

ENVIRONMENT CABINET MEMBER MEETING

Agenda Item 52

Brighton & Hove City Council

Subject:	Closure of Brighton Parking Information Centre – Improvement of Services		
Date of Meeting:	11 September 2008		
Report of:	Director of Environment		
Contact Officer:	Name:	Austen Hunter	Tel: 29-2245
	E-mail:	austen.hunter@brighton-hove.gov.uk	
Key Decision:	No		
Wards Affected:	All		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:

- 1.1 The centralisation of cashier services allowed Hove Parking Information Centre to relocate to larger premises with more capacity. The lease on the Parking Information Centre at North Road will shortly be due for renewal. This presents an opportunity for services to be centralised at one location resulting in improved customer service.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That the Cabinet Member approves the centralisation of Parking Information Services to Hove Town Hall and closure of North Road Parking Information Centre by the end of September 2008.

3. RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION/CHRONOLOGY OF KEY EVENTS:

- 3.1 On 28 February 2008 Budget Council approved the centralisation of cashier services to Brighton and closure of their Hove Town Hall accommodation. It was decided that Hove Parking Information Centre would take advantage of this and relocate to the offices vacated by cashiers at Hove Town Hall.
- 3.2 In June 2008 Hove Parking Information Centre relocated to the former cashier service accommodation. The new accommodation at Hove suited parking services requirements exactly and offers better access and a better quality environment for the customers of the service and indeed staff working in parking services.
- 3.3 The premises previously occupied by Hove Parking Information Centre has now been put up for commercial lease.
- 3.4 Following the relocation to the former cashier offices Hove parking Information Centre extended its opening hours to start at 8.45 every morning. The

centralisation of the Parking Information Centres would allow for further trials of extended opening hours for example late opening one day per week. This is currently not possible with staff working at two sites.

- 3.5 There is significantly more capacity at Hove with up to seven counters available instead of the three counters at the former Parking Information Centre. In order to make the most of these facilities and provide better queue management which has historically always been a problem at Hove Parking Information Centre we also need sufficient staff resources at one location which can be achieved through centralisation.
- 3.6 Brighton Parking Information Centre has seen a decline in the volume of transactions over the past year and Hove Parking Information Centre has seen an increase. Overall approximately 68% of all transactions by value are now carried out at Hove Parking Information Centre which has better public transport links and parking facilities.
- 3.7 In line with e-government obligations Parking Services has put a great deal of information on-line including application forms and almost all parking transactions can be carried out by post. The consolidation of both Parking Information Centres would free up resources to further invest in our on-line services with the aim of reducing the need for people to visit the Parking Information Centres in person.
- 3.8 Brighton & Hove City Council is very unusual in having two parking information centres. Most authorities do not have even one dedicated Parking Information Centre. For example, Southampton and Manchester only provide limited facilities as part of their general enquiries front office. Birmingham does not provide any walk in facility with all parking applications and enquiries being dealt with by post as they feel that this is the most efficient means of dealing with applications.
- 3.9 Should the proposed centralisation be agreed, advanced publicity of the change would be provided through posters at both Parking Information Centres and on the council's web pages as well as through press releases.

4. CONSULTATION

- 4.1 Staff at both Parking Information Centres have been informally consulted about these proposals and are broadly supportive of consolidating the Parking Information Centres given that this will provide a better working environment for staff.

5. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

The centralisation of Parking Information Services to Hove Town Hall would provide financial efficiencies, including savings on the leased costs of the Brighton site. These efficiencies would allow investment in service delivery improvements such as extended opening hours and on line services.

Finance Officer Consulted: Patrick Rice

Date: 12/08/08

Legal Implications:

There is no legal requirement or duty which would prevent the Council from centralising the Parking Information Service to one location in the City and the proposals do not raise any employment law considerations as all current staff will be re-located to the Hove Office.

Lawyer Consulted:

Liz Culbert

Date: 13/08/08

Equalities Implications:

The Blue Badge office has already relocated from North Road to improved facilities at Hove Town Hall where there is an interview room with disabled access which is now available to the public.

Sustainability Implications:

Operating from one base will reduce overall energy consumption. It is expected that the investment in on-line and telephone service access which will be possible if services are centralised will in due course reduce the number car journeys to the Parking Information Centre.

Crime & Disorder Implications:

None identified.

Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

The proposals provide an opportunity to meet the corporate objective of making better use of public money. There is a risk of adverse publicity if this is perceived as a cut in service rather than providing a better service at a single location. Whilst some customers would have further to travel to visit the centralised Parking information Centre the maximum distance for anyone living in the Controlled parking Zone where permits are required would be 2.8 miles and Hove town Hall has excellent public transport access.

Corporate / Citywide Implications:

None identified.

6. EVALUATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTION(S):

6.1 None considered.

7. REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 Centralising the Parking Information Centres into better facilities at Hove would mean that an improved, more consistent service could be provided to customers. There would be the possibility of extending opening hours, for example, a trial of opening late one night per week, through better use of existing staff resources.

- 7.2 Almost all transactions, such as paying a Penalty Charge Notice, can also be carried out by telephone, post or online. Merging facilities will present the opportunity to invest further in these alternative means of contact. For example, Parking Services are currently working on a system of on-line permit renewals. Centralising services would also allow for a trial of the issuing of waivers by telephone.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

None.

Documents In Members' Rooms

None.

Background Documents

None.