

Report for: Councillor Arthur, Cabinet Member for Resources and Culture.

Item number: 3

Title: Haringey Registration and Citizenship Service (Register Office) move from Haringey Registration Scheme 1977 to a new scheme under New Governance

Report authorised by : Bernie Ryan, Assistant Director for Corporate Governance and Monitoring Officer

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Ward(s) affected: All

**Report for Key/
Non Key Decision:** Non Key Decision

1. Describe the issue under consideration

- 1.1 Register Offices operate under registration schemes and these outline how services and staffing structures are organised. The majority of Register Offices operate under a 'New Governance' scheme under the provisions of the Registration Service Act 1953 and Haringey is one of only three offices still on a traditional scheme.
- 1.2 This report seeks approval to transfer to the New Governance registration scheme. Haringey's current registration scheme dates back to 1977 and it cannot be altered without the permission of the Secretary of State. A move to a new registration scheme under the government's New Governance programme will enable Registrars the flexibility to arrange its services to meet local needs. A New Governance scheme will allow the service to restructure and make required budget savings without the approval of the Secretary of State. By signing up to a new governance scheme the Haringey registration service will commit to the National Code of Practice and Good Practice Guide.
- 1.3 The report also seeks the appointment of a "Proper Officer" for the registration of births, deaths and marriages, in accordance with the Registration Service Act 1953. It is proposed that the Business Manager for Legal Services is appointed Proper Officer for this purpose, as the person with managerial responsibility for the service.

2. Cabinet Member Introduction

- 2.1 A transfer to the New Governance registration will give the Council more control of how the Registrars Service delivers services to our residents. We will be able to adapt to changing demand quicker and we will be operating with the same anatomy as other local authorities' Register Offices.

- 2.2 Given the benefits of this transfer and the support of the General Register Office for Haringey to move on to a new governance scheme I am confident that this will enable the service more flexibility and benefit our residents.

3. Recommendations

The Cabinet Member for Resources and Culture is asked:

- 3.1 to approve the London Borough of Haringey Registration of Births, Deaths and Marriages Scheme as set out at Appendix 1, for submission to the Secretary of State.
- 3.2 to approve the appointment of the Business Manager, Legal Services, as Proper Officer for the purposes of the Registration Service Act 1953 and to note that Constitution will be amended accordingly.

4. Reasons for decision

- 4.1 A move to New Governance will provide Haringey with more independence in the running of Registrars services to residents and other customers. The service can be more flexible and will be able it to adapt faster to changes in demand and corporate initiatives. A move will enable the implementation of a new structure, which will meet the £77,000 savings which are required for the service to operate within the available budget.
- 4.2 The General Register Office (GRO) supports Haringey's move to a New Governance scheme and Haringey is now one of only three remaining offices on a traditional registration scheme. A change of scheme will remove the requirements to seek approval from the Secretary of State prior to any changes to service points; service availability and contract arrangements; the number of principal posts; location of the registration office and historical records. This will make it faster to adapt to any new corporate changes, e.g. move of offices.
- 4.3 Changes to legislation (mainly affecting immigration) have seen a reduction in demand for weddings, civil partnerships and people attending Citizenship Ceremonies. The service has also undergone major transformation, phone calls are now handled by Customer Services and appointments are booked online by customers. The combination of these changes has lead to a reduction in work levels and income and the service is currently making a loss.
- 4.4 The current scheme requires the service to have a prescribed number of statutory officers including two Registrars of Births and Deaths (RBD). The number of RBDs in the traditional registration scheme is determined by the population size of the borough, and does not reflect the work levels. Haringey is a borough without any major hospitals and birth and death registration levels are extremely low. The service is also required to have an Additional Superintendent Registrar (ASR). A more efficient structure as set out in the Service Delivery Plan (Appendix 2) can be created if New Governance is approved.

