



# **Customer Services and Libraries Redesigning Services**

**Formal Consultation Document  
Wednesday, 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2013**

## Introduction

This paper sets out the proposed organisational changes within Customer Services and Libraries outlining the objectives for the service redesign and the reason for the proposed changes.

Over the past two years Herefordshire Council has been working towards structuring the organisation appropriately to respond to the requirements of the Comprehensive Spending Review. As a result there has been a decrease in the services operated by the local authority and the number of people it employs.

The financial constraints on the Council will continue as the local authority faces significant reductions in central government funding. By 2015 the Council's Government grant will be an estimated 33% lower than it was in 2011. For 2013/14 the local authority needs to deliver savings of around £12.9 million and in the next two years a further £23.1 million.

The Council also need to consider redesign of services based on:

- Realigning its resources to cater for people who need services the most, specifically recognising the changing demographics as the population lives longer and ensuring the safeguarding of the county's children.
- Changing trends and expectations of citizens in how they access services and interact with the council.
- Improving the service whilst facing budget pressures.

## Background to the Changes

On 19<sup>th</sup> September 2013 Herefordshire Council's Cabinet was presented options on the future of Customer Services and Libraries. The recommendation of Option 2 was agreed in providing core services with reduced opening hours balanced with the opportunity to have additional services and functions on sites from within other public services, voluntary, private and education sectors. This is a preliminary decision that is likely to be revised to Cabinet in light of budget savings.

The cabinet report papers are available from:

<http://councillors.herefordshire.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=251&MId=4725&Ver=4>.

This option was recommended based on considering a range of consultation and data:

- Staff and stakeholder focus groups

- Impact Study findings
- Trend data and user information
- Research generated for the impact study (submitted with the cabinet papers)
- Financial considerations.

## **Principles of the Changes**

Based on the information contained within the cabinet report the key principles of the redesign reflects the following points:

- Ultimately the face to face service will be designed around people who need them most and currently have no option but to visit sites for services.
- Alternative routes are developed to enable customers access to services at reduced cost to the local authority, including a continuous programme of electronic service delivery.
- To continue with the journey of integrating customer services and libraries as the front facing delivery of local authority services and partner services.
- That the local authority provision should not duplicate what is already available.
- Continuously improve the interface between the front and back office functions, based on the principle of enabling the customer to receive the quickest response direct from people with the skills and knowledge. This will involve cross authority changes in approach and practices to ensure customer queries are dealt with one time and first time.
- To design services and sites that considers local circumstances, and involve communities in their operation and design.
- For centres to extend their role as community hubs, making spaces available for community use and functions provided by other organisations.
- To reflect the priority area identified in the impact assessment (see section of Equality Needs and Impact Assessment).

## **Impact on Services**

These principles have an impact on services in that:

- There will be a reduction in the opening hours with corresponding staffing reductions.
- For officers to have multi-skills across libraries, customer services and the contact centre.
- Provide a comprehensive web presence and opportunity for digital access of services.

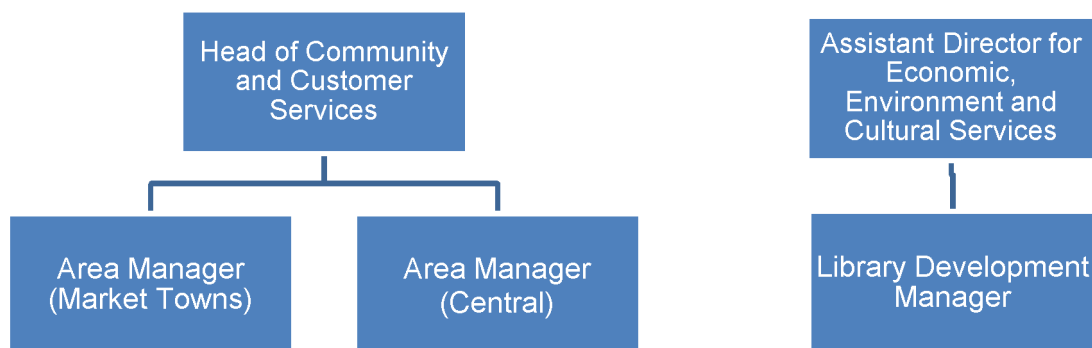
- Redesign of centres to address priority areas and community / third party “top-up” use.
- Establishment of three community libraries at Weobley, Colwall, Leintwardine which means withdrawal of front counter staff (unless paid for by the local community), with back office support from Libraries.
- Where relevant and possible services/functions are no longer operated by Customer Services and Libraries based on services that are high cost and low impact being withdrawn; where services are not adding value particularly to specialist requirements; where functions are already being provided elsewhere; or a different organisation would be better placed to run services.

