

OFFICER DECISION RECORD (ODR2)

This form records an officer decision and is published in accordance with the Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014

Date of Decision	25/04/2024
Decision Taker (including Job Title)	Alex Thompson Director of Finance & Customer Services
Specific Delegation	To have overall responsibility for the operational management of the relevant area of service and for bringing forward such strategic plans and policies, and implementing all decisions, including the allocation of resources within approved estimates, as are necessary to exercise the functions for which the service is responsible (Constitution, Chapter 2, Part 5, Paragraph 27, page 53)
Brief Description of Decision	To transfer face to face Customer Service provision at Macclesfield and Crewe to the libraries and continue a reception service managed by the facilities team, and to continue to offer the public phone facility.
Reasons for the Decision and alternatives considered	<p>The Councils corporate face to face services are delivered through Customer Service Centres (CSC's) based at Macclesfield Town Hall and Delamere House Crewe, along with all Cheshire East Libraries.</p> <p>Customer Service Centres have undergone several changes including the adoption of increasingly digital methods of customer contact such as e mail, social media and on-line.</p> <p>Demand for face-to-face contact since the covid pandemic footfall has shifted to libraries where staff have been upskilled and away from the traditional customer service centres at Macclesfield and Crewe. The trend towards digital adoption methods continues.</p>

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The Service is also increasingly moving into a more strategic role, supporting the wider Council in the delivery of an enhanced customer experience, leading to the need to adapt face to face structures to reflect the change in demand.

The Customer Service Centres provide two main functions:

- Customer function: To support customers to access services via pre booked appointments, “Walk ins” or via supported telephony self-service.
- Building function: To operate as the reception facility for the building. This includes access for visitors, public access for customers with meetings/appointments (such as Safeguarding meetings) and building security.

Three options have been considered: -

Option 1 – Continue service as is.

Customer demand for face-to-face contact has been reducing over several years. Customers contact preferences have changed and services have been re-designed to align to this demand, increasingly offering digital methods of delivery.

The CSCs were redesigned in 2018 to accommodate this, migrating from direct service provision to a focus on supporting customers to self-serve and then again in 2021 after the return of customers following the covid pandemic.

Appendix 1 shows the impact of the reducing demand and how footfall has shifted to libraries and away from the traditional customer service centres at Macclesfield and Crewe.

Most services delivered though the CSC’s have been redesigned to allow for digital access. Revenues & Benefits as an example have digitally enabled all applications and reports of changes with any supporting documentation uploaded by the customer. Similar processes exist for most services with face-to-face contact delivered by exception and by appointment only. Customers who “walk in” are frequently directed to the self-serve phones.

Appendix 2 provides a full list of services delivered through the Customer Service Centres. Column C describes how they are delivered now and Column D how they could be delivered in future.

In summary there is not a requirement for Customer Service Centres to continue to deliver services as they are currently. There are however elements of the customer function which will still be required: -

- Whilst most customers have access to, and can utilise, digital technology this is not the case for all customers. Those who are unable to utilise, or do not have access to digital technology will continue to require support. This service is currently by phone via the Corporate Contact Centre and it is proposed that this continues. However, it should be recognised that this is likely to lead to an increase in telephony contact and of footfall into Libraries.
- **Appendix 2** highlights several processes where documentation or identity need to be verified. In most cases this can be completed on-line using our own on-line services or those provided by the UK Government such as Gov Verify. Customers who are not digitally enabled however will need an alternative option. This could be provided at a staffed building reception, by Libraries or by a third-party provider such as the Post Office (however this is chargeable to the customer).

Option 2 - Provide an automated reception for the building and move public access elsewhere.

Crewe Delamere House: Crewe currently has a single customer access point via the Customer Service Centre and a separate automated access for staff. The nearest alternative Council facility is at Crewe Municipal Building.

An enhanced intercom at Delamere House could accommodate staff and visitors/Partners however there is no lobby area at Delamere in which visitors can wait for access so consideration would need to be given to enable this.

Delamere House provides public access to Housing, and Social Services. These services require secure interview facilities which are not currently available at Crewe Municipal Building.

As there is no obvious alternative for public access this option is not recommended for Crewe Delamere House.

Macclesfield: Macclesfield Town Hall contains 3 public access points and a separate staff access. The Visitor Information Centre, Registration Office and Customer Service Centre all have separate customer access points within Macclesfield Town Hall with a further public access point at Macclesfield Old Town Hall.

The Children Families Centre shares an access point with the CSC, whilst having a separate, confidential reception desk. Macclesfield Town Hall also provides public access to Housing.

Traditionally Macclesfield Old Town Hall has provided access to the civic functions of the council including Inquests, weddings, and the democratic process. It does not have a physical Reception but does have a “meet and greet” Officer. It has several large rooms for hire but does not have smaller rooms suitable for meetings. Combining these Receptions would have similar issues to Crewe in combining civic and council service functions particularly in relation to Weddings. Utilising rooms within the Town Hall would also remove an income source for the Council as these are currently available for hire.

As a result, option 2 is not recommended for Macclesfield.






The decided option:

Option 3 - to transfer the customer service centres at Macclesfield and Crewe and continue a reception function managed by the facilities team. Continue to offer the supported telephone self-serve facility and to continue to offer face to face customer services at all libraries.

