



FUTURE NORTHANTS

West Northants Customer Service Opening Hours
Shadow Executive 27th October 2020





Decisions required:

Approval for the recommended Customer Services opening hours from vesting day: for West Northamptonshire unitary authorities

This paper describes the recommended approach for consolidating the Customer Services Opening Hours for the West. Although this is not a requirement of the safe and legal plus programme; it can be a 'plus' as it has significant benefits for our customers, future transformation and integration.

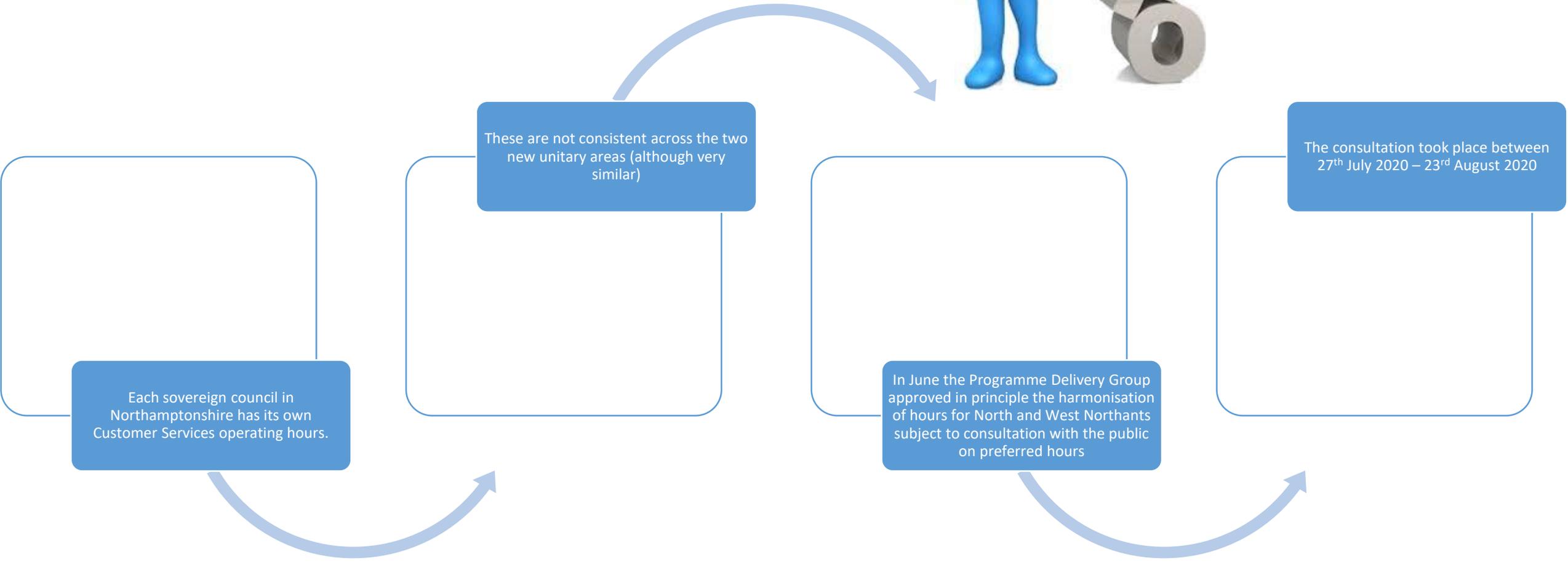


Presentation overview

- Background information
- Public consultation approach and preview
- Pattern of Contact and what that tells us
- Outcomes of the consultation and preferences for West Northants
- Impact assessments
- Summary



Background



Current West Northants Customer Service Opening Hours

Authority	Start Time	Closing Time
Daventry	9:00am	Phones 4:40pm Face to Face 5:00pm apart from 4:30pm on Friday
Northampton	9:00am apart from 10:00am on Wednesday	5:00pm
South Northants	9:00am	5:15pm
County	9:00am	5:00pm



