

# WIRRAL COUNCIL

## LICENSING, HEALTH AND SAFETY AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

19 MARCH 2012

<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>PROPOSED LOCAL ELECTION FEES AND CHARGES STRUCTURE</b>
<b>WARD/S AFFECTED:</b>	<b>ALL</b>
<b>REPORT OF:</b>	<b>DIRECTOR OF LAW, HR AND ASSET MANAGEMENT</b>
<b>KEY DECISION?</b>	<b>NO</b>

### 1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 The purpose of this report deals with the proposed fees payable to the Returning Officer and his staff employed to undertake various duties in connection with the elections to be held on 3 May 2012.

1.2 The proposed fees are set out in Appendix 1.

### 2.0 BACKGROUND AND KEY ISSUES

2.1 Historically, the local election fees have been decided by the Returning Officer, however, it is considered good practice that any fees paid to the Returning Officer and staff employed in relation to ensuring the effective running of local elections be considered and agreed by the Licensing, Health & Safety and General Purposes Committee.

2.2 The Returning Officer is the person who has the overall responsibility for the conduct of elections held within the Borough. The Returning Officer is an officer of the Council who is appointed under the Representation of the People Act 1983, although appointed by the Council the role of the Returning Officer is one of a personal nature and distinct and separate from their duties as an employee of the Council. The Returning Officer is responsible for:-

- the nomination process for candidates and political parties;
- provision and notification of polling stations;
- appointment of presiding officers and polling clerks;
- appropriate administration and security of polling stations;
- preparation of all ballot papers;
- the actual Count and Declaration of Results;
- issue, receipt and counting of postal ballot papers;
- all candidates' election expenses return;

- presentation of final account and reclamation of funding from external body as prescribed.
- 2.3 The Returning Officer role is independent from the Council and the post holder directly accountable to the courts system as an independent statutory office holder.
- 2.4 In respect of Parliamentary Elections the fees are set by Government while fees for local elections are set locally. This report seeks to set the local elections fees.
- 2.5 Fees paid to the Returning Officer and the staff employed to undertake election duties have increased in line with the Council's annual pay award. The Returning Officer was prior to 2010 the previous Chief Executive. The current Returning Officer considers it appropriate that a review of the Returning Officer fees should be undertaken and be agreed by this Committee.
- 2.6 The role of Returning Officer is considered separate to the substantive role as an officer of the Council. As mentioned above, the role attracts personal responsibility and that is considered one of the fundamental reasons why a fee is paid to the Returning Officer. The Returning Officer is the employer of the staff engaged specifically to run Parliamentary and Local elections. The Council has a statutory obligation to provide the Returning Officer such resources considered necessary by the Returning Officer to run an effective Parliamentary/Local election.
- 2.7 The approved Elections Budget includes the costs/fees payable to ensure the effective running of local elections.
- 2.8 Appendix 1 details the proposed scale of fees for the Returning Officer and the staff employed in relation to running the local election. Information gathered from other Merseyside authorities (Sefton, Knowsley and St Helens Councils) in relation to their fees is also included.
- 2.9 The Committee is asked to consider the fees proposed in Appendix 1 and agree the Returning Officer fee and the associated fees detailed in Table 1. The costs of the fees that would be payable can be met within the approved Elections Budget.

### **3.0 RELEVANT RISKS**

- 3.1 In order for the elections to be administered, elections staff will need to be paid for the work that they undertake. Failure to agree a fees and charges structure will undermine the effective administration of elections, which will expose the Council and Returning Officer to consider risk and liability. The Returning Officer will not be able to appoint the staff required to run the forthcoming local election.

#### **4.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

4.1 Consideration has been given to the fees proposed by other Councils/Returning Officers and are details in Table 2 of Appendix 1.

#### **5.0 CONSULTATION**

5.1 Other Merseyside authorities have been consulted to compare the election fees and the results are detailed in Table 2, Appendix 1.

#### **6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR VOLUNTARY, COMMUNITY AND FAITH GROUPS**

6.1 There are no such implications arising.

#### **7.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: FINANCIAL; IT; STAFFING; AND ASSETS**

7.1 Such implications are set out in this report. The fees payable under Table 1, Appendix 1 would be met from the approved Elections Budget.

#### **8.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

8.1 Such implications are set out in this report.

#### **9.0 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 Has the potential impact of your proposal(s) been reviewed with regard to equality?

(b) No because there is no relevance to equality.

