

## CITY SERVICES SCRUTINY PANEL

Notes of meeting held on: 23<sup>rd</sup> July 2012

**Present:** Cllrs Stephen Bonallie (Chair), Steven Foster, Neville Padgett, Stuart Porthouse, Lynda Scanlan, Peter Wood, David Tate

Jim Diamond, Karen Lounton (Deputy Registration Services Manager), Norma Johnston (Assistant Head of Street Scene) & Liz Craig

### Action

		Action
1.	<p><b>Welcome and Apologies</b></p> <p>Councillor Bonallie welcomed everyone to the meeting.</p> <p>Apologies were received from Cllrs Michael Essl &amp; Kath Rolph.</p>	
2.	<p><b>Notes of the last meeting</b></p> <p>The notes from the last meeting were agreed as a true record.</p>	
3.	<p><b>New Issues Referred from the Scrutiny Committee</b></p> <p>No issues were referred to this panel.</p>	
4.	<p><b>Policy Review – Setting the Scene</b></p> <p>Cllr Bonallie welcomed Karen Lounton, Deputy Registration Services Manager and Norma Johnston, Assistant Head of Street Scene to the meeting. Karen had come along to give members more information on the Tell us Once Birth as Martin Lancaster had set the scene at the last meeting for Tell Us Once Bereavement.</p> <p>Karen reported there was a high up take for Tell Us Once Birth and they have an excellent working relationship with the Contact Centre. The CRS system went live and can push electronic returns to DWP for a speedier service.</p> <p>The Tell Us Once Bereavement service currently has a 50% take up and the service are looking to increase this figure in the future. They are also looking to develop feedback from customers and consider how the service could be developed in future and progressed to other 3<sup>rd</sup> party organisations (banks, insurance companies).</p> <p>One recent development is that they have suggested to DWP that the Tyne &amp; Wear Local Government Pension Scheme be included</p>	

in the Tell Us Once Bereavement end user list to enhance the system.

As an aid to the customer, the service produces a document on who should be contacted on bereavement.

Damien Green MP came to visit the contact centre in January 2012 and was given the opportunity to see the Tell Us Once services.

Norma Johnston reported that work was always going on to make the process more user friendly though there were areas where legal restrictions applied.

Karen reported appointment times for registering a birth is 30 minutes and 35 minutes for registering a death.

A new aspect to the service from June 2012 is Tell Us Once service for families who's loved one have been referred to the Coroner. These customers are very different due to sudden death and circumstances surrounding the death of their loved one. The Registrars take guidance from Mr Winter, the Coroner when registering the death.

CLlr Bonallie reported he had visited the contact centre at Doxford Park and sat with the member of staff dealing with a bereavement call. He had been most impressed by the standard of service though in this case the customer did not take up the TUO service as had already contacted most of the organisations themselves.

Karon reported that leaflets were being delivered to the hospice and the birthing unit at the hospital. This enables people to see what the service is, what we can do for them and provides the information for them to be able to make a choice.

CLlr Tate enquired as to why you could no longer get a copy birth certificate while you wait? Karen reported that as part of the service review a copy birth/death/marriage certificate could be obtained by contacting the contact centre, and this would take upto 5 working days. There is no longer a while you wait service, however if it is in an emergency they use the common sense approach and do all they can to obtain the copy certificate for the customer.

CLlr Porthouse agreed that it wasn't unreasonable to wait a week for a copy certificate, however had paying a premium for a fast track service been considered.

Karen reported this had been considered as part of the service review. Statutory fee for copy certificates was £10 and that they

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produce around 8500 copy certificates per annum.

Cllr Porthouse asked why the NHS weren't included in the TUO service. Karen reported that the DWP use the National Insurance number for registration and not the national health number. However for registering Births they have notification from the health authority, the GRO database is pre populated when a baby is born as this is generated by the hospital. If the baby is not on the GRO database then the birth registration cannot take place.

Members asked if they have trouble over wills, Karen reported they don't get involved with this and don't promote any companies providing wills services.

Cllr Scanlon suggested that people may be suspicious of using the TUO Service if the DWP includes banking/financial information, etc.

Karen reported that this has happened with the TUO Birth where young unmarried mums are claiming separately, yet living with the father of the baby and are worried the DWP may find out.

Cllr Bonallie asked how they planned to increase the current 50% take up of TUO Bereavement service. Karen reported the they were looking at distributing leaflets to doctor's surgeries to raise awareness of the service and also to funeral directors.

The reporting systems used by DWP have had some software issues. This has made it difficult to give an accurate position with regards to management information. Neighbouring authorities have taken up the TUO service with the exception of South Tyneside Council. This means if you die at Sunderland Royal hospital but are a resident in South Tyneside your family would not be able to use the TUO service.

Cllr Wood asked about the length of the policy review and what desk top research the Panel will be doing as it will be easier to get information on births rather than deaths.

Karen reported for births they could do a summary of families over 2 month period to gauge receptiveness. They haven't done this service for deaths before, could pick families with a death in a longer, reasonable length of time.

Cllr Wood asked if we could take up Cllr Rolph's idea of using the Sunderland Echo to ask people to get in touch with regards to the service they received. Karen and Norma noted that it may be advisable to firstly consult with the DWP as to methods of obtaining feedback on the scheme.

	<b>Action: to contact DWP and ask if other organisations have benefit realisation on the Deaths.</b>	
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<b>5.</b>	<b>Issues to feedback to the Scrutiny Committee</b>  Any issues raised by the panel could be feedback to the Scrutiny Committee via the Scrutiny Panel Lead or directly to the Chair of the Scrutiny Committee.	
<b>6.</b>	<b>AOB/Member items</b> No further items were raised.	
<b>7.</b>	<b>Date of next meeting</b> It was noted that the suggested date of Monday 17 <sup>th</sup> September clashed with North Area Committee. It was proposed that the meeting instead be held at Monday 10 <sup>th</sup> September 2012 at 5pm.	