

Agenda Item 10

Executive Member	Councillor Vivienne Michael
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Date	27 th November 2012

Ward (s) affected	Northern Wards	Key Decision	Yes
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Subject	The HelpShop, Leatherhead
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Recommendation

That the HelpShop in Leatherhead be co-located with Leatherhead Library as suggested in paragraph 9.1 of the report.

The Executive has the authority to determine the Recommendation

Executive Summary

- In February 2011, at a meeting of the Scrutiny Committee, it was recognised that the HelpShop service in Leatherhead is a valued one but that it was difficult to predict what type of service would be required in the longer term. The Executive noted that action needed to be taken to reduce the rental expenditure.
- Changes in services offered (e.g. bus passes being issued County wide by the SCC Library Service), coupled with growing financial pressure on the Council as a whole, suggest that the time is right to review how the HelpShop service is provided in Leatherhead.
- A number of options have been explored over the past two years with the most cost-effective and customer-friendly being a co-location at Leatherhead library at the Mansion House.
- This proposal meets two of the Council's priorities as follows:

Access to Services. The library is fully accessible to disabled customers. It provides free on-site parking for Mansion House customers and is close to bus routes. The co-location of the two services under one roof would be convenient for many customers.

A co-location at the library would allow for all existing HelpShop services to transfer to the library, including the payment kiosk.

Whilst the opening hours of the two services currently differ, there is scope to review the opening hours of the HelpShop if required.

Value for Money. This proposal would see the continuation of the HelpShop provision in Leatherhead at a greatly reduced cost to Mole Valley District Council.

Background

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The Leatherhead HelpShop was opened in 1997 at 25-29 High Street Leatherhead. The District Council had previously operated a Locality Office in Leatherhead from Wesley House that incorporated a cash desk and dealt with general enquiries.
- 1.2 The main role and purpose was identified as ‘to enable people to use the facility as part of their normal activity, such as shopping, avoiding the need to make a special trip to obtain information and advice across the whole range of district, county council and local services.’ The idea was to provide a local service to residents which would be an exemplar of seamless service delivery between the County and District Councils. Both Councils financially supported the HelpShop. The service would also be a personal face to face service.
- 1.3 The original concept for funding the facility was that an agreed apportionment of costs would be made based upon the numbers of enquiries received concerning district and county council functions. The County Council withdrew from 1st April 1999 but the District Council continued to provide the HelpShop in Leatherhead. The Town Centre Manager also occupies a room at the HelpShop and, at that stage a recharge was made for that accommodation.

Current HelpShop Service

- 1.4 The HelpShop provides a point of contact for some of the residents of and visitors to the Leatherhead area. The HelpShop is open six days a week for face-to-face visits. Telephone calls and emails to the HelpShop are responded to by any member of the Council’s Customer Services Unit (CSU) which is based at Pippbrook and the ability to respond is not dependent on being on site. The Leatherhead Town Centre Manager is accommodated on the premises for which no recharge is made. The opening hours are as shown below although once a month on a different weekday the HelpShop closes at 4pm for staff training.

Monday to Friday: 9.30am – 1.15pm and 1.45pm - 4.30pm
Saturday: 9.30am - 1.00pm

The services provided are as follows:

- Access to public access terminals/self service facility
- Book meetings for Park House, Leatherhead
- Request black/clear sacks
- Buy radar keys and laundry tokens

- Get help filling in Council forms, e.g. housing and council tax benefits etc
- Make payments through the kiosk
- Obtain information and leaflets on Council services and other public bodies
- Report issues such as missed bin, lost dog, health and safety matters etc.
- View current planning applications online
- Member surgeries once a month on a Saturday morning

Customers can also pick up leaflets on or make enquiries about other Council-related services.

- The HelpShop became part of the Customer Services Unit in November 2009. The service is provided by Customer Services staff working at the HelpShop on a rota basis. Two staff are required to work at the HelpShop at any one time for security reasons although only 0.8 FTE is actually required to deliver the current HelpShop service (the second person takes phone calls as if they were at Pippbrook).
- In February 2011 a report was taken to the Council's Scrutiny Committee regarding the HelpShop. The minutes of that meeting state:

“There was a common view across the Chamber that the HelpShop offered a valuable service to local residents, many of whom did not have access to the internet and it was essential that it remained in a convenient high profile location. However it was accepted that it may not be possible for the HelpShop to remain in its current premises if the Council was unable to negotiate a reduced rent with the landlord.

The Leatherhead Members of the Council in particular felt that it was important for the HelpShop to remain on the High Street and agreed that it would not be acceptable for it to be moved to either Park House or the Leatherhead Theatre. Some Members were concerned to note that if the break clause on the HelpShop premises was not activated in March 2011 then the Council would be tied into its lease for another six years. There was a view taken that it was difficult to predict what type of service would be required in six years or if the HelpShop would even still be needed. Therefore if it was decided that the Council should remain in its current premises, then the insertion of another break clause in the lease should be negotiated with the landlord.”

- The meeting of the Executive on 8 February 2011 minuted the following decision:

The Helpshop, Leatherhead – EXEMPT ITEM - *There was a general acceptance across the Committee that action needed to be taken to reduce the rental expenditure on the current premise of the HelpShop.*

- Subsequent to these meetings a revised and greatly reduced rent was negotiated for a period of one year from September 2011. This was part of a 5- year lease due to expire in September 2016. In accordance with the view expressed by the Scrutiny Committee in February 2011, a break clause was negotiated as part of that lease. The clause could be exercised after one year once the rent for the

remaining 4 years had been negotiated. The rent review was done in August 2012.

- In September 2012 the break clause in the current HelpShop lease was exercised in order to allow the Council the opportunity to vacate the existing premises in March 2013. This break was a one-off opportunity and had it not been exercised, the Council would have been tied into a lease at an increased annual rent which would not expire until September 2016.
- Footfall into the HelpShop is changing. Figures for 2011/12 and 2012/13 (to date) show reductions over 2010/11 when average footfall was 1,382 a month compared to 1,230 a month for the first 6 months of 2012 (which includes Olympic related enquiries averaging 51 a month).

