

Report to: **Overview and Scrutiny Committee**
Date: **6 November 2018**
Title: **LOCALITIES TEAM UPDATE**
Portfolio Area: **Customer First**
Portfolio holder: Cllr Annabel Roberts

Wards Affected: **All**

Relevant Scrutiny Committee: **N/A**

Urgent Decision: **N** Approval and clearance obtained: **Y**

Date next steps can be taken: Any recommendations will be published to the Hub Committee on 20 November 2018

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RECOMMENDATIONS

That the progress of the Locality Team pending ongoing monitoring be noted with a further update report being presented to the Committee in 12 months' time.

1. Executive summary

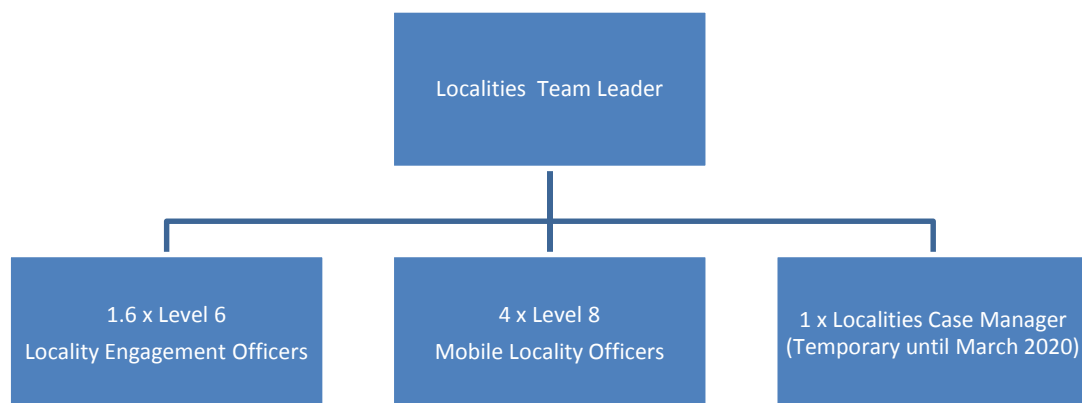
- 1.1 The Localities Team Leader brought a report to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee on 27 February 2018 detailing how the Localities Service had been operating in the previous 12 months, and how the Service had evolved from its initial inception in 2015. This report provides a further update on how the Localities Team has been operating since that report and also details changes that have taken place in the structure and operation of the Localities Team since the February report, together with the future direction of the Locality Service to continue to meet Council needs.
- 1.2 At the February 2018 meeting, the Overview & Scrutiny Committee recommended that the progress made in the Locality Team be noted, and that the effectiveness of the Locality based support provision in Okehampton be monitored and kept under review, with the five Okehampton Ward Members

being a key part of this process. The continuing presence in Okehampton will be reported on separately at a future meeting of this Committee (see paragraph 3.3 below).

- 1.3 The Localities Team continues to act as a link and support service providing information and support to Members, multi-agency partners, residents and officers on a wide range of resident-facing Council services. Locality working was a key and innovative part of the Council's transformation programme, and the Localities Team have been in operation for over three years. The Service continues to evolve and covers service elements previously covered by a number of departments across the Council. Work delivered by the Localities Team continues to be well received both within the Council and by residents and partners.

2 Background

- 2.1 The following background information provides an overview of how the Localities Team is currently working. The Locality Service acts as a liaison and support service which undertakes work on behalf of a number of services across the organisation.
- 2.2 There are four distinct job roles in the locality service as shown in the diagram below:



2.3 Mobile Locality Officers

There are currently four West Devon Mobile Locality Officers (Level 8) who cover designated areas across West Devon, and who are each equipped with a Council vehicle and an iPad. These officers undertake a wide range of routine tasks and continue to undergo extensive training to help them fulfil their roles. Current IT provision means Mobile Locality Officers are issued most of their workload manually on a daily basis via email. They receive work requests during the course of their day and are often able to respond quickly to cases requiring urgent attention within their area.

