

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

Section 1: About the proposal

Title of Proposal
Budget Reconstruction Proposal CSS02 – Customer Service Points (CSPs) v0.4

Intended outcome of proposal
To produce £79,400 of savings (£39,700 in YR1 2019/20), by moving some smaller CSPs (Campbeltown, Mull and Islay) to morning only part time opening hours and closing those on sparsely populated islands of Colonsay, Jura and Tiree completely.

Description of proposal
<p>Move the CSPs at Mull, Campbeltown and Islay to part time, morning only hours akin to the service already operating on Rothesay. Closing the CSPs on Tiree, Jura and Colonsay and withdrawing funding for that operation from the Tiree Community Business Ltd, the Jura Development Trust and Colonsay Community Development Company respectively. Moving to a home based registration service on those islands (akin to that operating on Coll).</p> <p>This would result in the reduction of two full time LGE6 CSP agent posts to 0.5FTE on Mull and at Campbeltown and the removal of a 0.4FTE Agent post on Tiree. The agents on Colonsay and Jura are employed by the Development Trust/Company there but funded by a £10,750 annual grant from the council that would be withdrawn. There would be no reduction in staff on Islay, but one 0.8FTE agent post there would be repurposed to answering additional digital customer contacts generated.</p> <p>The service point buildings on Colonsay and Jura are council owned and their future has yet to be decided. The CSP Building on Tiree is owned by the community business there.</p>

Business Outcome(s) / Corporate Outcome(s) to which the proposal contributes
We ensure Information and support is available for everyone. We engage with our customers, staff and partners. Argyll and Bute's economic success will be built on a growing population.

Lead officer details:	
Name of lead officer	Robert Miller
Job title	Customer Engagement Manager
Department	Customer and Support Services
Appropriate officer details:	
Name of appropriate officer	Judy Orr
Job title	Head of Customer and Support Services
Department	Customer and Support Services
Sign off of EqSEIA	
Date of sign off:	13th December 2018, Updated 4th and 28th January and 11th February 2019.

Who will deliver the proposal?
Robert Miller, Customer Engagement Manager.

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

Consultation / engagement

CSP Staff whose posts are at threat of redundancy or whose posts are affected.

CSP Supervisors at CSPs.

Colonsay Community Development Company, Colonsay CSP Scalasaig, Colonsay PA61 7YW. Co- signed by Chair of Colonsay Community Council.

Jura Development Trust, The Service Point Craighouse, Isle of Jura, PA607XG (also endorsed by Jura Community Council).

Tiree Community Business Ltd. Office 2 The Island Centre, Crossapol, Isle of Tiree. Additional input received from Convenor of Tiree Community Council.

Deputy Registrar General, National Records Scotland in respect of Registration Service.

Data

Volume of Customer Service Enquiries Handled by each CSP in 2018 calendar year.

2018 Stats	Requests Logged	% of total CSP
Campbeltown	11747	16%
Dunoon	13187	18%
Helensburgh	15148	21%
Islay	7873	11%
Lochgilphead	5126	7%
Mull	6469	9%
Oban	8550	12%
Rothsay	4785	7%
Tiree	687	1%
TOTAL	73572	

Note Colonsay and Jura do not log requests directly into the council's CRM system, however Colonsay recorded 943 visitors to their CSP in 2018. Yellow highlighted CSPs are those proposed to go part time or close.

