



Service Delivery Committee	Tuesday, 15 March 2022	Matter for Information and Decision
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Report Title: **Customer Service Lunchtime Opening Hours (March 2022)**

Report Author(s): **Philippa Fisher, Head of Customer Service & Transformation**

Purpose of Report:	At the Service Delivery Committee Meeting in November 2021, Members requested that a full report be given relating to the lunchtime closure of the Customer Service Centre since the commencement of the COVID Pandemic – 23 March 2020.
Report Summary:	This report provides background information, benchmarking analysis and the results of consultation regarding the decision to re-open over the lunchtime period for the virtual Customer Service Centre.
Recommendation(s):	<p>A. That Members note the information provided from surveys indicating that residents are currently satisfied with the Council’s customer service opening hours, whilst also noting that the benchmarking exercise across the County indicates that Oadby and Wigston Borough Council are the only Council/District who do not offer a service over the lunchtime period. Having listened to Member feedback the recommendation is to approve re-opening the virtual customer service centre at lunchtimes with effect from 1 April 2022.</p> <p>B. That Members consider Customer Service Centre awareness sessions and whether they feel these would be beneficial so that sessions can be organised during April and May 2022.</p>
Senior Leadership, Head of Service, Manager, Officer and Other Contact(s):	<p>Anne Court, Head of Paid Service and Chief Executive Officer Anne.court1@oadby-wigston.gov.uk</p> <p>Philippa Fisher, Head of Customer Services and Transformation (0116) 257 philippa.fisher@oadby-wigston.gov.uk</p>
Corporate Objectives:	<p>Providing Excellent Services (CO3) Building, Protecting and Empowering Communities (CO1) Growing the Borough Economically (CO2)</p>
Vision and Values:	<p>“A Stronger Borough Together” (Vision) Accountability (V1) Respect (V2) Teamwork (V3) Customer Focus (V5)</p>
Report Implications:-	
Legal:	There are no implications arising from this report.
Financial:	The implications are as set out at paragraph 3.2 of this report.

Corporate Risk Management:	Reputation Damage (CR4) Organisational / Transformational Change (CR8)
Equalities and Equalities Assessment (EA):	There are no implications arising from this report.
Human Rights:	There are no implications arising from this report.
Health and Safety:	There are no implications arising from this report.
Statutory Officers' Comments:-	
Head of Paid Service:	The report is satisfactory.
Chief Finance Officer:	The report is satisfactory.
Monitoring Officer:	The report is satisfactory.
Consultees:	Residents of the Borough of Oadby and Wigston.
Background Papers:	None.
Appendices:	1. Leicestershire Districts and County Customer Service Centre Benchmarking Summary

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Members fed back anecdotally at the Service Delivery Committee on 30 November 2021 that they were dissatisfied with the lunchtime closure of the virtual customer service centre (originally brought in at the beginning of the pandemic) remaining in place, and that they were receiving feedback from residents to support this.
- 1.2 Previously, when the decision to cease a service provision had been presented to Members, such as the removal of face to face Wednesday evening openings and Saturday mornings, a report had been presented to Members for their approval. However, due to the speed of the operational decision that was needed because of the pandemic, on this occasion approval was not sought.

2. Background

- 2.1 At the commencement of the pandemic and in line with Government guidelines the Customer Service Centre closed its face to face service provision at Bell Street, Wigston and went virtual on 23 March 2020.
- 2.2 Due to the nature of the working patterns of the Technical Officers and to manage the team of both part-time and full-time staff a decision was made to have a standard fixed lunchtime closure from 12.30 p.m. to 1.30 p.m. Residents and Members were notified of this decision through our social media channels, website and for Members via the Members' Bulletin.
- 2.3 As a review of Council cost and expenditure and the continuing pandemic and legislation not enabling face to face service provision it was agreed by members that the Service Centre would not re-open. This decision was also supported by evidence regarding channel shift and residents utilising other means to access our services.

3. Resource Implications

- 3.1 The Council is continually challenged from a budgetary and government funding perspective and as such reviews the services it provides to ensure that the most cost effective provision possible is offered to our residents and businesses.
- 3.2 In order to resource the change back to lunchtime opening and for resilience purposes it will be necessary to create two permanent full time positions that we currently have on a temporary contract due to cease at the end of June. The cost implications arising from this will be approximately £26,000 including oncosts per FTE.

4. Proposed Public Consultation and Engagement Approach

- 4.1 The feedback regarding the dissatisfaction of lunch-time opening hours has been anecdotal and it was agreed at the Service Delivery Committee of 30 November 2021 that throughout January and February 2022, the Council would utilise customer satisfaction surveys to ask residents about opening hours. The approach to the consultation is outlined below:-
- a. On-line questionnaire will be available through e-mails.
 - b. The surveys will also be conducted over the telephone through the Customer Service Centre Technical Officers.
 - c. The surveys will also be conducted over the telephone by the Customer Service Improvement Officer.
 - d. Any formal complaints received from residents would be reviewed since the closure in March 2020 - no formal complaints have been received
 - e. It was agreed at the Service Delivery Committee in November 2021, that members would feedback to the Head of Customer Service and Transformation the names of residents – no feedback has been received.
- 4.2 The feedback obtained from the above sources has been used to help make a decision as to whether lunch-time re-opening should recommence.
- 4.3 The results from the survey run in January and February are shown below. Added to the standard customer satisfaction survey, a question specifically relating to satisfaction with the opening hours of the Customer Service Centre was asked:

Month	Number of responses	Percentage Satisfaction Rating
January	54	93.5%
February (end date 18 February due to date of report submission)	59	96.2%

5. Leicestershire Districts and County Customer Service Centre Benchmarking Summary

- 5.1 As supporting evidence, a benchmarking exercise was also conducted across the whole of the County to establish other Council's approaches to their Customer Service provision. The purpose of this was also to establish and:-
- a. Identify the baseline position.
 - b. Outline the service offering by other Districts and Councils.
 - c. Benchmark our offering against those other Districts in Leicestershire.

The summary of this exercise is attached to this report as **Appendix 1**.

6. Awareness Sessions - Customer Service Centre offering

- 6.1 As part of the review it was identified that it might be beneficial to run awareness sessions for Members to give clarity around the current full service offering by the virtual Customer Service Centre and the Technical Officers role. Members are asked to provide feedback regarding whether they feel these would be beneficial so that sessions can potentially be organised during April and May 2022.

7. Future Provision - Customer Service Strategy

- 7.1 As the Council and the country emerge from the pandemic into an endemic phase, a key area of work will be to review the customer service strategy across the whole of the Council in order to deliver our services to a high standard in the most cost effective way.
- 7.2 This area of work will review how we reach high connectivity with all our demographics and hard to reach communities, taking into account new digital technology, processes and systems and resourcing.

8. Timetable for Future Decisions

- 8.1 In the second quarter of the 2022/23 meeting cycle at Service Delivery Committee it is proposed that the Head of Customer Service and Transformation deliver a report for the future provision of Customer Service for the Council.