From 1 April 2011 the issuing of bus passes moved from being a District Council function to a County Council function which is carried out at the Leatherhead library. The Council is also seeing a general growth in customers' use of online self-service options such as making payments and using services such as Home Choice which are quicker to use and available 24/7. Current website statistics support this view, though they paint an overall picture and are not Leatherhead specific. (Appendix A)

1.5 For the first six months of this financial year, (April to September), a total of 7,380 visits were recorded at the HelpShop. In that time the HelpShop was open for 933 hours plus an extra 12.5 hours over Olympic weekend which total 945.5 hours. This equates to 7.8 visitors per hour - a decrease of 1.4 visits per hour since a report on this matter was taken to Scrutiny in February 2011.

1.6 Of these 7,380 visits the enquiries can be broken down as follows:

- The top enquiries are consistently categorised as Customer Services. Of the 4,631 enquires received in this category during the six months April to September, 1,518 related to kiosk payments and 841 were to collect a leaflet or other publication. The HelpShop also receives enquiries that are non-MVDC related such as the 561 enquiries relating to bus passes (these visitors were referred to Leatherhead library).
- The second highest topic is Environment which relates to bin-related enquiries. A total of 845 such enquiries were received in the six month period.
- The third highest is Council Tax and Benefits. In the six month period, a total of 685 enquiries were received at the HelpShop on this topic.
- A total of 308 enquiries were Olympic-related.

Cost of the HelpShop

1.7 The previous lease ran until September 2011, at which time a new five-year lease was agreed. In accordance with the views expressed by Members in

February 2011, this lease incorporated a one-off break clause for September 2012.

The lease required that a rent review was conducted prior to September 2012. This was done in August. Details of the lease costs are attached in a Part II Confidential Appendix F.

Following the rent review, the one-off opportunity to break the lease was exercised by officers through delegated powers.

- 1.8 Details of the HelpShop budget are appended in a Part II Confidential Appendix F.

Financial Considerations

- 1.9 The Council's current financial position is such that we continue to look for savings and deliver maximum value for money for residents. The opportunity to re-locate the HelpShop offers up budget savings for consideration whilst still enabling this valued service to be retained in Leatherhead.
- 1.10 The greatest savings can be achieved through co-location where the Council no longer retains responsibility for property rent, rates and maintenance costs. The current HelpShop premises cost approx £50,000 per annum to run. A co-location will significantly reduce these costs.
- 1.11 To move the HelpShop to an alternative High Street or Swan Centre location (without co-location) will not deliver the same level of savings as responsibility for rent, business rates etc. would remain.
- 1.12 Whilst some landlords may be willing to offer an attractive rent (or even no rent) for the first year this would not be sustained over the usual rental period of 5 years. Running costs of maintenance, electricity, rates etc. would also need to be met - for 2012/13 £19,400 is budgeted for these. This option would also require the availability of suitable property. See the Part II Confidential Appendix B for a breakdown of empty properties in the High Street and Swan Centre.
- 1.13 There are costs associated with re-locating the HelpShop. Some capital costs would be incurred for moving the payment kiosk and setting up a new desk, storage, IT etc. elsewhere. Such costs have been estimated and budgeted for. Further capital would be required to 'make good' the dilapidations at the current premises. This has also been estimated and budgeted for.
- 1.14 Co-location would incur some revenue costs, though this would be far less than the costs associated with having responsibility for premises. Estimates have been made taking into account current co-location costs for County Services co-locating at Pippbrook and actual costs are currently being ascertained.

2.0 Options Considered

2.1 In the past 2 years, a number of options have been developed for consideration as follows:

Option 1: to move to Park House

Option 2: to move to Leatherhead Theatre

Option 3: to co-locate with the Police

Option 4: to co-locate with Surrey Independent Living Council at the HelpShop

Option 5: to move to the Fairfield Centre

Option 6: to move to other premises in the High Street or Swan Centre

Option 7: to co-locate with the library

Option 1

2.2 At the meeting of the Scrutiny Committee in February 2011, members gave clear direction that a move to Park House was not preferred.
This is not the recommended option.

Option 2

2.3 At the meeting of the Scrutiny Committee in February 2011, members gave clear direction that a move to Leatherhead Theatre was not preferred.
This is not the recommended option.

Option 3

2.4 Co-location with the Police was explored in 2010/11 but appropriate premises could not be found. The Police have now moved out of their Leatherhead station and alternative policing arrangements have been made.
This is not an available option.

2.5 Option 4

Co-location with Surrey Independent Living Council (SILC) at the current HelpShop premises was considered in 2011 but no long term guarantee of the partnership could be made and therefore no agreement was reached. Although this might have produced some savings, this would not have been a significant amount.

This is not an available option.

2.6 Option 5

A move to co-locate at the Fairfield Day Centre has been explored in 2012. Such a co-location would require costly building works to the Centre to create an appropriate space and would prevent consideration of other joint working opportunities. Additionally the payment kiosk (a key service provided at the HelpShop) could not be re-located at the centre, due to a lack of space leading to the inability to comply with Disability Discrimination Act requirements.

This is not the recommended option.

2.7 Option 6

A suggestion has been made to explore the possible use of empty premises on Church Street that have been empty for some time and where favourable rent terms may be offered. It is now known that the landlord has submitted a planning application relating to all 4 properties in that location. Details of other properties available for rent in the High Street and Swan Centre as at 6 November 2012 are appended in the Part II Confidential Appendix B. None of these have proven to be suitable either in terms of the rent required, accessibility, or the size of the property available.

This is not the recommended option.

2.8 Option 7

The concept of co-location with Surrey County Council is not new to the District Council. In Dorking, Pippbrook is already home to the County's Adult Social Care team and the opportunity to bring such joint working to Leatherhead would be in keeping with this partnership approach. The library already serves approximately 5,000 customers a month with a wide range of needs and there is some cross-over in terms of customer enquiries between the two organisations.

In April 2011 the County Council took back responsibility for bus passes and this service is administered at the library. Some HelpShop customers still approach the HelpShop about bus passes and need to be re-directed. Much of the literature on display in the HelpShop can also be found in the library. Co-location would allow services to be rationalised and eliminate duplication.

The option to co-locate at the library brings with it the opportunity to provide improved customer service through having both authorities located under one roof. Opening times at the library are different to, and longer than, those of the HelpShop and such co-location would provide the opportunity to review our opening hours.

