

## RETURNING OFFICER'S FEES AND ARRANGEMENTS FOR ELECTIONS

### 1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 Following an evaluation of the elections in May 2014, this report sets out the change to the count venue for the May 2015 elections and associated accommodation arrangements and seeks approval of the Returning Officer's scale of fees and expenses for 2015/2016.

### 2 INTRODUCTION

- 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.
- 2.2 The Returning Officer for Rochford District Council is the Chief Executive.

### 3 DISCUSSION

#### The Count Venue

- 3.1 Since 2002 the election count has taken place at the Mill Arts and Events Centre in Rayleigh. The venue has provided adequate facilities, but the size of the hall means that the number of count tables is restricted.
- 3.2 The increasing complexities of some election counts, together with a rise in the number of combined elections, has meant that this lack of space has started to impact on the administration of the count.
- 3.3 The UK Parliamentary election on Thursday, 7 May 2015 will, for the first time be combined with both District and Parish Council elections. The verification of three different ballots will take place on the Thursday evening, followed by the counting of votes for the Constituency of Rayleigh and Wickford.
- 3.4 Since May 2010, the number of postal voters within the Rochford District has increased by nearly 2500. It follows, therefore, that there will be more postal votes that need processing at the count venue. It is imperative that sufficient space is available for this task.
- 3.5 The 2001 UK Parliamentary and District Count took place successfully at the Clements Hall Leisure Centre, Hawkwell, albeit in a smaller hall than is available today.
- 3.6 The sports hall at Clements is significantly larger than the hall at the Mill Arts and Events Centre. Moving the count to this venue will allow the employment of more staff at the count, resulting in a more efficient operation.

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**Accommodation Arrangements**

- 3.7 The core election team operates from two offices on the ground floor of No.19 South Street, Rochford. Limited storage space is available in the stables room at this site, with the majority of election equipment stored at the depot at 57 South Street.
- 3.8 For the run up to the forthcoming election additional space has been identified at the Rochford offices to enable the secure storage of ballot papers, postal packs and poll-cards and the filling of ballot boxes.
- 3.9 For the past four years postal vote opening sessions have been carried out in the main meeting room at the Rochford offices and the former training room opposite. Officers are in the process of finding an optimum location for postal vote opening this year.

**Returning Officer Fees and Expenses**

- 3.10 The Returning Officer is held personally responsible for the organisation and conduct of every election held within the District. For national elections and referenda the fee paid to the Returning Officer is set by statute and paid by central Government. For local elections the fee is paid by the local authority.
- 3.11 The Returning Officer fee for district and parish elections is calculated using the formula shown at Appendix 1, table A. These rates were last increased in September 2009.
- 3.12 A fee is also paid to staff in the election office in recognition of the additional responsibilities associated with serving as Deputy Returning Officers with either full or limited powers. This payment is at the discretion of the Returning Officer and is drawn from the clerical allowance which is calculated as shown at Appendix 1, table B.
- 3.13 Appendix 1, table C shows the total amounts paid from the clerical allowance between 2011 and 2014 inclusive.
- 3.14 The clerical figure represents the amount allowable for staffing both the count and the postal vote process. The clerical rates were last increased in September 2009.
- 3.15 If additional payments to staff in the electoral office are paid by the Returning Officer from his own fees, the monies saved can be used to employ additional staff to work on the election. For 2015 the Returning Officer proposes to pay the Deputy Returning Officers identified in paragraph 3.12 from his own fee as opposed to drawing payments from the clerical allowance. The Returning officer intends to allocate fifty percent of his fee to cover these payments.
- 3.16 The fees payable to staff working in polling stations and on other electoral duties are broadly in line with assumptions laid down by the Cabinet Office in 2012. Appendix 1, table D, lists the scale of fees.

**4 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 No increase is proposed in the schedule of fees paid to Returning Officer or polling staff.
- 4.2 The cost of employing additional staff at the count would be covered by savings achieved from the clerical allowance as identified in paragraph 3.15.

**5 RECOMMENDATION****5.1 It is proposed that Council RESOLVES**

- (1) To note the change in count venue for the 7 May 2015 elections from The Mill Arts and Events Centre, Rayleigh to the Clements Hall Leisure Centre, Hawkwell.
- (2) To note that sufficient space is made available within existing office accommodation for the checking and storage of ballot papers, postal packs and poll cards and that the best location for postal vote opening is under consideration.
- (3) To agree to retain the fees payable to the Returning Officer at their current level and as identified at Appendix 1, table A.
- (4) To note the schedule of fees paid to staff working on elections in the financial year 2015/16 as shown in Appendix 1, table D.
- (5) To endorse apportionment of the Returning Officer fee in the ratio 50% Returning Officer, 50% Deputy Returning Officers within the core electoral team.
- (6) That any fee paid to the Returning Officer or any Deputy Returning Officer with full powers is published on the website.



Amar Dave

Chief Executive

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**Background Papers:-**

None.

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If you would like this report in large print, Braille or another language please contact 01702 318111.

**Rochford District Council - Election Fees and Charges 2015/16****A. Returning Officer's Fees**

For each contested District/ Parish/ Town council ward	£123.05
Plus for each 1000 electors or part thereof	£42.52
For each uncontested District/Parish/Town Council ward	£58.45

**B. Clerical Allowance**

The count per 500 electors	£15.77
Poll cards 1 <sup>st</sup> 2000 electors per ward	£24.75
Each 250 part thereof	£1.61
Preparation, each 100 or part thereof	£2.76
Postal vote issue per ward 1 <sup>st</sup> 50	£43.36
Each additional 50 per ward	£27.56
Postal vote opening per ward	£43.56
Each additional 50 per ward	£27.56

**C. Clerical Amounts Paid**

Referendum and District 2011	4400
District 2012	3300
Police and Crime Commissioners 2012	2640
County 2013	3520
European and District 2014	3040

**D. Election fees**

Presiding Officer	*£195.00
Training	£30.00
Travel	£15.00
Poll Clerk	*£115.00
Training	£15.00
Travel	£7.50
Polling Station inspector	£195.00
Postal vote issue – hourly rate	£8.00
Postal vote opening – hourly rate	£9.00

Postal vote supervisor – hourly rate	£10.00
Poll card delivery – per card	0.15
Count staff – hourly rate (day)	£10.00
Count staff – hourly rate (night)	£12.00
Count supervisors – hourly rate (day)	£15.00
Count supervisors – hourly rate (night)	£16.00
Count supervisor training	£20.00
Trainer fee – per session	£75.00
Room hire daily rate	£125.00

\*A 20% uplift is paid to polling staff working in combined stations.