

WIRRAL COUNCIL

LICENSING, HEALTH AND SAFETY AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

25 MARCH 2015

SUBJECT:	PROPOSED LOCAL ELECTION FEES AND CHARGES STRUCTURE
WARD/S AFFECTED:	ALL
REPORT OF:	HEAD OF LEGAL & MEMBER SERVICES
KEY DECISION?	NO

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The purpose of this report deals with the proposed fees paid to the Returning Officer and his staff employed to undertake various duties in connection with elections held within the Borough.
- 1.2 The next scheduled Borough elections will take place on 7th May 2015 and will be combined with a UK Parliamentary General Election.
- 1.3 The proposed election fees for 2015/16 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 Licencing, 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 is 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 is directly accountable to the courts system as an independent statutory office holder.
 - 2.4 Historically, fees paid to the Returning Officer and the staff employed to undertake election duties were increased in line with the Council's annual pay award.
 - 2.5 In 2012, the Returning Officer, who was the Head of Law and Asset Management, felt it appropriate that a review of the schedule of fees should be undertaken and a report was submitted to the Committee on 19th March 2012 setting out the proposed local elections schedule of fees for 2012/13 with a recommendation that they be considered and agreed by members.
 - 2.6 At the meeting it was resolved that the schedule be approved subject to some amendments which related to the fee for Deputy Returning Officers and Polling Station Inspectors.
 - 2.7 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 Local elections. The Council has a statutory obligation to provide the Returning Officer such resources considered necessary by the Returning Officer to run effective Local elections.
 - 2.8 In respect of the forthcoming UK Parliamentary Election, the (Acting) Returning Officer has overall responsibility for the conduct of the election. The (Acting) Returning Officer fee is set by Government and funding is provided for the effective and efficient running of the election.
 - 2.9 As the UK Parliamentary Election will be combined with the Local elections, the (Acting) Returning Officer will make the necessary adjustments to the local election schedule of fees structure adopting similar principles and comparisons with other Merseyside authorities and consideration given to the combined election duties.
 - 2.10 Up to 50% of the costs incurred for the local elections combined with the UK Parliamentary election can be claimed back from Government due to the cost of combined elections.
 - 2.11 The approved Elections Budget includes the costs/fees payable to ensure the effective running of local elections.
 - 2.12 Appendix 1 details the proposed scale of fees for the Returning Officer and the staff employed in relation to running a local election. Information gathered from other Merseyside authorities (Knowsley, Sefton and St Helens Councils) in relation to their local election fees is also included.

2.13 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 2. The costs of the local election 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 detailed in Table 1 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 1, 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 2, 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 2, Appendix 1.

13.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

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

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Proposed Local Election Fees and Charges Structure

REFERENCE MATERIAL

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
Licencing, Health and Safety and General Purpose	19 March 2012

METROPOLITAN BOROUGH OF WIRRAL

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

1 APRIL 2015

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 and 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 is 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 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 Local election.

TABLE 1

Lists the calculated scale of fees for the financial year 2015/16 which have been calculated by increasing (or decreasing as the case may be) annually, the fees received at the 2008 local elections by the Retail Price Index.

Provides a comparison of local election fees against similar posts supplied by other Merseyside authorities (Knowsley, Sefton and St. Helens).

TABLE 2

Lists the proposed scale of fees for local elections held within the Metropolitan Borough of Wirral – from April 2015.

TABLE 1**Schedule of Local Fees increased annually by RPI and comparison with Merseyside Authorities**

