The Highland Council

Finance, Housing and Resource Committee – 26th February 2014

Agenda Item	21
Report	FHR/
No	43/14

Customer Services Review 2 Report by Depute Chief Executive

Summary

The Customer Service Review 2 focusses on the changing behaviour of our customers. It proposes that the Council delivers services in line with the Customer Engagement Strategy to meet the changing needs of our customers, in a way that customers wish to transact, at a time which most suits their lifestyles. The review presents an opportunity to invest in a new website and utilise new technologies to support self-service to enhance the customer experience and provide an affordable and sustainable service with easier access for more people across Highland communities.

1. Background

- 1.1 The Council's customers are changing the way they contact us and more are demanding access to services on-line, by telephone and outside of normal working hours. Demand for services at some Service Points is declining and at the same time the Council needs to continue to ensure its service delivery is efficient.
- 1.2 The Highland Council Customer Engagement Strategy 2012-17 and the Customer First Strategy support the Highland Council Programme and the review takes into account the strategic aims and objectives of the Council.
- 1.3 The Corporate Improvement Programme is aligned with this strategy and aims to extend customer access to Council services. This will extend customer access to services and this will make it easier for our customers to contact us and uses public resources more efficiently.

2. Drivers for Change

- 2.1 The Customer Engagement Strategy 2012–2017 vision is to be an efficient and effective Council, delivering quality Customer Service through a wide range of channels including telephone, face to face, via self-service e-mail and web interaction.
- 2.2 The Corporate Improvement Programme is aligned with the targets agreed in the Single Outcome Agreement. The Council has agreed an overall programme of work with significant savings achieved to date; the Customer Services Review 2 has to deliver a further budget saving of £100,000 in 2014/15. Proposals contained in this report present an opportunity to improve the customer experience and to deliver savings of £160,000 by June 2015.

3. Purpose of the review

- 3.1 The Customer Service Review 2 aims to:-
 - Increase choice for customers in the way they access services
 - Provide an improved interactive self-service website
 - Increase the number of services available

- Support the drive to become an efficient and effective Council
- Deliver the savings target
- Provide extended opening hours through the Service Centre (8am to 6pm weekdays and Saturday mornings), and through an effective website

4. Scope of the review

- 4.1 The scope of the review considers the nature and volume of customer contact throughout the 35 Service Points spread across the Highlands. The review has taken into account the requirements for the delivery of the Registration Service.
- 4.2 Included in the scope of this review is the Customer Service management structure necessary to support the new service.
- 4.3 The Service Centre and "Out of Hours" arrangements with Police Scotland are currently working well and continue to be reviewed on an on-going basis as part of the Customer Services Management function. Therefore they are out of scope of this review.

5. Benefits of the Review

- The shift of resources away from face to face to telephone, on-line and mobile provision recognises what our customers expect;
 - Delivers savings of £160,000 p.a. recurring from 2015/16 instead of £100,000 in 2014/15:
 - Creates a sustainable model for the future in line with the Customer Engagement Strategy;
 - Enables a managed change in relation to the planned reduction in the workforce including redeployment into new roles and opportunities for early retirement and voluntary severance;
 - Enables a managed change in service delivery including the launch and continued development of the new website (April 2014) and building capacity within partners (HLH) and third sector

6. Current Customer Service Delivery

- 6.1 The Council has a network of 35 Service Points, categorised as small, medium or large. There are a number of delivery models in place -
 - Stand-alone offices delivering a full range of services
 - The Inverness Registration Office
 - Council Partnership Offices which deliver services on behalf of public sector partners e.g. Police Scotland
 - Service Centre in Alness handling approx. 1400 calls per day over extended hours during week-days and Saturday mornings.

7. Customer Service Review 1 - Achievements

7.1 The development of Community Hubs providing access to a wide range of Council and partners services including registration has been successful. Customer Services has developed strong partnerships with Police Scotland, Highlife Highland, HM Passport Service and others.

8. Customer Service Review 1 - Operational Challenges

- 8.1 Extremely low customer footfall in some rural locations has resulted in staff finding it increasingly difficult for staff to gain experience and maintain a quality service. This is an expensive service delivery model and demonstrates a need for change.
- 8.2 In single-manned offices it is difficult to support the range of sometimes conflicting customer service functions, e.g. when there is an in-depth sensitive transaction such as a Registration event. Dedicated appointment times have been applied, to alleviate this situation, but have not fully resolved this outstanding issue.
- 8.3 As a result of the resource issues outlined above, Customer Service Team Leaders, whose main job should be to support, coach and mentor staff, find themselves serving customers rather than delivering their full management function. The ongoing operational challenges highlight that the current service delivery model is neither sustainable, nor affordable, nor does it meet the true needs of our customers.

