

North Yorkshire Council

Standards and Governance Committee

17 May 2023

Approval of interim schedule of election fees for upcoming by-elections

Report of the Assistant Chief Executive Legal & Democratic Service

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The Committee are asked to approve an interim schedule of election fees to be paid at upcoming North Yorkshire Council and Parish Council by-election scheduled for 25th May 2023 and 8th June 2023.

2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 When a by-election is called, the Returning Officer is required to employ sufficient staff to carry out the processes necessary to conduct a poll, including staffing polling stations, counting votes and postal vote opening sessions. A schedule of fees is agreed in advance setting out the payment for each job role. In previous years, fee schedules were approved by agreement of District and Borough Chief Executives within North Yorkshire, and these were last agreed in 2021.
- 2.2 Although Central Government do not provide funding for local elections, they do fund national elections such as Parliamentary General elections, so when setting a schedule of election fees, it is prudent to pay due regard to the guidance they issue in relation to the levels of fees that they will allow. Updated guidance from the Election Claims Unit (part of the Cabinet Office) outlining indicative rates of pay for each type of election job is due to be published in the next few months, which will allow for a more comprehensive schedule of fees to be submitted to this committee for approval in due course.
- 2.3 What follows are interim recommendations for elections fees to take effect until the new guidance has been published and considered.
- 2.4 The need for these recommendations have come about due to vacancies arising on North Yorkshire Council for Eastfield Division and on Lothersdale Parish Council and Helmsley Parish Council and following requests for elections being received by the Proper Officer from the required number of local government electors.

3.0 RECOMMENDED INTERIM SCHEDULE OF ELECTIONS FEES FOR UPCOMING BY-ELECTIONS

- 3.1 The following fees are recommended for approval for the by-elections scheduled for 25th May 2023 and 8th June 2023 and for further by-elections arising until formal guidance has been received from the Election Claims Unit and considered, whereupon a new schedule will be brought back to this committee for approval.

Role	2021 Fee	Proposed 2023 Interim Fee
Returning Officer's Fee	8p per elector or £54 (whichever is greater)	8p per elector or £56 (whichever is greater)
Polling Station Inspector	£260	£277
Presiding Officer	£230	£255
Poll Clerk	£155	£172
Verification/Count Co-ordinator/Count Manager	£25ph (Day) £35ph (Night)	£27.50ph (Day) £38.50ph (Night)
Count Supervisor	£20ph (Day) £30ph (Night)	£22ph (Day) £33ph (Night)
Count Assistant	£10ph (Day) £16ph (Night)	£12ph (Day) £17.50ph (Night)
Postal Vote Opening Co-ordinator	£20ph (Day) £30ph (Night)	£22ph (Day) £33ph (Night)
Postal Vote Supervisor	£15ph (Day) £25 (Night)	£16.50ph (Day) £27.50 (Night)
Postal Vote PI adjudicator	£15ph (Day) £25 (Night)	£16.50ph (Day) £27.50 (Night)
Postal Vote Opener	£11ph (Day) £16ph (Night)	£12ph (Day) £17.50ph (Night)
Training Fee	£15ph	£16.50ph
Trainers' Fee	£250	£22ph (Day) £33ph (Night)
Clerical Duties by Supervisor	£20ph (Day) £30ph (Night)	£22ph (Day) £33ph (Night)
Clerical Duties by Assistant	£10ph (Day) £15ph (Night)	£12ph (Day) £17.50ph (Night)
Mileage rate	45p per mile	45p per mile

4.0 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

4.1 Holding fees at their 2021 rates would be an option, however given increases in the National minimum wage and high inflation over the last two years, doing so would make elections work less attractive and make retention and recruitment of casual election staff more difficult. This would be compounded by the additional requirements placed on polling staff by the introduction of the Elections Act, making the roles more demanding than in 2021.

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Approving the proposed interim fees schedule would – for the 2 by-elections scheduled – increase staff costs against 2021 rates by around £500.

6.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Keeping the fees at 2021 levels would mean the poll clerk fee would be below the National Minimum Wage.

7.0 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

7.1 There are none. [OB]

8.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

8.1 There are none.

9.0 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1 The calling of one North Yorkshire Council and two parish council by-elections to take place in late May and early June necessitates the setting of a schedule of fees for the election roles that the Returning Officer needs to fulfil to conduct the election. Written guidance from the Election Claims Unit is expected which will enable the Council to undertake a more comprehensive review of its schedule of election fees, and while that guidance is awaited, an interim decision is required.

10.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- (i) That the Committee approves the recommended fee schedule shown in paragraph 3.1 be used by the Returning Officer for the purposes of employing staff to work at the scheduled by-elections on 25th May 2023 and 8th June 2023.
- (ii) That this fee schedule is used at any further by-elections arising prior to new guidance from the Election Claims Unit being received and considered and until a revised schedule is brought back to this committee.

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(Insert date)

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Note: Members are invited to contact the author in advance of the meeting with any detailed queries or questions.