

CITY OF
WOLVERHAMPTON
COUNCIL

Governance and Ethics Committee

14 January 2022

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| Report title | Local Election Fees and Charges 2021-2022 | |
| Cabinet member with lead responsibility | Councillor Paula Brookfield Cabinet Member for Governance and Equalities | |
| Accountable director | David Pattison, Chief Operating Officer | |
| Originating service | Electoral Services | |
| Accountable employee | Laura Noonan Tel Email | Electoral Services Manager 01902 554939 Laura.Noonan@wolverhampton.gov.uk |
| Report has been considered by | Election Board | 11 January 2022 |

Recommendation decision:

The Governance and Ethics Committee is recommended to:

1. Approve the proposed schedule of fees for May 2022 as shown in Appendix 1.

1.0 Purpose

- 1.1 To outline the fees and charges relating to Local Elections, which must be set locally.

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.

3.0 Scale of fees

- 3.1 The fees payable to staff working in polling stations and on other electoral duties are broadly in line with assumptions laid down by the Cabinet Office as reasonable for that role and in line with the West Midlands region.
- 3.2 All fees have been kept at the same rate as 2020/2021 for a standalone election, except for Poll Clerk pay. Poll Clerk pay is proposed to be increased by £5 from £150 to £155, so that it is in line with the National Living Wage of £9.50 an hour.
- 3.3 No pay rate equates to less than the National Living Wage.
- 3.4 Last year, people working election duties received a higher rate of pay due to the combined poll, where there was a 20% uplift for some roles.

4.0 Financial implications

- 4.1 There is a £192,000 budget currently set aside to cover the cost of local elections each year. 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. In these circumstances significant underspends against the local elections budget are expected. The forthcoming standalone election is, however, estimated to cost in the region of £260,000 at this stage. This includes fees payable under the proposed schedule in this report. The anticipated cost in excess of the budget will be funded from the Elections Reserve established specifically for this purpose.

- 4.2 A risk assessment of the election process is currently being undertaken in conjunction with Public Health. Any costs associated with emerging recommendations will be reviewed and incorporated in future update reports.

[GE/18112021/K]

5.0 Legal implications

- 5.1 The approach taken is lawful and in compliance with relevant election law.
[DP/20122021/A]

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

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

8.0 Schedule of background papers

- 8.1 None listed.

9.0 Apprentices

- 9.1 Appendix 1: Election Fees and Charges 2021-2022