

# **SCOTTISH INDEPENDENCE REFERENDUM**

**18 September 2014**

## **Counting Officer Expenses Guidance**

## **Contents**

1. Introduction
2. Legislative background
3. Chief Counting Officer and Counting Officer responsibilities
4. Accounting requirements
5. Initial and further advances
6. Making a claim
7. General advice on claims
8. Summary of accounts (Form A)
9. Counting Officer's services (Form E)
10. Polling station costs (Form F)
11. Postal voting costs (Form G)
12. Poll card costs (Form H)
13. Count costs (Form I)
14. Other costs (Form J)
15. Transparency of staff costs (Form K)

## **Forms**

- Form A: Summary of accounts
- Form B: Appointment of deputies
- Form C: Bank account details
- Form D: Application for further advance
- Form E: Counting officer's services
- Form F: Polling station costs
- Form G: Postal voting costs
- Form H: Poll card costs
- Form I: Count costs
- Form J: Other costs
- Form K: Transparency of staff costs

# 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 These guidance notes provide information on the submission of claims for reimbursement of expenses incurred by Counting Officers in the course of conducting the Scottish Independence Referendum on 18 September 2014.

1.2 As a Counting Officer for the Scottish Independence Referendum, you are personally responsible for managing and accounting for the expenditure incurred for the purpose of conducting the referendum in the voting area for which you act.

1.3 Although parts of your claim may be prepared by deputies or election staff, you are personally responsible for ensuring that the accounts are complete, legitimate, properly presented and auditable. Please read this guidance carefully and ensure that all parts of the claim meet with your approval before it is submitted to the Scottish Government.

1.4 While the approach is similar to the recent European Parliamentary Elections, the requirements differ in some areas and you should ensure that you have checked that your accounts meet the requirements set out in this guidance. The arrangements for funding the referendum, while intended to be simpler and less onerous to implement, build on the general principles used in relation to expenses in previous elections and referendums.

## **Referendum funding approach**

1.5 The approach for administering referendum expenses is intended to ensure that Counting Officers are provided with sufficient financial resources to fulfil their duties under the Scottish Independence Referendum Act 2013 and deliver a well-run referendum, whilst ensuring transparency and value for money in the use of public funds.

1.6 Funding allocations are set out in the Scottish Independence Referendum (Chief Counting Officer and Counting Officer Charges and Expenses) Order 2014 (referred to throughout as the Charges Order). These have been determined using information on actual spend in the 2011 referendum on the Parliamentary Voting System, and adjusted to take account of further data provided by local authorities on the cost of the 2012 local government elections. Specific local issues raised by elections managers that could affect costs have also been taken into account. Although Counting Officers are asked to detail expenses under different cost headings (polling station, postal voting, poll card, count and other costs), the Charges Order sets the overall maximum recoverable amounts in each voting area and it is up to individual Counting Officers to determine the best way to allocate resources according to local circumstances and to ensure best value.

1.7 This evidence-based methodology, informed by early and on-going consultation with elections teams, was designed to produce cost estimates that are as accurate as possible. The Scottish Government recognises however that it will be important to keep in touch with the Chief Counting Officer and Counting Officers on progress towards delivering the referendum and that this process may uncover funding issues which were not taken into consideration in developing the maximum

recoverable amounts. In these circumstances Counting Officers should contact the Scottish Government Referendum Team. See paragraphs 6.8 – 6.10 for more details.

1.8 Advances will be payable on the basis of 75% of the overall maximum amount specified for the CO's expenses in the Charges Order. These will be paid by **18 July 2014**. Any balance remaining will be paid once the accounts are settled. This sum excludes the element payable for the CO's services.

1.9 The payment for the CO's services will be paid in two stages: 75% will be paid as soon as possible after the date of the referendum, and again the remaining 25% will be paid once the accounts are settled.

### **Submitting your claim**

1.10 The deadline for the submission of expense claims is **20 March 2015**. This is in line with the Electoral Commission's recommendation that governments set a deadline at around 6 months after the date of the poll. Feedback from elections teams suggests that this is a reasonable timeframe and it will avoid any overlap with the claims process for the 2015 General Election. Counting Officers will be able to send more complex claims at a later date by prior arrangement with the Scottish Government. **Please contact the Scottish Government Referendum Team as soon as possible to agree a later deadline for any complex claims.**

1.11 Further information on how to submit your claim is included at Chapter 6. Please be mindful of the following key points when preparing your claim:

- **Expenditure must be necessary for the fulfilment of your duties and responsibilities under the Scottish Independence Referendum Act 2013.** The Scottish Government is only able to reimburse you for costs incurred in pursuit of the effective conduct of the referendum.
- **The deadline for submitting claims is 20 March 2015.** Please contact the Scottish Government Referendum Team if you have any particularly complex claims that may take longer to prepare, or if you think you will be unable to meet this deadline for any reason.
- **The Scottish Government may refuse to reimburse expenditure which does not conform to the requirements set out in this guidance.** This includes claims submitted late, or those without sufficient supporting documentation, or those which are not auditable.

### **Scrutiny approach**

1.12 The Scottish Independence Referendum is the first electoral event for which the Scottish Government is responsible for administering the direct reimbursement of Counting Officer expenses. While some aspects of this approach are similar to that taken by the Cabinet Office in relation to the European Parliamentary Elections in May 2014, Counting Officers should read this guidance carefully and should not assume that the requirements are the same.

1.13 The purpose of the scrutiny process is to ensure the proper and effective use of public funds and promote transparent and accurate reporting, whilst being proportionate to the level of risk involved. Chapter 4 sets out the specific accounting requirements that should be taken into account when submitting your claim.

1.14 Claims will be subject to one of two levels of scrutiny. Around 75% of Counting Officers will initially be subject to light touch scrutiny, whereby all expenditure should be accounted for using the appropriate forms. Supporting documentation will only be required in relation to individual items amounting to £2,500 or more (including staff payments). However, Counting Officers must still ensure that supporting evidence is available and auditable in respect of all costs, in case this is required.

