

Council



Report of the Returning Officer

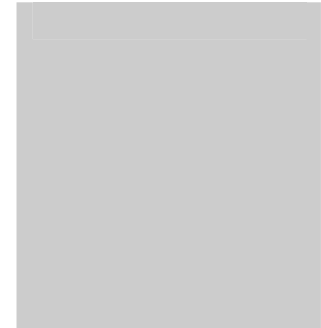
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Neighbourhood Planning Referendums – scale of fees and charges

Recommendation

Council is asked to agree the scale of fees and charges, as shown in appendix A, for neighbourhood planning referendums.

Purpose of Report

1. This report asks Council to agree a scale of fees and charges for the Counting Officer to undertake arrangements for managing and conducting neighbourhood planning referendums.

Corporate objectives

2. The setting of transparent fees contributes to the corporate objective of effective management of resources.

Background

3. At its meeting on 9 December 2010 Council agreed a scale of fees and charges for district and parish elections and parish polls in accordance with provisions in the Representation of the People Act 1983 and the Local Government Act 1972. The fees for conducting Parliamentary and European Parliamentary elections are regulated by the Returning Officers' Fees and Charges Orders made by the Government. In addition for the recent Police and Crime Commissioner election in 2012 and the national AV referendum in 2011 a national scale of fees and charges was set by an Order.
4. Under the Neighbourhood Planning (Referendums) Regulations 2012, which came into force on 3 August 2012, each council is required to make arrangements for the referendum to take place in any localities they are responsible for within the referendum area. The council is also required to meet the costs of a neighbourhood planning referendum. The council's existing scheme for local

elections does not include reference to the fees payable for running a neighbourhood planning referendum.

5. At a neighbourhood planning referendum in England the referendum is the responsibility of the Counting Officer who is the Returning Officer for principal area elections for that authority (i.e. the person appointed as the Returning Officer for the election of principal area councillors is also the Counting Officer for the referendum).

Proposed scale of fees

6. At its meeting on 18 October 2012 Cabinet agreed a funding contribution to provide financial support to towns and villages to develop neighbourhood plans. In doing so Cabinet estimated the likely costs of supporting a neighbourhood plan through to the referendum stage according to three groups: towns, larger villages and smaller villages based on the settlement categories in the council's core strategy. The report to Cabinet estimated the cost to the council of delivering a neighbourhood plan, including the cost of a referendum, for one of the five towns (Chinnor was included in this group) in the order of £30,000, £15,000 for the larger villages and £10,000 for the smaller villages.
7. Officers propose the use of the above categorisation for Council to set a maximum scale of fees and charges for the Counting Officer to use. The proposed scale is set out in appendix A. This is based on the levels for contested parish council elections in the council's existing scheme.

Financial Implications

8. The council must meet the costs of a neighbourhood planning referendum. It is not possible to accurately estimate the cost of a referendum. The costs will depend on the size of the neighbourhood plan area - the size of the electorate, the number of polling stations and staff required to run them, the number of postal voters and whether the referendum is combined with any other elections. After each referendum, the Counting Officer will report the actual expenditure to councillors.
9. The fee payable to the Counting Officer is not superannuable.

Legal Implications

10. It is not a legal requirement to have a scale of fees and charges but the presence of one regulates the maximum expenditure payable by the council.

Other implications

11. None known.

Conclusion

16. This report asks Council to agree a scale of fees and charges for neighbourhood planning referendums.

Background Papers

None.

Scale of fees for neighbourhood planning referendums

Only the fees and disbursements specified below shall be chargeable. The fees payable to the Counting Officer or his/her duly appointed Deputy Counting Officer(s) shall include all payments which he/she makes from his/her fees to other persons by way of remuneration of services undertaken on his/her behalf.

In no case shall a charge exceed the sum actually and necessarily paid or payable by the Counting Officer. Subject to this, the maximum charges are set out in the scale.

