

Supporting Information and Impact Assessment

Service / Policy:	Customer Services
Executive Lead:	Richard Haddock
Director / Assistant Director:	Fran Hughes/Bob Clark

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Section 1: Background Information	
1.	<p>What is the proposal / issue?</p> <p>To consider and agree the future operating model for the rationalisation of our Connections Offices. Members at the Council Budget on 25 February 2016 requested information on further options.</p>
2.	<p>What is the current situation?</p> <p>The Connections Service provides the face to face offices for the public to contact Torbay Council.</p> <p>Face to face services operate from central locations in each of the three towns in Torbay. One operates in Torquay Connections whilst the others are co-located services at Brixham Library and the Paignton Library Information Centre (PLAIC).</p> <p>In addition to providing information on Council services, Torquay and Paignton also offer self serve facilities via internet pods and drop in sessions and surgeries for partner organisations.</p> <p>Torbay Council also offers customer services via a 'Contact Centre' which manages telephone contact for a wide range of council services including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Housing Benefits Council Tax Business Rates Community Safety Elections Registrars Housing Options IER (Individual Electoral Registration) <p>Customers can also access services via the Councils website.</p> <p>For further information see Annex 1 - Background information, staffing levels and demand</p>

<p>3.</p>	<p>What options have been considered?</p> <p>This document contains information on 8 potential options -</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Centralise Connections in Paignton Library Information Centre (PLAIC) 2. Centralise Connections in Torquay Connections 3. Centralise Connections in PLAIC offering appointments in Brixham & Torquay Library one day per week 4. Centralise Connections in Torquay Connections offering appointments in Brixham & Paignton Library one day per week 5. Reduced opening days in all offices 6. Reduced opening hours in all three offices 7. Continue to offer a Connections service in all three locations 8. Appointment only in all three locations <p>For further information see Annex 2 - Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and risks.</p>
<p>4.</p>	<p>How does this proposal support the ambitions, principles and delivery of the Corporate Plan 2015-19?</p> <p>Principles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use reducing resources to best effect
<p>5.</p>	<p>Who will be affected by this proposal and who do you need to consult with?</p> <p>Connections customers Back office services Partner organisations</p>
<p>6.</p>	<p>How will you propose to consult?</p> <p>Torbay Council has consulted on the proposal to close Brixham and Torquay Connections offices in the following ways:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A survey was developed for service users to complete - paper copies were available in all Connections offices and all Libraries. 2. The survey was available on-line during the consultation period. <p>Public consultation on the budget proposal for the permanent closure of the Torquay and Brixham Connections offices was also undertaken</p> <p>Further consultation may be required if Council select an option that is significantly different to that already consulted on.</p>

Section 2: Implications and Impact Assessment

7. What are the financial and legal implications?

The financial and legal implications are set out within Annex 2

The trial identified no significant increase in the number of travel warrants issued.

The increase in postage for returning documents will be reduced when Risk Based Verification is introduced. (This framework will reduce the identification documents required to be submitted by low risk customers when making an application for Housing Benefit)

8. What are the risks?

For further information see Annex 2 detailing strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and risks.

9. Public Services Value (Social Value) Act 2012

Not applicable

10. What evidence / data / research have you gathered in relation to this proposal?

Detailed analysis of the trial closure of Torquay and Brixham Connections presented within the Connections Officer Rationalisation Project report.

For further information see Annex 2 - Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and risks for each option.

There are 8 potential options -

1. Centralise Connections in Paignton Library Information Centre (PLAIC)
2. Centralise Connections in Torquay Connections
3. Centralise Connections in PLAIC offering appointments in Brixham & Torquay Library one day per week
4. Centralise Connections in Torquay Connections offering appointments in Brixham & Paignton Library one day per week
5. Reduced opening days in all offices
6. Reduced opening hours in all three offices
7. Continue to offer a Connections service in all three locations
8. Appointment only in all three locations

Summary of Options

	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3	Option 4	Option 5	Option 6	Option 7	Option 8
Risk level	Low	Medium	Low	Low	Medium	Medium	Low	High
Savings (based on full year savings)	£76,000	£56,000	£66,000	£46,000	£20,000	£20,000	Nil	Unknown
FTE Savings	3.4	2.4	3	2	1	1	Nil	Unknown
Option suitable for existing appointments (Housing)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓
Co - located with partners	✓	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓
Opportunity to channel shift	✓	✓	✓	✓	Limited	Limited	✗	✓
Complies with Lottery grant funding	✓	Requires clarification	✓	Requires clarification	✓	✓	✓	Requires clarification
Potential to generate income from vacated office space	✓	Requires clarification	✓	Requires clarification	✗	✗	✗	✗
Potential to cause customer confusion	Low	Low	Low	Low	Medium	Medium	Low	High

11. What are key findings from the consultation you have carried out?

Budget Consultation

To close Torquay and Brixham Connections Offices and Centralise the Connections service within the existing office in Paignton Library and Information Centre. Self Service Pods will be provided at Torquay and Brixham Libraries. Customers will still be able to access services via the Customer Contact Centre (telephone) and/or the Council's website.

This proposal is expected to save £76,000.