1.15 The remaining 25% of Counting Officers, to be selected at random, will be asked to provide supporting documents in respect of all expenditure. Other Counting Officers may also be subject to fuller scrutiny if their claim exceeds the maximum recoverable amount under the Charges Order, or if any specific concerns are raised.

1.16 The Scottish Government will undertake to process claims promptly, with a view to settling all claims submitted prior to the deadline of 20 March 2015 within four months of receipt. Any complex claims for which a later deadline has been agreed will be processed as soon as possible.

### **Summary of key dates**

Charges and Expenses Order in force	5 May 2014
Advance of 75% of expenses allocation	By 18 July 2014
Referendum	18 September 2014
Payment of 75% of Counting Officer fee	End September 2014
Deadline for submission of claims	20 March 2015
Target date for settling claims and payment of outstanding sums	July 2015

### **Contact details**

1.17 The Referendum Claims Team will undertake to keep you apprised of progress in processing your claim. If you have any queries at any point in this process please contact: [referendum@scotland.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:referendum@scotland.gsi.gov.uk).

## **2. LEGISLATIVE BACKGROUND**

### **Scottish Independence Referendum Act 2013**

2.1 The legislative framework for holding a referendum on Scotland's independence is set out in the Scottish Independence Referendum Act 2013. The Act provides for a single-question referendum about whether Scotland should be an independent country, to be held on 18 September 2014.

2.2 The Act prescribes the rules for voting and sets out the rules for how the poll and count should be conducted, to ensure that they are run in an efficient, transparent and fair manner that will be familiar to voters and to those running it, so that they can have confidence in the legitimacy of the process and of the result. The rules about the conduct of the poll and the count are based on the rules applying to the conduct of elections to the Scottish Parliament, UK Parliament, and local councils and at other referendums.

2.3 The Act also provides for a 16 week regulated formal campaign period, during which limits will apply to the amount of money any registered participant may spend on campaigning, aimed at ensuring a level playing field for both sides of the debate. In addition, the Act provides that the referendum will be overseen by the independent Electoral Commission, who will also be responsible for regulating the campaign rules, informing the public about the referendum and reporting to the Scottish Parliament on the conduct of the referendum.

2.4 The Act does not set out who can vote in the referendum, as this is dealt with in the Scottish Independence Referendum (Franchise) Act, which came into force on 8 August 2013.

### **Scottish Independence Referendum (Chief Counting Officer and Counting Officer Charges and Expenses) Order 2014**

2.5 The Charges Order came into force on 5 May 2014. This sets out the maximum amounts Counting Officers and the Chief Counting Officer can claim for specified charges (also referred to as fees) and specified expenses incurred in delivering the referendum, together with an overall total for each local government area and for the Chief Counting Officer. This is in line with the funding arrangements for counting and returning officers in UK elections and referendums.

2.6 The Charges Order lists the specific areas of expenditure for which Counting Officers may be reimbursed. These include appointing and paying staff, matters relating to conducting the poll and the count, and ancillary activities necessary to discharge the Counting Officer's duties under the 2013 Act. For the Chief Counting Officer, these expenses include costs associated with making and managing the arrangements for the referendum, providing guidance and directions to Counting Officers, collating the national result and communications relating to the referendum.

2.7 In recognition of their personal responsibilities, the Order also provides that the Chief Counting Officer and Counting Officers may claim a fee for discharging their duties at, and making arrangements for, the referendum.

### **3. CHIEF COUNTING OFFICER AND COUNTING OFFICER RESPONSIBILITIES**

#### **Chief Counting Officer**

3.1 In line with the 2013 Act, the Deputy First Minister appointed the Convener of the Electoral Management Board for Scotland to be the Chief Counting Officer for the referendum on 9 January 2014.

3.2 The Chief Counting Officer is responsible for ensuring the proper and effective conduct of the referendum, including the conduct of the poll and the counting of votes, in accordance with the 2013 Act. Her role includes:

- planning and coordinating the referendum at a national level;
- appointing a Counting Officer for each local government area;
- providing training, guidance and performance management for Counting Officers;
- issuing directions to Counting Officers and Electoral Registration Officers on the exercise of their functions in relation to the referendum;
- authorising Counting Officers to certify and announce results in each local government area;
- coordinating the national count; and
- undertaking public awareness activities, communications and media handling.

3.3 The Chief Counting Officer may recover a charge for services necessarily rendered and expenses necessarily incurred for the efficient and effective conduct of the referendum. The Charges Order lists the specified services and expenses and the maximum recoverable amount for each.

3.4 The Chief Counting Officer is responsible only for preparing and submitting the accounts for the activities undertaken by the office of the Chief Counting Officer, in such format as agreed with the Scottish Government. The CCO is not responsible for preparing and submitting accounts for Counting Officers.

#### **Counting Officers**

3.5 Counting Officers for the referendum will perform a similar role to Returning Officers in elections. Their responsibilities are set out in the 2013 Act and involve all aspects of running the referendum in their local government area, including managing the conduct of the poll, counting the votes, and passing the local result to the Chief Counting Officer. A full description of the Counting Officer role may be found in [Part A of the Chief Counting Officer's guidance for Counting Officers](#).

3.6 Counting Officers can recover their charges for services necessarily rendered and expenses necessarily incurred for or in connection with the referendum. The Charges Order describes the specified services and sets out the maximum recoverable amount for these services, for each local government area. Similarly, it lists the specified expenses and the maximum recoverable amount for expenses, for each local government area. The total of these two amounts is the overall maximum recoverable amount available to Counting Officers.

3.7 Counting Officers are responsible for preparing and submitting the accounts for their own activities. Responsibility for the accuracy and presentation of the Counting Officer's accounts rests with each Counting Officer, who must sign them off personally. Claims must also be signed by the Director of Finance for the relevant local authority, to provide additional assurance as to the accuracy of the accounts.

3.8 As stated in paragraph 1.9, payment for Counting Officers' services will be made in two parts – the first 75% will be paid as soon as possible after the referendum and the remaining 25% will be paid when the accounts are settled.

