

REPORT TO: Cabinet Member - Leisure and Tourism
Cabinet

DATE: 1st December 2010
16th December 2010

SUBJECT: Proposals for the Creation of a Single Registration Service
for Births, Deaths and Marriages for Sefton

WARDS AFFECTED: All Wards

REPORT OF: Leisure And Tourism Director - G Bayliss

CONTACT OFFICER: Rajan Paul Assistant Leisure and Tourism Director (Proper
Officer) 0151 934 2377
John Proffitt, Head of Cemeteries and Crematoria, Registrars
and Coroners - 0151 934 2357

EXEMPT/CONFIDENTIAL: NO

PURPOSE/SUMMARY:

To seek approval for the introduction of a Single Registration Service of Births Deaths and Marriages for Sefton

REASON WHY DECISION REQUIRED:

This is a policy decision which requires Cabinet Member and Cabinet approval

RECOMMENDATION(S):

It is recommended that the Cabinet Member for Leisure and Tourism recommends to Cabinet that they :

- i. Approve, in principle, the introduction of a single registration service for Sefton
- ii. Approve, in principle, the adoption of 'New Governance' a General Register Office initiative in order to facilitate the single registration district and reduce regulation.

It is recommended that Cabinet

- i. Approve, in principle, the introduction of a single registration service for Sefton
- ii. Approve, in principle, the adoption of 'New Governance' a General Register Office initiative in order to facilitate the single registration district and reduce regulation.
- iii. Notes that due to Government regulation the introduction of a single registration district and adoption of 'New Governance' are subject to final approval by the Registrar General.
- iv. Authorises the Cabinet Member for Leisure and Tourism and Sefton's Proper Officer for the Registration Service to progress matters with the General Registry Office in order to bring these proposals into effect.

KEY DECISION: No

FORWARD PLAN: No

IMPLEMENTATION DATE: Upon the expiry of the Call in period following the publication of the Cabinet Minutes

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS:

- To retain the two districts

IMPLICATIONS:**Budget/Policy Framework:**

Financial:	2009/ 2010 £	2010/ 2010 £	2011/ 2012 £	2012/ 2013 £
<u>CAPITAL EXPENDITURE</u>				
Gross Increase in Capital Expenditure	0	0	0	0
Funded by:	0			
Sefton Capital Resources	0		0	0
Specific Capital Resources	0			
<u>REVENUE IMPLICATIONS</u>				
Gross Increase in Revenue Expenditure	0			
Funded by:	0			
Sefton funded Resources				
Funded from External Resources				
Does the External Funding have an expiry date? N	When?			
How will the service be funded post expiry?				

Legal: This is a statutory Service

Risk Assessment: None

Asset Management: None

CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN/VIEWS**CORPORATE OBJECTIVE MONITORING:**

<u>Corporate Objective</u>		<u>Positive Impact</u>	<u>Neutral Impact</u>	<u>Negative Impact</u>
1	Creating a Learning Community		✓	
2	Creating Safe Communities		✓	
3	Jobs and Prosperity		✓	
4	Improving Health and Well-Being		✓	
5	Environmental Sustainability		✓	
6	Creating Inclusive Communities	✓		
7	Improving the Quality of Council Services and Strengthening local Democracy	✓		
8	Children and Young People		✓	

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS RELIED UPON IN THE PREPARATION OF THIS REPORT

1.0 Background

- 1.1 Sefton Births Deaths and Marriages Registration Service is a statutory function which is regulated by the Government via the General Registry Office (GRO) but provided and funded by the Local Authority.
- 1.2 Legislation places a duty on the Local Authority to provide the service and specifies minimum standards in terms of its provision. Details of how each individual Authority will meet these have to be proposed, in a document known as a 'Scheme', to the Registrar General (RG) for their approval.
- 1.3 Sefton's current scheme, which dates back to 1989, identifies two independent registration districts and offices, based on the ward boundaries. As far as legislative requirements and the GRO are concerned these are two completely separate districts and have to be staffed and managed accordingly.

Sefton North Registration district based at Southport Town Hall covers Cambridge, Meols, Dukes, Norwood, Kew, Birkdale, Ainsdale, Harington, Ravenmeols

Sefton South Registration district based at Waterloo Town hall covers Manor, Blundellsands, Victoria, Church, Linacre, Derby, Litherland, Ford, St Oswald Netherton and Orrell, Molyneux, Sudell, Park

- 1.4 The difficulties with this type of scheme is its inflexibility, even a minor change e.g. amending opening hours requires RG approval. This restricts our service provision and means that it is difficult to adapt if service users needs change.
- 1.5 GRO have recognised the difficulties that this level of regulation can cause for local registration services and over the past two years have introduced an alternative to the Scheme known as New Governance.
- 1.6 This initiative allows greater flexibility and reduced regulation, passing more of the regulatory responsibility down to the local level and away from the GRO. It also permits changes to the service without the need to have RG approval first.
- 1.7 At least 100 of the 174 local authorities in England have already adopted New Governance and are already seeing the benefits of reduced regulation.
- 1.8 One of the other issues with Sefton's current scheme are the two independent districts which can cause difficulties for residents; details are highlighted below.

