

## Budget Proposals 2015/16: Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) – One centralised connections office

<b>Officer Name:</b>	<b>Alison Whittaker</b>	<b>Position:</b>	<b>Customer Services Manager</b>
<b>Business Unit:</b>	<b>Customer Services</b>	<b>Directorate:</b>	<b>Information Services</b>
<b>Executive Lead(s):</b>	<b>Cllr Beryl McPhail</b>	<b>Date:</b>	<b>October 2014</b>

The council and its partners are facing a significant challenge in the savings it needs to make over the next couple of years. This Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) has been developed as a tool to enable business units to fully consider the impact of their proposals on the community. As a council we need to ensure that we are able to deliver the savings that we need to make while mitigating against any negative or adverse impacts on particular groups across our communities.

This EIA will evidence that the Council have fully considered the impact of the proposed changes and has carried out appropriate consultation on those changes with the key stakeholders. This EIA and the evidence provided within it will allow Councillors to make informed decisions as part of the decision-making process regarding the council's budget.

### Executive Lead / Head Sign off:

<b>Executive Lead(s)</b>	<b>Cllr Beryl McPhail</b>	<b>Executive Head:</b>	<b>Bob Clark</b>
<b>Date:</b>	<b>October 2014</b>	<b>Date:</b>	<b>October 2014</b>

Summary from Overall Budget Proposals:

Proposals - Outline	Savings for 2014/15 and 2015/16		Implementation Cost Include brief outline + year incurred	Delivery When will this proposal realise income / savings	Risks / impact of proposals <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Potential risks</li> <li>▪ Impact on community</li> <li>▪ Knock on impact to other agencies</li> <li>▪ <b>If statutory service please state relevant legislation section and Act together with any statutory guidance issued.</b></li> </ul>	Type of decision		
	Income £ 000's	Budget reduction £ 000's				Internal	Minor	Major
<p><b>One centralised Connections office:</b></p> <p>Close Brixham and Torquay Connections Offices and centralise the "Connections" service in Paignton Library And Information Centre (PLAIC)</p>		2015/16 £102k	There will be additional costs associated with this proposal (to be researched).	<p><del>01/04/2015</del></p> <p>2015/16</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The location within PLAIC needs to be able to accommodate a significant increase in footfall</li> <li>▪ Age UK would no longer be able to use the meeting room in Torquay Connections and would have to make alternative arrangements</li> <li>▪ There is a need to ensure that the Main Reception at Torquay Town Hall does not become a face to face enquiry point</li> <li>▪ Customers that currently use Brixham &amp; Torquay Connections would either have to travel to Paignton or make use of the alternative facilities.</li> <li>▪ Appointments may have to continue to be facilitated in Torquay due to meeting room space &amp; staff travel costs to PLAIC</li> </ul> <p><del>Proposed Amendment September 2014: it is proposed that £48,000 of transitional funding is applied to extend the implementation date of this proposal</del></p> <p>Proposed Amendment October 2014: it is proposed that £102,000 of transitional funding is applied in 2015/16 to enable further work to be undertaken to review the Connections operating model and having a centralised office</p>			X

## Section 1: Purpose of the proposal/strategy/decision

No	Question	Details
1.	<p><b>Clearly set out the proposal and what is the intended outcome.</b></p>	<p>Customer Services currently manages four face to face offices:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Torquay Connections located at Town Hall Torquay</li> <li>▪ Paignton Connections located within Paignton Library and Information Centre</li> <li>▪ Brixham Connections located with Brixham Library</li> <li>▪ Main Reception located at the Town Hall</li> </ul> <p>The proposal is to close two of the Connections Offices in Torquay &amp; Brixham and centralise the Connections face to face service in PLAIC.</p> <p>The intended outcome is that Customer Services will have one centralised face to face office within Torbay (excluding Main Reception). At the same time the operating model of the Connections service will be reviewed and amended to provide customers with a variety of contact channels within the one remaining office.</p>
2.	<p><b>Who is intended to benefit / who will be affected?</b></p>	<p><b>Negative impact</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Customers that currently use the Torquay or Brixham office will no longer be offered a face to face service by Customer Services. (Provision will be made for customers in Torquay &amp; Brixham to contact Customer Services using alternative channels)</li> <li>▪ The remaining office may experience high customer demand if other contact channels are not effective.</li> <li>▪ Potential increase in complaints e.g. waiting times, quality of service</li> <li>▪ The operating model in PLAIC will be significantly different to the current operating model, this may cause some customer confusion until the new way of working becomes familiar with our customers.</li> <li>▪ Potential increase in transport costs for some customers travelling to remaining location, although this may be mitigated by implementing increased online transactions.</li> <li>▪ All back office service areas will need to be consulted if it is identified that face to face enquiries are dealt with in the offices that are closing.</li> <li>▪ Negative public perception</li> </ul>

