

RECORD OF DECISION MADE UNDER DELEGATED AUTHORITY

PUBLIC DOCUMENT

Any interest to declare/ or conflict and any dispensation granted - n/a

SERVICE DIRECTORATE: Legal and Community

1. **DECISION TAKEN**

That the Scale of Electoral Services Fees for electoral events to be during 2020/21 be as set out at Appendix A.

2. **DECISION TAKER**

Jeanette Thompson as Service Director: Legal and Community with responsibility for Elections Services¹ (in consultation with Ian Couper as Chief Finance Officer).

3. **DATE DECISION TAKEN:**

27 February 2020.

4. **REASON FOR DECISION**

- 4.1 To enable the Council to remunerate the Returning Officer and the staff employed to carry out tasks during electoral events and to be open and transparent regarding other payments.

5. **ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

- 5.1. For the scales of fees to remain at the 2019/20 rates or to increase some areas to reflect other local rates.
- 5.2. The decision taken was, however, to increase the fees by 2%, as per the practice adopted for the last review. Although the Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) has no jurisdiction with regards to the Electoral Services Scale of Fees, during their recent review of Members' Allowances, the IRP recommended that any increase in allowances for Members should not exceed that negotiated by the Local Government Association for Council Officers' pay. The increase agreed for 2019/2020 was set at 2% and therefore this was applied to the 2020/2021 allowances. The increase in the Electoral Services Scale of Fees therefore mirrors that proposed by the IRP. Whilst the current negotiations for pay awards for 2020/21 are ongoing, for simplicity sake the 2% increased has been adopted.

6. **CONSULTATION (INCLUDING THE EFFECT ON STAKEHOLDERS, PARTNERS AND THE PUBLIC)**

- 6.1 There is currently no County-wide agreement as to the Scale of Fees for local elections. An informal consultation exercise was, however, recently undertaken by a neighbouring local authority in respect of the Parliamentary election fees, as all neighbouring authorities are competitors when recruiting staff. Hertfordshire local authorities form a Hertfordshire County Group and of those, six offered responses in relation to fees listed below (the names of the respective authorities were not provided):

¹ & Under 14.6.9(a)(xxiii) to carry out the duties of the Returning Officer because of his inability to act – i.e. set his own Returning Officer fees.

Polling Station Inspector	Presiding Officer	Poll Clerk	Count Supervisor	Count Assistant
285	285	175	140	100
100	275	175	140	70
300	290	180	115	75
275	275	179	218	110
300	275	165	140	100
*	255	165	170	140

6.2 When compared with the rates above (to NHDC set out in Appendix A) NHDC would, in the main, appear to be below those other authorities. However, when considering the fees, some roles within NHDC attract other payments, such as a training fee and conveyance of the ballot box fee. It is not clear from the information provided by the Hertfordshire Group whether the fees quoted include any other fees/payments.

7. RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

7.1. Each Local Authority is required to appoint one of its officers as Returning Officer (RO). The RO is appointed in an independent capacity by the Council to organise and oversee the administration of elections. Each Council must provide their RO with the resources required for an election, which includes the cost of recruiting and paying staff, although these are effectively employed by the RO.

7.2. A Scale of Fees is required to cover staff costs associated with the administration of elections and other electoral events, for example, a local planning referendum or parish poll. The scale is directly applicable to district and parish electoral events. Other electoral events (eg County elections where applicable) are subject to agreement.

7.3. The RO appoints circa 300 temporary staff for local elections and will need to do so for the Police and Crime Commissioner Elections on 7 May 2020, which will also be combined with the District and Parish elections. The informal 'consultations' in early 2019 and research indicated that the levels approved in Appendix A (which includes the 2% increase rounded up to the nearest £0.10), were, as indicated, below average when comparable with neighbouring authorities although anticipated to be sufficient to maintain staffing levels and interest. It is worth noting that recruitment of staff has been challenging for several reasons (including recent volume and timing of the Parliamentary election in 2019). However, this was the experience of many other authorities and therefore at this stage the decision has been to increase as per Appendix A.

7.4. The role of Polling Station Inspector (PSI) has been included within the Scale of Fees as PSIs play an important role in the effective management of each election and deal with queries and problems arising at the polling station on polling day.

7.5. Both Presiding Officers and Poll Clerks now undertake the same training, so that there is consistency in the information provided to electors and, if required, Poll Clerks can act as Presiding Officers in emergency situations.

7.6. A travelling expense has previously been paid to Poll Clerks at a rate of £5 (Presiding Officers receive a fee for the conveyance of the ballot box/es), and PSIs for mileage (or minimum fee). For clarity and transparency this fee has been included within the agreed Scale of Fees in Appendix A (but it is not a new fee as such). The rate payable is as per the HMRC tax-free approved mileage allowance rate.

7.7. NHDC currently uses the services of Selima for its electoral payroll system. Following a successful tender, as of 1 April 2020, NHDC will be using a new payroll

provider - Liberata UK Ltd to provide its payroll service and the electoral services payroll will also be absorbed into this contract.

- 7.8. Whilst providing the new payroll provider with details in advance of the 'go live' date it is apparent that there are a number of historic job roles that have not previously been included within the Scale of Fees, and this has therefore been amended. To make the conversion to the new payroll provider an easier transition (to reduce the number of roles on the new system) some of the roles have been changed to an hourly rate.

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1. Section 36 of The Representation of The People Act 1983 (RoTPA) provides that [at (4), (5), (5A)] all expenditure properly incurred by a Returning Officer in relation to the holding of a district, parish or community election be paid by that Council, or parish or community council for which the election is held.
- 8.2. A RO is entitled to recover their charges in respect of services rendered or expenses incurred for elections, as per section 29 RoTPA.

9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 The fees for elections are considered in the budget setting process and a 2% inflationary increase was assumed. In the case of Parish elections, each Parish is charged for its election.

10. RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 The Council needs to ensure it complies with statutory requirements one element of this is to ensure that it has the staff required to operate an election.

11. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 There are no equalities implications.

12. SOCIAL VALUE IMPLICATIONS

- 12.1 The Social Value Act and "go local" policy do not apply to this decision.

13. HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 13.1 There are no human resource implications, other than those set out.

14. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 14.1 None.

15. NOTIFICATION DATE

28 February 2020

Signature of Decision Taker



Signature of the Chief Finance Officer

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This decision is a NON-EXECUTIVE DECISIONS and is therefore not subject to call in.