

FORM 1

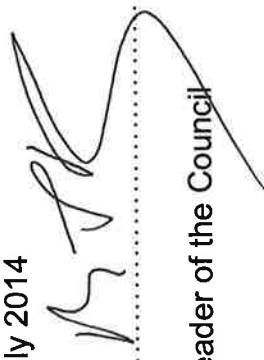
NOTICE OF DELEGATION OF DECISION TO CABINET MEMBER BY STRONG LEADER

Under Section 15(4) of the Local Government Act 2000, the senior executive member may discharge any of the functions that are the responsibility of the Cabinet or may arrange for them to be discharged by another member of the Cabinet or Officer. On 1st December 2010, the Council adopted the Strong Leader Model for Corporate Governance 2011 as required under Part 3 of The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 (The 2007 Act).

I, Councillor Marcus Hart, as Strong Leader, delegate the decision in respect of Review of Worcestershire Hub Satellite Offices at Stourport-on-Severn and Bewdley to the Cabinet Member detailed below:

Councillor Nathan Desmond, Cabinet Member for Resources and Transformation

Dated: 1st July 2014

Signed: 

Leader of the Council

FORM 2

NOTICE OF DECISION OF CABINET MEMBER

Pursuant to Section 15(4) of the Local Government Act 2000, as amended by section 63 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, the senior executive member may discharge any of the functions that are the responsibility of the Cabinet or may arrange for them to be discharged by another member of the Cabinet or Officer. On 1st December 2010, the Council adopted the Strong Leader Model for Corporate Governance 2011 as required under Part 3 of The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 (The 2007 Act).

In accordance with the authority delegated to me by the Leader, I have made the following decision:

Subject	Decision	Reason for decision	Date for Decision to be taken
Review of Worcestershire Hub Satellite Offices at Stourport-on-Severn and Bewdley	To ENDORSE the proposal to shut the offices with effect from 29 August 2014 in view of the significant decline in usage.	The significant fall in usage to under 200 contacts a month across the two sites makes them financially unsustainable when there are other means by which services may be accessed, including on the website, by telephone and face-to-face in Kidderminster.	1 July 2014

I confirm that the appropriate statutory officer consultation has taken place with regard to this decision.

Dated: 1 July 2014

Signed: 

Councillor: ...Nathan Desmond...
Cabinet Member for Resources and Transformation

To: Councillor Nathan Desmond, Cabinet Member for Resources and Transformation

From: Ian Miller, Chief Executive

Ext. 2700

lan.miller@wyreforestdc.gov.uk

Date: 1 July 2014

REVIEW OF WORCESTERSHIRE HUB SATELLITE OFFICES AT BEWDLEY AND STOURPORT-ON-SEVERN

PURPOSE OF REPORT

1. To review the future of the hub satellite offices in Bewdley and Stourport-on-Severn.

RECOMMENDATION

2. That the Cabinet Member **ENDORSES** the proposal to shut the offices with effect from 29 August 2014 in view of the significant decline in usage.

BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Worcestershire hub was created in 2003 as a single point of contact for face-to-face enquiries as well as other customer contact from telephone calls and e-mail. In Wyre Forest, the decision was taken to manage the service locally rather than be part of the shared service with the county council, and to concentrate telephone handling at the Town Hall in Kidderminster.
- 3.2 Usage at the two satellite offices in Stourport-on-Severn library and in Load Street, Bewdley has declined significantly in the last two years as a result of a range of factors:
 - A general shift away from face-to-face contact towards other channels, in particular the web site and social media. This is consistent with the experience in other sectors as digital routes increasingly become the norm for conducting transactions;
 - Worcestershire County Council now requires all blue badges, bus passes and waste permits to be applied for online through www.worcestershire.gov.uk;
 - The Council has changed how it receives cash payments, first implemented in January for customers in Stourport-on-Severn and extended to the whole district in April. There are now about 50 locations across Wyre Forest where residents can make payments to the Council

using Post Offices and shops that offer PayPoint, which has made paying the Council much more convenient and accessible to residents.

- 3.3 Detailed usage statistics are in Appendix A for Stourport-on-Severn and Bewdley. They demonstrate that customer contacts across the two sites have declined from over 1000 a month in September and October 2012 to barely 200 a month in the period from April to June 2014. The cost of running the two sites is about £50,000 a year meaning that each of these customer visits now costs the council about £20.

KEY ISSUES

- 4.1 The Council will continue to need to offer a range of customer access channels for the foreseeable future. Face-to-face customer contact will be available, in addition to other ways of accessing services by means of the website www.wyreforestdc.gov.uk or by telephone. The Council continues to increase the amount of self-service options on its website in order to provide greater flexibility to customers, who can access services at a time convenient for them, 24 hours a day.
- 4.2 In respect of Bewdley and Stourport-on-Severn, the case for change is simply too compelling. The Council cannot justify keeping the two locations open when it needs to save very significant sums of money as a result of Government grant reductions. It is therefore proposed that the satellite offices at Stourport-on-Severn and Bewdley will close on 29 August 2014 as a result of the significant decline in usage.
- 4.3 This change contributes to the overall targets for spending reductions under the medium term financial strategy and will allow the Council to continue to protect front-line services that local residents value most. As noted above, there is a range of other ways of accessing services on line or by telephone, and Kidderminster Town Hall is only a relatively short bus or car journey away for any resident who wishes to speak to a customer service adviser face-to-face. The Worcestershire Hub at the Town Hall, Kidderminster is open from Monday to Friday, from 8.30am to 5.00pm (10.00am to 5.00pm on Wednesdays). Home visits are also available for revenues, benefits and welfare customers if required – for example, in cases of disability.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The closure of the two sites contributes approximately £50k towards the savings of £213k that the revenues, benefits and hub service are required to achieve as agreed in the medium term financial strategy and budget for 2014-15 onwards.
- 5.2 The release of the Load Street office allows achievement of either a capital receipt or revenue stream from alternative uses. The Council's use of space in Stourport-on-Severn Library is under a short-term licence and there are no cost implications from its termination.

6. LEGAL AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are no specific legal requirements in respect of how the Council organises its customer service operations.

7. EQUALITY IMPACT NEEDS ASSESSMENT

- 7.1 The proposals in this report have been screened for their impact on the various equality strands. The impact has been assessed as either neutral or nil for all equality strands.

8. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 8.1 Although there will be full communication with members, residents and staff about the reason for change, there remains a risk of negative reaction in the press and from residents and the town councils. This will be managed through reiterating the facts about the case for change. Customers at the two sites will be informed of their closure several weeks in advance, thus providing the opportunity for them to establish their preferred alternative means of accessing services in future.
- 8.2 Staffing reductions within the hub are being managed in accordance with the Council's policies on redundancy and redeployment.

9. CONSULTEES

- 9.1 Cabinet members and Corporate Leadership Team.

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 10.1 None.

Appendix A

Number of customer contacts at Stourport-on-Severn and Bewdley, August 2012 to June 2014