## Proposed Changes

### Customer Services and Libraries

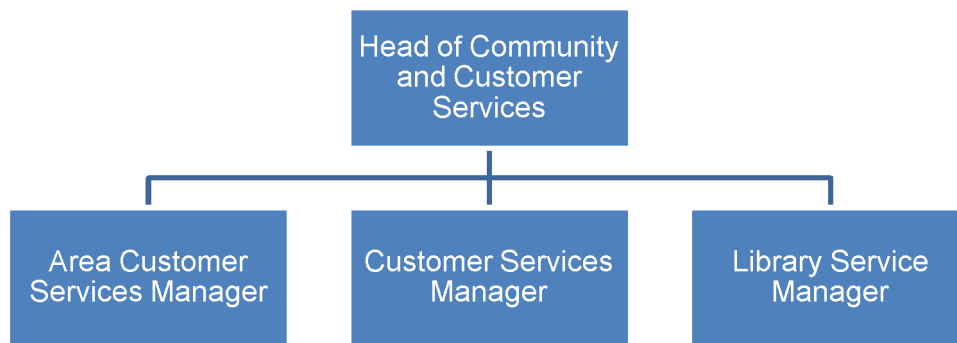
Already in process is the bringing together of Customer Services and Libraries divisions into one service (as from 1<sup>st</sup> October 2013). This will see an alignment of budgets and management structures.

**Current Structure** (only relevant posts shown)\*:



\*Note: only “relevant posts shown” means the structure lists post relating to the redesign of Customer Services and Libraries e.g. a head of service may oversee other services but not impacting on the redesign of service.

**Proposed Structure** (only relevant posts shown):



These future service manager roles will cover the following functions:

- **Area Customer Services Manager** - Management of the market towns customer services centres / libraries (Ledbury, Ross on Wye, Leominster, Kington, Bromyard).
- **Customer Services Manager** - Management of the combined customer contact centre and front office at Franklin House.
- **Library Service Manager** – management of core Library Service, Hereford Library, Belmont Library.

The managers will also have responsibility for service improvement, budget monitoring setting, strategic planning for the services as well as line management functions.

The management structure will reflect three services of:

- Area Customer Services
- Central Customer Services
- Libraries

The following information will outline the functions of each service and the proposed changes.

## Area Customer Service

This service will be responsible for the operation of the market town centres. The remaining site to be integrated is Ledbury which is likely to be next Summer / Autumn 2014.

The current Branch Supervisors will become Duty Supervisors reflecting their current role of being the senior customer service officer on site and on duty. Due to the reductions of posts

