

DECISION ITEM

REPORT OF	MEETING	DATE	ITEM NO
RESOURCES DIRECTORATE	FINANCE AND DEMOCRACY COMMITTEE	25 SEPTEMBER 2017	7

TOWN HALL WEDDING VENUE PROPOSAL

PUBLIC ITEM

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

SUMMARY

The council is seeking to adopt a more commercial approach to achieve a self-sufficient council by 2020, in response to this a suggestion has been put forward to use the civic accommodation at the Town Hall as a wedding venue. This is an approach used in several other local authorities, the report outlines the proposed benefits from the Town hall becoming a new wedding venue.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That 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. That 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.

SUMMARY OF PREVIOUS DECISIONS

None

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. By 2020, every local authority is required to be self-sufficient, with central government grants diminishing then being removed. 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 is an opportunity for which there is an anticipated market. The refurbishment of the Town Hall has made the proposal more 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. The setup cost will be minimal and can be met from within existing budgets. Wyre Council have approximately 15 weddings per year promoting the facility through Facebook and word of mouth with numbers increasing year on year. The wedding and civil partnership fees for the hire of either the Council Chamber or the Members Lounge at Wyre are Monday to Friday £330 and Saturday is £650.
5. It is proposed that wedding ceremonies are offered on a trial basis with Fridays offered, subject to operational requirements together with Saturdays and for the scheme to be reviewed after 12 months.
6. There are several factors to be considered such as employing extra staff and having weekend opening, the Customer Services Manager will lead on this initiative should it proceed. Factors to consider include:
 - Meet standards set by Lancashire Council to become a registered venue
 - Consider key dates in the local tourism calendar with a particular reference to St Anne's
 - Employee availability on Saturdays to support the ceremony and the Registrar
 - Rooms prepared for the ceremony i.e. balloons, chair covers, candles, and flowers
 - Parking spaces would be required spaces for the wedding party
7. A draft project plan has been put together to outline the next steps:

Milestones	Due Date
Accommodation project to factor in a new wedding venue	March 2017
Fylde visit to Wyre to share best practise on Council's wedding venues	April 2017
Report back on findings, demand, cost, pitfalls etc.	July 2017
Accommodation project works for the wedding venue rooms to be completed	January 2018
Fylde Council to hold a 21 days public online consultation day period to approve this as a new venue	January 2018
Applying for a licence from LCC, assuming we submit all the required information, be determined within 8 weeks	February 2018
Establish role for facilitating / hosting weddings (HR involvement)	March 2018
Venue information packs to be created	April 2018
Market & promote the Town Hall venue	March 2018
New venue launched	May 2018

8. This could be a viable commercial opportunity that can attract income to contribute to the revenue fund but also enhance and maximise the use of the Town Hall.

IMPLICATIONS	
Finance	If the proposal is approved there would be additional income to the Council which it is not possible to quantify at this stage. This would 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
Wyre Council Civil Marriages and Civil Partnerships Information		wyre.gov.uk/weddings and civil partnerships