

CAMBRIDGESHIRE REGISTRATION SERVICE ANNUAL REPORT

To: **Communities and Partnership Committee**

Meeting Date: **10 October 2019**

From: **Christine May, Assistant Director – Cultural & Community Services**

Electoral division(s): **All**

Forward Plan ref: **N/A** *Key decision:* **No**

Purpose: **To provide an annual report of the work of the Registration Service, highlighting service performance, issues and improvements**

Recommendation: **The Committee is asked to:**

a) Note the work of the Registration Service; and

b) Support the service moving forward with required legislative and structure changes.

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1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The Cambridgeshire Registration Service provides core statutory services for the official recording of key events (birth and death registrations, marriage ceremonies, civil partnerships, citizenship ceremonies, and provision of copy certificates), in addition to non-statutory, income generating services such as naming and renewal of vows ceremonies.
- 1.2 Castle Lodge at Shire Hall in Cambridge is the Register Office for the county and there are also full-time registration offices in Ely and Huntingdon. There are then part time offices in March and Wisbech, and the service also carries out death registrations 3 days per week from the Bereavement Care Suite at Addenbrookes Hospital.
- 1.3 In 2018/19 the service registered 7,417 births and 5,301 deaths, took 4,495 notices of marriage / civil partnership, carried out 2,137 marriage / civil partnership ceremonies and welcomed 1,480 new British citizens. Each year around 60,000 copy certificates are issued.
- 1.4 The Local Authority delivers the service in accordance with legislation founded on the Births and Deaths Registration Act of 1836, and with guidelines primarily issued by the General Register Office (GRO), which is part of the Home Office (within HM Passport Office). The GRO has to approve core changes (such as office relocations), to ensure they meet the legal and service standard requirements for at least all statutory functions. The service is inspected to ensure full compliance - this is measured against 70 aspects relating to Public Protection and Counter Fraud, with 39 pages relating to statutory and operational service delivery standards. In addition ongoing monitoring takes place against national Key Performance Indicators and the service has to submit an Annual Report to GRO for scrutiny.
- 1.5 Due to the relocation of our 3 main sites, a planned staffing re-structure, the impact of changes to marriage law and the implementation of mixed sex civil partnerships, it is important that the Committee is aware of both current and future service provision.

2. SERVICE IMPROVEMENTS AND DEVELOPMENTS

2.1 Accommodation

- 2.1.1 Huntingdon appointments were relocated from Lawrence Court into the adjacent Huntingdon Library in March 2019. This has released much needed additional space at Lawrence Court for the Coroner Service, and has also increased membership and footfall at the Library.
- 2.1.2 In September 2019, Ely registration appointments and ceremonies relocated from a rented building into the new Cambridgeshire Archives building in Ely, facilitating better use of a CCC asset, which also provides customer parking not previously available on site.
- 2.1.3 The County's two million records of births, marriages and deaths will shortly be moved from Lawrence Court (Huntingdon) and Castle Lodge (Cambridge) into the new Cambridgeshire Archives building in Ely. This is the first time since 1837 all the

county's registration records have been centralised, and in archive standard storage which will better ensure preservation for the future.

- 2.1.4 Customer self-service 'self-arrival' screens have been introduced in the Ely and Huntingdon offices, and will shortly be introduced in Cambridge.
- 2.1.5 As part of the relocation of CCC from the Shire Hall site a new location for the Cambridgeshire Register Office is required that will meet the timescales for the Cambs 2020 project. A preferred option has been identified and will be reported as part of a separate report to this committee. This relocation will be planned carefully to ensure service delivery is maintained throughout, given the Cambridge base is responsible for the largest proportion of customer facing appointments and ceremonies across the county.

2.2 Opening hours

- 2.2.1 The relocation of Ely appointments facilitated a change in opening hours from part-time (3 days a week) to full-time (5 days a week).
- 2.2.2 Opening hours in March and Wisbech were amended to assist customers to register deaths within the statutory requirement of 5 calendar days from date of death.
- 2.2.3 Staff have also worked closely with colleagues from Addenbrookes and Royal Papworth Hospitals to incorporate death registrations of Papworth patients within the hours operated in the Addenbrookes Bereavement Care Suite.

2.3 Finance

- 2.3.1 Staff have implemented the integration of customer payments between the registration booking system and the County Council's income system. This means income is increasingly processed on-line, and through the various IT systems appears directly in the correct cost centre. In total, card payments (on-line or via card machines in offices) accounts for 95% of all registrations service income.

2.4 Staffing

- 2.4.1 A management restructure of the service is planned to take place in the last quarter of 2019, in order to provide sufficient capacity at the right levels to manage some 75 part time and seasonal staff in an overall 18.25 FTE establishment.

