



Cabinet

Date **Wednesday 15 January 2014**
Time **9.30 am**
Venue **Committee Room 2, County Hall, Durham**

Public Question and Answer Session

9.30 a.m. to 10.00 a.m.

An opportunity for local people to have a 30 minute informal question and answer session with Cabinet Members

Cabinet Business

10.00 a.m. onwards

Part A

Items during which the press and public are welcome to attend - members of the public can ask questions with the Chairman's agreement

1. Minutes of the meeting held on 18 December 2013 (Pages 1 - 6)
2. Declarations of interest

Key Decisions:

3. Customer First Strategy Refresh 2014-2017 - Report of Corporate Director, Neighbourhood Services [Key Decision: NS/22/13] (Pages 7 - 26)
4. Customer Access Point Review - Joint Report of Corporate Director, Neighbourhood Services and Corporate Director, Regeneration and Economic Development [Key Decision: NS/23/13] (Pages 27 - 64)

Ordinary Decision:

5. Local Education Partnership Director - Report of Corporate Director, Resources (Pages 65 - 68)
6. Such other business as, in the opinion of the Chairman of the meeting, is of sufficient urgency to warrant consideration.

7. Any resolution relating to the exclusion of the public during the discussion of items containing exempt information.

Part B

Items during which it is considered the meeting will not be open to the public (consideration of exempt or confidential information)

Key Decision:

8. North East Industrial Estate - Future Options and Acquisition Strategy - Report of Corporate Director, Regeneration and Economic Development [Key Decision: R&ED/13/13] (Pages 69 - 80)

Ordinary Decision:

9. Acquisitions at Queen Street, Crook to Facilitate Sale of Former DCC Depot - Report of Corporate Director, Regeneration and Economic Development (Pages 81 - 92)
10. Such other business as, in the opinion of the Chairman of the meeting, is of sufficient urgency to warrant consideration.

Colette Longbottom
Head of Legal and Democratic Services

County Hall
Durham
7 January 2014

To: **The Members of the Cabinet**

Councillors S Henig and A Napier (Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council) together with Councillors J Brown, N Foster, L Howvells, O Johnson, M Nicholls, M Plews, B Stephens and E Tomlinson

Contact: Ros Layfield

Tel: 03000 269708

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

At a Meeting of **Cabinet** held in Durham Town Hall, Market Place, Durham on **Wednesday 18 December 2013 at 10.00 a.m.**

Present:

Councillor S Henig (Leader of the Council) in the Chair

Members of Cabinet:

Councillors J Brown, N Foster, L Hovvels, O Johnson, A Napier, M Nicholls, M Plews, B Stephens and E Tomlinson

Other Members:

Councillors E Adam, J Armstrong, J Clare, P Conway, M Dixon, I Jewell, R Lumsdon, A Surtees and R Todd

1 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 20 November 2013 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

2 Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

**3 Calculation of Council Tax Base 2014/15
Key Decision: CORP/R/13/04**

The Cabinet considered a report of the Corporate Director Resources which sought agreement on the Council's Council Tax Base for all domestic properties liable to pay council tax, as part of the council's budget setting process for 2014/15 (for copy see file of minutes).

Resolved:

That the recommendations contained in the report be approved.

4 2014/15 Budget, Medium Term Financial Plan(4) 2014/15 - 2016/17 and Service Plans
Key Decision: CORP/R/13/02

The Cabinet considered a joint report of the Corporate Director Resources and Assistant Chief Executive which provided an update on the 2014/15 budget, the Medium Term Financial Plan up to 2016/17, the Council Plan and Service Planning process (for copy see file of minutes).

Members commented on the local government financial settlement from the Government that was expected later that day, and although the figures had been forecast members expressed grave concerns at the impact once again this was going to have on Durham. The Authority would keep lobbying the government on the impact to Durham and the North East which appeared unfair as there was no regard to need or to the revenue levied from the council tax. Cabinet accepted that the Council would take its share in reducing the country's deficit however emphasised that this should be done fairly.

Resolved:

That the recommendations contained in the report be approved.

5 Draft Tree Management Policy
Key Decision: NS/25/13

The Cabinet considered a joint report of the Corporate Director, Neighbourhood Services and Corporate Director Regeneration and Economic Development on the consultation on a draft countywide tree policy for the management of all trees under Durham County Council's ownership and for those trees in private ownership which pose a safety risk to the public highway (for copy see file of minutes).

Resolved:

That the recommendations contained in the report be approved.

6 Climate Change Strategy and Delivery Plan
Key Decision: R&ED/12/13

The Cabinet considered a report of the Corporate Director Regeneration and Economic Development which informed of the progress of the Climate Change Strategy and Delivery Plan and requested direction regarding carbon reduction targets (for copy see file of minutes).

Resolved:

That the recommendations contained in the report be approved.

7 Proposals for the Development of Market Rent and Market Sale Housing in Durham
Key Decision: R&ED/18/13

The Cabinet considered a joint report of the Corporate Director Regeneration and Economic Development and Corporate Director Resources which outlined a proposal for the Council to develop its own market rent and market sale housing on County Council owned land and considered how best it could be delivered (for copy see file of minutes).

Resolved:

That the recommendations contained in the report be approved.

8 Response to Secretary of State Consultation - Creation of a Combined Authority for the North East
Key Decision: R&ED/20/13

The Cabinet considered a report of the Corporate Director Regeneration and Economic Development which provided information on the Secretary of State Consultation on the proposal to establish a Combined Authority for Durham, Northumberland and Tyne and Wear and ask Cabinet to consider the proposed response from the seven local authorities in the North East (for copy see file of minutes).

The Leader advised that the decision to be made was urgent because of the limited time in which the responses could be submitted to the Secretary of State, and due to this it needs to be free from call-in pursuant to paragraph 20(a) of the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules. He advised that The Chairman of the Council in consultation with the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board agreed that the decision proposed was reasonable in all circumstances and to it being treated as a matter of urgency, and that the call-in procedure would not apply in these circumstances.

The Corporate Director Regeneration and Economic Development asked the Cabinet to consider endorsing the single local authority response to the Secretary of State. He also suggested that the response include that Durham be protected from the liability which arises from the transport functions of the ITA and Nexus.

Councillor J Armstrong, Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board advised that at the Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the 9 December 2013 members considered a cover report and presentation focusing on the consultation by the Secretary of State on the proposal to establish a Combined Authority for Durham, Northumberland and Tyne and Wear. There was broad support by the members of the Committee for the principle of the Combined Authority, and the following comments were made:-

- The consultation period was too short, a very tight timescale for consultation particularly as it included the Christmas and New Year holiday periods.

- Due to the tight national timescale and the timing of the consultation this had resulted in a somewhat restricted engagement activity considering the proposed remit of the Combined Authority.
- In order to ensure transparency and openness in the decision making process, there needed to be robust and fit for purpose arrangements for scrutiny to ensure accountability.

Cabinet members advised of their support for the collective approach across the region, emphasising that this was not another level of local government, it would be a collective body that would be influential and have united voice for the north east at national level.

Resolved:

1. Agreed that the decision to be made was an urgent matter which should be excluded from call-in pursuant to paragraph 20(a) of the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules.
2. Endorsed the single local authority response to the Secretary of State consultation.
3. Agreed that the comments made by Overview and Scrutiny be included in the response by Durham, and that the response include for Durham to be protected from the transport liabilities.
4. Agreed to delegate to the Corporate Director in consultation with the Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Economic Regeneration the finalisation of the joint response and the submission to Government by the 2 January 2014.

**9 Review of Care Connect
Key Decision: R&ED/23/13**

The Cabinet considered a joint report of the Corporate Director Regeneration and Economic Development and Corporate Director of Children and Adult Services on the review of the Care Connect services and options available to meet the CAS MTFP savings proposal to reduce their expenditure on the Care Connect service from £3.3m to £2.3m from 2014 (for copy see file of minutes).

Resolved:

That the recommendations contained in the report be approved.

10 World War 1 Centenary Activity Programme

The Cabinet considered a report of the Corporate Director Neighbourhood Services which provided an overview of activity being arranged across the County to mark the Centenary of World War 1 (WW1-100) and sought member involvement in the planning process (for copy see file of minutes).

In relation to paragraph 30 of the report The Corporate Director Neighbourhood Services advised that the services identified had not been launched, a bid for HLF funding had been submitted in September, and if successful would come into effect in March 2015.

Resolved:

That the recommendations contained in the report be approved.

11 Boundary Amendments and Character Appraisals for Gainford Conservation Area

The Cabinet considered a report of the Corporate Director Regeneration and Economic Development which sought approval of an amended boundary and character appraisal for the Gainford Conservation Area (for copy see file of minutes).

Resolved:

That the recommendations contained in the report be approved.

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Cabinet

15 January 2014



Customer First Strategy Refresh 2014-2017

Key Decision NS22/13

**Report of Corporate Management Team:
Terry Collins, Corporate Director Neighbourhood Services
Councillor Brian Stephens, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for
Neighbourhoods and Local Partnerships**

Purpose of the Report

1. To seek approval to carry out a public consultation on a new Customer First Strategy for the Council for 2014-2017.

Background

2. In the light of MTFP savings and changing customer preferences, the Council needs to develop, implement and embed a revised Customer First Strategy across the council to replace the existing strategy agreed in 2010 following LGR.
3. The revised strategy document will provide a direction of travel for the way in which we will provide access to services and a commitment to ensure customers are at the forefront of service delivery within the context of reducing budgets and diminishing resources.
4. The main focus of the strategy document encompasses the main contact channels used by customers; streamlined service delivery and the council's approach to use of feedback, intelligence and data to inform service development.
5. In line with the 'whole council approach' to Customer Services the Customer First Strategy will seek to broaden accessibility to information and increase the online capability to transact with the council. This approach will ensure best use of existing resources and buildings to provide a network of service access points which is instantly recognisable through a single branding, provisionally entitled "Information Durham". When implementing this approach clarity will be provided in relation to where key transactions will be offered, such as benefits. By evolving this approach customers will have much greater access to services and information with little to no revenue budget implications.
6. The Customer First Strategy needs to be clear, concise and linked to the wider priorities of the Council. As delivery of the Strategy will result in changes both internally in relation to integration of services and enabling "channel shift" so that customers are able and want to access services through digital means at a time and location convenient to them. It is

important that a comprehensive consultation process is developed to enable effective engagement with all stakeholders.

Development of the Strategy

7. The first part of the refresh process has involved working with staff to develop a draft document which addresses the known issues surrounding effective customer care.
8. A cross council project team has been set up to drive forward the refresh of the strategy, which has contributed to its content and format; this included identifying service improvements in relation to access to services and statistical data around customer contact.
9. Research data from surveys showing customer preferences in relation to access channels and demographics in terms of the make-up of our communities has also been used to ensure the strategy document is focussed around customer needs.
10. A copy of the refreshed Strategy is attached at Appendix 2 for information.

Consultation

11. The statutory requirement to consult is based on section 3 of the Local Government Act 1999 in which it states that a best value authority must secure continuous improvement in the way its functions are exercised and in deciding how to fulfil its duty; an authority must consult a range of stakeholders including taxpayers.
12. It is proposed that a consultation exercise is undertaken to obtain the views of the public on a number of issues central to the strategy document and the direction of travel proposed in it including:
 - Consideration of the vision statement and main areas of focus
 - Current customer preferences
 - Future access channels
13. A number of consultation methods have been agreed to encourage wide participation, including:
 - On-line survey (Paper copies will be available at locations across the county to ensure those without access to PCs/internet access can participate)
 - Focus Group meetings and signposting through AAPs
 - Disability Partnership
 - Partnership Delivery Improvement Group
 - Investors in young people
 - People's Parliament

14. The consultation will take place over a 12 week period, commencing on 20th January 2014 and running until 14th April 2014
15. The results of the exercise will be included in a future report to Cabinet on the new strategy document.

Customer Access Point Review

16. Whilst it is intended to consult on the revised wider Customer First Strategy an immediate decision is required regarding the future provision of Customer Access Points to meet MTFP and Capital Programme timetables. A separate report on Customer Access Point provision is included on this agenda.