9. Customer Service Review 2 - A New Approach

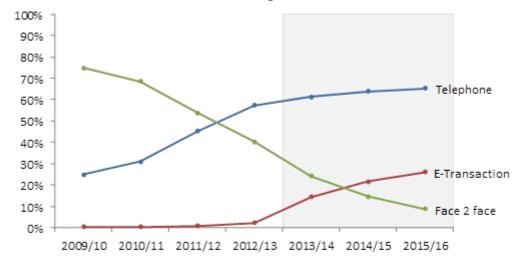
9.1 We believe that our customers are looking for something different from their Council. As a Council we need to respond to changing customer needs and deliver services which represent value for money for the wider community.

10. Customer Insight

10.1 Customer Services captures significant management information from various systems including Axis (financial systems) Lagan (CRM) and the Registration system. Recent analysis of our Customer Service contact volumes demonstrates interesting trends. Information can be broken down to contact channels, providing us with insight into how customers access our service. The following graph describes how customers are changing the way they access our services

Customer Channel Migration Forecast





Forecast based upon 40% decrease in F2F contact, increase split 10%Telephone and 30% E-Transaction E-Opportunity = 25% increase by 2015/16

2011/12 - PS and CSR Implemented 2012/13 - Planning transfer

Highlights

The graph shows the impact of the Payment Strategy and first Customer Services Review (1st April 2011). It demonstrates a major shift in contact, with customers using PayPoints/Post Offices or moving to online and automated services such as direct debit payments etc. This has resulted in a decrease in face to face contact. It also illustrates the continuing growth of e-based transactions. With the launch of the new website more people will be able to access on-line services 24/7 and we will continue to see a reduction in the number of customers requiring access to Service Points.

11. Future Investment in Technology

11.1 The Council's new website will be more accessible to customers who wish to transact online. To support customers we will invest in an on-line help facility e.g. web-chat. This is in line with many other organisations such as the Department for Work and Pensions who have already introduced protocols that are digital by default e.g. the new Universal Credit.

12. Aligning Service Delivery to Customer Needs and Business Requirements

12.1 Service Points with less than 100 customer contacts per week have been identified as high risk due to low customer usage. We would propose that a face to face function will no longer be delivered from the following Service Points:- Dornoch, Lairg, Grantown, Gairloch, Fortrose, Brora, Muir of Ord, Lochcarron, Fort Augustus, Lochinver, Mallaig, Acharacle, Durness, Kingussie and Hilton. We propose to move to supported self-service provision via High Life Highland libraries at these locations. Whilst libraries are the preferred location for self-service provision, in some areas it may be possible to locate the self-service units in other locations, if the library is not convenient or if another location offers a better opportunity for customer/community access. Further review on this option will take place as part of the implementation

plan. Opportunities for mobile provision and outreach will also be considered and kept under review, especially as connectivity improves in rural areas.

- 12.2 Appendix 1 demonstrates the new landscape for Customer Service Delivery. We propose the retention of the following Service Points which will become Community Hubs delivering a full range of services including registration and any service provision under partnership agreements. The following Service Points with more than 100 transactions per week will be retained under this structure: Inverness, Fort William, Dingwall, Wick, Thurso, Nairn, Alness, Tain, Portree, and Aviemore. We will also retain Ullapool and Golspie to maintain geographical resilience for face to face contacts. This will support the registration and passport interviews along the west coast and the Isles. In addition we will retain a partner priority office (Police Scotland) in Golspie.
- 12.3 The proposal also enables us to reduce the number of Service Points that are delivering the same functions within 10 miles of each other i.e. in close proximity. We propose to consolidate and enhance our service delivery resource by closing Invergordon Service Point and providing service delivery from Alness Service Point, instead. Registration will be delivered from Alness Service Point. This will also allow the Council to provide facilities for customers at Alness with improved premises and better confidentiality than is available at Invergordon.
- 12.4 Where library function has significant business and there is a corresponding low Service Point business, as is the case in Kyle, Bettyhill and Broadford Service Points; it is proposed that High Life Highland will deliver the library function from these locations. High Life Highland will not be required to deliver Service Point face to face transactions, but will support self-serve to Council Services as outlined in Section 11.5. Police Scotland will work with High Life Highland to develop new partnership arrangements in these locations to benefit local communities.
- 12.5 It is also proposed that High Life Highland will no longer be required to deliver Service Point face to face transactions in Helmsdale, Ardersier, Bonar Bridge or Kinlochleven although these offices will continue to support self-serve to Council services.
- These proposals will see a reduction in the number of locations where Registration is delivered. This is offset by changes in legislation (Local Electoral Administration and Registration Services (Scotland) Act 2006) which provides customers with the opportunity to register birth and death events out with their local registration district i.e. any Registration Office in Scotland. Since the introduction of the Act there has been a gradual decline in the number of customers accessing registration in rural areas. In some more remote locations customers will continue to have access to the home based registration service (Ardgour, Assynt, Glenelg and the Small Isles).

