

CABINET – 21ST AUGUST 2014

Report of the Head of Finance & Property Services Lead Member: Councillor Tom Barkley

Part A

ITEM 8 MULTI AGENCY CO-LOCATION PROGRAMME

Purpose of Report

To consider high level outline business cases for the possible co-location of the Job Centre Plus, Leicestershire County Council staff and staff currently at the Council's Limehurst Avenue depot, as well as the scoping and costs of a Document Management and Retention project. To approve initial resources to prepare full business cases.

Recommendations

1. That the allocation of up to £100k from the Reinvestment Reserve to provide resources to prepare full business cases, including the temporary appointment of a Programme Manager (Accommodation Strategy) and Document Management Delivery Officer, as well as design and technical support, for each of the four elements of the programme be approved.
2. That delegated authority be given to the Strategic Director of Corporate Services to submit an application to the Department of Communities and Local Government in respect of the Transformation Challenge Award in respect of the project.

Reasons

1. To provide resources in order that Cabinet will be provided with full business cases on the four elements of the programme in a timely manner.
2. To enable the application for external government grant funding to be submitted on a timely basis.

Policy Justification

This is in line with the Corporate Plan commitment to seek ways to run the Council more efficiently and creatively so residents get value for money.

Implementation Timetable including Future Decisions and Scrutiny

The final business cases should come back to Cabinet, and Council if necessary, towards the end of 2014 or early 2015. These may be individual reports or combinations of the four strands in one or more reports.

This report will be available for scrutiny on 18th August 2014 by the Overview Scrutiny Group.

Report Implications

The following implications have been identified for this report.

Financial Implications

The recommendations in this report will commit the Council to up to £100k of expenditure funded from the Reinvestment Reserve. In the initial stages this funding will be used to work up the business cases in collaboration with potential partners and this will require detailed design work and specifications to be carried out as well as possible 'soft market' testing for the Document Management system. Temporary support for the projects and document management may also be required at this stage. There are sufficient funds in the Reinvestment Reserve to cover this amount.

Full financial implications will be included in subsequent reports that cover the detailed business cases.

Risk Management

The risks associated with the decision Cabinet is asked to make and proposed actions to mitigate those risks are set out in the table below.

Risks Identified	Likelihood	Impact	Risk Management Actions Planned
Cost overrun	Possible	Moderate	The amount required is to cover the preparation of detailed business cases and no works etc would be commenced without the agreement of both Cabinet and the potential partners.
Time overruns	Possible	Moderate	Delays to the preparation of detailed business cases would impact on the schemes themselves but this will be covered when the detailed reports are submitted to Cabinet.
Unable to agree terms with partners	Possible	Moderate	No proposals will be put to Cabinet until Heads of Terms are agreed with partners. If terms are not agreed then the relevant scheme will not proceed and the costings and timescales for concurrent schemes will be adjusted accordingly.

Risks Identified	Likelihood	Impact	Risk Management Actions Planned
The proposals do not have the support of staff.	Possible	Moderate	A full communications plan will be established so that staff are aware of the reasons for the co-locations and the ultimate goals etc. In addition, the communications plan will include detailed information about timetables, moves, document management, possible disruption etc. There will be staff representatives on relevant project boards and any major problems will be included in the risk analysis of the final reports.

Key Decision:

Yes

Background Papers:

None

Officers to contact:

John Casey, 01509 634810,
john.casey@charnwood.gov.uk
 Simon Jackson, 01509 634699,
simon.jackson@charnwood.gov.uk

Part B

Background

1. The Council has been approached by the Department of Work & Pensions (DWP) to relocate its Loughborough Job Centre Plus office to the Council's offices at Southfield Road in 2015. In addition, discussions are underway with Leicestershire County Council (LCC) about the possibility of co-locating office staff at the Southfields offices.
2. Meanwhile, the Council has also been considering relocating the staff currently based at the Limehurst Avenue Depot (Limehurst) in Loughborough to the Southfields offices. In order to effect these changes, provide a modern working environment, and improve efficiency the Council has also been considering the introduction of a Council-wide Document and Record Management system.
3. In order to assess these four major tasks it is proposed that reports are taken to Cabinet, and Council if required, setting out full business cases for each of these items and setting out how they could be achieved over a period of two years from formal commencement, probably in 2015.

Current Position and Proposed Way Forward

4. The current position is that there are no formal agreements with either the DWP or LCC. However, initial meetings have been positive and the parties are working on the necessary business case analysis of the options available.
5. Views have been sought from senior management in order that resources from all sides are not expended when there is no Council support for these proposals. Whilst some concerns as to certain aspects of the changes were raised, the overall view was that these proposals should be taken forward.
6. Subject to Cabinet's decision, a Corporate Programme Board will be established to oversee the programme and the membership of this Board will be the Senior Management Team plus others as needed. There will be subsidiary boards/teams to be responsible for any co-location proposals with partner organisations, the Limehurst transfer and Document Management. Further boards/teams may be established if required. A shadow Corporate Programme Board has been established to progress matters pending Cabinet's decision. No costs will be incurred until after permission has been granted by Cabinet.
7. This initial funding, which will be needed to cover design, project management costs etc will be in the region of £100k and will be funded from the Reinvestment Reserve. Contributions from any co-locating organisations would be identified at the time that such decisions may be confirmed.

8. It is envisaged that further Cabinet reports will be tabled before the end of 2014 with detailed proposals covering the various schemes and their funding and resourcing.

Department of Work & Pensions

9. The DWP wish to relocate around 40 staff to Southfields and 35 of these are customer facing. The majority of its customers are on fixed appointments and its staff will be able to operate alongside CBC's own customer services rather than having separate areas. The DWP are now co-located at Melton and Hinckley councils and will be moving its staff to Harborough council in the next few months. It has also co-located at Daventry council.
10. In order to accommodate the DWP staff, four CBC teams would have to be relocated in Southfields and Committee Room 2 might also have to be moved. Three of the teams would be accommodated by making better use of the Capita area and various other underutilised spaces on the ground floor of Southfields, with one being relocated to the first floor.
11. The DWP's timescale is to move in 2015, probably in the summer or Autumn. Approval is required from the DWP and the Treasury, which will have timing implications. However, the works required to accommodate them are not technically difficult and should not take too long.

Leicestershire County Council

12. LCC is looking to complete its ongoing business case analysis of its future office options in the Charnwood area by the end of December 2014. Implementation of its selected option(s) would commence immediately thereafter and would be completed and ready for occupation during autumn 2016.

General

13. Depending on the scale of the relocations, two of the quadrangles within the Southfields offices may have to be converted into office space.

Document and Record Management

14. Whether the above moves take place or not, the Council has identified the need for a major Document Management and Records Management project covering all areas. This will be combined with a review of current ways of working with initiatives in respect of home/flexible working where feasible. Allied to this would be new standardised work stations in order that the space can be used as efficiently as possible with staff being located in team areas rather than individual allocated desks.
15. Document Management is defined as the management of documents in current use whilst Records Management is concerned with the retention and disposal of documents. The former would require an across the board electronic document management system whilst the latter might

be an electronic solution and/or the use of offsite storage. Both would require a major document audit to decide what to keep and where/how to keep it.