### **Deputies and authorised signatories**

3.9 It is recognised that Counting Officers may wish to appoint deputies to act on their behalf, which is provided for under the 2013 Act. Deputies can be given delegated powers to sign documents instead and on behalf of Counting Officers, should those officers be unavailable.

3.10 Deputies who are given responsibility for covering the entire range of the Counting Officers duties are referred to as “deputies with full powers”. Other deputies may be given limited powers to exercise responsibility over specifically identified areas or functions.

3.11 The Scottish Government will accept documents signed by deputies only when it has been provided with specimen signatures against which subsequent signatures can be checked, and supplied with a copy of their letter of appointment signed by the relevant Counting Officer. **Form B** is available for this purpose and should be submitted at the same time as **Form C**, as this form requires signatures. Should any additional deputies be appointed between submitting these forms and sending in your final claim, you should include their details on a further copy of Form B with your final claim.

3.12 In general it is preferable for the use of such deputies to be limited. Whenever possible the relevant Counting Officer should sign documents personally. Only when it is absolutely essential should delegated powers to sign documents be called upon. This establishes a clear and verifiable audit trail back to the responsible authority and lessens the risk of misunderstanding.

3.13 There is no provision in the Charges Order for a specific fee for Deputy Counting Officers, but Counting Officers are free to allocate some or all of their own fees to deputies as they see fit. No additional funding will be available for a fee for deputies.



## 4. ACCOUNTING REQUIREMENTS

4.1 Scottish Ministers are required to prepare annual accounts detailing payments in and out of the Scottish Consolidated Fund, which will include payments to Counting Officers. The use of public money to meet referendum expenses requires proper, auditable accounting and transparent presentation. The process is designed to be fair and proportionate, however, given the high level of public interest in all aspects of the referendum, it is important that the claims process is sufficiently robust to provide assurances about the appropriate use of public funds.

4.2 It is possible that Audit Scotland may wish to undertake an audit of the financial arrangements for the referendum to ensure that value for money has been achieved. For this reason it is imperative that effective and auditable financial management arrangements are in place.

### Accounting requirements

4.3 Counting Officers are required to account for all expenditure against each expenditure head, using the forms provided. The following chapters in this guidance give details of how to fill in each form. For the majority of Counting Officers, supporting documentation is only required in respect of any individual spend (i.e. any single entry on any of the forms) of £2,500 or more. It also includes payments to individual members of staff amounting to £2,500 or more.

4.4 Where you are not required to submit full supporting documentation with your claim (i.e. if you are not part of the full scrutiny sample), **you should still ensure that evidence of payment for all items claimed is available and auditable if required.** The Scottish Government may request supporting evidence in relation to any aspect of your claim. In addition, supporting evidence may be requested for audit purposes. Care must be taken to collect and safely preserve original receipted vouchers or invoices, regardless of whether you need to provide them in support of your claim.

4.5 If your claim exceeds the Maximum Recoverable Amount set in the Charges Order, you may be asked to provide additional supporting documentation in respect of some or all expenditure.

4.6 In addition, 25% of Counting Officers will be selected at random to provide full accounts. This will require documentation to be provided in support of all items of expenditure. The local government areas falling within this sample will be notified separately.

4.7 If you have any queries about the information required with your claim, or any other aspect of the scrutiny process, you should contact the Scottish Government Referendum Team as soon as possible.

4.8 Accounts should be submitted electronically, using the forms provided. Where supporting documentation is required, you may submit scanned copies electronically.

4.9 Any hard copies submitted (and supporting vouchers or invoices where required) must be completed either in typescript or in pen and must not be altered using correction materials.

4.10 Where evidence of expenditure is required, original supporting documents or photocopies of invoices, receipts and vouchers will be accepted.

4.11 Counting Officers should note that due to the fact that personal declarations will be accepted only in exceptional circumstances, these are likely to be queried, which could delay the payment of any balance owed.

4.12 All vouchers and invoices (where required) must be clearly numbered to indicate how they correspond to the items listed on the forms. Please ensure that where a single voucher or invoice includes items of expenditure across different heads, the document is positioned where the first item appears in the covering form (**Form A**). Subsequent items should be listed on the appropriate form and cross-referenced accordingly. Electronic accounts should cross-reference to the relevant supporting documentation.

### **Use of accounting and auditing services**

4.13 Many Counting Officers will have access to professional accounting or audit advice within their local authority to assist with checking referendum accounts. Using such services is a decision for the Counting Officer, but having a professional accountant or auditor involved in the preparation or quality control of your accounts to help ensure that they meet the required accounting standards is considered good practice. This should minimise any subsequent queries from the Scottish Government Referendum Team so that the claim can be processed more quickly.

4.14 It is therefore acceptable to include any reasonable costs associated with the use of book-keeping, accounting or auditing advice within your expenses claim, provided they are within your overall maximum recoverable amount. Such costs should be recorded under Head J3 (Costs of materials and services).

### **Bank accounts**

4.15 Counting Officers may choose to open separate bank or building society accounts for their initial advances and subsequent elections expenditure, to ensure that funds are ring-fenced and easily managed. If other arrangements are entered into, Counting Officers should ensure that there is a suitable separation of funds and that only authorised staff have access to the funds.

4.16 Any interest earned on money deposited in referendum bank accounts should be accounted for under Head J3 on **Form J**.

## 5. INITIAL AND FURTHER ADVANCES

### Terms of advances

5.1 Under the Scottish Independence Referendum Act 2013, advance payments to Counting Officers may be made to cover the cost of running the referendum.

### Initial advance

5.2 Each Counting Officer will be entitled to an advance payment of 75% of the maximum recoverable amount of expenses specified in the Charges Order. Note that this sum does not include the amount which a Counting Officer may claim in respect of his or her personal charge (fee) for conducting the referendum.

