

Argyll and Bute Council: Equality and Socio-Economic Impact Assessment

Section 1: About the proposal

Title of Proposal

Budget Savings Proposal - Customer Engagement Team v0.5

Intended outcome of proposal

To deliver a saving of £318k through a reduction in staffing in Customer Service Centre, Customer Service Points and Registration services, with a consequent change in the model for delivering those mediated services.

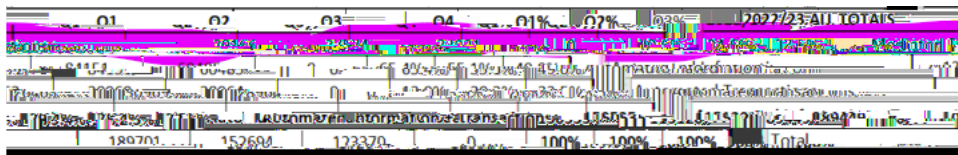
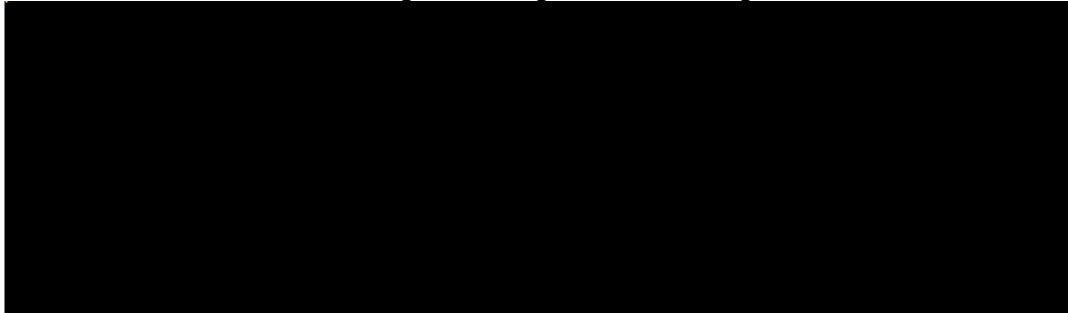
Description of proposal

This proposal has three components:

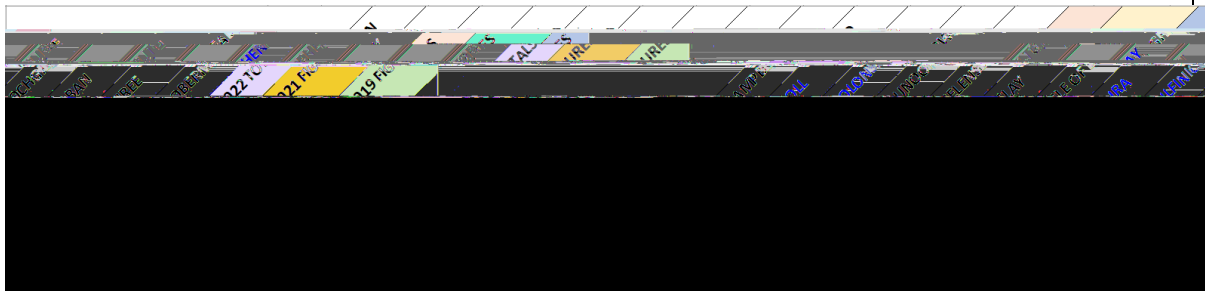
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| <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Close the doors of all CSPs (Customer Service Points) to walk in customers and operate an appointment only service at them. Move to digital only receptions at Kilmory and Helensburgh Civic Centre. Most CSPs would be retained as offices, as they house other services and/or are the locations of Registration District Offices. Offering only structured appointments would allow more efficient use of resources and incentivise the shift to digital. This would allow a reduction in headcount that would provide £233,454 savings as follows: |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Oban CSP to lose an LGE9 Supervisor and be managed from Mull, Upgrade an LGE6 CSP agent post to LGE7 Sers TJ-0.002 Tc 0 Tw 7.06 0 Td(5)-3.2 (F)-2 (T)-6.8 (E L)-8.2 (G)-4.9 (E)-5.8 (6)-3.2 (A)-2.2 (g)-0.9 (e), predicated on the continuing optimisation of digital engagement channels and automations that have seen face to face interactions fall to circa 40% of pre-pandemic levels. Risks/Impacts for service users and service delivery are detailed below. |
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1. Total CET Interactions (Mediated and Self Service), for Quarters 1-3 of 2022/23. Note Face to face is circa 14% of mediated transactions, which in turn are circa 23% of all transactions recorded through CET Digital and non Digital Channels:



2. Registration Activity in each District for calendar year 2022 and compared to 2019 Pre-Pandemic demands:



3. Service Point Activity in Typical Month of October 2022, Including face to face footfall compared to 2019 Pre-Pandemic Levels.