16. The actions referred to in 14 and 15 would be beneficial to the operations of the Council irrespective of any co-locations and document management already links to the Customer Services Strategy. Making better use of technology will provide opportunities for staff to work more flexibly and create a 21st century working environment. This in turn should help in both the recruitment and retention of staff.
17. The introduction of document and record management would run concurrently with the other projects with a review to completion by September 2016. The review of working practices would operate to a similar timetable.

Limehurst Depot

18. This is the most straight forward of the changes and, subject to Cabinet/Council approval, would involve moving around 30 staff to the top floor of the ICS building. In due course it would be the aim to relocate those staff with the rest of the Landlord Services team. Prior to this relocation it would be necessary to relocate or dispose of the items stored at the depot within 6 months, resulting in an actual move date of March/April 2015. An options appraisal for the use/disposal of the Limehurst site would be undertaken coterminously in order that there was a clear plan in place for Spring 2015.

General Advantages and Disadvantages

19. Advantages:

- Co-locations with partner organisations should produce some 'soft benefits' for customers and produce a much better customer service for many of the people concerned.
- Relocating the Repairs & Investment team from Limehurst will help to continue its integration with the various housing teams at Southfields and would also provide them with working conditions equivalent to that of its colleagues.
- The document management improvements should streamline working practices and greatly reduce the amount of working space occupied by filing and thus produce a more modern and pleasant working environment.
- These actions will result in the Council increasing the value it obtains from its assets, especially in view of more expected funding cuts in 2016 and subsequent years.
- All three moves produce a positive financial result for CBC.

20. Disadvantages, (*with mitigation in italics*):

- Not all staff may be supportive of these changes and co-locations for various reasons. *There will be a full communications plan to keep staff informed as well as staff representatives on relevant project boards and teams.*

- During the moves and building works there will be disturbance to staff and normal working. *This will be managed as an integral part of the work programmes.*
- These are major projects and it is important that sufficient resources, both monetary and non-monetary, are provided so that staff can still provide a service to customers. *As mentioned above full costings and business cases will be presented before the projects start and these will be based on sufficient resources being made available as well as drawing on the partners' experiences elsewhere of similar co-locations.*

Financial Implications of Co-locating Partners and Limehurst staff

21. The outline costs for co-location of partners and Limehurst staff amount to £1.4m which should yield annual savings of £210k to the Council. Improved Working practices will cost £855k, making a total of £2.25m and annual savings of £210k.
22. The costings above are provisional and are not based on firm quotes or estimates. They include expected building, fit out, furniture, IT, telephony and relocation costs in the Capital and One off Revenue costs. At present they assume no contribution from the incoming tenants as these discussions still have to be held. In addition they do not include any expected disposal proceeds from a sale of Limehurst depot.
23. The Net New Income/Savings combine additional rent, service charges and NNDR less ongoing costs such as extra cleaning and consumable costs. All rents are at current levels and do not factor in any additional rents as a contribution towards the Capital/One off Revenue costs.
24. The CBC Improved Working costs include all new work stations as well as a full electronic document/record management system and the majority of an upgrade to telephony and IT to allow for complete hot-desking and inter changeability between CBC and co-located partners' staff. In addition, CBC's project costs are included here.
25. Some Government support may be available through the 'Transformation Money Fund' and an Expression of Interest (Eoi) has been submitted, with a response due in August 2014. If the Eoi has been successful then a full business case needs to be submitted during October 2014 for funding in 2015/16.
26. The above figures show a worst case scenario based on current knowledge and funding could be made available without impacting on other current capital projects.
27. At present the space for each CBC Southfields employee costs £1,496 per year, compared to £3,166 for each Limehurst employee, giving an average of £1,630. If all relocations take place then the cost per employee will be £917 a year, a saving of £713 (44%). Average Local Authority costs per employee are £1,905.

28. These costings are at a high level but if costs were 10% higher and savings 10% less then the pay back period would still be under 10 years.

Other Issues

29. *Are the timings feasible?* Any partner co-location projects should be run concurrently and are likely to require up to 20 months. Physical on-site development works would therefore need to commence no later than the first quarter of 2015. The move of Limehurst staff to the ICS building would be straightforward and could be done in two days. Clearing the Limehurst site would take 6 months with other items at Limehurst which are deemed to be needed being relocated to one of the industrial units owned by the Council. Based on the experience of other councils the Document Management should be achievable in 18 months.
30. *Will all the staff fit in?* The current office space area (ignoring meeting/committee rooms, the Breakout, store rooms, reception and allowing for walkways but no filing areas) is 2,964 sq mtrs and applying LCC's space per person would allow 590 people. We currently have 429 staff at Southfields so that would be an extra 161. Filling in two of the quadrangles would provide a further 100 work stations so we would have a 690 capacity and 600 staff in all. This would also provide extra toilets.
31. *Why do you propose to fill in the quadrangles?* Whilst expensive this is the most cost effective solution as four elevations are already in place and by craning in a steel frame and removing some existing walls this will be the most efficient and quickest new build option.

BRECKLAND DISTRICT COUNCIL

Report of: Trevor Carter, Executive Portfolio Member for Place

To: Strategy Board 07 September 2015
Cabinet 22 September 2015

(Author: Ralph Burton, Strategic Property Manager)

Subject: Office co-location with Department of Work & Pensions

Purpose: To obtain agreement to co-locate with the Department of Work and Pensions at Elizabeth House, Dereham and Breckland Business Centre, Thetford via leasing office space.

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) currently operates out of Job Centres located in high street locations around the country. DWP are progressing a nationwide programme of relocations following the introduction of Universal Credit creating the opportunity to work more closely with local authorities in order to provide more joined up services to the public.
- 1.2 DWP have completed a number of relocations by co-locating with local authorities in their HQ buildings by way of lease and are progressing a number of such projects both in the Eastern region and across the UK. DWP estimate that 70% of their customers are the same as those seeking Council services generally.
- 1.3 **Universal Credit:** This is a new service that aims to make work pay. It is a new simpler, single monthly payment for people in or out of work, which abolishes six benefits being; jobseekers allowance, housing benefit, working tax credit, child tax credit, employment and support allowance and income support.
- 1.4 Universal Credit is the subject of an accelerated roll out across the UK and DWP are agreeing co-locations with Councils to achieve different ways of working in the future to change the ways and ethos of how services can be joined up and provided. Nationally, this forms part of a shared agenda for the government's One Public Estate agenda whereby public property assets and Council buildings are shared and used to optimum affect and residents can benefit from seamless joined up services under one roof.
- 1.5 DWP's proposals to the Council are to co-locate at Elizabeth House in Dereham and Breckland Business Centre in Thetford. The proposals for co-location at Dereham means Elizabeth House has a change of purpose, i.e. it becomes more focussed on delivery of front line services, giving customers a better experience of interacting with the public sector for assistance.

