

## THE EXECUTIVE

18 MARCH, 2003

### REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF LEISURE AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

<b>FEES AND CHARGES: BIRTHS, DEATHS AND MARRIAGES REGISTRATION SERVICE</b>		<b>FOR DECISION</b>
<i>This report is submitted in response to the instruction given by the Charging Policy Commission that all charges for Services are reviewed by the Executive.</i>		
<b><u>Summary</u></b> This report identifies the costs of running the Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Service and recommends increases to the charges associated with civil marriages at the Approved Premises in the Borough for the next financial year.		
<b><u>Recommendation</u></b> The Executive is recommended to agree the increase in Charges for 2003/04 for performing a civil marriage ceremony at Approved Premises as set out in paragraph 1.5 of this report.		
<b><u>Reason</u></b> To enable the required annual increase to take place.		
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#### 1. **Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Service**

- 1.1 The Registration Service based at Arden House is provided for the Registration District of Barking and Dagenham for the Registrar General. The service is administered as statutory provision by the local authority under the regulations set by the Registrar General. Fees are set by the General Register Office (GRO) for all fees associated with the registration of Births and Deaths, giving notice of and conducting Marriages at the Register Office.
- 1.2 From 1 April 2003, these are:
  - (i) Registration of Births and Deaths - £3.50 per certificate issued by Registrar.
  - (ii) Superintendent Registrar issue of certificate for Births, deaths and marriages - £7.00
  - (iii) Issue of short form birth certificate - £5.50
  - (iv) Notices of marriage - £30 per person.
  - (v) Registration of marriage fee - £34 plus certificate fee of £3.50.

- 1.3 Other premises, which meet the Approved Premises criteria, may be used for civil marriages. In this borough, Eastbury Manor House, Barking and City Limits, Collier Row are designated as Approved Premises. For civil marriages conducted there, the local authority sets the fee charged for the marriage ceremony and the fee paid to the Registrars who perform the ceremony.
- 1.4 Two Registrars are required at each ceremony (by law), a Superintendent Registrar and a Registrar. The General Register Office recommends allowing up to 3 hours per marriage. Consequently, the former General Purposes Committee agreed, on 9 June 1999, that the Registrars should be paid a session fee for conducting marriages outside normal office hours, which equates to this.
- 1.5 The proposed increase in charges for 2003/04 takes account of the prevailing charges for Approved Premises marriages around London. The present and proposed charges for 2003/04 for conducting a marriage ceremony are:

	<u>Present Charge 2002/03</u>	<u>Proposed Charge 2003/04</u>
Monday to Friday	£180.00	£186.00
Saturday	£250.00	£260.00
Sundays/Bank Hols	£320.00	£330.00

- 1.6 It is proposed to retain the existing session fees of £65 for the Superintendent Registrar and £55 for the Registrar for 2003/04. Car allowance costs of £3 per marriage are also incurred.
- 1.7 Most marriages at the Approved Premises take place on Saturday and the aim has been to make a small profit on each marriage conducted. For 2002/03, this is £127.00 and the increased charge produces a profit of £137.00 per marriage.

## 2. **Financial Implications**

- 2.1 The Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Service is based at Arden House. The gross cost of the service for 2003/04, which includes staffing, premises related, central support and Capital charges is £184,740.
- 2.2 The level of income anticipated is £98,910, producing a net cost of £85,830. Of the income received, around 94% is generated from the fees described in para 1.2, which are all set by the GRO. In addition a very small sum is received from the GRO, which represents payment from the Department of Work and Pensions for the issue of certain certificates. Approximately 6% of registration service income is generated from civil marriages performed at Approved Premises.
- 2.3 Although a larger registration district, for comparison purposes, the net cost of the registration service in the London Borough of Newham for the current year is estimated to be £325,400.
- 2.4 The service, in its current form is set to face radical change. The government aims to give customers a far wider choice than currently on how they register births and deaths and when and where they are able to marry and for the staff to become local

authority employees, which they are not currently. A consultation document is expected during early summer 2003, with the aim of the new legislation being on the statute book in 2005. Prior to this, the service is being required to organise and conduct Citizenship ceremonies from 2004.

- 2.5 Discussion is taking place on the guidelines for these and the fee to be paid to local authorities for conducting these ceremonies. There is also discussion currently on how the registration service might become involved with administration involved with the provision of Entitlement (ID) Cards, should these be introduced. Further information is required before the implications for the service can be determined.

### **Background Papers**

Minutes and report to the former General Purposes Committee held on 9 June 1999.