

**THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL**  
**EDUCATION, CULTURE AND SPORT COMMITTEE**  
**18 SEPTEMBER 2008**

Agenda Item	
Report No	

**Review of Administrative and Clerical Support Staff**

**Report by Director of Education, Culture and Sport**

**SUMMARY**

This report provides members with a progress report on the review of administrative and clerical support staff across the Education Culture & Sport (ECS) Service including the outcomes of the information gathering phase and details of the design and implementation phases that will be undertaken over the next 6 to 12 months.

**1.0 Introduction**

1.1 On the 8<sup>th</sup> November 2007 the ECS Committee approved proposals to review and restructure the administrative and clerical support staff functions across the non-school sectors (hereafter referred to as the review). That report is appended for information (**Annex 1**). This report summarises the actions undertaken since then and the proposals for the next stage in the review process.

It should be noted that the support functions within the schools sectors were subsequently included within the review on the basis that there were inextricable links with the wider review.

1.2 The review had the following objectives:

- The creation of an integrated support function throughout the Service.
- To establish the appropriate support structures to meet the needs of the revised management structures throughout the Service.
- To drive forward business improvement and the efficiency agenda.
- To manage change in a collaborative and open manner.

**2.0 The Corporate Context**

2.1 The Council is committed to improving efficiency via the Corporate Change project using the diagnostic tool-kit devised by the Improvement Service. This approach will identify the scale of the opportunity to simplify, standardise and share functions to enable a strategic view to be taken of potential improvements and efficiency savings that can be re-directed to front-line service delivery.

2.2 Aspects of the ECS support staff review will ultimately converge with the Corporate Change project. It should therefore be regarded as complementary to the corporate project. It should be noted that the Shared Services Project is a significant undertaking and that it is likely to have a 2 to 3 year implementation phase.

### 3.0 Implementation Timescale

- 3.1 The review comprises 3 distinct phases – analysis, redesign and implementation.
- 3.2 During the analysis phase the current situation was captured and analysed. Thereafter opportunities for improvement were identified and understood. This phase is nearing completion with in excess of 700 process maps currently being constructed and validated for all support staff activities identified during face-to-face meetings with groupings of support staff across the Service. This was a significant exercise which could not have been completed without the dedicated support of colleagues both within the ECS Service and the Business Improvement Team (BIT) to whom thanks are extended.
- 3.3 The information gathering phase produced evidence of the following:
- Fragmentation
  - Duplication
  - Out of date work practices and processes
  - Inefficient uses of IT
  - Manual processes
  - Non-integrated systems and processes
  - Individualistic work practices

Improvements in staffing processes had been delayed awaiting the outcome of the corporate Payroll Personnel project.

- 3.4 The next stage is to take forward detailed work in relation to 7 specific projects which are detailed in **Annex 2**. Each project team will include a core group, comprising – a project leader, an ECS Business Support Officer and the appropriate level of support from the BIT.

Project Initiation Documents (PID) will be prepared for each project during September and these will be approved by the Service senior management team before progressing to the next phase. The completion date for each project will be determined by the nature and complexity of the work required.

- 3.5 There is a recognition that, particularly for project leaders, there will be a significant time commitment related to involvement within a project group. Work priorities will therefore have to be re-assessed during certain phases of the project. This is on the basis that the successful delivery of these projects is regarded as a high priority.
- 3.6 During the next phases of the review some existing processes may be redesigned and/or re-engineered and thereafter modelled and tested in an operating environment. When this phase is completed changes to processes and structures will be implemented. The BIT will provide advice and guidance during these phases and will ensure that the appropriate interfaces with the Corporate Change projects are in place.

#### **4.0 Other Related Changes to Date**

- 4.1 Accommodation – a stated objective of the review was to create an integrated support structure. A key aspect of this objective was to co-locate the appropriate support staff wherever possible. Co-location of the support staff for the ECS Inverness, Nairn and Badenoch & Strathspey management team will be achieved by the end of October 2008. Similar moves to varying degrees are on-going in Dingwall and Portree.
- 4.2 School Transport Administration – the ECS Committee in May 2008 approved the creation of an integrated Transport Unit within TEC Services that in future would assume responsibility for the administration of the school transport function. The transitional arrangements are progressing well with appointments to the new posts within TEC Services expected to be completed by the end of October 2008. A project group that includes officers from both Services has been established to oversee the detailed transitional arrangements including clarification of roles and responsibilities and the appropriate process and system interfaces.

