

HOMES & COMMUNITY COMMITTEE

7 JUNE 2021

REVIEW OF TENANT ACCESS SERVICE OPENING HOURS

1.0 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To review the opening hours of the Customer Access Service (CAS) contact centre and recommend alignment with the opening times of the main council contact centre.
- 1.2 At the 15 March 2021 committee, Members considered a report to align the opening hours and agreed that a decision would be deferred to the 7 June 2021 meeting so that further information regarding service demand could be obtained.

2.0 Background Information

- 2.1 As part of the return of the housing management service to the Council, the Customer Access Service (CAS) team is merging with the Councils Customer Services team. Currently there are slight differences between the opening hours of the two contact centres. The CAS contact centre opens at 8.30am, compared to the Councils opening at 9am. The CAS one closes at 5.15pm Monday to Thursday and 4.15pm on a Friday compared to the Council closing at 5pm Monday – Friday.
- 2.2 Outside of these opening hours, the Council operates an emergency telephone service. Emergency repair calls are transferred to the 24/7 Careline function who determine whether the situation requires an emergency make safe visit. Urgent homeless enquiries are transferred to the on call duty officer. These services would continue should the opening hours be aligned therefore there would never be a situation where a tenant would not be able to access emergency advice.
- 2.3 The table below details the number of calls received during specific period since the new telephone system was installed on 16 December 2020 up till 31 January 2021. It clearly shows that the busiest times for telephone calls are between 9.00am and 5.00pm.

Time period	Average number of calls per time period per day (30 days)	Average number of calls per 15 minute time period per day	Total calls received during this period
8.30am – 9.00am	3.6	1.8	110
9.00am- 1.00pm	99.3	6.2	2978
1.00pm – 5.00pm	69.4	4.33	2083
5.00pm – 5.15pm	0.6	0.6	19

- 2.4 Further analysis of the number of calls received by the CAS team between 8.30am and 9.00am during a more recent four week period has shown that the number of calls received remains static with an average of less than two calls per day. During this twenty day period a total of only nine calls were received during between 5pm and 5.15pm.

2.5 Callers were asked why they contacted us at that time, Just over 50% provided a reason as detailed below.

Reason	Number of calls	Comment
Report priority one repair	7	These could have been reported to the emergency out of hours team
No specific reason for calling before 9am or after 5pm	19	
Lifestyle	2	Out of all of the calls logged, only two tenants said it would not be convenient for them to call at a different time

2.6 From a staffing aspect, to ensure that there is adequate cover, the CAS team currently have to work two shifts. If the opening times were aligned then the advisors would all work the same time and there would be no reduction in cover during the day.

2.7 Out of hours, tenants have the options of emailing their enquiries and raising queries via their My Account. Further work is taking place to improve the digital online offer for all tenants.

2.8 The alignment of the opening hours was discussed with the Tenants Forum and they unanimously agreed that the opening hours should be altered in line with recommendations. They felt that tenants needed to have uniformity with all other council services.

3.0 Proposals

3.1 It is proposed that the CAS contact centre operating hours aligns with the Councils contact councils opening hours. This will provide our residents with a service which has simplified opening hours and does not cause any confusion as to when the service is open.

3.2 Out of hours, there will be no change as tenants who need to report an emergency will transfer through to Careline as they currently do.

3.3 The alignment of the opening hours brings the additional benefit of providing increased stability to the service. There is no requirement for the advisors to have an early start or late finish which means there is an increase in the availability of staff to provide a service during busier times.

4.0 Equalities Implications

4.1 The proposed alignment of the opening hours do not present any specific equality issues.

5.0 Digital Implications

5.1 The ICT business unit will need to make a small one off amendment to the telephony system to align the opening times.

6.0 Financial Implications

6.1 There are no financial implications to this proposal.

7.0 Community Plan – Alignment to Objectives

7.1 No direct links to the Community Plan directly but moves the Council closer to service alignment.

8.0 Comments of Director/Housing Advisory Group

Tenants Forum on 10/2/21 - Agreed unanimously that the times should be altered in line with recommendations. They felt that tenants needed to have uniformity across all council services.

9.0 RECOMMENDATIONS that:

a) **The Committee approve the alignment of the opening hours.**

Reason for Recommendations

To update Members on the small change in service delivery.

Background Papers

Nil

For further information please contact Jill Baker on ext. 5810

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