

# Customer Service Centre Opening Hours Public Consultation

## Frequently asked questions

These questions and answers may help to give you more information.

### What Is Shropshire Council proposing?

We are proposing shorter opening times for part of our Customer Service Centre which would still remain open for a total of at least 30 hours across weekdays. These changes are for our more general service calls and will not affect calls to Adult and Children's Social Care or calls about homelessness or to the Local Welfare Support line. They will affect calls to more transactional services such as Waste, Registrars, Parking, Education etc. where many people could instead do business online via [www.shropshire.gov.uk](http://www.shropshire.gov.uk)

### Why is Shropshire Council doing this?

It is some time since we last reviewed our opening times and since then we have seen changes in the level of calls we receive at different times of the day, also, more council services have now become available online and customer behaviours have changed with many more people choosing to do business online.

We need as many people as possible to do business with us online because the costs are so much lower, this is very important at a time when budgets are difficult, but we also need to continue to offer a telephone service to our residents who are not able to do things this way.

Also, in the aftermath of the Covid 19 pandemic and now also during the cost-of-living crisis, we believe we should be more proactive, reaching out to Shropshire residents who might be in need of help before things reach crisis point for them.

We need to do this without extra resources, so we feel that what we are proposing here is the best compromise between encouraging people to go online, reducing the hours we are open to take calls so that we still provide a telephone service through the busiest times of the day, whilst freeing up existing staff time to make much more proactive outbound contact with our more vulnerable residents.

### How much money will this save?

Revising our opening times will reduce the direct cost of staff time required to provide a phone service. We expect the cost reduction here to be around £93,000 but we will be reinvesting the same amount into making outbound calls which can create a much greater preventative return by helping people to stop needing council services in the first place.

### What if I am not able to use online services?

The Customer Service Centre will still be open for a good portion of the working day and for the most popular calling times. Anyone who is not able to use the Council's online service offer is still able to contact us.

**Will I have enough time for my enquiry?**

Some of the enquiries we help with only take a short time, others may take longer. Our advisers will still deal with your enquiry as normal and as they do now.

**What if I need to report an urgent issue?**

As explained above, these changes to opening times only affect our more transactional service requests and for most of these it is reasonable if the contact centre is not available to wait until the next working day. For those able to go online, council services are available 24 hours.

There are some issues, for example, adults and children's concerns, highways issues requiring immediate response, homelessness and car park lock-ins, where it is necessary to expect an urgent response. Calls like this will be handled through our out of hours team but advisers will only deal with genuinely urgent issues through this service.

**How many days will you be open for?**

We expect to remain open between Monday to Friday but given the very small number of calls we now receive on a Saturday, the fact that most council departments are closed over the weekend, and the cost of maintaining a Saturday service to answer calls, we propose to stop opening the contact centre on a Saturday morning.

**What will happen to Customer Services staff?**

Changing our opening times for these service request lines will free up staff time as explained above. We will be use this time to have the same staff make outbound calls, being more proactive and reaching out to residents who may need some support.