

COMMITTEE REPORT

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| To: CORPORATE SERVICES COMMITTEE | | Subject: AREA/REGISTRATION SERVICE – NATIONALITY CHECKING SERVICE |
| From: HEAD OF CENTRAL SERVICES | | |
| Date: 23 April 2008 | Ref: JAF/BN | |

1 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to advise the Corporate Services Committee of an invitation from the Home Office, UK Border Agency to local authorities to introduce a Nationality Checking Service.

2. Background

- 2.1 In 2007 an invitation was issued by the Home Office, Border and Immigration Agency (LACORS) inviting all Scottish Local authorities to offer a Nationality Checking Service.
- 2.2 Nationality Checking Service is a basic advice service which aims to help those seeking citizenship make a good quality application which the Nationality Group will be able to determine more quickly.
- 2.3 The Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner (OISC) is an independent public body set up under the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999, and is led by Immigration Services Commissioner. The OISC is responsible for ensuring that all immigration advisers fulfil the requirements of good practice.
- 2.4 Many Councils in England offer this service. In Scotland the only Council offering the service is South Lanarkshire Council and it is offered from offices in East Kilbride, Hamilton and Lanark. It is understood that other Scottish Councils are currently considering the position.
- 2.5 The service involves a potential applicant making an appointment to visit the designated office of participating Councils.
- 2.6 Role of Trained Advisers

Advisers will be trained by OISC to advise those seeking Citizenship with a view to ensuring the

- correct application form is being used
- correct application form is issued if required
- applicants are guided through the form
- form is correctly completed
- form is signed
- correct fee accompanies the application form

a.

In addition, the trained adviser also

- performs an identify check
- photocopies passport(s) and other valuable documents
- returns original(s) documents to the applicant
- submits the form and photocopied documentation to the Home Office
- ensures effective case management

3. Considerations

3.1 Under Section 20 of the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003 and guidance issued by the office of the Depute Prime Minister Councils have authority under their powers of wellbeing to offer this service and make an administrative charge for the cost of the service provision.

3.2 Effective arrangements require to be in place prior to offering this service. These include

- staff training
- accommodation
- marketing
- resources
- fees and
- registration with the Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner

3.3 Staff training

Prior to offering this service staff will be required to be trained to Level 1 Adviser. This involves completing a one day Nationality Checking Service course and taking an on-line level 1 assessment to test knowledge of Immigration and Rules, with the focus on Nationality Section on the test. The OISC provide a Caseworker who will act as a "buddy" to assist with the launch of the service and accompany staff through the first couple of days interviews. Support via the telephone is available thereafter if required.

3.4 Accommodation

Having regard to accommodation and capacity it is considered that the scheme could be operated on a pilot basis from the Shotts Registration Office.

3.5 Marketing the Nationality Checking Service

This will involve

- preparation of an information leaflet on the Nationality Checking Service
- display of posters in Receptions
- publication of service on Website
- preparation of articles for the North Lanarkshire News and press releases

3.6 Resources

It is considered the service can be introduced within the current resources on the basis that the checking service will be offered on an appointment only basis on agreed days of the week.

3.7 Suggested Fees

The table below, based on suggested charges from the IOSC procedural guide, contains a description of each type of application.

| Type of application | Chargeable fee to customer (inclusive of VAT) | VAT | Taxable Amount |
|--|---|--------|----------------|
| Adult who submits a single application pays one fee | £35 | £5.21 | £29.79 |
| Husband and wife living together who apply at the same time pay one fee | £50 | £7.44 | £42.56 |
| Husband and wife (and up to 2 children) | £60 | £8.93 | £51.07 |
| Additional children on parents' application | £15 per child (eg based on 4 children £90) | £13.40 | £76.60 |
| One or more children under the age of 18 who apply separately from their parents | £15 per child | £2.23 | £12.77 |

3.8 Registration with the of the Immigration Services Commissioner

3.8.1 There is annual recurring fee of £555 for the Council to be registered with the Immigration Services Commissioner and it takes a minimum of eight weeks to complete the registration process. The Council can offer the service when the OISC confirm the registration process has been successfully completed.

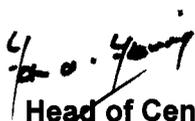
3.8.2 There is a 3 stage registration process

- Each adviser who will be offering the service completes an on line assessment on the Commissioners Code and Rules
- The Co-ordinator for the introduction of the Nationality Checking service completes an application pack for level 1 registration and gives the names of staff acting as advisers. Advisers also complete competency statements.
- Each Adviser who is listed in the Councils application pack and has completed the Codes and Rules assessment will be provided with their individual adviser reference number. This will enable Advisers to complete the level 1 competency test co-ordinator.

4. Recommendations

4.1 It is recommended that the Committee

- (a) accepts the invitation to offer a Nationality Checking Service in North Lanarkshire
- (b) approves the implementation of an action plan for the introduction of this service on a pilot basis from the Shotts Registration Office
- (c) notes that operation of the Nationality Checking Service will be monitored and reviewed and
- (d) notes that performance will be reported after nine months operational experience.



Head of Central Services

Local Government Access to Information Act: For information on this report please contact, John Fleming, Head of Central Services on 01698 302228