No	Question	Details
		<p><b>Positive impact</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The level of savings identified will allow for additional staff to be transferred to the remaining office and call centre in addition to realising benefits</li> <li>▪ Streamlining of service attributing to savings target</li> <li>▪ Torquay Connections could generate income for Torbay Council</li> <li>▪ The central office will have a security presence. (Currently a member of the Security Team is present at the Torquay Office only)</li> <li>▪ Saving of Qmatic (customer queuing system) annual licence. Currently used in Torquay Connections (£4,800)</li> <li>▪ An increase in channel shift - a percentage of face to face customers will choose to contact using the telephone or website rather than travel to the central Connections office</li> <li>▪ Opportunity to re-engineer customer contact and ensure that it is future proof</li> <li>▪ Reduction in below the line accommodation costs (2013/14 Torquay Connections 45k, Paignton Connections 18k, Brixham Connections nil)</li> <li>▪ Improved scheduling of resource (staff) and increased flexibility</li> <li>▪ Consistency of service</li> </ul>

## Section 2: Equalities, Consultation and Engagement

Torbay Council has a moral obligation as well as a duty under the Equality Act 2010 to eliminate discrimination, promote good relations and advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not.

The **Equalities, Consultation and Engagement** section ensures that, as a council, we take into account the Public Sector Equality Duty at an early stage and provide evidence to ensure that we fully consider the impact of our decisions/proposals on the Torbay community.

### Evidence, Consultation and Engagement

No	Question	Details
3.	Have you considered the available evidence?	<p>In 2013/14 Customer Services dealt with 88,000 face to face enquires. By centralising at one location and changing the way the service operates the savings identified can be achieved.</p> <p><b>2013/14 Face to face volumes</b> Torquay Connections – 50,296 Paignton Connections (Including Reception Desk)- 29,515 Brixham Connections – 8,249</p> <p>Many Councils already have only one face to face office. In addition to being the most expensive contact channel to provide there is a national agenda to move towards digital channels of contact. <a href="http://digital.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/about/">http://digital.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/about/</a>. As well as being cost effective, online transactions enable customers to self serve at a time that is convenient to them.</p>

No	Question	Details															
4.	<b>How will consult on the proposal?</b>	<p>A specific 'Review of Connections Services' consultation questionnaire was produced to capture views regarding this proposal.</p> <p>The survey was open from Friday 4 July to Friday 29 August 2014.</p> <p>Paper copies were made available at the Connections Offices at Brixham, Paignton and Torquay; in the four libraries at Brixham, Churston, Paignton and Torquay. An online survey was open on the Torbay Council website for the same period.</p> <p>The Results from this survey can be found at appendix one at the end of this report.</p> <p>The Council also produced a 'General Budget Questionnaire' in which the following question was asked:</p> <p>"Do you support the proposal to centralise the Connections Service?"</p> <p>This questionnaire was open from Friday 4 July to Friday 29 August and was made available in the same locations as stated above, and also online. The results from this survey can be found in section 5 below.</p>															
5.	<b>Outline the key findings</b>	<p>The Council produced a 'General Budget Questionnaire' in which the following question was asked:</p> <p><b>One centralised Connections service:</b> Close Brixham and Torquay Connections Offices and centralise the Connections service in Paignton Library and Information Centre. This is expected to save £102,000.</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="1079 943 1615 1246"> <thead> <tr> <th data-bbox="1079 943 1281 1054">Do you support this proposal?</th> <th data-bbox="1281 943 1451 1054">Number</th> <th data-bbox="1451 943 1615 1054">Percent</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td data-bbox="1079 1054 1281 1102">Yes</td> <td data-bbox="1281 1054 1451 1102">642</td> <td data-bbox="1451 1054 1615 1102">51.9%</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="1079 1102 1281 1150">No</td> <td data-bbox="1281 1102 1451 1150">533</td> <td data-bbox="1451 1102 1615 1150">43.1%</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="1079 1150 1281 1198">No answer</td> <td data-bbox="1281 1150 1451 1198">63</td> <td data-bbox="1451 1150 1615 1198">5.1%</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="1079 1198 1281 1246">Total</td> <td data-bbox="1281 1198 1451 1246">1238</td> <td data-bbox="1451 1198 1615 1246">100%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>A specific 'Review of Connections Services' consultation questionnaire was produced to capture views regarding this proposal – the</p>	Do you support this proposal?	Number	Percent	Yes	642	51.9%	No	533	43.1%	No answer	63	5.1%	Total	1238	100%
Do you support this proposal?	Number	Percent															
Yes	642	51.9%															
No	533	43.1%															
No answer	63	5.1%															
Total	1238	100%															

