

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE – 14th SEPTEMBER 2005

REGISTRATION SERVICE DEVELOPMENTS

Report by Executive Director of Neighbourhood Services

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To seek approval for a range of new developments in the Registration Service

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Community Services Committee at its meeting on 29th March 2005 agreed the response to the consultation document on the Registration Services (Scotland) Bill. Included in this response was agreement to the proposal to be able to register a birth or death anywhere in Scotland. This will become law in January 2007 at the earliest.
- 2.2 Presently there are 8 separate Registration Districts in East Ayrshire. Birth and Death Registrations can only be carried out in the district in which the birth or death occurred or where the deceased or baby's mother had their home address. In the case of a marriage the registration can only be carried out in the district in which the marriage is to be solemnized.
- 2.3 The Community Services Committee of 12th November 2003 agreed a response to the consultation document on Civil Partnership Registration. This will allow same sex couples to register their partnership in order to receive the benefits associated with a legal marriage. There is no provision for a ceremony to mark the occasion.
- 2.4 The Registration Service charges £8.50 for an official extract requested after a search. There is an increasing demand for photocopies of extracts. These copies have no official standing but are used by those people who simply need documentation to compile a family tree.

3. CONSIDERATIONS

- 3.1 In relation to 2.1 and 2.2 above, it would be possible to change the 8 Registration Districts to one "East Ayrshire" Registration District. After informal consultation with The General Register Office for Scotland, they have advised that the change could be operational by January 2006. This

would help the service prepare for the changes outlined in the Bill as well as offering an improved service to customers by increasing the choice of places they can register a birth, death or marriage.

- 3.2 In relation to 2.3 above, evidence from couples who have enquired about Civil Partnership Registration has shown that same sex couples will request a ceremony with their Civil Partnership Registration. Most Councils in Scotland agree that this service should be offered to the gay community and that this would be in line with equal opportunities policy. The charges for a ceremony would be the same as present Civil Marriage Ceremony fees.
- 3.3 In relation to 2.4 above, other Councils are charging a small fee for a photocopy of an extract requested after a search has been carried out. The fee is usually more than a normal copying charge because it is from an official extract; other Councils charge approximately 50 pence per copy.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 Offering ceremonies for same sex couples would increase income. There would also be a small rise in income for copying extracts.

5. LEGAL AUTHORITY/IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Changes to the Registration Districts require approval from Scottish Ministers but this process is straightforward. The process is also subject to public consultation.

6. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Offering ceremonies for same sex couples would be in line with equal opportunities policy.

7. CONCLUSIONS

- 7.1 The Registration Service strives to improve services for its customers as well as increase income where possible. The points considered in section 3 would be welcomed by customers and can be easily implemented by the service.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 8.1 The Community Services Committee are requested to:-

- (i) Remit to the Executive Director of Neighbourhood Services to apply to Scottish Ministers to change the present eight Registration Districts to one called "East Ayrshire";
- (ii) Approve the proposal to offer same sex couples the option of holding a ceremony when registering their partnership, with the same fees for Civil Marriage Ceremonies; and
- (iii) Agree to the charge of 50 pence for a photocopy of an official extract.

William Stafford
Executive Director of Neighbourhood Services

15th August 2005

WS/JAG/KH

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

1. Consultation documents on Civil Partnership Registration and the Registration Services (Scotland) Bill

Any person wishing to inspect the above background papers should telephone 01563 578178 and ask to speak to John Griffiths, Head of Leisure Services

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