
Subject:	EK SERVICES FACE-TO-FACE SERVICE PROVISION AT DEAL AREA OFFICE
Meeting and Date:	Cabinet – 4 September 2017 Scrutiny (Policy and Performance) Committee – 12 September 2017
Report of:	Andrew Stevens, Assistant Director - EK Services
Portfolio Holder:	Councillor Mike Conolly, Portfolio Holder for Corporate Resources and Performance
Decision Type:	Key
Classification:	Unrestricted

Purpose of the report: To provide further information and data as requested by Cabinet on 3 July 2017 regarding the potential withdrawal of DDC face to face customer services at Deal and to seek approval to close the DDC service desk at this location.

Recommendations:

1. To note the additional information and data provided;
2. To agree that EK Services can withdraw DDC face to face customer service at Deal library;
3. To delegate the final decision on the date of closure to the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Resources and Performance, in consultation with the S151 Officer and the Director of Shared Services.

1. Summary

- 1.1 Cabinet will recall that a previous report (Cabinet 03 July 2017) sought approval to withdraw face to face customer services at the DDC area offices (Aylesham, Sandwich and Deal) during 2017/18. At that meeting, Cabinet agreed to the closure of the EKS service provision at Aylesham and Sandwich but agreed that further information and data relating to the Deal service desk should be gathered and reported back to this Cabinet meeting. This information is presented in this report at Section 6.0.
- 1.2 In addition, at Scrutiny (policy and performance) Committee on 11 July 17 a request was made to provide additional information and data regarding Sandwich and Aylesham offices (this is shown in section 7.0 and as an appendix).
- 1.3 This report will also provide further information in regard to the alternative options that are proposed for customers to access services and outline implementation considerations.

2. Introduction and Background

- 2.1 Alongside its three partner Councils, EK Services (EKS) is seeking to adapt services in line with the changing nature of society and customer expectations as well as embracing new technology whilst being ever mindful of affordability.
- 2.2 This aligns closely with Dover District Councils Corporate Plan, specifically Priority 4 – Smarter Council. EKS needs to support the Council by providing quality services focussed on residents needs with easy access but offering good value for money.

- 2.3 As stated in the Corporate Plan¹ it is '*essential that we continue to be financially stable and to target our resources carefully to achieve the best outcomes for the district*' and in order to maintain a viable service we need to '*change the way we do things and be more innovative and flexible in how we provide services*'
- 2.4 The EKS Vision for Customer Service provision is to: *provide a service that meets the expectation of the majority (digital or telephone by first choice) but caters for the minority (assisted digital, post, visiting officers) and also remains affordable and relevant.*
- 2.5 EKS has made proposals to the three partner Councils to cease the provision of face to face EKS services at the outlying area offices across Dover District (Deal, Aylesham, Sandwich), Canterbury City Council (Whitstable and Herne Bay) and Thanet District (Ramsgate). This would leave primary face to face contact centres at three main locations in each Council plus, in Dover, the existing Gateway in the town centre, although we expect the latter to be subject to review in the future.
- 2.6 EKS delivers services to a minority of customers at these area offices at a significant cost compared to other customer service provision². These plans, across the three partner districts, will enable EKS to save a total of £200k from base budget. This is an essential element of the delivery of EKS savings targets³. It is expected that these savings will be achieved through vacancy reduction without job losses due to the regular staff turnover rate within customer services. The proposed changes in DDC area should contribute £45k of these savings. However, whilst the savings are very important, the services can be provided in other ways for the majority and there are plans to ensure the vulnerable are taken into account and can continue to access services.
- 2.7 Cabinet has already agreed to the service changes at Aylesham and Sandwich but wish to consider the additional information requested in regard to the EKS customer service provision at Deal Library.

3. **EKS at Deal Library – Service Provision**

- 3.1 DDC has provided a face to face customer service at Deal library for many years. The service is provided Monday, Wednesday and Friday between 9am and 5pm. This office is resourced with 2 staff members who deal with a variety of transactions for the council including primarily⁴: Benefits (33% of contact), Parking (21%) and Council Tax (16%). These are followed by Housing queries and Waste enquiries as well as general enquiries from people asking questions, often unrelated to EKS services or Council services.
- 3.2 Despite vastly increasing numbers of people choosing to contact us by other means (telephone and online) the design of the face to face service has not adapted or changed to meet the majority of customers' expectations. Other organisations who also deal with our customer base have moved away from face to face services due to their cost and strategy to move customers online (Pension Service, Jobcentres, utility companies etc.).

¹ DDC Corporate Plan 2016-20 – page 9 –Priority 4 Smarter Council

² Government benchmarking shows Face to Face transactions cost circa £8.62 per transaction compared to £2.83 for telephone and 15p online contact. SOCITM

³ EKS 2017/18 budget requires a base budget saving of £832k to be achieved – against annual operating costs circa £12.5m and the cessation of the face to face service provision will contribute a significant proportion of this.

