

Division(s):

AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE – 6 MARCH 2019

Scale of Election Fees and Expenditure 2019/20

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 2019/2020, 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 is responsible for approving the “scale of fees”, which is considered last in March 2018, approving the scale of fees which would apply in 2018/19.
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 the running of County Council 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. Therefore, the Scale of Fees aim to provide a framework, and to steer an even course between the individual requirements of all the districts within the County.
4. The proposed scale of fees and expenditure is included as an Annex to this report. The Committee is requested to approve the proposed Scale of Fees to apply from the start of the financial year 2019/20.

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 Oxford City, South Oxfordshire and the Vale of White Horse District Councils for the three recent county by-elections (Iffley Fields, Wheatley and Grove & Wantage).

Levels for 2019-20

6. Most of the fees remain unchanged. However, in order to ensure sufficient interest in the staffing of elections generally, fees payable for individual electoral positions have been increased in line with the annual local government pay award for staff, rounded to the nearest pound.

7. In summary, it is therefore suggested that for Uncontested elections:
- The Returning Officer fee for a 1-member division increases from £43.95 to £45.00 and for a 2-member division from £87.90 to £89.00;
 - The Deputy Returning Officer's fee for a 1-member division increases from £29.15 to £30.00 and for a 2-member division from £58.30 to £59.00.

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

8. In respect of Contested elections:
- The Returning Officer fee for a 1-member division would increase from £91.30 to £93.00 and for a 2-member division from £182.60 to £186.00;
 - The Deputy Returning Officer's fee for a 1-member division from £86.90 to £89.00 and for a 2-member division from £173.80 to £177.00.
 - The Deputy Returning Officer's fee for the count and declaration of poll, for a 1-member division increases from £58.30 to £59.00 and for a 2-member division from £116.60 to £119.00.
 - The Presiding Officer fee rises from £200.00 to £204.00 and in the case of a combined poll to £230.00;
 - The Poll Clerk fee rises from £145.00 to £148.00 and for combined polls to £158.00;
 - The employment of Clerical Persons increases from £108.50 for a 1-member division to £110.00, and in the case of 2-member divisions a rise to £221.00;
 - The preparation and issue of poll cards and postal votes, and supervision therefore increases from £18.45 to £19.00 for a single member division, to a maximum of £38.00 for a 2-member division.
9. Where the increase of an individual fee has resulted in an increase which is so small that it would be lost in the rounding process (paragraphs 14, 15 and 20) these fees remain unchanged and will be reviewed ahead of the next scheduled County Council Elections in 2021.
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, are 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 2019 to end of March 2020.

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 2019-20 year.

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Background papers: Nil

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