

**REPORT TO ARTS, LEISURE &
CULTURE SELECT COMMITTEE**

DATE 1st DECEMBER 2011

**REPORT OF HEAD OF
PERFORMANCE & BUSINESS
SERVICES**

GATEWAY REVIEW – REGISTRATION & BEREAVEMENT SERVICES

SUMMARY

This report provides an update on progress in relation to the Registration & Bereavement Services Efficiency, Improvement & Transformation (EIT) review and outlines the preferred options of the review team.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. It is recommended that the review team focus on option 4 as the preferred option for both service areas and work up detailed recommendations that will be presented to Members of the Committee at the meeting on 4th January 2012.

DETAIL

1. The scoping document and project plan was approved by the Arts Leisure & Culture Select Committee (ALCS) on the 15th June 2011, with baseline information being presented on the 13th July 2011.
2. The primary aim of the review has been to identify potential to deliver transformational changes and efficiencies whilst having due regard for statue and working towards a minimum target of 15% cost savings i.e. 18K for Registration and 26K for Bereavement Services.
3. Members recognised that these two service areas are particularly sensitive and sometimes highly emotive and did express some reservations about making significant changes due to the nature of the services provided.

Review and Consultation Exercise

4. Consultation has been focused around the following potential options identified in the baseline report.

Bereavement Services Options Review

- I. Recombine operational element with administrative/technical role i.e. transfer Bereavement Services to CFYA
- II. Commission burial service to external provider
- III. Deliver burial service in conjunction with neighbouring authorities
- IV. Review existing structure with a view to further improvements

Registration Service Options Review

- I. Consider shared services & joined-up working arrangements
- II. Transfer service to Customer Contact Centre
- III. Cease provision of non-statutory services i.e. Naming, Renewal of Vows & Civil Funerals Ceremonies

IV. Efficiencies through improved working practices i.e. scheme change in consultation with HR & General Register Office, the decommissioning of the statutory marriage room, implementation of Tell Us Once Service and opening service all-day Saturday

5. Stakeholder consultation concluded 18 October 2011 and included:

- funeral directors,
- University Hospital of North Tees,
- neighbouring authorities,
- CFYA and
- an on-line questionnaire for customers' comments on current opening hours.

6. Communication and consultation briefings have been on-going with staff since May 2011.

Stakeholders' Feedback

7. Feedback from stakeholders strongly suggests to dissolve the current set-up of Registration and Bereavement Services would be a backward step, particularly given the recent introduction of a satellite office within the University Hospital of North Tees, which closely links the Registrar with the hospitals' Mortuary Team, Bereavement Officers and Coroner's Service.

8. Stakeholders were in favour of retaining the current service with the introduction of opening the service all day Saturday, particularly for death registrations and the booking of funerals. Funeral Directors were also agreeable to us exploring the feasibility of an on-line out-of-hours funeral booking service and offered no real concerns to a scheme change within Registration providing the current performance levels were maintained.

9. A summary of Stakeholders feedback is attached at Appendix 1. (To follow).

RECOMMENDED OPTION

10. Given the highly sensitive nature of these services and views of stakeholders, the review team would recommend option 4, in both service areas as the preferred option. This will provide the opportunity to achieve efficiencies without the loss of front-line service provision and also the chance to deliver improvements for the customer.

11. This option will allow focus on:

- a) Examining staff roles / responsibilities
- b) Changes to structures / working patterns
- c) Reduction in inefficient / complex processes
- d) Potential to increase fees

12. It is anticipated that the likely outcomes will identify the opportunity for:

- Opening of both Registration & Bereavement Services all-day Saturday for ceremonies, registrations and funeral bookings (staff to work 5 days over a 6 day week).
- Improved communication methods with CFYA and more joined-up working with key stakeholders.
- Registration scheme change, working towards a one statutory Superintendent Registrar one statutory Registrar of Births & Deaths model with LEAN working methods, whilst maintaining robust security stock control monitoring systems.
- Improved Customer service.

13. Efficiencies will be met through:

- Further income generation through an increase in interment fees
- An increase in Registration Services income through decommissioning of the statutory marriage room – see Appendix 2
- ‘Absorbing’ the costs of implementing the Tell Us Once Service [with additional benefits being realised elsewhere within the Authority]. Details of Tell Us Once are attached at Appendix 3.
- Absorbing cost of administration of commemorative memorial wall and tree plaques.

14. In addition, the service will explore the feasibility of an on-line ‘out-of-hours’ funeral booking service to identify if any further efficiencies can be made in the medium – long term.