

Report for:	Housing & Regulatory Board
Meeting Date:	27 February 2020

Title of Report:	Registration Service Fees 2021 - 2023
Shadow Portfolio Holder	Isobel Darby
Responsible Officer	Wendy Morgan-Brown, Head of Registration, Coroners, Archives & Trading Standards
Report Author Officer Contact:	Wendy Morgan-Brown 01296 383521 wmbrown@buckscc.gov.uk
Recommendations:	Approve the fees for 2021/22 and 2022/2023
Corporate Implications:	Reports must include specific comments from Legal and Finance Officers addressing any legal and financial implications of the recommendations. Comments from the Interim Monitoring Officer and Section 151 Officer for the Shadow Authority should also be sought and incorporated into this section. Add any other implications, where appropriate.
Options: (If any)	There are no other options.
Reason:	

1. Purpose of Report

1.1 To review and approve the non-statutory fees chargeable from 2020/21 to 2022/23 for the Registration Service.

2. Content of Report

3.1 The Registration Service is funded through statutory and non-statutory fee income. The non-statutory fees are set locally by the Council and historically have increased annually by inflation as a minimum, and in some cases by more, to assist with delivery of the MTFP.

3.2 The service delivery is predominately statutory; birth and death registrations are a statutory requirement and are free to those using these services. There is a statutory ceremony fee of £46 which falls well below cost recovery. With the exception of certificate fees, statutory fees have not increased for the last 5-6 years.

3.3 The Service is therefore reliant on a steady number of activities each year which generates a level of income to cover costs. A reduction in activities will affect the Service's ability to cover its costs and deliver the budget.

3.4 The Service receives no budget from the Council and the current budget starts with a deficit of -£250k. The Service therefore is required to cover all operating costs as well as deliver a further £250k to balance the budget. Income is in the region of £1.4m per annum.

3.5 The main income for the Service is from weddings and civil partnership ceremonies with around 1800 ceremonies undertaken each year. Bookings are made up to three years in advance, and couples pay the full amount for their ceremony at point of booking.

3.6 The Service introduced this payment model around two years ago and at that point introduced a 3-year fee plan so correct fees could be paid and income maximised. This provided for improved efficiency both for the Service and couples by reducing the number of contacts and created a clearer pricing structure.

3.7 The fees for 2020/21 have been increased by inflation and are processing through the unitary budget approval process. However, fees also need to be proposed and agreed for 2021/22 and 2022/23 to provide for an ongoing 3-year fee plan.

3.8 Attached at Annex 1 are the fees for 2020/21, and the proposed fees for 2021/22 and 2022/23. These fees have inflation applied at 3%, which is the same increase applied to the 2020/21 fees.

3.9 The fees proposed are in the upper quartile of the fees benchmarked across the South East authorities, and are comparable with shire authorities who tend to have a high number of wedding venues. Customers are inclined to book a wedding venue on the venue itself, rather than the price charged by the Registration Service.

3. Financial Implications

3.1 None. Customers have a wide range of venues and prices should they choose to marry or form a civil partnership.

3.2 Approval of the proposed fees is required to meet the existing income budget, no impact is anticipated on the overall budget position.

4. Legal Implications

4.1 None.

5. Other Key Risks

5.1 The business model itself has risks associated with it as the income is reliant on activity levels remaining the same or increasing.

6. Dependencies

6.1 None

7. Consultation



7.1 Not Applicable.

8. Communications Plan

9.1 Once the fees are agreed the relevant websites will be updated to show the new fees. The fees will increase from 1 April 2020

9. Equalities Implications

9.1 Do you feel an equalities impact assessment is required? No.

9.2 This report's recommendations do not impact on the protected characteristics identified in the Equality Act 2010 as none of the fees and charges are specific to any of the groups concerned.

10. Data Implications

10.1 Do you feel a Data Protection Impact Assessment is required? No.

10.2 Minimal data is required and not used for any other purposes.

11. Next Steps

11.1 The new fees will be introduced on 1 April 2020 and charged to customers booking between 2020-2023.

Background Papers	It is a legal requirement to make available background papers relied upon to prepare a report and should be listed at the end of the report (copies of background papers for executive decisions must be provided to Democratic Services). Hyperlinks to papers published online should be used where possible. Where there are no background papers, insert None.
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