5. Alternative options considered

- 5.1 Option 1: The Service can stay under the current Scheme and comply with the requirements it contains, including service points; service availability and contract arrangements; the number of principal posts; location of the registration office and historical records.
- The only provision to vary the Scheme is through a formal application, requesting amendments of the Scheme, to be made to by Secretary of State for the Home Department for their approval.
 - A number of statutory posts can be left vacant and duties transferred to colleagues. This will limit the effectiveness of any restructure and make any further changes difficult.
 - The number of posts cannot be amended, and owing to a reduction in service demand, the service will continue to operate at a loss.
- 5.2 Option 2: The Service can approach the General Register Office to amend the current registration scheme. This would be a traditional approach to changing the way services are organised.
- This requires the permission of the Secretary of State, which is a long and complicated process.
 - The General Register Office (GRO) does not support this approach.
 - This process will need to be followed each time future changes need to be made, including service location.
- 5.3 Option 3: The Service can move to New Governance without changing the structure and posts.
- This will not meet the required savings.
 - This will not give the service the flexibility of having multi-skilled staff.
 - This will provide the possibility of implementing changes easier in the future.
 - The General Register Office (GRO) does not support this approach.

None of these options are being proposed owing to the constraints as detailed above.

6. Background information

- 6.1 The Council is having to make significant savings of £70 million over three years and has decided to do this by way of making transformational change across the Council rather than on a piecemeal basis. One of the transformational approaches has been concerning the way that Customer Service is operated across the Council with all initial contacts for all services, including Registrars, now being handled by Customer Services.
- 6.2 In addition to the above, changes to immigration rules and tighter criteria for people applying for citizenship have led to a reduction in overall demand for the services provided by the Registrars Service. As a consequence the service's income is no longer covering its costs and a new operating model needs to be put in place to make savings of £77,000 so that the service can operate within the available budget.

- 6.3 The Council's current registration scheme dates back to 1977. This scheme is rigid and requires the agreement of the Secretary of State in order for changes to be made and Haringey is now one of only three registration districts not to have changed from a traditional registration scheme to a new scheme under New Governance.
- 6.4 A New Governance Scheme requires the authority to self-report on standards, performance and to meet the Code of Practice (Appendix 3) as set out in the Proper Officer's Handbook. The General Register Office (GRO) supports Haringey in its proposal to move to New Governance.
- 6.5 Under the new scheme the service is required to have a Service Delivery Plan (Appendix 2) which sets out to explain how the service is delivered, staffing, service context and objectives. The Service Delivery Plan, together with the national Code of Practice (Appendix 3), are both annexes to the new Scheme.
- 6.6 A 45 day period of staff consultation covering the proposal to adopt New Governance, the Service Delivery Plan and a new service structure commenced on the 1st of October 2015 and closed on the 16th November 2015. There was no staff opposition to the proposed change to the governance scheme. However, concerns were raised regarding continued service quality, and it was explained to staff that by meeting the standards as set out in the Code of Practice service quality will not be affected by a move to New Governance.
- 6.7 Staff also proposed an alternative structure, deleting the post of the Superintendent Registrars, during the consultation period. This proposal was rejected by the Assistant Director of Corporate Governance and the Business Manager during the consultation process, as both officers consider that a manager at the appropriate level who keeps up to date with legislation and service development needs to be available.
- 6.8 The service does not propose to reduce the service offer to the public. As a consequence, and with the agreement of the General Register Office, it has been agreed that consultation with the public on these proposals was not necessary.
- 6.9 There is no reduction in opening hours, access to services and therefore a full Equalities Impact Assessment will not be required for this change. Should service provision to the public change in the future consultation and a full Equalities Impact Assessment will be completed. An equalities impact assessment screening tool has also been carried out regarding the impact of the proposed restructure on staff in line with the Council's standard requirements, which found that there was no requirement to carry out a full equalities impact assessment.
- 6.10 New Governance will create flexibility and allow the service to adapt to changing circumstances with ease rather than approval from the Secretary of State and the overall benefits are:
- Freedom and flexibility with the delivery of the service
 - Ability to offer services that meet local requirements

- More efficient use of resources

7. Contribution to strategic outcomes

- 7.1 The service works closely with Customer Services, who now take the majority of phone calls and some other customer contacts. Adopting New Governance will create the flexibility for the service to work more closely with the Customer Services Transformation programme as it will be able to adapt faster. The service will be able to meet the needs of any other corporate programmes in the future.

