

Notice of KEY Executive Decision

Subject Heading:	Review of Safe Working practices – Council operated weddings & ceremonies
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Viddy Persaud, Cabinet Member for Public Protection & Safety.
SLT Lead:	Barry Francis, Director of Neighbourhoods
Report Author and contact details:	Louise Roast Louise.roast@havering.gov.uk 01708 433498
Policy context:	This decision seeks permission to safely increase capacity numbers at weddings & ceremonies in Council operated venues as per the updated Risk Assessment
Financial summary:	This decision supports income generation within the service.
Reason decision is Key	(c) Significant effect on two or more Wards
Date notice given of intended decision:	9th August 2021

Key Executive Decision

Relevant OSC:	Towns & Communities
Is it an urgent decision?	No
Is this decision exempt from being called-in?	An application has been made to the Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Board for a waiver of Call-in, in order to implement this decision as soon as possible to ensure the safety of wedding guests and Council staff whilst allowing the most inclusive wedding celebration for Havering residents. This application was granted on 23 August 2021.

The subject matter of this report deals with the following Council Objectives

Communities making Havering	<input type="checkbox"/>
Places making Havering	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Opportunities making Havering	<input type="checkbox"/>
Connections making Havering	<input type="checkbox"/>

Place an X in the [] as appropriate

Part A – Report seeking decision

DETAIL OF THE DECISION REQUESTED AND RECOMMENDED ACTION

That the risk assessment control measures for Council operated weddings and ceremonies at Langtons House. set out at Appendix A be altered due to a reduced risk level, and capacity numbers for guests increased as follows:

Langtons Hall – 70

Langtons Orangery – 70

Langtons East & West Rooms – 40

AUTHORITY UNDER WHICH DECISION IS MADE

Part 3 para 3.4 (c) and (d). Powers of Second Tier Managers

(c) To manage buildings and facilities under their control including letting, hiring or otherwise permitting the use of such premises and property for occasional purposes and to dispose of obsolete, worn out and surplus stores, equipment and vehicles, ensuring that value for money is obtained on all asset disposals

(d) To be responsible and accountable for all health and safety matters.

STATEMENT OF THE REASONS FOR THE DECISION

At the final easing of Coronavirus restrictions at Step 4 (from 19 July), Government guidelines stated there will no longer be a legal restriction on the number of people that can attend a wedding and the legal requirement for social distancing will no longer apply. However, in light of the rising infection rate at that time and the continued risk to staff, it was decided that the existing control measures, including the restrictions on guest numbers, as documented in the Risk Assessment would remain in place and be reviewed in 4 weeks. This was agreed to by way of a special urgency decision made on 19 July 2021. This was in accordance with the Health & Safety at Work Act 1974 to assess the risks to the health & safety of employees (and risks to the health and safety of persons not in your employment) to which they are exposed while they are at work.

Review Outcome

1. Since the 19 July 2021, the Registration Service has consulted with colleagues in internal Health & Safety and Public Health, to inform a decision on appropriate steps that should be taken with regards to the further easing of restricted numbers of guests permitted at Council operated weddings & ceremonies.

