



FULL COUNCIL - INFORMATION REPORT

Date Written	14 th March 2022
Report Author	Mike Parry
Service Area	Customer Services
Exempt/Non Exempt	Non Exempt
Committee Date	30 th March 2022

To: *Mayor, Ladies and Gentlemen*

Re-opening of the One Stop Shop

1.0 SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update to Council regarding the re-opening of the One Stop Shop (OSS).
- 1.2 The report includes details on reopening plans, operational requirements, service delivery and future provision considerations.
- 1.3 These measures are being introduced having regards to current staffing resources, safe working arrangements (including Government guidance) whilst meeting the needs of our residents.

2.0 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 2.1 During the coronavirus pandemic, all Council buildings have been closed to the public both as a consequence of Government legislation but also in regards to staff and public safety.
- 2.2 The Council has continued to run services through the contact centre provision via the telephony service and provided support for online queries where needed.
- 2.3 Back-office services have adapted their public assistance and support models utilising online services, web interactions and telephone provision.

- 2.4 The Council has improved and expanded the way we communicate with the public through social media. We have also accelerated our channel shift agenda in order to address the service challenges brought about by the pandemic and the closure of Council offices.
- 2.5 Payments are being made via online options, telephone assistance or through Paypoint outlets and Post Offices throughout the County Borough.
- 2.6 The OSS has worked closely with all departments and supported the changes and challenges from a service provision perspective for each individual service area during the pandemic.
- 2.7 Information provided by our Corporate Complaints Department advises that there have been no formal complaints received relating to the Civic Centre not being open. However, some Councillors have reported that residents have been enquiring when the face-to-face provision will be reintroduced.
- 2.8 A risk assessment has been carried out by the Council's Health and Safety Team to ensure our processes are safe and liaison continues with the Estates Team relating to the improvement works being carried out on the Civic Centre building. The move to digital service provision from face-to-face has not had a significant impact on services or performance measures with no apparent increase in backlogs or complaints.

3.0 OPERATIONAL REQUIREMENTS

- 3.1 The operational requirements that need to be factored into the new operating model include the ability to carry out:
- Appointments - Can be arranged online, via telephone or in person at the Civic Centre during opening hours.
 - Face-to-face meetings - Most meetings can be held remotely but some will require face-to-face, particularly for our vulnerable customers and those who are digitally excluded. Interview rooms and Pods will be available for this purpose.
 - Drop in requirement - It is of paramount importance that we consider and address the needs of our most vulnerable customers. To this end, there will be occasions where an immediate interview or intervention will be required. For example, customers presenting as homeless.
 - Virtual meetings - Where appropriate, customers will be offered the option for a virtual appointment.
 - Interview room requirements - As mentioned above, interview rooms and pods will be made available to conduct pre-arranged interviews.
 - Home visits - Certain services are able to make provision for our most vulnerable customers by home visits (already doing this in limited circumstances).

4.0 SERVICE DELIVERY MODEL

- 4.1 The service delivery model consists of:

- Reopening date - 28th March 2022.
- Appointments based service - Customers can visit the Civic Centre and make an appointment to see an advisor during opening hours.
- Reduced opening hours (10.00-12.00 and 2.00-4.00) - Appointments may be made outside of these core hours as deemed necessary by each specific service area. Services will be expected to ensure that they have staff available to deal with the appointments they make between the hours of 9.00-10.00 and 4.00-5.00.
- Web Forms - Booking requests and contact details for appointments (already in place).
- Interactive Voice Response (IVR) - Review and update.
- Additional support for vulnerable customers.
- Redirection of customers to Paypoint outlets for those wishing to pay via cash.

5.0 ISSUES AND FUTURE PROVISION

- 5.1 Initially, the OSS will be staffed by Customer Services telephony staff on a rota basis. As an interim step, this seems prudent. However, resources and capacity will need to be constantly reviewed and amended as appropriate depending on footfall and the nature and volume of enquiries and appointment requests. It is important to note that general enquiries and services can be carried out via our website and telephone. We would encourage residents to utilise these methods first if they are able to. More information on how to access our services will be part of our on-going information sharing processes.
- 5.2 Service delivery would be provided through telephone systems linked closely with our telephone menu options and through appointment requests facilitated by back-office services. Investigation is also taking place on how IT can support Microsoft Teams to enable a face-to-face facility at the Civic Centre.
- 5.3 Appointments will be made for customers via face-to-face, telephone or potentially Microsoft Teams (video call). The booking of appointments will be managed by each service area so as to allow service managers to continue to support agile working and ensure staff work in a safe environment.
- 5.4 Provision of hand sanitisers on entry to the building and screens will remain at the main reception desk, in interview rooms and in pods. Queue management will be carried out by the contact centre staff. The staff will have access to the list of appointments for a given day, which will allow queue intervention and the ability to advise customers of their options for accessing services in the safest and most efficient way.
- 5.5 Customer Services staff will work closely and in conjunction with Corporate Communications to ensure our customers are fully aware of the contact options available to them. A communications campaign will outline all of the above as well as promoting the digital offerings that will remain in place.
- 5.6 We must ensure that all Statutory obligations are met when open, for example legislation relating to housing/homelessness and Social Services.

6.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are no direct financial implications in this report.

7.0 INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

7.1

	Positive Impacts	Negative Impacts	Neutral/Not Applicable	
1. Merthyr Tydfil Well-being Objectives	2 of 4	0 of 4	2 of 4	
2. Sustainable Development Principles - How have you considered the five ways of working? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long term • Prevention • Integration • Collaboration • Involvement 	5 of 5	0 of 5	0 of 5	
3. Protected Characteristics (including Welsh Language)	0 of 10	0 of 10	10 of 10	
4. Socio-economic Disadvantage	0 of 6	0 of 6	6 of 6	
5. Consultation and Engagement	Undertaken	Due to be Undertaken	Not Required	
	0 of 1	0 of 1	1 of 1	
6. Data and Evidence to inform the proposal	Yes		No	
	1 of 1		0 of 1	
7. Biodiversity and the resilience of Ecosystems	Maintained	Enhanced	Reduced	Neutral/Not Applicable
	0 of 1	0 of 1	0 of 1	1 of 1
Summary				
The main positive impacts are:	The main positive impacts are that those in the community who need additional support for Housing, Homelessness or Housing Benefit will have a greater level of access to face-to-face channels. By providing these channels, customers will be able to receive the right information, advice and assistance face-to-face when they need it.			

The main negative impacts are:	There are no negative impacts identified.
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**ELLIS COOPER
CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

**COUNCILLOR CHRIS DAVIES
CABINET MEMBER FOR
GOVERNANCE AND RESOURCES**

BACKGROUND PAPERS		
Title of Document(s)	Document(s) Date	Document Location
Does the report contain any issue that may impact the Council's Constitution?		No

Consultation has been undertaken with the Corporate Management Team in respect of each proposal(s) and recommendation(s) set out in this report.