Recommendations

17. That Cabinet approves the commencement of a consultation on the Customer First Strategy
18. That a further report is brought back to Cabinet following the consultation exercise in order to confirm the final strategy document

Background Papers

Cabinet 29th June 2010 Customer First Strategy

Contact: Alan Patrickson 03000 268165

Appendix 1: Implications

Finance

The strategy aims to deliver value for money customer service within the context of savings targets

Staffing

Staff have been consulted in line with the Internal consultation exercise

Risk

A full Risk register has been developed

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

The strategy document sets out a clear commitment to ensuring that equality and fairness are key features of the Council's approach to customer service. The Equality Impact Assessment has identified a potential impact in relation to the review of access channels which may result in the potential reduction in Customer Access Points. A separate EqIA will be completed in relation to that review.

Accommodation

The Strategy action plan will include a review of the council's Customer Access Points

Crime and Disorder

Not applicable

Human Rights

Not applicable

Consultation

A range of consultation exercises have been developed in line with the consultation and engagement plan

Procurement

Not applicable

Disability Issues

Access to services is a key component of the Strategy

Legal Implications

Legal Advice has been sought and it is considered there are no implications.

Customer First Strategy

2014 to 2017



DRAFT



Altogether better





Foreword

Welcome to Durham County Council's Customer First Strategy for 2014 to 2017

This refreshed strategy sets out how, over the next three years, we aim to transform the way in which our customers access our services.

Our vision for this strategy is clear; we aim to:

“Deliver customer services that provide value for money, flexibility and choice whilst placing our customers at the heart of everything we do.”

We have come a long way since the new unitary council of County Durham was formed in 2009. At that time, we were committed to providing a consistent and responsive approach to all our customers whilst we transformed and harmonised the way we worked across the service areas. Our commitment to providing strong customer service has not changed; however we are now working in an environment of increased demand for services; changes to the welfare system and reducing budgets.

The council will have experienced a 50% reduction in the amount of funding it receives directly from the government by 2016/17. This challenging economic climate continues to dominate decision making and the priorities of the council. Our aim is to make sure that these cuts are well managed and that the impact on our customers is minimised. We will continue to consult widely on our savings plans and changes to services to ensure the needs of local people are understood and customer feedback is used to help shape future priorities.

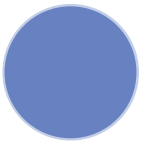
This strategy is aimed at all our customers, whether they be residents, visitors, businesses or partners. We want to ensure that we provide ways of contacting us which are convenient for our customers; that customers are able to easily report their requests, issues and concerns to us and that they are clear on when to expect that service to be delivered by us.

We need to balance diminishing resources with a commitment to providing essential services for vulnerable communities. This will require us to think differently about the way we provide services to develop and encourage self-service, and work better with our partners to save money and join up services.

This strategy document sets out our approach to these challenges over the next three years.

Councillor Brian Stephens

Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhoods and Local Partnerships



Delivering an altogether better Durham

The Customer First Strategy is central to ensuring that customers remain at the heart of our vision for an altogether better place which is altogether better for people. Our strategy supports and contributes to all five overarching priorities which are:

Altogether wealthier - focusing on creating a vibrant economy and putting regeneration and economic development at the heart of all our plans

Altogether better for children and young people - ensuring children and young people are kept safe from harm and that they can 'believe, achieve and succeed'

Altogether healthier - improving health and wellbeing

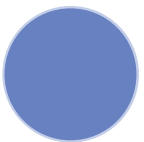
Altogether safer - creating a safer and more cohesive county

Altogether greener - ensuring an attractive and 'liveable' local environment and contributing to tackling global environmental challenges



Treating people fairly and respecting differences

We are committed to treating all our customers fairly, with respect and dignity, regardless of background or abilities. We will take account of individual needs and make appropriate adjustments to improve access to services. We take our responsibilities seriously and will train our staff, improve our buildings, provide accessible information and investigate all complaints fairly.



Understanding our county and customers

As our county is diverse in both its geography and the make-up of our communities, we need to ensure that we build a strategy which takes account of those diverse needs and the ways in which we are able to interact with customers who need our services. We also want the county to flourish as a place so we need to ensure that our visitors and businesses can easily access information to encourage them to visit and to set up or expand a business with us.



Changing technology and customer expectations

Each year we answer more than 910,000 telephone enquiries and deal with more than 270,000 face to face enquiries via our customer access points. The number of emails and web forms we receive are increasing significantly. The telephone remains the preferred method of contact.

The internet is changing the way that people interact both in terms of social contact and when requesting goods and services. Communities are developing around interest rather than just location. The rise of social networking presents the council with an enormous opportunity to engage with people in new and exciting ways.

We know that our customers' expectations regarding the way they can access our services are changing. There is demand for faster, easier contact at a time and place that is convenient to them. We need to meet this demand. We also need to ensure that we are providing access channels which give good value for money at a time when we are having to reduce resources to achieve efficiencies. This means improving our online provision to offer electronic self-service and better information services.

Did you know?

Payments for services online have increased by 65% from 2011/12 to 2012/13.

Did you know?

A recent survey shows 78% of our residents have access to the internet. Ipsos Mori Jan 2013.

Did you know?

Over 12,000 people follow the council's social media accounts (Facebook and Twitter).

We want to make improvements to our internet services and provide higher quality and more convenient access to services 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. We must also recognise that there are still groups of people who do not have access to the internet so the council will ensure that the right support is available to those who will need it.

Did you know?

76% of internet users in County Durham access/buy products and services online. This is higher than the national average.

The Digital Durham project is aiming to widen access to superfast broadband across the County, so we can enable residents to access our online services. This project will result in 98% of properties having access to superfast broadband by 2016.

Case Study

Moving school admissions online

School admissions moved from paper-based systems to web-based systems by encouraging parents to apply online. Historically, parents had two options when applying for a school place; online and via a paper-based application form inside the Parents' Guide to School Admissions publication.



The paper application form and the Parents' Guide to School Admissions publication was abolished and replaced with an information postcard signposting parents to apply online. This resulted in a significant increase in online applications between 2012 and 2013:

- online primary admissions increased from 36% ➔ 72%
- online junior admissions increased from 31% ➔ 70%
- online secondary admissions increased from 25% ➔ 77%

These changes allowed us to make savings, improve customer service and streamline our systems.

Customer First

We want to ensure that customers can access our services in a variety of ways; that our service delivery is effective, fair and efficient and that our staff are helpful, knowledgeable and friendly. Our vision for this is captured below, we want to:

“deliver customer services that provide value for money, flexibility and choice whilst placing our customers at the heart of everything we do.”

Key Outcomes

We have established three outcomes that we will work to deliver to embody the 'Customer First' ethos and ensure we are providing cost effective services. These are:

A range of effective and easy to use ways in which our customers can deal with us

Responsive and customer focussed services

Customer feedback informs learning and results in improved services

The rest of this strategy outlines how we will help deliver these outcomes.

A range of effective and easy to use ways in which our customers can deal with us

What this means

We recognise that our customers want to contact us in different ways depending on the nature of the interaction. We need to develop our website to provide better access to council services online. The rise of social networking presents the council with an enormous opportunity to engage with people in new and exciting ways. The telephone remains the most popular means of customer contact and we will continue to develop our technology in this area. We currently have 14 contact centres across the council dealing with a range of services; we will review this to consider joining up services where appropriate and work towards making it simpler for the customer and more efficient to operate.

We want to ensure that where our communities need to see us in person, that they are able to do so. However, providing face to face services is the most expensive means of interacting with our customers and as we are in a climate of reducing resources, we will need to carry out a review of our customer access points to consider where they should be located in the future, based on customer need and providing value for money. We will also ensure that our customers are aware that they can access service information in any of our buildings, and we will continue to explore opportunities to deliver face to face services outside of the traditional access points, working with other familiar service providers.

We need to be clear about what standards of service customers can expect to receive from our staff when contacting the council. We will monitor our performance in relation to timeliness and quality of service and use this to make improvements where we can.

Did you know?

In 2012/13 there were 31 reports of abandoned shopping trolleys.

Did you know?

In 2012/13 11,871 street lighting requests were logged.

Did you know?

When it's wintry weather you can go online to see which roads are gritted where you live, work or travel.

Our commitment:

- Consider "access for all" when making decisions about how people can contact us.
- Provide more and better self service facilities in our public buildings.
- Use social media to communicate messages quickly and widely.
- Refresh our service standards and the way we report our performance.
- Provide opportunities for our customers to access online services and continue to expand broadband in the county.
- Ensure we can deal with out of hours emergencies such as flooding incidents.
- Make it easier for customers to telephone us.
- Make better use of our buildings to widen access to information on services.

Responsive and customer focussed services

What this means

It is important that everyone who works in the council puts our customers at the forefront of the way we work and deliver services. To ensure that we are as responsive as possible, we will continuously look closely at the way we respond to customers enquiries. We will also eliminate processes which do not add value to customer enquiries, to make the service as efficient as possible

It is important that we are giving out the right information, advice and support and that our staff are courteous and polite. We will review our quality assurance systems and deliver a new programme of customer care training so our staff can deal confidently with customers.

We will look in-depth at a number of our key areas of service delivery to review the customer experience and improve the way we work. This will mean eliminating wasteful parts of the process, reviewing our letters, forms and information to ensure they are clear and easily understood and use customer feedback to improve the quality of our service provision.

Did you know?

In 2012, approximately 40,000 people were helped to stay in their own homes through the provision of community based services such as home care, day care, equipment, adaptations and respite care arrangements.

Did you know?

In 2012/13 customers submitted 16,468 requests regarding delivery of refuse and recycling containers.

Our commitment:

- Take account of individual needs and make appropriate adjustments to help all customers access council services.
- Improve the way we deal with customers by implementing a new customer care training package.
- Ensure our communications are as clear as they can be including ensuring forms and letters are easy to read.
- Identify where ICT solutions can improve the way services are delivered.
- Consider changing our working arrangements to accommodate customer needs.

Customer feedback informs learning and results in improved services

Did you know?

Only 2% of the complaints received into the Council in 2012/13 were escalated to the Local Government Ombudsman.

We have made some major changes to the ways in which we provide services; including implementing alternate weekly collections for waste and recycling; and introducing charges for some services.

It is important that we capture the views of our service users so that we can learn from this feedback and use it to review the way in which we provide services. We are also committed to using the information we have on the reasons for people contacting us, so we can build that into service improvement. We also need to build our information systems so we can adapt services to meet the diverse needs of our communities.

Did you know? If you follow us on Twitter and Facebook:

You can get regular updates when weather causes disruption to our services.

You can find out what we're doing to make County Durham altogether better #lovedurham.

Our commitment:

- Take your views into account when improving services.
- Enable customers to access their information securely online.
- Use customer feedback to inform business planning.
- Monitor the equality impact of service changes and use that information for future service development.
- Review the way in which we deal with all customer feedback, including complaints, compliments and comments.
- Tell customers when their feedback has been used to shape service provision through 'you said, we did' information.

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Appendix 3

Durham County Council – Altogether Better equality impact assessment form

NB: Equality impact assessment is a legal requirement for all strategies plans, functions, policies, procedures and services. We are also legally required to publish our assessments.

You can find help and prompts on completing the assessment in the guidance from page 7 onwards.

Section one: Description and initial screening

Section overview: this section provides an audit trail.

Service/team or section: **Customer Relations, Policy and Performance**

Lead Officer: Mary Readman

Start date: 19th November 2012

Subject of the Impact Assessment: (please also include a brief description of the aims, outcomes, operational issues as appropriate)

Background

- 1 With the creation of the new Unitary Council, the 'customer first' ethos became a cornerstone of the new Council's approach focusing on putting the customer's needs at the forefront of the council's work by improving customer service and joining up service areas.
- 2 The existing Customer First Strategy was developed and adopted in 2010. Its aim was to transform the way that customers access our services and the services themselves so that they are modern, efficient, effective and customer focussed. The action plan focussed on identifying and understanding the needs of our current and potential customers, measuring levels of customer satisfaction, creating a customer focussed culture within the Council, making services accessible to all and to provide high quality services to the Council's customers.

