

Responses to Uncontested Fee Proposal

Town/Parish Council	Summary of Consultation Response	Comments
Ashwell	Ashwell Parish Council discussed this at their November meeting. They were of the view that as electoral services were a district council responsibility the cost should be borne by North Herts Council.	
Caldecote and Newnham	Will not be paying any uncontested election fees; the staff at NHDC already receive a salary for their roles, which I imagine already covers the responsibilities you outline in your note. So I am not certain why you are now asking us all to pay twice for the same activity?	Not requesting payment towards officers' salaries – it is a contribution towards the work that must be undertaken on behalf of a Parish/Town Council for their election. In the current arrangements, the District Council is essentially subsidising the cost of parish elections. Not proposing that officers are paid twice - that the Parish covers the costs of running their own election.
Codicote	Codicote Parish Council will be objecting to the proposal on the basis that the Parish Council has no say in the matter, and it has always been a core service previously provided.	Reasons for introduction of fee has been included within the officer's report and explained during consultation with respective Parish/Town Councils.
Great Ashby	Council has no objection to the introduction of a fee, as it recognises the volume of work involved for North Herts Council Officers irrespective of an election being contested or uncontested. It also assists Great Ashby Community Council (GACC) with the budgeting process; as the fee is fixed and known, GACC can put the appropriate amount into reserves each year. Council would like to highlight that they found the style and format of the paper form not particularly user friendly and would welcome any efficiencies being introduced into the process (such as online submissions) that would reduce the overall cost of an election.	With regards to the suggestion of online submissions, the Nominations process must be a paper based process as this is a legislative requirement.
Graveley	They all feel that the proposal is reasonable and agree that it should be a tiered charge against the number of seats for each Parish.	

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	From perspective of Parish Clerk, agree it is reasonable and you have given enough notice so that any Parishes that do have elections next year, the RFO's can now include these costs in the budget's that are being set for next year's precept.	
Hinxworth	Object. The cost of this will be down to the electorate who will bear this cost through precept. Voting is a democrat right and therefore this cost should not be paid for by the voters. Unanimous in our view point.	
Ickleford	In support of introducing a fee for elections whether they are uncontested or not. Suggested that the fee be set according to the precept rather than seats as the precept for Lilley Parish Council is a third of Ickleford Parish Council. So, an increase in the precept to assimilate the fee would be a much higher percentage of the precept for Lilley than Ickleford. Irrespective – Ickleford Parish Councillors are supportive of the introduction of an uncontested fee.	The suggested fee has been determined having looked at the various elements involved in an uncontested election. Unsure of a methodology for setting an uncontested fee to assimilate to a precept.
Knebworth	Councillors of view that there is no need to change the current arrangement.	Reasons for introduction of fee has been included within the officer's report and explained during consultation with respective Parish/Town Councils.
Offley	Outlined proposal is fair.	
Pirton	Overall, little reaction from Pirton Parish Councillors. One Councillor thought that the proposed charge was "petty" and that the money could be better spent supporting organisations in the village.	
Reed	We feel that the proposal to charge the council is unreasonable for three reasons: 1. Reed is a particularly small parish and so the proposed charge would be disproportionate compared to other, larger parishes. 2. This appears simply to be a way of appearing to reduce the overall NHDC costs by simply passing them on to another body. At the end of the day, it is	The proposals include a tiered banding, proportionate to the number of seats in that parish at that election. As set out above, the District Council is essentially subsidising the costs of elections for Parish/Town Councils. This proposal is for the true cost of the elections to be met by the authority for whom the elections are for.

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	<p>all coming out of the pockets of hard working tax payers.</p> <p>3. NHDC has always had these costs as part of the costs of running elections. The parish has not, and even though it may be seen by some as a small amount, for the parish this would inevitably result in an increase to the council.</p>	
Royston	<p>Matter discussed by Royston Town Council Finance Committee and they raised no objection to the introduction of an uncontested elections fee</p>	
Rushden and Wallington	<p>This seems a bit like robbing Peter to pay Paul.</p> <p>Surely all that will happen is that Parish Councils will increase their precept requests by this amount to cover the costs and therefore precept costs as a whole for NHDC will increase to the same but opposite amount that the budget for the Elections Team will reduce (by the income derived from this fee).</p> <p>This seems to be adding another layer of administration onto an already admin heavy service provision. Surely the Elections Team are there to provide a non-chargeable service to local Parish Councils as do many other council departments. For this reason we are opposed to this proposal as it adds no value to the democratic process and we believe that it will only add increased costs to NHDC overall.</p>	<p>The proposal is not based on income generation - it is a contribution towards the work that must be undertaken on behalf of a Parish/Town Council for their election, which the District Council funds unless the election is contested.</p> <p>Within legislation it states that the Returning Officer shall be paid all expenses reasonably incurred by the relevant local authority.</p> <p>Having a set fee with enable the Town/Parish Councils to budget over the four years between elections.</p>
Weston	<p>Agree that costs have to be covered, therefore in principle, expecting Parish Councils to pay something for uncontested elections is not unreasonable. However, those cost would then need to be covered by the precept, which is a tax on exactly the same people that the District Council would otherwise be expecting to pay to cover the costs. In other words, it is the same money coming from the same source, the only relevant question therefore is not who collects the money to cover the cost, but rather, what is the most cost-effective and efficient way to cover the cost?</p> <p>In response to this, the Council's view was that the cost would inevitably be lower if the</p>	<p>The election to Town/Parish Councils occurs every four years and the uncontested fee could be budgeted over that four year period.</p> <p>It is a contribution towards the work that must be undertaken on behalf of a Parish/Town Council for their election, which at the moment the District Council funds unless the election is contested.</p>

	<p>District Council covered it out of their own budget. Instigating a new process, invoicing individual councils, collecting payment, chasing receivables and accounting for the same, will inevitably be more expensive and less efficient than simply leaving things as they currently are.</p> <p>For this reason, Weston Parish Council do not believe that a separate charge to parish councils for uncontested elections is an optimum solution to covering the cost of the process.</p>	
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