Service Point Totals and Averages Oct 22	Campbeltown	Dunoon	Helensburgh	Inverclyde	Inverkeithing	Mull of Galloway	Oban	Perth & Kinross	Perth & Kinross	Perth & Kinross	Perth & Kinross
Channel Type	Totals	Totals	Total	Total	Total	Total	Total	Total	Total	Total	Total
Chat	0	12	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
E-mail	148	270	181	21	71	125	53	1			
Face to Face	322	360	787	105	120	201	152	12			
Facebook	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5
Letter	23	51	70	1	31	5	30	5	0		
Outbound	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Phone	0	292	329	24	330	50	177	6			
Text	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Twitter	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Webform	195	167	66	0	0	11	2	0	0	0	0
Webform	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Voiceform	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Smart Assistant	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total Oct 2022	730	1078	1065	1404	775	609	571	824	626	69	
Cash Receipts	56	90	50	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11
Cash Receipts	382.06	408.53	570.97	125.28	253.77	208.71	366.14	203.56	44.52		
Service Requests per worked Hour	2.72	3.13	2.33	0.93	2.53	1.38	2.21	2.27	0.58		
Face to Face	322	360	787	105	120	201	152	12			
Face to Face Totals Oct 2022	939	856	2981	353	361	249	595	297	62		
F2F % 2022 vs 2019	34%	42%	26%	18%	29%	48%	34%	51%	19%		

4. Service Point Activity Average per month over a full Calendar Year (Oct 21 to Sept 2022)

5. Jura Service Point Activity FQ1&2 2022/23:

6. Colonsay Service Point Activity FQ1&2 2022/23:

7.

Argyll and Bute Broadband Provision 2022

Source: [Subnational indicators](#) - [Exploring the Data on Scotland's National Statistics](#) ([ons.gov.uk](#))



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Indicator	Period	Unit	Angus	Argyll and Bute	Highland	Scottish Borders
Gross value added per hour worked	2020	Pounds	35.7	31.2	35.6	32.3
Gross median weekly pay	2021	Pounds	459	458.2	493.8	460.6
Employment rate for 16 to 64 year olds	07/2021 - 06/2022	Percentage	74.4	75.1	71.3	74.4
Gross disposable household income per head	2020	Pounds	19,111	18,111	19,111	19,111
Gigabit capable broadband	May-22	Percentage	29.7	3.1	29.1	20.1

8. Note on ACHA Revised Opening Hours 2022:

ACHA have changed their opening hours as from w/c 3/10/22

Other information

Gaps in evidence

Awaiting response from National Records Scotland regarding proposed registration changes.

Section 3: Impact of proposal

Impact on service users:

Negative	No impact	Positive	Don't know
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activity since the pandemic, even the small amount of the “real person” contact shown in the data above is valued. Jura DC cited the example of an elderly customer with

opportunities in places where permanent full time and casual work is harder to get. A number of respondents noted that the council commitment to sustainable communities should in actuality be flowing work and jobs and income to Islands; "Tiree Community Council noted "Council should be channelling investment to the most remote and economically fragile communitis such as Tiree, where 45% of the housing stock is second homes – not taking it away".

10. An appointment only service naturally imposes a degree of inconvenience on customers used to turning up when it is most suitable for them. This is particularly so when the interaction is a brief one such as having to make an appointment just to hand over documents. It may also require customers to take time off work when they could previously have interacted during a lunch break. It is also difficult to use for those leading chaotic lives through drug & alcohol or mental health issues and for be young people, who if there is school attendance only have a very limited window to meet professionals whether social work or others.

If any 'don't know's have been identified, at what point will impacts on these groups become identifiable?

N/A

Impact on service deliverers (including employees, volunteers etc):

	Negative	No impact	Positive	Don't know
Protected characteristics:				
Age		X		
Disability		X		

hotel costs for an off island registrar to attend and may deter customers from booking ceremonies on small islands to the detriment of their economies.

