

**HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**

**COMMUNITY INFORMATION AND PROTECTION  
SELECT COMMITTEE**

**TUESDAY 30 OCTOBER 2001 AT 10.30 A.M.**

**CIVIL NAMING**

Report of the Head of Statutory Services

Author: Tom Hawkyard - Head of Statutory Services.  
Tel. 01992 555499

Executive Member: Derrick Ashley

**1. Purpose of Report**

In response to the decision of the Community Information and Protection Committee on 4 July to include Civil Naming on the scrutiny work programme, to enable members to review progress to date on the pilot and of feedback from customers.

**2. Summary**

Hertfordshire is one of eight Registration Authorities piloting Civil Naming ceremonies. These are effectively civil christenings but have no legal status. The pilot commenced in February and is due to run for a year.

**3. Conclusions**

- 3.1 To continue to develop Civil Naming in line with ongoing customer feedback and staff comments.
- 3.2 To monitor the effectiveness of marketing and to continue to offer Civil Naming ceremonies when the pilot ends.
- 3.3 Members are invited to review and comment on this issue.

## 1. **Background**

- 1.1 The Hertfordshire Registration Service was invited by the Home Office to be part of a Civil Naming pilot.
- 1.2 The purpose of the pilot is to examine different ways of providing Civil Naming Ceremonies, in order to assess alternative methods of service delivery and demand. The pilot is being run in partnership with a private sector business, LifeCycle Marketing, who are responsible for the administration and assessing customer satisfaction through a questionnaire (see Appendix i)  
LifeCycle make an administration charge direct to the customer for this aspect of the service.

## 2 **What has happened in Hertfordshire?**

- 2.1 Hertfordshire are piloting an approach that involves more face-to-face contact with the customers than elsewhere but is also the most expensive - 'the Rolls Royce Service!'

Initially our charges were set at £50 less than the cost of civil weddings - £225 during the week, £275 on a Saturday, and £325 on a Sunday for events at venues, the charge for a civil naming ceremony at the Register Office during the week being £100.

The service is also being centrally managed by one Superintendent Registrar, unlike other Registration Services in Hertfordshire, which are managed on an office-by-office basis.

- 2.2 In the first 6 months there were 100 enquiries, but only 8 actual ceremonies. Seven of these ceremonies were at venues at weekends and were carried out by staff working outside of their normal hours and being paid a sessional fee. The other ceremony took place in a Register Office during the week and was fitted in as part of the normal working day, with no additional staffing required.
- 2.3 Between 1st September and 30th November a further 9 ceremonies are booked.
- 2.4 If the development of civil naming follows the pattern of civil weddings, then we would anticipate carrying out 100 ceremonies in 2002/03.

## 3 **Feedback**

- 3.1 To date no couples who have had ceremonies have returned their customer satisfaction questionnaires
- 3.2 Verbal feedback from those who have enquired about ceremonies has been that although they like what is on offer the price is too high. As a result prices were reduced for ceremonies from 1st September.

The prices are now set at £150 during the week, £200 on a Saturday and £250 on a Sunday for events at venues. The charge for a civil naming ceremony at the Register Office during the week remains £100.

Early indications are that more enquiries are now being converted into bookings.

#### **4 Marketing/Advertising**

- 4.1 We have had articles on Civil Naming in Sticks, Herts. Direct and Primary Times (a magazine produced for Primary School children in Enfield and Herts). The last two have resulted in enquiries. There have also been articles in local newspapers.
- 4.2 There are billboards at Harlow and Luton Railway stations advertising civil naming. These went up at the beginning of September, replacing our previous billboards at these stations which had advertised Hertfordshire weddings. By advertising outside of the County in this way we hope to attract customers who do not live in Hertfordshire and whose Authorities do not offer this service.
- 4.3 A Civil Naming brochure has been produced. The brochure is being handed to anyone registering a birth in Hertfordshire and is also available at maternity units, libraries, etc.

#### **5 Financial Implications**

There are no financial implications as the service is self-funding. The fee levels cover out-of-hours payment for staff performing ceremonies, travel costs and our marketing/advertising.