8. Statutory Officers comments (Chief Finance Officer (including procurement), Assistant Director of Corporate Governance, Equalities)

Finance and Procurement

- 8.1 The Chief Finance Officer supports the recommendation in this report as it will enable the service to be flexible and react to changing demand levels moving forward. The new proposed operational model will be fully funded from its remaining budget after taking into account the savings that the service is planning to achieve.

Legal

- 8.2 The Assistant Director of Corporate Governance has been consulted on this report.
- 8.3 The Registration Services Act 1953 (the Act) requires that all local authorities must prepare a Registration Scheme for approval by the Secretary of State. A scheme covers such matters as the location of offices and the provision of officers. A new flexible governance scheme means that changes to a local registration service may be adopted without the need to apply for a formal amendment to the existing scheme. This would mean that the increase or decrease of post holders or the opening or closure of a service delivery point could be carried out without the need for a formal scheme change.
- 8.4 The New Governance scheme will have no impact on the delivery of the local service to the citizens of Haringey.
- 8.5 Under section 14(4) of the Act, all officers affected by a new scheme must be consulted. The report sets out the consultation that has been carried out with affected staff and the trade unions, who have confirmed that they do not have any comments or concerns on the proposals. As there are no proposed changes to service delivery, wider public consultation was not required.
- 8.6 The Council is responsible for preparing and submitting the scheme to the Minister. The new, proposed, local scheme is supported by the Service Delivery Plan, attached at Appendix 2 of the report. Both the new, proposed, scheme and the Service Delivery Plan have been considered by the General Register Office.

- 8.7 The new scheme is required to be sealed, following Member approval, subsequent to which it will be submitted to the Minister with a view to implementation with effect from the specified date of 3 February 2016.
- 8.8 Upon implementation of the new scheme, The Haringey Registration Scheme 1977 will be revoked.
- 8.9 This report also seeks the appointment of a Proper Officer, to manage the registration service and have overall responsibility for the delivery of the service in accordance with the Act. It is proposed that the responsibilities of the Proper Officer are transferred to the Business Manager for Legal Services, who is responsible for the management and delivery of the Registrars Service. Subject to agreement to this appointment, the constitution will be amended accordingly.

Equality

- 8.9 The Council has a public sector equality duty under the Equalities Act (2010) to have due regard to:
- tackle discrimination and victimisation of persons that share the characteristics protected under S4 of the Act. These include the characteristics of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex (formerly gender) and sexual orientation;
 - advance equality of opportunity between people who share those protected characteristics and people who do not;
 - foster good relations between people who share those characteristics and people who do not
- 8.10 The subject matter of this Cabinet report is whether to adopt a 'new governance' model for the Registration and Citizenship Service. Decision makers are **not** at this stage being asked to consider future changes to how Registration and Citizenship services are delivered to customers and residents.
- 8.11 Any future delivery changes would be consulted and decided upon under the proposed 'new governance,' should this report's recommendations be passed. In this instance, a full equality impact assessment would need to be undertaken by the Council to understand how any proposed changes in future service delivery would impact on different groups of customers and residents, and to identify any mitigating actions necessary.
- 8.12 The equalities impact screening tool, reviewing potential equalities impact on staff of adopting the proposed new governance arrangements was carried out before consultation commenced. The equality impact screening tool established that changes will have 2% or less adverse impact on business unit profile for any of the equalities protected characteristics such as age, disability, race and sex (gender) and a full assessment was not required.

9. Use of Appendices

Appendix 1 – Haringey Registration Scheme

Appendix 2 – Service Delivery Plan
Appendix 3 – National Code of Practice (Appendix A if the Proper Officer's
Guide)

10. Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

Haringey Registration Scheme 1977
Proper Officers Guide to Registration Service Delivery – August 2015