

To: GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE		Subject: FREEDOM OF INFORMATION
From: DIRECTOR OF ADMINISTRATION		
Date: 5 January 2004	Ref: JAF/IL	

1. Purpose of Report

1.1 The report advises the Committee of progress made with regard to the Council's obligations under the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 which comes into full force on 1 January 2005.

2. Background

2.1 The Committee, at its meeting on 4 June 2003, following consideration of a report submitting proposals formulated by the Corporate Freedom of Information Working Group on action to address the Council's obligations under the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002, agreed, *inter alia*, a strategy for preparation of the Council's statutory Publication Scheme. The Committee agreed, also, that the production of that Scheme be undertaken by officers who co-ordinate the compilation and maintenance of the Council's web site with guidance from the Corporate Freedom of Information Working Group who should retain responsibility for the Publication Scheme.

2.2 In terms of the Act, the Council's draft Publication Scheme requires to be submitted to the Scottish Information Commissioner on or before 28 February 2004 with a view to approval by 1 June 2004.

3. Draft Publication Scheme Production

3.1 In line with the Committee's instructions, work on the production of the Council's draft Publication Scheme is well advanced with a view to consideration on behalf of the Council prior to the statutory date for submission. The draft Scheme, while drawing on the contents of the Council's web site, covers a range of further information.

3.2 It is proposed that the Council's Publication Scheme be made available on the Council's web site and that, in addition, paper copies of the Publication Scheme be made available at all Council offices and libraries. Similarly it is proposed that the various categories of information covered by the Publication Scheme be available in a range of formats depending on the nature of the information. The formats will include hard copy reports and leaflets, web pages, books, electronic documents, audio tapes and, in very limited cases, inspection by appointment.

3.3 It is proposed that the majority of the information covered by the Publication Scheme will be available free of charge although, to reflect existing practice, the provision of some categories of information will attract a fee.

4. **Identification of Information and Future Archiving Arrangements**

- 4.1 Central to compliance with the requirements of the Act is identification of information held by the Council. In response to a survey undertaken by the Department of Community Services detailed information has now been obtained from all Departments of the Council. That information is currently being analysed and, while more work requires to be done to identify future archiving needs, it is understood that the Director of Community Services has concluded that the current premises at Lenziemill, Cumbernauld provide insufficient capacity to meet the Council's archiving requirements. Consideration will, accordingly, require to be given to alternative premises.

In the meantime the Director of Community Services has obtained Council approval for the recruitment of one additional member of staff to assist in archiving work. It is, however, to be anticipated that, to meet the full archiving requirements of the Council, further staffing resources will be required.

5. **Further Action**

- 5.1 In addition to completion and submission of the draft Publication Scheme and work on record management and archiving, a range of further action is required including detailed arrangements for identification, consideration and processing of requests for information, establishment of procedures for response, establishment of review procedures, identification of relevant officers and staff training. Further reports will, accordingly, be submitted to the Committee.

6. **Resources**

- 6.1 As part of a survey commissioned by the Scottish Information Commissioner, the Council has been asked to give an estimate of the *external* budget - i.e. the budget to be spent outside the organisation on, for example, procuring new systems or consultant services – set aside by the organisation for ensuring compliance with the Act. The bands suggested in the survey range from under £50,000 to £1,000,000+. At the present time it is not proposed that the Council avail itself of external assistance, but there will undoubtedly be further resource implications for the Council in advance of the date when the Act comes fully into force.

7. **Recommendation**

- 7.1 It is recommended that the Committee, meantime, note the position.


Director of Administration

Members seeking further information on the contents of this report are asked to contact John Fleming, Head of Central Services on Extension 2228.