
Report To:	Policy & Resources Committee	Date:	20 June 2017
Report By:	Chief Financial Officer	Report No:	FIN/27/17/AP/LA
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Subject:	Marriages within Inverclyde Council Premises		

1.0 PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update to Committee approval on proposals regarding the delivery of marriage ceremonies within Council premises.

2.0 SUMMARY

- 2.1 As part of the Office Asset Management Plan, West Stewart Street, which currently hosts a bespoke Marriage suite, is due to close in October, 2017. It had been intended that marriages within Council premises would continue in the former District Court after this date albeit there were acknowledged logistical challenges which officers have been attempting to address.
- 2.2 The works to the District Court are more extensive than originally thought and this will impact on costs and timescales meaning that there is going to be a period where the Council does not have a facility for holding wedding ceremonies within its estate. Registrars have not been taking bookings for weddings in Council premises beyond 1 October 2017 as they cannot guarantee that a facility will be available. Registrars can however continue to conduct ceremonies outwith Inverclyde Council premises.
- 2.3 There is a requirement in law that a Council must have a facility within its "Registration Office" to hold a Marriage Ceremony and Councils do require to employ a Registrar capable of holding a Marriage Ceremony. In 2016, 40 of the 79 marriages held by a Council Registrar took place in external venues and 5 out of the 79 took place in West Stewart Street on a weekend. Appendix 1 provides more detail on Registrars activity and pricing during 2016.
- 2.4 Via reports to Committee, Members have been advised of the intention that the District Court will be used as a wedding venue. Officers have been examining how this will work in practice given that the District Court is located in the heart of a functioning and complex building. Issues around security and safety plus the practicalities of moving potentially large groups around the building will undoubtedly lead to extra costs and a review of current charges.
- 2.5 Discussions have included Inverclyde Leisure to examine whether opportunities exist to access the former District Court from the Town Hall whilst providing a potential marketing opportunity to IL for Wedding Receptions at the Town Hall. Officers will bring back to Committee a more detailed proposal with associated financial implications no later than the September meeting.
- 2.6 Whilst the physical work to the District Court and the operational review is on going officers would recommend that the Provost's Room be used for Small Weddings at selected times. This would necessitate a review of charges given both the quality of the offering and to reflect the extra costs which would be incurred to manage public access and set up the facility for a wedding.
- 2.7 There are not envisaged to be any material financial impacts arising from the proposed interim arrangements but approval of the proposal by Committee now will enable certainty to be given to prospective couples regarding weddings in Council premises from October, 2017.

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 It is recommended that the Committee note that the District Court will not be available for Marriage ceremonies by October, 2017 but that officers will bring back options for consideration to the September meeting of the Committee.

- 3.2 It is recommended that the Committee agree that the Provost's Room becomes the Council's designated interim Marriage Facility from October 2017 and the pricing for the use of the new facility be approved.

Alan Puckrin
Chief Financial Officer

4.0 BACKGROUND

- 4.1 The Environment & Regeneration Committee has previously agreed to the refurbishment of the former District Court. At the same time it was noted that the use of the District Court as a marriage venue to replace West Stewart Street would be investigated due to the closure of West Stewart Street which is due at the end of September when Safer Communities move into the former Education HQ offices in William Street.
- 4.2 The timescales understood at the time was that the refurbishment would be complete in the spring/early summer of 2017 which gave plenty of time for a transfer to the new marriage facility.
- 4.3 Registrars currently officiate at around 80 weddings per year and, in 2016, 50% of these took place at West Stewart Street. The use of a Council facility generates roughly £7,000 per year depending on the size of the wedding and the day of the week on which it is held. The two wedding suites at West Stewart Street can accommodate 4 for the most basic ceremony or 44 guests including the couple.
- 4.4 The Council has a legal requirement to be able to provide a wedding “celebrant” and to provide a venue from within its “Registration Office”.

5.0 LATEST POSITION

- 5.1 Property Services have liaised with Historic Environment Scotland on grant support and subject to clarifying the extent of roof works have secured an offer of £65,000. As part of identifying the extent of the roof works, other external works have been identified. It is believed by Property Services that these works are not substantial but the changes to the specification require a re-submission for Planning Consent and for Building Warrant with a subsequent delay to the original programme. As such the District Court will not be refurbished until 2018.
- 5.2 Officers from Finance have been leading discussions with Inverclyde Leisure and Legal & Property Services to identify how the District Court could pragmatically be operated as a wedding facility. Ideally access would be via the Town Hall but there is no disabled access from there, which presents problems for weekend weddings. The installation of a lift would be necessary for disabled access here and this option was previously investigated but costs were considered to be prohibitive. In addition there are resourcing challenges around managing large wedding parties in a complex operational building given the competing priorities and limited resources available to the Council Officers and Registrars.
- 5.3 Currently Registrars are not taking any bookings for weddings in Council facilities post September 2017. This will have a minor impact on income levels in 2017/18 for the Registrars. There is clearly a reputational risk if the Council cannot offer an alternative to couples from October, 2017.

