

meeting COUNTY COUNCIL

date 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2011

agenda item number

**15**

## REPORT OF THE DEPUTY LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

### TELL US ONCE

#### Purpose of the Report

1. The purpose of this report is to provide a more detailed update to Elected Members in relation to implementation of the cross-government 'Tell Us Once' service in Nottinghamshire as the "go-live" date approaches. Members have been kept updated thus far on the progress of the programme via the Deputy Leader's portfolio report to Council.

#### Background

2. "Tell Us Once" is a national programme which is being led by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) on behalf of the Government, to transform the way in which the public tell central and local government about changes to their circumstances. It is a process by which people can inform government bodies at a local and national level about a birth or death and this information is then passed on their behalf, using secure electronic means, to the relevant central and local government departments.
3. Since 2008, a number of National Pathfinders comprising Metropolitan, Unitary, County and District Councils, along with a number of government departments have been testing the "Tell Us Once" arrangements for births and deaths. The testing has been in a live face-to-face and telephony environment covering 24 central and local government services which are listed in Appendix A.
4. Whilst initially "Tell Us Once" will be a discretionary service for both customers and local authorities; to date almost 95% of UK local authorities are committed to implementing the "Tell Us Once" service for births and deaths. Government resources are being provided to support all local authorities in implementation so that this service is live

across the Country by early 2012. The service may become a requirement at a later date.

5. The operational model for “Tell Us Once” is that it will be available to the public as soon as possible after the event of a birth or death either face to face via their local authority or via a DWP free phone number. Regardless of which channel the member of the public chooses, the information will be captured and shared in the same way.
6. In the majority of cases local authorities are looking to utilise their Registrars for the face to face channel, because customers are already required to contact this service in certain circumstances by statute. The law requires the public to register within 5 days of a death (unless the Coroner is involved) and 42 days for a birth at the Registration Office nearest to where the event occurred. There is also strong evidence from the National Pathfinders which suggests take-up of the service by the public is highest when it is delivered by Registrars.

### **Implementation in Nottinghamshire**

7. The County Council, City and District Councils in Nottinghamshire are working together on the implementation of “Tell us Once” with the aim of going live with the service during the autumn. The exact date is yet to be confirmed dependant on the development and roll out of the electronic system supporting the initiative nationally.
8. It is proposed that the face to face “Tell Us Once” service across the County will be offered by the County Council’s Registration Services who will be the hub that collects the information from the bereaved and new parents. For consistency the City Council are also going to use their Registrars to deliver the “Tell Us Once” service to the public.
9. Using Registration Services to deliver the “Tell Us Once” initiative will mean customers will require just one appointment to complete the whole process, and they will be dealing with a trusted person, with whom they will have established a relationship already through the registration process. This is an important factor for members of the public at these critical points in their life.
10. Around 80% of the information provided during the registration process can be used for “Tell Us Once” purposes, making the process overall very efficient and customer focussed.
11. The impact on the normal business of the registration service will result in an extra 10 minutes initially being added to the registration process. However, it is anticipated that this will reduce after a few months once the Registrars become more familiar with the service and systems.
12. Customers who choose not to use the “Tell Us Once” service provided by the Registrars and wish to register a death would still be able to choose the DWP free phone telephone service as long as it was within

28 days of the registration date. For registration of a birth, customers will have to use the Registrars Service.

13. The Customer Service Centre will be taking bookings for appointments with the Registrar's Service and will advise the public that this new service is available at the time of booking. The Customer Service Centre will also be the single point within the Council for receiving and processing the electronic "Tell Us Once" notifications following the registration.

### **Benefits of the proposed service.**

14. On average there are over 11,000 births and deaths registered each year at the County's Register offices, with a further 14,000 at the City. The introduction of "Tell Us Once" system will mean that the County Council's services will be made aware (where consent is given) far sooner of those death registrations made in the City, or any part of the UK operating the "Tell Us Once" service, when it involves a county resident. This will then reduce the timescale in taking the correct follow-up action.
15. For example, Adult Social Care and Health services will have another route of being informed about deaths of service users thus reducing further the possibility of overpaying providers. It also means that ICT systems can be updated sooner to reduce incidents of identity theft and inappropriate use of Blue Car Badges.
16. Overall the "Tell Us Once" service should reduce the number of times customers will need to contact the Council and other government bodies. This will reduce customer time taken up and result in faster claim processing and thus increased customer satisfaction. It will mean less administration, reduced postage and call costs for the County Council.
17. The introduction of the service will overcome some of the current difficulties experienced by Registration Services in relation to data sharing which is limited by current legislation. Currently, the County Council's services are dependent on the next of kin, relatives or carers informing them direct, or obtaining the information via other channels
18. Over time, the County Council stands to benefit further as the DWP are actively engaged with other government departments to develop the service further into other areas where customers are most likely to experience a change in circumstance e.g. change of address; change of name; travel in and out of the country.

### **Statutory and Policy Implications**

19. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of finance, equal opportunities, human resources, crime and disorder, human rights, the safeguarding of children, sustainability and

the environment and those using the service and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

That the contents of the report be noted.

## **COUNCILLOR MARTIN SUTHERS Deputy Leader of the County Council**

### **Comments of the Service Director – Finance (PB 07/09/2011)**

The only costs to the authority from the 'Tell Us Once' system have been mainly staff time associated with set up and 'ongoing' maintenance from staff changes.

There has been central funding for the ongoing development, support and maintenance costs associated with the "Tell Us Once" system along with a dedicated telephone line

### **Comments of the Service Director – HR (MT 09/09/11)**

The HR implications are noted in the report in terms of the potential impact on the work of the Registration Service.

### **Legal Services Comments (SG 08/09/2011)**

This report is for noting only.

### **Background Papers Available for Inspection**

[http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/NI1/Newsroom/DG\\_188740](http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/NI1/Newsroom/DG_188740)

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

All.

### Services notified following a Birth

#### DWP

- Jobseeker's Allowance
- Income Support

#### HMRC

- Working Tax Credit
- Child Tax Credit
- Child Benefit

#### Local Authority

- Children's Services
- Library Services

#### Council benefits (administered on behalf of DWP)

- Housing Benefit
- Council Tax Benefit

### Services notified following a Bereavement

#### DWP

- State Pension
- Pension Credit
- Attendance Allowance
- Disability Living Allowance
- Carer's Allowance
- Jobseeker's Allowance
- Income Support
- Incapacity Benefit
- Bereavement Benefit

#### HMRC

- Working Tax Credit
- Child Tax Credit
- Child Benefit

#### IPS

- UK Passport

#### DVLA

- Driving Licence

#### Local Authority

- Council Tax
- Council Housing
- Library Services
- Electoral Services
- Adult Services
- Children's Services
- Blue Car Badges
- Owe payment to council
- Concessionary Travel (from autumn 2011)
- Local Government Pensions (from autumn 2011)

#### Council benefits (administered on behalf of DWP)

- Housing Benefit
- Council Tax Benefit