

17 SUPPORT SERVICES DEPARTMENT - REVIEW OF PAYMENTS FOR REGISTRARS (AN91-2006)

Significant new legislation governing Civil Marriage and, more recently, Civil Partnerships, has led to a significant increase in the demand for Registrars to perform ceremonies. The Marriage (Scotland) Act 2002 in particular allowed a wide variety of new venues to be designated. These include Parks (including Dundee Law), Football Grounds, RRS Discovery, Unicorn, Broughty Castle, Mills Observatory, several Hotels, etc. This improved choice has seen the number of civil marriages in Dundee rise since 2002 as follows:-

2002 = 203; 2003 = 249; 2004 = 283; 2005 = 325.

The Registration Service will also soon be in a position to offer child-naming and renewal of vows ceremonies.

At present, local agreements provide for one Registrar to be on duty on Saturdays and this limited service does not always permit all requests for ceremonies to be accommodated. The current and anticipated future demand for the services of a Registrar for out of hours ceremonies necessitates a review of the current agreements if customer needs are to be satisfied. It would allow Dundee to tap into the wedding tourism market which has developed in recent years.

The challenge is to put in place resources to cope with peaks of demand, while avoiding unnecessary rostering of staff on any fixed rota as at present. The simplest solution, already adopted by many Councils in Scotland, including Dundee's immediate neighbours, is to move from a system of overtime payments at relevant premium rates, to one of flat rate payments for events.

After comparison with out of hours flat rate payments in other Council areas, and the amounts which would be earned at a range of overtime rates, it is proposed that the undernoted flat rate payment structure be adopted for events outwith normal working hours:-

Weekday evenings and Saturdays	£50
Sundays	£70
Public Holidays	£90

Being able to offer a wider choice of dates and times to couples will bring an increase in the number of events catered for. The increase in costs to the Council in fees paid to Registrars will be more than offset by the fees to be charged. In due course, the additional services which it is proposed to provide will bring a further increase in customers and thus income.

It is therefore recommended that the above fee structure be approved and adopted.

The Registrar's Office has also been staffed and opened on Saturday mornings for registrations. However an analysis of Saturday registrations over the last six months shows ten Saturdays with no registrations at all with the rest recording either one or two registrations. As the legislation allows generous time periods for registering events, and provision is made for emergency or urgent registrations to be dealt with, it is suggested that the provision of a Registrar for Saturday morning opening for registrations is unnecessary and it is recommended that it be ceased for a trial period of six months. If no problems or issues arise, a note recommending permanent cessation of Saturday registration will be brought to Committee.

The Chief Executive, Depute Chief Executive (Support Services), Depute Chief Executive (Finance), staff and Unions have been consulted and are in agreement with these proposals.