3. LEGISLATIVE CHANGES

- 3.1 There are frequent changes to legislation relating to civil registration, typically requiring implementation at short notice. This presents challenges to the service in terms of managing customer expectations, and explaining what changes are included (and what is not) within the new legislation, which is sometimes difficult when relatively little information is available. In most cases legislation (from regulation orders to primary legislation) is required, and, in relation to the next set of changes, this has not yet taken place. Nevertheless the Service continues to work hard to prepare thoroughly for all forthcoming new legislation.

- 3.2 A [Private Members Bill](#) received Royal Assent in March 2019. It requires the introduction of mixed sex civil partnerships by the end of 2019. As yet there are no details available so no bookings can take place, and much staff time is spent explaining to customers the reasons for this, as well as the minimal differences between a civil partnership and a marriage.
- 3.3 The [Law Commission has announced a review of marriages](#). They aim to launch the consultation in Spring 2020, and report back to the Government in Autumn 2021. It will be for the Government of the day to decide how they will respond to the report, and then legislation will be required for any changes to come into effect.
- 3.4 The Ministry of Justice is reviewing the legalisation relating to Approved Premises (for the purposes of civil registration) to see if it can be opened out to facilitate the growing demand for outdoor ceremonies.

4. ALIGNMENT WITH CORPORATE PRIORITIES

- 4.1 Delivery of an efficient, professional and customer focussed Registration Service that is appropriately resourced ensures that the statutory requirement to register all key life events is met in a timely manner. The Service takes care to consider the overall impact of service decisions on wider corporate priorities, for example exploring opportunities to use this unique customer contact to provide information and signposting to relevant early support.

4.2 A good quality of life for everyone

The Service impacts directly on the well-being and quality of life for all customers and their families, the majority of whom are Cambridgeshire residents, by ensuring that appointments are available in a timely manner and carried out in accordance with legislation:

- the recently bereaved are able to complete the death registration process thereby facilitating funerals and signposting to relevant services – important as part of the grieving process
- babies are registered, giving them a legal identity and families access to a range of services e.g. childcare, tax benefits, healthcare
- completion of the legal preliminaries, and ceremonies where relevant, for marriage and civil partnerships – important occasions for the couple and their wider circle, with legal changes and financial benefits as a direct result

4.3 Thriving places for people to live

The provision of timely registration services has a direct positive benefit on the suppliers of goods and services across Cambridgeshire e.g. funeral directors (where delays in issuing paperwork would create capacity issues for body storage and delays to funerals), and wedding suppliers (from Approved Venues to florists, caterers and bridal shops)

4.4 The best start for Cambridgeshire's Children

See wording under 4.2 above

5. SIGNIFICANT IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Resource Implications

The planned restructure is essential to ensure the appropriate level of resources for future service delivery, and in improving the recruitment and retention of staff by addressing the way some roles have evolved over time, through updated job descriptions. The restructure is planned to be budget neutral.

5.2 Procurement/Contractual/Council Contract Procedure Rules Implications

There are no significant implications

5.3 Statutory, Legal and Risk Implications

The Local Authority has a statutory duty to provide the necessary resources to deliver the Registration Service, with any additional services generating additional income. This is also a high profile service and therefore carries both financial and reputational risk implications.

5.4 Equality and Diversity Implications

There are no significant implications

5.5 Engagement and Communications Implications

There are no significant implications

5.6 Localism and Local Member Involvement

There are no significant implications

5.7 Public Health Implications

The Service is looking to explore further benefits that could be realised from the service and other CCC services working together, notably Public Health.

Implications	Officer Clearance
Have the resource implications been cleared by Finance?	Yes Name of Financial Officer: Martin Wade
Have the procurement/contractual/ Council Contract Procedure Rules implications been cleared by the LGSS Head of Procurement?	Yes Name of Officer: Gus de Silva
Has the impact on statutory, legal and risk implications been cleared by LGSS Law?	Yes Name of Legal Officer: Fiona McMillan
Have the equality and diversity implications been cleared by your Service Contact?	Yes Name of Officer: Adrian Chapman
Have any engagement and communication implications been cleared by Communications?	Yes Name of Officer: Eleanor Bell
Have any localism and Local Member involvement issues been cleared by your Service Contact?	Yes Name of Officer: Adrian Chapman
Have any Public Health implications been cleared by Public Health	Yes Name of Officer: Tess Campbell

Source Documents	Location
Civil Partnerships, Marriages and Deaths (Registrations Etc.) Act 2019	https://services.parliament.uk/bills/2017-19/civilpartnershipsmarriagesanddeathsregistrationetc.html
'Law Commission Begins Work on Weddings Reform'	https://www.lawcom.gov.uk/law-commission-begins-work-on-weddings-reform/