REPORT TO	BEST VALUE SUB-COMMITTEE
REPORT ON	BEST VALUE REVIEW OF THE REGISTRATION OF BIRTHS DEATHS AND MARRIAGES SECTION 2000/01
REPORT BY	CHIEF EXECUTIVE
REPORT NUMBER	421/2001

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

This Report is a result of a Best Value Review of the Service provided by the Registrar of Births Deaths and Marriages Section of the Department of Support Services.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:-

2.1 The City Registrar improves the quality of core registration functions through better communication and joint initiatives with stakeholders. He will also identify alternative Council premises that are suitable for conducting civil marriages, in conjunction with the Administration Manager and report to the Director of Support Services by December 2001. The City Registrar will also consult the public on an annual basis, in an effort to measure progress and achieve continuous improvement.

2.2 The City Registrar will formulate a strategy for developing and extending the genealogy service and report to the Director of Support Services by September 2001.

2.3 The City Registrar and the Administration Manager meet with the Registrar General's Examiner at the end of each year to discuss his report, in an effort to improve the Section's error rating.

2.4 The City Registrar investigates the possibility of applying for a Charter Mark for the Registration Section and report to the Director of Support Services by July 2001.

2.5 The City Registrar investigates the feasibility of producing literature that conforms to Crystal Mark standard and reports to the Director of Support Services by December 2001.

2.6 The City Registrar, in conjunction with the Director of Finance, benchmarks with other Registration Authorities to measure and compare cost, on an annual basis. The City Registrar investigates any changes to current performance and reports to the Director of Support Services.

2.7 The City Registrar investigates possible qualification for heritage / tourism / lottery funding for the Genealogy Unit and reports to the Director of Support Services by December 2001

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

This review accounts for 6% of the revenue budget of the Administration Division of the Support Services Department, at a budget cost examined of £218,500. This represents 52% of expenditure reviewed in this Department in 2000/01.

4. **LOCAL AGENDA 21 IMPLICATIONS**
This review has addressed the following key themes of Local Agenda 21:-
"opportunities for culture, leisure and recreation are readily available to all."
Dundee Registrars Section actively promote the use of their records in all areas of the community, particularly genealogy and academic research.

5. **EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS**
None

6. **DEFINITION OF SERVICE REVIEWED**

6.1 Local Authorities in Scotland have a statutory duty to provide a service for the registration of births, stillbirths, deaths and marriages in each of their registration districts.
The registration of these events is compulsory and is governed by two main Acts of Parliament:-
The Registration of Births Deaths and Marriages (Scotland) Act 1965
The Marriage (Scotland) Act 1977.
Registration is affected by several other Acts however and the most important of these are:-
The Population (Statistics) Acts 1938 and 1960
The Adoption (Scotland) Act 1978
The Presumption of Death (Scotland) Act 1977
The Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act 1990

The City registrar is responsible for ensuring that all births, deaths, stillbirths and marriages occurring in Dundee Registration District are registered within the statutory time limits. The registration staff also deal with changes of name, marriages abroad, re-registration of births and declarations of paternity. Civil marriages are conducted at the main office at 89 Commercial Street and more recently at the City Chambers. In addition to the statutory functions the Section performs, a Genealogy Unit has been established to cater for the growing interest in genealogical research, both locally and worldwide.

6.2 The Section is staffed by a City Registrar, four registrars and two clerical support staff. All five registrars are qualified and are authorised to conduct civil marriages. The salary scales for each of these posts are as follows:-
City Registrar   PO 4 – 7
Registrar   GS1 – AP4
Clerical Assistant   GS1 – GS2

7. **JUSTIFICATION FOR REVIEWING THIS SERVICE**
Dundee City Council has recognised that, under Sections 5, 7, 8 and 9 of the Registration of Births Deaths and Marriages (Scotland) Act 1965, it has a statutory obligation to act as the local registration authority. Accordingly, it must provide and maintain a registration office and appoint a district registrar and other registrars necessary for the purposes of the Act. Appropriate arrangements must also be made to ensure that all events occurring within the Registration District are registered within the statutory time limits.

The Registration Section is included within the current round of Best Value Reviews for the Council and has also recently been the subject of a re-structuring and re-grading process.

It is particularly important that the Section is able to demonstrate Best Value, due to the direct service which it supplies to the public. The Service maintains a high profile and as such attracts a great deal of public interest. The Registration Service has also been the subject of recent administrative changes which have allowed greater flexibility in relation to civil marriages and further legislative changes are pending which will effectively revolutionise the provision of civil marriage in Scotland. These changes will require the Section to be aware of the environment in which it operates and provide a service, in a competitive market, which is tailored to the needs of the public.

8. REVIEW METHODOLOGY

8.1 The review team consisted of Steve Swann, from the Personnel and Management Services Department, who acted as team leader, the City Registrar, Grant Law, who acted as lead officer, Linda Robertson, a registrar from the Section and Derek Miller, the Administration Manager from the Department of Support Services. Philip Owen, a Principal Accountant with the Finance Department, completed the team membership.

8.2 The team identified four methods which were deemed appropriate for the purposes of this review; Consultation with customers and stakeholders, benchmarking with other registration authorities, market testing of genealogy services and an option appraisal for the services concerned.

9. CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS

9.1 Customers and Stakeholders
Two main groups of stakeholders were identified;

♦ The Registrar General for Scotland
Who, by virtue of the Registration of Births Deaths and Marriages (Scotland) Act 1965, is responsible for maintaining the utility and efficiency of the registration service in Scotland.

