

**ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – REPORT TO MEMBERS**

<b>1.</b>	<b>Meeting:</b>	<b>Cabinet</b>
<b>2.</b>	<b>Date:</b>	<b>27<sup>th</sup> March, 2013</b>
<b>3.</b>	<b>Title:</b>	<b>Celebratory Services - Relocation and Fees Review</b>
<b>4.</b>	<b>Programme Area:</b>	<b>Environmental and Development Services</b>

### **5. Summary**

The report seeks approval to relocate Celebratory Services to Clifton Park Museum and revise fees for celebratory services delivered under the Well Being Power.

### **6. Recommendations**

**That Cabinet:-**

- **approves the relocation of Marriages, Civil Partnerships and individual Citizenship ceremonies from the Town Hall to Clifton Park Museum with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> December, 2013**
- **approves changes to the fees for non statutory celebratory services**
- **approves the required increase in opening hours of Clifton Park Museum to accommodate the requirement to deliver statutory services**
- **notes the resultant budget pressure on Heritage Services.**

## 7. Proposals and Details

### Background

The Registration Service is delivered by the Local Authority on behalf of the General Register Office (GRO). The service is governed by the Registrar General (RG) and is delivered in accordance with legislation and the GRO good practice guide.

The Registration Service offers a range of statutory and non statutory services. Statutory fees are set by the RG for certain services; these apply nationally and can not be varied. The local authority has discretion to deliver additional services in accordance with the Well Being Power contained in the Local Government Act 2000. Local Authorities delivering Registration Services under the Well Being Power may set local fees but these must be on a cost recovery basis only.

The services referred to in this report are delivered under the Well Being Power.

### Current and proposed service offer

Celebratory services are primarily delivered, at present, from Rotherham Town Hall. A premises rationalisation programme has enabled the Council to improve the use of the Town Hall, by transferring the Members' base there from the Eric Manns Building, and to use the Eric Manns Building as an integrated base for Youth Services. These moves will save the Council in excess of £100,000 per year.

The property rationalisation has also created an opportunity for the local authority to review and improve facilities for the delivery of celebratory services. Clifton Park Museum has been identified as the preferred site for celebratory services. The services will be enhanced by the excellent standard of the period ceremony room; set in a grade II\* listed building which looks out onto surrounding park land. The park also provides the ideal setting for photographs.

Not only does the relocation bring significant benefits to celebratory services, but it also provides the following advantages/opportunities for Clifton Park Museum and the Town Hall:

- Improved sustainability for the Museum, increase to opening hours, potential visitor numbers and likely supplementary spend.
- Provides opportunities for Heritage Services, in partnership with Green Spaces, to increase revenue through the potential to offer reception package options e.g. function room hire, catering.
- Possibility of closing Town Hall on Saturdays if no other functions are taking place.

- Possibility of increased revenue at Town Hall if the Garden Room / John Smith room become available for hire.
- Improved access for Members and others to facilities within the Town Hall.

It is recommended that group citizenship ceremonies continue to be delivered from the Town Hall. This is due to the large number of attendees (up to 80 per ceremony), the requirement for the involvement of the Mayor or other dignitary and the expectation that they are delivered in a civic setting. The Museum could not accommodate groups of 80.

It is, however, recommended that private citizenship ceremonies, attended by individual citizens, their families and guests will be held at Clifton Park Museum. These are few as they are delivered only when citizens are unable to attend a group ceremony. In the interest of efficiency these are included in existing ceremony programmes on week days only and without the requirement for a dignitary.

It is proposed that wedding and citizenship ceremonies are held in the Dining Room, sited on the ground floor of the Museum. The Walker family portraits and panels will remain in the room, together with the family tree that tells the story of the family. These displays will be pertinent to the ceremonies that will take place.

It is appreciated that a number of customers have already made bookings for the Town Hall during 2013, so in order to minimise the inconvenience on existing customers and to allow sufficient time for the preparation of facilities in Clifton Park Museum (including the ongoing redisplay of the York and Lancaster Regimental Museum), it is proposed that the new service model is implemented from 1<sup>st</sup> December, 2013.

