

REVIEW OF THE OPENING HOURS FOR THE COPELAND CENTRE

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: Cllr Mike Ashbrook
LEAD OFFICER: Jane Salt Head of Customer Services
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Summary: To consider delaying the opening of The Copeland Centre on Wednesdays to allow team meetings, team building and training to take place. This will allow Customer Service staff to further improve their service to Copeland Borough Council customers and partner organisations.

Recommendation: That The Council offices at the Copeland Centre do not open to the public until 10.00 hours on Wednesday mornings, in line with DWP for a trial period, with a review of effectiveness after 3 months.

Impact on delivering the Corporate Plan: Allow time for staff to work towards a team approach in order to deliver the Corporate Plan objectives.

Impact on other statutory objectives (e.g. crime & disorder, LA21): None

Financial and human resource implications: To assist improve morale by taking time to work together with colleagues to form teams and deliver training. It is recognised that there is a direct and positive link between well trained staff and levels of performance.

Project & Risk Management: None

Key Decision Status

- **Financial:** None
- **Ward:** None

Other Ward Implications: None

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Council through the Corporate Plan has sets its main priorities for change and improvement in the future. To achieve its objectives the Council recognises that there is a requirement for managers to work closely with their teams so that we can transform Copeland into an organisation that is confident and proud of its achievements.

2. ARGUMENT

- 2.1 In order to deliver all of the tasks associated with the transformation of the Council there is an increased requirement to include staff in discussions. For example to discuss how they support

the objectives of the Corporate plan, to agree the objectives in Departmental plans and help set objectives for their own Service plans.

- 2.2 Throughout the organisation there are numerous new teams who need time to work together to create a positive approach to the change agenda. It is important that staff in the same team receive the same messages at the same time from their line manager. This can prove difficult particularly where the section is customer facing.
- 2.3 It has been recognised that not all staff, including managers have had sufficient training to deliver what is expected of them in this intense period of change. Taking time out together will help staff receive training at the same time as their colleagues.
- 2.4 It is a well known phenomena that there is a direct and positive link between well trained staff and performance. The expected outcomes therefore are that we have a trained, well motivated, high performing work force combined with an improvement to Customer Service delivery and a consistency of message.
- 2.5 Other organisations in the Copeland Centre do not open until 10.00 on Wednesday mornings, i.e. DWP so this already tends to be one of the quieter times for the Councils' enquiry office. The weekly customer figures show that all customer activity is lower before 10am each day and based on a small sample in November it was found that Wednesdays are 9% below average for phone calls and 40% below average for face to face visits (in numbers this was 52 and 7 respectively) between 08.45 and 10.00.

3. OPTIONS TO BE CONSIDERED

- 3.1 To retain the current opening hours to the public which are from 08.45 to 17.15 Monday to Thursday and 08.45 to 16.30 on Fridays.
- 3.2 To close to the public for a period of time, for example an hour. This could either be:
 - at the start or end of the working day. If the hour is to be taken at the end of the day this could be seen as the least productive time and staff could use the closure to have a regular early finish time and
 - on the same day every week or on a specific day of the month, for example the first Wednesday of the month. However by closing on a specific day of the month the general public are expected to be aware whether it is the right day of the month for the offices to be open at 08.45 or 10.00.

4. CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1 If we do not allow closure of the offices customer facing sections will not have the opportunity to work together or have team discussions that will allow them to deliver a consistent message, which arguably is more important for those dealing directly with the community.
- 4.2 As the impact will be that the offices will not be open before 10.00 am (including external access for meetings) there will need to be extensive awareness publicity throughout the organisation and the Borough. It is intended therefore to work with the Communications Manager to ensure that this is widely advertised and the reasons for such action explained adequately.

List of Appendices

None

List of Background Documents:

None

List of Consultees:

Corporate Team, Leader, Deputy Leader, Portfolio holder for Human Resources