

Proposed changes to Shropshire Council's Registration Service Evidence Document

July 2022

Other conditions supporting the proposals

In post pandemic times it is increasingly difficult to find suitable accommodation in which registration services can be provided. The accommodation in which we have been able to work from to provide these peripatetic services are small and poorly ventilated. These are not recommended settings in which staff and members of the public can safely meet. Clearly the councils own public health and staff welfare responsibilities are unlikely to be able to be met .

1. Staffing

Registration staff are highly trained professionals and quite correctly have a great deal of specialist knowledge. The numbers of trained registration officers are low nationally and locally, having only enough registration officers available to allow service to be provided.

- All but 2 trained registration officers are part time employees.
- All are based within fixed offices and the peripatetic service is provided by these same officers.
- In times of annual leave, sickness, absence or emergencies around the ceremony schedule, officers are necessarily moved to cover fixed offices first as these are where the majority of appointments are booked. The result of this is that any appointments booked at a peripatetic site are cancelled, or if the absence is planned, we often have to close the appointment booking diary for these sites in order to provide service at busier offices.

2. Technical issues

Operating from the peripatetic sites is not without its technical challenges. In this age of increasing reliance on digital technology it is essential that services such as ours are able to access reliable and secure IT provision. The lack of reliable IT resources is undeniably a concern which is significant as the work we do has to be recorded on a national secure IT system which requires stable access to IT. There have been many instances prior to the pandemic of officers having to revert to manual methods of registration only to have to re do any work when back at a fixed office creating additional work for officers and also distress and annoyance for customers when things go wrong.

3. Workload Increase

Increases in workload brought about by legislative change, increased deaths, ceremonies and legal preliminaries have required the service to use its resources wisely and efficiently. The current provision of attendance by appointment at peripatetic offices are neither a wise nor efficient use of resources.

This can be demonstrated below:

Evidence

Breakdown of time required to attend a single appointment at a peripatetic office:

- Staff time to drive into their base, collect their security stock, laptops, printers
- Staff time to drive out to the peripatetic office
- Staff time to set up laptops and printers etc
- Appointment time
- Staff time to close down, cash up if necessary, disconnect equipment and return to their vehicle
- Staff time to drive back to base.
- Mileage costs

In reality a single 30 minute appointment can account for 2.5 hours of staff time whereas the same appointment in fixed office will take just 30 minutes with set up and close down time being split equally across all other appointments undertaken within that fixed office on the same day.

Attendance of registration staff at peripatetic offices for, in the majority of instances, just a single appointment is costly and is not an economical use of staff time, a member of staff in one of our fixed offices could realistically provide 4 appointments in the time it takes to attend to deliver a single appointment.

Utilisation of offices

As you can see from the breakdown of appointment types between 2018 and to end June 2022, if the prime purpose of maintaining a peripatetic service within these localities was to provide access for those people who may have difficulty travelling and have to register a death within 5 days it is not these people who were using the service with the majority of appointments being taken by birth informants who have 42 days to register or marriage and civil partnership notices which can be done 12 months before the event. As we can see from customer behaviours during the pandemic, these customers have been willing and able to travel to other offices which have been able to open.

For context see the figures below which provide a representation of work done expressed as a percentage of the work done by the registration service across the Shropshire Council Area in relation to appointments (not ceremonies)

Table 1 - Showing the numbers of Birth related appointment bookings made in each location and as a percentage of the total number of Birth Registration appointments booked by location

Birth related appointments	Office	2018		2019		2020		2021		2022 (01/01 to 30/06)	
	Total bookings	1482		1412		1640		759		506	
	Shrewsbury	680	46%	642	45%	1123	68%	472	62%	250	49%
	Oswestry	253	17%	227	16%	157	10%	123	16%	101	20%
	Bridgnorth	144	10%	132	9%	106	6%	59	8%	33	7%
	Ludlow	127	9%	121	9%	95	6%	36	5%	44	9%
	Market Drayton	105	7%	108	8%	64	4%	40	5%	33	7%
	Whitchurch	87	6%	94	7%	69	4%	29	4%	45	9%
	Bishops Castle	21	1%	26	2%	1	<1%	0	-	0	-
	Church Stretton	19	1%	16	1%	6	<1%	0	-	0	-
	Wem	46	3%	46	3%	13	1%	0	-	0	-

Source – Zipporah Appointment Booking diary (includes Birth, Birth declaration, Birth Re-registration appointments)

2020 and 2021 – Numbers of actual registrations completed

Table 2 - Showing the numbers of Death Registration appointment bookings made in each location and as a percentage of the total number of Death Registration appointments booked by location

