

CABINET MEMBER FOR RESOURCES - CLLR JOHN NOEKEN

DEPARTMENT FOR RESOURCES

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REFERENCE: R-001-10

R-001-10 - REGISTRATION SERVICE INCOME

Purpose of Report

1. To request permission to increase the fees for Private Citizenship Ceremonies from £42.00 to £60.00 and to introduce a reservation fee for Registration Office marriage and civil partnership ceremonies of £30.00 (non refundable) at the Registration offices (Chippenham, Salisbury and Devizes). The net effect of these increases will be an additional £14,000 in this financial year based on anticipated figures

Background

2. A significant proportion of the Registration budget is balanced through income derived from ceremonies provided for the public. However, due to the current financial climate, considerably fewer ceremonies are taking place. When constructing the 10/11 budget account was taken of this declining trend and the budget adjusted accordingly based on a 'best guess' of predicted ceremonies that would take place.
3. Work has now taken place on income figures for 2010/11 based on the anticipated budget income against our actual bookings and it shows that these are lower again than predicted during the budget setting process.
4. Measures have been taken to contain the costs by not replacing a Head of Service post and containing any non essential spend. Additional mechanisms for raising income are being introduced such as chip and pin payments to increase the flexibility for raising income on copy birth and death certificates which also provides a better service to the public. However, this will still be insufficient to offset the anticipated shortfall.

Options Considered

5. Closing outstations would release income but would affect the service delivery to the population. Raising the fees on marriages, civil partnership, approved venue, naming and renewal of marriage vows ceremonies has been considered but having benchmarked against neighbouring authorities Wiltshire is currently in the middle to top quartile in cost.

6. However, we have benchmarked the costs of Citizenship fees with other local authorities including those around our borders and feel that Wiltshire's can be increased.
7. The service has been experiencing an increasing number of 'no shows' for marriages in our ceremony rooms. This is wasteful and costly if staff have been brought in specifically to carry out the ceremony. Other registration services have found that the introduction of a non refundable reservation fee has helped to address this.
8. Account has been taken of those who may be on low income and unable to afford a reservation fee of £30.00 as well as the statutory marriage fee of £43.50. Trowbridge is the County Register Office and couples will be able to get married here without paying the reservation fee. In addition, in genuine hardship cases it will be possible for the reservation fee to be waived for the other ceremony rooms.

Reason for Decision

9. In order to mitigate the greater than anticipated reduction in income to the Registration Service budget in 2010/11.

DECISION MADE

I approve the decision set out above.

This decision was published on the 13th July and will come into force on the 21st July, 2010.

The following supporting documents are attached:

None.

Date: 13 July 2010

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Cllr John Noeken
Cabinet Member for Resources