♦ The General Public
Who are required to register all births, stillbirths, deaths and marriages occurring within the registration district. The public are also generally obliged to acquire certificates of any of these events from the local registrar. The local records are further used to provide the public with a genealogy service. The general public also contribute to the cost of maintaining the registration service through Council Tax and Income Tax contributions.

9.2 Critical Success Factors
The performance of the Section is measured annually by the Examiner for the Registrar General. The examiner's report grades each office in terms of Staffing and Training, Records Management and Premises. The Report also provides an overall rating and a measurement of accuracy by means of an error rate.

The performance of the Section is measured by the Council in terms of cost and this is a vital consideration in the present political and economic climate.

The public were consulted by means of several questionnaires which measured performance and satisfaction levels in relation to births, civil and religious marriages, genealogy and certificates (see Appendix1). These questionnaires asked the public to express the importance of several success factors. The complete list of success factors which were measured is:-

Professionalism of Staff	Quality of Documents
Prompt Service	Easy to find out what to do
Accuracy of Records	Amount of Information
Presentation of Information	Value for Money
Tailored Service	Photographic Opportunities
Parking and Access Facilities	Overall Accommodation

Very few Registration Authorities however, were able to provide information that allowed a comparison for Best Value purposes and the few Authorities that did provide information measured differing, narrow aspects of the service that was provided. It was therefore necessary to categorise those factors that could be measured in terms of common Success Factors. Due to this, it was necessary to group all the success factors above into categories that would allow comparison with other Local Authorities, as shown by Appendix 2.

The results of each questionnaire were then condensed, to determine the Critical Success Factors relating to the Section. Performance was measured by applying scores to each satisfaction measure and calculating the combined, total response score against the highest achievable score for each Success Factor.

An analysis of the responses by the public to the questionnaires revealed the following critical success factors, in order of priority, as shown in Appendix 2.
- ◆ Professionalism of Staff
- ◆ Accuracy
- ◆ Quality of Service
- ◆ Cost
- ◆ Speed of Service

The first three Critical Success Factors determined by the public questionnaire also correspond with the critical success factors measured by the Registrar General's District Examiner.

10. PERFORMANCE REVIEW

A summary of the consultation results appears at Appendix 3.

CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTOR	PERFORMANCE INDICATOR	PRESENT PERFORMANCE
Professionalism of Staff	% of public satisfied with professionalism of staff	97%
	Recent Report by Registrar General's Examiner: Staff Training	A
Accuracy	Recent Report by Registrar General's Examiner: Error Rate	3.6%
Quality of Service	% of public satisfied with quality of service.	95%
	Recent Report by Registrar General's Examiner: Premises	A
Cost	Unit cost for comparison purposes. (see 9.1)	£12.51
	% of public satisfied with Value for Money	89%
Speed of Service	% of public satisfied with speed of service delivery	96%

10.1 Professionalism of Staff

A high score of 97% public satisfaction is a statistic to be proud of but complacency would quickly lead to a negative response. Consequently, it is necessary to continue to monitor satisfaction levels in an effort to achieve continuous improvement. Satisfaction levels may also be increased by communicating staffing status as discussed in paragraph 10.4.

10.2 Accuracy and Quality of Service

Quality received a high rating of 95% from the respondents questioned. Accuracy was measured by the error rating from the District Examiner, from New Register House.

Good communication will improve the accuracy of the information recorded in the statutory registers however and also improve the quality of the service, by removing barriers and highlighting aspects of the service that may be improved. At present, there is little formal communication amongst the District Examiner, the City Registrar and the Administration Manager, following the annual inspection. An annual meeting would allow greater communication and an exchange of information that may help improve the service that the Section provides.

10.3 Cost

Virtually all fees chargeable by the City Registrar are governed by statute and are consequently not possible to control. An exception to this is the fee structure for genealogy as this is not a statutory function. People commissioning genealogical research were therefore asked whether the service offered by the Section was value for money. Because of this, the questionnaire response relating to cost accounted for only 11% of all respondents questioned.

The overall satisfaction rating for Value for Money was 89%. The running costs involved in Dundee City Council providing a genealogy service can mainly be attributed to the subscription to the Registrar General, for on-line access and the cost of telephone charges. The Unit functions by utilising excess capacity which results from fluctuations in registration workload and staffing levels. The income derived from this service therefore not only covers the running costs of the Unit but also contributes to the overall income of the Department. The Section is also able to provide a quality, popular service at a low cost to the general public.

The cost of providing a work unit of registration in Dundee was calculated by applying weighted formulae to each of the statutory functions undertaken by a local office. A total workload of units was then calculated for registrations in 1999 and this was considered against the estimated total cost of providing the service for 2000/01. Unit cost were also calculated for 1996/97, 1998/99 and 1999/2000.

Statutory fees are set by the Registrar General and therefore cannot be influenced. It is possible however, to reduce the overall cost of the service by attempting to increase income from additional services or added value.

10.4 Speed of service

88% of the respondents were questioned about the speed of the service provided by the Registrars Section and the satisfaction level for those questioned was 96%. Improvements to the quality of the service may be made by attempting to reduce waiting times, to maintain or improve this level of performance. Alternately, improvements may be achieved by improving communication with the public, as there is a direct correlation between overall lower satisfaction levels and waiting periods. The reception at 89 Commercial Street area is physically screened from the Registrars' stations and consequently the public are often unaware of staffing levels and problem registrations. A system that communicated these issues would help improve satisfaction levels by keeping the public informed.

11. RESULTS OF COMPARISONS

11.1 Benchmarking

Registration of births, deaths and marriages is a function that is strictly controlled by legislation and consequently it is impossible to draw comparisons with agencies in the private sector. Due to this it was decided to confine any comparisons to other local registration authorities.

