

**NORTH LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCIL  
OFFICER DECISION NOTICE AND RECORD  
(PUBLISHED)**

**1. DECISION TAKEN**

To approve Registration Service – Two part ceremony fee

<b>EXECUTIVE</b>		<b>NON-EXECUTIVE</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<b>(Please tick either)</b>
<b>IS THIS A 'KEY DECISION' ? (see definition overleaf)</b>				<b>No</b>
<b>DOES THIS DECISION RELATE TO EXEMPT INFORMATION?</b>				<b>No</b>
<b>EXEMPT PARAGRAPH REFERENCE (NOT TO BE PUBLISHED)</b>				

<b>2. OFFICER DECISION TAKER</b>	<b>NAME</b>	Helen Manderson
	<b>POSITION/POST</b>	Director of Business Development
	<b>SIGNATURE</b>	
	<b>DATE</b>	23.06.20

<b>3. REASONS FOR THE DECISION (Please ref to any report/minute/background documents attached)</b>	
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<b>4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED (BY DECISION MAKER(S))</b>	
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*TO BE COMPLETED BELOW - ONLY WHEN A DELEGATED OFFICER DECISION REQUIRES PRIOR CONSULTATION WITH A MEMBER (LEADER OF THE COUNCIL, CABINET MEMBER/CHAIRMAN OF A COMMITTEE) IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE 'SCHEME OF DELEGATIONS TO OFFICERS' OR DECISION/MINUTE OF COUNCIL/COMMITTEE OR DECISION/MINUTE OF CABINET/CABINET MEMBER.*

<b>5. DECISION REQUIRED TO BE TAKEN IN CONSULTATION WITH RELEVANT MEMBER</b>	<b>COUNCILLOR</b>	.....
	<b>POSITION</b>	.....
	<b>SIGNATURE</b>	.....
	<b>DATE</b>	.....

<p>6. ANY CONFLICT OF INTEREST DECLARED BY ANY EXECUTIVE (CABINET) MEMBER (S) CONSULTED, WHICH RELATES TO THE DECISION, OR (NON-EXECUTIVE) – ANY MEMBER OF THE COMMITTEE THAT DELEGATED THE DECISION TAKEN</p>	
<p>7. WITH REFERENCE TO 6. ABOVE - HAS ANY DISPENSATION BEEN GRANTED TO THE EXECUTIVE (CABINET) MEMBER? (ONLY APPLIES TO EXECUTIVE)</p>	

**PLEASE REMEMBER TO ATTACH ANY ACCOMPANYING REPORT.**

**WHEN COMPLETE, PLEASE SEND TO HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES, CIVIC CENTRE, SCUNTHORPE FOR PUBLISHING.**

**(The definitions of a key decision are when an executive decision is likely -**

(i) to result in the Council incurring expenditure or the making of savings (including the receipt or loss of income) over £350,000 in any one financial year; or

(ii) to be significant in terms of its effect on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more wards or electoral divisions in the area of the local authority).

**NORTH LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCIL**

***Director of Business Development***

**Registration Service – Fee for Additional Ceremony Option**

**1. OBJECT AND KEY POINTS IN THIS REPORT**

- 1.1 To approve a new fee to be implemented providing additional options for customers during Covid 19 pandemic.
- 1.2 The key points in this report are
  - To consider implementation of an additional fee to allow customers to have an additional ceremony with the registration service

**2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

- 2.1 The registration service is statutorily required to provide some registration services, which includes statutory wedding and certificate fees. The fees are set nationally by a complex formula based on returns submitted by local authorities to the Department for Communities and Local Government. 2.2
- 2.2 Each local authority is responsible for setting discretionary fees for a range of services including statutory ceremonies (marriages and civil partnerships) in approved premises, and other non-statutory ceremonies.
- 2.3 Legislation dictates that couples must marry/form a civil partnership at the place specified on the Superintendent's Certificate for Marriage, issued after a Notice of Marriage has been attested. This requirement means that once a Notice of Marriage is attested, couples are unable to change the venue of their marriage without providing another Notice of Marriage at an additional cost.
- 2.4 Non-statutory ceremonies (where no legal function is carried out) can be undertaken at any location and couples can choose to change the venue with no implication.
- 2.5 Following implementation of the Coronavirus Act 2020, marriage and civil partnership ceremonies (except marriage/CP by Registrar Generals Licence) were prohibited as it would exceed the maximum number of people and

household that could meet indoors, where a ceremony must legally take place. Many couples have been subject to the following changes to their ceremony

- Cancellation by the register office (all ceremonies from March 23<sup>rd</sup>-June 30<sup>th</sup> 2020) and their venue
- Cancellation by their venue (where the venue is not able to open due to the nature of the business)
- Postponement to a later date by their venue
- Postponement to a later date by personal choice

2.6 The registration service initially cancelled ceremonies to the end of June based on information made available at the time, in line with decisions taken by regional offices and after discussion with the Proper Officer.

