

Bath & North East Somerset Council

MEETING:	Council	
MEETING DATE:	16 March 2023	
TITLE:	Local Government Elections 2023: Election Fees	
WARD:	All	
AN OPEN PUBLIC ITEM		
List of attachments to this report: Appendix 1		

1 THE ISSUE

- 1.1 On Thursday 4 May 2023 there are local government elections in Bath and North East Somerset, including the election of 59 ward councillors for Bath & North East Somerset Council and the election of 444 parish and town councillors for the parish and town councils within the Council area.
- 1.2 This report sets out the proposed fees paid to the Returning Officer and the staff he employs to undertake various duties in connection with these elections.

2 RECOMMENDATION

The Council is asked to:

- 2.1 Agree the scale of fees payable to the Returning Officer and his staff as set out in Appendix 1 to this report.

3 THE REPORT

- 3.1 The Returning Officer has overall responsibility for the conduct of elections held within Bath and North East Somerset.

3.2 The Returning Officer is responsible for:

- the publication of all election notices
- the nomination process for candidates and political parties
- the issue, receipt and counting of postal votes
- the provision of polling stations and other election venues

- the appointment of presiding officers, poll clerks and polling station inspectors
- the administration and security of polling stations
- the verification, count and declaration of results

3.3 In order to fulfil his legal duties the Returning Officer needs to employ and pay over 600 additional staff with different levels of responsibility. It is important that this is done fairly and transparently.

4 STATUTORY CONSIDERATIONS

4.1 Under section 35(1) of the Representation of the People Act (RPA) 1983, 'every district council shall appoint an officer of the council to be the returning officer for the elections of councillors of the district and an officer of the council to be the returning officer for elections of councillors of parishes within the district.' Other types of elections are covered by similar provisions within the RPA 1983.

4.2 Returning Officers are statutorily independent of the local authority and are ultimately responsible for the efficient and effective running of elections. They are also responsible for accounting for the expenses incurred for the conduct of elections in their area. If the Returning Officer directly incurs costs for an election, they can make a claim for reimbursement from the local authority.

5 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (FINANCE, PROPERTY, PEOPLE)

5.1 A separate budget is maintained for electoral expenditure, which is built up over time towards the local government elections in an election reserve. The Council has set aside a budget of £300,000 to reimburse the Returning Officer for all expenses incurred for the conduct of the local government elections on Thursday 4 May 2023.

6 RISK MANAGEMENT

6.1 A risk assessment related to the issue and recommendations has been undertaken, in compliance with the Council's decision making risk management guidance.

7 EQUALITIES

7.1 The setting of a scale of fees does not in itself involve equality and inclusion implications. However, the level of expenses included in the scheme have been formulated to ensure that robust arrangements are in place to secure participation by candidates, staff and the general public.

8 CLIMATE CHANGE

8.1 No impact arising directly from this report.

9 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

9.1 None

10 CONSULTATION

10.1 The Monitoring Officer has been consulted.

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Background papers	Representation of the People Act 1983
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APPENDIX 1

Postal vote issuing and opening staff	
Role	Hourly rate
Postal vote preparation and issue assistant	£13.50
Postal vote preparation and issue supervisor	£16.00
Postal vote opening and checking assistant	£13.50
Postal vote opening and checking supervisor	£16.00
Postal vote opening and checking – IT signature verification	£13.50
Postal vote opening session manager	£26.00

Polling station staff	
Role	Hourly rate
Polling station equipment issue assistant	£13.50
Polling station equipment issue supervisor	£16.00
Presiding officer	£17.50
Poll clerk	£13.50
Polling station marshal	£13.50
Polling station inspector	£17.50

Verification and count staff	
Role	Hourly rate
Ballot box receipt assistant	£13.50
Ballot box receipt supervisor	£17.50
Verification and count assistant	£13.50
Verification and count supervisor	£17.50
Verification and count top table assistant / data officer	£17.50
Verification and count manager	£26.00
Media handling / comms	£17.50

Other duties	
Role	Hourly rate
Casual administrative support	£13.50
Nomination checking assistant	£13.50
Nomination checking supervisor	£17.50

Returning Officer fee	£6,700
The Returning Officer fee is based on the fee payable to the Returning Officer at the Police and Crime Commissioner election in May 2021, which is the last whole authority area election.	

Night rates

The night period, i.e. the time during which the night rate will be paid, lasts between 10pm and 8am. For overnight counts, all count roles will be paid at the night rate of 1.5x the day rate.