A – Fees

1	To the Counting Officer, or where appropriate a Deputy Counting Officer for carrying out all the duties assigned to him / her by the Counting Officer for conducting the referendum and generally performing the duties required by any enactments relating to the referendum	
	for each parish/town, a flat fee: -	
	Towns including Chinnor	£50
	Larger village parishes	£40
	Smaller village parishes	£30
	(If the Counting Officer or his/her duly appointed Deputy Counting Officer also carries out the functions specified in items 2 and 3 of the scale he/she will be entitled to claim the total of the fees payable under both items)	
2	To the Counting Officer, or a Deputy Counting Officer for services in connection with the preparation, maintenance and issue of official poll cards a flat fee as follows:	
	Towns including Chinnor	£20
	Larger village parishes	£15
	Smaller village parishes	£10
3	To the Counting Officer, or a Deputy Counting Officer appointed for the purposes of making arrangements for the issue and opening of postal votes a flat fee as follows:	
	Towns including Chinnor	£30
	Larger village parishes	£25
	Smaller village parishes	£20
	(A Deputy Counting Officer appointed under items 2 and 3 cannot also claim the fee payable under items 9 and 10 of this scale)	
4	To the Counting Officer, or a Deputy Counting Officer appointed for the purposes of making arrangements for counting the votes and declaring the results of the referendum	
	Towns including Chinnor	£50
	Larger village parishes	£40

	Smaller village parishes	£30
	(A Deputy Counting Officer appointed under item 3 cannot also claim the fee payable under items 10 and 11 of this scale)	

B – Disbursements

4	For the employment of persons for clerical and other assistance a flat fee as follows:	
	Towns including Chinnor	£40
	Larger village parishes	£30
	Smaller village parishes	£20
5	For printing and providing forms , notices and other documents required for the referendum, including the printing costs, computer charges and all associated costs, together with advertising expenses, postage, telephone calls and miscellaneous expenses (ad hoc printing) a flat fee	£35
6	Presiding Officer , a fee of or where a referendum is combined with any other poll a fee of	£190 £220
7	Poll Clerk , a fee of or where a referendum is combined with any other poll a fee of	£110 £135
	(The fees for Presiding Officers and Poll Clerks include all expenses other than travelling expenses specified in item 12 of this scale)	
8	To the Counting Officer or his/her duly appointed representatives, for inspection and supervision of each polling station , a fee per station of	£20
9	For the employment of persons in connection with the issue and receipt of postal ballot papers .	
	(a) postal vote supervisors	£10 per hour
	(b) postal vote count assistants	£7 per hour
10	Count Supervisor , a fee of	£20 per hour
11	Count Assistant , a fee of	£10 per hour
12	Travelling expenses of the Counting Officer, Deputy Counting Officer, Assistants, Presiding Officer, Poll Clerks, Count Assistants, Polling Station Inspectors and any other person	HMRC rate
13	Fees associated with each polling station as follows: -	
	(a) Hire and associated costs (heating / electric) of polling station venue	Actual and necessary cost
	(b) Compensation payable in consequence of the cancellation of functions in order to make suitable premises available for use as polling stations	Actual and necessary cost
	(c) Booking halls, writing letters, arranging staff, preparation of ballot box and licence costs	Actual and necessary

		cost
	(d) Polling booth / screen delivery	Actual and necessary cost
	(e) Paper, stationery packs	Actual and necessary cost
	(f) Manual assistance (for moving ballot boxes and stationery)	Actual and necessary cost
14	Printing of ballot papers	Actual and necessary cost
15	Printing and postage of poll cards	Actual and necessary cost
16	Fees associated with the count as follows: -	
	(a) Hire and associated costs (heating / electric) of count venue	Actual and necessary cost
	(b) Compensation payable in consequence of the cancellation of functions in order to make suitable premises available for use as count venue	Actual and necessary cost
	(c) Stationery and equipment for the count	Actual and necessary cost
	(d) Additional printing/notices for the count	Actual and necessary cost
17	Any other costs associated with the referendum, such as advertising and any other miscellaneous costs	Actual and necessary cost
	<p>Note</p> <p>In the event of a neighbourhood planning referendum being combined with another poll the costs are to be shared on an equal basis, unless a particular expense can actually be allocated to a specific election/referendum.</p> <p>In the case of costs associated with postal vote opening, recharges will be calculated based on the number of postal votes issued as a percentage of the total number of postal votes returned.</p>	

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