

# **WIRRAL COUNCIL**

## **CABINET**

**14 OCTOBER 2010**

### **REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF FINANCE**

#### **JOINT WORKING WITH HER MAJESTY'S REVENUES AND CUSTOMS (HMRC)**

##### **1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 1.1 This report details the proposed move of Her Majesty's Revenues and Customs (HMRC) face to face enquiry office for Wirral to the Birkenhead One Stop Shop in the Conway Centre, Conway Street from February 2011. Members are requested to agree that this example of public sector joint working should be progressed.

##### **2. BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 Customer Services provide three main access channels, face to face, telephone and Web. The face to face areas focus on the network of One Stop Shops. One Stop Shops not only provide access to Council services but work with other public sector bodies and voluntary sector agencies.
- 2.2. Currently the organisations present at various sites include the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) via Job Centre plus and the Pension Service, the NHS, Merseyside Police, Wirral Partnership Homes and four voluntary sector agencies. Added to this staff are present in four Job Centre Plus sites giving advice on Council services to DWP claimants as well as to general visitors.
- 2.3. It is an objective of the Government that, wherever possible, national and local government services should be available to the public in one location and so this approach by HMRC has presented a further opportunity to build on the work already being done by One Stop Shops.

##### **3. HER MAJESTY'S REVENUES AND CUSTOMS SERVICE ON WIRRAL**

- 3.1 HMRC currently has a small face to face enquiry facility based at Birchen House, Canning Street, Woodside, Birkenhead. It is open Monday to Friday 8.30 to 17.00 with a later Wednesday opening at 9.30. Whilst it offers a drop in service it also has appointment based interviews.
- 3.2. HMRC has reviewed both its property in use and its contact strategy. This has culminated in a rationalisation of offices within its current estate. It has looked for a more efficient method of retaining face to face access whilst promoting cheaper access methods of telephone and web which will both remain unaffected by this development.

- 3.3. HMRC has already successfully moved to co-location of face to face access in a number of North West local authorities including Rochdale, Bolton and Blackpool.
- 3.4. Back office HMRC staff from Birkenhead are being re-located to Government offices in Liverpool to maximise their use and allow the Birchen House property to be vacated. HMRC wish to maintain a face to face presence in Birkenhead and having looked at alternatives have identified that the Conway Centre One Stop Shop meets their necessary customer service standards as well as having a town centre location.

#### **4. CO-LOCATION OF HMRC AT THE CONWAY CENTRE OSS**

- 4.1. Discussions have taken place on the HMRC requirements for an on site presence and the changes that would be required at the Conway Centre which is the busiest One Stop Shop.
- 4.2. HMRC and the Director of Law, HR and Asset Management and the Director of Finance have reviewed requirements and agreed that while some internal re-modelling of one of the main rooms is required, along with minor changes on the first floor to accommodate staff while not on the booths, HMRC can be accommodated on site. An additional three booths will be created at a cost of £39,200 along with minimal back office re-arrangements. The booths will be mainly used by HMRC and suitably signed but will also be used by OSS staff. HMRC would also have access to the interview rooms and share the public space. HMRC IT requirements will also be catered for within this work.
- 4.3. This is the minimum work to achieve this change and by doing this there will be a co-ordinated public sector contact point in central Birkenhead. I will work with HMRC to ensure that the single reception and signposting arrangement is developed in such a way as to not be a detriment to either HMRC or the Authority.
- 4.4. The formal terms of the occupation are being agreed by the Head of Asset Management. The decision to undertake the work necessary to achieve this joint working was taken under delegated authority by the Cabinet Member for Corporate Resources on 16 August 2010.

#### **5. PROPOSED TIMETABLE**

- 5.1. HMRC have indicated that they would want to be in situ at Conway by late February 2011. There will be some disruption and inconvenience in the main room at the One Stop Shop while work is undertaken but this will be minimised. This timescale is considered to be achievable with work commencing in December 2010.

#### **6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1. The cost of the proposed alterations will be £39,200. This will be jointly funded between HMRC and Wirral Council. The Wirral contribution is being met from the One Stop Shop reserve which was set up to deal with small scale building alteration.

## **7. STAFFING IMPLICATIONS**

7.1. There are none arising out of this report.

## **8. EQUAL OPPORTUNITY IMPLICATIONS**

8.1 The co-location and ease of access to more services in one place will help respond to equal opportunity issues. The existing One Stop Shop facilities are DDA compliant and this will extend to the new booths.

## **9. HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS**

9.1. There are none arising directly from this report.

## **10. ANTI POVERTY IMPLICATIONS**

10.1. The co-location and ease of access to more services in one place will help in addressing Anti Poverty, given the use of the site by people on low income who will now be able to access information and advice on a wider range of income related matters .

## **11. SOCIAL INCLUSION IMPLICATIONS**

11.1. The co-location and ease of access to more services in one place will further help in addressing Social Inclusion, as more services are available on site, thus more people will access the breadth of services many of which are aimed at broadening inclusivity especially via financial and benefit related services.

## **12. LOCAL AGENDA 21 IMPLICATIONS**

12.1. The co-location and ease of access to more services in one place will clearly help reduce double journeys and create a focus for a wide range of enquiries to be responded to in one place.

## **13. COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**

13.1. There are none arising directly from this report.

## **14. PLANNING IMPLICATIONS**

14.1 There are none arising directly from this report as the alterations proposed are all internal alterations and do not require planning permission. The alterations will retain the environment of the One Stop Shop whilst creating a distinct area for use by HMRC.

## **15. LOCAL MEMBER SUPPORT IMPLICATIONS**

15.1. Birchen House and Conway Centre One Stop Shop are in Birkenhead and Tranmere ward.

**16. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

16.1. Correspondence with HMRC.

16.2. Plans for alterations within the Conway Centre One Stop Shop.

**17. RECOMMENDATION**

17.1. That Members agree to the re-location of the HMRC Enquiry Office to the Conway Centre One Stop Shop.

IAN COLEMAN  
DIRECTOR OF FINANCE

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