

## Appendix C Report Following Public Consultation – Revised Proposals

### What have we been consulting on?

As a result of pressures on local government, Shropshire Council has had to consider the manner in which it provides all of its services. Shropshire Registration Service has been consulting on how best to re design and future proof registration services in Shropshire. In addition to the budgetary pressures faced by all local authorities, the recent reconfiguration of Women’s and Children’s Services within the Shropshire and Telford Health Trust and the resultant drop in the numbers of births which are able to be registered in Shropshire and the retirement of a number of registration staff now is a good time to have a look at what we do and how we do it.

A six week consultation was held during which the views of the residents of Shropshire were sought on a range of 3 options for the Registration Service.

#### **Option 1: Leave the provision exactly as it is.**

There are no savings available and it would be necessary to fill a number of vacant posts in order to continue to provide service in all of the existing locations. Retirements and redundancies have left insufficient staff to maintain the current structure. The locality in which a registration office is available would remain the same, and the opening hours would remain unchanged, see Table 2.

Table 1

Offices	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Registration Staff hours
Bishops Castle	Closed	10:00 - 12:00	Closed	Closed	10:00 - 12:00	4
Bridgnorth	10:00 - 16:00	10:00 - 16:00	10:00 - 16:00	Closed	10:00 - 16:00	25
Church Stretton	Closed	14:00 - 16:00	Closed	Closed	14:00 - 16:00	4
Ludlow	10:00 - 14:00	10:00 - 14:00	10:00 - 14:00	10:00 - 14:00	10:00 - 14:00	20
Market Drayton	10:00 - 14:00	Closed	10:00 - 14:00	Closed	10:00 - 14:00	12
Oswestry	09:30 - 16:00	09:30 - 16:00	09:30 - 13:00	09:30 - 16:00	09:30 - 16:00	33.3
Shrewsbury	09:15 - 17:00	09:15 - 17:00	09:15 - 17:00	09:15 - 17:00	09:15 - 17:00	111
Wem	10:00 - 14:00	10:00 - 14:00		10:00 - 14:00		12
Whitchurch	10:00 - 14:00		10:00 - 14:00		10:00 - 14:00	12

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<b>Option 2: Close under used offices and concentrate on providing service where there is greatest demand</b>
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Under this proposal the offices based in Wem, and Church Stretton would close Table 2 All other offices would remain open with opening hours varied

Table 2

Location	Current Hours	New Hours	Weekly Opening hours	Comments Why
Bishops Castle	4	By appointment max 2 hours	Reduced	Under utilisation and excessive costs
Bridgnorth	25	25	Unchanged	Not applicable
Ludlow	20	12	Reduced	Staff redundancy
Market Drayton	12	13.5	Increased	To provide additional resource for customers from Wem office
Whitchurch	12	13.5	Increased	
Oswestry	33.3	38	Increased	Protecting staff hours affected by closures. Also to provide additional resource for the Oswestry/North area
Shrewsbury	111	111	Unchanged	Not Applicable

Table 3- the proposed opening times and locations of offices for Option 2 shown below

Offices	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Registration Staff hours
Bridgnorth	10:00 - 16:00	10:00 - 16:00	10:00 - 16:00	Closed	10:00 - 16:00	25
Ludlow	10:00 - 14:00	Closed	Closed	10:00 - 14:00	10:00 - 14:00	12
Market Drayton	10:00 - 14:30	Closed	10:00 - 14:30	Closed	10:00 - 14:30	13.5
Oswestry	09:30 - 16:30	09:30 - 16:30	09:15 - 16:30	09:30 - 16:30	09:30 - 16:30	38
Shrewsbury	09:15 - 17:00	09:15 - 17:00	09:15 - 17:00	09:15 - 17:00	09:15 - 17:00	111
Whitchurch	10:00 - 14:30	closed	10:00 - 14:30	closed	10:00 - 14:30	13.5

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### Option 3:

#### **Close all local registration offices and centralise all registration services in Shrewsbury.**

All registration services would be available in Shrewsbury only, centralising our services and closing all other offices although this could create additional savings, it would undoubtedly cause great inconvenience to customers from anywhere other area of the county, which does not, we feel, reflect the needs of a rural county such as Shropshire.

In order to accommodate appointments centrally in Shrewsbury Opening Hours would have to alter and a shift system would be required.

Appointments in Shrewsbury would be available between 09:00 – 19:00, Monday to Friday

### **Consultation Response**

The consultation ran for a period of 6 weeks. During which time 48 on line responses were received, 2 written responses were received outside of the consultation period, but which will be considered and 5 responses were received by e-mail direct to the registration service.

The electronic on-line survey was carried out using an application which allows for the responses to be collated into statistical reports, and also allows for the recording of individual comments. A full copy of this report is attached at [Appendix A](#). The comments contained within the 7 responses received outside of the electronic report have been reproduced separately at [Appendix B](#)

The outcome of the consultation showed that  
48% of respondents preferred option 1,  
37.5% of respondents preferred option 2  
14.5% of respondents preferred option 3

The main concerns which were expressed by respondents related to:

- Transport
- Lack of provision in South of the County
- Over provision in the North
- Oswestry being favoured over the South of the County
- In adequate EINA
- No consideration given to the people of Wem
- Will disproportionately affect the less well off
- Elderly people - the impact of travelling on them
- Cost and time spent travelling to other offices

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The following suggestions were made as alternatives to the proposals and have been discarded for the reasons shown:

