

WAVERLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL

EXECUTIVE – 5TH JULY 2011

Title:

REVIEW OF FARNHAM LOCALITY OFFICE

[Portfolio Holder: Cllr Stefan Reynolds]

[Wards Affected: All Farnham Wards]

Summary and purpose:

This report sets out proposals for a revised model of service at the Council's local office in Farnham following a review as part of the Council's Foresight Programme.

How this report relates to the Council's Corporate Priorities:

This report relates to the Council's priorities of value for money, customer focused services and improving lives by providing accessible locations for the provision of face-to-face service. The latter is particularly important for the more vulnerable and disadvantaged members of Waverley's community.

Equality and Diversity Implications:

The provision of service outlets in each of the Council's main centres of population serves to ensure residents are not disadvantaged or excluded from services that might otherwise involve a visit to the Council's central offices in Godalming.

Climate Change Implications:

The provision of services locally assists in reducing residents' need to travel to Godalming for face to face services.

Resource/Value for Money implications:

The approved revenue budget for 2011/12 includes provision for three full-time equated posts at Farnham Locality Office, the Farnham Council Offices building was transferred to Farnham Town Council in April 2011 and as part of this transfer Waverley can operate its local office service at no cost for a period of five years.

Legal Implications:

There are no specific legal implications.

Background

1. Historically, one of the principal uses of the Council's local offices was for payment of housing rents and Council Tax bills. However following a review in 2008/09 the Council changed its payment receiving services by providing facilities for payments at Post Offices and All Pay outlets and in November 2009 Waverley's local cash offices were closed.
2. The closure of Waverley's cash offices as expected had an impact on usage of the local offices and visitor numbers declined. As a result from November 2009 opening hours at all three local offices were reduced and the generalist staffing numbers were reduced to reflect the anticipated lower demand.
3. The service currently provided at Cranleigh and Haslemere is primarily based around service areas providing specialist staff to operate from each location on particular day/half days. This model of service was introduced in June 2010 and replaced the provision of permanently based generalist locality office staff at the two offices. The service provision was further refined following a review in March 2011.
4. Farnham Locality Office however remains as the one local office retaining generalist locality office staff. Unsurprisingly as the largest town in the borough, it remains the busiest of the Council's three local offices. The Farnham Locality Office establishment is 3 full-time staff at a budgeted cost of approximately £80,000 in 2011/12.
5. The Locality Office at Farnham was largely unaffected by the changes made to the model of service introduced at the other local offices at Haslemere and Cranleigh. However the transfer of the Farnham Council Offices building to Farnham Town Council, the consequential operation of the locality office from a shared reception desk and a reduction in service enquiries and changes in the services provided means it is now appropriate to review the service model provided at Farnham.

Proposed model of service for the Farnham Local Office

6. Since early 2011 Farnham Locality Office has been operating on less than the established staffing level of 3 full time equivalent posts with vacant hours not being filled and some team members have been regularly reallocated to cover vacancies in other areas. For this reason it is considered that the establishment of generalist staff at Farnham could be reduced to one full-time post continuing to provide a permanent daily staffing presence.
7. At the same time as adjusting the generalist established staffing numbers provided at Farnham it is proposed that the service model adopted at Haslemere and Cranleigh be replicated at Farnham to improve the provision of local services for Farnham residents. The service model would be to provide appointment based services for Benefits and Planning on two separate half days each week and a Housing surgery for a further half day each week. The staff operating the appointment based services would be provided by existing specialist staff from each of the service areas.

8. The changes in service provision outlined above would achieve financial savings of approximately £50,000 in a full year by reducing the staffing establishment from 3 full time equivalent posts to one full time post.

Staffing Implications

9. Subject to the approval of the Executive to the proposals outlined above the aim is to redeploy the postholders in the two full time equivalent posts at Farnham which would be removed from the staffing establishment. It is not therefore considered that there will be a need for redundancy in this instance.

Recommendation

It is recommended that:

1. the revised operational arrangements for the permanent staffing establishment at Farnham Locality Office be reduced from three full time equivalent posts to one full time equivalent post, providing a full year budget saving of approximately £50,000;
2. the existing Locality Office post holders who are not appointed to the remaining permanent full time post at the Farnham Local Office be redeployed within Waverley; and
3. that approval be given to the provision of specialist service staff providing an appointment/surgery based service for Planning, Benefits and Housing in line with the Council's other local offices.

Background Papers

There are no background papers (as defined by Section 100D(5) of the Local Government Act 1972) relating to this report.

CONTACT OFFICER:

Name: Roger Standing **Telephone:** 01483 523221
E-mail: roger.standing@waverley.gov.uk