Do you support this proposal ?	Number	Percent
Yes	135	54.9%
No	105	42.7%
No answer	6	2.4%
Total	246	100%

Review of Connections Services consultation 5 October - 11 November 2015

Do you support the proposal to centralise the Connections Service at Paignton? (Please tick one box only)

	Number	Percent
Yes	221	33.1%
No	368	55.1%
No response	79	11.8%
Total	668	100%

Further details of the consultation are included in the Connections rationalisation project report.

12. Amendments to Proposal / Mitigating Actions

Following the decision at Council on the 25 February 2016, 8 potential options have been identified. This report provides Council with information relating to these options.

Equality Impacts

13	Identify the potential positive and negative impacts on specific groups To be completed for the option selected by Council
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	Positive Impact	Negative Impact & Mitigating Actions	Neutral Impact
Older or younger people			
People with caring Responsibilities			
People with a disability			
Women or men			
People who are black or from a minority ethnic background (BME) <i>(Please note Gypsies / Roma are within this community)</i>			
Religion or belief (including lack of belief)			
People who are lesbian, gay or bisexual			
People who are transgendered			
People who are in a marriage or civil partnership			
Women who are pregnant / on maternity leave			

Socio-economic impacts (Including impact on child poverty issues and deprivation)			
Public Health impacts (How will your proposal impact on the general health of the population of Torbay)			

14	Cumulative Impacts - Council wide (proposed changes elsewhere which might worsen the impacts identified above)		
15	Cumulative Impacts - Other public services (proposed changes elsewhere which might worsen the impacts identified above)		

Annex 1

What is the trend in demand over the last 6 years?

Footfall within the Connections offices has been gradually reducing year on year as customers choose alternative methods of contact.

Method of contact	Period	Number
Total footfall within the Connections offices	April 2010 to Mar 2011	101,387 visitors
	April 2011 to Mar 2012	94,465 visitors
	April 2012 to Mar 2013	81,994 visitors
	April 2013 to Mar 2014	71,578 visitors
	April 2014 to Mar 2015	66,896 visitors
	April 2015 to Feb 2016 (Excluding the trial 5 October - 2 November)	31,911 visitors

What is the current demand?

On average the number of customers visiting the Connections offices each week are:

Connections Office	Number of customers
Torquay	824
Paignton	556
Brixham	123

How are customers dealt with when they visit Connections?

In Torquay and Paignton Connections customers are directed to the appropriate facility depending on their enquiry. Options available:

Scanning - Documents are scanned by a member of the team and immediately returned to the customer.

Pods - customers are directed to a computer to resolve their enquiry and report information using on-line.

Phones - customers are directed to the free phone facility to enable them to contact a variety of back office services to resolve their enquiry.

CSA - customers whose enquiry requires a Customer Service Advisor (CSA) e.g. Bus pass applications, Parking Permits, Overseas pension verification. Customers who are unable to use the free phone or web or whose enquiry is very complex are also directed to a CSA.

Appointments - Customers who have a pre-arranged appointment for Housing in Torquay and Registrars in Paignton are directed to the appropriate meeting room.

Universal Credit - Customers that visit Connections to make an application for Universal Credit that require assistance from a CSA to complete their application.

General advice - quick enquires that do not require use of a back office system and can easily be resolved at the first point of contact.

In Brixham all customers' enquiries are dealt with by a member of the Customers Services Team due to the office layout and the volume of customers.

Prior to the Connections trial which was undertaken in October 2015 we began to record the demand for each facility. This analysis is continuing to enable us to monitor the use of each facility and further develop the use of on-line transactions.

The table below details the facilities used by customers 15 August 2015 - 26 February 2016 excluding the period of the trial 5th - 30th October 2015

	Scanning	Directed to Pod	Directed to Phones	CSA	Appointments (Housing & Registrars)	Universal Credit Applications	General Advice	Total
Torquay	6828	2127	3315	438	874	0	3827	17409
Paignton	3196	497	846	377	1736	0	5159	11811
Brixham*	857	0	1	0	5	0	1828	2691

Customer Services also record the volume of customers throughout the day to ensure that any capacity can be utilised and where possible staff support the Call Centre by answering telephone calls within the Connections office.

The table below details customer footfall throughout the day 15 August 2015 - 26 February 2016 excluding the period of the trial 5th - 30th October 2015

	9-10am	10-11am	11-12am	12-1pm	1-2pm	2-3pm	3-4pm	4-5pm	Total
Torquay	2127	2397	2672	2570	2436	2203	1888	1116	17409
Paignton	1870	1644	1720	1524	1617	1506	1213	717	11811
Brixham	310	398	425	430	371	354	337	66	2691

*Brixham 4-5pm - Totals added for 2 days as split not known

What are our current staffing levels?