It is currently unknown when ceremonies will be allowed to take place, and upon recommencement, how many guests will be permitted. The National Panel for Registration has recommended to GRO that initially only statutory ceremonies are permitted, which will restrict the numbers to the couple, two registrars and two witnesses. This is the minimum needed for a marriage to legally take place. Civil partnerships require the couple, plus two witnesses and one registrar. The legislative requirements described in 2.4 means that if a couple have originally planned a ceremony with 100 guests at an approved venue, if they can only have a statutory ceremony with 6 guests, they are unable to change the location to a smaller venue such as the Register Office, without re attesting their notice of marriage, with additional financial burden. If they did choose to change to a smaller venue and have no celebration at the venue, the approved venue could also lose a significant amount of income (up to £17,000 for some venues at peak times)

2.7 The cancellation and restriction of ceremonies could have severe implications for the service budget. Ceremony income for 2020-21 is expected to be £82,412 (June 2020-March 2021). Income for 2021-22 is expected to be £81,599. If restrictions on ceremony guest numbers continues, it is likely that more couples will choose to postpone their date to either later in 2020/21 or to 2021/22. This means reduced income in 2020/21 (although it is expected to be recouped in 2021/22)

2.8 A number of approved premises and couples have enquired if the service would be able to conduct a statutory ceremony with restricted guest numbers and then a non-statutory ceremony at a later date when more guest numbers are permitted. To enable this there would need to be a charge of £198.00 for this service, which has been based on cost recovery only. Once statutory (or larger) ceremonies are permitted, this would allow couples to be legally married/form a civil partnership at their venue specified on their Superintendent's Certificate for Marriage and still have a larger celebratory ceremony at a later date. It may also remove the requirement for couples to re-attest their notice of marriage, allowing for potential savings to expected loss of income as the service would otherwise pay for the cost of covering this if their ceremony has been unable to go ahead due to Covid 19 (£35 per person)

### **3. OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION**

- 3.1 To make no changes and keep current options
- 3.2 To approve the proposed changes to registration service fees as set out in 2.9 effective from restrictions being lifted

### **4. ANALYSIS OF OPTIONS**

- 4.1 Implementation of the new fee and service will allow additional options for customers by increasing their choices when considering their ceremony. If restrictions are lifted allowing larger gatherings outdoors, some couples may choose to pay a smaller additional fee of £46 to have an outdoor celebratory ceremony with the legal statutory element taking place inside the licensed venue., However this can only take place subject to weather conditions and if gatherings are not permitted indoors, and the venue have no alternative arrangement, it could result in last minute cancellations. Allowing a smaller ceremony followed by a celebratory ceremony at a later date may provide additional income to the service, and potentially to the approved venues, many of whom are facing a summer wedding season with little to no income.

### **5. FINANCIAL AND OTHER RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (e.g. LEGAL, HR, PROPERTY, IT, COMMUNICATIONS etc.)**

- 5.1 The current and proposed fees are set to ensure cost recovery for providing discretionary registration services and avoid any subsidy for local taxpayers. The fee charged would cover all costs.
- 5.2 Staff may be positively impacted as additional ceremonies will increase their pay if they choose to be available to work. There are enough staff to cover a minimum number of ceremonies at any given time, including the small team of casual marriage registrars.
- 5.3 Ceremonies conducted in this way would ensure legal requirements continue to be met.
- 5.4 There are no property, IT or HR implications.

### **6. OTHER RELEVANT IMPLICATIONS (e.g. CRIME AND DISORDER, EQUALITIES, COUNCIL PLAN, ENVIRONMENTAL, RISK etc.)**

- 6.1 No negative impact on customers is expected.

**7. OUTCOMES OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT (IF APPLICABLE)**

7.1 Not applicable

**8. OUTCOMES OF CONSULTATION AND CONFLICTS OF INTERESTS DECLARED**

8.1 No formal consultations required.

**9. RECOMMENDATIONS**

9.1 It is recommended that the Officer approves the fee to enable us to offer the service.

Author: Kate Thwaites

Date: 15<sup>th</sup> June 2020