



LEAD MEMBER FOR COMMUNITIES AND SAFETY

DECISIONS to be made by the Lead Member for Communities and Safety,
Councillor Bill Bentley

THURSDAY, 25 JANUARY 2018 AT 10.00 AM

COMMITTEE ROOM - COUNTY HALL, LEWES

AGENDA

- 1 Decisions made by the Lead Cabinet Member on 27 September 2017 (*Pages 3 - 4*)
- 2 Disclosure of Interests
Disclosure by all Members present of personal interests in matters on the agenda, the nature of any interest and whether the Members regard the interest as prejudicial under the terms of the Code of Conduct.
- 3 Urgent items
Notification of any items which the Lead Member considers urgent and proposes to take at the appropriate part of the agenda.
- 4 Registration Service - provision of discretionary services (*Pages 5 - 14*)
Report by the Director of Communities, Economy and Transport
- 5 Any urgent items previously notified under agenda item 3

PHILIP BAKER
Assistant Chief Executive
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17 January 2018

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LEAD MEMBER FOR COMMUNITIES AND SAFETY

DECISIONS made by the Lead Member for Communities and Safety, Councillor Bill Bentley, on 27 September 2017 at County Hall, Lewes

Councillor Elkin spoke on item 6 (see minute 19)

15 DECISIONS MADE BY THE LEAD CABINET MEMBER ON 1 SEPTEMBER 2017

15.1 The Lead Member confirmed as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 1 September 2017.

16 REPORTS

16.1 Reports referred to in the minutes below are contained in the minute book.

17 ONE WAY SYSTEM AND 20MPH SPEED LIMIT - ASHGATE ROAD, EASTBOURNE

17.1 The Lead Member considered a report by the Director of Communities, Economy and Transport. The Lead Member reported the comments of the Local Member.

DECISIONS

17.2 RESOLVED to inform the petitioners that (1) a one-way system on Ashgate Road is not a priority for the County Council at the present time;

(2) the implementation of a 20mph speed limit is not a priority for the County Council at the present time; and

(3) additional parking places in the area specified cannot be provided by the County Council as the area in question is not public highway.

Reasons

17.3 The County Council has a limited amount of funding to develop local transport improvements and we need to ensure that we target our resources to those schemes that will be of greatest benefit to our local communities. The proposal did not meet the benchmark score to enable it to be taken forward at this time.

17.4 The grassed area outside Nos 15-25 Ashgate Road is not designated a public highway and the County Council as Highway Authority does not jurisdiction over the area, and residents are advised to contact Eastbourne Borough Council with their request for the area to be converted to parking.

18 PROVISION OF AN ON-STREET ADVISORY DISABLED PARKING BAY IN MANOR END, UCKFIELD

18.1 The Lead Member considered a report by the Director of Communities, Economy and Transport.

DECISIONS

18.2 RESOLVED to (1) note the concerns raised by the objector; and

(2) approve the provision of an on-street advisory disabled parking bay in Manor End, Uckfield.

Reasons

18.3 The need for the disabled bay was identified by site assessments undertaken by the Traffic and Safety Officer, and supported by the information given in the initial application. The criteria of Policy PS4/18 have been met, so the applicant is entitled to an advisory disabled parking space.

19 BUSINESS ADVICE & SUPPORT PARTNERSHIP (BAASP)

19.1 The Lead Member considered a report by the Director of Communities, Economy and Transport.

DECISIONS

19.2 RESOLVED to (1) endorse the entering into partnership with four other local authorities in order to offer a single branded business advice service in collaboration together;

(2) delegate authority to the Director of Communities, Economy and Transport to enter all such agreements necessary to give effect to recommendation (1); and

(3) agree to the reduction of the hourly rate for a chargeable business advice from £72 + VAT to £70 + VAT to ensure fees are uniform across the partnership.

Reasons

19.3 Whilst East Sussex Trading Standards could continue to act independently outside of the partnership, there are clear advantages of working collaboratively, very much focused on shared resources giving rise to shared benefits for the local authority partners and local businesses. It is essential that the five authorities offer the same rate to enable most effective and clear marketing.

19.4 The Lead Member requested that the partnership be kept under constant review, and that the exercise of the delegation in terms of variations to the membership of the partnership be made in consultation with him. The Lead Member also confirmed that he would be prepared to consider further reports on the chargeable rate, should the partnership determine that a higher rate was appropriate in the future.