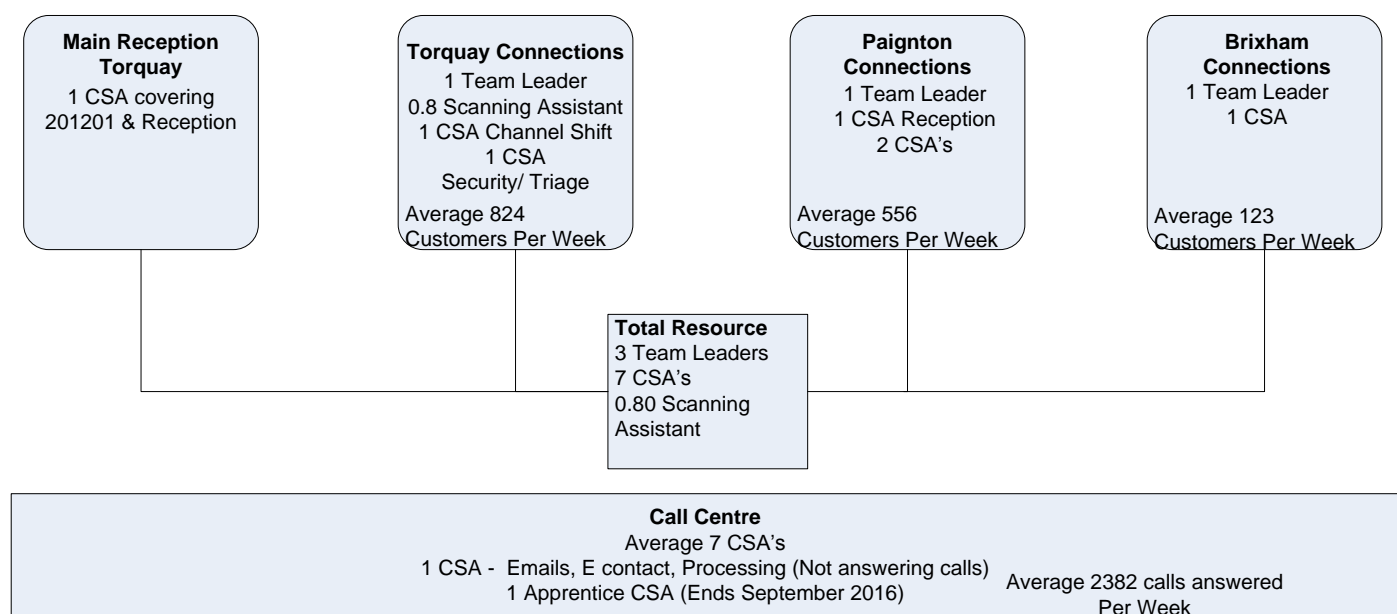
Although additional skill sets from back office services have been introduced into the Call Centre, Customer Services staffing levels continues to reduce due to budget cuts. Since 2012 the number of CSA's has reduced by 13.9 FTE.

The service is unable to achieve any further financial savings whilst maintaining the current service to customers at 3 locations.

Year 2012		Year 2016	
Team Leaders	4 FTE	Team Leaders	4FTE
Customer Service Advisors	32.6 FTE	Customer Service Advisors	18.7 FTE
Scanning Assistants	1 FTE	Scanning Assistants	0.8FTE

Typically there are 3 CSA's and 1 Team Leader on leave at any one time. There are also 2 CSA's currently on maternity leave, whose posts have not been back filled.

Customer Services – Current Staffing Levels And Weekly Demand Averages



How does the service operate?

Customer Service Advisors (CSA's) manage customer demand in the Connections Offices, Call Centre and Main Reception at Town Hall. Staff are cross trained and work in the Call Centre and the Connections Offices.

In November 2014 the operating models in Torquay and Paignton offices were changed to achieve the following:

- Introduce and promote the use of online services and telephones to customers as these cost less than a face to face transaction.
- To maximise capacity to the call centre (staff in the face to face offices now answer calls as well as dealing with the face to face customers).
- Improve performance to the call centre.
- To bring the service into line with other organisations e.g. DWP, HMRC (pushing more self service and telephone support).
- To enable vulnerable customers to see a Customer Service Advisor (CSA) promptly to resolve their enquiry.

CSA's in the Connections Offices now assist the Call Centre by taking calls whenever possible. This, with the added emphasis of channel shifting face to face customers to the phone and web provides a flexible and responsive service.

The new way of working has increased the use of lower cost methods of contact e.g. web and telephone and although the overall footfall is reducing a significant volume of customers still visit the Connections offices.

Conclusion

As previously indicated within the current staffing levels section, we have few staff to support 3 Connections offices, Main Reception at the Town Hall and the Call Centre.

In order to achieve cashable savings in 2016/17 the delivery model for Connections must be rationalised. The document contains information relating to 8 potential delivery models.

In conjunction with the detailed report produced in November 2015 members are requested to consider the options for Connections based on the information within this report.

Annex 2

8 potential options have been identified and evaluated by officers.

Option 1 - Centralise Connections in PLAIC

Paignton Library and Information Centre (PLAIC) would become the central Connections office and Torquay and Brixham Connections would be closed. A trial was undertaken of this option and it was established that it is possible for the Connections service to operate from the current location within PLAIC.

Strengths

- PLAIC is ideally located with good transport links - bus station, train station, parking etc.
- PLAIC is a modern purpose built building.
- Centralising in PLAIC supports the concept of a Community hub. Customers can also utilise the other services within PLAIC whilst visiting Connections.
- The proposed Connections office space in PLAIC is suitable for the new operating model and additional self service functions.
- Would maximise the use of meeting rooms within PLAIC with the potential to add additional meeting rooms if required.
- No additional security is required. PLAIC would benefit from the security currently provided within Torquay Connections. Security from the Torquay Connections office would be transferred to PLAIC.
- Maximise the use of Customer Service staff to cover Call centre; Connections office and Town hall reception. Reduced staffing issues relating to staff scheduling due to reduction in office locations.
- Feedback from the trial from customers who used the central service was positive.
- Paignton Library would benefit from a security presence within the building.
- This is a low risk option as the concept of a central office in PLAIC has been proved.
- The Housing Service operated from PLAIC during the trial and no issues were identified.
- The Housing Service reported that there was no significant increase in the volume of travel warrants issued during the trial.
- This is an opportunity to generate income from potential lease of Town hall Connections accommodation.
- Connections customers may be encouraged to use Library resources.

