

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>SHADOW GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE</b></p>
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<p style="text-align: center;"><b>24 NOVEMBER 2008</b></p>
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<b>SUBJECT</b>	<p><b>CREATING CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE : SCALE OF ELECTION FEES</b></p> <p>(To adopt a unified scale of fees)</p>
<b>REPORT OF</b>	<b>Electoral Services Lead</b>
<i>Contact Officer: Brian Dunleavy (0845849 6225) brian.dunleavy@southbeds.gov.uk</i>	

**IMPLICATIONS**

<b>SUSTAINABILITY</b>	None arising from this report
<b>FINANCIAL</b>	The scale of fees includes the increase for inflation as approved by the General Purposes Committee of Mid Beds DC on 31 Jan 2007 (Minute R/06/24) and is incorporated in the draft budgets for Central Bedfordshire.
<b>LEGAL</b>	None
<b>PERSONNEL/EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES</b>	None
<b>COMMUNITY DEV/SAFETY</b>	None
<b>TRADES UNION</b>	None
<b>HUMAN RIGHTS</b>	None

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>OTHER DOCUMENTS RELEVANT TO REPORT</b></p>
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<p>Mid Bedfordshire District Council Scale of Election Fees for the year commencing 1 April 2008</p>
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<p><b>RECOMMENDATIONS:</b></p>
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1. That the Election fees for the year commencing 1 April 2009 as shown in the attached appendix are adopted.
2. That the fees set out in the Appendix are up rated annually to reflect inflation as advised by the Director of Corporate Resources for Central Bedfordshire Council and that provision be made within the draft Central Bedfordshire Scheme of Delegation to Officers to enable the Returning Officer to adjust fees annually on that basis.

*Reason for Recommendations*

*To put in place the appropriate fees for the election administration.*

## **1. Background**

- 1.1 Fee orders have a basic division into fees payable to the Returning Officer personally, and sums made available to the Returning Officer to defray the costs of running an election.
- 1.2 For national elections, fees are prescribed on a fixed scale. The scale is updated usually just before a general election. For local elections the fees scales and payments are set by the local authority concerned. There is a range of local discretion but in most cases local authorities tend to base their fees on the latest government complete scale or by using the government scale for a Presiding Officer and then determining the rest of the fees by a percentage multiplier.

## **2. Scale of Fees and 'Electoral Appointee'**

- 2.1 There are two different approaches in the constituent districts. At South Beds the 2005 Returning Officer fees order is used, with annual adjustments for inflation, but this becomes complicated when determining fees appropriate for the whole of the district specifically when the government rate was based on the administration of the election being on a parliamentary boundary as it was in 2005. In Mid Beds the approach has been to take the 2005 order for a Presiding Officer, added inflation annually, and then used the multiplier system. The multiplier system takes the Presiding Officer fee as the base level and then relates other responsibilities and work to this sum.
- 2.2 The administration of the initial Central Bedfordshire elections will be carried out by the existing election teams from the two Authorities, under the guidance of one Returning Officer. The appointment of the Returning Officer for the 2009 Central Bedfordshire elections was made by the Bedfordshire Structural Changes Order. However, following on from that order it has been recognised by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) that there are number of issues regarding electoral appointments for some of the preparing and shadow councils. Consequently, the DCLG has directed, by further statutory instrument, that exceptionally and notwithstanding that electoral matters are not normally the function of the Executive. The 'Executives' of all preparing/shadow councils are to nominate an 'electoral appointee' to cover the transitional period. For Central Bedfordshire the matter will be determined at the meeting of the Shadow Executive on 25 November 2008.

- 2.3 Whilst acknowledging that there will be different levels of expenditure within the constituent parts, clearly the overall costs should not exceed the amounts previously budgeted for by both Authorities.
- 2.4 The current level of expenditure at South Beds does fit within the overall Mid Beds scheme that is proposed. There may be over expenditure in one aspect but this will be compensated for in an under spend in another particular element. This practice will accord with the fees and charges order for the 2009 European election whereby Local Returning Officers will be free to disburse funds on different functions to meet local requirements provided the overall budget is not exceeded.
- 2.5 The fees for Mid Beds were revised in 2007 to take into account that the poll had been extended by a further 2 hours for all elections. The revised scale was approved by the Remuneration and General Purposes Committee Meeting held on 31 January 2007 and included the provision that the scale be increased each year by a percentage inflation as advised by the Chief Finance Officer. The scale is shown at Appendix A
- 2.6 Before recommending the Mid Beds scale of fees as the most current and therefore appropriate, officers sought comparisons from neighbouring shire authorities where the cost of administering an election would be similar.
- 2.7 For the counties of Cambridgeshire and Buckinghamshire there is a county wide agreed scale of fees. The Presiding Officer fee proposed is the mid point. The fees for a Presiding Officer in Buckinghamshire are 4% greater but in Cambridgeshire they are 4% less. In the same way the Returning Officer fee would fall in the middle range. The Returning Officer fee in both Cambridgeshire and Buckinghamshire are based on the number of elections (i.e. wards) with Cambridgeshire paying 38% greater and Buckinghamshire paying 39% less. Hertfordshire does not have a county wide scheme but a sample of authorities show a comparable rate payable for Presiding Officers and Count staff.

### **3. Central Bedfordshire Elections**

- 3.1 Members will be updated at the meeting about the preparations for the administration of the elections for the new Central Bedfordshire Council. As set out in the bid for unitary status and in the structural changes order, the new Council will elect 66 Councillors, for the new wards based on existing divisional boundaries. There will be 23 two member wards and 5 four member wards.
  
- 3.2 The intention is that there will be 185 polling stations and two counting venues, one at the Dunstable Leisure Centre and the other at the Flitwick Leisure Centre. Altogether there will be some 550 people involved on the day. This is anticipated to be an early opportunity for employees across the new Council to become involved in an historic moment. Information on the progress of the whole count will be relayed electronically between the two venues, so that interested parties will be aware of the overall picture.
  
- 3.3 The update will include the opportunity for members to ask questions.

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**Background Papers:** None specific

**Location of Papers:**

**File Reference:**