#### **10.0 CARBON REDUCTION IMPLICATIONS**

10.1 There are no such implications arising.

#### **11.0 PLANNING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**

11.1 There are no such implications arising.

#### **12.0 RECOMMENDATION/S**

12.1 That the Committee agree the proposed Local Election Fees and Charges structure set out in Table 1, Appendix 1.

#### **13.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S**

13.1 It is considered good practice that the Council approves the fees.

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#### **APPENDICES**

Appendix 1 – Proposed Local Election Fees and Charges Structure

**REFERENCE MATERIAL**

Electoral Commission Guidance

**SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)**

<b>Council Meeting</b>	<b>Date</b>

**METROPOLITAN BOROUGH OF WIRRAL**

**FEEES FOR BOROUGH COUNCIL ELECTIONS  
AND BY-ELECTIONS**

**2012/2013**

**1 APRIL 2012**

## **INTRODUCTION**

Historically, the local election fees have been decided by the Returning Officer, however, it is considered good practice that any fees paid to the Returning Officer and staff employed in relation to ensuring the effective running of local elections be considered an agreed by the Licensing, Health & Safety and General Purposes Committee.

The Returning Officer is the person who has the overall responsibility for the conduct of elections held within the Borough. The Returning Officer is an officer of the Council who is appointed under the Representation of the People Act 1983, although appointed by the Council the role of the Returning Officer is one of a personal nature and distinct and separate from their duties as an employee of the Council.

The role of Returning Officer is considered separate to the substantive role of an officer of the Council. As mentioned above, the role attracts personal responsibility and that is considered one fundamental reason why a fee is paid to the Returning Officer. The Returning Officer is the employer of the staff engaged specifically to run Parliamentary and Local elections.

The Council has a statutory obligation to provide the Returning Officer such resources considered necessary by the Returning Officer to run an effective Parliamentary/Local election.

## **TABLE 1**

Lists the proposed scale of fees for the financial year 2012/13. They have been calculated by increasing (or decreasing as the case may be) the fees received at the last stand alone local election in 2008 by the annual Retail Price Index.

## **TABLE 2**

Provides a comparison of the fees proposed against the fees by three other Merseyside authorities (Sefton, Knowsley, and St. Helens).

**TABLE 1****Proposed Scale of Fees**

	<b>Local Fees 2008</b>	<b>x 2009/10 Inflation Rate April 2009</b>	<b>x 2010/11 Inflation Rate April 2010</b>	<b>x 2011/12 Inflation Rate April 2011</b>	<b>x 2012/13 Inflation Rate January 2012</b>		<b>Proposed Fees 2012/13</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>RPI %</b>		<b>(minus) 1.2</b>	<b>5.3</b>	<b>5.2</b>	<b>3.9</b>			
Returning Officer (per ward x 22 Wards)	£210.48 per ward = £4,630.56	£207.95 per ward = £4,574.90	£213.25 per ward = £4,691.50	£224.34 per ward = £4,935.48	£233.09 per ward = £5,127.98		<b>£233.09 per ward</b>	<b>£5,127.98</b>
Deputy Returning Officer (full powers)*	£	£	£	£	£		£	£
Presiding Officer x 103 (inc fee for training)	£156.50	£154.62	£162.82	£171.29	£177.97		<b>£190.00</b>	<b>£19,570.00</b>
Poll Clerk x 235	£90.00	£88.99	£93.71	£98.58	£102.42		<b>£110.00</b>	<b>£25,850.00</b>
Polling Station Inspector x 22 (inc fee for training)	£110.00	£108.68	£114.44	£120.39	£125.08		<b>£190.00</b>	<b>£4,180.00</b>
Deputy Returning Officer x 4 (for declaring result and pv checking)	£404.00	£399.15	£420.31	£442.17	£459.42		£	£
Postal Vote Opening Supervisor x 2 (per hour)	£8.00	£7.90	£8.32	£8.75	£9.09		<b>£9.00</b>	
Postal Vote Opening Clerks x 12 (per hour)	£6.00	£5.93	£6.24	£6.56	£6.82		<b>£6.80</b>	
Count Supervisor x 16	£86.00	£84.97	£89.47	£94.12	£97.79		<b>£100.00</b>	<b>£1,600.00</b>
Head Counting Assistant x 22	£78.00	£77.06	£81.44	£85.67	£89.01		<b>£80.00</b>	<b>£1,760.00</b>
Senior Counting Assistant x 22	£52.00	£51.38	£54.10	£56.91	£59.13		<b>£60.00</b>	<b>£1,320.00</b>
	<b>Local Fees 2008</b>	<b>x 2009/10 Inflation Rate April 2009</b>	<b>x 2010/11 Inflation Rate April 2010</b>	<b>x 2011/12 Inflation Rate April 2011</b>	<b>x 2012/13 Inflation Rate January 2012</b>		<b>Proposed Fees 2012/13</b>	<b>Total</b>