- Results from public consultation on the budget proposal the permanent closure of the Torquay and Brixham Connections offices supported this proposal (Yes 54.9%, No 42.7%, No answer 2.4%)

Weaknesses

- Call Centre and Connections offices would no longer be co-located, so Call Centre staff will not be easily transferrable at short notice to Connections office duties.
- Customers unable to travel to PLAIC will have to choose another contact method. During the trial free phones were installed within Brixham and Torquay Libraries to enable them to contact various departments during the Library opening hours.
- Consultation undertaken during the trial did not support the proposal to centralise the Connections Service in PLAIC (Yes 33.1%, No 55.1% No answer 11.8%).

Opportunities

- Maximises the use of a modern building which was lottery funded.
- PLAIC is centrally located with Torbay.
- Torquay Connections could be leased to generate income.
- Promote Channel Shift via new operating model and additional self service capabilities to reduce demand.

Risks

- Customers may contact other organisations for assistance rather than travel to PLAIC. (Feedback from other organisations during the trial identified a low level of increased demand. The majority of these customers were sign posted to other facilities).

Savings

76k staff savings (Based on full year savings) 3.4FTE.

Costs

The existing pods located in Torquay and Paignton Connections are 4 years old and approaching “end of life”. They require a considerable amount of IT resource to maintain them.

The review of the Connections service has identified the importance of adequate provision of self service facilities and the existing pods are no longer fit for purpose.

To supply 10 free standing touch screen kiosks of industrial quality and the required software the capital investment would be approximately £26,000 with an annual revenue cost of £7000.

The location of the kiosks will be dependent on the decision made by Council.

Option 2 - Centralise Connections in Torquay Connections

Torquay Connections office would become the central Connections office and Paignton and Brixham Connections would be closed.

Strengths

- Torquay Connections currently has the highest level of demand out of the three offices.
- The Torquay Connections office has 7 meeting rooms.
- The majority of Council Staff are based in Torquay. (staff would not have to travel to meet with customers).
- Housing appointments which are currently undertaken within Torquay Connections could continue.
- Connections staff would be located in the same location as the Call centre staff. This would enable some flexibility to manage demand.
- Security would continue to support Connections at the current location.

Weaknesses

- No trial of centralising in Torquay has been undertaken.
- The potential footfall to a central office in Torquay has not been established and therefore there is a risk that the office may not be suitable as a central location.
- Customers have not been consulted on this option.
- Connections staff currently manage the Reception at PLAIC. It may not be feasible to continue if the Connections Service was withdrawn from Paignton.
- Customers unable to travel to Torquay will have to choose another contact method.
- Customers travelling from Brixham would be impacted most.
- No future use for the existing space currently occupied by Connections in PLAIC has been identified.
- No opportunity to explore a potential income stream from leasing the current Torquay Connections space.
- Centralising in Torquay may limit the future opportunities for Torquay Town Hall.

Opportunities

- The space currently occupied in PLAIC and Brixham Library would be available for other uses. Potential income generation.

Risks

- Possible non compliance of the terms of the lottery grant at PLAIC (i.e. we are not providing a Customer Services function).
- Any change of use within PLAIC e.g. Connections space used by another organisation would need to comply with the lottery conditions.
- Significant communications prior to centralisation would be required. This would include customers and stakeholders.
- Public consultation may not support this option.
- The vacated spaces in PLAIC and Brixham Library may remain unoccupied if it cannot be utilised by other Council departments/organisations.
- Potential increase in customer dissatisfaction leading to an increase in the number of complaints if customer demand is not dealt with effectively within Torquay Connections.

Savings

Approx 56k based on a full year savings (resource would be required to maintain a Reception at PLAIC unless an alternative solution is identified 20k) 2.4FTE.

Costs

The existing pods located in Torquay and Paignton Connections are 4 years old and approaching “end of life”. They require a considerable amount of IT resource to maintain them.

The review of the Connections service has identified the importance of adequate provision of self service facilities and the existing pods are no longer fit for purpose.

To supply 10 free standing touch screen kiosks of industrial quality and the required software the capital investment would be approximately £26,000 with an annual revenue cost of £7000.

The location of the kiosks will be dependent on the decision made by Council.

Option 3 - Centralise Connections is PLAIC offering appointments in Brixham & Torquay Library one day per week in each location

Centralise in PLAIC and offer pre booked appointments for customers who require a face to face appointments within the meeting rooms in at Torquay and Brixham Libraries. This option would enable elderly or vulnerable customers the opportunity to resolve enquiries in Torquay and Brixham utilising existing meeting rooms within the Libraries.

Customers would telephone Customer Services (Free phone is available in the Library if required). If the enquiry cannot be resolved and the customer cannot travel to Paignton an appointment will be made with a Customer Service Advisor. Appointments will initially be booked for 30 minutes to allow sufficient time for the CSA to deal with the enquiry. This would equate to 13 appointments at each location per week.

