



**Committee and Date**

Council

12 December 2024

Item

Public



## Electoral Services – Scale of Fees 2025/26

<b>Responsible Officer:</b>	Andy Begley		
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<b>Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder):</b>	Cllr Gwilym Butler		

### 1. Synopsis

To agree the scale of fees for electoral events held during 2025/26, with particular reference to those re-charged to town and parish councils.

### 2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 In May 2025 all unitary and town and parish council seats will be up for election. The Returning Officer has the responsibility for administering those elections and Shropshire Council has an obligation to provide sufficient resources for the Returning Officer to carry out those duties. Where town and parish council elections are held, the costs of those polls are reimbursed by those councils to Shropshire Council.
- 2.2 In order to run elections, costs are incurred including printing, postage, logistics, premises hire and staff. Duties of staff have increased in recent years as a result of electoral reform. Recruiting and retaining sufficient experienced staff to run polling stations is cited by Returning Officers nationally as a significant challenge. Indicative staffing pay bands have been laid out by Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) who reimburse costs for national polls. In practice staff pay is in line for national and local polls.

- 2.3 This report therefore seeks approval for those costs and also a delegation in order for those costs to be adjusted annually to cover by-elections before the following round of local elections in 2029.

### **3. Recommendations**

- 3.1. That the Council agree the Scale of Fees for 2025/26 as set out in Appendix A and B.
- 3.2. That Council delegates to the Chief Executive the power to set fees annually in between scheduled local elections.

## **Report**

### **4. Risk Assessment and Opportunities Appraisal**

- 4.1 The Council needs to ensure it complies with statutory requirements. One element of this is to ensure that the Returning Officer has sufficient staff and resources required to operate an election. Staffing of polling station roles continues to present one of the biggest challenges in the running of elections. The Council needs to pay a competitive rate, as it will become increasingly difficult to staff elections because of fees.
- 4.2 The impact of the Elections Act 2022 has also increased the complexity in the administration for polling station staff (Presiding Officers, Poll Clerks and Polling Station Inspectors), who are now expected to, amongst other reforms, verify the identity of every voter before a ballot paper is issued.
- 4.3 The Scale of Fees must be balanced against setting a rate that is fair, ensures that we can recruit suitable staff and doesn't risk any rate being paid dropping below the National Living Wage.

### **5. Financial Implications**

- 5.1 Total costs depend on many factors including the number and cost of staff and polling stations. The Electoral Commission recommends ratios when allocating electors and staff to Polling Stations which dictates that each Polling Station requires a Presiding Officer and between 1 and 3 Poll Clerks. Due to the changes required to be made to the electoral register following the Local Government Boundary Review, the final maximum number of polling stations required in the May 2025 elections is not yet determined. It will also depend on how many unitary and parish elections are contested. However, it is estimated that there will be around 270 polling stations in use.
- 5.2 In 2021, the parish and town elections were combined with the Shropshire Council and the Police and Crime Commissioner elections, therefore a third of the relevant costs were recharged to the parish and town councils at that time.

- 5.3 In 2025, the parish and town elections will be combined with the Shropshire Council elections only, therefore the costs will be shared between the two election types. This will increase the proportion attributable to each election type.
- 5.4 Fees set out cover Returning Officer fees as well as staffing fees. For Unitary Council elections the Returning Officer fees are payable to the Returning Officer by the Council. No increase is proposed to those, thus not increasing this cost to the Council.
- 5.5 The overall cost incurred locally for administration of national elections is recoverable from Government via the Electoral Claims Unit in MHCLG.
- 5.6 The overall cost incurred locally for the administration of local elections is not recoverable and is funded by the Councils concerned.

## **6. Climate Change Appraisal**

- 6.1. There are no direct climate change impacts arising from this report.