Should the library service move to a High St or Swan Centre location within Leatherhead, there is mutual understanding that the HelpShop would be part of that move.

3.0 Accessing the HelpShop

- 3.1 The HelpShop is located on a pedestrianised High Street. The nearest car parks are the Swan Centre and Church Street which offer disabled parking bays. Access from the Swan Centre is via stairs or a lift for disabled people/those with pushchairs etc. or a walk down Leret Way to approach the High Street from the Lidl end of town.
- 3.2 Cyclists can park their bicycles at the foot of the High Street outside Argos/Travelodge.
- 3.3 The HelpShop is on one level and is accessible for disabled customers.

- 3.4 Bus users can make use of a number of bus routes including the 465 which stops at Bridge Street. According to the 'Traveline' website, it takes 4 minutes to walk from bus stop Q to the HelpShop, and 6 minutes to walk to the library.

4.0 Accessing the library

- 4.1 Leatherhead library is located as part of the Mansion House on Church Street. The Mansion House offers two disabled parking bays at the front and free car parking for up to two hours for Mansion House users at the rear. The nearest pay and display car park is on Church Road and Church Street car park is also nearby.
- 4.2 Cyclists can park their bicycles immediately outside the doors of the library.
- 4.3 The library is on one level and is accessible for disabled customers.
- 4.4 Bus users can make use of a number of different bus routes according to the County Council website. The 'Traveline' website indicates that it takes 6 minutes to walk from bus stop Q (465 route) to the library and 4 minutes to walk to the HelpShop.
- 4.5 More information on the accessibility of the library can be found on the County Council website: <http://www.surreycc.gov.uk/people-and-community/libraries/libraries-in-surrey/libraries-and-opening-times/leatherhead-library/accessibility-at-leatherhead-library>
- 4.6 An Equalities Impact Assessment of relocation to the library is attached at (Appendix C)

5.0 The Way Forward

- 5.1 The HelpShop service is valued by residents of and visitors to Leatherhead but the current premises are expensive.
- 5.2 Relocation and co-location opportunities have been explored thoroughly over the last two years. Co-location offers the best value for money, whilst continuing to provide similar access to the Council's services as is currently provided.
- 5.3 Co-location at the library has the advantage of offering customers a more joined-up service through a one stop shop which overall offers an even wider range of services to residents.
- 5.4 Positive discussions are being held with SCC staff to explore the detailed arrangements needed to take forward the co-location option.

6.0 Consultation

- 6.1 A customer survey was been undertaken in December 2010 to establish the views of our customers with regard to their use of the HelpShop. A further user survey was also conducted in October 2012. The two sets of results are shown in the table below and a more detailed summary of the 2012 survey results can be found in Appendix E.

	December 2010	October 2012
Number of responses	85	65
% of customers who combined their visit to HelpShop with doing some shopping	95%	91%
% of customers planning to use library	17%	23%
% of customers who used kiosk	12%	15%
% of customers who picked up leaflets	9%	32%
% of customers who prefer HelpShop remains within 5-10 mins walk of current location	65%	55%
% of customers who are prepared to walk up to 2 minutes	31%	37%
% of customers who walked to Leatherhead	46%	37%
% of customers who drove to Leatherhead	48%	46%
% of customers who came to Leatherhead by bus	6%	12%

7.0 Conclusion

- 7.1 The service provided from the HelpShop is valued by its customers and it has met the role and purpose that was envisaged for it. However, it is an expensive facility to provide in its current premises.
- 7.2 Co-location at the library would enable the Council to continue to deliver its Access to Services priority and to deliver better Value for Money.

8.0 TIME CONSTRAINTS

- 8.1 The break clause has been exercised which means Mole Valley must vacate the existing premises, having completed all dilapidations and paid all monies owing, by 23 March 2013.
- 8.2 In order for the HelpShop facility to be provided in new premises by mid/late February it is necessary to undertake certain elements of work such as the implementation of appropriate IT infrastructure, provision of the kiosk, signage etc. All of these require lead-in periods and the discussions with the necessary contractors need to commence in early December. Surrey County Council is aware of these time constraints and will work with us to deliver this if Members approve the library co-location.

9.0 DECISION REQUIRED BY THE EXECUTIVE

9.1 The recommended way forward is Option 7 as detailed in paragraph 2.8 – i.e.:

That Members agree to co-locate the HelpShop at Leatherhead library and that, should an opportunity arise for the library to move to a High St or Swan Centre location, that the HelpShop be included in such a move.

9.2 Alternatively the Executive could decide to ask the Officers to pursue one of Options 1, 2, 5 or 6 bearing in mind the time constraints detailed above and the level of savings that these premises are likely to generate.

10.0 CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

Legal Implications

The break clause terms in the lease are strict. Having exercised the break clause, one of the terms which must be complied with is that the Council gives vacant possession by 23 March 2013.

The break clause can not now be withdrawn. If the Council were still occupying the premises on 23 March 2013, despite having served the break notice, it is possible that the Landlord could object to this and claim that the lease had terminated. The Council would therefore risk being left without premises or, if it were able to stay in these premises, the terms would be as agreed with the Landlord, or ordered by a Court, which could be far less favourable. There may also be financial penalties imposed for the continued occupation which could be very high. This would be a very high risk strategy and is not recommended.

Financial and Risk Implications

As part of the budget planning for 2013/14, the Council is having to find up to £1 million savings. This is an extremely difficult challenge and co-location of the HelpShop to the library could make a significant contribution to this without materially affecting service delivery.

The current property related costs of the HelpShop are high and as a result it is a costly service to provide. The co-location would significantly reduce these revenue costs.

There would be capital costs associated with any relocation and capital bids have been made to ensure provision to meet such costs.

Should the 23 March 2013 deadline be missed, the consequences could be as detailed above which could result in high rental costs to 2016 and/or possible litigation.

Equalities Implications

An Equalities Impact Assessment has been completed on co-locating at the library (see Appendix C). It is fully accessible for library users (approximately 5,000 a month) and is also suitable for HelpShop users.

