



Subject:	Consultation on the Death, Still-Birth and Baby Loss Bill
Date:	20 th June 2025
Reporting Officer:	Nora Largey, City Solicitor/Director of Legal & Civic Services
Contact Officer:	Joanne Murray, Civic Services Manager

Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Please indicate the description, as listed in Schedule 6, of the exempt information by virtue of which the council has deemed this report restricted.	
Insert number <input type="checkbox"/>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Information relating to any individual2. Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the council holding that information)4. Information in connection with any labour relations matter5. Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained6. Information showing that the council proposes to (a) to give a notice imposing restrictions on a person; or (b) to make an order or direction7. Information on any action in relation to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime	
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sometime in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues
1.1	To bring to members attention correspondence from Mathew O'Toole, Chair of the Committee for Finance at the Northern Ireland Assembly, on the councils' views on the Deaths, Still-Birth and Baby Loss Bill. (Appendix 1)

2.0	Recommendation
2.1	<p>The Committee is asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approve the officer submission (Appendix 2), as the Council's formal response.
3.0	Main Report
3.1	<p>The Death, Still-Birth and Baby Loss Bill was introduced by the Finance Minister, John O'Dowd MLA, on 25th March 2025. The purpose of the Bill is to amend the law relating to the manner of notification of deaths and still-births and the manner of giving particulars relating to them. It will also provide a legislative basis for the introduction of a baby loss scheme and will address differences in registration processes for births and still-births between some same-sex female couples and opposite-sex couples.</p>
3.2	<p>The framework for the registration of deaths and still-births in Northern Ireland is defined within the Births and Deaths Registration (Northern Ireland) Order 1976 ("the 1976 Order") and the Civil Registration Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2012 ("the 2012 Regulations").</p>
3.3	<p>The General Register Office for Northern Ireland is responsible for administering the registration of deaths and still-births in Northern Ireland. The local district councils are responsible for the provision of the registration service through 11 registration districts. There are on average 17,000 deaths and 75 still-births each year in Northern Ireland.</p>
3.4	<p>As required by the 1976 Order, all deaths in Northern Ireland must be registered, in any district in Northern Ireland, within 5 days of the date of death; and still-births must be registered within 42 days of the date of still-birth, also in any district in Northern Ireland.</p>
3.5	<p>Following discussions with Belfast City Council Registrar Team and the broader registrar network it is felt that the amendments to the bill are appropriate. However, the team would like to put forward to the Committee the following suggestions as mentioned in our formal response.</p>
3.6	<p>In the event of a Still Birth Registration, or the death of an infant under 1 year old, whilst short birth and death certificate and a still birth certificate is also provided to the family free of charge as per Art 40A of the Births and Deaths Registration (NI) Order 1976, families do ask for a long birth certificate, which requires the Council to charge the statutory fee of £8. As appears in the consultation response, officers are asking that this statutory obligation is removed.</p>

3.7	<p><u>Emergency Ceremonies</u></p> <p>Council officers have also suggested that marriage certificates should be issued for free if one of the parties to be married is terminally ill with a very limited life expectancy. Quite often these ceremonies are carried out in private homes, hospitals/hospices or if the couple are physically able to attend at City Hall.</p>
3.8	<p><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></p> <p>There are no financial implications for the Council as the fee income goes directly to the General Registry Office.</p>
3.9	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>None</p>
4.0	Appendices - Documents Attached
	<p>Appendix 1 – Letter from Matthew O’Toole, Committee for Finance Chair, Northern Ireland Assembly</p> <p>Appendix 2 – Officer Response</p> <p>Appendix 3 – Summary of updates to the Bill from GRO</p>