No	Question	Details
		results of this consultation can be found at appendix one at the end of this report.
6.	<b>What amendments may be required as a result of the consultation?</b>	Following the public consultation and feedback from the Priorities and Resources meetings that took place throughout September 2014 it is apparent that the centralisation of Connections has an impact not only upon residents of the Bay and the Customer Services department but also upon a number of other services within the council. It is essential that such a significant change is carefully planned and fully costed taking into account all issues. To ensure this happens it is proposed that one year's transitional funding of £102,000 is applied to ensure a full review is undertaken to ensure the centralisation to one office is completed in a cost efficient and effective way.

## Positive and Negative Equality Impacts

No	Question	Details		
7.	Identify the potential positive and negative impacts on specific groups			
		Positive Impact	Negative Impact	Neutral Impact
	Older or younger people	Positive impact on those customers with online capabilities due to increased facilities - 24/7 365 days per week	Anyone who prefers face to face facility and non online users	Neutral impact on people who do not use the face to face offices
	People with caring responsibilities	Positive impact on those customers with online capabilities due to increased facilities - 24/7 365 days per week	Anyone who prefers face to face facility and non online users	Neutral impact on people who do not use the face to face offices
	People with a disability	Positive impact on those customers with online capabilities due to increased facilities - 24/7 365 days per week	Customers with a disability may have difficulty travelling to a central location.	Neutral impact on people who do not use the face to face offices
	Women or men	Positive impact on those customers with online capabilities due to increased facilities - 24/7 365 days per week	Anyone who prefers face to face facility and non online users	Neutral impact on people who do not use the face to face offices
	People who are black or from a minority ethnic background (BME)	Positive impact on those customers with online capabilities due to increased facilities - 24/7 365 days per week . The website can be translated into 51 different languages using Google translate.	Anyone who prefers face to face facility and non online users	Neutral impact on people who do not use the face to face offices



No	Question	Details		
	Religion or belief (including lack of belief)	Positive impact on those customers with online capabilities due to increased facilities - 24/7 365 days per week	Anyone who prefers face to face facility and non online users	Neutral impact on people who do not use the face to face offices
	People who are lesbian, gay or bisexual	Positive impact on those customers with online capabilities due to increased facilities - 24/7 365 days per week	Anyone who prefers face to face facility and non online users	Neutral impact on people who do not use the face to face offices
	People who are transgendered	Positive impact on those customers with online capabilities due to increased facilities - 24/7 365 days per week	Anyone who prefers face to face facility and non online users	Neutral impact on people who do not use the face to face offices
	People who are in a marriage or civil partnership	Positive impact on those customers with online capabilities due to increased facilities - 24/7 365 days per week	Anyone who prefers face to face facility and non online users	Neutral impact on people who do not use the face to face offices
	Women who are pregnant / on maternity leave	Positive impact on those customers with online capabilities due to increased facilities - 24/7 365 days per week	Anyone who prefers face to face facility and non online users	Neutral impact on people who do not use the face to face offices
	Socio-economic impacts (Including impact on child poverty issues and deprivation)	Positive impact on those customers with online capabilities due to increased facilities - 24/7 365 days per week	Anyone who prefers face to face facility and non online users	Neutral impact on people who do not use the face to face offices

