

Report to: **Overview and Scrutiny Committee**
Date: **19th November 2019**
Title: **LOCALITIES TEAM UPDATE**
Portfolio Area: **Customer First**
Portfolio holder: Cllr Jeff Moody

Wards Affected: **All**

Relevant Scrutiny Committee: **N/A**

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

Date next steps can be taken:

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RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Committee continue to adopt the locality model pending ongoing monitoring and a further report in 12 months.

1. Executive summary

- 1.1 The Localities Team Leader brought a report to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee in November 2018, detailing how the Localities service had been operating in the previous 12 months, and how the service had evolved from initial inception in 2015. In the previous meeting, the Team Leader set out future plans on how to further develop the Locality service to continue to meet Council needs. The Overview & Scrutiny (Internal) Committee recommended in November 2016 that the Locality Model should continue to operate pending ongoing monitoring and a 12 monthly report.
- 1.2 The Localities Team act as a liaison and support service providing information and support to Members, multi-agency partners, residents and officers on a wide range of resident-facing Council services.
- 1.3 Locality working was a key and innovative part of the Council's transformation programme, and the Localities Team have been in operation for over four

years. The Service continues to evolve and covers service elements previously covered by a number of departments across the Council. Work delivered by this Localities Team continues to be well received both within the Council and by residents and partners.

- 1.4 The South Hams Locality Service is currently being reviewed by a Member led Task & Finish Group following recommendations from an update report to South Hams Overview and Scrutiny Panel in October 2019. The recommendations arising from this Group will not have any implications on the delivery of the West Devon Borough Council Locality Service.

2. Background

- 2.1 The following background information provides an overview of how the Localities Team is currently operating. The locality service was formed in June 2015 as a liaison and support service which undertakes work on behalf of a number of services across the organisation. There are four distinct job roles in the locality service as shown in the diagram below:



2.2 Mobile Locality Officers

There are four Mobile Locality Officers who cover designated areas across West Devon. These officers are paid a Level 8 salary and are each equipped with a Council vehicle and an iPad. These officers undertake a wide variety of tasks and receive dedicated training to help them fulfil their roles. Mobile Locality Officers are manually issued their workload on a daily basis via email and increasingly through the All on Mobile platform. They receive varied work requests during the course of their day and are often able to respond quickly to cases requiring urgent attention.

2.2.1 Mobile Locality Officer Tasks

Types and range of tasks undertaken by Mobile Locality Officers include:

- a. Regular information gathering (normally the supply of photos or the completion of short forms) for Assets, Council Tax, Elections, NNDR, Planning Enforcement and Environmental Health and Commercial Services, or for escalation to Locality Engagement Officer.
- b. Property inspections including toilet checks and fire alarm testing
- c. Abandoned vehicle reports
- d. Fly-tipping reporting, investigation and collection of small fly tips
- e. Dog patrols
- f. Planning notices (and individual householder notifications)
- g. Private water supply testing
- h. Visual preliminary inspections to assess the condition of the trees
- i. Environmental nuisances
- j. Waste and cleansing issues – meeting with customers to resolve issues and encourage recycling
- k. Disabled Facility Grant Visits
- l. Identifying street defects for repair / replacement
- m. Housing benefit and Council Tax reduction digital assistance visits
- n. Support at community and consultation events
- o. Contract monitoring of all aspects of the FCC contract
- p. Taxi rank inspections to ensure driver and vehicle compliance
- q. Annual Housing site survey relating to the new homes bonus

2.2.2 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 in the organisation who were paid Level 6 and above. The targeted use of Mobile Locality Officers for these tasks is therefore much more cost effective. For example, the average hourly rate of a qualified Planning Officer is over £5 more per hour than a Mobile Locality Officer. When one considers approximately 1,000 planning notices are posted over the course of the year the savings soon stack up.

2.2.3 The workload of Mobile Locality Officers, whilst varied, is felt to be manageable, and the appointment of the Localities Case Manager has led to greater consistency and an ease in identifying priority work and allocating officers accordingly. Most Mobile Officer work is recorded by email, with certain aspects recorded on W360 and ever increasing amount on All on Mobile. Team training has been carried out to ensure the quality and consistency of the work carried out by the MLO's

2.3 **Locality Engagement Officers**

There are currently 1.6 Locality Engagement Officers covering West Devon, however the officer occupying the 0.6 post, is currently only carrying out case management duties for the Neighbourhood Planning function. Dil Lord is the full time post holder and uses her own vehicle for travel. Dil'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. Dil also plays an important role in providing the Northern Outreach service at the Ockment Centre in Okehampton each Wednesday.

