

WIRRAL COUNCIL

CABINET – 16th October 2008

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF LAW, HR AND ASSET MANAGEMENT

PRIORITY SERVICE FOR ISSUING CERTIFICATES AT THE REGISTER OFFICE

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 This report contains a proposal to introduce a 'priority service' for customers who wish to pay for certificates from the Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages in order to receive their certificates within an hour. Customers who did not wish to pay for the service would return for their certificates the following day or could choose to have the certificate posted to them.

2.0 BACKGROUND

2.1 Wirral currently offers a same day "while you wait" service for all current birth, death and marriage certificates and for family history certificates researched on-line through the Cheshire Family History Society Website and containing a register reference number. Any other certificates including those with a GRO reference number are held to be researched as time allows. The same prioritisation system is applied to postal applications received. Counter applications are afforded a higher priority than postal applications.

2.2 The system is prioritised in this way as many people require current certificates for entry to school, for passports, job applications, to cash benefit cheques, driving licences, etc. Family history is not need urgently and often requires significant research. An example of this is a marriage where the applicant has the year and quarter of the entry, the names of the couple but no further information. To issue the certificate could require the search of over 200 church indexes.

2.3 In order to allow a choice of service, and to avoid customers waiting for long periods at the Register Office, it is proposed to introduce an option for customers to pay for a 'priority service'.

3.0 PROPOSAL

3.1 It is proposed that customers are offered a choice of two services:

For the standard fee of £7 the customer can return to the Register Office the following day or choose to have their certificate posted to them.

For an additional fee of £18 the certificate would be issued to them within an hour.

3.2 This service would be offered to all customers, except requests for family history certificates where a reference was not included due to the research time involved.

4.0 COMPARISON WITH OTHER LOCAL AUTHORITIES

4.1 Research has been carried out amongst other local authorities and the results are set out below

4.1.1 Sefton, St Helens and Knowsley Register Offices do not offer a priority service.

4.1.2 Liverpool

Liverpool Register Offers an express service for current certificates for family history certificates with references with collection within 1 hour at a charge of £25. Family history certificates without references are held for research

4.1.3 Stockport

Stockport Register Office offers an express service for current certificates and for family history certificates with references at a charge of £25 for collection on the same day. Family history certificates without references are held for research

4.1.4 Denbighshire

Denbighshire Register Office offers an express service for current certificates only with a same day collection for a total charge of £24. Family history certificate requests with or without references are held for research.

4.2 From the research undertaken, the introduction of this service has received positive feedback from customers.

5.0 IMPLEMENTATION

5.1 If agreed, it is proposed to introduce this service from 1st December 2008 and would be publicised in advance.

6.0 CORPORATE OBJECTIVES

6.1 This proposal links to the Council's Strategic Objective of 'creating an excellent Council' and the Council's aim for 2008-2013 to 'create a sustainable and stable budget providing value for money'.

7.0 FINANCIAL AND STAFFING IMPLICATIONS

7.1 Wirral Register Office currently issues approximately 15,000 certificates per annum. Of these, approximately 50% are requested in person at the office. If 25% of this number chose to pay the priority fee then this would generate an extra £33,750.00 per year in income. However, it is uncertain at this stage how many customers would opt for the priority service.

7.2 There would be a need to withdraw the service if staffing shortages due to illness prevented the service being offered.

8.0 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS

8.1 Customers are able to receive their certificates the following day for no additional charge.

9.0 PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

9.1 There are none arising from this report.

10.0 COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

10.1 There are none arising from this report.

11.0 HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS

11.1 There are no human rights implications from this report.

12.0 LOCAL AGENDA 21 IMPLICATIONS

12.1 There are none arising from this report.

13.0 ACCESS TO INFORMATION ACT

13.1 There are none arising from this report.

14.0 LOCAL MEMBER SUPPORT IMPLICATIONS

14.1 There are none arising from this report.

15.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

15.1 That the proposal to introduce a 'priority service' for the issuing of current and family history certificate (with references) be approved.