

Elections Fees and Charges

Executive Member(s): All

Local Member(s) and Division: All

Lead Officer: Duncan Sharkey - Chief Executive and Returning Officer

Author: David Clark - Service Director – Governance, Democratic & Legal Services

Contact Details: David.Clark@somerset.gov.uk

1. Summary

- 1.1 The Council has now assumed responsibility for the running of various election types which were previously run by the four district councils. It is prudent to put in place scales of fees and charges to provide certainty to the Returning Officer as to the level of payments to staff and to pay the proper charges for stationary, hire of building and other costs.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That Council note the report and approve the fees and charges to apply the various elections in Somerset for 2023/4 set out in the Appendices to the report.

3. Electoral Fees and Charges

- 3.1 There are a number of election types which are relevant to Somerset. The main ones are set out in the table below together with the funding body in each case. Whenever there is an election or poll for each of these the Returning Officer, irrespective of title, is personally liable for the electoral process. The Council ensures that there is sufficient insurance in place to cover any issues that may arise at an election/poll.

Election type	RO title	Funded by
Somerset Council	Returning Officer	Somerset Council
Parish/Town/City	Returning Officer	Parish/Town/City (recharged)
Police and Crime Commissioner	Local Returning Officer	Government
Neighbourhood Planning Referendum	Counting Officer	Somerset Council (Government grant)
Parish Poll	Returning Officer	Parish/Town/City (recharged)
National Referendum	Counting Officer	Government

The Electoral Registration Officer for the authority, and not the Returning Officer, is the relevant person who is appointed to be the Acting Returning Officer for Parliamentary Elections and the Petition Officer in respect of recall petitions. The funding in both cases comes from central government.

Legislation requires that each relevant local authority must place the services of its officers at the disposal of the person who is appointed to the office of returning officer (or the equivalent).

Although local elections are the responsibility of the Returning Officer, it is considered prudent for local authorities to have a scale of fees and charges to cover disbursements including fees to staff involved. Where a local authority has such a scale the Returning Officer can pay all expenditure properly incurred, provided that it does not exceed the fixed level. This provides certainty to both the authority and the Returning Officer. The predecessor authority approved a scale in February 2022 for the elections in May 2022. However, with the additional responsibilities for polling station staff, the effect of inflation and the increase in the national minimum wage, it is suggested that this scale should be amended for the current year. Please see Appendix A for the recommended levels. There are, however, savings from the previous scale as the Council no longer has to re-imburse district councils for the use of polling screens and election equipment.

The Chief Executive was appointed as the Returning Officer for Somerset Council elections on their initial appointment and their fees were incorporated into their overall salary level. The Chief Executive was subsequently appointed for other local election types as part of the Council's constitution which was adopted on 22 March this year. They are entitled to receive fees for these additional election types in common with the normal practice.

Regarding national election types, the Acting or Local Returning Officer receives fees determined by Parliament. It is at the Acting/Local Returning Officer's discretion if they wish to make any payments from those sums to deputies that they may appoint. Fees for staff at national elections are also to be set locally but within centrally recommended guidelines.

A suggested fee scales for City, Town and Parish Council elections is attached as Appendix B. This largely mirrors the Somerset Council scheme.

A suggested scale for Parish Polls is attached as Appendix C. Voting at Parish Polls is only held between 4 and 9pm, there are no poll cards or postal votes, which is why the scale is shorter than others. There is also no requirement for voters to show identity documentation at parish polls. These are comparatively rare occurrences, but for that reason, it is helpful to have a defined scale.

The scale for Neighbourhood Planning Referendums will be the same as for Somerset Council elections.

4. Consultations undertaken

- 4.1 These have been internal with key officers including to ensure legal and administrative requirements are met. Comparisons have also been made with the fee scale of Cornwall Council which is geographically close and has a similar number of electors. Below is a table showing relative levels:

Role	Cornwall	Somerset proposed
Presiding Officer	£285 + £50 training	£245 + £35 training
Poll Clerk	£221 + £15 training	£165 + £35 training
Polling Station Inspector	£285 + £50 training	£300 + £35 training
Count Supervisor	£40 per hour	£40 per hour
Count Assistant	£17.50 per hour	£24 per hour
Returning Officer (Unitary)	£450	£350

5. Implications

- 5.1 It is the appointed Returning Officer's duty to organise and conduct local elections, and the Electoral Registration Officer the Parliamentary elections.

