

Report to Appointments and Conditions of Service Committee

Subject: Returning Officer Fee for Local and Parish Elections

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1. Purpose of the Report

To set the level of fee for the position of Returning Officer for local and parish elections.

2. Background

The Returning Officer is a separate statutory function from that of the Head of Paid Service and is a different legal entity from that of the Council. The same person does not necessarily undertake both the roles. Gedling Borough Council has appointed the Chief Executive to the role of Returning Officer.

In respect of parliamentary elections and other national polls the fees are set by Government while fees for local elections are set locally by Councils responsible for the election.

Under the Council's scheme of delegation, although the Chief Executive has delegated authority for a wide range of matters under the Representation of People Acts for electoral functions, the delegation does not refer to the specific section of the 1983 Act for approving fees for the role of Returning Officer. The Act does, however, make clear that the Returning Officer has power to set the level of payments for staff he employs to assist on the discharge of his function for example poll clerks and presiding officers for polling stations and any deputies he may wish to appoint.

3. Proposal

In February 2018 Election Managers from across Nottinghamshire met to review the fees as this had not been done since August 2012 (although a small increase

to the rate of pay for poll clerks was agreed in 2017 to recognise changes to the minimum wage).

The meeting agreed that it was not appropriate to impose blanket increases to fees due to continuing pressures on public finances. A targeted approach was therefore agreed to recognise the increasing complexity associated with some job roles (particularly postal vote opening procedures) and to recognise that some rates of pay had fallen out of step with the minimum wage.

The changes agreed are:

- Increase the Poll Clerk fee to £128 (£8 per hour) from £115
- Increase the Presiding Officer fee to £208 (£13 per hour) from £195
- Increase the Poll Station Inspector fee to £208 (£13 per hour) from £195
- Increase the Postal Vote Opening Assistant fee to £9.05 per hour from £7.90 per hour
- Increase the Postal Vote Opening Supervisor fee to £11.60 per hour from £10.50 per hour

For simplicity all Nottinghamshire councils are in the process of agreeing a scale of fees for all job roles associated with delivery of local elections. This ensures a consistent approach to staffing arrangements and avoids staff choosing to work for alternative districts that may offer a more attractive rate of pay rather than the one closest to them. The new scale of fees is attached at Appendix One. Appendix two contains the agreed fees for Parish Council elections. It is recommended that Gedling Borough Council adopts the Nottinghamshire schemes.

4. Resource Implications

There are no direct resource implications arising from this report as payments to the Returning Officer are managed from existing budgets. The Council does have a statutory duty to resource the post of Returning Officer and must provide sufficient resources for him to fulfil his duties.

5. Recommendation

The Appointments and Conditions of Service Committee is asked to

- 1) Approve the level of fees associated with the post of Returning Officer for local elections and parish elections as detailed in Appendix One;
- 2) Note the scale of fees for all roles other than that of Returning Officer; and
- 3) Note that the Returning Officer's fees for parliamentary elections and other national polls are set nationally.