

Review of face to face Customer Services – Public Consultation

What is this consultation about?

Customer Services operates face to face offices all across Shropshire where people can access help with their Council services.

This consultation is about our offices at Shrewsbury, Oswestry, Ludlow, Bridgnorth, Whitchurch and Market Drayton where we run a direct service using Shropshire Council staff as well as our offices at Albrighton, Shifnal, Broseley, Cleobury Mortimer, Bishop's Castle, Church Stretton, Wem and Ellesmere where customer support is provided by partner organisations.

The number of people using our face to face services has been steadily falling as shown in the table below and some of our smaller offices see no customers at all some months. Whilst we recognise that some residents need local access to services, the Council has to find ways of achieving this on much reduced budgets which is why we are looking to make changes.

Reduction in the use of Customer Service Face to Face points over 5 years.

Year ended	April 2014	April 2015	April 2016	April 2017	April 2018
Customer numbers	70615	70825	52025	39229	33079

This consultation is about our recommendations to reduce the days on which we directly staff our offices to more closely match the reduced demand and what we will put in place on the days we do not attend and also about the continuing viability of our smaller offices.

For some time our offices have had self-service telephones and public computers installed and we intend to keep these where they are as well as work to improve the way that people can access help through them so that we can still help with a range of issues in one go if needs be.

We have an opportunity to look critically and sensibly at the times we have staff present in our offices and to make adjustments that are fair to our customers and that still help us to meet the financial challenges we face.

What do I need to do?

This document lays out how this Customer Service Point might operate in the future and what this means for customers.

No formal decision has been made at this stage. We are asking you to have your say by completing the consultation questionnaire.

The information we receive through this consultation will be used to inform any decision making on the future delivery of Customer Services at this office.

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This period of consultation will run from Monday 30 July 2018 to Friday 24 August 2018. We need you to answer the questions on the consultation form and leave it with us.

If you prefer, you can complete the form online by going to shropshire.gov.uk/get-involved and searching for “Review of Customer Services Face to Face Points Consultation” .

The potential impact of any changes on our customers is being assessed through the completion of an Equality & Social Inclusion Impact Assessment. This is something that we complete to show that we have been fair when looking at the needs of customers, especially those who might be affected more by any changes.

You may find the information in our “Frequently Asked Questions” useful, copies are available to go with this consultation document.

What are we proposing?

We are proposing changes to the days and times during which Customer Service staff are in the office and available to help customers at the following offices: Shrewsbury, Oswestry, Ludlow, Bridgnorth, Whitchurch and Market Drayton and the decommissioning of the support in Albrighton, Shifnal, Broseley, Cleobury Mortimer, Bishop’s Castle, Church Stretton, Wem and Ellesmere.

Is there a recommendation or a preferred proposal?

We do have a preferred option that we feel would still provide a service whilst helping us to live within our budget but we will listen to and consider any other proposals or suggestions that are made through this consultation period provided they can make us the same savings.

Shropshire Council’s preferred proposal for the future delivery of customer services at **Shrewsbury** would be:

- A public Freephone which is linked to the Customer Service Centre will be available so that you can speak to an adviser who can deal with a wide range of requests. A free to use public computer will be available throughout the day for customers to do business with us online.
- We staff the service for 2 days of the week so that customers who are in need can still access crisis payments and services throughout the working week. Based on our busy times at this office and across the County we recommend these two days should be: **Monday and Thursday, 9am to 4.45pm**

The survey questionnaire asks if you agree to the proposed changes and if you wish to make any other alternative suggestions.