

Policy and Resources Committee

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| Date: | 17 September 2013 |
| Title: | Saturday Surgeries |
| Purpose of the Report: | To review the effectiveness of the surgeries in the past 12 months. |
| Contact Officer: | Morag Robinson, Office Administration Manager |

Background

On 4 September 2012 a report was presented to the Policy & Resources committee to decide what the future arrangements should be with regard to the monthly Saturday surgeries. Following discussion at this meeting it was agreed that Full Council should decide whether Saturday surgeries continue. There were marked differences in opinion on the usefulness of the surgeries and whether the level of publicity was adequate enough. The consensus of opinion was that they should continue, particularly until the Neighbourhood Plan was determined and then attendance figures reviewed over a 12 month period.

Since then a detailed log has recorded the number of visitors who have attended and the types of issues which have been raised i.e. whether it has been a Town, District or County Council matter. Appendix A summaries this information and includes a column for Other which are matters that do not fall within the remit of Town, District or County Council. It can be seen that the number of visits that have been made to councillors vary month by month with the majority of matters raised being within the County Council remit followed closely by the District Council and the least number of matters raised being Town Council.

Councillors must therefore look at this evidence and determine whether the current format of all three Councillors holding a monthly surgery meets the needs of residents. It makes sense for the County Councillor to hold his own surgery separately and a pre-booked appointment system be introduced at the Town Hall whereby residents can arrange to make an appointment at a pre-agreed time with a Councillor of their choice (Town and/or District) at either the Town Hall or an alternative venue of their choosing. The Councillor would be contacted by the Information Centre.

The new arrangement can be advertised on the Council's notice boards, within the Information Centre, periodically within the Thame Gazette, via the weekly e-newsletter and the Council's website as a permanent feature on the front page for residents to email any issues to oss@thametowncouncil.gov.uk. This revised service could also feature as an item in the quarterly newsletter which is posted directly to residents.

Risk Assessment

| Risks | Controls |
|--|--|
| Lone working of member of staff | No staff will be needed with the introduction of the new arrangement |
| Councillors not always available on a Saturday | Residents can pre-book an appointment with their Councillor of choice at an agreed time. |

Resource Appraisal

| | | Revenue | Capital |
|----------|---|----------------|----------------|
| Staffing | Staff will arrange meeting in core time | Nil | |

Legal Powers: Local Government Act 1972, s 111

Recommendation:

The Committee is recommended:

- i) To discontinue holding the monthly Saturday Councillor Surgery in its current format.***
- ii) To agree a pre-booked appointment system.***