No	Question	Details		
	Public Health impacts (How will your proposal impact on the general health of the population of Torbay)	Positive impact on those customers with online capabilities due to increased facilities - 24/7 365 days per week	Anyone who prefers face to face facility and non online users	Neutral impact on people who do not use the face to face offices
8a.	<b>Cumulative Impacts – Council wide</b> (proposed changes elsewhere which might worsen the impacts identified above)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduced funding of Supporting People. The impact of the reduction of the funding for Supporting People is unknown. Potentially, there may be an increase in demand for some services areas eg               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Housing - potential increase in homelessness or increase in homeless prevention work</li> <li>○ Debt Advice - potential increase in debts such as Council Tax and rent arrears due to increased waiting lists and fewer resources to assist with budgeting</li> </ul> </li> </ul>		
8b.	<b>Cumulative Impacts – Other public services</b> (proposed changes elsewhere which might worsen the impacts identified above)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Impact of Welfare Reform - The introduction of Universal Credit and further welfare reform has yet to be clarified both in terms of implementation and procedure within Torbay.</li> </ul>		

### Section 3: Mitigating action

No	Action	Details
9.	<b>Summarise any negative impacts and how these will be managed?</b>	<p>There is a potential impact of closing Torquay and Brixham Connections and centralising in Paignton on the following groups that currently use these offices:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Older or younger people</li> <li>2. People with caring responsibilities</li> <li>3. People with a disability</li> <li>4. Socio-economic impacts (including impact on child poverty issues and deprivation)</li> </ol> <p>To mitigate the impact on these groups the following actions are being explored as part of the project:</p>

- Installation of non chargeable telephones lines to enable customers to continue to contact Torbay Council. These could be located either in the Libraries or at other suitable locations. The consultation process with stakeholders will identify potential locations.
- Installation of self service pods for customers to use at the locations identified. This would enable customers that we able to use a computer to contact Torbay Council via the website.
  - The format of the website is currently being reviewed with a view to improve the customer experience, readability, accessibility and access by mobile devices plus a review of current content.
  - The number of online transactions is also being increased to improve self service and allow greater customer interaction with more council services 24/7.
  - Web chat is also being explored. This would be an additional service that would be dealt with by the Customer Service Team. This would allow Customer Services to support customers to self serve by signposting to the appropriate web page or answer simple queries.
- Identify services that are or could be delivered by the Library Service in Brixham and Torquay.
- Explore how the number of documents required to be scanned could be reduced. In addition, consider alternative methods of providing documentation.

It is proposed that one year's transitional funding of £102,000 is applied to ensure a full review is undertaken to ensure the centralisation to one office is completed in a cost efficient and effective way. It is essential that such a significant change is carefully planned and fully costed taking into account all issues.

#### Section 4: Monitoring

No	Action	Details
10.	<b>Outline plans to monitor the actual impact of your proposals</b>	<p>A full review will be undertaken to ensure that the centralisation to one office is completed in a cost efficient and effective way.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Periodic customer satisfaction surveys - This will include accessibility questions</li> <li>• Internal surveys with back office services – This will include identifying issues regarding accessibility for customers from a back office perspective.</li> <li>• Corporate complaints monitoring – These are dealt with on a case by case basis. Overall analysis would identify trends/issues that will then be addressed</li> </ul>

#### Section 5: Recommended course of action

No	Action	Outcome	Tick ✓	Reasons/justification for recommended action
11.	<b>State a recommended course of action</b>	<b>Outcome 1: No major change required</b> - EIA has not identified any potential for adverse impact in relation to equalities and all opportunities to promote equality have been taken		
		<b>Outcome 2: Adjustments to remove barriers</b> – Action to remove the barriers identified in relation to equalities have been taken or actions identified to better promote equality		

**Outcome 3: Continue with proposal -**  
*Despite having identified some potential for adverse impact / missed opportunities in relation to equalities or to promote equality. Full justification required, especially in relation to equalities, in line with the duty to have 'due regard'.*

It is proposed that one year's transitional funding of £102,000 is applied to ensure a full review is undertaken to ensure the centralisation to one office is completed in a cost efficient and effective way. It is essential that such a significant change is carefully planned and fully costed taking into account and minimising all issues including those identified below:

*There is a potential impact on the following groups –*

- 1. Older or younger people*
- 2. People with caring responsibilities*
- 3. People with a disability*
- 4. Socio-economic impacts (including impact on child poverty issues and deprivation)*

*Action will be taken to minimise this (section 3)*

*The impact in terms of customer volumes is unidentifiable but will be closely monitored (section 10)*



*The consultation has identified that there is a demand for alternative contact channels in Torquay & Brixham –*

*"If a self service computer and a free phone to various council services was available for you to use at a location in Torquay or Brixham, would you use these to make your enquiries?"*

	Number	Percent
Yes	279	33.4%
No	331	39.6%
Don't know	199	23.8%
No response	27	3.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>836</b>	<b>100%</b>

The consultation has identified that there is a demand for a range of contact channels

“How likely are you to use each of the following methods of contact with Torbay Council?”

