

## **Cabinet Member for Localism and Enforcement Agenda**

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**Date:** Monday, 14th July, 2014  
**Time:** 9.30 am  
**Venue:** Committee Suite 1 & 2, Westfields, Middlewich Road,  
Sandbach CW11 1HZ

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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 relating 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. **Review of Ceremony Fees for the Financial Years 2014 to 2017 (Pages 1 - 8)**

To consider a revision of the ceremony fees for 2014/15, and to agree the ceremony fees for the Registration Service for 2015/16 and 2016/17.

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For requests for further information

**Contact:** Cherry Foreman

**Tel:** 01270 686473

**E-Mail:** [cherry.foreman@cheshireeast.gov.uk](mailto:cherry.foreman@cheshireeast.gov.uk) with any apologies

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# CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

## Cabinet Member for Localism and Enforcement

**Date of Meeting:** 14 July 2014  
**Report of:** Head of Governance and Democratic Services  
**Subject/Title:** Review of Ceremony Fees for the Financial Years 2014/15; 2015/16 and 2016/17

### 1.0 Report Summary

- 1.1 This Report seeks authority to revise ceremony fees for 2014/15 and to agree ceremony fees for the Registration Service for 2015/16 and 2016/17.

### 2.0 Recommendation

- (a) To amend the published fee for a 2pm Saturday Ceremony for 2014/15 at Approved Premises from £660 to £550 and to offer customers who have already paid a refund of the difference.
- (b) To amend the published fee for a Sunday Ceremony for 2014/15 at Approved Premises from £560 to £550 and to offer customers who have already paid a refund of the difference.
- (c) To amend the published fee for Christmas Day and Boxing Day for 2014/15 for Approved Premises from £900 to £800.
- (d) To set and publish the following fees for Ceremonies for 2015/16 and 2016/17:

	2015/16	2016/17 (2.0 % increase)
<b>Weekday</b>	£445	£455
<b>Sat and Sun</b>	£550	£560
<b>Bank Holiday</b>	£660	£675
<b>Christmas Day and Boxing Day</b>	£800	£815

- (e) That the fee for Ceremonies held in the Mayor's Reception Room (Municipal Buildings) and the Silk Room, Macclesfield be set and published at £220 for 2015/16 and at £230 for 2016/17.

### 3.0 Reasons for Recommendations

- 3.1 A review of the Registration Service charging structure for Ceremonies held at Approved Premises has been undertaken. Following this review, revised fees are proposed. As couples book their ceremonies up to three years in advance, Ceremony fees are proposed for 2015/16 and for 2016/17. Some adjustments to be current year's published fees are also proposed as a result of the review.

#### **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 calculated average cost to the authority of providing a Ceremony at Approved Premises. The proposed fees will cover the overall costs relating to Ceremonies during the year without generating excess fee income.

7.2 The overall effect on income generation as a result of the proposed changes to the fee structure would be an approximate reduction of £34,500 for the current year and £15,200 in 2015/16.

#### **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.

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.

8.3 It is therefore incumbent on the Council to ensure that an assessment of all the costs incurred in providing a registrar and superintendent registrar at a solemnization are made and that the charges levied do not exceed this amount in order to comply with the Regulations.

#### **9.0 Risk Management**

9.1 By proposing and implementing adjustments to the current year's fees, in addition to 2015/16 and 2016/17, this effectively manages the risk of customer dissatisfaction with the changes.

9.2 By proposing and implementing the new fee structure, the Council can be confident that fees are set in an open and transparent way that meets the financial and legal requirements.

## **10.0 Background and Options**

- 10.1 The background to the recommendations is set out in Appendix A.  
Appendix B provides a financial summary of the existing and proposed fees for 2014/15; 2015/16; and 2016/17.

## **11.0 Access to Information**

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

Name: Lindsey Parton

Designation: Registration Service and Business Manager

Tel No: 01270 686477

Email: [Lindsey.parton@cheshireeast.gov.uk](mailto:Lindsey.parton@cheshireeast.gov.uk)

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**Equalisation of 2pm Saturday ceremony fee to that of 12 noon and 4pm, reduction of Sunday ceremony fee to the same level and review of fee charged on Christmas Day and Boxing Day**

The aim of this review of Registration fees for Ceremonies in Approved Premises is to equalise the fee charged for a 2pm ceremony on a Saturday with that charged for a 12noon and 4pm ceremony, to reduce the fee charged on a Sunday to that of Saturday, and to review the fee charged for a ceremony on Christmas Day and Boxing Day.

