

Record of operational decision

Decision title:	Decision to introduce new, and increase existing Non-Statutory Registration Service fees and charges from 1 January 2026
Date of decision:	31 October 2025
Decision maker:	Director of Governance and Law
Authority for delegated decision:	Under the bespoke delegation set out in the Cabinet decision on 16 April 2012 SUBSIDIES, FEES AND CHARGES UPDATE Microsoft Word - \$5mbjgrn.doc (herefordshire.gov.uk) which allows for the implementation of any changes to fees and charges covered by the principles and policy direction, including those outlined in the report, be carried out under the overall scheme of delegation.
Ward:	Countywide
Consultation:	A review of fees charged by neighbouring authorities was undertaken to compare with Herefordshire fees. This was to ensure Herefordshire remains competitive and affordable for couples and venues whilst covering increasing service costs.
Decision made:	To increase non-statutory Registration Services with effect from 1 January 2026 covering the period to end of 2028, with charges to be reviewed annually.
Reasons for decision:	<p>The Registration Service is a statutory service with responsibility for registering births, deaths and marriages within the county.</p> <p>Non-statutory fees apply to the conducting of a marriage or civil ceremony at either a Register Office or approved venue, and the licensing of approved venues. These increases do not include the statutory register office ceremonies which the General Register Office set at £56.</p> <p>Fees for conducting a ceremony were last reviewed and increased in 2025, covering the period up to the end of 2027.</p> <p><u>The fees for conducting a ceremony</u> are increased by 5-10% year on year, keeping them affordable for couples and in-line with neighbouring authorities. Herefordshire has a large number of impressive wedding venues and attracts couples from across the country. It is important the service supports these local venues to remain competitive.</p> <p><u>Licence fees</u> are paid by venues to be able to hold weddings and civil ceremonies in their buildings and grounds. These have been increased by between 5-10% based on benchmarking work of other local authority charges.</p> <p>There are other discretionary fees we can charge to recover administrative</p>

	<p>time of the team and other costs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Admin fee of £50 to make any changes to ceremony arrangements will be increased to £55. This rate will also now be applied to arrange a priority ceremony (within 8 weeks of the ceremony). • Booking fee of £70 will be increased to £75. • The cost of postal passport change requests will increase from £30 to £35. • Non-statutory commemorative certificates will increase from £13 to £14; and certificate boxes from £10 to £11. • Private citizenship ceremonies of £195 will be increased to £205 (Mon to Thurs); and from £205 to £220 (Fri and Sat). • Change of Name deeds for those wishing to change their name will increase from £130 to £140. Additional copies are chargeable, and the fee will increase from £12.50 to £13.50. <p>The service is working to raise awareness and market existing services which are less used e.g. naming ceremonies, renewal of marriage vows.</p> <p>The new fees are attached at appendix 1.</p> <p>Additional sources of income are being explored such as providing pre-ceremony consultation meetings (to allow couples to prepare for their ceremony) and by allowing the couple to tailor their marriage and civil partnership ceremony.</p> <p>The service is actively working on utilising the existing Ceremony Officers to act as funeral and celebration of life celebrants. There will be a training requirement and discussions with the Crematorium are underway.</p> <p>Any new fees will at least cover the costs of providing any new service, and consider fees charged by other authorities.</p>
Equality Considerations	<p>Any increase on fees can impact those in society that are less well-off. The authority is required to offer a basic ceremony for the couple and 2 witnesses at a statutory fee of £56.00. This is unaffected by the proposals in this report. Similarly, group citizenship ceremonies are held once a month and remain free of charge.</p>
Highlight any associated risks/finance/legal/equality considerations:	<p>The council has the power to set fees for the registration or renewal of an approved wedding premises under Regulation 12 of The Marriages (Approved Premises) Regulations 2005. There is also a power under section 93 of the Local Government Act 2003 for the council to make a charge for discretionary services.</p> <p>These non-statutory fees will as a minimum cover the costs of providing the service, whilst remaining competitive against other authority fees and supporting local businesses.</p> <p>There is an increasing demand for couples to choose a basic ceremony at £56 rather than choose a more expensive venue (this is a trend being reflected regionally as well as locally). This could lead to a reduction in income.</p> <p>The UK Government is now considering a 2022 Law Commission Report reviewing the arrangements of weddings and civil ceremonies in England</p>

	and Wales. A consultation is due to be undertaken in early 2026. The report recommends that ceremonies take place anywhere (as is the case in Scotland) with independent persons or celebrants to become officiators at ceremonies. If this becomes law, this will have a significant negative impact on the income the Council can generate. The service continues to look at introducing other ceremony packages with the aim that the council registration team is seen as offering high-quality, trusted, flexible, bespoke ceremonies and therefore becomes the first point of call for couples considering their options.
Details of any alternative options considered and rejected:	Not to increase fees. Fees should reflect increasing staff and administrative costs.
Details of any declarations of interest made:	None.

Signed.....Claire Porter..... Date: 31.10.2025