- 1.6 **Breckland Business Centre, Thetford:** The opportunity at Thetford is to co-locate alongside the Anglia Revenues Partnership (ARP) to achieve new ways of working and joined up services. To create suitable ground floor space for DWP there will be some relocation of current occupiers and remodelling of and this is work in progress as is the design work.
- 1.7 **Elizabeth House:** Discussions regarding the co-location of DWP at Elizabeth House are well advanced. The following points in this report - 1.8 to 1.13 relate only to the Elizabeth House project being the most advanced element.
- 1.8 Some office moves are required to create the ground floor space to enable the DWP letting and also to take advantage of this opportunity to rationalise office space in some areas. An extract of the proposed changes to the ground floor are shown in Appendix 1.
- 1.9 DWP requires a 'turnkey' solution where the Council provides the office space, re-modelled to their requirements along with furniture and IT infrastructure. DWP will bring their ICT equipment to 'plug' into the IT infrastructure with the exception of a small number of shared desktop computers for both customer types to use as self-service. The Council funds the solution and rentalises the costs through the resulting leasehold agreement.
- 1.10 The Heads of Terms for the lease are nearly in agreed form and remain work in progress at the time of writing this report. The resulting leasehold agreements will be created allowing for the capital works to be planned and completed, leading to DWP occupying space in Elizabeth House on the ground floor in early 2016.
- 1.11 This project has several strands and as DWP has demonstrated experience and knowledge in achieving co-location elsewhere, their model is being adopted. The Property work-stream consists of the letting, building works, programming and office moves. The Operational work-stream comprises of establishing new ways of shared working, such as shared reception. DWP confirm that a certain amount of operational fit can be achieved prior to occupation but that this is an evolutionary process to develop new ways of working when working alongside each other. This approach is being adopted at Breckland Business Centre, Thetford also.
- 1.12 In order to de-risk the project the lease which will allow DWP's occupation will be completed prior to the point where expenditure is incurred for the building / enabling works which are anticipated to be committed in October/November.
- 1.13 The financial aspects of the project are in Appendix 2.

2.0 Options

- 2.1 **Option 1:** Enter into leasehold agreements with the Department for Work and Pensions for office space at Elizabeth House, Dereham and Breckland Business Centre, Thetford.
- 2.2 **Option 2:** Do not enter in to the leasehold arrangements and cease negotiations to co-locate DWP within the Council's property assets.

3.0 Reasons for recommendations

3.1 Transformation: Customers and residents benefit from the need to have reduced levels of engagement and multiple visits to several locations and the broad aim is to achieve more with less transforming the way the public access public services. DWP has an advanced digitalisation agenda and anticipates more digital engagement with customers both online and within its premises. This project is part of the Council's Transformation Programme and is coming forward now to meet DWP's timescale requirements particularly at Dereham.

3.2 One Public Estate: The Council's Transformation key themes include Digitalisation and One Public Estate. The One Public Estate programme was launched in June 2013. It is designed to allow local authorities to work with central government and local agencies to release assets and share land and property information across the public sector. Its objectives are to (1) Deliver more integrated customer focused services (2) Create economic growth (3) Reduce running costs (4) Generate capital receipts.

4.0 EXPECTED BENEFITS

4.1 The expected benefits of this project are:

- The project is expected to improve resident's access to services and provide services at the right price and in the right place supporting the government's ambition for Universal Credit.
- The proposed leasehold transactions will optimise the Council's assets resulting in both co-location.
- This project will also support the transformation of services through digitalisation and the government's desire for 'One Public Estate'.

5.0 IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Carbon Footprint / Environmental Issues

5.1.1 The building materials required for the works will be of a suitably required and appropriate environmental standard.

5.2 Constitution & Legal

5.2.1 All legal matters to safeguard the Council will be completed as part of the transaction of the purchase.

5.3 Contracts

5.3.1 A works contract will be entered into and a leasehold agreement for each property will be entered into.

5.4 Corporate Priorities

5.4.1 DWP's interests and agenda provides the Council with a broad range of opportunities and benefits and they match the Council's priorities which include:

- Developing the local economy to be vibrant with continued growth.
- Providing the right service at the right price and in the right way

5.5 Crime and Disorder

5.5.1 It is the opinion of the Report Author that there are no implications.

5.6 Equality and Diversity / Human Rights

5.6.1 DWP is committed to equality and diversity. DWP has signed its Charter for Employers who are Positive about Mental Health; it adheres to the Public Sector Equality Duty, records annual equality information regarding its employment and has an agreed set of equality objectives.

5.7 Financial

5.7.1 See Appendix 2 and Proforma B attached.

5.8 Health & Wellbeing

5.8.1 It is the opinion of the Report Author that there are no implications.

5.9 Risk Management

5.9.1 Current identified risks include:

- De-risking of project to mitigate against abortive expenditure via lease completion before placing orders for building works.
- Obtaining sufficient understanding between the Council and DWP on operational matters and new ways of working prior to committing to expenditure.
- Office moves resulting from DWP occupation.
- Budget constraints and adequate resourcing for the delivery of the project.

5.10 Safeguarding

5.10.1 It is the opinion of the Report Author that there are no implications.

5.11 Staffing

5.11.1 Staff will be relocated in the building to accommodate these leasehold agreements.

5.12 Stakeholders / Consultation / Timescales

5.12.1 Via Cabinet agenda publication.

6.0 WARDS/COMMUNITIES AFFECTED

6.1 All

Lead Contact Officer

Name and Post: Ralph Burton, Strategic Property Manager

Telephone Number: (01362) 656327

Email: Ralph.burton@breckland.gov.uk

Key Decision: No

Exempt Decision: No – Please note that the appendices are below the line.

This report refers to a Discretionary Service

Appendices attached to this report:

1. Ground Floor Plan – Elizabeth House (**below the line**)
2. Financial Appraisal including Proforma B (**below the line**)

Hub Commissioning Model

Responsible Officer: Nigel Bishop – Head of Customer Involvement

e-mail: Nigel.bishop@shropshire.gov.uk

Tel: 01743 258677

1. Summary

- 1.1 Redesign work on the Hubs concept, including through the Resilient Communities project, the Strategic Welfare Reform Group, which includes housing associations, Citizen's Advice (CAB) and the Department for Work & Pensions (DWP), and the Map of Maps project, suggest that a shared understanding of the Hubs concept is emerging. Additionally, it suggests that the model for Hubs that is developing through this work also mirrors the work the Department for Work and Pensions and Job Centre Plus will require from a Local Services Support Framework i.e. a design for citizen support primarily around the needs arising from changes to welfare benefits, in readiness for the implementation of Universal Credit. The Universal Credit is the new means tested replacement which spans a number of both out-of-work and in-work benefits.
- 1.2 The emerging maturity of this model indicates that opportunity now exists to look at commissioning the Hubs and micro hubs provision through alternative providers. This could include Housing Associations, the Voluntary and Community Sector, Parish and Town Councils, other public service providers and from other appropriate Shropshire Council services, including the Library Service.
- 1.3 Through the commissioned model Shropshire Council would retain responsibility for one fully manned main hub (Hub central) located in Shrewsbury, to ensure the Council retains sufficient provisions to meet requirements around specialist work, and coordinates the support activity around the commissioned Hubs. The central hub will possess the relevant expertise and experience needed for first point of contact. This will allow continued innovation, which encompasses previous learning and permits control over all of the innovative work awaiting trial, including building the welfare reform support structure. A formal consultation on the commissioning of services and the changes in service delivery would be recommended and necessary in the areas indicated in order to allow the possibility for a change in service.
- 1.4 An equality and social inclusion impact assessment has been completed and is attached at appendix C. This will be updated after the consultation exercise.

