

AUDIT & GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE – 7 MARCH 2018

Scale of Election Fees and Expenditure 2018/19

Report by Director of Law and Governance

Introduction

1. 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'. The Committee last did this in December 2016, approving a scale of fees to apply throughout the year 2017/18 and in particular for the May 2017 County Elections.
2. A scale of fees for the financial year 2018/19 now needs to be agreed. As in previous years, the review has been undertaken in consultation with the City and District Councils in Oxfordshire who assist the Council in the running of County Council elections. This year the scale of fees has been reviewed in the light of the experience of the County Election.
3. The proposed scale of fees is included as an Annex to this report. Committee is requested to approve the proposed Scale of Fees to apply from the start of the financial year 2018/19.

Purpose of the Scale of Fees

4. 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 will be amounts that the City and District councils will claim back from the County Council for running elections on its behalf.
5. Most of the fees and expenditure remain unchanged. As you will see from the scale, some of these costs are fixed and some are "actual and necessary costs". The mileage rate is linked to the national authorised 'all car' rate of 45p per mile.

Levels for 2018-19

6. The main changes under this review relate to:
 - An increase in the Poll Clerks basic fee – to reflect the relative difficulties of obtaining and retaining polling clerks: from £135.00 to **£145.00** (£152.00 to **£155.00** for a combined poll);

- An increase for the preparation of ballot boxes, to reflect the relative complexity and importance of ensuring ballot boxes are ‘polling station ready’: from £3.65 to **£5.00** per box;
 - Reserve poll clerks/presiding officers – the experience of the County Election (and subsequent General Election, in which County Council staff supported City and District election colleagues) demonstrated the importance of having a reserve list of staff. This is a list of staff who can be on call to be sent to a polling station in case of unexpected staffing difficulties on polling day. This is in line with good election planning. It was noted in discussion with City and District Council colleagues that such staff also require training and so it was noted that a payment for such training to them was also justified, whether they are used on polling day or not.
7. All other fees remain the same. The increases represent only a marginal cost compared to the overall cost of running a County Council election (or by-election).
8. The City and District Councils have now indicated that the referred to scale of fees are 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 by-elections that may occur in-year during 2018-19.

Financial Implications

9. A separate budget is maintained for electoral expenditure, which is built up over time towards the County Council elections, due to be held next in 2021. This also incorporates an element towards by-election costs which may also occur in the 2018/19 year.

RECOMMENDATION

10. **The Committee is RECOMMENDED to approve the Scale of Expenditure for the financial year 2018/19, as shown in Annex A to this report, for the election of County Councillors and any other local referendums.**

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Background papers: Nil

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