

North Yorkshire Council

Standards and Governance Committee Special Meeting

Minutes of a special meeting held at County Hall, Northallerton on Wednesday 17th May 2023 at 9.30am.

Present:-

County Councillors Clive Pearson (Chair), Nick Brown, Sam Cross, Melanie Davis, Heather Phillips and Monica Slater.

Copies of all documents considered are in the Minute Book

1. Welcome and Introductions

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the Special Meeting of the Standards and Governance Committee and noted the apologies of Louise Holroyd and Hilary Gilbertson MBE (Independent Persons for Standards).

The Deputy Monitoring Officer explained that the Special Meeting had been called as arrangements for a Council by-election and a Parish Council by-election were required, and, previously, elections had been arranged by District and Borough Councils. As these would be the first elections arranged by the new Unitary Authority, some key aspects of the process required the agreement of the Committee.

2. Appointment of Deputy Electoral Registration Officer - Additional Duties under the Elections Act 2022

Considered-

The report of the Monitoring Officer requesting Members to delegate to the Electoral Registration Officer (ERO) the power to appoint one or more deputies and to revoke or vary such appointments as necessary. This is because the Elections Act 2022 places further obligations on the ERO, which it would be more practical for a number of deputies to undertake in locations across North Yorkshire.

To date Councils has appointed one deputy, that being the Assistant Chief Executive Legal and Democratic Services. However, the further obligations placed on EROs by the Elections Act 2022, as outlined in the report, including obligations around implementing the requirement for voter identification at polling stations, meant that it would be more practical to appoint more deputy EROs at locations across North Yorkshire.

Unlike Returning Officers, the ERO cannot appoint a deputy themselves, unless the power to do so has been delegated to them, hence asking this committee to delegate the power.

Members discussed the report and the following issues were highlighted:-

- A Member stated that he understood the requirement of the delegation but asked whether a specific number of EROs should be identified, rather than leaving this open. In response it was suggested that flexibility in the process was required, hence the request, however if Members were minded, these could be limited to one appointment per legacy district, provided that there was flexibility to make another appointment should that person be not available. Another Member suggested that it would be useful to already have the flexibility built into the process with between one and five appointments to each legacy district. In relation to this it was noted that the one of the main additional duties of an ERO was the signing off of temporary Voter Authority Certificates (VAC) and there were only a number of circumstances, for example a postal strike, where these would be required, therefore it was likely that one per legacy district would be sufficient, with the built-in flexibility. It was stated that it was difficult to clarify how frequently temporary VACs would require issuing, if at all, as the ability to issue them is a contingency measure.
- It was noted that a small number of people had applied for VACs in Scarborough.
- It was asked whether there would be a substantial training requirement in terms of large numbers of temporary EROs being appointed with cost implications as a result. In response it was noted that the legacy districts had a number of staff that were already fully trained in respect of these duties.
- Members suggested that, for now and subject to subsequent review, that one appointment per legacy district should be made.

Resolved –

That it be agreed that the Committee delegates to the ERO the power to appoint one deputy ERO per legacy district and to revoke or vary such appointments as necessary

3. Interim schedule of election fees for upcoming by-elections

Considered –

The report of the Monitoring Officer requesting Members 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.

The proposed interim fees were outlined in the table below -

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

Members discussed the report and the following issues were highlighted:-

- It was asked how the fees compared to other areas. In response it was noted that the fees had been compared with neighbouring areas and were based on the 2021/22 figures with inflation taken account. It was stated that the national fees were still awaited, hence the interim report, and these fees would be reviewed once the national position was clarified. In the meantime any by-election would involve payments in accordance with the interim fees before the Committee for approval. It was expected that the national fees would be clarified prior to the Mayoral election in 2024.
- Noting that the report referred to additional work required at Polling Stations, a Member considered that his experience of Polling Stations was that they were fairly quiet and he queried whether the additional payments for this work were justified. In response it was emphasised that some polling stations receive more electors than others and there was a great deal more work now required in Polling Stations particularly in terms of administration and the fees had been developed to acknowledge that. Other Members stated that they found polling Stations to be rather busy, and the work was very demanding on occasions.
- A Member asked whether there would be additional Presiding Officers required in view of the additional workload. In response it was stated that additional Polling Clerks, rather than Presiding Officers, would be required for the additional duties in some polling stations.

Resolved –

- (i) That the Committee approves the recommended fee schedule shown in paragraph 3.1 of the report 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.

4. Other Business

Issue for consideration at a subsequent meeting.

It was suggested that a future item for a meeting of the Committee should be the broadcasting and recording of all public meetings. Members agreed that this should be considered.

Resolved -

That this issue be considered at a future meeting of the Committee

The meeting concluded at 10.00 am.

SML