5.3 Counting Officers should ensure that the details of the bank account to which payments should be made have been submitted to the Scottish Government Referendum Team by 20 June 2014. Payments will be made by 18 July 2014, directly to the relevant bank account.

5.4 **Form C** must be signed by the Counting Officer and Director of Finance to confirm that they have read and accept the terms on which the advance is made. These terms are:

- the Counting Officer will account properly and on time for any advances;
- the Counting Officer will repay any unspent funds that have been advanced to them; and
- the Counting Officer will use any advances only to meet expenses covered by the provisions in the Charges Order.

5.5 You must confirm to the Scottish Government Referendum Team that your advance has been received.

### Further advances

5.6 The initial advance is intended to cover the up-front costs which Counting Officers will need to fund prior to the referendum. However, in line with previous polls in the UK, further advances may be made available in exceptional circumstances, where the Counting Officer can provide evidence of unexpected and/or higher costs which cannot be covered by the initial advance. Further advances of this kind will only be made when a special application has been made and where it is apparent that there is an unforeseen bill that needs to be paid urgently.

5.7 In such cases, Counting Officers may apply for a further advance of up to a maximum of 90% of the overall maximum recoverable amount for expenses specified in the Charges Order. However, **a further advance cannot be used to claim for the total outstanding balance of your actual spend on the poll.** Counting Officers must supply details of expenditure to date, copies of the invoices awaiting payment, and an explanation of the need for the further advance.

5.8 **Form D** is available for the purpose of applying for a further advance. It requires confirmation that you have read and understood this guidance and the conditions upon which advances are made as set out above. It should be signed by the Counting Officer and the relevant Director of Finance.

5.9 Please contact the Scottish Government Referendum Team immediately if you wish to apply for a further advance, so that applications can be processed promptly. Please note that if your application is not accompanied by the correct supporting documentation, this will delay any approval of a further advance payment.

5.10 In addition, it will not be possible to make any further advances to Counting Officers for applications submitted more than one month after the date of the referendum, i.e. made on or after 18 October 2014. If there is a need for further funds at this stage, the full claim should be made so that the account can be settled and the balance paid. Please inform the Scottish Government Referendum Team of any outstanding unpaid invoices so that payment can be expedited.

5.11 Payment for a Counting Officer's services, i.e. the fee, will be made in two instalments: 75% will be paid following the referendum in the week beginning 22 September 2014, and the remaining 25% will be paid after the accounts have been submitted and settled.

### **Use of advances**

5.12 Advances made for the Scottish Independence Referendum must not be used to offset payments in respect of any other polls. They must only be used for expenses incurred in delivering the referendum on 18 September 2014.

## 6. MAKING A CLAIM

### Time limits

6.1 Accounts must be submitted within six months of the date of the referendum, i.e. by **20 March 2015** at the latest. This is in line with the Electoral Commission's recommendation that governments set a deadline at around 6 months after the date of the poll. Feedback from elections teams suggests that this is a reasonable timeframe and it will avoid any overlap with the claims process for the 2015 General Election.

6.2 Failure to meet this deadline will result in a delay in accounts being settled. Counting Officers who have not submitted accounts by six weeks before the deadline, on 6 February 2015, will be issued with a reminder.

6.3 The Scottish Government will acknowledge receipt of your accounts, by email, within two working days.

### Extension of time to submit accounts

6.4 If you have a valid reason for being unable to submit a claim on time, it may be possible to request an extension to the deadline for the submission of your claim. Please contact the Scottish Government Referendum Team before the deadline of 20 March 2015 to discuss your situation. Claims should only be submitted when they are complete.

### Form of claim

6.5 Claims should be submitted via email to [referendum@scotland.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:referendum@scotland.gsi.gov.uk). A set of electronic forms is provided alongside this guidance to assist you in submitting your claim. These are based on the forms used in the 2014 European Parliamentary Elections and the 2011 referendum on the Parliamentary Voting System.

6.6 The set of forms is as follows:

Form A	Summary of accounts
Form B	Appointment of deputies with full powers
Form C	Bank account details
Form D	Application for further advance
Form E	Counting Officer's services
Form F	Polling stations costs
Form G	Postal voting costs
Form H	Poll card costs
Form I	Count costs
Form J	Other costs
Form K	Transparency of staff costs

6.7 Please refer to the relevant section of the guidance to ensure that you are familiar with the accounting requirements for each form. Note that all forms must be

completed, with the exception of forms B and D, which should only be submitted if necessary.

### **Over and under spending**

6.8 The figures for expenses set out in the Charges Order are maximum recoverable amounts, which have been determined on the basis of previous spend and discussion with electoral professionals, and are designed to provide a sufficient level of resource within which to run the referendum in each area. It is up to the Counting Officer to decide how best to allocate the available funding within this overall amount, to achieve best value in the local circumstances. You are not obliged to spend the full amount if it is not required for the effective delivery of the referendum in your area.

6.9 However, the Scottish Government recognises that there may be unexpected, necessary costs that cannot be met through savings elsewhere. The Scottish Independence Referendum Act 2013 does not permit Scottish Ministers to authorise the payment of amounts in excess of the maximum recoverable amount in the Charges Order, so any additional sums (which are agreed in advance with the Scottish Government) will need to be provided for in a further Charges Order. For this reason, it is vital that you inform the Scottish Government Referendum Team as soon practically possible of your request for any additional costs, so that consideration can be given and, if appropriate, the necessary arrangements can be made. Only expenses that are reasonably incurred and notified in advance or as soon as practicable after the event will be considered for reimbursement.

6.10 You are not required to inform the Scottish Government of any anticipated underspend.

### **Reconciliation**

6.11 The Scottish Government Referendum Team will check claims and aim to process them as promptly as possible, with a view to settling all claims received before the deadline of 20 March 2015, within four months. If your claim is more complex, or is received after the deadline, this process may be delayed.

6.12 Once the accounts have been cleared, reconciliation payments will be made, either by requesting the reimbursement of funds from Counting Officers, or by arranging for the payment of balances due to Counting Officers. Payments will be made to the notified bank account. You must confirm to the Scottish Government Referendum Team that your payment has been received.

