

Division(s):

AUDIT & GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE – 27 MAY 2020

Scale of Election Fees and Expenditure 2020/21

Report by Director of Law & Governance and Monitoring Officer

RECOMMENDATION

1. **The Committee is RECOMMENDED to approve the Scale of Expenditure for the financial year 2020/21, as shown in Annex A to this report, for the election of County Councillors and any other local referendums.**

Introduction

2. Each year the Council needs to set a scale of election fees and expenditure for the holding of elections of county councillors. This Committee has delegated responsibility for approving the “scale of fees”.
3. In accordance with the Council’s practice, a review has been undertaken in consultation with the City and District Councils of Oxfordshire, who assist in running the County Council’s elections and by-elections. The Districts are generally mindful of the County Council’s scale of fees, when setting their own fees for local elections and also use it in the event of any County Council by-election. Therefore, the Scale of Fees aims to provide a framework and to steer an even course between the individual requirements of all the districts and the County.
4. The proposed scale of fees and expenditure for 2020/21 is included as an Annex to this report. The Committee is requested to approve the proposed Scale of Fees to apply from 1 April 2020.

Purpose of the Scale of Fees

5. The purpose of the scale of fees and expenditure is to set out the amounts that can be charged for organising and running county council elections and by-elections. In practice, this means that these are the amounts that the City and District Councils will claim back from the County Council for running elections on its behalf. The current year’s scale of fees, for example, was used by the County Council in its commissioning of South Oxfordshire District Council to administer the recent county by-election held for the Wallingford Division in November 2019.

Levels for 2020-21

6. As in the last financial year, most of the proposed fees remain unchanged, save for an approximate 2% lift in fees paid to individual election staff. This is in line

with the increased annual local government pay award for staff, rounded to the nearest pound. No significant issues have arisen in the previous year which need addressing by the new Scale of Fees.

The main changes

7. At the suggestion of the Districts and the City Council, the fee payable to Inspectors and Supervisors of polling stations has been increased from £200.00 to £235.00. This brings the fee in line with that paid to Presiding Officers on a combined poll, as Inspectors/supervisors of polling stations carry at least an equivalent level of responsibility for ensuring the integrity of the poll.
8. For Contested elections:
 - The Returning Officer fee for a 1-member division would increase from £93.00 to £95.00 and for a 2-member division from £185.00 to £189.00;
 - The Deputy Returning Officer's fee for a 1-member division from £88.00 to £90.00 and for a 2-member division from £176.00 to £180.00.
 - The Deputy Returning Officer's fee for the count and declaration of poll, for a 1-member division increases from £59.00 to £60.00 and for a 2-member division from £119.00 to £121.00.
 - The Presiding Officer fee rises from £204.00 to £208.00 and in the case of a combined poll to £235.00;
 - The Poll Clerk fee rises from £148.00 to £151.00 and for combined polls to £161.00;
 - The employment of Clerical Persons increases from £110.00 for a 1-member division to £112.00, and in the case of 2-member divisions a rise to £225.00.
9. For Uncontested elections:
 - The Returning Officer fee for a 1-member division increases from £45.00 to £46.00 and for a 2-member division from £89.00 to £91.00;
 - The Deputy Returning Officer's fee for a 1-member division increases from £30.00 to £31.00 and for a 2-member division from £60.00 to £61.00.

NB In practice, it is unlikely that elections will ever be uncontested within the county council divisions.

10. The City and District Councils have confirmed that the proposed Scale of Fees is acceptable to them for the running of elections on the County Council's behalf, is consistent with their recent experience and should therefore provide a robust and cost-effective means of delivering any elections that may occur in the year from April 2020 to end of March 2021.

Financial Implications

11. A separate budget is maintained for electoral expenditure, which is built up over time towards the County Council elections, next due to be held in 2021. This

also incorporates an element towards by-election costs which may also occur in the 2020-21 year.

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Background papers: Nil

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