A large number of District Registrars were contacted in an effort to secure qualitative information for the purposes of comparison. Unfortunately, very few registration authorities have, as yet, consulted with the public. Three local authorities were however, able to provide sufficient information that allowed a comparison of performance in the critical success factors which were identified in the questionnaires. It can be seen from the table below that although performance in all Registration Authorities is commendably high, Dundee's performance is comparable for every critical success factor.

A further comparison with every Registration Authority in Scotland was undertaken, based upon the cost of providing a registration service for 1996/97, 1997/98, 1999/2000 and 2000/01.

LOCAL AUTHORITY	Professionalism of Staff	Quality of Service	Speed of Service
Dundee City	96.8%	95.2%	96.5%
A	98.6%	92.6%	96.6%
B	94.7%	96%	N/A
C	83.7%	84%	82%

Comparison of unit costs with other local registration authorities was calculated by applying weighted formulae to each of the statutory functions undertaken by a local office (see audit file). A total workload of units could then be calculated for every office in Scotland. This workload was then considered against the cost of the service in each local registration authority, to provide a unit cost for registration. Dundee City Council's position in the table for 2000/01 is 5th out of 32 Councils in Scotland. The lowest estimated cost per Unit is -£0.93 and the highest is £61.74, as shown in the table below. The average cost per registration unit is £24.44. Dundee City Council is therefore currently providing a registration service at a cost that is currently one of the lowest in Scotland.

	1997/98	1998/99	1999/00*	2000/01*
Highest Cost	£57.03	£59.89	£60.37	£61.74
Lowest Cost	-£5.47	-£4.82	-£2.33	-£0.93
Average Cost	£18.54	£20.52	£23.06	£24.44
Dundee's Cost	£9.90	£15.64	£17.36	£12.51
Dundee's Position	9th Lowest	14th Lowest	14th Lowest	5th Lowest

*Estimate

It can be seen from the table above, that 4 Councils currently estimate that they can provide a service with a cheaper unit cost than Dundee. On closer inspection however, this situation can be explained by various factors.
The Council with the lowest estimate cost currently accounts for 21% of all marriages conducted in Scotland or 1009% more than Dundee. Marriage fees account for approximately 38% of the income for the Dundee Section and consequently the income for this Council will be considerably higher than that for Dundee.
The Councils with the second and third lowest estimated costs cover large rural areas and do not bear the high costs associated with providing a registration service in a large city. Many remote or rural Registration Districts tend to be serviced by parlour registrars which, although inexpensive to operate, are not capable of providing a standard of registration required by a heavily populated area.
The Council with the fourth lowest estimated unit cost is a very large city with 3 times the population of Dundee. They have also invested heavily in their civil marriage accommodation and the Council registered four times more marriages than Dundee in 1999. Of these, 54% were civil marriages, compared to 38% in Dundee.

11.2 Market Testing
The Registration office in Dundee has developed a Genealogy Unit, to maximise the potential of the records in its custody. The Unit provides family trees for descendants of families from the Dundee area and helps trace family members who have lost contact. The Unit is unique in Scotland and provides a service that is outside the statutory registration functions that local registration authorities are required to provide.

The Unit is already competing in an open market, to such an extent that professional genealogists use the service to research family information for their clients. There are many genealogy services in the private sector however and an effort was made to market test this service. Most professional genealogists in Scotland belong to the Scots Ancestry Research Society and this group was contacted to in an effort to obtain comparative information. Genealogists belonging to this Society charge a minimum of £16 per hour, with an initial deposit of £20 required. The Registrars Section charges £30 per two hours research, although this is reduced if the research is limited. The fee structure of the Unit therefore compares very favourably with professional genealogy fees. The Research Society also advise that the extent of their research is generally limited to the mid 18th century, which is the same limit as the Registrars Section. The Research Society however, advises that the average cost of tracing **one** family line is between £96 and £128. Similar research by the Council's Genealogy Unit will trace **every** branch of a family line at an average cost of £60 to £90. The Council Unit will also attempt to complete this research within two weeks, compared to four to six weeks for professional genealogists. The running costs of the Council providing a genealogy service are outlined in Appendix 4 and the Unit currently operates at a profit, by utilising excess capacity. Given the performance of the Unit however, there is scope to increase income through higher fees, without an adverse affect upon demand.

The comparison of the service offered by the Council compared to professional genealogists is summarised in the table below.

	Hourly Rate	Limit of Research	Average Fee	Extent of Research Included
Dundee City Council	£15	18th Century	£60 - £90	Every branch
Scots Ancestry Research Society	£16	18th Century	£96 - £128	One Branch

12. OPTION APPRAISAL

12.1 The registration of births, deaths, stillbirths and marriages is governed by statute and the process of registering these events is regulated by instructions from the Registrar General for Scotland. Sections 5, 7, 8 and 9 of the Registration of Births Deaths and Marriages (Scotland) Act 1965 also mean that Dundee City Council has a statutory obligation to act as the local registration authority. This requires the Council to provide and maintain a registration office and appoint a district registrar and other registrars necessary for the purposes of the Act. It is also an offence to fail to register events in Scotland. Consequently there is presently no scope to vary the actual process of registration nor is it possible to consider alternative options of providing a registration service.

Although the Council is restricted in terms of the type of service it is required to provide, it is possible to focus upon service delivery and in particular, whether value can be added to any of the statutory functions in an effort to improve the quality of the service.