11. Numerous small-scale CSP based activities carried out for other Services would need to be “rehomed” as front doors would be locked; e.g. Lair Management, Minibus Hires, Toilet Radar Keys, document scanning, tip permits, recycling bags, witnessing and scanning of documents and management of Trust Applications such as the GM Duncan bequest in Campbeltown. It would also limit access to the free period products and other free resources made available from Service Points.
12. Physical receptionists at Kilmory and Helensburgh and CSPs acting as de facto reception at multi service offices such as Manse Brae and Oban Civic Centre would be removed and alternative measures would need to be put in place direct with Services for visitor management. Security would also require to be reviewed e.g. the installation of secure access to back office areas at Kilmory.
13. There may be an impact on Registration service income as most CSP staff double up as Registrars or Assistant Registrars, therefore the loss of 6.4 FTE from this small service will constrain the ability to accept ceremony bookings; particularly at peak times. It also increases the risk of failed ceremonies due to fewer resources able to cover and Registrars being able to act as witnesses at small on premise weddings – with consequent reputational damage. Tiree community council also observed that it could impact the wider wedding tourism income on the islands. The far smaller pool of registrars also has implications for progression and the ageing profile of our pool of registrars.
14. Negative impact on remaining staff dealing with increased workloads and higher numbers of dissatisfied customers, plus the number of times agents/registrars will be lone workers will increase, with consequent increase in risk. One HSCP contributor noted that if the proposals were accepted “At a very general level we have got to address the issue that the council looks to be shut. Remote access to council services has potential but we need to make sure that it doesn’t make the council seem remote from the people of A&B”.

If any ‘don’t know’s have been identified, at what point will impacts on these groups become identifiable?

N/A

How has ‘due regard’ been given to any negative impacts that have been identified?

There has been and will continue to be considerable investment in Digital customer engagement services and in automations to replicate services that CSP staff currently undertake manually, such as Blue Badge processing. This will help to increase efficiency and productivity to offset the fact there will be fewer resources to handle existing customer engagement demands. New systems such as a CSP Appointment Booking System will be implemented to support the proposed revised model.

In line with the Scotgov imperative the “No-one be left behind” in the digital age, easy digital access and assisted digital access alternatives continue to be implemented (for example Google smart speaker bin day look up service went live in December). Telephony and email options remain with 24/7 web and voice automated services. Face to face will remain as an appointment based option and many smaller islands have never had Service Points and use these alternative channels.

This proposal applies similar levels of service provision across the entire Council area, so there is no absolute differential impact between communities in islands, remote and mainland areas. The move towards greater digital delivery seeks to create a more inclusive service than can be provided by physical presence in a small number of communities. The impact assessment gives due regard, however, to the underlying fragility of our remote and island communities and those who are currently digitally excluded.

Only 60% of savings will be taken in 2023/24 to allow for a planned transition to the revised minimum viable service model e.g. to allow most registrars to be retained until September so that the marriage ceremony season is serviced and time for alternative arrangements to be made for duties performed out of closing CSPs.

Will impact delivery of the Registration Service
Will potentially impact delivery of the Social Care function on Tiree (shared office)
Will require relocation of “offshored” work on Tiree, Islay and Rothesay (e.g. Blue badge processing, Email and call handling and Telecare calls).

Numerous small scale activities on behalf of other council services will need to be adapted and altered e.g. access arrangement to meeting rooms and digital conferencing facilities, key holding (buildings and minibuses), local, cemetery lair record management and internment/digging/memorial permissions e.g. it will be problematic to manage those on Tiree from Mull and the Tiree Community Council and Business have highlighted funeral arrangements as a particular concern.

The CSPs are also the focus for local emergency arrangements, which would need to be reviewed e.g. on Tiree the CSP holds the Community contingency plan, grab bag and emergency essentials.

Some have educational back up roles such as the CSP on Jura where it has been used as an exam base when pupils cannot get to Islay. These responsibilities will need to be reviewed as will access to the digital conferencing services at all the affected CSPs. Numerous activities completed on behalf of partner organisations will require to be reviewed and agreed including with Police Scotland, Campbeltown Museum Trust, HSCP.

Alternative venues will be required for MP, MSP and Councillor Surgeries if the venues on Colonsay and Jura are closed and for Community Council meetings. The community run CSPs are the bases from which the portfolios of community assets are run, such as shop, ferry tickets and moorings/pontoons.

Will require a review of Property Management arrangements and cost at Tiree, Jura and Colonsay.

Section 5: Monitoring and review

How will you monitor and evaluate the equality impacts of your proposal?

Impacts will be very difficult to monitor on Jura, Colonsay and Tiree as there will be no Customer Service employees left on these islands. This will need to be done through the few other council employees, feedback from elected representatives at Community Council and elected member level. Feedback can also be sought from the community organisations who we currently partner to deliver services.

For those CSPs operating an appointment only service every attendee will be offered a survey including questions on fairness and access etc. and these will be reported quarterly.

Service delivery impacts will be reported as part of regular performance reporting in terms of customer complaints, response times to calls, accuracy of returns etc.

Employee impacts will be evaluated through statistical returns, absence returns and employee meetings such as the minuted Area Team Meetings. Financial impacts will be monitored from monthly budget reports and Highlight Reports to Customer Support Services Mgt Team Meetings.