

GENERAL LICENSING COMMITTEE

27 FEBRUARY 2024

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

THE TOWN HALL, DARLINGTON

Purpose of Report

1. To consider an application for the renewal of a licence to be an approved 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 2021; and
 - (d) The Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act (2013).

Summary

2. Darlington Register Office has been located at the Town Hall, Darlington since October 2016. A local authority has a legal obligation to provide accommodation and facilities for a statutory marriage and also a statutory civil partnership to take place charged at a fee set by government. Most local authorities provide this facility to accommodate the couple being married or forming a civil partnership plus two witnesses only. The local authority is then able to approve other locations at its register office accommodation and at other local authority building as “decommissioned marriage rooms” which can provide for larger ceremonies and the fees for these ceremonies can be set and reviewed by the local authority.
3. In Darlington the statutory marriage and civil partnership ceremonies take place in a small room adjacent to Committee Room 3, which accommodates the couple and two witnesses only. The Council Chamber Foyer and the Oak Room (formerly Committee Room 2) are approved as decommissioned marriage rooms in the Town Hall.
4. Several other rooms in the Town Hall are approved as an emergency back up in the event of damage to the Oak Marriage Room, Council Chamber Foyer or statutory marriage room, namely the Council Chamber, Committee Rooms 1 and 2 and the Civic Reception thereby allowing the business to continue and meet ceremony booking obligations.

Information

5. Marriage and Civil Partnership ceremonies have worked successfully at the Town Hall since 2016 without any concern which would warrant a change to the current arrangements.
6. The Town Hall has the required fire risk assessments and is fully accessible. Parking is provided for two wedding vehicles on the Town Hall forecourt. Register office staff manage guests to minimise disruption for meetings that are coinciding with weddings and ensure that security processes are followed.
7. The current ceremony licence for the Town Hall is due to expire on 6 April 2024. An application without any changes has been submitted to renew this licence for a further three years from its expiry, thereby permitting civil marriages and civil partnerships to continue at the following locations:

Location	Maximum Capacity
The Oak Room	50
Council Chamber Foyer	12
The Council Chamber	50
Committee Room 2	40
Committee Room 3	20
Civic Reception	30

Notes to maximum capacities:

- (a) Maximum capacities do not include the couple being married, registrars, photographers/videographers.
- (b) The Council Chamber, Committee Rooms 2 and 3 and the Civic Reception area are to be licensed for emergency/business continuity purposes only and not intended for regular use for ceremonies.
- (c) Outdoor ceremonies are not available at the Town Hall, Darlington.

Financial Implications.

8. There are future bookings for marriage and civil partnership ceremonies in the Town Hall, Darlington beyond the expiry of the current licence on 6 April 2024 with ceremony bookings and advance payments having been made into 2026.

Legal Implications.

9. The renewal of a licence for civil marriage and civil partnerships to be held at the Town Hall, Darlington is required to meet existing contractual bookings beyond the current ceremony licence which expires on 6 April 2024.

10. The application a renewal of a licence for civil marriages and civil partnerships for a further three years which is the standard period of renewal.

Conclusions.

11. Members are asked to grant the renewal of the licence for the Town Hall, Darlington to be approved as a venue for civil marriages and civil partnerships for a three year period with effect from 6 April 2024 to 6 April 2027.

Recommendations.

12. It is recommended that a licence for the Town Hall, Darlington as an approved venue for civil marriages and civil partnerships be granted for three years from 6 April 2024 to 6 April 2027 and that the places designated where civil marriages and civil partnerships can take place and maximum capacity in those designated areas be:

Location	Maximum Capacity
The Oak Room	50
Council Chamber Foyer	12
The Council Chamber	50
Committee Room 2	40
Committee Room 3	20
Civic Reception	30

Notes to maximum capacities:

- (a) Maximum capacities do not include the couple being married, registrars, photographers/videographers.
- (b) The Council Chamber, Committee Rooms 2 and 3 and the Civic Reception area are to be licensed for emergency/business continuity purposes only and not intended for regular use for ceremonies.
- (c) Outdoor ceremonies are not available at the Town Hall, Darlington.

Reasons.

13. To facilitate civil marriages and civil partnerships at The Town Hall, Darlington.

**Luke Swinhoe, Assistant Director, Law and Governance and
Proper Officer for Darlington Registration District**

Background Papers.

There were no background papers in the production of this report.

S17 Crime and Disorder	This report has no implications for Crime and Disorder
Health and Well Being	This report has no direct implications to the Health and well-being of residents of Darlington
Carbon Impact and Climate Change	There are no issues which this reports needs to address
Diversity	There are no issues relating to diversity which this report needs to address
Wards Affected	All wards are affected
Groups Affected	The impact of the report on any individual Group is considered to be minimal
Budget and Policy Framework	This report does not represent a change to the budget and policy framework.
Key Decision	This is not a key decision
Urgent Decision	This is not an urgent decision
Council Plan	The report contributes to the Council Plan in a number of ways through the involvement of Members in contributing to the delivery of the Plan.
Efficiency	The Work Programmes are integral to scrutinising and monitoring services efficiently (and effectively), however this report does not identify specific efficiency svings.
Impact on Looked After Children or Care Leavers	This report has no impact on Looked After Children or Care Leavers