

***HC 15**

NORTHERN OUTREACH

Members were presented with a report that considered the usage of the Northern Outreach Service and how best to offer Council services in the future.

The Lead Member for Customer First introduced the report and he and the Commissioning Manager responded to questions of clarity.

Members had a long and detailed debate on this item. A number of Members were concerned that the Council was withdrawing a service from Okehampton. In response, other Members saw this as an opportunity to provide services in a better way, by engaging with stakeholders. In response to requests to take more time over the decision, Members were reminded that reviewing the way services were provided in Okehampton had been put forward as a budget saving two years ago. Some Members also noted that service provision was important across the Borough, not just to Okehampton, and generally the Council should look to effective ways of delivering services to all residents. One Member noted the importance of a communications strategy when the service was closed, and ensuring all partner agencies had the correct signposting information to help residents. Members were also reminded of the cost of providing the current service. In concluding, the Lead Member advised that this should not be seen as a cessation of activity but an opportunity to do things differently.

It was then **RESOLVED** that the outreach service at the Ockment Centre be withdrawn as of 31 July 2019 and that an option appraisal on the future of Tavistock Reception be presented to the Hub Committee meeting on 5 November 2019.

To ensure that the withdrawal of the service has as minimal an impact as possible the following steps be implemented:

- Clear Communication: that all residents, agencies based at the Ockment Centre, Okehampton Library, Okehampton Town Council and local parish councils be advised of the withdrawal and given clear guidance on how best to contact the Council;
- Vulnerable Customers: in instances where customers are not able to engage with the Council online or over the telephone, that Mobile Locality Officers be on hand to assist these customers;
- Improved Customer Service: that the Council remain committed to improving customer satisfaction levels in line with its adopted Action Plan.