2.3.1 **Mobile Locality Officer Tasks**

The range of tasks undertaken by Mobile Locality Officers include:

- Regular information gathering (normally the supply of photos or the completion of short forms) for Assets, Council Tax, Elections, NNDR, Planning Enforcement, Environmental Health and Commercial Services.
- Property inspections including toilet checks and fire alarm testing
- Abandoned vehicle reports
- Fly-tipping reports
- Dog patrols
- Planning notices (and individual householder notifications)
- Private water supply testing
- Tree inspections to assess the condition of the trees
- Environmental nuisances
- Waste and cleansing issues – meeting with customers to resolve issues and encourage recycling
- Disabled Facility Grant visits
- Identifying street defects for repair / replacement
- Housing benefit/Universal Credit assistance visits
- Support at community and consultation events

2.3.2 It is important to note that many of the tasks undertaken by Level 8 Locality Officers were previously undertaken by a range of specialist officers across the organisation. The targeted use of Mobile Locality Officers for these tasks is therefore much more cost effective when taking into account officer time and travel costs. When one considers, for example, approximately 1,000 planning notices are posted over the course of the year, the savings soon stack up.

2.3.3 The workload of Mobile Locality Officers is extremely wide ranging, but is considered to be manageable, and the appointment of the Localities Case Manager (see paragraph 4.3 below) has led to greater consistency and an ease in identifying priority work and allocating officers accordingly. All Mobile Locality Officer tasks are recorded by email, with certain aspects recorded on W2 and All on Mobile. Team training has been carried out to ensure consistency of response for all customers.

2.4 **Locality Engagement Officers**

There are currently 1.6 Locality Engagement Officers (LEO) in West Devon, however the officer occupying the 0.6 post, is currently only carrying out case management duties for the Neighbourhood Planning function. The LEO for West Devon is a full time post-holder and uses her own vehicle for travel. The West Devon LEO's role is to provide a locality level, face to face point of contact, improving the customer experience by creating a seamless response to customer need.

2.4.1 **Locality Engagement Officer Tasks**

The range of tasks undertaken by the West Devon Locality Engagement Officer include:

- Attendance at a variety of engagement events and Link Meetings to inform residents and Town & Parish representatives of Council services.
- Interacting with contractors, special community interest groups and partners.

- First point of contact for Members with responsibility for taking ownership of queries/complaints and seeing cases through to the point of resolution
- Processing place based cases in W2 and dealing with customer correspondence through a variety of methods
- Working closely with Mobile Officers to find solutions to long standing/complex cases
- Processing and advising on Community Grants

Localities Team Leader

The Localities Service was initially set up and managed by a Level 3 Localities Manager. However, Localities now form part of the larger Case Management team within Customer First, and overall responsibility for the Service falls within the remit of one of the two Case Management Managers, who manage all of the Customer First case managers across both Councils. The Localities Team is now directly managed on a day to day basis (in line with other services within Case Management) by a Team Leader, who was appointed in October 2017. As well as line managing two Engagement Officers and 4 Mobile Locality Officers at West Devon, the Localities Team Leader directly manages a team of nine in South Hams. The main purpose of the Team Leader role is to lead, manage and motivate a team of staff in the Localities Team and ensure effective deployment of resources and to develop the range of locality services and support.

- 2.4.2 A key part of the Case Management Manager's role is working with the Extended Leadership Team to develop the Locality Service and ensure business demand across the organisation is met. The inherent flexibility of the Locality service has allowed Case Management to provide additional support in areas experiencing exceptionally high workload e.g. Waste Case Management.

3. PERFORMANCE

- 3.1 From October 2017 to October 2018, the West Devon Locality Team delivered the following key outputs. It should be noted that the Team was operating with reduced capacity at 3 x FTE for this entire period due to long term sickness/redeployment).

- Undertook 400 routine public toilet inspections
- Affixed 550 planning notices and delivered over 3000 neighbour notifications
- Dealt with 56 abandoned vehicles
- Investigated 217 fly tips
- Undertook 400 individual dog patrols
- Currently following up 1500 household election forms
- Carried out 230 private water quality supply tests
- Visited 300 potentially empty properties
- Carried out 27 visits to complete housing benefit/universal credit claims with residents requiring digital assistance
- Delivered over 400 recycling boxes due to extreme customer demand
- Carried out 20 periodic housing inspections on Council Let properties

- 3.2 The Locality Engagement Officer has undertaken a variety of engagement events, with a particular focus on promoting the new recycling scheme and garden waste subscription service over the past year. The West Devon LEO has attended the Okehampton, Chagford and Lamerton shows, the Okehampton Food and Music Festival, The Dickensian and Edwardian

evenings, as well as holding regular engagement events at supermarkets in Tavistock and Okehampton. The LEO has also assisted with hand washing demonstrations for Junior Life Skills and with the Joint Local Plan consultation held at the beginning of November.