The very nature of civil registration also means that a great amount of information is recorded locally and although this information is forwarded to the Registrar General on a weekly and annual basis, records are retained locally, in the format of registers and microfiche. Statutory registration in Scotland occurred in 1855 and the City Registrar in Dundee has retained all the birth death and marriage registers from this date. Dundee also acts as the area repository for most Angus records between 1855 and 1939. Birth, death and marriage registers are public records in Scotland and the sheer quantity of information that is retained in Dundee means that these records could perhaps be used to provide further, additional services. By providing additional services the Section could improve the quality of the service that is being provided to the public and perhaps increase income, thus reducing the overall cost of providing a registration service.

An effective Communication Strategy is vital to the service, in terms of accuracy and quality. The Section currently produces information leaflets and brochures for marriage, birth and genealogy but these may be further improved and simplified to provide better communication and advice. Consideration may therefore be given to applying for a Crystal Mark for these documents and any further pamphlets that may be introduced. Consideration should also be given to seek opportunities to interface with the public and other stakeholders / customers prior to a registration. This would allow the public to become familiar with a process at an early stage and prepare them for any requirements relating to a registration.

Following the performance review, comparisons made with other local authorities and market testing, it can be seen that the performance of the Section compares favourably with other feasible providers. The genealogy service that is provided by the Section is also very competitive when considered against that provided by professional genealogists. Continuous improvement may be achieved however, by measuring customer satisfaction and seeking to improve communication with stakeholders. Benchmarking with other Registration Authorities will also help measure performance and maintain high standards.

Further consideration of the factors above however, reveals that improvement can be made in the following areas:

Quality of Service
Cost of Service

In light of the above restrictions and considerations, there are 3 options available to Dundee City Council relating to quality and cost:

1. Provide a basic registration function as defined by the relevant Acts.

2. Provide an enhanced service by adding value to the statutory functions, to improve quality and expand additional services in-house, utilising existing resources available as a consequence of registration.

3. Provide genealogy service by outsourcing, utilising existing resources available as a consequence of registration, to reduce cost.

The criteria used to evaluate each option were:

- Effect on Quality
- Professionalism of Staff
- Speed of Service
- Accuracy
- Cash Flow
- Feasibility
- Sustainability

12.2 Providing A Basic Registration Function

The way that civil registration service in Scotland is delivered is currently the subject of review by the Registrar General. A consultation paper has already been published which seeks to identify changes to improve and modernise the service so that it more effectively meets the need of citizens in a changing world. Providing a basic service as defined by the current Acts would not provide the flexibility to meet the challenges posed by this paper and would be in direct conflict with the views of the Registrar General.

Although all informants of births, deaths, stillbirths and marriages have little choice of where to register an event, it is unreasonable and unprofessional to disregard initiatives which could make the experience as painless or pleasurable as possible. It is also good practice to ensure that **all** parties concerned in a process are made aware of legalities and available options. Each party should also have the chance to contribute to an improved service delivery. This includes hotels, hospitals, undertakers, religious celebrants etc.

An important consideration to the Council is also the potential loss of income which would result from providing a basic registration function, particularly from couples intending to marry in Dundee. Marriage has now become an industry and expectations of couples contracting a marriage have increased drastically due to the choice which is available in all aspects of the occasion. Many couples also now opt to be married abroad to add that extra romance to their special day. All forms of marriage in Dundee have been declining steadily however, since 1970. Civil marriages have actually seen a fall of 60%, from 584 in 1984 to 235 in 1999. A survey conducted by the City Registrar in 1995 revealed that 70% of couples contracting a civil marriage in Dundee would have preferred their marriage to be at a location other than 89 Commercial Street. 31% of couples contracting a religious marriage would also have preferred a civil marriage, had suitable accommodation been available. The results of the most recent survey also shows that 71% of couples questioned regarded the quality of marriage accommodation as very important and the remaining 29% regarded it as important (see Appendix 5). Although 50% of the couples who actually decided to arrange their marriage at the Registrars Office stated that they were very satisfied with the accommodation, the remaining 50% stated that they were merely satisfied. The option to provide only a basic marriage ceremony at 89 Commercial Street would therefore undoubtedly lead to a further decline in marriages conducted in Dundee and consequently a loss of potential income.

12.3 Providing An Enhanced Service

Births, deaths and stillbirths must all be registered at a prescribed place, in a standard format. By seeking and identifying customer needs, preferences, obstacles, problematic areas, etc. however, it is possible to add value to the statutory functions of registration and market the service to meet customer requirements. This will, in turn, help to ensure that all events are registered

correctly, within the statutory time limits. In the discussion paper "Civil Registration in the 21st Century," the Registrar General emphasises the need for dignity in dealing with registrations which, although designed to record information, represent a fundamental importance to those persons involved in the process. He also draws attention to the need for human interaction in dealing with events that are a source of great stress. By introducing processes that help reduce levels of stress and increase the pleasure of a registration, intangible value may therefore be added to the service. Continuous improvement should therefore be pursued by continued, constant consultation with members of the public.

Due to the fairly rigid process of registration and the statutory limits for recording vital events, it is important that all other agencies involved in the registration process are fully aware of the legal requirements and the options that are available to informants. Any leaflets, brochures etc. that are currently available should be concise and clear in their message. Value may therefore be added to the service by proactively communicating directly with all parties concerned and inviting their participation in the formulation of any initiatives. This may involve registrars participating in forums or quality circles, hosting briefings or delivering talks about the appropriate service. Producing literature that conformed to standards set by Crystal Mark would also improve communication. The benefits of such a communication strategy would include a reduced error rate, timeous registrations, fewer complaints, reduction of stress, etc. A successful communication strategy would however, depend upon the existing systems, resources and requirements of stakeholders as well as the Registrars Section. Appropriate stakeholders should therefore be contacted about the possibility of establishing formal channels to improve communication.

