

STOCKTON-ON-TEES BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET RECOMMENDATIONS

PROFORMA

Cabinet Meeting9th February 2012

1. Title of Item/Report

Efficiency, Improvement, and Transformation (EIT) Gateway Review of Registration & Bereavement Services

2. Record of the Decision

Members considered a report relating to the EIT review of Registration & Bereavement Services which had been undertaken to identify ways in which those front-line services could be carried out more effectively and efficiently, having due regard for statute. The review had been carried out as a "Gateway" review under the scrutiny of the Arts, Leisure & Culture Select Committee. Cabinet was also provided with the Equality Impact Assessment that had been developed for this review.

The review had examined a variety of services that were delivered by Registration & Bereavement services to both residents and non-residents of the Borough. Those included the statutory registration of births, deaths, marriages and civil partnerships, conducting of ceremonies for weddings and civil partnerships, the administration of all burials and exhumations within the Borough's cemeteries, approval of memorial applications and the non-statutory services such as naming ceremonies, renewal of vows, family history research and technical and legal advice on the law of burial and exhumation.

Evidence from statutory key performance indicators showed that customer satisfaction levels had remained above the national standard of 90%, with formal complaints maintaining a below average standard against a national figure of 0.5%.

Feedback from stakeholder consultation was strongly in favour of retaining the current set-up of Registration & Bereavement Services, maintaining the satellite office within the University of North Tees Hospital, but indicated a real need to open both service areas all-day Saturday, particularly for death registrations and the giving of Notices of Marriage & Civil Partnership.

It was noted that the service was predominately funded by income generation with a cost to the authority of £30,000 per annum. Due to the

highly sensitive nature of the services the review focussed upon service transformation/improvement thereby ensuring that both service performance and customer satisfaction levels remained high.

It was explained that the Arts, Leisure and Culture Select Committee had been supportive of the proposals coming from the review. Members welcomed improvements which would be delivered through the 'Tell Us Once' service, improvements to the marriage venue and the proposal to retain the satellite registration office at North Tees General Hospital.

It was noted that through the proposals the services would become cost neutral.

During consideration particular reference was made to the 'Tell Us Once' service and it was noted that when established this service would be promoted appropriately.

RESOLVED that

1. In conjunction with HR consultation commences with staff to allow Bereavement Services to be open Monday to Saturday for the booking of interments and general enquiries, proposing that staff work 5 over 6 days per week on a rota basis.
2. The Registration team will assume the responsibility for the marketing and delivery of civil funeral ceremonies with a view to increasing business, utilising casual 'as and when' funeral celebrants.
3. Officers explore the feasibility on an on-line booking facility for funeral directors, whilst maintaining the current 'out-of-hours' arrangements for Muslim Burials and Registrar General's Licence (Death-Bed Weddings).
4. Officers to review burial fees and charges to bring in-line with other Tees Valley Authorities with effect from 1 April 2012.
5. In order to provide an improved level of service and extended choice for customers –
 - a. An alternative, more intimate statutory marriage room be provided for the set statutory fee (£43.50).
 - b. The current statutory marriage room be decommissioned and named the 'Nightingale Suite' from February 2012 to provide additional income of £17,000 per annum.
 - c. The new Nightingale Suite be decorated and updated, and ceremony times be extended from 30 to 45 minutes, with the production

of bespoke scripts to broaden the choice and reflect the wishes of the customer.

d. In addition, DDA compliant public toilet facilities be provided for customers on the ground floor.

6. That the Registration Service absorb the additional costs of providing the Tell Us Once service – providing non-cashable savings of £13,000, with other benefits being realised elsewhere in the Authority through reductions in over-payments and avoidable contact.

7. That structures are considered in consultation with General Register Office (GRO) and HR to:

 Create a dedicated ceremonies team

 Enter into GRO's 'New Governance' arrangements, including adoption of service delivery and good practice standards

 Work with GRO and staff to provide a scheme change, working towards a one statutory Superintendent Registrar and one statutory Registrar of births and deaths model.

 Provide all-day opening on Saturdays

8. The service continues to offer non-statutory services such as naming ceremonies, renewal of vows, etc to meet the needs of customers.

3. Reasons for the Decision

To produce efficiencies and service improvement in the delivery of Registration & Bereavement Services as part of the Council's EIT Programme, whilst sustaining/improving high quality outcomes for SBC residents.

4. Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

None

5. Declared (Cabinet Member) Conflicts of Interest

None

6. Details of any Dispensations

Not applicable

7. Date and Time by which Call In must be executed

Midnight on Friday 17 February 2012

Proper Officer
13 February 2012