



# FUTURE NORTHANTS

North Northants Customer Service Opening Hours  
Shadow Executive 29<sup>th</sup> October 2020





## **Decisions required:**

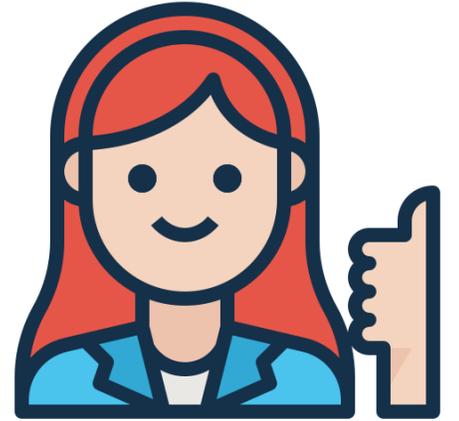
### **Approval for the recommended Customer Services opening hours from vesting day: for North Northamptonshire unitary authority**

This paper describes the recommended approach for consolidating the Customer Services Opening Hours for the North. Although this is not a requirement of the safe and legal plus programme; it can be a 'plus' as it has significant benefits for our customers, future transformation and integration.

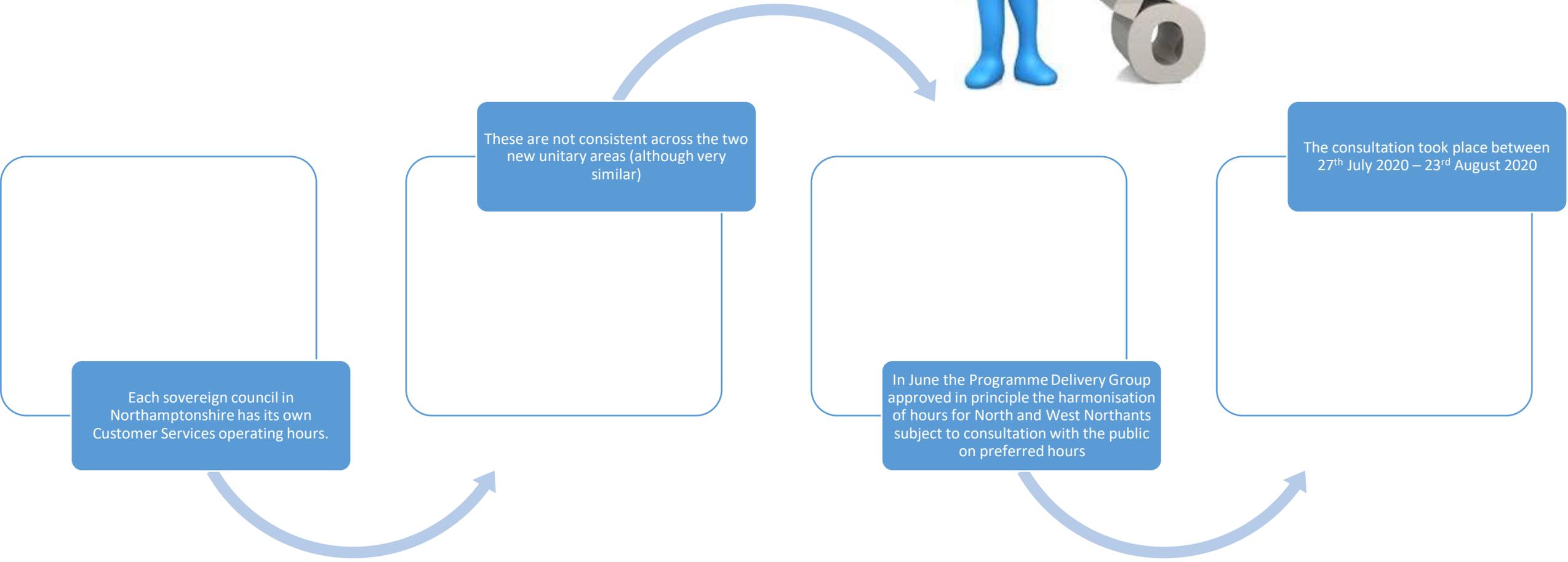


# Presentation overview

- Background information
- Public consultation approach and preview
- Pattern of Contact and what that tells us
- Outcomes of the consultation and preferences for North Northants
- Impact assessment
- Summary



# Background



# Current North Northants Opening Hours

Authority	Start Time	Closing Time
Corby	8:30am	5:00pm
East Northants (main office at Thrapston)	8:45am apart from 9:45am on Wednesday	5:00pm
Kettering (also open on Saturdays)	8:30am	5:00pm
Wellingborough	8:30am apart from 9:30am on Thursday	5:00pm, Monday-Thursday 4:30pm Friday
County	9:00am	5:00pm



It is noted that the reduced hours in ENC on Wednesday and BCW on Thursday provide training / meeting time. We'll have a critical mass after vesting day so the phones should be answered even if some of the staff are offline for a training/ meeting hour