Legislation currently allows civil marriages to be performed outside the main registration office, in Council buildings which have been approved by the District Registrar and the Registrar General. By identifying suitable Council buildings for civil marriage, an effort can be made to increase the number of civil marriages and the overall total of marriages conducted in Dundee. This not only has the effect of continuous improvement by meeting public expectations and increasing income for the Council but also helps boost local commerce by retaining custom within the City.

12.4   Expanding Additional Services
Genealogy is a growth industry that attracts interest from the local public as well as academics and descendants of Scottish families, primarily from USA, Canada, England and Australia. The initial source of most information for genealogists is either the Registrar General or the local registrar, who holds local birth, death and marriage records as far back as 1855. The standard procedure in Scottish registration offices is for the registrar to search their indexes for a single entry and issue a birth, death or marriage certificate. This tends to be very expensive and time consuming for genealogists and consequently most researchers tend to use the services of New Register House.

Dundee Registrars' Section has now established a Genealogy Unit to provide a genealogical and family tracing service. This Unit has proved exceptionally popular with Dundonians and Scottish descendants alike and many of its efforts to trace family have been reported in the local and national press. No other Registrars Office in Scotland offers such a service and this Unit is a perfect example of how existing resources may be used to provide additional services

at little or no additional cost. During a recent visit to Dundee, the Registrar General expressed his amazement at the initiative of the Dundee Section and encouraged the Council to continue to support the Section to deliver this service.

The annual patterns of registrations mean that certain times of the year are more busy for certain events than others and the genealogy service is provided by utilising spare capacity during these fluctuating periods. The only ongoing cost to the Council therefore, is approximately £1,500 per annum, for each terminal connection to New Register House (currently one). The income derived from this service is shown below and it can be seen that the Genealogy Unit already makes a positive contribution to the Critical Success Factor of cost. The service is provided with virtually no marketing or advertising at present and it is clear that appropriate marketing of the service would dramatically increase the financial contribution of the Unit.

1996/97	1997/98	1998/99	1999/00
£5,623	£6,828	£6,319	£4,961

One problem that has resulted from the creation of this unit however, actually relates to its very success. The Unit is currently operating at near capacity, without any real marketing or advertising of its services. A great number of enquiries the Unit deals with are e-mail or postal. Although a further connection to the Scottish Indexes (Local On-Line Access or LOLA) and further computer terminals would allow the Unit to increase the number of bookings it received, there would be insufficient staff to deal with the core registration function as well as genealogy. The need to allow time for staff training, staff holidays etc. further exacerbates this situation. Marketing the Unit, by advertising its services would undoubtedly increase its customer base and therefore increase income for the Section but this must be balanced against the capacity of the Section to continue to deliver a competitive service. Consideration must therefore be given to how the Unit may be expanded on a self financing basis and the cost effectiveness of any proposal, adhering to existing Council recruitment policy

12.5 Provide Genealogy Service by Outsourcing,
It is possible that the problems concerning the expansion of the genealogy service, documented at 12.4, may be overcome by outsourcing the service. The advantages of such a scheme would be to allow the registration staff to concentrate on registration functions, with training the only real issue for the City Registrar. The cost of providing the service could also be covered by income from research fees.

There are however, many disadvantages and obstacles to such a proposal. Professional researchers charge a minimum of £16 per hour and as the Council only charge £15 per hour for the service, it would not be cost effective to outsource to professional genealogists. All of the current income from genealogy would be lost through outsourcing and the Council would still be faced with the running costs of the Unit as detailed in Appendix 4, resulting in a net loss. A member of the registration staff would also still be required to supervise any genealogist when using the statutory registers, thus negating any possible benefits in terms of human resources.

Recruiting casual staff to fulfil the genealogy role would also be problematic. The question of payment for such staff would pose a particular problem, if the proposal was to prove financially beneficial to the Council.

The payment would undoubtedly have to be lower than the rate for the lowest paid registrar but it would have to be sufficiently high to discourage the staff from accepting private commissions. Regardless of the level or method of payment however, the cost to the Council would nullify any benefits derived from income.

Staffing would also have to cope with the seasonal nature of many commissions. The seasonal nature of births, deaths and marriages would also mean that there would periodically be spare capacity within the Registrars Section that was not being effectively utilised. The problems of training would also be increased, particularly if the staff had no previous experience of registration, information technology or genealogy.

A further, important consideration would also be the position of the Registrar General, as presently only registration staff are permitted to oversee genealogical research. Consequently, any staff recruited for genealogical research may have to become permanent Council employees, attached to the Registrars Section. This would effectively rule out any proposal to recruit casual staff for genealogy.

12.6 Consideration of Options

The four options available to the Council are discussed at length above. The table below examines each option against feasibility and sustainability. It also considers the effect of each option against the Critical Success Factors and cash flow. A score is calculated for the effect each option will have on each of the Critical Success Factors. Each option is also evaluated against the criteria of Feasibility, Sustainability, Suitability and Cash Flow. The options scoring highest are therefore preferable and most likely to succeed.

5 = high/positive, 1 = low/negative.

	OPTION			
CRITERIA	Provide a Basic Service	Enhanced Service	Expand Additional Services	Outsourcing Genealogy
Professionalism	3	4	5	3
Accuracy	2	5	4	3
Quality	1	5	5	3
Speed	3	5	3	3
Cash Flow	2	5	3	1
Feasibility	5	5	3	2
Sustainability/ Suitability	2	5	5	3
TOTALS	18	34	28	18

1. Providing A Basic Registration Function

This option is feasible but is not suitable in light of the policy of Dundee City Council and that of the new Registrar General. It would also not serve the interests of the public, as it would reduce the quality, speed and accuracy of the

service, mainly due to poorer communication. Income would also be reduced, primarily from fewer civil marriages.
Not a recommended or desirable option.

