

REPORT TO: Safer Policy & Performance Board

DATE: 21 September 2010

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director, Adults and Community

SUBJECT: General Register Office review of the Halton Registration Service

WARDS: Boroughwide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To inform the Board of the findings of the recent Inspection of the Halton Registration Service. See attached Report Appendix 1.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION:

That Members of the Board approves:

- i) the findings of the review;**
- ii) that the recommendations will be reviewed in accordance with the report;**

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 3.1 The delivery and administration of civil registration is a partnership between local government and the General Register Office (part of the Identity and Passport Service). In 2007 registration officers became local authority employees. This, together with the creation of a new governance framework, provided local authorities with greater responsibility and opportunities to develop the delivery of local registration services. To date some 93 local authorities, including Halton, have adopted the new governance arrangements, and committed to the national Code of Practice / Good Practice Guide.
- 3.2 The Local Government Delivery Partnership Unit works with local authorities to review and improve service standards and to progress the modernisation of civil registration. The unit also seeks to identify innovation and good practice within the service and to encourage its wider dissemination. For local authorities that have adopted the new governance arrangements, a system of self-reporting through the submission of an Annual Performance Report to the General Register Office is in place. To supplement this, the unit also undertakes Inspection of the service.
- 3.3 Halton adopted new governance arrangements in July 2007. The terms of reference for this review were agreed with the Proper Officer for

Registration and the Registration Service Manager / Superintendent Registrar on 29 April 2010 as follows:

- To examine the technical proficiency of staff in relation to marriage activity and service attainment against related Good Practice Guide standards.
- To examine the service's Key Performance Indicator monitoring systems and service attainment.
- To examine the customer journey whilst accessing the service and attainment against related Good Practice Guide standards.
- To identify existing strengths and offer recommendations for improvement.
- To report on any other noteworthy issues identified during the review.

3.4 The review noted the following:

- Observation of the Superintendent Registrar and other registration officers performing statutory duties revealed a very good standard of technical proficiency;
- The register office makes good use of electronic and manual recording systems which work well in monitoring service performance in respect of appointment availability, customer waiting times and certificate applications;
- The Registration Service's attainment against Key Service Performance Indicators is good, meeting or exceeding all but two standards (see Appendix B of the report);
- Customer access to the Registration Service is excellent across the district with additional service points providing convenient access;
- Initial customer contact via the Council's contact centre works very well, although there is scope to extend its role and responsibilities in relation to the registration service; and
- Staff display excellent customer care skills and a willingness to ensure that customers are fully informed and meet all their needs.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

None.

5.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS

5.1 In order to meet the key recommendations outlined in 2.1 above, support will be required from internal divisions / services, specifically the Contact Centre /Halton Direct Link, ICT Services and the Property Services / Asset Management Divisions.

5.2 The Inspection highlighted a number of areas for development that if implemented would have some resource implications.

6.0 RISK ANALYSIS

6.1 The review noted the following issues that need to be addressed:

- The register office strong room can only be accessed via the Superintendent Registrar's office, thus customer interviews are disrupted if a register is urgently required.
- A waste pipe is located in the ceiling and that the strong room has reached its capacity for the storage of completed registers and unused security stock.
- Due to shortage of space, it was also noted that stationery and stock was stored within the kitchen area.
- The photocopying machine is situated in the corridor to the kitchen, which constitutes part of a fire exit route.

7.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

None.

8.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

Document	Place of Inspection	Contact Officer
Review Report on the Registration Service in Halton – June 2010	The Town Hall Heath Road Runcorn WA7 5TN	Howard Cockcroft