Consultation approach

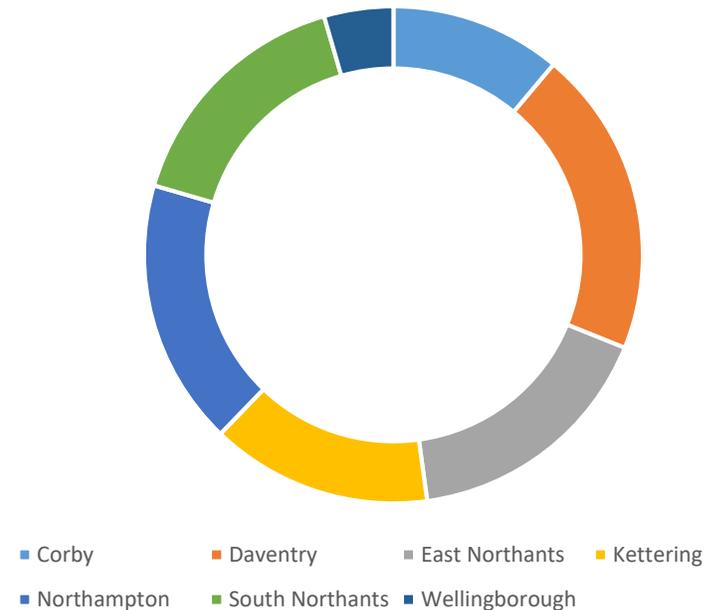
- It was important to consult in a way that provides the public with **realistic options** – in order to manage expectations and avoid potential backlash if the results show that customers prefer hours that the councils cannot accommodate
- It took the form of a short online survey with: A strong introduction and an opportunity to understand the demographics of respondents along with preferred channels of communication

Channel	Audience
Websites: Future Northants All countywide websites	General Public
Email	Residence panels across the county Parish Council CVS Housing providers Other partners
Social media: Twitter Facebook Press release issued to all local news providers Local radio interview	General public
Customer service centres across Northamptonshire	Service users Emails to be sent to customers that opt in after interactions (phone, face to face)

Outcomes of the consultation

In total, we received **1225** responses from residents of Northamptonshire

Breakdown	
Location	Number of respondents
Corby	136
Daventry	245
East Northants	205
Kettering	176
Northampton	212
South Northants	196
Wellingborough	55
Total	1225



Pattern of contact and what that tells us

To coincide with the public consultation, the Customers and Digital Team have collected call volume data from 6 of the 8 local authorities from 2 separate weeks earlier in 2020 – the week commencing 3rd February, and the week commencing 20th April.

These weeks were chosen to give recent snapshots of volume data, pre-lockdown, and during lockdown, as we wanted to investigate whether patterns of call arrival, and hence customer behaviour, had altered due to the restrictions placed on residents.

Pattern of contact and what it tells us

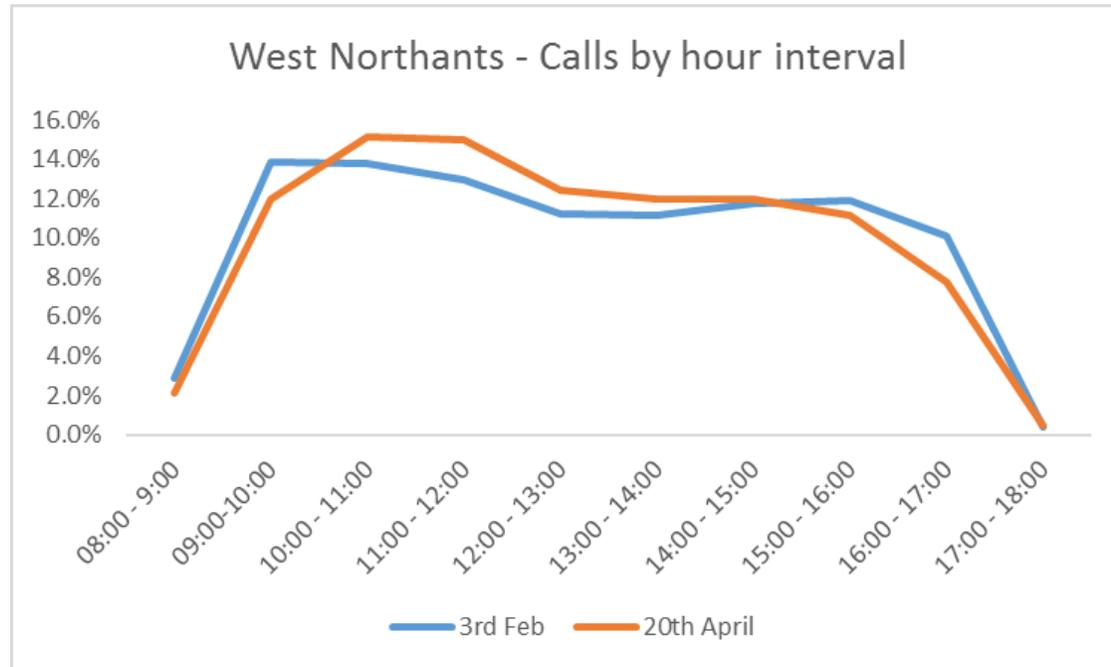
For the purpose of producing a combined picture for both West and North Northamptonshire, the County Council call volumes were split 54%:46% respectively, matching the Disaggregation Principles set out by the Future Northants Programme.

