

# Proposal to change the opening times of the One Stop Shop and Customer Contact Centre

## Diversity Impact Assessment

### 1 Purpose

To ensure provision of in person and telephone customer access to the Council that is effective, efficient and value for money. This DIA sets out proposed changes to opening times, the current and future context of Council service provision and an analysis of the impacts of the proposal.

This proposal supports current Council objectives in a number of ways:

- Increasing resilience and independence of vulnerable and potentially vulnerable people
- Providing support to prevent people from becoming dependent on services, which are often more expensive
- Making best use of Swindon's resources inside and outside the Council

The proposal is to:

Reduce the opening hours by 1.5hrs per day to 9am to 5pm

Change the Customer Services performance indicators:

#### **From**

80% of customers seen in 15 minutes and 80% of calls answered in 20 seconds

#### **To**

80% of customers seen in 30 minutes and 80% of calls answered in 60 seconds

There is no proposal to change the current operating hours or performance indicators for the Homeline service where 95% of contacts are responded to in 30 seconds, which are received via the ARC (alarm receiving centre) based at Water Side

This proposal would create an immediate cost saving of £197k

### 2 Current provision

The Customer Services portfolio includes provision of a face-to-face service via the One Stop Shop (OSS), Civic, and Clarence House Receptions. It also includes a telephony service via the Contact Centre and Control Room (Homeline and 24hr Emergency Number). Across these two channels of communication, it delivers over 40 distinct services ranging from Revenues, Benefits, Housing, StreetSmart, Anti-Social Behaviour, Regulatory Services, Blue Badges, Building Control, Planning, Car Parking services, and School Admissions. Many services relating to Children & Families and Adults Services are not part of the current offering.

The service deals with annual volumes of circa 400,000 calls to the Contact Centre; 320,000 visits to the One Stop Shop, Civic, and Clarence House reception and 38,300 customer emails into the Customer Services & StreetSmart inbox. The service operates under the 'Swindon Direct' brand.

The One Stop Shop (OSS) currently operates from 8.30am to 6pm Monday to Friday

The Contact Centre (CC) currently operates from 8am to 8pm Mon to Fri

The proposal to change would result in the following new operating hours:

- The One Stop Shop would open from 9am to 5pm Mon to Fri.
- The Contact Centre would operate from 9am to 5pm Mon to Fri.

This change would reduce the operating costs within Customer Services and potentially within Facilities Management (including Security and Cleaning).

Since 2007, opening hours for the service have changed; previously, late opening on a Thursday until 8pm in the OSS and Saturday mornings for both the OSS and CC was trialled. After analysis of customers over three years; the low take-up during these extended hours alongside financial pressures, forced a decision to reduce opening times to their current operational hours.

This proposed change has taken this into account and has closely analysed current patterns of customer interaction. It has also taken a forward look at the growing demand for on-line services for transactional based activity and the demand for richer, more meaningful interaction when needs are greater or more complex. All of this needs to be achieved against a backdrop of an ever decreasing financial situation and an imperative to run this service at a lower cost to operate.

Stronger Together is the Councils response to the challenges it faces in balancing demand, expectation and the financial situation. A key element of this is to get much closer to the community so that it enables and facilitates a new relationship. A relationship based on empowering the community to take ownership and control over lives and options.

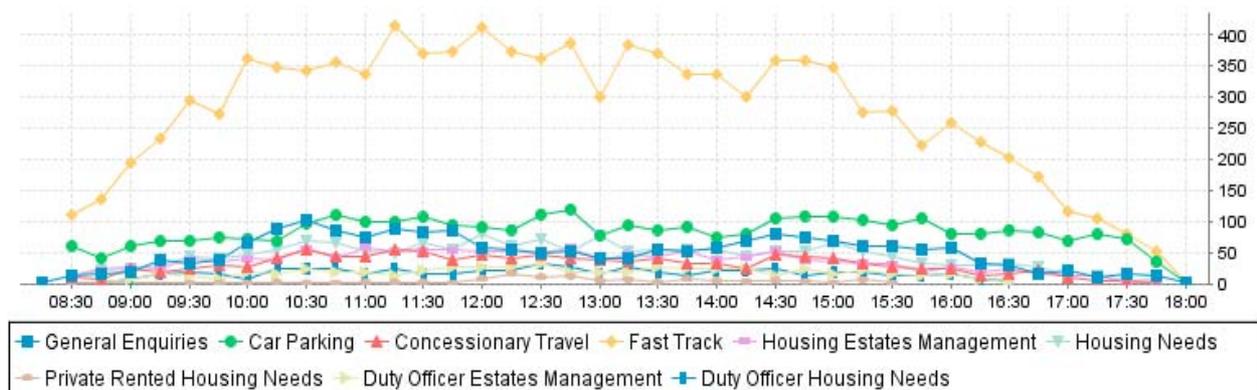
Any future service needs to respond to all these drivers; embracing technology wherever possible, but retaining a close link with the customers it supports.