- 3.3 Since the closure of the CSC offices on St James Street in Okehampton, in line with this Committee's recommendations, the West Devon LEO has been based at the Ockment Centre twice a week, offering advice on a range of Council services, and assisting some residents to complete benefits, council tax and Devon Home Choice applications, in addition to dealing with a number of blue box queries following the introduction of the new scheme in April. A Task & Finish group of Members is being set up to report back on the effectiveness of this arrangement to a future Overview & Scrutiny Committee.
- 3.4 As well as carrying out engagement work, the LEO also assists with locality based enquiries and has dealt with over 1200 resident enquires in the past 12 months, resolving nearly 500, and allocating over 700 to other officers. The LEO also picks up any formal complaints relating to the waste contract, and works with residents and the contractors to resolve these.

4. FUTURE LOCALITY SERVICE DEVELOPMENTS

4.1 Mobile Locality Officers

The Mobile Locality Officers are well placed to offer a flexible, timely and a wide ranging support function to the entire organisation. Their current responsibilities mean that they are involved with every service area, and are able to re-prioritise their workload at short notice to provide support wherever it is most needed. Such is the range of their current responsibilities, it would be difficult to introduce more work into their daily schedules, without impeding on the quality/frequency of existing work. There have been initial discussions on how the Mobile Officers could be better integrated into the processes in commercial services to ensure that the customers in the high volume areas receive an excellent level of customer service. This work will coincide with the decisions due next month regarding the waste procurement.

The plan for the next 12 months will also include the better use of existing technology. This will enable us to monitor the location of officers in real-time and ensure that work is allocated to the closest possible officer, reducing unnecessary travelling time and associated fuel costs. Training for essential uses will be provided, however shadowing colleagues, and "job swaps" will be encouraged to broaden horizons and teach new skills in other areas.

New uniforms and vehicles are on order for all Mobile Officers, and, following the expiry of existing contracts, some of the new vehicles will include the advertisement of other internal services, and this will be trialled as a form of mobile advertising.

There will also be more targeted enforcement campaigns in the next 12 months, as we work closely with colleagues in Environmental Protection to target hot spots for littering and dog offences under the PSPO legislation.

4.2 **Locality Engagement Officers**

The current engagement resource is restricted by current assignments, however there is a willingness to adapt the role to allow more time for proactive contract monitoring and ensuring that customer complaints are dealt with effectively first time around. This again, will be part of a wider consideration on how the Localities Team is best placed to meet the future needs of Commercial services, as well as the rest of the organisation.

4.3 **Locality Team Case Manager**

The most significant change that has taken place in the structure and operation of the Localities Service since the February 2018 report, is the appointment last spring of a dedicated Case Manager (Level 8). The Case Manager is responsible for allocating the day-to-day work of the Mobile Locality Officers and also overseeing the internal working relationships between stakeholders and colleagues. This appointment has freed up the equivalent of a full time Locality Engagement Officer (Level 6), as this responsibility was previously split between the 4 Engagement Officers across both Councils. The creation of this temporary post has been extremely successful and the Case Manager offers an excellent level of support to the Mobile Officers whilst they are carrying out their day to day duties. The added level of consistency that this role has created has allowed us to identify improvements in processes and further improve the communication with our stakeholders. As well as allocating and collating work from the team, the Case Manager also answers resident enquiries and coordinates work activities with Specialists and Case Managers. As this is an intensive role, there is little scope to extend it to include more duties, and instead, the emphasis will be on further improving automation and work processes to ease the manual intervention required in many of our processes.

4.4 **The Team**

The Localities Team are a cohesive unit and meets regularly in South Hams and West Devon to discuss any area specific issues, hear updates and talk about team performance. Occasionally the team meets as a whole for training, or dedicated workshops on specific areas. Earlier this year, the Team had an away day in Exeter, the emphasis on this was self-reflection, perception and team working. The day received excellent feedback, and the time spent as a group, especially for those who work alone, was invaluable.

We continue to receive compliments regularly, however we will be striving to improve the consistency of our communication this year, and ensure that everyone is well versed on how to provide the excellent level of customer service that we should be providing every time.

5. **Implications**

Implications	Relevant to proposals Y/N	Details and proposed measures to address
Legal/Governance	Y	The Overview & Scrutiny Committee is responsible for considering and scrutinising how the Council is performing as an organisation.

Financial	N	There are no direct financial implications of the contents of the report.
Risk	N	Section 3 of the report shows the service is performing well.
Comprehensive Impact Assessment Implications		
Equality and Diversity	N	
Safeguarding	N	
Community Safety, Crime and Disorder	N	
Health, Safety and Wellbeing	N	
Other implications	N	

Supporting Information

Appendices:

None

Background Information:

Report to Overview & Scrutiny Committee meeting on 27 February 2018