

Agenda for Scrutiny Committee and Overview Committee Joint Meeting Tuesday, 11 August 2015; 6.00pm



[Members of the Scrutiny Committee](#)
[Members of the Overview Committee](#)

Venue: Council Chamber, Knowle, Sidmouth, EX10 8HL
[View directions](#)

Contact: Diana Vernon, 01395 517541 (or group number 01395 517546): Issued 30 July 2015

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- 1 Election of Chairman
- 2 Appointment of Vice Chairman
- 3 [Public speaking](#)
- 4 Apologies
- 5 [Declarations of interest](#)
- 6 [Matters of urgency](#) – none identified
- 7 To agree any items to be dealt with after the public (including press) have been excluded. There are no items that officers recommend should be dealt with in this way.

Matters for Debate

- 8 **Moving and improving consultation** (pages)
The committees to review the Cabinet reports of 15 July 2015 and debate the proposed consultation process for obtaining the views of residents, stakeholders and equality partners on providing services from offices in Honiton and Exmouth. Views are welcomed on the methodology, the questions set out in the questionnaire, and generally on the consultation process.

Voting on any proposed recommendations will be conducted separately for each committee.

Under the Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014, any members of the public are now allowed to take photographs, film and audio record the proceedings and report on all public meetings (including on social media). No prior notification is needed but it would be helpful if you could let the democratic services team know you plan to film or record so that any necessary arrangements can be made to provide reasonable facilities for you to report on meetings. This permission does not extend to private meetings or parts of meetings which are not open to the public. You should take all recording and photography equipment with you if a public meeting moves into a session which is not open to the public.

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[Decision making and equalities](#)

For a copy of this agenda in large print, please contact the Democratic Services Team on 01395 517546

Report to: Cabinet
Date of Meeting: 15 July 2015
Public Document: Yes
Exemption: None
Review date for release: None



Agenda item: 16

Subject: Office relocation – moving and improving consultation

Purpose of report: To agree our consultation approach in relation to our office relocation.

Recommendation: That members of Cabinet are aware that this report will be discussed at the Scrutiny meeting of 30 July.

Reason for recommendation: This consultation has been designed to help inform decisions regarding how we organise our services in the future from offices in Honiton and Exmouth. It asks our residents, stakeholders and equality partners to outline how and where else they would like to access our services in the context of two office locations, services delivered through surgeries, an improved website capability and more mobile working. This consultation will assist the council in meeting our legal duties in terms of equality and best value.

Officer: Karen Jenkins, Strategic Lead – Organisational Development and Transformation
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Financial implications: There are no additional in year budgetary implications as a result of this work. The 2015/16 revenue budget already includes £5,000 to cover expenditure associated with this community consultation. This will be sufficient to cover the estimate of costs as referred to in section 3 of the report of £4,500.

Legal implications: It is a requirement to ensure that we conduct a consultation exercises in respect of securing our 'best value' duty under the Local Government Act 1999 and such a consultation exercise can also help inform whether or not the Council has complied with its public sector equality duty under the Equality Act 2010. Where a consultation is carried out there are clear responsibilities in terms of how that process is conducted. Those requirements are that the consultation is carried out when the proposals are at a formative stage and are presented such that a person understands what is proposed. Sufficient time needs to be given to comment and the responses need to be conscientiously taken into account when determining the proposals. It is considered that this consultation meets those requirements in so far as are relevant at this time.

Equalities impact: High Impact

The relocation of our offices has a potentially high impact on service users. This consultation is designed to gain the views of residents, stakeholders and our equalities partners to mitigate any potential adverse impacts.

Risk: Low Risk

Links to background information:

Link to Council Plan: Outstanding council

Report in full

Consultation relating to Equalities and Best Value

1 Introduction

Further to council's decision to relocate to two council owned sites in Exmouth and Honiton it is now necessary to consider what consultation we need to carry out in respect of Best Value and Equalities.

This paper aims to set out our plans for consultations. This includes timescales, process, who we will consult and approximate costs.

1.1 Who will we consult?

We would like to consult with a broad range of stakeholders and customers to meet our Equalities and Best Value duties:

1. Customers (service users) and council tax payers (3000)
2. Stakeholder Group which includes Towns and Parishes, Chambers of Commerce, Federation of Small Businesses, members of the Business Forum
3. Tenants Panel
4. Voluntary and Community Groups
5. Equalities Partners

1.2 How will we consult?

1.2.1 Customers (service users) and council tax payers

We will consult customer and service users with a specific questionnaire that will be randomly sent to 3,000 households across East Devon.

This questionnaire will also be available online via our website for all interested people to complete, including those that do not receive a postal copy.

