

To: Members of the Special Sub-Group

Councillors Humphreys, Phillips, Smith, M Stanley and Sweet

For the information of the other Members of the Council

SPECIAL SUB-GROUP

13 JANUARY 2015

The Special Sub-Group will meet in the Committee Room, The Council House, South Street, Atherstone on Tuesday 13 January 2015 at **3.00 pm**.

AGENDA

PART I - PUBLIC BUSINESS

- 1 Evacuation Procedure.**
- 2 Apologies for Absence / Members away on official Council business.**
- 3 Disclosable Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests**
- 4 Public Participation**

Up to twenty minutes will be set aside for members of the public to ask questions or to put their views to elected Members. Participants are restricted to five minutes each. If you wish to speak at the meeting please contact David Harris on 01827 719222 or email democraticservices@northwarks.gov.uk.

**PART A – ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION AND DECISION
(WHITE PAPERS)**

- 5 **Results of Change to the One Stop Shop Opening Hours** – Report of the Assistant Chief Executive (Community Services)

Summary

The purpose of this report is to report on the outcomes of the pilot agreed by this board on 14 April 2014 to open the Council's One Stop Shop and Contact Centre on a number of days when the Council would traditionally have been closed to members of the public during 2014.

The Contact Officer for this report is Bob Trahern (719378).

- 6 **Combined Authorities** – Report of the Chief Executive

Summary

To receive a verbal update on the proposal for Combined Authorities

The Contact Officer for this report is Jerry Hutchinson (719200).

**PART C – EXEMPT INFORMATION
(GOLD PAPERS)**

- 7 **Exclusion of the Public and Press**

Recommendation:

That under Section 11A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business, on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined by Schedule 12A to the Act.

- 8 **Shared Service Proposal and Structure Changes in the Revenues and Benefits Division**– Report of the Assistant Chief Executive (Community Services)

The Contact Officer for this report is Bob Trahern (719378).

JERRY HUTCHINSON
Chief Executive

For general enquiries please contact David Harris, Democratic Services Manager, on 01827 719222 or via e-mail – davidharris@northwarks.gov.uk.

For enquiries about specific reports please contact the officer named in the report.

Agenda Item No 5

Special Sub-Group

13 January 2015

**Report of the
Assistant Chief Executive (Community
Services)**

**Results of Change to the One Stop
Shop Opening Hours**

1 Summary

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to report on the outcomes of the pilot agreed by this board on 14 April 2014 to open the Council's One Stop Shop and Contact Centre on a number of days when the Council would traditionally have been closed to members of the public during 2014.
- 1.2 At this time, it was agreed with the Trade Unions that interim arrangements would be put in place for 2014 only and that if on review the pilot was deemed successful a formal consultation regarding potential amendments to staff terms and conditions would be undertaken prior to any permanent changes being adopted from 2015/16 onwards.

Recommendation to the Board

- a That Members review the outcomes of the pilot to open the Contact Centre and One Stop Shop; and**
- b If a decision is taken to retain the arrangements to open the councils one stop shop and contact centre on a permanent basis from 2015/16 onwards, formal consultation is started immediately with Staff and the Trade Unions.**

2 Background

- 2.1 As a result of Jobcentre Plus colleagues occupying the Council One Stop Shop in June 2014, this resulted in a number of changes being necessary to the Council's delivery model.
- 2.2 The decision to align our opening times more closely with those operated by the Department of Work and Pensions that saw the opening times for face to face services change to start at 9am and close at 5pm has worked very well. This did not require any changes to the terms and conditions of staff employed in this area as the telephone service opening times covered by the same officers remained at 8.30am to 5.15pm.
- 2.3 The second and potentially more significant change was the issue raised by the fact that the Jobcentre Plus offices were open on five days when the

Council would otherwise have been closed to the public during 2014. As a result, officers were concerned about the negative perception of customers who would be able to access the Council One Stop Shop on these days to see Jobcentre staff but not be able to access information on Council services. These days were as follows.

Tuesday 27 May 2014 (not applicable in 2014 as the service did not open until June but normally a statutory holiday)
Tuesday 26 August 2014 (a statutory holiday)
Monday 29 December 2014 (a statutory holiday)
Tuesday 30 December 2014 (a statutory holiday)
Wednesday 31 December 2014 (staff are required to take a days annual leave or flexi time to enable the Council to remain shut until after the New Year

It should be noted for completeness that the Jobcentre designated the 24 December as a statutory holiday when they were closed although this was a normal working day for the Council when we were open.