13. Future Partnership Working

13.1 Consultation has been undertaken with our key strategic partners including High Life Highland, Police Scotland and Visit Scotland.

a) High Life Highland - Partnership Highlights

High Life Highland has 40 locations where members of the public can access one of their 150 dedicated public access PCs (on line facility). The development of the Council website and self-service will increase access for residents in a wider number of communities. It has been agreed with High Life Highland that it will provide a facilitated self-service function on behalf of the Council and within its existing resources, which will include effective signposting of information, provision of generic council literature and guidance

in using the self-service facilities (PCs, phones etc.), as currently undertaken as part of the public access PCs model within libraries. In order to maintain and in some cases improve confidentiality for customers a telephone link will be provided to the Service Centre or council officers, where appropriate. Liaison will also continue regarding any training requirements for staff.

- Highland Council will actively promote the use of the Library Service thus improving access to learning for Highland Council citizens and sustaining footfall at these locations.
- Co-location partnership arrangements with HLH will continue in Alness.

13.2 b) Police Scotland – Partnership Highlights

Police Scotland is in a period of change as they align their landscape of Police stations with their strategic objectives, this compliments our proposal. Consideration has been given to the low business footfall at Muir of Ord, Gairloch and Lairg Service Points. It is our intention to move to a self-service delivery model from the local High Life Highland libraries. Police Scotland has confirmed that currently it has no plans to close police stations. Consultation has also highlighted the important strategic role that the Golspie Office location provides to this key partner. Therefore, as above, Golspie is retained.

13.3 c) Visit Scotland - Partnership Highlights

- Dornoch Service Point will no longer deliver a service on behalf of Visit Scotland. Consultation has taken place and confirms Visit Scotland will consider alternative partnership arrangements that will continue to benefit the local community.
- Visit Scotland will no longer be required to deliver a Service Point function at Durness as the customer contact volume is very low, less than one contact per week and we currently pay £4,000 per year for this service. It is our intention to discontinue this service from April 2014, and to replace with self-service provision. This decision will have no adverse effect on the service provided by Visit Scotland.

14. Asset Management

14.1 Our proposal takes into account the Highland Council's Asset Management Programme with Customer Services working with officers to ensure the review meets asset management strategic objectives. Community Hubs will evolve as the asset management programme unfolds. Fort Augustus Service Point is the only affected office which is solely occupied by Customer Service. Asset Management are fully engaged and are working with Customer Service to identify a solution for this building.

15. Service Enhancements

15.1 Self Service Access

Our customers are demanding more self-service via the web, as demonstrated by the Council's annual customer survey. The intention is to design all processes to suit all customer channels including self-service. With "Web" becoming a main contact channel it is important to invest in the development and management of this facility. It is proposed to create new posts to provide additional support for the web function. It is also proposed to move the web team from their current location within the PR team and into Customer Services so that web is integrated within the CRM team under a single manager. A new web team will be created, allowing the Council to fully focus on

developing its web presence and improving its website. This new team will be mainly funded from existing budgets, cessation of ICT charges from Fujitsu and a £25,000 contribution from the savings generated by the Customer Services Review 2. Therefore this report asks for approval to create the posts of Web and CRM Manager and Web Content Developer which will be graded in line with the Council's Job Evaluation scheme. All new posts will be funded from within existing budgets as part of the realignment of resources within the review.

- 15.2 Self-service will be a new feature and to support our customers who choose to self-serve we will add a "live chat" type feature where customers can talk to a live person on line during busy periods. An extra resource of 0.8 FTE (HC4) will be added to the Service Centre to support this technology and manage the anticipated increase in customer e- contact.
- 15.3 It is also proposed to site self-serve, public access computers, in our all Community Hubs and area offices, such as Kingussie, which will not have a Service Point. The cost of providing access to on line services is approximately £15,000 and will be funded through existing capital provision.