Objectives

- 3 The refresh of the Customer First Strategy is designed to build on the previous version, learning from both the successes and challenges to date. The revised strategy is intended to set the direction of travel for customer contact, engagement and feedback for the next four years with the continued aim of transforming the way that customers access our services whilst still meeting our financial targets.
- 4 There are a number of key drivers for the development and delivery of the Customer First Strategy, these include the increasing financial challenges faced by the Council, a number of significant policy and legislation changes by central government and the changing nature of the communications environment in which the Council operates, increased digital access and awareness and the associated change in customer expectations.
- 5 Whilst the Customer First Strategy is designed to deliver consistent customer interaction across the whole council, the Customer Services team need to be at the forefront of its delivery, with a central role in delivering a joined up approach, service integration and customer routing.
- 6 The revised Customer First Strategy will have an overarching vision “to deliver customer services which provide value for money, flexibility and choice whilst placing our customers at the heart of everything we do” and three overarching outcomes:
 - i) Efficient and Effective Access Channels
 - ii) Responsive and Customer Focussed Services
 - iii) Treating People Fairly

Who are the main stakeholders: General public / Employees / Elected Members / Partners/

Is a copy of the subject attached? / No

If not, where could it be viewed? Forward Plan

Initial screening

Prompts to help you:

Who is affected by it? Who is intended to benefit and how? Could there be a different impact or outcome for some groups? Is it likely to affect relations between different communities or groups, for example if it is thought to favour one particular group or deny opportunities for others? Is there any specific targeted action to promote equality?

Any proposals to review or change Customer Access Points are likely to impact on customers across all protected characteristics. At this stage the impact is unclear but there is potential for both negative and positive impacts. The most likely impacts will be in relation to age and disability. A full impact assessment will be carried out as proposals develop

Is there an actual/potential negative or positive impact on specific groups within these headings?

Indicate :Y = Yes, N = No, ?=Unsure

Gender ?	Disability ?	Age ?	Race/ethnicity ?	Religion or belief ?	Sexual orientation ?
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How will this support our commitment to promote equality and meet our legal responsibilities?

Reminder of our legal duties:

- Eliminating unlawful discrimination & harassment
- Promoting equality of opportunity
- Promoting good relations between people from different groups
- Promoting positive attitudes towards disabled people and taking account of someone's disability, even where that involves treating them more favourably than other people
- Involving people, particularly disabled people, in public life and decision making

What evidence do you have to support your findings?

Decision: Proceed to full impact assessment No

Date: 19th

November 2012

If you have answered 'No' you need to pass the completed form for approval & sign off.

Section two: Identifying impacts and evidence- Equality and Diversity

Section overview: this section identifies whether there are any impacts on equality/diversity/cohesion, what evidence is available to support the conclusion and what further action is needed.

	Identify the impact : does this increase differences or does it aim to reduce gaps for particular groups?	Explain your conclusion, including relevant evidence and consultation you have considered.	What further action is required? (Include in Sect. 3 action plan)
Gender			
Age			
Disability			
Race/Ethnicity			
Religion or belief			
Sexual orientation			

How will this promote positive relationships between different communities?

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Section three: Review and Conclusion

Summary: please provide a brief overview, including impact, changes, improvements and any gaps in evidence.			
Action to be taken	Officer responsible	Target Date	In which plan will this action appear
When will this assessment be reviewed?	Date: 5 th December 2012		
Are there any additional assessments that need to be undertaken in relation to this assessment?	A full assessment will be carried out as the proposals develop		
Lead officer - sign off: Mary Readman			Date: 20 th November 2012
Service equality representative - sign off:			Date: 20 th November 2012

Please email your completed Impact Assessment to the Equality team - equalities@durham.gov.uk.

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Cabinet

15th January 2014

Customer Access Point Review



Key Decision NS/23/13

**Report of Corporate Management Team:
Terry Collins, Corporate Director Neighbourhood Services
Ian Thompson, Corporate Director Regeneration and Economic
Development
Councillor Brian Stephens, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for
Neighbourhoods and Local Partnerships**

Purpose of the Report

1. The report considers the current position and future direction of travel in relation to providing face to face access to services through Customer Access Points (CAPs). The report presents options for consideration and proposes a way forward in the light of customer requirements and savings targets.

Background

2. The Government's 2015/16 spending round and the finance settlement consultation published in the summer of 2013 identified a continuing deteriorating financial position for local government. The Council's most recent Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP4) has identified that the level of savings required in the period 2011 to 2017 has increased considerably to a figure of £222m.
3. Total revenue expenditure on Customer Services is approximately £4.06m, of which 50% is spent on CAPs. 85% of the Customer Services budget relates to staff costs.

Office Accommodation Strategy

4. Cabinet approved the original Office Accommodation Strategy on 2nd November 2010 to enhance the Council's customer service provision and rationalise office accommodation before April 2014.
5. Prior to LGR, district councils delivered the majority of services from their respective Civic Centre buildings. The move towards 'one stop shops' was emerging, particularly in relation to housing services, which resulted in some neighbourhood 'face to face' facilities. At the time of LGR therefore, face to face services were in a period of transition with an inconsistent provision across the County and with many interactions taking place through the traditional civic centre and cashier offices.

6. The Office Accommodation Strategy identified locations from which Customer Access Points would either be developed or moved. These were based around areas of need and with facility design influenced by customers.
7. The current Office Accommodation Strategy is an “invest to save” programme. The original budget of £8m was supplemented by an additional £200,000 approved at MOWG (Member Officer Working Group – Capital) and £450,000 contribution from Neighbourhood Services to cover the costs of Crook library relocation, which was an approved scheme in the capital programme. The plan anticipated that the capital expenditure would be exceeded by capital receipts from the sale of vacated sites.
8. Capital receipts to the value of £3,912,500 have already been realised, leaving accommodation at 17 Claypath, Teesdale House, Chester-le-Street Civic Centre, Old Bank Chambers and Croft Street Social Services Offices sites still to be marketed.
9. The projects listed in Table 1 have been delivered:

Table 1: CAP projects delivered:

Project	Details
Annand House	Meadowfield office refurbishment & CAP Closure
Consett	Closure of the Civic Centre and relocation of CAP
Crook	Library co-location with CAP and office refurbishment
Dragonville	Vacation and demolition of depot site for disposal
Durham	Relocation of CAP with library in Clayport
Easington	Closure of Council Offices and CAP
Green Lane	Spennymoor office refurbishment
Stanhope	DurhamTalk installation in the Dale Centre
Seaham	Opening of Seaham Multi User Centre
Chester-le-Street	Closure of the Civic Centre and relocation of CAP to shared facility with Cestria Community Housing

10. The projects listed in Table 2 remain in the Office Accommodation programme with an allocated capital budget; although, as yet they have not been delivered. There is also a total of £136,665 uncommitted revenue budget associated with these projects.

Table 2: Remaining CAP projects

Project	Proposed Nature of Scheme	Current Service CAP Provision	Capital Budget Allocation (£)
Stanley CAP	Co-location of CAP/Library into Louisa Centre	CAP located in Front Street. Building does not have suitable access for disabled people.	790,000
Newton Aycliffe CAP	Co-location of CAP/Library as part of Newton Aycliffe Leisure Centre project.	Customer Services surgery provided from Library.	433,613
Bishop Auckland CAP	Co-location of CAP/Library into Bishop Auckland Town Hall	CAP provided from Old Bank Chambers 3 days a week.	853,963
Peterlee CAP	Durham Talk Kiosk in either new Library or East Durham Homes	Customer Services and housing solutions surgeries provided from East Durham Homes outlet	20,160
Spennymoor CAP	Durham Talk Kiosk (To replace face to face provision in Spennymoor)	Full CAP.	50,000
Total budget allocated to remaining schemes in scope			£2,147,736

11. In advance of planned provision at Peterlee (DurhamTalk) and Newton Aycliffe (CAP), surgeries have been launched on a one day a week basis to meet the needs of customers in those areas. These surgeries are offered on a booked appointment basis, offering Council Tax and Benefits advice and assistance. This is an enhancement on previous provision where customers would either have to travel to Spennymoor or Easington. These surgeries have been delivered through partnership working with other services or agencies.

Services provided via CAPs

12. In the financial year 2012/13 a total of 295,000 interactions were recorded at the CAPs, 54% of these interactions were 'signposting' in nature, where the service provides general information or where an interaction does not require the customer's details to be taken e.g. a query regarding what can be recycled, asking directions or reception function.
13. Although CAPs are primarily used to manage Customer Services interactions they also host / enable a number of other services. Table 3 details services typically available at a CAP.

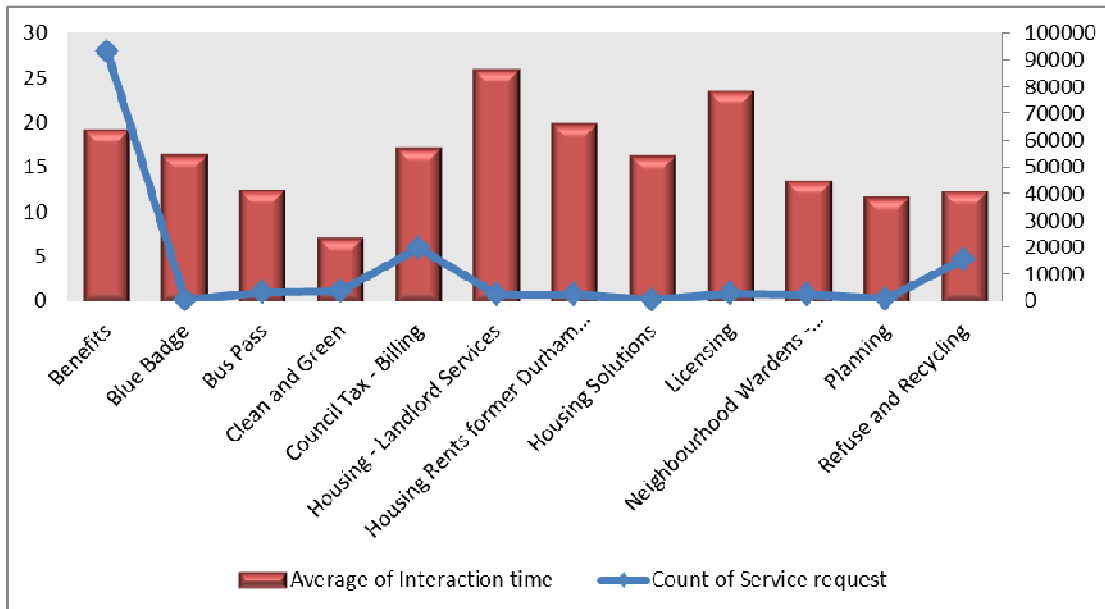
Table 3: Services provided at CAPs

Primary Customer Services functions	Signposting / other duties carried out by Customer Services staff	CAPs hosting services for
Street scene services e.g. Pest Control; Anti-Social behaviour (Neighbourhood Warden activities)	Libraries	Housing Solutions
Direct Services e.g. New bin orders, missed bin requests, special collections; Assist List	Cultural events (e.g. Lumiere tickets)	Planning
Highways services e.g. Pothole reporting, streetlighting faults; flooding issues	Reception duty for other services / buildings	Welfare Rights (Crook)
Benefits interactions – processing Housing Benefit and Council Tax support scheme applications; recording changes in circumstances	General help / advice	Blue badges
Council Tax Billing interactions		Licensing
Licensing Pilot (Consett)		Registrars
Durham City Homes – repairs; rents		
Bus Passes		

14. Demand for each of these services varies at each CAP. Appendix 2 gives details of the 5 most common services offered from each CAP in 2012/13 along with graphically represented CAP market penetration.
15. The table shows that the most common non-signposting transaction at all CAPs is benefits enquiries, while other frequent transactions vary with location. It should be noted that almost all CAPs include a hosted service in their top 5 transactions such as housing solutions, planning or licensing.

16. Just as demand varies so does the interaction time, Figure 1 shows the average interaction time for some of the most popular interview based transactions against the yearly demand for the service. This data only relates to interactions that require a customer service intervention and does not include signposting.

