

REPORT TITLE: Registration Service Cabinet date	20 th February 2024
Cabinet Member	Cllr Paul Davies
Key Decision Eligible for Call In	Yes Yes

Purpose of Report; To seek cabinet approval to consult with the General Registrar office (GRO) to redesign the Registration Service. The proposed redesign, based on assessed needs, includes a proposed consolidation of activity into a single central site.

Recommendations

- That the Registration service be approved to consult with and obtain the required approval from the General Registration Office (GRO) on the proposed new local scheme. Any consolidation to one central site will only be agreed following due process with the GRO.
- Re-design the Registration Service including options to;

A: consolidate into a central main site in Huddersfield for delivering all Registration services although wedding ceremonies would still take place at Dewsbury Town Hall and at wedding venues across North Kirklees.

B: Needs led support – ensuring that the impact of consolidation are reviewed and adjustments are considered in light of the experience, including holistic support to individuals and the feasibility of offering place-based service delivery where the need is identified.

- That a full review of the Registration Service fees and charges set by the council is made annually based on benchmarking with other local Registration districts and implemented in year from 2025/26, reviewed annually thereafter.
- The final decision will only be made after the consultation with and approval from the GRO and delegate the decision on site arrangements to the Strategic Director for Adults and Health in consultation with the cabinet portfolio holder.

Reasons for Recommendations

- The move to one central site for service delivery improves efficiencies by reducing duplication of infrastructure and support required to deliver across two sites.
- A one site model supports the council to meet the financial challenges it faces.
- The analysis of service delivery at the current split sites shows that Huddersfield has a higher proportion of service delivery supported than Dewsbury across all functions.
- Understanding the impacts of consolidating to one central delivery site is key to both understanding the need for feasibility of adjusted registration services as well as the holistic needs of individuals i.e. those who are isolated or lonely.
- Fees and charges are a key part of the service delivery in a Registration Service. Some of these are set nationally by the GRO. The council can set its own fees and charges for some functions and are already set for 2024/25. Any changes will therefore take effect from 2025/26 and reviewed annually for future years.
- The fees and charges review will take into account the following factors: full cost recovery, inflation, and market competition through benchmarking with other local Registration districts.

- There is a statutory requirement to consult with and receive approval from the GRO for any changes to the Registration Scheme. If the recommendations in this report are approved, we will need to commence that consultation process with the GRO.

Resource Implications:

Costs – The 2023/24 budget for the Registration Service is Gross £1,131k Income (£768k) Net cost to the Council of £361k.

Communications – to support delivery of key messages to target audiences and help promotion of the service from a single site.

Registration and other council staff to engage with key stakeholders such as health services and bereavement forums to develop mitigations and targeted support options.

Support will also be required from other corporate services such as:

- I.T – support to community’s access revised registration service
- Assets and corporate facility management will need to be involved in early conversations in relation to proposed central site registration service.
- Legal support in revision of local scheme and advising on any policy implications.
- Data & Insight – support with monitoring service impacts and delivery.

Corporate Landlord will make use of space vacated by Registration Services as part of plans to make greater use of Dewsbury Town Hall by other council staff.

Date signed off by Strategic Director & name.

Richard Parry Strategic Director for Adults and Health 05/02/2024

Is it also signed off by the Service Director for Finance?

Isabel Brittain Service Director Finance 07/02/2024

Is it also signed off by the Service Director for Legal Governance and Commissioning?

Julie Muscroft Service Director Legal Governance and commissioning 07/02/2024

Electoral wards affected: Dewsbury East, Dewsbury South and Dewsbury West

Ward councillors consulted: None

Public or private: Public report

Has GDPR been considered? Yes - There is no personal data within this report.

1. Executive Summary

The Council is under a statutory duty to provide registration services under the Registration Services Act 1953. Registration services have to be provided in compliance with the Act and in compliance with a “local scheme” approved from time to time under the Act. At a national level

Registration Services are overseen by the Registrar General (the office of the Registrar General is often referred to as the GRO).

Since 2012 the council has delivered registration services in both Huddersfield and Dewsbury providing services across the full functionality of a Registration Service, supported by council management resources. Fees and charges are reviewed on an annual basis in the registration service. The financial challenges of the council require a review of the service delivery model as providing full-service delivery at both sites is no longer sustainable or fully efficient.

The proposal seeks approval to redesign the Registration Service through the following:

- That the Registration service be approved to consult with and obtain required approval from the General Registration Office (GRO) on the proposed new local scheme
- Re-design the Registration Service including options to;

A: consolidate into a central main site for delivering all Registration services although wedding ceremonies would still take place at Dewsbury Town Hall and at wedding venues across North Kirklees.