Responsibility for appointment of the Deputy Returning Officers rests with the Returning Officer.

The Representation of the People Act 1983 makes provision for a scale of expenses to be fixed for the purpose of determining the Returning

Officer's expenditure.

The Council has an annual budget based on equalising the necessary sum for the all-out elections over the four-yearly cycle. This covers any by-elections held during the life of the council and can be adjusted to reflect the inflationary costs during the period, as they arise. There is no need to increase this year's budget to reflect any changes arising from this report.

6. Background Papers

6.1 Scale of fees and charges for Cornwall Council.

Note: For sight of individual background papers please contact the report author

SOMERSET COUNCIL

**2023 SCALE OF EXPENSES which may be incurred in
relation to the Election of Somerset Councillors**

A – FOR SERVICES OF DEPUTY RETURNING OFFICERS

A maximum of **£230.00**, for each contested electoral division of Somerset Council, to be distributed among Deputy Returning Officers at the discretion of the Returning Officer. Such sum shall be increased to **£350.00** in the event of there being only one contested election on a particular day.

To a Deputy Returning Officer separately appointed by the Somerset Returning Officer for the counting of the votes and declaration of result at a contested electoral division, a fee of **£60.00** for the first election plus **£30.00** for each additional contested electoral division.

B – CLERICAL ALLOWANCES**1. Contested Election**

A Clerical allowance of **£350.00** for each contested election of a Somerset Councillor, provided that such fee shall be increased to **£470** in the case of a Deputy acting for not more than one election on the same day.

2. Uncontested Election

A Clerical allowance of **£100.00** for each uncontested election.

C – DISBURSEMENTS**In a Contested Election**

- | | | |
|------------|---|------------------------------|
| 1.1 | For the employment of clerks in connection with the despatch and opening of postal voters' ballot papers. | £2.10 per postal vote |
| 1.2 | For the printing and production of postal voting documentation. | Actual and necessary cost |
| 1.3 | For all postal voting postages. | Actual and necessary cost |
| 2. | For the presiding officer employed at a polling station, to include all expenses other than any travelling expenses authorised by this scale £245.00 or £265.00 where Somerset Council and other elections are held together. In addition for undertaking compulsory training an expense of £35 is paid. | |

3. For the Poll Clerk employed at a polling station to include all expenses other than any travelling expenses authorised by this scale ~~£165.00~~ or ~~£180.00~~ where County Council and other elections are held together. In addition for undertaking compulsory training an expense of £35 is paid.
4. For each person employed in counting votes to include all expenses ~~£24.00~~ for the first hour and ~~£12.00~~ per half hour or part half hour thereafter.
5. For the employment of a supervisory counting assistant a sum of ~~£40.00~~ for the first hour or part thereof and ~~£20.00~~ per half hour or part thereafter.
6. For each Polling Station Inspector to include all expenses other than any travelling expenses authorised by this scale ~~£300~~. In addition for attending compulsory training an expense of £35 is paid.
7. Travelling expenses of the Returning Officer, Deputy Returning Officers and those employed by the Returning Officer and DRO other than election day staff. **45p** per mile
8. Travelling expenses of presiding officers, poll clerks and counting staff including any expenses incurred in those cases where presiding officers or poll clerks are responsible for the transport of the boxes to or from the polling stations. **45p** per mile
9. For printing and providing ballot papers. Actual and necessary cost.
10. For printing and providing notices and other documents required in and about the election or poll and costs of publishing same. Actual and necessary cost.
11. For the preparation and revision of Poll Cards. **£2.05** per 100 cards.
12. Delivery of Poll Cards. Actual and necessary cost.
13. For the hire of any building or room for the purpose of the election and for expenses for heating, lighting and cleaning any building or room. Actual and necessary cost.

