

STOCKTON-ON-TEES BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET RECOMMENDATIONS

PROFORMA

Cabinet Meeting5th February 2009

1. Title of Item/Report

Access to Services - Review of Ingleby Barwick Community Access Point

2. Record of the Decision

Consideration was given to a report that detailed the results of a review of the Community Access Point service at Ingleby Barwick. The Ingleby Barwick Community Access Point was the first of a proposed borough-wide network of locations that operated on a part-time basis. Customers that wanted to interact with the Council on a face-to-face basis, but were unable to access one of three main multi-service centres, can call-in to talk to a Customer Service Officer.

In January 2006, Cabinet approved a vision for the way that the Council's customers might access its services in the future. This became the Council's Access to Services Programme and included the development of a corporate telephone contact centre, three multi-service centre in the town centres of each of Stockton, Billingham and Thornaby and a borough-wide network of "Community Access Points" for customers who had special needs or lived in outlying communities and might not be able to access one of the three town centre multi-service centres.

The plan for the Community Access Points was that through the use of mobile technology and the new CRM (Customer Relationship Management) software, Customer Service Officers could work in outlying areas on a "surgery" basis, visiting various locations regularly (e.g. once a week). Although it might not be possible to resolve the same range of queries at first point of contact as at one of the main multi-service centres, customers would be able to talk to officers face-to-face and the officer concerned would take ownership of any queries or requests for service that are raised, either dealing with them on the spot or following them through when they return to the main office.

During 2006, consultation exercises were undertaken with Members and Viewpoint Focus Groups to consider possible locations for the Community Access Points. Suggestions included supermarkets, GP surgeries and the mobile library bus. The consultation indicated that this type of service would be welcomed, however it was difficult to gauge

demand. It was therefore decided that, initially, one network point should be set up as a pilot, to enable further analysis and review.

In following up customer suggestions, an approach was made to Tesco Ingleby Barwick branch where management expressed an interest in working with officers to establish a Community Access Point within the store. Space could be provided for a "Council stand" in the main customer thoroughfare together with a room for private discussions with customers. It was decided to open the first Community Access Point within the Tesco store and that this should form the pilot scheme. Experiences of the exercise would inform the roll-out of other Access Points.

The Access Point was launched on 11th January 2008. It opened between 11:00am and 3:00pm each Friday. The hours of operation were originally 1:00pm to 4:30pm; however these were changed in September, to try to pick-up Tesco's mid-day customers, as it had been noticed that there were very few visitors later on in the afternoon.

Even with in-store publicity, promotions in Stockton News and local Ingleby Barwick newsletters, take-up of the service had been disappointing, averaging 9 enquiries per week. April 2008 was the busiest month with 62 enquiries and September was the quietest month with only 20 enquiries. With two members of staff available, there was the capacity to deal with many more enquiries.

A review of the Ingleby Barwick service had been undertaken, to inform a decision about a possible change in venue, frequency or time of the service. This had included consultation with residents and ward councillors, and trying radio as a new method of promotion. At its meeting on 4th December 2008, Cabinet requested a further report on the results of the review and recommendations arising from it.

During November 2008 a survey of Ingleby Barwick residents was undertaken to ascertain:

- * Awareness of the Tesco Community Access Point service
- * Awareness of the radio advertising campaign
- * Use of the service
- * Satisfaction with the way in which the service is delivered
- * Potential future use of the service
- * Need for the service
- * Suitability of the location and days/times of operation
- * Views and experiences about contacting the Council

In total 706 interviews were carried out – 450 doorstep interviews and

256 at the Tesco store. High level results of the interviews together with comments and conclusions were detailed within the report.

The Ingleby Barwick Ward Councillors had taken an active interest in supporting and promoting the Access Point and had provided valuable comments and feedback that had been incorporated into the review.

With regard the new Community Access Points at its meeting on 4th December 2008, Cabinet delegated the approval of any further trial Community Access Points to the Corporate Director Resources in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Access & Communities. The Customer Services team had been working with representatives from Tristar Homes to set up a joint Community Access Point in the Tesco store on Durham Road. This would operate on the first Friday of every month commencing 6th February 2009. It was envisaged that the service would be used by local residents as well as customers from the nearby villages that use the supermarket. This would provide the opportunity for a second trial in an area of different demographics from the first.

RESOLVED that:-

1. The trial Community Access service at Ingleby Barwick change from weekly to monthly and take place on Saturday mornings.
2. The range of activities at the Ingleby Barwick Access Point (and any new access points) be expanded to include promotions of forthcoming events and topical matters that may be of interest to residents.
3. The Ingleby Barwick trial be extended for a further six months at which point a final decision be made about the future of the service.

3. Reasons for the Decision

The recommendations takes account of the low take-up of the existing weekly service whilst accepting the results of consultation that indicate there was still demand for the type of service provided at the Community Access Points. The change will free-up staffing resources to deliver improved performance in the main contact centre or open new Community Access Points elsewhere within the borough.

4. Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

None

5. Declared (Cabinet Member) Conflicts of Interest

None

6. Details of any Dispensations

Not Applicable

7. Date and Time by which Call In must be executed

Friday, 13th February 2009

Proper Officer
09 October 2009