

# Southend-on-Sea Borough Council

Agenda  
Item No.

Report of Chief Executive & Town Clerk  
to

## General Purposes Committee

On

6 August 2003

Report prepared by: Andrew Wallace

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### Local Government Elections Polling Hours - Polling Day Staff Fees

*A Part I Public Agenda Item*

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#### 1. Background

- 1.1 The Electoral Commission has published proposals to unify polling hours for all elections in the United Kingdom to conform with those of Parliamentary Elections i.e. 7.00am to 10.00pm. These proposals have all party support and are almost certain to become law this autumn.

#### 2. Recommendation

- 2.1 That the fees paid to Presiding Officers and Poll Clerks be the same as that prescribed by the Deputy Prime Minister's Office for Parliamentary Elections.
- 2.2 That the fee for counting votes at Local Government Elections be £30.00
- 2.3 That these fees be increased annually by an amount equivalent to the percentage increase applied in the Local Government Pay Award for staff on NJC Conditions of Service.

#### 3. Details

The changes will have an effect on the Council's Budget for Local Government Elections in that the fees paid to Presiding Officers and Polling Clerks will need to be the same as fees for Parliamentary Elections to take into account additional hours work at anti-social ends of the day. It has also been the practice in this Council for many years to require Presiding Officers to take part in the counting of votes. They are paid an additional sum for doing this but it is significantly less than that we would need to pay to attract staff to undertake the counting of votes only.

Apart from considerations such as the European Working Times Directive it is clearly unreasonable to require people to work from 6.30am (the time polling staff are required to be at their stations) to 12.30am the following morning when the local count would finish.

I will need therefore need to recruit specialist count staff and dispense with the requirement that Presiding Officers remain at the Count. My proposals, set out in the recommendations above, will have a budgetary impact but the Council will not feel the effect of this for two years. Next year's Council Elections are combined with the European Parliamentary Election and the Government will be responsible for approximately 50% of the overall costs, therefore the Council will make a saving and estimates will reflect this. The following year is a fallow year in which there are no Local Government Elections.

#### 4. Background Papers

Proposals of the Electoral Commission on Electoral Reform.