

Customer Services and Libraries Redesign of Service

Frequently Asked Questions

Q.	Can you confirm when I need to make my comments, is it at the end of the process?
A.	<p>We need to have your comments on the proposals by the 21st October so then we can finalise the design of the service. On the basis of that design we will then start the process of appointing staff to posts or redundancies. The time table as set out in the consultation document (page 14) highlights the final completion of the redesign for the 25th November.</p> <p>You can send your comments to Natalia Silver via email. In the subject heading can you please label “staff consultation – customer services and libraries”. Thank you to all those who have already commented on the proposals.</p>
Q.	It is not clear when I express my interest in any of the roles and what forms I use?
A.	<p>Once we have the comments back from the consultation we can start to plan the redesign of the services and what interviews need to take place. We would need the expression of interest forms submitted by the 23rd October with 1st and 2nd choice areas, interest in the EHTS post and any reduction in hours (see below). We will send round all the required paper work by 16th October and try to keep the requirements to a minimum.</p>
Q.	How and when would any notice of redundancy be served?
A.	<p>The proposals will be considered based on comments made by staff and stakeholders. The final redesign aims to be issued on the 1st November. At that point people will be invited for interview. Once all those interviews are complete staff will be offered a post or be made redundant. Those staff who are unfortunately facing redundancy will then be served their notice (from the 25th November). That notice period will depend on your length of service, but a minimum of a month from the day you receive your dismissal letter.</p>
Q.	Will we get to a point where we do not need to be interviewed?
A.	<p>Staff are pooled at risk where there are more people for posts - this is the case for Customer Services Officers and Duty Supervisors. If people decide to reduce their hours, are appointed to another post or take one of the options to leave, it will be more likely that we can assign people to roles and therefore no need to interview.</p>
Q.	Could we all collectively reduce our hours to make up the shortfall caused by the reduction in hours?
A.	<p>That would be possible, but we would need everyone to agree to equal reduction in hours. On some of the initial visits to the sites there was split opinion when this option was raised.</p> <p>If you do wish to reduce your hours it would be helpful to let us know by the 23rd October – see above.</p>
Q.	On what basis will redundancy payments be calculated?
A.	<p>Please see attached link to Gov.uk website to calculate your entitlement. You will also need to times the statutory amount by the local Herefordshire Council multiplier of 1.5 to reach your</p>

	<p>estimated total payment.</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/calculate-your-redundancy-pay</p>
Q.	What transitional support is available for people at risk?
A.	<p>This is set out in the following link to the Intranet: Further dates are being arranged subject to demand. http://intranet/intranet/content/63615.asp</p>
Q.	If I am made redundant at what point can I secure access to my local government pension?
A.	<p>This is a complex area and you are best advised to speak directly with the Pensions Administrators at Worcestershire County Council. However as a general guide attached is a link to Worcestershire County Council's website:</p> <p>http://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/cms/jobs-and-careers/pensions/retirement.aspx</p> <p>Phone numbers and contact details can be found by clicking on Contact Information in the toolbar on the left-hand side of this web-link.</p> <p>This is set out in the following link to the Intranet:</p> <p>http://intranet/intranet/content/63615.asp</p>
Q.	I couldn't see there was a voluntary redundancy option? What do I do if I want that option?
A.	<p>Yes you can apply for voluntary redundancy. The payment for voluntary redundancy and compulsory redundancy is the same.</p> <p>It would be helpful to let us know if this is your intention so it will reduce the impact on having to interview staff by the 21st October including any intention to reduce hours.</p>
Q.	I want to take voluntary redundancy now, if I get a job before my notice period is finished can I still access my redundancy pay?
A.	<p>If this is for an external organisation that is not covered by the Modification Order then you may still be entitled to redundancy. Please discuss this with your line manager in the first instance. If this post is within Herefordshire Council in effect you would not be redundant as continuous service would apply and therefore you would not be entitled to redundancy pay.</p> <p>Until the staff consultation process, interviews and final decisions are made it is not known whether you will actually be at risk of redundancy. Therefore, it would be deemed to be a resignation if you hand in your notice before the consultation period, internal interviews, final decisions and communications are made to you.</p>
Q.	What happens if I am offered a job (for example the EHTS one or a job on the risk register) and decide not to take it, can I still be considered for the Customer Services officers jobs, and is there a risk of losing my redundancy?
A.	<p>As above, people are not formally at risk until a dismissal meeting has taken place and a confirmation letter is received. This is dependent on the outcome to a pooled at risk post (Customer Services Officer or Duty Supervisor). Therefore, if you go for any posts before receiving your formal at risk letter and decide not to take it you will still be able to be considered for a Customer Services Officer or Duty Supervisor. If you are not successful with one of these posts you will be formally placed at risk with the potential for entitlement to redundancy – however if you then turn down a suitable alternative post you may forfeit your right to redundancy.</p>

