

**CUSTOMER SERVICES
REVIEW OF CHANGES AT RAMSEY & YAXLEY
(Report by the Head of Customer Services)**

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 At the Overview & Scrutiny meeting (Economic & Well Being) on the 10th February 2011, It was agreed that in order to achieve the required budget savings, Ramsey & Yaxley customer service centres would reduce their opening hours at each location from five days per week to two days per week from July 2011. The opening hours were decided upon taking into account the opening hours of the Ramsey Library and the busiest days historically.
- 1.2 Members of the Overview & Scrutiny panel asked for an update report 12 months after the changes had been implemented.
- 1.3 As a result of this change, the budget for Ramsey reduced from £51,158 (2010/11) in Ramsey to £13,365 (2012/13) and the budget for Yaxley reduced from £57,887 (2010/11) to £34,947 (2012/13). Please note that we are in a rent free period for Ramsey, and costs will increase by around £6k per year when rent becomes due.

2. ISSUES

- 2.1 The reduction in service at Ramsey & Yaxley resulted in a change to the job description to that of one more similar to the rest of the Customer Service Team. During the consultation process both staff members at Ramsey & Yaxley disagreed that the new job description was a suitable alternative which resulted in very unexpected long term absence.
- 2.2 During this time both locations were open for a limited number of days as cover was not available. Eventually it was agreed that the alternative Job Description wasn't a suitable alternative and both staff members took redundancy, which put further pressure on the team as we tried to cover Ramsey & Yaxley as much as possible with resources within our remaining team whilst recruitment took place.

- 2.3 In Yaxley the lease expires July 2013. Members have asked that we consider future options beyond that date. One option would be to use the library one or two days a week. Alternatively, we could consider the lease on the current premises or examine what other options are available in Yaxley at that time. The Customer Services manager will review the options during this financial year.
- 2.4 Yaxley parish council were concerned that not opening the Yaxley CSC on Tuesdays was problematic. The village bus operates on that day but past surveys suggested that this bus wasn't used by HDC customers but by customers accessing the doctors surgery. We haven't received any complaints from customers due to not being open when the bus service is running. Data about methods of transport for customers is shown at Appendix A.

3. IMPACT OF CHANGES

- 3.1 Many customers have continued to experience the same service provision as before only over two days rather than five. Customers are accessing HDC services during those two days resulting in a more efficient use of resources.
- 3.2 Before the changes, a high number of customers used our Customer Service Centres to use the Public Access PC's and they can continue to do so five days a week through the Libraries. This is the main reason for the drop in numbers shown at Appendix B, and demonstrates that users of the service were not necessarily accessing advice for HDC services.
- 3.3 We have continued to offer the same partner sessions at each location.
- 3.4 We did see a slight increase in the number of complaints received especially during the early months due to wasted journeys as customer were getting used to new opening hours and the unexpected closures following the staffing problems. The number of complaints decreased as the months passed by and customers got used to the new service provision and alternative ways to access services.
- 3.5 The new member of staff recruited for Ramsey & Yaxley arrived in February 2012, but did not begin to staff the satellite offices until April as she was in training. We expect customer numbers to increase now that we have regular opening times.

4. CONCLUSION

- 4.1 Budget savings have been made as predicted, but service has been disrupted due to unforeseen circumstances. Despite the decline in numbers of customers using the service, few complaints have been received as customers adapt to alternate methods of accessing the Council's services.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 The customer service centres at Ramsey & Yaxley continue to operate for two days per week at each location.

5.2 The Head of Customer Service can report on any further impacts as part of the usual six monthly report to Overview & Scrutiny.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Previous Overview and Scrutiny (economic Well Being) reports
Budget savings reports to Cabinet, February 2011.

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Appendix A

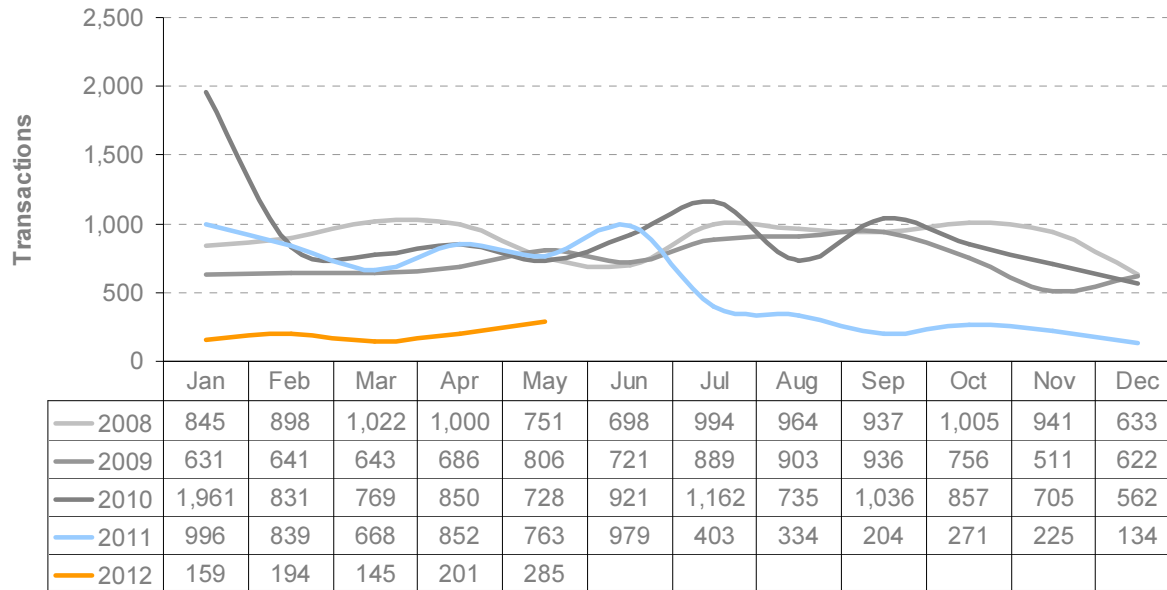
Method of Transport used by customers to visit offices (21st -25th May 2012)