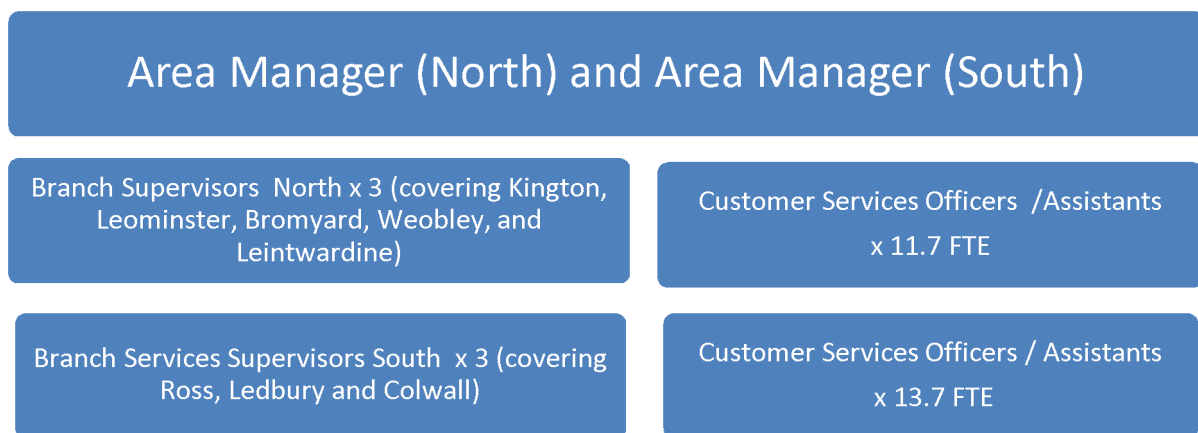
there will be times when a duty supervisor is not working on site. The skills of team members in this service would cover the operation of both library and customer service functions.

The division will be split between north and south for management arrangements.

As the market town centres develop their community function and operation there will be increased liaison with third party organisations, specifically the role of the Duty Supervisors to ensure community groups are supported to use the venues.

Leintwardine, Colwall and Weobley are proposed to become community run libraries.

### Current Structure



### Future Proposed Structure



### Central Customer Service

The functions of customer contact and front desk at Franklin House will be brought closer together with staff expected to work across the phone and face-to-face functions. This is to allow flexibility to address service demand whilst recognising that skills sets may be different

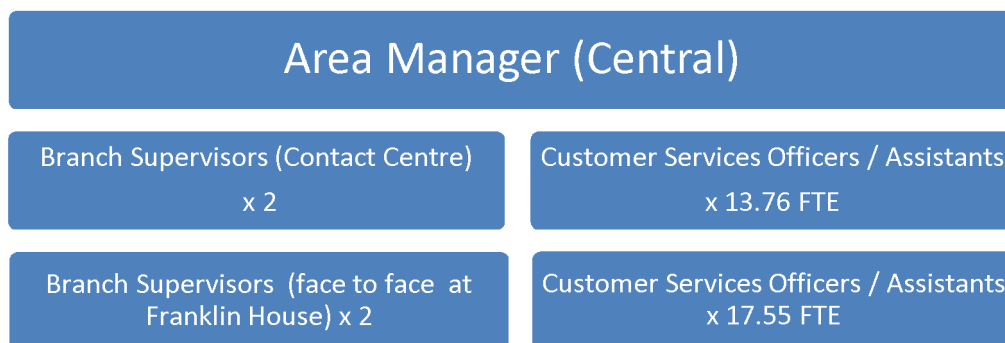
based on phone or face to face interaction. This change will be reflected in a revised, single job description.

The face to face opening times will see a reduction of hours of 20%, with staff time reassigned to address pressure points in the service regarding phones and email, and further opportunity of electronic delivery. All emails will be dealt with at Franklin House and not distributed to market town sites.

The equivalent of one FTE will be transferred within Directorate to Environmental Health and Trading Standards service to answer and resolve special service queries.

