

REPORT TO: Executive Board

DATE: 24th May 2012

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director, Communities

PORTFOLIO: Neighbourhood, Leisure & Sport

SUBJECT: Variation of the non-statutory fees and setting of new fees for services offered by Halton Registration Service for 2013/2014

WARDS: Boroughwide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To seek the approval of the Board to vary the non-statutory fees offered by Halton Registration Service for 2013/2014.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That the Board approves the following variations and the setting of new fees offered by Halton Registration Service as set out in Appendix 1.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 3.1 The Marriage Act 1995 and the Civil Partnership Act 2005 allows local authorities to set fees for the attendance of a Superintendent Registrar and Registrar at a ceremony in an approved premise. In January 2011 the Executive Board Sub Committee agreed to review the charges for non-statutory registration services outside the usual time periods of the setting of fees and charges as the majority of ceremonies are planned up to two years in advance. Therefore the early setting of charges for non-statutory fees for 2013/14 is necessary in order to advise customers of the amount they will be expected to pay.
- 3.2 In determining the proposed fee structure shown in Appendix 1 for 2013/14, comparisons have been made based on available information from Cheshire East and Cheshire West and Chester. However, it should be noted that it is difficult to conduct a like-for-like comparison due to the high standard of the facilities that are provided at Runcorn Town Hall. These facilities briefly comprise a choice of six ceremony rooms; decoration and furniture are of a superior standard, award winning 'Green Flag' gardens and grounds, designated limousine parking and a large free car park for guests.
- 3.3 The Service currently has a set fee for civil ceremonies taking place between Monday and Friday in decommissioned rooms, e.g. the Boston

Suite. The Service would like to have an increased differential fee for ceremonies taking place on a Friday as shown in Appendix 1. Cheshire West and Chester Based and Liverpool already have a differential fee for ceremonies taking place on a Friday.

- 3.4 The Service wishes to increase the non-returnable reservation fee, from £30 including VAT to £40.00 for the booking or subsequent change of time, date or venue for all ceremonies.
- 3.5 The Service wishes to increase the fee for telephone applications for copies of certified certificates from £20.00 to £25.00. This cost includes the statutory fee for the certificate and recorded delivery postage costs, the Service will prioritise such applications within 48 hours. This increased fee will help the authority recover the cost of providing a telephone requests service. Customers will still be able to obtain certificates at the statutory fee in person by attending the Register Office, Direct Links or by making an online application.
- 3.6 The Service would like to increase the current cost of the fast track certificate from £26 to £30. This cost includes the statutory fee for the certificate and recorded delivery postage costs (if required) the Service will aim prioritise such applications on the date of request.
- 3.7 In addition to the fees shown in Appendix 1, the Service wishes to introduce an enhanced fee of 30 percent for all types of ceremonies that take place after 5pm (Monday to Sunday, including Bank Holidays). The Protections of Freedoms Bill 2012 removes the current statutory timeframe which states that both marriages and civil partnerships must take place between 08:00 and 18:00. This Bill will therefore have an impact on the Service and an appropriate fee structure is required for future ceremony bookings.
- 3.8 The Service would like to introduce a Ceremony Rehearsal service, priced at £60.00 (including VAT) for a 30-minute rehearsal. It should be noted that in order to minimise operational costs, rehearsals will be only be hosted at the Boston Suite.
- 3.9 The Service's income target has been increased by £15,000 in 2012/13. The early setting of non-statutory fees for 2013/14 will enable the Service to forward plan more effectively to achieve these income targets.
- 3.10 Based on the supporting information set out above the potential increased income for 2013/14 would be approximately £8,000.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The above proposals are in line with the Authority's new governance arrangements for delivery of registration services as outlined in the White Paper "Civil Registration: Vital Change" (2002), which enables the

authority to have the freedom to make policy decisions locally without recourse to the General Register Office.

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The proposed timeframe for fees will take effect from the 1 April 2013 unless otherwise specified.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1 Children & Young People in Halton

None identified.

6.2 Employment, Learning & Skills in Halton

None identified.

6.3 A Healthy Halton

None identified.

6.4 A Safer Halton

None identified.

6.5 Halton's Urban Renewal

None identified.

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

7.1 There are no anticipated risks associated with these recommendations.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

8.1 An Equality Impact Assessment of 8th May 2012 found that there were no equality or diversity issues against any of the protected characteristic groups.

9.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

Document	Place of Inspection	Contact Officer
New governance arrangements for the delivery of the Halton Registration Service, Executive Board Sub Committee (29 March 2007)	Halton Register Office	Registration Service Manager Superintendent Registrar

APPENDIX 1 Charges - Halton Registration Service

	2012/13	2013/14	Cheshire West & Chester
Reservation Fee (non returnable)	30.00	40.00	80.00
Fee for telephone applications	20.00	25.00	N/A
Fee for a fast track certificate	26.00	30.00	N/A
Fee for a Ceremony Rehearsal	N/A	60.00	N/A
Registration of a building 1994 and 2004 Acts	800.00	850.00	No info
Attendance by Senior Registrar/Registrar at the Boston Suite, Runcorn Town Hall (a venue approved 1994 / 2004 Acts)			
Monday to Thursday	120.00	150.00	No info
Friday <i>(new fee for a Friday with effect from 01/04/2013)</i>	120.00	160.00	No info
Saturday (commencing at or after 12 noon (now all day rate))	160.00	190.00	No info
Attendance by Senior Registrar/Registrar at the Civic Suite, Runcorn Town Hall (a venue approved 1994 / 2004 Acts)			
Monday to Thursday	250.00	250.00	286
Friday <i>(new fee for a Friday with effect from 01/04/2013)</i>	250.00	260.00	302
Saturday	275.00	290.00	372
Attendance by Senior Registrar/Registrar in the Leira or Members Room Runcorn Town Hall (a venue approved 1994 /2004 Acts)			
Monday to Thursday	206.00	220.00	286

Friday <i>(new fee for a Friday with effect from 01/04/2013)</i>	206.00	230.00	302
Saturday	206.00	250.00	372

Attendance by Senior Registrar/Registrar at all other buildings in Halton, approved under the 1994 /2004 Acts

Monday to Thursday	290.00	315.00	286
Friday <i>(new fee for a Friday with effect from 01/04/2013)</i>	290.00	335.00	302
Saturday	350.00	385.00	372
Sunday	400.00	450.00	No info
Bank Holidays	500.00	550.00	No info