<b>RPI %</b>		<b>(minus) 1.2</b>	<b>5.3</b>	<b>5.2</b>	<b>3.9</b>			
Counting Assistant x 220	£38.00	£37.54	£39.53	£41.58	£43.20		<b>£50.00</b>	<b>£11,000.00</b>
Poll Card Delivery per card (5% increase)	10p	10.5p	11p	11.5p	12p		<b>13.5p</b>	
Ballot Box & Booth Collection x 125	£10.00	£10.00	£10.00	£10.00	Nominal tax free element - no increase suggested		<b>£10.00</b>	<b>£1,250.00</b>
Standby Polling Staff x 2	n/a	£20.00	n/a	n/a	Nominal amount – no increase suggested		<b>£20.00</b>	<b>£40.00</b>
*Clerical (per ward)	£354.00	£349.75	£368.29	£387.44	£402.55		<b>£402.00</b>	



**TABLE 2**

**Comparison of Fees**

<b>SCALE OF FEES (gross)</b>			<b>Wirral</b>	<b>Sefton</b>	<b>St Helens</b>	<b>Knowsley</b>
<b>A</b>	<b>Fee for Returning Officer</b>					
	<b>1</b>	Fees for conducting a Borough Council election and generally performing all the duties required to be performed and all disbursements and expenses other than those for which special provision is made below.	<b>£233.09 per Ward</b>	<b>£376.00 per Ward</b>		<b>£315.00 per Ward</b>
	<b>2</b>	(a) Fee for conducting a Neighbourhood Planning Referendum – for each local area and if held concurrently with the appropriate Borough Council elections.	<b>No rules yet</b>			
		(b) If not held concurrently with the Borough Council elections.	<b>No rules yet</b>			
	<b>3</b>	(a) Fee for conducting a Council Tax Veto Referendum – for each locality and if held concurrently with the appropriate Borough Council elections.	<b>No rules yet</b>			
		(b) If not held concurrently with the Borough Council elections.	<b>No rules yet</b>			

<b>SCALE OF FEES (gross)</b>			<b>Wirral</b>	<b>Sefton</b>	<b>St Helens</b>	<b>Knowsley</b>
<b>B</b>	<b>Fee for Deputy Returning Officer (with full powers)</b>					
	<b>1</b>	Fees for conducting a Borough Council election and generally performing all the duties required to be performed and all disbursements and expenses other than those for which special provision is made below.	<b>50% of RO fee</b>			
	<b>2</b>	(a) Fee for conducting a Neighbourhood Planning Referendum – for each local area and if held concurrently with the appropriate Borough Council elections.	<b>No rules yet</b>			
		(b) If not held concurrently with the Borough Council elections.	<b>No rules yet</b>			
	<b>3</b>	(a) Fee for conducting a Council Tax Veto Referendum – for each locality and if held concurrently with the appropriate Borough Council elections.	<b>No rules yet</b>			
		(b) If not held concurrently with the Borough Council elections.	<b>No rules yet</b>			

SCALE OF FEES (gross)			Wirral	Sefton	St Helens	Knowsley
<b>C</b>	<b>Fee for Deputy Returning Officer (with specific powers)</b>					
	1	(a) For each Deputy Returning Officer appointed solely for the purpose of presiding at the counting of the votes and of declaring the result of poll of Borough Council elections.		£123.00 per ward	£108.00 + £25.00 per additional ward	£143.00 + £25.00 per additional ward
		(b) For each Deputy Returning Officer appointed solely in connection with voting by persons entitled to vote by post in Borough Council elections		inc in C1(a) above ?	£19.00 per hour	
	2	(a) Fee for conducting a Neighbourhood Planning Referendum – for each local area and if held concurrently with the appropriate Borough Council elections.	No rules yet			
		(b) If not held concurrently	No rules yet			
	3	(a) Fee for conducting a Council Tax Veto Referendum – for each locality and if held concurrently with the appropriate Borough Council elections.	No rules yet			
		(b) If not held concurrently	No rules yet			

