



East  
Northamptonshire  
Council

## Policy and Resources Committee - 7 November 2011

### Oundle Customer Service Centre - Review of Opening Hours.

#### Purpose of report

To inform Members of changes to the Oundle International Festival operating hours, and seek approval to amend the opening hours for the Oundle Customer Service Centre within the shared office.

#### Attachment(s)

None

#### 1.0 Background

1.1 On the 1 November 2010 this Council resolved:

That from 1 December 2010 the future delivery of tourism and council services at Oundle be from the Oundle Festival Office (OIF) on Tuesdays, Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays from 10am to 4pm and that consideration should be given to the development of a leaflet service at appropriate venues across the district.

1.2 The Oundle CSC has operated from the OIF office, New Street Oundle from the middle of December 2010.

1.3 The move from the previous Oundle Customer Service Centre in West Street to the OIF office provided the Council with a significant amount of savings in rent, utilities and staffing costs.

1.4 The savings in staffing were realised as we were able to allocate just one Customer Services Advisor on Tuesdays, Thursday, Fridays and Saturday mornings as there were no lone working issues due to a sharing of the office with a member of OIF staff.

1.5 OIF have always closed their office at 1pm on Saturdays and therefore we had two Customer Services Advisors on site from 1pm to 4pm on a Saturday.

1.6 OIF have reviewed their opening hours and as the Council has now been operating from that office for just under 12 months it is an appropriate time for us to also review the Oundle CSC opening hours.

#### 2.0 OIF Review

2.1 OIF have recently informed us that from the beginning of November 2011 they have decided to open from 10am to 1pm only from Monday to Saturday. They confirm that this is a temporary measure, during their quiet season, and will be reviewed again in January 2012.

2.2 This has a significant impact on staffing implications for the Council and means that due to lone working issues we would need to provide two members of staff from 1pm to 4pm on our weekday opening hours in addition to Saturday. This would of course negate some of the salary savings we made this year after closing the West Street office.

### **3.0 The Oundle Customer Service Centre (OCSC)**

- 3.1 The OCSC has been open nearly a year and the number of visitors has been steadily rising. In October there were 460 transactions with over 50% relating to tourism. Although this number is rising steadily it would be difficult to justify having two Customer Service Advisors on site to service this amount of customers.
- 3.2 Saturday afternoons are particularly quiet with often only one or two visitors after 1pm. Recently the office had to temporarily close at 1pm on a Saturday for three weeks due to staff sickness and no complaints or issues were raised by customers.
- 3.3 OIF staff have informed us that they often have visitors and enquiries relating to the Council on a Monday morning and have had to ask customers to return on the following day.
- 3.3 Although OIF have decided to reduce their opening hours on a temporary basis due to seasonal operations, it is important that the Council's review of the opening hours are appropriate for throughout the year. Any chopping and changing of opening hours is likely to cause confusion and frustration for customers

### **4.0 The Way Forward**

- 4.1 In order to continue to provide an effective and efficient level of Customer Service at Oundle it is proposed that the opening hours are amended from:  
Tuesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday 10am to 4pm  
To  
Monday to Saturday from 10 am to 1pm.
- 4.2 It is proposed that this change would be effective from Monday 5 December 2011.
- 4.3 This reduces the opening hours on each day but provides coverage across the whole week and mirrors the opening hours for the Oundle International Festival. This would allow us to employ one Customer Service Advisor to cover these hours and will deal with the peak of customers on Monday morning and the lack of customers on a Saturday afternoon.
- 4.4 It will be important to review all our documentation and information relating to OCSC and update with any new opening hours alongside an awareness and communication plan to inform customers of the change.
- 4.5 A letter has been sent to Oundle Town Council and our Councillors in the north of the district to inform them that this proposal was being considered by the Policy & Resources Committee at this meeting. .

### **5.0 Financial Implications**

- 5.1 There are no financial implications arising from this proposal.

### **6.0 Legal Implications**

- 6.1 The Council has entered into a "licence to occupy" agreement with OIF for the shared office. The change of opening hours does not affect any element of that licence.

### **7.0 Equality Implications**

- 7.1 There are no known equality implications from this report at this time. The overall reduction in opening hours is six hours per week, however the service will now be available across six days per week rather than four.

## 8.0 Recommendation

Members are recommended to approve the change to Oundle Customer Service Centre opening hours to Monday to Saturday 10am to 1pm effective from Monday 5 December 2011.

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| <b>Legal</b>  | Power: Local Government Act 2000 |           |  |           |  |
|   | Other considerations:            |           |  |           |  |
| <b>Background Papers:</b> Minutes of Council, 1 November 2010   |                                  |           |  |           |  |
| <b>Person Originating Report:</b> Lisa Hyde, Head of Customer & Community Services Tel: 01832 742162<br>ljhyde@east-northamptonshire.gov.uk |                                  |           |  |           |  |
| <b>Date:</b> 24 October 2011  |                                  |           |  |           |  |
| <b>CFO</b>  |                                  | <b>MO</b> |  | <b>CX</b> |  |

(Committee Report Normal Rev. 22)