Figure 1: CAP Interviews – Total number and Interaction time



Note: Blue badges, housing solutions and planning are hosted services in the CAPs

17. It is estimated that 73% of all demand managed via CAPs currently requires a face to face interaction. The largest interaction type by volume of demand is benefits, where interviews take on average 19 minutes.

18. Face to face transactions are most commonly preferred by the customer, or required by the Council, for one or more of the following reasons:

- Council processes require that original documents be produced and witnessed.
- Council processes require that other validation is required on a face to face basis.
- Familiarity with staff and their understanding of individual cases.
- Assistance with forms is required due to literacy or comprehension needs.
- Processes rely on paper documents, for example some planning issues.

19. It can be determined from the demand and interaction information that CAPs provide a well-used service for the community and in some cases provide a vital method for customers to transact with the Council where face to face contact is required.

CAP review findings

20. Analysis work on the current use of CAPs was undertaken by the research and consultation team in Assistant Chief Executives, sponsored by the Customer Focus Board.
21. The analysis reviewed a full year's data to February 2013 exploring the types of interactions and services requested and also defining areas from which demand originates.
22. The three busiest CAPs (after removing signposted enquires) were Clayport, Seaham and Spennymoor. These three CAPs also have the largest catchment areas, and between them provide access to services for over half the population of County Durham.
23. Multiple service requests (MSR), where households visited the CAP three times or more are a key driver of high levels of footfall. Analysis showed that the benefits service area had the highest number of MSRs.
24. The three CAPs to the north of the county, Chester-le-Street, Stanley and Consett are much closer together geographically and therefore their catchment areas are smaller. Together their catchment areas comprise around a quarter of the population.
25. Stanley, Consett, Crook and Teesdale all have relatively high levels of face to face usage in terms of rates per population.
26. Old Bank Chambers, in Bishop Auckland, has the smallest catchment area serving only 1.5% of the population however this is likely to be because it is open just three days per week.
27. Customers visiting Spennymoor and Seaham travel further to access the CAP services with more than 40% of customers travelling 4 miles or more. These proportions were only slightly higher than Crook and Teesdale CAPs serving rural areas.
28. Geographical patterns of footfall show a moderate correlation with deprivation, with the strongest relationship with footfall being income deprivation. Other factors such as proximity are likely to be just as, if not more, important. Also many customers remain in pre-LGR patterns of usage with some using the Access Point in their former district rather than a nearer one.

Finance and MTFP savings

29. The total staff expenditure on frontline face to face service provision in CAPS is £1.744m. Appendix 3 shows a breakdown of staffing costs at each individual CAP.
30. In the three years from 2010/11 to 2012/13 a total of £1,019,347 has been removed from the overall Customer Services operational budget as part of the

MTFP savings programme with a further reduction of £172,000 currently taking place in 2013/14.

31. There is also an additional budget pressure arising from the 3% turnover efficiency target given to all service areas. In terms of Customer Services, given that 85% of total budget (93% of the controllable budget) relates to staffing costs, this provides a challenge in terms of achieving that saving which is £101,085 for 2013/14.
32. Further MTFP targets include a saving for Customer Services of £196k in 2014/15. This can only be achieved through a reduction in frontline service provision and is currently linked to CAP closure. While achieving savings at this level is challenging, it must be considered against other frontline savings across the Council in areas such as Highways and Streetscene. It is also likely that further budget pressures will result from the challenging financial settlement expected for 16/17 and beyond and it is anticipated that significant additional savings are likely to be required.

Current Position

33. The Customer First Strategy is currently undergoing a refresh, with a direction of travel to deliver more efficient and effective access channels and more responsive customer focussed services. The refreshed strategy recognises that whilst the Council remains committed to placing customers at the heart of everything we do, the means of delivering this must adapt to the changing financial circumstances and to the needs of customers who prefer to deal with the council by other means using technology such as through the website.
34. One of the key mechanisms for delivering these objectives is channel shift; the movement of customer contact away from expensive channels and towards cheaper channels wherever possible. Face to face remains the most expensive way of dealing with customer enquiries, with benchmarked SOCITM¹ figures of £8.62 per transaction against £2.83 for telephone transaction and £0.15 per web transaction.
35. The current strategic position is therefore in transition, balancing out the agreed accommodation strategy, the need to deliver immediate savings, and the developing strategy of channel shift to provide a low cost, sustainable service in the longer term.
36. In line with the 'whole council approach' to Customer Services the Customer First Strategy will seek to broaden accessibility to information and increase the online capability to transact with the Council, through the concept of 'Information Durham' This approach will seek to maximise existing resources and buildings to provide a network of service access which is instantly recognisable. When implementing this approach clarity needs to be provided in relation to where key transactions will be offered, such as Benefits. By

¹ Society of Information Technology Management

evolving this approach customers will have much greater access to services / information with little to no revenue budget implications.

37. Work on delivering the remaining projects outlined in the accommodation strategy, and detailed in Table 2 is currently on hold pending a decision on the direction of travel for frontline face to face CAPs.
38. In performance terms, it should be noted that the progress made to date with the Office Accommodation strategy to expand and develop CAPs has been successful in increasing usage and driving demand. Usage is currently increasing, with 55% more customer visits at CAPs in Q1 2013/14 when compared to Q1 2011/12. The majority of this demand comes from signposting activities and has been created as a direct result of the strategy to develop new and co-located facilities.
39. The most frequent non-signposting service via a CAP is benefits with an average interview taking 19 mins, however signposting activities take typically less than one minute. As a result the recorded average performance of the CAPs with respect to timeliness of service is improving as a result of thousands of new, but very short transactions being included within those reported.
40. As a result, and as can be evidenced, demand is currently being managed in the access points despite the large increase in footfall, driven by co-location of services.
41. The service remains alive and responsive to opportunities for managing demand in new ways. For example, working together and co-locating with housing providers in Peterlee and Chester-le-Street is already delivering an improved customer offer with modest revenue implications. There are limitations to this model however, and it should be noted that housing providers in the south of the county have already moved away from providing face to face provision.
42. When compared to near neighbours it is apparent that DCC is providing a generous proportion of Access Points to the population with DCC offering above the average number of access points per population. When comparing the number of access points against the population density DCC is once again providing a high number of access points with only 2 other authorities offering more access points when compared to comparable authorities (based on population density). In addition, DCC offers more access points per population than these two authorities.
43. However it should also be considered that the individual geographies and circumstances of other councils tends to be a larger influencer on the number of CAPs provided than population. Those authorities reporting large numbers of CAPs have typically co-located services into library buildings and as these facilities do not provide the full range of face to face services provided in the Council's CAPs direct comparison is difficult.

44. A breakdown of near neighbours and other selected authorities has been included at Appendix 4.
45. Work on developing the technology and management arrangements to deliver more effective channel shift through the enhancement of e-based methods of contact is on-going. Projects have been initiated to improve the website, develop the Civica e-billing / open access system and the 'proof of concept' for online booking and payment of a new bin request. By offering these alternative methods of accessing services it is anticipated that demand via traditional methods of contact will reduce.
46. While some progress is being made on the development of an effective e-based offer, this remains some way off until underlying ICT systems, including CRM and web platforms, suffering from historic underinvestment, are updated.
47. We know that our customers' expectations regarding the way they can access our services are changing; for example, one independent survey showed that 44% of our households use the internet to make payments, higher than nationally typical.
48. There is demand for faster, easier contact at a time and place that is convenient to them. We need to meet this demand. We also need to ensure that we are providing access channels which give good value for money at a time when we have to reduce resources to achieve efficiencies. Also the Government's approach to 'Digital by Design', which aims to deliver public services online or by other digital means, will increasingly see public services being required to consider digital access as the first option. However, we must recognise that there are still groups of people who do not have access to the internet or have a need to access services via a traditional method.
49. Finally, the full and long lasting impact of Welfare reform continues to be largely unknown. Local Authorities have been identified as a key partner in the delivery; however, detailed plans in a number of areas are yet to be determined. Given the significant footfall associated with Benefits transactions, the proposed systems around the introduction of Universal credit have the potential to significantly reduce demand for face to face activities.

Future direction

50. In light of reducing budgets, continuing pressures on revenue and general reductions in services County-wide it is timely to consider if the planned increase in CAPs and the associated revenue expenditure remains appropriate and sustainable.
51. A number of options for consideration are set out below, the first setting out a continuation of the current strategy to increase revenue expenditure; with further options being presented to further reduce revenue costs by permanent suspension of the office accommodation strategy and CAP closure or reprovision.

Options

Option 1 – Maintain the current strategy, increasing revenue expenditure on face to face customer services.

52. By continuing full delivery of the Accommodation Strategy, there will be capital expenditure of £2,147,736 and an increase in the Customer Services revenue budget of £136,665.

53. The developments at Stanley, Newton Aycliffe and Bishop Auckland would result in the closure of Spennymoor CAP as a face to face access point. Staff from Spennymoor would be redeployed to alternative locations to support delivery in these areas.

54. Overall access to service will increase. While there is currently a Customer Service presence in all areas identified in the Accommodation Strategy with some areas currently supported on a surgery basis, restarting the Accommodation Strategy would see some of these developed into full CAPs, as detailed in the following table

Table 4 Service provision through Option 1

CAP	CAP model
Barnard Castle	Co-located CAP and Library
Bishop Auckland	Co-located CAP and library
Chester-le-Street	Co-located CAP and housing provider
Clayport	Co-located CAP and Library
Consett	Dedicated CAP
Crook	Multi User Centre (MUC)
Newton Aycliffe	Co-located CAP
Peterlee	Surgery
Seaham	MUC
Spennymoor	No dedicated CAP
Stanhope	DurhamTalk
Stanley	Co-located CAP and Leisure Centre

55. In addition to CAPs identified above, information will be available in a variety of Council owned properties, providing customers with signposting assistance. This new provision will be presented under a common 'Information Durham' branding alongside identified CAPs. The Map at Appendix 5 shows what this provision will look like

56. This option would considerably increase access to services available prior to LGR.
57. As the Bishop Auckland, Newton Aycliffe and Stanley Access Points are proposed to be co-located with other services, it is expected that overall demand will increase as a result of the latent demand effect that has been seen in Crook. This would conflict with the Council's approach to channel shift.
58. The analysis carried out through ACE has shown Spennymoor is one of the busiest CAPs with one of the largest catchment areas. Should this close, in accordance with the current strategy, the nearest short term available alternative would be the service at Bishop Auckland, which, due to its facilities, would not be able to deal with the demand and would create significant operational and reputational difficulties until the projects at Bishop Auckland and Newton Aycliffe were delivered.
59. This option would also fail to achieve the required MTFP saving resulting in further steps being taken through contingency to address this.
60. In summary, over and above the existing provision, this option will result in:
- New, co-located CAPs at Stanley, Newton Aycliffe and Bishop Auckland.
 - The existing CAP at Spennymoor will close as a face to face facility.
 - The surgeries in Peterlee would be retained.
 - Revenue expenditure will increase by £136,655.
 - The existing planned MTFP saving will need to be mitigated.
 - Information Durham' provision and branding developed.

Option 2 - Revise the Office Accommodation strategy to achieve a reduction in revenue expenditure

61. Under this option, Spennymoor, the most popular CAP, will remain open as a staffed face to face CAP. Newton Aycliffe, Bishop Auckland and Peterlee will offer a surgery based service. This would be provided from suitable locations and through working with other service providers This would result in all the areas identified in the Office Accommodation Strategy receiving a Customer Service offer, as detailed in the following table

Table 5: Service provision through Option 2

CAP	CAP model
Barnard Castle	Co-located CAP and Library
Bishop Auckland	Surgery
Chester-le-Street	Co-located CAP and housing provider
Clayport	Co-located CAP and Library
Consett	Dedicated CAP

Crook	MUC
Newton Aycliffe	Surgery
Peterlee	Surgery
Seaham	MUC
Spennymoor	CAP
Stanhope	DurhamTalk
Stanley	Co-located CAP and Library

62. In addition to CAPs identified above, information will be available in a variety of Council owned properties, providing customers with signposting assistance. This new provision will be presented under a common 'Information Durham' branding alongside identified CAPs. Map available at Appendix 6.