Q.	I have a number of specific queries regarding my individual circumstances. Who do I contact?
A.	Caroline McToal is the HR Business Partner in Hoople HR and is supported by Keri Meredith and Lara Pye as HR Advisors.
Q.	What are the MOC15 & MOC16 forms for? Do I need to do anything with them now?
A.	<p>MOC15 is the skills redeployment form. This form is to document your key skills/experience (both your current role and past roles), and will be used by recruiting managers should you show an interest in a vacancy.</p> <p>You will receive emails relating to internal job vacancies – from these emails if you identify a job vacancy you wish to be considered for you to then fill out the MOC16 form to apply for the vacant position.</p> <p>Internal job vacancies are also placed on the intranet.</p>
Q.	What reasonable adjustments will be made to accommodate staff with disabilities for the interview?
A.	Yes, the council has a duty to make reasonable adjustment and would want to do that anyway as part of a fair process. However, it would be useful to tell us what you need to ensure requirements are not missed and reasonable adjustments can be made. It would be helpful that any needs are made clear by 23rd October .
Q.	How would the interviews be handled to ensure they are fair and equitable when the staff might not have the range of skills and experience in the person specification?
A.	<p>In the first instances all people at risk will be interviewed to ensure the process is fair. These will be conducted by Roger Horton and Nikki White, and possibly one other. We will use your redeployment form and expression of interest form as an application form.</p> <p>This is obviously a resource committed to conducting these interviews.</p> <p>We will also ask you to express your first and second choices of location, but also your primary area of work and duties (this will be a short form to complete). If you are interested in the EHTS job please put this as your first choice. We have introduced listing primary areas of work as some people have commented that their current main function should be taken into consideration (this is expanded in a later answer). We would like you to submit this form by the 23rd October.</p> <p>We will take into consideration any training needs where people are required to extend their roles and responsibilities where relevant.</p>
Q.	Why does it take so long between the final proposals being released and the end of the consultation?
A.	Once the proposals are finalised we will invite people to interview (giving 5 working days notice) then conduct the interviews which considering the potential number will take place over a two week period.
Q.	Will there be a training budget for staff to gain skills?
A.	Considering the pressure on budgets we will be using internal resource to share skills.

Q.	I don't understand why there is a new post created for Environmental Health and Trading Standards when the contact centre takes the calls?
A.	<p>This in effect will be a transfer within the Directorate to Environmental Health and Trading Standards. An outcome of the work conducted as part of the Root and Branch review found that the Environmental Health and Trading Standards were best placed to take their "own" calls. Based on the volume of calls and consideration for digital by default this amounts to 1 FTE post.</p> <p>Also, seconded staff from Hoople dealing with Benefits will return to their host organisation to be part of a wider team dealing with benefits.</p>
Q.	Why are there proposed changes in the contact centre when we are already under pressure and increase in demand?
A.	<p>The services across the board are working under pressure considering the existing reduction in hours combined with continued customer demand. However, how our service and interaction with our customers will need to change considering the budget pressures. More customers will be expected to interface with the council via the web, with front facing services catering for people who need them most. Where functions can be delivered elsewhere they will do so to reduce pressure on staff (e.g. payments at the post office).</p>
Q.	As there is not the intention of reducing the work of the contact centre why are staff who do that work in a pool at risk with Customer Services Staff?
A.	<p>The officers who operate the contact centre have the same job description (pre and post the consultation) as the officers who operate face to face service. They are actually one team with expenditure coming from one budget, with some staff operating both the phones and face to face. Going forward there will be greater integration to create a responsive and flexible team who can operate both functions.</p> <p>However, it is recognised that some staff will have better skills on the phone than face to face, and vice versa. Taking the comments on-board officers will be able to indicate their primary area of work pre-interview to illustrate area of expertise, preference and any training requirements. It is hoped in the future that we will not have this level or scale of redesign and will be able to address changes in an area, site or function basis – that is why it will be important to outline your 1st choice location and primary areas of work.</p>
Q.	If we are to be uniformed with the library staff then surely we either all get pooled in together or not at all? Also why can't staff who conduct library duties elsewhere go for the Hereford Library Assistants jobs?
A.	<p>The Library Assistants in Hereford have a different job description and person specification with current staff meeting 55% of the role - the number of posts match the number of people already in those jobs which means they can be aligned to roles. In the market towns there is a single job description and person specification for the Customer Services officers (if previously aligned to the library function or not). This will be the direction for the market town sites to create a multi-skilled and flexible team.</p>

