

Bath & North East Somerset Council

DECISION MAKER:	Cllr Martin Veal, Cabinet Member for Community Services	
DECISION DATE:	On or after 30 July 2016 (for single Member decision)	EXECUTIVE FORWARD PLAN REFERENCE:
		E 2883
TITLE:	Ceremony Fee Increases for the Registration Service and The Guildhall, Bath.	
WARD:	All	
AN OPEN PUBLIC ITEM		
List of attachments to this report: Pricing Structure Document		

1 THE ISSUE

- 1.1 There have been no recent increases in the charges made by the Registration Service for Ceremonies, most notably for those held in The Guildhall, Bath, and consequently they have now become significantly out of step with the market and contain some internal inconsistencies. This has been highlighted by a service review and changes to prices are now recommended.

2 RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 To increase the charges for ceremonies undertaken by the Registration Service (with the exception of those ceremonies with a statutory set fee), with effect from 1st October 2016
- 2.2 To increase the Approved Premises Licence fees in line with increased costs, with effect from 1st October 2016
- 2.3 To honour all existing bookings and those made until 31st March 2017 at the current advertised rates.

3 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (FINANCE, PROPERTY, PEOPLE)

- 3.1 There are no significant additional costs to be occurred by implementing these recommendations, but it is anticipated that the increased charges will generate further income for the Registration Service which will help the service fully recover its costs to catch up with inflation as the fees have not been reviewed since 2013.

4 STATUTORY CONSIDERATIONS AND BASIS FOR PROPOSAL

- 4.1 The Registration Service is bound by significant legislation in the delivery of its core activity of civil registration and is overseen by the General Register Office (HM Passport Office). The Registration Service will continue to offer the Statutory Ceremonies within its designated premises at the national mandatory fee. The recommendations only apply to ceremonies undertaken by the Registration Service within Approved Premises, rather than those within the District Register Office, and other discretionary charges.

5 THE REPORT

- 5.1 The Registration Service delivers the registration of births, deaths and marriages for the defined registration district of Bath and North East Somerset. The service has a primary office in The Guildhall and satellite offices in Keynsham, Midsomer Norton and the Royal University Hospital. As well as using The Guildhall as the Register Office, separately the service delivers ceremonies from the Alkmaar Room and Russell Room. These rooms are designated as Approved Premises for marriage and civil partnership and the hire/charges for using these rooms are at the discretion of the room owner/manager. The Guildhall is a very popular venue for ceremonies and demand is so great that a further new room, The Abbey View Room, has now been licenced and prepared as an additional venue for up to 25 people.
- 5.2 The fees for the Alkmaar and Russell Rooms have not been reviewed since 2013 and are now not covering all their costs. Extensive benchmarking has been undertaken against other Approved Premises in Bath, in the wider district and other local government deliver venues nationally. The proposed level of fee increases reflect the fact that The Guildhall is not a purely commercial venue and are still far below those charged by commercial Approved Premises in Bath.
- 5.3 The new Abbey View room has been created to help supply the market demand for a medium sized venue for couples and has been priced according to comparable size and location.
- 5.4 There is an increasing demand from customers to make their wedding/civil partnerships individual and bespoke events. For all ceremonies, it is proposed that the time will be extended from 30 minutes to 1 hour to allow and encourage greater personalisation of ceremonies by customers.
- 5.5 The Registration Service has recently had a refurbishment project that has improved The Guildhall ceremony rooms and public areas, which is creating even more interest in the available venues.
- 5.6 The cost of an Approved Premise Licence (Three years) for other venues (commercial or otherwise) has also not been reviewed since 2013. Benchmarking of other local registration districts has shown that it is now below our neighbours charging and does not fairly reflect the level of work and cost that this licencing activity generates for the service.

6 RATIONALE

6.1 The increased charges are needed to support the increasing cost to deliver the ceremonies in The Guildhall.

6.2 The increase in Approved Premises licence fee reflects the cost to deliver this licensing activity.

7 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

7.1 None

8 CONSULTATION

8.1 These charges are being increased to align with current costs; there has been internal consultation on the proposals with key Members and officers and extensive research with other council's and external providers.

9 RISK MANAGEMENT

9.1 A risk assessment related to the issue and recommendations has been undertaken, in compliance with the Council's decision making risk management guidance.

Contact person	Ian Savigar, 01225 477327
Background papers	<i>List here any background papers not included with this report, and where/how they are available for inspection.</i>
Please contact the report author if you need to access this report in an alternative format	