	Local Fees 2008	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/2016	Merseyside Comparative Fees		
RPI %		3.9	3.3	2.8	1.1	Knowsley	Sefton	St Helens
Returning Officer (per ward)	£210.48	£233.09	£240.78	£247.52	£250.24	£315.00	£388.00	unavailable
Deputy Returning Officer (full powers)/Project Management	Up to 50% of RO overall fee	Up to 50% of RO overall fee	Up to 50% of RO overall fee	Up to 50% of RO overall fee	Up to 50% of RO overall fee	unavailable	50% of RO overall fee	unavailable
Deputy Returning Officer (count only)	£404.00	£459.42	£474.58	£487.87	£246.62	£143.00 + £25 per additional ward	£192.00 per ward	£108.00 + £25 per additional ward
Deputy Returning Officer (for postal vote checking only)	incl above	incl above	incl above	incl above	£246.62	unavailable	£192.00 per ward	£19.00 per hour
Presiding Officer x 103	£156.50 (inc. training @ £25)	£177.97 (inc. training @ £25)	£183.84 (inc. training @ £25)	£188.99 (inc. training @ £25)	£166.07	£166.00	£156.00	£170.00
Polling Station Inspector x 22	£110.00 (inc. training @ £25)	£125.08 (inc. training @ £25)	£183.84 (inc. training @ £25)	£188.99 (inc. training @ £25)	£166.07	£166.00	£156.00	£170.00
Poll Clerk x 235	£90.00	£102.42	£105.90	£108.87	£110.07	£98.59	£105.00	£101.00
Training (Presiding Officer/Polling Station Inspector)	£25.00	£25.00	£25.00	£25.00	£50.00	unavailable	£50.00	50.00
Postal Vote Opening Supervisor x 2 (per hour)	£8.00	£9.09	£9.40	£9.66	£9.77	unavailable	£20.00	£15.00
Postal Vote Opening Clerks x 12 (per hour)	£6.00	£6.82	£7.05	£7.25	£7.33	unavailable	£12.00	£11.00
Verification/Count Supervisor	£86.00	£97.79	£101.02	£103.85	£104.99	n/a	£250.00	£85.00
Head Counter	£78.00	£89.01	£91.95	£94.53	£95.57	£90.00	£125.00	n/a
Senior Counter	£52.00	£59.13	£61.08	£62.61	£63.30	£69.00	£75.00	n/a
Counting Assistant	£38.00	£43.20	£44.63	£45.88	£46.39	£60.00	£45.00	£57.00
Poll Card Delivery per card	10p	12p	0.124p	0.128p	0.129p	0.16p	0.16p	0.18p
Ballot Box & Booth Collection	£10.00	Nominal tax free element - no increase suggested	Nominal tax free element - no increase suggested	Nominal tax free element - no increase suggested	Nominal tax free element - no increase suggested	n/a	n/a	n/a
Standby Polling Staff	n/a	Nominal amount – no increase suggested	Nominal amount – no increase suggested	Nominal amount – no increase suggested	Nominal amount – no increase suggested	n/a	n/a	n/a
Clerical (per 10,000 electors or part)	£354.00	£402.55	£415.83	£427.47	£432.17	unavailable	£388.00	£220.00

Comparable fees of similar posts within other Merseyside authorities.

TABLE 2

Proposed Returning Officer Fees and Charges for Borough Elections

SCALE OF FEES				£ gross
A	Fee for Returning Officer			
	1	(a)	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.	£250.24 per ward x 22 = £5,505.28
B	Fee for Deputy Returning Officer and Election Project Management			
	1	(a)	For a Deputy Returning Officer appointed with full powers to perform duties and rights lawfully performed and discharged in the same like manner as the appointed Returning Officer	Up to 50% of RO overall fee
	2	(a)	For each Deputy Returning Officer appointed for conducting a count in an electoral area or ward	£247.00
		(b)	For each Deputy Returning Officer appointed for conducting the issue, receipt and opening of postal ballot packs in an electoral area or ward	£247.00
	(c)	For a person appointed to Project Manage an election in conjunction with a Deputy Returning Officer with full powers	Up to 50% of RO overall fee	
D	Fee for Clerical Assistance			
	1	(a)	Borough Council elections	£432.17 per 10,000 electors or part
E	Uncontested elections			
	1	(a)	Borough Council election, per Ward	33% of contested fee
	2	(a)	Fee for clerical assistance, per Ward	33% of contested fee
F	Polling Station Staff			
	1	(a)	each Presiding Officer	£166.07
		(b)	each Polling Station Inspector	£166.07
		(c)	each Poll Clerk	£110.07
		(d)	Training (Presiding Officer/Polling Station Inspector)	£50.00
G	Counting of Votes			
	1	(a)	each Verification/Count Supervisor	£125.00
		(b)	each Head Counter	£100.00
		(c)	each Senior Counter	£70.00

		(d)	each Counting Assistant	£50.00
		(e)	For each General Assistant	£50.00
H	Postal Voting			
	1	(a)	For the employment of persons engaged in the preparation and issue of postal ballot papers (per 100 postal voters or fraction thereof)	£29.00
		(b)	For each Postal Vote Opening Supervisor (per hour)	£10.00
		(c)	For each Postal Vote Opening Clerk (per hour)	£8.00
I	Travelling Expenses			
	1	(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.	40p per mile
J	Poll Cards			
	1	(a)	Employment of persons in connection with the preparation, completion and issue of official poll cards (per 100 cards or fraction thereof).	£12.00
		(b)	Delivery of poll cards by hand per card	0.16p

Training fee for PO/PSI increased to £50 due to increased responsibilities to be trained for as a result of new legislation over the years.