Death related appointments	office	2018		2019		2020		2021		2022 (01/01 to 30/06)	
	Total Bookings	3249		3362		3767 all death registrations took place over the telephone after 24/03/2020		3610 all death registrations took place over the telephone		1713	
	Shrewsbury	1875	60%	2158	64%	3748	99%	3610	100%	883	52%
	Oswestry	337	10%	313	9%					255	15%
	Bridgnorth	382	12%	324	10%					232	14%
	Ludlow	301	9%	279	8%					143	8%
	Market Drayton	113	3%	108	3%					99	6%
	Whitchurch	172	5%	111	3%					96	6%
	Bishops Castle	13	<1%	14	<1%	8	<1%	0	0%	0	0%
	Church Stretton	17	<1%	14	<1%	3	<1%	0	0%	0	0%
	Wem	39	1%	41	1%	3	<1%	0		0	0%

Source 2018, 2019, 2022 Zipporah Appointment booking diary (includes death and death declaration appointments)

Table 3 - Showing the numbers of appointment bookings made in each location and as a percentage of the total number of Marriage/Civil Partnership preliminary appointments booked by location

Marriage/civil partnership preliminaries	Location of service	2018		2019		2020		2021		2022 (01/01 to 30/06)	
	Total Bookings	1806		2423		2011		2051		1791	
	Shrewsbury	1014	56%	1290	53%	1287	64%	962	47%	874	49%
	Oswestry	226	13%	291	12%	215	11%	357	17%	295	16%
	Bridgnorth	256	14%	353	15%	253	13%	289	14%	284	16%
	Ludlow	100	6%	155	6%	110	5%	226	11%	115	6%
	Market Drayton	100	6%	156	6%	66	3%	110	5%	126	7%
	Whitchurch	70	4%	112	5%	59	3%	107	5%	97	5%
	Bishops Castle	9	<1%	18	<1%	3	<1%	0	0%	0	0%
	Church Stretton	11	<1%	17	<1%	7	<1%	0	0%	0	0%
	Wem	20	1%	31	1%	11	<1%	0	0%	0	0%

Source Zipporah Appointment booking diary (includes Civil partnership and marriage notice appointments)

Unattended appointments

There is the equally frustrating issue with unattended appointments which when these occur in the peripatetic offices which result in a complete waste of staff time and an inability to recover the costs incurred. No Show appointments in our fixed locations, although frustrating do not lead to unproductive periods as there are a range of required administrative tasks to be completed in offices which are not able to be completed at peripatetic sites

Table 4
Showing the numbers of unattended appointments prior to the pandemic

Location of service	2018 No show appointments			2019 No show appointments		
	Birth	Death	Marriage/CP	Birth	Death	Marriage/CP
Shrewsbury	28 4%	14 1%	30 3%	20 3%	10 <1%	38 3%
Oswestry	6 2%	4 1%	7 3%	8 3%	5 2%	11 4%
Bridgnorth	7 5%	1 <1%	11 4%	6 4%	2 <1%	6 2%
Ludlow	5 4%	2 2%	1 1%	2 2%	4 3%	5 3%
Market Drayton	8 8%	0 0%	5 5%	7 6%	1 1%	2 1%
Whitchurch	0 0%	3 3%	5 7%	2 2%	0 0%	2 2%
Bishops Castle	1 5%	2 15%	0 0%	1 6%	0 0%	2 11%
Church Stretton	0 0%	2 13%	1 9%	1 6%	0 0%	0 0%
Wem	3 7%	0 0%	0 0%	2 6%	1 2%	0 0%

Source – Zipporah appointment booking system

Market Drayton and Whitchurch

Our offices in Market Drayton and Whitchurch, both based within the libraries in each town are currently open for 12 hours per week –

Table 1 – Current opening hours

Office	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Market Drayton The Library Cheshire Street Market Drayton	10:00-14:00 (1 office operating F2F)	Closed	10:00-1400 (1 office operating F2F)	Closed	10:00-1400 (1 office operating F2F)
Whitchurch The Library Civic Centre High Street Whitchurch	10:00-14:00 (1 office operating F2F)	10:00-14:00 (1 office operating F2F)	Closed	Closed	10:00-14:00 (1 office operating F2F)

Our proposal for both offices is to condense the number of days which the offices are open down to 2 days each but extend the opening hours to 6 hours per day. This will provide an additional 1 hour per week at each site for face-to-face appointments as the administration time at the close of the day and the setting up time at the beginning of the day will be reduced. This will also provide a greater range of opening hours on the days of operation. It will also make it easier to cover both of these offices in times of staff absence as they will be open on different days.

