

Item No.	Classification: Open	Date: 19 July 2018	Meeting Name: Cabinet Member for Housing Management and Modernisation
Report title:		Improved Customer Services Working Through Libraries	
Ward(s) or groups affected:		All	
From:		Richard Selley, Director of Customer Experience	

RECOMMENDATIONS

The cabinet member for Housing Management and Modernisation is asked to agree:

1. That the Service Point at Walworth Road should close by the end of 2018 and be re-purposed as the new location for Southwark Works.
2. That the Service Point at Peckham is re-branded as a customer Self Service Point with some provision for face to face assistance for vulnerable residents.
3. The customer services appointment service offered at Blue Anchor Library ceases in December 2018
4. The customer service offered in the Dulwich Community shop ceases in October 2018.
5. That a shared customer service model is established in conjunction with Southwark Library Services, giving customers access to self service assistance for simple enquires.

Rationale for the change

6. The Customer Access Strategy, renewed in March 2017, seeks to deliver modern, digital customer services that provide easy access to council services and value for money whilst placing our customers at the heart of everything we do.
7. The strategy recognises that “the spread of the internet and mobile technology has presented new opportunities for delivering services more effectively and at a lower cost”. Today 80% of adults in the UK have a smart phone and widespread online access has changed customer behaviours and enables customers to access services 24 hours a day, seven days a week.
8. The Customer Access Strategy has five key objectives which are to Transform, Understand, Enhance, Awareness and Inclusion.
9. The Service Points have seen a reduced footfall of 54% over the last three years which is consistent with the expectations of the Customer Access Strategy as more and more customers choose to access services online.
10. Universal Credit (UC) is being rolled out and has helped with the reduction in customers needing to attend our face to face services. UC is replacing a number of key benefits for working age applicants, in particular housing benefit,

which means that customers no longer need to attend our services to present documents and proofs in support of a claim.

11. The Revenues and Benefits service has removed the need to see original document proofs since October 2017. Some 70% of Service Point customers attend in connection with their housing and council tax benefit reliefs and this has resulted in an even greater impact on an already reduced footfall as customers will no longer need to attend to provide those original proofs.
12. The council is committed to maintaining and promoting its present Libraries service and encouraging more people to use them. By providing assistance for customers accessing self service for a simple enquires within libraries, customer access for our customers will be improved and may assist with increasing the footfall in libraries.
13. These changes to the way that services are delivered are anticipated to deliver the budget savings required of the Service Points over the next two financial years.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

14. The Peckham and Walworth Service Points, the Blue Anchor Library, Aylesbury sub-office, Mobile Office and Community shop currently have a staffing complement of 32. This includes two Service Point Operational Managers (SPOM) and two Senior Customer Services Officers (SCSO). The staffing establishment has not changed significantly in recent years. Since the advent of the MySouthwark online platform in 2013 customer footfall at thee Service Points has decreased by 54%.
15. Following the closure and repurposing of the My Southwark Service Point at The Blue in June 2016, the Customer Experience division launched a pilot scheme at the Blue Anchor library (a few doors away in the same parade of shops) to explore the possibility of delivering co-located services with Southwark Library Services.
16. Benchmarking has also been conducted to look at alternative models for delivering customer services with Libraries adopted by other local authorities. A review of Enfield and Sutton councils was completed as they have been identified as delivering co-located service delivery models.

Enfield

17. A visit was made to Enfield Council to look at their shared customer service model with libraries. They have 10 libraries, including four main hub libraries where customers can hand in documents to be scanned and sent on to the relevant council service.
18. Enfield's libraries are staffed by a combination of council librarians and volunteers. These staff have limited knowledge of the full range of council services and do not offer information or advice.
19. Enfield also offers a small scale face to face service from their civic centre, with up to 10 customer service officers available. This provision includes two cashier windows for payments. Their self service office appears to be modern with five iPads used by officers to assist customers, 15 computers for customer use and a self scan system that floor walkers are available to help with.

