

DECISION ITEM

REPORT OF	MEETING	DATE	ITEM NO
RESOURCES DIRECTORATE	FINANCE AND DEMOCRACY COMMITTEE	23 SEPTEMBER 2019	7
TOWN HALL WEDDING VENUE UPDATE			

PUBLIC ITEM

This item is for consideration in the public part of the meeting.

SUMMARY

An example of the council adopting a more commercial approach to achieve a self-sufficiency, in response to staff suggestions put forward to use the civic accommodation at the Town Hall as a wedding venue. This report provides an update of the wedding ceremonies held over a twelve month trial period, outlining the reputational benefits realised and new income monies generated.

RECOMMENDATION

1. To note the success of the trial period for the Town Hall being used as a wedding venue
2. To approve its continued use going forward, at a cost set within the fees and charges schedule annually, with seven day a week use, subject to operational use taking priority on weekdays.

SUMMARY OF PREVIOUS DECISIONS

Finance and Democracy Committee – 25 September 2017 agreed that;

1. The Town Hall be approved as a location to host licensed weddings within the Borough and that officers make an application to Lancashire County Council for a licence in 2018 once the Council Chamber refurbishment has been completed;
2. Subject to the approval of a licence the Town Hall is used as a wedding ceremony venue on Fridays (subject to operational requirements) and Saturdays for a trial period of twelve months with set-up costs to be met from existing budgets and a charge of £350 for a Friday ceremony and £650 for a Saturday ceremony.

Finance and Democracy Committee – 18/3/2019 – Information Item – Weddings at Fylde Progress Report

CORPORATE PRIORITIES

Spending your money in the most efficient way to achieve excellent services (Value for Money)	✓
Delivering the services that customers expect of an excellent council (Clean and Green)	✓
Working with all partners (Vibrant Economy)	✓
To make sure Fylde continues to be one of the most desirable places to live (A Great Place to Live)	✓
Promoting Fylde as a great destination to visit (A Great Place to Visit)	✓

REPORT

1. Every local authority is being encouraged to become self-sufficient with central government grants diminishing. The Local Government Association (LGA) Peer Challenge Report in June 2016 stated that income generation needed to be developed at Fylde to contribute to the revenue stream.
2. A number of employee suggestions were made to generate income including the use of the Town Hall as a wedding venue. Offering the Town Hall as a wedding venue with the photo opportunities along the Promenade Gardens in close proximity was an opportunity for which there was an anticipated market. The refurbishment of the Town Hall has made the arrangements viable.
3. Members of the Self-Sufficient Officer Working Group visited Wyre Council, who offer wedding ceremonies in the Council Chamber and Members Lounge. Officers at Wyre explained the procedures and protocols in place and a wedding was observed. Officers were able to gather important tips and suggestions about seating, audio equipment and greeting guests based on lessons learnt at Wyre.
4. A report was taken to Finance and Democracy Committee on the 25th September 2017, and the decision is noted above. As a result, a successful application was made to Lancashire County Council for a wedding site premises license.
5. The Town Hall was marketed from summer 2018 onwards as a wedding venue to allow time for setup arrangements and refurbishments. The setup cost has been minimal and met from within existing budgets. Promoting the facility through Facebook and word of mouth was used to increase publicity. A number of open days have also taken place to promote the service.
6. It was originally agreed wedding ceremonies would be offered on a trial basis with subject to operational requirements together and for the scheme to be reviewed after 12 months.
7. At the time of writing this report, a year has elapsed since the first wedding ceremony took place.
8. During the past 12 months we have had a number of ceremonies which have all been conducted without incident also therefore enhancing the Council's reputation in delivering high quality services. There have been 11 ceremonies to date with another five planned. The total income generated from these weddings will amount to £4890. Week-days have proven to be a popular choice.
9. The size of the weddings range from small and intimate, to much larger occasions. One wedding service was live-streamed in order that the service could be viewed by relatives abroad.
10. The success of the service has been greater than originally anticipated. From speaking to Wyre Council initially as part of the consultation, we anticipated up to 1-3 wedding ceremonies in year one. Feedback received from Wyre Council was that spreading the word of the new wedding venue would take 3-4 years.
11. A special thanks should go to Maria Marcella and her team in Customer Services for managing the wedding service. Thanks should also be recorded to Alex Scrivens, the Corporate Services Manager who led on the work of the Self-Sufficient Officer Group and assisted with much of the early planning for the service launch. Feedback has been made about the service by a number of individuals and some of the positive comments are shown below:

"A wonderful venue for a wedding; the room looked beautiful. Maria and her team have great attention to detail and helped make our day extra special. Thank you. "

"Our marriage at the Town Hall was made so special by the kindness and thoughtfulness of all the staff who were more like friends. The setting was fabulous, every stop was pulled out to make our day one we will remember always.

Thank you Rachael, Shannon, Bill, you are beautiful people. We were so taken back by the wonderful room and service."

"St Anne's Town Hall was a wonderful venue for our wedding. The room was decorated beautifully with great detail. We will never forget this day."

“What a wonderful place and what fantastic people! Maria and Shannon could not have been better hosts and witnesses; the room and the arrangements were faultless and helped to make our day very special. Thank you so much!”

“A truly beautiful setting for our special day with our nearest and dearest friends and family.”

12. This has been a successful project and it is believed that the popularity of the Town Hall as a wedding venue will continue to grow in future years. As a result members are invited to approve the continued use of the Town Hall for wedding ceremonies going forward, at a cost set within the fees and charges schedule annually, with seven day a week use, subject to operational use taking priority on weekdays.

IMPLICATIONS	
Finance	Additional income to the Council will be reflected in future updates to the Financial Forecast.
Legal	None arising from report
Community Safety	None arising from report
Human Rights and Equalities	None arising from report
Sustainability and Environmental Impact	None arising from report
Health & Safety and Risk Management	None arising from report

LEAD AUTHOR	CONTACT DETAILS	DATE
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BACKGROUND PAPERS		
Name of document	Date	Where available for inspection
Main Council Wedding Website		http://weddings.fylde.gov.uk
Social Media Wedding Website		https://www.facebook.com/WeddingsatFylde