

Appendix A
Report of the Lincolnshire Election Officers' Group

To: Lincolnshire Chief Executives' Meeting

Date: 14th December 2018

Subject: Election Fees for County, District, Parish/Town Council Elections and Local Referenda

1. Recommendation

To adopt the scale of fees for County, District and Parish Council elections and local referenda held in Lincolnshire from April 2019, as set out in appendix 1 of the report.

2. Background

For many years all Lincolnshire councils have agreed a common scale of election fees across Lincolnshire. Agreeing a common scale ensures a consistent approach and helps avoid problems such as staff being attracted from one authority to another because of a difference in rates of pay and can support the submission of staffing expenses to the Election Claims Unit in relation to national polls.

A review of the current fees has been undertaken by the Lincolnshire Election Officers' Group to ensure the levels are appropriate and sufficient taking into account minimum wage and national living wage calculations. The Group comprises Electoral Services/Democratic Services Managers from each of the District Councils, City of Lincoln and Boston Borough Council and Lincolnshire County Council.

3. Polling Staff Fees

The scale of fees for polling staff have been maintained at the current level for several years, with the exception of the poll clerk fee which was raised in 2017 following an increase in the National Living Wage. The National Living Wage is due to be raised again in April 2019 to **£8.21** per hour (for those aged 25 and over).

It has become increasingly difficult in recent years to recruit Presiding Officers and Poll Clerks due to the requirement to work long hours without a break. The pressure experienced at recent national polls has also had an impact on attracting good polling staff.

Having considered the number of hours staff are expected to work whilst on polling duty, the unsociable element of those hours, the responsibilities attached to the roles and the impact of increases in the National Living Wage from April 2019, it is recommended that the fees for Presiding Officers, Poll Clerks and Polling Station Inspectors be increased as set out below:-

Job	Current Fee	Suggested Maximum Fee	Narrative
Presiding Officer– single election	£195	£205	£205 equates to £12.81 per hour (based on 16 hours)
Presiding Officer – combined elections	£234	£246	20% increase on single election fee
Presiding Officer – Parish Polls	£63.50	£78	£13 per hour for 6 hours
Poll Clerk – single election	£120	£132	The national living wage increases in April 2019 to £8.21 per hour. £132 equates to £8.25 per hour (based on 16 hours). It is proposed that Poll Clerk fees be annually reviewed to ensure they comply with the hourly minimum wage.
Poll Clerk – combined elections	£143	£158.40	20% increase on single election fee
Poll Clerk – Parish Polls	£38	£50	£8.33 per hour for 6 hours
Polling Station Inspector – single election	£195	£205	Same fee as Presiding Officer
Polling Station Inspector – combined elections	£234	£246	20% increase on single election fee

4. Training Fees

Polling Station staff and Count Supervisors receive a training fee of £40 for attending face to face training prior to each election. This is recommended good practice and meets with the performance standards set by the Electoral Commission. There is no proposal to increase this fee.

In recent years some authorities have introduced on-line training for staff and it is recommended that a fee of £20 be paid to staff undertaking this form of training, if offered by the relevant authority. It will be for each Returning Officer to determine what form they wish the training to take.

5. Count Staff

To reflect the unsocial hours element of a night time count and attract good staff, it is proposed to increase the Count Supervisor fee from £19.50 per hour to £21 per hour, the count assistant fee from £13.50 per hour to £14.50 per hour, and the daytime rate for count assistants from £8.25 per hour to £9 per hour.

The fees for the Deputy Returning Officer (for count and declaration of result only) and the day rate for the Count Supervisor remain unchanged.

6. Postal Vote Staff – Issue / Receipt

Postal vote staff are paid an hourly rate for issuing the postal ballot packs and opening the returned packs, although this varies between authorities as some choose to contract printers to undertake a complete fulfilment whereby the packs are sent direct from the printers to the voters, not issued in-house. The proposed fees incur a minor increase in the fee for daytime postal vote assistants from £8.25 per hour to £8.50 per hour. This fee will be reviewed annually to ensure it complies with hourly minimum wage.

A set fee is introduced for night time postal vote supervisor and assistants consistent with the proposed fees for overnight count staff, of £21 per hour and £14.50 per hour respectively. An overnight opening only usually occurs on polling day when postal packs are handed in at polling stations and then returned to the count centre for opening after close of polls.