63. This option would considerably increase access to services when compared prior to LGR. All of the areas identified in the Office Accommodation Strategy would still receive a service of some type, with a further enhancement upon implementation of the strategic direction of 'Information Durham'.

64. Customer Services is required to make £196,000 MTFP savings in 2014/2015 which can currently only be achieved by a reduction in service provision. By ceasing the planned CAP developments the identified £136,655 increase in operational costs would be avoided and therefore contribute to this target.

65. It is proposed that Bishop Auckland CAP, which is likely to be sold in the near future, be vacated and service re-deployed as a surgery in a nearby Council owned property. Services would continue on an appointments basis for Revenues and Benefits This would achieve the additional £59,345 saving. In total these changes would achieve MTFP target with considerably less impact on the front line than the full closure of Spennymoor CAP.

66. It would also be a feasible option to reconfigure the current plans to move the Stanley CAP into the Louisa centre as part of this option, without increasing revenue costs, to incorporate improved accommodation as part of this option.

67. In summary, this option will result in:

- Relocation of the CAP at Stanley
- a surgery based service at Bishop Auckland and Peterlee
- Newton Aycliffe will continue to offer surgery provision in line with the leisure centre / library project.
- Spennymoor will retain the existing CAP
- No further increases in revenue expenditure
- Savings incurred on Capital financing
- Planned MTFP savings achieved
- 'Information Durham' provision and branding developed

Option 3 – Closure of further CAPs

68. Option 3 would be to consider further closure of CAPs to continue the direction of travel towards expenditure reductions.
69. The analysis work undertaken to inform this review has shown that if CAPs other than Spennymoor were to be considered for closure to generate revenue savings then others should be considered based on popularity, proximity and current operating models. Appendix 7 gives further information on the CAPs
70. When taking a strategic view, considering the popularity, proximity and current operating model. The two CAPs which could be closed, where the impact could be mitigated by nearby CAPs, would be Bishop Auckland and Stanley.

Table 6: Service provision through Option 3

CAP	CAP model
Barnard Castle	Co-located CAP and Library
Chester-le-Street	Co-located CAP and housing association
Clayport	Co-located CAP and Library
Consett	Dedicated CAP
Crook	MUC
Newton Aycliffe	Surgery
Peterlee	Surgery
Seaham	MUC
Spennymoor	CAP
Stanhope	DurhamTalk kiosk

71. As with option 2, in addition to CAPs identified above, information will be available in a variety of Council owned properties, providing customers with signposting assistance. This new provision will be presented under a common 'Information Durham' branding alongside identified CAPs. Map available at Appendix 8
72. The two CAPs identified are currently in buildings that are either due to be vacated or require significant investment to support the customer experience already in place in nearby facilities. Additionally the usage and demographic analysis carried out showed that the customer base for both of these CAPs is geographically relatively small and self-contained, resulting in less of an impact than closures elsewhere in the county.
73. The impact on customers will be a requirement to travel to alternative CAPs or use another means of contacting the Council e.g. Website or telephone. In

Bishop Auckland the average traveling distance will increase from 2.1 miles to 5.6 miles. Customers that used the Stanley office would see average traveling distance increase from 1.9 miles to 5.6 miles.

74. It should be noted that Stanley CAP returned one of the highest usage rates per head within its catchment, implying that although demand would be displaced to nearby CAPs, this would impact the capacity to deliver services within this area.
75. It is proposed that CAP provision would be kept under review following the initial closure, with the expectation that as channel shift and process reviews develop, further face to face reductions would be possible.
76. From the closure of the two CAPs a total saving of £234k would be achieved. Resulting in an overall saving for this option of £371k.
77. A restructure of customer services would be required to achieve this saving with a required reduction of approximately 9 FTE.
78. In summary, this option will result in
 - Closure of CAP at Stanley
 - Closure of CAP at Bishop Auckland
 - Newton Aycliffe and Peterlee will retain the current surgery provision
 - Spennymoor will retain the existing CAP
 - Decrease in revenue expenditure
 - Savings incurred on Capital financing
 - Planned MTFP savings achieved
 - Information Durham' provision and branding developed

Option 4 – Adopt an alternative service delivery model

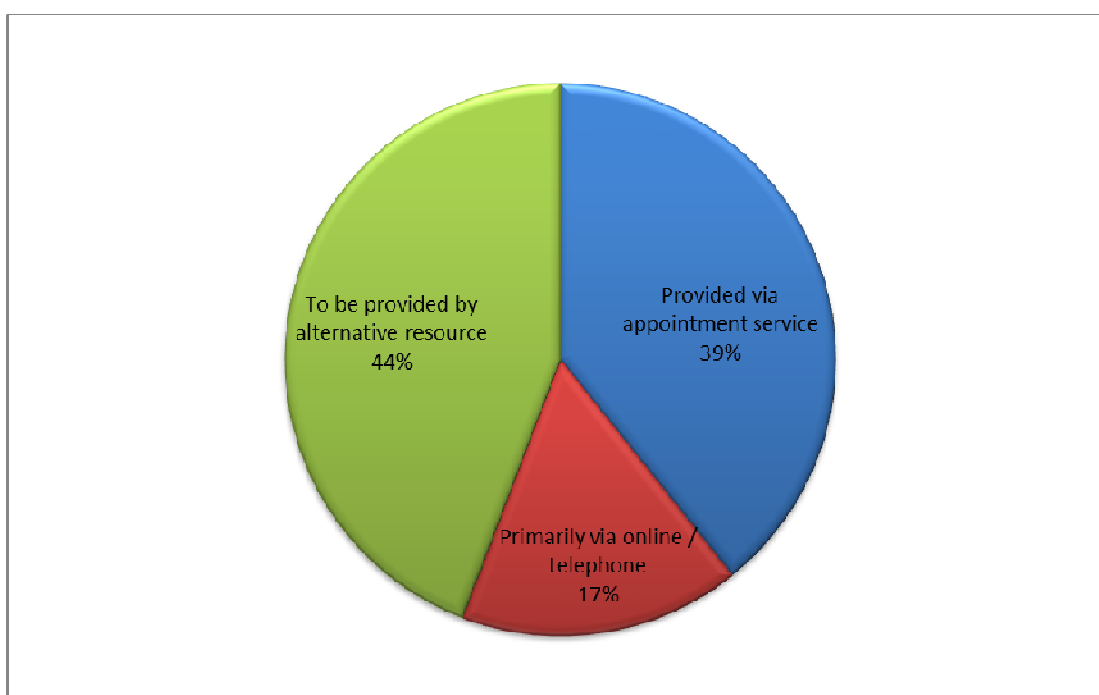
79. The final option to be considered would be to move to an alternative delivery model for face to face contact, with a small number of centres offering full face to face interview services, potentially by appointment only, with staff in other centres such as leisure centres and libraries providing frontline signposting services.
80. This option has not been fully costed and would represent a significant change to the way customers receive face to face services. Interview space would be restricted to potentially four centres at Consett, Durham, Seaham and Spennymoor on an appointment only basis, potentially supplemented by surgeries in other locations.

Table 4 Service provision through Option 4

CAP	CAP model
Clayport	Co-located CAP and Library
Consett	Dedicated CAP
Seaham	MUC
Spennymoor	Dedicated CAP

81. In addition to the CAPs identified above, information will be available in a variety of Council owned properties, providing customers with signposting assistance. This new provision will be presented under a common 'Information Durham' branding alongside identified CAPs. The availability of the core services would however be reduced. Map available at Appendix 9

82. Major impacts of this alternative delivery model would be upon customers accessing the benefits service who currently prefer or require face to face interactions, but would also be felt by hosted services that rely on Customer Services to provide accommodation, signposting or reception function, in particular – Housing Solutions and Welfare rights. Based on 2012/13 data 130,000 interactions at access points would need to be accommodated by an alternative resource.



83. Channel shift is a key element of this option and in order to effectively cater for the likely queries that would not be fulfilled by face to face provision more efficient web channels are required to reduce likely demand on telephony resources. Additionally a number of processes would require re-designing, for example to design out the need for face to face validation.

84. In summary, this option will result in

- Closure of CAPs at Stanley, Bishop Auckland, Barnard Castle, Chester-le-Street, Crook, and Stanhope.
- Training of staff in other face to face locations to enable sign-posting e.g. Leisure Centre staff, librarians.
- Identification of alternative sites for surgery offer
- Alternative resource / delivery model to manage reception functions where required
- Information Durham' provision and branding developed

Recommendation

85. It is recommended that Cabinet consider the contents of the report and approve Option 2 for implementation.

Background papers

Cabinet Report 2nd November 2010 Corporate Improvement Programme – Strategic approach to Council Offices - Key Decision R&ED/10/10

Cabinet Report 15th December 2010 – Corporate Asset Management Plan and Capital Strategy

Cabinet Report 22nd September 2011 – Update on the Office Accommodation Programme

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Appendix 1: Implications

Finance - Savings outlined in the report would contribute to targeted MTFP savings

Staffing – Reductions in CAPs would require reductions on staffing, which would be achieved in line with HR management of change processes. Vacant posts and redeployment will be used whenever possible to mitigate the impact across the service as a whole.

Risk – a risk assessment has been undertaken and no reportable risks have been identified

Equality and Diversity - Public Sector Equality Duty – An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed for proposed options and this will be reviewed following determination of the preferred option.

Accommodation – This report refers to the office accommodation strategy impacts.

Crime and Disorder - None

Human Rights - None

Consultation – Service User consultation will commence based on the chosen option

Procurement – None at this stage

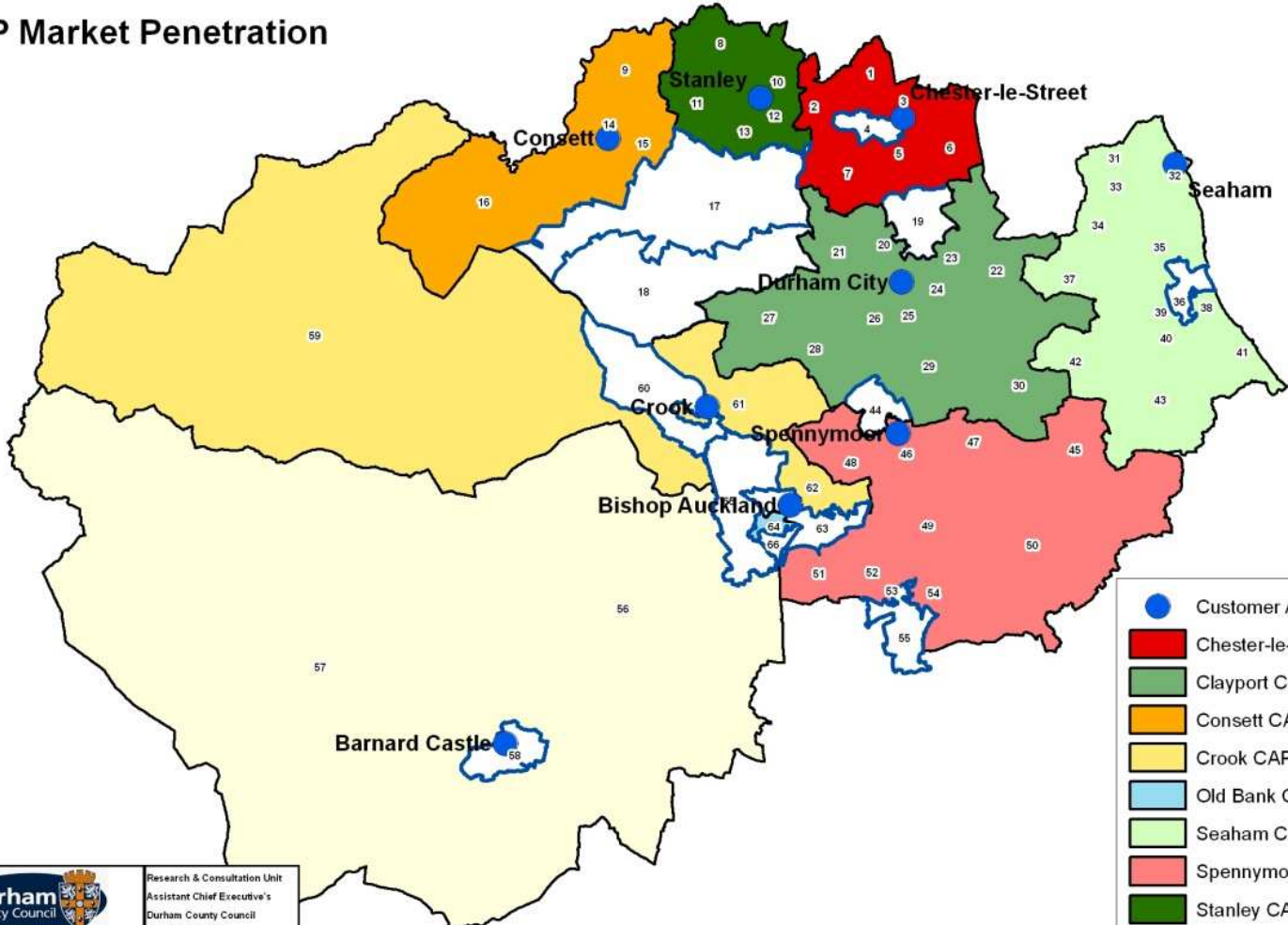
Disability Discrimination Act – As per Equality and Diversity above

Legal Implications – Legal Advice has been sought and it is considered there are no implications at this stage.

