

**Chief Executives' Group - North Yorkshire and York
Thursday, 14 November 2013**

North Yorkshire Councils – Election Fees

In 2005 a review of election fees paid by all North Yorkshire Councils was undertaken by the then, Head of Democratic Services at Craven District Council, Colin Iveson. This followed the introduction of new Returning Officers Charges Orders for national elections. A copy of Mr Iveson's review report is attached at Appendix A.

Once the review had been undertaken the proposed schedule of fees was agreed at a meeting of the North Yorkshire Chief Executives. It was also agreed that authority to apply any annual increases to the fees would be the responsibility of Colin Iveson.

There have been no increases to the fee schedule for at least two years as there were no annual salary increases.

As Colin Iveson retired last year, the annual fee increase should be referred back to the North Yorkshire Chief Executives to decide who should now be responsible for this task.

Appendix A – report of Mr Colin Iveson (2005)

**North Yorkshire Councils
Report of Colin Iveson (2005)**

REVIEW OF ELECTION FEES

Report of the Returning Officer, Craven District Council

A new Returning Officers' Charges Order came into force on 23rd March 2005 (Statutory Instrument 2005 No.780) for the General Election held in May 2005. The basis of the charges in that Order had changed quite considerably in the following respects:

- fees for Presiding Officers and Poll Clerks increased to recognise responsibilities and hours;
- lump sum fee for Returning Officers;
- introduction of fees for:
 - polling staff attending training sessions; and
 - services for conducting each training session.
- lump sum for clerical assistance., including poll cards and count;
- specific sum for administering postal ballot papers based on volume.

The fees agreed by the Government and set out in the Returning Officers Charges Orders were decided following discussion through a working party of electoral practitioners and then consultation with the Electoral Commission. These now form a sound basis upon which the North Yorkshire Councils can conduct their review

The effect of the new Returning Officers Charges Orders means that the fees and charges used by the North Yorkshire Councils are substantially different, both in terms of the basis upon which they were set and in their levels. For example a Presiding Officer at a local election would receive a fee of £100 under the North Yorkshire Councils' agreed fees and charges (polling for 13 hours – £7.69 per hour) compared to £175 for the General Election (polling for 15 hours – £11.67 per hour).

Bearing in mind that the staff we used at the recent General Election are the same as those we would use for local elections, there is every likelihood that we will have difficulties recruiting those same people to do a job with the same responsibilities at the next round of local elections.

For most of the Borough / District Councils the next ordinary day of election is May 2007, but for Craven and Harrogate, which have elections by thirds, the next ordinary day of election is May 2006.

In light of the above, the Electoral Officers from a number of the Borough / District Councils in the County are of the view that the fees and charges used by the North Yorkshire Councils are in urgent need of review. We met to undertake this review in July 2005.

The principles upon which we conducted the review are:

- the levels of responsibility for staff employed on elections are the same whether the election is national or local with the only change in responsibility occurring when elections are combined;
- there is strong argument in support of adopting a similar level of fees and charges locally to those used in the Returning Officers' Charges Orders;
- the fees and charges locally require restructuring to reflect modern election practices;

- having provision in the fees' and charges schedule for training / development is essential; and
- there is no need to include variable amounts in the fees and charges schedule, currently listed as "actual and necessary costs".

Attached is a schedule recommending a new structure and level of fees that could be used by both Borough / District Councils and North Yorkshire County Council at local elections / parish polls in North Yorkshire in future. Please note that these fees are intended as a guide; it is for each Council to decide whether it will adopt some or all of the fees and charges.

The following notes set out the basis for changes in the proposed new elections fees schedule set out at the Appendix to this report:

(1) STAFF (Sections A – H of attached schedule):

(a) Presiding Officers and Poll Clerks Fees –

- i. Basic fees rounded as a proportion of the fees set down in the Returning Officers' Charges Order i.e. 13/15^{ths} (87%). [Note: The indications are that polling hours for local elections will be changed in the new set of Regulations to be published from 8am – 9pm to 7am – 10pm (same hours as for national elections). These fees will need to be increased accordingly to the same levels as for the 2005 General Election.]
- ii. Additional fee for extra responsibilities involved with combined elections as a proportion of those set down in Returning Officers' Charges Order i.e. 13/15^{ths}. [Above note also applies.]

(b) Training – Provision included to undertake and deliver training of election staff.

(c) Counts –

- i. (Deputy) Returning Officers – reclassify as "Supervision of Area Counting Centres" – have one fee (not separate day and night fees) as most local counts are conducted on the evening of polling day. Up-rated as per the 2005 pay award.
- ii. Counting Assistants – simplify by having one fee only as most local counts are conducted on the evening of polling day. Also, rather than have a separate recount fee, pay set amount for up to 3 hours and then an amount per additional ½ hour beyond that.
- iii. Senior Counting Assistants – simplify by having one fee only as most local counts are conducted on the evening of polling day. Also pay set amount for up to 3 hours and then an amount per additional ½ hour beyond that.

(d) Postal Voting – Introduce similar basis for administering postal votes to that in Returning Officers' Charges Order i.e. to cover payment for staff involved in preparation, issue and receipt of postal ballot papers for each electoral area. Responsibility levels are same for all types of local elections so proposed fees' levels are same as for the General Election.

(e) Poll Cards – Specific amounts have been included for manual preparation and sorting / checking computer-produced cards. It is proposed that these be incorporated as part of an overall charge for clerical and supervisory staff.

