

EXTRA-ORDINARY FULL COUNCIL

| | |
|-------------------------|--|
| Date: | Wednesday, 16 March 2022 |
| Title: | West Witney Ward – Potential By-election |
| Contact Officer: | Deputy Town Clerk – Adam Clapton |

Background

As members will be aware, a Town Councillor vacancy has arisen in the West ward of Witney.

At the time of writing, it is not known whether a by-election will be called for this vacancy.

This will be confirmed by West Oxfordshire District Council following 23rd March 2022. If an election is called, it will not take place later than 26th May 2022.

Current Situation

There are no other elections due in this ward in May so the Electoral Services office at West Oxfordshire District Council (which administers elections) has advised the costs incurred in facilitating a potential by-election would need to be solely covered by the Town Council. This includes the purchase of poll cards for the electorate should the Council decide they are required.

Environmental impact

Having declared a Climate Change Emergency at its Council meeting on 26 June 2019 – with this in mind Councillors should have due regard to the environmental impact of any decisions they make with regard to its facilities and services it operates.

The creation of several thousand single-use poll cards for a by-election.

Risk

In decision making Councillors should give consideration to any risks to the Council and any action it can take to limit or negate its liability.

This Council did provide poll cards for the by-election in North ward in 2019, but it should be noted that when a by-election was required during 2015 in the South ward, the administration at the time decided not to purchase them. Residents who did not have social media or who accessed the web were not aware there was an election.

Financial implications

- An exact cost for providing poll cards has not been provided by the District Council but the approximate cost will be £900-£1,100.

- There will be further costs towards a by-election as a whole which will need to be met by the Town Council including staffing and polling stations. These potential costs have not yet been provided but could be in the region of £2,000-£3,000.

- The Town Council holds an earmarked reserve election fund which is added to each year as a contingency. If a by-election is held, further funds will need to be budgeted for in 2023/24.

Recommendations

Members are invited to note the report and consider the following:

1. Whether to agree to the purchase and distribution of poll cards for the West witney Town Council ward, should a by-election be called.