Brixham Library - utilise the meeting room on the first floor for pre arranged appointments. Appointments could be booked by Customer Service where it has been identified that an appointment is required. These would be offered one day per week. If there are no appointments staff would not attend. If there is capacity between appointments the CSA will support the Call Centre by taking calls to maximise capacity.

Torquay Library - utilise the meeting room near the entrance of the Library for pre arranged appointments. Appointments could be booked by Customer Service where it has been identified that an appointment is required. These would be offered one day per week. Depending on the volume of appointments the CSA would return to the Call Centre or support the Call Centre in between appointments.

Analysis of the face to face enquiries has been undertaken to understand why customers require a face to face interaction.

Analysis of face to face enquiries August 2015 - February 2016 (Not customers with a TQ5 postcode)

Description	Volume
Pensionable age bus pass applications	300
Parking permits	204
Disabled bus pass applications	99
Overseas pensions verification	58
Student bus pass applications	53
Blue badge & Radar keys enquiries	44
Housing advice relating to customers with no contact telephone number	38
Proof of entitlement of benefits to enable free veterinary treatment	38
Complex benefit or council tax enquiries	21

How could the face to face enquiries be reduced further?

Pensionable age bus passes - this is currently a face to face transaction only. Libraries also process around 1000 applications per year. Investigation is required to enable customers' alternative methods of applying e.g. postal and on-line applications.

Parking permits - On-line and paper applications are available on the website. Some customers prefer to call in to collect a permit. Investigation is required with Parking Services to establish if a face to face service is still required and explore alternative options and locations.

Disabled bus passes - this is currently a face to face transaction only. Investigation is required to identify if a percentage of these applications could be processed through a paper or on-line applications.

Overseas pension verification - to verify customer's entitlement to overseas pensions - this service could be centralised.

Student bus passes - Investigation is required to enable customers' alternative methods of applying e.g. postal and on-line applications.

Blue badge & Radar keys enquiries - radar keys could continue to be available at the central location. There are other outlets and methods of purchasing radar keys within Torbay. Blue badges are administered by Torbay and South Devon NHS Foundation Trust.

Housing advice relating to customers with no contact telephone number - Investigation is required with Housing to explore an alternative service for these customers.

Proof of entitlement of benefits to enable free veterinary treatment - this service could be centralised.

Complex benefit or council tax enquiries - customers not able to travel to the central office would be given an appointment.

Strengths

- PLAIC is ideally located with good transport links - bus station, train station, parking etc.
- PLAIC is a modern purpose built building.
- The proposed Connections office space in PLAIC is suitable for the new operating model and additional self service functions.
- Centralising in PLAIC supports the concept of a Community hub. Customers can also utilise the other services within PLAIC whilst visiting Connections.
- Would maximise the use of meeting rooms within PLAIC with the potential to add additional meeting rooms if required.

- No additional security is required. PLAIC would benefit from the security currently provided within Torquay Connections. Security from the Torquay Connections office would be transferred to PLAIC.
- Maximise the use of Customer Service staff to cover Call centre; Connections office and Town hall reception. Reduced staffing issues relating to staff scheduling due to reduction in office locations.
- Feedback from the trial from customers who used the central service was positive.
- Paignton Library would benefit from a security presence within the building.
- This is a low risk option as the concept of a central office in PLAIC has been proved.
- The Housing Service operated from PLAIC during the trial and had no issues.
- The Housing Service reported that there was no significant increase in the volume of travel warrants issued during the trial.
- Opportunity to generate income from potential lease of Town hall Connections accommodation.
- Could encourage Connections customers to use Library resources.
- Results from public consultation on the budget proposal the permanent closure of the Torquay and Brixham Connections offices supported this proposal (Yes 54.9%, No 42.7%, No answer 2.4%).
- Customers unable to use other methods of contact and who are unable to travel to Paignton will be able to visit the Libraries at a pre arranged appointment to resolve their enquiry.
- As appointments are pre booked at a time convenient for the customer and therefore will not have to queue to see a CSA.
- Details and volumes of appointments could be analysed to further reduce the need for appointments in the future.

Weaknesses

- Call Centre and Connections offices would no longer be co-located, so Call Centre staff will not be easily transferrable at short notice to Connections office duties.
- Customers unable to travel to PLAIC will have to choose another contact method. During the trial free phones were installed within Brixham and Torquay Libraries to enable them to contact various departments during the Library opening hours.
- Consultation undertaken during the trial did not support the proposal to centralise the Connections Service in PLAIC (Yes 33.1%, No 55.1% No answer 11.8%).

- Work with back offices and partners is required to reduce the volume of face to face enquiries.

Opportunities

- Torquay Connections could be leased to generate income.
- Promote Channel Shift via new operating model and additional self service capabilities to reduce demand.
- To review the current face to face transactions, identify and explore alternative methods of delivery.

Risks

- Customers may contact other organisations for assistance rather than travel to PLAIC. (Feedback from other organisations during the trial identified a low level of increased demand. The majority of these customers were sign posted to other facilities).
- Potential for backlogs in appointments if demand is in excess of available appointments if further reductions in face to face enquires cannot be made.

Savings

66k based on a full year savings (Option 1 savings of 76k minus the cost of staffing the appointments 10k) 3FTE.

Costs

The existing pods located in Torquay and Paignton Connections are 4 years old and approaching "end of life". They require a considerable amount of IT resource to maintain them.