#### **5.0 Change management**

- 5.1 One of the objectives of the review is to manage change in an open and collaborative manner. This objective is being achieved by the following actions:
- Quarterly briefing notes for all staff that may be affected by the review
  - Regular face-to-face briefings with trade union representatives and colleagues in the Personnel Service
  - Face-to-face meetings with staff when changes are about to take place, for example during August and September meetings with staff whose current duties include school transport administration
- 5.2 A change management seminar for all Business Support staff within the Services was held on the 8<sup>th</sup> August. This event, which was facilitated by the Training and Development team, enabled this staff grouping to be briefed in detail about their role in the change process and also to share their concerns about the future. This type of approach will be considered for other staff groupings throughout the review period.
- 5.3 During the review period it is likely that there will be deletion of some support staff posts and the re-deployment of staff within the terms of the Council's redeployment policy. The reasons for this are outlined in paragraph 3.3 above.

#### **6.0 Resource and equality implications**

- 6.1 At this stage in the review it is difficult to be precise about the possible outcomes. However it is certain that on the basis of the information gathered to date that some changes to processes and structures will be required. In addition there may be changes to some work locations. The objective however is to ensure that the support structure is as efficient as possible in order that scarce financial resources can be redirected to front-line service delivery.

- 6.2 When future support staff structures are being considered one of the key principles will be to ensure that there is equality of provision across all geographical areas of the Highlands.
- 6.3 To accompany changes to systems and processes there is a commitment to ensure that all relevant employees receive the appropriate training and support.

## **7.0 RECOMMENDATION**

- 7.1 Members are asked to note the progress with the review of administrative and clerical support staff and that further progress reports will be brought to members throughout the period of the review.

Signature:

Designation: Director of Education, Culture & Sport

Date: 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2008

Ref: HF/RM

Background Papers:

- Annex 1 ECS Committee report 8<sup>th</sup> November 2007 – “Restructuring of administrative and clerical staff in the non-school sectors”
- Annex 2 A summary of the 7 projects to be considered during the next phase of the review.

**THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL**  
**EDUCATION, CULTURE AND SPORT COMMITTEE**  
**8 November 2007**

**ANNEX 1**

Agenda Item	
Report No	

**Restructuring of Administrative and Clerical staff in the Non-School Sectors**

**Report by Director of Education, Culture and Sport**

**SUMMARY**

This report continues the restructuring process agreed by the ECS Committee in November 2006, January 2007 and March 2007 by outlining proposals for a review of all administrative and clerical support posts in the non-school sectors. The report asks members to approve the intended review process and the initial proposals for amendments to structure.

**1. BACKGROUND**

- 1.1 Members agreed on 9 November 2006 and 25 January 2007, to introduce a new management structure that reflected the new operational management Areas within the Highland Council. It was also agreed on 8 March 2007 to introduce other area functions and Highland wide functional teams.
- 1.2 In order to ensure that the appropriate administrative and clerical (hereafter referred to as support staff) structures are in place to support the above changes it is now necessary to carry out a review of all such designations across the Service. This review will include all parts of the Service out-with the schools sector. The support staff function in schools will be the subject of a separate review at a later date.

**2. THE REVIEW PROCESS**

- 2.1 The review process will be as follows:-
  - Information gathering – the objective is to establish what is done, why it is done, how it is done and who it is done for. The time spent on individual tasks will also be included within the information gathering stage.
  - In parallel to the information gathering process there will be review of existing ECS office accommodation with a view to amalgamating staff within fewer offices wherever possible.
  - The information gathered above in relation to existing tasks and office accommodation will be analysed and will form the basis of revised support staff proposals for consideration by members.
  - It is anticipated that the above processes will be completed within approximately 6 months, around the end of the current financial year. Thereafter it is

anticipated that full implementation of any proposals agreed by members could take a further 12 to 18 months.

### **3. THE CONSULTATIVE PROCESS**

3.1 The successful management of change is under-pinned by regular effective communication with all relevant stake-holders. To date the following communication has taken place:

- At the outset discussions took place with the relevant trade union representatives and the Head of Personnel. These meetings out-lined the details of the review process, the consultative process, the governance arrangements and the likely time-scale for implementation. There were no objections to the information provided at this meeting.
- 165 support staff were invited to attend a series of locally-based meetings with ECS senior management during the week commencing 22<sup>nd</sup> October. Also in attendance were officials from the Personnel Service and trade union representatives. These meetings afforded staff the opportunity to raise issues and voice any concerns about the review process. Some of the issues emerging from those meetings were regarding job location, salary, training for new jobs, travel to new location, how the review process will be carried out and what impact job evaluation will have on the review.
- At each stage in the review process there will be regular communication with all stake-holders. There is a commitment to hold regular locally-based meetings throughout in order to provide staff with the opportunity to hear first-hand progress to date. The views of all stake-holders will be considered prior to the completion of final proposals for the consideration of members.
- It is recognised that the corporate Business Improvement Team (BIT) has had significant experience in the process of back-office reconfiguration. It is therefore appropriate that the advice and support of this team is sought at the crucial stages during this review.
- Colleagues in Housing & Property Services will assist with the review of ECS office accommodation.
- Colleagues in TEC Services in relation to the proposed creation of an Integrated Transport Unit which will be the subject of a separate report to the January 2008 ECS Committee.

