

**28<sup>th</sup> January 2014****Agenda Item: 7****REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR FOR PROMOTING INDEPENDENCE  
AND PUBLIC PROTECTION****UPDATE ON CURRENT TEMPORARY POSTS IN REGISTRATION AND  
CELEBRATORY SERVICES****Purpose of the Report**

1. To provide an update on the use of the current temporary posts within Registration and Celebratory Services and seek approval for an extension to these posts until 31 March 2015.

**Information and Advice**Background

2. The registration service is working towards the objective of becoming financially self-sufficient. This is being achieved by cost-efficient completion of statutory duties and the promotion of income generating non-statutory services.
3. In February last year, the Community Safety Committee approved an increase to the establishment of the Registration Service by four FTE posts, on a temporary basis, to create the capacity for further service development to generate additional income and to improve customer service. Specifically, the increase was to enable the service to:
  - Sustain the 'Tell Us Once' (TUO) service without detriment to statutory birth and death registrations
  - Offer the benefit of a local Nationality Checking Service
  - Respond fully to increased public demand for income-generating services
4. The committee agreed that the temporary posts were to be initially on a 12 month temporary basis with a view to making these posts permanent if it is proven that the additional resources enable further service development, additional income generation and demonstrably beneficial improvements in customer service. This report provides an update on how this work has developed.

Recruitment to the temporary posts

5. On committee approval to recruit, the County Council's vacancy protocol was followed and the recruitment process resulted in one full-time and six part-time appointments. In view of the number and nature of appointable candidates, it was not possible to appoint fully to the four FTE posts available. The total number appointed amounted to 3.9 FTE posts, as shown by the following table:

<b>Appointment number</b>	<b>Registration Area</b>	<b>No of Hours</b>	<b>Start Date</b>	<b>Scheduled end date</b>
Appointment 1	South	15	03.06.2013	01.06.2014
Appointment 2	South	13	05.06.2013	01.06.2014
Appointment 3	Central	15	01.07.2013	30.06.2014
Appointment 4	Central	22	03.07.2013	02.07.2014
Appointment 5	Central	22	02.09.2013	15.08.2014
Appointment 6	North	37	08.09.2013	15.08.2014
Appointment 7	Central	15	11.09.2013	10.09.2014

6. As intended, these appointments created capacity within the service for experienced registrars to undertake the training required to enable the service to diversify into the new income generating area of Nationality Checking, as described in more detail in paragraphs 9 to 16 below, as well as improving capacity for other income generating services, and for delivery of the TUO service.

#### The 'Tell Us Once' (TUO) Service

7. An important reason for seeking an increased establishment was to accommodate public demand for the TUO service. This is a national initiative for the Department for Work and Pensions that enables a citizen, when registering a birth or death, to inform a number of central and local government departments through a single registration appointment. The TUO service provides significant financial savings for central and local government departments, but increases the time required for the birth and death appointments. As previously reported to the committee, this represents a cost to the registration service of approximately £30,000 per year.
8. The registration service is currently offering the TUO service with all birth and death registration appointments. A recent addition to this service has been the verification of child benefit application forms during TUO birth appointments. This removes the need for parents to post birth certificates away, and thereby shortens the time for their claims to be processed.

#### Introduction of Nationality Checking Service

9. The Nationality Checking Service (NCS) is for prospective British Citizenship applicants. It aims to help applicants to make a good quality and complete application, which the Home Office Nationality Group will be able to process quickly. Political approval for the introduction of this service was gained through a Cabinet meeting on 6 April 2011.

10. During the latter part of 2013, a good deal of resource has been invested in planning and preparation for commencement of the NCS service. This included ensuring that appropriate equipment is in place at service points to enable copies to be made of original documents so that applicants do not need to surrender these. Also, the planning process took account of interdependencies with other parts of the County Council. In particular, synchronisation with the print replacement strategy, Ways of Working planned property moves and the ICT replacement programme.
11. In order to facilitate the smooth introduction of this service, and to provide capacity for future expansion, a total of 20 experienced members of staff (including some managers) were provided with the training required to deliver NCS. This specific training commenced in September, however in advance of this, all of the newly appointed fixed term registrars had to undertake a significant amount of technical registration and ceremony related training themselves, to ensure the service had capacity to maintain normal service delivery. Alongside this, a Communications Plan was created and followed, which included the preparation of website information and marketing material.
12. Fees for the service have been agreed previously by the committee as follows:
  - Single adult applicant - £55,
  - Child - £40
  - Married / civil partnership couple - £100
  - Married / civil partnership couple and two children - £130 (and £25 each for additional child)
13. The system went live for bookings at the end of October 2013, and the first appointments took place in November. Appointments are currently being offered at the registration offices in Newark, Retford, Carlton and Mansfield. Appointments are booked through the Business Support team for registration service at County Hall, and the fee is collected at the time of booking.
14. Due to changes to the Home Office process for nationality applications, the launch of the Nottinghamshire services has coincided with an unusually slack period for applications right across the UK. As a consequence of this, initial take-up of the service was very slow, and this was in line with bookings being taken by other local authorities that offer this service. However, advice from the Home Office is that activity is expected to pick up markedly in the early months of 2014, as applicants master a new language requirement.
15. In order to capitalise on the anticipated volume of potential applications, a programme has been put in hand to review and refresh the Council's NCS communications plan, and to disseminate more marketing material to promote the availability of the service. This will be completed by the end of January.
16. It is pertinent to note also that NCS provides an opportunity to encourage applicants to have their citizenship ceremony in Nottinghamshire, thus generating more income for the County Council. Further income arises where applicants choose to have an individual (rather than group) ceremony. These are proving