⁴ Percentages based upon stats for period April 2016 to April 2017

- 3.3 Based upon the customer surveys and feedback from customer service staff, it seems that the convenience of the facilities are causing much of the footfall even though many of the enquiries can be dealt with in other ways. This is a common trend and having reviewed similar service changes across other UK Authorities who have already removed face to face contact, their experience indicated that a proportion of the customer enquiries did 'fall away' and there was little complaint. EKS has already closed the area office provision at Whitstable and this has seen a similar response, with only a few complaints at the start and none recently and with no major increase in transactions at the telephone contact centre.
- 3.4 EKS has been gathering and analysing an advanced level of customer information over the past 12 months. Considerable time has been spent engaging with the customers at the Deal office, conducting surveys to ascertain why they are choosing to come in face to face to deal with the council, who they are (age, disability status, gender, how far they have travelled) as well as establishing whether they have access to the internet at home or elsewhere and whether they are confident in using it or not. The output from these surveys was included in the previous cabinet report and is attached at Appendices 1 (for Deal) and 2 (for Aylesham and Sandwich). EKS "Digital Champions" have also spent time at the offices helping customers to access the services in other ways and raising awareness of online and telephone services. Customer reaction to this has been very positive.

4. **EKS at Deal Library – Alternative Service Delivery Provision**

- 4.1 Most of the transaction types at Deal can be dealt with in other, more cost-effective, ways. However, EKS is very conscious of the need to ensure services are maintained for the vulnerable and for those that may not be able to access online services or who may be unable to travel to Dover for a face to face appointment.
- 4.2 The following paragraphs outline the alternative methods of delivery for the current EKS provided services at the Deal Library.
- 4.2.1. Benefits & Food Vouchers. All benefits queries can either be handled on the phone or online or via post. The provision of benefits documentation and evidence can now be provided online and EKS are introducing a new digital solution that will make this even easier and quicker for customers. For those unable to use this, receipt of documents via post is also available or people can arrange an appointment at Dover at their convenience. Provision of Food Vouchers is not a DDC service, this is a service provided by Foodbank with EKS assistance.
- 4.2.2. Parking. DDC are introducing a new parking system this year that will mean all parking permits will be accessed online so we expect the demand for these services to cease in all but exceptional cases in which case they will be dealt with via telephone. For penalty charges and fines, these can still be dealt with via post or online with queries able to be handled via telephone or appointments at Dover.
- 4.2.3. Council Tax. All Council Tax queries can be dealt with via telephone, email or post.
- 4.2.4. Housing. EKS handle queries on housing, rent issues and other general queries on behalf of the Council. These can be dealt with online, via telephone or post; serious homeless issues already have to be handled by the Housing team in Whitfield.
- 4.2.5. Waste. A large proportion of contact in regard to waste is for queries which could be handled via telephone or online. The exception is provision of waste bags which need to be collected by residents from stock held in various locations. Discussions are ongoing with DDC waste services in regard to options. In Sandwich, the Town Council are in discussion about providing the waste bags from the Town Council offices under an arrangement with DDC. It is possible a similar arrangement may be made with Deal Town Council.

4.2.6 Exceptional Cases. For the vulnerable and exceptional cases where a customer may be unable to access online, telephone or postal services, nor attend an appointment in Dover, EKS is proposing to liaise with local community groups, who exist to provide assistance to these vulnerable already and where applicable assist by implementing a visiting officer who can attend individuals in their homes.

5. **Implementation Planning**

5.1 Given the above, we are now in a situation where we recommend closing face to face customer service at Deal this autumn. Customers will still be able to make their enquiries to the council but will do so via telephone, online or post and for that still wish to have a face to face discussion (for complex queries) then they will be able to access an appointment at the Dover offices. For the very vulnerable and those who may not be able to leave their homes or access telephone or postal services, a visiting officer should be able to assist or support the existing voluntary groups that already support these types of customer.

5.2 In order for a successful implementation across all locations, should Cabinet agree, it is proposed that a detailed communication plan is developed in consultation with DDC Communications and also with input from the relevant Town Councils. This should include proactive contact with key stakeholder groups and known existing vulnerable customers to explain the plans and ensure individuals and groups know how to access services in future. It is also proposed to provide a range of external communication advertising and engagement via various means such as Twitter campaigns, Keep me Posted updates, leaflets and posters. Where applicable it is envisaged that briefing or training for Members and Town Council staff can be provided to enable them to inform and signpost residents and other parties to the other alternative access points.

5.3 The actual date for closure may best be determined after the detailed implementation plans and communications have had time to be effective. To that end, it is proposed that the specific closure date for the area offices is delegated to the Portfolio Holder to agree with the S151 officer and Director of Shared Services.

