

22nd September 2015**Agenda Item:****REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR FOR SOUTH NOTTINGHAMSHIRE
AND PUBLIC PROTECTION****APPROVED PREMISES FOR CIVIL CEREMONIES****Purpose of the Report**

1. To provide an annual update and overview of the County Council's role in licensing premises for the solemnization of marriages and the registration of civil partnerships.

Information and AdviceBackground

2. Current legislation allows the solemnization of marriages (for any couple) and the formation of civil partnerships (for same-sex couples only) to take place in venues other than register offices. The County Council is concerned with approval of:
 - Secular premises for civil marriages and civil partnerships
 - Religious premises for civil partnerships
3. Secular premises such as historic or romantic buildings, including castles, stately homes and country houses can be licensed, as can hotels, civic buildings and sports stadia. In all cases, approval can only be granted if this can be done without compromising the fundamental principles of English law and Parliament's intention to maintain the solemnity of the occasion.
4. To be approved, a venue must be a permanently immovable structure, comprising at least one room, or any boat or other vessel which is permanently moored. Premises outside this definition, such as the open air, a tent, marquee or any other temporary structure, and most forms of transport, would not be eligible for approval. The premise must be a seemly and dignified venue for the proceedings, and to be approved by the County Council it cannot be a religious premise, other than for the formation of Civil Partnerships. Also, it must be regularly available to the public, which rules out a domestic home.
5. There are currently 65 Approved Premises in Nottinghamshire (a net decrease of four since last year), and these are listed in Appendix A to this report. The fee for approval of a premise is included in the set of registration fees, which is reported annually to the Community Safety Committee for consideration and approval.

Civil Partnerships in Religious Premises

6. The Marriages and Civil Partnerships (Approved Premises) (Amendment) Regulations 2011 allow civil partnership ceremonies to be conducted in places of worship in England and Wales. The Registration Services' role is to approve the premises. Nationally, the leaders of Liberal Judaism, the Quakers and the Unitarians have all expressed interest in holding ceremonies. The procedure, and the basis on which approvals will be granted, is broadly the same as that which currently applies to secular premises. Once approved, a premise will be included in the list of approved venues for civil partnerships, indicating that they are a religious premise. However, at present there have been no applications for a religious building in Nottinghamshire to be licensed for Civil Partnerships.

Procedures

7. The Constitution of the County Council identifies that the Planning and Licensing Committee is responsible for all licensing functions given to the Authority by law, except for Safety of Sports Grounds. Responsibility for the management of the Registration Service is delegated to the Corporate Director for Adult Social Care, Health and Public Protection.
8. The registration service procedures for approval of premises have been developed following 'The Registrar General's Guidance to Authorities for the approval of premises as venues for civil marriage and civil partnerships' (Sixth Edition, Revised June 2015). The premises are assessed for suitability, fire safety, and the need (or otherwise) for planning permission. Once granted, each approval lasts for three years.

Statutory and Policy Implications

9. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (Public Health only), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults, service users, sustainability and the environment and ways of working and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

Financial Implications

10. There are no financial implications contained in this report.

RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1) It is recommended that the contents of the report be noted and that further reports will be brought to the Planning and Licensing Committee annually.

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Constitutional Comments (SLB 24/08/2015)

11. Planning and Licensing Committee is the appropriate body to consider the content of this report.

Financial Comments

12. There are no financial implications arising from the report.

Background Papers

The Registrar General's Guidance to Authorities for the approval of premises as venues for civil marriage and civil partnerships' (Fifth Edition, Revised May 2014)

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

All