Face to Face contact at council offices was not included in this as during the 2nd week, lockdown restrictions meant this channel was unavailable.

Similarly, Online contact was not included as (with the exclusion of the Web Chat service offered in Kettering) this is a channel available for 24 hours a day.



Contact Volumes and what they tell us – West Northamptonshire



There was a 33% reduction in total calls received in the week commencing 20th April when compared to 3rd February. Whilst there are some fluctuations apparent, the overall pattern of arrival is very similar for both weeks.

The initial peak comes later during the lockdown week, and there is less of a dip in contact over the lunchtime period.

Possible reasons for this are the disruption traditional routines caused by workers on furlough or working from home.



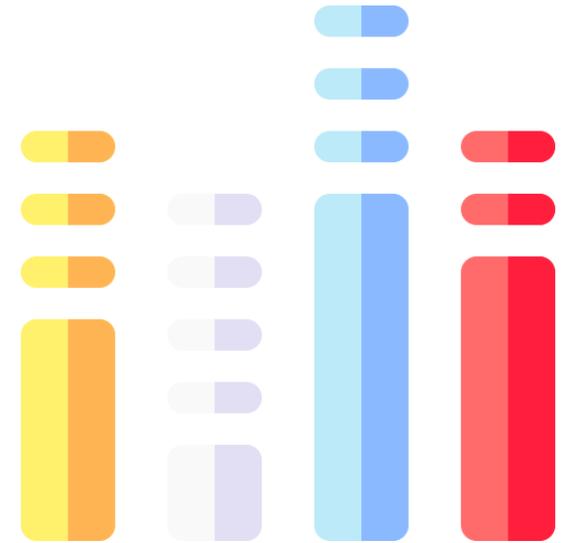
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Contact Volumes and what they tell us

What is clear from both areas of the County is that the proportion of contact at either end of the 10 hour spectrum is significantly lower than at any other point in the day. Only 5% of contacts received at NCC occurred between 8am and 9am, or 5pm and 6pm. NCC, as of week commencing 1st September 2020 has changed opening hours to 9am – 5pm following a consultation of their own, there is nothing in the data collected that suggests undoing this change, whilst harmonising other authorities to match that time would be cost effective.

However, with a comprehensive direct comparison being impossible owing to the different operational hours currently available to customers in the county, we can only make an effective recommendation alongside the responses received in the consultation. This is more so the case in the North of the County due to the lack of equivalent data for Corby and East Northants which was not available.



Customer Service Opening times preferences – West Northants

- There was a clear preference of 9.00am -5.00pm from respondents in West Northamptonshire

Preference	Daventry	Northampton	South Northants	Grand Total
8:30am - 4.30pm	64	51	42	157
9.00am - 5.00pm	61	59	61	181
9.30am - 5.30pm	42	52	37	131
No preference	44	52	55	151

West Northants Impact assessment:

South Northants:

- Daily 15 min reduction in service availability in South Northants
- SNC leadership have confirmed that there are tasks that staff could complete daily within this time so working hours would not need to change
- Slight changes to waste processes – already agreed as feasible with waste colleagues

Daventry:

- Daily 30 minute increase in service availability in Daventry
- In order to accommodate extended hours of operation, working hours for customer service staff may need to be extended on Fridays, meet from existing budget
- There must also be a corresponding increase in the availability of the back office teams to match this. Otherwise, there will be no-one to put customers through to, or officers to speak with in order to gain clarification on customer queries.
- The Daventry HR lead is investigating the details behind this as well as consultation required for this change to take place: How many people and who will be affected (customer service staff and other teams included)
- An alternative is to consider routing calls for Daventry to a different West contact centre between 4:30 – 5pm on a Friday



West Northants Impact assessment continued:

Northampton Borough & County Council

- NBC and the County Council operate 9-5 - no HR impact
- Out of Hours service – NBC have confirmed that the proposal fits well with current hours of operation

Assumptions:

- NBC, SNC & NCC all staff hours will be reviewed in the transformation stage of the FN programme



Risks:

- Contracts – moving across existing employee contracts and establishing new ones for Day 1. This also includes material changes to contracts in Daventry to meet required hours on Fridays
- Future political decisions affecting delivery of long term vision – with the appointment of new Chief Executives to each authority now confirmed, and elections for members in 2021, there is a possibility that high level decisions taken on behalf of the entire unitary council will have an impact on customer services, including opening hours
- The agreed 'To Be' opening hours do not reflect/meet customer needs

Impacts for West Northants are all manageable



In summary:

Approval is being requested for the unitary customer services opening hours:

- **West Northants: 9.00am – 5.00pm Monday to Friday**