

REVIEW OF THE OPENING HOURS FOR THE COPELAND CENTRE

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: Cllr Elaine Woodburn
LEAD OFFICER: Jane Salt Head of Customer Services
REPORT AUTHOR: Jane Salt Head of Customer Services

Summary: Approval was given to delay the opening of The Copeland Centre on Wednesdays to 10.00 a.m. with a review of the effectiveness after 3 months.

Recommendation: That the Council offices at The Copeland Centre continue to open to the public at 10.00 hours on Wednesday mornings.

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 set 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. Since the introduction of the late opening on Wednesday's all of the Customer Service Section have found it extremely useful to be afforded the opportunity to meet in their respective teams and in some instances as a department.

- 2.2 There have been a variety of topics covered in the meetings. For example objectives in service plans and the benefits recovery plan, there have been revised instructions for staff on system security, managing attendance and performance monitoring. It has also allowed time for dedicated training on the new Contact Centre system, data protection as well as the numerous circulars and bulletins that continue to be received in respect of Housing and Council tax benefit.
- 2.3 To date managers and staff would report that it has been a success and the topics covered ensure that the service delivered to our customers is improved and more accurate.
- 2.4 There have been no complaints from customers with regard to the late opening and they appear to be getting used to this, especially as it replicates the situation with the DWP opening hours. In the event of a lengthy queue accumulating prior to opening additional staff are deployed to reception at 10.00 to reduce the impact to our customers.

3. OPTIONS TO BE CONSIDERED

- 3.1 To revert back to the opening hours from 08.45 to 17.15 Monday to Thursday and 08.45 to 16.30 on Fridays.
- 3.2 To retain the late opening on Wednesdays.

4. CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1 There will continue to be circulars and bulletins issued by DWP in respect of changes to the way in which we process Housing and Council tax benefit. There is also a plan to introduce the verification framework later this year which entails a change in the process of evidencing claims. The successful delivery of these changes relies on further intensive training for both Revenues and Benefits staff and Customer Service Officers.
- 4.2 There are still a number of other topics that would benefit from staff being allowed time to discuss, for example service level agreements and extension of services delivered at the front office, not to mention joint team briefings/meetings.
- 4.3 The customers have now accepted the fact that we open later on a Wednesday and there have been no complaints.
- 4.4 The staff and management find this time beneficial.

List of Appendices

None

List of Background Documents: None

List of Consultees: Corporate Team, Leader