## **7. Background**

- 7.1 Each Local Authority is required to appoint a Returning Officer (RO). The RO is appointed in an independent capacity by the Council to organise and run elections free from the political structure of the authority. Councils must provide their RO with the resources they need to run elections. This includes the cost of recruiting and paying staff to act as Presiding Officers and Poll Clerks, along with any other ancillary staff necessary for the success of a poll.
- 7.2 For national polls the government issues a Fees and Charges schedule which identifies for each authority a “maximum recoverable amount” along with a fee which may be claimed by the appointed RO for the rendering of their services. The RO will pay their appointed staff from the monies provided by government and will account for their expenditure by way of a return to the Election Claims Unit (ECU) at the Cabinet Office.
- 7.3 MHCLG is responsible for central government elections and last year launched a project to introduce indicative fee bands for all election roles at polls which they fund. This introduced set fees which should be paid to elections staff at UK Parliamentary elections, Police and Crime Commissioner elections and national referenda.
- 7.4 For all such national elections, the RO will be expected to adhere to the range proposed for each role by the MHCLG. To pay outside of this range will require special agreement from the ECU or risk the ECU refusing to reimburse the difference where roles exceed their expected amounts.
- 7.5 Although local elections are not formally subject to the same fees as national elections, in practice the scale of fees should be uniform across all election types as having separate fees for local and national elections would cause confusion and major issues with staffing elections which pay different amounts to those held either at the same time or in other years.

7.6 The cost of scheduled elections will also include the costs of running the counts and these will include count staffing and premises. The amounts charged to Town and Parishes will depend on the number of electors in their area, numbers of postal votes, turnout, time taken to count and whether there are combined polls. As a guide, advice is usually given to allow £2.30 per elector overall for an average size ward taking account of the fact it may be more for smaller areas.

7.6 The proposed scales of fees in respect of Unitary elections are detailed at Appendix A and for Town and Parish elections at Appendix B. These rates would be applicable at the 1 May 2025 local elections.

7.7 Additionally, elections staff are entitled to statutory holiday pay, at 12.07%, and this should be reflected separately on a payslip.

## 8. Conclusions

8.1 The rates set out reflect the pay bands issued by MHCLG and therefore are an appropriate basis to set the fees for forthcoming scheduled polls and unscheduled by-elections, and to recover them from town and parish councils.

**List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information)**

**Local Member:** All

**Appendices:**

**Appendix A: Unitary Council – Electoral Fees**

**Appendix B: Parish Councils – Electoral Fees**

**Appendix A****LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972****Unitary Council – Electoral Fees**

Scale of Fees and Disbursements for Council Elections with effect from 1 April 2025.

**PART A – RETURNING OFFICER’S FEES**

Fee for conducting the election and generally performing the duties required by an enactment relating to the election or poll and including all expenses other than those specifically mentioned in Part ‘C’ below.

		<b>2021</b>	<b>2025</b>
		<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
1.	<b><u>Uncontested Elections</u></b> For each ward	134.00	134.00
2.	<b><u>Contested Elections</u></b> For each ward	234.00	234.00
3.	<b><u>Declaration of Results</u></b> For each ward To the Deputy Returning Officer in charge of counting the votes and declaring the result (or where this function is performing by the Returning Officer personally, to the Returning Officer)	99.00	99.00

**PART B – PAYMENTS TO STAFF**

		<b>2021</b>	<b>2025</b>
		<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
4.	<b><u>Presiding Officers</u></b> For each Presiding Officer (plus any travel and/or training fees as per the indicative fee bands)  Note: 1. Where there is a combined poll on the same day, an uplift fee will be payable in accordance with the indicative fee bands	287.00	318.75

5.	<p><b><u>Poll Clerks</u></b></p> <p>(i) For each full time Poll Clerk (plus any travel and/or training fees as per the indicative fee bands)</p> <p>(ii) part time or evening poll clerks</p> <p>Notes: 1. Additional poll clerks may be employed, as per the Electoral Commission's guidance on polling station staff ratios 2. Where there is a combined poll on the same day, an uplift fee will be payable in accordance with the indicative fee bands</p>	192.00	219.62
6.	<p><b><u>Counting Assistants</u></b></p> <p>(i) Scheduled elections For each Counting Assistant (Night rate/Saturdays x1.5; Sundays/Bank Holiday x2)</p> <p>(ii) Unscheduled elections For each Counting Assistant For the first two hours For each additional hour or part thereof (to include all expenses other than travelling expenses)</p>	13.00 per hour (day rate)	14.40 per hour (day rate)
7.	<p><b><u>Postal Votes</u></b></p> <p>Scheduled elections For the remuneration of persons employed for the issue and receipt of postal ballot papers. (Night rate/Saturdays x1.5; Sundays/Bank Holiday x2)</p>	10.00 per hour or part thereof (day rate)	14.40 per hour or part thereof (day rate)
8.	<p><b><u>Clerical Allowance</u></b></p> <p>For each ward For the employment of staff for clerical or other assistance or the payment of honoraria to staff other than the Returning Officer who undertake additional duties or overtime in connection with the election or poll (as the case may be).</p>	149.00	149.00