B: Needs led support - That the impact of this is reviewed and adjustments are considered in light of the experience, including holistic support to individuals and the feasibility of offering place-based service delivery where need is identified

2. Information required to take a decision.

2.1 Background

Overall responsibility for civil registration in England and Wales rests with the Home Secretary. The administration of the service is shared between the Registrar General (RG) and local government. The General Register Office (GRO) oversees the quality of registration information and monitors the technical delivery of the service. Local Authorities have responsibility for the operational delivery of the local service. Registration services play a vital role in securing and recording high quality information and provide individuals access to essential information. Kirklees Council recognises it has a diverse geography and communities and strives to deliver a registration service which meets both local needs and national standards.

Although used infrequently by individuals across their life course, registration services are used at the most important life events for people, and this is reflected by the council's service standards as well as the environment provided to citizens within which to make these important registrations.

Up until 10 October 2012 there were two individual Registration Districts in Kirklees (Huddersfield District and Dewsbury District). On 11 October 2012 the Kirklees Registration District was formed, with the one unified Registration District being co-terminus with the Kirklees boundaries forming the existing local scheme. There is no requirement for a Registration District to have more than one Register Office within its boundaries.

The service functions provided by the Registration Service include the following: Births, Deaths, marriages, civil partnerships, citizenship ceremonies, memorials and baby naming ceremonies (a full list is at Appendix 1). All the service functions are currently provided from both the Huddersfield and Dewsbury sites.

Each site has their own management structure, stores, stock systems, secure storage systems and ceremony rooms.

During the COVID pandemic the GRO changed some registration requirements so that face to face appointments were minimised and online and phone options approved. These are subject of potential future changes to the national scheme which the council will look to apply.

Whilst the GRO has the responsibility for setting some fees and charges the council has responsibility for fees and charges not set by the GRO. A full list of services provided, and their current fees and charges is at Appendix 1 – those with an Asterix on them are the statutory fees set by the GRO.

The Registration Service is statutorily required to consult with the GRO on proposals for any changes to its current scheme for official approval.

2.2 Supporting information and Data.

To help support decision making this report details existing arrangements and timescales for registration services. Also provided are service usage on the highest volume functions at each site. This has supported the identification of which site would minimise the impact for residents of moving to full-service delivery at one site only.

Registration Services and timescales

What Service do you require	Timescales for completing registration	What you should do	Method of Registration
To Register a Birth	Within 42 days of the child being born.	You should do this at the local register office for the area where the baby was born or at the hospital before the mother leaves. The hospital will tell you if you can register the birth there. If you cannot register the birth in the area where the baby was born, you can go to another register office, and they will send your details to the correct office.	Online or on the phone to book an appointment. Appointment will be in person at the registration office An appointment is normally available within 5 days of the request
Marriage/Civil Partnership	Give notice within 29 days before the ceremony	You need to make an appointment to give notice at your local register office . You must have lived in that registration district for the past 7 days.	Online or on the phone to book an appointment. Appointment will be in person at the registration office

		You and your partner will need to give notice separately if you live in different registration districts. You do not have to do this on the same day.	An appointment is normally available within 10 days of the request
To Register a death	<p>Within 5 days of the death unless a coroner is involved.</p> <p>If the death has been reported to a coroner, they will inform when you are able to make an appointment to register the death.</p>	The registration should be made in the district in which the death occurred in England	<p>Online or on the phone to book an appointment.</p> <p>The appointment will be in person at the registration office.</p> <p>An appointment is normally available within 2 days of the request.</p>

Death registration is the area where timescales pose the most significant challenge to moving to one site for residents. Although births and marriages and civil partnerships do have timescale standards, by their nature, they allow for forward planning in a way that death registration does not.

Currently in person appointments are booked online or over the phone, and service standards currently indicate Kirklees registrar services support the 73% of death registration within 5 days, which is in line with other Registration Districts. We will continue to prioritise death registration appointments.

Those having to register deaths are often supported by families, friends, and religious communities to do so, however there are exceptions where some people are without this support. Further work to understand who these people are would be a priority for the service not only to support effective registration but also as they are most likely to need further support from council and community services, whether that be access to information and support or social care and wellbeing.

The timescales are also impacted by faith related burials, and this will need to be considered fully in any mitigations.

Births & Deaths Registrations

The following tables detail Births & Deaths Registrations undertaken at each site in 2022/23 and up to 30th September 2023 for year 2023/24.