Committee:	Lead Cabinet Member for Communities and Safety
Date of meeting:	25 January 2018
By:	Director of Communities, Economy and Transport
Title:	Registration Service – Provision of Discretionary Services
Purpose:	To note the breadth of discretionary services currently being provided by the Registration Service and to seek approval to implement a new discretionary service which will discount non-statutory fees by up to 25%.

RECOMMENDATIONS: The Lead Member is recommended to:

- 1) Note the breadth of discretionary services currently being pursued by the Registration Service;**
 - 2) Approve the implementation of a new discretionary service which will discount non-statutory fees by up to 25%; and**
 - 3) Delegate authority to the Director of Communities, Economy and Transport to discount non-statutory ceremony fees by up to 25%.**
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1. Background

1.1. The Registration Service has successfully developed an ethos of team members regularly proposing new ideas for improving the service's offering. These proposals are considered, and those which are deemed feasible are piloted and pursued. The current schemes being pursued are detailed in Appendix 1.

1.2. Over the last few months two further proposals for discretionary services have been suggested, as set out in detail in section 2 below. Following consideration, Lead Member approval is now sought to implement these new additional discretionary services.

2. Proposals

2.1. **Funerals and wakes at Southover Grange.** (Detailed at Appendix 2.) The proposed fees for this service will be considered by Cabinet at the meeting on Tuesday 23 January. The service has become aware of a recent but growing trend for civil funerals to be held in venues other than a crematorium. Once the funeral ceremony has been completed the Funeral Director then accompanies the body to the crematorium and the mourners remain in situ for the wake. The benefit of this arrangement is that the funeral ceremony itself does not need to be rushed as is often the case at crematoria and the guests can stay in the same venue for the funeral and the wake afterwards. Some areas are not well covered by the crematoria available, which involves a lot of travelling for many people, and some family members prefer funerals to take place in more attractive buildings than some of the crematoria that are available. Southover Grange is an ideal venue for offering this new service.

2.1.1. The proposal is that the Registration Service would make Southover Grange available for civil funerals and wakes after civil funerals. It is believed that this would be attractive to the residents of Lewes and the surrounding area because their only current crematoria options are Brighton, Tunbridge Wells or Eastbourne.

2.1.2. As funerals are normally arranged at relatively short notice this would not interfere with marriages at the building because, by law, marriages must be booked at least 28 days prior to the ceremony.

2.1.3. This proposal would help to make better use of Southover Grange during down-time and prevent the ceremony rooms standing idle when there are no ceremonies taking place (especially through the winter months).

2.2. **Discount on non-statutory ceremonies.** (Detailed at Appendix 3.) The Lead Member is requested to delegate authority to the Director of Communities, Economy and Transport to discount non-statutory ceremony fees by up to 25%, if they are booked at the same time as the customer is conducting other business with the Registration Service. Some examples of this would be:

2.2.1. Booking a non-statutory naming ceremony while in the office to register the birth of a baby.

2.2.2. Booking a non-statutory celebration ceremony for family members once the couple are back in the UK for customers who are in the process of organising a Certificate of No Impediment (required for British citizens to marry in some countries).

3. Conclusion and Reason for Recommendation

3.1. The Lead Member is recommended to note the breadth of discretionary services currently being pursued by the Registration Service.

3.2. The Lead Member is recommended to approve the implementation of a new discretionary service which will discount non-statutory fees by up to 25%.

3.3. The Lead Member is recommended to delegate authority to the Director for Communities, Economy and Transport to discount non-statutory ceremony fees by up to 25%.

RUPERT CLUBB

Director of Communities, Economy and Transport

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LOCAL MEMBERS

All

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

None

APPENDIX 1 – DISCRETIONARY SERVICES ALREADY IN OPERATION

1. Retail sales and merchandise

- 1.1. Commemorative certificates to all birth and marriage customers.
- 1.2. Decorative silver-plated certificate holders to all birth and marriage customers.
- 1.3. A collection of books containing music and verse suggestions for naming ceremonies, renewal of vows ceremonies and funerals.
- 1.4. Milestone cards for new babies.

