

Finance and Resources Committee

10.00am, Tuesday, 12 June 2018

Provision of Registrar Services

Item number	7.15
Report number	
Executive/routine	
Wards	All
Council Commitments	None

Executive Summary

On [21 September 2017](#), Councillor Booth requested in a motion at Council for a report which sets out options for the future of Leith Registrar's Office and outline plans for any necessary public consultation on these options. This report seeks to address that request.

Provision of Registrar Services

1. Recommendations

- 1.1 It is recommended that committee:
 - 1.1.1 Note the contents of this report;
 - 1.1.2 Approve consolidation of Kirkliston Registrar office into the South Queensferry Registrar office to provide a unified service; and
 - 1.1.3 Approve that the marriage diary at Leith Registrar office be closed on each and every Tuesday and Wednesday excepting when either is on St Valentine's Day, a popular marriage day.

2. Background

- 2.1 The city has been served by eleven Registrar offices in Currie, Forrest Road, Haymarket, Kirkliston, Leith, Montrose Terrace, Morningside, Newington, Queen Street, Ratho and South Queensferry. Civil Marriage ceremonies were conducted in all offices except Forrest Road. Currie, Kirkliston and South Queensferry were dual purpose offices, also dealing with Council Tax, rent payments etc.
- 2.2 In the early 1990s Forrest Road, Montrose Terrace, Morningside, Newington and Queen Street were closed to provide a semi-centralised service in India Buildings on Victoria Street. The offices at Currie, Haymarket and Ratho were later consolidated into India Buildings.
- 2.3 In 2007 India Buildings was sold and the centralised Registrar Service moved into Lothian Chambers with three satellite offices retained at Leith, Kirkliston and South Queensferry.
- 2.4 In 2016 as part of the Council transformation programme the number of FTE staff was reduced by five to 17 (23%) which put significant strain on maintaining service delivery from four offices.
- 2.5 In 2017 the centralised Registrar Service in Lothian Chambers moved into high quality purpose built accommodation located in The Quadrangle, City Chambers.
- 2.6 In late summer 2017 four events coalesced together to encourage development of officer proposals to consolidate the Registrar service in Edinburgh to two sites from the current four. These events were:
 - 2.6.1 the reduced number of available Registrar staff;
 - 2.6.2 the creation in City Chambers of a fit for purpose office with enhancements such as separate rooms to record deaths and still births to provide privacy;

- 2.6.3 an Estates Optimisation Programme that included the vacation of 1A Parliament Square and relocation of Homelessness Services with one preferred location identified as Leith Library and Registrar Office; and
- 2.6.4 the requirement to contribute to anticipated savings of around £20m to balance the 2018-19 council budget (consolidation of Leith Registrar into City Chambers would provide staff resource savings of one FTE or around £30,000 per annum).
- 2.7 At Council on 21 September 2017 Councillor Booth's approved motion requested a report which set out options for the future of Leith Registrar Office and outlined plans for any necessary public consultation on these options. This report seeks to address that request.

3. Main report

- 3.1 This report seeks to review the Registrar Service.

Current Service Description

- 3.2 The service currently has four offices at City Chambers, Leith Library, South Queensferry Local Office and a room in Kirkliston Local Office. The services delivered at each office is as follows:

City Chambers
Birth, Death, Marriage and Civil Partnership Registration
Nationality Checking of foreign nationals on behalf of UK Home Office
Citizenship Ceremonies of groups and individuals
European Passport checking service
Conducting Marriage & Civil Partnership Ceremonies
Coordinating supply civil celebrants who conduct ceremonies at venues out with the registrar's office
Leith
Birth, Death, Marriage and Civil Partnership Registration
Conducting Marriage & Civil Partnership Ceremonies
South Queensferry
Birth, Death, Marriage and Civil Partnership Registration
Conducting Marriage & Civil Ceremonies
Kirkliston
Birth, Death, Marriage, and Civil Partnership Registration

Registrar Provision in Scottish Cities

- 3.3 Infrequent utilisation of Registrar Services has driven consolidation onto fewer and fewer sites in other Scottish cities. By contrast Edinburgh still has a significant offering of office locations. This comes at a cost.

City	Number of Registrar Offices
Aberdeen	1
Dundee	1
Edinburgh	4
Glasgow	1

Leith Registrar Customer Analysis

- 3.4 To carry out an analysis of the home address of the customer using the services at Leith Registrar office the National Records of Scotland were asked to search their database on postcode. The below table details the registrar events (births, deaths & civil ceremonies) recorded in Leith office during the financial year 2017-18.

Registrar Event	*Leith Resident	Other Edinburgh not Leith	Other Scotland not Edinburgh	Other UK Not Scotland	Outside UK	Total Registrar Events in Leith Office	Leith Resident as % of Total Events
Civil Partnership & Marriage	68	223	35	25	15	366	19%
Birth Registration	452	-	-	-	-	1913	24%
Death Registration	204	-	-	-	-	1366	15%

*EH6 postcode used as proxy for Leith

- 3.5 As a proxy for Leith an EH6 postcode, which includes Newhaven and Craightinny, was used to search the database. See appendix 4 for area map. The number of civil marriages (64) and civil partnerships (two) recorded in Leith Registrar where one or both parties were resident in Leith was 66 or 19% of the total recorded. The other 81% of civil marriages and partnerships involved non-residents of Leith, mostly from other parts of Edinburgh (61%), but a significant proportion of the total (20%) were from outside Edinburgh including 15 couples from overseas. Leith Registrar is the lowest cost marriage venue in urban Edinburgh so may attract customers from other areas for that reason. The Registrar in Leith works closely with UK Border Agency to ensure that marriages of couples from out with the UK comply with nationality and immigration rules.
- 3.6 The analysis of registrar events by National Records of Scotland found that 24% of births registered in Leith Registrar office were made by a parent living in Leith and 15% of deaths registered were of a person resident in Leith. A formal consultation with customers to ascertain why they prefer to use Leith office rather than one of the other offices has not been carried out. However, evidence from the booking of appointments process and informal discussion with customers indicates that ability to park is the main reason for use of the Leith office rather than using the former Lothian Chambers or current City Chambers offices.

