

CABINET MEMBER FOR RESOURCES – CLLR J NOEKEN

DEPARTMENT OF RESOURCES

OFFICER CONTACT: Jacqui White 01225 713013 email: jacqui.white@wiltshire.gov.uk

REFERENCE: R-003-10

R-003-10 - REGISTRATION SERVICE INCOME

Purpose of Report

1. To request permission to set the fees for the Nationality Checking Service (NCS) at £50 for adults, £25 for children, and £25 for re-visits (when the customer has to return because they have not brought all the documentation they were asked to.)
2. The net effect of these increases will be an additional £2,000 of income in this financial year and £8,000 income in the 2011/12 financial year, based on anticipated figures

Consultation

Why undertake Nationality Checking?

3. To provide the first step for people applying to become British Citizens. Nationality Checking is a necessary step in this process.
4. We have already held Citizenship Ceremonies for 1,900 people in the county since 2004 but these people will have had to use another authority's nationality checking service. This will have been an inconvenience for the customers and also represents a loss of revenue to Wiltshire Council. A significant number of these will have been forces personnel.
5. A significant proportion of the Registration budget is balanced through income derived from services and ceremonies provided for the public. The Nationality Checking Service is needed by customers and will generate significant income for the Registration service budget which would otherwise go to other local authorities.

What benefits does Nationality Checking have for customers?

6. Nationality Checking is a necessary step towards citizenship.
7. The nationality checking team can make sure applications for British Citizenship are not delayed. They do this by:
 - checking forms to make sure everything is filled in correctly
 - making sure all the required documents and fees are attached before the application is sent to the Home Office.
8. In addition customers keep important documents (such as passport and marriage certificates) rather than sending them to the Home Office.

How the service works for customers

9. A trained advisor will:
 - check application forms have been completed correctly.
 - make sure all required documents are attached.
 - check that the correct fee has been submitted.
 - photocopy valuable documents such as passports and marriage certificates.
 - photocopy 'Life in the UK' certificates or other evidence of competence in the English language.
 - certify the copies and return the originals.
 - send the completed application to the Home Office by special delivery.

More about the service

10. The Nationality Checking Service is a partnership between the Home Office Border and Immigration Agency and a local authority. The local authority team will have received training from immigration specialists and will provide a first-rate service.

Neighbouring local authorities who already offer the Service

- BaNES
- Devon
- Gloucestershire
- Hampshire
- Oxfordshire
- Poole
- Swindon
- *Notable exception* is Bristol.

Options Considered

11. Offering the NCS service. This provides a service which residents will use and will also result in revenue to the council.

12. Not offering the NCS service, as at present. Wiltshire residents use this service. By not providing it, they have to go to another local authority.

Differentiated fees or more complex fees structures, when compared with neighbouring authorities. The fees we propose are simple and transparent; they encourage Wiltshire residents to use our service because our fees are competitive with or equal to our neighbouring authorities. A list of the charges made by neighbouring authorities is attached as Appendix A to this report.

Reason for Decision

13. In order to introduce a useful service to Wiltshire residents and raise revenue for the Registration service which would otherwise go to other local authorities.

INTENTION TO MAKE DECISION

Following consultation with officers I give notice that I intend to make the decision set out in the attached report. If you would like to make any representations to me on this issue please do so by 1st December, 2010.

The following supporting documents are attached:

R-003-10 - Registration Service Income - Appendix

Date: 23rd November, 2010.....

John Noeken
Cabinet Member for Resources