

REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, PLACE AND COMMUNITIES

RATIONALISATION OF REGISTRATION SERVICE DELIVERY POINTS

Purpose of the Report

1. To seek approval for consolidation of registration appointments into eleven offices, and for provision of statutory fee ceremonies at the Nottinghamshire Register Office only.

Information

Overview

2. This report outlines two avenues for rationalisation of registration services. These will realise revenue savings and will simplify the availability of services. It is proposed to:
 - a. Consolidate the availability of registration appointments into fewer offices;
 - b. Cease the current (voluntary) practice of offering statutory fee marriage ceremonies at venues other than the Register Office in Worksop.

Registration Offices

3. The service currently offers registration appointments at 16 locations across the County, eight of which open part-time hours as the total number of appointments required by Nottinghamshire residents does not warrant full-time offices in all areas.
4. Nottinghamshire County Council currently operates a larger number of registration offices than many other County Councils, for example:
 - Leicestershire - 7
 - Northamptonshire - 7
 - Derbyshire - 11
 - Lincolnshire - 12
5. It is proposed to reduce the number of registration offices available from 16 to 11 and to do this by ceasing the (part-time) registration offices located in Bingham, East Leake, Ollerton, Southwell, and Stapleford. None of these offices averaged more than seven appointments per week during the 2017- 2018 financial year. The total number of registration appointments at all Nottinghamshire registration offices in 2017-2018 was 19,728 of which 1,510 were carried

out at these five offices. This means that 92% of registration appointments took place at the other 11 offices around the County.

6. Discontinuation of these five service points will mean that the people of these communities will have further to travel for an appointment, The offices available for these bookings will be in Arnold, Beeston, East Retford, Eastwood, Hucknall, Mansfield, Newark, Sutton-in-Ashfield, West Bridgford, Worksop and at Kings Mill Hospital, plus appointments may at times be available at the records repository in Bulwell.
7. The current Bingham and East Leake offices are both less than 10 miles distant from the West Bridgford office. The Ollerton Office is less than 11 miles from three other offices (Worksop, Retford and Mansfield). The Southwell office is 8 miles from the Newark office, and the Stapleford office is less than 4 miles from the Beeston office. The availability of appointments will be increased appropriately at other offices to accommodate the same overall volume of business across the County. Work to create additional capacity for appointments at the Newark Registration Office will be completed before local office closures are implemented.
8. As this proposal does not involve a reduction in services overall, consultation has been undertaken with members of staff affected, our landlords for the offices and with current service users accessing registration services at these offices. The outcome of these consultations has confirmed the content of a Equality Impact Assessment carried out on the proposal, which identified negative impacts on customers in these communities based on age, disability and pregnancy/maternity. Conversely, there is a benefit for customers across the whole of Nottinghamshire since the consolidation of service delivery points will increase the availability of appointments at main offices.
9. It is pertinent to note that the availability of appointments at part-time offices can have a detrimental effect on some registration performance statistics. For example, a customer may choose to wait for an appointment at a part-time office rather than travel to another office for an earlier appointment.

Statutory Fee Marriage Ceremonies

10. All couples pay a fee to register a UK marriage or civil partnership. The UK statutory fee for a basic ceremony at a register office is £46 (plus £4 for the certificate). Statutory fee ceremonies of this nature appeal to couples who wish to complete the legal formalities with the minimum of ceremony and just two witnesses. More elaborate ceremonies are available at a range of fees.
11. The County of Nottinghamshire is one 'Registration District' and each such District has a 'Register Office' where ceremonies must be available at the statutory fee. Nottinghamshire's Register Office is in Worksop. Prior to 2012, there were five Registration Districts in the County, each with basic ceremonies available. When the Districts were amalgamated, it was decided that as Worksop is not geographically central to the County, such ceremonies would also be offered in West Bridgford and Mansfield. Ceasing the availability of statutory fee ceremonies at venues other than Worksop will bring Nottinghamshire in line with most other areas.
12. Couples who do not wish to travel to Worksop for a basic ceremony will be able to have a Standard Ceremony at another office at a cost of £125, or may choose to travel to another local authority (if this is closer for them) for a statutory fee ceremony there.

Other Options Considered

13. The proposals detailed here represent a simple rationalisation of existing services and no other, more elaborate proposals are being considered at this time.

Reason/s for Recommendation/s

14. Implementation of the proposals detailed in this report will realise revenue savings and will simplify the availability of services.

Statutory and Policy Implications

15. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, data protection and information governance, finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (public health services), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and adults at risk, service users, smarter working, sustainability and the environment 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

16. The measures referred to in this report will introduce efficiencies that together will realise estimated annual savings of approximately £13,000.

17. The anticipated savings arising from the closure of registration offices are based on two factors. First that the service will no longer need to pay the running costs associated with these premises, and secondly from efficiencies arising from staff travel costs to and from offices that are not their base.

18. A presumed small increase in income arising from withdrawal of statutory fee ceremonies in West Bridgford and Mansfield is based on the assumption that the slots will be taken up by couples who will be content to pay the standard ceremony fee, rather than book a ceremony at the Nottinghamshire Register Office or book a statutory fee ceremony with another local authority.

Human Resources Implications

19. The total number of appointments for registration services will be unaffected by the proposals made in this report, and so there are no implications for the number of registration staff required. Appointments that would have taken place in the five offices proposed for closure will be accommodated at other offices. Most staff affected already have their base at other offices, and where individuals are affected by the changes, normal County Council disturbance arrangements will apply.

Implications for Service Users

20. Up to 8% of service users will have a longer journey to access registration appointments, and customers wishing to have a statutory fee ceremony will have longer to wait and / or further to travel to access this service.

RECOMMENDATION/S

It is recommended that approval is given to:

- 1) Close the registration offices in Bingham, East Leake, Ollerton, Southwell, and Stapleford.
- 2) Cease offering statutory fee ceremonies at venues other than the Register Office in Worksop

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Constitutional Comments [SLB 05/09/2018]

21. Communities and Place Committee is the appropriate body to consider the content of this report.

Financial Comments [SES 05/09/2018]

22. The financial implications are set out in paragraphs 16 to 18 in this report.

HR Comments [JP 15/08/2018]

23. The HR Implications are set out in paragraph 19 of the report.

Background Papers and Published Documents

- Equality Impact Analysis – Rationalisation of Registration Service Delivery Points
- Dossier of comments received

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

- All