# Consultation approach

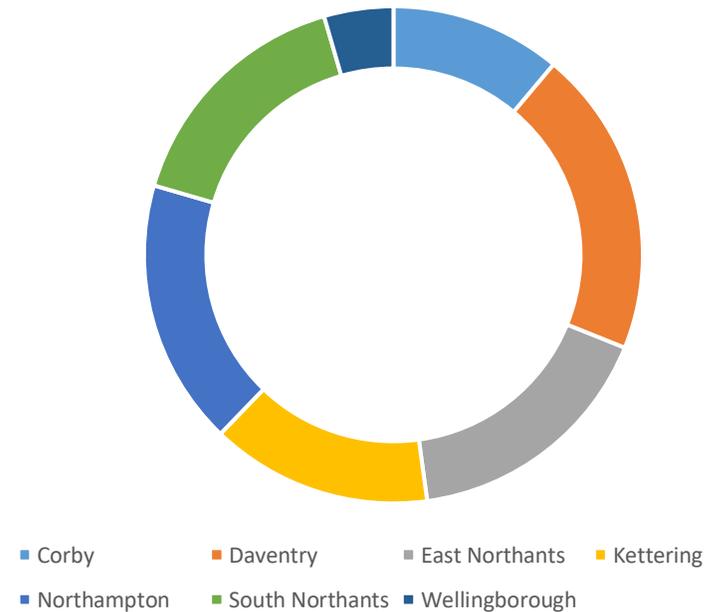
- It was important to consult in a way that provides the public with **realistic options** – in order to manage expectations and avoid potential backlash if the results show that customers prefer hours that the councils cannot accommodate
- It took the form of a short online survey with: A strong introduction and an opportunity to understand the demographics of respondents along with preferred channels of communication

Channel	Audience
Websites: Future Northants All countywide websites	General Public
Email	Residence panels across the county Parish Council CVS Housing providers Other partners
Social media: Twitter Facebook  Press release issued to all local news providers  Local radio interview	General public
Customer service centres across Northamptonshire	Service users Emails to be sent to customers that opt in after interactions (phone, face to face)

# Outcomes of the consultation

In total, we received **1225** responses from residents of Northamptonshire

Breakdown	
Location	Number of respondents
Corby	136
Daventry	245
East Northants	205
Kettering	176
Northampton	212
South Northants	196
Wellingborough	55
Total	1225



# Pattern of contact and what that tells us

To coincide with the public consultation, the Customers and Digital Team have collected call volume data from 6 of the 8 local authorities from 2 separate weeks earlier in 2020 – the week commencing 3<sup>rd</sup> February, and the week commencing 20<sup>th</sup> April.

These weeks were chosen to give recent snapshots of volume data, pre-lockdown, and during lockdown, as we wanted to investigate whether patterns of call arrival, and hence customer behaviour, had altered due to the restrictions placed on residents.

# Pattern of contact and what it tells us

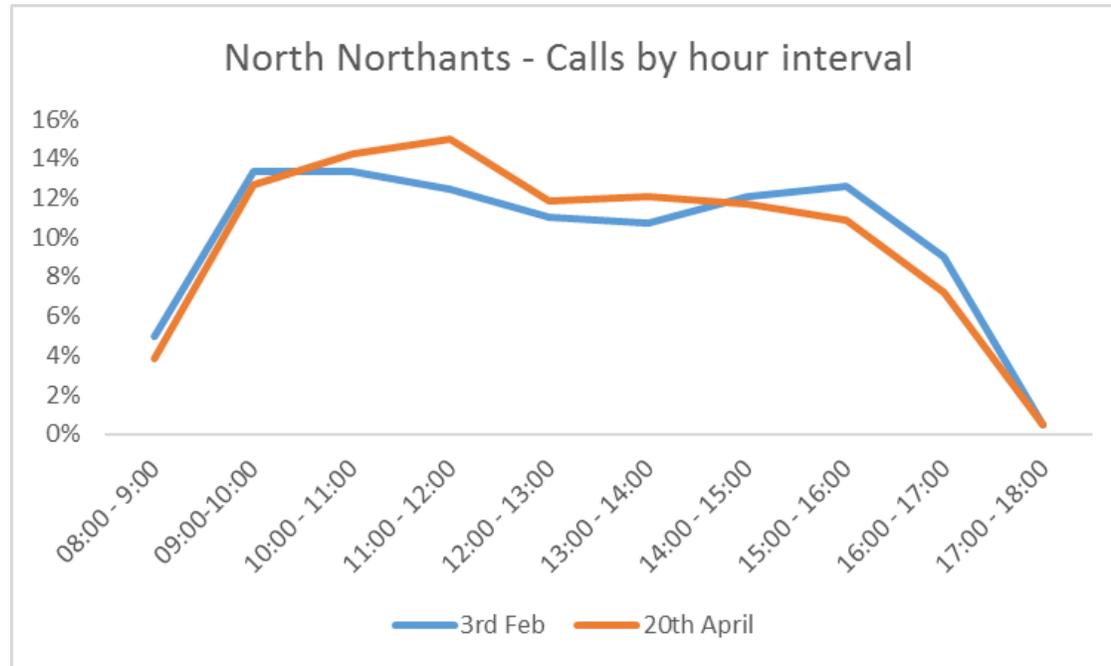
For the purpose of producing a combined picture for both West and North Northamptonshire, the County Council call volumes were split 54%:46% respectively, matching the Disaggregation Principles set out by the Future Northants Programme.

