

Title: Warwick District Council and Parish Election Scale of Fees  
Lead Officer: Leanne Marlow, Elections Manager (01926 958847)  
Portfolio Holder: Councillor Davison  
Wards of the District directly affected: None

<b>Approvals required</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Name</b>
<b>Portfolio Holder</b>	17/12/2024	Ian Davison
<b>Finance</b>	16/12/2024	Alex Elston
<b>Legal Services</b>		
<b>Chief Executive</b>	16/12/2024	Chris Elliott
<b>Director of Climate Change</b>		
<b>Head of Service(s)</b>	16/12/2024	Graham Leach
<b>Section 151 Officer</b>	16/12/2024	Andrew Rollins
<b>Monitoring Officer</b>		
<b>Leadership Co-ordination Group</b>		
<b>Final decision by this Committee or rec to another Cttee / Council?</b>	Yes	
<b>Contrary to Policy / Budget framework?</b>	No	
<b>Does this report contain exempt info/Confidential? If so, which paragraph(s)?</b>	No	
<b>Does this report relate to a key decision (referred to in the Cabinet Forward Plan)?</b>	No	
<b>Accessibility Checked?</b>	Yes	

---

## Summary

The report seeks agreement for the increase in elections fees payable to staff for District & Parish Elections, it aligns the payments with the new pay bands set by Electoral Claims Unit for national elections.

## Recommendation(s)

- (1)** That the Scale of Fees for Elections staff at District and Parish/Town Council elections as set out in Appendix 1 to the report be approved.
  - (2)** Delegated authority to the Head of Governance and Monitoring Officer to revise the fees annually in line with MHCLG (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government) guidance.
  - (3)** That Council agrees the recharge amount for an Uncontested Parish/Town ward to increase to £500.
  - (4)** That the revised Returning Officer fees, payable to them for District Council and Town/Parish Council elections as set out in Appendix 1 be approved.
  - (5)** That delegated authority be given to the Head of Governance & Monitoring Officer to revise the fees, in line with any national pay award of senior officers, payable to the Returning officer each year for the next four years.
  - (6)** The Committee approves that the recharge of fees for more than one election on the same day must be proportional to the electorate (e.g. polling stations will be split equally between each election in the station, and count venue will be proportional to staff requirements).
- 

## 1. Reasons for the Recommendation

- 1.1. Changing the fees from set fees to hourly rates for all staff will mean WDC (Warwick District Council) fees align with MHCLG. Matching with MHCLG will streamline national elections fees with local election fees. The fees provide greater transparency on roles for everybody involved and greater consistency between all elections.
- 1.2. The Council is required to establish the fees payable to persons employed by the Returning Officer at its elections, held every four years, and at any by-election held in between. The authority for approving these fees had been delegated by Council to the Audit & Standards Committee.
- 1.3. It was agreed at Audit & Standards Committee in January 2023 that a full review of fees would be undertaken by December 2024. Due to the UKPGE and additional workload due to the Elections Act 2022 the review was delayed.
- 1.4. MHCLG introduced Expenses Guidance for Returning Officers in February 2024 which included pay bands for all election jobs and information on what can be accounted for.
- 1.5. MHCLG have since updated the pay bands for 2025/2026 to reflect changes to local government pay and national living wage. MHCLG believe the pay bands enhance local flexibility; allowing Returning Officers to determine pay rates that work best for their local needs. They also ensure consistency, offering clearer benchmarks for rates eligible for reimbursement from the consolidated fund, reducing delays in claim settlements caused by inconsistent staff payments.

- 1.6. It is recognised that there will be additional demands on polling staff through the introduction of the requirement for voter ID in polling stations. It is reported by the Electoral Commission there is a shortage of individuals who wish to help on elections, and it is an increased challenge at each election to recruit staff of sufficient skills to undertake rolls in delivering elections. Additionally, the new laws around postal votes being handled at polling stations has also created additional documentation and processes at polling stations.
- 1.7. The pay bands included in Appendix 1 set out the main election roles, within their respective pay bands (A-D). It should be noted that individual roles within their pay band commences with the highest paid role, descending to the lowest paid role. The Electoral Claims Unit requires that the Returning Officer structure payments that are aligned to these pay bands. For instance, no role should be paid at a higher rate than any role that appears above it within the pay band.
- 1.8. The rates provided within the table are daytime rates. The Returning Officer can apply an enhanced night rate to count staff for evening counts that is fixed at x1.5hrs.
- 1.9. Some staff payments are subject to holiday payment entitlement. This is referred to in the Expenses Guidance for Returning Officers document. WDC also follow advice from their own HR department at Warwick District Council.
- 1.10. All expenditure incurred for an election is paid for by the Returning Officer in the first instance. Once the nomination deadline has passed, WDC will know which wards/parishes are contested. Uncontested elections will be recharged back to town/parish councils at a rate of £500 per town/parish ward. All recharges will be sent to town/parish councils for scheduled elections by the end of the calendar year. If the election was called due to a casual vacancy, recharges will be sent to town/parish councils within 4 months of the electoral process taking place subject to receiving all the invoices.
- 1.11. Regardless of whether the election is contested or uncontested the Returning Officer is still required to undertake preliminary elections paperwork and tasks. Examples of these tasks are creating and issuing Notice of Elections for each ward/parish, Returning Officers fees, Nominations including the process involved in processing nomination papers, informal checks, formal appointments and a final check after the nomination deadline. This list is not exhaustive of the tasks that would be taken.
- 1.12. Returning Officer fees are recommended to be increased because of recognition of the risk to their post and continuing the fee increase to align with national pay awards for senior officers. It should be noted that since 2022/23 the national pay award for senior officers has seen an increase of 5.9%. The revisions propose take this into consideration but also seek to align the fees for Parish/Town and District Elections due to work involved, for example District elections now require the same number of individuals to support a nomination for election and persons standing for election need to complete the same paperwork. Therefore, the risk has reduced and in doing so the fee as been revised down for District elections, where as Parish/Town has increased due to the pay award increase.
- 1.13. The recharge fees are recommended to make sure each authority have contributed fairly towards their individual election. This is to ensure WDC are not left to carry the cost for all elections national or local.

