Council one stop shops to relocate

Fenland District Council’s one stop shops in March and Wisbech are relocating when their leases expire this year, as figures reveal footfall at the shops has dropped by 81 per cent since they opened 15 years ago.

The shop in Broad Street, March, will relocate to the council offices at Fenland Hall in County Road and the shop in Bridge Street, Wisbech, will relocate to The Boathouse Business Centre in a move that will save taxpayers around £130,000 a year.

Potential savings from the shops’ relocation were identified during the council’s Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) in 2015, which looked at ways the council could continue to deliver a balanced budget despite reductions in government funding and increased demand for council services.

Now, with the shop leases expiring later this year, the decision to relocate them was approved by Cabinet at meeting its yesterday (February 21).

A report to members said the number of residents visiting the shops in Broad Street, March, and Bridge Street, Wisbech, had fallen dramatically from 190,866 a year in 2005/2006 to 59,251 in 2017/2018 and 36,893 in 2018/19, as more and more people choose to access their council services online.

Figures show the number of hits on the council’s website have soared by 542 per cent in that time, from 90,726 hits a year to 582,788 – with the average web transaction costing the council 6p to provide compared to £8.78 per face-to-face transaction at the shops.

The relocated one stop shops will be known as Customer Services Centres, and have the same opening hours. They will also continue to provide local residents with the same advice and information on a range of services, including Council Tax, benefits, waste collections, housing advice and planning enquires.

The lease on the March shop expires in July, but the shop will close its doors and relocate next month to allow works required to return the Broad Street building to its original condition, as per conditions of the lease, to be carried out.

The last day at the one stop shop will be Friday, March 8, with the new Customer Service Centre opening at Fenland Hall on Wednesday, March 13.

The lease on the Wisbech shop expires in September, and it is expected to relocate by late July/mid-August.

Councillor Anne Hay, the council’s Portfolio Holder for Finance, said: “We are committed to providing excellent customer services across Fenland, regardless of the ongoing budget savings we have to make. It is likely the number of visits to our one stop shops will continue to decline as more people make use of our online services, so by relocating the shops to
In addition to using Customer Services Centres, residents can also access services and contact us in a number of other ways. These include phoning us on 01354 654321, emailing us at info@fenland.gov.uk, accessing services online at www.fenland.gov.uk and visiting our Community Hubs in Chatteris and Whittlesey.

The new March Customer Services Centre will be open 9am to 4pm Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Fridays and 9am to 12pm on Saturdays (closed Thursday and Sunday).

ENDS

For more information contact Fenland District Council press office on 01354 622226