

TELFORD & WREKIN COUNCIL

CABINET - 7th JULY 2009

SCRUTINY REVIEW OF FIRST POINT

REPORT OF THE SCRUTINY LEADERSHIP BOARD

1. PURPOSE

This report is to inform Cabinet of the discussion at The Scrutiny Leadership Board on 9th March 2009 about the First Point Advice Centre and recommendations they wish to make.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Scrutiny Leadership Board recommends:

- 2.1 continual monitoring of the First Point Advice Centre to ensure that the appropriate ranges of services are provided to the public;**
- 2.2 the Cabinet consider providing a permanent point of contact for Council services in the town centre vicinity;**
- 2.3 the Cabinet considers the use of library facilities to offer a first point of contact for Council services throughout the Borough; especially in areas where the library is used on a part time basis.**

3. PREVIOUS MINUTES

SLB-19 - Scrutiny Leadership Board meeting held on Monday 9th March 2009

4. INFORMATION

The Scrutiny Leadership Board held their meeting at the location of the First Point Advice Centre in Telford Central Library and invited the Head of Customer Services and Business Transformation, The Customer services Manager, Customer Quality Manager, Borough Librarian and the Service Director from Citizen's Advice Bureau to provide information on the new First Point Advice Centre.

Scrutiny Leadership Board members were impressed by the numbers of people accessing First Point within the first two weeks of it's operation; a total of 300 people. They were further impressed with the wide array of advice services on offer, and noted with approval the co-operation between the organisations participating in the scheme.

The Scrutiny Leadership Board felt that the general ambience of the Library setting presented a far more friendly and welcoming environment than either Civic or Darby offices could, and that this had probably contributed to the numbers of people accessing the service so far. Questions were asked about possible expansion of advice given.

The Scrutiny Leadership Board's recommendations based upon their discussions are detailed in section 2 above.

5. BACKGROUND

The Customer Services Strategy in 2007, had as an action to support an objective to deal with as many customer enquiries at the first port of call, the introduction of a series of one stop shops to be branded as "First Point". The need for this service was heightened by the onset of the current economic recession, and in response, the Cabinet in January 2009 approved the establishment of a First Point Advice Centre.

5.1 Equality & Diversity

There are no implications from these scrutiny recommendations in terms of the Council's commitment to equality and diversity.

5.2 Environmental Impact

By recommending a permanent location and further first point contacts within Libraries around the Borough, this would remove further the need for residents to travel and in consequence reduce their carbon footprint.

5.3 Legal Comment

Under the Council's Constitution, the Scrutiny Leadership Board can submit reports to Cabinet for their consideration; paragraph 11 of Section 5 of Part 4 applies. Under paragraph 2.3 vi) of Section 4 of Part 4 of the Constitution the Cabinet can receive and consider any report from the Scrutiny Leadership Board.

5.4 Links with Corporate Priorities

The Scrutiny recommendations link with many of the Council's corporate priorities; particularly priority 7, a Modern Efficient and Effective Council.

5.5 Opportunities and Risks

The opportunities and risks associated with these recommendations will be assessed on acceptance by the Cabinet.

5.6 Financial Implications

The operational costs of the Advice Centre are estimated at £199k for a period of 12 months. This includes staffing costs and general overheads associated with running this service at the Library. In addition to these costs one off costs of approximately £38k were also incurred in setting up the advice centre. Provision was made in the 2009/10 budget strategy to fund all of these costs on a one off basis. There is no funding available at present to extend this service beyond the initial 12 month period.

6. WARD IMPLICATIONS

Borough wide implications

7. BACKGROUND PAPERS

CB124 - Cabinet report 12th January 2009