

FINANCE BRIEFING PAPER – GENERAL ELECTION



1. Introduction

- 1.1 This paper provides details of the estimated cost of undertaking any UK Parliamentary or General Election (GE) and the additional costs incurred in the June 2017 GE resulting from activities undertaken in order to respond to the issues experienced.
- 1.2 The paper also sets out the forecasted expenditure for the GE which will be reclaimed from the Government as part of the reimbursement for eligible GE costs.
- 1.3 The costs included within this paper are an unaudited statement and maybe subject to further minor adjustments.

2. Budgeted Expenditure For General Election

- 2.1 All eligible spend by the Council in conducting a GE is funded by Government and all eligible costs are reclaimed by submission of Election Accounts to the Cabinet Office Elections Claims Unit.
- 2.2 The estimated eligible spend to be claimed for the June 2017 GE is £401,000.
- 2.3 In addition the Council is due to receive the balance of claims for the previous Referendum and Police and Crime Commissioner Election. This is estimated to be £75,000 and is held as a contingency for the Council to be used to support the cost of undertaking elections.

3. Additional Costs

- 3.1 The response to rectify three distinct issues experienced in the GE have given rise to additional costs. The following section details the issues and the response with associated costs.
- 3.2 Poll Cards
- 3.3 Costs relating to the issuing of two poll cards to postal voters and the subsequent explanatory letter agreed by the Electoral Commission are set out below:

Description of additional costs	£
Poll Cards printing and posting error	12,498
Additional letter – Electoral Commission requirement	10,468
Total	22,966

3.4 Postal Votes

There were 1,117 entries identified where a postal vote pack was required but had not been printed and distributed. Print costs are within usual expenditure plans, however the distribution method and cost varied depending on the location of the elector as follows;

- 927 were within the Plymouth area and were distributed by hand
- 56 were outside the area and were distributed by courier
- 56 were agreed for collection (though more people did decide to collect their pack)
- 77 were living overseas, and it was not possible to distribute their packs

3.5 Costs relating to the dedicated customer services response, associated IT support and urgent distribution of the 1,117 postal votes are set out below:

Description of additional costs	£
Courier and mileage	15,100
Additional staffing	8,206
Stationery	100
Total	23,406

3.6 Investigation

3.7 The Council has appointed Dr David Smith, former Chief Executive of Sunderland City Council to undertake an independent investigation. Dr Smith is a non-executive board member for the Cabinet Office Electoral Registration Transformation Board and leads on elections and democracy for the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE).

3.8 Costs relating to the independent investigation and the associated specialist IT support are set out below;

Description of additional costs	£
Investigation fees	19,700
IT support - data extraction	2,000
Total	21,700

4. **Summary of costs**

Additional cost totals	£
Poll cards (printing, postage and follow up correspondence)	22,966
Postal votes (courier, mileage, staffing and stationery)	23,406
Investigation (enquiry, report and IT support)	21,700
Total	68,072

5. Impact of additional costs

- 5.1 It is proposed to meet the additional costs incurred by using the contingency funds outlined in 2.3.
- 5.2 Senior Officers have foregone fees associated with the undertaking of the 2017 GE. In order to minimise the impact of the additional costs on the Elections contingency funds these foregone fees are proposed to supplement the funds available to carry forward into 2018/19.
- 5.3 Taking account of the proposed approach the impact of the additional costs on the Elections Contingency is set out below:

Description of funds	£
Elections contingency	75,000
Senior Officer foregone fees	7,446
Sub Total	82,446
Less additional costs incurred	- 68,072
Balance of contingency to carry forward to 2018/19	14,374