

CABINET

Date of Meeting	Tuesday, 23 rd October 2018
Report Subject	Registration Service Fees and Income Generation
Cabinet Member	Cabinet Member for Corporate Management and Assets
Report Author	Chief Officer (Governance)
Type of Report	Strategic

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Council manages the Registration Service which has a number of statutory functions including the registration of births, deaths, marriages and civil partnerships, officiating civil marriage and civil partnership ceremonies, licensing of venues for ceremonies, custody of archived records, issuing copy certificates, and conducting Citizenship ceremonies. There is scope to offer a range of non-statutory services that could complement and enhance existing services whilst generating extra revenue for the Council.

Many of the fees for these services are prescribed by statute and in any event cannot exceed the cost of providing the service. The nature of the Registration Service means services such as marriages are booked up to twenty four months in advance and consequently non-statutory fees need to be set in advance. The Council completed a full review of non-statutory registration fees on 1 March, 2017. A revised schedule of fees was introduced to cover the fiscal years 2017/18, 2018/19 and 2019/20. There is however still scope to review existing fees further.

This report identifies opportunities for the Local Authority to extend the range of services delivered by the Registration Service, and outlines non-statutory fees for 2020/21.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1	Cabinet support the Registration Service in its review to identify opportunities to extend the range of services to customers thus generating new income streams for the Local Authority.
2	Cabinet approve the revised schedule of fees for 2019/20.
3	Cabinet approve a new schedule of fees for 2020/21.

REPORT DETAILS

1.00	EXTENDING THE RANGE OF SERVICES OFFERED
1.01	<p>The Registration Service is located at the Register Office, Llwynegrin Hall. This is an attractive, grade II listed building dating back to 1830 and presents opportunities to extend the range of services available to customers. At present there are two ceremony rooms at Llwynegrin Hall:</p> <p>(1) the statutory room for small civil marriage and civil partnership ceremonies for which fee is prescribed by statute; and</p> <p>(2) the Ceremony Room licensed for larger groups with non-statutory fees that vary depending on the day.</p>
1.02	<p>With the exception of the statutory room, any venue used for civil marriage and civil partnership ceremonies must be licensed. Within Llwynegrin Hall there is a particularly picturesque room that is currently occupied by Welsh Audit Office (WAO). The Council is obliged to provide WAO space to undertake its duties but they could be easily accommodated within Phases 1 and 2 of County Hall. Initial discussions about the principle of relocating to County Hall have been successful and officers could find suitable premises for WAO once employees have moved to Unity House. This presents a good opportunity for the Registration Service to offer an additional licensed room for ceremonies or to increase the range of complementary services (see below).</p>
1.03	<p>Llwynegrin Hall itself is an attractive space but visitors use it for a relatively short period even when attending a ceremony. The refreshment facilities are currently very limited and there is an opportunity to provide refreshments associated with ceremonies such as offering drinks and/or canapes/snacks to customers before or after a ceremony. Catering is not core business for the Registration Service but in partnership with one of the Council's own catering suppliers (e.g. Theatre Clwyd or NEWydd) provides an opportunity to enhance services and generate new income.</p>
1.04	<p>The Registration Service currently offers two non-statutory ceremonies including renewal of vows and naming ceremonies. The service is aware of a number of self-employed Civil Celebrants working in Flintshire who deliver a range of non-statutory 'marriage' ceremonies that provide choice about the content and style of ceremony creating a personal celebration for couples. These type of ceremonies do not have any legal status and</p>

	often confuse couple who do not fully appreciate the legal preliminaries around marriage. However, the growing demand for personalised ceremonies provides an opportunity to extend non-statutory services in Flintshire including Commitment Ceremonies after legal preliminaries are complete e.g. celebrations outdoors and at non-licensed venues.
1.05	In addition to ceremony enhancements the Registration Service has the chance to introduce administrative charges for tasks it currently undertakes free of charge. This includes validating passport name change upon marriage, and foreign pension validation. Although volumes are low, it is recognised the service should be recovering all costs.
1.06	Revised schedule of fees for 2019/20
1.07	In line with the Council's income policy there are a number of fees proposed for revision on 1 April, 2019. Following a review of the cost to deliver these services, the revised fees include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Celebrants attendance at Celebratory Services; • Non-refundable deposits; • Priority services for certificates.
1.08	It is proposed that the fee for the Celebrants attendance at Celebratory Services i.e. Renewal of Vows and Naming Ceremonies, is revised due to the low volume of bookings. The Registration Service deal with around four services annually and it is proposed that the existing fee for 2019/20 is revised to include VAT to generate more interest in the service – see attached schedule.
1.09	The Registration Service deal with approximately forty cancellations annually. To reflect the time and effort administering ceremonies up to the point of cancellation, a revised non-refundable deposit is proposed for implementation on 1 April 2019.
1.10	The Registration Service deal with approximately fifty to sixty requests for copy certificates, often on the day. A new fee is proposed for implementation on 1 April 2019 to reflect the administrative process involved in issuing a same day certificate.
1.11	New schedule of fees for 2020/21
1.12	Couples can get married at the Register Office in Flintshire for the statutory fee of £46.00 after legal preliminaries have been completed. The Local Authority can set fees to recover the costs incurred by the Registration Service for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Registrars attendance at Approved Premises; • The Registrars attendance at the Ceremony Room; • Administering the application for premises to be licensed and approved as a venue for Civil Marriages and Civil Partnerships.
1.13	The fees to recover the costs incurred by the Registration Service are reviewed annually and a new schedule of fees for 2020/21 is proposed taking in to consideration 5% rate of inflation on existing fees.