Methodology

The questionnaire will be sent out in the post to 3,000 randomly selected households from throughout the District. These households will be selected completely at random from the Land and Property Gazetteer database by our Strata colleagues, which is the most comprehensive and up to date list of addresses.

The fact that it will be sent out to 3,000 randomly selected residents allows us to statistically extrapolate the results to the wider population.

Online and paper based

The questionnaire will be sent out in the post, and respondents receiving one in the post will be given the option to complete it online if they wish.

Despite the Government's digital agenda the majority of people, particularly in Devon are much more likely to complete a paper based survey than an online one. For example, a Devon local authority carried out its budget consultation purely online and despite a large promotion campaign only got 109 responses.

We don't know the e-mail addresses of everyone in the District so would be unable to send it out to a random selection. To publicise the survey to everyone and ask people to complete it online would mean it would be a self selection survey, rather than a random selection survey. This would mean there would be no chance of being able to extrapolate the results of the survey to the wider population.

How will the online survey work

We already have survey software called SNAP that we use regularly. This allows us to design paper based or online surveys. The questionnaire has been designed in SNAP as a paper based survey, it will be converted into a SNAP online survey and a copy embedded within pages on our internet.

Numbers of responses

This is a random mailout to 3,000 residents. Anything over 400 responses to questions is considered to be statistically reliable. We would expect to get around 400 responses from a random mailout to 3,000 residents on this topic as it will be fairly difficult to engage residents on it.

Why 400 responses?

It is best practice in consultation that surveys have a margin of error of $\pm 5\%$ or lower at the 95% confidence level. What that means, in plain English, is that 95 out of 100 times the survey is conducted using a proper random sample, the results will yield a value within five points (plus or minus) of the actual result if you surveyed the whole population rather than just a proportion. As an example, if 65% of survey respondents are satisfied with their home, you can be reasonably sure that the actual opinion of the overall population being sampled is somewhere between 60% and 70%.

Why not aim to get back more than 400?

There are diminishing returns. After 400 respondents, the slight increase in statistical accuracy may not be worth the additional cost. A sample size of 400 with its statistical accuracy of $\pm 5\%$ is thought of as the most cost effective sample size. For example the statistical reliability of 1,000 respondents would still be $\pm 3.1\%$ and to get 1,000 responses back we would be looking at a cost of around £12,000.

Unique identifier

Each questionnaire sent out in the post will have a unique identifying number on it. This allows us to send out reminder letters or postcards if they are needed to boost response rates. This also means that these results can be extrapolated to the wider population as we will know who has completed the questionnaire from the random mailout.

If people that receive the questionnaire in the post fill it in online they will have to type in their unique identifier. If there is more than one submission for a unique number all the responses for that number will be deleted.

If respondents do not complete the unique identifier section then they will be assumed to be self selecting and their answers will be analysed separately.

Self selection respondents

These are the residents who complete the online questionnaire but were not part of the original mailout to randomly selected residents. Their results cannot be extrapolated to the whole population and so will be analysed separately.

Making the results representative

There are demographics questions in the questionnaire, asking people for their age group and gender, disabilities and location. We would expect to receive more responses from older people, as happens nationwide.

The results can be weighted if necessary (according to best practice). This is a technique used to get accurate levels of representation of certain groups in the District.

Data for under represented groups can be weighted to compensate for small numbers where accurate information exists about their actual percentage in the population, making the sample a better representation of the actual population. For instance, if the population is known to be 50:50 male to female but the sample has 48:52 then weighting is used to adjust the sample data to represent the true population. In this case it would be done by giving each male in the sample a weight of 50/48 and each female a weight of 50/52.

Only numerical data (from tick box questions) will be able to be weighted, free text answers will not be.

1.2.2 Stakeholder Group

We will send links to this group so that they are alerted to the questionnaire and can complete this.

1.2.3 Tenants' Panel

We will work with the Tenant Participation Team to encourage tenants to give us their thoughts. A link to the questionnaire will be sent out to the approx. 80 tenants we have e-mail addresses for.

1.2.4 Voluntary Groups and Community Groups

The questionnaire will be sent to East Devon Voluntary Services Authority for them to publicise to voluntary and community groups on their e-newsletter database (about 200).

1.2.5 Equality Partners

We will work with the Equality Partner group to agree the best method of consultation and discuss any other equality groups that they suggest should be consulted.

- Hikmat Devon CIC (minority ethnic backgrounds)
- Living Options (people with disabilities)
- Devon Youth Service (young people)
- Devon Insight (blind and visually impaired)
- RNIB (blind and visually impaired)
- Intercom Trust (LGBT)
- East Devon Learning Disability Parliament

To supplement the completed questionnaires the Community Engagement and Funding Officer will carry out face to face consultation with some equalities groups.