16. Management, Staff Restructure and Realignment

- 16.1 With the proposed number of Service Points reduced from 35 to 12 we need to consider our operational management requirements. This proposal will see the creation of two operational areas of service delivery; North and South. Each area will incorporate 6 offices. We intend to appoint 2 Operations Managers to replace the current 5 Customer Service Team Leader posts based in the Network.
- The Management restructure will see a reduction of 4 FTE (HC7) from the deletion of Customer Service Team Leader (Network) posts and that of the Senior Registrar. Therefore this report asks for approval to delete 5 HC7 posts and create two new HC7 posts of Customer Service Operations Manager North and Customer Service Operations Manager South. All new posts will be funded from within existing budgets as part of the realignment of resources within the review
- 16.3 Currently Customer Service Team Leaders have a proportion of their time allocated to front line service delivery. In the new structure this will no longer be required. By removing this duty from the management role a portion of FTE graded at HC4 Customer Service Assistant will be required to fill this gap, hence there will be a change in staffing profile in some of the Community Hubs to support the service delivery. This information is provided in Appendix 1. Customer Service Officers will continue to be responsible for the day to running of their offices.
- 16.4 The Senior Business Support Officer post will no longer be required and this post will be deleted and a new post of Strategic Quality Performance Manager created. This new role will focus on evaluating and improving the quality of customer service whilst ensuring the Council continues to secure Customer Service Excellence.
- 16.5 It is recommended that a new dedicated Training and Quality Performance Officer post be added to support the new profile of Customer Service and the wider Chief Executive Team. This role will provide a crucial link between Customer Service and Employee Development and will report to the Strategic Quality Performance Manager. This will increase training activity and improve overall customer service delivery and performance. Therefore this report asks for approval to delete the post of Senior Business Support officer and create 2 new posts of Strategic Quality Performance Manager and Training and Quality Performance Officer. All new posts will be funded

from within existing budgets as part of the realignment of resources within the review

- The Operation Managers will be required to have the Professional Registration Qualification and with the introduction of the new post of "Strategic Quality and Performance Manager" the work of the Senior Registrar will be absorbed within the new management structure, therefore the post of Senior Registrar will be deleted. Full training will be provided to staff where they do not already hold the qualification.
- 16.7 In summary, there will be an overall reduction of 19.96 FTE Customer Service staff posts as a result of this proposal. To mitigate the impact, at the time of writing this report, there are a total of 16.08 FTE Customer Service opportunities in either new posts or vacancies in existing posts, which leaves a net balance of an overall 3.88 FTE reduction in posts. In total this means that there are 27 individuals impacted by this review, due to the high number of part time posts. The position regarding vacancies is very fluid and may change/improve before approval as all vacancies are currently being held for redeployment and filled either via temporary staff or temporary fixed term contracts.

17 Opportunity to Mitigate Impact

- 17.1 As outlined above there are potentially 27 individuals affected by this review. Through good vacancy management and the creation of new posts we will minimise the impact on staff and posts will be ring-fenced to allow redeployment and prevent the need for compulsory redundancies. This will include offering remote and flexible working for staff in rural and more remote locations. The extended implementation time will assist greatly with the redeployment of staff and allow for planned closure of offices.
- 17.2 The creation of the following posts, as part of the 16.08 FTE outlined in section 16.8 will also see new opportunities as outlined above for staff to consider as follows: -
 - Strategic Quality Performance Manager (HC9)
 - Training and Quality Performance Officer (TBC)
 - Web CRM Manager Post (TBC)
 - Web Content Developer Post (TBC)

There is also a vacant Customer Services Delivery Manager Post which can also offer an opportunity.

18 Implementation Impact

- 18.1 There would need to be a managed period of Service Point closures during the time between the decision being made and June 2015, rather than a 'big bang' approach. This would be driven by staff in Service Points being redeployed and moving to new positions. This would be especially relevant in the single staffed offices as it would not be possible to provide relief cover to keep them open once staff leave. Remaining offices would need to have new staffing in place to deal with the transfer of customer volume, together with a resource transfer to the Service Centre to deal with increased telephone and web contact. Whilst the overall list of Service Points would be agreed at committee, a rolling closure programme would be devised and Service Points identified would have a 2 month notification period.
- 18.2 In the interim period the Council would have to manage the deferring of savings and find the funding needed to invest in the new web development team (£25,000) the cost of the Live Chat support facility for self-service (£10,000) the transfer of resource from

the closing Service Points to the remaining Community Hubs and Service Centre £158,000, total £193,000.