The review of the Connections service has identified the importance of adequate provision of self service facilities and the existing pods are no longer fit for purpose.

To supply 10 free standing touch screen kiosks of industrial quality and the required software the capital investment would be approximately £26,000 with an annual revenue cost of £7000.

The location of the kiosks will be dependent on the decision made by Council.

Option 4 - Centralise Connections in Torquay Connections offering appointments in Brixham & Paignton Library one day per week in each location

Centralise in Torquay Connections and offer pre booked appointments for customers who require a face to face appointments within the meeting rooms in at Paignton and Brixham Libraries.

This option would enable elderly or vulnerable customers the opportunity to resolve enquiries in Paignton and Brixham utilising existing meeting rooms within the Libraries.

Customers would telephone Customer Services (Free phone is available in the Library if required). If the enquiry cannot be resolved and the customer cannot travel to Torquay an appointment will be made with a Customer Service Advisor. Appointments will initially be booked for 30 minutes to allow sufficient time for the CSA to deal with the enquiry. This would equate to 13 appointments at each location per week.

Brixham Library - utilise the meeting room on the first floor for pre arranged appointments. Appointments could be booked by Customer Service where it has been identified that an appointment is required. These would be offered one day per week. If there are no appointments staff would not attend. If there is capacity between appointments the CSA will support the Call Centre by taking calls to maximise capacity.

Paignton Library - utilise the meeting room within the existing Connections area (room 6) for pre arranged appointments. Appointments could be booked by Customer Service where it has been identified that an appointment is required. These would be offered one day per week. Depending on the volume of appointments the CSA would return to the Call Centre or support the Call Centre in between appointments.

Analysis of the face to face enquiries has been undertaken to understand why customers require a face to face interaction.

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How could the face to face enquiries be reduced further?

Pensionable age bus passes - this is currently a face to face transaction only. Libraries also process around 1000 applications per year. Investigation is required to enable customers' alternative methods of applying e.g. postal and on-line applications.

Parking permits - On-line and paper applications are available on the website. Some customers prefer to call in to collect a permit. Investigation is required with Parking Services to establish if a face to face service is still required and explore alternative options and locations.

Disabled bus passes - this is currently a face to face transaction only. Investigation is required to identify if a percentage of these applications could be processed through a paper or on-line application.

Overseas pension verification - to verify customer's entitlement to overseas pensions - this service could be centralised.

Student bus passes - Investigation is required to enable customers' alternative methods of applying e.g. postal and on-line applications.

Blue badge & Radar keys enquiries - radar keys could continue to be available at the central location. There are other outlets and methods of purchasing radar keys within Torbay. Blue badges are administered by Torbay and South Devon NHS Foundation Trust.

Housing advice relating to customers with no contact telephone number - Investigation is required with Housing to explore an alternative service for these customers.

Proof of entitlement of benefits to enable free veterinary treatment - this service could be centralised.

Complex benefit or council tax enquiries - customers not able to travel to the central offer would be given an appointment.

Strengths

- Torquay Connections currently has the highest level of demand out of the three offices.
- The Torquay Connections office has 7 meeting rooms.
- The majority of Council Staff are based in Torquay. (staff would not have to travel to meet with customers).
- Appointments are currently undertaken with Torquay Connections could continue.
- Connections staff would be located in the same location as the Call centre staff. This would enable some flexibility to manage demand.

- Security would continue to support Connections at the current location.
- Customers unable to use other methods of contact and who are unable to travel to Torquay will be able to visit the Libraries at a pre arranged appointment to resolve their enquiry.
- As appointments are pre booked at a time convenient for the customer, they will not have to queue to see a CSA.
- Details and volumes of appointments could be analysed to further reduce the need for appointments in the future.

Weaknesses

- No trial of centralising in Torquay has been undertaken.
- The potential footfall to a central office in Torquay has not been established and therefore there is a risk that the office may not be suitable as a central location.
- Customers have not been consulted on this option.
- Connections staff currently manage the Reception at PLAIC. It may not be feasible to continue if the Connections Service was withdrawn from Paignton.
- Customers unable to travel to Torquay will have to choose another contact method.
- Customers travelling from Brixham would be impacted most.
- No future use for the existing space currently occupied by Connections in PLAIC has been identified.
- No opportunity to explore a potential income stream from leasing the current Torquay Connections space.
- Centralising in Torquay may limit the future opportunities for Torquay Town Hall.
- Work with back offices and partners is required to reduce the volume of face to face enquiries

Opportunities

- The space currently occupied in PLAIC and Brixham Library would be available for other uses. Potential income generation.
- To review the current face to face transactions, identify and explore alternative methods of delivery.

Risks

- Possible non compliance of the terms of the lottery grant at PLAIC (i.e. we are not providing a Customer Services function).
- Any change of use within PLAIC e.g. Connections space used by another organisation would need to comply with the lottery conditions.
- Significant communications prior to centralisation would be required. This would include customers and stakeholders.
- Public consultation may not support the new approach.
- The vacated spaces in PLAIC and Brixham Library may remain unoccupied if it cannot be utilised by other Council departments/organisations.
- Potential increase in customer dissatisfaction leading to an increase in the number of complaints if customer demand is not dealt with effectively within Torquay Connections.
- Centralising in Torquay may not be achievable by mid 2016 as consultation will need to be undertaken.
- Potential for backlogs if demand is in excess of available appointments and if further reductions in face to face enquires cannot be made.