**PART C – OTHER DISBURSEMENTS**

		<b>2021</b>	<b>2025</b>
		<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
<b>9.</b>	<b><u>Travelling Expenses</u></b>		
	Returning Officer, Deputy Returning Officer, Presiding Officers, Poll Clerks and Counting Assistants		
	(i) Scheduled	Pay band rate	Pay band rate
	(ii) Unscheduled	Either: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Actual and necessary cost of public transport.</li> <li>• Own car mileage rates on Unitary Council scale; or</li> <li>Actual and necessary costs of hire (subject to prior approval by the Returning Officer)</li> </ul>	Either: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Actual and necessary cost of public transport.</li> <li>• Own car mileage rates on Unitary Council scale; or</li> <li>Actual and necessary costs of hire (subject to prior approval by the Returning Officer)</li> </ul>

**Note**

All fees payable in accordance with this schedule may be increased with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> April each year based on the nationally set pay bands and pay rates to assist Returning Officer and Electoral Registration Officer align principal area elections with the consolidated funded polls.

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972****Parish Councils – Electoral Fees**

Scale of Fees and Disbursements for Parish Council Elections and Polls consequent upon a Parish Meeting – with effect from 1 April 2025.

**PART A – RETURNING OFFICER’S FEES**

**Fee for conducting the election or poll, and generally performing the duties requires by any enactment relating to the election or poll and including all expenses other than those specifically mentioned in part ‘C’ below:**

		<b>2021</b>	<b>2025</b>
		<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
1.	<b><u>Uncontested Parish Elections</u></b> (scheduled polls only – unscheduled poll is set by Council in the fees and charges report) For each parish or where the parish is divided into wards, for each ward	50.00	50.00
2.	<b><u>Contested Parish Elections</u></b> (scheduled polls only – unscheduled poll is set by Council in the fees and charges report) For each parish or where the parish is divided into wards, for each ward	100.00	100.00
3.	<b><u>Declaration of Results</u></b> For each parish or where the parish is divided into wards, for each ward to the Deputy Returning Officer in charge of counting the votes and declaring the result (or where this function is performed by the Returning Officer personally, to the Returning Officer)	45.00	45.00
4.	<b><u>Polls Consequent on a Parish Meeting</u></b>		
	(i) Where official notice of a poll has been received but no poll is taken in consequence of the withdrawal of a candidate or otherwise	23.00	23.00
	(ii) For every poll taken for the election of the chairman of a parish meeting or for an appointment to any other office	54.00	54.00
	(iii) For every poll taken consequent on a parish meeting on any question other than as mentioned in paragraph 3(ii)	54.00	54.00
	(iv) In the case of a poll to which either paragraph 3(ii) or (iii) applies, for each additional polling station after the first	11.00	11.00
	Notes:		



	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. If a poll is taken on the same date in any parish on more than one question, then only one fee shall be charged under paragraph 4(iii)</li> <li>2. If polls are taken on the same day in any parish for the election or appointment of persons to more than one office, then separate fees shall be payable under paragraph 4(ii) for each poll</li> <li>3. Where polls are taken in any parish on the same day for the election or appointment of persons to any office <u>and</u> on any other questions consequent on a parish meeting, separate fees shall be payable under paragraphs 4(ii) and (iii) but only one fee shall be payable under paragraph 4(iv) in respect of each additional polling station</li> </ol>		
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### **PART B – PAYMENTS TO STAFF**

		2021 £	2025 £
5.	<p><b><u>Presiding Officers</u></b></p> <p>For each Presiding Officer (plus any travel and/or training fees as per the indicative fee bands):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) Parish Election</li> <li>(ii) Parish Poll</li> <li>(iii) Additional fee where two or more elections (Unitary &amp; Parish) or an election (Unitary or Parish) and a poll are held on the same day</li> <li>(iv) Additional fee where two or more parish polls are held on the same day</li> </ol> <p>Notes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Where more than two parish polls are held on the same day then only one additional payment will be made under paragraph 5(iv)</li> <li>2. Where Unitary elections, parish elections and one or more parish polls are held on the same day, only one additional fee shall be payable under paragraph 5(iii) and there shall be no payment under paragraph 5(iv)</li> </ol>	<p>234.00</p> <p>75.00</p> <p>58.00</p> <p>20.00</p>	<p>318.75</p> <p>91.45</p> <p>20% uplift</p> <p>10% uplift</p>
6.	<p><b><u>Poll Clerks</u></b></p> <p>For each Poll Clerk (plus any travel and/or training fees as per the indicative fee bands):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) Parish Election</li> <li>(ii) Parish Poll</li> </ol>	<p>144.32</p> <p>50.00</p>	<p>219.62</p> <p>63.35</p>