5.4 An Equalities Impact Statement is included at Appendix 4.

6.0 **Further information requested by Cabinet (03 July) to support recommendation**

6.1 Cabinet approved the withdrawal of face to face service at Aylesham and Sandwich on 3 July 17 but asked for more information and data to support the recommendation to withdraw face to face customer service at Deal. The additional information requested is outlined below, together with the relevant data.

6.2 The percentage of customers who are “repeat customers”

EKS has carried out a verbal survey with customers at the Deal office to gauge how many customers were “unique visitors” or customers who tended to use the facilities repeatedly. This survey demonstrates that 39% of visitors to the Deal service desk had used those facilities for another matter within the previous 12 months. This means 61% of callers were “unique” or first time callers.

6.3 The number and “vulnerability profile” of individual customers.

During the customer insight work at this office survey data was collected on 384 individual customers. This included information on their age, sex, disability status, how far they had travelled to come into the office, whether they had access to (or used) the internet and, most importantly, why they chose to use face to face services rather than telephoning or going online. This section gives some more information about the data collected.

6.3.1 From the data collected, 56% of customers are of working age and 44% of pension age (65+). From the “working age” group most of the customers are in the age band 45-54 (almost 1 in 5 of the total number of customers fall into this age band). More females than males use the office (60% and 40% respectively). 85% of customers do not consider themselves as having a disability.

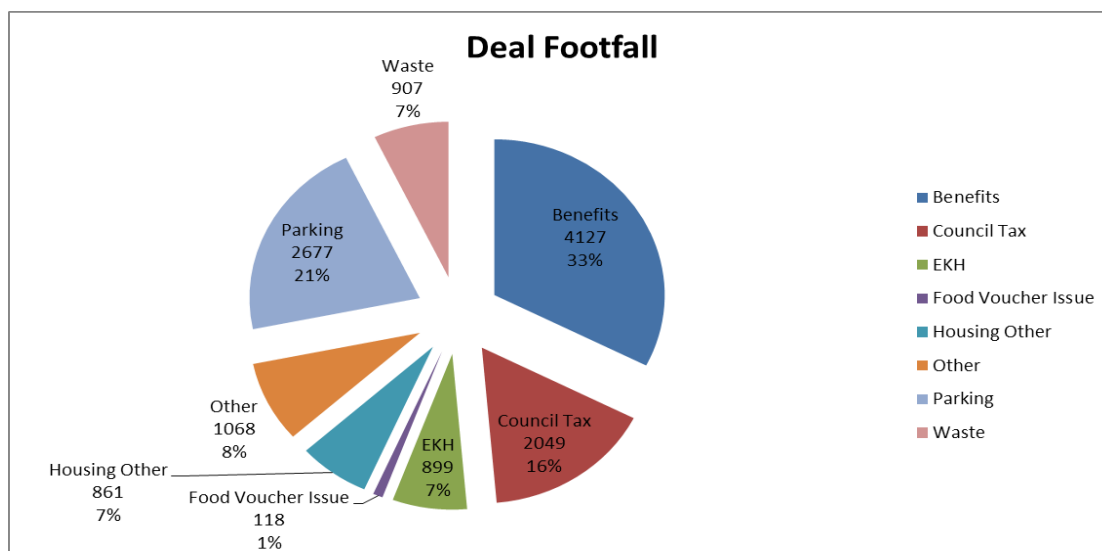
6.3.2 In terms of digital capability / capacity, only 14% of customers told us they do not have access to the internet. Unsurprisingly, these customers tend to fall into the higher age band (75+) which reflects national statistics and research. When this group were asked for the reason for their visit only 5 indicated they used face to face because they could not access online services. This reflects 1% of the total customer base surveyed. The remainder of this “digitally excluded” group gave various reasons for using face to face services such as “prefer face to face”, “dropping in documents”, “making a payment” or generally making enquiries about services. *The vast majority (if not all) of these transactions could be dealt with on the telephone or via the post and not having access to the internet would not be seen as a barrier to having their enquiries dealt with should the office close.*

6.3.3 The following table compares the customers in their respective age bands to the ONS national statistics on household internet access.

Age band	Percentage of Deal customers	ONS internet access statistics* recent users of internet in last 3 mths
16-24	5.4%	98.6% (m) 98.9% (f)
25-34	16.7%	
35-44	14.3%	
45-54	19.9%	95% (m) 94.9% (f)
55-64	18.3%	88.2% (m) 88.3% (f)
65-74	14.6%	75.8% (m) 72.5% (f)
75+	10.8%	46.7% (m) 32.4% (f)

* - 'ONS Internet stats 2016'

6.4 Reasons for visit (Apr 16 to Apr 17)



7. **Further information requested by Scrutiny Committee (11 July) regarding Aylesham & Sandwich** (*not relevant to the decision to close Deal and included in this report for completeness*). The additional data that was requested by Cabinet in relation to the Deal office has also been collated for Aylesham and Sandwich, as requested by Scrutiny Committee. This information is provided at Appendix 5.

