

NORTH LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCIL

**GOVERNANCE & TRANSFORMATION
CABINET MEMBER**

REGISTRATION SERVICE – FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

1. OBJECT AND KEY POINTS IN THIS REPORT

- 1.1 To update the Cabinet Member on developments in the registration service.
- 1.2 To approve progression of work with North East Lincolnshire Council and Lincolnshire County Council to work together to improve registration services for customers.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 The local registration service (LRS) is overseen by the General Register Office, which is part of the Home Office.
- 2.2 The LRS is responsible for delivering a wide range of services and obligations set out in national legislation. This includes the statutory registration of births, deaths, marriages and civil partnerships as well as taking notices of marriage/civil partnerships and citizenship ceremonies for new British citizens.
- 2.3 Over the last few years registration services have also become increasingly involved in supporting the Home Office's priorities of protection from terrorism, reducing crime and fraud, and tackling immigration abuse.
- 2.4 Like many local authorities, we also deliver a range of discretionary services including 'Tell Us Once', naming ceremonies, renewal of vows and a name changing service. This could potentially be extended to include other services such as civil funerals.
- 2.5 Registration of births and deaths is provided free of charge. Fees are set nationally for other statutory services such as certified copies of registration entries and designated Register Office weddings. Local fees can be applied to discretionary services e.g. non Register Office wedding ceremonies and name changing service.

- 2.6 The Registration Service currently aims to operate at nil net cost or better. We continually review how we deliver our services to improve access for customers and achieve the best possible value for money. Recently this has included exploring the potential benefits of sharing of services with neighbouring councils. The council's budget plans include a saving target of £15,000 for the Registration Service from potential shared service arrangements across 2016/17 and 2017/18.
- 2.7 Registration legislation requires local authorities to prepare a Registration Scheme for the organisation of the LRS in their area and a supporting service delivery plan (SDP). This includes setting out boundaries for Registration Districts for marriages and Sub-Districts for the registration of births and deaths. This forms a legal agreement between the Registrar General and the local authority. There is some scope to revise the SDP to reflect local changes. This might include adjusting levels in response to local demand.
- 2.8 At the moment births and deaths must be registered in the district in which they occur. However informants can make a declaration of a birth or death at any register office. This has to be forwarded on to be recorded in the registration district where the event occurred. Notices of marriages must be attested in the district in which the person giving notice lives.
- 2.9 Lincolnshire and North East Lincolnshire also operate as separate registration districts. This can prove confusing for informants, especially those living on the borders of other registration districts. It is not legally possible to merge these into one registration district at this time. However, there may be ways we could work together to deliver services more effectively for the customer.
- 2.10 In light of these issues Registration Services staff have met with colleagues in Lincolnshire and North East Lincolnshire in the last few months to explore potential for working together.
- 2.11 While there is a view at this time that a formal shared service arrangement may not be needed, all parties agree that there may be scope to work more collaboratively to deliver operational benefits and some financial efficiencies. Any future collaborative arrangements could be underpinned by service level agreements where necessary.
- 2.12 Managers from all three services have identified three main areas for potential further development:
- **Training** – efficiencies and service improvement through cross-service approach to training, to become a regional centre of registration excellence and develop commercial potential in this field
 - **Cross-boundary registration and notices** – streamlining of procedures and practices, centralised e-appointment systems etc, to improve service to customer and reduce costs

- **Staff deployment / resilience** – e.g. staff enabled to deliver registration and ceremony services across districts to enhance customer choice and reduce unnecessary cost; centralised ceremony administration etc.

2.13 We now need to confirm how the council wishes to take these issues forward.

3. **OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION**

3.1 Option 1 is to progress work on the areas identified in 2.12, with a view to drawing up more specific proposals for collaborative working across the three Lincolnshire registration districts. This will involve setting up a project group of relevant staff from each authority. The Assistant Director Customer Services has agreed to chair this group.

3.2 Option 2 would be not to progress collaborative registration services any further at this time.

4. **ANALYSIS OF OPTIONS**

4.1 Option 1 is the preferred option. This option provides the following transformational benefits:

- Improved services and choice for customers
- Improved staff and service resilience
- Has the potential to realise some operational and financial efficiencies.

Option 1 will also support the council's aims towards:

- Improving quality of provision and delivery in new and more efficient ways
- Enhancing partnership working and new delivery mechanisms to improve outcomes and value for money.

The project would also create an effective platform to shape joined up services in response to any future national changes in registration law and services – for example universal online registration and civil preliminaries for marriage, or the longer term removal of boundary restrictions.

4.2 Option 2 would allow the Registration Service to continue to deliver and develop local registration services, but could fail to maximise potential for future service improvement and efficiencies.

5. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (FINANCIAL, STAFFING, PROPERTY, IT)

5.1 Financial

5.1.1 Further work is required as part of the project to identify and confirm financial efficiencies. It is anticipated that savings could be achieved through shared training costs, reduced licensing requirements, travel efficiencies etc. Longer term there may be potential to realise some efficiencies through shared management arrangements.

5.1.2 It is also possible that the project could open up some new income streams, including via more effective deployment of resources that could enable us to deliver additional services locally, or future commercial opportunities such as delivery of training.

5.2 Staffing, Property and IT

5.2.1 Further work is needed to clarify the potential impact on staffing resources. Collaborative working and deployment of staff across boundaries may involve reviewing existing job descriptions.

5.2.2 We would consult staff, Human Resources and trade unions about any potential changes as required.

6. OUTCOMES OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT (IF APPLICABLE)

6.1 Not applicable at present.

7. OUTCOMES OF CONSULTATION AND CONFLICTS OF INTEREST DECLARED

7.1 Not applicable at present. The project group would consider the need for any consultation with customers and staff as proposals are developed further.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 That the Cabinet Member approves the progression of work to develop proposals for more collaborative working with North East Lincolnshire Council and Lincolnshire County Council as outlined in Option 1, and

8.2 That the Cabinet Member receives further reports on progress as the project develops.

DIRECTOR OF PLACES

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Background Papers used in the preparation of this report: None

