

BABERGH DISTRICT COUNCIL

From: Cabinet Member for Organisational Delivery	Report Number: BCa/17/62
To: Cabinet	Date of meeting: 12 April 2018

MOTION

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To consider the proposal of Councillor Luke Cresswell as outlined in a Motion to Council on 20th February as follows:

That:

- 1) A Babergh District Council access point be set up in Hadleigh to support residents and be a point of contact for the community in central and East Babergh; and
- 2) This access point to have similar capabilities to the access point in Sudbury and provide support, advice and a facility to scan information to Babergh District Council and or Suffolk County Council; and
- 3) This access point to be set up and operational without delay.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That the Council does not pursue the option of a Hadleigh customer access point with similar capabilities to Sudbury.
- 2.2 Instead the Council identifies opportunities to work in partnership with existing organisations in Hadleigh, to provide self-service facilities, including the provision of scanning information. That consideration be given to the extension of this model should further self-service needs across the district be identified.

Reason for Decision: That an appropriate self-service provision could better meet the aims of the Joint Strategic Plan in a more cost effective manner.

3. Financial Implications

- 3.1 There would be an increased cost to the Council to provide a provision similar to that in Sudbury; as a minimum this would need to include staff costs, and based on location, there may be building and maintenance costs. There would likely be set-up costs in terms of IT, and refurbishment costs dependent on the building's suitability to receive customers. The current annual cost for maintaining the Sudbury customer access point is £74k per annum, which is exclusive of the initial costs associated with building works to the Sudbury office.
- 3.2 If we were to operate a model whereby the focus was on working with partners who already had established facilities, accessible by customers, a self-serve provision would be more cost effective. It is not possible at this current time to state exactly what these costs are, as scoping work is continuing, to understand these. However, we know that technology to

deliver a simplified self-serve facility which allowed customers to scan documentation (which accounts for a significant proportion of in-person visits) could cost in the region of £5k for initial set-up.

4. Legal Implications

4.1 None identified

5. Risk Management

5.1 This report is linked with the following Council risk, reviewed as part of the significant risk register.

Risk Description	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigation Measures
If we do not have more efficient and effective public access and agile working arrangements then we will not be able to tailor the services our customers need and target those in need.	2 Unlikely	2 Noticeable/ Minor	New public access points are up and running in both Stowmarket and Sudbury. Services can be accessed through both; with a range of assisted/self-serve/telephony support available. Further development and review is on-going. We are also developing regular liaison and feedback mechanisms to develop customer satisfaction measures. We have undertaken a staff survey which will inform an action plan in the future, tackling areas of concern.

6. Consultations

6.1 None

7. Equality Analysis

7.1 An initial Equality Impact Assessment was carried out as part of the Future Model for Public Access in September 2016. It is envisaged that any additional provision agreed would be an enhancement to our current service, and would have a positive effect. A further assessment would be carried out.

8. Shared Service / Partnership Implications

8.1 There are no shared service implications. However if we were to develop a model in partnership with other public, charitable, voluntary or community interest groups and organisations this would be in line with the Joint Strategic Plan ambitions of building our communities capacity.

9. Links to Joint Strategic Plan

9.1 As 8.1

10. Key Information

10.1 At the Council meeting on 20th February 2018 a Motion was put to Council by Councillor Luke Cresswell as per paragraph 1.1.

At the Council meeting it was resolved to refer the matter to Cabinet for discussion.

This report is providing the necessary information for Cabinet to consider the matter.

10.2 In September 2016, the Council resolved to vacate the Hadleigh headquarters, and to operate one customer access point in the district. The Babergh customer access point is located in Sudbury, at the Town Hall, and offers in-person as well as self-service facilities for customers to access both County, District and Town Council services.

10.3 Following the closure of the Hadleigh Headquarters we have been monitoring any potential impact on our customers. We are pleased to report increases in the use of our website, as well as high levels of online completion of electronic forms; for example over 80% of Housing Benefit application forms are completed electronically.

10.4 Further development to support customer access to our services has been under review and is illustrated in a refreshed Customer Service strategy which Cabinet will be asked to approve in July 18. The strategy is a 'living' document that needs to meet ours and our customer expectations, and keep abreast of issues that may arise. With this in mind, work had already commenced to understand how to continue to support customers in Hadleigh.

10.5 The Assistant Director for Customer Services has been in contact with the Hadleigh Town Clerk, to seek feedback on the impact of the closure of the HQ, and whether they had seen an increase in the number of customers trying to access services at Hadleigh Town Council. The Town Clerk advised that they had not seen an increase in customer contact, but on the odd occasion when required they had been able to direct customers to our telephony or web services. The premises occupied by the Town Council at the Guild Hall are not particularly accessible for customers and significant works would be required to provide similar facilities as per the Sudbury customer access point.

10.6 Preliminary discussions have been held with South Suffolk Leisure as an existing partner of Babergh Mid Suffolk Councils, to understand any opportunities available to utilise their current accommodation to provide some self-service facilities. South Suffolk Leisure are supportive of the approach and already provide some services to local community groups.

10.7 There are of course other organisations situated in Hadleigh, whom it would also be worth approaching, to understand their level of interest in working with us. Examples could include Suffolk Libraries, and the Co-operative.

10.8 Further more detailed scoping work would be required to make further recommendations on the level of service that we would provide (for example only self –service or assisted self-service) and therefore an appropriate partner to support this provision.

10.9 This approach is becoming more widespread across local authorities, with self-service provisions operating from diverse organisations such as village halls and community centres, Community-owned shops and pubs, as well as mobile based services.

11. Options Considered

11.1 The two options that have been considered are:

- a) To provide an additional customer access point in Hadleigh modelled as per the Sudbury customer access point;
- b) To explore and develop an operating model which focuses on self-service, utilising existing organisations to support our customers and developing communities' capabilities to help themselves.

12. Background Documents

12.1 None