6.0 PROPOSALS

- 6.1 There is a legal requirement for Councils to have a facility to hold small ceremonies for the couple and their witnesses at a cost of £125. In addition it is proposed that in the interim the Council only offers weddings with up to 12 attendees plus the couple from within its premises.
- 6.2 Having considered the available options it is also proposed that the location for these small wedding ceremonies should be the Provost's Room in the Grand Corridor. This is a prestigious location which will be attractive to many couples. However, ceremonies will need to be timed not to interfere with the day to day operation of the Municipal Buildings including Provost's appointments, Committee and Council meetings.

- 6.3 Given the prestigious nature of the Provost's Room it is proposed that while the basic ceremony will continue to be offered at the current price of £125, a wedding for a party of up to 12 attendees plus the couple on a weekday be increased to £250. This level of charge is in line with neighbouring authorities/external venues. The potential use (and costs) of the Provost's Room on a weekend will be examined further given that the Municipal Buildings will require to be specifically opened up for the event.
- 6.4 Whilst this interim arrangement is in place and whilst the contract for the works to the District Court is progressing, officers will continue to develop proposals regarding the long term future of weddings from within Council Premises. This will highlight the operational issues and costs for members to consider but will inevitably mean a review of charging levels compared to West Stewart Street.

7.0 IMPLICATIONS

7.1 Finance

It should be noted that the Office AMP assumes a £91,000 saving when West Stewart Street closes including approximately £40,000 FM costs. It would therefore not be sustainable given the major financial pressures facing the Council to retain West Stewart Street once Safer Communities relocate to William Street.

Financial Implications:

One off Costs

Cost Centre	Budget Heading	Budget Years	Proposed Spend this Report £000	Virement From	Other Comments
Registrars	Income	2017/18	4		Assumes 6 months income loss in 2017/18. This to be contained by Finance Services.

Annually Recurring Costs/ (Savings)

Cost Centre	Budget Heading	With Effect from	Annual Net Impact £000	Virement From (If Applicable)	Other Comments
N/A					

7.2 Legal

There are no legal implications arising from the proposals in this report.

7.3 Human Resources

There are no HR implications arising from the proposals in this report.

7.4 Equalities

Has an Equality Impact Assessment been carried out?

Yes See attached appendix

No This report does not introduce a new policy, function or strategy or recommend a change to an existing policy, function or strategy. Therefore, no Equality Impact Assessment is required.

7.5 Repopulation

It is important that the Council continues to provide an attractive marriage service irrespective of whether weddings take place in Council facilities or not as this will add to the reputation of the Council and make the area desirable to potential residents.

8.0 CONSULTATIONS

8.1 The proposals in this report have been endorsed by the Corporate Management Team.

9.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

9.1 None.

Registrars - Annual Stats

Appendix 1

	2013	2014	2015	2016
Births	763	735	732	705
Ave/week	15	14	14	14
Deaths	957	899	996	988
Ave/week	18	17	19	19
Marraiges	208	202	211	208
Ave/week	4	4	4	4
TOTAL	1965	1871	1976	1901

CIVIL MARRIAGE CEREMONIES

	Civil Marriage Ceremonies	Total Marriages	% of total
2013	72	208	34.62%
2015	95	211	45.02%
2016	79	208	37.98%

OTHER CEREMONIES

	Baby Naming	Renewal of Vows	Citizenship
2015	5	1	5
2016	1	1	17

CIVIL CEREMONIES 2015

	Mid week	Weekend
Jan	1	1
Feb	4	1
March	5	1
April	5	3
May	9	0
June	8	3
July	8	6

CHARGES/ INCOME

Civil Marriages	Small - Clyde Suite	Large - Stewart Suite	External venue
Monday to Thursday	£125.00	£211.50	£288.00
Friday	£125.00	£235.00	£288.00
Saturday	£327.00	£345.00	£339.00
Sunday	£339.00	£360.50	£351.50
Public Holiday	£390.60	£398.00	£390.80
Out of Hours			£326.50

Aug	6	6
September	6	2
Oct	2	5
Nov	6	3
Dec	4	0
TOTAL	64	31

CIVIL CEREMONIES 2016

	<u>Mid week</u>	<u>Weekend</u>
Jan	0	0
Feb	3	4
March	4	0
April	2	3
May	2	3
June	6	5
July	5	4
Aug	8	5
September	6	8
Oct	2	1
Nov	2	2
Dec	3	1
TOTAL	43	36

Other Ceremonies			
Baby Naming			£205.00
Renewal of Vows			£205.00
Citizenship (fee from Home Office)			£80.00

Certificates and Extracts			
Other Services			Deposit
Baby Naming Ceremonies or Renewal of Vows			50.00
Licence of approved venue or temporary Single Licence			£0.00
Hire of Stewart Suite (Per Hour)			£0.00
Certificates (proof of abbreviated must be shown)			£0.00

2016 Civil Marriage Ceremonies	Small - Clyde Suite	Large - Stewart Suite	External venue	Total no. of ceremonies
Monday to Thursday	10	4	1	15
Friday	13	7	7	27
Saturday	0	5	28	33
Sunday	0	0	1	1
Public Holiday	0	0	0	0
Out of Hours	0	0	3	3
Total no. of ceremonies	23	16	40	79
INCOME	£2,875.00	£4,216.00	£13,127.00	£ 20,218