## 7. GENERAL ADVICE ON CLAIMS

7.1 All costs incurred must be necessary and reasonable for the effective and efficient conduct of the poll.

7.2 The approach to referendum expenses is intended to provide Counting Officers with flexibility to determine how best to manage the cost of the poll in their area within the overall Maximum Recoverable Amount. You are free to use funds within the different cost headings as you see fit.

### **Accounting for equipment**

7.3 The cost of equipment should be divided by the number of scheduled polls known about at the time of purchase that will occur during the lifetime of the equipment. For example, if an item of equipment lasts five years and during those five years there were scheduled to be five different elections or referendums, a fifth of the cost should be apportioned to each poll. The Scottish Government will therefore reimburse claims for the appropriate percentage of the cost of equipment used for the referendum. It may be necessary for the Scottish Government to ask for additional information in relation to expenditure of this nature.

### **Election management software**

7.4 The same approach should be taken with election management software, such as the package for postal vote processing and postal vote identifier checking. Claims for the relevant percentage of the cost of any annual licence fee payable in the year of the referendum will be considered. For example, if you are using EMS for two polls this year, of which one is the referendum, the Scottish Government will cover half the cost of the licence fee.

7.5 Costs associated with registration are being met through a separate process and should not be included in your claim.

### **Contingency planning**

7.6 It is good practice to plan for contingencies. [Part B of the Chief Counting Officer's guidance for Counting Officers](#) explains how this should be built into your planning process. Contingency planning would not be expected to incur significant costs. However, claims for costs that can be shown to be necessary and reasonable may be considered, provided that they do not exceed your maximum recoverable amount.

### **Staff costs**

7.7 Staff may be deployed in different ways in different authorities, and this is left to the Counting Officer's discretion. However, it is important that staff payments are transparent, so that it is clear who has been employed, what duties they have undertaken and how much they have been paid. The following chapters describe how to account for staff payments in relation to each head of expenditure.

Supporting payroll documentation (required by those in the full accounts sample) should therefore clearly identify staff, duties performed and provide evidence of individual payments. In addition, **Form K** requires additional details where any individual has received payments in excess of £2,500, and supporting documentation will be required in respect of these payments in all cases.

7.8 Any reimbursement of staff costs must be at a rate proportionate to the task undertaken. For example, if there are five members of staff of different grades undertaking postal vote opening, then they should all be paid the rate for the job, rather than their usual rate of pay.

7.9 Please ensure that all staff who are due payment for their contribution to the delivery of the referendum in your area are paid promptly.

7.10 Counting Officers should be aware that no fee for their duties is payable other than within the overall maximum amount available for their services.

7.11 Superannuation contributions are not payable in respect of Counting Officers' fees for the referendum (including the CCO), so these should not be included in your claim.

### **National Insurance**

7.12 National Insurance contributions are not payable in respect of the referendum.

### **Automatic Enrolment (workplace employee pensions)**

7.13 As a result of new workplace pension rules, Counting Officers will need to ensure that all eligible workers are enrolled in a pension scheme and make a contribution towards it. While most staff who work only a set number of hours on polling day will not be captured by these arrangements, there will be some electoral staff on longer term contracts that will be captured. You should liaise with your local authority pensions administrators and HR colleagues regarding the arrangements.

### **Claiming for VAT and Income Tax**

7.14 Local authorities can recover VAT in respect of statutory services under s.33 of the Value Added Tax Act 1994. Local authorities may therefore wish to seek the return of VAT on elements of referendum expenditure which are attributable to that local authority. However, Counting Officers are statutorily independent of local authorities. This means that any VAT paid on referendum expenses that is not attributable to the local authority should be included in your claim. Any queries regarding VAT should be directed to Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC).

7.15 All figures in your accounts relating to staff payments should be shown gross, not net, of income tax. Any questions on income tax matters should be made to the local Inspector of Taxes who handles the PAYE for the relevant local authority. Counting Officers are encouraged to make contact with their local tax authorities before the referendum to ensure that they are clear about what is acceptable in



relation to the late payment of income tax by Counting Officers for referendum staff, to avoid unnecessary interest payments. Interest payments incurred as a result of late payment of due tax should not be included in your claim.

### **Staff training**

7.16 Counting Officers may claim for providing locally focused training to staff under the appropriate expenditure head.

7.17 Training for tasks common to all elections and referendums can be funded only in proportion to the extent to which it applies to the referendum. For example, if training sessions covered activities at the European Parliamentary Elections and the Scottish Independence Referendum, the costs claimed should be split accordingly. Training of staff for general electoral work or training for work in relation to electoral registration will not be funded.

## 8. SUMMARY OF ACCOUNTS (FORM A)

### Purpose of claim

8.1 The summary of accounts form is the master document which both summarises the amounts claimed and confirms that the accounts are true and accurate. It contains the totals carried forward from the accompanying forms (E to J) and takes account of the amounts already received as initial and/or further advances. It sets out in summary what has been spent, what has been advanced and what remains due (or owed). In addition, it seeks some further data about the overall numbers of voters, including postal and proxy voters.

### How to fill in the form

8.2 You should only enter information in the yellow cells; the orange cells will be populated automatically using information provided on the other forms.

8.3 The total amount recorded in part 2 of **Form A** (amounts claimed under each head of expenditure) should not exceed the maximum recoverable amount (MRA) for expenses listed for your authority in the Charges Order. An explanation of any overall overspend should be given on the comments form. If your claim exceeds the relevant MRA, you are likely to be asked to provide supporting documentation, even if you are not part of the full accounts sample. Wherever possible, overspends should be agreed with or notified to the Scottish Government Referendum Team in advance. There is no need to provide an explanation for any underspend.

8.4 Any advances should be detailed in part 3.

8.5 Part 6 of the form requires data on the final number of voters and postal/proxy voters.

8.6 Once you are content that the accounts are true and accurate, you must sign the form to declare that the accounts are correct. It is in law the Counting Officer's personal responsibility and you will be held to account for any inaccuracies or discrepancies.