### **4. THE GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS**

4.1 Regular reports will be brought to the ECS Committee meetings in November 2007 and January 2008 with final proposals reflecting the outcome of the review process being presented to members in March 2008.

## 5. POSSIBLE OUTCOMES

5.1 Due to the scale and complexity of this review it is not possible to be prescriptive at this stage about the possible outcomes of the review. However, it is important that all stake-holders, including Members, are made aware of the areas where changes could occur. These include:

- The likely creation of a single ECS support structure within each of the new administrative Areas.
- Some support staff may be working in different locations
- Some job contents may change
- A significant emphasis on meeting identified training needs

5.2 In recognition of the fact that some existing support staff may need to be redeployed during the period following the review, the process of managing vacancies within the ECS Service has been reviewed. This revision has been agreed in conjunction with the Head of Personnel. The main objective of the review was to ensure that appropriate posts are held in order that support staff affected by the restructuring could, in theory, be redeployed into those vacant posts. The main change, therefore, in relation to administrative and clerical assistant posts is that, with immediate effect, many posts falling vacant will not be filled for a period of 3 months after which time the position will be reviewed further.

## 6. INITIAL PROPOSALS

6.1 Historically the senior administrative posts within the Area Education structure have been as follows:

- |                   |                              |
|-------------------|------------------------------|
| • I, N and B&S    | Support Services Officer     |
| • Ross & Cromarty | Area Education Administrator |
| • Lochaber        | Area Education Administrator |
| • Sutherland      | Area Education Administrator |
| • Skye & Lochalsh | Area Education Administrator |

6.2 There was no equivalent post assigned to Caithness. In addition there are no corresponding posts within the Community Learning and Leisure sector. Within the new ECS management structure approved on the 25 January 2007 there is a Business Support Officer post (Grade AP5) within the HQ structure.

6.3 It is recognised that the above structure is no longer appropriate and is not equipped to effectively support the revised management structures within the Service. In addition there is an outstanding requirement to drive forward business improvement and back office efficiency across the Service.

6.4 In order to achieve this objective it is proposed to delete the above 5.0 FTE posts and the BSO post (graded at AP5) approved in January 2007. It is proposed to replace these posts with 3.0 FTE Business Support Officer (BSO) posts at an Area level and 1 senior BSO post based within ECS HQ.

- 6.5 The nature of the BSO post based at HQ has been revised to reflect a more responsible role with a specific remit to lead on business improvement across the Service and co-ordinate the activities of the 3 area-based BSO posts. The draft job descriptions for these posts are appended as Annex 1.
- 6.6 The BSO post-holders should help deliver the improvement and efficiency agenda by identifying where systems and processes could be improved. It is essential that these posts are regarded as developmental as opposed to being restricted to operational. It is essential, therefore, that careful consideration is given to this fact when the appropriate support staff structures are being designed at both an Area and at a HQ level.

## **7. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 It is difficult to quantify the precise resource implications which will be identified as a result of this review. However on the basis that the basic objective of the review is to put in place a more efficient and effective support structure aligned to a culture of business improvement it is reasonable to assume that there will be a need to redeploy some of the existing support staff. The pace of this change will be heavily influenced by both the review of office accommodation and the extent to which systems and processes can be improved.
- 7.2 The initial proposals outlined above will certainly result in fewer posts and a consequent reduction in the level of funding required.
- 7.3 In terms of delivering the review within the time-scales out-lined above it is important that there is close liaison with the corporate Business Improvement Team in order to build on their experiences having been involved in similar exercises elsewhere within the Council during recent years.

## **8. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 8.1 Members are asked to:
- Approve the review process out-lined in section 2 of the report.
  - Approve the initial proposals outlined in section 6 of the report.
  - Note the consultative and governance arrangements outlined in sections 3 and 4 of the report.

Signature:

Designation: Director of Education, Culture and Sport

Date: 30<sup>th</sup> October 2007.

Author: Ron MacKenzie, Head of Support Services,  
Education Culture and Sport

## Administrative and clerical review

## ANNEX 2

Project	Project Leader	Business Support	BIT	Other membership
Future role and purpose of HQ and Area Offices	Graham Nichols	ALL	TBA	TBA
Staffing	Elaine Kirkham	Shona MacKenzie	TBA	TBA
Castle Street Dingwall, (excluding Area office support staff)	John Ritchie	Ian Jackson	TBA	TBA
School administrative and clerical support	Moira McCarrell	Ros Bell	TBA	TBA
Distribution management	Jackie MacKenzie	Hugh MacLeod	TBA	TBA
Benefits related activity	Jeannie Graham	Marlene Stewart	TBA	TBA
Letting systems	Ian Murray	Pamela MacLean	TBA	TBA