## **2. Alternative Options**

- 2.1. WDC could set fees based on previous years, but these will not align with the Electoral Claims Unit figures and would prove difficult to create accounts and justify payments to staff allocated on the election.

## **3. Legal Implications**

- 3.1. The proposals within the report are within the legislative framework and associated guidance.

## **4. Financial Implications**

- 4.1. The Electoral Claims Unit have provided clarity to RO's that all costs must be justifiable, accountable, and necessary. More recently the claims unit have moved to a digital system to facilitate the National Audit Office scrutinising the RO's submissions.
- 4.2. A 2022/23 Funding Review identified that payments (by all local authorities) were not as transparent when scrutinised by ECU and NAO. The clear financial implication and risk to WDC is that MHCLG may withhold payment for unaccountable payments and the cost recovery is offset by the RO/WDC.
- 4.3. No two elections are complete replicas, staffing requirements vary to meet the demands of the electorate. It would therefore prove difficult to provide like for like comparisons. For example, in Appendix 1. Many of the roles under the MHCLG pay bands are not accounted for in WDC's 2023/24 fees and charges. These roles are annotated 'not included in the fee schedule'. Although roles were not covered in the 2023/24 fee schedule, the RO did make payments for these essential positions. It is not possible to provide direct comparison on the fees use to the change in structure overall.
- 4.4. It should be noted, where there is ambiguity or vagueness surrounding roles, the Electoral Claims Unit will request the RO to provide further clarity on fees paid. Such delays would incur additional costs in administrative hours spent providing ECU with the clarity they seek and will delay receipt of final settlement payments.
- 4.5. The proposed fees and charge's structure address the RO's time and expense that are incurred when administering an uncontested election. As noted above, the proposed structure provides parishes and towns with greater clarity when setting their annual budgets.
- 4.6. If the costs are not shared proportionately during a combined election i.e. between WDC and a town/parish council, WDC will be left incurring higher costs resulting in in the need for additional resources to be provided by the Council.
- 4.7. The only costs to be incurred by WDC following this change, should be in relation to staff working on the Election of WDC Councillors. All other Elections costs should be reclaimable from the relevant Authority, Parish or ECU.
- 4.8. Within the approved budget growth bids there is an increase to the election reserve which makes allowance for changes in fees, therefore as long as this commitment is made then there should be sufficient budget in place.

## **5. Corporate Strategy**

- 5.1. Warwick District Council has adopted a Corporate Strategy which sets three strategic aims for the organisation.
- 5.2. Delivering valued, sustainable services – The intention of the proposal is to create more transparency with the staffing payments issued during an election.

For illustration purposes 23/24 fees have been provided against the proposal in Appendix 1. The proposed fee structure disaggregates the roles and creates greater transparency surrounding payments for all job roles. The proposal facilitates greater budgetary controls and oversight of expected expenditure.

- 5.3. Low cost, low carbon energy across the district – This report does not have an impact on this value.
- 5.4. Creating vibrant, safe and healthy communities of the future - This report does not have an impact on this value.

## **6. Environmental/Climate Change Implications**

- 6.1. The distance of polling staff travelling to polling stations are taken into consideration when they are being allocated on election day, to help decrease mileage costs and carbon footprint.

## **7. Analysis of the effects on Equality**

- 7.1. There are no direct impacts on equality matters from the recommendations.

## **8. Data Protection**

- 8.1. There are no specific data protection issues within the report.

## **9. Health and Wellbeing**

- 9.1. There are no Health and Wellbeing implications from the proposal.

## **10. Risk Assessment**

- 10.1. Reduction in fees could result in WDC struggling to recruit to election posts. The Elections Team has taken proactive steps to overcome the challenges concerning the recruitment and retention of polling station staff. In January 2024, the Election Team launched a recruitment portal for applicants to complete their application form online. This removed time consuming administrative paper-based tasks, speeding up the onboarding of staff. Prior to the UKPGE, this service was further enhanced by moving the bank details and HMRC paperwork for new starters to an online service.
- 10.2. The Elections Team approach the recruitment and onboarding of staff as a year-round task that is not limited to pre-election periods. Working closely with WDC Media and Communications, the team access a variety of channels to highlight the roles available during an election. The Media Team have also made contacts with Parish and Town Councils and County Councils, providing media assets to be used for the recruitment of staff.
- 10.3. In the lead up to the PCC election, the Elections Team launched an initiative to progress experienced Poll Clerks towards working as a Presiding Officer. The team ran a short practical session that was open to all Poll Clerks who had conducted the minimum requirement of at least two poll clerk duties. The course was well attended, and 9 experienced Poll Clerks worked as Presiding Officers for the first time.
- 10.4. The Recruitment for specific elections has been moved to earlier in the year to assist in early identification of potential staffing shortfalls. For instance, for scheduled May elections, the recruitment availability email is sent mid-December of the previous year.

**Background papers: None**

**Supporting documents:**

[Elections Funding Pay Bands 2025 - 2026](#)

[Expenses Guidance for Returning Officers – February 2024](#)

[Appendix 1 – Elections Fee's and Charges 24.25](#)