

# Cheshire West & Chester Council

## **Democratic & Legal Services**

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To:  
Local Council Clerks

17 February 2014

Dear Town/Parish Clerk

### **Future Arrangements for Town/Parish (Local) Council Elections**

As you are aware although your local council currently pays the **full** cost of any stand alone by-election (based on the agreed scale of election fees and charges that applies across Cheshire) no recharges are made for the all out combined elections held every four years.

This was the practice adopted by the predecessor authorities and was applied to the 2011 elections.

It is, and has always been, at the discretion of the former district councils, and now Cheshire West and Chester Council, whether to subsidise local elections. Across the country there has been a move to end subsidies, so that costs are borne by the towns and parishes that receive the benefits of having contested elections.

The cost of elections continues to increase and the present charging system does not comply with the Council's current policy which is that where it is possible to charge for goods or services, this should be done.

With effect from 1 April 2014 it has been agreed that local councils should be recharged some of the costs for holding combined elections. Rather than putting in place a complicated formula based on various rates for hire of polling stations, poll staff, costs for printing and postal votes etc, which would result in smaller parishes paying considerably more per elector than larger town or parish councils, a fixed rate per elector is being proposed. This method as well as being more equitable also means that local councils will know in advance how much a combined election will cost and will be able to budget accordingly.



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The amounts to be recharged will be as follows:-

- **Each Uncontested Election:** £165.00 (admin fee) plus Returning Officer fee based on the number of electors (£16 per 1000 electors or part) as per the Cheshire scale of fees and charges
- **Each Contested Election:** £0.85 per elector with a minimum charge of £547.50 (£500 admin fee plus the Returning Officer fee of £47.50 as per the Cheshire Scale of Fees and Charges.) There will be a cap on the maximum amount recharged to ensure that no local council pays more than the actual additional costs incurred by CWAC in carrying out the election. The maximum amount recharged will be based on 2750 electors - £2337.50

The enclosures with this letter are:

- **Appendix A** - giving examples of how the recharges will apply across a selection of local councils with differing electorates,
- **Appendix B** – giving examples of the current costs of standalone elections with comparisons with what the recharge would be if based on a full cost recovery (taking into account that the election would be combined with borough and parliamentary elections)
- **Appendix C** - a procedure for the recharging process
- **Appendix D** - a copy of the Cheshire Scale of Fees and Charges.

It should be noted that that whilst the recharging proposals mean that local councils pay a contribution towards the cost of combined elections, the amount being charged does not equate to the full additional cost incurred by the Authority when combined elections are held - see Appendix B.

The Council is aware that this is a change in the way that elections are charged for and also that it is now too late for changes to be made in the submission of parish/town council precepts for 2014/15. In order to lessen the impact of this change, costs for scheduled elections in 2015 may be paid for in two stages 50% in 2015/16 and 50% in 2016/17.

Following the May 2015 elections the Council will review the arrangements and discuss with ChALC whether any changes are required. You will be notified well in advance of any changes that may be in place the 2019 elections. This will give you the chance, if you consider appropriate, to create an elections reserve to enable you to budget for the cost of contested elections over a period of years.



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In relation to the 2015 elections the Council will be offering all Clerks the opportunity to attend briefings on the nomination and elections process. These briefing will take place in early 2015 and details will be sent nearer the time.

Yours faithfully

*Mandy Ramsden*

Senior Manager - Committees and Elections

Deputy Returning Officer

Democratic Services

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