

ANGUS COUNCIL

RESOURCES AND CENTRAL SERVICES COMMITTEE – 3 FEBRUARY 2005

REVISION OF FEES AND PAYMENTS - REGISTRATION STAFF
CIVIL MARRIAGES AT APPROVED VENUES

REPORT BY THE DIRECTOR OF LAW AND ADMINISTRATION

ABSTRACT

This Report seeks approval for increases in the charges for the conducting of civil marriages at approved venues and the use of the Marriage Rooms within Registration Offices. The additional income will be utilised to meet the cost of increased fee payments to registration staff. It also seeks approval for the introduction of charges to those new citizens wishing a private citizenship ceremony either in a Registration Office or a venue considered suitable by the Council.

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee is asked to approve the following revised fees and charges from 1 April 2005:-

- (i) an increase in the charge for the services of a Registrar to conduct a civil marriage ceremony at an approved venue from £106.50 to £126.50;
- (ii) an increase in the accommodation fee for the use of the Marriage Rooms within Registration Offices from £30 to £35;
- (iii) an increase in the fee payable to Registrars and Assistant Registrars conducting a civil marriage ceremony at an approved venue from £50 to £70;
- (iv) an increase to the fee payable to accompanying Registrars and Assistant Registrars attending a civil marriage ceremony at an approved venue from £30 to £50;
- (v) the introduction of a fee for any new citizen wishing a private citizenship ceremony of £126.50 at a venue deemed suitable by the Chief Registrar and £35 within a Registration Office;

The Committee is also asked to agree that the above fees be reviewed on annual basis in future years.

2. MARRIAGES

Members will recall legislative changes in the Marriage (Scotland) Act 2002 which approved, for the first time, civil marriage ceremonies at venues approved by the Council. This legislation came into force on 9 June 2003 and since then 110 Civil Marriages have been conducted by Registrars and Assistant Registrars at various approved venues in the Angus Registration District.

No firm guidance was given by the General Register Office for Scotland on the level of charge to be made by Councils for the carrying out of ceremonies or the remuneration to registration staff carrying out this duty outwith normal registration office hours. Accordingly, all Councils developed their own charging and remuneration packages, with the vast majority (including Angus) opting for a fee payment to staff. A recent comparison was carried out with 9 local authorities and it was established that the fee payments varied from £50 (payable by Angus) to £91, with an average of £67.40.

Report No 1271/01 to the Policy and Resources Committee of 9 October 2002 approved the charge of £106.50 for the venue for a civil marriage and payment to the Registrar or Assistant Registrar of £50 for each marriage ceremony conducted, with a recommendation that the fees be reviewed in 2 years time. Report No. 1007/03 to the Resources and Central Services Committee of 4 September 2003 subsequently approved, inter alia, the payment of a £30 fee to Registrars and Assistant Registrars accompanying the officiating Registrar where it was considered appropriate for health and safety or other reasons.

From the results of the survey carried out it is now apparent that Angus Council are very much at the lower end of the scale in respect of payments to staff conducting civil marriage ceremonies at approved venues. It is now felt that, given the system is working well and proving popular with the public, due recognition should be given to registration staff and payments should be adjusted to at least the average level identified in the recent survey of other areas.

Most other Councils surveyed have indicated that they are to review charges for implementation on 1 April 2005 and, although this proposal places fees marginally above the current average, cognisance has been taken of these likely increases.

3. CITIZENSHIP CEREMONIES

To date, 5 citizenship ceremonies have been carried out and 17 new citizens welcomed. All have so far participated in the Council's composite ceremony and no requests have been received as yet for a private ceremony. As new citizens are entitled to request a private ceremony, it is felt prudent to put in place a charging structure.

The proposal for private citizenship ceremonies would allow the Council to respond favourably to any request received and is in line with similar ceremonies conducted in relation to civil marriages.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The increased costs of payments to Registrars and Assistant Registrars will be met in full by a similar increase to the charges made to those wishing to be married by civil ceremony at an approved venue and therefore there is no increased cost to be met by the Council.

It is unlikely that private citizenship ceremonies will generate significant increased income.

5. CONSULTATION

The Chief Executive, the Director of Finance and the Personnel Services Manager have been consulted in the preparation of this Report.

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DIRECTOR OF LAW AND ADMINISTRATION

NOTE: No background papers, as defined by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (other than any containing confidential or exempt information) were relied on to any material extent in preparing the above Report.