

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

Section 1: About the proposal

Title of Proposal
2020-2021 Budget Preparation: Commercial Services; CS02 – Remodel Business Support in Estates, Programme Management and Property Services

Intended outcome of proposal
Removal of 2 x LGE6 (or equivalent) Administration/Business Support Posts from the organisational structure.

Description of proposal
Commercial Services is a new department established on 1-Jul-19, bringing together 3 teams who have previously not worked together – Estates, Programme Management (CHORD) and Property Management. All teams carry an Administration / Business Support resource and function. There are currently 9 business support or admin personnel equating to 8.6 FTE. Some staff are also involved with secondments to capital projects (e.g. CHORD or Asbestos Management) or filling temporary posts. Depending on the nature of their duties there can be peaks in demand at times – during contracts, school holidays or at the end of projects. Staff range from LGE 4 to LGE 7. Undertake a review of the Administration/Business Support function in light of the new mandate for Commercial Services, which is based on the current and forecast future service demands, including service priorities and skill sets that will be required to deliver, and taking account of the opportunities for efficiencies in working practices which can be achieved through efficient use of current and emerging Information and Communication Technologies. This will move the current function to a shared and virtual business support team which will result in the removal of 2 x LGE6 (or equivalent) posts from the current structure.

Business Outcome(s) / Corporate Outcome(s) to which the proposal contributes
• BO027 – Our infrastructure and assets are fit for purpose • BO104 – Our communities are protected and supported • B0107 - The support and lifestyle needs of our children, young people and their families are met • BO113 - Our infrastructure is safe and fit for the future • BO114 – Our communities are cleaner and greener Contributes towards the Commercial Services Savings Target i.e. 7% reduction in respect of the 2020-2021 Revenue budget, which equates to £682,861

Lead officer details:	
Name of lead officer	John Gordon
Job title	MPCMT Programme Manager
Department	Customer Services
Appropriate officer details:	
Name of appropriate officer	Ross McLaughlin

Job title	Head of Commercial Services
Department	Customer Services
Sign off of EqSEIA	
Date of sign off	

Who will deliver the proposal?
Estates, Programme Management and Property Services

Section 2: Evidence used in the course of carrying out EqSEIA

Consultation / engagement
The Third Tier Managers for each of the teams (noted above) met with the potentially affected staff within their individual teams on 4, 7 and 8 October 2019 respectively. The purpose of the meetings was to explain the proposals in the context of: the Scottish Governments' budget setting process/timetable, and the forecast impact upon the Local Authorities settlement for FY20/21; the Argyll & Bute Council budget setting process FY20/21 and its' timescales; the associated service review exercise; and the potential impact upon their permanent and seconded posts.

Data
The three teams potentially affected deliver services which have a direct impact on the Council's Property and Estate assets e.g. statutory maintenance of Council buildings, including schools, leisure centres, public halls, libraries etc.; refurbishment of properties; construction of new assets; lease or licence agreements for businesses, community groups etc. to make use of property or land owned by the Council. As a consequence of this far reaching service provision the efficiency of the teams has a direct impact upon services users both internally and externally, as well as the individual service providers From: the respective Team Organisational Structures; Local Government Employee Salary Scales 2019-20; and A&BC's 'My View' HR related system it has been established that, of the 9 members of staff potentially affected by the proposals: • 8 are female and 1 is male • 2 are part-time and 7 are full time • 2 are on Phased Retirement • 2 are on Temporary Contracts • 2 are on Secondments • The salaries of the potentially affected staff range from: ○ LGE 4 (FTE) - £16,296 to £17,264 for a 35hr week in FY19/20; to ○ LGE 7 (FTE) - £21,844 to £23,158 for a 35hr week in FY19/20

Other information
N/A

Gaps in evidence

As Commercial Services is a new department within the Council its function, role and responsibilities will develop over the short to medium term. This assessment has been undertaken on the basis of what is currently 'known', and accordingly it may have to be revisited in due course and as the service develops and matures.

Section 3: Impact of proposal

Impact on service users:

	Negative	No impact	Positive	Don't know
Protected characteristics:				
Age		X		
Disability		X		
Ethnicity		X		
Sex		X		
Gender reassignment		X		
Marriage and Civil Partnership		X		
Pregnancy and Maternity		X		
Religion		X		
Sexual Orientation		X		
Fairer Scotland Duty:		X		
Mainland rural population		X		
Island populations		X		
Low income		X		
Low wealth		X		
Material deprivation		X		
Area deprivation		X		
Socio-economic background		X		
Communities of place?		X		
Communities of interest?		X		

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

	Negative	No impact	Positive	Don't know
Protected characteristics:				
Age	X			
Disability		X		
Ethnicity	X			
Sex	X			
Gender reassignment		X		
Marriage and Civil Partnership		X		
Pregnancy and Maternity	X			
Religion		X		
Sexual Orientation		X		
Fairer Scotland Duty:				
Mainland rural population		X		
Island populations		X		
Low income	X			
Low wealth	X			
Material deprivation		X		
Area deprivation		X		
Socio-economic background	X			

	Negative	No impact	Positive	Don't know
Communities of place?		X		
Communities of interest?		X		

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?

The starting point, in considering the option to remodel the Administrative / Business Support Function within Commercial Services, was the creation of the 'new' service on 1 July 2019.

This brought together not only three teams: Estates, Programme Management and Property Services which had no previous experience of in-depth, day-to-day, partnership working, but also brought over a team (Programme Management) with different procedures, processes and delegated authorities.

It was therefore essential that that credence was given to understanding the current business outcomes that the teams were charged with supporting, how these might develop and evolve as the strategic mandate of the service crystallised into work streams, projects and the like, and what organisational structure, resources and skill sets would be required to deliver upon these now, and in the future.

The size of the Administration/Business Support function was as a consequence of the individual teams requirements within their respective services/directorates, and in creating the new Commercial Services function it was evident that here was a level of duplication/cross over of functions, which could be delivered more efficiently and effectively within a shared resource model, using standard processes and procedures, whilst giving individual team embers the opportunity to learn new skills or augment existing ones.

Unfortunately it is a fact that the Administration / Business Support function tends to:

- Be built around posts which are at the lower end of the Local Authority Pay Scales
- Include roles which are more readily open to flexible working arrangements and/or job sharing opportunities

As a consequence of which, and also due to historical inequalities in the employment market, tend to attract a higher proportion of female employees, and employees who are more likely to work within that function throughout their career.

This means that any proposal to reduce the number of posts within the function is likely to have an adverse and negative function on female employees and employees with long service who may be approaching retirement age.

It is envisaged that with the creation of the new Commercial Services, and the closer and interdisciplinary working relationship across what were previously disparate teams, there will be opportunities within the posts that remain for personnel to develop new skills e.g. in project management, financial management, facilities management etc., which will in turn afford them the opportunity for career advancement,

Section 4: Interdependencies

Is this proposal likely to have any knock-on effects for any other activities carried out by or on behalf of the council?	Yes
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Details of knock-on effects identified

The affected teams have responsibility for all of the Councils' properties and estates, which in turn are utilised by all sections of society across the local authority area. It may be that in the short to medium term response times in dealing with enquiries and/or managing responses to Councils' 24hr Property Helpdesk are increased, leading to a perceived, if not actual, deterioration in service provision. However, it is to be expected that as personnel become more familiar, confident and competent in their revised roles, that these initial impacts will be positively addressed.

Section 5: Monitoring and review

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

- Argyll and Bute Council procedures for Service Redesign will be followed.
- Staff consultation
- Monitoring of Members Casebook Incidents
- Customer Feedback (internal and external)