- | | |
|--|----------------------------|
| 14. For adapting any building or room for the purpose of the election and restoring it to fit condition for its normal use, including the fitting up of voting compartments and the hire of necessary furniture where this is not otherwise obtainable. | Actual and necessary cost. |
| 15. For the conveyance of ballot boxes, ballot papers, polling screens etc., in those cases where the cost of transport is not included in the travelling expenses of presiding officers and poll clerks under C(1)7. | Actual and necessary cost. |
| 16. For general stationery, postage, telephone expenses, bank charges and other incidental expenses. | Actual and necessary cost. |
| 17. For all additional costs arising from the Coronavirus pandemic including PPE for all relevant staff, equipment and deep cleaning for buildings used as polling stations, etc. | Actual and necessary cost. |

In an Uncontested Election

- | | |
|---|----------------------------|
| 1. For all necessary preliminary work. | Actual and necessary cost. |
|---|----------------------------|

Chief Executive and County Returning Officer
Somerset Council
County Hall
Taunton

May 2023

SOMERSET COUNCIL

**2023 SCALE OF EXPENSES which may be incurred in
relation to the Election of City, Town and Parish Councillors**

Returning Officer's Fees**Parish Council Elections**

Fee for conducting the election, giving the prescribed notices, preparing and supplying nomination papers, deciding as to the validity of nominations, appointing and remunerating Deputy Returning Officers, arranging for or conducting the poll, counting the votes, declaring the result and making return of same and generally performing all the duties which a Returning Officer is required to perform under the Representation of the People Acts and the Rules and Regulations made thereunder, and including all disbursements and expenses other than those for which special provision has been herein made, as follows:

One basic fee for undertaking the above services irrespective of the number of elections **£60.00**

together with:

- a)** for each contested election:
- | | |
|--|---------------|
| in a parish or group of parishes, or (where a parish is divided into wards) in a ward - not exceeding 1,000 electors | £45.00 |
| over 1,000 but not exceeding 3,000 electors | £60.00 |
| over 3,000 electors | £70.00 |

b) for each uncontested election **£35.00**

c) plus a clerical allowance as follows:

(i) **Contested Election**

A clerical allowance of **£85.00** per contested election of a Parish Councillor, provided that such fee shall be increased by **£70.00** in the case of not more than one election being

held on the same day.

(ii) **Uncontested Election**

A clerical allowance of **£45.00** for each uncontested election.

Disbursements

- | | | |
|-----|--|---|
| 1. | For the employment of clerical assistance in connection with the election(s) | |
| 2. | For the preparation, revision, printing and despatch of poll cards | £2.00 per 100 cards |
| 3. | For the hire of any room or building required for election purposes | The actual cost |
| 4. | For the fitting up, reinstatement, heating, lighting, cleaning and repair of damage for any room or building used for election purposes. | reasonably and properly incurred |
| 5. | For the purchase and preparation of ballot boxes | £8.00 per box for preparation |
| 6. | For the purchase, hire or construction of polling compartment. | |
| 7. | For the printing of notice, ballot papers and nomination papers and the printing or purchase of all other notices and forms | The actual cost |
| 8. | For the publishing of notices | reasonably |
| 9. | For the general stationery, postages, telephone expenses messengers, bank charges and other incidental expenses | and properly incurred |
| 10. | For copies of registers of local government electors | |
| 11. | For the carriage of ballot boxes, papers etc. | |
| 12. | For the services of the police where required | |
| 13. | For each Deputy Returning Officer for conducting the opening of postal votes in the electoral area: | |
| | a) for one election (i.e Parish) | £60.00 |
| | b) for each additional election after the first election | £30.00 |
| 14. | For each Deputy Returning Officer for conducting the counting of votes in the electoral area: | |
| | a) for one election (i.e Parish) | £60.00 |
| | b) for each additional election after the first election | £30.00 |
| 15. | For each Presiding Officer, to include all expenses except as hereinafter mentioned | £245.00 |
| 16. | For each Presiding Officer, when Somerset and Parish Council elections are held together, to include all expenses except as | £265.00 |

