

## **Portfolio Holder Decision**

---

**Report Title:** Cheshire East Council Registration Service - Review of Fees

**Portfolio Holder:** Cllr Jill Rhodes, Portfolio Holder for Public Health and Corporate Services

**Senior Officer:** David Brown; Director of Governance and Compliance

---

### **1. Report Summary**

- 1.1 The Registration Service reviews its ceremony fees on a regular basis to ensure that the full cost of the work undertaken is recovered.

### **2. Recommendations**

- 2.1 That the fees outlined in the Appendix are agreed with immediate effect.

### **3. Reasons for Recommendations**

- 3.1 Many couples make their decisions over ceremonies a number of years in advance. They are constantly reminding the Registration Service of their need to budget for the ceremony and as such are very anxious to know the level of fee they will be charged. Such requests are often made in advance of a formal booking being made for a ceremony. In addition, publishing fees for future years helps the Registration Service to more accurately predict income levels.

### **4. Other Options Considered**

- 4.1 Considering other options was not considered realistic.

### **5. Background**

- 5.1 In July 2020 the Portfolio Holder agreed the Service's current fee structure. In summary, fees for marriages and civil partnerships in Approved Buildings were set until 2024/25. As outlined above, fees are set in advance so that couples, who are planning ceremonies, have a clear indication of what they will need to

pay. This report makes no recommendations for fees for marriages and civil partnerships in Approved Buildings for 2025/26, the year following the last year for which fees are set. These will be reviewed in the normal way early in 2022. However, this report does address fees for marriages, civil partnerships and renewal of vows ceremonies in the Mayor's Reception Room, Crewe, the Silk Room, Macclesfield and the Mayor's Parlour in Crewe for 2022/23 and 2023/24.

- 5.2 In July 2020 approval was given for the service to start offering celebration of life ceremonies and naming ceremonies. The current fees for these are outlined in the Appendix. This report proposes that the fees set last year are retained for a further year as they are new services and a review of their take up will be conducted early in 2022.
- 5.3 In a response to the impact of Coronavirus on the ceremonies delivered by the Service, approval was obtained in July 2020 to introduce more flexibility into service provision, offering a facility where couples could hold a short legal ceremony for limited numbers of attendees at an Approved Building, followed by a celebration service (non-statutory) for a greater number of people at the venue at a future date. Take up of these services has been limited, this is not surprising due to the protracted impact of the pandemic. There would appear to be a logic in continuing to offer this service, especially as bookings have been made for future years. This report makes recommendations for the fee levels up to 2024/25, meaning that fees for these services would be set to the same date as those for marriages / civil partnerships in Approved Buildings.
- 5.4 VAT is payable on an element of fees for statutory services delivered in Council owned buildings (Mayor's Reception Room, Mayor's Parlour and Silk Room) and on some non-statutory services delivered at outside venues. VAT is included, where appropriate, on the proposed fees detailed in the Appendix.

## **6. Implications of the Recommendations**

### **6.1. Legal Implications**

- 6.1.1 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.

- 6.1.2 There is a specific power to charge under Section 93 of the Local Government Act 2003, which gives relevant authorities the power to charge for discretionary services. Further the 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 (unless the local authority specifically sets up a company to trade).

## **6.2. Finance Implications**

- 6.2.1. Finance have been consulted over the fee levels recommend in this report and are satisfied that the proposed fees will recover the full cost of the relevant activity.

### **6.2.2. Policy Implications**

- 6.2.3. There are no policy implications

## **6.3. Equality Implications**

- 6.3.1. There are no equality implications.

## **6.4. Human Resources Implications**

- 6.4.1. There are no HR implications.

## **6.5. Risk Management Implications**

- 6.5.1. Here are no risk management implications.

## **6.6. Rural Communities Implications**

- 6.6.1. There are no direct implications for rural communities.

## **6.7. Implications for Children & Young People**

- 6.7.1. There are no direct implications for children and young people.

## **6.8. Public Health Implications**

- 6.8.1. There are no direct implications for public health.

## **7. Ward Members Affected**

- 7.1. All Wards are affected.

## **8. Consultation & Engagement**

- 8.1. No consultation has taken place.

**9. Access to Information**

**10. Contact Information**

10.1. Any questions relating to this report should be directed to the following officer:

Name: Martin Smith

Job Title: Registration and Civic Services Manager

Email: [martin.r.smith@cheshireeast.gov.uk](mailto:martin.r.smith@cheshireeast.gov.uk)