

**CORPORATE LEADERSHIP TEAM'S  
REPORT TO COUNCIL**

**10 April 2024**

**Report Title:** Elections – Scale of Fees and Charges

**Submitted by:** Director of Legal and Governance Services/Monitoring Officer

**Portfolios:** One Council People and Partnerships

**Ward(s) affected:** All

<b><u>Purpose of the Report</u></b>	<b><u>Key Decision</u></b>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
This report sets out the proposed fees paid to the Returning Officer and their staff employed to undertake various duties in connection with Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner Election being held on 2 <sup>nd</sup> May, 2024.			
<b><u>Recommendation</u></b>			
That Council:-			
1. Notes the proposed election fees for 2024/25, as set out in Appendix 1.			
<b><u>Reasons</u></b>			
To ensure that there is a consistent and transparent approach to payments for administering elections within the borough and in the Staffordshire county area.			
To ensure that elections staff are remunerated in line with the changes to their role following the implementation of the Elections Integrity Bill.			
To ensure we are in line with the limits placed on election staff fees by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities.			

**1. Background**

- 1.1** Each Local Authority is required to appoint a Returning Officer (RO). The RO is appointed in an independent capacity by the Council to organise and run elections free from the political structure of the authority. Councils must provide their RO with the resources they need to run elections. This includes staff payments and any necessary disbursements considered necessary by the Returning Officer to run effective elections.
- 1.2** The Returning Officer in Newcastle-under-Lyme needs to employ and pay up to 350 additional staff with different levels of responsibility. It is important that this is done fairly and transparently.

- 1.3 For national polls the government issues a Fees and Charges schedule which identifies for each authority a “maximum recoverable amount” along with a fee which may be claimed by the appointed RO for the rendering of their services. The RO will pay their appointed staff from the monies provided by government and will account for their expenditure by way of a return to the Election Claims Unit (ECU) at the Cabinet Office.
- 1.4 The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) has recently undertaken an exercise to review staffing fees for national polls that are met out of the consolidated fund. The outcome of the review was to introduce a new schedule of fees for election duties.
- 1.5 The recently formulated scale of fees published by DLUHC applies to Parliamentary and Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner elections. DLUHC consulted with all Local Authorities and members of the Association of Electoral Administrators as part of their review exercise.
- 1.6 For all such national elections, the RO will be expected to adhere to the range proposed for each role by DLUHC. To pay outside of this range will require special agreement from the ECU or risk the ECU refusing to reimburse the difference where roles exceed their expected amounts.

## 2. Issues

- 2.1 The Elections Act 2022 imposes additional burdens on election staff, particularly those employed in polling stations where new requirements for checking Voter ID and handling postal votes mean additional complexity in terms of process and understanding of legal requirements. An increase in fees would reflect the additional burdens and responsibilities being placed on polling station staff.

## 3. Recommendation

- 3.1 To inform members of the schedule of fees set out in appendix 1

## 4. Reasons

- 4.1 In order for the elections to be administered, election staff will need to be paid for the work that they undertake. Failure to agree a fees and charges structure could undermine the effective administration of elections and result in the RO not able to appoint the staff required to run the forthcoming election which will expose the Council and RO to risk and liability.

## 5. Options Considered

- 5.1 The proposed fees outlined in appendix 1 have been agreed by Electoral Services teams within the Staffordshire County Working Group and for the PARO and Staffordshire County Council to take into consideration.

## 6. Legal and Statutory Implications

- 6.1 Such implications are set out in this report.

## 7. Equality Impact Assessment

7.1 There is no relevance to equality.

## 8. Financial and Resource Implications

8.1 Such implications are set out in this report.

## 9. Major Risks & Mitigation

9.1 Such implications are set out in paragraph 4.1.

## 10. UN Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDG)

10.1 The proposal, by achieving (whatever) contributes towards the following UNSDGs



## 11. Key Decision Information

11.1 N/A

## 12. Earlier Cabinet/Committee Resolutions

12.1 N/A

## 13. List of Appendices

13.1 Appendix 1.

## 14. Background Papers

14.1 DLUHC Expenses Guidance for Returning Officers.