Data on Births

Table 1

Births	22/23 (year)	23/24 (up to 30/9/2023)
Huddersfield	1,119 (57%)	530 (57%)
Dewsbury	839 (43%)	406 (43%)
Totals	1,958 – 100%	936 – 100%

Data on Deaths

Table 2

Deaths	22/23 (year)	23/24 (up to 30/9/2023)
Huddersfield	2,482 (64%)	1,124 (64%)
Dewsbury	1,406 (36%)	632 (36%)
Totals	3,888 – 100%	1,756 (100%)

As can be seen in the data there is consistency on both births and deaths registered at each site in 22/23 and for the first 6 months of 23/24. Huddersfield office registering 57% and Dewsbury 43% of births and Huddersfield registering 64% and Dewsbury 36% of all deaths in the district. When comparing the details in tables 1 and 2 it shows that similar volumes of births and death registrations are forecast for year 2023/24 as were made in 2022/23.

Whilst not all data is shown for every function provided by the registration service as identified in Appendix 1, those detailed are for the highest volume services provided.

In total 2,245 people who used the Dewsbury office out of a total North Kirklees population of circa 190,000 would need to travel to Huddersfield meaning that 1.2% of the population of North Kirklees would potentially have been affected in 22/23 had the change already taken place.

It is clear from this data that the Huddersfield site sees the highest usage. In July 2023 the service moved from its base in Huddersfield Town Hall into the purpose-built facilities for birth and death registrations in Civic Centre One. This move was made with minimal disruption to residents. It is proposed therefore that Huddersfield is the site chosen to be the main site offering all functions of the Registration Service. Ceremonies will continue to take place in the Huddersfield Town Hall ceremony room and at Dewsbury Town Hall ceremony room.

Choosing the Huddersfield site as the central site will minimise the impact for some residents. The Huddersfield site is very close to Huddersfield Bus Station which has regular services to a number of towns in North Kirklees. The train station is less than a 10-minute walk from the Huddersfield site and again there is a regular train service to a number of North Kirklees towns.

Car parking is readily available close to the Huddersfield site.

78% of the Kirklees population have access to a car or other motor vehicle. (Census data 2021).

Careful consideration is required before consolidating to one central site, with approval from the GRO required before this decision can be made.

Should this receive the relevant approval it will free up space in Dewsbury Town Hall to support centralise more services and activity in Dewsbury, helping it become a more lively and vibrant venue and bringing opportunity for additional footfall into Dewsbury.

3. Fees & charges

Most of the Registration Service fees and charges are set by the GRO as can be seen in appendix 1.

Those that can be set by the service are reviewed annually. The reviews have always included benchmarking with other local Registration districts to mitigate impacts on Kirklees residents. The fees and charges are already set for year 2024/25. A review is required to set charges for 2025/26 onwards. Charges will be set considering inflation rates as well as an understanding through the benchmarking of the proposed charges for future years by other local Registration districts. Benchmarking with other Registration districts will ensure we consider what the charges are for these other districts so we can be consistent with charges where appropriate.

4. Targeted Support and mitigations

If consolidation is approved, to help mitigate the impact of the consolidation to one central site in Huddersfield, for those needing to register births and deaths, service delivery for these functions would be fully appraised and identified mitigations put in place where feasible.

- Utilise the learning from the transition to one site to fully explore if there is identified need and feasibility of additional part time sites for birth and death registration utilising existing council facilities to provide those services.
- Targeted and universal communication approach to provide key messages relating to the change and where to get support.
- Travel routes and distances - we have already begun to explore this, and we would need to ensure public transport route information to the Huddersfield site was made readily available. Contingency travel provision in exceptional circumstances is also being explored with community teams and partners.
- Further work to understand who the cohorts of people are who need assistance with travel and other support to register deaths. These people would be a priority for the service not only to support effective registration but also as they are most likely to need further support from council and community services. This could be access to information and support or social care and wellbeing and this would be an opportunity to connect them to early intervention and preventative community support and services.
- Faith based burials - early engagement with key stakeholders. Additional information shared on council, community businesses and partners channels.
- Priority being given to those registrations that require urgent support. For example, those needing death registrations to meet faith burial requirements.
- There will be engagement with service users, staff, and partners to identify opening hours and accessibility at these sites to provide these services.

5. Proposed savings and staffing reduction

This provides cumulative savings of £335K (£40K 2024/25 and £295K 2025/26) and a reduction of 9.2fte in respect of this proposal.

