

FINANCE AND PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT PORTFOLIO DECISION RECORD

6 February 2006

Present:

Councillor Peter Jackson (Performance Management Portfolio Holder)

Officers: Tony Brown, Chief Solicitor
Joanne Machers, Chief Personnel Services Officer
Peter Spires, Registration Service Manager
Peter Turner, Principal Strategy Development Officer (Best Value & Performance Management)
Kerry Trenchard, Strategy & Performance Officer
John Morton, Assistant Chief Financial Officer
David Cosgrove, Principal Democratic Services Officer

36. Review of non statutory fees in the Registration Service *(Assistant Chief Executive)*

Type of decision

Non-key.

Purpose of report

The purpose set out details of proposed increases in the locally set fees for non statutory services provided by the Register Office.

Issue(s) for consideration by Portfolio Holder

The Council, in conjunction with central government, currently provides the statutory Registration Service based at the Register Office on Raby Road. At present non statutory services are provided including naming and renewal of vows ceremonies which align with the statutory birth and marriage registration provision. Locally set fees may be set to recover the true cost of providing the service. Hartlepool's fees are amongst the lowest in the North East, while the service provided remains second to none. This fee income is a significant element of the business plan.

With the introduction of Civil Partnership Registration on 5th December the Government set the fee for a basic registration and ceremony at £40.00. At the same time the statutory fee for a basic marriage ceremony was increased from £34.00 to £40.00; an increase of 17.6%. It will be necessary to increase all non statutory fees associated with marriage or civil partnership by more

than the rate of inflation to include the £6.00 increase made by Central Government to the base fee. It is proposed that other fees are increased broadly in line with inflation, currently set at 3%.

Decision

That all Fees for additional non statutory fees be increased from 1st April 2006 as detailed below: -

Marriages in approved Premises at + £6.00 +3%

	2005/6 Fee	Proposed 2006/7 Fee	% increase
Mid Week:	£225.50	£238.50	5.8%
Out of Office Hours Monday to Friday and all day Saturday:	£259.50	£273.50	5.4%
Sundays and Bank Holidays:	£332.50	£349.00	5.0%

Basic Marriages and Civil Partnerships in The Willows (Register Office Marriage Suite) at + £6.00 or + £6.00 +3%

	2005/6 Fee	Proposed 2006/7 Fee	% increase
Mid Week:	£34.00	£40.00	17.6%
Saturday mornings	£64.00	£72.00	12.5%
Saturday from 12.00 noon	£94.00	£103.00	9.6%

Alternative Civil Ceremonies (i.e. Naming, Renewal, Commitment) at + 3%

	2005/6 Fee	Proposed 2006/7 Fee	% increase
Mid Week:	£130.00	£134.00	3.1%
Out of Office Hours Monday to Friday and all day Saturday:	£185.00	£191.00	3.2%
Sundays and Bank Holidays:	£215.00	£222.00	3.3%

Citizenship Ceremonies at + c 3%

	2005/6 Fee	Proposed 2006/7 Fee	% increase
In the Willows or Register Office	£50.00	£51.50	3.0%
At an approved premise	£85.00	£87.50	2.9%

Civil Partnership Additional Ceremonies in approved Premises at + 3%

This service is also subject to a statutory charge of £40.00 not included in this table.

	2005/6 Fee	Proposed 2006/7 Fee	% increase
Mid Week:	£170.00	£175.00	2.9%
Out of Office Hours Monday to Friday and all day Saturday:	£225.00	£232.00	3.1%
Sundays and Bank Holidays:	£255.00	£263.00	3.1%

N.B. All the above fees exclude the statutory certificate fee of £3.50 per certificate

37. Registration Modernisation (*Assistant Chief Executive*)

Type of decision

Non-key

Purpose of report

The purpose of the report is to introduce the Government Position and Consultation Paper 'Registration Modernisation' and consider a proposed response to the consultation paper.

Issue(s) for consideration by Portfolio Holder

The Council, in conjunction with central government, currently provides the statutory Registration Service based at the Register Office on Raby Road. The administration of the service remains broadly unchanged since it was introduced in 1837, with responsibility shared between the Registrar General, local government and registration officers. Registration officers are statutory post holders, appointed by the local authority, but not employed by them. Each local authority is required to prepare a local service delivery plan (known as a 'scheme') for approval by the Chancellor of the Exchequer. Under the current Hartlepool Scheme the Register Office is staffed by 4 statutory officers and 4 directly employed officers.

In 2002 the Government published the White Paper 'Civil Registration: Vital Change' which set out the agenda for a modern, effective and high quality registration service in keeping with Government's wider reform agenda. The registration service is going through its most significant change for 168 years. Major blocks to progress include the need for new primary legislation and the restrictive governance arrangements. The Consultation Paper 'Registration Modernisation' identifies the various elements of change and the how they may be introduced.