8.7 Counting Officers should sign the declaration personally. In exceptional circumstances, where the Counting Officer is not available to sign off the accounts in person, it may be acceptable for a deputy "with full powers" (see paras 3.9 - 3.13) to sign the declaration on behalf of the Counting Officer. Deputies must ensure that they are properly authorised to do so and that they have submitted a **Form B** and their letter of appointment in advance. The form should also be signed by the relevant Director of Finance.

## 9. COUNTING OFFICER'S SERVICES (FORM E)

### Purpose of form

9.1 Counting Officers and the Chief Counting Officer will be able to recover an amount for their specified services (as opposed to their expenses) in running the referendum. This is also known as a "personal fee". The Charges Order sets out a maximum recoverable amount for the services specified.

9.2 Payment for a Counting Officer's services will be made in two parts, as described in paragraph 5.11.

### How the amounts are calculated

9.3 **Chief Counting Officer:** the Chief Counting Officer may recover a flat rate of no more than £25,000. This covers the services specified in the Charges Order.

9.4 **Counting Officers:** Counting Officers are entitled to recover maximum recoverable amounts for services as shown in column 2 of the table in the Schedule to the Charges Order.

9.5 Superannuation is not payable in respect of Counting Officer or CCO fees.

### How to fill in the form

9.6 The amount allocated for the services of the Counting Officer, as specified in the Charges Order, should be recorded in part 2 of **Form E**.

9.7 Where the Counting Officer has chosen to allocate some or all of his or her personal fee to any deputies, this should be recorded in part 3. Payments to deputies may only be paid out of the Counting Officer's fee: there is no mechanism under the Charges Order for a deputy to be paid a separate fee from the specified expenses.

## 10. POLLING STATION COSTS (FORM F)

### Purpose of form

10.1 **Form F** documents the costs of staffing, equipping and running the polling stations. You are required to account for staff costs using annex A. The costs on this form must relate to those for polling stations only.

10.2 All expenditure should be accounted for in the annexes, but unless you are part of the full accounts sample, **you need only provide supporting documentation (vouchers, invoices etc.) for any individual items of expenditure that exceed £2,500.**

### What you can claim

10.3 **Staff costs** should be detailed under Heads **F1-F4**. Rates of pay are not prescribed, though it is expected that payments to Presiding Officers and Poll Clerks would be similar to those paid in recent polls, i.e. £195/£115 for the day of the poll.

10.4 **Head F3**, 'Supervising Officers', is intended to cover staff who act as Polling Station Inspectors, as well as any other ancillary staff employed on activities attributable to setting up and managing polling stations.

10.5 If staff are paid through a payroll system, you must ensure that National Insurance contributions are excluded.

10.6 **Training costs (Head F5)** are intended to cover all costs associated with providing training sessions for polling station staff.

10.7 **Accommodation costs (Head F6 and F7)** should include the cost of hiring permanent and temporary polling stations. Schools and some other public buildings should be available to Counting Officers free of charge, with the exception of heating and lighting costs.

10.8 **Preparation and transport (Head F8)**. This should not include the costs associated with transporting ballot papers from the polling station to the count venue; this should be listed on Form I (chapter 13).

10.9 Claims relating to **equipment (Head F9)** should take into account the guidance at paragraph 7.3. Only the proportion of the cost of equipment relevant to its use at the referendum should be claimed.

10.10 In line with advice from electoral professionals, the size of the voting boxes on the ballot paper are the same size as on the ballot papers used in Scottish Local Government elections, therefore there should not be a need to purchase new tactile voting devices.

10.11 Any costs associated with hiring or reimbursing call charges on mobile phones should be included under polling station equipment.

10.12 **Ballot paper costs (Head F10)** should include the cost of producing and printing polling station ballot papers only; postal voting ballot papers should be included in your claim on **Form G**.

10.13 Where a single contract has been entered into for ballot paper and postal ballot pack production, you should require the contractor, as part of the contract, to identify the costs separately so that they can be accounted for appropriately.

## **How to fill in the forms**

### **Form F**

10.14 The total amounts for each head of expenditure calculated on the supporting forms will be transferred automatically to the relevant line at part 2 of **form F** and totalled. This total will also appear in the appropriate line in **Form A**.

10.15 Your claim should also make clear how you have determined the annual value of the equipment claimed, in the space for additional information.

10.16 Any equipment costs necessary for the support of postal voting or the count must be included on the forms for those functions.

### **Form F, Annex A**

10.17 Each of the payments to staff should be accounted for under the appropriate head of expenditure. The form requires the type and number of staff employed as well as their rate of pay and total cost (e.g. [X] Polling Clerks x £[rate] = [total]).

10.18 Please see the Staff Costs section at 7.7-7.11 above for more information. Supporting payroll documentation should clearly identify staff, duties performed and provide evidence of individual payments, though this documentation need only be submitted with your claim in certain cases.

10.19 For any individual who has received payments in excess of £2,500, you must provide details of the tasks performed, the rate at which they were paid, and the number of hours worked. **Form K** is provided for this purpose. Supporting documentation (signed vouchers) should be provided in all cases.

## 11. POSTAL VOTING COSTS (FORM G)

### Purpose of Form G

11.1 **Form G** documents the costs of preparing and issuing postal voting packs, and opening and checking the returned forms. You are required to account for staff costs using annex A. The costs on this form must relate to those for postal voting only.

11.2 All expenditure should be accounted for, but unless you are part of the full accounts sample, **you need only provide supporting documentation (vouchers, invoices etc.) for any individual items of expenditure that exceed £2,500.**

### What you can claim

11.3 In the consideration of staff costs, printing and stationery, postage (outward), postage (inward) and accommodation, the expected number of postal votes is the number of postal voters reported in each voting area by local authorities in response to the Scottish Government's request for data in August 2013, increased by 10% to reflect the expected increase in postal voting rates.

