

Superintendent Registrar



For the attention of the Corporate Services Scrutiny Panel

Comments on the draft Marriage and Civil Status (Amendment 4) (Jersey) Law

Submitted by

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In response to the Panel's invitation to submit comments in relation to how the draft Marriage and Civil Status (Amendment 4)(Jersey) Law will affect the working practices of the Office of the Superintendent Registrar, I wish to submit the following:

1. The draft law will allow for a more streamlined and efficient administration process within the Office of the Superintendent Registrar. Internal processes are currently labour intensive, unnecessarily complicated and potentially open to human error– the draft law will significantly improve the efficiency of the process allowing for better use of staff time and office resources.
2. The draft law will allow for online applications and digital retention of supporting documentation, significantly reducing the amount of paper generated internally and which thereafter is required to be stored - thus resulting in budgetary savings.
3. The draft law will significantly streamline and modernise the application procedure for couples. Certain aspects of the application can be made using an online application process with 24 hour access at the convenience of the public. This will obviate the need for resident couples to take time off work to attend the office during opening hours, whilst still retaining the same level of documentary verification requirements. Lower footfall will provide better customer service through reduced waiting times and allow staff to be freed up to perform other tasks, thus providing more efficient use of resources within the department and better use of public funds, delivering a better service to the public. For non-resident couples, the online application process will

provide significant improvement to the current processes. All couples will retain the ability to apply using non-digital application processes. The cost and staff efficiency savings will apply nonetheless as staff will perform the digital application in the couple's place.

4. The draft law will significantly reduce the possibility of sham, fraudulent or coerced marriage by introducing certain safeguarding provisions. Such safeguards are not built into the current law. These developments in the law are required and welcomed by the Superintendent Registrar.
5. The draft law will allow for more efficient communication between the Office of the Superintendent Registrar and Jersey Customs and Immigration Service to ensure that all immigration requirements are met before a couple are authorised to marry in Jersey.
6. The draft law will give the Superintendent Registrar statutory authority to provide certain services for which the Office of the Superintendent Registrar is already called to provide to other authorities and jurisdictions – such as No Trace Letters.
7. The draft law will expressly allow for the online publication of Notices to Marry – thus allowing greater public availability/access to Notices beyond the display of a paper Notice in the foyer of the Office of the Superintendent Registrar during public opening hours. The digitisation of this process will allow for savings in staff resources and printing costs.
8. The draft law will retain and streamline rigorous practices of ensuring all supporting documentation is in place before an application can proceed.
9. The draft law will address considerable customer demand for greater choice in the location of their marriage ceremony, greater choice in the person who will conduct their marriage ceremony and the ability to marry same sex partners. It will also allow for the introduction of spiritual and religious content to reflect changing demands of the general public. The draft law will deliver these improvements and efficiencies whilst maintaining the solemnity and dignity of the occasion which will remain a central tenet to marriage in Jersey.

Claire Follain

Superintendent Registrar