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**APPLICATION FOR RENEWAL OF LICENCE FOR PREMISES TO BE APPROVED  
AS A VENUE FOR MARRIAGES AND CIVIL PARTNERSHIPS**

**BACKHOUSE HALL, BULL WYND, DARLINGTON (THE REGISTER OFFICE)**

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**SUMMARY REPORT**

**Purpose of the Report**

1. To consider an application for the renewal of a licence to be approved as a venue for Civil Marriages and Civil Partnerships in accordance with the provisions of:
  - (a) The Marriage Act 1949 (as amended by the Marriage Act 1994);
  - (b) The Civil Partnership Act (2004);
  - (c) The Marriage and Civil Partnerships (Approved Premises) Regulations 2005; and
  - (d) The Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act (2013).

**Summary**

2. The three year licence of Backhouse Hall as an approved venue is now due for renewal and Members are asked to consider the application.

**Recommendation**

3. It is recommended that the application for renewal be granted for Backhouse Hall, Bull Wynd, Darlington as an approved venue for the solemnisation of Marriages and Civil Partnerships in respect of the venue subject to the standard licence conditions and that the maximum number of persons permitted to occupy ceremony rooms on the occasion of Civil Marriages or Civil Partnerships should be as outlined in accordance with the Fire Officer's recommendations.

**Catherine Whitehead  
Assistant Chief Executive  
and Proper Officer for Darlington Registration District**

**Background Papers**

Application from the Superintendent Registrar, Darlington Borough Council for renewal of premises as a venue for Civil Marriages and Civil Partnerships.

Anthony Hall : Extension 6400

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|----------------------------------|---|
| S17 Crime and Disorder           | There are no issues in relation to Crime and Disorder.                        |
| Health and Well Being            | There are no issues in relation to Health and Wellbeing.                      |
| Sustainability                   | There are no issues in relation to Sustainability                             |
| Diversity                        | There are no issues relating to Diversity which this report needs to address. |
| Wards Affected                   | All Equally   |
| Groups Affected                  | All Equally   |
| Budget and Policy Framework      | This report does not affect the budget or policy framework.                   |
| Key Decision                     | This is not a key decision.   |
| Urgent Decision                  | This is not an urgent decision.   |
| One Darlington: Perfectly Placed | This report does not adversely impact on the Strategy.                        |
| Efficiency                       | This report does not have any direct impact on efficiency.                    |

## MAIN REPORT

### Information and Analysis

4. By law each Registration District has to provide a Register Office where couples can be married at a statutory rate. The location of the statutory Register Office and level of service it provides varies with the minimum requirement being sufficient to accommodate the couple plus up to four guests who also act as witnesses. The current location for the statutory Register Office in Darlington is the Superintendent Registrar's Office.
5. Since 1994 Registration Districts have been able to approve other venues as an alternative venue to a Register Office which are largely hotels. However it also allows for the approval of a 'decommissioned register office' and many Registration Districts such as County of Durham and Northumberland use this to have several Register Offices across one area.
6. The second opportunity of a having decommissioned register office is that premises, above the statutory requirements, can be provided catering for larger weddings and civil partnerships. The fee is set by the local authority to cover costs.
7. Backhouse Hall has been Darlington's decommissioned register office since 2007 when the service relocated to the Dolphin Centre .Pease Suite in the Dolphin Centre can accommodate 80 guests per wedding

8. Pease Suite has been a very successful venue delivering over 300 weddings a year and attracting couples from Darlington and further afield in comparison with approximately 10 couples per year who opted for the basic wedding in the Statutory Register Office in the Superintendent's Office.

### **Outcome of Consultation**

9. The application has been the subject of the usual officer consultations and has been advertised. No objections have been received. The building has the required fire risk assessments and there are no access or DDA issues which would adversely affect the application.
10. The premises are considered to be suitable for approval as a venue for Marriages and Civil Partnerships, subject to the standard conditions and a limit on the number of people permitted to be present in the nominated rooms.
11. A copy of the application submitted is attached.
12. Following receipt of the application, consultations have been carried out with the following:-
  - (a) Licensing Officer, Darlington Borough Council;
  - (b) Building Control Manager, Darlington Borough Council; and
  - (c) The Fire Service.
13. In accordance with building control requirements, the applicant has confirmed:
  - (d) that a Fire Risk assessment has been carried out within the last 3 years which covers the proposed areas for use and occupancy.
  - (e) that a Disability Risk Assessment has been carried out and that there are no access issues for persons attending ceremonies in the proposed areas for use and occupancy.
14. The Fire Safety Officer recommends that the maximum number of persons permitted in each room be as follows:-

| Designated Room | Maximum Capacity |
|-----------------|------------------|
| Pease Suite     | 80 people        |

### **Conclusion**

15. Officers are satisfied that it would be appropriate for the renewal of Backhouse Hall, Bull Wynd, Darlington as a suitable venue for Civil Marriages and Civil Partnerships under the above legislation.
16. The licence will last for a period of 3 years from the date of issue.