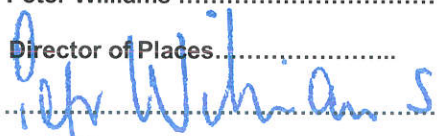


**NORTH LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCIL  
OFFICER DECISION NOTICE AND RECORD  
(PUBLISHED)**

<b>1. DECISION TAKEN</b>			
To approve charges for the discretionary elements of the council's Registration Service in accordance with the delegated authority given to Directors to set fees and charges for council services approved by Full Council on 16 February 2017. The fees and charges approved to be as set out in the attached report.			
<b>EXECUTIVE</b>	✓	<b>NON-EXECUTIVE</b>	
			(Please tick either)
<b>IS THIS A 'KEY DECISION' ? (see definition overleaf)</b>			No
<b>DOES THIS DECISION RELATE TO EXEMPT INFORMATION?</b>			No
<b>EXEMPT PARAGRAPH REFERENCE (NOT TO BE PUBLISHED)</b>			

<b>2. OFFICER DECISION TAKER</b>	<b>NAME</b> Peter Williams .....
	<b>POSITION/POST</b> Director of Places.....
	<b>SIGNATURE</b>  .....
	<b>DATE</b> 17.3.17.....
<b>3. REASONS FOR THE DECISION (Please ref to any report/minute/background documents attached)</b>	Need to establish discretionary fees and charges for the Registration Service operated by the Council for the 2017/18 financial year.
<b>4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED (BY DECISION TAKER(S))</b>	As per attached report

*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> .....
<b>6. ANY CONFLICT OF</b>	

<p>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**

**REPORT TO DIRECTOR OF PLACES**

**FEES & CHARGES FOR REGISTRATION SERVICES FOR 2017/18**

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

- 1.1 To approve the fees and Charges for the Registration Service.
- 1.2 The key points in this report are:
- The Registration Service operates with a range of statutory and non-statutory services and fees
  - The statutory fees that are set nationally have been in place since 2012
  - We expect some new statutory Registration fees to be introduced later in 2017
  - We have reviewed our discretionary fees for statutory ceremonies in approved premises and other non-statutory services
  - We have drawn up proposals for changes to these fees and charges
  - We are seeking to introduce the new fees with effect from 1 February 2017

**2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

- 2.1 The council needs to periodically review the range and fees of the registration services we provide, particularly in response to the changing demands of our customers and the need to fully cover the costs of our services wherever possible.
- 2.2 We are statutorily required to provide some registration services but others are discretionary.
- 2.3 Statutory fees include statutory wedding and certificate fees. These fees are set nationally by a complex formula based on returns submitted by local authorities to the Department for Communities and Local Government.

- 2.4 The last increase in statutory fees was in 2012. The current statutory fees are not set at a level to recover the full cost of delivering the service.
- 2.5 The Immigration Act 2016 provides an opportunity for some new statutory fees to be introduced for a number of services that do not currently attract a charge. We understand the new fees may include: increased fees for deathbed weddings, birth declarations for other districts, non-fault corrections and submissions of foreign divorce documents. Subject to ministerial and HM Treasury approval, these fees are likely to be introduced in the first quarter of 2017. The numbers of these each year, however, are small and the new fees are not expected to result in a large increase in income.
- 2.6 Each local council is responsible for setting discretionary fees for a range of services including statutory ceremonies (weddings and civil partnerships) in approved premises, and other non-statutory services. It is vital that we continually review these fees to ensure that we continue to deliver cost effective, customer focused and financially sustainable services.

## 2.7 Weddings

2.7.1 There are 4 options available for those couples wishing to marry at the Civic Centre in North Lincolnshire:

- a) The designated Register Office – a small office where a couple can marry in front of 2 witnesses (available Mon-Thurs 9am-11am). There is a statutory fee of £46 for this service
- b) Ceremony Room 1 seating up to 20 guests (available Mon-Sat 10am-4pm).
- c) Ceremony Room 2 seating up to 60 guests (available Mon-Sat 10am-4pm).
- d) The Council Chamber seating up to 120 guests (only available on a Saturday 10am-4pm)

The council is able to set discretionary fees for the Ceremony Rooms and the Council Chamber. Fees are applied to these facilities to reflect the size and quality of the rooms and demand for particular days of the week.

2.7.2 In addition couples may marry at a venue licensed by the local authority known as an Approved Venue (available 365 days per year). The council is able to set discretionary fees for Registration staff to officiate at Approved Venues. Again the fees are set to recover costs and reflect demand for different days of the week.

2.7.3 Two Registration staff must attend and officiate at each Approved Venue ceremony. There are currently 17 Approved Venues in North Lincolnshire.

citizenship ceremonies. There has been no demand ever for private citizenship ceremonies in Approved Venues. Most people booking a private citizenship ceremony do so because they wish to make a fast application for a British passport and do not wish to wait for the standard monthly ceremony. Non-statutory ceremonies take the same amount of time as a statutory ceremony. We therefore propose that fees for these ceremonies are set at the same level as those for statutory ceremonies.

- 2.9 We have completed an extensive benchmarking exercise comparing our services and fees nationally and in particular against neighbouring councils. We have also considered fees for basic church weddings which can vary from £563 to £798.

### **3. OPTION FOR CONSIDERATION**

- 3.1 To approve the proposed changes to Registration Service fees as set out in Appendix 1 with effect from 1 April 2017.

