



REGENERATION AND ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - 18TH SEPTEMBER 2012

SUBJECT: REGISTRATION SERVICE ANNUAL REPORT 2011/12

REPORT BY: CHIEF EXECUTIVE

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To inform members of the performance of the Registration Service in 2011/12, legislative changes, and initiatives introduced to improve customer service.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 The Registration Service has a statutory duty to provide an annual report on performance to the General Register Office (GRO) and to publish a Service Delivery Plan. The Service Delivery Plan is accessible via the Registration pages on the Council's website.
- 2.2 The service has adapted to changes in legislation and introduced new initiatives to improve customer service.

3. LINKS TO STRATEGY

- 3.1 The Registration Service links to the corporate theme of "Building Better Public Services". The Registration Service is committed to providing customers with high quality registration services at key times in their lives.

4. THE REPORT

- 4.1 The Registration Service is responsible for Commemorating Life Events and Promoting and Celebrating Citizenship in the Community. The Service establishes a permanent legal record of every birth, death, marriage and civil partnership in the County Borough, authorises and conducts civil marriage and civil partnership ceremonies, administers the oath and pledge taken by new British Citizens. In 2011/12 the Registration Service dealt with:

1501	Birth Events
804	Death Events
488	Civil Marriage and Civil Partnership Ceremonies
1336	Legal Notices
7500	(approximately) Certificates

4.2 The Registration Services publishes a Service Delivery Plan on the Caerphilly Council website and submits an Annual Report to the General Register Office. Details of the performance of the Registration Service in 2011/12 against National targets set by the General Register Office are provide in the table below:

Indicator	Target	Result
All births registered within 42 days	98%	99%
All deaths registered within 5 days (except those following an inquest)	95%	97%
Incoming declarations registered within 24 hours of receipt	90%	100%
Applications for corrections and re-registrations processed within 7 working days of Registration Officer receiving General Register Office notification.	90%	100%
Certificates from entries in deposited registers issued in response to application within 5 working days	95%	100% (98% within 2 working days)
Waiting times for appointment		
(i) birth registration/declaration within 5 working days	95%	100%
(ii) still-birth registration/declaration within 2 working days	95%	100%
(iii) death registration/declaration within 2 working days	95%	100%
(iv) notices for marriage and civil partnership within 5 working days	95%	100%
Percentage of customers seen within 10 minutes of appointment time.	90%	98%
Percentage of satisfied customers, evidenced from response to customer satisfaction surveys.	90%	100%

4.3 In 2011 Caerphilly Registration Service worked in partnership with IT, Customer First and the Department of Work and Pensions to introduce Tell Us Once (TUO) a national programme for the bereaved. The service offers bereaved families the opportunity to notify a number of local and central government departments at the same time as registering the death, thus reducing the number of separate contacts made. The service is of significant benefit to the families of the bereaved and those agencies that receive the information electronically in order to update their systems.

The success of the TUO initiative in Caerphilly Registration District has to date exceeded local and national expectations. 94% of those offered the service by Registrars in 2011/12 chose to take up the service and expressed 100% satisfaction with the scheme.

4.4 Provision of the Tuo service has however extended the appointment times for death registrations and increased the workload of officers within the Registration service. In order to accommodate the additional workload Caerphilly Customer First were utilised to handle all initial phone calls and information queries for the service. Their assistance has been crucial as an assessment identified that 20,000 phone calls were received annually by the service. Additional assistance by Customer First is being considered in areas such as on line telephone payments and electronic appointment booking systems.

4.5 Welsh National Mining Memorial

Registrars have assisted the Aber Valley Heritage Group with the project commemorating those who lost their lives in two mining disasters at the collieries in Senghenydd in 1901 and 1913. Pupils from St. Cenydd Comprehensive School spent time at the registration offices assisting with locating the records and the issue of 500 certificates for every life lost in the disasters.

4.6 Index Digitisation Initiative

The Registration Service hold copies of certificates for life events going back to 1837 and annually issue approximately 4000 copies to members of the public and family historians from the closed records. Locating these can be time consuming, as officers have to search through paper indexes, many of which are fragile and require careful handling. The Service intends to digitise the indexes and make them available for search through the Caerphilly Council website. Once completed this will improve access for the customer and reduce significantly the time taken to locate the records. Digitisation will remove the need to handle the paper indexes, which will be archived, and retained for posterity. The project will however take some time to complete, as there are over 600,000 index entries.

4.7 Legislative Changes

Since December 2011 Civil Partnerships are no longer restricted to secular approved buildings. Faith groups, if they so wish can apply to the Local Authority for their building to be approved. Registrars officiate solely over the civil partnership registration, which must remain totally separate to any religious ceremony. The Government is currently consulting on Equal Civil Marriage which if implemented will impact on the Registration Service.

In October current restrictions on the times that ceremonies can take place (8:00am to 6:00pm) will be removed and districts will be able to set their own policies on the times that ceremonies take place. The Service has consulted local venues licensed for ceremonies on their preferences and the consensus was 8am to 8pm. It is therefore intended to offer ceremonies within those times, but other requests will be considered on an individual basis in consultation with the venue.

5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The Registration Service impacts on all sections of the community, mainly at critical life events. Particular emphasis is placed on the core services of the registration of births, deaths, marriages and civil partnerships. The Service also has a statutory duty to administer Citizenship ceremonies.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 None directly arising from this report. If there is a demand for later weddings any potential for increased costs will be managed by use of relief officers.

7. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 None directly arising from this report. The General Register Office has strict deadlines for core registration service functions. The introduction of the Tell Us Once service has had an impact on the time taken to register a death and will continue to be monitored.

8. CONSULTATIONS

- 8.1 This report has been sent to the consultees listed below and there are no responses that have not been reflected in the recommendation.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 9.1 That members note the contents of this report and the proposals on times of Marriage and Civil Partnership provision.

10. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 10.1 To keep members informed of the work of the Registration Service and their efforts to continually improve customer service.

11. STATUTORY POWER

- 11.1 The Registration Service Act 1953.

Author: Della Leigh Mahony, Superintendent Registrar
Consultees: Cllr. D.V. Poole, Cabinet Member for Community and Leisure Services
Cllr. D.T. Davies, Chair Regeneration and Environment Scrutiny
Cllr. E.M. Aldworth, Vice-Chair Regeneration and Environment Scrutiny
Anthony O'Sullivan, Chief Executive
Rob Hartshorn, Head of Public Protection
Jacqui Morgan, Trading Standards and Licensing Manager
Jonathan Jones, Scrutiny Co-ordinator
David A. Thomas, Senior Policy Officer (Equalities and Welsh Language)