Employment Issues

Such issues may arise should the council wish to amend the current opening hours of the HelpShop. Consultation shows that late night Tuesday opening is not something which many customers desire, so this can be discounted at this stage. In relation to Saturday afternoons, the HelpShop is currently open until 1pm while the library is open until 5pm. Officers will address any employment issues that may arise from this option if pursued. Current library opening hours are attached as Appendix D.

Sustainability Issues

None

Consultation

A survey of customers was carried out in December 2010 and again in October 2012. A summary of both consultations is provided in paragraphs 6.1 and 6.2 and the results of the most recent consultation are attached as Appendix E. The report will be considered by the Scrutiny Committee and the Chairman will present the views of that Committee to the Executive.

The Portfolio Holder advised the local District Councillors and County Councillor of the possibility of a move to the library and held a site visit with them.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

Quarter 2 (July - September 2012) Website Report

Visitor Numbers

Average Unique Visitors Per Month: 37,863

July 2012: 55,739 High visitor number can be attributed to Olympic Road Cycle Race
 July 2011: 27,093

August 2012: 29,235
 August 2011: 32,137 Unique visitors were more for August 2011 vs August 2012 as a result of the London Surrey Cycle Classic Olympic Road Race Test Event

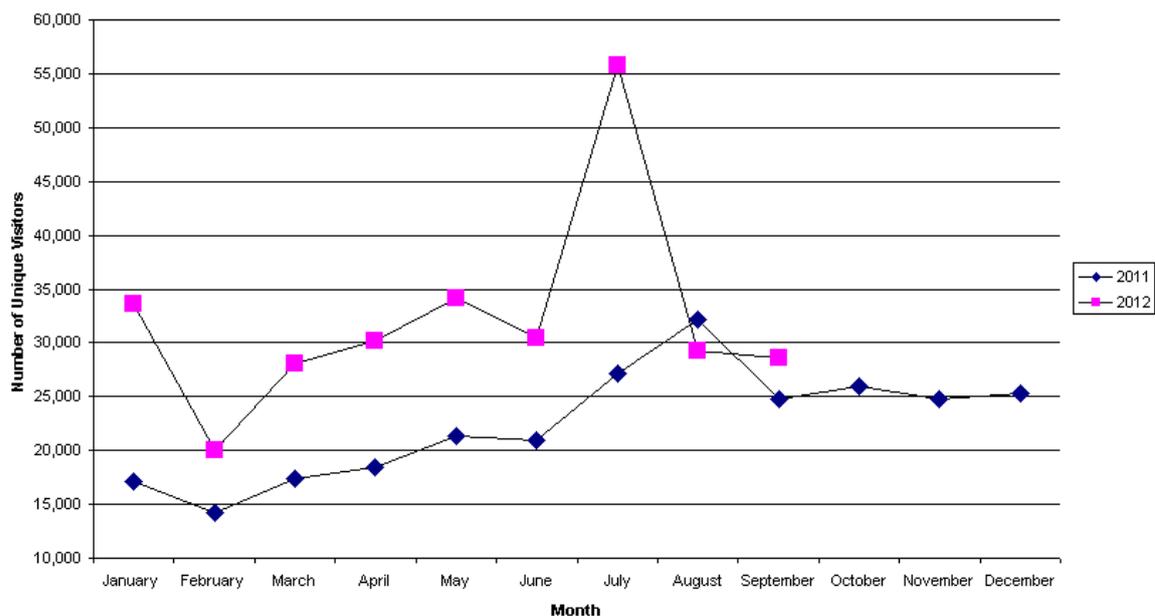
September 2012: 28,616
 September 2011: 24,791

Highest Day: Friday, July 27 with 7,358 visitors
 Lowest Day: Saturday, August 11 with 729 visitors

It is possible to show the increase in unique website visitors year on year. Data for 2010 is not available as the new website was launched in August 2010 and statistical information for the first three months of the site was recorded differently to the way data is currently collected.

The spike in July 2012 is as a result of the London 2012 Olympic Road Cycle Races and the increased number of visitors in August 2011 compared to August 2012 is due to the London Surrey Cycle Classic, the test event for the Olympic race.

Unique Visitor Numbers (Year on Year 2011 vs 2012)

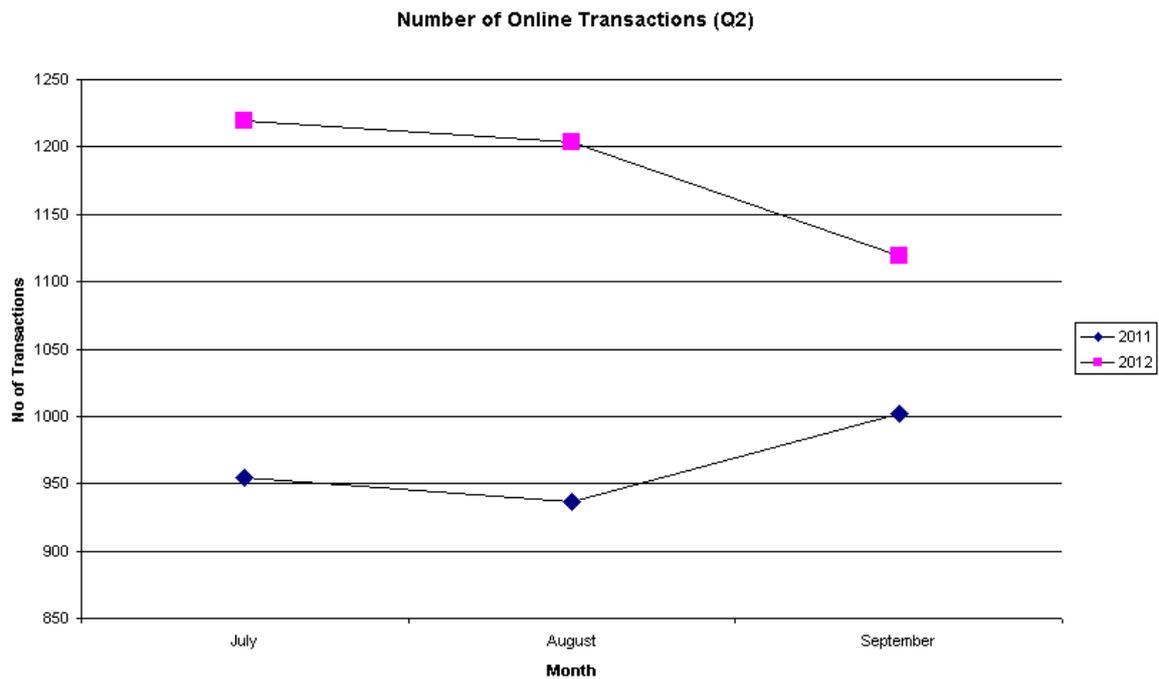


Online Payment Transactions

July 2012: (£179,565 in 1,219 transactions) online payments made
 July 2011: (£148,118 in 1,053 transactions) online payments made