Sutton

20. A visit was also made to Sutton Council where they have implemented a co-located customer service model within their libraries.
21. Sutton has eight libraries in total, five of these have been equipped to enable customers to scan and send information to back office council teams.
22. Sutton also has a small face to face service in their civic office, primarily resourced with one customer service officer. Here, customers may attend without an appointment to scan documents for council tax and housing benefit only. The customer service officer on duty has specific knowledge of council tax and housing benefit and can give advice in relation to document submission. They are not trained to deliver information about the wider gambit of council services.
23. Customers are encouraged to seek information and access services online using the council's "My Sutton" account.
24. Appointments are only available for vulnerable and elderly clients who may have complex enquiries, e.g. entitlement, new claim etc.
25. Sutton places a strong emphasis on first time resolution and encourages customers to present documents to the civic centre rather than at the libraries. Sutton reports around 95% accuracy in relation to document submission.

Southwark Council pilot

26. Following the repurposing of the My Southwark Service Point at The Blue as the new My Southwark Homeowners Agency, Southwark launched a pilot customer self service scheme on 1 June 2016 at the Blue Anchor library. The library is located just a few doors along in the same parade of shops. The focus of the pilot is to deliver customer service functions within a library setting.
27. The Blue Anchor library is open on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays. Customers may only visit the library for customer service related enquiries if they have made an appointment in person or online in advance.
28. The Blue Anchor library pilot service is staffed by one customer service officer. Since the pilot began in June 2016 more than 2,550 customers have attended the Blue Anchor library for customer service enquiries. The main reason for attending is for the submission of documents for council tax and housing benefits.
29. On average 231 customers are seen every month, equating to approximately 14 per day.
30. The service is run with the full support of the Library service. The service though successful has not seen the take up of resident engagement as first expected.

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

31. An analysis of data in relation to appointments indicates that customers are making appointments for services and information that can be access via MySouthwark online.

32. Meetings have been held with the Library Service to discuss the feasibility of locating customer's services within all 12 Libraries within Southwark. The Library service only have limited space in some locations and are unable to accommodate additional functions within all libraries.
33. The service points at Peckham and Walworth, the Blue Anchor library, Aylesbury sub-office and the mobile office are currently operating with a staffing level of 32 full time equivalents (FTE). The budgets for MSSP cost centres total £1.337m minus £70k for the Ombudsman service so £1.267m overall.

Staff Costs	Building costs
<p>For a CSO: the full employment cost at mid point for 18/19 is £35,027</p> <p>For a Senior CSO: The full employment at mid point for 18/19 is £43,664.</p> <p>For an Operational Manager: The full employment cost at mid point for 18/19 is £53,432</p>	<p>Peckham service point costs for 2017/18, including rent, utilities and R&M, was £52,818.</p> <p>Walworth service point costs for 2017/18, including rent, utilities and R&M, was £25,488.</p>
<p>Total using these mid points the cost is £1.175m (the staffing budget is £1.157m)</p>	<p>Total cost: £78,306</p>

34. A number of options for delivering face to face services in the future have been considered. All achieve an improved level of customer Self Service for those accessing council services. This will enable customers to access systems and services through the technology available. Computers will enable customers to access the internet, their MySouthwark account services as well as printing, scanning and photocopying facilities. The scanning machines will allow customers to scan and send their documents to the desired department. Telephones will be installed alongside self service computers giving customers greater access to services. The recommend option is detailed below.

Close the Walworth service point and re-purpose as the new Southwark Works office, close Blue Anchor Appointment service and the Community shop customer services offer.