### 3 Considerations

We have taken into account the following when forming this proposal:

**Need to reduce costs** – as with every other service area in the business there is a need to look for opportunities to provide the most efficient and effective service possible and at the same time reduce operating costs.

**Usage numbers** – using contact data from the Q-Matic contact log system in the One Stop Shop, analysis of customer usage patterns has been undertaken. Whilst there are customers who currently access the service during 8.30 – 9am and 5 – 6pm; volumes are significantly lower than during the remaining opening hours



Graph to show customer contact type in the One Stop Shop over a three month period – Jul – Sep 2012

The Contact Centre uses the Avaya system to capture contact information; the figures below are the call volumes during October 2012:

SUMMARY	Call Volumes
08:00 Total	174
08:15 Total	195
08:30 Total	371
08:45 Total	499
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>1239</b>

SUMMARY	Call Volumes
17.00 – 18.00	650
18.00 – 19.00	112
19.00 – 20.00	22
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>784</b>

**Working patterns of customers** – although the service does not have an in-depth profile of its customers, the data is telling us that the main customer contact occurs between 9am and 5pm. Most of this contact relates to dropping off documents or calling to report a fault or problem. There may be an impact on some customers who call or visit between 8.30 – 9am and 5 - 6pm, however, there is a letterbox on the external wall of Wat Tyler House; and the Control Room will still be available to take emergency calls for a range of services, such as Housing Repairs

**Staff implications** – the proposal has stated there will be staff implications both in the One Stop Shop and Contact Centre, these equate to 11.2 fte. A profile of the affected staff has been created and it is recognised that the greatest impact will be on female staff. (See Appendix 1 for staff make-up)

**Complaints/feedback** – 56 Customer Services related complaints have been received since 1st April 2012. This accounts for 4.46%% of the 1255 recorded Service Delivery complaints since April. None of these complaints were in respect of opening times and access to Customer Services. There is no equality data associated with these complaints.

**Consultation** – to date the proposal has been presented to the Lead member, all Tier 1 and Tier 2 Officers within the organisation with a request to assess the implications and provide feedback. To date 10 responses have been received; all in support of the proposal. Housing Services have requested that if the proposal progresses, there is engagement with Tenants groups prior to the change.

**Impact of previous changes** We have reviewed the impact of two previous key changes; opening hours and the closure of the cash desk, to ensure we have taken any learning from these. Although there is no specific equality data available, there is no evidence that there has been an adverse impact on any group or individual. The Closure of Cash Desk in April 2012 did have the potential to have an adverse impact on customers. To date evidence suggests the impact has

been minimal, arrears have not increased and we have successfully redirected 7000 visits to other methods and locations for making payments. Only 2 complaints have been received via the Corporate Customer Comments process.

## Benefits

- The main benefit of this proposal is the financial saving of circa £197k. This is based on staff savings in the One Stop Shop and Contact Centre. There may be other savings opportunities through reduced security presence; and reduced ICT – these figures are yet to be quantified.
- There is no benefit to customers, however, the commitment to drive forward opportunities to provide more services on-line, will ultimately increase choice and accessibility for some customers.
- There is likely to be an increase in wait times during peak times. This may have an adverse effect on customers. To mitigate this, we will be exploring opportunities to extend the appointment systems to more services, so customers have allocated slots for their visits

## Assumptions

- Although the amount of Equality & Diversity data for these services is almost non-existent, there is generic data to inform decision making. Using the data and staff experience, the following assumptions have been made:
  - We believe no single customer group will be impacted greater than any other as a result of this change
  - Customers will be impacted but the data tells us that reducing daily opening hours will have less impact than a full day closure of the service
  - Customers will be impacted by extended wait times in the One Stop Shop and Customer Services; these will be kept to a minimum, but will peak at times of high demand
  - Customer contact in the One Stop Shop has fallen due to the closure of the Cash desk; this is expected to continue for these services
  - The impact of the changes in Welfare Benefits needs to be well managed; there could be an increase in footfall once the new arrangements are in place. This will be closely monitored and plans will be put in place to manage any large increase in demand.
  - We have the ability to reduce customer demand by transitioning many of the transactional services on to on-line service channels
  - Staff will be impacted however; the Partner will do its utmost to find alternative employment for those staff who wish to remain. Forced redundancies will be a last option

## 4 Public Sector Equality Duty

The proposal will enable the council to deliver on all of its equality duties – most notably the need to advance equality of opportunity, which includes providing accessible and available services and information and targeting our services where there is greatest level of need.

