

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

COUNCIL MEETING

24 JANUARY 2017

ITEM NO 12 - FOUR YEARLY ELECTIONS

Councillor Stevens to move:

The Council spends around £510,000 a year on elections and maintaining the electoral roll. We elect Councillors in thirds and so hold local elections 3 in 4 years. So over 4 years the cost is about £1.53M. In most years we additionally hold General Elections, European Parliament elections and last year a referendum. Central government reimburse us around £100,000 for each of these national elections so the net expenditure is around £410,000 p.a. or around £1.23 M every four years.

The Council incurs the cost of maintaining the electoral roll regardless of whether elections were held. 2013/14 was a 'fallow year' i.e. there were no elections. That year the running costs were only £181,000 compared with the following two years which were £336,000 each year. So we can deduce that each local election costs RBC around £150,000.

On Wednesday 7 December 2016 in the House of Commons Ranil Jayawardena, Conservative MP for NE Hants proposed a 10 minute rule bill regarding Electoral Reform for local government. He proposed that local elections should be held on an all out basis every four years - rather than thirds. His arguments in favour are that:

- this would lead to considerable savings;
- they tend to concentrate voters' minds - leading to increased voter turn out;
- Councils can plan longer term rather than just be looking to the next local elections.

Recognising the saving of £300,000 over 4 years and the benefits identified by Ranil Jayawardena MP, this Council instructs the Head of Legal & Democratic Services to report to the next Council meeting on the steps required by the authority to resolve to move to all out elections from 2018.