

**COUNCIL PREMISES DISABILITY ACCESS PROGRAMME –  
STORNOWAY TOWN HALL – PROJECT EVALUATION REPORT**

Report by Director of Technical Services



**COMPETENCE**

- 1.1 There are financial implications arising from the recommendations contained in this Report and they are detailed in the body of the report. The legal aspects are also addressed within the Report.

**SUMMARY**

- 2.1 The Comhairle has a statutory obligation in terms of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 to make reasonable adjustments to its premises to ensure that there are no physical barriers stopping or making it unreasonably difficult for the disabled person to access the premises.
- 2.2 A recent access audit has found a significant number of shortcomings at Stornoway Town Hall and the purpose of this report is to seek approval to commence works to address these shortcomings.
- 2.3 Members will be aware that proposals are currently being developed for a major Improvement/refurbishment scheme for the Town Hall and while no funding source for these major works has been identified, there are linkages between the current THI scheme and the proposed access works at the Registrar's Office. In terms of future use of the Town Hall accommodation, while no specific recommendations have yet been brought forward, it is of importance that the principle of retaining the present Registrar's Office in its current location is established in order to justify the scope of the current access proposals. Such approval would only apply to the Registrar's Offices and would not for example extend to the present Marriage Room.
- 2.4 This Report seeks approval of the PER to enable funding to be identified from the Capital Programme 2004 – 2008 to carry out the necessary improvements to the access to the Registrar's Office.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 **It is recommended that the Comhairle approve that:**
- (a) **the Stornoway Registrar's Offices or other public office be maintained in their present location within Stornoway Town Hall;**
  - (b) **the Comhairle approve the project as outlined for inclusion in the Capital Programme 2004 – 2008 in line with the Project Evaluation Report at Appendix 2 to this Report.**

Background Papers: Access Audit dated 22 January 2007.

## **BACKGROUND**

- 4.1 A recently completed access audit of Stornoway Town hall has found a number of significant deficiencies in terms of adjustments to the fabric of the building that the Comhairle might reasonably have been expected to undertake in order to comply with its statutory obligations under the terms of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995.
- 4.2 The accessibility issues at the Registrars Office have been identified as the highest priority and a scheme is currently in preparation to deal with the most serious of these issues. It is of some importance that some of these issues are addressed as soon as possible to minimise the potential risk of prosecution, while other aspects of the work require to be carried out concurrently with the repaving of Cromwell Street under the Townscape heritage Initiative scheme. Dependant on actual costs, it may be possible to address other issues related to access shortcomings at other entrances to the building.
- 4.3 The scheme proposed for the Registrars Office includes the construction of an elevated level access to both the main Cromwell Street entrance to the Town Hall and to the Registrars Office, the formation of an internal lobby, provision of an automatic door, creation of a small waiting area provision of induction loops and provision of controlled entry system.
- 4.4 It is of importance that the proposed works fit in with the overall approved development plan for this building and the proposals have been developed in consultation with Simpson and Brown, the Architects currently working on detailed proposals for the Building. In addition, Members should note that because of the listed building status of this building, approval of the proposals will be required from Historic Scotland.
- 4.5 At present it is not intended to address any of the identified shortcomings inside the remainder of the building as the intention is that these would be addressed as part of the major refurbishment scheme and any major alteration works would more than likely be abortive in the overall plan for the Town Hall. If possible however works at the main entry points to the building will be considered.
- 4.6 During the time that the alteration works are being carried out to the Registrars offices, it will be necessary to temporarily relocate Registration Staff into the Marriage Room and marriage ceremonies would be conducted in the auditorium during the period of the works. The external paving works are currently scheduled to commence at the beginning of September 2007 and it would be desirable to have the internal alterations completed by that time.
- 4.7 Members should note that External Fabric Repairs to the Windows and Stonework on the South Beach Elevation of the Town Hall will also be undertaken at the same time as the proposed alterations to the Registrars Office.