<b>SCALE OF FEES (gross)</b>			<b>Wirral</b>	<b>Sefton</b>	<b>St Helens</b>	<b>Knowsley</b>
<b>D</b>	<b>Fee for Clerical Assistance</b>					
	<b>1</b>	Borough Council elections	<b>£402.00 per ward</b>	<b>£376.00 per ward</b>	<b>£213.00 per ward</b>	
	<b>2</b>	Neighbourhood Planning Referendum	<b>No rules yet</b>			
	<b>3</b>	Council Tax Veto Referendum	<b>No rules yet</b>			
<b>E</b>	<b>Uncontested elections</b>					
	<b>1</b>	Borough Council election, per Ward	<b>33% of contested fee</b>	<b>£189.00</b>	<b>33% of contested fee</b>	
	<b>2</b>	Fee for clerical assistance, per Ward	<b>33% of contested fee</b>	<b>Half of fees referred to in B</b>	<b>33% of contested fee</b>	
<b>F</b>	<b>Polling Station Staff</b>					
	<b>1</b>	(a) each Presiding Officer	<b>£165.00</b>	<b>£151.00</b>	<b>£164.00</b>	<b>£166.00</b>
		(b) each Polling Station Inspector	<b>£165.00</b>	<b>£151.00</b>	<b>£164.00</b>	<b>£166.00</b>
		(c) each Poll Clerk	<b>£110.00</b>	<b>£100.00</b>	<b>£98.00</b>	<b>£98.59</b>
		(d) each Presiding Officer Training fee	<b>£25.00</b>	<b>£50.00</b>	<b>£50.00 (part only)</b>	

<b>SCALE OF FEES (gross)</b>			<b>Wirral</b>		<b>Sefton</b>	<b>St Helens</b>	<b>Knowsley</b>
<b>G</b>	<b>Counting of Votes</b>						
	<b>1</b>	(a) each Count Supervisor	<b>£100.00</b>		<b>£99.00</b>	<b>£82.00</b>	
		(b) each Head Counter	<b>£80.00</b>		<b>£73.00 (not to exceed two per Ward)</b>	<b>£80.00</b>	<b>£90.00</b>
		(c) each Senior Counter	<b>60.00</b>		<b>£53.00 (not to exceed two per Ward)</b>		<b>£69.00</b>
		(d) each Counting Assistant – (not to exceed 1 per 500 electors or fraction per Ward)	<b>50.00</b>		<b>£44.00</b>	<b>£55.00</b>	<b>£60.00</b>
		(e) For each General Assistant	<b>50.00</b>		<b>£44.00</b>	<b>£61.00</b>	
	<b>2</b>	The maximum amount recoverable for each recount of the votes ordered by the Returning Officer per Ward			<b>£110.00</b>		

<b>SCALE OF FEES (gross)</b>			<b>Wirral</b>	<b>Sefton</b>	<b>St Helens</b>	<b>Knowsley</b>	
<b>H</b>	<b>Postal Voting</b>						
	<b>1</b>	(a)	For the employment of persons engaged in the preparation and issue of postal ballot papers – Borough Council elections	<b>£29.00</b> (per 100 postal voters or fraction thereof)	<b>£75.00</b> (per 100 postal voters or fraction thereof)	<b>£29.00</b> (per 100 postal voters or fraction thereof)	
		(b)	For the employment of persons engaged in the opening and checking of postal ballot papers – Borough Council elections	<b>see H1 (d) and (e) below</b>	<b>see H1(a) above</b>	<b>see H1(c), (d), and (e)</b>	
		(c)	For each Postal Vote Opening Manager			<b>£17.00</b> (per hour)	
		(d)	For each Postal Vote Opening Supervisor (per hour)	<b>£9.00</b>		<b>£15.00</b> (per hour)	
		(e)	For each Postal Vote Opening Clerk (per hour)	<b>£6.80</b>	<b>£6.00</b> (for external staff only)	<b>£11.00</b>	

<b>SCALE OF FEES (gross)</b>			<b>Wirral</b>	<b>Sefton</b>	<b>St Helens</b>	<b>Knowsley</b>
<b>I</b>	<b>Travelling Expenses</b>					
	<b>1</b>	(a) Travelling expenses of the Returning Officer and any other officer employed by him where necessary to make arrangements for the poll or otherwise in connection with the conduct of the election.	<b>40p per mile</b>	<b>40p per mile</b>		
<b>J</b>	<b>Poll Cards</b>					
	<b>1</b>	(a) Employment of persons in connection with the preparation, completion and issue of official poll cards for Borough elections		<b>£12.00</b> (per 100 cards or fraction thereof)	<b>£79.00</b>	
		(b) Supervision and clerical assistance for checking computer compiled cards for Borough elections		<b>£12.00</b> (per 100 cards or fraction thereof)		
		(c) Delivery of poll cards by hand for Borough or Parish elections – for every 100 cards	<b>£13.50</b>	<b>£16.00</b>	<b>£17.50</b>	<b>£14.00</b>