6. Services and agencies involved

There is a requirement for the council to consult with the GRO on the proposals to ensure that statutory requirements on stock control and security are not compromised and that the proposed service delivery model meets with GRO approval. Whilst initial discussions have taken place, formal consultation with the GRO will take place should the proposals in this report be approved.

7. Implications for the Council

7.1 Working with People

The planned approach will require consultation with staff as part of the agreed change process.

Delivery of the proposed changes will require clear communications with key stakeholders in the births, deaths and ceremonies sectors so that they and residents are supported and advised appropriately.

7.2 Working with Partners

We will collaborate on access and opening hours with relevant partners (for example funeral services, bereavement forums and approved venues for ceremonies) to identify any opportunities to ensure the best outcomes possible for all concerned. A robust communications plan will be in place to ensure all partners are aware of and understand the changes.

7.3 Place Based Working

The Registration Service supports residents from the whole of the Kirklees community and will continue to do so. The current service delivery model is facilitated over two main sites, the proposal to integrate those sites in one location will mean we will learn from experience what the need is for targeted support for specific birth and death registrations that would improve our place-based service delivery for those functions.

7.4 Climate Change and Air Quality

The proposal to have one main location in Huddersfield from the current two in Huddersfield and Dewsbury will impact on increased travel for some citizens who do not use public transport.

7.5 Improving outcomes for children.

There will be no direct impact on improving outcomes for children. Improved communications about support services available to new parents will be an indirect outcome.

7.6 Financial Implications

Depending on services required and where residents live some may see an increase in travel costs.

The annual budget for the Registration Service for 2023/24 is Gross Budget £1,131k Income (£770k) Net Budget £361k. All the income received (£770k) is generated through set registration fees and charges.

The GRO sets specific fees and charges for certificates nationally and the council has no control over these. For the other fees and charges that the council sets in relation to services provided a full review will be undertaken. This review is likely to see fees and charges increase from 2025/26. Benchmarking will be undertaken with other Registration Services to ensure that any increase is in line with full cost recovery and is consistent with the fees and charges in neighbouring authorities.

The financial challenges the council faces mean we cannot sustain the current service delivery model. The proposal takes into consideration the ability to meet those challenges and maintain a service to meet the needs of citizens.

The proposed savings are subject to approval and a service change process. The agreed service change process will determine the timescales for realisation of the proposed savings with the expectation that they are delivered across 2024/25 and 2025/26 however some savings may be realised earlier.

7.7 Legal Implications

Provision of Registration Services by the Council is a statutory duty under the Registration Service Act 1953 and services must be provided in compliance with the requirements of the Act and organised in accordance with an approved local scheme.

7.8 Other (e.g. Risk, Integrated Impact Assessment or Human Resources)

Before making a decision, Members must have regard to the Integrated Impact assessment in relation to the proposals. Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 places a duty on the council in carrying out its functions to have due regard to the need; (a) eliminate discrimination; harassment; victimisation, and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act; and (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; (c) foster good relations between persons who share a protected characteristic and persons who do not share it. Section 149(7) of the 2010 Act set out the protected characteristics which are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

An Integrated Impact Assessment has been carried out for this proposal and is published on the Council's website. The assessment is contained in this link: [Integrated Impact Assessments - IntegratedImpactAssessment \(kirklees.gov.uk\)](https://www.kirklees.gov.uk/integrated-impact-assessments)

The assessments highlight some neutral and negative impacts of the proposed changes, however overall, the impacts remain neutral

There will be HR implications from these changes and staff and trade unions will be consulted in accordance with the usual procedures.

8.Consultation

This report has been subject to consultation with the Council's Executive Leadership Team (ELT), Executive Board, and the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services, and their comments have informed the contents of this report.

Whilst initial discussions have been had with the GRO and an indicative willingness in principle to work with us on the proposal if approved, there is a requirement for the council to consult with the GRO on changes to the Registration Scheme.

9. Engagement

Engagement with Partners, Service Users and Staff impacted by these changes will take place following a cabinet decision.

There will be HR implications from these changes and staff and trade unions will be engaged with in accordance with the councils HR service change procedures.

10. Options

10.1 Options considered and reasons for recommendations.

When identifying which site should be allocated as the Register Office in the proposed new scheme both our current sites were considered. It was important to consider the usage data, security of documents and the ability to reuse current accommodation when identifying which site to choose to minimise impacts. The details are included in section 2 of the report.

Targeted support (detailed in section 4.) to mitigate the consolidation of registration services into one site will continue to be considered, developed and implemented where feasible.

