

By-Election Recharges to Parishes

July 2023

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Why do we recharge?

Elections can be called at any time, when parish councillors are no longer in office due to resignations, death, or disqualification. Every parish election incurs costs such as the hire of polling stations, staffing, the printing of ballot papers and postal votes, and postage. By-elections also incur these types of cost, and the number of parish by-elections is unpredictable.

The Returning Officer for North Yorkshire Council (NYC) is responsible for organising and delivering elections for all parishes within North Yorkshire. Section 36 of the Representation of the People Act 1983 allows the Returning Officer to recover from local Town & Parish Councils administration fees and costs incurred.

The recharges to parishes are on a cost recovery basis only, and no income will be generated by NYC as profit.

When will recharges apply?

Recharges will only apply for unscheduled by-elections. At scheduled elections (usually 4 yearly), no recharges will be made. This is because many costs are ones which NYC would have to cover for the election of councillors to NYC such as polling station hire and staff as NYC's election would be held on the same day. NYC will, for now, cover the cost of printing parish ballot papers and postal votes together with postage at scheduled elections, but will review this ahead of the scheduled elections in 2027.

Between 1 April 2023 and 31 March 2024

NYC will not recharge any parish within North Yorkshire for costs incurred in relation to elections. This is because there needs to be a fair approach to parish recharges across the whole of North Yorkshire, and parishes that may have previously not been recharged their by-election costs, need time to consider any impact on budgets and potential precept implications ahead of budget setting for the 2024-25 financial year.

From 1 April 2024

Parish recharges will come into effect for any elections held on 1 April 2024 or thereafter.

NYC will recharge the full cost of parish by-elections to the parish.

What is recharged?

Parishes will only be recharged actual costs incurred by the Returning Officer and this cost depends on many variables, such as the:

- parish electorate;
- number of postal voters;
- geographical area affecting number of polling stations and staffing; and
- whether poll cards are issued or not.

Costs incurred at an election relate to:

Cost Element	
Hire of venues	Polling & count
Delivery of equipment to venues	Polling booths and or other equipment, if required
Printing	Poll cards, postal votes, ballot papers, election notices
Postage	Poll cards and postal votes, general administration
Staffing (& mileage)	At the polling station, the opening of postal votes, the count of votes, and for general administration
Returning Officer Fee	

Poll card issue – the issue of poll cards is optional for the parish but strongly recommended

Upon receipt of the necessary requests for a parish by-election, NYC will calculate the cost of production and postage of poll cards and inform the parish in advance to allow a decision to be made by the parish on whether to issue them or not. Whilst not issuing poll cards can reduce the cost of a by-election, the Returning Officer recommends issuing poll cards for all contested elections to increase awareness and turnout for improved democracy.

Combined Polls

The recharge can depend on how many elections are being held on the same day, for example if there is a UK Parliamentary Election, or Combined Mayoral on the same day. Usually, the costs of printing and postage, polling accommodation and staffing are among the items that can be shared. However, anything that relates solely to the parish such as ballot papers are charged in full.

A list of the cost elements for an election, and the basis on which they can be shared with a combined poll, are set out in [schedule 1](#).

Staff working at the election are paid using rates of pay agreed by NYC. A schedule of staffing fees is provided in [schedule 2](#). Note that the rates of pay are subject to regular review and potential change. The rates were last reviewed in 2021 and are due a change ahead of the 2024-25 financial year as DLUHC are expected to issue expected national

averages to local authorities as a guide for rates of pay for election staff, which may or may not be adopted for April 2024 and beyond.

The costs incurred also vary depending on the prices charged by Royal Mail and our service providers for that particular election. The anticipated costs incurred for printing and postage (outwards) can be found in [schedule 3](#).

How much will be recharged?

As explained in the above section, costs vary greatly between parishes due to many variables.

Indicative calculations can be provided upon request for each parish (or ward of a parish if warded), though it must be noted that these are estimates only.

By way of example, parish by elections can cost anywhere between £1,500 and £10,000 depending upon affected electorate and geographical area.

Parishes should expect to receive an invoice from NYC for the cost of a by-election within 2 months of the date of the poll. This allows the costs incurred from external organisations (polling station hire, print and postage) to be received, paid and reconciled by NYC before calculating the total cost of a parish by-election.