35. Close the Walworth service point in October 2018. This dovetails with the need to relocate the Southwark Works (SW) office away from the Elephant and Castle Shopping Centre.
36. Southwark Work's main office operates with 20 members of staff and provides hot desking for other agencies. In 2017/18 approximately 1600 Southwark residents used the Southwark Works office to access employment support, training and advice.
37. The service provides specialist advice and support to Southwark residents seeking employment. It also delivers a number of employment related services

including:

- Client registrations for employment and training support delivered by the Southwark Works Network.
- 8 client workstations that enable independent job search activity, training, skills development using web/desktop based tools
- One-to-one client/caseworker meetings.
- Group training sessions for clients and staff from across the SW network.
- Recruitment and selection events.
- Information sessions on employment related topics such as benefits, childcare and training
- A library of literature to support residents into employment

38. In relocating the service to 376 Walworth Road, it retains the service for the area and makes it accessible to many parts of the borough due to its prime location on key bus routes. It will also be in close proximity to other complimentary services, such as Cambridge House, Advising Communities, Inspire at St Peters and London Mutual Credit Union.
39. The relocation will enable Southwark Works to deliver a modern, visually welcoming service that is in keeping with the Council's ambitions for services that are fit for the future.
40. The larger space will offer more meeting rooms, more desk space for members/staff and allow the delivery of additional 1:1 support for residents. There will also be improved IT facilities and broadband connectivity for clients and staff using the office.
41. Drawings for the proposed setup are not yet finalised however a description of the new space are as follows:

Ground Floor

- Reception desk and waiting area
- Minimum of 8 client work stations
- Staff works stations (number TBC)
- 1 large meeting room
- 1 small meeting room
- Staff kitchen
- 2 WCs, including disabled toilet
- Stairwell to the basement

Basement

- Meeting room
- Staff work stations (number TBC)
- Storage space

42. As the basement is only accessible by stairs, SW will ensure clients and staff with mobility needs always have access to facilities on the ground floor (Under the Equalities Act 2010).

43. The new SW service will adopt the new branding through shop front signage, and an interior look and feel that complements the branding.
44. The costs of refurbishment works to 376 Walworth Road are to be confirmed, but will be met within existing budgets. There will be a separate report detailing this option/costs.
45. Close the Blue Anchor Library appointment Service, which operates four days a week and the Dulwich community shop which operates one day a week in December 2018, retaining the Peckham service point as a customer self-service offer with interview facilities for vulnerable customers. The Peckham service point would be staffed by 10 CSOs who will assist customers with complex enquiries on an appointment only basis. These staff would also floor walk and assist with customer self service access.
46. The Peckham service point location would be redesigned as part of the larger library, in order to facilitate the move to a more self service based offer. A proposed design for the new layout along with costs is attached as Appendix 1 and Appendix 2. It shows a more modern approach that will encourage customers to complete transactions independently.
47. The Peckham redesign would offer ten self service terminals with telephones plus a further four telephones available to support those who have difficulties in using our on-line services. Three desks will be located on the ground floor along with a reception desk to assist our vulnerable customers and those unable to access our online bookings systems. The upper floor will be used for other council services, including Education, Rightfully Yours, rent officers and libraries staff. Appendix 1 staffed other additional departmental staff.
48. Under this recommendation the Peckham service point would be the main customer service hub in the borough. This single location is no more than a bus ride away from any part of the borough. The CSOs based here would predominantly support customer self service, conduct appointments with customers with complex issues and/or with those who are vulnerable.
49. This recommendation proposes that the mobile office will continue to be utilised fully, attending different estates around the borough offering support to those who cannot attend Peckham, those who do not have access to on-line services, those who are vulnerable and hard to reach customers. It is proposed that the mobile office continues to cover Dulwich each Monday AM with an additional day if required once the community shop in Dulwich is closed. It is also in demand by other services including, Asset Management, Revenues and Benefits and the NHS. The mobile office will be supported by 3 officers, one of whom would be the driver.
50. The main focus of the mobile office would be document submissions by appointment but appointments would also be available to deal with more complex issues. Appointments for the Peckham service and the Mobile Office would be bookable via the online portal and at the main Peckham service point hub.
51. The Aylesbury office will remain within the Service Point function while we continue assisting customers with their enquiries, so honouring the council's commitment to maintain a customer services presence on the Aylesbury whilst regeneration is taking place. This will offer appointments to all customers who

need support with submitting documents and resolving complex issues within the regeneration scheme. This service will be supported by 2 officers.