11.4 You should indicate the final number of postal voters on the register on 3 September in box 3 on Form G.

11.5 **Staff costs (Head G1 and G2).** If staff are paid through a payroll system, you must ensure that special arrangements are made to exclude National Insurance contributions, as these are not payable in respect of the referendum.

11.6 **Training costs (Head G3)** are intended to cover all costs associated with providing training sessions for staff involved in the issue and receipt of postal votes.

11.7 **Printing and stationery (Head G4)** should include costs associated with printing postal voting packs. See also paragraph 10.12.

11.8 **Postage (Heads G5 and G6).** Claims may be made for the VAT on the delivery costs under Heads 5 and 6.

11.9 **Accommodation (Head G7).** You can claim for the accommodation costs for the preparation of ballot packs. You should only claim for the use of local authority accommodation if there is usually a charge for using the rooms and if the amount which you are looking to claim is consistent with or below the rate usually charged.

11.10 **Equipment (Head G8).** As described at paragraph 7.3, the cost of equipment should be divided by the number of scheduled polls known about at the time of purchase, that will occur during the lifetime of the equipment and your claim under G8 should only include the appropriate percentage of the cost of equipment used for the referendum. Similarly, claims for the relevant percentage of the cost of any annual licence fee payable in the year of the referendum will be considered (please refer to paragraph 7.4).

11.11 Where all or part of the postal voting process has been outsourced, you should require the contractor, as part of the contract, to identify the costs separately so that they can be accounted for appropriately.

## **How to fill in the forms**

### **Form G**

11.12 The total amounts for each head of expenditure calculated on the supporting forms will be transferred automatically to the relevant line at part 2 of **Form G** and totalled. This total will also appear in the appropriate line in **Form A**.

### **Form G, Annex A**

11.13 Each of the payments to staff should be accounted for under the appropriate head of expenditure. The form requires the type and number of staff employed as well as their fee and total cost (e.g. [X] staff to prepare postal ballot packs x £[rate] = [total]).

11.14 Please see the Staff Costs section at 7.7-7.12 above for more information. Supporting payroll documentation should clearly identify staff, duties performed and provide evidence of individual payments, though this documentation need only be submitted with your claim in certain cases.

11.15 For any individual who has received payments in excess of £2,500, you must provide details of the tasks performed, the rate at which they were paid, and the number of hours worked. **Form K** is provided for this purpose. Supporting documentation (signed vouchers) should be provided in all cases.

## 12. POLL CARD COSTS (FORM H)

### Purpose of form

12.1 **Form H** documents the costs of preparing and issuing poll cards. You are required to account for staff costs using annex A. The costs on this form must relate to those for poll cards only.

12.2 All expenditure should be accounted for, but unless you are part of the full accounts sample, **you need only provide supporting documentation (vouchers, invoices etc.) for any individual items of expenditure that exceed £2,500.**

### What you can claim

12.3 **Staff costs - preparation (Head H1).** If staff are paid through a payroll system, you must ensure that special arrangements are made to exclude National Insurance contributions, as these are not payable in respect of the referendum.

12.4 **Equipment (Head H2).** As described at paragraph 7.3, the cost of equipment should be divided by the number of scheduled polls known about at the time of purchase, that will occur during the lifetime of the equipment and your claim under H2 should only include the appropriate percentage of the cost of equipment and associated IT used for the referendum.

12.5 **Cost of printing and stationery (Head H3)** should include the cost of printing poll cards.

12.6 **Postage or delivery (Head H4).** Claims for either business delivery rates or the cost of hand delivery by casual staff will be accepted, though you are expected to use the most cost efficient delivery system available.

### How to fill in the forms

#### Form H

12.7 The total amounts for each head of expenditure calculated on the supporting forms will be transferred automatically to the relevant line at part 2 of **form H** and totalled. This total will appear in the appropriate line in **Form A**.

#### Form H, Annex A

12.8 Each of the payments to staff should be accounted for under the appropriate head of expenditure. The form requires the type and number of staff employed as well as their fee and total cost (e.g. [X] staff to prepare to poll cards x £[rate] = [total]).

12.9 Please see the Staff Costs section at 7.7-7.12 above for more information. Supporting payroll documentation should clearly identify staff, duties performed and provide evidence of individual payments, though this documentation need only be submitted with your claim in certain cases.



12.10 For any individual who has received payments in excess of £2,500, you must provide details of the tasks performed, the rate at which they were paid, and the number of hours worked. **Form K** is provided for this purpose. Supporting documentation (signed vouchers) should be provided in all cases.

## 13. COUNT COSTS (FORM I)

### Purpose of form

13.1 **Form I** documents the costs of staffing, equipping and running the count. You are required to account for staff costs using annex A. The costs on this form must relate to those for the count only.

13.2 All expenditure should be accounted for, but unless you are part of the full accounts sample, **you need only provide supporting documentation (vouchers, invoices etc.) for any individual items of expenditure that exceed £2,500.**

### What you can claim

13.3 **Staff costs - preparation (Head I1-I3).** If staff are paid through a payroll system, you must ensure that special arrangements are made to exclude National Insurance contributions, as these are not payable in respect of the referendum.

13.4 **Training (Head I4).** This is intended to cover all costs associated with providing training to staff involved in count activities.

13.5 **Accommodation costs (Head I5).** Accommodation costs are intended to cover rent for premises, and heating, lighting, caretaking, setting up and restoring costs. Individual expenses allocations have been adjusted to reflect known issues relating to count venue costs, for example, in urban areas where accommodation can be more expensive. Allocations should allow sufficient flexibility to meet unexpected extra costs. However, if you anticipate extra costs that cannot be managed through savings elsewhere, you should inform the Scottish Government Referendum Team as soon as possible.

13.6 **Equipment costs (Head I6).** As described at paragraph 7.3, the cost of equipment should be divided by the number of scheduled polls known about at the time of purchase, that will occur during the lifetime of the equipment and your claim under I6 should only include the appropriate percentage of the cost of equipment used for the referendum. Claims may be made for hardware (such as counting trays, tables, stationery items etc.) and any software or IT support necessary for the processing of the result.