**Equalisation of 12, 2 & 4pm Ceremony fee on a Saturday**

For the last five years, since Cheshire East Council came into effect, the fee for a 2pm ceremony has been higher than that for a 12noon and 4pm Ceremony. With a yearly inflation rise, the gap between the two fees has gradually been getting wider. It is suggested that these fees should now be reviewed by reducing the fee charged for a 2pm ceremony to bring it into line with the other times. Whilst there is a higher market demand for Ceremonies at 2pm, we feel it would be an improvement to the fee structure to bring all these fees in line.

Couples book their ceremonies up to three years in advance and the fees are published on the Cheshire East website. Fees for 2014/15 are already published.

To reduce the fee for a 2pm ceremony in 2015/16 and publish on the website would lead to confusion amongst our 2014/15 customers and inevitable complaints from those paying the higher amount this year.

Consideration should therefore be given to amending the published fee for a 2pm ceremony this year (2014/15) and informing those customers who have already paid, with the potential of offering them a refund of the difference.

The proposed new fee structure takes account of work carried out by Financial Services to determine the average cost of a Ceremony which was established as being £550 at the current time.

It is therefore proposed to reduce the 2pm ceremony fee to this figure of £550 during 2014/15; and in 2015/16 to increase the 12 noon and 4pm ceremony fee to this same fee; thereby equalising the fee over a two year period. (See Appendix B for details).

It is proposed that the fee for weekday ceremonies should be raised from £430 to £445 for 2015/16, to reduce the gap between Friday and Saturday fees. The overall average fee would still be within the £550 specified. (See Appendix B).

The final table set out in Appendix B proposes fees for 2016/17 being set by applying the annual CPI inflation rate for December 2013 of 2.0%. (This is the rate used to set the levels of state and inflation linked pensions). The benefit of doing this with immediate effect is that the majority of customers will know what they will be paying for their ceremony at the time they book.

#### **Fee charged for a Sunday ceremony**

We feel that there is little justification moving forward for the Ceremony fee being higher on a Sunday than on a Saturday, as it has been established that the majority of staff and other costs incurred are similar on both of these days. The same reasoning has therefore been applied to propose a reduction in the published fee for 2014/15 from £560 to £550, and to refund all couples who have already paid. The fee would then start to rise again with inflation in 2016/17.

#### **Review of fee charged on Christmas Day and Boxing Day**

When the Registration Service decided to offer ceremonies on Christmas Day and Boxing day it was felt that the fee had to be higher than that of all the other Bank Holidays due to the fact that staff were entitled to double pay and time off in lieu if they worked on these days. In applying a yearly inflation related increase to this fee, it has increased disproportionately to all our other fees over the past few years and it is now appropriate to address.

It is therefore proposed to reduce the published fee for this year (2014/15) from £900 to £800 (which was the fee charged during 2013/14). To reduce any further could leave the Council open to complaints from the customers who paid £800 last year. The fee would stay the same for 2015/16 but then start to rise again with inflation in subsequent years. (See Appendix B for figures)

#### **Mayors Reception Room/Silk Room ceremonies**

The fee for ceremonies in the Mayor's Reception Room (Municipal Buildings) and the Silk Room (Macclesfield Town Hall) is set at £210 for the year 2014/15.

It is proposed to increase this to £220 for 2015/16; and to £230 for 2016/17, in order to cover anticipated increases in the costs of hiring the rooms and building support. As couples can book ceremonies up to three years in advance, it is proposed that these fees be set and published with immediate effect.



## APPENDIX B

### Assumptions

- The average cost to the council of providing a ceremony is £550
- Actual number of ceremonies conducted in 2013/14 is used as a control for comparison of figures going forward

	Control year 13/14		
	number of ceremonies	£ per ceremony	Total
Weekday	516	400	£206,400.00
Sat 12&4	331	480	£158,880.00
Sat 2	288	620	£178,560.00
Sun	264	520	£137,280.00
Bk Hol	10	620	£6,200.00
Box Day	2	800	£1,600.00
	1411		£688,920.00

Overall average income  
per ceremony

£488.00

Published Fees 2014/15	
£ per ceremony	Total
430	£221,880.00
515	£170,465.00
660	£190,080.00
560	£147,840.00
660	£6,600.00
900	£1,800.00
	£738,665.00

£523.50

Amend Published Fees 2014/15	
£ per ceremony	Total
430	£221,880.00
515	£170,465.00
550	£158,400.00
550	£145,200.00
660	£6,600.00
800	£1,600.00
	£704,145.00

£499.04

YEAR 2 2015/16	
£ per ceremony	Total
445	£229,620.00
550	£182,050.00
550	£158,400.00
550	£145,200.00
660	£6,600.00
800	£1,600.00
	£723,470.00

£512.74

YEAR 3 2016/17		2.0% Inflation
£ per ceremony	Total	
455	£234,780.00	
560	£185,360.00	
560	£161,280.00	
560	£147,840.00	
675	£6,750.00	
815	£1,630.00	
	£737,640.00	

£522.78

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