2 Equalities and Best Value

2.1 Under the Equality Act as a public authority we have legal duties to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other prohibited conduct
- Advance equality of opportunity

- Foster good relations between people
- Publish objectives to demonstrate how we will meet the above challenges and publish information on performance.

As a council we are working towards the following equality objectives:

- Knowing our communities
- Service our communities
- Including equalities in our decision making

2.2 There is a general duty to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which the Council's functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of *economy, efficiency and effectiveness*.

Consultations will need to explain what we mean by the term 'Best Value' and we will need to ensure that the consultation is geared to best value issues of economy, efficiency and effectiveness and invite ideas and suggestions.

3 Costs

It is estimated that the costs will be £4000 for the consultation with residents and £500 for the consultation with equality partners. The Engagement and Funding officer will carry out the consultations.

4 Timing

This consultation work will commence at the beginning of September with sending out of documents and results collated by end of November / early December.

East Devon District Council

East Devon District Council Office relocation

Background information to Moving and Improving

September 2015

Please read carefully before filling in the questionnaire.

Following a detailed process and careful evaluation, we have decided to move our headquarters from Sidmouth, to sites we already own in Honiton and Exmouth. This will involve building a purpose built office in Honiton and refurbishing Exmouth Town Hall.

Why are we consulting?

Now the decision has been made we specifically want to understand how our residents would like us to organise services in the future from:

- Offices in Honiton and Exmouth
- Surgeries (drop in sessions) in our main towns where customers can come in and see us on specific days between particular times
- A greater number of online services.

Under the Equality Act as a public authority we have legal duties to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other prohibited conduct.
- Advance equality of opportunity.
- Foster good relations between people.
- Publish objectives to demonstrate how we will meet the above challenges and publish information on performance.

As a council we are working towards the following equality objectives:

- Knowing our communities
- Service our communities
- Including equalities in our decision making

We also have a general duty to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which the Council's functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of *economy, efficiency and effectiveness* (also known as the 'Best Value' duty).

We believe that what we are proposing is likely to represent best value in the way we carry out our functions but are interested to hear your views.

Why are we moving from our current offices in Sidmouth?

- The building is old, expensive to run and needs expensive repair – costs which make staying at Knowle a more expensive option than moving.
- The building is bigger than we need.
- The space consists of small and individual offices which is not helpful to the way our teams actually work.

Aims for relocation:

- no additional burden on council tax payers
- new buildings will be suitable for a variety of uses, fit for purpose and meet high energy efficiency standards
- officers will be increasingly mobile through new ways of working
- website will offer more opportunities for customers to deal with us online
- regular surgeries (drop in sessions) will be held in other towns to meet customer demand
- new buildings and new accommodation will maximise the use of space and technology for the benefit of our customers and the productive working of our staff and councillors
- the buildings will provide good access for people with disabilities.

Why Honiton and Exmouth?

Following a great deal of consideration of all the available options, sites in Honiton and Exmouth have been chosen.

- Honiton is geographically in the middle of the district. Exmouth is in the south west corner of the district but is the town with the largest population. These two sites combined will allow easy access for most people that want to visit our offices.
- we own the land in Honiton
- we own Exmouth Town Hall
- the sites are well connected locally and benefit from good links into the regional and national transport network.

Services that would be available in Honiton:

- Planning and Development Management
- Housing benefits and council tax support
- Collection of council tax and business rates
- Local land charges searches
- Council Housing - including housing advice, homelessness, housing register, landlord services, rent management, community development etc.
- Home Safeguard, our telecare alarm service for vulnerable people
- Help with difficulty in affording council bills (debt advice)
- Licensing – grant alcohol, entertainment and other licenses to residents and businesses
- Countryside, Leisure, Arts and Culture
- Environmental Health - health and safety enforcement in businesses, investigating food poisoning, noise pollution etc
- Off street car parks service
- StreetScene including engineering; waste management and recycling; street cleaning; parks and gardens; beach management; concessions etc.
- Private Sector Housing - advice and support for private sector landlords and tenants
- Building Control – making sure all building work carried out meets certain standards
- Economic Development, Property and Estates
- All corporate functions such as Human Resources, Legal, Finance, Communications and Democratic Services.

Services that would be available at Exmouth Town Hall:

- Planning and Development Management
- Housing benefits and council tax support
- Council Housing - housing advice, homelessness, housing register, landlord service, rent management, community development etc.
- Help with difficulty in affording council bills (debt advice)
- Environmental Health - health and safety enforcement in businesses, investigating food poisoning, noise pollution etc
- Off street car parks service

Services are and will increasingly be provided without the need to visit our main offices:

- Most of our customers deal with us by phone or on line.
- We are developing our website on an ongoing basis so that more transactions will be available online. This will be easier to use and search so people can access more of our services online.

