



Democracy and Standards Committee Monday 25th September 2023

Report Title	Elections - Scale of Fees and Charges
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Are there public sector equality duty implications?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information (whether in appendices or not)?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Applicable paragraph number/s for exemption from publication under Schedule 12A Local Government Act 1972	

List of Appendices

Appendix 1 – Original Fees

Appendix 2- Revised Scale of Fees and Charges

1. Purpose of Report

To note changes in the scale of election fees for local government elections in North Northamptonshire.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1. Revisions to the scale of fees are required to provide consistency in the allocation of fees across different types of elections and to reflect uplifts in the National Living Wage, burdens associated with the cost of living, and the additional responsibilities placed on staff arising from the implementation of the requirements of the Elections Act 2022.

3. Recommendations

It is recommended that the Democracy and Standards Committee

- 3.1 Note the revised scale of election fees and charges for local government elections within North Northamptonshire at Appendix 1.

Reasons for decision

To ensure there is an element of consistency between the election roles for NNC and those set out in the new scale of fees for national polls recently published by DLUHC.

To ensure that staff are adequately remunerated to reflect additional responsibilities imposed by the provisions of the Elections Act 2022, that fees take account of increases in the National Living Wage and are sufficiently attractive to encourage staff to undertake election duties.

Alternative Options

Not to revise the scale of fees, however this would lead to a lack of consistency and may cause staff recruitment and retention issues.

4 Report Background

4.1.1 The Returning Officer is the employer of staff engaged to undertake election duties. It is a legislative requirement that the Returning Officer's expenditure in delivering an election is met by the Council.

4.1.2 Expenditure includes staff payments and any necessary disbursements considered necessary by the Returning Officer to run effective elections.

4.1.3 Although the Returning Officer may determine a scale of fees and charges which will enable them to deliver a successful election, it is considered prudent that the council note the proposed scales of expenditure to ensure that they are aware of the financial envelope that the Returning Officer will work within. It should be noted however that these may be changed by the Returning Officer should they require it.

4.1.4 Returning Officer fees vary throughout the country and there is not a standard approach or formula to determining them. The proposed increases in fees are considered to be reasonable and proportionate considering the additional responsibilities imposed by the requirements of the Elections Act 2022 which adds additional complexity to election processes.

4.1.5 The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) has recently undertaken an exercise to review staffing fees for national polls that are met out of the consolidated fund. The outcome of the review was to introduce a new schedule of fees for election duties.

4.1.6 The recently formulated scale of fees published by DLUHC applies to Parliamentary and Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner elections. DLUHC consulted with all Local Authorities and members of the Association of Electoral Administrators as part of their review exercise.

- 4.1.7 To facilitate consistency in the heads of election staff expenditure across different types of elections the DLUHC heads of expenditure and scale has been used as a guide to update the council schedule of fees and charges.
- 4.1.8 Appendix 1 sets out the original fees that were presented to the North Northamptonshire Shadow Executive Committee on 3rd February 2021, and which have not been modified since that time. Appendix 2 sets out the revised fees which are proposed for local government elections.
- 4.1.9 At national polls (i.e. Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner and parliamentary elections) the scale of fees for election duties is different to those for local government elections. This is because national polls are funded by the Treasury.
- 4.1.10 The changes proposed in the revised scale of fees at Appendix 2 has been drafted following consultation with colleagues at West Northamptonshire Council.
- 4.1.11 The Elections Act 2022 introduced the requirement to provide photo ID when voting in a polling station as well as changes to the handling of postal votes, changes to the franchise for European Union Citizens and changes to the eligibility criteria for overseas voters.

5 Issues and Choices

- 5.1 Retaining the existing scale of fees risks losing the goodwill of staff prepared to work the long, and in many cases unsociable, hours associated with election duties and would negatively impact recruitment into these roles with staff preferring to work for neighbouring local authorities where the rate of remuneration may be more favourable.
- 5.2 The Elections Act 2022 imposes additional burdens on election staff, particularly those employed in polling stations where new requirements for checking Voter ID and handling postal votes mean additional complexity in terms of process and understanding of legal requirements. An increase in fees for polling station staff would reflect the additional burdens and responsibilities being placed on polling station staff.
- 5.3 The proposed increase in mileage payments reflects the use of the Kettering Offices as the main administration centre for elections, particularly in relation to the delivery of ballot boxes and election stationery and the venue for the verification of ballot papers and the count for casual vacancy elections.

6 Next Steps

- 6.1 The revised fees will be implemented for all local government elections (including parish and town council casual vacancies) taking place from 2nd October 2023.
- 6.2 The fees will be reviewed by the Returning Officer prior to the scheduled local government elections due to take place on 1st May 2025.

7 Implications (including financial implications)

7.1 Resources and Financial

- 7.1.1 Town and parish councils would be recharged for elections administered on their behalf.

7.2 Legal and Governance

- 7.2.1 As set out in this report, the Returning Officer is the employer of staff undertaking specific election duties and may review and revise the scale of election fees as they require.
- 7.2.2 The Council has a responsibility to meet the expenditure associated with delivering an election and this includes payments to staff employed to undertake election duties.

7.3 Relevant Policies and Plans

- 7.3.1 Electoral Commission performance standards require the Returning Officer to have robust delivery plans in place and to ensure sufficient resources are available to deliver the election.

7.4 Risk

- 7.4.1 There are no significant risks arising from the proposed recommendations in this report.

8.1 Consultation

- 8.1.1 The revised scale of fees has been formulated in consultation with colleagues at West Northamptonshire Council and takes into consideration the outcomes of a recent consultation exercise conducted by DLUHC in setting a scale of fees for national polls where the expenditure is met by The Treasury.

9.1 Equality Implications

- 9.1.1 There are no equality implications arising from the recommendations in this report.

10.1 Climate Impact

10.1.1 There are no climate implications arising from the recommendations in this report.

11.1 Community Impact

11.1.1 The successful administration of elections is essential to ensuring democracy for electors within North Northamptonshire.

11.2 Crime and Disorder Impact

11.2.1 There are no crime and disorder implications arising from the recommendations in this report.

12 Background Papers

12.1 None