

Cabinet Member for Finance and Assets

Agenda

Date: Monday, 25th April, 2016
Time: 11.00 am
Venue: Committee Suite 1,2 & 3, Westfields, Middlewich Road,
Sandbach CW11 1HZ

The agenda is divided into 2 parts. Part 1 is taken in the presence of the public and press. Part 2 items will be considered in the absence of the public and press for the reasons indicated on the agenda and at the foot of each report.

PART 1 – MATTERS TO BE CONSIDERED WITH THE PUBLIC AND PRESS PRESENT

1. **Apologies for Absence**

2. **Declarations of Interest**

To provide an opportunity for Members and Officers to declare any disclosable pecuniary and non-pecuniary interests in any item on the agenda.

3. **Public Speaking Time/Open Session**

In accordance with Procedure Rules Nos.11 and 35 a period of 10 minutes is allocated for members of the public to address the meeting on any matter relevant to the work of the body in question. Individual members of the public may speak for up to 5 minutes but the Chairman or person presiding will decide how the period of time allocated for public speaking will be apportioned where there are a number of speakers. Members of the public are not required to give notice to use this facility. However, as a matter of courtesy, a period of 24 hours' notice is encouraged.

Members of the public wishing to ask a question at the meeting should provide at least three clear working days' notice in writing and should include the question with that notice. This will enable an informed answer to be given.

4. **Registration Fees 2016/17 and Ceremony Fees 2017/18 (Pages 1 - 8)**

To consider fee increases across a range of the Registration Service non statutory fees.

For requests for further information

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CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Cabinet Member for Finance and Assets

Date of Meeting: 25 April 2016
Report of: Head of Governance and Democratic Services
Subject/Title: Registration Fees to be set by Cheshire East Council for Financial Year 2016/17 and Ceremony Fees for 2017/18 and 2018/19

1.0 Report Summary

1.1 This Report seeks authority to agree fee increases across a range of the Registration Service non statutory fees.

2.0 Recommendation:

- a) That the following ceremony fees be agreed, with the equivalent fees also applying to any Renewal of Vows ceremonies :

| | <u>Recommended Fees</u> | |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------|----------------|
| | <u>2017/18</u> | <u>2018/19</u> |
| Weekday | £485 | £500 |
| Sat & Sun | £590 | £605 |
| Bank Holiday | £695 | £715 |
| Christmas Day and Boxing Day | £835 | £850 |

- a) That that the Administration fee and second stage payment for ceremonies each remain at their current level of £100 for 2016/17.
- b) That the fees for ceremonies in the Mayor's Reception Room and the Silk Room for 2017/18 be set at £245 for weekdays and £285 for Saturdays.
- c) That the fee for licensing a building for Marriage and Civil Partnership be increased from £1550 to £1650 with effect from 1 April 2016.
- d) That the fees for the Nationality Checking Service for 2016/17 be set at:
- Adult - £75; and
- Child under 18 - £40
- e) That the fees for a Private Citizenship ceremony for 2016/17 be set at:

**Adult £100; and
Child under 18 – nil**

- f) **That the fee for the production of On Demand certificates for 2016/17 remain at £20.**

3.0 Reasons for Recommendations

- 3.1 In 2009 a full review of the Registration fees was undertaken and since that time fees have been reviewed and determined on an annual basis. In July 2014 a review of ceremony fees was undertaken for the financial years 2014 to 2017.

4.0 Wards Affected

- 4.1 All

5.0 Local Ward Members

- 5.1 All

6.0 Policy Implications

- 6.1 None identified

7.0 Financial Implications

- 7.1 Financial advice has been sought on the proposed fees taking into account the full cost of administering the service. The proposed fees for ceremonies will recover the full cost of ceremonies for the year without generating excess fee income.

8.0 Legal Implications

- 8.1 The majority of fees collected by the registration service are set by central government. The Council has legal authority under legislation to set fees for non statutory services including:

- Ceremonies at Approved Premises
- Grant of Approval for Approved Premises
- Naming Ceremonies
- Renewal of Vows Ceremonies
- Nationality Checking Service
- Private Citizenship Ceremonies
- Administration Fee for booking ceremonies
- On demand certificate service

- 8.2 The specific power to levy fees for Approved Premises is set out in the Marriages (Approved Premises) Regulations 2011. These state that local authorities may charge an amount determined by the authority as reasonably representing all the costs incurred by it of providing a registrar and superintendent registrar to attend at a solemnization. It is therefore incumbent on the Council to ensure that an assessment of all the costs incurred at a solemnization are made and that the charges levied do not exceed this amount in order to comply with the Regulations.
- 8.3 A specific power to charge was introduced by section 93 of the Local Government Act 2003, which gives relevant authorities the power to charge for discretionary services. Further the new general power of competence contained in the Localism Act 2011 now sits alongside a local authority's power to trade and charge. In common with the LGA 2003 powers, charging for things done in the exercise of the general power of competence is not a power to make a profit from those activities.

9.0 Risk Management

- 9.1 No risks have been identified.

10.0 Background and Options

- 10.1 The background to the recommendations is set out in the attached appendix.