2.0 Difficulties Created by the Current Two District Setup

- 2.1 Having two independent registration districts in Sefton creates difficulties for residents. The reason for this is that births deaths and marriages must, by law, be registered in the registration district where the person lives. As Sefton is split into two districts, north and south, based on ward boundaries, certain residents have to travel further than necessary.
- 2.2 This can also create difficulties, depending upon where people work e.g a person living in Southport but working in Bootle would have to register in Southport despite the south office at Waterloo being closer.
- 2.3 Both districts operate an appointment system for registrations, at certain times of the year. Due to the volume of work, the offices have difficulty providing sufficient registration appointment slots. But as mentioned above due to the districts being independent a resident can't use another office as it is outside of the district. e.g. if the north office is fully booked on a particular day, but the south office has free appointment times, it is not possible for resident to attend the south office (as it is outside the area) and the person would have to wait for another day.

2.4 The current set up also means that staffing both offices can be difficult. It is a statutory requirement to have an appointed Superintendent Registrar and a Registrar for Births Deaths and Marriages for each district. This means that there is no possibility of moving or adjusting staffing levels and if not fully utilised they still need to be provided.

3.0 **Service Improvements**

3.1 **Adopting New Governance**

3.11 As mentioned previously the GRO recommends the adoption of New Governance as an alternative to the current schemes. Adopting this initiative will have a number of advantages for Sefton and its residents including;

- Regulation by the GRO is reduced
- Greater freedom and flexibility to tailor the delivery of the local Registration Service
- The Proper Officer (Currently the Assistant Leisure and Tourism Director) is given more responsibility and accountability for the delivery of the service
- A 'Light Touch' inspection regime by the GRO is introduced
- Ability to amend the Registration Service, including changes to staffing and offices without the need to refer to the GRO for approval
- The Registration Service is brought into line with other Council services, meaning that members and officers can decide how the service is provided and not the GRO.

3.2 **Creating a Single Registration District**

3.21 The GRO recommend that where local authorities have more than one registration district, as part of adopting New Governance, they consider creating a single registration district.

3.22 In Sefton's case there would be a number of advantages for residents in doing this including;

- Ward boundary restrictions would be removed
- Residents would be able to chose which office to register at
- Increased availability of appointment times as they could use both offices
- Staff could be transferred between offices if required
- Only one main office will be needed, giving greater flexibility in terms of 'outstation' delivery e.g. at a different venue on different days
- There would only be a need to provide two statutory officers - Superintendent and Registrar of Births Deaths and Marriages - instead of the four currently required which gives greater flexibility for future staff provision

4.0 **The Process**

4.1 The creation of a single registration district and adoption of New Governance has a number of key requirements. Work has already commenced on some of these as part of the general management of the service these include.

4.2

Task	Target Date
Preliminary discussions with GRO	Nov 2010 (completed)
Implementing a system for the Control of Certificate Stock	Nov 2010 (completed)
Production of a Service Delivery Plan	Nov 2010 (completed)
Incorporate Performance Management and GRO Performance Indicators	Nov 2010 (completed)
Members agreement to the principle of a single registration District	Dec 2010

Formal Commitment to by the Proper Officer to The GRO new Governance Code Of Practice and Submission of GRO questionnaire	Dec 2010
Discussions with staff	Jan 2011
Detailed discussions with GRO	Feb 2011
Proper Officer Submission to GRO for approval	April 2011
Introduction of new Births Deaths and Marriages District and New Governance	July 2011

5.0 Final Approval of the Proposals

- 5.1 The Cabinet Member and Cabinet should note that that this report seeks approval in principle, for the adoption of New Governance and the Creation of a Single Registration District.
- 5.2 Due to the statutory nature of the service, Members should note that final approval for implementation of these initiatives falls to the Registrar General.
- 5.3 If the principle is approved by Members, the final submission will be made by Sefton's Proper Officer for Registration Service, after approval by the Cabinet Member for Leisure and Tourism.

6.0 Financial Implications

- 6.1 There are no financial implications and in fact allowing greater flexibility of staffing and sites may mean that some efficiencies and savings can be identified.

7.0 Conclusions

- 7.1 Introduction of a single Registration Service will have a number of advantages for Sefton residents and the Council as a whole and will result in greater flexibility, reduced regulation by the GRO and an ability to tailor the Registration Service to the Council's particular needs.

8.0 Recommendations

It is recommended that the Cabinet Member for Leisure and Tourism recommends to Cabinet that they :

1. Approve, in principle, the introduction of a single registration service for Sefton
2. Approve, in principle, the adoption of 'New Governance' a General Registry Office initiative in order to facilitate the single registration district and reduce regulation.

It is recommended that Cabinet

1. Approve, in principle, the introduction of a single registration service for Sefton.
2. Approve, in principle, the adoption of 'New Governance' a General Registry Office initiative in order to facilitate the single registration district and reduce regulation.
3. Note that due to Government regulation the introduction of a single registration district and adoption of 'New Governance' are subject to final approval by the Registrar General.
4. Authorises the Cabinet Member for Leisure and Tourism and Sefton's Proper Officer for the Registration Service to progress matters with the General Registry Office in order to bring these proposals into effect.