- We are planning to update our telephone system to make it easier for people to contact us by phone.
- We have launched a new App for smartphones and tablets. People with the App can use it for all sorts of purposes including reporting issues to us, finding out more about planning applications, looking at local food hygiene ratings.
- We already have council housing staff based at Exmouth Town Hall as it is the area we have the most council housing.
- We have a base for Housing support staff in each of our main towns and use our community centres for occasional surgeries/drop in sessions.
- We already hold council tax benefit, housing benefit and debt advice drop in sessions in Axminster, Cranbrook, Honiton, Ottery St Mary and Seaton. If we move we would also look to provide a similar service in Sidmouth depending on demand.
- Documents related to planning can already be viewed at the town council offices in Seaton, Ottery St Mary, Honiton, Budleigh Salterton and Axminster.
- We are making sure that our officers have the right technology to work in a mobile way around the district.
- We will develop our use of surgeries in the rest of our towns and this consultation will inform this development.

Moving and improving

September 2015

Please carefully read through our proposal and then tell us what you think using this questionnaire:

■ It's easy to complete this questionnaire online at www.eastdevon.gov.uk/consultation-and-surveys/moving-and-improving

■ Alternatively, you can complete this paper copy and return it to us by ??

A - Your current use

1. On average, how many times in the last 12 months have you visited East Devon District Council's main offices in Sidmouth?

- None - please move onto question 3
- Once or twice in 12 months
- Three to five times in 12 months
- Once every couple of months
- Once a month
- Two to three times a month
- Once a week or more often
- Unsure

2. Have you visited East Devon District Council's main offices in Sidmouth in the last six months?

- Yes
- No - please move onto question 3
- Unsure - please move onto question 3

If yes, why did you visit?

Please tick all that apply

- To look at a planning application
- To drop off a letter or form
- To make a payment
- To attend a council meeting
- To discuss your circumstances with an officer, please tell us which service in the box below:
- Other, please write in below:

B - About you

We are asking the following questions so we can see if any particular groups have specific requirements. All information will be treated in accordance with the Data Protection Act.

3. Which town or village do you live in?

- Budleigh Salterton
 Exmouth
 Honiton

- Ottery St Mary
 Seaton
 Sidmouth

- Axminster
 Colyton
 Woodbury

- Broadclyst
 Other (please tick and write in below)

4. Which age group are you in?

29 and under

30 to 49

50 to 69

70 and over

5. Are you:

Male

Female

Transgender

Prefer not to say

6. To which ethnic group do you consider you belong?

For example, White British, Chinese

7. Do you have a long standing illness, disability or infirmity that limits your day to day activities in any way?

Yes

No - please move onto question 8

If yes, please tell us the nature of your disability:

Please tick all that apply

Mobility (physical disability)

Mental health issues

Blind or visually impaired

Learning disability

Progressive disability or chronic illness. For example Multiple Sclerosis

Deaf or hearing impairment

Other - please write in below

C - Moving and improving

Please read the consultation information that came with this questionnaire before answering these questions

8. Thinking about your particular circumstances and considering:

- the services listed in the proposals that will be available from our Honiton and Exmouth offices
- the surgeries (drop in sessions) we provide in other towns for council tax benefit, housing benefit, debt advice and council housing
- the increased number of services that will be available online

Will you be able to access the services you need when we move to Honiton and Exmouth?

- Yes - please move onto question 9
- No

If no, what other options do you think we should consider to help you access the services you need when we move to Honiton and Exmouth?

9. If we were to hold surgeries (drop in sessions) in Sidmouth where people can regularly access our services face to face at certain dates and times, would you use these surgeries?

- Yes
- No - please move onto question 10

If yes, which services would you like to be able to access at drop in sessions in Sidmouth?

10. Thinking about our new purpose built head office in Honiton, do you have any specific requirements for the design?

For example; visitor car parking spaces, a lift to upper floors, requirements for the reception area, a hearing loop in the council chamber, small meetings rooms where you can talk to an officer in private

- Yes
- No - please move onto question 11

If yes, please tell us what specific requirements you have for the design:

11. Thinking about our move to offices in Exmouth Town Hall, do you have any specific requirements for the refurbishment of the Town Hall?

For example; visitor car parking spaces, requirements for the reception area, small meetings rooms where you can talk to an officer in private

- Yes
- No - please move onto question 12

If yes, please tell us what specific requirements you have for the refurbishment:

12. Do you have any other comments about how we are proposing to deliver services as described in this document?

13. To help us continue to improve our service delivery, do you have any other suggestions about how we can deliver effective, efficient and economical services to you?

Thank you for taking the time to complete this consultation.

Please send it back to us in the pre-paid envelope by ??