2. What are Hubs and how do they work?

- 2.1 The Hub concept is a different way of supporting people to meet their needs by empowering them to a much greater extent thus helping them to find new, more convenient and independent ways of conducting business with us.
- 2.2 Prototype hub models have operated for some time from the Guildhall in Shrewsbury and the Library in Oswestry. The principle of these hubs is based on the concept of helping people to help themselves by using a Customer Services “meeter and greeter”. This involves diverting customers to alternative service channels other than face to face such as using the dedicated phones, which are programmed to the Customer Service Centre and the most used service numbers, or the public computers, which see an increase in usage as services progressively move online. This principle of being met and subsequently encouraged to help one’s self, through use of a “meeter and greeter” helps to overcome the customer’s expectation of having someone provide for them at a traditional reception desk.
- 2.3 The analysis from our prototypes suggest that with minimal help and direction, many people are capable of resolving their problems effectively without the need to call at a Council office. Once shown or otherwise encouraged, people are more willing to deal with their needs more independently and customer footfall is reducing significantly as a result. These independent solutions may include contacting us via our telephony services which offer technically competent solutions for an increasing number of services. It may be through local community venues able to offer the appropriate support, direction and signposting. It may be through the increasing services provided by our libraries. It may be by contacting us via increasingly popular channels of social media.
- 2.4 Hubs have now begun to evolve from their original beginnings to the point where service from community venues independent of the Council are being used to trial delivery with an independent organisation fulfilling the role of meeter and greeter. In offering alternative methods of doing business based on prevention rather than transaction and by engaging with the owning organisations we are able to significantly reduce our own input as a result.
- 2.5 Through the roll-out of these hubs we therefore intend to create a different kind of access to services and in a different way by concentrating on providing a range of community venues within which needs can be identified and effectively resolved without escalation.

Recommendations

- 3.1 The Director of Commissioning, in consultation with the relevant portfolio holders commissions the hubs provision in the stated locations in line with the Hubs model set out in appendix A.
- 3.2 Responsibility for the Shrewsbury Hub is maintained by Shropshire Council.

REPORT

4. Risk Assessment and Opportunities Appraisal

- 4.1 Working with partners to commission coordinated services within communities has the potential to create a new model of service delivery that provides early intervention and preventative services, based on building capacity within the community and through the combined efforts of partners and stakeholders.
- 4.2 Commissioning client consultation space and activities through community venues and from community providers, including the voluntary sector, has the potential to create more resilient communities and support the retention of local community facilities.
- 4.3 Working with the Department for Work and Pensions to coordinate the Hubs model alongside the rollout of Universal Credit, offers the opportunity to provide a whole place approach to welfare support, provision of services and support for the vulnerable, those in crisis and those impacted by welfare reform.
- 4.4 Through implementing a commissioning based hub model for the first time there are risks to the Council's reputation and customer trust if the model fails to provide a satisfactory service to its users.
- 4.5 Liability for any problems that may be encountered within this new model, including data loss and data capture, would need to be established between the Council and the commissioned provider.
- 4.6 Perception of duplication to users, or lack of clarity about who is providing information or services, would also present a risk of damaging both reputation and trust in the Hub itself.
- 4.7 Whilst commissioning of services is longstanding, the area of community based "hubs" and the wider commissioning of wider "front desk" services, is new ground. Therefore the suitability of new providers and their ability to deliver is a relative unknown. Current community models retain a level of independence and neutrality that has great potential value but may be altered upon commissioning. The appetite of different providers to accept all customer need, including contentious issues that may involve challenge, is not tested.
- 4.8 In terms of physical space, risks are focused on whether the venue will be the right size to accommodate the Hub appropriately. The value of strategic partners must not be compromised by the commercial value of non-strategic partners.
- 4.9 One of these partners is Jobcentre Plus who have stated a desire to work from Shropshire Council hubs. They would bring with them their existing infrastructure and long established links, thus bringing expertise to the "into work" strand of Hub activity work that would help customers prepare for independence and paid work. There is a potential risk that if some level of control over the hub functionality is not retained there may be difficulty in accommodating such partners.
- 4.10 Traditional Service Level Agreements in their current format may potentially stifle the creativity that community venues could bring. Therefore, consideration around new, more open but outcome based agreements will be necessary.

- 4.11 There is the potential to utilise the existing infrastructures that are already in place at community venues including IT services, IT Suites, volunteers and community catalysts, those motivational individuals and organisations with the right links into the locality. The right provider, perceived as non-institutional, who has active links into the community, particularly around a broad volunteering strand, could form the ideal community catalyst for this model.
- 4.12 Through encouraging customers to use more convenient and cost effective alternatives to the traditional face to face way of doing business with the Council, providers can divert a percentage of customers. This should consequently allow the number of contact days to be reduced, therefore allowing further cost savings to be made.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1 Changes to outlying face to face provisions at existing rural Customer Service Points, combined with future movement to a commissioning based model for a further 5 main hubs, subject to negotiation and which would see a decrease in our direct input, would contribute to an estimated saving of around £250,000.
- 5.2 Working with partners could potentially reduce the costs of commissioning through the arrangement of shared client consultation space.
- 5.3 We have recently received Transformational Challenge Award funding provided by the Department for Communities and Local Government to support the development of community hubs. This funding is awarded to support the redesign of services in such a way that they provide better outcomes for citizens and where the projected savings are greater than the investment.
- 5.4 The community hub funding will support the redesign of existing face to face customer focussed services, notably our libraries and customer service points. We want to use this funding to support the transfer of our libraries and other customer services to third party organisations and to create places that residents can easily get information and advice that both helps them and enables them to help others within their community.
- 5.5 Specifically we have £520,000 that will be focused in at least six locations. In addition to investing in the building and in new technology, e.g. library self-service machines, resources will be available to help build the capacity of the voluntary and community sector and town and parish councils to take on the management of local services."

6. Introduction

- 6.1 A considerable amount of redesign work, research and collaborative working has been undertaken around the original Hubs concept.
- 6.2 Aims and Objectives
- i. Much of the work on the Hubs concept has focused on moving the existing face to face provision away from core transactional activities; moving those who can serve themselves onto more cost effective channels. This will allow resources to be focused on the vulnerable, those in crisis or those impacted by benefits reform, taking into account the accelerated plans for Universal Credit rollout.
 - ii. The core objective of this redesign work has been to concentrate all of the available resources from Shropshire Council, our partners, the voluntary sector, the government and the community into the provision of specialist help. Specifically this specialist help will address the underlying causes of crisis and ideally reduce, or prevent, long term dependency in the future.
 - iii. This project includes developing collaborative strategies across all sectors to coordinate resources around early intervention, advice, support, skills, training and employment service. Work to look at reducing duplication of existing provision has begun, with a shared ambition to create an effective ecosystem of support, including revised, modernised and locality based self-help directories that incorporate a vibrant, voluntary sector market place.
- 6.3 Work through the Resilient Communities project, the Strategic Welfare Reform Group (which includes housing associations), Citizen's Advice and the Department for work and Pensions, and the collation and revision of existing help directories, suggest that a shared understanding of the Hubs concept is emerging. This model also matches work the Department for Work and Pensions is undertaking in support of the implementation of Universal Credit.
- 6.4 Prototyping work undertaken at the "CasCA" : (Community Centre, Craven Arms,) and exploring delivery options in talks with Whitchurch Town Council indicates that the common understanding of this model is now mature enough to be considered as an opportunity to commission the delivery of some of the key elements of Hubs from community and voluntary sector providers, including parish and town councils.