Registration Activity in each CSP District for calendar year 2018

DISTRICT	BIRTHS	DEATHS	RELIGIOUS MARRIAGES	CIVIL MARRIAGES	CIVIL PARTNERSHIP	CP TO MARRIAGE CONVERSION	TOTAL REGISTRATION	CIVIL MARRIAGE CONDUCTED IN A COUNCIL ROOM AND CHARGED A FEE	CIVIL MARRIAGE CONDUCTED IN A COUNCIL ROOM AND NOT CHARGED A FEE	CIVIL MARRIAGE CONDUCTED IN AN OUTSIDE VENUE	TOTAL CIVIL CEREMONIES
CAMPBELTOWN	47	113	17	24	0	2	203	11	6	7	24
COLL	1	1	0	3	0	0	5	0	1	2	3
COLONSAY	0	1	0	1	0	0	2	0	0	1	1
DUNOON	94	238	31	47	0	0	410	14	10	23	47
HELENSBURGH	188	314	303	109	0	1	916	17	14	80	111
ISLAY	16	43	10	23	0	0	92	6	2	15	23
ISLE OF BUTE	51	90	17	27	0	0	185	7	5	15	27
JURA	4	3	1	2	0	0	10	0	0	2	2
KILFINICHEN	7	2	10	4	0	0	23	0	0	3	4
LOCHGILPHEAD	77	104	123	149	0	0	453	5	12	132	149
OBAN	135	177	43	84	0	0	439	0	29	55	84
TIREE	3	7	2	5	0	0	17	0	0	5	5
TOBERMORY	27	31	5	34	1	0	98	7	12	15	35
TOTALS	650	1124	562	512	1	3	2853	67	91	355	515

Other information

Clearly this proposal will have negative impacts on the island communities of Mull, Islay, Jura, Colonsay and Tiree that need to be carefully weighed given the Section 7 and 8 duties of the council under the Islands (Scotland) Act 2018 to assess impacts “likely to have an effect on an island community which is significantly different from its effect on other communities”. Similarly the remote mainland community in Campbeltown requires consideration under the Fairer Scotland Duty and shares many of the characteristics of Islands, with similarly detrimental impacts.

These likely foreseeable negative impacts can be summarised as follows:

Impact on service users

1. Although digital technology can help to provide channels of communication between the islands and the council, the withdrawal of face to face representation will potentially affect these communities disproportionately due to the fact they are more vulnerable to being cut off due to digital service disruptions and due to the fact their ageing populations are less likely to undertake or have support to undertake digital transactions. This point was made by a number of the island consultees. The data above shows the number of service requests handled at each CSP and the “real person” contact is valued. The future of the council owned CSP buildings on Colonsay and Jura with their enhanced broadband connections would also be in doubt if alternative arrangements cannot be made.
2. Although digital means are available for such items as Blue Badge applications, housing benefit, council tax reduction, Scottish welfare and free school meal and clothing grants applications, it is the disabled and low income service users who most value the availability of a friendly face to face resource to help them access these services and on islands like Jura and Mull the CSP is the only council facility adapted for the disabled with hearing loops and ramps etc. Similarly the provision of physical leaflets from the council and partner organisations would require a willing alternative venue that is not obviously available on Jura or Colonsay.
3. Although the move to home based registration has been shown to work on Coll, that has a very small island population and hence the HBR approach on larger islands has the potential for a less responsive registration service at times when people are at their most vulnerable and are less willing or able to travel to larger islands or the mainland. Consultees make the point that the registrars are multifunctional providing “a one stop facility for bereaved families in the absence of an island undertaker...help with funeral arrangements, assistance with the funeral form, liaises and co ordinates with R & A staff, deals with the advertising of the funeral, guides relatives, at a very difficult time, through the whole process including completion of DWP forms for funeral expenses, if necessary, and provides contact with stone masons. Even on a similarly sized island like Colonsay the withdrawal of a Registration office represents a diminution in service. The Deputy Registrar general has not ruled against such a move, but he has stated that it should only be countenanced after a full public consultation. Registration would need to move to an afternoon only appointment basis at the part time CSPs, except for emergencies.
4. CSPs do not only provide access to council services, but also to partner services such as the mediated Digital Passport Service and the withdrawal of this would be a material deprivation requiring additional trips to the mainland for islanders from Tiree. Similarly on Mull the CSP hold keys for ACHA and West Highland Housing who do not have permanent presence on the island and the Tiree CSP does the same for ACHA. The Campbeltown office is the gateway for the local museum and reduced hours will mean reduced reception service to back office services at a number of sites.