	Very likely		Fairly likely		Not very likely		Never	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Internet	231	27.6%	178	21.2%	139	16.6%	153	18.3%
Email	207	24.7%	168	20.0%	144	17.2%	175	20.9%
Web Chat	43	5.1%	46	5.5%	151	18.0%	370	44.2%
Text	71	8.4%	78	9.3%	169	20.2%	301	36.0%
Telephone	419	50.1%	225	26.9%	71	8.4%	35	4.1%
Postal	185	22.1%	204	24.4%	151	18.0%	115	13.7%
In person	523	62.5%	134	16.0%	62	7.4%	24	2.8%

**Outcome 4: Stop and rethink** – EIA has identified actual or potential unlawful discrimination in relation to equalities or adverse impact has been identified



# Review of Connections Services

## Consultation Report

### September 2014

Method	Number of questionnaires returned	Percent of questionnaires returned
Paper	720	86.1%
Online	116	13.9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>836</b>	<b>100%</b>

This survey was open between 4 July and 29 August 2014



## **1. Introduction**

Torbay Council, along with other local authorities, continues to face reductions in the level of funding it receives.

The council has to make extremely tough decisions and needs to reduce costs and deliver services in new ways so it can maintain as many services as possible that Torbay residents value.

In setting a budget for the next financial year, Torbay Council faces an unprecedented challenge. Savings of over £30 million in the last three financial years have already been made and further reductions estimated at more than £14 million are needed in 2015/16. The majority of this has already been identified.

In July 2014 remaining saving proposals of £3.8 million were published, one of the proposals was to reduce and centralise the Connections service to the office at Paignton Library and Information Centre.

The closure of Torquay and Brixham Connections would mean that there will no longer be a facility to undertake face to face enquiries in these two towns. However, the Council is looking to make better use of new technology to help its customers to make enquiries and receive help and advice. This proposal would save £102,000.

## **2. Methodology**

A specific 'Review of Connections Services' consultation questionnaire was produced to capture views regarding this proposal.

The survey was open from Friday 4 July to Friday 29 August 2014.

Paper copies were made available at the Connections Offices at Brixham, Paignton and Torquay; in the four libraries at Brixham, Churston, Paignton and Torquay.

An online survey was open on the Torbay Council website for the same period.

The Council also produced a 'General Budget Questionnaire' in which the following question was asked:

"Do you support the proposal to centralise the Connections Service?"

This questionnaire was open from Friday 4 July to Friday 29 August and was made available in the same locations as stated above, and also online. The results for this question within the General Budget Questionnaire can also be found at the end of this report.

An internal consultation was also undertaken by the manager of the Connections Service asking other service managers across the Council what the impact of the proposal to centralise the Connections Service would be on their service. The results from this consultation can also be found at the end of this report.



### **3. Quality Assurance**

To ensure the quality of data provided, all information received through both the online and paper surveys have been verified and moderated. This provides assurance that the results presented overleaf are an accurate representation of respondent's views.

### **4. Key Findings**

- 561 respondents (67.1%) do not support the proposal to centralise the Connections Service at Paignton.
- 463 of respondents (55.4%) most frequently use the Torquay Office.
- Council Tax and Housing Benefit were the main services that respondents used at Connections within the last two years.

## 5. Results

Q1) Do you support the proposal to centralise the Connections Service at Paignton?

	Number	Percent
Yes	195	23.3%
No	561	67.1%
No response	80	9.6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>836</b>	<b>100%</b>

Q2) How often do you visit the Connections Offices in Torbay?

	Number	Percent
Every day	15	1.8%
Once a week	91	10.9%
At least once a month	190	22.7%
A few times a year	361	43.2%
Never	157	18.8%
No response	22	2.6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>836</b>	<b>100%</b>

Q3) Which Connections Office do you currently use most frequently?

	Number	Percent
Brixham	92	11.0%
Paignton	115	13.8%
Torquay	463	55.4%
No response	166	19.8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>836</b>	<b>100%</b>

Q4) \*Do you ever visit a different Connections Office in Torbay?