8 **Options**

- 8.1 As explained in this report, the aim is to adapt the service provision to ensure that EKS can maintain its financial stability by targeting resources appropriately and by changing delivery in line with the majority of customer and society expectations and using technology to assist, whilst ensuring the minority and vulnerable are catered for. Consideration of DDC Corporate Plan and Priorities has also been taken into account⁵. Whilst the financial aspect is a key driver, experience from other Local Authorities and expert opinion states that as long as face to face is maintained some individuals will not embrace the other options even when they are able to and thus, it becomes a potential blocker to achieving the wider digital ambitions.
- 8.2 Options include:
- 8.2.1 Maintain the service but at additional cost to Council. This effectively would mean an agreement that the EKS savings target for DDC Management fees be adjusted downward to match the £45k savings that would have been delivered. This will require either a budget growth or savings to be identified elsewhere in the Council. It will make it more difficult to pursue the wider digitisation agenda as it would maintain the flow of customers who would otherwise move online (evidenced by survey and research). It would also potentially create challenges in ceasing other face to face service thus having a much greater financial impact. It will not remove the imbalance where current face to face provision which is the most expensive service provision is being funded by public money for the minority of people. ***This option is not recommended.***
- 8.2.2 Maintain a Reduced Service (Time). It would be possible to maintain a presence in the library for one day a week for appointments only. This option would be the “next best” option as it would enable us to accurately match resource to demand and also make sure we are only seeing those people face to face who are genuinely struggling to access our services in any other way. This would impact upon the resourcing and costs of EKS and is likely to be met by similar demands at other area offices which will have the potential to undermine the whole proposal across EKS. Also, the points outlined in 8.1.1 above remain extant for this option, albeit the cost impact would be lower. ***This option is not recommended.***
- 8.2.3 Maintain a Reduced Service (staff reduction). It would be possible to maintain the service but reduce the staffing level. However, this will impact the financial savings reducing the savings by approximately £15k. However, it has a greater impact on resource management as the roster system which requires staff to move between different locations for face to face or contact centre remains more complex, particularly when trying to provide single resources to locations for certain days per week. It does not address the wider points about digital ambitions and the ongoing provision of expensive face to face channels compared to other access means and the associated productivity impact⁶. ***This option is not recommended.***

⁵ - ‘change the way we do things and be more innovative and flexible in how we provide services. We will do this in a variety of ways, including undertaking a range of shared services and collaborative projects, contract renegotiation and digital transformation’. – DDC Corporate Plan – Priority 4 - Smarter Council

⁶ One member of staff in the main contact centre would be expected to handle 50 – 100 queries per day on the telephone, dealing with the majority of the customer base compared to a single member of staff in the Deal office dealing with approx 25 - 45 customers per day

8.2.4 Withdraw face to face services at Deal. This proposal will ensure the majority of customers who already access services online or via telephone continue to be served in a viable and cost effective manner. Other customers will be encouraged to transact with us either on the telephone or online. Customers who are currently bringing in documents will be encouraged to either upload them online if they have internet access or via post. All of the transaction types that happen in this office can be carried out using other channels such as online or telephone. It will enable EKS to maintain its viability through cost reduction and adapting services to meet the needs of the majority whilst considering and ensuring the minority and vulnerable are also catered for. ***This option is recommended.***

8.2.5 Maintain a 'footprint' via telephone or online access point. Other options that could be considered include the installation a telephone line in the office dedicated for customers to contact the main DDC contact centre and / or provision of internet access. This was an approach taken when the Whitstable office was closed; CCC requested a phone line be installed with a direct line through to the Contact Centre. This was provided although only a few people actually went on to use it in the months following the closure. It is a simple way of maintaining some district footprint and also assists with the implementation communications. This will be considered as part of the implementation plan in any case. ***This option is recommended to be considered alongside implementation planning.***

9. **Resource Implications.**

9.1 There will be part year savings of £22.5k in 2017/18 (assuming full implementation in October 2017) and then on-going savings of £45k per annum in subsequent years if a full withdrawal is the agreed.

10. **Corporate Implications**

10.1 Comment from the Section 151 Officer: The Accountancy Section has been consulted on the report and has no further comments to add (SG)

10.2 Comment from Solicitor to the Council: Comments have been provided and taken into account in the drafting of this report.

10.3 Comment from the Equalities Officer: In preparation for the report an Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out which highlights an impact on both age and disability. Measures have been outlined in order to mitigate the impact on the protected characteristics. Members are reminded that, in discharging their responsibilities, they are required to comply with the public sector equality duty as set out in section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15>'.

