

15 September 2021**Agenda Item:9****REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, PLACE AND COMMUNITIES****REGISTRATION SERVICE FEES FROM 2022/2023 THROUGH TO 2025/2026****Purpose of the Report**

1. To seek Committee approval for revisions to Registration Service fees and charges.

Information

2. Registration Service fees over which the County Council has discretion are normally reviewed annually. Some fees may cover one or two years in advance, however charges for ceremonies are set four years in advance as customers may request ceremony bookings well ahead of their planned event. Once ceremony fees are agreed by committee, the fee charged to a customer booking in advance will be held at that level as part of ceremony terms and conditions.
3. Current fees and those up and including the financial year 2023/2024 were approved by the Communities and Place Committee in November 2019. No fees report was brought to committee in 2020 due to the uncertainty created by the Covid-19 pandemic, however this report now proposes the revisions set out in Appendix A.
4. On the basis of current public demand for ceremonies, and by comparison with neighbouring local authorities, it is proposed to maintain fees for 2024/2025 at the same level as those previously agreed for 2023/2024, and to introduce modest increases to some fees for 2025/2026.

Background

5. Fees for statutory registration services are set nationally by the General Register Office, and include all certificates issued, fees for giving notice of intention to marry or form a civil partnership, and fees for related ceremonies when taking place at the Register Office. It is possible that, at any time, the Registrar General or Home Office may make changes to these fees. If so then local fees will be re-set to a new figure directly commensurate with the change. This last took place in February 2019 in respect of certificate fees.
6. The level of the statutory fees does not cover the full cost of service delivery, and this places a financial pressure on the service. However, fees for non-statutory services can be set on a cost recovery basis thereby off-setting the cost of providing the service overall. Non-statutory registration services are offered by the County Council under the provisions of the Local Government Act 2000 and the Localism Act 2011. Services include conducting civil marriage and civil partnership ceremonies at premises other than the Register Office, plus a range of celebratory ceremonies including naming, commitment, renewal of vows, civil funerals and individual citizenship ceremonies. In recent previous years the service was able to approach

an overall cost-neutral position, however this was not possible in 2020/2021 as the Covid-19 pandemic meant that it was not possible to offer income generating discretionary services.

7. The Law Commission Review Public Consultation on Marriage Reform (previously reported to the Communities and Place Committee) has now concluded. It is anticipated that this may lead to proposed changes to marriage legislation that will have significant bearing on the future income generating potential of the registration service, particularly if a celebrant-based system (rather than a buildings-based) system is the outcome of the review. The Law Commission are currently analyzing responses to the consultation, with a view to publishing a report with recommendations for the government at the end of 2021.

Other Options Considered

8. The County Council has discretion over the type and level of non-statutory services and fees.

Reasons for Recommendation

9. The recommendations are made to enable the County Council's Registration Service to charge fees for discretionary services that off-set the cost of providing statutory services, and that provide the public with a selection of service options at fees they are content to pay.

Statutory and Policy Implications

10. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, data protection and information governance, finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (public health services), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and adults at risk, service users, smarter working, sustainability and the environment 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

11. The fees charged for non-statutory services enable the County Council to off-set costs associated with providing statutory registration services. This is based on presumed overall take-up of discretionary services by the public, and assuming a normal level of public demand for statutory services, such as the registration of births and deaths.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that approval is given for:

- 1) The schedule of registration services fees set out in Appendix A to this report,

Derek Highton
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Constitutional Comments (KK 04/08/2021)

12. The proposal in this report is within the remit of the Communities Committee.

Financial Comments (RWK 10/08/2021)

13. The report sets out proposals for fees for the Registration service over which the Council has discretion for the financial years 2024/25 and 2025/26. The proposal is that fees for 2024/25 remain at the level agreed for 2023/24 and that fees for 2025/26 are increased by £5 equating to increases of 0.9% to 3.6%. These proposed increases will result in additional income in 2025/26.

Background Papers and Published Documents

- The Registrar General's Guidance to Authorities for the approval of premises as venues for civil marriage and civil partnerships' (Eighth Edition, June 2021).

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

- All

Appendix A

Registration Service Fees (proposed changes and new fees are shown in **bold**)

SERVICE	FINANCIAL YEAR	MON - THU	FRI / SAT	SUN / B/H
Standard Marriage, Civil Partnership with ceremony. At selected Registration Offices (days and times may vary, Payment in full at time of booking)	Current 2021 – 22	£130	£160	N/A
	2022 – 23	£135	£165	N/A
	2023 – 24	£140	£170	N/A
	2024 – 25	£140	£170	N/A
	2025 – 26	£145	£175	N/A
Enhanced Marriage, Civil Partnership with ceremony, Naming, Commitment or Renewal of Vows at a Registration Office. (Deposit = £150)	Current 2021 – 22 2022 – 23 2023 – 24 2024 – 25 2025 – 26	MON - THU	FRI / SAT / SUN	BANK HOLIDAY
		£215	£315	£415
		£220	£320	£420
		£225	£325	£425
		£225	£325	£425
		£230	£330	£430
Enhanced Marriage, Civil Partnership with ceremony, Naming, Commitment or Renewal of Vows at an Approved Premise. (Deposit = £150)	Current 2021 – 22 2022 – 23 2023 – 24 2024 – 25 2025 – 26	MON - THU	FRI / SAT	SUN / B/H
		£410	£450	£535
		£415	£455	£540
		£420	£460	£545
		£420	£460	£545
		£425	£465	£550
Statutory Marriage (Basic ceremony) / Civil Partnership (Signing only, no ceremony).		MON - FRI	SAT	SUN / B/H
		Statutory fee (currently £46)		

Civil Funeral / Memorial Service (Attendance at a second site – £25)	Current 2021 – 22 2022 – 23	ALL MONDAY TO FRIDAY ONLY
		£220 £225
Individual Citizenship Ceremonies No charge for children (under 18)	Current 2021 – 22 2022 – 23 2023 – 24	£120 (plus £25 for each additional adult applicant) £120 (plus £25 for each additional adult applicant) £120 (plus £25 for each additional adult applicant)
Rehearsal appointments	Current 2021 – 22	£25
	2022 – 23	£25
	2023 – 24	£25

Approved Premise Licensing

Introductory fee / general fee for non-commercial bodies	Current 2021 – 22	£1450
	2022 – 23	£1450
	2023 – 24	£1450
General renewal fee	Current 2021 – 22	£2350
	2022 – 23	£2350
	2023 – 24	£2350
Suitability visit	Current 2021 – 22	£110
	2022 – 23	£110
	2023 – 24	£110
The review of a refusal of an approval or the setting of requirements or conditions	Current 2021 – 22	£265
	2022 – 23	£265
	2023 – 24	£265
Changes and amendments to licence	Current 2021 – 22	£75

	2022 – 23	£75
	2023 – 24	£75

Other fees (the change highlighted in bold is for implementation from the date of committee approval).

Copy Certificates:

- Standard service – collection or despatch after 7 days from order/payment = £11 (postal charges apply outside UK)
- Priority service – same day/within 24 hrs collection or despatch = £35 (statutory fee)
- Hourly search fee for family history applications = £25

Other fees:

- Notice taking on Saturdays – Statutory fee, plus **£10** per person non-refundable fee payable at time of booking (reduced from £15)
- Ceremony plus naming ceremony / renewal = Marriage fee, plus £155
- Change of name deed - £50
- General administrative charge (amendments to ceremonies or any extra administrative tasks relating to a booking) - £25
- Document checking service - £10
- European Union Settlement Service (free to applicants, cost to the registration service recouped from Brexit funding).