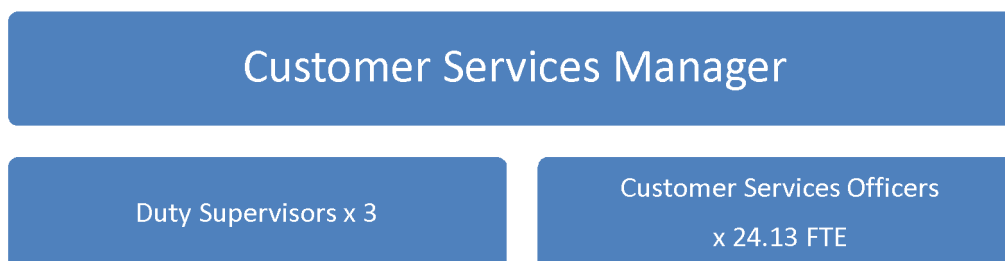
Seconded posts for dealing with benefits enquiries by phone will be placed with their host organisation to be part of the specialist team.

**Current Structure** (excluding Hereford / Belmont Library which is reflected in the Libraries section):



**Revised Proposed Structure** (only relevant posts shown):

Customer Services element -



Environmental Health and Trading Standards element -

Team Leader (Business Development and Support)

Business Support Officer x 1 FTE

## Libraries

The Libraries will continue to provide core activities to support the management of library stock, the home delivery service, events, book clubs and the general development of the service. The service will need to reallocate resources to address the target budget savings and give additional support to the three community libraries at Weobley, Colwall and Leintwardine.

Under the management of the Library Service Manager will be the management of Hereford and Belmont Libraries. This recognises Hereford as the central library for the county with much higher usage and a focal point for the Libraries Service.

From April 2014 the Schools Library Service will be outsourced to operate independent of the service and therefore not show on future structures.

**Current Structure** (only relevant posts shown):

Customer Service element -

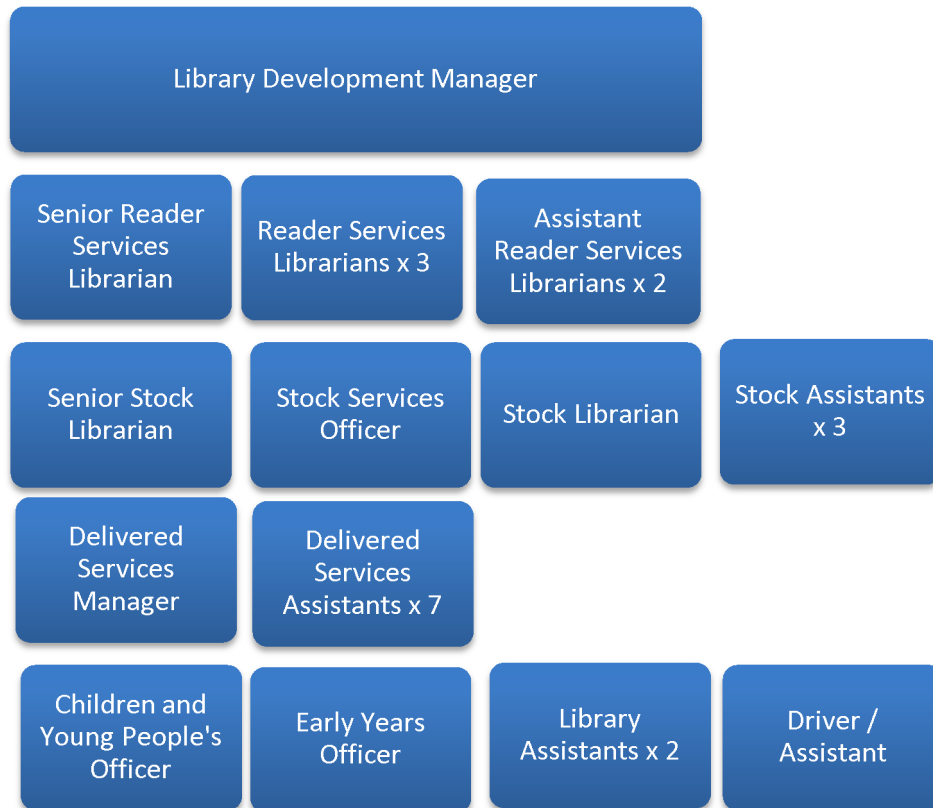
Area Manager (Central)

