MARRIAGE AND CIVIL PARTNERSHIP (SCOTLAND) BILL

SUBMISSION FROM GLASGOW CITY COUNCIL

How would you characterise your views on the Bill in general?

Glasgow City Council welcomes the Bill. Public opinion increasingly supports equal marriage rights for same sex couples. We believe that the Bill as drafted strikes a careful balance in promoting equality for same sex couples whilst at the same time protecting freedom of religion, belief and expression.

How would you characterise your views on the introduction of same sex marriage, so that same sex couples can marry each other?

We welcome the introduction of equal marriage rights for same sex couples as an important step forward in promoting equality of opportunity for same sex couples.

How would you characterise your views on putting belief celebrants on the same footing as religious celebrants?

Glasgow City Council supports these provisions in the Bill which respect people’s belief systems and the value and diversity of bodies authorised to solemnise marriage in Scotland. We would however wish to ensure that the processes which support the establishment of belief ceremonies are robust, well maintained and monitored and ensure a consistent approach. We understand that the qualifying requirements for religious and belief bodies who wish to solemnise marriage may be laid down in regulation and that the Scottish Government will consult separately on these regulations once available. We welcome this further stage of consultation.

How would you characterise your views on the arrangements for authorising celebrants to solemnise opposite sex and same sex marriage (including the opt-in procedures)?

The proposed process is of relevance to the religious or belief bodies who will be directly affected. We have no comment to make.

How would you characterise your views on civil partnerships changing to marriage?

Glasgow City Council welcomes this practical proposal which allows people who have entered into a civil partnership to change their civil partnership into a marriage through an administrative process rather than requiring a marriage ceremony. This would require some changes to existing forms and the process should have a fee attached similar to the existing process for a civil partnership or marriage.

How would you characterise your views on allowing civil marriage ceremonies to take place anywhere, other than religious premises, agreed between the couple and registrar?
Glasgow City Council recognises that there is a benefit in allowing ceremonies to take place in a wider range of locations. There may be a financial impact from carrying out additional health and safety assessments at additional locations, in order to ensure the safety of our staff. There may be a requirement to charge a fee to cover these costs although this could be included in the existing fee. We are currently looking at interim licensing costs for venues until the legislation is passed.

**How would you characterise your views on allowing the religious and belief registration of civil partnerships?**

We welcome the wider choice that this provides for those who wish to enter a civil partnership.

**How would you characterise your views on allowing transgender persons to stay married when obtaining a full Gender Recognition Certificate, which provides legal recognition in the acquired gender?**

Glasgow City Council welcomes this positive step to increase equality for the transgender community.

**12. Would you like to comment on the wider issue of protections for those in society who may have concerns about same sex marriage?**

**13. Would you like to comment on the wider issue of freedom of speech?**

In relation to 12 and 13, Glasgow City Council believes that the legislation as drafted provides an appropriate balance in respecting competing views and protecting freedom of speech.

**14. Would you like to comment on any other wider issues in relation to the Bill that are not mentioned above?**

Given that civil partnerships are being retained alongside marriage, Glasgow City Council believes that the Scottish Government should consider the inequality of mixed sex couples not being allowed to enter into a civil partnership.

We consider that the existence of two very similar processes (civil partnership and marriage) may be confusing and clear public information will be needed. The uptake of civil partnerships may reduce as same sex marriage becomes established, in which case the continuing need for civil partnerships could be reviewed.

Glasgow City Council
22 August 2013