7. Background

- 7.1 Face to face contact with customers in respect of "core" council business has been declining over time. Monthly footfall in September 2014 was under 6,000 compared to over 11,000 for the same month in 2012 and this is not an exception. Face to Face provision also represents the most expensive type of transactional provision, with Society of Information Technology Management figures suggesting that it can cost as much as £8.15 for one Face to Face transaction, compared with 15p for a web transaction.
- 7.2 Whilst the overall volume of footfall has been falling, the largest percentage of face to face customer enquiries is now focused on benefits, need, hardship, homelessness and crisis. Responding to this type of contact has become

increasingly specialist as the situations are often complex and crisis led, thus requiring a careful approach.

- 7.3 Ambition now exists to redesign services in ways that reduces long term need and remove, where possible, future dependency. Many of our partners are also sharing this ambition and are undertaking similar work in this area.
- 7.4 Convergence of this work, and an understanding of the impact that the impending rollout of Universal Credit will have, has brought together a consensus of thinking around the need to create an ecosystem of support that focuses on individual's needs and the capacities that exist within each community. A Hubs model is therefore emerging as the keystone to building this framework.

8. Existing Hub Provision

- 8.1 Shropshire Council originally prototyped two hubs, one at Oswestry (co-located in the library) and one at Guildhall (in place of the old Council reception area).
- 8.2 The principle of these hubs is based on the concept of helping people to help themselves by using a Customer Services "meeter and greeter". This involves diverting customers to alternative service channels other than face to face service such as using the dedicated phones, which are programmed to the Customer Service Centre and the most used service numbers, or the public computers, which see an increase in usage as services progressively move online.
- 8.3 Many customers of all ages prove able to serve themselves with some help, but some initial support is often needed to bring this about.
- 8.4 Hubs have also developed to accommodate a range of partner organisations chosen for their ability to deliver services around benefit dependency issues, hardship, homelessness etc. The key requirement here is that customers can be referred to them for appointment, often via online contact – a surgery based approach.
- 8.5 This model is embryonic of the kind of support mechanism that the Department for Work and Pensions believe will be needed as welfare reform rolls out.

9. Future Hub Provision

- 9.1 Six larger market towns were identified as potentially hosting locations for the main community hubs. Built around the multi-partner model, these were chosen because of the level of footfall and the level of benefit dependency and deprivation in local wards. These hubs were located at:

- Shrewsbury
- Ludlow
- Bridgnorth
- Whitchurch
- Market Drayton
- Oswestry

- 9.2 A number of smaller 'micro hubs' were identified, which were modeled around the availability of warm phones (phones which only dial the Customer Service Centre) and the provision of computers that allow for self-serve or assisted-serve transitions.
- 9.3 These micro hubs were designed to be located in open access community buildings where additional footfall was welcome and where existing staff and/or volunteers were able to fulfil a signposting or assisted serve role. However, ownership of the enquiry or responsibility for resolution of the enquiry does not pass to these staff.
- 9.4 More recently, a micro hub has been set up at CasCA (Community Centre in Craven Arms,) starting with the incorporation of the library and Customer Service Point and is shortly to include Adult Social Care teams, who are currently looking to locate there.
- 9.5 Footfall for core Council services is very low and has provided an ideal opportunity for handover of delivery to CasCA reception staff, with Shropshire Council staff only attending by appointment if needed. With the installation of a public phone and computer giving access to our website, CasCA staff will be required to divert enquiries to these methods, with volunteers helping with online transactions.
- 9.6 The model is new and still being prototyped but staff have been trained up and are beginning to commence this role, potentially affording the Council a considerable saving.
- 9.7 Options for delivery of the services located in the Civic Centre currently at a formative stage with Whitchurch Town Council. Shropshire Council and the Town Council already jointly share a customer service point and this would provide the opportunity to explore the commissioning of Face to Face provision through the Hubs model.
- 9.8 Pursuing the "commissioned Hubs" across Shropshire would effectively look to roll out a similar model to CasCA, but to sites (like Whitchurch) that are much busier and maintain a much higher proportion of benefit and need related enquiries.

10. Retained Hub Operations

- 10.1 The single retained Council run hub would extend all of the learning to date into a three pronged provision around Council services, focusing on providing protection to the vulnerable, including meeting emergencies and meeting the obligations and requirements brought in by welfare reform:
- i. Core Council business and support mechanisms would be increasingly encouraged towards self-serve, firstly by telephone and then increasingly online. This would additionally be extended to a physical dedicated self-help area; providing information about local services and community help. Access to the support ecosystems identified through partnership working and the voluntary sector market place would be available through simple "life strands" themes around Early Health, Family, Children, Education, Money, Home, Health, Independence, Lifestyle, Jobs and Training. This thematic approach would include Council services and be drawn together through the work currently being undertaken on directory provision and Map of Maps.

- ii. The second provision is around remaining independent in the community, maximising incomes and independence in old age or for those genuinely reliant on the benefits system. This takes learning from the First Point of Contact system operated in the Customer Service Centre and might be met directly in the hub or via external partners.
- iii. The third provision is around working age clients and is the support structure needed to help people access the benefits system digitally. It will also challenge and address the sometimes complex hierarchy of needs that may prevent someone being work ready. This will be followed up with an into work strand, incorporating learning to date as well as new strands around life coaching, interview preparation, job search and local employer engagement for mock interviews. It is expected that those all of working age will be invited to interview where the onset of Universal Credit, the new regime and the new requirements would be explained. Additionally the need for intervention and help can be identified and the customer shall be invited to sign up to the help framework with the aim of moving into work.

10.2 Jobcentre Plus have expressed a need for accommodation within the Council Hub framework as part of the into work strand and could bring with them many of the professional and practical links needed to make this successful.

List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information)
Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder)
Local Member
Conflicts of interest declared by members
Appendices A. Hubs Concept B. Universal Credit Briefing Note C. Equality and Social Inclusion Impact Assessment

A. Hubs Concept

The hubs concept is not simply about reducing the costs of operating existing Face to Face provision. It is also built around the principles of moving those who can serve themselves onto more cost effective channels, whilst focusing support on those who are in crisis, enabling us to provide specialist help to address the underlying causes of crisis and, ideally, enabling us to address and reduce long term dependency.

The hub concept should provide a network of support and is not simply a building for service provision. Hubs should be located in buildings that are accessible to all in the community and be places where people are already going to improve the quality of life within their neighbourhoods. Hubs are where voluntary support networks are already active. These could be community centres, leisure centres, libraries or other suitable buildings. Hubs should be accessible to all and must be places where all members of society are welcome.

By skilling staff and volunteers at such venues to provide Face to Face support and signpost customers to existing community networks, we aim to reduce the number of customer service enquiries that need to be undertaken by specialist staff. Instead these enquiries will be moved onto more cost effective channels – phone and online.