Appendix 2: Top 5 Services Offered by CAPS

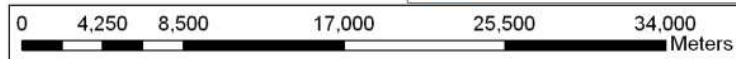
CAP	Top 5 services
Barnard Castle	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> I. Benefits II. Council tax – Billing III. Refuse and recycling IV. Libraries V. Planning
Bishop Auckland	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> I. Benefits II. Council Tax III. Bus Pass IV. Housing – Landlord services V. Special collection
Chester-le-Street	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> I. Benefits II. Meeting / visitor III. Council Tax IV. Planning V. Housing solutions interview
Consett	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> I. Benefits II. Council Tax III. Licensing IV. Housing solutions interview V. Refuse and recycling
Crook (Also hosts Coroner's Office)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> I. Libraries II. Benefits III. Refuse and recycling IV. Council Tax V. Facilities management
Durham Clayport	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> I. Benefits II. Council Tax III. Housing – Landlord services IV. Housing rents – former Durham City V. Planning
Durham County Hall* *County Hall is for reception/signposting only, interviews in Durham are conducted in Clayport	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> I. Meeting / visitor II. Facilities management III. CAS IV. Refuse and recycling/Clean and green (Grass cutting, fly tipping etc)
Seaham	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> I. Benefits II. Council Tax III. Refuse and recycling IV. Housing solutions interview V. Social care direct
Spennymoor	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> I. Benefits II. Meeting / Visitor III. Blue Badge IV. Communications V. Council tax
Stanley	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> I. Benefits II. Refuse and recycling III. Council Tax IV. Clean and Green V. Neighbourhood wardens – enforcement

CAP Market Penetration



- Customer Access Points
- Chester-le-Street CAP
- Clayport CAP
- Consett CAP
- Crook CAP
- Old Bank Chambers CAP
- Seaham CAP
- Spennymoor CAP
- Stanley CAP
- Teesdale CAP
- Not Allocated

	Research & Consultation Unit Assistant Chief Executive's Durham County Council Tel: 0191 372 7689
	Map Produced for: Neighbourhood Services
Map scale: 1:220,000	
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Appendix 3: Staffing Costs broken down by CAP

CAP	Present Customer Services CAP staffing costs
Barnard Castle	£102,535
Bishop Auckland (3 days a week)	£80,345
Chester-le-Street	£132,858
Clayport	£200,872
Consett	£149,511
Crook	£175,140
Newton Aycliffe (1 day surgery)	£5,146
Peterlee (1 day surgery)	£5,146
Seaham	£200,872
Spennymoor	£200,872
Stanley	£153,999
Staffing cover	£337,293
Total	£1,744,589

Appendix 4 – Access Point Benchmarking

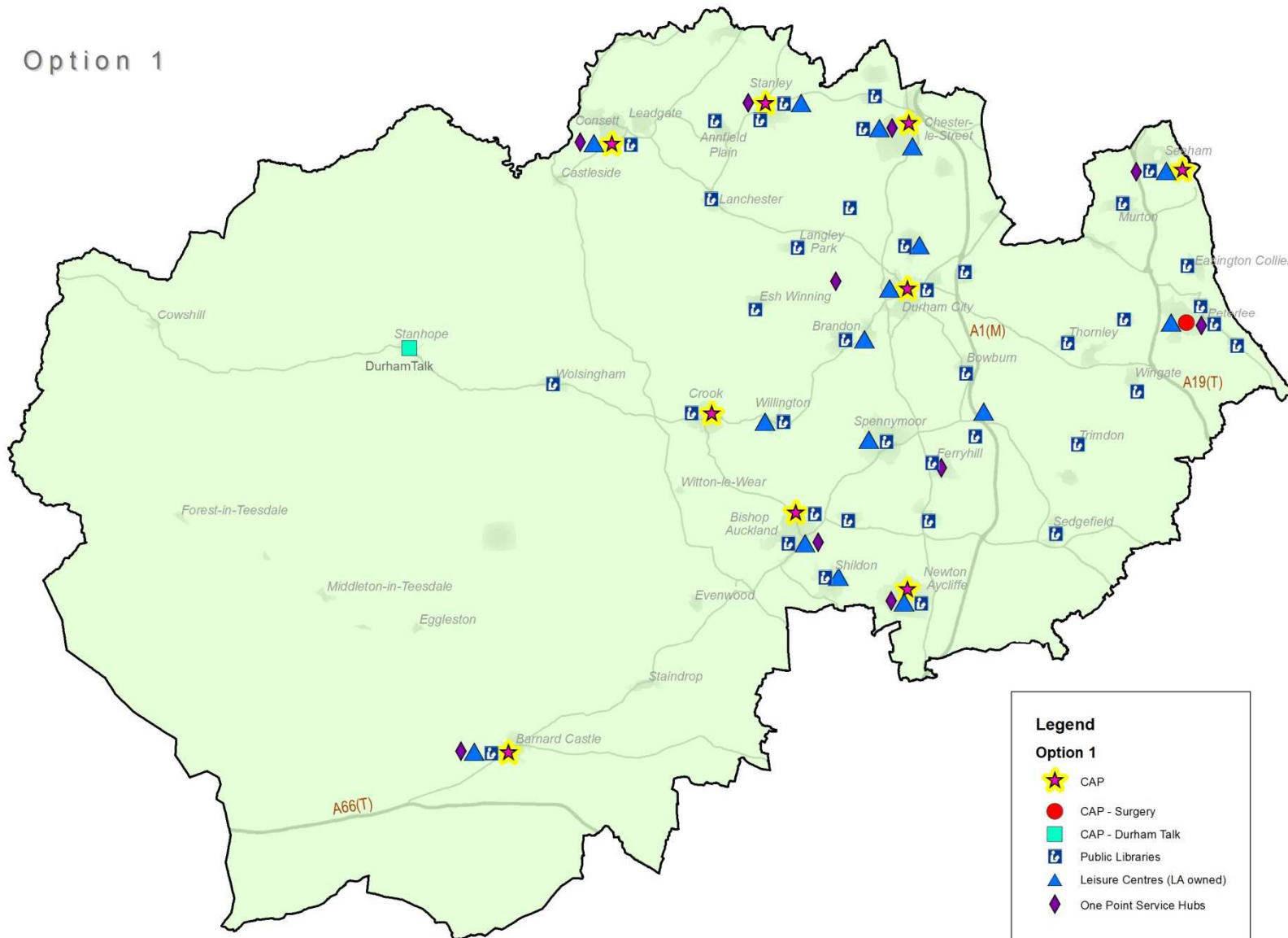
Authority	Population served	Number of face to face access point	Population to access point	Density (number of persons per hectare)	Have recently / are planning to review number of access points	Notes
Near neighbours						
Nottinghamshire County	785,802	10	78,580	3.8		all offered via district buildings
Ashfield District	119,497	3	39,832	10.9		In the process of a full re-structure
Bassetlaw District	112,863	3	37,621	1.8	Didn't know	
Mansfield District	104,466	1	104,466	13.6	Completed as 1 off, with a 1 stop shop	
Cumbria County	499,858	8	62,482	0.7		Services delivered in partnership with district councils
Carlisle City	107,524	1	107,524	1		
Copeland Borough	70,603	3	23,534	1	No plans to change	
Staffordshire County	848,489	10	84,848	3.2		one access point is currently in development with services offered from a temporary location
Cannock Chase District	97,462	2	48,731	12.4		
Newcastle-under-Lyme City	123,871	2	41,290	5.9		1 is a 1 Stop Shop in rural area opened 1 day per week
Stoke-on-Trent City (Unitary)	249,008	9	27,667	26.6	Complete	Merged with libraries

Derbyshire County	769,686	2	384,843	3	No plans to change	These are general help desks
Bolsover District	75,866	4	18,966	4.7	No plans to change	
Chesterfield Borough	103,788	2	51,894	15.7	No plans to change	
North East Derbyshire District	99,023	2 + 5	99,023	3.6	No plans to change	1 Stop Shop deals with revenues & benefits but has phone that public can ring main contact centre for other issues. 5 other face face buildings for housing which is outsourced
Barnsley Metropolitan Borough	231,221	16	14,451	7	Are looking to reduce further	Merged with libraries gone from 9 CAP's to 16
Bolton Metropolitan Borough	276,786	6	46,131	19.8		Customer Services offered via libraries
Darlington Borough	105,564	1	105,564	5.3		
Doncaster Metropolitan Borough	302,402	1	302,402	5.3	Done	Opened 1 stop shop Jan 13
Dudley Metropolitan Borough	312,925	1	312,925	31.9	No plans to change	
Durham County	513,242	9	57,026	2.3	?	
Gateshead Metropolitan Borough	200,214	4	50,053	14.1	No plans to change	
North Lincolnshire (Unitary)	167,446	7	23,920	8.3		
Nuneaton & Bedworth Borough	125,252	2	62,626	15.9		Are currently merging Customer Services and Libraries
Rotherham Metropolitan Borough	257,280	6	42,880	9		
Salford City	233,933	3	77,977	24.1	No plans to change	
St Helens Metropolitan Borough	175,308	3	58,436	12.9		Customer Services offered via libraries
Stockton-on-Tees Borough (Unitary)	191,610	3	63,870	9.4	On going reduction	Reduced to 5 1 stop shops
Tameside Borough	219,324	8	27,415	21.3	Done	Opened 1 stop shop Oct 12 incorporating 1 library & 1

						musuem
Wakefield Metropolitan Borough	325,837	1	325,837	9.6		
Other Unitary Councils						
Northamptonshire County	691,952	3	230,650			
Cornwall (Unitary)	532,273	23	23,142			Some customer access points are merged with Libraries. Also offer 4 visiting services
Northumberland (Unitary)	316,028	9	35,114			