5. The council has a commitment to maintaining sustainable communities of place and so the cessation or reduction of CSP services could be viewed as making such communities seem more isolated and therefore unattractive to people considering moving or staying in them. The loss of the Police and Visit Scotland offices in some of these communities has made the CSPs the go to place for visitors seeking more general information and so their loss will further erode attractiveness to visitors. The Jura Development Council argue that as their population has grown by 15% since 2015 they have more need than ever of a CSP and its closure would imperil that growth.
6. Aside from the CSP provision the actual buildings are used as community hubs and whilst there may be future scope for community buyouts, only one building is currently community owned (Tiree) and it is not certain that local funding could sustain the currently council owned ones. The withdrawal of funding for upkeep of buildings and the staff to keep them open is likely to have an impact on Community of Interest groups that use the buildings for meetings and group activities such as mother and toddler groups in the absence of a library. Jura Development trust say the Jura CSP is essential to the success of its Community Action Plan 2018-23 and the facilities at their CSP are used by both its ageing and younger members of the community e.g. through Jura Juniors, Parent Council and the focus of the Music Festival event. Colonsay Community Council has highlighted impacts on the library and office space. Tiree Community Business say that the withdrawal of funding would lead to it being seriously financially challenged.
7. The CSPs moving to part time opening have meeting rooms used council and non council groups such as home carers and for job interviews and moving to part time opening will restrict this. Also many groups use the buildings in the afternoons as their members do not get up until later so only opening part days will also restrict them. Arts and cultural activities would also be impacted by loss of venue and utilities as numerous history, music, and arts groups use the venues; particularly on Colonsay and Jura. The Jura CSP is used as a back-up classroom when the Islay Crossing is not open and older students use the better internet connection there for online tutorials etc.
8. Jura and Colonsay also provide facilities for commercial economic activities and professional services from will writing, to accountancy and crofting advice. Free lancing experts use the broadband and VC facilities to generate income and provide training and tutoring. Loss or curtailment of the facilities would impact income, opportunities and deprivation.
9. Ensuring adequate income to the islands and remote communities is always a challenge and the loss of nearly £80k of expenditure will have a ripple effect that will be difficult to make up. Mull and Islay CSPs undertake mainland customer related work (Blue Badge processing, contact management etc.) that ensures they are fully occupied and whilst this work can be moved to mainland CSPs to allow this proposal to be implemented, it is arguable that the council commitment to sustainable communities should in actuality be flowing work and jobs and income the other way.

Impact on service deliverers

1. There is a gender equality issue with the proposal in that all three of the employees (Mull, Campbeltown and Tiree), whose post is at threat of redundancy are female.
2. Due to the remote nature of the communities the employees live in it is disproportionately difficult for them to find alternative employment, both through the council redeployment process or on the open employment market. The same will be true for the people employed by the council funding given to Colonsay Community Development Company and Jura Development Trust, whose jobs will also be at threat.

3. Loss of income through redundancy or reduced hours will naturally mean individual hardship and material deprivation and the potential to have to move to find work.
4. Losing the role of being the face of the council on the island communities will have a personal impact on their role in building a sustainable community of place.
5. Mull CSP in particular will become the only CSP with a lone worker CSP agent/registrar in the afternoons and thus will have a potential material deprivation of safety compared to other service point agents if there is an accident or aggressive customer incident.
6. All of the community based CSPs (Colonsay, Jura and Tiree), make the point strongly that the CSPs are the bases from which they deliver their services and community regeneration initiatives and the uncertainty of the use of the buildings and the income would have a serious impact on their efforts, in contradiction to the Islands and Fairer Duty Scotland Acts.

Gaps in evidence

None received from Campbeltown Community Council or Mull Community Council.

Section 3: Impact of proposal

Impact on service users:

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

	Negative	No impact	Positive	Don't know
Disability		X		
Ethnicity		X		
Gender	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		
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?

YES, these are outlined at the "Other information" section above and the knock on effects section below.

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

Details of knock-on effects identified

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

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 VC 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 VC service at all the affected CSPs, for example on Jura the VC is used by a member of the H&SCP IJB, by the Community Council and the Progressive Care Centre.

Numerous activities completed on behalf of partner organisations will require to be reviewed and agreed including with Police Scotland, HM Passport Service for the remote passport interview service, Campbeltown Museum Trust.

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.

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 reduced to part time working the remaining agents will be asked to keep an impact log, to be reviewed at an agreed cycle.