By implementing this model, specialist customer service support can be focused on more complex needs and on those in crisis. By operating a surgery based model within the hubs, alongside other specialists, we can initiate multi-agency support, bringing together statutory partners and the voluntary sector to match clients to the appropriate support resources.

This proposal fits with the DWP's future model of Universal Credit support, where a community led triage is a precursor for access to DWP services. Signposting within the hubs will also distance the venue staff and/or volunteers from the need to have challenging conversations or from having to convey contentious decisions - retaining the hubs neutrality and support ethos.

By hiring surgery space within the venue and by working with partners to facilitate or commission activities within the hubs, the statutory providers can also help support the sustainability of local, voluntary led facilities.

B. Universal Credit Briefing Note

Briefing note	An overview of Universal Credit, the potential impact in Shropshire and the Local Service Support Framework
Officer responsible	Nigel Bishop
Area affected	County wide

Background: what is Universal Credit?

Universal Credit (UC) will replace a number of existing means tested Social Security benefits. The benefits that it replaces cover the majority of people claiming, from the unemployed looking for work, those unable to work due to sickness, to lone parents and, because UC will also replace both Child Tax and working Tax Credits, working adults and families in low paid work. UC will incorporate all housing costs including Housing Benefit.

UC is not a “simple” benefit but it will simplify the system by bringing a number of benefits under one umbrella rather than requiring a number of different benefits to be claimed across more than one department. It also eases the move into work, in that the claimant does not have to “leave the system” to claim in-work benefits as these are incorporated into UC.

Shropshire rollout:

Rollout of UC in Shropshire commences in February 2015 and, as in the pilot areas, rollout will be staged in order to assess the impact before further rollout commences. From February 2015, UC claims will be limited to childless single people however, as some pilot areas are trialling claims from couples, there is a possibility of their inclusion. The expectation is that most existing claims will be transferred over to UC during 2015/2016. Best estimates are that some 700,000 more complex claims will still not have been transferred by the end of 2017 and will depend on the development of new IT systems. (Source: Turn2Us advice agency).

Major impact points:

UC brings about some major changes which can be summarised as follows:

- UC will be paid calendar monthly
- Help with rent is included in with UC so the default position is to pay this to the claimant but with protection for the most vulnerable. This direct payment has been the case with privately rented properties for some time and will therefore be extended to all social sector housing.
- Because UC incorporates Working Tax Credits its introduction will affect both working and non-working households.
- There is a blanket £16,000 limit on the capital a person can have before entitlement is lost. This was always the case for out of work benefits – but this limit is now

extended to those in work whereas before, tax credits were not subject to a capital limit. The numbers of people likely to lose in work support as a result are not known.

- The rates of UC are lower than the benefits replaced for some recipients as there are no additions for disability. Those who transfer onto UC from current benefits will be transitionally protected and will keep the current rate of benefit – but this protection will be eroded when changes occur, and changes may occur quickly.
- A person starting work at any level will not have to sign off UC to claim in-work benefits. Instead, UC will react to their wage income and will continue in payment. The mechanism for this “real time” adjustment is via HMRC systems information.
- With some exceptions, UC can only be paid upon acceptance of a binding “claimant commitment” which will specify the conditionality to be met. The requirements will vary but unless the claimant is incapable of work due to illness (and has been so assessed by a DWP medical), a carer for a disabled person (meeting the conditions for a carer’s allowance) or the carer of a child under 1, they will have to do as directed or face benefit penalties. There are time limited exemptions for some victims of domestic violence. The activities required of the claimant will vary but could range from attending regular interviews, taking steps to becoming work ready, taking steps to getting better paid work to full job seeking activities. What is required within these activities is decided by Jobcentre Plus and whatever is reasonable in the circumstances. DWP attitudes suggest that when someone has signed up to such an agreement, it would be very difficult for them to justify failure to comply.
- Those in work may still be subject to a claimant commitment unless their earnings reach a required limit – effectively set at a reasonable number of hours per week for the person’s circumstances and at the minimum wage. This prevents people doing a bare minimum by setting a legal minimum.
- Penalties, or “sanctions” on benefits for not meeting requirements are more stringent and for longer periods.
- Hardship payments made to those sanctioned are heavily conditional. The law includes these words: “*they (the claimant) have made every effort to cease to incur any expenditure which does not relate to such needs (basic and essential needs)*”. Hardship payments are recoverable.

Changes for pensioners:

Also within the Welfare Reform Act 2012 are a number of changes that will affect those over pension age:

- Where one of a couple is under Pension Credit age, any claim made will have to be for working age benefits and the younger person will be subject to UC conditionality.

- The Welfare Reform Act allows for a capital limit of £16,000 to be put in place on Pension Credit, currently there is no limit. As yet there is no date for this to be introduced.
- Pension Credit will need to be adjusted to include a housing credit as Housing Benefit disappears. This is unlikely to be before 2017.

Statistics:

The following statistics give some idea of the eventual impact on Shropshire citizens as the rollout of UC continues.

There are 7,260 benefit claims in total from people/families either receiving Jobseeker's Allowance, in the work-related activity group or receiving Employment & Support Allowance or lone parents receiving Income Support. (Source, Jobcentre Plus)

There are 18,700 families receiving tax credits in Shropshire, the majority, 14,400 are in work and 4,300 are not in work. There are just over 30,000 children in these families. 22,200 are in families who work and 8,300 are in non-working families. (Source HMRC statistics 2012/2013)

There are 17,200 claims to Housing Benefit in the Shropshire area; these include people over pension age. All will eventually transfer over to UC or the new Housing Credit.

Prior experience – outcomes from the Direct Payment Project:

Shropshire was a pilot area that tested the payment of social housing rent directly to the benefit claimant, one of the key changes within UC.

What we learned from the key work done from the housing providers indicates the challenge we are faced with in preparing Shropshire citizens for major conditionality changes, or in being able to repair negative outcomes.

The learning showed us that it was not simply a matter of helping people with budgeting skills that is required. It is a wider matter of educating and preparing people for the changes that will come, it is a question of changing a culture of expectation that someone else somewhere will always provide. There is a major issue around challenging expectations. What we found was this:

- Most people in the pilot were apathetic about changes, there is a lack of public awareness of UC meaning that most people are not actively planning around what will be required.
- Many customers already have debt issues including rent arrears and considerable support was needed to keep them ahead of paying bills. Many people had health issues – and were hopeful that these would protect them from benefit changes. Many did not have internet access, naming cost as the main barrier to inclusion.
- The support mechanisms needed both in our own customer hubs and throughout Shropshire via the Local Support Services Framework needs to address these findings and be in a position to react to negative outcomes for the customer.