Q.	The jobs at Franklin are different than the Customer Services job in the market towns, e.g. Franklin do not run the library function, but this is not made clear in the job description?
A.	<p>There is one job description and person spec for Customer Services Officers recognising the level of responsibility and skills required. This recognises the need for a responsive and flexible workforce with the ability to work across the county when needed.</p> <p>However, a strong case has been made that Library functions should be included in job descriptions for market towns and that will be considered.</p>
Q.	What savings are needed for the individual departments? Also can this be broken down by area and why are not the location not meeting their own savings?
A.	<p>The savings are based on the reduction in hours agreed by Cabinet. The consultation paper outlines where there will be a reduction in staff by the areas (ref: current and future structures). However, the budget needs to be considered as a whole reflecting this is one service. Also, there are a number of anomalies where people might not be working in the best location for them or the service, and the redesign will aim to address those.</p>
Q	Will the staff reductions have to reflect the percentage in reduced hours agreed by Cabinet? Also, hours in some market towns have already reduced to staff shortages, will they reduce again in areas needing a 50% cut in services.
A.	<p>Yes the reduction in staffing will reflect the percentage sites will be open. Taken into consideration will be the reduction in hours that have already taken place. However, we are currently assessing a range of data to understand the best time of opening based on customer usage, demand, travel options, etc.</p>
Q.	I work full time but the centre is reducing its hours by 30%, does that mean I can no longer work my allotted hours?
A.	<p>We will try to accommodate people as much as possible. It might be the case that if people want to retain their hours they may need to work at different sites.</p>
Q.	What will be the hours of opening of Franklin House? Will they still be open on a Saturday?
A.	<p>The opening hours at Franklin House will reduce by 20% as outlined in the Cabinet report of the 19th September 2013. Data is currently being pooled together (for all sites) from the impact study, customer usage and bus timetables to understand the best opening times for the customer. It is important that there is as little impact on users of the services as possible whilst considering the outcome of the cabinet decision.</p> <p>If a case can be made for not opening Franklin on Saturdays then that can be considered. The case would have to demonstrate that displaced customers can access services elsewhere, especially if dealing with a crisis.</p>
Q.	Have Library staff received the same information as customer service staff?
A.	<p>Yes. The design of the services covers Customer Services and Libraries. As from the 1st October 2013 Customer Services and Libraries became one division. The aim is to address the current discrepancies in budgets between the two services that recognise the services are inter-dependent e.g. property for the sites was managed by libraries but staff costs covered by Customer Services.</p>