2. ***Providing An Enhanced Service***
Consultation with other stakeholders in the Registration Chain, such as hospitals, will help clarify and improve procedures. Quality may also be improved by creating strategic alliances to communicate and improve procedures. Providing antenatal talks, genealogy lectures, attending wedding fairs, etc. would provide two way, visible and direct forms of communication. Before such ventures can be considered however, it will be necessary to gauge the reaction of other stakeholders to any joint initiatives. The City Registrar should therefore communicate with stakeholders in the registration chain and invite proposals for joint initiatives.

Designing literature that is clear and concise will ensure that information is clearly understood by the public. Consideration should therefore be given to designing existing and future literature to meet standards set by Crystal Mark. This will lead to benefits in accuracy and speed of service delivery.

At present civil marriages may be conducted in any Council building that is deemed suitable and appropriate to host a marriage ceremony. Identifying further, alternative premises for civil marriage would help add value to the civil marriage service in Dundee, whilst increasing income and reducing overall cost. This initiative would be feasible, suitable and sustainable, meeting both Council policy and that of the Registrar General.

It is therefore recommended that the City Registrar contacts appropriate stakeholders in an effort to establish formal communication channels/initiatives that will improve the service to the benefits of the various stakeholders. The City Registrar and the Director of Support Services should also seek to identify further Council buildings that may be suitable for conducting civil marriages.
Recommended Option

3. ***Providing Genealogy Service by Outsourcing***
The existing financial benefits of the Unit would almost certainly be lost should the service be outsourced. Although, arguably suitable, such a proposal may not be feasible or sustainable due to policy of the Registrar General and Dundee City Council. The limited space and the disruption to core functions within 89 Commercial Street would also be a restrictive factor in maintaining such a policy.
Not a recommended or desirable option.

13.　CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT PROPOSALS

Critical Success Factors

13.1　All Critical Success Factors
♦ The City Registrar will consult with the public on an annual basis, in an effort to achieve continuous improvement. Consultation will take the form of customer satisfaction questionnaires and informal interviews. These surveys will help gauge public opinion on the standard of service provided, monitor public use of the services the Section provides and identify any unmet needs for services.

♦ The creation of a Genealogy Unit has demonstrated that Value may be added to the work of the Section by offering additional services, using existing resources. This creation of this Unit has already led to an increase in income for the Section, thus reducing overall costs. Maximising the potential of the Unit within existing parameters is possibly feasible and is certainly suitable but cost will probably influence the success of any proposal. The City Registrar will therefore consider how the Genealogy service may be further developed and improved and report to the Administration Manager by September 2001. Due consideration will be given to ascertain the effect of advertising and marketing the service, with perhaps a limited, pilot advertising campaign. Consideration will also be given to how these resources may be further utilised to provide additional services to the public.

13.2   Accuracy of Records

♦ The Examiner from the office of the Registrar General spends several days in Dundee at the end of each year. He is tasked with ensuring that the information recorded by the staff is accurate and in accordance with procedure laid down by the Registrar General. He also considers the suitability of staff training, staffing levels and the general accommodation. Previously however, there has been very little feedback to the registration staff, following the visit of the District Examiner. The only formal communication at present is the Examiner's annual report which consists of a general grading of broad issues, without any specific commentary. The City Registrar and the Administration Manager will therefore meet with the Registrar General's Examiner at the end of each year, from December 2001, to discuss his report, in an effort to understand the nature of any errors and identify issues of mutual concern.

13.3   Quality of Service

♦ The City Registrar will investigate the possibility of applying for a Charter Mark for the Registration Section and report to the Director of Support Services by July 2001. The attainment of a Charter Mark will formally reinforce and build upon the issues identified by this best value review. Specifically it will help improve performance, boost staff morale and raise the standard of the service that the Section provides.

♦ It is important that all stakeholders are aware of their legal responsibilities and the processes involved in the registration of births, deaths and stillbirths. The City registrar is therefore obliged to communicate directly with stakeholders such as hospitals, doctors, religious organisations and funeral undertakers as well as the general public. At present this is mainly done through HMSO publications, locally produced leaflets and information from the Dundee City Council Website. Good communication should be simple, unambiguous and clear and these characteristics are the objectives of the Plain English Campaign. The City registrar and the Administration Manager will therefore investigate the feasibility of producing all literature to conform to the standards set by the Campaign, thus qualifying for their Crystal Mark award. The City Registrar will then report to the Director of Support Services by September 2001.

13.4   Cost

♦ The City Registrar, in conjunction with the Director of Finance, will benchmark with other Registration Authorities to measure and compare cost, on an annual basis. Any changes to current performance will be investigated and reported to the Director of Support Services.

♦ In an effort to maximise the potential of the Genealogy Unit, the City Registrar will investigate the possibility of qualification for heritage / tourism / lottery funding for the Genealogy Unit and come forward with a report to the Director of Support Services by December 2001.

14.   CONSULTATION
The Director of Support Services has been consulted on this Report. Consultation also occurred with the Registrar General through the District Examiner and the general public. Due to the content of the District Examiner's Report it was not necessary to consult further with the Registrar General.

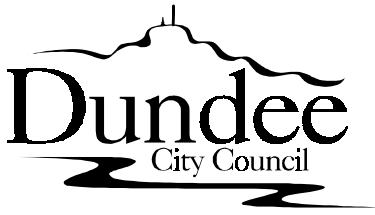**15.   BACKGROUND PAPERS**
Best Value Submission to the Secretary of State for Scotland December 1997. Policy and Resources Committee - 11th December 1997.