### **4. ANALYSIS OF OPTION**

- 4.1 This offers the best scope to continue to deliver a high quality and sustainable service. The proposals will:

- Offer choice for customers
- Allow the service to generate new business and cover costs while continuing to deliver high quality services to customers
- Provide a more realistic pricing structure that better reflects and promotes the quality of our facilities
- Still allow the service to offer competitive fees for weddings and ceremonies that compare well with neighbouring providers
- Contribute to meeting service budget savings targets

### **5. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (FINANCIAL, STAFFING, PROPERTY, IT)**

#### **5.1 Financial**

5.1.1 We have set the proposed fees to ensure we cover the cost of providing discretionary Registration services and avoid any subsidy for local taxpayers.

5.1.2 If the proposed fees are applied to activity levels for the last year, we estimate this will generate an additional £15,000 in service income per year.

#### **5.2 Staffing, Property and IT**

5.2.1 There are no other staffing, property or IT implications.

- 2.7.4 It has proven increasingly difficult to cover ceremonies across so many venues with a small team of staff. Last year we recruited a team of 8 casual marriage Registrars to improve capacity to meet demand, particularly at the most popular times. This has worked well and the number of weddings we have been able to undertake at approved venues has increased by 40% from April 2016 to September 2016 compared to the same period in 2015.
- 2.7.5 The legal part of every marriage ceremony must take place in a building or structure that is registered or approved for marriages. There are an increasing number of unregulated independent celebrants who provide non-legal ceremonies and offer these in private homes and outdoors. These are usually conducted after a legal marriage has taken place and guests often believe this is the actual "wedding". This causes some concern as poor performance by independent celebrants could reflect badly on the local registration service if it is perceived to be registrars conducting these ceremonies.
- 2.7.6 There have recently been requests for the provision of outdoor ceremonies and in 2016 we introduced a service whereby we would offer to conduct the celebratory aspect of the ceremony outdoors before moving into the licensed venue for the legal part of the process. Alternative provision is made for any instances of bad weather. An extra charge of £100 on top of the Approved Venue fee was originally set for this service. Registrars receive specialised training to deliver ceremonies in a professional manner and we believe we are better able to deliver the whole package, combining both the celebratory and legal elements of the marriage on the same day.
- 2.7.7 There have been 5 outdoor ceremonies in 2016. While the service is of interest to couples, feedback from approved venue managers at the annual stakeholder's meeting is that many couples are put off by the extra £100 fee.
- 2.7.8 We have spent a lot of time this year designing outdoor ceremonies and looking at the practicalities of delivering this service. The initial fee was therefore justified. Now we feel that the groundwork has been done and all practical aspects of the service considered. In light of this and the feedback from approved venues we feel we should review this fee. An extra fee of £46 in line with the statutory wedding fee would be more realistic, would better reflect the actual cost of delivery and could encourage more couples to take up this option.

## 2.8 Non Statutory Ceremonies and Services

- 2.8.1 Non-statutory ceremonies include Naming's, Renewal of Vows, private Citizenship ceremonies and other services.
- 2.8.2 We conduct very few non statutory ceremonies. In 2015/16 there were 7 Naming ceremonies, 1 Renewal of Vows and 6 private



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

6.1 We do not believe that the proposed changes will impact negatively on customers.

**7. OUTCOMES OF CONSULTATION AND CONFLICTS OF INTEREST DECLARED**

7.1 We have consulted the council's Commercial Manager who supports these proposals and offered advice on appropriate pricing structures.

**8. RECOMMENDATIONS**

8.1 That the Director of Places approves the proposed changes to Registration services and fees.

**HEAD OF SERVICE FOR REGISTRATION SERVICES**

Author: Ali Prestwood

Date: 31 January 2017

**Background Papers used in the preparation of this report: None**

## Appendix 1

### Proposed Fees 2017/18

SERVICE	PROPOSED FEE
<b>WEDDINGS/CIVIL PARTNERSHIPS</b>	
RO STATUTORY FEE (SR's Office- Bride/ Groom plus 2 witnesses) Mon-Thur 9am to 11am only	£46
<b>CEREMONY ROOM 1 (SEATS 20)</b>	
Mon-Thur	£100
Fri	£120
Sat	£140
Sun	n/a
<b>CERENONY ROOM 2 Mon (SEATS 60)</b>	
Mon-Thur	£220
Fri	£260
Sat	£295
<b>COUNCIL CHAMBER Sat only (SEATS 120)</b>	
	£320
<b>APPROVED VENUE FEES</b>	
Mon-Thur	£310
Fri	£325
Sat	£395
Sun/Bank holidays	£450
Outside ceremony addition	£46
<b>NON-STATUTORY CEREMONIES NAMINGS/RENEWALS/PRIVATE CITIZENSHIP</b>	
<b>CEREMONY ROOM 1 (SEATS 20)</b>	
Mon-Thur	£100
Fri	£120
Sat	£140
<b>CEREMONY ROOM 2 (SEATS 60)</b>	
Mon-Thur	£220
Fri	£260
Sat	£295
<b>COUNCIL CHAMBER (SEATS 120)</b>	
Sat only	£320
<b>APPROVED PREMISES</b>	
Mon-Thur	£310
Fri	£325
Sat	£395
Sun/Bank holidays	£450
<b>OTHER SERVICES</b>	
BOOKING FEE	£30
REHEARSAL SERVICE	£25
CEREMONY CHANGES ADMIN FEE	£20
STANDARD CERTS-STATUTORY FEE	£10
NEXT DAY CERTS (INCLUSIVE OF STATUTORY £10 FEE)	£15
PRIORITY CERTS (INCLUSIVE OF STATUTORY £10 FEE)	£25
NAME CHANGE SERVICE	£60
EXTRA COPIES OF NAME CHANGE DEED	£30