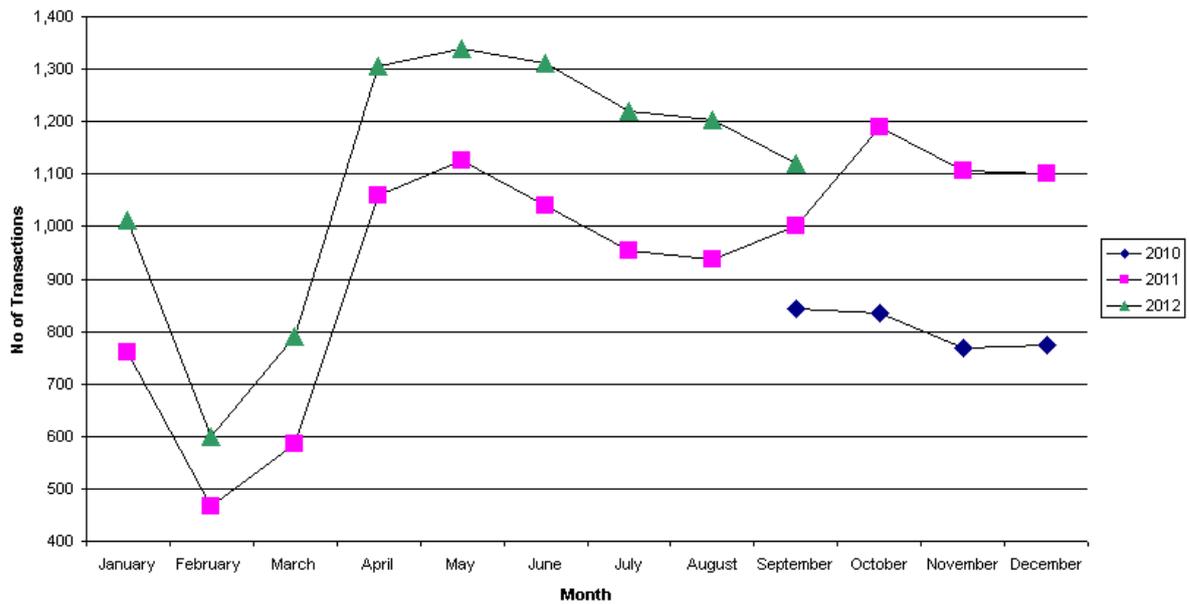
August 2012: (£163,188.56 in 1,204 transactions) online payments made
 August 2011: (£140,837.43 in 968 transactions) online payments made

September 2012: (£154,334.88 in 1,119 transactions) online payments made
 September 2011: (£139,390.32 in 1,002 transactions) online payments made



These Q2 figures are consistent with the year on year statistics (below), which show an emerging pattern of a small drop in July, August and September.

Number of Online Transactions
Year on Year Comparison: September 2010 to September 2012



Number of EForms Submitted:

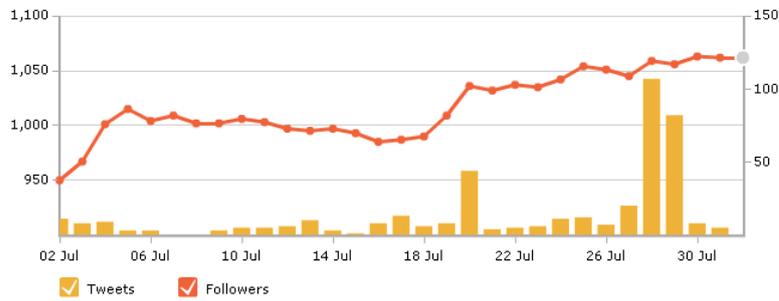
July: 301 (159 DMS forms + 188 email)
 August: 343 (155 DMS forms + 142 email)
 September: 308 (131 DMS forms + 177 email)

Top 10 Pages July- September 2012:

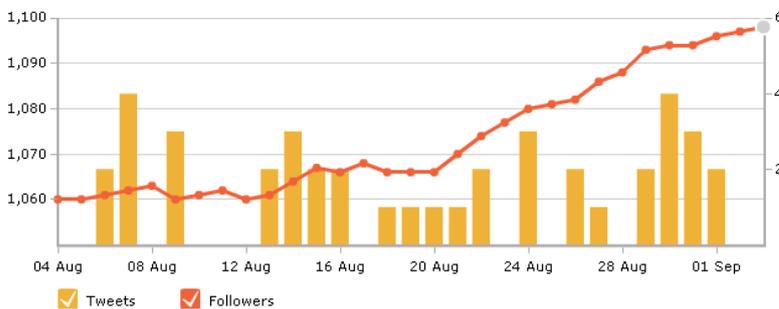
<u>Page Name</u>	<u>Number of Unique Visitors</u>
Car parking for July 28 & 29	16,152
Search for a Planning App	15,541
Planning / Building	12,976
Cycling Road Races	5,553
Contact Us	5,446
Search	5,116
Road Closures	4,613
Dorking Meadowbank	4,257
The Big Weekend	4,175
Leatherhead Town	4,132

