

(i) Mrs I MacKenzie

To the Chair of the Communities & Places Committee

“Can you provide a timeframe for Service Centres to re-open?”

The service centre providing telephony and on-line services has operated continuously through lockdown and Covid restrictions. 16 Service Points and the Archive Centre are currently open by appointment for Registrar services which are permitted by national direction for some face to face contact (aspects of birth registration and marriage).

All other services have been adapted so that they can be delivered remotely and for people to have the help and support they need.

The national guidance currently states that all offices and call centres are to remain closed. Government guidance remains in place that working from home where possible is the default option.

However, to ensure vulnerable people receive all the support and help they require we are exploring other appointment-based services and a further programme of pro-active calls is about to begin to individuals who had received food or financial support from the Council earlier in the year (around 1300 people). This will ensure that they currently have all the support they require both practical and wellbeing through the winter period.

It is worth noting that Service Point operations have continued throughout lockdown and during the phase 2 route map, through telephony and on-line services. Between 23rd March and 31st October this year, the customer services network dealt with 125,400 contacts by telephony and webchat compared to 114,730 in the same period last year. This includes all the outbound calls the team have made to people self-isolating because they were shielding or because they are part of the test and protect programme. The automated payment service has also dealt with 13,325 payments between 1.4.20 and 2.12.20 compared to 9461 in the same period last year. Services are still being provided using telephony and on-line options.

Other Councils we have contacted either have a restricted face to face service in place or their customer service offices remain closed and rely on other channels of contact to serve the public.

The timing of any further re-opening will depend on Government permissions, extending the appointment system where necessary and conducting full risk assessments for each site and service type and these require Trade Union engagement.