increasingly popular in Nottinghamshire, with a 42% increase in bookings during 2013 (64 ceremonies compared with 45 in 2012).

### Financial Information

17. In addition to the cost of management and staffing time, NCS start-up costs incurred have included £286 'Disclosure and Barring Service' (DBS) checks (previously Criminal Records Bureau checks) for the eleven staff initially delivering this service. £105 has been spent on Home Office training. A cost was also incurred to register the service with the Office of Immigration Services Commissioner (OISC). This is an annual registration, which provides indemnity cover and marketing assistance for a fee of £575.
18. NCS appointments are initially being offered on the basis of (on average) three appointments on each of two days per week in three locations across the County for 45 weeks each year (to account for holidays). This would yield an annual income of approximately £45,000, based on a single adult fee of £55. This capacity will be expanded as necessary to accommodate public demand as fully as possible.

### Other income generating services

19. In addition to creating capacity to enable the smooth introduction of NCS, the expansion has contributed to the ability of the service to develop other income generation initiatives. For example, to promote the Civil Funeral service to families that chose not to have a religious ceremony, and for the service to diversify into the offer of 'Living Eulogies', a service to assist customers who wish to plan ahead and have their funeral wishes recorded and preserved while they are alive. These are considered in the Registration Fees report that is presented to the committee at this meeting also.

### Conclusions

20. Based on the investment that has been made in staff training and preparations, it is concluded that the additional posts have provided capacity to benefit fully from the income potential arising from a Nationality Checking Service. This is expected to make a significant beneficial contribution to the objective of enabling the service to be self-sufficient financially. The posts have also enabled the service to accommodate the delivery of the TUO service for the convenience of the public and for the financial benefit of other public services in central and local government.
21. In addition, the extra staffing capacity offers the opportunity to offer a greater number of other income generating services. Indications to date provide early evidence that the current additional temporary posts provide improved customer service and will generate income to more than cover their costs.
22. Nevertheless, in view of the overall financial position at present, it is not considered appropriate that these posts should be made permanent at this stage, but rather that the temporary appointments should be extended until 31 March

2015. This will allow a further period in which to evaluate their merit fully, and will synchronise the end-dates of the temporary contracts as well as coinciding with financial year-end. It is anticipated that this extension will help ensure retention of newly appointed temporary staff, whose completed training represents a considerable investment in the future of the service.

## **Statutory and Policy Implications**

23. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, finance, human resources, human rights, the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults, service users, sustainability and the environment and ways of working and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

## **Financial Implications**

24. On top of the financial implications contained in paragraphs 17 and 18, this report proposes to extend the temporary posts with the registration service at a cost of £25,676 per full time post per annum. It is anticipated that the additional cost will be met from the increased income generated by the additional services on offer.

## **Human Resources Implications**

25. This report proposes to extend the following posts on a temporary basis until 31 March 2015:

- 3.9 FTE Registrar posts, NJE Grade 4, scp 19-23 (£22,562-£25,676). Posts to carry approved car user status.

## **Ways of Working Implications**

26. As the above posts are already established on a temporary basis they are already accommodated within existing office resources.

## **RECOMMENDATION/S**

- 1) It is recommended that the temporary appointments referred to in this report are all extended until 31 March 2015 to enable further evaluation of their value.

**PAUL MCKAY**

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### **Constitutional Comments (KK 14/01/14)**

27. The proposal in this report is within the remit of the Community Safety Committee.

### **Financial Comments (KAS 20/01/14)**

28. The financial implications are contained within paragraph 24 of the report.

### **Background Papers and Published Documents**

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

- [Previous report to the Community Safety Committee – 26 February 2013](#)

### **Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected**

All.

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