

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE – 31 MAY 2005

AYRSHIRE ELECTRONIC COMMUNITY

Report by Depute Chief Executive / Executive Director of Corporate Support

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1** To advise Members of steps which have been taken to consolidate the portfolio of services previously provided by the Ayrshire Electronic Community project within the Council's mainstream activities thereby ensuring sustainability of service provision.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1** At the 25th November 2004 meeting of Policy and Resources Committee, Members were advised that the temporarily funded Ayrshire Electronic Community (AEC) project would reach the end of its funding period on 31st December 2004. Committee consequently remitted to the Depute Chief Executive / Executive Director of Corporate Support, to consult with service departments, to identify and take forward the transition of appropriate essential services from AEC into the Council.

3. PROGRESS

- 3.1** Since the decisions of Committee in November 2004, appropriate consultations on the sustainability of key elements of the AEC service portfolio have taken place with relevant service departments and service users, and technical issues have now been resolved in respect of the disaggregation of the AEC ICT infrastructure to East and North Ayrshire Councils, as the former project's principal sponsors.
- 3.2** Available funding to consolidate key elements of the AEC portfolio of services into the Council's mainstream provision is available from a combination of the AEC Phase 1 and 2 Revenue Budget balances due to this Council, and a proportion of the Council's ICT Capital Expenditure Programme for 2005/06.
- 3.3** As a consequence of consultation with the relevant service departments and service providers, and with regard to the aforementioned package of available funding, it has been concluded that all of the services provided currently by the AEC project up to 30th June 2005 will, from that date onwards, be able to be consolidated within the Council's mainstream service provision.
- 3.4** The available funding package, as outlined in Section 3.2 of this Report, will be utilised to support the consolidation of service provision until end-September 2006. The continuation of service provision from October 2006 will require the allocation of additional funding through the Council's ICT Capital Expenditure Programme in combination with possible additional funding provision from the Community Planning Partnership's Community Regeneration Fund to enable the continuation of

community based learning previously developed through AEC. An allowance for this Community Regeneration funding has been identified.

4. AEC APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

4.1 The main objective of AEC was to increase the uptake and use of ICT by community groups, businesses and individuals in the community. AEC staff, therefore, adopted the undernoted six key principles in designing and implementing initiatives.

Awareness	Initiatives to raise awareness encouraging curiosity matched with a sense of achievement.
Engagement	Innovative methodology to engage and retain users, and build confidence.
Access	Providing non-users and the disadvantaged with access to ICT.
Skills and Training	Providing opportunities and initiatives to ensure new users are not overwhelmed or confused by technology and to enable progression.
Use	Ensuring that the use of ICT must be appropriate and relevant to the user.
Impact	Ensuring that impact is beneficial to the individual, communities or business.

4.2 The project's approach and methodology was extremely successful as reported to Policy and Resources Committee on 25th November 2004, with AEC achieving and exceeding the targets set by the partnership, and it is now intended that best practice initiatives are sustained into the future.

5. TRANSITION AND CONSOLIDATION OF AEC SERVICES

5.1 As a result of consultation with the relevant service departments, and having regard to the Council and its objectives under the Community Regeneration Outcome Agreement, it is proposed to integrate the elements of the AEC Service portfolio within the Council's mainstream activities in the following manner :

5.1.1 Development of and Support to Learning Centres. It is proposed that the Community Learning and Development Service will strengthen and expand the learning opportunities available in learning centres for young people, adults and community groups, by appointing additional staff through the available Community Regeneration Funding allocated for this purpose. The Learning Centres identified are those which are located within the 0-15% data zones in the Cumnock Area, the Doon Valley Area and in Shortlees, Kilmarnock, with staffing levels in the remaining being retained.

5.1.2 Public Access Kiosks. The existing public access Kiosks within Glaisnock Shopping Centre, Cumnock and the Bellsbank Community Centre will be fully integrated into the Council's ICT Wide Area Data Network (WAN), thereby ensuring continuity of the current service and thus providing a means to continue the development and support of information provision through these facilities.

- 5.1.3** Support to former Social Inclusion Partnership (SIP) Representatives. Essential ICT support currently provided by AEC to former SIP representatives will be continued through an extension to existing corporate contracted arrangements for PC support within the Council. The provision will be enhanced to accommodate the conjoined/new Community Planning Partnership representatives covering the north and south of the Council area.
- 5.1.4** Outreach Support to Community and Community & Voluntary Organisations. The Council of Voluntary Organisations (CVO) East Ayrshire is currently conducting an ICT audit to establish the extent of the need for ICT support and training in the voluntary sector. This exercise should be concluded by early-June and if it is determined that such a need exists, then CVO will develop a Business Plan and will seek suitable alternative funding sources to address the need.
- 5.1.5** Development and Support of Community Web Sites. The hosting, support and further development of the existing portfolio of 90+ Community Web Sites will be continued through an externalised managed support contract. In this respect "Expressions of Interest" have been sought, and an Invitation to Tender has now been issued. This contract will provide a means for individual Web Site owners to update site content and to track user accesses.
- 5.1.6** AEC ICT Infrastructure. Arrangements are already in place to, where appropriate, transfer the main elements of the AEC ICT infrastructure to East and North Ayrshire Councils as the project's principal sponsors, and to disaggregate the remaining assets amongst all partners in accordance with relevant European funding guidance and the Council's Asset Disposal Procedures.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1** All costs associated with the transition and continuation of individual AEC services will be met from the Council's share of surpluses accruing from the AEC Revenue Budget as at 31st December 2004, and from provision contained within the Council's ICT Capital Expenditure Programme for 2005/06.
- 6.2** All recurring costs associated with the continued provision of individual AEC services once transferred to the Council's mainstream service provision will be met from a combination of the Council's proportion of the AEC Phase 1 and 2 Revenue Budget balances, the Council's ICT Capital Programme and the Community Planning Partnership's settlement under Community Fund Regeneration Outcome Agreement.

7 MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS

- 7.1** Given the nature of the services being provided and the inseparable link to the Community Plan and its Promoting Community Learning theme, it is considered appropriate for the Community Learning and Development Section of the Department of Educational and Social Services to act as lead in respect of delivering the services formally provided through AEC, supported in respect of the technical aspects of the service by IT Services, and accordingly for the staffing resource reverting to the Council to be accommodated there also, thereby providing service continuity and ensuring sustainability of service provision.

8. LEGAL / POLICY IMPLICATIONS

None.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Committee :

- (i) Notes progress made in respect of consolidating the AEC service portfolio within the Council's mainstream service provision.
- (ii) Notes the manner in which the individual elements of the AEC service portfolio will be integrated into the Council's mainstream service provision.
- (iii) Notes the establishment of management arrangements intended to ensure service continuity and sustainability of service provision.
- (iv) Otherwise notes the contents of the Report.

Elizabeth Morton

Depute Chief Executive / Executive Director of Corporate Support

24 May 2005

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

Nil

Implementation Officer : Elizabeth Morton, Depute Chief Executive / Executive Director
of Corporate Support