Social Media

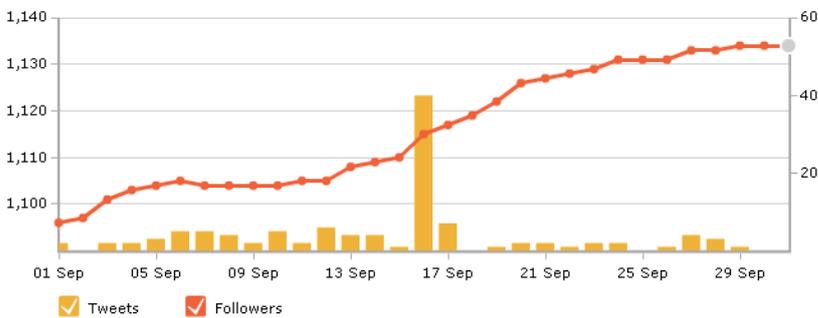
Twitter



July – 1,062 followers



August – 1,099 followers



September – 1,134 followers

YouTube

Total Videos uploaded between July- September: 1

Total Video views July - September: 440

Equality Impact Assessment

Customer Services – Relocation of HelpShop
to Leatherhead Library

Indicate for each equality strand whether there may be a positive impact, negative impact, or no impact.				
Equality Strand	Positive	Negative	No impact	Reason
Age	√		√	<p>The library is 147 metres (482 feet) from the current HelpShop location, which is approximately a 3 minutes walk for a healthy person of working age. *</p> <p>It is recognised that for people who are older or younger, this walk may be longer. However, it is considered that the relocation will not have any impact on people who are able to usually walk around the town centre.</p> <p>For those who may not be able to walk the additional distance , there is a car park at the Library, which will be closer to the HelpShop location than any car park is to the current HelpShop location, and will provide improved access for those people.</p>
Race			√	It is not considered that moving the HelpShop would have any impact on people because of their race.
Disability	√			The library can be reached on the flat from the HelpShop's existing location and from nearby car parks. There is the added benefit of 2 disabled parking bays on site. CSU staff are trained to assist visually impaired customers and the portable hearing loop would move to the library location.
Gender			√	It is not considered that moving the HelpShop would have any impact on people because of their gender.
Trans-gender			√	It is not considered that moving the HelpShop would have any impact on people because of being trans-gender.
Belief / Faith			√	It is not considered that moving the HelpShop would have any impact on people because of their faith.
Sexual			√	It is not considered that moving the HelpShop would have any impact

Orientation				on people because of their sexual orientation.
Other equality issues – please state	√			<p>Non-drivers Leatherhead Library can be accessed via a number of bus routes as detailed on the County Council website:</p> <p>From Cobham and Oxshott 408</p> <p>From Dorking 465, 516</p> <p>From Epsom 408, 479, 516, 622</p> <p>From Guildford 478, 479</p> <p>From Kingston and Surbiton 465</p> <p>Drivers For people who want to drive to the HelpShop only, there is car parking at the Mansion House which provides two hours free parking for library customers. This will also apply to HelpShop customers. The 2 nearest pay and display car parks are at Church Road (opposite) and at Church Street.</p>
Rural/Urban issues			√	Other than the reference above to drivers and non drivers, it is not considered that moving the HelpShop would have any impact on people because of rural/urban issues.
HR issues	√	√		<p>This could be a positive and/or a negative impact if the Council decides to change current opening hours to beyond those indicated in the contracts for CSU. Otherwise there would be no impact.</p> <p>If it is considered appropriate to amend opening times, there will be a need to extend existing CSU contracts to cover all day Saturday opening and/or late night opening (to 7pm) on a Tuesday, though indications from the user survey show little preference for late night opening.</p>

* <http://tinyurl.com/ckvhxgd>

If you find a negative impact on any equality group you will need to complete stage one and move on to stage two and carry out a full EqlA.

A full EqlA will also need to be carried out if this is a high profile or major policy that will either effect many people or have a severe effect on some people.

Is a full EqlA required?	Yes (go to stage two)	
If no briefly summarise reasons why you have reached this conclusion, the evidence for this and the nature of any stakeholder verification of your conclusion.		
Briefly describe any positive impacts identified that have resulted in improved access or services		
<p>The library already offers 2 disabled parking bays at the front which HelpShop customers could use. This is an improved offer compared to the current High Street location which does not allow customers to park outside during opening hours.</p> <p>There is a car park at the Mansion House which provides two hours of free parking for Library customers. This provides improved access for people who walk and would struggle to walk the extra distance from the HelpShop to the Library. The Library is also well served by the local bus network.</p> <p>Some HelpShop customers are also library users and given the current locations of these 2 services must walk between the two. Co-location will provide benefits to such customers as well as potentially attracting more customers on a mutually beneficial basis to both the HelpShop and SCC's library service.</p> <p>Although the library is closed on a Monday, the recent user survey indicates that HelpShop customers would not find this negative as 24 of the 25 customers who said they use the HelpShop on a Monday have indicated that they could do so on a different day. Overall, opening hours of the library are greater than those at the HelpShop – including a late night and all day Saturday opening. Depending on member/customer preference and budgets there is the potential to increase the opening hours of the HelpShop provision for the benefit of customers.</p>		

For screenings only:

Review date	
Person responsible for review	
Corporate Head of Service signed off	
Date completed	

- Signed off electronic version to be kept in your team for review
- Electronic copy to be forwarded to the Policy Officer for publishing

Stage Two – Full Equality Impact Assessment

Introduction and background

Using the information from your screening please describe your service or function. This should include:

- **The aims and scope**
- **The main beneficiaries or users**
- **The main equality, accessibility, social exclusion issues and barriers, and the equality strands they relate to (not all assessments will encounter issues relating to every strand)**

If this EqIA is part of a project it is important to focus on the service or policy the project aims to review or improve.

To provide a first point of contact face to face service for customers in Leatherhead. The Customer Services team respond to customer enquiries by resolving queries at the first point of contact or, when necessary, referring customers to other services within the authority or to external bodies. Examples of the service provided at the HelpShop include helping customers to use the payment kiosk, taking Park House bookings, providing assistance in the completion of benefits application forms, viewing plans and responding to general enquiries which can be either council or non-council related. Once a month members (both District and County) offer a member surgery to residents on a Saturday morning at the HelpShop.

In addition, residents of Poplar Road, Leatherhead are able to purchase washing and drying tokens from the HelpShop.

The staff who work at the HelpShop are not dedicated to HelpShop and are multi-functional Customer Service Advisors. Staffing is managed on a rota basis taking into account the mixture of part-time and full-time hours worked by the team. The team of 14 Advisors are managed by 2 team leaders and a shared manager.