### Review of fees

A full fees review for celebratory services has not been carried out for over five years and the full cost of services provided is not currently being met by the fees charged.

Since fees were last set the Register Office has moved from Bailey House to Riverside House, with the majority of celebratory services taking place in the Town Hall. The change in location and the need to offer off site delivery of celebratory services comes with additional costs for caretaking and building attendants, neither of which is accounted for in current fees.

All customers arranging celebratory services are advised verbally and in writing that fees are subject to review. However, in order to minimise the impact on customers it is proposed that the increases to fees are tied in with the relocation of celebratory services to Clifton Park Museum. The proposed set of fees and charges is included in Appendix 1.

## **8. Finance**

The transfer of the Members' base to the Town Hall and the integration of Youth Services into the Eric Manns building will save £100,000 per year that will contribute to meeting the Council's budget challenge.

One-off re-fit costs for the Musuem, including for redecoration, fixtures & fittings, redisplay of galleries and the removal of display cases will be around £14,000 and can be met from existing budgets.

*Heritage Services Revenue costs* – a recent report to the Cabinet Member for Culture & Tourism (5<sup>th</sup> February, 2013) recommended changes to the service delivery within Heritage Services, including a reduction in the opening hours of Clifton Park Museum and the Archives & Local Studies Service, which would release savings to the Council of approximately £102,000 per year (£90,000 in 2013-14.)

Approval of the relocation of celebratory services will enable the Council to reinstate and increase opening hours. This would also enable the Council to meet the GRO requirements for wedding provision and to comply with Heritage Lottery Fund expectations for the Museum. The longer opening of the Museum would negate £55,000 of the proposed cost saving set out in the Council's budget and create a budget pressure within Heritage Services for this amount. Officers are looking at ways of mitigating this pressure.

Additional opening hours would be between 10:30 – 16:00 on Fridays and between 9:30 and 10:00 on Saturdays

*Fees Revision* - the revision of fees would mean celebratory services are delivered on a cost recovery basis with no financial implications for the Council; details are contained in Appendix 1.

It should be noted that the service must offer ceremonies at the non-variable statutory fees rate of £45, which would in all instances make a loss delivered from Clifton Park Museum, as is currently the case at the Town Hall.

The fee payable to local authorities by the Home Office for citizenship ceremonies has increased to £80 per new citizen attending a group ceremony. This is a fee the Home Office considers indicative of the cost of delivery, the additional fee for private citizenship ceremonies directly reflects this.

## **9. Risks and Uncertainties**

If approval is not granted in March 2013, an implementation date of 1<sup>st</sup> of December, 2013 is unlikely to be achieved without significantly impacting on customers. The service is legally obliged to take bookings up to one year in advance and ceremony bookings traditionally increase from April, particularly in the Easter period.

There is a risk that increasing fees could reduce demand for services, or shift demand to cheaper alternatives. However, benchmarking data suggests that Rotherham would still remain competitive in both price and range of services offered.

Failure to increase fees means the service would be delivered at a loss. Current financial constraints indicate that the Council is not in a position to subsidise services.

## **10. Policy and Performance Agenda Implications**

A range of celebratory services, at varying fees, are offered; this includes the minimum statutory fee. The scope of services offered ensures access and choice for all citizen groups.

The Registration Service regularly receives compliments in relation to celebratory services and no upheld complaints were received in the annual monitoring period ending 31<sup>st</sup> March, 2012.

Overall customer satisfaction for the service was 98.2% in the same annual monitoring period. Services are delivered to a very high standard and it is anticipated that an increase in fees would not reduce overall satisfaction levels.

## **11. Background papers and Consultation**

Heritage Lottery Fund has confirmed that it has no objection to the proposal, so long as there is no adverse impact on existing customers.

Cabinet Member Report for Culture & Tourism, Heritage Services – Service Offer 2013/14, dated 5<sup>th</sup> February, 2013.

No changes to planning permission needed.

Benchmarking Data for fees is provided in Appendix 1.

## **13. Contact names**

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