2. Advertising opportunities

- 2.1. Providing in-house advertising space in the waiting areas and interview rooms.
- 2.2. Allowing paid-for advertising to be placed inside birth certificate folders.

3. Adding value to statutory services

- 3.1. Focussing on promoting private citizenship ceremonies for all new British Citizens by making the offer more attractive and fitting around the customer's requests.
- 3.2. Adding surcharges for weddings on 'peak demand' days, such as the weekends of bank holidays, and around Christmas and New Year.
- 3.3. Charging tiered pricing for weddings in the various offices depending upon their quality.
- 3.4. Offering marriage preparation (rehearsal) appointments for marrying couples.

4. Non-statutory discretionary opportunities

- 4.1. Provision of baby photography sessions advertised to all new birth customers with a 25% profit share of the photographer's takings.
- 4.2. Increasing the customer choice and revenue from licensing new Approved Marriage Venues by appointing an officer to approach potential venues to try to persuade them to become licensed.
- 4.3. Heavily promoting non-statutory ceremonies by making our offer and pricing more competitive and bringing the licensed venues on board to signpost customers towards us.
- 4.4. The provision of champagne VIP suite and Prosecco drinks toasts before and after ceremonies at Southover Grange to add to the customer's all round ceremony experience.
- 4.5. The provision of approved catering arrangements at Southover Grange, enabling receptions to take place there, alongside a profit share of 10% of the caterer's takings.
- 4.6. The provision of an official photographer at Citizenship Ceremonies with a profit share of the photographer's takings.
- 4.7. Offering additional add-on services to our citizenship and nationality services as the only registration service in the region to do so, thus picking up many customers from afar.

5. Work in progress initiatives

- 5.1. Establishing a standalone Ceremonies Website which will provide a platform for advertising from both the wedding venues and also associated suppliers of wedding products and services – this will also enable a two tiered pricing structure for licenses.
- 5.2. Establishing a 'recently married service' whereby customers who have changed their name through marriage can inform all companies at once via us for payment of a convenience fee.
- 5.3. The production and sale of 'save the date' cards with depictions of the Register Offices on for couples to purchase and send out immediately after booking their ceremony.
- 5.4. The production of in-house ceremonies brochure and bereavement guide funded by advertising revenue, aiming to produce a healthy surplus.
- 5.5. The sale of fountain pens immediately after signing the register so that customers can keep the pen they signed the register with as a memento of their special day.

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Team Manager
Registration Service

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1. Background

- 1.1. The Registration Service has recently renovated Southover Grange in Lewes as a ceremony venue including marriages and non-statutory ceremonies, such as naming ceremonies for children, renewal of vows ceremonies and non-statutory 'wedding celebrations' (where a legal marriage has, for example, already taken place abroad).
- 1.2. In the financial year 2015-2016 we carried out 2,470 ceremonies (excluding funerals) in East Sussex, of which 98% were statutory marriages.
- 1.3. In the financial year 2016-2017 we carried out 2,481 ceremonies (excluding funerals) in East Sussex, of which 95% were statutory marriages.
- 1.4. The minimum waiting time from giving statutory notice of marriage until the marriage authorities can be issued is currently 28 days. This means that any upcoming available dates cannot be filled with legal marriages if they are within the next 28 day period. The Registration Service will therefore never be in a position where a couple would like to book a wedding on a date already reserved for a funeral. The Service has also made the decision that no funerals will be booked on dates already reserved for weddings.
- 1.5. In the last year and a half, the Registration Service has been far more active in training staff in the delivery of, and promotion of, non-statutory ceremonies. These remain a small proportion of the number of ceremonies we carry out, but are increasing. The number of non-statutory ceremonies carried out in the 2015-2016 financial year was 57 (2% of the total), but this increased to 134 in the 2016-2017 financial year (5% of the total, and an increase in the number of non-statutory ceremonies of 135%).
- 1.6. We currently have 4 experienced funeral celebrants – two based in Eastbourne and two in Lewes. We have a Unique Selling Proposition of being a 'team' of funeral celebrants, with additional back-up from more senior ceremonies celebrants based at our offices, meaning no funeral will ever be missed through illness or absence.
- 1.7. In the 2015/2016 financial year we officiated at 149 funerals, of which 46% were carried out by the Lewes-based funeral celebrants.
- 1.8. In the 2016/2017 financial year we officiated at 101 funerals, of which 77% were carried out by the Lewes-based funeral celebrants. (The decrease in numbers in this financial year was due to some experienced funeral celebrants retiring from the service.)
- 1.9. This financial year to date (2017-2018) we have 87 funerals booked (up to and including 09/11/17), of which about 55% will be carried out by the Lewes-based funeral celebrants.
- 1.10. Deaths are required to be registered within 5 days of the event, unless they are referred to the Coroner. Most funerals take place within approximately one to three weeks of the death and are therefore booked at relatively short notice.
- 1.11. The nearest crematorium to Lewes is currently Woodvale in Brighton. This is just under 10 miles away (20 minutes by car). There is also a crematorium at Eastbourne (17 miles, or 30 minutes by car) and Tunbridge Wells (24 miles, or 42 minutes by car). There are plans to build a new crematorium in Horam which will be approximately 16 miles away (28 minutes by car).
- 1.12. Our funeral celebrants have reported that there is a growing trend for families to hold ceremonies outside of a crematorium setting and for the Funeral Directors to transport the body for burial or cremation following the ceremony. Some families accompany the body to the crematorium, but many do not.

