



Equality Impact Assessments

Full Impact Assessment Form

1. What is the service area(s) and who is the lead officer?

- Debbie Gates – Executive Director of Central and Community Services
- Honor Howell – Assistant Director
- The Downham Market and Hunstanton area offices are currently providing a face to face service to customers for two days a week. Downham Markt on a Monday and Friday and Hunstanton on a Tuesday and Thursday.

2. What change are you proposing?

The proposal is to close the area offices and transfer all services to King's Court .

3. How will this change help the council achieve its corporate business plan objectives (and therefore your Directorate/service objectives)?

The proposal links to the business objective of 'Providing important local services within our available resources'.

4. What is your evidence of need for change?

With the introduction of digital services, the numbers of customers visiting the area offices has reduced significantly. Traditionally, the main reasons customers visited the area offices were in respect of housing and benefit enquiries. Both of these services have now been fully digitalised, meaning customers are able to make applications to go on the housing register, apply for benefit, report a change of circumstances as well as upload supporting evidence online, negating the need to visit the offices in person.

The Council is due to cease the sale of the kitchen waste bin liners in the near future and this will reduce the average customer numbers to 1-2 an hour. This is not considered an effective use of resources when the Contact Centre in King's Lynn is so busy.

5. How will this change deliver improved value for money and/or release efficiency savings?

Closing the offices will enable the CIC to transfer the staff back to King's Court and utilise their time more effectively to deal with more customer enquiries.

6. What geographical area does this proposal cover?

The proposal covers the towns of Hunstanton and Downham Market and the surrounding areas.

Ward members and town councils have been advised of the proposal.

7. What is the impact of your proposal?

The impact on the staffing on the CIC will be a positive one as it will release resource to assist in the Contact Centre in King's Court.

Services users are being consulted on the changes and initial results will be available at the Cabinet meeting.

Consideration has been given to those using the service. Many services are now available online so customers are able to self-serve. If they do not have access to a computer or mobile device, then the telephone services is available as well as web chat. The council also offers a visiting officer service to visit customers in their home if they are unable to travel to a council office.

8. What data have you used to support your assessment of the impact of your proposal?

Volumes of customers, nature and type of enquiries received.

9. What consultation has been undertaken/will need to be undertaken with stakeholders/ groups directly or indirectly impacted by the proposals and how do you intend to use this information to inform the decision?

Consultation with customers has been conducted and initial results are attached to the report. .

Ward Members, Cabinet, Portfolio Holder and Town Councils have been advised of the proposal.

10. Are there any implications for other service areas?

None. The CIC is the only service offered in the Hunstanton and Downham offices.

11. What impact (either positive or negative) will this change have on different groups of the population?

The potential closure of the area offices would impact on people in the local community who use the offices for a variety of reasons. However, the same could be said for any resident of any area within the borough as the council does not have an office in every village.

The perception (although we do not have the evidence to support this yet) is that the offices are used by more elderly customers, especially Hunstanton as it has a high proportion of retired residents and that these customers might find it difficult to access the services online. The council will still offer its telephone service and are able to assist customers with any service request they have. If a personalised service is required then a home visit can be arranged.

Consultation is being undertaken with users of the service to investigate how the potential closure would affect them and how would they contact the council if the office was not there. Using this data, we will be more informed of any potential barriers to customers accessing council services.

12. What actions could be taken to mitigate the adverse impacts identified in question 11? Please clearly state if any actions cannot be mitigated.

Communication of alternative methods of contact
Promotion of online services and the benefits they bring
Promotion of the Visiting Officer service
Signposting customers to other agencies who may be able to assist them (Town Council, Parish Council)
Promote the use of the Community Information Points

13. How will you monitor the impact of this change?

A review will be carried out after 6 months and a report taken to Corporate Performance Panel

14. Other Staff Involved in Assessment (including Corporate Equality Group Representatives), and comments from Equality Work Group Reps

Equality Group Representative

Assessment Completed By: Honor Howell

Job Title: Assistant Director

Date: 19.07.17