	hereinafter mentioned	
17.	For each Poll Clerk employed at a Polling Station - Parish Council elections	£165.00
18.	For a Poll Clerk employed at a Polling Station when Somerset and Parish Council elections are held together	£180.00
19.	For each Presiding Officer and Poll Clerk for attending training	Up to £35.00
20.	For each person employed as a trainer	£150.00 per session
21.	For each person employed as a polling station inspector	£250.00
22.	For each person employed in the counting of votes	£20.00 for the first hour or part thereof and £12.00 per half hour or part of a half-hour thereafter
23.	For the employment of a Supervisory Counting Assistant	£35.00 for the first hour or part thereof and £18.00 per half hour or part of a half-hour thereafter
24.	Travelling expenses of Returning Officer or Deputy Returning Officer	45p per mile
25.	Travelling expenses of Presiding Officers, Poll Clerks and Counting Assistants to and from their place of abode and for the conveyance of ballot boxes from the polling stations to the place where the votes are to be counted	45p per mile
26.	For the employment of Clerks in connection with the despatch	£2.10 per postal vote and opening of Postal Voters' Ballot Papers
27.	For the employment of persons for the delivery of poll cards by hand	22p per poll card

PARISH POLLS – 2023/2024

SCALE OF FEES AND ELECTION EXPENSES

Returning Officer's Fees

Fee for conducting the poll, giving the prescribed notices, appointing and remunerating Deputy Returning Officers, arranging for or conducting the poll, counting the votes, declaring the result and making return of same and generally performing all the duties which a Returning Officer is required to perform under the Local Government Act 1972 and the Rules and Regulations made thereunder, and including all disbursements and expenses other than those for which special provision has been herein made, as follows:

- | | | |
|----|--|----------------|
| 1. | Fee for undertaking the above services irrespective of the number of questions | £100.00 |
|----|--|----------------|

Disbursements

- | | | |
|-----|--|--|
| 1. | For the employment of clerical assistance in connection with a poll | £80.00 |
| 2. | For the hire of any room or building required for polling purposes | |
| 3. | For the fitting up, reinstatement, heating, lighting, cleaning and repair of damage for any room or building used for polling purposes | |
| 4. | For the purchase, hire or preparation of ballot boxes | (£8.00
Per box for
preparation) |
| 5. | For the purchase, hire or construction of polling compartments | |
| 6. | For the alteration of stamping instruments (£5.00 per Instrument) if required. | |
| 7. | For the printing of notices, ballot papers and the printing or purchase of all other notices and forms | The actual
cost |
| 8. | For the publishing of notices | reasonably |
| 9. | For the general stationery, postages, telephone expenses, messengers, bank charges and other incidental expenses | and properly
incurred |
| 10. | For copies of registers of local government electors | |
| 11. | For the carriage of ballot boxes, papers etc. | |
| 12. | For the services of the police where required | |
| 13. | For each Deputy Returning Officer for conducting the counting of votes in the electoral area: | £60.00 |

- | | | |
|------------|---|--|
| 14. | For each Presiding Officer, to include all expenses except as hereinafter mentioned | £140.00 |
| 15. | For each Poll Clerk employed at a Polling Station | £86.00 |
| 16. | For each Presiding Officer and Poll Clerk for attending training
Up to | £35.00 |
| 17. | For each person employed as a Trainer | £150.00 per session |
| 18. | For each person employed as a Polling Station Inspector | £140.00 |
| 19. | For each person employed in the counting of votes | £20.00 for the first hour or part thereof and £12.00 per half hour or part of a half-hour thereafter |
| 20. | For the employment of a Supervisory Counting Assistant | £35.00 for the first hour or part thereof and £18.00 per half hour or part of a half-hour thereafter |
| 21. | Travelling expenses of Returning Officer and Deputy Returning Officer | |
| 22. | Travelling expenses of Presiding Officers, Poll Clerks and Counting Assistants to and from their place of abode and for the conveyance of ballot boxes from the polling stations to the place where the votes are to be counted | 45p per mile |