

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				Published Fees 2014/15		Amend Published Fees 2014/15		YEAR 2 2015/16		YEAR 3 2016/17		2.0% Inflation
	number of ceremonies	£ per ceremony	Total	£ per ceremony	Total	£ per ceremony	Total	£ per ceremony	Total	£ per ceremony	Total	
Weekday	516	400	£206,400.00	430	£221,880.00	430	£221,880.00	445	£229,620.00	455	£234,780.00	
Sat 12&4	331	480	£158,880.00	515	£170,465.00	515	£170,465.00	550	£182,050.00	560	£185,360.00	
Sat 2	288	620	£178,560.00	660	£190,080.00	550	£158,400.00	550	£158,400.00	560	£161,280.00	
Sun	264	520	£137,280.00	560	£147,840.00	550	£145,200.00	550	£145,200.00	560	£147,840.00	
Bk Hol	10	620	£6,200.00	660	£6,600.00	660	£6,600.00	660	£6,600.00	675	£6,750.00	
Box Day	2	800	£1,600.00	900	£1,800.00	800	£1,600.00	800	£1,600.00	815	£1,630.00	
	1411		£688,920.00		£738,665.00		£704,145.00		£723,470.00		£737,640.00	
Overall average income per ceremony			£488.00	£523.50	£499.04	£512.74	£522.78					