Key Executive Decision

2. The above has included a full review of the Risk Assessment for weddings & ceremonies which show a change in level of Risk (as the infection rate has declined since July 19th) to allow us to safely re-configure each ceremony room.
3. The following factors have also been considered:
 - a) That in light of the continued threat of infection, Havering Council are retaining social distancing and other Covid safe measures as good practice in Council run buildings.
 - b) That the Government advice is still to adopt a cautious approach as the path of the pandemic and future waves and variants (particularly as we head towards the autumn and winter months) is an unknown. And there is still a requirement to carry out a risk assessment. This includes doing a risk assessment to decide what reasonable steps you need to take to protect your workers and others from coronavirus (COVID-19).
 - c) That the overriding requirement is to protect staff and visitors. This includes protecting, for business continuity purposes, the Registration Service, a critical frontline service in a pandemic who are not only performing weddings and ceremonies but carrying out statutory duties for key life events. (This includes, for example, the registration of deaths enabling the process from death to a funeral. Without a legal death registration taking place, a deceased person cannot be cremated or buried.)
 - d) The mental well-being of the staff has also been considered. The Registration team have been at the forefront of the pandemic, risking their lives in their dealings, face to face, with the public throughout, unable to carry out the majority of their work from home and working constantly with the threat of infection in the workplace. Losing a colleague to Covid in January 2021 also had a profound effect on this team, many of whom have fears and anxieties about being in big groups again and/or have underlying health conditions.
 - e) The business requirement has also been considered. Many couples getting married have postponed their weddings, sometimes more than once, as we have moved through the pandemic. Having the maximum number of guests being able to attend is very important for couples on their special day.
4. In reviewing the Risk Assessment for Weddings & Ceremonies (Appendix A), H&S have recommended that the majority of the control measures in place should remain, but that further steps should be taken to increase ventilation in Langtons House, which is highly important in decreasing likelihood of spread of infection. For that reason, colleagues in Technical Services have been engaged to assess how this can be achieved and the associated costs, it may, for example, include steps such as the installation of CO2 monitors to determine the level of fresh air/ possible installation of air cleaning devices/ a review of the existing A/C units in Langtons House.
5. The overall review of the Risk Assessment has determined that numbers of guests can be increased safely to a revised level whilst taking on board the overriding need to keep staff protected in this pandemic period. This can be achieved by retaining Covid safe measures for staff (keeping at least a 1m distance from the public, improving /

Key Executive Decision

maintaining ventilation, continuing to operate separate exits & entrances, continuing staff wearing of face masks etc.) but relaxing social distancing measures for guests.

6. It is therefore proposed that capacity numbers be increased as per the revised Risk Assessment, (this will replace all previous pre-Covid capacity numbers)

Current restricted capacity numbers at council operated weddings & ceremonies:

Langtons Hall – 36
Langtons Orangery – 36
Langtons East & West Rooms – 19

Proposed capacity numbers at Council operated weddings & ceremonies

Langtons Hall – 70
Langtons Orangery – 70
Langtons East & West Rooms – 40

(Prior to the Covid pandemic, maximum capacity numbers were: Langtons Hall & Orangery – 100/ East & West Rooms – 50)

7. For further assurance, an independent review of the Risk Assessment is to be carried out by an external H&S organisation , this will provide an independent review and may identify additional measures that could be considered.
8. The proposal is to implement the revised numbers upon being formally agreed via Executive decision on 26 August, and that a further review be carried out in 6 – 8 weeks' time.

OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

9. The option of not increasing numbers has been considered and dismissed as it does not meet the business needs.
10. To remove all remaining control measures following the Governments confirmation that national restrictions are to be removed from July 19th 2021 has been considered and rejected on the grounds that it would expose colleagues to unmitigated risk of infection, have the potential to significantly disrupt business continuity and leave the organisation at risk of prosecution by the Health & Safety Executive.

PRE-DECISION CONSULTATION

Councillor Viddy Persaud, Cabinet Member for Public Protection & Safety

Key Executive Decision

NAME AND JOB TITLE OF STAFF MEMBER ADVISING THE DECISION-MAKER

Name: Louise Roast

Designation: Head of Registration & Bereavement Services

Signature:

Date:

Part B - Assessment of implications and risks

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (All Tiers) (England) Regulations 2020 provide an exception to general lockdown restrictions for wedding ceremonies subject to certain conditions. The general lockdown restrictions ended on 19 July. Government guidance states:

“There will no longer be limits on the number of people who can attend weddings, civil partnerships, funerals and other life events (including receptions and celebrations).” However, whilst this relaxation will permit greater numbers it does not oblige the Council to increase the numbers to the maximum capacity.

As the owner of the building and the employer of the workforce presiding over the ceremonies the Council has the power to manage its facilities in the way it thinks appropriate. Furthermore the Council has duties under the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 to staff and visitors to their premises to provide a safe working environment. The Report sets out the control measure the Council’s advisers consider is appropriate to safeguard staff and visitors

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

The proposal supports income generation within the Service, as the increased capacity numbers minimises the risk of customers deciding to postpone or cancel their ceremony.

