

North Yorkshire Council

Standards and Governance Committee

13 December 2023

Schedule of election fees for elections and by-elections in North Yorkshire

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The Committee are asked to approve a schedule of election fees to be paid at future scheduled elections and unscheduled by-elections in North Yorkshire.

2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 When an 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, vote counts and postal vote opening sessions. A schedule of fees is set 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. This committee approved an interim schedule of fees in May 2023, while awaiting expected written guidance on indicative fees from Central Government.
- 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 has now been published, which allows for a more comprehensive schedule of fees to be submitted to this committee for approval.
- 2.3 What follows are recommendations for elections fees to take effect immediately, allowing fees to be adopted for the scheduled Combined Authority Mayoral election in May 2024 and any unscheduled by-elections arising before then.

3.0 RECOMMENDED SCHEDULE OF ELECTIONS FEES

- 3.1 The fees set out in Appendix A are recommended for approval and are based on written guidance received from the Election Claims Unit on indicative fees for elections. The recommended fees are based on adopting the interim fees already approved on a permanent basis where those fees sit within the newly published pay bands. In Appendix A, "out of hours" refers to hours worked on Saturdays and in the evening, while any hours worked on Sundays or bank holidays would be paid at double the day rate, as covered in the guidance document (Appendix B).
- 3.2 It is further recommended that when the Election Claims Unit publishes updates to its indicative fees in future years, the North Yorkshire fee schedule is automatically updated in line with it e.g. if the pay bands were to be uplifted for 2024/25, the North Yorkshire fees would have the same uplift applied. .

4.0 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

4.1 Setting fees at the bottom end of the ranges published in the indicative fees would cost less, but could make our fees uncompetitive with neighbouring councils, possibly leading to recruitment problems for scheduled elections. It would also represent a drop in the fees paid previously. Setting fees at or near the top of the range would make the roles attractive but would be costly.

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Approving the proposed interim schedule would be broadly cost neutral as in most cases the new fees are equal to the interim fees already approved. In a small number of cases (senior roles at election counts), the new fee is lower than the interim fee, so there will be a slight saving on staff costs for election counts if this new schedule is approved.

6.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Adopting this fee schedule will ensure all roles exceed the national minimum wage.

7.0 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

7.1 There are none. ^[OBJ] An Equalities Impact Assessment Screening Form is provided at Appendix C

8.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

8.1 There are none. A Climate Change Impact Assessment Screening Form is provided at Appendix D.

9.0 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1 Approving a schedule of fees will enable a degree of certainty for those organising elections, providing a basis for them to recruit sufficient casual staff to work at elections taking place in the North Yorkshire council area. By paying due regard to the fees guidance provided by the Electoral Claims Unit, it ensures our fees will be in line with national expectations. Allowing fees to rise in line with future updates to national guidance provides greater certainty going forward by establishing a consistent approach.

10.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- (i) That the Committee approves the recommended fee schedule shown Appendix A be used by the Returning Officer for the purposes of employing staff to work at elections taking place in North Yorkshire.
- (ii) That this fee schedule is amended in line with amendments made to the national indicative fee schedule in future years.

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

Appendices – Appendix A – Proposed Schedule of Fees 2023/24
Appendix B – Election Claims Unit Pay Bands for Election Staff 2023/24
Appendix C – Equalities Impact Assessment Screening Form
Appendix D – Climate Change Impact Assessment Screening Form