Support mechanisms in Shropshire:

"Local government has a key role to play in identifying, leading, facilitating and commissioning partnerships to deliver. The voluntary sector and social housing providers often have a lead role in local delivery partnerships, and in particular in identifying who

needs help and in what form." (Source: Universal Credit Local Support Services Framework, Dept, for Work & Pensions)

It is clear that many customers affected by the introduction of UC, particularly the most vulnerable, will have a hierarchy of needs to address before they can concentrate on benefit conditionality. There will truly be a customer journey which will vary according to need, but is likely to follow this path:

Crisis resolution (insufficient money, Local Support & Prevention Funding/food parcels, risk to housing, homelessness, family crisis, drug and alcohol misuse)

Challenge to change (awareness of requirements, initial triage of needs, agreement to engage)

Debt (including rent arrears, Council Tax arrears, consumer credit issues)

Budgeting issues (individual money skills, financial decision making, managing with reduced income)

Banking and borrowing (promotion of Credit Unions as alternative sources of credit)

Housing related issues (sufficiency of housing, help to move, close support)

Digital inclusion and education (assisted access to online claims and maintenance, universal job match and applications)

Work preparation (challenging expectation, culture change, confidence building, training, help with skills, work clubs)

Into work (better off in work calculations, job applications, into work funding, apprenticeships, Princes Trust, Economic Development input)

Stability (staying in work, reporting changes, self-serve, resilience)

Much valuable work is being done by Housing Associations around preparing their tenants for these changes. Shropshire Council's own Customer Service Points are heavily involved in benefit administration and crisis resolution.

Most voluntary and community organisations in Shropshire are aware of the impact of UC changes, Jobcentre Plus are currently trialling a universal triage system with consent to share data that will help to identify more vulnerable customers and potentially avoid benefit penalties and they are actively seeking accommodation within Shropshire Council's community Hubs.

There is now a need to pull these strands together into a uniformly effective and inclusive programme of help. Our Welfare Reform Strategic and Operational Boards are currently addressing this issue.

Proposals and recommendations:

That the Welfare Reform Board, representing various agencies throughout Shropshire (including Shropshire Council), agrees a common progress path for our customers, beginning with a triage to identify those most at risk, clarify their hierarchy of needs and agree an action plan to address these, thus moving that person towards independence of systems.

That there are agreed and quality assured process steps that are indelibly linked to the next part of the customer's progress plan regardless of who delivers. This will prevent needs being looked at in isolation by individual agencies, with the required outcome being that the customer is skilled up and enabled along the way, thereby being less likely to lapse back into crisis.

That Shropshire Council's own community Hubs, now key as a recognised point of contact for those in crisis, develop along these lines and are inclusive of self-help and signposting areas, digital inclusion zones for both core council business and access to benefit applications with assistance for the most vulnerable.

It is recommend that we provide the challenge and education so that crisis resolution becomes the first step on the progress path, whilst engaging partners, including Housing Association Support Officers, to work with us from these venues to provide expertise. This does not negate any individual work done from their own community venues.

It is recommend that wherever possible, we look to accommodate local Jobcentres as an integrated part of our Hubs to add value and expertise to the "into work" strand of operations.

It is recommend that we maintain our current relationship with Ingeus, a company holding a Jobcentre Plus contract to work with long term sick customers who are currently accommodated in two of our Hubs. This will link with any direct input from Jobcentre Plus.

It is recommended that we look to forge stronger links to organisations such as the Barnabas Centre, Elim church and other neutrally positioned community based organisations that are developing innovative help around getting people into work, so that we have agreed points of outreach referral.

It is recommend that this strand of work is developed closely with that of resilient communities and that, wherever possible, the triage done at first point of contact identifies needs across all age groups.

Chris Westwood
Customer Services Manager
2014

31 October

Examples of Co-location – articles

1) 7 October 2015 Cirencester

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) has given the go-ahead for Cirencester's Jobcentre Plus services to be co-located with Cotswold District Council at the latter's Trinity Road headquarters.

The co-location – which is expected to take place early in 2016 - will allow both organisations to provide a more joined up face-to-face service for customers. By working more closely together as key partners, they will also save on overheads and reduce costs to the taxpayer.

The move fits very well with the Government's programme of welfare reform and service transformation and will further support the delivery of Universal Credit which went live in Cotswold district from May 2015.

It is anticipated that all the staff who currently work at the Cirencester Jobcentre will re-locate to Trinity Road and will continue to deliver the same range of services. When the move is completed, the existing Jobcentre in Southway, Cirencester will close.

Nick Browning, the Jobcentre Plus District Manager, comments:

"The relocation of our Jobcentre to the Cotswold District Council offices in Cirencester presents us with an exciting opportunity to work alongside a key local partner in delivering improved services to people in the area, and will support the future delivery of Universal Credit to Cotswold customers."

CDC Leader Cllr Lynden Stowe, adds:

"We have been in discussions with the DWP about this co-location for some time and I am grateful to everyone who has been involved in making this possible. As well as enabling co-located service delivery in Cirencester for the first time, all taxpayers should be pleased to hear that we will be making best use of excess office accommodation at Trinity Road and reducing both our running costs."

2) March 2014 DWP report –

a) West Lindsey also worked towards co-location and this showed that better customer service is provided resulting in better outcomes.

All LA's involved in UC delivery - Desirable - Take advantage of any co-location opportunities; Integrate appropriate services where co-location is not sustainable; All partner front-line teams trained to deliver a basic level of partner services; Effective signposting to the right organisation; Informal networking particularly with volunteers involved in the project.

b) At Melton Borough Council we have improved the links between financial inclusion and employability services to show the benefits of work. The Jobcentre is co-located within the Council Offices and as part of the signing-on process the Jobcentre advisor is now booking clients straight into MAS. This is ensuring that any unemployed person is receiving what is often their first money advice session and follow up sessions are regularly arranged.

c) Rushcliffe Borough Council

A customer came to the Community Contact Centre to provide documents for a housing benefit claim. She brought in her wage slip showing new decreased wages (reduced from 40hrs pw to 12hrs pw). As colleagues from Jobcentre Plus were at the Centre, the customer was able to get immediate guidance about her job search options. Jobcentre Plus helped the customer to apply for JSA online and an appointment was made for her to visit again to get help with writing her CV and using Universal Jobmatch. The customer was very grateful to be receiving this additional help, all in the one location which was convenient for her.



Need Help

Finding a Job?

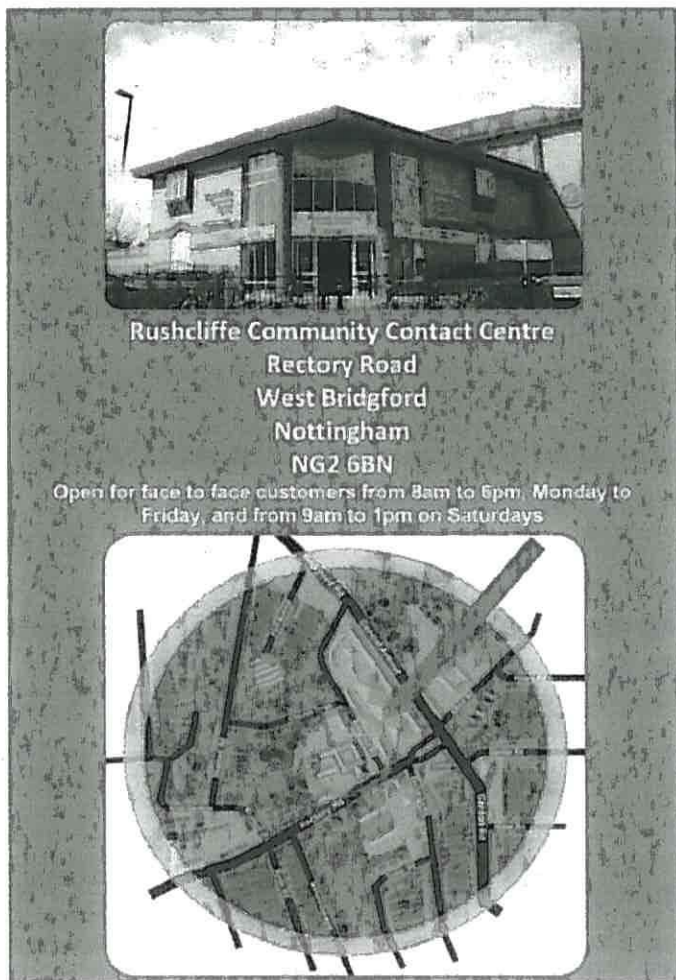


Call in and book an appointment with a Jobcentre Plus adviser at Rushcliffe Community Contact Centre (based in the Police Station at West Bridgford) or call us on 0115 9819911