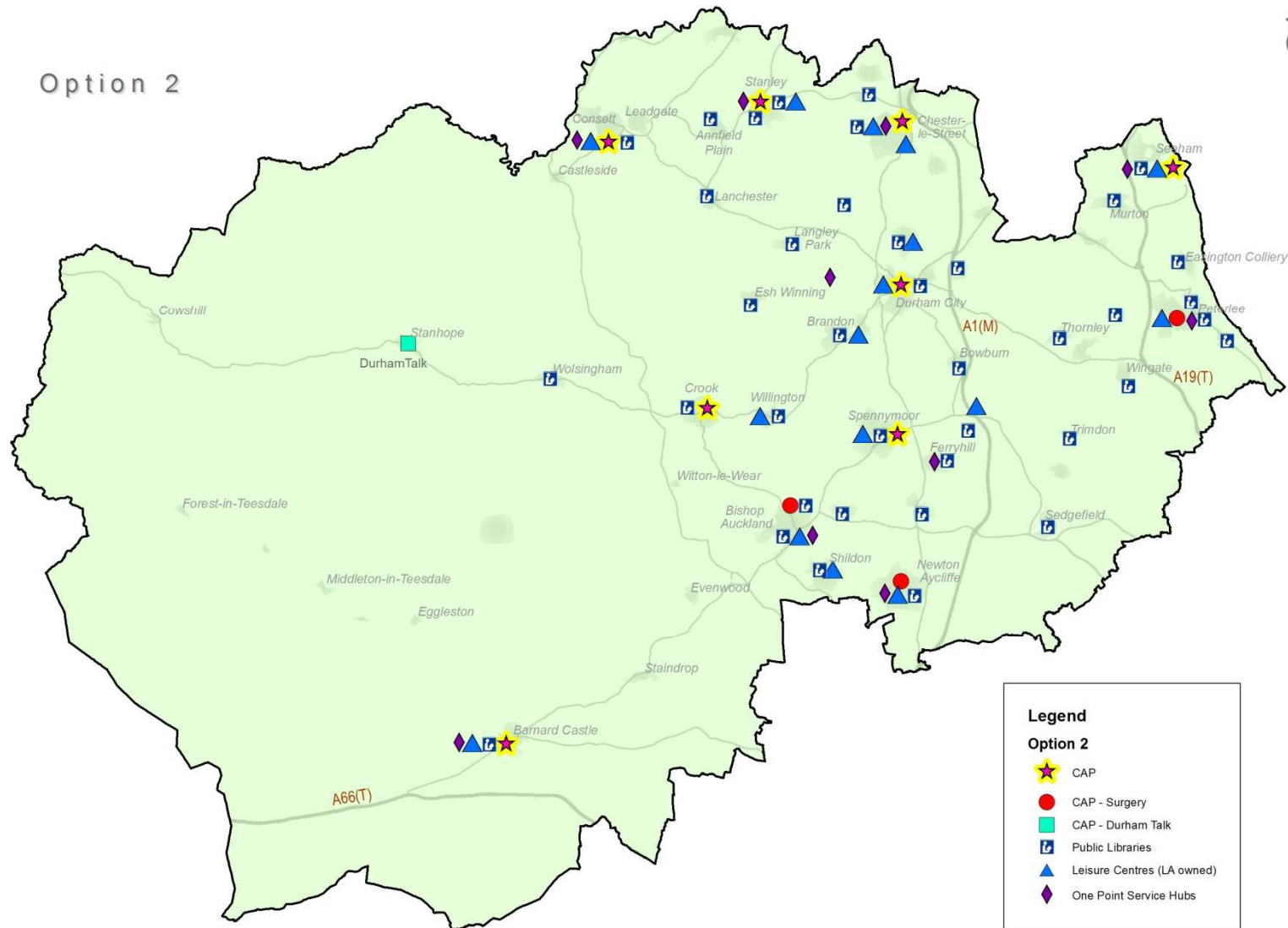
Appendix 5 – Option 1

Option 1



Appendix 6 – Option 2

Option 2



Legend

Option 2

- CAP
- CAP - Surgery
- CAP - Durham Talk
- Public Libraries
- Leisure Centres (LA owned)
- One Point Service Hubs

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Appendix 7: CAPs to be considered for further reduction in Option 3

CAP	Total service requests (Based on 12/13 data)	Extent of CAP catchment as a % County Durham population*	Building information
Bishop Auckland	7,309	1.5	Building currently unsuitable and likely to be sold as part of Bishop Auckland master plan.
Chester-le-Street	12,169	10.5	CAP currently undergoing transfer to a co-located site with Cestria homes. Access for disabled people is provided with Customer requested spec
Clayport	21,722	16.9	Newly renovated CAP and library. Access for disabled people is provided with Customer requested spec in place
Consett	15,928	7.5	Newly renovated CAP in centre of Consett. Access for disabled people is provided with Customer requested spec in place
Crook	24,357	6.6	Newly renovated CAP and library. Access for disabled people is provided with Customer requested spec in place
Seaham	20,131	18.5	Newly developed CAP and library. Access for disabled people is provided with Customer requested spec in place
Spennymoor	25,020	17.1	Dedicated CAP with co-hosted key services. (CAP currently planned to close

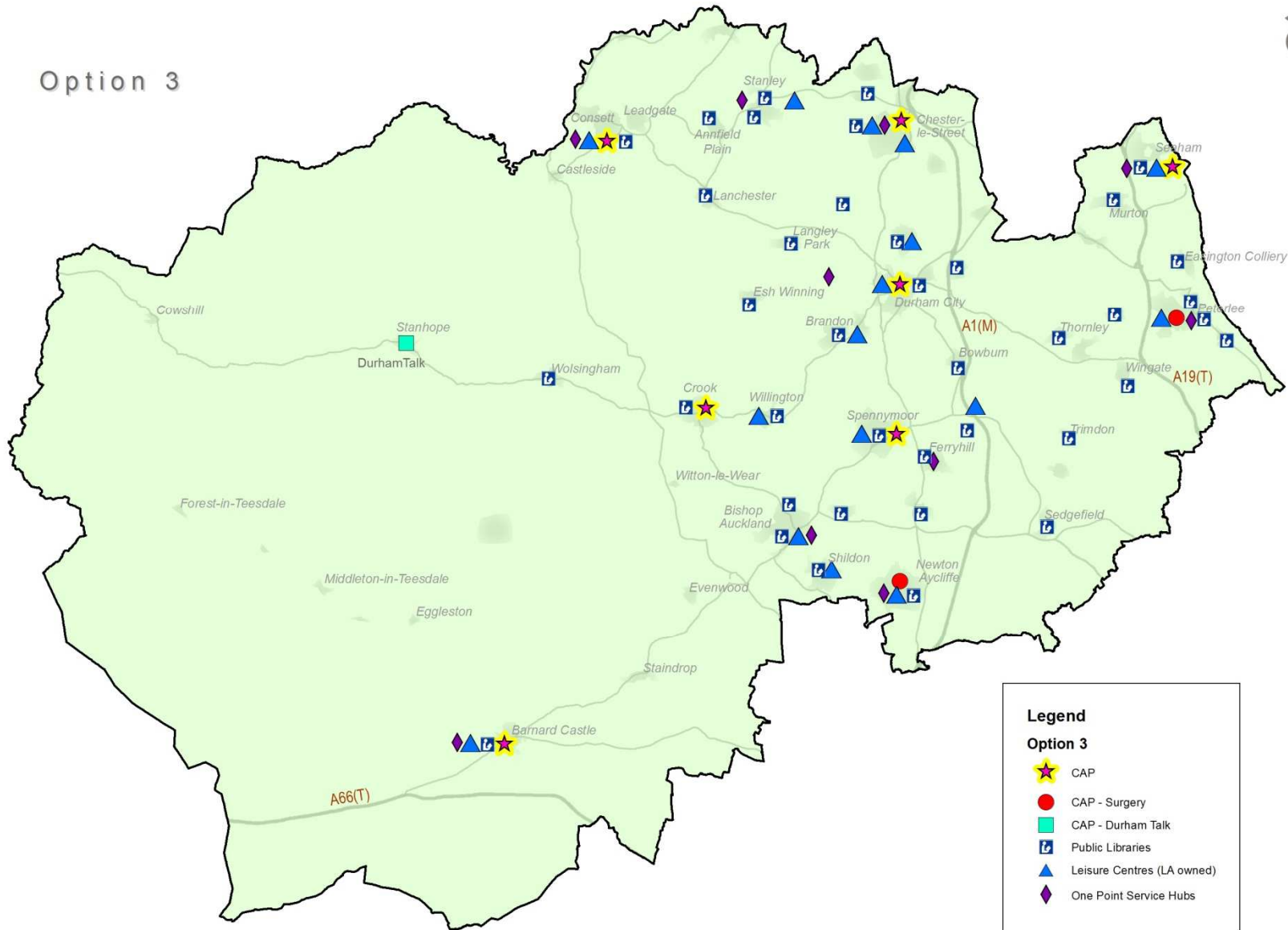
			as part of existing Office Accommodation Strategy)
Stanley	14,425	7.9	Building unsuitable and CAP due for capital investment / relocation from current location to co-location in Louisa Centre
Teesdale	8,845	4.9	CAP currently undergoing transfer to Witham alongside library

*The remaining 8.6% of the population live in areas with no clear catchment

Appendix 8 – Option 3



Option 3



Legend

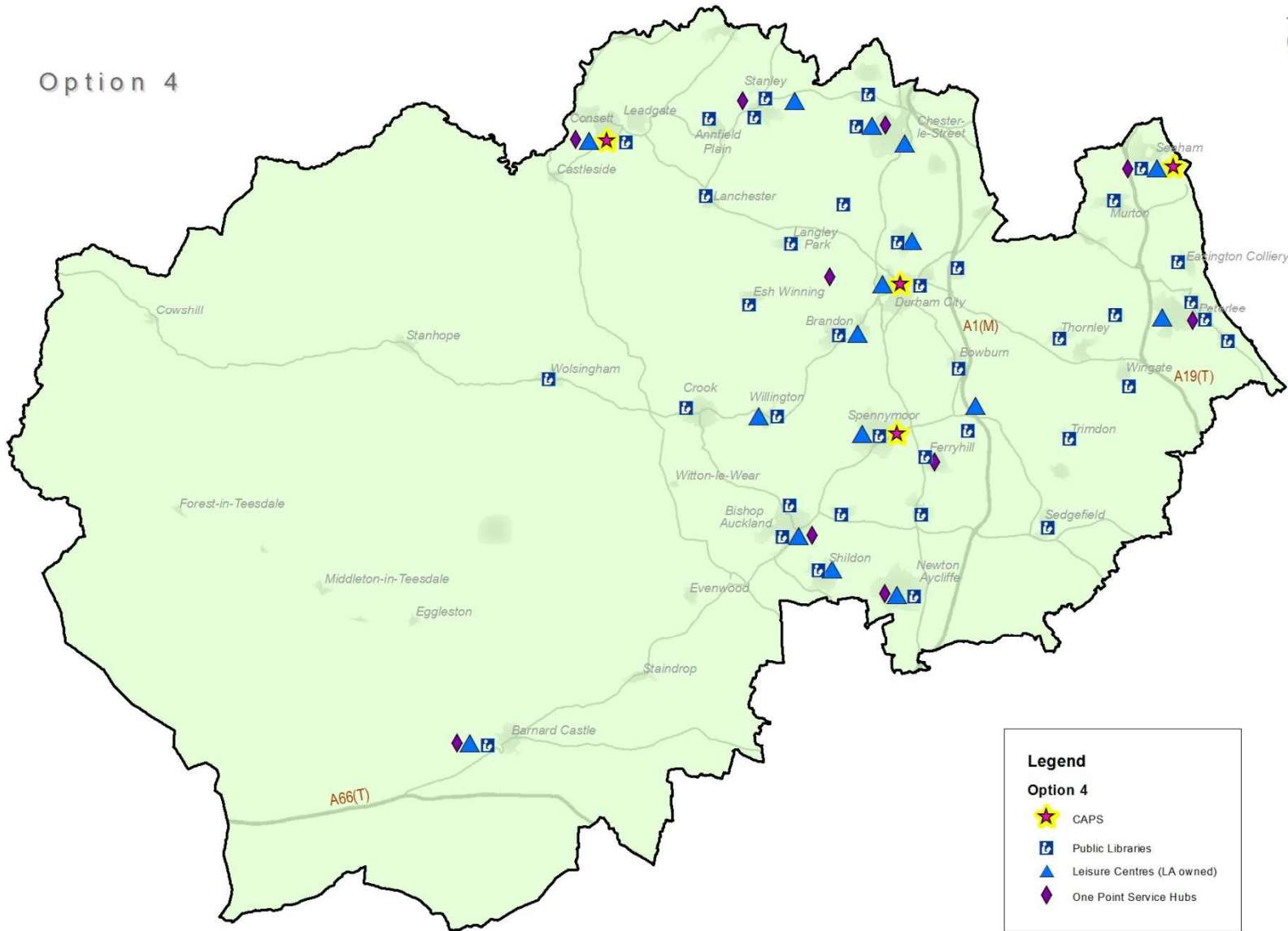
Option 3

- CAP
- CAP - Surgery
- CAP - Durham Talk
- Public Libraries
- Leisure Centres (LA owned)
- One Point Service Hubs

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Appendix 9 – Option 4

Option 4



Legend

Option 4

- CAPS
- Public Libraries
- Leisure Centres (LA owned)
- One Point Service Hubs

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Equalities and Diversity Impact Assessment

NS 3.26

Customer Access Point Review



Durham County Council – Altogether Better equality impact assessment form

NB: Equality impact assessment is a legal requirement for all strategies plans, functions, policies, procedures and services. We are also legally required to publish our assessments. You can find help and prompts on completing the assessment in the guidance from page 7 onwards.

