

Name of meeting: Corporate Scrutiny Panel

Date: 12th of January 2018

Title of report: Access to Services Strategy

Link to the original report can be found at Agenda Item 10 [here](#).

The outcome the Council is seeking is for residents and communities to be able to readily access information, signposting and services in order to improve the customer experience and journey, first time, more of the time. It is important that we become less reliant on buildings. **74%** of the public when asked said 'I would generally **prefer to travel to a central location**, with a wider range of services available' (vs 26% support for 'I would generally prefer to travel to separate places to access different services')

1. Access to Service Principles

In order to deliver this outcome the principles underpinning the service proposition are:

- **Digital by design** in an inclusive way that recognises that not all sections of the population will be digitally literate or have access to technology.
- **Telephone and Face to Face** access where appropriate.
- The availability of **community hubs** where appropriate that co-locate a number of services – these could include adult and children's social care and communities teams.
- **Local access points** which have due regard to the wider assets within neighbourhoods, wards and communities which are well networked and supported by a high quality back office.

We must engage with communities to deliver our services, working in partnership with community groups. Many of our services are already supported by Friends of Groups and volunteers and we must continue to grow this model.

2. Digital by design

In order to meet the needs of customers, Kirklees Council must provide services that are:

- Easily accessible
- Simple to use
- Streamlined
- Convenient
- Cost effective
- Robust

It is also important to bear in mind the target audience's access to technology, the type and complexity of the contact, their personal preferences as well as their skill sets when selecting channels.

Rising internet use and customer expectations of accessing public services online present an ongoing opportunity for us. Competent online services are easy and quick to use,

available whenever customers need them and have a relatively low administrative burden. Managed well, online access to services is a very effective channel with considerable benefits for customers and taxpayers.

We must however also meet the needs of people who do not (yet) have access to the internet, or lack the skills and/or capability to use it.

3. Telephone and Face to Face access

Our approach for **Universal Customers**.

Develop a single 'universal front door' delivered via:

- an accessible, effective and preferably digital offer to all customers for transactions and information, advice and guidance services
- an effective and efficient customer contact centre with a critical mass of council services
- Improved common processes, delivered end to end.

Minimise the cost of delivering services to universal customers, so that we can invest more in the services we provide to customers who are 'at risk' or have 'high needs.'

This means we need to:

- Invest in improving our 'universal front door' by designing and implementing digitally enabled services for as many council services as possible – Digital by Design programme - supported by a channel shift and take-up implementation plan.
- Build-on our approach to supported access for those customers who in the short to medium term will not exploit digitally enabled services e.g. consolidate our assisted digital arrangements, consider availability 24/7 and training council staff to support customer access to use online services.
- Develop and implement joined-up, technologically enabled front to back office processes to deliver improved customer service.

4. Community hubs

The availability of community hubs where appropriate that co-locate a number of services – these could include adult and children's social care and communities teams.

In terms of physical locations the offer will be as follows:

- Two Customer Contact Centres, one in Huddersfield and one in central Dewsbury. Only at Huddersfield will access to specialist officer advice be offered on a face to face basis. Access to specialist officers from Dewsbury Contact Centre to be via online link.
- Four EIP Hubs in Huddersfield Civic Centre 1, Dewsbury Town Hall, Batley Town Hall and Slaithwaite Town Hall.
- Four Children's Centres for Early Years support at Fieldhead co-location Centre, The Chestnut Centre, Slaithwaite Town Hall and Dewsbury Moor Children's Centre.
- In the North of the District, there are 5 Kirklees Community Hubs (formally known as Schools as Community Hubs) which fit coterminously within the councils 2 EIP areas.
- In the South of the District there are 11 Kirklees Community Hubs which largely fit within the Councils 2 EIP areas.

It is important to note that a Community Hub involves all partners working in an area in Council and private sector buildings as well as outreach workers who do not physically work from a fixed location.

There is a need for a multi-agency approach with shared outcomes and working to avoid duplication of service.