Savings

46k based on a full year savings (76k minus 10k for appointments and 20k to manage PLAIC Reception 2FTE)

Resource would be required to maintain a Reception at PLAIC unless an alternative solution is identified

Costs

The existing pods located in Torquay and Paignton Connections are 4 years old and approaching "end of life". They require a considerable amount of IT resource to maintain them.

The review of the Connections service has identified the importance of adequate provision of self service facilities and the existing pods are no longer fit for purpose.

To supply 10 free standing touch screen kiosks of industrial quality and the required software the capital investment would be approximately £26,000 with an annual revenue cost of £7000.

The location of the kiosks will be dependent on the decision made by Council.

Option 5 - Reduced opening days in all offices

Continue to operate from all three locations, closing each office a number of days each week.

Strengths

- May encourage channel shift where available.
- Retains a Customer Services Connections presence in the three towns.
- Does not impact on elderly or disadvantaged groups.
- Possibly more acceptable for customers than centralising in one location.

Weaknesses

- On days when all offices are open the current staffing level could not be reduced as we are already operating with the minimal level of staff.
- Face to face demand is fairly constant throughout the week and there are no obvious days when the offices could be closed.
- Reducing staffing levels on current days when there are a reduced number of Connections Offices open would impact on the performance of the Call Centre as support from staff located in the Connections offices would not be provided.
- The Housing Service would need to operate from multiple locations to enable appointments 5 days per week. This may cause customer confusion.
- In PLAIC the Customer Services Team manages the Reception. Registrar's appointments are offered 5 days a week. CSA's are required to check customers in on arrival and direction them to the correct location and therefore a presence in PLAIC would need to be maintained.
- Customer consultation would need to be undertaken on this option. This would cause delays in implementation and would reduce the savings achievable.
- There would be no opportunity to utilise the current office space for a different purpose on days when the offices are closed.
- This option would realise minimal savings.

Opportunities

- May be possible to re-direct some staff resource to the Call Centre functions (call centre) due to reduction in Connections face to face service.

Risks

- All Customer Service staff would need to have new contracts to reflect the reduced requirements of the service on days when not all offices are open. There is a risk that experienced and valued staff would leave due to a reduction in hours and wages.
- Closing different offices on different days would cause confusion to customers and back office staff, throughout the Council who direct customers to the Connections offices.
- The effect on face to face demand on a reduced number of days has not been explored. There is a potential that the service would not be able to manage the demand during the reducing opening hours.
- Reduction in staff hours or different work patterns will impact on staff retention.

Savings

Estimate 20k based on a full year savings depending on the opening days on each office 1FTE.

Costs

The existing pods located in Torquay and Paignton Connections are 4 years old and approaching “end of life”. They require a considerable amount of IT resource to maintain them.

The review of the Connections service has identified the importance of adequate provision of self service facilities and the existing pods are no longer fit for purpose.

To supply 10 free standing touch screen kiosks of industrial quality and the required software the capital investment would be approximately £26,000 with an annual revenue cost of £7000.

The location of the kiosks will be dependent on the decision made by Council.

Option 6 - Reduced opening hours in all three offices

Continue to operate from all three locations, reducing the opening hours.

Strengths

- May encourage channel shift where available.
- Retains a Customer Services Connections presence in the three towns.
- Does not impact on elderly or disadvantaged groups.
- Possibly more acceptable for customers than centralising in one location.

Weaknesses

- Customers may not find the new opening hours convenient.
- May cause issues for the Security Team.
- All current locations will need to be maintained and staffed but will not be fully utilised.
- Customer confusion from changing the opening hours.
- Effort required informing customers of the change.
- Alternative contact methods required when office is not open (this could be access to PC's in libraries). Cost approx 30k.
- Difficult to manage staff time and may incur wasted resource through travelling time.
- Library staff in Paignton and Brixham may be required to provide customers who visit when the office is closed details of the opening information.
- In Torquay, customers who find Torquay Connections closed may visit the Main Reception for information.
- Staff rotation/planning would prove difficult and may result in wasted resource.
- Demand may be unmanageable during the new opening hours.
- The staff in the Connections Offices support the Call Centre. Call Centre demand is at its highest from 9.00am - 11.00am and relies on additional resource from the Connections offices to manage the peaks in demand. A reduction in staffing numbers during this time would dramatically impact of the performance of the Call Centre and waiting times for customers.
- The opening hours of the Call Centre could not be reduced as it manages customers' enquiries from multiple services.
- Face to face demand is fairly constant through the day and there are no obvious hours during the day that could be reduced that would not affect the performance of the Call Centre.
- Customer Services would still need to manage the Town Hall Reception (8.30am - 5.30pm)

- In PLAIC the Customer Services Team manages the Reception. Registrars appointments are offered all day and CSA's are required to check customers in on arrival and direction them to the correct location.
- Due to the level of demand for pre booked and emergency appointments for Housing Services, the service would be unable to operate effectively if the Connections Offices opening times were reduced.
- Configuring the staff rota would be complex as CSA's would be required to work a standard day when in the Call Centre and a reduced number of hours when in Connections.
- There would be no opportunity to utilise the current office space for a different purpose whilst the offices are closed.
- This option would realise minimal savings.