Supervisors x 2 (Hereford  
and Belmont)

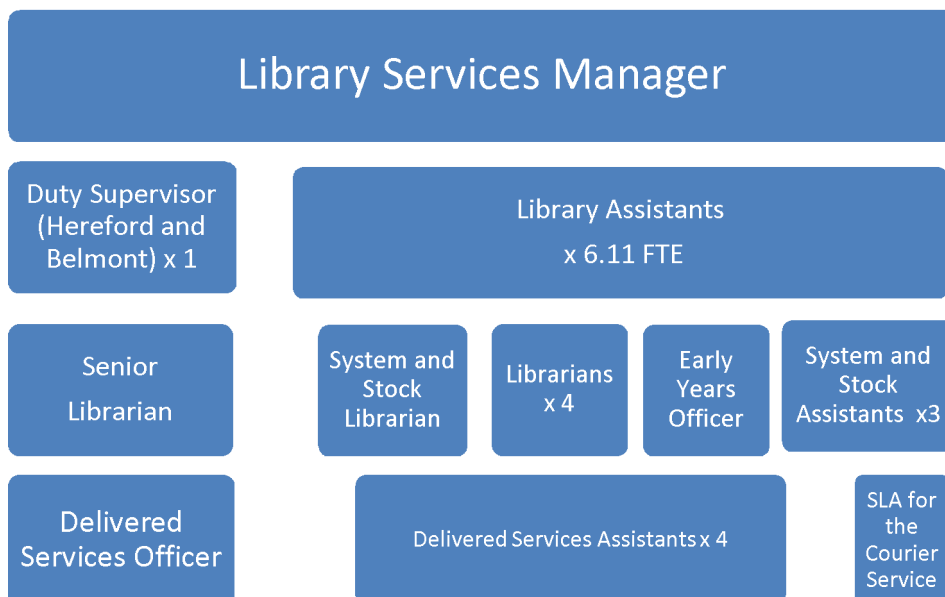
Customer Services  
Assistants x 6.11 FTE



### Libraries element -



### Future Proposed Structure:



## Scope of consultation

It is important to consider the impact of the proposed changes on service areas as well as those staff whose roles are significantly impacted. The scope of this consultation is intended to extend to the following key stakeholders:

**Internal** - Officers within Customer Services, Library Service, Environmental Health and Trading Standards, Licencing.

**External** – Hoople: Revenues and Benefits Services; Housing Solutions Partnership.

Stakeholders are invited to participate in this consultation commenting on the proposals from their perspective specifically outlining concerns they have with the structure and suggesting alternative options.

For information consultation will be sent to Cabinet Member leads and each Directorate.

## Equality Impact Assessment

A full Equality Impact and Needs Assessment was conducted to compliment the Cabinet report assessing each of the options. The research concluded in the following priorities for service by customers:

### Age – Children

- The evidence suggests that young children benefit from a library service in terms of their reading and education attainment.
- Families in crisis affecting children's prospects and development.

### Age – Older

- Impact study found high use of service by 65+.
- Less likely to use the internet to access service.
- At risk of isolation.

### Disability

- Less likely to use the internet.
- Isolation and mobility challenges.
- Use of services such as talking books.
- Multiple disabilities need to be considered.

### Poverty

- Less likely to afford computer and access to the internet.
- Higher use of public access PCs.

- Less funds available to spend on travel.
- Combined factor of being in crisis.

#### Rural

- Access to services locally.
- Reduced options for public transport.
- Combined factor with poverty, disability and age to create isolation.

## Scope and potential impact

As required by S.188(4) of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992, below is the written information requires disclosure.

Number and Category of colleagues who may be dismissed by reason of redundancy from Customer Services and Libraries.

