

## EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

### COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE - 25<sup>th</sup> MAY 2005

#### REVIEW OF LIBRARY, REGISTRATION AND INFORMATION SERVICES

##### Report by Executive Director of Neighbourhood Services

#### 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To recommend to Community Services Committee the summary findings of the Member Officer Working Group on the future direction and priorities for Library, Registration and Information Services.

#### 2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Community Services Committee agreed on 24<sup>th</sup> March 2004 to establish a short life Member Officer Working Group to review Library, Registration and Information Services. The group met 6 times, visited number of libraries and Local Offices and reached the conclusions detailed below.

#### 3. CONSIDERATIONS

- 3.1 The group visit to libraries and Local Offices helped illustrate the strengths and weaknesses in design, location and suitability for purpose of some of our buildings. The Member Officer Working Group concluded that :-

- ❖ Service points should be multi-purpose where this is practicable. (This recommendation has been put into effect with the reconfiguration of library services in the Bellsbank/Dalmellington area).
- ❖ Shared sites delivering a range of services provide value for money, security for staff, and are attractive to the public.
- ❖ While a "high street" presence can provide profile, ease of parking is very important to users and should be given a high priority in planning service points.

- 3.2 The Member Officer Working Group welcomed the development of a comprehensive Property Asset Register by Development Services and expressed the view that it should include information on whether or not a building is "fit for purpose". The development of Statutory Performance Indicators requiring a DDA Access Audit for Council buildings was also welcomed. The group further concluded that:

- ❖ There should be an ongoing review mechanism associated with the Property Asset Register to ensure that unsuitable buildings are recognised and appropriate replacements identified.

- ❖ Plans for new facilities should be widely communicated to all potential partners.
  - ❖ “Non traditional” funding sources should be investigated for the funding of the upgrade of existing facilities.
  - ❖ Poor or intermittent repair and maintenance of high profile public buildings such as libraries and Local Offices gives a very poor public impression of East Ayrshire Council and that consideration should be given to improving the current system of buildings maintenance.
- 3.3 The Member Officer Group considered the competing demands for “face to face” services and the growth in allocation of resources to electronic delivery mechanisms. The Working Group was given a demonstration from IT and Local Office staff of the new Modernising Government Fund initiative, the Customer Contact Gateway (CCG), which is now operational in all Local Offices. The Working Group:
- ❖ Recognised the value and potential of this development.
  - ❖ Supported the Chair’s decision to request a presentation for other Members of the Council.
  - ❖ Agreed that a “corporate launch” would be appropriate for the CCG.
  - ❖ Agreed that this important initiative should be supported by other Council departments.
  - ❖ Stressed the importance of other Council departments supporting this initiative and ensuring that their “back office” information is kept up-to-date.
- 3.4 CCG provides Local Office staff with a full range of “back office” information enabling them to answer enquiries quickly and accurately.
- The Working Group was advised that:
- ❖ Local Office staff using CCG could deal with up to 80% of customers’ needs at this first point of contact.
  - ❖ Time spent by Council “back office” staff in answering enquiries will be considerably reduced.
- 3.5 The Distributed Contact Centre (DCC) element of the CCG initiative will provide the enquirer with a single telephone number to access the Local Office network. A caller to the Council would be automatically routed to a Local Office in which the phone line was not engaged, so for example, staff at the New Cumnock office could take an enquiry or payment from a caller from Lugton. The Working Group concluded that:

- ❖ The DCC has the capacity to augment the Council's main telephone number and the Helpline and provide callers to the Council with a fully integrated enquiry system.

3.6 The Member Officer Working Group concluded that:

- ❖ It is important that East Ayrshire Council has a physical presence in our communities.
- ❖ Local Offices and Libraries play a major part in providing East Ayrshire Council with that physical presence.
- ❖ CCG proposals enable the Council to have a physical presence combined with a cost effective, sophisticated electronic information and payment service that enables the Council to meet its e-government targets.

3.7 The Member Officer Group, through Community Services Committee, brought forward reconfiguration proposals for Dalmellington and Bellsbank Community Libraries. These proposals are being implemented.

3.8 The Member Officer Group noted that Library Registration and Information Services surveys customers on an ongoing basis and utilises the feedback to shape service delivery where resources allow.

#### **4. FINANCIAL/LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 Nil

#### **5. CONCLUSION**

5.1 The Member Officer Working Group considered a wide range of issues relating to Libraries, to Local Offices and to the Registration of Births, Deaths and Marriages. In view of the start of the Best Value review of the Registration Service there are no specific recommendations for that service. The Working Group has however brought forward a series of recommendations that are detailed in sections 3.1 – 3.8 of this report and which provide a clear way forward for the development of Library, Registration and Information Services.

#### **6. RECOMMENDATIONS**

6.1 It is recommended that Community Services Committee agrees to the findings of this report.

William Stafford

**Executive Director of Neighbourhood Services**

WS/JAG/KH

17<sup>th</sup> May 2005

**LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS – Nil**

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