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Meeting	Cabinet Resources Committee
Date	2 March 2011
<b>Subject</b>	<b>Registration and Nationality fees and charges</b>
Report of	Cabinet Member for Customer Access and Partnerships
Summary	To approve proposals to update fees and charges for the registration and nationality service from April 2011.

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Officer Contributors	Richard Grice, Assistant Director, Customer Services Mark Rimmer, Head of Registration and Nationality
Status (public or exempt)	Public
Wards affected	All
Enclosures	Appendix 1 Table: Registration and nationality fees and charges
For decision by	Cabinet Resources Committee
Function of	Executive
Reason for urgency / exemption from call-in (if appropriate)	Not applicable

Contact for further information: Richard Grice, Assistant Director, Customer Services, 020 8359 2002.

## **1. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 1.1 That the fees and charges detailed in the appendices of this report be approved to take effect from 1 April 2011.**

## **2. RELEVANT PREVIOUS DECISIONS**

- 2.1 Cabinet resources Committee, 5 March 2009, Registration fees and charges.

## **3. CORPORATE PRIORITIES AND POLICY CONSIDERATIONS**

- 3.1 Regularly reviewing fees and charges enables the Council to ensure it is making the best use of its resources, supporting the corporate priority of 'better services with less money'. The resources generated by changes to fees and charges will help to support the priorities of the Corporate Plan.

## **4. RISK MANAGEMENT ISSUES**

- 4.1 It is not considered that the issues involved are likely to raise significant levels of public concern or give rise to policy considerations.
- 4.2 Wedding fees on Monday to Friday show the largest proportionate increase. These fees have not changed for several years and are considerably below the market rate. The proposed new fees are based on those of the neighbouring London Borough of Brent, with whom we share management of the registration and nationality service. Where fees are already in line with market rates they have not been increased.

## **5. EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

- 5.1 Changes to fees and charges have the potential to affect those people who would choose to marry on a weekday due to cost. However, evidence from other boroughs who charge closer to the market rate is that there is no reduction in demand nor any adverse impact on specific groups.

## **6. USE OF RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS (Finance, Procurement, Performance & Value for Money, Staffing, IT, Property, Sustainability)**

- 6.1 The impact of the increased and revised fees and charges has been taken into account in the 2011-12 Medium Term Financial Strategy.

## **7. LEGAL ISSUES**

- 7.1 None other than those to which reference is made in the body of this report.

## **8. CONSTITUTIONAL POWERS**

- 8.1 The Council's Constitution in Part 3, Responsibility for Functions, paragraph 3.6 states the functions of the Cabinet Resources Committee including approving income sources and charging policies.
- 8.2 Paragraph 3.8 of the Council's Financial Regulations requires that the Cabinet Resources Committee (CRC) approves changes to fees and charges that are significantly different from inflation.

## 9. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

9.1 The Council has shared a Head of Registration and Nationality Service with the London Borough of Brent since September 2009. This arrangement has enabled the Council to learn from Brent's high performing service and implement new ways of working that have significantly enhanced performance for Barnet's residents. As a result, the Council's registration and nationality activities have utilised good practices from across the industry and, increasingly, the service is leading innovation in areas such as nationality and citizenship. This improvement was recognised when the service received a score of 'good' in the 2010 General Registrars Office (GRO) inspection.

9.2 This report proposes updating fees and charges for the various services provided by registration and nationality to bring them into line with industry standard. Fees and charges for these services have not increased since 2008/9.

### Wedding fees

9.3 The current fees to marry at Burnt Oak registry office on a Monday to Friday do not cover the costs of providing the service, nor do they match the fees charged by neighbouring authorities. It is proposed that fees for these days increase to cover costs and bring them into line with those charged by London Borough of Brent.

9.4 Saturday is a popular day for weddings at Burnt Oak and the fee charged currently is significantly below the market rate. It is proposed that this fee is increased to reflect the popularity of the day and to bring it closer to the fee charged by Brent.

9.5 The fee charged for marrying in the registry office on Sunday and for all weddings at approved premises are already at a rate commensurate with other London Boroughs and, therefore, no change is proposed.

### Nationality checking

9.6 The Council provides an optional service to customers whereby their applications for citizenship can be checked for completeness by the registration service. This ensures that all necessary documents are included in the application and that the relevant forms have been completed correctly before submission to the UK Border Agency (UKBA). It is not a check on citizenship status, neither does it make any recommendations on status. This service reduces the risk of applications having to be completed several times by customers as a result of common mistakes. This is a popular service with customers and demand for the service in Barnet has grown significantly in the last year. A small increase of £5 is proposed for this service to ensure it stays in line with neighbouring boroughs.

### Settlement checking

9.7 The Council and the London Borough of Brent are working with UKBA to pilot a settlement (application for leave to remain in the UK) checking service. This service, which is optional for the customer, operates on the same lines as the Nationality Checking Service outlined above. The service was new in 2010/11 and is growing steadily. A small increase of £10 is proposed for this service to ensure it stays in line with neighbouring boroughs.

### Priority Certificate Service

9.8 It is proposed that a new option service be introduced whereby customers can obtain a certified copy of a birth, death or marriage certificate from the historic archive, dating back to 1837, within 2 hours of making their application. A fee of £6 on top of the statutory fee of £9 is proposed for this service. In comparison with other local authorities this is in line with the existing market rate and there is no evidence to suggest that customers will be disadvantaged by payment of this fee.

## **10. LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS**

10.1 None.

Legal – MB  
CFO – MC/JH

## APPENDIX 1

<b>PROPOSED FEES FOR BARNET REGISTRATION AND NATIONALITY SERVICE</b>		
<b>Valid from 1 April 2011</b>		
<b>Service</b>	<b>Current Fee</b>	<b>Proposed Fee</b>
Wedding Fee in Oak Room Burnt Oak (Monday and Tuesday)	£40	Abolished See Below
Wedding Fee in Oak Room (Wednesday, Thursday or Friday)	£90	Abolished See Below
Wedding Fee in Oak Room (Monday to Thursday)		£100
Wedding Fee in Oak Room (Friday)	£90	£125
Wedding Fee in Oak Room (Saturday)	£150	£180
Wedding Fee in Oak Room (Sunday)	£275	£275
Wedding Fee in external Approved Premises (Monday to Friday)	£275	£275
Wedding Fee in external Approved Premises (Saturday)	£325	£325
Wedding Fee in external Approved Premises (Sunday)	£375	£375
Nationality Checking (NCS) Adult	£40	£45
NCS (Child)	£20	£25
Settlement Checking Service (SCS)	£70	£80
Admin Fee for Priority Certificate Service (Same Day)	None	£6 in addition to the Statutory Fee