

**ANGUS COUNCIL**

**POLICY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE – 30 AUGUST 2016**

**USE OF THE CANMORE ROOM FOR CIVIL MARRIAGES, PARTNERSHIP REGISTRATIONS AND PRIVATE CITIZENSHIP CEREMONIES**

**REPORT BY HEAD OF LEGAL AND DEMOCRATIC SERVICES**

**ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this report is to seek approval for the Registration Service to use the Canmore Room for conducting civil marriages, partnership registrations and private citizenship ceremonies.

**1. RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that the Policy and Resources Committee:

- (i) approve the use by the Registration Service of the Canmore Room for conducting civil marriages, partnership registrations and private citizenship ceremonies; and
- (ii) as a consequence, prohibit the use of the Canmore Room for conducting religious marriages.

**2. ALIGNMENT TO THE ANGUS COMMUNITY PLAN/SINGLE OUTCOME AGREEMENT/COPORATE PLAN**

This report contributes to the following local outcome(s) contained within the Angus Community Plan and Single Outcome Agreement 2013-2016:

- We have a sustainable economy with good employment opportunities
- Angus is a good place to live in, work in and visit
- Our communities are safe, secure and vibrant

**3. BACKGROUND**

3.1 The Registration Service of the Council performs civil marriage ceremonies and partnership registrations in terms of the Marriage (Scotland) Act 1977. The Service also conducts private citizenship ceremonies on behalf of the Home Office.

3.2 The Marriage (Scotland) Act 1977 permits a registrar to solemnise a civil marriage in his registration office or at an appropriate place in the registration district of the authorised registrar. The Registration Service has three offices (in Montrose, Arbroath and Forfar) and each office has a room set aside and furnished for conducting civil marriages, partnership registrations and private citizenship ceremonies. The Forfar and Arbroath offices are leased from third parties and these leases expire in February 2020 and October 2018 respectively. In accordance with the Council's accommodation strategy, work is ongoing to co-locate this Service within other Council premises. Issues may arise in respect of the availability of accommodation to conduct the ceremonies referred to above but it is not thought that these issues are insurmountable.

3.2 It is against this background that consideration has been given to using the Canmore Room for conducting civil marriages, partnership registrations and private citizenship ceremonies. The use of the Canmore Room will reduce the accommodation requirements of a co-located Forfar Registration Office. In addition, it is considered that the location and suitability of the Canmore Room for conducting these types of ceremonies may increase the number of persons wishing to use the Registration Service which could result in additional revenue. The

Registration Service has been seeking to increase revenue by promoting the use of its services at local marriage fairs and by introducing additional services (such as Renewal of Marriage Vows and Baby Naming Ceremonies). The Registration Service is also in the process of preparing a brochure advertising the services and facilities available in Angus.

- 3.3 If the Committee is minded to permit the use of the Canmore Room for conducting civil marriages, partnership registrations and private citizenship ceremonies, then it must prohibit the use of the Room for conducting religious marriages. The National Registers of Scotland is responsible for the arrangements for registering births, deaths, marriages and civil partnerships in Scotland. They have been clear that if premises are to be designated as a "registration office" for the purposes of the Marriage (Scotland) Act 1977 then the premises cannot be used for conducting religious ceremonies. It is understood that this is required to preserve the distinction between religious marriage ceremonies and the civil marriage ceremonies performed by the Registration Service. It is not known that the Canmore Room has ever been used for such ceremonies (religious or otherwise).
- 3.4 Committee is asked to note that no ceremonies will be permitted to take place in the Canmore Room until such time as a full assessment is conducted to ensure that evacuation processes in the event of a fire (particularly in respect of evacuating persons who required the use of the lift) are safe and robust and any recommendations arising therefrom implemented.

#### 4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The combined annual rent paid for the Forfar and Arbroath Registration Offices is £32,420. The Montrose Registration Office is owned by the Council. If vacated, it could be declared surplus and sold to generate a capital receipt.

The number of ceremonies conducted in the Marriage Room at Forfar Registration Office between 2013 and 2015 (inclusive) are as follows:-

	2013	2014	2015
Weekend Ceremony	4	9	8
Weekday Ceremony	<u>12</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>4</u>
Total	16	18	12

Income (including statutory fees) generated from ceremonies range from £125 (for a ceremony with less than 10 people attending during office hours) to £444 (for a ceremony taking place on a public holiday). It is anticipated that there would be no additional costs in setting out the Canmore Room during the week for ceremonies as this could be met within current resources. Costs of opening the Canmore Room and setting it out for a ceremony would be between £40 to £50 at the weekend (based on one member of staff engaged for two hours).

- 4.2 If the use of the Canmore Room for ceremonies proves to be popular then additional revenue would be generated. By way of comparison, Dundee City Council charge an additional £105 for the use of the Tay Room at City Square in Dundee (on a Saturday) over and above the normal fees for services in their marriage room. At this point, demand for the use of the Canmore Room is unknown. If the use becomes popular then the fees would be reviewed to assess whether additional revenue can be generated over and above what is proposed.

#### 5. CONCLUSIONS

It is recommended that the Policy and Resources Committee:

- (i) approve the use by the Registration Service of the Canmore Room for conducting civil marriages, partnership registrations and private citizenship ceremonies; and
- (ii) as a consequence, prohibit the use of the Canmore Room for conducting religious marriages.

**7. CONSULTATION (IF APPLICABLE)**

- 7.1 Chief Executive, Strategic Director – Communities, Strategic Director – Resources and Head of Corporate Improvement and Finance and have been consulted on this report.

**NOTE:** No background papers, as detailed by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (other than any containing confidential or exempt information) were relied on to a material extent in preparing the above report.

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