Options 1 and 2 above have demonstrated that whilst the full range of Customer Service Centre functions are not required there is a requirement

	<p>for a building reception at both Macclesfield and Crewe. The telephone self-service facilities currently available at the Centres would continue to be provided.</p> <p>Appendix 3 provides a list service delivered through the reception. Column C describes how they are delivered now and Column D how this would not change.</p> <p>Appendix 4 highlights the volume of reception tasks.</p> <p>Option 3 provides a balance between the needs of digitally excluded customers and building requirements whilst recognising the reducing requirement for face to face, the increased requirement of the corporate contact centre and service improvements identified through COVID and the potential for efficiencies. The Macclesfield library and Crewe library may be impacted by increased demand and WIFI bandwidth within libraries will need to be addressed as part of the digital inclusion agenda. On average CSC volumes are 91 per month which equates to 4 per day between the two sites. There are 14 libraries that could absorb these volumes with minimal impact. The impact of any increase will be managed by offering an appointment in advance to ensure staff are available. There are no appointment types that require actioning in less than 5 days therefore the current library opening hours will not cause an issue for accessing services in a timely manner.</p>
<p>Member consultation and interests declared</p>	<p>Leader, Deputy Leader, Leader of the Conservative Group, Ward Members Macclesfield and Crewe.</p>
<p>Significant Decision</p>	<p>YES</p> <p>Currently residents and customers can access face to face services at all Cheshire East libraries as well as the customer centres at Macclesfield Town Hall and Delamere House, Crewe. In future face to face customer services will be provided at the libraries only. Visitors for specific officers or to attend meetings such as homeless and social care clients will not be affected by this change.</p>

<p>Legal Implications</p>	<p>The decision being made is to withdraw a face to face public service from Macclesfield Town Hall and Delamere House. This has been an incremental change and the public will have a number of alternatives, but the fact of closure and the mitigations in place have not been communicated publicly nor has there been a public consultation.</p> <p>Legal advice has been provided that this decision falls within the definition of a Significant Decision in the Constitution, which given the impact would be a matter for Members decision informed by a public consultation and an EIA.</p> <p>Officers can take significant decisions and, if the decision taker is satisfied that they have authority to do so, the decision should be recorded as an ODR2, published and the referral period needs to pass before the decision can be implemented. This will allow Members to be alerted to it and have the opportunity to query if they so choose.</p> <p>Julie Gregory 15.04.24</p>
<p>Financial Implications</p>	<p><i>This relates to the MTFs item “Brighter Futures Together Programme Customer Experience” with savings of £334,000 included in the Corporate Services budget over several years. Details of that budget change are attached as an appendix.</i></p> <p><i>This ODR will assist with delivery of that proposal. On that basis it is supported from Finance. I would repeat the concerns from Legal over awareness of these changes in the Council.</i></p> <p><i>The total budget for the Crewe face to face contact centre is £303,120.</i></p> <p><i>That covers 5.89 FTE.</i></p> <p><i>As part of the last round of MARS – 2 members of staff are due to leave the team and 50% of their associated budgets will be removed from the service in line with the MARS scheme.</i></p> <p><i>As a result the service will have their budget reduced by £37,892 leaving £265,228.</i></p> <p><i>Further planned changes to the budget:</i></p>

	<p>1 x Grade 6 transfer (£38,621)</p> <p>1 x Grade 8 transfer (£49,145)</p> <p>to the Macclesfield Contact Centre budget to strengthen the support for customers contacting by telephone and email, these contact channels remain our busiest.</p> <p>1 x 1.2 FTE grade 4 transfer (£38,918)</p> <p>to facilities management leaving £138,543.</p> <p>There will be an additional transfer of £50,820 (from the customer service face to face non staffing budget to the facilities management budget where it is proposed the service will sit in the future. to cover the cost of security function at both centres.</p> <p>That will leave budget of £87,723 as a saving.</p> <p>Steve Reading, Finance, 23/4/2024</p>
<p>Confidential/Exempt Information</p>	
<p>Background Papers</p>	<div style="display: flex; flex-wrap: wrap; justify-content: space-around; text-align: center;"> <div style="width: 30%;">  <p>Appendix 1 - Comparison between</p> </div> <div style="width: 30%;">  <p>Appendix 3 - reception tasks.xlsx</p> </div> <div style="width: 30%;">  <p>Appendix 2 - services delivery (1).xlsx</p> </div> <div style="width: 30%;">  <p>Appendix 4 Reception Role.pptx</p> </div> <div style="width: 30%;">  <p>Appendix 5 Equality Impact Assessment_Pi</p> </div> </div>



Signed

Dated 25/04/2024

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Extract of “Brighter Futures Together Programme Customer Experience HLBC from 2022/23

Proposal	Detail	Specific HLBC	Saving	Dependency	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	
Reduced demand for face to face provision	Adapt the operating model for face to face services to more appropriately match demand. Reduce staffing levels for Advsiors from 8.36 to 4	Y	90	None	90			
Reduction in staffing levels within the CC due to reduced demand and reduced handling time	Reduce in CC fte from 43 to 37 FTE	N	161	CX Service re- design & digital developments	0	80	81	
Reduction in print, postage and stationary budget for Revenues	Increased use of on line services and e billing	N	50	Promotion of digital	30	20		
Reduction in complaints	Bring the volume of Waste complaints in line with other visibale services	N	33	CX Service re- design		33		
Re-designing services to enable payment up front at all times	Reduction in debt written off	Y	120	<i>Included within debt recovery HLBC</i>		120		
Total Gross Savings			454		120	133	81	334