

Committee	Assets & Services
Month	March 2021
Report Title	Report on weddings and projects over the last 10 weeks.
Report Author	Claire Haddock - Bookings Officer
Attachments	None

Report on weddings and projects over the last 10 weeks.

Weddings at the Town Hall are proving to be very popular; we have received some lovely comments and feedback from past couples who have had their ceremonies over the last year. We even had a wedding on Christmas Eve 2020 which was a great way to finish the year. In the coming months we have 16 weddings booked with people inquiring every day. We have two confirmed bookings for 2022 with other inquiries in the pipeline.

As you know, Saffron Walden Town Hall was granted the Community Venue status for weddings and civil ceremonies on Saturday mornings which we are thrilled about. As such we are now able to offer the people of Saffron Walden a cheaper alternative for their weddings. When we applied, we had to name the room that would be used for these ceremonies, this room was the Council Chamber but as we have our offices in there for now, we are using the Court Room, with a view to things moving back to the Council Chamber at a later date. On a temporary basis, this is acceptable to Essex Registry Office.

There are stipulations for Community Venue weddings and civil ceremonies. For someone to have a community venue wedding they would have to have their ceremony between 9am -12pm on a Saturday, and they would have limited decorations in the room, have limited ceremony choices and are only allowed 14 guests. All of these are limited as they are paying a much-reduced price for their ceremony; this accords with the current practice at UDC and is in line with practice at many other Essex venues and as advised by the Registrar. The price for a community venue wedding is £378 for the registrar and the room for an hour; this is a really discounted and cheap rate. If a couple wanted the room for longer or with more dressings, the use of the speaker for music these are all charged as an add on and it is up to the couple as to how much they want to add onto the day. We provide a price list for these additional elements for each couples' consideration.

Over the last few months, we have been working hard on getting things in place and making the rooms look more decorative for weddings. We have invested in silk roses flower arrangements for the tables in the room where the register is signed and as you come up the stairs, we have had new pleated tablecloths made to fit the tables, we have had table cloths made with the Town Crest on them for mayoral events and for covering up the radiator in the Assembly Hall, we have chair covers and colored sashes if people want to decorate the chairs for their big day. We will have rooms that will be very tastefully decorated for a weddings or civil partnerships.

I have not pursued the Town Hall becoming a community venue Monday – Friday, this is something we hope to pick up in the future. The reason behind not pursuing at the minute is that we would likely be unable to meet the demand this would generate given that part of the building is currently used as office accommodation. When having a ceremony, you do not want noise from rooms around you. Currently, when we have ceremonies in the Town Hall, we do not book the Assembly Hall or Scrivener Room out at the same time to avoid noise disturbance, but we have in the past then rented out the ground floor rooms, the Committee Room and Council Chamber but these are not currently available for hire. Once the Town Council finds more permanent office accommodation, the Community Venue and small weddings would take place in the Council Chamber with just the larger weddings booked for the Court Room and Assembly Hall. This means we can book the weddings downstairs and still have events and classes taking place upstairs. We would then be able to apply for Community Venue Monday – Friday as well as Saturdays. Once the office accommodation vacates the Town Hall, there are so many more opportunities available to us for hiring.

As well as setting up things properly for the weddings, I have spent a lot of time looking at the seating at the town hall, having had a few complaints and spent time at comedy nights and theatre events ourselves we know how uncomfortable the seating was. We now have some fantastic silver and blue aluminum seats; it has taken some time to find something that will cater for all the town hall uses but we think we now have the right seats. We have unfortunately lost some capacity due to the new seats being wider and longer (circa 15 seats). I have been on touch with the local theatre and pantomime groups who use the hall each year, they came in and met me so I could show them a sample of the seating (prior to bulk purchase) so that we could try and test out the seats with these community groups. All the groups agreed they could work with the capacity we now have, they liked the seats and agreed they were a vast improvement on our previous seating. Each seat has gained at a minimum of 3 inches. The ticket prices for some groups may increase very slightly, due to the reduced seating capacity, but the groups agreed it was something that needed to happen. The groups were very happy with the new seating and supported the purchase of the new chairs. With the Town Hall being used for so many different types of events we think the seating we have will be good for all, it also looks a lot better than the old, tired seating we had. Please do come have a look and try the seating for yourselves, it would be great to have your feedback too.