

CABINET MEMBER FOR RESOURCES - MR JOHN NOEKEN

BUSINESS SERVICES

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REFERENCE: R-004-12 Intention

R-004-12 - REGISTRATION SERVICE - INCOME

Purpose of Report

This report seeks approval for the following changes to Registration service in Wiltshire

Removal of restrictions on the times for solemnisation of marriage and registration of civil partnership and to agree the fee to be charged to couples.

- i) To request approval for the removal of the restrictions on the times during which marriages may be solemnised and civil partnerships registered. The only limitation placed on time would be the ability of the registration service to provide two officers.
- ii) To approve a schedule of fees to be charged to couples for this service.

The result of this change will be to give customers greater choice in the time for their ceremony to take place.

Approve a licensing procedure and fee for religious premises as a civil approved venue

- (i) To approve a licensing procedure for proprietors or trustees of religious premises to apply to local authorities for their premises to be made an approved venue for civil partnership registrations.
- (ii) To approve a licence fee of £1,700 for the provision of the licence.

The result of this change will enable the registration service to set up a licensing procedure similar to that for civil approved venues for marriage and civil partnerships and cover the cost of the procedure.

Fees Proposed

Removal of restrictions on the times for solemnisation of marriage and registration of civil partnerships

It is proposed that ceremony fees should remain the same as the existing (already approved) day- time fees, with the exception of ceremonies booked to start on or after 10 pm on Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve. These ceremonies will be subject to the bank holiday fee.

Fig.1 Proposed fees (only change from current fees is highlighted)

Day	Marriage	Civil Partnership Registration	Civil Partnership with Ceremony	Naming	Renewal of Vows
Monday to Friday	£385	£105	£240	£170	£170
Saturday	£395	£127	£268	£200	£200
Sunday	£460	£143	£284	£215	£215
Bank Holiday includes from 10.00 pm on Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve	£490	£164	£332	£260	£260

Licensing Religious Buildings for the Registration of Civil Partnerships

It is proposed that the fee for granting an approval to a religious building should be equitable with the fee for a civil venue in Wiltshire.

Proposed Licence fee of £1,700 renewable after three years.

Similarly, it is proposed that the fee for the registrar's attendance to register a civil partnership should match the fee for a registrar to attend an approved venue to register a civil partnership since the costs are the same (see Fig 2 below) .

Fig 2 Proposed Fees

Day	Civil Partnership Registration in a Religious Building
Monday to Friday	£105
Saturday	£127
Sunday	£143
Bank Holiday includes from 10.00 pm on Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve	£164

Consultation

Customers A survey of customers, undertaken by a neighbouring authority, showed that 25% of couples were interested in evening ceremonies with the majority favouring early evening

Approved venues Approved venues have been consulted through the regular newsletter and on visits for licence renewals. Response has been generally muted but open.

Staff -The outcomes of consultation with staff showed that staff felt this was a service that should be provided. They expected the demand will be low initially with a very gradual increase. The consultation highlighted issues relating to health and safety and pay and working hours which have been addressed within Council guidelines.

Options Considered

Removal of Restrictions on the Times for Solemnisation of Marriage and Registration Of Civil Partnerships

Make no change and continue to apply the statutory time limits. Rejected on the grounds that this would be contrary to the spirit of the Protection of Freedoms Act provisions and would restrict customer choice within Wiltshire. Customers wanting later times could go to other registration districts outside Wiltshire.

Extend the hours on a limited basis, keep 8.00 am as the start time and extend the end time from 6.00 pm to 9.00 pm. Rejected on the grounds that this would restrict customer choice and may lead to challenges from couples wanting at later or earlier ceremony.

Licensing Religious Buildings for the Registration of Civil Partnerships

Reduce the cost of the licence to make it easier for religious organisations. Rejected on the grounds that the service needs to recover the full costs, to introduce a subsidy would unfairly place the burden of the costs on other users of the service. This same rationale is applied to charities wishing to obtain a civil approved venue licence for marriage and civil partnership for their premises for whom there is no subsidy.

Extend the licence period for religious buildings but not civil approved venues in line with a few other local authorities. Rejected on the grounds that much can change in a three year period. Renewal of the licence provides an essential opportunity to visit, inspect and review all the arrangements and give advice, guidance and support. Renewal after three years ensures parity with civil approved venues.

Reason for Decision

Removal of restrictions on the times for solemnisation of marriage and registration of civil partnership and to agree the fee to be charged to couples

It is necessary for the Council to decide whether or not to permit the removal of time restrictions for the solemnisation of marriage and registration of civil partnerships and to approve a schedule of fees for the provision of the service to couples.

Licensing Religious Buildings for the Registration of Civil Partnerships

It is necessary for the Council to approve the process and set the licence fee for religious buildings wishing to become approved venues for the registration of civil partnerships. The fee must also be set for the attendance of a civil partnership registrar at a religious building to register a civil partnership.

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 14th September, 2012.

The following supporting documents are attached:

- R-004-12 - Report
- R-004-12 - Appendix - Fees charged by surrounding authorities

Date: ...6th September, 2012.....

Cllr John Noeken
Cabinet Member for Resources