

REPORT TO THE COMMUNITY AND CORPORATE ORGANISATION POLICY AND SCRUTINY PANEL

DATE OF MEETING: 7 NOVEMBER 2017

SUBJECT OF REPORT: REGISTER OFFICE AND REGISTRARS SERVICE

TOWN OR PARISH: ALL

**OFFICER/MEMBER PRESENTING: HEAD OF LEGAL & DEMOCRATIC
SERVICES**

KEY DECISION: NO

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Panel considers the progress made in developing the Registration Service and the successful operation of the shared service arrangement with Somerset County Council. |

1. SUMMARY OF REPORT

This report updates members on the operation of the shared registration service and the delivery of service enhancements.

2. POLICY

The shared registration service contributes to the Council's Corporate Plan vision of providing modern, and efficient services, and the Plan ambition of delivering strong outcomes focussed partnerships.

Developments implemented by the shared service have transformed the offering available to service users and stakeholders.

3. DETAILS

On 1st April 2016 North Somerset Council delegated operational responsibility of its Registration Service to Somerset County Council.

The legal agreement underpinning this shared working arrangement requires the service to meet operational standards set by the General Register Office (GRO) and in addition required Somerset County Council to deliver investments and enhancements to improve customer service and accessibility to the service.

Initially the main service focus has obviously been to implement and consolidate the shared working activities. There were many parts to this process including planning and

engagement, recruitment, training of staff, implementation of a public online booking service for births and deaths, diversion of calls to a centralised booking function team and finally the relocation of historical North Somerset registers to the Heritage Centre in Taunton.

Performance results are reported annually to GRO whose local compliance officer commented that he was pleased to note the good level of service achieved by the local authority during the first year of the arrangement.

In addition to operational activity the following service developments have been delivered:

| Service Development Deliverable | Milestone Date | Progress |
|---|-----------------------|--------------------------|
| Implementation of an electronic diary system to staff delivering the service. | 1st January 2017 | Completed May 2016 |
| Provision to the public of a telephone contact centre for making appointments | 1st January 2017 | Completed August 2016 |
| Provision to the public of an online booking system for making appointments. | 1st January 2017 | Completed August 2016 |
| Provision of shared storage facility for historical registers and provision of a shared copy certificate service to the general public. | 1st April 2017 | Completed November 2016. |

Looking forward, the next developments for the service will be:

- To further develop the centralised booking function, using newly available technology to streamline processes and create efficiencies that will benefit the whole service;
- Recruitment of a Marketing Officer;
- Relocation of the Clevedon register office to Castlewood;
- Development of a business case for an online marriage 'dashboard' to allow customers interactivity with their ceremony bookings and enable online payments;
- Continue to consider the implementation of potential legislative changes and the impact to the service such as the appointment of Medical Examiners and changes to the process of recording marriages.

4. CONSULTATION

None

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

None

6. LEGAL POWERS AND IMPLICATIONS

The service delivery is governed by births and deaths registration Acts as well as various marriages and civil partnership Acts. The shared service arrangement is underpinned by a contract between the councils.

7. RISK MANAGEMENT

None

8. EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

N/A

9. CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

The arrangement is in line with the corporate vision and ambitions indicated in the policy section above.

10. OPTIONS CONSIDERED

N/A

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BACKGROUND PAPERS

Report to the Executive held on 8 December 2015 –
<http://apps.n-somerset.gov.uk/cairo/committees/comidx10-2015.asp>

Report and notes of Community and Corporate Organisation Policy and Scrutiny Panel informal meeting held on 24 November 2015