

**REPORT TO: POLICY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE ON 15 DECEMBER 2009**

**SUBJECT: THE MORAY REGISTRATION SERVICE**

**BY: THE CHIEF LEGAL OFFICER**

**1. Reason for Report**

- 1.1 To inform the Committee of the outcome of the formal consultation with staff, trade unions and other stakeholders in respect of the review of the operation of the Moray Registration Service.
- 1.2 This report is submitted to this Committee in terms of Section A(28) of the Administrative Scheme relating to exercising the functions of the Council in connection with the Registration of Births, Deaths and Marriages.

**2. Recommendation**

**2.1 That the Committee agree to:-**

- (i) Note the outcome of the formal consultation with staff, trade unions and other stakeholders in respect of the review of the operation of the Moray Registration Service;**
- (ii) The revised opening hours for the Buckie, Forres and Keith Registration Officers with effect from 1 January 2010, and**
- (iii) The re-introduction of the Career Progression Scheme for the Registration Service.**

**3. Background**

- 3.1 At the Meeting of this Committee held on 7 April 2009 (paragraph 13 of the Minute refers), it was agreed that the Moray Registration Service be reorganised in certain areas, namely that the satellite offices in outlying areas operate at reduced opening hours on limited days a week and that some staff relocate to the Elgin Office. A revised staffing structure which would also incorporate a career progression scheme acceptable under the terms of Single Status was also agreed, in principle, subject to further detailed discussion with Personnel Services.

**Revised Opening Hours - Consultation Response**

- 3.2 A full analysis of the public responses received in regard to the revised opening hours has been undertaken. Of the forty individual organisations contacted, ten responses have been received. Four stated no objection to the proposed changes, three responses opposed the proposed changes, one suggested no change but that staff within the outlying offices be given 'more to do'; one suggested that the shorter hours be spread over five days rather than three whole days and one made no comment on the proposals other than request that

the ratio of births, deaths and marriages be broken down into three. A summary of the responses received is attached at **Appendix 1**.

- 3.3 Consultation with internal stakeholders has also been undertaken with no objections being received.
- 3.4 It is therefore proposed to make no changes to the original proposed revised opening hours as detailed at **Appendix 2**.

### **STAFF CONSULTATION REPONSE**

- 3.5 A full consultation has been carried out with the staff and the trade union and all are in agreement with the proposals regarding the new structure, career progression scheme and the reduced operating hours in the Forres, Buckie and Keith offices.
- 3.6 Internal stakeholder consultation has also been undertaken with regard to the effects of the proposals on the burial ground administration, hall booking administration and the future operation of the Keith Access Point.
- 3.7 In respect of burial ground administration, no objection has been raised by the Lands and Parks Department to the reduced operating hours. Hall bookings currently undertaken by the Buckie Registration staff will be transferred to the current hall keeper.
- 3.8 In regard to the Keith Access Point, the unexpected voluntary retirement of the Registrar during the consultation period required the need to amend the original staffing proposals for this office which resulted in the management of the Access Point function being transferred to the Revenues Department along with the transfer of the remaining Assistant Registrar/Customer Services Assistant to the Revenues Department who will remain within the Keith Area Office as a Customer Services Assistant at the Access Point. The service to the public will therefore continue unchanged.

### **4. Staffing/Financial Implications**

- 4.1 In the original report, Option 2 placed 3 posts at risk with the need to look at the relocation of some staff, however due to the unexpected voluntary retirement of a member of staff within the Keith Registration Office and the resultant operational need to fill this vacancy, the number of posts at risk has reduced from 3 to 1.
- 4.2 Following consultation with both staff and the trade union, agreement has been reached regarding the relocation of staff resulting in there now being no staff at risk.
- 4.3 The unexpected staffing changes within the Keith Office and the operational requirement to ensure that both the Registration and the Access Point elements of the service were maintained, required negotiations with the Revenues Section to secure support for the continued operation of the Access Point. This resulted in agreement for the transfer of the remaining member of staff from the Registration Service to the Revenues Section and the temporary transfer of a

member of the Registration staff from within the Buckie Registration Office to support the Registration element. The transfer of the member of staff to the Revenues Section has required the transfer of that element of the Registration budget to the Revenues staffing budget.

- 4.4 The Buckie Registrar also has as part of their duties, the function of hall bookings. Following negotiation with the Educational Resources Manager, this element of the duties will be transferred to the existing hall keeper but will require the transfer of a small element of the Registration budget (7 hours per week at Grade 1).

## **5. Corporate Plan**

- 5.1 The proposals will contribute to the Council's commitment to the provision of responsive and modern services.

## **6. Consultations**

- 6.1 External consultation was carried with the firms of Undertakers serving Moray, Monumental Sculptors and community groups including Community Councils and local forums. Of the forty individual organisations contacted, ten responses were received and the outcome of these is as reported at paragraph 3.2 above.
- 6.2 Internal consultation has been undertaken with the staff, trade unions, the Environmental Protection Manager in relation to the administration of burial grounds, the Educational Resources Manager in relation to hall bookings and Rhonda Geddes-Stewart, Personnel Adviser and Andrea Elder, Personnel Adviser in regard to the staffing issues and career progression scheme respectively and staff within Accountancy in regard to the resource transfer. On initial inspection the Scheme appears acceptable but does require final verification which rests with officers under delegated authority and no problems are envisaged. Consultation has also been undertaken with the Customer Services Manager, Revenues in relation to the Access Point in the Area Office in Keith. All are in agreement with the proposals.

## **7. CONCLUSION**

- 7.1 The final outcome of the review has taken longer than expected due to unexpected events which have left staff feeling uncertain and anxious, final agreement to the revised structure and opening hours for the Registration Service will bring stability to the staff and a new sense of purpose as the opportunity to expand the genealogy element of the service is developed.

Author of Report: Moira Patrick, Principal Committee Services Officer

Background Papers: Report to P&R Committee dated 7 April 2009/Consultation Responses

Ref: