



**REPORT of
DIRECTOR OF CUSTOMERS AND COMMUNITY**

**to
FINANCE AND CORPORATE SERVICES COMMITTEE
12 JUNE 2018**

PROPOSALS FOR CHANGE TO OFFICE OPENING TIME TO PUBLIC

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To update Members on the outcome of a three month trial of a revised opening time to the public of 10 am on the last Wednesday of every month.
- 1.2 To seek Member approval to make this revised opening time permanent.

2. RECOMMENDATION

That following a successful three month trial, Members approve a revised Council Offices opening time of 10am on the last Wednesday of each month to enable staff meetings and training to be undertaken during that time and improve the overall service to our customers.

3. SUMMARY OF KEY ISSUES

3.1 Background

- 3.1.1 In November 2017 Members agreed a three month trial of a revised opening time once a month to enable:
 - improved communications between Managers and Staff, including Team meetings and one to one discussions;
 - opportunities for staff training;
 - staff briefings by the Corporate Leadership Team (CLT).
- 3.1.2 Creating a monthly opportunity to undertake meetings whilst the office is not open to the public improves the overall service being provided by:
 - reducing the incidence of team meeting taking place whilst the public are trying to contact us, thereby minimising the impact upon customers through increased staff availability;
 - enabling the Council to provide a better overall service to the customer by creating a regular opportunity for staff training and engagement.

3.1.3 Creating an opportunity for the Corporate Leadership Team to undertake staff briefings is also vital as we embark on a significant transformation journey to meet the financial challenges that we are facing.

3.2 **Outcome of the Trial**

3.2.1 The three month trial commenced on 25 March 2018, with a revised opening time of 10am for both telephone and face to face enquiries on the last Wednesday of each month and has been very successful.

3.2.2 There have been no significant issues, with most members of the public appearing to being aware of the revised opening time.

3.2.3 There has been early engagement with partners, and a clear communications plan was developed, including updates on our website, twitter, press releases and email banners.

3.2.4 An analysis of the way in which staff utilised the later opening time showed that:

- In March 82% of team managers' reported that staff used the later opening time to attend the staff briefing from CLT in our reception area on the Future Council Model (FCM) project and in additionally 25 % of teams also squeezed in a team meeting as well.
- In April 52% of team managers reported using the time to undertake staff meetings or training.
- In May another CLT briefing for all staff is planned which will fall during the later opening period.

3.2.5 Some learning has come out for the trial, including the need to have clearer external signage to direct the customers of our partners who have an urgent issue, improvements to our out of hours telephone message and improvements to arrangements to admitting visitors to the building outside of our public opening times. All of these issues have now been addressed.

3.2.6 As there is only a two week gap between the date of the report being considered by Members and the next late opening date, in order to ensure that Customers had adequate notice of any changes to the late opening arrangements it was agreed by the Director of Customers and Community in consultation with the Chairman of the Finance and Corporate Services Committee that we would provisionally advertise the next few months late opening dates to avoid any confusion.

3.2.7 If Members decide not to continue with the revised opening arrangements we will revert to our previous 8.30am opening from July 2018 and partners and members of the public will be notified as required.

4. **CONCLUSION**

4.1 The trial has been very successful with good use of the time prior to the late opening being used to undertake staff briefings, meetings and training.

- 4.2 The consolidated use of the time for meetings and training has improved the overall quality of service we are able to offer to customers at all other times, providing staff with an opportunity to undertake uninterrupted staff meetings and training.
- 4.3 It has provided opportunities for the Corporate Leadership Team to have regular staff briefings to ensure consistent communication on key priorities, and to ensure that staff are regularly updated on the FCM project.
- 4.4 Members are asked to make the trial a permanent arrangement, and from 27 June 2018 the offices will open at 10am on the last Wednesday of every month.

5. IMPACT ON CORPORATE GOALS

- 5.1 Introducing a later opening to the public to enable staff training and meetings to take place directly contributes to the Corporate Goal of Delivering good quality, cost effective and valued services

6. IMPLICATIONS

- (i) **Impact on Customers** – The change proposed would reduce the overall time the offices are open by 1.5 hours per month, however the quality of the service to the customer would be greatly enhanced if we utilised that time to ensure that staff briefings / team meetings and training were carried out, thereby minimising the time that officers were unavailable to deal with the public as a result of team meetings. It would also reduce the total number of hours that staff were not available to the public due to team meetings
- (ii) **Impact on Equalities** – None.
- (iii) **Impact on Risk** – Failure to publicise the change adequately could result in customers attending the office when it is closed, leading to customer dissatisfaction and reputational damage. Failure to have a regular pattern of late opening that it is easy for customer to remember will make it difficult for the change to embed.
- (iv) **Impact on Resources (financial)** – None.
- (v) **Impact of Resources (human)** – Maximising the use of the late opening arrangements for team meetings / training and staff briefings would make more efficient use of staff time, and would improve the service to customers. It would also improve organisational communication, enabling consistent and clear messages to be delivered by the Corporate Leadership Team.
- (vi) **Impact on the Environment** – None.

Background Papers: None.

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