12. **Appendices:**

Appendix 1 – Customer insight data at Deal

Appendix 2 – More recent usage stats for Aylesham and Sandwich

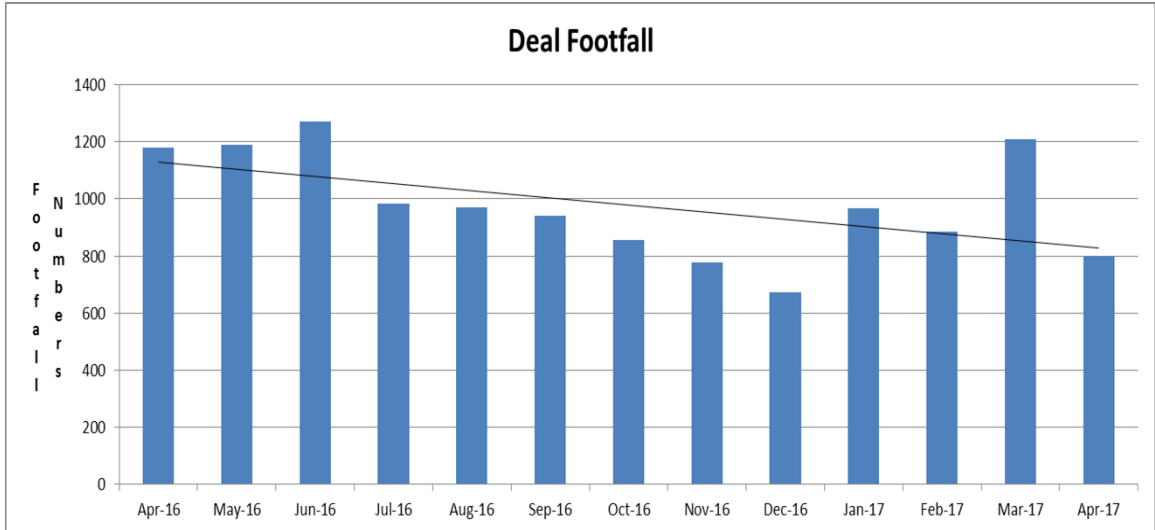
Appendix 3 – ONS national statistics (internet access per age band)

Appendix 4 – Equality Impact Assessment

Appendix 5 - Further information requested by Scrutiny Committee (11 July) regarding Aylesham & Sandwich

Deal data and customer insight

- Visitor numbers at Deal (April 16 to April 17)



- Results from customer surveys (384 completed)

“Average” Deal customer is aged between 45-54, travels 2.13 miles to come into the office to hand in documents. They are likely to possess a smart phone / access to the internet

What is your postcode?
CT14 7TJ

What is your age?
16-24 (25-34) 35-44 45-54
55-64 65-74 75+ (please circle)

Are you:
Male Female (please circle)

Do you consider yourself to have a disability?
Yes No (please circle)

Can you use a computer/smart-phone/tablet?
Yes No (please circle)

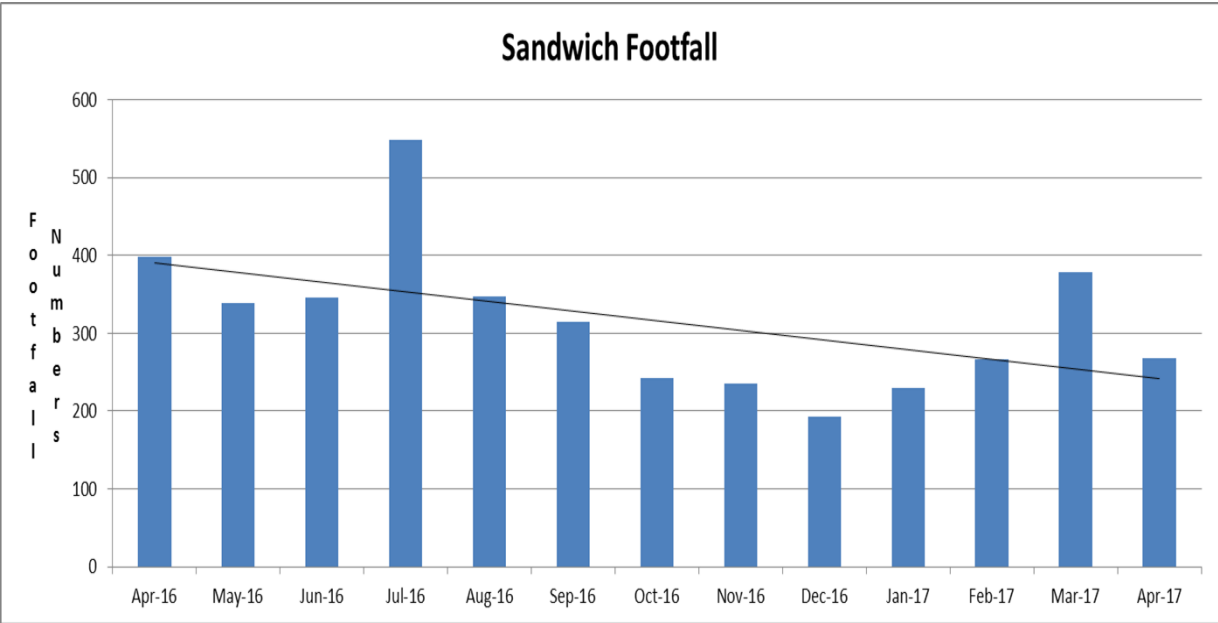
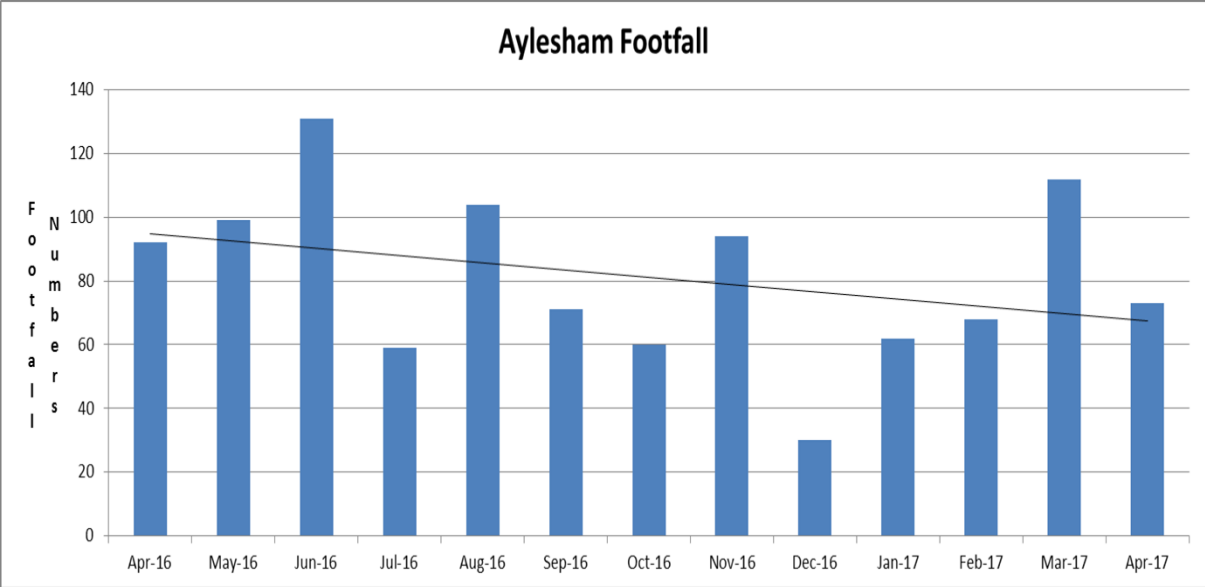
Does anyone in your house use a computer/smart-phone/tablet?
Yes No (please circle)

Do you have access to a computer/smart-phone/tablet at home?
Yes No (please circle)

Do you have access to a computer at a library, council office or similar?
Yes No (please circle)

Why did you visit today instead of going online or phoning?
Provide H/B info.

More recent usage stats for Aylesham and Sandwich



National internet access statistics (ONS)

ONS Internet stats 2016

Figure 3: Recent internet users in last 3 months by age group and sex, UK, 2016

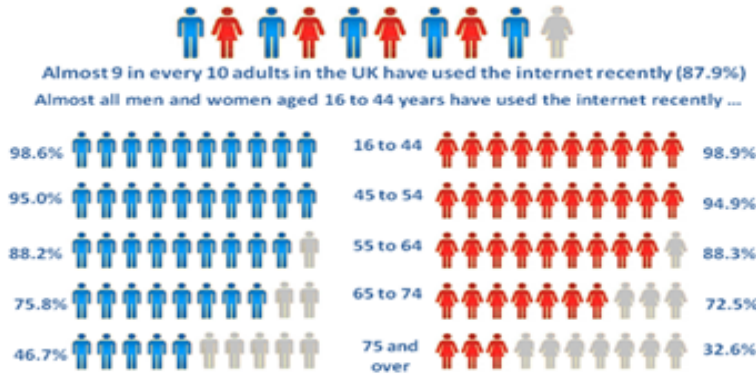
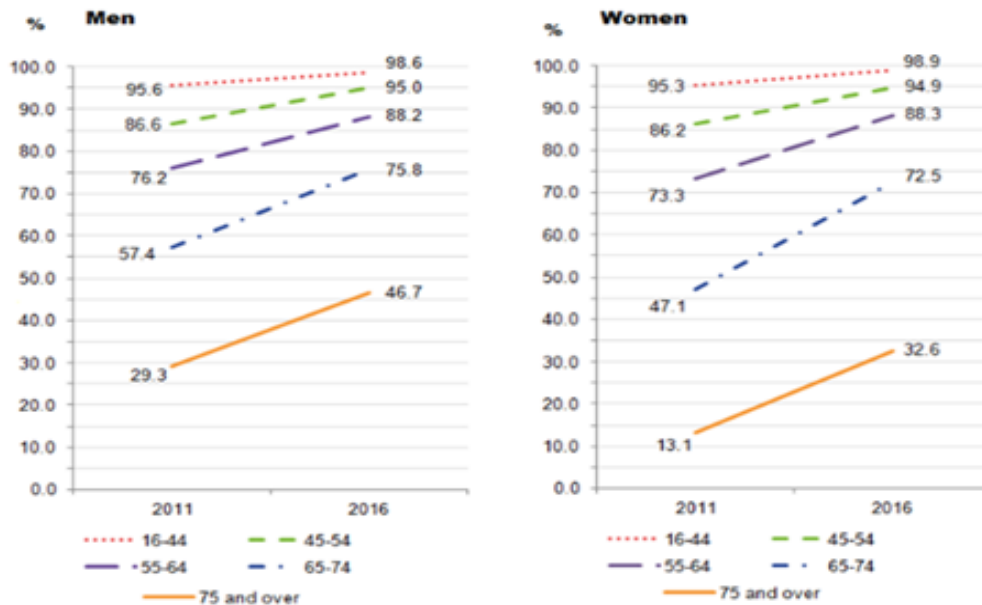


Figure 4: Recent internet use in 2011 and 2016 by age group and sex, UK



Equalities Impact Assessment

Lead Officer:-	Andrew Stevens, Assistant Director, EK Services
Decision Maker(s):-	Cabinet – 4 th September 2017
Name and Type of decision:- e.g. Policy, contract, service delivery change.	Service delivery change. The report recommends that face to face customer service is withdrawn from Deal.
Date of decision When will the final decision be taken?	4 th September 2017.
Aims of the decision <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Objectives • Intended outcomes • Key actions • Who and how many will be affected 	<p>The objectives of the decision are to withdraw face to face customer service at Deal.</p> <p>Although face to face service will be withdrawn we still intend to offer a comprehensive service on the telephone and online. The intended outcome is for customers to interact with us in a more cost effective way as face to face service provision carries significantly higher overheads than dealing with people on the telephone or online.</p> <p>The key actions are to seek approval in principle from Cabinet on 4th September 2017 and then embark on a communications campaign to publicise the closures. It is anticipated that the face to face service will be withdrawn during the autumn 2017</p> <p>In terms of numbers of people affected, the numbers of customers using these offices varies from month to month but we generally see about 220 customers per week at Deal. Footfall is decreasing year on year. Of these approximately 39% are repeat customers.</p>

<p>Information and Research</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summarise research and information that you used to prepare your proposals / preferred options • What data did you use to research your proposals • List anything you found that will affect people with protected characteristics. 	<p>We have been collecting a great deal of data and information on customers using our face to face services over the last 12 months. This has been using feedback cards and we have collected information regarding age, gender, distance travelled, disability status and whether the customer is digitally literate or not and had access to the internet. We have collected over 380 survey forms which have subsequently informed these recommendations.</p> <p>These survey forms have been accompanied by EKS “Digital Champions” spending time in this office talking to the customers about how they prefer to contact the office and helping them deal with the council in a different way. These sessions have been very positively received.</p> <p>Generally speaking, we have found that Deal is mostly used by people aged between the ages of 45-54. A minority of people using face to face at these offices consider themselves to be disabled.</p> <p>Based upon the surveys, approximately 60% of the customers are female.</p> <p>We have also carried out research looking at other similar organisations that provide services to our customers. For older people in particular anyone dealing with the Pension Service would be expected to interact with them online or by telephone. Documents can be posted to them as well. HMRC also encourage this type of contact rather than face to face. Utility companies such as water, gas and electricity companies offer no face to face services either.</p>
<p>Consultation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has there been any specific consultation done • What were the consultation results • Did the consultation analysis show any difference for people with protected characteristics. • What conclusions did you draw from the consultation 	<p>There has been significant consultation through a process of discussions and surveys with over 380 users of the face to face service at Deal to build up a detailed understanding of who are customers are and to find out why they were choosing to contact us face to face rather than use more modern, cost effective ways of contacting us.</p>

Assessing if the decision is likely to be relevant to the three aims of the Equality Duty.

Aim	Relevance Yes / No
Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation	No
Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not.	Yes
Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.	No

If you have decided that this decision is relevant to the three aims of the Equality Duty, use the section below to show how it is relevant and what the impact will be.