www.gov.uk/jobsearch

jobcentreplus

Department for Work and Pensions



3) April 2015 Bexhill's new Jobcentre open for business

Jobseekers in Bexhill are benefiting from improved facilities after the town's new Jobcentre opened its doors.

On Monday, April 13 2015, the facility moved from its home of 65 years in St Leonards Road to a new base in Amherst Road.

The Jobcentre is co-locating with Rother District Council in a part of the Town Hall building previously used as the council's customer contact centre.

The centre boasts a new digital hub, which jobseekers can use to search for jobs, while space is available for training and job interviews.

Helen James, customer service manager for Hastings and Bexhill for the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), said: "Staff in the Jobcentre are very excited about working in an office which is designed to deliver a modern service to Bexhill claimants.

"Importantly, from April 20 we'll be ready to roll out Universal Credit, which will eventually replace six means-tested benefits.

"Also, claimants will benefit from having access to other community services, as the local authority is based in the same building."

Malcolm Johnston, Rother District Council executive director of resources, said: "We are delighted to be working in partnership with the DWP on this project.

"The new co-located Jobcentre not only fits with our SPACES initiative to decrease costs and increase partnership working, but will also help both organisations meet their aim of assisting residents who are out of work to find employment."

Published on Thursday, April 16 2015

4) August 2015 DWP MOVE TO COUNCIL HQ SAVES MONEY AND IMPROVES SERVICE

20/08/2015 BY DIGITAL MEDIA



The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) is establishing a new city centre base inside the City Council's headquarters, in a move to improve customer service and save public money.

The ground floor atrium space of the council's Loxley House offices is due to be occupied by members of staff from the DWP's Station Street Job Centre from August 24.

The co-location of public services is seen by Government as a crucial way of improving customer experience, embracing the DWP's vision for 2020. The City Council began its own consolidation of services in 2010 when it moved staff from six old, unsuitable and expensive

city centre buildings into the cost-effective, modern, accessible and energy-efficient office accommodation at Loxley House.

Since then, Nottingham City Homes (NCH) has also moved from outdated premises into Loxley House, along with East Midlands Shared Services, the joint finance, payroll and human resources function between Leicestershire County Council and Nottingham City Council.

The moves have helped to make savings and improve efficiency, with decisions and actions taken more quickly while reducing time lost through staff and citizens moving between different buildings.

Now the approach is being taken a step further with the introduction of DWP into the building. Up to 30 staff dealing with around 3,000 citizens will initially move to Loxley House, with a view to developing the arrangements over the next six to 12 months into a one-stop service for those seeking benefits whether administered by central or local government.

Changes to the ground floor of Loxley House to accommodate DWP have involved improvements to the council's reception area, establishing a DWP reception desk and opening up more of the building to the public, including the café. This will be developed to become a customer service area, with a 'digital zone' where DWP, NCH and City Council customers will be able to get online for job searches or to access services.

Portfolio Holder for Jobs, Growth and Transport, Councillor Nick McDonald, said: "We are continually looking for ways to reduce the cost of our office accommodation and make better use of our assets. We've already achieved a lot by closing old buildings and relocating staff to Loxley House, which provides on-going revenue savings, as well as income from the sale of former offices.

"I'm pleased we're taking this one step further with DWP's move to the building. This makes sense not just in terms of efficiency and savings, but also from a customer perspective. We already work very closely with the DWP on a number of successful initiatives to help local people find jobs and apprenticeships and this new arrangement can only help us work together even more effectively."

DWP's District Manager Graham Sheppard said: "Our key aim is to work collaboratively to support people lifting themselves out of poverty, helping them to get a job and securing children's futures.

"Co-location is an approach being taken wherever possible by DWP to provide exemplar services while protecting the public purse. We are looking forward to working alongside colleagues from the City Council and NCH and believe this will be very beneficial for local citizens and future-proof a 'one service' environment."

Councillor McDonald, right, is seen with Graham Sheppard inside the new DWP base at Loxley House.

5) Jobcentre Plus moves into new premises at council offices in Arnold

Posted On : 14 July 2014 @ 8:43

A new Jobcentre Plus is to be opened at Gedling Borough Council's Civic Centre next week as part of a joint initiative with the Department of Works and Pensions (DWP).

The Jobcentre will move from its offices on St Albans Road Arnold, into the ground floor of the Civic Centre in Arnot Hill Park, on Monday 14 July.

Residents will now be able to visit the council offices to get help gaining employment, applying for jobseekers allowance and for face to face advice on a number of employment and benefit matters.

Both services will benefit financially from the move, the council will receive a rental income and the Jobcentre will be paying less rent than at their previous premises on St Albans Road. It is estimated that visits to the council offices could increase by 11,000 people a year, a third more people than currently visit.

The Jobcentre is joining a number of public services who've recently moved into the Civic Centre, and it is now a multi-agency community hub. The Nottinghamshire North and East Clinical Commissioning Group, Citizen's Advice Bureau, Gedling Homes, TravelRight Gedling, Nottinghamshire Police and Crime Commissioner, Nottingham Credit Union and Royal British Legion are now all operating from the Civic Centre.

The Jobcentre Plus will be open from Monday – Friday, 9am – 5pm (10am – 5pm on Wednesdays). For more information or to book an appointment with the Jobcentre plus people can call 0345 604 3719 or visit www.gov.uk

Paula Calladine, Arnold Jobcentre Manager said:

“The co-location with Gedling Borough Council colleagues will provide joined-up services for the local community in a single building and enable us to work closely with local partners in order to offer a more comprehensive service to unemployed people.

“We will continue to offer the full range of services currently available at Arnold Jobcentre and effectively enhance our service delivery, reducing the cost to the taxpayer and providing more of a ‘one stop shop’ for services.”

Councillor Michael Payne, Deputy Leader of the Council said:

“We are very pleased to welcome the Jobcentre Plus to the Council offices in Arnold. This is a significant step forward for improving the services we provide for residents. We're leading the way in working together with our colleagues in the Department of Work and Pensions, NHS, the Police and many other local service providers. Sharing our buildings reduces costs and makes it easier for our residents, the taxpayer, to access to the services they want to use.”