

9. TOWN COUNCIL ELECTIONS – MAY 2027 (FINANCIAL PLANNING): UPDATE FROM ELECTORAL SERVICES

9.1 Purpose of Supplementary Paper

To brief Members on further correspondence received from Guildford & Waverley Electoral Services after publication of the Agenda Item 9 report and draft letters, and to advise whether the update affects the recommendations.

9.2 Summary/Key Points

- Electoral Services now accepts the £12 per elector approach is not workable for larger councils and will not proceed with either a flat rate or a sliding scale.
- They will instead prepare parish-by-parish cost forecasts using current pricing assumptions (print, venues, staffing, postal services etc.) for approval through the Guildford & Waverley Joint Corporate Leadership Board, aiming for end of February 2026 (subject to LGR pressures).
- Pending those forecasts, they suggest councils needing a medium-term figure now use an interim assumption of “double the most recent all-out contested election cost.”
- The correspondence reiterates that proper election costs are rechargeable to the relevant parish/town council (Representation of the People Act 1983, s.36).
- No revised estimate for GTC is provided at this stage; the financial risk and need for prudent reserve planning identified in the main report remains.

9.3 Officers’ Assessment

Officers consider this update to be welcome and material insofar as Electoral Services now accepts that a flat £12-per-electors approach is not workable for larger councils and is moving towards a parish-specific cost forecasting method. However, the correspondence does not provide a revised estimate for Godalming Town Council at this time and therefore does not remove the financial risk identified in the main report.

Members are therefore invited to treat the £12-per-electors figure as an upper-bound planning assumption pending the promised end-February forecast work, and Officers advise that the core recommendations in the main report remain appropriate—including strengthening the Election Reserve now and continuing to seek transparency and timely confirmation of the basis for any recharge model.

9.4 Implications for GTC’s Current Planning Assumption

The main report explains that applying the earlier guidance (electorate × £12) produces an indicative estimate of £208,116 for GTC (17,343 electors, Jan 2026).

The update indicates Electoral Services recognises the limitations of that approach for larger councils and is developing a more tailored forecast. However, no alternative figure for GTC is available at the present time, so Members are asked to treat the £12-per-electors figure as an upper-bound planning assumption pending the promised end-February forecast work.

9.5 Implications for the Draft Letters Attached to Agenda Item 9

Draft letter to CEO (Waverley/Guildford): The draft requests transparency and a full breakdown/methodology for the £12-per-electors planning figure.

Given the update, Members may consider that this letter remains appropriate; however, it may now be strengthened by explicitly requesting:

- GTC’s parish-specific forecast once the end-February work is completed; and

- confirmation of the governance route (what is being approved by the Joint Corporate Leadership Board) and the timetable for publication/sharing with parishes.

Draft letter to Secretary of State: The update reinforces the draft's central point: LGR-driven resequencing creates a standalone 2027 parish/town election with concentrated costs at the local tier.

Officers consider the letter remains relevant and may be supported by the additional statement that Electoral Services itself recognises the difficulty of applying a flat per-electoral cost for larger councils.

9.6. Officer Recommendation to Members (Supplementary)

That Members:

1. Note the further correspondence from Guildford & Waverley Electoral Services indicating they are moving away from a flat £12-per-electoral approach and are producing parish-level forecasts for approval by end of February 2026 (subject to LGR pressures).
2. Confirm that the recommendations in the main Agenda Item 9 report remain appropriate pending receipt of a parish-specific forecast for Godalming.
3. Authorise the CEO, in consultation with the Chair of the LGR working group to amend the letters to the CEO and Secretary of State as outlined at para 9.5
4. Upon its receipt, the GTC cost forecast from Electoral Services to be reported to the next available P&M committee meeting.