The HelpShop currently opens as follows:

Monday to Friday:	9.30am to 1.15pm
	1.45pm to 4.30pm
Saturday:	9.30am to 1.00pm

The move to the library is being driven by the need to make budget improvements in order to provide a balanced budget for 2013/14 onwards. This has been facilitated by a one-off break clause opportunity in the existing 5 year HelpShop lease (which expired in 2016). In line with the Council's Access to Services priority theme, we have sought to identify a solution which maintains the HelpShop presence in Leatherhead, enabling the Council to provide the same services, in an accessible location. A partnership with Surrey County Council's library team offers opportunities to make the necessary budget improvements whilst also potentially offering an improved service to residents. This partnership could be mutually beneficial for both Authorities.

Now describe how this fits into the Council's corporate priorities, the Sustainable Community Strategy or other local, regional or national plans and priorities.

The HelpShop service meets the corporate priority of Access to Services by providing face to face access to the council's services in Leatherhead, In addition, it offers a Saturday morning service to customers. The move to the library would result in there being no HelpShop service on a Monday (the library is closed that day) but could potentially extend the service overall by opening earlier in the week and/or a late night and/or a full day on a Saturday (subject to member/customer demand and appropriate budget)

The proposal to move the HelpShop to Leatherhead library meets the priority of Value for Money through making use of a shared space. The move will save the council approx £40,000 per annum.

Evidence gathering and fact-finding

What evidence is available to support your views above? Please include:

- A summary of the available evidence
- Identification of where there are gaps in the evidence (this may identify a need for more evidence in the action plan)
- What information is currently captured with respect to usage and take up of services.
- What the current situation is in relation to equality and diversity monitoring (where relevant)

The HelpShop service is used on average (last 6 months data) by 1230 customers a month. This makes it a valued but expensive service given the building costs.

The library is approximately a 3 minute walk from the HelpShop. There are no steps en route and it is mainly on the flat. There is free parking for 2 hours for Mansion House users. It is also located close to 2 council car parks at Church Road and Church Street.

Surrey County Council views this move as mutually beneficial.

The current HelpShop is on one level as is the library (by using an internal ramp). There is therefore no impact for wheelchair users when using HelpShop facilities.

In December 2010 a user questionnaire was carried out which received 85 responses. It revealed that 65% of users would be prepared to walk between 5 and 10 minutes if the HelpShop were to move. A further 31% would walk up to 2 minutes. The library is approximately a 3 minute walk from the current premises.

It also revealed that 48% of users drove to Leatherhead, and 46% walked. 6% came by bus.

A further user questionnaire was conducted between Friday 5 October and Friday 2 November 2012 which received 65 responses.

Those responses revealed similar trends – 55% of users would be prepared to walk between 5 and 10 minutes if the HelpShop were to move. A further 37% would walk up

to 2 minutes. The library is approximately a 3 minute walk from the current premises.

It also revealed that 46% of users drove to Leatherhead, and 37% walked. 12% came by bus. 3% came by taxi and one respondent said they came by mobility scooter.

How have stakeholders been involved in this assessment? Who are they, and what is their view?

The Portfolio Holder had been discussing the possibility of a new location as part of developing the 2013/14 budget. As part of this, it was identified that there was only a single date on which the Break Clause could be made and therefore officers used their authority to exercise this break.

Subsequently, the Portfolio Holder met with the five Leatherhead members and the County Councillor who, at the time, expressed some concerns. A further meeting has been offered to these members on 16 November to allow for further discussion.

A user survey was conducted with customers in December 2010 when the future of the HelpShop was previously considered. A further user survey ran from 5 October to 2 November 2012 which revealed a similar level of response. Details are noted above.

CSU staff have been updated with the current proposals which has generally been welcomed. This will remain a standing agenda item on the CSU team meeting agenda.

Surrey County Council staff required to implement the co-location have been involved in the preliminary discussions. This move is seen to be mutually beneficial.

Analysis and assessment

Given the available information, what is the actual or likely impact on minority, disadvantaged, vulnerable and socially excluded groups?

Is this impact positive or negative or a mixture of both?

This is set out in the impact analysis set out below.

The only identified negative impact could potentially be on MVDC staff, if a decision was taken to extend the opening hours of the service. Though this would depend on the individuals concerned.

Otherwise the other impacts have all been either positive impacts or no impacts.

In broader terms it is considered that those people who use both the HelpShop and library will have a positive impact and both organisations (MVDC & SCC) could benefit from customers using each others' services.

Some customers visit the HelpShop whilst in the town centre to ask general questions about the town (e.g. where is the nearest bank, café etc) which could easily be answered by others in the town such as the CAB or other shopkeepers. These are not

directly about MVDC services however.

Residents of Poplar Road (emergency homeless accommodation) will still be able to purchase washing and drying tokens and depending on the opening hours, may find this service improved.

Indicate for each equality strand whether there may be a positive impact, negative impact, or no impact.				
Equality Strand	Positive	Negative	No impact	Reason
Age	√		√	<p>The library is 147 metres (482 feet) from the current HelpShop location, which is approximately a 3 minutes walk from the current location for a healthy person of working age. *</p> <p>It is recognised that for people who are older or younger, this walk may be longer. However, it is considered that the relocation will not have any impact on people who are able to usually walk around the town centre.</p> <p>For those people who may not be able to walk the additional distance, there is a car park at the Mansion House, which will be closer to the HelpShop location than any car park is to the current HelpShop location, and will provide improved access for those people.</p>
Race			√	<p>It is not considered that moving the HelpShop would have any impact on people because of their race.</p>
Disability	√			<p>The library can be reached on the flat from the HelpShop's existing location and from nearby car parks. There is the added benefit of 2 disabled parking bays on site.</p> <p>CSU staff are trained to assist visually impaired customers and the portable hearing loop would move to the library</p>