52. In addition, assisted self service points would be located in all libraries. The library service currently deliver digital taster sessions for customers who require essential and basic IT skills and knowledge. For example using a keyboard and mouse and creating email accounts etc. In addition, it has been agreed that the library service will now include a module to assist individuals in accessing services and information via MySouthwark. The Service Point management team will meet with colleagues in library services to train library staff to roll out the digital support to customers.
53. Southwark has a network of 12 libraries with excellent geographical coverage from Borough High Street in the North to Kingswood House in the South. There is a range of opening hours with 4 libraries open on Sundays ensuring seven day access to services.
54. All libraries provide free access to the internet through a network of fixed computers at each library and the availability of Wi-Fi. The service contributes to the council priorities and Fairer Future promises to improve digital access to services and “Digital by Default” by providing basic ICT training session for the public. In 2016-17 5,174 ICT training sessions were run in libraries.
55. In addition to the basic introduction session, library staff also assists residents with more specific online tasks such as applying for freedom passes.
56. It is a natural extension of this provision for libraries to support residents to access council services online by assisting them in registering for “My Southwark” and helping them with basic enquiries about the range of services available.
57. The future state customer access model as detailed in Appendix 3 is also described below.
58. Customer Access from Home: customers who are confident using digital technology can access services and information online by visiting www.Southwark.gov.uk. It is essential for customers to sign up for a MySouthwark account as some services are only available on-line through their MySouthwark account.
59. Library Assisted Self Service (simple queries) – libraries staff will assist customers to use scanners to send documents to relevant services. Library staff will not be equipped to assist customers with complex enquires. Libraries staff will advise customers who have a complex enquiry to contact the call centre who will resolve the enquiry with the customer or encourage the customer to use online services at home or visit the Service Point Hubs (Peckham, Aylesbury, and Mobile Office).
60. Contact Centre Assistance, Revenues and Benefits, Housing. Customers can call the Contact Centre to obtain advice and information regarding the status of a claim or enquiry. If the enquiry is deemed to be of a complex nature the customer will be advised that an appointment would need to be booked at one of the Service Point Hubs. The Contact Centre will however be actively promoting customers to upload information online in the first instance.

61. Service Point - Self Service in-department Assistance Complex. Staff within the Service Point Hubs will be actively floor walking and promoting self service within its locations. Staff will actively encourage and assist customers in creating a MySouthwark account, describing the benefits of having an account. Floor walkers will be able to assist with routine and complex enquiries and book appointments for interviews handling more detailed complex enquiries.
62. Service Point Appointment - Complex. Customers will only be given an appointment for a complex enquiry providing they meet specified qualifying criteria. Interviews will only be given to those customers who are considered vulnerable or if the issue is deemed to be of a very complex nature e.g. benefit overpayment or an entitlement issue.
63. This recommendation supports the Customer Access Strategy which seeks to ensure that all customers can easily access information and support in accessing service and have their individual needs considered.
64. The proposed sites and staffing levels under this recommendation, operating from Monday to Friday between 9am and 5pm are as follows:

Role	Staff	Employment Cost
Operational Managers	2 SPM	£106,864
Peckham service point	10 CSOs	£350,270
Mobile Office	3 CSOs	£105,081
Aylesbury sub-office	2 CSOs	£70,054
Total	17 FTE	£632,269

65. The savings achieved under this model, incorporating building costs for the Walworth service point and a decrease of 13 FTE CSOs and 2 FTE SCSO would be £546,000. This figure is explained under the Financial Implications section.
66. The refurbishment of Peckham Service Point has been estimated to take four weeks. The refurbishment should commence in September 2018. Following the reorganisation of staff, the remaining officers based at Peckham Service Point will be relocated to the Walworth Road Service Point on an interim basis before Walworth Road is closed in October 2018.