2.3.1 **Locality Engagement Officer Tasks**

Types of tasks undertaken by the West Devon Locality Engagement Officer:

- a. Attendance at a variety of engagement events and Link Meetings to inform residents and Town & Parish representatives of Council services.
- b. Interacting with contractors, special community interest groups and partners.
- c. First point of contact for Members with responsibility for taking ownership of queries/complaints and seeing cases through to the point of resolution
- d. Processing place based cases in W360 and dealing with customer correspondence through a variety of methods
- e. Working closely with Mobile Officers to find solutions to long standing/complex cases
- f. Processing and advising on Community Grants and processing the West Devon Member Locality Grants
- g. Contract monitoring of the FCC contract by carrying out regular street inspections in the Borough's high profile zones.

2.4 **Localities Team Leader**

The Localities Service was initially set up and managed by the Level 3 Localities Manager. However, since the Localities Manager's move to another post, the structure of this service has been revised. Localities now form part of the larger case management team within Customer First, and managed by the Case Management Manager, who manages all of the Customer First Case Managers across both Councils. The Localities Team is now directly managed (in line with other services within case management) by a Level 5 Team Leader with this post being shared across the two authorities. As well as line managing six West Devon members of staff, the Localities Team Leader directly manages a locality team of nine in South Hams, and the Localities Case Manager who works equally across both authorities (but predominantly based from Kilworthy Park). The main purpose of this role is to lead, manage and motivate a team of staff in the Localities Team and ensure effective deployment of resources.

- 2.4.1 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, Elections, Neighbourhood Planning and Trees.

3. **PERFORMANCE**

- 3.1 In the past year the West Devon Locality Team delivered the following key outputs, (it should be noted that the team were operating with reduced capacity at 3 x FTE for part of this period due to long term sickness/redeployment)
 - a. Undertook over 400 routine public toilet inspections
 - b. Affixed over 700 planning notices and delivered over 4000 neighbour notifications
 - c. Dealt with 48 abandoned vehicles
 - d. Have investigated and collected/reported for collection 136 Fly-tips
 - e. Undertook over 300 individual dog patrols

- f. Followed up 800 household election forms to ensure the accuracy of voting information
 - g. Carried out 215 private water quality supply tests
 - h. Visited 350 potentially empty properties
 - i. Carried out 100's of tree inspections to assess for Ash dieback, provide mapping data and report on the general condition of other species
 - j. Carried out 10 Periodic Housing inspections on Council Let properties
 - k. Carried out 684 individual street inspections (since April 2019) to ensure contract compliance
- 3.2 The Locality Engagement Officer has undertaken a variety of engagement events, with a particular focus on promoting the imminent enhancements to recycling service. Dil 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. Dil has also led on the recycling demonstrations for Junior Life Skills which is a valuable event for local school children.
- 3.3 Since the closure of the CSC offices on St James Street in Okehampton, Dil has been based at the Ockment Centre every Wednesday offering advice on a range of Council services. This includes tasks such as assisting residents completing Benefits, Council Tax and Devon Home Choice applications. Dil has assisted 204 visitors in the past 12 months.
- 3.4 As well as carrying out engagement work, Dil also assists with locality based enquiries and has resolved 447 in the past 12 months. Dil also takes ownership of any formal complaints relating to the waste contract, and works with residents and the contractors to resolve these.
- 3.5 In the past 6 months the team have focussed on ensuring that the Council achieves excellent value for money from the FCC contract by formalising many of the monitoring processes that were already in place. This includes the better utilisation of mobile technology to report and challenge contract failures in accordance with the specification.
- 3.6 All of the West Devon Locality officers assisted with the Royal visit to Tavistock and the Goose Fair organisation and clean up, both of which received positive feedback from stakeholders this year.
- 3.7 Luke Rees the Localities Case Manager received 1st place in the 'Responsible' category of the Staff Awards in October 2019, this was in recognition for his hard work and commitment in making his new role a success over the past 18 months.

4. FUTURE LOCALITY SERVICE DEVELOPMENTS

- 4.1 The 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 nearly 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. The main aim of the

Localities service is to ensure that resources are best allocated to align with Council priorities and in the coming months the team will be working closely with the waste contractor to ensure the seamless roll out of the upcoming recycling changes and 3 weekly refuse trial.

As well as continuing to currently provide the Northern Outreach service at the Ockment Centre, the West Devon Localities team are likely be involved in the future development of this offering. A separate report on Access to Services was considered by HUB Committee on the 6th November.

The main focus for the next 12 months will be to continue to improve our internal working processes to ensure we have the capacity to meet the ever increasing demand on the team's resources. We hope to be able to introduce vehicle tracking to provide location data that can be used to analyse areas of demand and keep officers even safer whilst carrying out their duties. There have also been initial discussions about the practicalities of the MLO's using electric vehicles to reduce fuel costs and the environmental impact of their role. This will be explored in the coming months.

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