Protected Characteristic	Relevance High/Medium/Low	Impact of the decision Positive / Negative
Age	Medium	Negative.
Disability	Medium	Neutral
Gender reassignment		
Gender		
Marriage and Civil Partnership		
Pregnancy and Maternity		
Race		
Religion, Belief or Lack of Belief		
Sexual Orientation		

<p>If you have found negative impact, outline the measures you intend to take to mitigate it.</p>	<p>National ONS data reveals that older people are less likely to have access to the internet than younger people. Withdrawing the face to face customer service will not disadvantage older people as we will still provide a telephone service for enquiries and customers always have the opportunity to upload documents on their phone if they have the facility and access or post documents where they do not. This is entirely consistent with other organisations such as Pension Service and HMRC who are also encouraging customers to interact with them in a more modern, cost effective way.</p> <p>In terms of disability, again, statistics show disabled people are less likely to have internet access than non-disabled people. The mitigating factors mentioned above remain applicable. We will offer a full digital service for those who have got access to the internet and a telephone service for those who do not. As many of the transaction types we deal with are customers simply bringing in documents for us to see we will of course accept these via the postal system like many other organisations they already deal with.</p> <p>For exceptional cases only there is a provision to visit people in their own homes to help them interact with the council. This will be adopted on a case by case basis and will only be carried out where there is no other help available to the customer.</p>
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Further information requested by Scrutiny Committee (11 July) regarding Aylesham & Sandwich *(not relevant to the decision to close Deal and included in this report for completeness).*

A5.1 The additional data that was requested by Cabinet in relation to the Deal office has also been collated for Aylesham and Sandwich, as requested by Scrutiny Committee.

A5.2 The percentage of customers who are “repeat customers” - Aylesham

Based upon the survey work conducted, the number of “repeat callers” to the Aylesham service desk is approximately 60%.

A5.3 The number and “vulnerability profile” of individual customers - Aylesham

During the customer insight work at this office data was collected on 116 individual customers at Aylesham. This included information on their age, gender, disability status, how far they had travelled to come into the office, whether they had access to (or used) the internet and, most importantly, why they chose to use face to face services rather than telephoning or going online. This section provides information on the data collected.

A5.3.1 From the data collected, 58% of customers are of working age and 42% of pension age (65+). From the “working age” group most of the customers are in the age band 45-64 (almost 1 in 3 of the total number of customers fall into this age band). More females than males use the office (63% and 37% respectively). 65% of customers do not consider themselves as having a disability, although this does not directly mean that 35% do have a disability, as some customers do not answer this question.

A5.3.2 In terms of digital capability / capacity, 44% of customers told us they do not have access to the internet. Unsurprisingly, these customers tend to fall into the higher age band (75+) which reflects national statistics and research. Upon checking the “reason for visit” the vast majority of enquiries could have been dealt with on the phone or by post (they were mainly “reporting” or “giving”) so the lack of online knowledge / equipment would not be a barrier to them dealing with the council. The table below compares the customers in their respective age bands to the ONS national statistics on household internet access:

Age band	Percentage of Aylesham customers	ONS internet access statistics* recent users of internet in last 3 mths
16-24	2.6%	} 98.6% (m) 98.9% (f)
25-34	13.8%	
35-44	10.3%	
45-54	15.5	95% (m) 94.9% (f)
55-64	15.5%	88.2% (m) 88.3% (f)
65-74	18.1%	75.8% (m) 72.5% (f)
75+	24.1%	46.7% (m) 32.4% (f)

A5.4 The percentage of customers who are “repeat customers” - Sandwich

We carried out an exercise to identify the number of “repeat callers” to the Sandwich office and these total 34%. Additionally, the office is slightly busier on “market day” and the typical split between Tuesday and Thursday callers is approximately 47% to 53% respectively.

A5.5 The number and “vulnerability profile” of individual customers - Sandwich

During the customer insight work at this office, data was collated on 309 individual customers at Sandwich. Information gathered included: age, gender, disability status, how far they had travelled to come into the office, whether they had access to (or used) the internet and, most importantly, why they chose to use face to face services rather than telephoning or going online. This section provides information on the data collected.

A5.5.1 From the data collected, 45% of customers are of working age and 55% of pension age (65+). From the “working age” group most of the customers are in the age band 45-54 (almost 15% of the total number of customers fall into this age band). More females than males use the office (69% and 31% respectively). 75% of customers do not consider themselves as having a disability.

A5.5.2 In terms of digital capability / capacity, 37% of customers told us they do not have access to the internet. Unsurprisingly, these customers tend to fall into the higher age band (75+) which reflects national statistics and research. Upon checking the “reason for visit” 25% of these were to make a payment and a further 35% were to ask about waste and recycling services. The vast majority of enquiries could have been dealt with on the phone or by post (they were mainly “reporting” or “giving”) so the lack of online knowledge / equipment would not be a barrier to them dealing with the council. The table below compares the customers in their respective age bands to the ONS national statistics on household internet access:

Age band	Percentage of Sandwich customers	ONS internet access statistics* recent users of internet in last 3 mths
16-24	1.9%	} 98.6% (m) 98.9% (f)
25-34	9.4%	
35-44	6.2%	
45-54	14.9%	95% (m) 94.9% (f)
55-64	11.7%	88.2% (m) 88.3% (f)
65-74	23.3%	75.8% (m) 72.5% (f)
75+	31.7%	46.7% (m) 32.4% (f)