Policy implications

67. None known.

Community / equalities impact statement

68. This impact assessment considers how these proposals might affect different communities in Southwark and any implications for equality and diversity. It also considers what impacts there might be on staff.
69. Developments in technology and the emergence of online platforms over the last few years have facilitated a reduction in footfall for the council of more than 54% since 2013.
70. It is important to recognise that Southwark has elderly and vulnerable residents who may not be confident or able to access services online. These proposals recognise the council's need to consolidate its services to meet the ever more

challenging financial climate while maintaining the ability to assist our more vulnerable customers.

71. This recommendation would provide the best support for elderly and vulnerable residents who don't use on-line services. Peckham is a central point in the borough with good transport links. It is also home to many of our most vulnerable residents.
72. Changes in service provision style will have implications for staff. This would mean a reduction in staff numbers. It would potentially also mean travel adjustments, changes to work patterns and more lone working.

Resource implications

73. In light of increasingly constrained budgets, providing key services alongside each other, for example non-library services in libraries would support the council's commitment to not close any of our borough's libraries.
74. Co-locating services helps the council to make best use of the resources available.

Legal implications

75. Refer to the advice of the Director of Law and Democracy.

Financial implications

76. The table below shows the likely costs and future savings of the proposals.

	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Operational Budgets			
Staffing	1,157,217	788,768	632,269
Building/Other	179,540	158,764	158,764
	1,336,757	947,532	791,033
One Off Costs of Proposal			
Refurbishment of Peckham MSSP	128,000		
Maximum estimated redundancy cost	250,000		
	378,000		
Future Savings			
Walworth Road Closure		(389,225)	
Phasing of Peckham Reconfiguration			(156,499)
		(389,225)	(156,499)
Total		(389,225)	(156,499)
Split of Savings Between Funds			
HRA		(268,565)	(107,984)
General Fund		(120,660)	(48,515)
			(376,550)
			(169,174)
			(545,724)

77. The refurbishment cost of the Peckham service point, scheduled for September,

will be funded from the part year closure of Walworth. The possibility that the nature of the works could meet the definition of a capital project is being considered. The noted redundancy cost is the maximum potential figure and management will seek to offer redeployment opportunities for affected staff to reduce the final cost and retain valuable customer service skills.

78. Savings of £546,000 will be delivered over the next two financial years as the new service configuration is adopted and becomes fully operational. As service points handle both housing and non-housing related queries the saving is split between the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and general fund.

Consultation

79. A consultation exercise will be conducted with staff, with the involvement of HR and trade unions. This will commence in June 2018 for the proposed changes and all considerations from staff considered in view to taking effect from October 2018
80. The process will be managed in line with the Council's Reorganisation, Redundancy and Redeployment procedure. Management will look at vacancies within the unit to mitigate against loss of employment.
81. Full and meaningful consultation with staff and Trade Unions will be undertaken. Ongoing consultation will be in place from 1 June 2018
82. It is intended that there will be a smooth transition leading to the introduction of the revised working arrangements which will not adversely impact on service delivery. We intend to conclude the restructure after consultation and consideration of the staff and members by October 2018
83. Full communication plan will be sorted with the assist of our communications team.
84. Full communication and consultation to be completed with Councillors, members and Tenants Council.
85. Any potential redundancy costs will be met within existing council resources.
86. Tenant and Resident Associations will be consulted on the proposals.
87. Ward councillors will be consulted and kept informed regarding plans for the affected areas. Particularly where services planned to be terminated.