Table 4 – Suggestions

Suggestion	Discarded because:
Town Clerks could register instead	Unfortunately this is not possible as the law states that a registrar has to be employed by the Registration authority
Increase Council Tax	The setting of Council Tax is not under the remit of Shropshire Registration Service so is unable to be considered as part of this consultation
Change the law so that a death can be registered in 10 days	Unfortunately this requires primary legislation so unfortunately cannot be considered as part of this consultation
Register in people's homes	<p>A Domiciliary service has and is provided for people who are housebound or have insurmountable issues which prevent them attending a registration office.</p> <p>To have a registration service purely built on attending peoples homes to register would be uneconomical as officers would spend large chunks of the day travelling and not registering. It is more effective for the public to come to the registrar in order that they can be seen with no wasted time in between registrations.</p>
Cut Salaries of Senior Shropshire Council Managers	This cannot be considered as part of the Registration Service consultation as the service has no influence here.
Make managers redundant	The Registration Service has 1 manager and 3 team leaders all of whom are also operational registration officers.
Cut cabinet members remuneration	The Registration Service is not able to influence this at all and as such it cannot be considered as part of this consultation.
Part time staff/job share	With the exception of 7 members of staff all staff are part time
Make savings on transport costs - use local staff	Staff do not get paid for travelling into their base
Don't use Agency Staff	The Registration Service do not use agency staff
Recruit more staff to the front line and reduce managers	We do not have any dedicated managers within the Registration Service all staff are operational1
Keep Wem Open, more houses being built so more births likely	Births have to be registered where they occur and the main maternity unit is now

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	<p>in Telford and Wrekin, so most births will not be registered in Shropshire any more.</p>
<p>Register on line</p>	<p>This is not something which Shropshire Council have within their gift. The method of registration is prescribed by law, primary legislation is required to make this change</p>
<p>Train Librarians or other members of Council Staff to be registrars, they would be cheaper?</p>	<p>Librarians and customer service staff are paid similarly to Registration Officers, they also have their own roles to perform. The requirement to maintain security stock, and have access to central government systems together with a working knowledge of Registration Law and Practice does not make this a viable option. It is important that access to government systems and valuable security stock is limited.</p>
<p>Campaign for a change in marriage law, lobby national panel to change the law to send one member of staff to a wedding instead of 2 Why have you taken on an apprentice and trained her as the UK's youngest registrar you should focus on redeploying or safeguarding existing jobs rather than creating new ones. It must be awful for those in a redundancy situation</p>	<p>This is already on the wish list of the National Panel for Registration and the General Register Office. Primary legislation is needed to make changes such as this.</p> <p>This respondent also seems to be under the misconception that the redundancies referred to within the document are/were compulsory – this is not the case at all, all were/are requests for voluntary redundancy.</p> <p>The comments directed at member of staff who has been featured in media recently are inaccurate as this was a funded apprentice post, the young person works in our administration team and also, as with all our team, is trained in particular aspects of registration, allowing her to provide assistance at ceremonies.</p>

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The following suggestions are all areas which merit further discussion and consideration

Table 5

Reduce hours in the North to supplement the South
Maintain the Ludlow Opening Hours
Increase the Ludlow Opening Hours
Use peripatetic part- time staff to provide service in the areas likely to lose their service
Operate out of Community Hubs to reduce overheads
Reduce the hours at all offices
Don't increase Oswestry's hours
Reduce hours in Wem but keep the office open
Impact study on how it effects the elderly
Reduce hours in Church Stretton but keep the office open
Reduce numbers of days offices open don't close offices

### Revised proposal:

Taking into account the suggestions made above, the following plan has been put together, the following changes have been made:

A service available by appointment will be made available in Wem, and Church Stretton, as well as in Bishops Castle, on the proviso that an accord can be reached on the availability of office space with the other interested agencies such as hubs, Town Councils etc

There will be no increase in the opening hours of Ludlow Office, however the loss of hours will be minimal, with service maintained for 4 days per week.

There will be no increase in the opening hours of the North based offices – Market Drayton, Whitchurch, or Oswestry, however existing provision will be maintained.

Table 6 – Revised proposal

Locality of Offices	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri
Bishops Castle	Closed	10:00 -11:30 Appointment only	Closed	Closed	Closed
Bridgnorth	10:00 - 16:00	10:00 - 16:00	10:00 - 16:00	Closed	10:00 - 16:00
Church Stretton	Closed	12:30 -2:00 Appointment only	Closed	Closed	Closed
Ludlow	10:00-14:00	10:00 - 14:00	Closed	10:00 - 14:00	10:00 - 14:00
Market Drayton	10:00 - 14:00	Closed	10:00 - 14:00	Closed	10:00 - 14:00
Oswestry	09:30 - 16:00	09:30 - 16:00	09:30 - 13:00	09:30 - 16:00	09:30 - 16:00
Shrewsbury	09:15 - 17:00	09:15 - 17:00	09:15 - 17:00	09:15 - 17:00	09:15 - 17:00
Wem	Closed	Closed	Closed	10:00 - 12:00 Appointment Only	Closed
Whitchurch	13:30 - 17:00	09:30 -14:00	Closed	Closed	10:00 - 14:00

The above plan allows for the savings to be made whilst encompassing most of the suggestions gathered by the consultation information.

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Savings Comparison – New proposal compared with proposed savings prior to consultation:

Table 7

Element	Pre Consultation Option 2 Savings	Proposal	Post Consultation New proposal saving
Staff (No Compulsory Redundancies)	£59361.00		£47751.00
Rent/Council Tax	£3400.00		£3400.00
Additional Rent Savings not previously Identified			£4340.00
Total Savings	£62761.00		£55491.00

(Sought after saving prior to consultation was £58,000)

### Recommendation

The revised plan shown at table 6 takes into account the majority of concerns raised at consultation, whilst still achieving the vast majority of savings required, for this reason we would recommend that the revised plan is accepted by the cabinet and furthermore ratify the proposal at full Council in order to ensure transparency.

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Portfolio Holder: Councillor Karen Calder

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