11.0 Access to Information

The background papers relating to this report can be inspected by contacting the report writer:

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Registration Fees to be set by Cheshire East Council for Financial Year 2016/17 and Ceremony Fees for 2017/18 and 2018/19 (Ceremony fees for 2016/17 having been agreed in last year's review)

Background

Arrangements for ceremonies, particularly at Approved Premises, are made up to three years in advance. Couples are constantly reminding Ceremonies Officers of their need to budget for the ceremony and as such are very anxious to know the level of fee they will be charged. Publishing fees this far in advance, will also help the registration service to more accurately predict income levels.

The majority of fees collected by the registration service are set by central government. The Council sets fees for non statutory services including:

- Ceremonies at Approved Premises
- Grant of Approval for Approved Premises
- Naming Ceremonies*
- Renewal of Vows Ceremonies
- Nationality Checking Service
- Private Citizenship Ceremonies
- Administration Fee for booking ceremonies
- On demand certificate service

** These ceremonies are no longer being marketed*

Power to set fee levels

Statutory fees for the Registration Service are set by central government and are periodically updated. The fees listed below do not come within that remit.

Recommendations

Marriage and Civil Partnerships Fees at Approved Premises

Ceremony fees for 2016/17 were set as part of the review of fees conducted and agreed in July 2014. The decision at that time in effect equalised the fee charged for weddings at different times on Saturdays and Sundays, which was a staged integration over a two year period.

Advice has been sought from Financial Services in terms of the level of ceremony fees recommended for 2017/18 and 2018/19 to ensure that the costs of the service are covered.

Recommendation: The following ceremony fees are recommended, with the equivalent fees also applying to any Renewal of Vows ceremonies :

| | <u>Fee agreed for</u> | <u>Recommended Fees</u> | |
|---|-----------------------|-------------------------|----------------|
| | <u>2016/17</u> | <u>2017/18</u> | <u>2018/19</u> |
| Weekday | £455 | £485 | £500 |
| Sat & Sun | £560 | £590 | £605 |
| Bank Holiday | £675 | £695 | £715 |
| Christmas Day and Boxing Day | £815 | £835 | £850 |

Administration Fee for booking ceremonies

The Administration fee is non refundable but deductible from the final balance of charges for ceremonies at Approved Premises. This currently stands at £100 and it is recommended that it stays the same.

In 2013/14 a second stage payment of £100 was introduced, paid at six months prior to the ceremony and deductible from the final balance. This was introduced to clarify with couples whether their ceremony was to go ahead or not as they often forget to cancel their booking, only remembering when asked for the final payment. This enables the Registration Service to remove any cancelled ceremonies from their diary at an earlier stage, thus freeing up appointments for other couples. It is therefore recommended that this fee continues and remains at £100.

Recommendation: It is recommended that the Administration fee and second stage payment for ceremonies each remain at their current level of £100.

Marriage/Civil Partnership ceremonies in the Mayor's Reception Room (Municipal Buildings) and the Silk Room (Macclesfield Town Hall)

Cheshire East Council is required by law to provide a statutory ceremony room for use of its residents at a statutory fee set by the Registrar General. The current statutory fee is £50.

The statutory rooms provided in both the Municipal Buildings and the New Town Hall at Macclesfield only cater for small parties of 12 people; the statutory obligation being a room for the couple and two witnesses.

The Registration Service offers enhanced ceremonies for up to 50 people in the Mayor's Reception Room in Crewe and the Silk Room in Macclesfield. This additional service commenced in 2013/14 and has proved to be popular. Due to increased weekend costs, it is recommended that a separate higher fee for

Saturdays is introduced for 2017/18, to ensure that costs are covered. The fees for these rooms for 2016/17 were agreed in the last review and set for the year at a flat rate of £230.

Recommendation: It is recommended that the fees for ceremonies in the Mayor's Reception Room and the Silk Room for 2017/18 be set at £245 for weekdays and £285 for Saturdays.

Fees for Licensing a Building for Marriage/Civil Partnership

This fee is charged for a three year licence. The latest fee increase came into effect on 1st April 2013 and has not been increased since this time.

Recommendation: It is recommended that the fee for licensing a building for Marriage and Civil Partnership be increased from £1550 to £1650.

Nationality Checking Service

The last fee increase was introduced on 1st April 2013 when the charge for an adult was set at £60 and the charge for a child under 18 set at £30. Nationality checking is a time intensive and often complex process for which staff require specialist training. It is therefore recommended that the fees be increased for 2016/17 to ensure that costs are covered.

Recommendation: It is recommended that the fees for the Nationality Checking Service be set at:

**Adult - £75; and
Child under 18 - £40**

Private Citizenship

When a person is granted British Citizenship they are required by law to attend a citizenship ceremony. This is the final part in the process of becoming a British citizen. Each local authority is required to provide a group ceremony and is given an allowance per citizen from the Home Office to cover the cost. However, new citizens may choose to have a private ceremony if they wish to and local authorities are permitted to make a charge for these.

The last fee increase was introduced on 1st April 2013 when the charge for an adult was set at £100 and the charge for an additional adult in the same family was set at £75. As there is no distinction in the cost of providing a ceremony for people in the same family it is recommended that a single fee of £100 be introduced for all adults for 2016/17.

Recommendation: It is recommended that the fees for a Private Citizenship ceremony be set at:

**Adult £100; and
Child under 18 – nil**

On Demand Certificates

This is a priority service for same day issue of duplicate certificates.

Recommendation: It is recommended that the fee for the production of On Demand certificates remains at £20.