Chief Executive ………………………………………….. Date …………………………

Appendices

1.   Questionnaires
2.   Comparison of Success Factors
3.   Summary of Consultation Results
4.   Genealogy Unit Profit Statement
5.   Quality of Civil Marriage Accommodation

APPENDIX 1a
<u>CERTIFICATE SURVEY</u>

Registrar of Births etc.
89 Commercial Street
Dundee
DD1 2AF

To help us deliver the highest possible standard of service to the citizens of Dundee I would be grateful if you would answer the following questions and return this questionnaire to the reception desk.

1. Please rank the following in terms of importance to you when you purchased the certificate(s) today, by circling a number from 1 to 5.   5 = high and 1 = low

Professionalism of staff	Quality of Documents	Prompt Service
5 4 3 2 1	5 4 3 2 1	5 4 3 2 1

If there is any other element of our service that is particularly important to you, please describe below or on the other side of this sheet.

2. Were you satisfied with how long it took to prepare your certificate(s)?

Very satisfied	Satisfied	Unsatisfied	Very unsatisfied

3. How satisfied were you with the courteous and professional manner of the registrar who dealt with your enquiry?

Very satisfied	Satisfied	Unsatisfied	Very unsatisfied

4. How satisfied were you with the quality of the certificate(s)?

Very satisfied	Satisfied	Unsatisfied	Very unsatisfied

If you have any comments or suggestions to improve the service would you please briefly state these below or on the other side of this sheet.

APPENDIX 1b

BIRTHS SURVEY

**Registrar of Births etc.
89 Commercial Street
Dundee
DD1 2AF**

To help us deliver the highest possible standard of service to the citizens of Dundee. I would be grateful if you would answer the following questions and return this questionnaire to the reception desk.

2. Please rank the following in terms of importance to you when you registered this birth with the registrar, by circling a number from 1 to 5.   5 = high and 1 = low

Professionalism of staff records	Quality of documents	Prompt Service	Easy to find out what to do	Accuracy of
1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5

If there is any other element of our service that is particularly important to you, please describe on the other side of this sheet.

2. How easy was it to find out how to register a birth?

    👍   😊   ☹   👎

    Very Easy   Easy   Difficult   Very difficult

3. Were you satisfied how promptly your registration was dealt with?

    👍   😊   ☹   👎

Very satisfied   Satisfied   Unsatisfied   Very unsatisfied

4. How satisfied were you with the courteous and professional manner of the registrar who registered the birth?

    👍   😊   ☹   👎

Very satisfied   Satisfied   Unsatisfied   Very unsatisfied

5. How satisfied were you with the quality of your child's birth certificate and accompanying folder?

    👍   😊   ☹   👎

Very satisfied   Satisfied   Unsatisfied   Very unsatisfied

If you have any comments or suggestions to improve the service would you please briefly state these below or on the other side of this sheet.

THANK YOU FOR TAKING THE TIME TO COMPLETE THIS QUESTIONNAIRE

APPENDIX 1c
MARRIAGE SURVEY

Registrar of Births etc.
89 Commercial Street
Dundee
DD1 2AF

To help us deliver the highest possible standard of service to the citizens of Dundee I would be grateful if you would answer the following questions and return this questionnaire to the reception desk.

Please rank the following in terms of importance to you when you arranged your marriage with the registrar, by circling a number from 1 to 5.   5 = high and 1 = low

Professionalism of staff	Quality of documents	Prompt Service	Easy to find out what to do	Accuracy of Records
5 4 3 2 1	5 4 3 2 1	5 4 3 2 1	5 4 3 2 1	5 4 3 2 1

If there is any other element of our service that is particularly important to you, please describe below or on the back of this sheet.

1. Were you satisfied with how promptly your enquiries were dealt with?

   Very Satisfied   Satisfied   Dissatisfied   Very Dissatisfied

2. How satisfied were you with the courteous and professional manner of the registrar who dealt with your enquiries?

   Very Satisfied   Satisfied   Dissatisfied   Very Dissatisfied

3. Did the Marriage Forms and booklet fully explain what was required to arrange your marriage?

   Fully   Mostly   Partially   Not At All

4. How much knowledge of the procedure did you have before you visited the Registrars Office?

   Full Knowledge   Partial Knowledge   Limited Knowledge   None

If you have any comments or suggestions to improve the service would you please state these below or on the other side of this sheet.

THANK YOU FOR TAKING THE TIME TO COMPLETE THIS QUESTIONNAIRE

APPENDIX 1d
<u>GENEALOGY SURVEY</u>

**Registrar of Births etc.
89 Commercial Street
Dundee
DD1 2AF**

To help us deliver the highest possible standard of service to the citizens of Dundee I would be grateful if you would answer the following questions and return this questionnaire to the reception desk.

Please rank the following in terms of importance to you when you commissioned this research, by circling a number from 1 to 5.
    5 = high and 1 = low

Amount of Information   Presentation of Information   Value for Money

5 4 3 2 1   5 4 3 2 1   5 4 3 2 1

If there is any other element of this service that is particularly important to you, please describe below or on the back of this sheet.

1. How satisfied were you with the amount of information you received as a result of this search?

      👍   ☺   ☹   👎

Very satisfied   Satisfied   Unsatisfied   Very unsatisfied

2. How reasonable was the fee for the service which you received?

      👍   ☺   ☹   👎

Very Reasonable   Reasonable   Unreasonable   Very Unreasonable

3. If applicable, how satisfied were you with the presentation of the information which you received?

      👍   ☺   ☹   👎

Very satisfied   Satisfied   Unsatisfied   Very unsatisfied

If you have any comments or suggestions to improve the service would you please state these below or on the other side of this sheet.

