

PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR FINANCE, RESOURCES AND ASSETS

DATE	20th January 2025
REPORT OF	Councillor Stephen Harness – Portfolio Holder for Finance, Resources and Assets
RESPONSIBLE OFFICER	Simon Jones – Assistant Director Law and Governance
SUBJECT	Review of Fees and Charges for Registrars and Civic Services
STATUS	Open
FORWARD PLAN REF NO.	PFH FRA 01/25/01

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 2025 / 26 onwards.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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

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

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Portfolio Holder:

1. Approves the proposed fees and charges as per the full Council approval of organisational uplift of fees and charges in line with the Consumer Prices Index.
2. Delegates authority to the Assistant Director Law and Governance to so implement with effect from 1st April 2025.

REASONS FOR DECISION

In February 2023 it was approved by Full Council that:

Fees and Charges: that an annual organisation wide uplift in fees and charges (where permissible by law) in line with the Consumer Prices Index (CPI) or any official index replacing it.

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 and the increase in fees. We do have bookings into 2026, 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 The National Panel for Registration Officers oversees a Fees and Funding exercise each year which individual districts undertake. This feeds into GROs strategy for Fees and Funding Review linked in with HM Treasury.
- 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 2025-2028.
- 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

For the service to remain competitive it is proposed that the fees be set as per the Council recommendation of February 2023.

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

- 9.1. 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 has 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 is accepted as best practice to regularly review fees and charges.

11. HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1. There are not HR implications

12. WARD IMPLICATIONS

Affects all wards

13. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

14. CONTACT OFFICER(S)

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PORTFOLIO HOLDER – FINANCE, RESOURCES AND ASSETS