5. Local Access Points

Access points which have due regard to the wider assets within neighbourhoods, wards and communities, which are well networked and supported by a high quality back office. These access points need not be in Council owned or managed buildings, they could be in any suitable facility e.g. school, community facility, and GP surgery.

This means we need to:

- Introduce technology that enables a single view of our customers in a secure, accessible, appropriate way and enables joint responses to meet their needs – it is especially important for us to know and share information on our ‘at risk’ and ‘high need’ customers and at a time of predicted increases in need (e.g. Welfare Reform).
- Join up the assessment of customer needs and entitlements where appropriate by having more common assess and decide processes within the council and with partners. E.g. Bringing Care and Financial Assessment together in a joined up process saves time and leads to improved outcomes.

6. Buildings

The above principals will give ability to generate capital receipts where possible and support rationalisation of buildings with use of buildings diminishing.

- The asset management theme will be supported as the project proposes to consolidate multiple partner premises into four community hubs, delivering targeted services to vulnerable communities, children, young people and families.
- The co-location and service transformation theme is being supported as the project proposes bringing multiple community services into single, accessible community hubs across Kirklees, transforming the service offer to communities.
- The regeneration theme is being supported as the project proposes investment in Council real estate (e.g. such as town halls) to accommodate local services and keep the buildings in use and in service to the communities. This will potentially enable vacation of other partner premises which can be subject to reuse, sale and/or regeneration.

7. Underpinned by a Mobile and Agile Workforce

Making the Workforce fully Mobile and Agile, able to work from any partner, home, field or remote location, or from the EIP hubs, with the full functionality to fully execute their role without the need to return to a base or undertake previously essential travel

8. What has happened so far?

The Digital Kirklees (Digital by Design) Programme is picking up pace and the new “**Citizen Account**” has been released. This is a significant development for residents to access information and services 24/7 through an online account; and also make the delivery of the service far more efficient and effective. Examples below:

- **Parks and open spaces** – Fieldworkers are now fully mobile, able to report and deal with issues without going into the office; this has reduced travel and data input by admin staff into the back office.

- **Memorials** – providing the ability for citizens to order or renew memorials; savings in face to face staff time and printing out brochures, order, orienting out brochures, map of grounds where memorial can be placed
- **Waste Recycling Centre permits** – 114K permits have now been issued; SITA have access to handheld devices to check permits and report issues on site. Rich business intelligence on site activity being actively used.
- **Application for new Taxi Driver licence** - reducing face to face interactions from five to two and enabling new drivers to book, pay, rearrange/cancel appointments by self-service
- **Council Tax statements** – residents can access their statement using account number and postcode. Includes payments made this year, next payment date and amount, yearly breakdowns where debt is outstanding from previous years.
- **Pothole reporting** – enhanced to assist workforce by capturing map coordinates and address when reporting.

The Innovation Centre - As part of this work, we have established an Innovation Centre; adopting proven, best practice principles and ways of working derived from the Government Digital Service (GDS). This translates into using a much more modern, agile and collaborative way of working with services; the approach proving to be very beneficial and allowing new digital services to be delivered at pace and savings realised quickly.

In the Customer Service Centres occupancy levels of services are being reduced by using robust data and performance intelligence. By using data to reduce the usage of booths in the centres this can mean more services can work out of the centre, therefore reducing demand on Council owned buildings.

Mobile and Agile working pilots have commenced and this is proving very positive, enabling practitioners to undertake assessments in a more efficient and effective way. It is expected that productivity will be increased across the service and improved service user outcomes will be achieved as a result. The evaluation of the early adopters is ongoing through regular learning sets.

“**BetterOff**” **Kirklees**” www.betteroffkirklees.org.uk is the new self-service digital platform that went live w/c 2nd Nov 2015. It was developed by staff at Advice Kirklees, the CAB and other partners with our Kirklees owned IT developers, Looking Local. “BetterOff Kirklees is web based but assisted self-service webchat support is available along with assisted digital at other sites.

It will be important to ensure that staff become ambassadors of the Access to Service Strategy. To this end a series of workshops will be held, involving appropriate services to identify how we are going to deliver on the strategy and how the strategy will impact on the different services.