

To: CORPORATE SERVICES COMMITTEE		Subject: REGISTRATION SERVICE – INTRODUCTION OF APPOINTMENTS SYSTEM
From: HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC AND LEGAL SERVICES		
Date: 7 August 2015	Ref: AAPD	

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The report contains proposals for changes to the Registration Service in North Lanarkshire by way of the introduction of an appointments system for all offices.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Registration Service operates from five full time offices at Airdrie, Bellshil, Coatbridge, Cumbernauld and Motherwell, and three appointment only offices. The service is provided by a team of 23 officers covering 19 full-time equivalent posts, including some job share arrangements.
- 2.2 The three smaller offices in Moodiesburn, Kilsyth and Shotts have been operating an appointment only system since July 2013, which was approved by this Committee on 2 May 2013.
- 2.3 The core function of the service is the registration of Births, Deaths and Marriages, the conducting of marriage, civil partnership, citizenship, and other life event ceremonies and, the provision of advice and guidance on registration matters.
- 2.4 The Area/Registration Service undertakes a range of functions on behalf of Learning and Leisure Services including
- clerking of Attendance Councils
 - administration and clerking of the Education Appeals Committee,
 - administration of the employment of children in accordance with the Employment of Children 2001 Byelaws and
 - additional services in relation to school attendance

The processing of footwear and clothing grants on behalf of Learning and Leisure Services transferred to Finance and Customer Services in 2011.

3. Considerations

3.1 Legislative Changes

- 3.1.1 Recent changes to legislation have had a significant effect on registration practices in North Lanarkshire, requiring processes to be reviewed and new procedures adopted. These include:
- the Certification of Death (Scotland) Act 2011, which in May 2015 introduced new death registration provisions to enable checks to be made on causes of death together with a new medical scrutiny system.
 - the Immigration Act 2014, in respect of which a referral system is currently in place.

- the Marriage and Civil Partnership (Scotland) Act 2014, which makes provision for the marriage of persons of the same sex. This Act also allows civil marriages to take place anywhere agreed by the local registration authority and the parties to the ceremony.

3.2 Cost/Quality of Service Provision

- 3.2.1 Value for money in service provision is scrutinised by monitoring unit costs and comparing these with other Scottish local authorities. It should be noted that posts in the registration service have reduced from 23 in 2013 to 19 currently.

Year	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Unit Cost	£24.31	£17.95	£13.16

- 3.2.2 In terms of quality of service provision, an accuracy rate of 99.59% for 2014 in the Registration of Births, Deaths, Marriages and Civil Partnerships was identified following an inspection by the District Examiner, National Records of Scotland. This is above average and places North Lanarkshire Council in the top quartile of all Scottish Councils.

3.3 Tell Us Once

- 3.3.1 The Service is committed to introducing the Department of Work and Pensions initiative 'Tell Us Once' in 2015/16. Participation in this initiative will enable informants to give informed consent to share death registration information with other services and government bodies and will add approximately 10 minutes to death registrations. It is anticipated that this initiative will be in place by the end of the year after the appropriate staff training has been carried out.

3.4 New Medical Scrutiny System

- 3.4.1. The Certification of Death (Scotland) Act 2011 has introduced a new Medical Scrutiny System and as a result of this a standby rota has been introduced to ensure that there is cover for emergency registrations in the evenings and at weekends. It should be noted that the average time taken for each death registration has increased from 30 to 45 minutes as a result of the additional input of information and if a registration is selected for review then this will involve a further delay in the registration being completed. There are two levels of review – a Level 1 review which allows the Reviewer to check the Medical Certificate of Cause of Death (MCCD) and speak to the certifying doctor (this may take up to one day to complete) and a Level 2 review which requires the Reviewer to speak to the certifying doctor and also check relevant medical records. This level of review can take up to three days.
- 3.4.2 Where a registration has been selected for review the informant has the right to apply for an advance registration if the funeral has to take place within a certain timescale. Applications for advance registration will be considered by the Medical Reviewer in special circumstances such as religious/cultural requirements and practical/administrative arrangements. These changes are adversely impacting on waiting times and the feasibility of maintaining a service where customers “drop in” without an appointment.

3.5 Provision of Extract Certificates of Births, Deaths and Marriages

- 3.5.1 At present customers can attend any registration office to order / purchase extract certificates of births, deaths or marriages. Postal requests are also received. During 2014/15, 27,978 extract certificates were issued.

3.6 Other Local Authorities

- 3.6.1 Following a change to the legislation in 2007, registration of births, marriages and deaths can be made out with the individual's own local authority area in any registration office in Scotland.
- 3.6.2 A number of local authorities, including South Lanarkshire Council, have moved to an appointments only system which has led to individuals from those areas electing to register at North Lanarkshire offices rather than wait for an appointment with their own council. The facility to do this is being highlighted to members of the public by local undertakers. As a consequence, the number of applications in North Lanarkshire to register a death have risen significantly.

4 Reasons for Proposed Change

- 4.1. As a result of the developments set out in part 3 of this report, the registration service is now dealing with more customers from other local authority areas and more time is required to be spent on each registration of a death. Because the Council does not currently operate an appointment system, members of the public can attend at any of the five main offices and expect to have their enquiry dealt with. Staff are under considerable pressure to cope with the increased demand.
- 4.2 It is now considered to be imperative that the Council moves to an appointments system for all Area/Registration offices. If this changed is approved then public notice will be given on the Council's website and at each of the registration offices.
- 4.3 There are no HR, legal or financial implications or issues arising from these proposals,

5 Recommendations

- 5.1 It is recommended that the Committee approve the introduction of an appointments system for all offices.



Head of Democratic and Legal Services

Further information on the content of the report, members can be provided by Paul Donnelly, Section Manager, Administrative and Members Services on Ext 2422.