THANK YOU FOR TAKING THE TIME TO COMPLETE THIS QUESTIONNAIRE

APPENDIX 1e
CIVIL MARRIAGE SURVEY

Registrar of Births etc.
89 Commercial Street
Dundee
DD1 2AF

(Telephone Survey)   Name of couple;   Date of Marriage;

1. From whom did you hear about the procedure to arrange your marriage?

   Minister   Family/friends   Registrar   Hotel   Other

2. When you visited the registrar's office, how well were you dealt with by the reception staff?

   👍   ☺   😐   ☹
   Very Well   Well   Poorly   Very Poorly

3. How satisfied were you with the registrar who issued/checked your marriage forms?

   👍   ☺   😐   ☹
   Very Well   Well   Poorly   Very Poorly

4. How satisfied were you with the courteous and professional manner in which the marriage ceremony was conducted by the registrar?

   👍   ☺   ☹   👎
   Very satisfied   Satisfied   Unsatisfied   Very unsatisfied

5. How well was our service tailored to your individual needs?

   👍   ☺   ☹   👎
   Very Well   Well   Poorly   Very Poorly

6. How easy was it to get to the registrar's office?

   👍   ☺   ☹   👎
   Very Easy   Easy   Difficult   Very difficult

7. How satisfied were you with the photographic opportunities within the registrar's office?

   👍   ☺   ☹   👎
   Very satisfied   Satisfied   Unsatisfied   Very unsatisfied

8. How satisfied were you with the parking facility at the registrar's office?

👍   ☺   ☹   👎
Very satisfied   Satisfied   Unsatisfied   Very unsatisfied

9. How satisfied were you with the overall accommodation within the registrar's office?

👍   ☺   ☹   👎
Very satisfied   Satisfied   Unsatisfied   Very unsatisfied

Lastly could you please tell us how important the following were to you.

Professionalism of Staff Unimportant	Very important	Fairly important	Not very important
Tailored service to needs Unimportant	Very important	Fairly important	Not very important
Access and parking Unimportant	Very important	Fairly important	Not very important
Photographic Opportunities Unimportant	Very important	Fairly important	Not very important
Accuracy of records Unimportant	Very important	Fairly important	Not very important
Quality of Accommodation Unimportant	Very important	Fairly important	Not very important

Is there any other element of this service that is particularly important to you that we have not mentioned?

THANK YOU FOR TAKING THE TIME TO ANSWER THESE QUESTIONS

APPENDIX 2

COMPARISON OF SUCCESS FACTORS

The public were consulted by means of several questionnaires which measured performance and satisfaction levels in relation to births, civil and religious marriages, genealogy and certificates. These questionnaires asked the public to express the importance of several success factors.

Very few Registration Authorities however, were able to provide information that allowed a straightforward comparison of Success Factors and the few Authorities that did provide information measured differing, narrow aspects of the service that was provided. It was therefore necessary to categorise those factors that could be measured in terms of comparable Success Factors. Consequently, it was necessary to group success factors above into similar categories to allow comparison. The effect of this resulted in the following categories:

Professionalism of Staff	Quality of Service	Speed of Service	Cost	Accuracy
♦ Registrars	♦ Quality of documents	♦ Prompt Service	♦ Value for Money	♦ Accuracy of Records
♦ Reception Staff	♦ Marriage Accommodation	♦ Waiting Times		
	♦ Presentation of Information			
	♦ Photographic Opportunities			
	♦ Access and Parking			
	♦ Amount of Information			
	♦ Easy to find out what to do			
	♦ Value For Money			
	♦ Tailored Service			

The results of each questionnaire were then condensed, to determine the Critical Success Factors, in line with the categories above. An analysis of the responses by the public to the questionnaires revealed the following results;

SUCCESS FACTOR	IMPORTANCE	% of RESPONDENTS
Professionalism of Staff	96%	88%
Amount of Information	96%	11%
Accuracy of Information	95%	64%
Easy to find out what to do	95%	58%
Quality of Documents etc.	94%	88%
Marriage Accommodation	93%	7%
Photographic Opportunities	89%	7%
Value For Money	88%	11%
Tailored Service	86%	7%
Access and Parking	86%	7%
Prompt Service	85%	88%
Presentation of Information	85%	11%

These results were then considered against the stated Success Factors of Quality, Professionalism and Accuracy from the Registrar General, to determine the Critical Success Factors for the Section.

APPENDIX 3 :SUMMARY OF CONSULTATION RESULTS

Professionalism of Staff

Number of Responses = 214   Satisfaction Rating = 97%

	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Unsatisfied	Very Unsatisfied
Number of Responses*	191	23	0	0
% of Total Responses	89.25%	10.75%	0%	0%

Quality

Number of Responses = 265   Satisfaction Rating = 95%

	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Unsatisfied	Very Unsatisfied
Number of Responses*	217	46	2	0
% of Total Responses	81.90%	17.35%	0.75%	0.00%

Cost

Number of Responses = 25   Satisfaction Rating = 89%

	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Unsatisfied	Very Unsatisfied
Number of Responses*	17	8	0	0
% of Total Responses	68%	32%	0%	0%

Speed

Number of Responses = 178   Satisfaction Rating = 96%

	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Unsatisfied	Very Unsatisfied
Number of Responses*	150	22	1	0
% of Total Responses	86.70%	12.72%	0.58%	0%

*Responses were scored on the following basis:-
Very satisfied = 4   Satisfied = 3   Unsatisfied = 2   Very Unsatisfied = 1
A satisfaction level was then calculated by dividing the score for each question against the maximum achievable score and expressing this as a percentage.