1.13. Some Funeral Directors (for instance Payne & Sons in Eastbourne) have started offering these ceremonies on their own premises.

1.14. We have been asked by informants registering deaths at Southover Grange if it is possible to hold funerals/memorial ceremonies there.

2. Proposals

2.1. To introduce Civil Funerals and Wakes held at Southover Grange. These services will enable us to increase our non-statutory service offering across the County, and fill empty ceremony slots at Southover Grange, thus making best use of resources.

2.2. The proposed fee for a Civil Funeral only:

2.2.1. Civil Funeral at Southover Grange - £250.00 (No VAT)

(Customers will be provided with exclusive use of the ground floor of the building for 1 hour, including the arrival and departure of the Funeral Director, the deceased and the mourners. Price includes the funeral celebrant.)

2.3. The proposed fee for Civil Funeral followed by a Wake:

2.3.1. Civil Funeral & Wake at Southover Grange - £500.00 (Plus VAT) *(Customers will be provided use of the ground floor of the building for 3.5 hours in total for the ceremony and the wake – either starting at 10am or 2pm. Price includes funeral celebrant and hosts to serve drinks.)*

2.4. As a pilot, Gastro Catering Ltd, one of our pre-approved wedding reception caterers, has agreed to provide catering for wakes at Southover Grange. The proposal is that we will charge customers for their catering at the cost price we receive it from Gastro Catering, plus VAT. The prices quoted below are indicative of the level of pricing we have been quoted:

- **Afternoon tea - £11.50/head + VAT**
(Selection of sandwiches, scones with cream and jam, selection of pastries and mini cakes – minimum 20 people or a surcharge may apply)

or

- **Fork buffet - £15.50/head + VAT**
(Meat & fish selection – vegetarian option available, selection of homemade savouries, quiche, bread, vegetable crisps)

Optional

- **Buffet desserts - £3.95/head + VAT**
(Whole cakes sliced)
- **Drinks supplied at cost price + VAT**
(Supplied by Booker Wholesale under our current agreement)
 - **Wine**
 - **Soft drinks & Water**
 - **Tea/Coffee**
 - **Prosecco**

3 Conclusion and reasons for recommendations

3.1 The offer of funeral services at Southover Grange will enhance our Civil Funeral offering, as well as offering a local service to the Lewes community and surrounding area, which is not currently very well served by the regional crematoria. This will also respond to requests received by the service from some death registration informants.

- 3.2 The offer of these services will allow the Registration Service to expand our service offering, thereby increasing income generation opportunities by making best use of our resources. It will allow us to close the circle of services we offer throughout milestone events in the lives of our customers without compromising our statutory obligations, whilst increasing our partnership working with local private businesses and increasing community access to Southover Grange.
- 3.3 The Registration Service will be able to offer this service to fill any available ceremony slots not being used for other ceremonies, particularly during the winter months when marriages are off peak.

