

Title of Report: Projected Costs for the Local Government Elections 2019	Officer Presenting: Deputy Returning Officer – Council Chief Executive Author: Assistant Deputy Returning Officers
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1 Purpose of Report/Recommendations

1.0 To advise Members of the projected costs for the forthcoming Local Government Elections and the financing of such.

2.0 Background

2.1 A report was presented at the meeting of the Governance and Strategic Planning Committee held on 5 February 2019 wherein it was agreed that an update would be provided on the preliminary cost figures for the LG Elections 2019 (Min Ref. GSP 24/19),

2.2 Following a request from a Member, it was also agreed that details would be provided on the postage costs to be incurred by Council for the distribution of candidate literature.

3.0 Key Issues

3.1 Council has set aside finance for the LG election for the last 5 years. The current election reserve sits at £328,000.

3.2 The costs associated with the LG Election include the following:

- Recharge by the EONI for the management of polling stations, stationery, postage of polling cards, transportation costs for equipment/ballot boxes etc. This equates to a potential £205,847.00 (66% of Councils prescribed maximum spend on Administration and Staffing costs).
- Council costs including staffing, advertising, security and set up of Count Centre, stationery inc. ballot papers, hire of count centre and Royal Mail costs for candidate literature.

- 3.3 Local Council expenditure on delivering Council elections is covered under the provision of the Electoral Law Act (Northern Ireland) 1962 and constrained by a scale of expenditure set by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.
- 3.4 This scale sets a maximum spend by Derry City and Strabane District Council for administration and staffing (excluding the DRO fee and candidate mailing costs) of £311,889. Council has projected spend and can confirm that the projected spend is within this threshold.
- 3.5 The total cost of the Election including administration and staffing costs, the DRO fee and mailing costs for candidate literature is however projected at £398,000, which is £70,000 in excess of the available election reserve.
- 3.6 Candidates are entitled to send an item of campaign material to every registered elector within their respective DEA. The contract for the postage of candidate mailing literature has been procured by the Cabinet Office and Royal Mail has been awarded the contract. All Councils are therefore obliged to use this centrally procured supplier. The contract requires each Council to pay an administration charge and for each item of candidate literature, a charge of 28.1p is applied.

4.0 Financial, Equality, Legal, HR, Improvement and other Implications

- 4.1 Council can adhere to the maximum spend threshold for administration and staffing costs prescribed by the Secretary of State.
- 4.2 The excess projected spend of £70,000 has been provisionally set aside in the Quarter 3 financial outturn report presented to this Committee.
- 4.3 The Royal Mail contract for the postage of candidate literature is a Universal Services Provider contract and the Chief Electoral Officer has confirmed that due diligence was applied in the award of the contract.

5.0 Recommendations

- 5.1 Members are asked to note the projected costs for the Local Government Elections 2019 and the arrangements for financing the projected excess spend.