

# **PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR FINANCE, RESOURCES AND ASSETS**

<b>DATE</b>	7 <sup>th</sup> February 2023
<b>REPORT OF</b>	Councillor Harness – Portfolio Holder for Finance, Resources and Assets
<b>RESPONSIBLE OFFICER</b>	Registrars and Civic Services Team Manager
<b>SUBJECT</b>	Review of Fees and Charges for Registrars and Civic Services
<b>STATUS</b>	Open
<b>FORWARD PLAN REF NO.</b>	<b>PHFRA 02/23/01</b>

## **CONTRIBUTION TO OUR AIMS**

This report contributes to all five outcomes of the Outcomes Framework to ensure delivery of resources to meet priorities and support a balanced budget for 2023 / 24 onwards

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The report sets out proposed changes to non-statutory fees for the Registration Service and changes for room hire at Grimsby Town Hall.

The fee setting process takes into account the three years ahead to ensure that customers can book ahead with financial certainty.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that the Portfolio Holder approve the proposed fees and charges as set out in Appendix A.

## **REASONS FOR DECISION**

Usually, all fees and charges within Registrars and Civic Services are reviewed to ensure that they reflect inflationary cost increases of providing the service and to consider benchmarking results locally and regionally. With the current high rates of inflation, to do this would make the service untenable and couples would make alternatives arrangements with regard to their non-statutory choices at another, lower cost district. In North East Lincolnshire, 61% of our income is from ceremonies alone, it therefore has been a balanced decision to increase prices for 2025/2026 by 5%.

The service is confident that it will reach predicted income levels for the current year. However, there is some uncertainty whether income will be achieved over the next two years due to the cost of living crisis. We do have bookings into 2024, but they are only provisional until one year in advance of the ceremony,

## **1. BACKGROUND AND ISSUES**

- 1.1 Fees are currently charged for marriage and civil partnership ceremonies, individual citizenship ceremonies and approved premise licence fees.
- 1.2 An annual benchmarking exercise of fees set within the Yorkshire and Humber region, is completed by Superintendent Registrars throughout the region. As a District, we are comparable to authorities of similar size.
- 1.3 The room hire charges for Grimsby Town Hall are set for individual events and functions to ensure appropriate recovery of costings and overheads are recharged in line with council policy.

## **2. RISKS AND OPPORTUNITIES**

- 2.1 Failure to review fees suitability this way would have a detrimental impact on budgets for 2023-2026.
- 2.2 The opportunity for a three year fee setting process is to ensure maximum income is collected in and bookings are secured in a timely manner.

## **3. OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

In order for the service to remain competitive it is proposed that the fees be set as laid out at the end of this report.

## **4. REPUTATION AND COMMUNICATIONS CONSIDERATIONS**

There are no reputational issues. Fees and charges are communicated to all customers at the time of initial enquiry. By setting a three-year fee structure, this allows customers to budget fully for their event, without any last minute increases.

## **5. FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS**

- 5.1. Fees and charges are reviewed to ensure that the costs of providing services are recovered wherever possible, after accounting for inflation, and that they are fair and competitive in comparison to the local and regional market.
- 5.2. Any increases in income from the proposed changes in fees and charges will help offset inflationary cost increases and help the Council achieve a balanced budget.

## **6. CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IMPLICATIONS**

There are no Children and Young People implications.

## **7. CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no Climate Change and Environmental implications.

## **8. CONSULTATION WITH SCRUTINY**

Not applicable

## **9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

The Council has a responsibility to promote best value and maximise use of limited resources. Undertaking a regular review of fees and charges supports this approach.

## **10. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

10.1 Statutory fees are increased by the Registrar General and the local authority have no discretion as to these. However, in the case of non-statutory fees these are discretionary and although the Council do set assumptions as to income generation targets, these fees must be reasonable. Care must be taken to ensure the level of fee is such that the fees can be demonstrated to be reasonable in comparison to providing the cost of the service.

10.2 It should be noted that the level of fees proposed are comparable to our neighbouring authorities.

10.3 It is accepted as best practice to regularly review fees and charges.

## **11. HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS**

There are no direct HR implications

## **12. WARD IMPLICATIONS**

Affects all wards

## **13. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

None

## **14. CONTACT OFFICER(S)**

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**COUNCILLOR HARNESS**  
**PORTFOLIO HOLDER – FINANCE, RESOURCES AND ASSETS**