

NORTH LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCIL

**CUSTOMER SERVICES, SPORT AND LEISURE
CABINET MEMBER**

MARRIAGE & CIVIL PARTNERSHIP PROCEEDINGS

1. OBJECT AND KEY POINTS IN THIS REPORT

- 1.1 To outline changes to legislation affecting marriage and civil partnership proceedings.
- 1.2 To seek approval for an additional registration service fee in response to the change in the law.
- 1.3 To seek approval to monitor customer demand arising from these changes for six months.
- 1.4 The key points in this report are:
 - There are no longer any restrictions on times when marriages and civil partnerships can take place
 - Local authorities can decide how they wish to respond to these changes
 - The registration service is proposing an additional fee and a six month monitoring period to assess demand

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 The Protection of Freedoms Act 2012 came into force on 1 October 2012. Before this date, marriages and civil partnerships had to take place between 8am and 6pm. The new act removes these time restrictions. Marriages and civil partnerships can now take place at any time of day.
- 2.2 The decision to offer marriage and civil partnership ceremonies outside of the previous 8am to 6pm period is up to each local authority.
- 2.3 Weddings in the register office or the Civic Suite currently take place within register office opening hours. The latest bookings at approved premises are 5.30pm.
- 2.4 The council needs to decide what 'extended hours' provision to offer for:
 - Register office and Civic Suite weddings and civil partnerships
 - Ceremonies in approved premises
 - Registration of marriages in non-conformist religious venues

- 2.5 There is a limited number of registration staff who conduct ceremonies both in the register office and at approved venues. Ceremonies are booked which take into account staff and register availability along with venue logistics.
- 2.6 Offering a service outside normal hours would involve a cost to the council. The council cannot change statutory fees for register office weddings and registering of marriages in non-conformist venues. The council can set fees for weddings in the Civic Suite and approved premises. A copy of current fees and charges are set out in Appendix 1.
- 2.7 Service staff have surveyed local approved premises to gauge demand. This shows that demand for 'extended hours' weddings are likely to be very low.
- 2.8 Staff are currently looking at the potential to extend ceremony provision at the Civic Centre to Saturday afternoons.
- 2.9 In response to the changes to the law, it is proposed that the registration service staff:
 - Continue to offer weddings at the Civic Centre within current or future agreed opening hours
 - Consider any requests for weddings outside these hours as they come in and provide staff, where possible, for a six-month trial period
 - Extend the approved premises fee of £400 for Sundays and bank holidays to cover any such ceremonies
 - Monitor demand for ceremonies in approved premises and non-conformist venues for six months
 - Provide a further report after the six month monitoring period

3. OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

- 3.1 To approve the approach set out in 2.9.
- 3.2 To request other changes in response to the changes to the law.

4. ANALYSIS OF OPTIONS

- 4.1 Option 1 is the preferred option. The factors supporting this option are:
 - It makes clear the times when register office weddings can take place
 - It allows the service to respond to any requests that do come in
 - The proposals can be managed within current staff capacity
 - A monitoring period allows time to gauge demand and develop any further changes needed.

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

5.1 Financial

There are no financial implications.

5.2 Staffing

The number of staff available to carry out ceremonies is limited. This has been considered when looking at capacity to extend the service offer.

5.3 Property

There are no property implications.

5.4 IT

There are no IT implications.

6. **OTHER IMPLICATIONS (STATUTORY, ENVIRONMENTAL, DIVERSITY, SECTION 17 - CRIME AND DISORDER, RISK AND OTHER)**

6.1 Statutory

There are statutory fees for some Register Office services.

6.2 Environmental

There are no environmental implications.

6.3 Diversity

The new laws offer people more choice about when they can marry.

7. **OUTCOMES OF CONSULTATION**

7.1 Managers have consulted staff about the changes to the law. Staff are happy to provide a service up to 7pm, but not to do very unsocial hours. A survey of approved premises shows there is limited interest in extended provision at this time. Of the eighteen venues surveyed, six said they would consider weddings after 6pm.

8. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

8.1 That the Cabinet Member approves the proposed response to the changes in the law relating to marriage and civil partnership times.

8.2 That a further update report is prepared after the proposed six month trial period.

DIRECTOR OF PLACES

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Background Papers used in the preparation of this report: None

CURRENT FEES

Register Office Ceremonies	£ 45	Monday to Saturday (am only)
Civic Suite Ceremonies	£ 85	Monday to Thursday
	£110	Friday
	£125	Saturday (am only)
Registered Building Marriages (non-conformist churches)	£ 84	Monday to Sunday
Approved Venues	£290	Monday to Thursday
	£295	Friday
	£330	Saturday
	£400	Sunday
	£400	Bank Holidays