Section one: Description and initial screening

Section overview: this section provides an audit trail.

Service/team or section: Projects and Business Services	
Lead Officer: Head of Service, Projects and Business Services Customer Relations, Policy & Performance Dorothy Emerson Service Improvement Officer (Equalities)	Start date 21 st October 2013
Subject of the Impact Assessment: (please also include a brief description of the aims, outcomes, operational issues as appropriate)	
<p>This assessment relates to the review of Customer Access Points (CAPs) and the future of face to face access to services. The review is also linked to the review of our Customer First Strategy and MTFP (budget) savings targets.</p> <p>CAPs provide access to information, advice and services in a number of locations around the county. Although many of the enquiries and requests for information are dealt with quickly or signposted to other help there are some people who access services through the CAPs, the most common is for benefits but help is also provided for bin collections, council tax, bus passes, housing, planning and licensing. In the financial year 2012/13 there were almost 300,000 interactions with just over half being 'signposting'. There are some enquiries which currently require face to face contact or for which customers prefer face to face contact, these include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • enquiries which require original documents to be produced; • familiarity with staff and their understanding of the individual's case; • help with forms because of literacy or other difficulties; • enquiries which need paper documents, such as planning applications. 	

<p>There are a number of reasons for the review of face to face access including the need to make savings in the current financial climate, the Government's guidance for more use of online services and responding to customers who want quick and easy ways to access information or help. However we also recognise that some people will continue to rely on face to face help in the future.</p> <p>Four possible options have been identified for consideration by Cabinet, full details are included in the Cabinet report but, in summary, they are:</p> <p>Option 1 – includes the closure of Spennymoor CAP and changes to Stanley, Newton Aycliffe and Bishop Auckland CAPs.</p> <p>Option 2 – Spennymoor CAP would remain open and Newton Aycliffe, Bishop Auckland and Peterlee CAPs would be run on an appointment system.</p> <p>Option 3 – this considers closing Bishop Auckland and Stanley CAPs</p> <p>Option 4 – move to alternative methods with only four CAPs remaining in place.</p> <p>For each option there would be additional support provided by working with partners and other local organisations to offer information and signposting.</p> <p>Who are the main stakeholders: Public / Employees / Elected Members / Partners/ Specific audiences/Other (please specify) –.</p> <p>Elected Members, General public – County Durham Residents, Durham County Council Employees, Partners</p> <p>Is a copy of the subject attached? No</p> <p>A copy of the subject can be obtained by contacting the Head of Service, Projects and Business Services</p> <p>Initial screening</p> <p>Prompts to help you: Who is intended to benefit and how? Could there be a different impact or outcome for some groups? Is it likely to affect relations between different communities or groups, for example if it is thought to favour one particular group or deny opportunities for others? Is there any specific targeted action to promote equality?</p> <p>Is there an actual potential negative or positive impact on specific groups within these headings Indicate :Y = Yes, N = No, ?=Unsure</p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td>Gender</td> <td>?</td> <td>Disability</td> <td>?</td> <td>Age</td> <td>?</td> <td>Race/ethnicity</td> <td>N</td> <td>Religion or belief</td> <td>N</td> <td>Sexual orientation</td> <td>N</td> </tr> </table> <p>Given the range of enquiries there are potential impacts from each option. The most likely impacts are on gender, disability and age as national and local evidence suggests that women, older and younger people and disabled people are more likely to rely on local services for a number of reasons including access to transport, caring responsibilities, ease of access, lack of internet access and computer skills. None of the options are likely to have a particular impact on race, religion, belief or sexual orientation.</p>							Gender	?	Disability	?	Age	?	Race/ethnicity	N	Religion or belief	N	Sexual orientation	N
Gender	?	Disability	?	Age	?	Race/ethnicity	N	Religion or belief	N	Sexual orientation	N							

What evidence do you have to support your findings?

There is national and local evidence which shows that women, older people and disabled people may rely on local services due to lack of personal transport, reliance on carers and combining a number of activities in one visit, for example shopping, health appointments or caring responsibilities.

People needing help with Housing Benefit or Council Tax account for one of the largest requests in CAPs, there is some evidence from the customer satisfaction surveys that there may be a higher number of disabled people using this service.

Decision: Proceed to full impact assessment – Yes Date: 21st October 2013

If you have answered ‘No’ you need to pass the completed form for approval & sign off.

Section two: Identifying impacts and evidence- Equality and Diversity

Section overview: this section identifies whether there are any impacts on equality/diversity/cohesion, what evidence is available to support the conclusion and what further action is needed.

	Identify the impact : does this increase differences or does it aim to reduce gaps for particular groups?	Explain your conclusion, including relevant evidence and consultation you have considered.	What further action is required? (Include in Sect. 3 action plan)
Gender	<p>Potential impacts relate to the loss of CAPs – Options 1, 3 and 4. This may mean additional travel and/or cost to access alternatives or increased reliance on online services.</p> <p>There is no evidence from the customer satisfaction survey results to indicate a disproportionate impact on gender.</p>	<p>Local and national evidence suggests that women are more likely to rely on local services. They are more likely to work part-time or have caring responsibilities which, combined with lower levels of access to private transport, means that they use services which are easy to access.</p> <p>There is a combined impact with age as there are more older women than men in the county.</p>	<p>Depends on Cabinet decision.</p>
Age	<p>Potential impacts relate to the loss of CAPs – Options 1, 3 and</p>	<p>Older people are more likely to use local services as a result of easy access. There</p>	<p>Depends on Cabinet decision.</p>

	<p>4. This may mean additional travel and/or cost to access alternatives or increased reliance on online services. Changing to an appointment system may impact on some age groups – those of working age in employment may prefer to make an appointment. There is evidence to show that older people are less likely to have internet access at home or have confidence in using online services.</p>	<p>are also more older women than men in the county, they are less likely to have access to private transport and may rely on others for care and support. The 2011 census shows that almost 18% of the county's population are aged over 65. The customer satisfaction survey indicates that 14% of those answering the question were aged over 65. The customer satisfaction survey indicates that those who identified themselves as aged over 65 were likely to use the following services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing Benefits - 36.36% • Council Tax - 31.17% • Bus Pass - 16.88% • Refuse and Recycling - 9.74% • Other -12.5%. 	
<p>Disability</p>	<p>Potential impacts relate to the loss of CAPs – Options 1, 3 and 4. This may mean additional travel and/or cost to access alternatives or increased reliance on online services. Relocation of CAPs may create a positive impact where the premises are more accessible. Changing to an appointment system may impact on some</p>	<p>Depending on the nature of their disability, some people may rely on others for care and support. Some online services can be difficult for disabled people to access, for example, those with learning disabilities or those who need specific computer software. The 2011 census shows that almost 24% of the county's population have a disability. The customer satisfaction survey indicates that 16% of those answering the question were</p>	<p>Depends on Cabinet decision.</p>

	<p>disabled people, for example those relying on carers may find it more limiting.</p> <p>Changes to online systems can be more difficult for some disabled people but may also offer increased access for those who cannot travel to the CAP.</p>	<p>disabled.</p> <p>The customer satisfaction survey indicates that those who identified themselves as disabled were likely to use the following services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing Benefits - 55.11% • Council Tax - 43.18% • Bus Pass - 9.09% • Blue Badge - 3.98% • Other - 12.5% 	
Race/Ethnicity	There is no evidence the options have a disproportionate impact on race or ethnicity.		
Religion or belief	There is no evidence the options have a disproportionate impact on religion or belief.		
Sexual Orientation	There is no evidence the options have a disproportionate impact on sexual orientation.		

How will this promote positive relationships between different communities?

Loss of CAP facilities may contribute to decline in some communities where other services are closing. Maintaining access to local services tends to offer opportunities for social contact.

Section three: Review and Conclusion

Summary: please provide a brief overview, including impact, changes, improvements and any gaps in evidence.

Each option may impact differently but the likely protected characteristics affected are gender, age and disability. Options 1, 3 and 4 include closures of Customer Access Points which would affect those who rely on local services. Increased use of online services may be a positive for some who cannot reach their local CAP but may have a negative impact for those who do not have easy access to the internet or have confidence in using computers.

Action to be taken	Officer responsible	Target Date	In which plan will this action appear
Review EQiA following Cabinet report	Mary Readman/Cheryl Duggan/Sue Kelley	January – February 2014	
When will this assessment be reviewed?	Date: January 2014		
Are there any additional assessments that need to be undertaken in relation to this assessment?			
Head of Service - sign off:			Date:
Service equality representative - sign off: Mary Readman Customer Relations, Policy and Performance Manager			Date:

Please email your completed Impact Assessment to the Dorothy Emerson, Service Improvement Officer (Equalities) at dorothy.emerson@durham.gov.uk

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Cabinet

15 January 2014



Local Education Partnership Director

Report of Corporate Management Team

Don McLure, Corporate Director, Resources

Councillor Alan Napier, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Finance

Purpose of the Report

- 1 To request approval to appoint a new Director to represent Durham County Council on the Board of Inspiredspaces Durham Limited, who are the Council's Building Schools for the Future contractor.

Background

- 2 Inspiredspaces Durham Ltd was formed to deliver the Building Schools for the Future (BSF) programme in Durham. The Council is a minority shareholder in the company and appoints one of the six Directors on the Board of Directors.
- 3 The Council has a Strategic Partnering Agreement (SPA) with the company, which gives it exclusivity over secondary education projects above £100,000 in value over the 10 year contract period to 13 August 2019. This exclusivity survives the Government's cancellation of the national BSF programme in 2010. The OJEU notice used for BSF allows the company to provide a variety of building, ICT and education services for the Council without the need for further procurement.
- 4 The company has a share capital of £10,000, of which the Council's shareholding is £1,000. In addition, the Council has also contributed £57,000 of funding to a loan made by the company to the separate company set up to deliver the PFI contract for schools at Sedgefield and Shotton Hall.
- 5 The other shareholders are Carillion (80%) and International Public Partnerships (INPP) (10%). Carillion have four seats on the Board of Directors and INPP have one. The Board is chaired by an independent chairman – John Bridge.
- 6 Inspiredspaces has completed a number of BSF projects in Durham, and is currently delivering the projects at Consett Academy and Wellfield Community School.
- 7 Since signing the SPA the Council has been represented on the Board of Directors by David Shirer, a finance manager in the Resources Service Grouping. David's directorship has come to an end and, following agreement of the Corporate Directors for Resources and Regeneration and Economic Development, Adrian White, the Head of Transport & Contract Services in the

Regeneration and Economic Development Service Grouping has been identified as an appropriate officer to represent the Council on the Board of Directors.

- 8 The Council's Director on the Board does not receive any additional remuneration for this role and there are no financial implications. Should this appointment be agreed, Mr Shirer will submit his resignation to the company secretary and at the same time the company secretary will be notified of Mr White's appointment. The appointment is not time-limited.

Recommendations and Reasons

9 Cabinet is recommended:

- To approve the appointment of Mr Adrian White as Durham County Council's director on the Board of Inspiredspaces Durham Ltd.

Background Papers

None

Appendix 1: Implications

Finance – none – no additional remuneration is provided

Staffing – none – role is subsumed within existing role

Risk – if no director is appointed the Council has no say in the running of the company in which it is both a shareholder and the principal client

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty – none

Accommodation - none

Crime and Disorder - none

Human Rights - none

Consultation – none

Procurement - none

Disability Issues - none

Legal Implications - none

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Agenda Item 9

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