## 5 Who are using these services and who are they for?

### What is current usage by each equality group where we know it?

The data captured within the Customer Services function does not give a breakdown of usage by equality group. Since the proposal was drafted, age analysis has been conducted between 8.30 - 9 am and 5 – 6pm. **A summary of this is at Appendix 2**

There are gaps in our knowledge in respect of all other characteristics, eg gender, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation and disability.

The only additional data available is that collected via the customer satisfaction survey, which does capture more profile information, however, the sample size is too small to give a fair and robust representation.

## 6 What will be included in the revised services and how have we understood the equality impact of this change?

The content of the service provided will remain the same; but the opening hours will be reduced by 1.5hrs per day. The key performance indicators for wait times in the One Stop Shop and Contact Centre will be extended

**From** 80% of customers seen in 15 minutes and 80% of calls answered in 20 seconds

**To** 80% of customers seen in 30 minutes and 80% of calls answered in 60 seconds

From an equality perspective, we have considered each characteristic alongside the limited data available and the staff experience and have concluded that no single group of customers will be impacted by the change.

There is an impact on staff; the make-up of staff is predominantly female; with an average age of 47 years in the One Stop Shop and 34 years in the contact centre. There are staff who have identified themselves as having a disability; however the recruitment process will ensure these members of staff have access to a fair process alongside all other colleagues.

### 6.1 One Stop Shop reduction in opening hours from 8.30am-6pm to 9am-5pm

#### **Impact of the proposal for One Stop Shop reduction in opening hours.**

The revised service will provide the same types of services as currently offered albeit during a reduced opening period. This will place a greater demand at peak times therefore the Key performance indicators have been adjusted to recognise this

We believe the proposal creates a **neutral** impact on the basis of all equality groups.

We recognise that some people, especially those with full time jobs may find this inconvenient; however we believe that the increasing availability of contact with the Council through other means (web based) provides a sufficient method to meet this concern.

Data about use of the current service does not enable us to undertake a full equality analysis. A better understanding will be developed through ongoing Customer monitoring and satisfaction surveys.

## 6.2 Customer Contact Centre reduction in opening hours from 8.00am-6pm to 9am-5pm

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## 7 Consultation

To date consultation has been limited to an internal audience for which Customer Services provides the first line of customer contact. The audience has comprised of the Lead Member for Customer Services; the Chief Executive; Board Directors and Heads of Service.

There has been a reliance on this audience to feedback based on their understanding of their customer base and to consider all the impacts this will have on their services and customers. To date 10 responses have been received, all in support of this change. The Housing and Benefits Services have both expressed the need to engage with customers early on in the change process to ensure the changes are well communicated and understood. The commitment is this will happen once there has been Cabinet approval to proceed with this change.

## 8 What next?

The next step is to gain Member approval to proceed with this proposal. The intention is for this to be presented to Cabinet on 12<sup>th</sup> December 2012. Affected staff will be notified prior to the cabinet papers being published on 4<sup>th</sup> December

To assess the impact of the change, the Client and Customer Services need to design and agree a pragmatic approach to capturing equality data and analysing the customer groups using the service.

**Timescale/Review**

It is expected that the proposed changes will be implemented in April 2013

The impact of the change will be monitored closely. The service has a robust method of data capture for contact volumes and to measure the service standards. Daily monitoring of this will quickly highlight any adverse impact on ALL customers.

**How will we know its done?**

The change is very specific and immediately recognisable – the service will available for a reduced amount of time.

There is work to do to capture effective equality information; until we can define a pragmatic way of doing this; it is difficult to commit to a timescale of when this will be available for analysis and future decision making. The importance of having this is recognised and the commitment is there to find a way to achieve this

Diversity Impact Assessment completed by:

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**November 2012**

Appendix 1

**Impacted Staff – Profile**

Contact centre	One stop Shop
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<b>Age Range</b>				<b>OSS Age Range</b>			
Age Range	20-57			Age Range	21-62		
Average Age	34			Average Age	47		
Median Age	31			Median Age	49		
<b>Age Range</b>				<b>Age Range</b>			
20-29	9			20-29	2		
30-39	6			30-39	4		
40-49	4			40-49	9		
50-59	3			50-59	9		
Total	22			60-69	3		
				Total	27		
<b>Gender</b>				<b>Gender</b>			
Female	19			Female	24		
Male	3			Male	3		
Total	22			Total	27		
<b>Disability</b>				<b>Disability</b>			
Yes	1			Yes	1		
No	21			No	26		