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Ceremonies Manager
Registration Service

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APPENDIX 3 – PROPOSAL FOR DISCOUNTS ON NON-STATUTORY CEREMONIES

1. Background

- 1.1. The Registration Service currently offers a wide range of non-statutory ceremonies, all currently charged at £250 including VAT, in order to remain commercially competitive. The most commonly requested versions of these are:
 - 1.1.1. Renewal of Vows,
 - 1.1.2. Baby Naming,
 - 1.1.3. Conversion of Civil Partnership into Marriage,
 - 1.1.4. Celebration Ceremonies - *to celebrate a marriage that has recently occurred, perhaps abroad or where family were unable to attend,*
 - 1.1.5. Commitment Ceremonies - *where the couple cannot legally marry, perhaps due to not being divorced, but wish to publicly declare their partnership in front of family and friends.*
- 1.2. The service, however, is quite happy to provide any kind of bespoke non-statutory ceremony that the customer requests. Some more unusual requests include:
 - 1.2.1. Engagement ceremonies,
 - 1.2.2. Adoption ceremonies,
 - 1.2.3. Divorce ceremonies,
 - 1.2.4. Anniversary ceremonies.
- 1.3. Occasionally customers will purchase a Baby Naming Ceremony for their child, or a Renewal of Vows Ceremony for their parents, to take place immediately after their statutory marriage ceremony. The combinations are clearly endless.
- 1.4. None of these non-statutory ceremonies hold any legal weight and are all totally unregulated. The Registration Service offers these ceremonies to complement its all-round professional offering, to provide customer choice, and for the purposes of income generation.
- 1.5. There are various independent celebrants around the county who also offer these non-statutory ceremonies but, with many of these being sole traders, they often cannot provide the customer with an alternative celebrant in the event of sickness or unavailability.
- 1.6. Despite there being pockets of the County well served by independent celebrants, there are other areas of the County where there are no independent celebrants operating.
- 1.7. There are misconceptions amongst the public which are regularly encountered:
 - 1.7.1. That an independent celebrant's ceremony is legally binding
 - 1.7.2. That the Registration Service will only provide a one-size-fits-all ceremony
 - 1.7.3. That the Registration Service can only provide legal weddings
- 1.8. The Registration Service is aware there is a general unawareness amongst the population at large that non-statutory ceremonies are available from the Registration Service, leaving many customers feeling they have no option but to use an independent celebrant through a perceived lack of choice.

2. Proposals

- 2.1. There are many instances where customers could be offered a non-statutory ceremony which links to their initial reason for contacting the Register Office. Some examples of this are:
 - 2.1.1. A baby naming ceremony, whilst they are registering the birth of a child
 - 2.1.2. A baby naming ceremony, whilst they are arranging a marriage, where they already have a child together whose surname may be changed via the marriage
 - 2.1.3. A celebration ceremony, (for couples who are planning to marry abroad), for when they return to the UK, who need to obtain a 'Certificate of No Impediment' from the Registration Service in order to marry abroad.
- 2.2. The proposal is for the Director of Communities, Economy and Transport to be authorised to give standing permission to the Proper Officer for Registration to discount fees by up to 25% for non-statutory ceremonies on the condition that the customer purchases these ceremonies whilst they are in contact with the Registration Service for another matter.
- 2.3. It is believed that this approach will enable regular conversations to take place with customers about these additional ceremonies, which will increase awareness, and it will enable the Registration Service to secure many more of these ceremonies than it currently achieves.
- 2.4. There is no cost of sales to this proposal as the customer will already be in conversation with the Registration Service about another matter, and hence the discount can be justified on the basis that no marketing or promotion activity has been expended to attract that potential new business in the first place.

3. Other considerations

- 3.1. Whilst the Registration Service intends to retain the price of non-statutory ceremonies at the current level of £250 including VAT for commercial competitiveness, it is perfectly possible that this price may be subject to upward pressure in due course. Accordingly, the request here is for a percentage discount to be approved rather than a set amount.
- 3.2. The Registration Service is alive to the potential danger of this becoming a 'hard-sell' type conversation, and so accordingly will establish strict protocols to ensure this conversation is merely one where the registrar is advising the customer of their options and the customer will never have to say 'no' to the registrar offering them the additional ceremony. To ensure compliance around this, all registrars are already routinely competency evaluated and any instance of 'hard sell' observed during these evaluations will result in the registrar being swiftly retrained.

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