Opportunities

- May be possible to re-direct some staff resource to the Contact Centre functions (call centre) due to reduction in Connections face to face service.

Risks

- The effect on face to face demand during shorter opening hours has not been explored. There is a potential that the service would not be able to manage the demand during the reducing opening hours.
- Torquay Connections meeting rooms may need to remain open to facilitate Housing Appointments and other appointments.
- Reduction in staff hours or different work patterns will impact on staff retention.
- All Customer Service staff would need to have new contracts to reflect a reduced number of hours. There is a risk that experienced and valued staff would leave due to a reduction in hours and wages.

Savings

Estimate 20k based on a full year savings 1FTE

Costs

The existing pods located in Torquay and Paignton Connections are 4 years old and approaching "end of life". They require a considerable amount of IT resource to maintain them.

The review of the Connections service has identified the importance of adequate provision of self service facilities and the existing pods are no longer fit for purpose.

To supply 10 free standing touch screen kiosks of industrial quality and the required software the capital investment would be approximately £26,000 with an annual revenue cost of £7000.

The location of the kiosks will be dependent on the decision made by Council.

Option 7 - Continue to offer a Connections service in all three locations

Strengths

- No change to the current service.
- Customer will be able to continue to visit an office that is most convenient for them.
- No savings are achievable from Customer Services budget.
- 76k savings will need to be found from an alternative source.
- Intelligence and customer feedback gathered will not be utilised.
- Operating from three locations may not be financially viable in future years and options 1 - 3 will need to be reconsidered. Customer and partner consultation will need to be undertaken again.
- Channel shift to cheaper methods of communication will be limited.
- No opportunity to generate additional income from office space.

Weaknesses

- This option would realise no savings.

Opportunities

- To maintain the current service to customers.

Risks

- Face to face customer demand may continue to reduce and operating from three locations may become unviable.
- No security presence will be provided in Paignton and Brixham Connections.

Savings

None

Costs

The existing pods located in Torquay and Paignton Connections are 4 years old and approaching "end of life". They require a considerable amount of IT resource to maintain them.

The review of the Connections service has identified the importance of adequate provision of self service facilities and the existing pods are no longer fit for purpose.

To supply 10 free standing touch screen kiosks of industrial quality and the required software the capital investment would be approximately £26,000 with an annual revenue cost of £7000.

The location of the kiosks will be dependent on the decision made by Council.

Option 8 - Appointment only in all three locations

Operate an appointment only service within all three Connections offices. Based on the current average weekly footfall within each office with 15 minute appointments, this option would require the following resource –

Location	Average Weekly Footfall	Number Of CSA's Required
Torquay	824	6.3 FTE
Paignton	556	4.2 FTE
Brixham	123	1 FTE

Strengths

- Customers unable to use other methods of contact would be able to visit an office for an appointment to resolve their enquiry with a CSA.
- As appointments are pre booked at a time convenient for the customer, they will not have to queue to see a CSA.

Weaknesses

- The majority of customers are not currently seen by a CSA as they are directed to alternatives (Web and telephone) within Torquay and Paignton Connections. Although demand is reducing, all offices still have a significant footfall. (April 2015 - February 2016, excluding the trial 5 October - 2 November - 31,911 visitors).
- No trial of this operating model has been undertaken and we have been unable to identify another local authority with this operating model.
- Demand to the Call Centre would increase due to customers telephoning to book appointments.
- Potential of lone working in Brixham when the Library is closed.(Wednesday and Friday afternoons).
- Unable to use the capacity between appointments to support the Call Centre.
- Desk space in the Connections Offices would not be utilised unless appointments are undertaken within the public areas in Connections.
- If customer appointments are undertaken at desks in a public area there would be difficulties managing customers who visit with no appointment.
- No opportunity to assist customers to self serve.
- Late arrivals will impact the appointment schedule.
- Potential impact on customers claiming Universal Credit.
- The Reception at PLAIC would still need to be managed by Customer Services.
- Significant communications and engagement with customers, back office departments and partners would be required.

Opportunities

- To review the current face to face transactions, identify and explore alternative methods of delivery.

Risks

- Removing the current operating model in Torquay and Paignton and replacing it with appointments could result in high demand at a high cost as customers will be unable to use the low cost methods currently offered (Web and telephone). Although the volume of customers that require a face to face is minimal the overall foot fall is still significant.
- Resource required is greater than the current operating model.
- May cause high customer demand to other services including Libraries and partner organisations.
- Potential for backlogs in appointments if demand exceeds the volume of available appointments.
- The offices would remain open to allow access for customers with appointments but there would be no resource to prevent customers without an appointment entering the offices.
- Overall cost of delivering the service may increase due to the volume of face to face transactions.
- Potential damage to reputation due to customer dissatisfaction.
- Public consultation may not support the new approach.

Savings

Unknown until demand for appointments has been identified but could potentially be an increase in cost.

Costs

The existing pods located in Torquay and Paignton Connections are 4 years old and approaching “end of life”. They require a considerable amount of IT resource to maintain them.

The review of the Connections service has identified the importance of adequate provision of self service facilities and the existing pods are no longer fit for purpose.

To supply 10 free standing touch screen kiosks of industrial quality and the required software the capital investment would be approximately £26,000 with an annual revenue cost of £7000.

The location of the kiosks will be dependent on the decision made by Council.