It is proposed that the Council adopt a positive stance to this consultation and responds to the Government in the form set out at Appendix 3 to the report, and agrees in principle to adopt the new model output scheme for the

registration service. It was also highlighted that current staffing arrangements do not include the audit and inspection procedures carried out by HM Inspectorate of Registration. It was suggested that the General Register Office ensure the transfer of the necessary skills to the local authorities in readiness for implementation. It is also recommended that Hartlepool would not wish to introduce a new scheme under the Government's proposals any earlier than 1st April 2007.

Decision

1. That the Council adopt a positive stance to the consultation and responds to the Government as set out in the form attached as Appendix 1 to the report
2. That the Council agrees in principle to adopt the new model output scheme for the registration service.
3. That the Council indicates it would wish to introduce such a scheme no earlier than 1st April 2007.

38. Review of Strategic Risk Register *(Assistant Chief Executive)*

Type of decision

Non-key.

Purpose of report

The report outlined amendments to existing strategic risks and two additional strategic risks following a review by Corporate Risk Management Group (CRMG) and Corporate Management Team (CMT). The review primarily involves examining risk ratings in terms of impact and likelihood and effectiveness of control measures in place to mitigate the risk.

Issue(s) for consideration by Portfolio Holder

Set out as Appendix 1 to the report was a brief overview as to how the Risks have been developed and how each of the risks have been rated. Following the review, there were now 26 strategic risks identified across the authority. The updated Strategic Risk Register is attached as Appendix 2 to the report.

Following the review in December 2005, there are now 26 strategic risks identified across the authority, up from 25 in October 2005. It was highlighted that the Red/Red risks had increased from 5 to 7. The two new risks related to the Anhydrite Mine and the risks associated with a colder than average winter.

The Portfolio Holder was concerned that the 'direction of travel' seemed to be in the wrong direction. It was reported that while two additional high risk issues had been identified, one risk had been removed from the register.

Decision

That the review of the Council's Strategic Risk Register and the amendments to the register be noted.

39. Employee Attendance 2005/06 – Third Quarter (*Chief Personnel Services Officer*)

Type of decision

Non-key.

Purpose of report

The report updated the portfolio holder on the Council's performance up to, and including, the third quarter of 2005/6 and action taken in the third quarter of 2005/6 in relation to employee absence.

Issue(s) for consideration by Portfolio Holder

During the third quarter of 2005/6 (i.e. October - December), the average (annual equivalent) days absence per FTE employee was 12.79 days (unweighted) and 11.25 days (weighted) compared to

- an annual target of 10.29 days
- performance of 14.64 days (unweighted) during the third quarter of 2003/4 (weighted data is not available) and
- performance of 12.69 days (unweighted) and 13.08 days (weighted) during the third quarter of 2004/5

A more detailed breakdown, by department, was submitted as Appendices A and B to the report reflecting the new departmental structure.

In the first nine months of 2005/6 (i.e. April – December), the average (annual equivalent) days absence per FTE employee was 11.40 days (unweighted) and 11.81 days (weighted). A more detailed breakdown, by department, is attached at Appendices C and D based on the new departmental structure.

The actions being taken to address the below target performance was set out in the report. It was highlighted that some of the issues affecting the performance were outside the control of departmental managers such as the delays to the implementation of the HR Analyser (sophisticated reporting tool).

The Portfolio holder was disappointed with the latest set of statistics but understood that the figures were slightly distorted by one department's absences. However, the Portfolio holder asked the Chief Personnel Services Officer to approach departments and relay the importance of getting these figures down whilst being mindful of the wellbeing of the staff.

Decision

That the employee absence statistics in relation to absence in the third quarter and after nine months of 2005/6, the actions taken in the third quarter of 2005/6 and planned future actions be noted.

40. Chief Executive's Departmental Plan 2005/06 – Third Quarter Review *(Assistant Chief Executive, Chief Personnel Services Officer, Chief Financial Officer and Chief Solicitor)*

Type of decision

Non-key.

Purpose of report

To inform the Portfolio Holder of the progress made against the Chief Executive's Departmental Plan 2005/06 in the third quarter of the year.

Issue(s) for consideration by Portfolio Holder

The Chief Executive's Departmental Plan 2005/06 set out the key tasks and issues within an Action Plan to show what is to be achieved by the department in the coming year. The plan also describes how the department contributes to the Organisational Development Improvement Priorities as laid out in the 2005/06 Corporate Plan. It provides a framework for managing the competing priorities, communicating the purpose and challenges facing the department and monitoring progress against overall Council aims.

Seven of the key tasks set out in the Plan were highlighted as Red Risks; unlikely to be completed within the initial timetable. The Portfolio Holder asked how many of these would be achieved by the end of the calendar year and it was reported that most would be achieved.

Decision

That the achievement of key tasks and outturns of performance indicators set out in the third quarter review Chief Executive's Departmental Plan 2005/06 be noted.

J A BROWN

CHIEF SOLICITOR

PUBLICATION DATE: 10 February 2006