

NEWCASTLE-UNDER-LYME BOROUGH COUNCIL

CORPORATE LEADERSHIP TEAM'S REPORT TO COUNCIL

11 February 2026

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

<u>Purpose of the Report</u>	<u>Key Decision</u>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<p>This report sets out the proposed fees paid to the Returning Officer and their staff employed to undertake various duties in connection with Borough, Town & Parish elections being held on 7th May 2026.</p>			
<u>Recommendation</u>			
<p>1. That Council notes and agrees the proposed election fees for 2026/2027, as set out in Appendix One to this report.</p>			
<u>Reasons</u>			
<p>To ensure that there is a consistent and transparent approach to payments for administering elections within the borough and in the Staffordshire County area.</p> <p>To ensure that elections staff are remunerated in line with the changes to their role following the implementation of the Elections Integrity Bill.</p> <p>To ensure we are in line with the limits placed on election staff fees by the Department for Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government</p>			

1. Background

- 1.1** Each Local Authority is required to appoint a Returning Officer (RO). The RO is appointed in an independent capacity 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 Department of Housing, Communities and Local Government.

- 1.4** The Department of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) undertook a review of staffing fees for national polls funded through the consolidated fund. As a result of this review, a revised schedule of fees for election duties was introduced and applied to all elections held on or after 1 May 2024.
- 1.5** The revised scale of fees published by MHCLG applies to Parliamentary elections and Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner by-elections up until May 2028. As part of the review process, MHCLG consulted with Local Authorities and members of the Association of Electoral Administrators.
- 1.6** For all such national elections, the RO will be expected to adhere to the range proposed for each role by MHCLG. 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.
- 1.7** Although local elections are not formally subject to the same fees as national elections, in practice the scale of fees should be uniform across all election types. Staffordshire County Council introduced the scale of fees established by MHCLG in 2025 for the County council elections.

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.
- 2.2** The Scale of Fees must be balanced against setting a rate that is fair, ensures that we can recruit suitable staff and doesn't risk any rate being paid dropping below the National Living Wage.
- 2.3** The Council has a responsibility to meet the expenditure associated with delivering an election and this includes payments to staff employed to undertake election duties.

3. Recommendation

- 3.1** That Council notes and agrees the proposed election fees for 2026/2027, as set out in Appendix One to this report.

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 Staffordshire County Council.

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. A budget provision of £200,000 is made in total for the Borough Election.

9. Major Risks & Mitigation

- 9.1 Such implications are set out in paragraph 4.1.

10. UN Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDG)



11. One Council

- 11.1 Please confirm that consideration has been given to the following programmes of work:

One Commercial Council ☒

We will make investment to diversify our income and think entrepreneurially

One Digital Council ☒

We will develop and implement a digital approach which makes it easy for all residents and businesses to engage with the Council, with our customers at the heart of every interaction.

One Sustainable Council ☒

11.2 The holding of elections is a statutory function. However, the management of elections takes account of opportunities for efficient delivery.

12. Key Decision Information

12.1 N/A

13. Earlier Cabinet/Committee Resolutions

13.1 N/A

14. List of Appendices

14.1 Appendix One: Election Fees and Charges Schedule

15. Background Papers

15.1 MHCLG Expenses Guidance for Returning Officers.