\* This is a multi-choice question so respondents could tick one than one box. Therefore percentages have been calculated from the total number of respondents (836).

	Number	Percent
Brixham	29	3.4%
Paignton	62	7.4%
Torquay	110	13.1%

Q5) \*What form of travel do you most regularly use when visiting a Connections Office?

\* This is a multi-choice question so respondents could tick one than one box. Therefore percentages have been calculated from the total number of respondents (836).

	Number	Percent
Walk	407	48.6%
Car	193	23.0%
Bus	119	14.2%
Cycle	139	16.6%
Taxi	7	0.8%
Train	1	0.1%

**Q6) \*What services have you used at Connections in the last 2 years?**

\* This is a multi-choice question so respondents could tick one than one box. Therefore percentages have been calculated from the total number of respondents (836).

	Number	Percent
Council Tax	469	56.1%
Housing Benefit	453	54.1%
Bus Passes	171	20.4%
Homelessness Advice	124	14.8%
Housing Standards	116	13.8%
Crisis Support	105	12.5%
Parking	86	10.2%
*Other	59	7.0%
Devon Home Choice	54	6.4%
Planning	53	6.3%
Community Safety	28	3.3%
Business Rates	22	2.6%
Licensing	17	2.0%

**\*Examples of comments provided:**

- General Enquiries (20)
- Recycling/Waste (13)
- Environmental issues i.e. noise, fly tipping, street cleansing (6)
- Advice for elderly (inc Age UK) (5)

**Q7) During recent visits to a Connections Office, have you used the self service computers in the office to make your enquiry?**

	Number	Percent
Yes	200	23.9%
No	468	56.0%
No response	168	20.1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>836</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Q7a) If you answered No, what are your reasons for not using the computer?**

- Prefer to speak to the staff / to deal with enquiry face to face (136)
- Don't / can't use a computer (90)
- Have no need to use the computer (57)
- Use my own computer at home (28)
- Did not know a computer facility was available (22)

**Q8) In the absence of a Connections Office in Torquay or Brixham would you travel to a new centralised office at Paignton Library and Information Centre?**

	Number	Percent
Yes	265	31.7%
No	326	39.0%
Don't know	205	24.5%
No response	40	4.8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>836</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Q9) If a self service computer and a freephone to various council services was available for you to use at a location in Torquay or Brixham, would you use these to make your enquiries?**

	Number	Percent
Yes	279	33.4%
No	331	39.6%
Don't know	199	23.8%
No response	27	3.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>836</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Q10) \*How likely are you to use each of the following methods of contact with Torbay Council?**

\* This is a multi-choice question so respondents could tick one than one box. Therefore percentages have been calculated from the total number of respondents (836).

	Very likely		Fairly likely		Not very likely		Never	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Internet	231	27.6%	178	21.2%	139	16.6%	153	18.3%
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Web Chat	43	5.1%	46	5.5%	151	18.0%	370	44.2%
Text	71	8.4%	78	9.3%	169	20.2%	301	36.0%
Telephone	419	50.1%	225	26.9%	71	8.4%	35	4.1%
Postal	185	22.1%	204	24.4%	151	18.0%	115	13.7%
In person	523	62.5%	134	16.0%	62	7.4%	24	2.8%

**Q11) Are there any enquiries that you consider it absolutely essential to have face to face contact with an advisor?**

	Number	Percent
Yes	492	58.9%
No	136	16.3%
Don't know	186	22.2%
No response	22	2.6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>836</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Q11a) If yes please state what type of enquires you consider to be essential for face to face contact and the reasons for this?**

- Prefer face to face (126)
- Benefit enquiries (inc Council Tax & Housing Benefit) (91)
- General enquiries (inc Planning/Parking enquiries, Community Safety, Waste) (85)
- Housing/Homeless enquiries (69)
- Council Tax/Business Rate enquiries (52)

**Q12) Would you like to access your Council records (e.g. Council Tax, Housing Benefit records) yourself via the internet?**

	Number	Percent
Yes	413	49.4%
No	243	29.1%
Don't know	158	18.9%
No response	22	2.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>836</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Q12a) If you answered No, please explain why in the box below:**

- Don't use the internet/computer – Have no internet/computer (100)
- Concerned about details being on the internet/security (42)
- No need/not interested in my council records (30)
- Prefer to speak to someone in person (26)