- 18.3 It is recommended that consideration is given to funding a one-off payment of (no more than) £193,000 in 2014/15 from the Strategic Change & Development Fund. [Note that £35,000 would be required immediately and the remainder would be accessed only if required and in line with the rolling programme].
- 18.4 The implementation phase for the new 12 Community Hub model will include engagement with local Members and communities to ensure that all options for local access to self-service are considered and that any new arrangements which are put in place will be the most suitable for that community.

19 Savings

- 19.1 The total savings of this review are £355,220:-
 - £109,275 will be reinvested into the remaining Community Hubs (Service Points).
 - £48,108 will be reinvested into the Service Centre to deal with an anticipated increase in call volumes, a new self-service web support facility and the need to improve training and quality
 - £25,000 will be used to fund the new Web Team needed to deliver and manage a modernised website
 - There will be £10,000 invested to procure life chat facility.
 - The remaining £160,000 approximately will deliver the savings target.

20 Implications

20.1 Financial Implications

These proposals allow the Council to deliver savings of £160,000 and to reinvest further savings into the remaining Service Point Network, Service Centre and Web Team to support a shift away from face to face contact to more on-line and telephone contact. There will be an increased need for training to support the move to new service delivery models, including within partner organisations, and this will be delivered within existing resources noting the proposed appointment of a new training officer.

20.2 Risk Implications

This proposal delivers an efficient and effective streamlined face to face presence for the Council, supported by self-service facilities in Community Hubs and Libraries, and is delivering the principles which members have approved as part of the Customer Engagement Strategy. Customers can still contact the Council by telephone, 6 days a week and by email and web 24/7, with a new website launch in April 2014. There is a risk that customers in some rural locations will need to either travel further distances or telephone the Service Centre to obtain more specialist advice than is available by self-service provision, however current customer footfall volumes suggest that these figures are relatively low, and additional investment is being made in the remaining Service Points and also at the Service Centre to cope with additional demand. Continued consideration will be given to outreach and mobile solutions to address this risk for more vulnerable customers.

20.3 Equality/Legal/Climate Change Implications

Equality Implications: An EQIA screening and full detailed assessment has been completed as part of the review and a copy is available upon request. The assessment identified 2 key areas of impact. The first key area is the impact on staff, and the extended 15 month implementation period, together with the proposed dedicated programme of redeployment will assist with mitigating the impact on this group of staff. The second key area is the potential effect on vulnerable customers, and again the 15 month implementation period will allow the Customer Services team to work across the Council to help signpost customers to alterative service provision or make alternative arrangements with the relevant service within the Council.

Climate Change Implications: currently Customer Services staff undertakes extensive travel across the Service Point network to provide cover for offices and to attend events. With a reduced footprint of offices, travel should reduce allowing resources to be focused on the proposed offices.

Legal Implications: there are no known legal implications

Recommendations

- i. Agree the revised service delivery model of 12 community hubs as outlined in this paper
- ii. Note the work undertaken as part of the Customer Services Review 2 and agree the £160,000 of savings which will be delivered as a result of this review
- iii. Approve the revised staffing structure as outlined in Sections 14 and 15 of this report
- iv. Agree the implementation arrangements as outlined in Section 18.1

Designation: Michelle Morris
Date: 18.02.2014

Author: Vicki Nairn, Tina Page

Background Papers:

Customer Engagement Strategy,

Customer Services Review Equality Impact Screening and Assessment

Service Point Network – 12 Office Model Applied

Note:- Community Hubs will deliver the full range of current Customer Service Business Activity including Registration Transaction Volumes - recorded Highland Council Business activity (CRM, Lagan, Registration etc. for period 1st April 2012 to 31st March 2013)

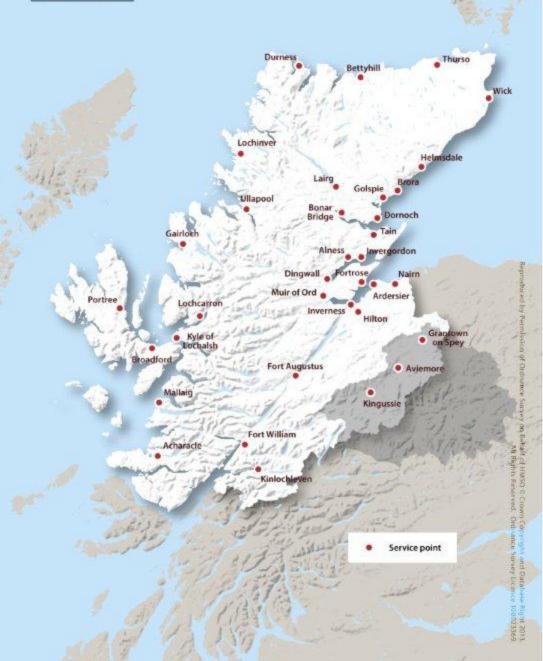
Cost Per Contact is calculated by dividing the Staffing Costs per Location, by the volume of recorded transactions. *Indicates Registration Function delivery at this location