Table 2 - Proposed revised opening hours:

Office	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Market Drayton The Library Cheshire Street Market Drayton	09:00-15:30 (1 office operating F2F)	Closed	09:00-15:30 (1 office operating F2F)	Closed	Closed
Whitchurch The Library Civic Centre High Street Whitchurch	Closed	09:00-15:30 (1 office operating F2F)	Closed	09:00-15:30 (1 office operating F2F)	Closed

Overall current service provision

Office	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Shrewsbury The Register Office Shirehall Shrewsbury	09:00 – 17:00 (3 offices operating F2F)	09:00 – 17:00 (3 offices operating F2F)	09:00 – 17:00 (3 offices operating F2F)	09:00 – 17:00 (3 offices operating F2F)	09:00 – 17:00 (3 offices operating F2F)
Oswestry The Library Arthur Street Oswestry	09:30 – 16:00 (1 office operating F2F)	09:30 – 16:00 (1 office operating F2F)	09:30 – 16:00 (1 office operating F2F)	09:30 – 16:00 (1 office operating F2F)	09:30 – 16:00 (1 office operating F2F)
Bridgnorth The Library Listley Street Bridgnorth	10:00 – 16:00 (1 office operating F2F)	10:00 – 16:00 (2 offices operating F2F)	10:00 – 16:00 (1 office operating F2F)	10:00 – 16:00 (2 offices operating F2F)	10:00 – 16:00 (1 office operating F2F)
Ludlow The Library & Museum Resource Centre 7-9 Parkway Ludlow	10:00-15:30 (1 office operating F2F)		10:00-15:30 (1 office operating F2F)		10:00-15:30 (1 office operating F2F)
Market Drayton The Library Cheshire Street Market Drayton	10:00-1400 (1 office operating F2F)		10:00-1400 (1 office operating F2F)		10:00-1400 (1 office operating F2F)
Whitchurch The Library Civic Centre High Street Whitchurch	10:00-14:00 (1 office operating F2F)	10:00-14:00 (1 office operating F2F)			10:00-14:00 (1 office operating F2F)
Bishops Castle Enterprise House Station Street Bishops Castle		10:00 – 12:00 Attended by appointment only			
Church Stretton The Library Church Street Church Stretton		14:00 – 16:00 Attended by appointment only			
Wem The Library Wem				10:30-14:00 Attended by appointment only	

Overall proposed Service Provision

Office	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Shrewsbury The Register Office Shirehall Shrewsbury	09:00 – 17:00 (3 offices operating F2F)	09:00 – 17:00 (3 offices operating F2F)	09:00 – 17:00 (3 offices operating F2F)	09:00 – 17:00 (3 offices operating F2F)	09:00 – 17:00 (3 offices operating F2F)
Oswestry The Library Arthur Street Oswestry	09:30 – 16:00 (1 office operating F2F)	09:30 – 16:00 (1 office operating F2F)	09:30 – 16:00 (1 office operating F2F)	09:30 – 16:00 (1 office operating F2F)	09:30 – 16:00 (1 office operating F2F)
Bridgnorth The Library Listley Street Bridgnorth	10:00 – 16:00 (1 office operating F2F)	10:00 – 16:00 (1 office operating F2F)	10:00 – 16:00 (1 office operating F2F)	10:00 – 16:00 (2 offices operating F2F)	10:00 – 16:00 (1 office operating F2F)
Ludlow The Library & Museum Resource Centre 7-9 Parkway Ludlow	10:00- 15:30 (1 office operating F2F)		10:00- 15:30 (1 office operating F2F)		10:00- 15:30 (1 office operating F2F)
Market Drayton The Library Cheshire Street Market Drayton	09:00- 15:30 (1 office operating F2F)		09:00- 15:30 (1 office operating F2F)		
Whitchurch The Library Civic Centre High Street Whitchurch		09:00- 15:30 (1 office operating F2F)		09:00- 15:30 (1 office operating F2F)	

Equality Impact Needs Assessment .

An initial Equality Impact Needs Assessment for each location at which we are proposing to cease service provision, has been carried out, and forms part of this document, it will be updated following the outcome of the consultation.

Equality Impact Needs Assessment

Conclusion from our Equality Impact Needs Assessment highlighted the fact that the rurality of the county of Shropshire does need to be considered when redesigning services. We have also tried to minimise additional travel distance for residents in those areas which may lose their peripatetic Registration service. Following this consultation, we hope to be able to further update our Equality Impact Needs Assessment with further information gleaned from respondents.

Current nearest Office	Nearest office under option 2	Additional distance of travel for customers
Wem Registrars service point The Library	Whitchurch Registrars Office	9 miles
	Shrewsbury Registrars Office	11 miles
	Market Drayton Registrars Office	14 miles
	Oswestry Registrars Office	19 miles
Church Stretton service point The Library	Bishops Castle	13 miles
	Shrewsbury Registrars Office	13 miles
	Ludlow Registrars Office	16 miles
Bishops Castle service point Enterprise House	Ludlow Registrars Office	17 miles
	Shrewsbury Registrars Office	24 miles

As part of this consultation, we would like very much to hear your views on the options available and also we would like to hear of any other ideas which you may have which would influence our thinking.

If there are specific issues such as travel or transport issues which would cause any of these plans to be unworkable or problematic, please make sure that we are aware of these as we consider this to be central to our understanding of the impact which any changes would have on the residents of any particular locality or the wider Shropshire Council area.

Please note that these proposals only relate to Registration Services and are not in any way related to any proposals for any other area of the Council.

If you would like any further information about the service or the proposals, please contact

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