				location.
Gender			√	It is not considered that moving the HelpShop would have any impact on people because of their gender.
Trans-gender			√	It is not considered that moving the HelpShop would have any impact on people because of being trans-gender.
Belief / Faith			√	It is not considered that moving the HelpShop would have any impact on people because of their faith.
Sexual Orientation			√	It is not considered that moving the HelpShop would have any impact on people because of their sexual orientation.
Other equality issues – please state	√			<p>Non-drivers Leatherhead Library can be accessed via a number of bus routes as detailed on the County Council website:</p> <p>From Cobham and Oxshott 408</p> <p>From Dorking 465, 516</p> <p>From Epsom 408, 479, 516, 622</p> <p>From Guildford 478, 479</p> <p>From Kingston and Surbiton 465</p> <p>Drivers For people who want to drive to the HelpShop only, there is car parking at the Mansion House which provides two hours free parking for Library customers. This will also apply to HelpShop customers. The 2 nearest pay and display car parks are at Church Road (opposite) and at Church Street.</p>
Rural/Urban issues			√	Other than the reference above to drivers and non drivers, it is not considered

				that moving the HelpShop would have any impact on people because of rural/urban issues.
HR issues	√	√		<p>This could be a positive and/or a negative impact if the Council decides to change current opening hours to beyond those indicated in the contracts for CSU. Otherwise there would be no impact.</p> <p>If it is considered appropriate to amend opening times, there will be a need to extend existing CSU contracts to cover all day Saturday opening and/or late night opening (to 7pm) on a Tuesday, though indications from the user survey show little preference for late night opening.</p>

What can be done to reduce the effects of any negative impacts? Where negative impact cannot be completely diminished, can this be justified, and is it lawful?

Discussions will need to be held with HR if members decide that they require the HelpShop to open for longer than is currently provided for in existing CSU staff contracts. If members decide not to change current opening hours, or to change them only within current contractual provision, there will be no impact.

The main impact would be if members decided in favour of opening late one night a week (to 7pm on a Tuesday) and/or all day on a Saturday.

This will have a cost impact which members will consider.

It is possible that a trial period may be agreed during which customer need can be fully assessed before any final decision on opening hours is made. Appropriate questions were asked relating to this topic in the recent HelpShop user consultation to help inform such decision-making. It revealed that of the 65 respondents, 69% would not wish the HelpShop to open late on Tuesdays. The question relating to all day opening on a Saturday produced a more balanced response. 43% would want the HelpShop to open all day on Saturday whilst 51% would not. 5% did not answer this question. 1% gave an alternative response.

Where there are positive impacts, what changes have been or will be made? Who are the beneficiaries? How have they benefited?

The library already offers 2 disabled parking bays at the front which HelpShop customers could use. This is an improved offer compared to the current High Street location which does not allow customers to park outside during opening hours.

There is a car park at the Mansion House which provides two hours of free parking for Library customers. This provides improved access for people who walk and would struggle to walk the extra distance from the HelpShop to the Library. The Library is also well served by the local bus network.

Some HelpShop customers are also library users and given the current locations of these 2 services must walk between the two. Co-location will provide benefits to such customers as well as potentially attracting more customers on a mutually beneficial basis to both the HelpShop and SCC's library service.

Although the library is closed on a Monday, the recent user survey indicates that HelpShop customers would not find this negative as 24 of the 25 customers who said they use the HelpShop on a Monday have indicated that they could do so on a different day. Overall, opening hours of the library are greater than those at the HelpShop – including a late night and all day Saturday opening. Depending on member/customer preference and budgets there is the potential to increase the opening hours of the HelpShop provision for the benefit of customers.

Recommendations

Please summarise the main recommendations arising from the assessment. NB If it is impossible to diminish negative impacts to an acceptable or even lawful level the recommendation should be that the proposal or the relevant part of it should not proceed.

That hours of operation be agreed as soon as possible so that the HR issue can be resolved.

Action Plan – actions needed to implement the EqlA recommendations

Issue	Action	Expected outcome	Who	Deadline for action
HR issues	Portfolio Holder and Members to discuss and agree preferred opening hours.	Customer Service & Communications Manager to draw up an implementation proposal and outline the cost impact as well as any contractual or other impact for consideration by members. Final approval will then be sought on opening hours.	Customer Services & Communications Manager	31 December 2012

Summary Sheet

Review date	
Person responsible for review	
Corporate Head of Service signed off	
Date completed	
Date forwarded to Policy Officer for publishing	

- **Signed off electronic version to be kept in your team for review**
- **Electronic copy to be forwarded to your service's Equality and Diversity Working Group Representative**

Leatherhead Library opening times:

Day	Opening Times
Monday	Closed
Tuesday	9am - 7pm
Wednesday	9am - 5pm
Thursday	9am - 5pm
Friday	9am - 5pm
Saturday	9am - 5pm
Sunday	Closed

Appendix E - HelpShop User Questionnaire Results

Dates: Friday 5 October - Friday 2 November 2012

Number of Questionnaires Completed	65
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1. How did you travel to Leatherhead today?

Bus	8
Train	0
Car	30
Walk	24
Other	3
Unanswered	0

2. Please tell us the town or village you live in and your post code

Town (Please see Q 2)	60
Post Code	60
Unanswered	1

Breakdown of Q2 as follows:

Leatherhead	28
Box Hill	1
Bookham	12
Fetcham	6

3. What else will you do while you are in Leatherhead?

Shopping	59
Banking/Post Office	35
Visit Fairfield Day Centre	3
Library	15
Other	10
Unanswered	1

Ashted	13
Dorking	1
Capel	1
East Horsley	1
Camberley	1

4. Why did you visit the HelpShop today?

Use Kiosk	10
Collect Recycling Bags	6
Pick up Leaflet	21
View Plans	2
Bring Evidence for Benefit Application	5
Check Benefit Application	3
Other	39
Unanswered	1

5. At the moment the HelpShop closes at 4.30 on weekdays. Would you find it helpful if it were to be open later on Tuesdays?

Yes	16
No	45
Other	1
Unanswered	3

6. At the moment the HelpShop closes at 1.00pm on a Saturday. Would you find it helpful if it were to open all day on a Saturday?

Yes	28
No	33
Other	1
Unanswered	3

7a. Do you ever visit the HelpShop on a Monday?

Yes	25
No	38
Unanswered	2

7b. If you answer 'yes', could you visit on a different day?

Yes	24
No	1
Unanswered	1

8. If the HelpShop were to move from its current location, how far would you be prepared to travel from here?

Up to 2 Mins Walk	24
Up to 5 Mins walk	24
Up to 10 Mins Walk	12
Other	3
Unanswered	2