Face to Face contact at council offices was not included in this as during the 2<sup>nd</sup> week, lockdown restrictions meant this channel was unavailable.

Similarly, Online contact was not included as (with the exclusion of the Web Chat service offered in Kettering) this is a channel available for 24 hours a day.



# Contact Volumes and what they tell us – North Northamptonshire



There was a 38% reduction in total calls received in the week commencing 20th April when compared to 3<sup>rd</sup> February.

There is greater divergence in the North of the county between the 2 weeks, with a greater percentage of contact occurring between 11am and 12pm, and a comparative dip after 2pm during lockdown.



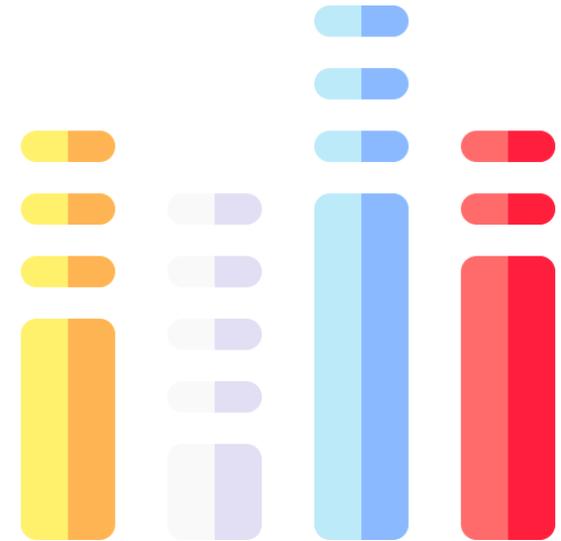
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# Contact Volumes and what they tell us

What is clear from both areas of the County is that the proportion of contact at either end of the 10 hour spectrum is significantly lower than at any other point in the day. Only 5% of contacts received at NCC occurred between 8am and 9am, or 5pm and 6pm. NCC, as of week commencing 1<sup>st</sup> September 2020 has changed opening hours to 9am – 5pm following a consultation of their own, there is nothing in the data collected that suggests undoing this change, whilst harmonising other authorities to match that time would be cost effective.

However, with a comprehensive direct comparison being impossible owing to the different operational hours currently available to customers in the county, we can only make an effective recommendation alongside the responses received in the consultation. This is more so the case in the North of the County due to the lack of equivalent data for Corby and East Northants which was not available.



# Customer Services Opening times preferences – North Northants

- No clear preference between the North opening hours choices and even where respondents chose just one preference

Preference	Corby	East Northamptonshire	Kettering	Wellingborough	Grand Total
8:30am - 4.30pm	36	52	47	15	<b>150</b>
9.00am - 5.00pm	32	59	43	17	<b>151</b>
9.30am - 5.30pm	37	54	45	16	<b>152</b>
No preference	29	57	48	14	<b>148</b>

# North Northants recommendation

Given no distinct preference in the North, opening hours of 9am – 5pm is being recommended for a number of reasons:

- The 9-5 option was one of 2 clear favoured scenarios for the respondents in the North of the county.
- It would be cheaper than going 8.30-5 for all. Rather than staying the same in 3 locations and expanding the hours of operation by 15 minutes each day in East Northants, this option represents a potential cost saving in the future or reallocation of the resources for back office functions.
- Adopting this option could avoid the need for staff disruption to working hours and consultation considering the FN programme drive for Safe and Legal

# North Northants Impact assessment:

- 30 min reduction in service availability in Corby, Kettering and Wellingborough
- 15 min reduction in East Northants
- Service management propose that there are several tasks that staff could do within the 15/ 30 mins rather than reducing hours
- No more Saturday availability in Kettering - A minor consultation would be required with staff to remove Saturday working from their contracts - The consultation could be a meeting with the affected staff informing them of the planned change and giving them 7 days to respond.
- Extension required for Out of hours service - enquires have been made to look at the feasibility of this & the potential costs involved



# Risks:

- Contracts – moving across existing employee contracts and establishing new ones for Day 1. This also includes material changes to contracts in Kettering to remove Saturday working hours
- Future political decisions affecting delivery of long term vision – with the appointment of new Chief Executives to each authority now confirmed, and elections for members in 2021, there is a possibility that high level decisions taken on behalf of the entire unitary council will have an impact on customer services, including opening hours
- The agreed 'To Be' opening hours do not reflect/meet customer needs

Impacts for North Northants are all manageable



# In summary:

**Approval is being requested for North Northants unitary customer services opening hours:**

- **North Northants: 9.00am – 5.00pm Monday to Friday**