

FOI 436/2017

REQUEST

Can you please provide me with the estimated or actual amount of money spent by the local authority on the following items when administering i) the 2016 EU referendum and ii) the 2017 UK General Election?

1. Printing ballot papers
2. Distributing postal votes within the UK
3. Distributing postal votes abroad
4. Staff time for
 - a. manning polling stations
 - b. counting ballot papers
 - c. administering postal votes and proxy vote applications
 - d. processing received postal votes
1. Promotional material highlighting the date of the vote across the local authority
2. Pencils at polling stations
3. Polling booths
4. Ballot boxes
5. Tactile voting devices
6. Training staff (both counting staff and staff manning polling stations)
7. Signs directing voters to the polling station
8. Polling station signs
9. Hiring polling stations
10. Transporting ballot papers from polling stations to count centres
11. Storing completed ballot papers after the election
12. Provision of disabled access at polling stations

RESPONSE

Firstly, I can confirm that neither Returning Officers nor Electoral Registration Officers, (both being persons appointed under the Representation of the People Act 1983), are listed as a public authority under the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act 2000, and as such are exempt from the disclosure requirements imposed by that legislation.

As you may be aware, the administration of national elections and referendums is undertaken on behalf of the Government by Returning Officers, (or similar designation), who are usually, but not always, the Chief Officer of a local authority.

Such elections are centrally funded, with each administering authority being allocated a maximum recoverable amount (MRA) based on a number of factors including the eligible electorate in that electoral area. The MRA for each electoral area is detailed in the applicable charges order and all administration and accounting for costs must be in accordance with formal guidance issued.

In the case of the EU Referendum, the guidance was provided by the Electoral Commission and should this be of any assistance, is publicly available using the weblink below;
(http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0009/199440/EU-Ref-Counting-Officers-expenses-guidance-notes.pdf).

Currently, within a maximum period of six months following the date of an election, all Returning Officers, (or in the case of the Referendum, Counting Officers), are required to submit accounts for approval to the Election Claims Unit (ECU) detailing the costs incurred.

I can confirm that the Tendring Counting Officer's expenditure claim in respect of the EU Referendum was approved and settled in in June 2017 and the deadline for submission of the Returning Officer's expenditure claim for the Clacton Parliamentary Constituency is 8 December 2017.

In view of the above, it be may be helpful to direct your queries to the ECU, to ascertain if the information you require is intended for future publication.

The contact information for the ECU is, as follows;

Election Claims Unit
Cabinet Office
Rosebery Court
Central Avenue
St Andrews Business Park
Norwich
NR7 0HS

Telephone number 01603 704200

In closing, whilst I am sorry that I have not been able to provide the information sought on this occasion, I hope my response has been of assistance.