

HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

**COMMUNITY INFORMATION AND PROTECTION
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

TUESDAY, 15 JANUARY 2002 AT 10.30 A.M.

COMMITMENT CEREMONIES

Report of the Head of Statutory Services

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Executive Member: Gerald Game

1. Purpose of Report

Jane Hobday has requested that the Scrutiny Committee consider whether or not to scrutinise the issue of Commitment Ceremonies (Affirmations) in Hertfordshire.

2. Summary

A number of authorities are proposing to pilot commitment ceremonies. Hertfordshire would be able to do likewise if it so wished.

3. Conclusion

The Scrutiny Committee are invited to review and comment on the report and discuss whether or not they wish to scrutinise the proposed issue.

Agenda Item No.

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4. Background

4.1 The Hertfordshire Registration Service is participating in a number of pilots of new services. Civil Naming and Re-affirmation of Vows are already underway. A Civil Funerals' pilot commences in April 2001.

4.2 Some authorities are also proposing to pilot a commitment ceremony. These are Warwickshire, Manchester, Newcastle, Brighton, East Riding of Yorkshire and Barnet. Others including Swindon, Sutton and Lambeth are showing interest.

4.3 The Greater London Authority already offers something similar which it calls the 'London Partnerships Register'. A number of ceremonies have taken place.

5. What is a Commitment Ceremony?

5.1 A Commitment Ceremony would be a ceremony open to all those who wish for some form of recognition of their partnership but cannot, or do not wish to be, married.

5.2. The ceremony would be open to heterosexual couples who do not wish to be married, as well as those in single sex relationships.

5.3 The ceremony would have no legal status.

6. What is the Purpose of the Pilot?

6.1 The authorities who propose to pilot Commitment Ceremonies would run it in partnership with a private section business, Lifecycle Marketing, who would be responsible for the administration and assessing customer satisfaction through a questionnaire. Lifecycle would make an administration charge direct to the customer for this part of the service.

7.0 Likely Demand

7.1 There is no evidence available to indicate what the level of demand might be.

8. Financial Implications

8.1 Those authorities who seek to pilot the ceremonies would make the service self-funding; fee levels would cover out-of-hours payments for staff performing ceremonies, travel costs and any marketing/advertising.

Background papers used by the author in compiling this report:

None