

Registration Services – Non-statutory charges

Decision maker: Director of Economy and Place

Decision date: Monday, 25 March 2021

Report by: Direct Services Manager

Classification

Open

Decision type

Non-key

Wards affected

(All Wards);

Purpose

To consider and approve the fee for attendance at a marriage ceremony within Herefordshire.

Recommendation(s)

That:

- a) **That charges are amended for Registration Services, as shown in appendix A, to take effect on 1 April 2021 are approved.**

Alternative options

1. A general increase. This is not being recommended as this will not deliver against the annual budget.

Key considerations

2. The Registration Service is a statutory service with responsibility for registering births, deaths and marriages within the county.
3. Non-statutory fees apply to the conducting of the marriage or civil ceremony at either a Register Office or approved venue.

4. The service is required to deliver against the annual budget, charges are reviewed annually to assess the requirements.
5. A review of other local authorities' registration services was undertaken within the West Midlands regional group. This review was able to benchmark with the fees charged for their non-statutory charges. Appendix B
6. It is important to note that non-statutory charges are not a straight competitive exercise between other facilities. Benchmarking only allows for considered review of current charges. There are number other factors which determine how charges are set locally such as the size of each establishment, staffing levels.

Community impact

7. The proposed increase in fees is in line with neighbouring authorities from within the West Midlands Regional group and enable the service to provide value for money.

Environmental Impact

8. This proposal does not impact on the environment.

Equality duty

9. Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, the 'general duty' on public authorities is set out as follows:

A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to –

- a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
 - b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
 - c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
10. Any increase on fees can impact those in society that are less able. The authority is required to offer a basic ceremony for bride, groom and 2 witnesses at a fee of £46.00 which is currently offered on a Tuesday at 9:30 am only.

Resource implications

11. Individual charges relating to this report are listed in Appendix A

Revenue budget implications	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	Future Years	
	£000	£000	£000	£000	
Marriage Ceremony Income	30	45	45	45	
TOTAL	30	45	45	45	

Legal implications

12. 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 is able to make a charge for discretionary services. Neither The Marriages (Approved Premises) Regulations 1995 or the Local Government Act 2003 allow the council to make a profit from charging for such non-statutory services.
13. The proposed increase is required to cover the cost of providing the non-statutory registration services but will not result in the council making a profit from the increased charges and therefore is in accordance with the legislation.

Risk management

14.

Risk / opportunity	Mitigation
Risk - Could result in some brides using the faculties provided by other local authorities or private operators.	These changes are comparable with neighbouring authorities. Enquiries will be handled at service level. Adverse publicity in the local press will require a press release highlighting the above.
Risk - There could be public disquiet at the increases; this could lead to unwelcome publicity.	Enquiries will be handled at service level. Adverse publicity in the local press will require a press release highlighting the above.

Consultees

15. None undertaken

Appendices

Appendix A – Wedding fees for 2021/2 and 2022/3.

Appendix B - Benchmarking