

**BRIDGNORTH TOWN COUNCIL
TOWN COUNCIL MEETING
TUESDAY 21ST JULY 2020**

LJ/2020

June 2020

REPORT TO TOWN COUNCILLORS

AGENDA ITEM 9 – CIVIL MARRIAGE AND CIVIL PARTERSHIP CEREMONIES –
LICENCE

AIM

1. *To consider renewing the licences to allow Civil and Marriage and Civil Partnerships in the Town Hall and the Castle Hall.*

BACKGROUND

2. The Town Council currently has licences to hold services, both of which expire on 30th April 2020.

DISCUSSION/ COMMENT

3. The cost of the licences depend upon the length of the licence; a 3 year licence for example costs £1,700 and a 7 year licence costs £3,400 (there are other options); there are some small savings to be had by obtaining into a lengthier licence.
4. A summary of bookings taken by calendar year for each of the Town Council's venues is provided:

	2019	2018	2017	2016
Town Hall	8	21	31	10
Castle Hall	1	2	1	3

5. A more detailed summary of recent hire activity is enclosed.
6. There is little evidence that there is any merit in renewing a licence for a venue (Castle Hall) where there have been only 7 services in 4 years
7. The fees charged for holding services in one of the 2 properties are:

Castle Hall £200

Town Hall £450 (discounted to £375 for residents)

8. It is not known for sure why the Council began offering services within its buildings. It might have been out of a desire to create an income stream or offer a service to residents. It might well be a combination of both.
9. As for understanding the demand that too probably is a mixture of things. Some people might see the Town Hall and Castle Hall as relatively cost effective options others might want to have a little more time than they would have at a registry office.
10. The vast majority of services in recent years have taken place on either a Friday or Saturday and had been supported by the tea shop staff, when the last incumbent departed we did not replace them (the work is seasonal and requires every weekend to be covered). The most popular days of the week for services coincide with market days which can create some issues regarding access/egress and alighting from vehicles. Services are now supported by administrative staff that accrue TOIL or overtime payments. Even in the most utilised year (2017) the income received for services was unlikely to have covered the basic staffing and administrative costs.
11. A summary of recent hire activity is enclosed.
12. With regard the Town Hall Fees have increased from £220 in 2017 to £375 in 2020 so that they can cover the Council's direct and indirect costs. It is likely that the popularity a few years ago might be because the hire charge was very cheap (and not covering the costs) raising the fees to a level where the Council at least breaks even is deters a number of bookings.

FINANCIALS

13. Income from weddings in recent financial years is shown below:

	<u>2019</u>	<u>2018</u>	<u>2017</u>	<u>2016</u>
Town Hall	£1,670	£3,610	£4,445	£2,200
Castle Hall	£280	£216	£108	£309

14. There are associated costs to putting on a wedding including staff overtime and additional cleaning as well as the cost of the licence fee and utilities. It is difficult for the Council to break even on what is really a commercial activity without a significant increase in fees (which might in turn deter bookings).

SUMMARY

15. The Town Council is being asked to consider renewing its 2 licences to hold civil ceremonies in both the Town Hall and Castle Hall. The small demand in recent years for the use of Castle Hall does not warrant a renewal of the licence.
16. Income derived from Town Hall services does not generate any great profit (if any at all) for the Council that might contribute to the Town Hall's upkeep.
17. The annual cost of a licence to operate is just over £560 per year.

OPTIONS

18. Renew both licences (and increase fees going forward)
19. Renew only the Town Hall Licence (and increase fees going forward)
20. Do not renew either licence.

RECOMMENDATION(s)

21. It is recommended that the Town Council RESOLVES:

Does not renew the licences to allow Civil and Marriage and Civil Partnerships in the Town Hall and the Castle Hall

Lee Jakeman
Town Clerk

TOWN HALL WEDDINGS

2016- TOTAL INCOME- **£2,200**

Weekend Weddings – 2

Weekday Weddings - 8

Total - 10

2017- TOTAL INCOME-**£4,445**

Weekend Weddings – 10

Weekday Weddings – 21

Total – 31

2018- TOTAL INCOME- **£3,610**

Weekend Weddings – 10

Weekday Weddings – 11

Total – 21

2019- TOTAL INCOME-**£1,670**

Weekend Weddings – 3

Weekday Weddings – 5

Total – 8

The total income over the four financial years for Town Hall is; £13,125

No weddings have been on a bank holiday in the past four years.

CASTLE HALL WEDDINGS

TOTAL INCOME FOR CASTLE HALL- £918.00

2016- 3 Weddings held **£309.00**

Weekend Weddings – 2

Weekday Weddings – 1

Total – 3

2017- One Wedding **£103.00**

Weekend Weddings – 1

Weekday Weddings – 0

Total – 1

2018- 2 weddings held - **£216.00**

Weekend Weddings – 0

Weekday Weddings – 2

Total – 2

2019- 1 wedding held- **£113.00**

Weekend Weddings – 1

Weekday Weddings – 0

Total – 1

2020- 2 weddings pending- **£480.00**

Weekend Weddings – 1

Weekday Weddings – 1

Total – 2

Total income for both venues= **£14,043**