7. Hand Delivery of Poll Cards

Of the seven Lincolnshire District Councils, two hand deliver poll cards to the voters and the remainder use Royal Mail.

The delivery rate of 18p per card has not been increased for a number of years and it is now considered appropriate to raise this to reflect the increase in postage costs over recent times. The proposed fee is 20p per card.

8. Returning Officers Fees

An anomaly has been identified in the Returning Officers fees between County and District elections. The same fee of £264 is paid per ward or division yet most local authorities have at least twice as many wards as divisions resulting in a much lower fee being paid for County elections, for the same level of work and responsibility (City of Lincoln Council being the exception).

Example:

15 wards x £264 = £3960

6 county divisions x £264 = £1584

In an effort to address the discrepancy and ensure a consistent approach, it is recommended that the calculation for Returning Officers fees be changed to a set fee of £200 plus £15 per 1,000 electors per electoral area (division or ward).

This would reduce the disparity between fees paid for differing local government elections and recognise the responsibility attached to the role, irrespective of whether it is a county or district election,

The impact of this would be a reduction in the fee paid for district elections for the majority of district councils, and an overall increase for county elections. This would maintain a lesser fee for County elections as the district council Returning Officer, in effect, acts as the Deputy Returning Officer with full powers, but has the same workload and responsibilities as for a district election. The RO fees based on the above calculation for both district and county elections are set out in appendix 2.

A similar proposal is recommended for parish councils in changing the fee from a set amount of £53 per parish, to £53 for up to the first 500 electors plus £18 for each additional 500 electors or part thereof. This more accurately reflects the differing size of parish electorates across the county and ensures a fair fee for small parish councils.

The fees for uncontested elections remain the same.

9. Deputy Returning Officer Fees – Full Powers

Under the current arrangements Deputy Returning Officers appointed with full powers are allocated a fee of £42.50 for the first 500 electors, plus £26.50 for every 500 electors or part thereof, for each district ward contested and £32 per uncontested ward.

It is recommended that this be made a matter for local determination, taking into account the level of duties actually undertaken and any other payments made to the DRO arising from their responsibilities for each particular election. However, it is suggested that any agreed fee should not be more than 50% of a Returning Officer's fee for the same election.

A similar arrangement is proposed for DRO fees for parish elections. Currently a fee of £42.50 is paid per contested parish and £21.50 for each uncontested parish. It is suggested that this fee also be made a matter for local determination based on duties and responsibilities, but again any fee paid should not be more than 50% of the Returning Officer's fee for the same election.

10. Clerical Fees

The current method for calculating Clerical Fees is considered to be inequitable between County and District elections, in the same way as the Returning Officer fees. The basis for the clerical fee is set out below:-

1 ward/division - £277

2 to 4 wards/divisions - £246 per area

5 or more wards/divisions - £215.50 per area

Plus

Postal votes - £63.50 per ward/division
Preparation of poll cards - £2.30 per 100
Preparation of proxy poll cards - £2.30 per 100

As mentioned under Returning Officer's fees, each district has at least twice as many wards as there are county divisions in their electoral area, which results in a much lower clerical fee being paid for the same amount of work and resources.

To simplify the methodology and reduce the disparity between fees paid for county and district elections, it is proposed to introduce a single set fee of £80 per division plus £60 per 1000 electors per ward/division.

The overall impact would be an increase in clerical fees paid for both district and county elections, as set out in appendix 2.

For parish elections it is suggested that a single fee of £8 per 100 electors be charged, with a minimum fee of £65 and a maximum of £350.

It is not proposed to change the clerical fee for uncontested elections of £56.50 per ward/division and £20.50 per parish/parish ward.

11. Neighbourhood Plan Referendum Fees

The holding of Neighbourhood Plan Referendums are becoming more frequent and currently there are no agreed fees for this type of poll. It is suggested that a Counting Officer fee and a clerical fee be introduced based on the fees for parish council elections of:-

Counting Officer - £53 for the first 500 electors plus £18 for each additional 500 electors or part thereof.

Clerical - £8 per 100 electors

12. Conclusion

The Lincolnshire Election Officers Group has considered the scale of fees in detail, taking into account factors such as national living wage, roles and associated responsibilities, equality across differing polls, and simplifying methodology, the Group recommend that the scale of fees as set out in appendix 1 be adopted.

The overall impact for each of the District Councils and the County Council is set out in appendix 2. This aims to provide an estimate of how the proposed fees will affect each authority.