11. Next steps and timelines

These savings are subject to cabinet approval and a service change process. The proposed service delivery model will then be subject to GRO approval.

The agreed service change process will determine the timescales for realisation with the expectation that savings are delivered across 2024/25 and 25/26 however some savings maybe realised earlier.

12. Contact officer

Dave Thompson Head of Access Strategy and Delivery
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13. Background Papers and History of Decisions

None

14. Appendices

Appendix 1 – list of current Registration and their current charges.

15. Service Director responsible

Jill Greenfield Service Director Communities and Access Services
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Appendix One – Summary of Fees: Kirklees Registration Service

Selling prices as of 01 April 2023. * Indicates statutory fees

Certificates	Registrar	All copies at time of registration*		£ 11.00
		All copies after registration*		£ 11.00
	Superintendent Registrar	Full copy*		£ 11.00
		Short copy*		£ 11.00
		Priority Service*	Certificate cost:	£ 35.00
			Priority service cost:	
		Express Service	Certificate cost:	N/A
			Priority service cost:	
		Certificate Errors	Space 17 - To change or add a forename to a birth registration within 12 months*	
	Application to consider correction of a birth, death, marriage or civil partnership certificate -Kirklees*		£ 75.00	
	Application to consider correction of a birth, death, marriage or civil partnership certificate -GRO*		£ 90.00	
	Admin fee	All Certificates		N/A
	Marriage certificate following conversion*			£ 11.00

	General Search in Indexes*	Not exceeding 6 successive hours	£ 18.00	
Registrations of new place of worship*			£ 29.00	
Registration of places of worship to conduct marriage*			£ 123.00	
Registration of a building for the solemnization of marriages: same sex couples*		Building previously registered for the solemnisation of marriage between a man and a woman	£ 64.00	
Approved Premises license	1 Year License		£ 650.00	
	3 Year License		£ 1,600.00	
Citizenship ceremonies	Private	Register Office	Mon - Fri	£ 140.00
			Saturday	£ 165.00
		Approved Premises	Mon-Fri	£ 250.00
			Sat & Sun & BH	£ 325.00
		Additional Child		£ 5.00
Baby Naming/Re-affirmation of vows	Register Office	Mon - Thurs	£ 150.00	
		Per extra child	£ 5.00	
		Fri & Saturday	£ 250.00	
	Naming/Renewal of Vows - Reg Office 25% Discount		-	
	Approved Premises	Mon-Fri	£ 475.00	
		Saturday & Sunday & BH	£ 500.00	
	Bespoke Baby naming/renewal		£ 650.00	
Wedding rehearsal			£ 40.00	
Booking Fee/Admin Fee			£ 50.00	
	Giving Notice*		£ 35.00	

Marriage & Civil Partnerships	Saturday Notice*		£ 35.00	
	Saturday Notice Additional Fee		£ 10.00	
	Home Office Referral Fee*		£ 12.00	
	Reduction to 28-day notice period*		£ 60.00	
	Foreign Divorce - Local*		£ 50.00	
	Foreign Divorce - GRO*		£ 75.00	
	Signing of PD2 form		£ 10.00	
	Church ceremony*		£ 86.00	
	Civil partnership/wedding conversion*		£ 45.00	
	Admin fee if ceremony required with conversion*		£ 27.00	
	RG License*		£ 15.00	
	Housebound Notice of Marriage*		£ 47.00	
	SR attendance at Housebound Marriage Ceremony*		£ 84.00	
	Registrar attendance at Housebound Marriage Ceremony*		£ 81.00	
	Detained Notice of Marriage*		£ 68.00	
	SR attendance at Detained Marriage Ceremony*		£ 94.00	
	Registrar attendance at Detained Marriage Ceremony*		£ 88.00	
	Additional Fee - Ceremony Date Change		Varying	
	Register office wedding	Mon 10/11am*		£ 46.00
		Mon-Thurs		£ 150.00
Fri/Sat			£ 250.00	
RO with bespoke			£ 700.00	
Approved Premises wedding		Mon-Fri anytime		£ 475.00
		Mon - Sat Evening - 2023 no longer charged separately - made inactive on Income Management		-
		Saturday & Sunday & BH		£ 500.00
		Legal with bespoke		N//A
Citizenship commemorative certificates			£ 5.00	

Framed Citz commemorativ e certs.		£ 15.00
Birth commemorativ e cert.		£ 5.00
Framed Birth commemorativ e cert.		£ 15.00