Method of Transport May 2011	Ramsey	St Neots	Yaxley	Huntingdon	Total
Bus		6		26	32
Car	1	88	15	97	201
Cycle		6			6
Motorcycle			1		1
Mobility Scooter		2			2
Walk	15	89	21	78	203
Other				4	4
Taxi		1			1
Train				1	1
Grand Total	16	192	37	206	451

Volumes of work handled at the Yaxley Customer Service Centre

Yaxley	Visitors per year 2010	Visitors per year 2011/12	Comments
Housing Benefit	1260	645	Excludes HB staff sessions
Housing	1223	303	Excludes Housing staff sessions
Payments	459	209	
Public Use PC	2289	494	Customers now using library
Transport related	709	161	Concessionary fares transferred to County
Partner Session	1935	347	
Council Tax	385	63	
Street scene (fly tipping, missed bins, new bin requests, etc)	846	64	Most people will have used the call centre
Planning	608	9	
Employment (support with looking for work)	200	41	
Leisure (centres and local activities)	72	2	
Tourism	184	41	
Other	813	176	Includes older & younger person enquiries
Total	10983	2555	

Yaxley transactions

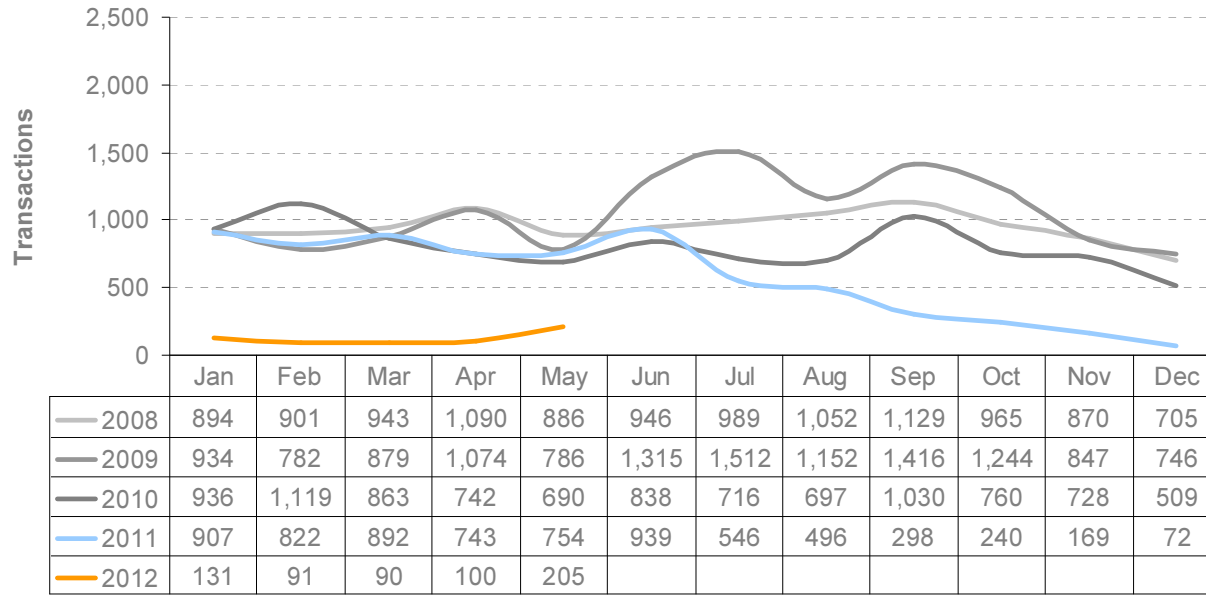


Days Open	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
2011	Open all working week						9	9	5	6	4	3
2012	3	4	4	5	9							

Volumes of work handled at the Ramsey Customer Service Centre

Ramsey	Visitors per year 2010	Visitors per year 2011/12	Comments
Housing Benefit	864	601	Excludes HB staff sessions
Housing	851	369	Excludes Housing staff sessions
Payments	211	133	
Public Use PC	2643	264	Customers now use library
Transport related	1294	198	Concessionary fares moved to County.
Partner Session	1829	329	
Council Tax	115	70	
Street scene (fly tipping, missed bins, new bin requests, etc)	221	45	Most people will have used the call centre
Planning	57	11	
Employment (support with looking for work)	521	107	
Leisure (centres and local activities)	102	20	
Tourism	470	35	
Other	806	256	Includes older & younger person enquiries
Total	9984	2438	

Ramsey transactions



Days Open	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
2011	Open all working week						9	10	7	6	5	3
2012	4	3	4	6	10							