

PERTH AND KINROSS COUNCIL

Scrutiny Committee – 19 April 2017

**REGISTRATION OF BIRTHS, DEATHS, MARRIAGES AND
CIVIL PARTNERSHIPS - INSPECTION REPORTS BY NATIONAL
RECORDS OF SCOTLAND**

Report by Head of Democratic Services

PURPOSE OF REPORT

This report comments on the annual inspection reports from the National Records of Scotland on the provision of registration services in the Perth and Kinross Council area in 2015.

1. BACKGROUND / MAIN ISSUES

- 1.1 The Head of Democratic Services has responsibility for the delivery of Registration of Births, Deaths, Marriages and Civil Partnerships throughout the Perth and Kinross Council area, in partnership with the National Records of Scotland (NRS).
- 1.2 Since August 2013, the registration service has been delivered from various locations - a central office in Perth; from Aberfeldy, Auchterarder, Blairgowrie, Crieff, Kinross and Pitlochry; and also from a home-based registrar for Kinloch Rannoch which is delivered from the local medical practice.
- 1.3 Registration of Births, Deaths, Marriages and Civil Partnerships is subject to annual inspection by District Examiners from the National Records of Scotland. Registers of events are recorded in calendar years and inspections are carried out during the following year, therefore the inspections referred to in this report are for the calendar year 2015.

2. PROPOSALS

- 2.1 Included at Appendix 1 to this report is a table detailing the outcomes of the inspections for each of the registration offices in Perth and Kinross for the period 2011 – 2015. This shows an improvement in accuracy rate from 97.23% in 2011 to 99.15% in 2015.
- 2.2 Perth and Kinross Council is one of a small number of local authorities which retains a home-based registrar providing a vital service to local residents who would otherwise be faced with a 36 mile round trip to reach their nearest part time office in Aberfeldy.
- 2.3 Overall, there are 11 members of staff throughout Perth and Kinross directly involved in delivering the registration service. There are now six members of staff who hold the Certificate in the Law and Practice of Registration – 2 members of staff qualifying in 2015, with 1 studying towards gaining the qualification in 2017.

- 2.4 The overall accuracy level of the registration entries has improved over the last year in all areas except Kinloch Rannoch. Due to the mix of registration offices within Perth and Kinross, it should be noted that an error in an office with large numbers of transactions will not affect the overall accuracy rate to the same extent as an error in an office where very small numbers of transactions are carried out annually. The effect can appear disproportionate in terms of the number of errors against the number of events registered.
- 2.5 In 2015 the Registration team undertook a benchmarking exercise with other local authorities to identify best practice for checking Registration entries prior to submission to NRS. Although no improved or alternative method of checking was identified, the exercise clarified the importance of a robust checking procedure. All local authorities who responded confirmed their register pages are read by another Registrar prior to submission.
- 2.6 The new rota which was introduced in 2014 to allow Registrars who were predominately based in local offices to spend more time in the Perth office allowed the Senior Registrar to undertake more robust checking to reduce the number of errors. This is reflected in the 2015 accuracy levels. Staff are now gaining more experience in registering events that may not occur very often in local offices e.g. reporting of possible sham marriages to the Home Office. Twice-yearly assessments on various sections of the Registrar's Handbook are undertaken and have helped to identify individual training needs, whilst also keeping staff up-to-date with the changes in legislation and procedures.
- 2.7 The cross-government programme, Tell Us Once (TUO) service, led by the Department of Work and Pensions, has been in place in Perth and Kinross since November 2011. This service allows the public the opportunity to inform local authorities and public sector organisations about a change in circumstances due to a birth or bereavement. Perth and Kinross Council services, such as Council Tax, Housing & Council tax benefits, Blue Badge, Adult Social Services and Libraries, received a total of 3364 notifications during the 2014/15 financial year, an increase of 305 notifications on the previous year. The total notifications sent during 2015/16 was 4282, an increase of 918 from 2014/15. The notifications from the TUO system allow services to act on the information obtained to update their systems and to cancel services, payments or memberships. The take up for the bereavement service during 2015 was 96% - up from 87% the previous year. The take up for the birth service is lower at 21%, although up from 17% last year, as customers perceive there are fewer benefits for them in using the TUO birth service. TUO is very well received by customers and they are very appreciative and satisfied with the service and support, often in difficult circumstances.
- 2.8 The Registrar General for Scotland publishes an annual review of demographic trends, which provides detailed information on statutory registration, normally including accuracy information for the 32 Councils. However, although the 2015 review was published in August 2016, due to difficulties within NRS in completing the examination process for 2015, the

comparative information for 2015 has not yet been published and there is not a timescale for when it might be available, the annual review can be viewed by using the following link:-