	Current as of 1.4.13		Proposed		Staff left/leaving/ vacant positions		Proposed reduction	Status
Role	FTE	Head- count	FTE	Head- count	FTE	Head- count	FTE	FTE
Customer Services officers / (assistants)	56.71	93	40.8	70	12.43	19	3.48	Pooled at risk
Business Support - EHTS	0	0	1	1	Na	Na	+1	Transferred from pooled at risk
(Branch) / Duty Supervisors	12	12	8	8	1	1	3	Pooled at risk
Hereford / Belmont Library Assistants	6.11	7	6.11	7	0	0	0	Assign to role
Library Managers	4	4	2	2	2	2	0	Assign to role
Library officers / Assistants	12.77	16	10.23	13	2.54	3	0	Assign to role
Service managers	4	4	3	3	1	1	0	Assign to role
Totals	95.59	136	71.14	104	18.97	26	5.48	

*Note: FTE = full time equivalent; (\*) relates to previous now changed title.*

## Considerations

**Left / leaving / vacant position** – a column has been included showing the number of staff who have left the service or in the process of leaving. As a result of likely changes in service pending Cabinet decision there has been a hold in recruiting to vacant posts – these posts can be taken into consideration as a reduction of the establishment. This has reduced the impact of proposed redundancies.

**Proposed head count** – the proposed head count is likely to change taking into consideration flexible / part-time working options.

**Discrepancies in pay** – within Customer Services there is an outstanding discrepancy in pay between Customer Services Assistants and Officers at scales 4 and 5 respectively. As the service requirement and skill level has altered this discrepancy is no longer with relevant. Therefore relevant officers will be paid equally at Scale 5. This does not affect change of scale for Library Assistants at Hereford Library.

**Schools Library Service** – the figures for Schools Library Service are not included in the above table as the service is due to be outsourced at no cost from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2014.

## Methodology

The reduction in staff numbers will be achieved through:

- **Alignment to roles:** Where a single person meets the 55% criteria the person will be appointed to the role without a selection process.
- **Pool at risk:** Where there are more people that can demonstrate a 55% criteria match than the number of roles that are available then the selection process is to retain the strongest candidate from the pool for the retained posts. Employees unsuccessful from the selection process would then be at risk of redundancy.
- **Displacement:** An individual within their current role that cannot demonstrate a 55% match to any available role within the structure. In this situation, the person would be at risk of redundancy.

Please refer to the table above which outlines the status of posts.

Where a competitive selection process is required a competitive interview will take place. Considerations regarding live disciplinary warnings, performance and absence criteria may be built into the scoring mechanism. There will be a standard template to capture the outcomes

from each selection exercise. This would be discussed and developed in consultation with trade union representatives.

Duty Supervisors and Customer Services Officers will be asked to identify their 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> priority location at interview and every accommodation will be made to assign officers to their 1<sup>st</sup> choice. Those interested in the Business Support Officer post within Environmental Health and Trading Standards to outline this as their 1<sup>st</sup> choice (a second choice will still be available).

Where appropriate, people can come forward voluntarily to leave under the council's exit policy before commencing any selection processes. Applications would be invited from anyone who was pooled at risk in order to avoid the need to make any compulsory redundancies. Applications will also be accommodated from aligned employees if it was possible to back-fill the role with an at-risk employee.

## **Formal Consultation Process**

The formal consultation period will run from 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2013 to 25<sup>th</sup> November 2013. During this period we will be consulting with staff, unions and key stakeholders on the proposed structure changes.

