

# DECISION ITEM



REPORT OF	MEETING	DATE	ITEM NO
RESOURCES DIRECTORATE	FINANCE AND DEMOCRACY COMMITTEE	26 SEPTEMBER 2016	7
<b>PARISH COUNCIL ELECTION RECHARGES</b>			

## PUBLIC ITEM

This item is for consideration in the public part of the meeting.

### SUMMARY

The council presently recharges the cost of parish council elections to the parish council concerned using a methodology that takes into account the actual cost of providing polling stations for each such election and divides most other costs equally between the relevant parishes.

Some parish councils have asked for other methods of apportioning the costs to be explored. The report sets out the results of applying two alternative methodologies and asks members to choose whether they wish to continue using the present methodology or to adopt one of the alternatives.

### RECOMMENDATION

1. Continue to recharge the cost of parish council elections using the present methodology for apportioning the costs between relevant parishes.

### SUMMARY OF PREVIOUS DECISIONS

None known

### CORPORATE PRIORITIES

Spending your money in the most efficient way to achieve excellent services ( <b>Value for Money</b> )	√
Delivering the services that customers expect of an excellent council ( <b>Clean and Green</b> )	
Working with all partners ( <b>Vibrant Economy</b> )	√
To make sure Fylde continues to be one of the most desirable places to live ( <b>A Great Place to Live</b> )	
Promoting Fylde as a great destination to visit ( <b>A Great Place to Visit</b> )	

## REPORT

1. The costs of holding an election for a parish councillor are paid by the borough council, but may be recharged to the parish council concerned<sup>1</sup>. Fylde Council does recharge the cost of parish elections.
2. The May 2015 polls were combined elections, in that parliamentary, borough council and parish council elections were held on the same day. In parishes or parish wards where there was a contested election for a parish councillor, one third of the cost of holding the combined elections in those parishes or parish wards fell to be recharged to the parish councils concerned. The one-third recharge was divided<sup>2</sup> between the parishes and parish wards concerned as set out in the following table

Element of the one-third recharge	Method of calculation
Polling station	Actual costs incurred in the parish or parish ward in question (these include hire costs for portable polling stations, as well as staff costs)
Poll cards	Divided equally between each contested parish or parish ward
Absent voting	Divided equally between each contested parish or parish ward
Count	Divided equally between each contested parish or parish ward
Clerical	£16.55 per 500 electors or part thereof
Returning officer	Divided equally between each contested parish or parish ward

3. At the May 2015 elections, there were ten contested elections for parish councils or parish council wards in Fylde. This level of competition was the highest for many years. Consequently, a number of parish councils who had not in recent times had to meet the cost of elections were faced with recharges. Further, because the polls were combined, poll cards were mandatory. Where a parish council election is held as a standalone poll, the parish council can decide whether or not to have poll cards issued.
4. Some parish councils have asked that consideration be given to different ways of calculating how the share of the cost of parish council elections is divided between parishes. Calculations have therefore been prepared showing how the recharges for the 2015 elections would have varied based on alternative methods of calculation. The total sum to be recharged between parishes remains the same: the difference is in the proportions of that cost which would have been recharged to each individual parish having a contested election.
5. The table in paragraph 6 shows the results of using the following three methods of dividing the costs between parishes :

Method 1: the present methodology, as described in paragraph 2 above

Method 2: All costs divided equally between the number of contested parishes or parish wards

Method 3: Cost apportioned on the basis of the electorate of the parish or parish ward

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<sup>1</sup> Representation of the People Act 18=983, section 36(5)

<sup>2</sup> Subject to some minor adjustment as a result of specific representations by parish councils

6. The results of the different methods of calculation on 2015 recharges would have been as follows:

Parish	Method 1: Present method of calculation	Method 2	Method 3
Bryning with Warton	£2343.57	£2406.68	£3212.58
Elswick	£2089.71	£2406.68	£992.20
Freckleton West	£2296.02	£2406.68	£2561.97
Little Eccleston with Larbreck	£2695.34	£2406.68	£394.41
St Annes: Ashton	£2514.67	£2406.68	£4091.29
St Annes: Central	£2446.68	£2406.68	£3559.80
St Annes: Kilnhouse	£2366.79	£2406.68	£3650.81
St Annes: St Leonards	£3224.64	£2406.68	£3826.11
Weeton with Preese	£2021.49	£2406.68	£516.89
Westby with Plumpton	£2067.92	£2406.68	£1260.76
Total	£24066.83	£24066.83	£24066.83

7. The present methodology (method 1) reflects, to some extent, the actual cost of running the election in each parish or parish ward. Method 2 divides all costs equally, regardless of where they were incurred. Method 3 places a greater financial burden on more populous parishes, who would arguably find it easier to raise the funds to pay, but does not reflect actual costs.
8. All of the methodologies are objectively justifiable, but both of the alternatives produce winners and losers when compared to the present methodology. Officers feel that the present method produces a fair means of recharging the cost of parish elections and, on balance, recommend that the present method of apportionment continue.

IMPLICATIONS	
Finance	There are no direct financial implications to Fylde Council in respect to this report. The options are all cost neutral to Fylde Council with the cost of the elections being recharged to the parishes.
Legal	The parish councils are obliged to pay the recharge decided by the council.
Community Safety	None arising from this report
Human Rights and Equalities	None arising from this report
Sustainability and Environmental Impact	None arising from this report
Health & Safety and Risk Management	None arising from this report

LEAD AUTHOR	TEL	DATE	DOC ID
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LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS		
Name of document	Date	Where available for inspection
Spreadsheet showing basis of calculations used in the report		Town Hall, Lytham St Annes