- 2.4 As can be seen from the table in paragraph 3.8 if a decision is taken to continue with the arrangements piloted, from 2015/16 onwards, this will result in the Council being open for face to face and telephone contacts when the rest of the back office operation will be closed. As such, this will require a number of changes to the existing terms and conditions of those staff employed by the Council in the contact centre and one stop shop. These changes would mirror those of other Council employees (e.g.) from Borough Care, housing repairs and streetscape who already work on these days and which is reflected in their employment terms and conditions which sees them compensated in line with the NJC (green book) in terms of pay and adjustments to their holiday entitlement.
- 2.6 In adopting the pilot, it was agreed that the arrangements outlined in paragraph 2.6 would be put in place in 2014 only so that Members could review the demand and impact of opening on these days before recommending if any permanent changes to existing staff's terms and conditions would be needed from April 2015 onwards. This is because such a decision would need a consultation exercise to be undertaken prior to implementation of any changes with both staff and the Trade Unions
- 2.7 Staff employed in the Councils Contact Centre and the One Stop Shop staff were requested to volunteer to work on the days outlined in paragraph 2.3 for which they were compensated in line with the Councils existing policies. This involved allowing them to take the extra statutory days holiday worked at another time of the year, and in addition to the normal pay for that day, they were also be paid at plain time for all the hours worked within their normal working hours for that day. The 31 December was paid at normal time and they were not required to use their annual leave or flexitime for this day.

3 Outcomes of the Pilot

- 3.1 In order to open on the designated days included in the pilot, this required sufficient staff to volunteer from the team which was achieved. The number of staffing required to deal with enquiries does vary considerably dependent on the time of the year, the day of the week, the time of the day, the weather and if court action or large scale mailshots are issued. On average the service will have between 6 to 12 officers working in the Contact Centre and One Stop Shop at anyone time which allows it to deliver an average service standard of dealing with 75% of calls within 20 seconds and 70% of personal callers in 10 minutes.
- 3.2 On the 4 days in question, we had 5.2 full time equivalent staff working on Tuesday 26 August and an average of 4.25 full time equivalent staff dealing with telephone and face to face enquiries over the Christmas period. The estimated cost of these staff working is outlined in paragraph 4.1.2. The number of staff required to deal with contacts will be reviewed next year now we have some experience of likely volumes and the time these calls were received but it is anticipated that additional costs incurred would remain broadly in line with those incurred on the pilot.
- 3.3 On 26 August 2014, the service dealt with 396 telephone calls whilst 28 calls were abandoned, 74 face to face enquiries and the overall service standard achieved was about 15% less than normal for the time of year (59%). This is largely because we received almost exactly the same level of calls as we would on a normal Tuesday in August (about 5% less). An analysis of main services requested were as follows; Council Tax and Benefits (26%), Housing Management (12.5%); Payments (12%); Refuse and Recycling (10%) and Environmental (7%), of which 83% were able to be dealt with at the first point of contact in either answering the query or completing a service request form on behalf of the customer..
- 3.4 Over the Christmas period, we experienced the following activity which again was largely in line with the call volumes we normally get on equivalent days in December with Monday the busiest of the three days compounded by the fact that we had already been closed since Christmas Eve.

| | Monday 29/12/14 | Tuesday 30/12/14 | Weds 31/12/14 |
|-------------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------|
| Total Calls | 340 | 201 | 129 |
| Calls Answered | 306 | 194 | 122 |
| Calls Abandoned | 34 | 7 | 7 |
| Answered in 20 seconds | 45% | 55% | 79% |
| Face to Face | 43 | 55 | 28 |

- 3.5 In summary, it is estimated that over the three days, 85% of the calls received were dealt with at the first point of contact by the front office staff. It was also noted that call volumes decreased over the three days we were open with New Years Eve being significantly quieter than the previous two days and that call volumes on all days was much lower after 2 pm. Conversely, footfall

increased on the second day of opening with customers coming in with enquiries across all services and to hand in post or have evidence scanned.

- 3.6 An analysis of main services requested were as follows; Refuse and Recycling (42%), Council Tax, and Benefits (20%); Payments (15%) and Housing Management (9%); a slightly different emphasis to August but more representative of calls at this time of year. This was caused by the usual general confusion around when bins would be emptied and an increase in missed bins caused by the problems faced by the service with resources at this time of year and with customers not presenting bins on the right dates. An additional positive was that the staff in Borough Care reported a significant reduction in the number of calls they were required to deal with compared to previous years. This is likely because of customers being able to have their non emergency calls dealt with by the contact centre and the mild weather experienced over the holiday period.
- 3.7 In conclusion, the pilot to open the Council to deal with both telephone and face to face enquiries was successful and the demand on the services justified opening them. In addition, because of the quality of the staff and systems available to them, they were able to answer the majority of customer enquiries presented to them indicating that the inability to refer matters to back office staff was not a significant issue particularly over the Christmas period and therefore no changes are deemed necessary to those employees contracts.
- 3.8 Should Members wish to consider alternative arrangements for 2015/16, they will need to have regard that the two main partners who also share the Council building have the following statutory days designated next year