It should be noted that the impact on service provision resulting from staff becoming infected as a result of a workplace contact will also place the income the council may receive at significant risk, whilst also placing the council at risk of financial penalties from the Health & Safety Executive.

HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS (AND ACCOMMODATION IMPLICATIONS WHERE RELEVANT)

The Council is committed to supporting staff who may feel anxious about the increasing numbers of guests permitted at Ceremonies and how it may impact upon them personally when performing ceremonies. All staff will be briefed on the revised risk assessment and the requirements of them and the public and will be supported by their line manager should they have any concerns. Also that the Councils Employee Assistance Programme is available should staff require it.

It is a requirement of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 to assess the risks to the health and safety of employees (and risks to the health and safety of persons not in your employment) to which they are exposed while they are at work.

Key Executive Decision

Where an identified risk exists the organisation is required to manage the risk through the identification and implementation of control measures. Breaching health and safety regulations is a criminal offence and consequences include unlimited fines or prison sentences.

The Council's internal Health & Safety & Public Health colleagues have been consulted on the proposed revised Risk Assessment and increased capacity numbers.

The measures post this date are to be reviewed 6-8 weeks after introduction, Trade Unions/Health & Safety/Public Health colleagues will be engaged before this date for their views and input on the suitability/requirement of the continuation of the control measures beyond that date.

EQUALITIES AND SOCIAL INCLUSION IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

1.1. The Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 requires the Council, when exercising its functions, to have due regard to:

1.2. (i) The need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010;

1.3. (ii) The need to advance equality of opportunity between persons who share protected characteristics and those who do not, and;

1.4. (iii) Foster good relations between those who have protected characteristics and those who do not.

1.5. Note: 'Protected characteristics' are age, sex, race, disability, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnerships, religion or belief, pregnancy and maternity and gender reassignment.

1.6. The Council is committed to all of the above in the provision, procurement and commissioning of its services, and the employment of its workforce. In addition, the Council is also committed to improving the quality of life and wellbeing for all Havering residents in respect of socio-economics and health determinants.

The measures introduced are designed to mitigate risk for those working within and visiting the council's owned wedding venue, Langton's House. These proposals may disproportionately impact those residents that have respiratory related disabilities or other medical conditions impacted through the wearing of face masks, including those who are pregnant. In these cases the requirement for a face mask will be removed on the proviso that other control measures remain in place.

Key Executive Decision

HEALTH AND WELLBEING IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

The decision being sought is to increase wedding capacity safely at council operated venues by reducing some of the control measures put in place, which is considered safe to do so at this time, because of the declining infection rate since July. The control measures that will be reduced include the requirement for guests to socially distance.

Since however, there continues to be a threat of infection, the majority of the control measures in place would remain, and further steps will be considered to increase ventilation in Langtons House to keep staff and public safe

The control measures are all documented in the attached Risk Assessment and will enable an increase in guest numbers in a safe way and minimise negative health impact. Public Health have been consulted on the review of the Risk Assessment.

This will be reviewed again 6-8 weeks' time.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

Appendix A – Risk Assessment at Ceremonies at Council operated weddings and ceremonies 16.8.21

Coronavirus (Covid 19) Weddings and civil partnership ceremonies, receptions and celebrations, guidance from Step 4.

Key Executive Decision

Part C – Record of decision

I have made this executive decision in accordance with authority delegated to me by the Leader of the Council and in compliance with the requirements of the Constitution.

Decision

Proposal agreed

Details of decision maker

Signed:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Andrew Blake-Herbert', with a horizontal line extending from the end.

Name: Andrew Blake-Herbert

Cabinet Portfolio held:

CMT Member title: Chief Executive

Head of Service title

Other manager title:

Date: 26th August 2021

Lodging this notice

The signed decision notice must be delivered to the proper officer, Debra Marlow, Principal Committee Officer in Democratic Services, in the Town Hall.

For use by Committee Administration

This notice was lodged with me on _____

Signed _____