Service Point Location	Service Delivery Applied	Multi Manned	HC \ Partner impact	Staffing Adjustments	Weekly Business Activity Volumes	Cost Per Contact	Weekly Business Activity Banded
Community Hub	s (North)						
Thurso *	Full Range	Yes	HC Staff	No Change	282	£5.45	100+
Wick *	Full Range	Yes	HC Staff	No Change	307	£6.70	100+
Tain *	Full Range	Yes	HC Staff	No Change	174	£5.25	100+
Alness (Approx. 5 Registration events per week to transfer from Invergordon)	Full Range	Yes	HC Staff	0.5 FTE (HC4)increase	263	£5.20	100+
Golspie *	Full Range	Yes	HC, Police	No Change	88	£5.21	60+
Ullapool *	Full Range	Yes	HC Staff	No Change	25	£14.72	20+
Community Hub	s (South)						
Inverness	Full Range	Yes	HC Staff	0.5 FTE (HC4) increase	989	£4.41	100+
Nairn *	Full Range	Yes	HC Staff	No Change	264	£5.63	100+
Aviemore *	Full Range	Yes	HC Staff	0.5 FTE (HC4) increase	114	£4.00	100+
Fort William *	Full Range	Yes	HC Staff	1.0 FTE (HC4) increase	438	£4.27	100+
Portree *	Full Range	Yes	HC Staff	0.5 FTE (HC4) increase	155	£8.83	100+
Dingwall *	Full Range	Yes	HC Staff	0.5 FTE (HC4) increase	414	£4.41	100+
	e Point – Due to Clo ce to face with self		ity				
Invergordon (ss) *	Self Service	N\A	HC Staff	Reduction	213	£4.96	100+
Hilton	Self Service	N\A	НС	Reduction	61	£3.77	60+
Fortrose *	Self Service	N\A	НС	Reduction	37.1	£12.31	20+
Lochinver	Self Service	N\A	НС	Reduction	14	£16.52	<20
Fort Augustus*	Self Service	N\A	НС	REduction	25	£9.07	20+
Broadford*	Self Service	N\A	HC, HLH	Reduction	25	£18.27	20+
Bettyhill*	Self Service	N\A	HC, HLH, police TNC	Reduction	10	£22.75	<20

Kyle *	Self Service	N/A	HC, HLH	Reduction	74	£9.22	60+
Brora *	Self Service	N\A	НС	Reduction	35	£6.53	20+
Muir of Ord	Self Service	N\A	HC /remove Police Partner	Reduction	34	£6.78	20+
Lochcarron *	Self Service	N\A	НС	Reduction	21	£11.06	20+
Mallaig	Self Service	N\A	НС	Reduction	2	£101.48	<20
Kingussie *	Self Service	No	НС	Reduction	27	£8.57	20+
Acharacle	Self Service	N\A	НС	Reduction	Less than	£100 +	<20
Gairloch *	Self Service	No	HC Police	Reduction	39	£8.71	20+
Lairg *	Self Service	No	HC, Police	Reduction	11	£20.50	< 20
Grantown *	Self Service	No	НС	Reduction	49	£4.67	20+
Dornoch *	Self Service	Yes	HC Visit SCot	Reduction	87	£13.16	60+
Withdrawal of S	Service Point F	unction from HI	LH Premises – Mov	e to Self Service	Provision On	ıly	
Kinlochleven	Self Service	N\A	HLH staff	HLH Impact			
Helmsdale	Self Service	N\A	HLH staff	HLH Impact			
Bonar Bridge	Self Service	N\A	HLHstaff	HLH Impact			
Ardersier	Self Service	N\A	HLH staff	HLH Impact			
Additional Info	rmation						
		partnership with Visit Scotland. Less than 10 customer contacts per ving to be realised.					
Inverness Regist	tration Office	1 FTE (HC4) increase to ensure resilience on Registration provison.					



Current Landscape





Proposed Landscape including additional self-service points