1.14	The new schedule of fees is set for implementation for all ceremonies and licence applications from 1 April, 2020 (see below).
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2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	<p>A review of the Registration Service to extend the range of services available will generate new income. It is difficult to predict the level of additional income at this time due to a number of factors including partnerships, implementation timescales, and demand. More information and expected income levels will be projected as new services are launched.</p> <p>The revised schedule of non-statutory fees for 2020/21 will generate an increase in income in the circa of £5,000.</p>

3.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED / CARRIED OUT
3.01	No consultation is required as a direct result of this report.

4.00	RISK MANAGEMENT
4.01	<p>Extending the range of services offered – offering additional rooms represents a low risk to the council though demand can initially be slow. The service plans to participate in a wedding fair to be held at the theatre in October in order to raise awareness and “test the market”. Offering new services such as catering will need to be undertaken with a specialist partner who can bring the necessary skills, expertise, equipment etc.</p>
4.02	<p>Revised schedule of fees 2019/20 and a new schedule of fees 2020/21 – a reduction in demand. Fees have been revised consistently in the past and experience shows the risk is low as bookings particularly for civil marriages have not reduced.</p>

5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	None.

6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	<p>Contact Officer: Rebecca Jones, Customer Service & Registration Manager Telephone: 01352 702413 E-mail: rebecca.jones@flintshire.gov.uk</p>

7.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
7.01	<p>Statutory fees - are fees set by the Secretary of State and are amended in Parliament. An example is the statutory fee for civil marriage in England and Wales which is fixed by government statute and is currently £46.00</p> <p>Non-statutory fees – fees set by the Local Authority to recover the costs incurred by the Registration Service because they are mandated by a statute.</p> <p>Registrar General – the director of the General Register Office responsible for the recording of vital records such as births, deaths, and marriages in England and Wales.</p>

	<u>Current Fee</u> <u>(2018/19)</u>	<u>Revised Fee</u> <u>(2019/20)</u>	<u>Proposed Fee</u> <u>(2020/21)</u>
Fee for the Celebrants attendance at Approved Premises:			
Monday-Thursday	£195 plus VAT	£205 inc VAT	£215 inc VAT
Friday	£230 plus VAT	£240 inc VAT	£250 inc VAT
Saturday	£300 plus VAT	£315 inc VAT	£330 inc VAT
Sunday & Bank Holidays	£360 plus VAT	£380 inc VAT	£400 inc VAT
Fees for the Celebrants attendance at Celebratory Services at the Ceremony Room, Mold:			
Monday-Thursday	£125 plus VAT	£130 inc VAT	£135 inc VAT
Friday	£210 plus VAT	£220 inc VAT	£230 inc VAT
Saturday	£255 plus VAT	£270 inc VAT	£285 inc VAT
Sunday & Bank Holidays	£300 plus VAT	£315 inc VAT	£330 inc VAT
Non-refundable deposit (deducted from full ceremony fee):			
Deposit for Ceremony Room	£50	£120	£125
Deposit for Approved Premises Ceremonies	£120	£120	£125

Fee for Priority Certificates:

	<u>Current Fee</u> <u>(2018/19)</u>	<u>Proposed Fee</u> <u>(2019/20)</u>	<u>Proposed Fee</u> <u>(2020/21)</u>
Priority Certificates:	£10	£16	£17

The Registrars attendance at Approved Premises:

	<u>Current Fee</u> <u>(2018/19)</u>	<u>Current Fee</u> <u>(2019/20)</u>	<u>Proposed Fee</u> <u>(2020/21)</u>
Monday-Thursday	£380	£400	£420
Friday	£460	£485	£505
Saturday	£480	£505	£530
Sunday & Bank Holidays	£535	£565	£590

The Registrars attendance at the Ceremony Room, Mold:

	<u>Current Fee</u> <u>(2018/19)</u>	<u>Current Fee</u> <u>(2019/20)</u>	<u>Proposed Fee</u> <u>(2020/21)</u>
Monday-Thursday	£185	£195	£205
Friday	£225	£240	£250
Saturday	£245	£260	£275
Sunday & Bank Holidays	£275	£290	£305

**The application fee for premises to be licensed and approved as a venue for
Civil Marriages and Civil Partnerships in Flintshire:**

	<u>Current Fee</u> <u>(2018/19)</u>	<u>Proposed</u> <u>Fee (2019/20)</u>	<u>Proposed Fee</u> <u>(2020/21)</u>
New application fee	£1100	£1450	£1520
Renewal application fee	£1000	£1340	£1400