**Q13) \*If you had to submit documents for scanning which of the following alternative options would you use to provide your information?**

*\* This is a multi-choice question so respondents could tick one than one box. Therefore percentages have been calculated from the total number of respondents (836).*

	Number	Percent
Visit Paignton Connections	278	33.2%
Deposit documents in a secure box at an office location in Torquay or Brixham, where the originals would be returned by post without charge	283	33.8%
Submit documents via a picture / scanned image from your own device	197	23.6%
Post via Royal Mail to the Town Hall in Torquay	255	30.5%

**Q14) The current opening times for Paignton Connections are 9.00am to 5.00pm. If the opening times were extended would you choose to visit after 5.00pm?**

	Number	Percent
Yes	243	29.1%
No	383	45.8%
Don't know	173	20.7%
No response	37	4.4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>836</b>	<b>100%</b>

## 6. Respondent Profile

**Q15) Gender**

	Number	Percent
Female	319	38.2%
Male	491	58.7%
No response	26	3.1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>836</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Q16) Age**

	Number	Percent
0 – 15	0	0.0%
16 – 24	89	10.6%
25 – 34	114	13.6%
35 – 44	126	15.1%
45 – 54	161	19.3%
55 – 64	137	16.4%
65 – 74	120	14.4%
75+	67	8.0%
No response	22	2.7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>836</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Q17) Do you consider yourself to be disabled in any way?**

	Number	Percent
Yes	172	20.6%
No	598	71.5%
No response	66	7.9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>836</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Q17a) If yes, please tell us how it affects you:**  
*(respondents could tick more than one box)*

	Number	Percent
Mobility	120	14.3%
Hearing	32	3.8%
Vision	34	4.0%
Other	73	8.7%

**Q18) How would you describe your ethnic origin?**

	Number	Percent
White	762	91.1%
Mixed ethnicity	6	0.7%
Asian or Asian British	3	0.4%
Black or Black British	6	0.7%
Chinese	0	0.0%
Other	9	1.1%
No response	50	5.9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>836</b>	<b>100%</b>



## Q19) What is your postcode?

	Number	Percent
TQ1 (Torquay)	219	26.1%
TQ2 (Torquay)	229	27.3%
TQ3 (Preston/Paignton)	107	12.7%
TQ4 (Paignton)	79	9.4%
TQ5 (Brixham)	124	14.8%
TQ6 (Dartmouth)	1	0.1%
TQ7 (Kingsbridge)	1	0.1%
TQ9 (Totnes)	3	0.3%
TQ12 (Newton Abbot/Teignmouth)	2	0.2%
BS39 (Clutton)	1	0.1%
EX4 (North Exeter)	1	0.1%
PL7 (Plympton)	1	0.1%
No response	68	8.1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>836</b>	<b>100%</b>

## 7. Other Consultations

### General Budget Questionnaire

One centralised Connections service. Close Brixham and Torquay Connections Offices and centralise the Connections service in Paignton Library and Information Centre. This is expected to save £102,000.

Do you support this proposal?	Number	Percent
Yes	642	51.9%
No	533	43.1%
No answer	63	5.1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1238</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

### Written representations:

Three written representations were received - one in favour of the proposal to centralise Connections to Paignton, two were against the proposal.

Details of the written representations have been made available to the Mayor.

## Internal Survey

A internal survey was undertaken by the manager of the Connections Service asking service areas what the impact would be on their service if the Connection Service was centralised to Paignton.

The following key themes have been identified from the feedback received:

### Key Themes

- **Reduced customer service especially to vulnerable groups**  
A percentage of customers who use the Connections office are older or vulnerable. Centralising in Paignton would have a detrimental effect upon these residents of Torquay and Brixham.
- **Increase in costs**  
Increased costs such as higher postage costs to send out forms and booklets, increased phone calls and increased travel assistance to vulnerable citizens who need to use the face to face service.
- **Inability to discharge statutory duties**  
The changes may have an impact on our housing and homeless service which would hinder the ability to provide our statutory duties and homeless prevention work which would lead to increased temporary housing.

For further information please contact the Policy Performance and Review team on 01803 207227 or email [consultation@torbay.gov.uk](mailto:consultation@torbay.gov.uk)

The information used to collate this report has been collected and processed in accordance with the Data Protection Act, 1998.