| Statutory Day | NWBC | DWP | WCC |
|--|-------------|------------|------------|
| Good Friday (3 April 2015) | X | X | X |
| Easter Monday (6 April 2015) | X | X | X |
| May Day (4 May 2015) | X | X | X |
| Spring Bank Holiday Monday (25 May 2015) | X | X | X |
| Spring Bank Holiday Monday (26 May 2015) | X | | |
| Summer Bank Holiday (31 August 2015) | X | X | X |
| Summer Bank Holiday (1 September 2015) | X | | |
| Christmas Eve (24 December 2015) | | X | |
| Christmas Day (25 December 2015) | X | X | X |
| Boxing Day (28 December 2015) | X | X | X |
| Extra Statutory Day (29 December 2015) | X | | X |
| Extra Statutory Day (30 December 2015) | X | | |
| New Year's Day (1 January 2016) | X | X | X |
| Good Friday (25 March 2016) | X | X | X |
| Easter Monday (28 March 2016) | X | X | X |

- 3.9 It should be noted that the number of annual leave days awarded to Borough Council staff reflects the higher number of statutory days granted. In addition, Borough Council staff are also currently required to use either a days annual

leave or flexitime on 31 December 2015 in order that the back office can be closed for the entire holiday period between Christmas Day and New Years Day.

4 Report Implications

4.1 Finance and Value for Money Implications

4.1.1 The additional costs incurred by the payment of overtime to the small number of staff who were be required to work on the current statutory days in 2014 was paid from existing budgets held within the Division as a result of current vacancy levels.

4.1.2 Based on the levels of staff that were required to work on the pilot this year, the total extra cost in overtime payments for each statutory day worked is estimated at an average of £500 per day. Under the current arrangements, this would result in additional costs of approximately £2000 if no changes are made which should be able to be paid from the existing overtime budget which is currently underspent. There was no additional cost incurred for opening on 31 December 2014 as this is not a statutory day.

4.1.3 If Members wish to re-designate any of the statutory days as normal working days for staff and increase leave entitlement accordingly, this would have a significant implication in terms of the consultation necessary and would result in compensation payments to those staff who currently are compensated to work on these days. This is not recommended as an appropriate approach.

4.1.4 In addition, by opening the building for the extra days stated had no impact on the heating and lighting costs of the building by virtue of the fact that other partners (e.g.) the County Council and Jobcentre Plus, were already working in the building

4.2 Human Resource Implications

4.2.1 Any decision to require existing staff employed in the contact centre or one stop shop to work on existing statutory days from April 2015 onwards will require an amendment to their existing terms and conditions which will require a consultation exercise involving the Trade Unions. The timing of this report has provided opportunity for this to happen.

4.2.2 New contracts of any new staff employed in this environment will be based on whatever arrangements are agreed following this consultation exercise.

4.3 Safer Communities Implications

4.3.1 An increase in the number of days the Council is open and available to be contacted by its residents can only be perceived as a positive step.

4.4 Environmental and Sustainability Implications

4.4.1 The Council's ongoing improvements in its online offer to customers means accessing the web site and self service is becoming more popular and common enabling customers to access help and advice when it's convenient. It is envisaged that over the coming years, an increasing number of current telephone and face to face enquiries will be undertaken electronically which falls in line with Council priorities and commitments.

4.5 Risk Management Implications

4.5.1 None

4.6 Equalities Implications

4.6.1 The impact of the proposed changes will have very limited impact on the Council's commitment to promoting better access to information and will not disadvantage any specific group of customers.

4.6.2 However, the extension of the number of days that the Council's One Stop Shop and Contact Centre and potentially wider services will be available again can only be seen as a positive step.

4.7 Links to Council's Priorities

4.7.1 The implications of this report have a link to the Council's commitment to promoting better access to services which the proposals in this report will achieve.

The Contact Officer for this report is Bob Trahern (719378).

Background Papers

Local Government Act 1972 Section 100D, as substituted by the Local Government Act, 2000 Section 97

| Background Paper No | Author | Nature of Background Paper | Date |
|---------------------|--------|----------------------------|------|
| | | | |

Agenda Item No 7

Special Sub-Group

13 January 2015

**Report of the
Chief Executive**

Exclusion of the Public and Press

Recommendation to the Sub-Group

That under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business, on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined by Schedule 12A to the Act.

Agenda Item No 8

Shared Service Proposal and Structure Changes in the Revenues and Benefits Division– Report of the Assistant Chief Executive (Community Services)

Paragraph 1 – by reason of the need to consider the staffing implications

The Contact Officer for this report is David Harris (719222).