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

The Council Chamber, Town Hall, Darlington

Purpose of Report

1. To consider an application received from Darlington Borough Council for a renewal of its licence to be approved as a venue for Marriages and Civil Partnerships in accordance with the provisions of the Marriage Act 1949 (as amended by the Marriage Act 1994), the Marriage and Civil Partnerships (Approved Premises) Regulations 2005 and the Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act 2013.

Summary

2. The Council Chamber has been an approved venue for Civil Marriages and Civil Partnerships for a number of years but has not yet been used for such ceremonies and its three year licence is now due for renewal.
3. The Council Chamber was originally licensed as an approved venue with business continuity in mind with a view to being used in an emergency only in the event of the current register marriage facility The Pease Suite, Backhouse Hall within the Dolphin Centre being unavailable due to an emergency eg. a fire.
4. Members will be aware that in order to make way for the relocation of the library the Register Office is relocating to the Town Hall in September, 2016 with weddings and ceremonies taking place in the Council Chamber and which will now become the Council's main marriage venue. The first wedding taking place on 1 October, 2016.
5. Couples being married in the Council Chamber will have a choice of either a small ceremony of up to 20 people in the Council Chamber Foyer or for larger weddings a ceremony in the main Council Chamber of up to 70 guests.
6. Although the main Council Chamber could accommodate more than 70 guests it is felt this number would be appropriate to meet most couple's needs and to make the ceremonies most manageable. The Council Chamber Gallery will not be available to guests.

7. Members may also be aware that under Marriage Law, each Registration District is required to provide a Register Office Marriage room otherwise known as a “statutory marriage room”. This facility must provide for weddings and civil partnerships to always be available during office opening hours at a price set by the government rather than locally and this fee is currently £46.00 thereby providing an affordable civil ceremony to anyone. The statutory marriage room (along with all religious buildings) is designated or licensed by the government through General Register Office rather than locally by the Council who approve approved other venues such as hotels and set the relevant ceremony fee.
8. Upon relocating to the Town Hall, this statutory marriage room will be the room formerly used by BBC Radio Cleveland which is within the Committee Suite area and when it is not in use as a marriage room will be used as a waiting room for Bride’s and their Bridal party as part of managing the larger weddings in the Council Chamber.
9. As an already approved venue for Marriages and Civil Partnerships the Council Chamber is therefore 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 below.

Information

10. The Marriage Act 1949 (as amended by the Marriage Act 1994), the Marriages and Civil Partnerships (Approved Premises) Regulations 2005, and the Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act 2103 permit a Local Authority to approve the use of certain premises as venues for Civil Marriages and Civil Partnerships. This Council is the appropriate Authority for premises within the Borough of Darlington.

It is proposed that the capacities in the Designated Rooms be a maximum of:

The Council Chamber	70 guests
The Council Chamber Foyer	20 guests

Legal Implications

11. This report has been considered by the Assistant Director, Law and Governance, the Fire Service, Building Control and also the Licensing Officer for legal implications in accordance with the Council's approved procedures. There are no issues which the Assistant Director, Law and Governance considers need to be brought to the specific attention of Members, other than those highlighted in the report.

Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998

12. The contents of this report have been considered in the context of the requirements placed on the Council by Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, namely, the duty on the Council to exercise its functions with due regard to the likely effect of the exercise of those functions on, and the need to do all that it reasonably can to prevent, crime and disorder in its area. It is not considered that the contents of this report have any such effect.

Conclusion

13. The Officers are satisfied that it would be appropriate for the renewal of the Council Chamber, Town Hall, Darlington as a suitable venue for Civil Marriages and Civil Partnerships under the Marriage Act 1949 (as amended) and the Marriage, Civil Partnerships (Approved Premises) Regulations 2005 and the Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act (2013) and the that Licence be renewed subject to the points above being taken into account. The approval will lasts for a period of 3 years from the date of issue.

Recommendation

14. It is recommended that approval be granted for The Council Chamber, Town Hall, 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.

Luke Swinhoe
AD Law and Governance and
Proper Officer for the Registration Service

Background Papers

- (i) Application from Darlington Borough Council for renewal of premises as a venue for Marriages and Civil Partnerships.

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