

CITY OF
WOLVERHAMPTON
COUNCIL

Governance and Ethics Committee

23 November 2023

Report title	Elections Fees and Charges 2023-2024	
Cabinet member with lead responsibility	Councillor Paula Brookfield Cabinet Member for Governance and Ethics	
Accountable director	David Pattison, Chief Operating Officer	
Originating service	Electoral Services	
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Report to be/has been considered by	Election Board	17 October 2023
	Cabinet Member Briefing	13 November 2023

Recommendation for decision:

The Governance and Ethics Committee is recommended to:

1. Approve the proposed schedule of fees for May 2023 as shown in Appendix 1.

1.0 Purpose

- 1.1 To outline the fees and charges for the elections taking place next year.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 The Representation of the People Act 1983 requires each Council to appoint an officer of the authority as Returning Officer to undertake various statutory duties in relation to election procedures. The Council's Returning Officer is the Chief Executive.
- 2.2 The Representation of the People Act 1983, Section 36(4) requires the council to cover all expenditure incurred by the Returning Officer in the holding of an election for all or any seats on it. The Council may set scales of expenditure which the Returning Officer must not exceed. The costs of running an election result from having to meet a range of fees, charges and expenses incurred in paying council employees and non-council employees for undertaking election duties, expenses for printing notices, poll cards, ballot papers and postal packs and hiring polling station venues and conducting the count.
- 2.3 The fees are regularly reviewed across the West Midlands region to ensure consistency and are also reviewed annually in line with inflation. The scale of fees and charges is taken to Election Board for approval from the Returning Officer and is then brought to Governance and Ethics Committee for final approval.
- 2.4 No rate of pay is below the national living wage.

3.0 Key changes to the scale of fees from 2022-2023

- 3.1 Guidance was received from the Elections Claims Unit (ECU) on the acceptable ranges for rates of pay for various roles. This scale of fees has been reviewed to be in line with these ranges and has introduced a number of flat rate fees moving away from hourly rates of pay.
- 3.2 The ECU guidance does not stipulate a rate of pay for Deputy Returning Officers, but these fees have been reduced for next year due to the number of days they may be working.
- 3.3 Polling Staff fees have largely remained the same but there is a 20% increase for managing a combined poll which is paid across the region.
- 3.4 Postal Vote Opening payments have moved from hourly to a flat rate for morning and afternoon sessions.
- 3.5 The majority of count roles have been moved to a flat rate fee.

4.0 Financial implications

- 4.1 The cost of running local elections to the Council in any year is dependent on whether they are standalone or combined with Parliamentary, Police and Crime Commissioner or

Combined Authority Mayoral elections. Combined elections costs are effectively shared, part funded by Government or the Combined Authority.

- 4.2 The current annual budget to cover the cost of local elections is £277,000. The maximum recoverable amount that can be claimed to cover the cost of Wolverhampton elements to the CAM election is yet to be confirmed. However, based on the 2021 elections, it is estimated it will be around £237,000.
- 4.3 The date of the Parliamentary election is unknown. When it is called, the maximum recoverable amount for each constituency will be shared in the Election Order set by Government.
- 4.4 New burdens funding associated with the implementation of Election Act was announced in December 2022, with the Council awarded a total of just under £104,000 spanning the 2022-2023 and 2023-2024 financial years.
- 4.5 It is anticipated that the fees payable under the proposed schedule in this report will be met from the funding sources identified above, and depending on the combination of elections there could be an underspend against the annual local election budget which subject to necessary approvals would be requested to transfer balances to the Elections reserve for future standalone local elections where there could be a budget pressure without the economies of scale afforded by shared costs of combined elections.

[LD/09112023/S]

5.0 Legal implications

- 5.1 The approach taken is lawful and in compliance with relevant election law.

[SZ/13112023/P]

6.0 Equalities implications

- 6.1 Whilst there are no direct equalities implications in this report there are a substantial number of equalities issues that are being addressed in relation to the elections and these are covered in other election reports.

7.0 All other Implications

- 7.1 There are no other implications arising from this report at the current time.

8.0 Schedule of background papers

- 8.1 Local Election Fees and Charges 2022-2023, Governance and Ethics Committee, 9 February 2023.

9.0 Appendices

- 9.1 Appendix 1: Election Fees and Charges 2023-2024