

Pre-Scrutiny Questions and Answers- O&S 13 November 2024

Report Title: The Royal Pump Rooms Customer Service Centre – Six Months On

Report Author(s): David Elkington – Head of Customer & Digital Services

Councillor R Dickson:

Out of the average 202 customers visiting the Customer Service Centre each week, what demographic data has been collected by the Council?

For example, does the Council know the age, gender and address of the visitors?

And how does this compare with the demographic of visitors to Riverside House?

Response:

We have not been routinely collecting demographic data for service users at The Pump Rooms, nor was this information collected at Riverside House. As such, unfortunately, we have no data to base any comparisons on, beyond the types of services which are being used.

This will change in the near future, as we're introducing a new Customer Relationship Management system for Customer Services team (and others) which will allow us to record the channel by which individuals contacted us. Consequentially, we will have more insight into who is using our services and for what.

Report Title: The Royal Pump Rooms Customer Service Centre – Six Months On

Report Author(s): David Elkington – Head of Customer & Digital Services

Councillor P Wightman:

In respect of the relocation service centre to the Pump Rooms, I know at the time it was hoped there may be an opportunity to expand face to face opportunities to other areas of the district including Kenilworth and Shire Hall in Warwick. I am wondering six months on what attempts to explore these options have been made and if there is any potential to take this forward?

Response:

Since the opening of the Pump Rooms we have not formally reviewed opportunities to open any further face-to-face sites. This is primarily due to low anticipated demand and potential costs.

In terms of anticipated demand, face-to-face contact volumes as a whole have declined significantly over the past decade. When anticipating our local demand, we can use historical data gathered between 2005 and 2018, when the Council operated "One Stop Shops" at five locations. Using data from these sites, we can extrapolate the changes we've seen in customer volumes and how they may translate into numbers at other sites since the last set of complete figures were collected in 2015/16.

| Site | Visitors Per Week Average 2015/16 | Visitors Per Week Average Apr 24 – Oct 24 | Difference | Possible Demand |
|-----------------|-----------------------------------|---|------------|-----------------|
| Pump Rooms | | 202 | -72.4% | |
| Riverside House | 731 | | | |
| Shire Hall | 136 | | | 38 |
| Kenilworth | 54 | | | 15 |
| Whitnash | 15 | | | 4 |
| Lillington | 31 | | | 9 |

Whilst these estimates are not complex and could have more detailed modelling techniques applied, potential usage of sites outside of the Pump Rooms is very low. It also has to be considered that offering services at other locations would also likely have additional costs. One member of staff for example costs in the region of £35,000 and we also have to consider the facilities costs of the sites too.

Whilst the door is not entirely closed and we always have potential to look again in the future, at present, we don't believe the potential demand would provide good value for money, considering the likely costs.

Report Title: Annual Update on the Corporate Strategy

Report Author(s): Chris Elliot – Chief Executive

Councillor P Wightman:

In respect of the annual update/review of the Corporate Strategy, it strikes me that carbon reduction of housing stock is prominent but there is currently almost no mention, if any, within the strategy of any commitment to increasing numbers of new housing to meet local affordable housing needs. On reflection, is this an omission or does it reflect that decarbonisation represents a higher priority for the current administration than providing sufficient numbers of affordable housing?

Response:

Thank you for this question about the number of affordable homes. This relates to strategic goal 3.1.4 of the corporate strategy: "Increase the volume of high quality, low carbon, affordable and social housing, including increasing the Council's and Milverton Homes' home building activity. This will help meet demand for housing and help tackle rough sleeping and homelessness." So "Yes", the number of affordable homes is a priority.

In our update, we've put "Proposals to bring forward developments at Leyes Lane and Rouncil Lane are progressing, including exploring the potential for Passivhaus housing on the sites." This focus is due to the need to progress these sites with reasonable haste. Of course there are other sites under consideration, and during this administration several sets of homes have been purchased. The Crewe Lane joint venture is also building affordable homes.

You are also asking how we prioritise between spending money on our low cost, low carbon ambitions and the number of affordable homes. This is a surprisingly complex question, so we are commissioning work on a housing development strategy to determine the best way to "Deliver excellent quality, low carbon, affordable and social housing" and "Increase the Council's Housing stock by bringing forward new Council housing at a rate that is sufficient to exceed right-to-buy losses" amongst other goals.