Paying the recharges

Parishes receive a precept via the Local Authority Council Tax to run the parish and this includes services such as allotments, lighting, cemeteries etc. Parishes need to factor the contingency cost of by-elections into their budget setting activity, and ensure they have sufficient funds to cover elections.

Invoices for by-election recharges must be paid in full, within 30 days.

Invoices issued by NYC can be paid by following the information provided on the back of the invoice, which explains how to pay the invoice by any of the following methods:

- via the council website using a debit or credit card
- by telephone – automated payment line
- by bank transfer
- at the bank
- by post (cheque)

If any parish is struggling to pay their election recharges due to an unexpectedly high number of by-elections between scheduled elections, they should contact electoral services on the details below.

Anything else you need to know?

Please contact electoral services:

- by email at elections@northyorks.gov.uk, or
- by telephone on 0300 1312 131

Schedule 1 - Cost Elements for a Parish By-Election

(Combination share)

The following table lists the cost elements of an election, and the basis on which they can be shared if combined with another poll on the same day:

Chargeable Service or Item	Cost recharged to parish	If combined with another poll:
Hire of polling stations (varies by venue)	actual cost	50% share with other poll (waived if combined with NYC election)
Delivery & Collection of Polling Booths	actual cost (variable)	50% share with other poll (waived if combined with NYC election)
Production of Poll cards (optional for the parish)	Refer to schedule 3	50% share if able to issue combined poll cards (waived if combined with NYC election)
Postage of Poll Cards (optional for the parish)	Refer to schedule 3	50% share if able to issue combined poll cards (waived if combined with NYC election)
Production of ballot papers (and other election stationery)	Refer to schedule 3	Not possible to share costs
Production/print of postal votes	Refer to schedule 3	50% share if able to issue combined packs (waived if combined with NYC election)
Outward postage of postal votes	Refer to schedule 3	50% share if able to issue combined (waived if combined with NYC election)
Inward postage votes	In line with Royal Mail	50% share if able to issue combined (waived if combined with NYC election)
Hire of count venue	Actual (varies per venue)	Electorate to station proportion (waived if combined with NYC election)
Staffing (polling staff &, count staff etc)	Refer to schedule 2	Polling - 50% share with other poll Count – 100% to parish for specific staff time
Returning Officer Fees	Refer to schedule 2	Unable to share if combined
Mileage incurred by staff	45p per mile	50% share with other poll

Schedule 2 - Election staff rates of pay

North Yorkshire Council agreed schedule of fees (2023)

Job / Role	Rate of Pay
Returning Officer	8p per elector, or £56 (whichever is the greater)
Presiding Officer	£255 / day
Uplift for combination poll	£51 / day
Poll Clerk	£172 / day
Uplift for combination poll	£35 / day
Polling Station Inspector (if required)	£277 / day
Attendance at training (if required)	£16.50 / hour
Coordinator Role: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poll Card Checks / Issue • Postal Vote Issue / opening 	£22 / hour – day £33 / hour – eve
Supervisor Role <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poll Card Checks / Issue • Postal Vote Issue / Opening 	£16.50 / hour – day £27.50 / hour – eve
Assistant Role	£12 / hour – day
Postal Vote issue / opening	£17.50 / hour – eve
Senior Count Manager / Supervisor	£27.50 / hour – day £38.50 / hour – eve
Count Supervisor	£22 / hour – day £33 / hour - eve
Count Assistant	£12 / hour – day £17.50 / hour – eve
Clerical (supervisory level)	£22 / hour - day £33 / hour – eve
Clerical (admin level)	£12 / hour – day £17.50 / hour - eve
Staff mileage	45p / mile

Schedule 3 – External Print and Postage Costs

The following table details our contracted rates for the production, printing and postage for election material by NYCs specialist contracted provider:

Element	Cost
Job setup costs	£675
Poll card printing	£0.03 per poll card
Poll card postage	£0.43 per poll card
Postal vote printing	£0.38 per pack
Postal vote postage – outward	£0.67 per postal vote envelope
Postal vote postage – return	£0.82 per envelope (Royal Mail costs)
Ballot papers – ordinary	£2.70 per books of 100 ballot papers
Ballot papers – tendered	£1.40 per book of 25 (1 needed per polling station)