

Agenda Item	10.
Report No	CP/24/22

HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Committee: Communities and Place

Date: 16 November 2022

Report Title: Service Points and Connected Customer Update

Report By: Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place

1. Purpose/Executive Summary

- 1.1 At the August meeting of the Communities and Place Committee, queries were raised regarding the opening hours of the Council's public Service Point offices. This report provides an update of the place-based review that has been undertaken of office opening hours and also a short outline of the recently agreed Connected Customers and Digitisation Redesign Board Review.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are asked to:
- Note the update on the opening hours across the Council's Service Point network.
 - Note the outline of the recently agreed Connected Customers and Digitisation Redesign Board review.

3. Implications

- 3.1 **Resource implications:** there are no direct resource implications as a result of the report. The review of opening hours is dependent upon adjusting staffing levels in certain locations and balancing workload across the whole of the customer service network; including the service centre, in order to meet customer needs.
- 3.2 **Legal implications:** the Service Point network also performs statutory registration duties which are detailed in item 9 on this Committee's agenda.
- 3.3 **Community (Equality, Poverty and Rural) impacts:** the customer services network provides the front door function to access many Council services. The client base is often vulnerable customers who may not otherwise be able to access other means of contacting the Council.

Whilst the Connected Customers and Digitisation review will consider how to improve services to customers across the organisation, it will remain important to consider the needs of all customers and the different ways in which people wish to contact the Council.

- 3.5 **Climate Change / Carbon Clever and Gaelic implications:** there are no direct climate implications as a result of this report.
- 3.6 **Risk implications:** the changes to opening hours are dependent upon maintaining staffing levels within key locations.

4. Review of Service Point Opening Hours

- 4.1 When Service Points reopened following the first phase of the pandemic, they did so on a reduced opening hours basis in order to support social distancing, support dedicated time for registration appointments to take place and also to continue to support the increase in call volumes being received through the Service Centre.
- 4.2 Whilst the interdependencies of services across the network remain, it was considered important to review current opening hours to ensure they meet current customer demands.
- 4.3 The review has been undertaken on a place by place basis, recognising that places are different, such as differing levels of customer need and balancing the dual role of service point assistance and assistance registrar. Therefore, the amended opening hours reflect the needs of each individual place. Moreover, there are ongoing service changes such as delivery of Registration Services, as detailed in a separate report to today's agenda. A summary of the amended hours can be found at appendix 1. Some have already commenced whilst changes to others are rescheduled over the coming weeks.
- 4.4 Opening hours will be kept under review.

5. Connected Customers and Digitisation

- 5.1 The pandemic has undoubtedly changed customer habits across society. It is therefore timely the Council also considers how it is connecting with its customer base across Highland. It is important that the Council reviews how customers connect with and, as an organisation, how we respond to our customers, with a view of improving what we do.
- 5.2 The Redesign Board has agreed that one of the main areas of work for the Board going forward will be a review entitled Connected Customers and Digitisation. A Member workshop has been held to begin scoping what this review will entail, and the Project Brief will be presented for consideration and agreement at the next Redesign Board meeting on 28 November 2022.

5.3 Existing Board discussions have highlighted the importance that this review considers all the different ways in which customers connect with the Council and that it should include all services and departments across the organisation. Indeed, in connecting with our customers across the Council, it should include consideration of the opportunities such as Asset Management through working with public sector Partners. The review will also consider how different digital approaches could improve the customer experience, alongside how such approaches could provide greater efficiencies for the organisation. The review will support the operational delivery of the ICT and Digital Strategies agreed at Corporate Resources Committee in September this year. Progress on the review will be considered by the Redesign Board and reported to Council. Service Point opening hours will be continually reviewed to reflect the development of this significant Council-wide project.

Designation: ECO Communities and Place

Date: 28 October 2022

Authors: Alison Clark, Head of Community Support & Engagement

Appendix 1: Revised Service Point Opening Hours November 2022

Appendix 1

Service Point	Opening Hours	Effective From
Thurso	Monday to Friday 0930 to 1230	07/02/2022
Wick	Monday to Friday 0930 to 1230 and 1330 to 1630	08/07/2022
Golspie	Monday to Friday 0930 to 1230	11/10/2021
Dornoch	Tuesday 0930 to 1230, Wednesday 1330-1630, Thursday 1130-1230 & 1330-1630	11/10/2021
Tain	Monday to Friday 0930 to 1230	29/11/2021
Alness	Monday to Friday 0930 to 1230	11/10/2021
Dingwall	Monday to Friday 0930 to 1230 and Tuesday and Thursday 1330-1600 (change from 1330-1630)	31/10/2022
Kyle	Monday to Friday 0930 to 1230 (change from 1330-1630)	28/11/2022
Portree	Monday to Friday 0930 to 1230 (change from 1330-1630)	28/11/2022
Fort William	Monday to Friday 0930 to 1230 (change from 1330-1630)	21/11/2022
Kingussie	Monday to Wednesday 1000 to 1230 and 1330 to 1500 (change from 1330-1630)	24/10/2022
Aviemore	Monday to Friday 1330-1630	11/10/2021
Nairn	Wednesday to Friday 0930-1230 (change from 1330-1630)	14/11/2022
Inverness	Monday to Friday 1000-1230, 1330-1630 (change from 1330-1630)	31/10/2022