

Registration Fees to be set by Cheshire East Council for Financial Year 2018/19 and Ceremony Fees for 2020/2021 (Ceremony fees for 2018/19 and 2019/20 having been agreed in the previous 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
- Renewal of Vows Ceremonies
- Nationality Checking Service
- Private Citizenship Ceremonies
- Administration Fee for booking ceremonies
- On demand certificate service

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 2018/19 and 2019/20 were set as part of the review of fees conducted and agreed in previous reviews in April 2016 and April 2017.

Advice has been sought from Financial Services in terms of the level of ceremony fees recommended for 2020/21 to ensure that the costs of the service are recovered.

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

	<u>Agreed fees for</u>		<u>Recommended Fees</u>
	<u>2018/19</u>	<u>2019/20</u>	<u>2020/21</u>
Weekday	£500	£525	£550
Sat & Sun	£605	£640	£675
Bank Holiday	£715	£750	£795
Christmas Day and Boxing Day	£850	£875	£900

Administration Fee and Second Stage Payment 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 this be increased to £150 for 2018/19.

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. These fees were set at £100 for the Mayor's Reception Room and Silk Room and at £200 for Approved Premises for 2017/18. It is recommended that these fees be increased to £110 for the Mayor's Reception Room and Silk Room and be retained at £200 for Approved Premises for 2018/19.

Recommendation: It is recommended that the Administration fee and second stage payment for ceremonies be set as follows for 2018/19:

Approved Premises - £150 Administration Fee
 - £200 second stage payment

Mayor's Reception Room - £150 Administration Fee
And Silk Room - £110 second stage payment

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. Fees for ceremonies in the Mayor's Reception Room and the Silk Room for 2018/19 were set at £260 for weekdays and £320 for Saturdays. It is recommended that these fees be increased for 2019/20 to ensure that costs continue to be recovered.

Recommendation: It is recommended that the fees for ceremonies in the Mayor's Reception Room and the Silk Room for 2019/20 be set at £275 for weekdays and £350 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 2016 and was not increased for 2017/18.

Recommendation: It is recommended that the fee for licensing a building for Marriage and Civil Partnership be set at £1800 for 2018/19.

Nationality Checking Service

The last fee increase was introduced on 1 April 2016 when the charge for an adult was set at £75 and the charge for a child under 18 set at £40. The fee was increased at that time to reflect the fact that Nationality checking is a time intensive and often complex process for which staff require specialist training. These fees remained unchanged for 2017/18.

Recommendation: It is recommended that the fees for the Nationality Checking Service for 2018/19 be set at:

**Adult - £90; and
Child under 18 - £50**

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.

As there is no distinction in the cost of providing a ceremony for people in the same family it was agreed that a single fee of £100 be introduced for all adults for 2016/17. An increased fee of £150 was applied for weekend ceremonies to cover costs incurred for 2017/18.

Recommendation: It is recommended that the fees for a Private Citizenship ceremony for 2017/18 remain at:

**Adult £100 weekday;
Adult £150 weekend;
Child under 18 – nil**

On Demand Certificates

New fees for copy certificates were introduced for 2017/18 as follows:

Standard Service (5 working days) - £10 statutory fee
Next Day Service - £20 (inc £10 statutory fee for certificate)
Premium 1 hour Service - £40 (inc statutory fee for certificate)

Recommendation: It is recommended that the fees for the production of copy certificates be set as follows for 2018/19:

**Standard Service (5 working days) - £10 statutory fee
Next Day Service - £25 (inc £10 statutory fee for certificate)
Premium 1 hour Service - £45 (inc statutory fee for certificate)**

Amendment Fee

Bookings made for Ceremonies are often changed by couples (in terms of the date, time or venue) and often this is done more than once. This is very time consuming process for the Ceremonies and Administration staff.

It is proposed that a policy of one free change be introduced with immediate effect. Subsequent changes would then be charged at £50 per amendment.

The benefits of introducing such a charge would be to reduce the overall number of changes, leading to better use of staff time and ensuring that costs are recovered.

Recommendation: It is recommended that a policy of one free booking amendment (date, time or venue) be introduced with immediate effect with subsequent changes being charged a fee of £50 per amendment. This fee to be introduced for the remainder of 2017/18 and for 2018/19.