Q.	I don't understand the point regarding staff being upgraded from scale 4 to 5, especially when we are trying to save money?																																																					
A.	<p>There will no longer be any Customer Services Assistants at scale 4, with a single job description for Customer Services officers which has been job evaluated at scale 5. It is not fair in terms of equal pay that there should be a lower salary scale when we are expecting staff to conduct the same duties now and going forward. Most of the Customer Services Assistants working at scale 4 are at the top of the grade so we have calculated that the additional cost to create consistency will be £2,000.</p> <p>Staff previously on scale 4 will move to the bottom of scale 5 and as with everyone else move up the scale annually.</p> <p>Library Assistants will be established to conduct duties in Hereford at a retained scale 4 reflective of the Job Description and Person Specification.</p>																																																					
Q.	You state a figure regarding the number of vacancies that are in each area – how far back (in date terms) do those figures go, that they are based on?																																																					
A.	<p>The budget is based on the revenue budget allocated to the service in April 2013. At the time we were carrying some vacancies that had not been taken out of the budget considering a need for a wider redesign of services. Also, it was known the council was going to address its level of spend against the savings required (ref page 2 of the consultation paper), therefore as people left and contracts ceased vacancies were not filled. Staff have been incredibly flexible and helpful in having to cope with that reduction and only at last resort have centres had to reduce their opening times. However, this has been incredibly helpful in those vacancies can be included in the budget saving meaning that there are less redundancies.</p>																																																					
Q.	I don't recognise the current staff figures within customer services, can we have a breakdown?																																																					
A.	<table><tr><td></td><td colspan="2">Current</td></tr><tr><td>Role</td><td>FTE</td><td>Headcount</td></tr><tr><td>HEREFORD CENTRAL</td><td></td><td></td></tr><tr><td>FRANKLIN FACE TO FACE CSO/CSA</td><td>17.55</td><td>21.00</td></tr><tr><td>FRANKLIN CONTACT CENTRE (phones)- CSO/CSA</td><td>13.76</td><td>18.00</td></tr><tr><td>HEREFORD LIBRARY CUSTOMER SERVICE ASSISTANT</td><td>6.11</td><td>7.00</td></tr><tr><td>NORTH</td><td></td><td></td></tr><tr><td>LEOMINSTER CSO/CSA</td><td>7.02</td><td>14.00</td></tr><tr><td>KINGTON CSO/CSA</td><td>1.36</td><td>2.00</td></tr><tr><td>BROMYARD CSO/CSA</td><td>2.84</td><td>7.00</td></tr><tr><td>WEOBLEY CSO/CSA</td><td>0.24</td><td>1.00</td></tr><tr><td>LEINTWARDINE CSO/CSA</td><td>0.24</td><td>1.00</td></tr><tr><td>SOUTH</td><td></td><td></td></tr><tr><td>LEDBURY LIBRARY CSO/CSA</td><td>3.85</td><td>8.00</td></tr><tr><td>LEDBURY CUSTOMER SERVICE CSO/CSA</td><td>2.01</td><td>5.00</td></tr><tr><td>COLWALL CSO/CSA</td><td>0.60</td><td>2.00</td></tr><tr><td>ROSS CSO/CSA</td><td>7.24</td><td>14.00</td></tr></table>				Current		Role	FTE	Headcount	HEREFORD CENTRAL			FRANKLIN FACE TO FACE CSO/CSA	17.55	21.00	FRANKLIN CONTACT CENTRE (phones)- CSO/CSA	13.76	18.00	HEREFORD LIBRARY CUSTOMER SERVICE ASSISTANT	6.11	7.00	NORTH			LEOMINSTER CSO/CSA	7.02	14.00	KINGTON CSO/CSA	1.36	2.00	BROMYARD CSO/CSA	2.84	7.00	WEOBLEY CSO/CSA	0.24	1.00	LEINTWARDINE CSO/CSA	0.24	1.00	SOUTH			LEDBURY LIBRARY CSO/CSA	3.85	8.00	LEDBURY CUSTOMER SERVICE CSO/CSA	2.01	5.00	COLWALL CSO/CSA	0.60	2.00	ROSS CSO/CSA	7.24	14.00
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	MANAGEMENT			
	BRANCH SUPERVISORS	12.00	12.00	
	MANAGERS	3.00	3.00	
	Total	77.81	115.00	
Q.	Why is there any need for 2 Area Managers and the amount of team leaders proposed when the workforce is so small?			
A.	<p>There has been a decrease in the number of area managers if you consider the budget had three area managers. Also the Duty Supervisors will be reducing as outlined in the consultation paper. This also needs to be seen in the wider context of previous reduction in management where at least one level of management has been completely withdrawn. Between the remaining Customer Services Managers they will be responsible for over 80 staff between them. Also the role of Branch Supervisor will change to Duty Supervisor recognising that with the reduction in capacity these officers will continue to take on frontline duties.</p>			
Q.	Why is the proposal for 8 Branch Supervisors split 50/50 with 4 centrally and 4 for the area offices?			
A.	<p>The 1 site, 1 team option has more flexibility than a displaced market team with a variety of sites/branches to manage.</p> <p>In the central team the vision moving forward is to have a generically trained customer service team who can handle the full range of customer service duties (telephone, face to face and email) which allows for a more efficient management structure, alongside the 20% reduction in opening hours.</p> <p>For the market town branches the library side of the service is included in the role, along with the inclusion of the requirement for the continued cross training of team members.</p> <p>The market town supervisors manage the individual sites; fire alarms, health & safety, repairs, room hire, sharing of space with other services, exhibition space, reader groups, bounce & rhyme, computer courses & many other activities which are incorporated into the mixed functions. The role also takes into consideration the support for community libraries in their development and continued operation.</p>			
Q.	Why are there no job cuts within the libraries?			
A.	<p>There are job cuts in the core Library Service. As within Customer Services, Libraries have carried a number of vacancies which have not been filled and staff have been very flexible in addressing demand. Actually the percentage for overall reduction between the two services are both around 25%. Also part of the Library Service (the Schools Library Service) will be externalised next year.</p>			
Q.	After proposed new structure will there be any more cut, how do you propose to meet the demands of the service?			
A.	<p>Considering the challenges the council has in meeting the budget requirement from a number of avenues (ref: consultation document page 2), there is a very strong likelihood of more budget reductions that will affect Customer Services and Libraries. Unless we adapt and change <i>now</i> the council will have very limited options.</p> <p>As outlined in the consultation paper (page 3 – Principles of the Changes) how we deliver Customer Services and Libraries will change its approach and delivery. There will be a drive for more people to access the council via the web whilst other contact will be with people who have no other option but face to face. The sites will be multi-functional with a range of services with less being delivered by the local authority with a strong self-service and community involvement approach.</p>			