(2) TRAVELLING EXPENSES (Section J of attached schedule):

No changes are proposed here.

(3) CLERICAL AND SUPERVISORY (Section K of attached schedule):

It is proposed that this should be paid per electoral area based upon a “per elector” fee rather than a lump sum. It would be available to pay in cases where there is additional workload and responsibility, as well as being used for overtime / work outside normal office hours, and payments to casual staff.

So far as the County Council Elections are concerned in this respect, it is accepted that it makes much sense for experienced electoral staff to administer the County Council elections, but it is felt that the County’s cost are heavily subsidised by the Borough / District Councils both in terms of manpower and use of the computer systems. In view of this, it is recommended that the Borough / District Councils collectively should seek an agreement with the County Council about a realistic recharge to that Council for the time spent by Borough / District Councils’ electoral staff administering the County Council Elections / By-Elections.

(4) RETURNING OFFICERS’ FEES (Section L of attached schedule):

The electoral officers thought it best to leave this element of the review to the Returning Officers (RO) themselves taking account of

- the national position on payment of fees to ROs;
- the postal votes element of the fee was set at a time when most of the work was done manually compared to today’s electronically based systems and this element was included in the flat fee for the General Election;
- to look at fees based on “electoral areas” rather than have separate fee levels for Parishes and District Wards, and potentially County Electoral Divisions and Parish Polls; and
- where there are combined elections, should there be an additional payment for the extra responsibility, similar to that in the Returning Officers’ Charges Order.

(5) UNCONTESTED ELECTIONS (Section M of attached schedule):

No changes are proposed here.

(6) PARISH POLLS (Section N of attached schedule):

No changes are proposed here.

Conclusion

In the past we have tried to establish a basis for the payment of such as Presiding Officer and Poll Clerks fees, but have struggled to find one. In addition, the fees for local elections in North Yorkshire are ready for a thorough review, having had very little done with them, except for annual uprating, since being established back in the 1970’s.

With the publication of the Returning Officers’ Charges Order for the May 2005 General Election and elections due in May 2006 for at least two of the Borough / District Councils in the County, now seems an opportune time to carry out the review. It would be useful also to have in one document the fees to be applied at all

local elections / polls in North Yorkshire with effect from January 2006. One set of fees for the whole County is important bearing in mind that North Yorkshire County Council elections, together with the Parliamentary European Constituencies, cross Borough / District Council boundaries.

RECOMMENDATIONS –

- (1) That the revised set of election fees for all types of local election, as set out in the schedule to this report (as amended).
- (2) That a revised structure of Returning Officers' Elections' Fees is agreed bearing in mind the points set out in (4) above. (See e-mail dated 26th August to Peter Simpson.)
- (3) That the schedule of elections fees and revised Returning Officers' Elections' Fees now agreed are referred to each Borough / District Council and the County Council in North Yorkshire for adoption.
- (4) That each of the Borough / District Councils adopting this schedule is recommended to uprate the revised schedule of election fees each year in line with the annual salary increases.
- (5) That the North Yorkshire Borough / District Councils' Chief Executives act collectively to seek an agreement with the County Council on a basis for recharging to that Council time spent by Borough / District Councils' electoral staff in administering the County Council Elections / By-Elections

Colin Iveson (Craven District Council) on behalf
of North Yorkshire Electoral Officers
August 2005.
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NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNCILS

PROPOSED ELECTION FEES

from January 2005

	HEAD OF EXPENDITURE	CURRENT FEES	PROPOSED FEES
	STAFF		
A	Presiding Officer/ Polling Station Inspectors Fee plus increase for combination	£100 £25.95	£150 (£175) £35 (£40)
B	Poll Clerk Fee plus increase for combination	£72.65 £18.25	£90 (£105) £20 (£25)
C	Providing Training, per session	No provision	£150
D	Attending training (presiding officers, poll clerks, counting assistants, postal vote issue and opening staff).	No provision	£25
E	Supervision of Area Counting Centres (formerly Deputy Returning Officer) One Count Two Counts Three Counts plus per count thereafter	£50.95 £76.60 £102.00 £12.62	£52.50 £79.00 £105.00 £13.00
F	Counting Assistant (first 3 hours) plus each additional ½ hour or part thereafter	£25.50	£30.00 £5.00
G	Senior Counting Assistant plus each additional ½ hour or part thereafter	£31.80	£45.00 £7.50
H	Multi-Vacancies elections where additional counting	Increase fees	Increase fees for E,

	methods are necessary	for E, F and G above by 30%	F and G above by 30%
I	POSTAL VOTES – preparation, issue and receipt per electoral area	£22.25 for first 50 plus £11 for each additional 100 or part thereafter	£60 for first 100 and £6 per 10 thereafter
J	TRAVELLING EXPENSES All staff employed at the election should be paid mileage at “.		Casual User” rate (NJC – APT & C Services) for cars not exceeding 1199cc
K	CLERICAL AND SUPERVISORY STAFF – For each contested electoral area to cover additional workload and responsibility for staff in preparation of stamping instruments, ballot boxes, checking ballot papers, checking poll cards, etc.		8p per elector
L	RETURNING OFFICERS’ fees		To be decided.
M	UNCONTESTED ELECTIONS		One third of fee for a contested election.
N	PARISH POLLS – Allowances not to exceed those paid under A, B, E and F of the above scale. (Note: If a poll is taken on more than one question on the same day, only one set of fees shall be charged) Such other payments as are necessary Services of Returning Officer		Same fee as if was contested election in electoral area