

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE – 10TH APRIL 2002

LOCAL OFFICE AND REGISTRATION SERVICES

Report by Director of Community Services

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To seek approval for a number of changes in the delivery of Local Office and Registration Services.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 As part of a routine annual review of services provided in Local Offices and Registration Services in November 2001, managers raised a number of issues that required attention. The issues identified at the time were:

- (i) a shortage of relief staff within a growing number of local offices;
- (ii) a shortage of Registration staff within a service currently dealing with a wide range of new developments, including;
 - marriages outwith registration offices
 - digital access to national records
 - electronic links to Register House
 - baby naming ceremonies
 - national changes to Registration laws and procedures;
- (iii) local office opening and closing times;
- (iv) health and safety/security concerns;
- (v) ageing IT equipment.

3. PROGRESS SO FAR

- 3.1 A number of issues have already been tackled and actioned including:
- (i) A standard Health and Safety/Security package for Local Offices, is now in place; and
 - (ii) A replacement programme for information technology equipment has been initiated.

4 ISSUES TO BE ADDRESSED

4.1 Local Office Relief Staff

4.1.1 There is a severe shortage of relief staff within a growing network of Local Offices and often non-trained staff from other Sections have had to cover for sickness absence or annual leave.

4.1.2 Additional staffing/staff hours are also required at the Bellfield Local Office. This office has only one local office staff member present but both have experienced an increased customer base to such an extent that additional staff are required.

4.2 Registration Service Developments

4.1.2 As outlined in 2.1. (ii) above there are a range of developments currently underway in the Registration service. All of these will require considerable management and staff time to implement. Since Registration staff are also local office staff this also impinges on local office services.

4.3 Opening and Closing Times.

4.3.1 A recent audit was carried out by the Councils' Internal Audit section and whilst favourable overall, it was recommended that local offices should introduce preparation time at the beginning and end of each day to allow for proper accounting and reconciliation of cash.

4.3.2 Currently, staff who require to prepare before opening times or reconcile after closing times, accumulate this time and it is given as time off in lieu. This results in further pressure on the relief bank of staff.

4.3.3 Similarly to banks and building societies local offices could open 15 minutes later and close 15 earlier enabling the service to comply with audit recommendations on financial security.

4.4 Expansion of Services

The Council have an outstanding commitment to provide a Local Office in Crosshouse and this will be considered as part of the capital programme process.

5. DISCUSSION

5.1 It is proposed to allocate, subject to Committee approval, additional resources to further address the difficulties highlighted above. These resources would include the appointment of two relief staff, appoint one part-time member of staff for Bellfield Local Office and appoint an additional Registrar at Kilmarnock.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 The total additional expenditure relating to the above is approximately £54,000 and this can be met from the department budget for 2002 – 2003.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 Nil.

8. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

8.1 The maintenance and development of Local Offices is concurrent with the Council's Decentralisation Policy.

9. CONCLUSION

9.1 As part of a management review of the Local Office and Registration services a number of deficiencies have been identified which have an adverse effect on staff and the service to the public, as well as reducing efficiency. It is proposed to address these issues through the provision of additional staff resources and slight adjustments to the opening hours of offices.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

10.1 It is recommended that the Committee:-

- (i) approve the appointment of additional staff as outlined in this report;
- (ii) refer the matter to the Corporate Sub-Committee of the Policy and Resources Committee in so far as the remit of that Committee is concerned;
- (iii) approve the additional expenditure of £54,000 on Local Offices and Registration Services;
- (iv) consider and approve, if acceptable, the reduced hours of opening of offices; and
- (v) otherwise note the contents of the report.

William Stafford
Director of Community Services

25th March 2002

WS/RRS

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

Nil.

Implementation Officer – william.stafford@east-ayrshire.gov.uk

AGENDA