During the formal consultation stage staff will be encouraged to engage with the process. This is an opportunity for staff and representatives to gain clarity regarding the proposals, provide feedback and ask any questions on the proposals. The union representative (David Stevens) for this redesign of service will be invited to meet with lead officers to track progress of the process and feedback concerns of its members. The consultation process will actively explore with staff and recognised unions ways to mitigate against any compulsory redundancies. This will include the following options:

- Staff turnover
- Recruitment freeze
- Reducing agency / short-term casual contracts
- Opportunities for flexible / part time working
- Early retirement
- People voluntarily coming forward to leave under the council's exit policy

## Proposed Consultation Timetable

Week	Dates	Location	Attendees	Activity
1	1.10.13	Plough Lane	TU reps	Union Briefing
1	2.10.13	Various locations	All staff	Consultation paper distributed to all affected staff to brief them on the proposals and launch formal consultation.
1	3.10.13 and 4.10.13	Various locations	All staff	Staff invited to meeting of lead officers for the redesign of service at each of the locations.
2	Week of 7.10.13	Various locations	Individual staff member	Individual consultation meeting conducted by line managers to ensure understanding of proposal, timetable and potential impact on the individual.
3	18.10.13	Plough Lane	TU reps	Consultation meeting to review feedback and discuss the proposal with a view to seeking agreement.
4	21.10.13	-	All staff	Deadline date for consultation feedback.
4	23.10.13		TU reps	Second collective consultation meeting to reach agreement if possible on proposals.
5	1.11.18		All staff	Individual or team meetings to communicate what has been decided as part of the collective consultation phase.
6, 7, 8	8.11.13 to 22.11.18	Various locations	Individual staff member	Individual 1:1s to be conducted by line managers as required to support any alignment or competitive selection activity.
8	25.11.13	-	All staff	Formal consultation ends and any staff who have been made redundant are dismissed / given notice period.

These dates may be subject to change towards the end of the process with effected staff notified of any changes.

## Feedback on proposals

All feedback employees have regarding the proposals should be directed to their line manager or trade union representative to be considered during the meetings scheduled throughout the consultation period.

## Proposed method of calculating redundancy payments

For redundancy calculation purposes, we propose to use the statutory redundancy calculation including the limit on weeks pay, which is currently £450 (with effect from 1 April 2013) x local multiplier of 1.5. This calculation will be used when staff are at risk of redundancy and will apply to any redundancies arising from this proposal, including when people have come forward voluntarily.

## Agency Workers

The number of agency workers working temporarily for and under Herefordshire Council's supervision and direction, the parts of the business in which they work and the type of work that they perform is no applicable as the service no longer commissions agency workers.

## Transition Support

The 'transitions: supported exit' programme has been put in place to help colleagues through this difficult time and has two levels of support:

- 1) General support which can be accessed by all employees at any time, in order to be prepared for possible changes ahead, including seminars, online tools, counselling and opportunities to meet potential employers.
- 2) Additional support which can be accessed by those who have been formally notified in writing that they are potentially 'at risk' of redundancy. This includes more intensive support such as CV and interview skills development, advice on self-employment and starting your own business and funded retraining opportunities (subject to eligibility). Those who are 'at risk' will also benefit from a streamlined application process, making it simpler to apply for internal vacancies.

In the first instance, employees should discuss options with their manager. To find out more, please visit the ['transitions: supported exit' programme page](#) on the intranet.

## Redeployment

There is a new redeployment process which will capture all employees at risk of redundancy and actively promote the current vacancies. It is the individual employee's responsibility to proactively apply to any current vacancies available and where the essential criteria for the role is met, they will be shortlisted for interview. The application process has been simplified for people at risk of redundancy so that people have the opportunity to describe all their skills and experience on a simple two page registration form and then a simple one page expression of interest that can be tailored for each application. This is to enable people to have the best chance at applying for roles that may be outside the scope of their current role, that are relevant to previous experience, competencies and potential.

## Supporting Documentation

Please find attached:

- relevant job description relating to your current role
- Skills Redeployment form
- Expressions of interest form
- Link to [Transitions – supported exit](#)

This consultation has been prepared and will be managed by: Natalia Silver, Head of Community and Customer Services – [nsilver@herefordshire.gov.uk](mailto:nsilver@herefordshire.gov.uk). Tel: 01432 260732.

Approved by: Geoff Hughes, Director for Economy, Communities and Corporate

Date: 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2013