<https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/files/statistics/rgar/2015/rgar-2015-corrected.pdf>

3. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION(S)

- 3.1 The staff involved in the registration of births, deaths and marriages and civil partnerships provide a high quality level of service to the residents of Perth and Kinross. Accuracy rates only play a small part in the quality of services provided but the National Records of Scotland use these to measure and monitor the service which makes a permanent record of people's life events. Action in the form of continued provision of training and reviewing best practice all contribute to maintaining high levels of performance which are reflected in the inspection reports for 2015.
- 3.2 It is recommended that the Scrutiny Committee notes the content of this report with regard to the annual inspection reports by the National Records of Scotland on the provision of registration services in the Perth and Kinross Council area.

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1. IMPLICATIONS, ASSESSMENTS, CONSULTATION AND COMMUNICATION

Strategic Implications	Yes / None
Community Plan / Single Outcome Agreement	Yes
Corporate Plan	Yes
Resource Implications	
Financial	None
Workforce	None
Asset Management (land, property, IST)	None
Assessments	
Equality Impact Assessment	None
Strategic Environmental Assessment	None
Sustainability (community, economic, environmental)	None
Legal and Governance	None
Risk	None
Consultation	
Internal	None
External	None
Communication	
Communications Plan	None

1. Strategic Implications

Community Plan / Single Outcome Agreement

- 1.1 Whilst Corporate and Democratic Services supports all of the Community Plan/Single Outcome Agreement strategic objectives this report does not directly support a particular objective.

Corporate Plan

- 1.2 Whilst Corporate and Democratic Services supports all of the Corporate Plan objectives this report does not directly support a particular objective.

2. Resource Implications

2.1 Financial

- 2.1.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

2.2 Workforce

- 2.2.1 There are no direct workforce implications arising from this report.

2.3 Asset Management (land, property, IT)

- 2.3.1 There are no direct asset management implications arising from this report.

3. Assessments

Equality Impact Assessment

- 3.1 Under the Equality Act 2010, the Council is required to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations between equality groups. Carrying out Equality Impact Assessments for plans and policies allows the Council to demonstrate that it is meeting these duties.

This section should reflect that the proposals have been considered under the Corporate Equalities Impact Assessment process (EqIA) with the following outcome:

Assessed as **not relevant** for the purposes of EqIA

Strategic Environmental Assessment

- 3.3 The Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005 places a duty on the Council to identify and assess the environmental consequences of its proposals.

However, no action is required as the Act does not apply to the matters presented in this report. This is because the Committee are requested to note the contents of the report only and the Committee are not being requested to approve, adopt or agree to an action or to set the framework for future decisions.

2. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 2.1 The Annual Inspection Reports by the Registrar General for Scotland were relied on to a material extent in preparing this report.

3. APPENDICES

- 3.1 Appendix 1 to this report details the outcomes of the inspections for each of the Registration offices in Perth and Kinross for the period 2011 - 2015.

		Accuracy Rates 2015										Appendix 1	
Accuracy Rates %		%	%	%	%	%	Number of Registrations						
		2011	2012	2013	2014	2015		2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2015
													Errors
Aberfeldy		94.59	95.87	95.61	94.69	99.15		111	121	114	113	117	1
Auchterarder		95.74	96.00	99.10	100.00	100.00		141	150	111	110	98	0
Blairgowrie		99.01	99.50	98.50	98.85	99.31		404	398	468	434	437	3
Coupar Angus		80.49	83.33					82	78				
Crieff		95.39	95.56	97.43	96.91	99.70		282	293	311	291	335	1
Kinross		97.92	98.70	99.23	98.27	100.00		144	231	259	231	248	0
Milnathort		95.05	100.00					101	15				
Perth		98.27	98.22	98.29	97.48	99.04		2311	2363	2342	2382	2498	24
Pitlochry		96.72	99.49	97.99	96.06	98.33		183	197	199	203	239	4
Rannoch and Foss		76.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	93.75		25	21	11	11	16	1
Total Perth & Kinross		97.23	97.80	98.24	97.56	99.15		3784	3867	3815	3775	3988	34