

THE EXECUTIVE

4 MAY 2004

REPORT FROM THE DIRECTOR OF LEISURE AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

FEES AND CHARGES: BIRTHS, DEATHS AND MARRIAGES REGISTRATION SERVICE	FOR DECISION	
<p><i>The assessing and determining of Charges and Fees is reserved to the Executive in the Council's Constitution by the Scheme of Delegation.</i></p> <p><u>Summary</u></p> <p>The Registration Service provides statutory services for birth, death and marriage registration.</p> <p>Additionally, a range of non statutory services are able to be provided from Civil Marriage at Approved Premises in the Borough to Baby Naming and Civil Partnership Ceremonies in both the Register Office and other suitable premises. The aim is to allow residents greater opportunity to celebrate significant events in their lives, who do not wish or are unable to have a religious ceremony. This will provide the opportunity for increased income generation for the service. This report identifies the various fees proposed for both existing and additional services.</p> <p><u>Recommendation</u></p> <p>The Executive is recommended to agree the level of charges described in section 3 of this report for 2004/05 and beyond covering non-statutory ceremonies.</p> <p><u>Reason</u></p> <p>To set the Fees for the year 2004/05, in accordance with the principles of the Charging Policy Commission.</p>		
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1. Statutory Fees

- 1.1 The Registration Service is provided for the Registration District of Barking and Dagenham for the Registrar General. Statutory 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 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.

2. Non Statutory Ceremonies and Fees

2.1 Civil Marriage:

Each local authority is required to provide premises for civil marriage at the statutory fee of £34 per marriage. In addition, legislation permits premises which fulfil statutory criteria (Marriage Act 1949) to be used as Approved Premises for Civil Marriage for which the local authority sets the fee.

2.2 Currently the venues in the Borough approved for this purpose are Eastbury Manor House and City Limits with a fee charged for the marriage ceremony and a fee paid to the Registrars who perform the ceremony. In 2003/04 there were 35 civil marriages held at these premises with a profit of £140 per marriage for those booked during that year. This compares with 27 marriages during 2002/03. The majority of these marriages were performed at Eastbury Manor House, which was closed for refurbishment during both parts of both these financial years.

2.3 Separate fees are charged at present for Monday to Friday, Saturday and Sunday / Bank Holidays. Although the majority of marriages take place on a Saturday, a few are held on a Friday and in order to increase income it is proposed to amend the charging structure to one fee for Monday to Saturday and another for Sundays / Bank Holidays.

2.4 As bookings for marriages can be made up to 12 months in advance, it is proposed that in subsequent years charges be agreed in November for the following financial year to enable bookings made to be charged at the appropriate rate for the year in which the marriage is held.

2.5 Increasingly local authorities are decommissioning their Register Office Marriage Rooms for use as Approved Premises for a significantly enhanced fee, with the Superintendent Registrar's office being used for marriage ceremonies for the statutory fee of £34 Monday to Saturday.

2.6 Delegated Authority has been obtained to decommission Arden House Marriage Room to become Approved Premises. However, as Marriage Notices are valid for 12 months, the decommission date will commence from April 2005. In order to ensure that residents can continue to have a dignified Register Office Civil Marriage Ceremony in suitable surroundings, the fees have been structured to enable additional income to be achieved predominantly from marriages held on Saturdays which is the most popular day for couples. Operating experience will allow a judgement to be made about the scale of future increases.

2.7 Other non statutory ceremonies – Baby Naming, Renewal of Vows, Civil Partnerships

Delegated Authority has also been obtained to offer a range of other non-statutory ceremonies to include baby naming, renewal of vows and civil partnerships for Borough residents, initially in conjunction with Civil Ceremonies Limited. This will provide individually scripted ceremonies. The company charges £30 per ceremony pack and handles the associated administration with the local authority setting the fee charged to the residents to ensure that these services are self financing. Although the level of demand may not prove to be significant, such service provision will enable the opportunity for some additional income generation. Again operating experience will allow a judgement to be made about the scale of future increases for these ceremonies.

2.8 In order to make it possible to provide all these additional ceremonies, both statutory and non statutory, additional casual Registrars have been recruited, who will be used only when required to fulfil these roles.

3. Revised Fee Structure

3.1 The present and proposed fees for these various services are set out below

	2003/04 £	2004/05 £	2005/06 £
Approved Premises: (Eastbury Manor, City Limits)			
Mon-Fri	186.00	270.00	
Saturday	260.00	270.00	
Sunday / Bank Holidays	330.00	340.00	
Session Fee – Supt Registrar	65.00	67.00	
Registrar	55.00	57.00	
Approved Premises: (Arden House)			
Mon-Fri	n/a	n/a	34.00
Sat am	n/a	n/a	60.00
Sat pm	n/a	n/a	130.00
Sun/Bank Hols	n/a	n/a	240.00
Other non statutory ceremonies, Baby Naming etc.			
Mon-Fri	n/a	100.00	
Sat	n/a	130.00	
Sun/Bank Hols	n/a	240.00	

4. Financial Implications

- 4.1 The budgeted gross cost of the Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Service for 2004/05, which includes staffing, premises related, central support and Capital charges, is £222,500. The level of income budgeted for is £132,840, producing a net cost of £89,660.
- 4.2 Although a larger registration district, for comparison purposes, the net cost of the Registration Service in the London Borough of Newham for the 2003/04 was in the region of £250,000.

5 Consultation

Bob Cooper, Interim Head of Finance, LESD

Background Papers

Executive Report and Minute 329, 11 March 2003 re: Fees and Charges: Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Service