	(iii) Additional fee where two or more elections (Unitary & Parish) or an election (Unitary or Parish) and a poll are held on the same day	39.00	20% uplift
	(iv) Additional fee where two or more parish polls are held on the same day	15.00	10% uplift
	(v) Part-time or evening Poll Clerks	7.00 per hour	13.31 per hour
	Notes: 1. Where more than two parish polls are held on the same day then only one additional payment will be made under paragraph 6(iv) 2. Where Unitary elections, parish elections and one or more parish polls are held on the same day, only one additional fee shall be payable under paragraph 6(iii) and there shall be no payment under paragraph 6(iv) 3. Additional poll clerks may be employed, as per the Electoral Commission's guidance on polling station staff ratios		
7.	<b><u>Counting Assistants</u></b>		
	(i) Scheduled elections For each Counting Assistant (Night rate/Saturdays x1.5; Sundays/Bank Holiday x2)	13.00 per hour (day rate)	14.40 per hour (day rate)
	(ii) Unscheduled elections For each Counting Assistant For the first two hours For each additional hour or part thereof (to include all expenses other than travelling expenses)	30.00 9.00	30.00 9.00
8.	<b><u>Postal Votes</u></b>		
	Scheduled elections For the remuneration of persons employed for the issue and receipt of postal ballot papers. (Night rate/Saturdays x1.5; Sundays/Bank Holiday x2)	10.00 per hour or part thereof (day rate)	14.40 per hour or part thereof (day rate)
9.	<b><u>Clerical Allowance</u></b>		
	For the employment of staff for clerical or other assistance or the payment of honoraria to staff other than the Returning Officer who undertake additional duties or overtime in connection with the election or poll (as the case may be):  For each parish or where the parish is divided into wards, for each ward	95.00	95.00

**PART C – OTHER DISBURSEMENTS**

		<b>2021</b>	<b>2025</b>
		<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
10.	<p><b><u>Travelling Expenses</u></b></p> <p>Returning Officer, Deputy Returning Officer, Presiding Officers, Poll Clerks and Counting Assistants</p> <p>(i) Scheduled</p> <p>(ii) Unscheduled</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Pay band rate</p> <p>Either:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Actual and necessary cost of public transport.</li> <li>• Own car mileage rates on Unitary Council scale; or</li> <li>• Actual and necessary costs of hire (subject to prior approval by the Returning Officer)</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;">Pay band rate</p> <p>Either:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Actual and necessary cost of public transport.</li> <li>• Own car mileage rates on Unitary Council scale; or</li> <li>• Actual and necessary costs of hire (subject to prior approval by the Returning Officer)</li> </ul>

		<b>2021</b>	<b>2025</b>
		<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
11.	<p><b><u>Printing, Stationery and Publishing Costs</u></b></p> <p>(i) Printing and providing ballot papers</p> <p>(ii) Purchase of Registers of Electors</p> <p>(iii) Printing and providing all other notices, nominations and other documents required in and about the Election</p> <p>(iv) Payment of persons for the distribution and posting of notices</p> <p>(v) All other general stationery, telephone calls, bank charges and miscellaneous expenses</p>	Actual Costs	Actual Costs
12.	<p><b><u>Hire and fitting up of Premises</u></b></p> <p>(i) for hire or necessary fitting up of rooms or buildings for polling and counting (including the hire of any portable buildings) or expenses for use of such room or building</p> <p>(ii) For constructing a polling station with fittings and compartments including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Purchase, hire and repair of polling screens</li> </ul>	Actual Costs	Actual Costs

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Delivery and collection of polling screens; and</li> <li>- All other expenses of and incidental thereof</li> </ul> <p>(iii) Payment of compensation in consequence of the cancellation of functions in order to make suitable premises available for polling stations or for the counting of votes</p>		
13.	<p><b><u>Administration of poll by Electoral Services</u></b></p> <p>Contested unscheduled elections.</p> <p>Contested scheduled elections.</p>	-	250.00
		-	150.00

**Note**

All fees payable in accordance with this schedule will be increased with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> April each year based on the nationally set pay bands and pay rates to assist Returning Officers and Electoral Registration Officer align parish area elections with the consolidated funded polls.