

Council report

Report of the Returning Officer

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Elections - scales of fees, charges 2015

Recommendations

Council is asked to

1. agree the scales of fees for district and parish council elections, parish polls and neighbourhood planning referendums for 2015/16 as set out in the Appendix to this report;
2. agree to continue to charge parish and town councils for running elections on their behalf.

Purpose of Report

1. This report recommends the adoption of scales of fees payable to the returning officer (RO) in connection with district and parish council elections, parish polls and neighbourhood planning referendums for 2015/16 and that council continues to charge parish and town councils for running elections on their behalf.

Strategic Objectives

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

Background

3. The Representation of the People Act 1983 (the 1983 Act), 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 (RO) must not exceed. The fees for conducting Parliamentary, and European Parliamentary and Police and Crime Commissioner elections are regulated by the Returning Officers' Fees and Charges Orders made by the Government.
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Scale of fees

4. At its meeting on 9 December 2010 Council agreed scales of fees for elections and parish polls in accordance with provisions in the Representation of the People Act 1983 and the Local Government Act 1972. At its meeting on 23 April 2013 Council agreed a scale of fees for neighbourhood planning referendums.
5. Council now needs to approve a scale of fees and charges for 2015/16. Officers have used the fees and charges format previously agreed by council. Some post fees have been increased (presiding officer, poll clerk and postal vote staff positions) by up to £5 to reflect rates payable by similar authorities.
6. A number of fees for the returning officer are shown. The RO uses these fees to pay both himself and key staff. After the 2015 elections, the returning officer will report actual expenditure to the audit and corporate governance committee. This will set out the cost of the elections and detail the total amount of fees paid to the RO and each of his deputies.
7. Following the 2015 elections officers will undertake a full review of the fees and charges structure with colleagues from within Oxfordshire and examine best practise from around the country with the aim of further simplifying the process. Council will receive a report at its meeting in December 2015.

Charging parish and town councils for the costs of holding elections

8. Any expenditure incurred in the election of a parish councillor is rechargeable only on the parish for which the election was held. The 1983 Act makes provision for district councils to re-charge the relevant parish council for running elections on their behalf. Previously the council has levied such a charge. The RO recommends that a charge is levied and that where there is a combined district, parish and parliamentary election, this should be on the basis of equal apportionment of shared costs.

Financial Implications

9. If the council discontinues its current practice of recharging parish and town councils for the costs of running their elections, this will create a significant additional budget pressure. The council would have to meet any costs that it could not contain within the overall budget from the contingency fund.

Legal Implications

10. There is a requirement for the council to agree the scales of fees for district and parish council elections, referendums and parish polls and to make a decision on recharging parish councils for the running elections on their behalf.

Other implications

11. None.

Conclusion

12. This report asks council to agree scales of fees for district and parish council elections, referendums and parish polls for 2015/16 and to agree to charge parish councils for running their elections.

Background Papers

Representation of the People Act 1983
Existing Scales of Expenditure for Elections.