13.7 **Transport (Head I7).** Transport costs are intended to cover the costs of transporting the ballot boxes and other documentation from polling stations to the count, and from the count to their final destination, and the transportation of other equipment to the count. Individual expenses allocations have been adjusted to reflect known issues relating to the cost of transporting ballot boxes in rural areas and should allow sufficient flexibility to meet unexpected extra costs.

13.8 **Security costs (Head I8).** Security costs are intended to cover all security costs associated with both the verification and the count. Police should only be required to attend in exceptional circumstances.

13.9 **Recounts.** COs are expected to meet the costs of any recounts from within their overall budgets.

## **How to fill in the forms**

### **Form I**

13.10 The total amounts for each head of expenditure calculated on the supporting forms will be transferred automatically to the relevant line at part 2 of **Form I** and totalled. This total will appear in the appropriate line in **Form A**.

### **Form I, Annex A**

13.11 Each of the payments to staff should be accounted for under the appropriate head of expenditure. The form requires the type and number of staff employed as well as their fee and total cost (e.g. [X] count assistants x £[rate] = [total]).

13.12 Please see the Staff Costs section at 7.7-7.12 above for more information. Supporting payroll documentation should clearly identify staff, duties performed and provide evidence of individual payments, though this documentation need only be submitted with your claim in certain cases.

13.13 For any individual who has received payments in excess of £2,500, you must provide details of the tasks performed, the rate at which they were paid, and the number of hours worked. **Form K** is provided for this purpose. Supporting documentation (signed vouchers) should be provided in all cases.

13.14 When making a claim for reimbursement of training costs, please confirm that the training was necessary and indicate the proportion of training which is attributable to the referendum in the corresponding explanatory box.

## 14. OTHER COSTS (FORM J)

### Purpose of form

14.1 **Form J** documents the costs incurred in running the referendum that do not fit under any of the other heads of expenditure. It breaks down the costs using annexes A and B. This form should cover any miscellaneous costs which cannot be included here, including the cost of providing (as opposed to attending) training.

14.2 All expenditure should be accounted for, but unless you are part of the full accounts sample, **you need only provide supporting documentation (vouchers, invoices etc.) for any individual items of expenditure that exceed £2,500.**

### What you can claim

14.3 **Payments to staff that cannot be recorded elsewhere (Head J1 and J2).** Claims may be made for the time which individuals work outside their core hours. Charges for staff time in the normal working day cannot be classed as overtime, though weekend and evening working might be. Where a payment relates to a specific activity, such as postal vote opening or counting votes, it should be clearly listed in the appropriate section and not included under J1.

14.4 It is important that staff payments are transparent. You should therefore ensure that your claim includes a clear explanation of duties performed in respect of any fee that is payable to staff. All staff payments under J1 must be based on a proportionate and justifiable basis. Payment of rates of pay which are in excess of the rate for the job may be refused. 'Bonus' payments will not be reimbursed. Any payments or fees for the responsibility of being a Depute Counting Officer must be paid from the Counting Officer fee. Please contact the Scottish Government Referendum Team if you are unsure about any particular spend under this head.

14.5 The following items would be accepted, providing the costs appear reasonable and necessary for the efficient running of the poll:

- General project management;
- Preparation of accounts;
- Recruitment of staff;
- Issuing notices;
- Responding to queries from electors;
- Dealing with correspondence specific to the referendum; and
- Overtime, evenings and weekends not attributable to another head of expenditure.

14.6 If staff are paid through a payroll system, you must ensure that special arrangements are made to exclude National Insurance contributions, as these are not payable in respect of the referendum.

14.7 **Materials and services (Head J3).** These costs may include the cost of printing notices, general stationery (not that used for polling stations, postal voting and the count), postage (but not the cost of sending postal votes or poll cards),

telephone bills, bank charges and so on. Please check whether any claims against Head J3 should be accounted for under other heads of expenditure.

## **How to fill in the forms**

### **Form J**

14.8 The total amounts for each head of expenditure calculated on the supporting forms will be transferred automatically to the relevant line at part 2 of **Form J** and totalled. This total will appear in the appropriate line in **Form A**.

### **Form J, Annex A**

14.9 Each of the payments to staff should be accounted for under the appropriate head of expenditure. The form requires a breakdown of the tasks performed by staff, the number of hours worked and the hourly rate.

14.10 Please see the Staff Costs section at 7.7-7.12 above for more information. Supporting payroll documentation should clearly identify staff, duties performed and provide evidence of individual payments, though this documentation need only be submitted with your claim in certain cases.

14.11 For any individual who has received payments in excess of £2,500, you must provide details of the tasks performed, the rate at which they were paid, and the number of hours worked. **Form K** is provided for this purpose. Supporting documentation (signed vouchers) should be provided in all cases.

### **Form J, Annex B**

14.12 Costs for materials and services must be shown on this form. As above, these must be described clearly and supported by evidence in accordance with the relevant level of scrutiny.

14.13 Any interest earned on money deposited in referendum bank accounts should also be accounted for under Head J3. Please make it clear on the form and accompanying documentation that this is a positive figure which will reduce the total claimed on this form.

## **15. Transparency of staff costs (Form K)**

### **Purpose of form**

15.1 Staff costs under other expenditure heads (with the exception of Head J1) may be accounted for by providing only the type and number of staff employed as well as their individual rate and total cost (e.g. 40 Polling Clerks x £[rate] = £total]).

15.2 However, to provide transparency around the identity of and duties performed by higher paid staff, details should be provided of any individual who has received payment across the expenditure heads of £2,500 or more (either for a specific activity or in aggregate).

### **How to fill in the form**

15.3 For each individual receiving more than £2,500, you will need to provide the following details:

- their name and job title;
- a description of the duties they have performed under the relevant expenditure heads;
- their hourly rate and the number of hours worked.

15.4 Supporting evidence in respect of these payments is required in all cases (such as signed vouchers). Scanned copies are sufficient.