

Item 3 – Minutes

Statement from Cllr Nick Ireland in relation to Recharging Town and Parish Councils for Election Costs

The last Shadow Executive approved recharging parish and town councils for election costs.

This is to *"be implemented replicating that which would have been implemented by the Dorset area councils on 1 April 2019"* and that *"any recharge will be made in the same financial year as the election or by-election"*.

This contradicts the stance taken by WDDC in March 2018 when their Returning Officer advised its parish councils that recharging would be implemented from 1 April 2019.

Their correspondence stated that *"The District Council recognises that the town and parish councils would need to precept to cover these costs which is why it was agreed that the charges would be made on a cost recovery basis i.e. those charges incurred in 2019, would be recoverable in the 2020/21 financial year"*

This difference is crucial and if not remedied, will have a significant impact on parish councils.

For many parish councils, contested elections are rare. If the current situation remains, **ALL** parish councils will have to raise their precept to cover a shared election next year, and also to cover at least one by-election. For several of my own parishes, this would necessitate a precept increase of over 50%, and in two cases, over 100%, to cover an eventuality that may not arise.

The WDDC policy makes perfect sense and the new Dorset Council will be easily able to carry the temporary burden of those election charges that do arise.

I therefore urge the Shadow Executive to reconsider this aspect of the decision.