SUPPLEMENTARY ADVICE FROM OTHER OFFICERS

Director of Law and Democracy

88. The report seeks the agreement of the Cabinet Member for Housing Management and Modernisation to changes to various customer service access points in the borough (paragraphs 1-4) and the establishment of a shared customer service model in conjunction with Library Services (paragraph 5).
89. This is a decision that the Cabinet Member for Housing Management and Modernisation is empowered to take by part 3D of the council's Constitution.
90. Paragraph 34 of the report advises that a number of options for the future

delivery of “face to face” customer services have been considered, and the report goes on to provide a detailed outline of the proposals that the Cabinet Member is recommended to take. It is a principle of sound decision-making that a decision-maker gives due regard to *all* the possible options that have been under consideration, so that a decision informed by all relevant considerations can be taken.

91. Paragraphs 82 and 83 refer to a proposal to devise a communications plan and undertake consultation with councilors and others. In the absence of any specific requirement to consult before taking action, the common law duty of fairness (adherence to which being another principle of sound decision-making) may still nonetheless require a local authority to undertake consultation on a proposal. What “fairness” requires by way of consultation will depend on the circumstances of each case: the demands of fairness are likely to be higher where the users of a service are affected by a proposal to alter those services; fairness may also require that a consultation put forward a number of options for consideration. In order to ensure any consultation is fair, the following fundamental principles of sound consultation should be followed: consultation should happen when the proposals are still at a formative stage; sufficient information should be given to enable the proposal to be intelligently considered; adequate time for responses should be given; and decision makers must conscientiously take into account responses to a consultation before finalizing any proposal (see the Supreme Court decision in *R (Moseley) v Haringey London Borough Council* (2014)).
92. The report at paragraphs 68-72 makes reference to an assessment of the impact that these proposals might have on different communities in Southwark and on staff, and the implications for equality and diversity. It also considers what impacts there might be on staff. The Cabinet Member is reminded that the council, in the exercise of all its functions, must have due regard (section 149 Equality Act 2010) to the need to (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation or other prohibited conduct, (b) to advance equality of opportunity and (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it. An assessment of the likely impact of the exercise of any function is one means by which the council can demonstrate that it has had regard to the objectives in section 149, and the results of such an assessment should be considered by the cabinet member when taking a decision.

Strategic Director of Finance and Governance (FIN1061 - JB)

93. The report sets out the rationale for closing the Walworth Road Service Point and refurbishing the Peckham Service Point to be re-branded as a customer Self Service Point. Paragraph 9 notes the declining footfall at the Service Points over recent years as more customers choose to access services online.
94. The table at paragraph 76 contains details of the relevant service budgets, cost estimates and savings delivered over the next two financial years split between the HRA and general fund. Paragraph 77 notes the potential for the refurbishment project to be a capital scheme and this should be further explored to ensure the investment is appropriately funded.
95. The table contains an upper estimate of potential redundancy costs alongside management’s commitment to mitigate the final figure through redeployment opportunities. The proposal could cause eligible staff to opt for early retirement and the capital cost would become a service pressure. Predicting retirement costs is problematic however management should recognise any such costs as

early as they arise.

96. The noted total savings figure of £546,000 would be captured in the budget development processes across HRA and general fund for 2019-20 and 2020-21.
97. Paragraph 44 notes that the decision to relocate Southwark Works to 376 Walworth Road and the associated relocation and operational costs will be the subject of a separate report and not covered within this decision.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
n/a		

APPENDICES

No.	Title
Appendix 1	PSP floorplan
Appendix 2	PSP re-design costings
Appendix 3	Service Pyramid

AUDIT TRAIL

Lead Officer	Richard Selley, Director of Customer Experience	
Report Author	Michelle Peake, Group Services Manager, Customer Resolutions	
Version	Final	
Dated	21 June 2018	
Key Decision?	Yes	
CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER		
Officer Title	Comments Sought	Comments Included
Director of Law and Democracy	Yes	Yes
Strategic Director of Finance and Governance	Yes	Yes
Cabinet Member	Yes	Yes
Date final report sent to Constitutional Team	19 July 2018	