Leith Registrar Office Proposal

- 3.7 As noted in 2.5 above an internal officer review had concluded that moving the Leith Registrar Office into the new City Chambers Registrar office made good sense for a range of reasons:

- 3.7.1 there was insufficient staff resource to maintain four registrar offices across the city following the transformation review in 2016;
 - 3.7.2 Leith Registrar office was setup in a single room (formerly the reading room of Leith Library) to register births, deaths and marriages;
 - 3.7.3 due to the open plan nature of the room there was no private space to offer dignity and respect for the recording of deaths and still births. The new City Chambers Registrar office offered this facility with three purpose built rooms;
 - 3.7.4 Leith Registrar office marriage suite is in a separate building (Thomas Morton Hall / Leith Theatre) next door which causes difficulties to resource both areas with limited staff; and
 - 3.7.5 water leaks had caused paint and plaster to peel from the wall and ceiling (appendix 1)
- 3.8 The officer review, which had not been approved, had concluded wrongly that the offer of a better customer environment in new purpose-built City Chambers office along with local provision in Leith of homeless and housing service would be welcomed and had not fully considered there might be a local preference for office location over quality of Registrar service provision. The Leith registrar book would still have been available in the City Chambers office with customers choosing to have their life event entry in the Edinburgh or Leith registration book.
- 3.9 A Registrar Service was retained in Leith office by temporarily withdrawing provision to the Kirkliston office (which has been re-directed to the South Queensferry office) and using part time council celebrants on Saturday's rather than permanent registrar staff to ensure full staff availability during the week.
- 3.10 Leith Theatre Trust are seeking amendments to their lease arrangements with the Council to allow greater day time access to set up for events. Sounds checks and noise from stage set up are not compatible with a dignified marriage service so the Registrar Service is seeking to reduce the days on which civil ceremonies are offered. It is proposed that the marriage/civil partnership diary is closed on Tuesday and Wednesday excepting when either is on St Valentine's Day, as this is a popular ceremony day to allow greater utilisation of Leith Theatre Trust for local events. Taking account of the low utilisation of the Leith marriage suite by Leith residents it is recommended that the Council continues to work with Leith Theatre Trust to provide greater access for them to Thomas Morton Hall.
- 3.11 If the refurbishment of the Leith Theatre is as successful as the Trust hope it is likely that greater access and perhaps full access will be requested in the future. This would require a future review on how and where a ceremony venue is provided.
- 3.12 This report does not propose that Leith Registrar office be moved from its current location therefore a public consultation is not necessary.

Kirkliston and South Queensferry Registrar Offices

- 3.13 The Registrar service in Kirkliston is provided from one small office in the library hub building. The only service that is provided is registration of births, deaths and marriage/civil partnership preliminaries with no ceremonies conducted. Due to

available onsite car parking the office is generally used for convenience by customers including those from across the boundary in West Lothian. The service has not been made aware of any complaints made regarding temporary consolidation of the Kirkliston Registrar service into the South Queensferry office.

- 3.14 It is recommended that due to lack of staff resource the consolidation of Kirkliston Registrar service into the South Queensferry office be made permanent.
- 3.15 Consolidation of the three ceremony suites in Lothian Chambers into one suite in City Chambers and proposed reduction in capacity at Leith to accommodate greater Leith Theatre Trust access means that extra capacity to conduct civil ceremonies is required elsewhere. This will include working with Council Events team to maximise usage of current estate. In addition, the South Queensferry office will receive some cosmetic improvements to the marriage suite. This will provide an enhanced marriage suite in the rear room with views across the Forth to the three bridges and a standard marriage suite in the front room facing onto the road.

4. Measures of success

- 4.1 Provision of Registrar service with minimal customer complaints.

5. Financial impact

- 5.1 There are no significant, new financial implications arising from this report. The proposed service offer can be contained within the existing budget.

6. Risk, policy, compliance and governance impact

- 6.1 The actions and outputs described in this report adhere to the risk compliance policy and governance arrangements. In addition, the recommendations in the report do not impact on any existing policies of the Council.

7. Equalities impact

- 7.1 There are no significant equalities implications arising from this report.

8. Sustainability impact

- 8.1 There are no significant sustainability implications arising from this report.

9. Consultation and engagement

- 9.1 Consultation with the North East and North West Locality Managers has taken place.

10. Background reading/external references

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11. Appendices

- 11.1 Appendix 1 - Leith Registrar Office
- 11.2 Appendix 2 - South Queensferry Registrar Office
- 11.3 Appendix 3 - Kirkliston Registrar Office
- 11.4 Appendix 4 - Map of Postcode Area Used for Leith Residency

Leith Registrar Office



1 - Front door – side entrance of library



2 - Open plan Registrar office with staff accommodation to rear



3 - Paint peeling from walls and ceiling

South Queensferry Registrar Office



1 - Location photo



2 - Front door to shared accommodation



3 - Marriage suite with views across three bridges on the River Forth

Kirkliston Registrar Office



1 - Location photo



2 - Shared entrance with library and local office



3 - Registrar's room

Map of Postcode Area Used for Leith Residency

