

RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL REPORT TO COMMITTEE

DECISION

meeting date: 9 APRIL 2024
title: RETURNING OFFICERS' SCALE OF FEES 2024/25 – BOROUGH AND
PARISH ELECTIONS
submitted by: CHIEF EXECUTIVE
principal author: MARSHAL SCOTT

1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To agree the adoption of the Returning Officers' Scale of Fees in connection with any Borough and Parish Council By Elections that might arise in 2024/25.

2 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. In addition, the Council must provide the Returning Officer with the necessary resources to enable efficient and lawful delivery of the elections. The Returning Officer for Ribble Valley Borough Council is the Chief Executive.

3 ISSUES

- 3.1 The Returning Officer is held personally responsible for the organisation and conduct of every election held within the Borough and in the case of the General Election the Ribble Valley Parliamentary Constituency which extends into the neighbouring Boroughs of South Ribble and Preston.
- 3.2 For National Elections and Referenda the fee paid to the Returning Officer and the cost of the election itself is set by the Government and regulated by the relevant Returning Officers' Fees and Charges Order.

The Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) has recently issued guidance to Returning Officers on expenses that can be reclaimed for Elections and indicative fees for staff employed on national elections.

- 3.3 For Local Elections the Council will set scale fees which the Returning Officer should not exceed. These local fees should reflect the nationally accepted staff rates.
- 3.4 Increases in the National Living Wage, the Council adopting the Real Living Wage and the requirement to pay holiday pay (12.07%) for staff employed on a casual basis has had a significant impact on the rates to be paid.
- 3.5 In order to approach setting these scale fees in a broadly consistent manner within Lancashire, a working group of Election Officers developed a scale of fees to be used. This took place in 2007 and those fees have since been updated annually in line with inflation, more recently the general staff pay award and now the guidance from DLUHC.
- 3.6 It is clearly good practice for these fees to be approved by the Council to which they will apply.
- 3.7 For Parish Council Elections we agreed many years ago not to recharge the cost of administering these elections to Parishes but for the Borough Council to bear the cost. The

cost of running Parish Elections has increased significantly over the years, particularly when held on their own i.e. Parish By Election. This may be something the Council wish to review.

RETURNING OFFICERS SCALE OF FEES 2024/25

The recommended Scale of Fees for 2024/25 are set out below:

Returning Officer (for Local Elections – Chief Executive)

For Borough Elections the fee to be as follows:

	£
Per contested ward	239.40 (224.80)
Per uncontested ward	119.70 (112.40)

For Parish Elections the fee to be as follows:

	£
Per contested ward	119.70 (112.40)
Per uncontested ward	59.85 (59.85)

Deputy Returning Officer (for Local Election – Director of Resources and Deputy CEO)

Deputy Returning Officer with full powers – 75% of the Returning Officers' fee

Presiding Officers

	£
Borough Elections	305.00 (240.00)
Parish Elections	305.00 (240.00)
Combined [20% uplift]	366.00 (288.00)

Poll Clerks

	£
Borough Elections	215.00 (145.00)
Parish Elections	215.00 (145.00)
Combined [20% uplift]	258.00 (174.00)

Training Sessions

Where these are held for Presiding Officers and Poll Clerks working on Borough and Parish Elections £25 per session.

Issuing and Opening of Postal Votes

An overall allowance of £102.45 (£96.20) per 100 votes or part thereof per ward for both Borough and Parish Elections to be deployed as felt appropriate by the Returning Officer.

Count and General Clerical Fees

An overall allowance for the Count and General Clerical Duties of £137.54 (£129.15) per ward per 1,000 electors or part thereof for both Borough and Parish Elections.

Where an election is uncontested the fee will be £48.08 (£45.15) per ward.

The Count and General Clerical fee to be deployed as felt appropriate by the Returning Officer.

PCC and General Elections

As stated earlier the Returning Officers' Fee for the PCC and General Election are met by the Government. The payment to staff working on these elections is determined by the Returning Officer following guidance issued by the Department of Levelling Up Housing and Communities.

4 RISK ASSESSMENT

4.1 Financial Implications

The Council does not specifically budget for by elections, the cost of any that take place will be charged to the Election Reserve Fund. The cost of holding the PCC and General Elections will be recharged to the Government.

4.2 Technical, Environment and Legal

The Elections will be conducted in accordance with Election Law and appropriate procedures and guidance.

4.3 Reputation

The efficient and effective administration of elections is vital to ensure the public has confidence in the Electoral process.

5 RECOMMENDED THAT COMMITTEE

- 5.1 Agree the Returning Officers' Scale of Fees for 2024/25 Borough and Parish Elections as set out in Section 3 of this report.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE

PF29-24/MHS/AC
25 March 2024