

## Equality Impact Assessment - head of service review

Reference: EQIA151744037

Submitted: 23 October 2019 23:39 PM

### Executive summary

**Title of policy or decision:** Approved Venue Ceremonies - Cancellation Policy

**Describe the main aims, objectives and purpose of the policy (or decision):** To introduce a revised cancellation policy to mitigate the loss of revenue to the authority as a result of current cancellation behaviour

Current Process:

Customers pay a non-refundable deposit of £50 at the time of booking. The balance for registrar attendance at the ceremony is payable 10 weeks prior to the ceremony date.

Customers receive a full refund (less the £50 deposit) regardless of cancellation date where a request for a refund has been made by the customer in writing.

There were approximately 640 cancellations for this type of ceremony in the last financial year (2018-19) - around 13%. The cancellations resulted in an estimated loss of revenue in the region of £300k where the cancelled slots remain unfilled.

Proposed change:

Increase the non refundable deposit to £120 c.20% of average overall fee. (The fees remain unchanged)

Collect the payment balance 26 weeks (6 months) prior to the ceremony date

Requests for refunds must be made in writing. A full refund will be given less the non-refundable deposit.

The proposed revised policy will mitigate lost income from late cancellations and gives ECC the opportunity to remark unfilled slots to customers.

**What outcome(s) are you hoping to achieve?:** Transform the council to achieve more with less

**Which strategic priorities does this support? - Transform the council to achieve more with less:** Limit cost and drive growth in revenue

**Is this a new policy (or decision) or a change to an existing policy, practice or project?:** a change to an existing policy, practice or project

### Assessing the equality impact

**Use this section to record how you have assessed any potential impact on the communities likely to be affected by the policy (or decision):** In the majority of cases (c.80%)\* notification of cancellations appears to be driven by current policy i.e. a low deposit, late balance payment and no contact with the customer until 10 weeks before the planned ceremony date. As a result

Cancelled slots are left unfilled due to the late nature of the vast majority of cancellations

There is a limited opportunity to market late availability slots

Loss of revenue to ECC

Loss of income for the Registrars (who are paid by ceremony)

There is an increased amount of administration to process cancellations and adjust staffing

\*Note this figure is an estimate from Registration Services as no reporting facility for this data currently exists.

A change to the cancellation policy is required to mitigate any further loss as well as bring ECC in line with its neighbouring and CIPFA comparative authorities with the publication of a robust policy.

According to the National Office of Statistics marriage rates remain relatively static meanwhile the age at which people marry continues to climb with the average age for opposite sex first marriages at 33 for men and 31 for women.

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/marriagecohabitationandcivilpa>

The population of Essex continues to grow with the 30 to 34 ages group set to rise by just over 3% over the next 5 years and coupled with the continued rise of civil ceremonies over religious ones (76% and 24% of marriage respectively) demand for registrar attendance at approved venues looks set to grow.

### **Does or will the policy or decision affect:**

**Service users:** Yes

**Employees:** Yes

**The wider community or groups of people, particularly where there are areas of known inequalities:** No

**Which geographical areas of Essex does or will the policy or decision affect?:** Uttlesford, All Essex

**Will the policy or decision influence how organisations operate?:** Yes

**Will the policy or decision involve substantial changes in resources?:** No

**Is this policy or decision associated with any of the Council's other policies?:** No

## **Description of impact**

**Description of Impact.** If there is an impact on a specific protected group tick box, otherwise leave blank.  
**You will be given the opportunity to rate identified impacts as positive, negative or neutral on the next page:** Marriage / civil partnership

**I confirm that I have considered the potential impact on all of the protected characteristics:** I confirm that I have considered the potential impact on all of the protected characteristics

## **Marriage / civil partnership**

**Nature of impact:** Positive

**Please provide more details about the nature of impact:** Increased clarity of policy to customers  
Aligns ECC more closely to its neighbouring and CIPFA comparative authorities policies  
Availability of popular time slots increases

**Extent of impact:** Low

**Please provide more details about the extent of impact:** The revised policy does not affect the total fee payable - only the deposit value and collection of the final balance.

## **Action plan to address and monitor adverse impacts**

**Does your EqIA indicate that the policy or decision would have a medium or high adverse impact on one or more equality groups?:** No

## Details of person completing the form

**I confirm that this has been completed based on the best information available and in following ECC guidance:** I confirm that this has been completed based on the best information available and in following ECC guidance

**Date EqlA completed:** 23/10/2019

**Name of person completing the EqlA:** Lisa Hale

**Email address of person completing the EqlA:** Lisa.Hale@essex.gov.uk

**Your function:** Corporate and Customer Services

**Your service area:** Customer

**Your team:** Customer and Revenue Optimisation

**Are you submitting this EqlA on behalf of another function, service area or team?:** Yes

**Name of person completing the EqlA:** Lisa Hale

**Function:** Corporate and Customer Services

**Service area:** Essex Registration and Nationality Service

**Team:** Registration Services

**Email address of Head of Service:** Juliet.Pirez@essex.gov.uk