

Briefing Note for submission to Overview and Scrutiny Members

Date: 3rd September 2012

Title: Kidsgrove Customer Service Centre Partnerships
Submitted to: Transformation and Resources O&S Committee
Submitted by: Head of Customer & ICT Services

1 Background

- 1.1 At your meeting of 12th June, a request was made by Members for information regarding the proposed tenancy by the Police in the Kidsgrove Customer Service Centre and the potential effects on the Centre resulting from their occupancy; particularly with reference to the future provision of services to the Kidsgrove community.
- 1.2 This briefing note seeks to address and allay the main concerns and issues raised by Members and the public, identified as:
- Police accommodation in the Centre
 - Services provided by the Police at the Centre
 - Future accommodation in the Centre for outside agencies
 - Staff training to manage potentially difficult customers
 - Future proposals
- 1.2 Kidsgrove Customer Service Centre provides Council and partner services through a “community hub” arrangement, and it was always envisaged that where possible community partnership working would be accommodated and encouraged, and the overall aim is to fully occupy the building. Staffordshire County Council Childrens’ Services already occupy part of the first floor at the Centre, and have exclusive use of Interview Room 3 on the ground floor. Visitors to the centre also benefit from improved access to Kidsgrove Town Council through a front line service provided by Customer Services staff.

2 Issues

- 2.1 In addition to all main Borough Council services, together with Blue Badges, Concessionary Bus Travel cards and Senior Rail cards, Staffordshire Cares (adult social care referrals) and Registration of Births, the Centre currently provides other partner services on a booking arrangement.
- 2.2 Staffordshire Police are in the process of entering into an agreement with the Borough Council for rooms on the first floor of the Centre and exclusive use of Interview Room 4 on the ground floor, which will be let by way of a lease arrangement. The lease is anticipated to be for 15 years, dependent on both parties continuing to be satisfied with the arrangements.
- 2.3 In addition Police staff will provide an enquiry service, utilising an additional desk to be constructed at their cost, next to the three existing customer services desks in place of the current room to the left of the desks. This will mean that the existing desk allocations will not change as a result of the tenancy. Police access to the Centre will be via their Force Access Control System through a separate entrance. Floor plans showing the proposed alterations are shown as Appendix A. Details of the services to be provided by the Police on a day to day basis at the Centre are shown as Appendix B.

The Police have stated that they have reviewed the services currently being delivered at Newcastle and Kidsgrove Police Stations and have undertaken to relocate some service provision to other more suitable police station environments.

- 2.4 Occupancy is provisionally by the end of October and, subject to the legal agreement being in place, work on the upstairs rooms is anticipated to start on 17th September for 5 weeks.
- 2.5 Inevitably, an additional tenant will impact on the availability and usage of the accommodation in the centre. Although in the first instance, the Citizens Advice Bureau will have one less room available on the days they are in attendance, this could be mitigated through discussion with Childrens' Services to provide flexibility in usage of Interview Room 3 if needed and available, in the spirit of partnership working. A table of the room allocations following the Police move to the Centre is shown as Appendix C.
- 2.6 The need to provide additional services at the Centre for the community is well recognised, and approaches have already been made to the following agencies:
 - Sanctuary Housing (was Beth Johnson Housing)
 - Staffordshire Housing
 - Choices Housing Association
 - Shelter (housing, homelessness and debt advice)
 - Changes (mental health)
 - Neighbourhood Watch
 - Business Innovation Centre (business advice)
 - Samaritans
 - Addaction (drugs and alcohol addiction and recovery)
- 2.7 Customer Services are awaiting responses to gauge interest. It is anticipated, and is normal practice in other customer service centres, that these services could be provided on a 'surgery' basis, with agencies in attendance at the centre at pre-allocated day and time slots on, for example, a monthly basis. Advance notice of events could be advertised in a similar way to those at the Victoria Hall. The Police have stated that the Force Local Service Officers will also fall in line with this regime.
- 2.8 As front line staff, Customer Services Agents undertake regular training and update sessions, and procedures are in place to ensure they are capable of responding in an appropriate manner to most situations. Human Resources work with Customer Services to provide suitable training and cover such topics as:
 - Dealing with aggression
 - Complaints Handling
 - Managing personal stress and good mental health
 - Equality and Diversity (including RNIB and RNID training)
 - First Aid training
 - Fraud & Corruption
 - Information Security
- 2.9 Tenants in the Centre are guided by and subject to the Council approved health and safety procedures in place at all customer service centres,

controlled by the Senior Customer Services Agent/ Team Leader on site. CCTV and panic alarms are installed at all centres. They are also expected to adhere to Customer Service Standards and the Police have indicated interest in their staff undertaking recognised customer services training.

3. Actions

- 3.1 Following occupancy, Customer & ICT Services will continue to monitor and review processes and practices, and work with the Police to ensure that joint working benefits the local community.

4. Comment for Members

If Members have any comments or questions on the information outlined in this briefing note, please contact the officer named above for further information.