TODMORDEN TOWN COUNCIL

Item Number	8
Report to	Full Council
Report Author	Cllr M Carrigan, Chair of Staffing Committee
Tel No	07706322037
Email	Cllr.mcarrigan@todmorden-tc.gov.uk
Date	30th September 2026
Subject	Office Access

Purpose of Report

1. To seek formal approval from Members for the continued operation of the office on an appointment-only basis.

2. To advise Members of the reasons for the introduction of the appointment-only arrangement and the circumstances which continue to support its use.

3. To explain the impact of the Town Hall building project, the subsequent changes to the use of the Town Hall and the resulting operational environment in which the office is situated.

4. To seek Members' agreement that the appointment-only arrangement should be formally adopted as the ongoing approach to access to the office.

5. To ensure that the arrangements for access to officers provide an appropriate balance between public accessibility and the operational requirements of the office, including officer availability, staff capacity, confidentiality, privacy and the physical limitations of the accommodation.

Background

6. The appointment-only arrangement was initially introduced in response to the Town Hall building project and the associated changes to the use and operation of the building.

7. The Town Hall is managed by Calderdale Council and is used for a range of Council and public-facing activities. The building is increasingly used for events and activities which are open to the public, including Town Hall tours.

8. The increased use of the Town Hall for public activities has resulted in greater public access and footfall within the building. This has changed the operating environment in which the office is situated and has increased the need for visitor access to be appropriately managed.

9. The office currently has standard public-facing hours of 9.30am to 4.00pm, Monday to Thursday. However, officers' working arrangements have become increasingly flexible as a result of the number and nature of events and activities taking place outside these hours.

10. Officers are required to support events taking place during evenings and weekends. In order to manage working hours appropriately and avoid the accumulation of excessive additional hours, officers are required to flex their working time.

11. As a consequence, it cannot be guaranteed that individual officers will be available in the office throughout the standard public-facing hours of 9.30am to 4.00pm.

12. An appointment-only arrangement provides a more effective and reliable means of managing access to officers. Visitors are able to arrange a meeting with the appropriate officer in advance, providing greater certainty that the officer will be available and that suitable accommodation is available for the meeting.

13. The appointment-only arrangement does not prevent Members or members of the public from accessing officers. Appointments can be arranged directly with the relevant officer or through the Clerk, depending upon the nature of the enquiry.

14. There is also flexibility to arrange appointments outside the standard public-facing hours where appropriate and subject to officer availability. The Clerk is routinely in the office from approximately 7.00am, enabling earlier appointments to be accommodated where required.

15. The physical layout and capacity of the office are also relevant considerations. The office is open plan and has limited space in which private meetings can be held. As the number of staff working within the office has increased, it has become increasingly difficult to accommodate unplanned visitors while maintaining an appropriate working environment for staff.

16. The open-plan nature of the office also presents challenges in relation to confidentiality and privacy. Discussions involving personal, sensitive or confidential information may be overheard by other staff or visitors if conducted within the main office.

17. Where a private or confidential discussion cannot appropriately take place within the office, the Mayor's Parlour may be used where suitable and available. An appointment system enables these requirements to be identified in advance and appropriate arrangements to be made.

18. The circumstances which led to the introduction of the appointment-only arrangement have therefore continued beyond the completion of the Town Hall building project. The increased public use of the building, flexible officer working arrangements, increased staffing levels, limited accommodation and confidentiality considerations all continue to support the need for a managed approach to office access.

Financial

19. There are no significant direct financial implications arising from the formal adoption of the appointment-only arrangement.

20. The arrangement supports the effective management of officer working time, particularly given the requirement for officers to support events outside normal office hours.

21. An appointment system also reduces the likelihood of officers being interrupted during planned work or of visitors attending when the relevant officer is unavailable.

22. The ability to plan appointments in advance enables appropriate meeting space to be identified, including the use of the Mayor's Parlour where a private or confidential discussion is required.

23. No additional budget is requested as part of this proposal.

Recommendation

24. Members are requested to formally approve the continuation and adoption of an appointment-only arrangement for access to the office.

25. Members are further requested to agree that:
    a. The standard public-facing office hours of 9.30am to 4.00pm, Monday to Thursday, are retained for information purposes, while making clear that officer availability during these hours cannot be guaranteed without an appointment.

    b. Members, members of the public and other visitors are encouraged to contact the office in advance to arrange an appointment with the appropriate officer.

    c. Appointments may be arranged outside the standard public-facing hours where appropriate and subject to officer availability, including earlier appointments through the Clerk where required.

    d. The Mayor's Parlour continues to be used, where appropriate and available, for private or confidential discussions which cannot suitably be accommodated within the open-plan office.

    e. Appropriate signage and public communications are maintained to explain the appointment-only arrangement and provide clear information on how appointments can be requested.

    f. The appointment-only arrangement remains subject to appropriate discretion to accommodate urgent matters or circumstances where an appointment cannot reasonably be arranged in advance.

    g. The operation of the arrangement is kept under review to ensure that it remains proportionate and does not create unnecessary barriers to Members, members of the public or other appropriate visitors accessing officers.

Reasons For Recommendation

26. The appointment-only arrangement was originally introduced as a consequence of the Town Hall building project and changes to the use and operation of the building.

27. Although the building project has progressed, the circumstances supporting the arrangement remain. The Town Hall, which is managed by Calderdale Council, is increasingly used for public-facing events and activities, including Town Hall tours, resulting in increased public access and footfall within the building.

28. The number of events taking place during evenings and weekends also requires officers to work flexibly and adjust their working hours.

29. As officers flex their working hours to support events and manage their overall working time, it cannot be guaranteed that every officer will be available in the office throughout the standard 9.30am to 4.00pm public-facing hours.

30. Formal adoption of an appointment-only approach provides greater certainty for visitors by enabling meetings to be arranged at a time when the appropriate officer is available.

31. The arrangement also enables officers to manage their workload and working hours effectively and reduces unnecessary interruptions to planned work

32. The increased number of staff working within the office has placed greater pressure on the available physical space and there is limited capacity to accommodate unplanned visitors.

33. The open-plan office environment creates particular challenges in relation to privacy and confidentiality. An appointment system enables officers to identify in advance whether a discussion requires a private location and, where appropriate, make use of the Mayor's Parlour.

34. The Clerk's earlier working hours provide additional flexibility for Members or visitors who require an appointment before the standard public-facing hours, with the Clerk routinely available from approximately 7.00am/7.30am.

35. Formalising the arrangement therefore provides a clear, consistent and transparent approach to office access while continuing to allow appropriate flexibility.

36. The proposed approach provides a practical balance between maintaining access to officers and managing the operational requirements of the office, including staff capacity, flexible working arrangements, confidentiality, privacy and limited physical space.

Policy Implications:

37. Formal adoption of the appointment-only arrangement will provide a clear and consistent policy approach to access to the office.

38. The arrangement will continue to allow appropriate flexibility for urgent matters or circumstances where an appointment cannot reasonably be arranged in advance.

39. Clear information will be provided to Members and members of the public explaining that the office operates on an appointment-only basis and setting out how an appointment can be requested.

40. Public-facing information will make clear that the standard office hours do not necessarily mean that every officer will be available throughout those hours, due to flexible working arrangements and operational commitments.

41. The appointment-only approach will be kept under review to ensure that it remains proportionate, effective and does not create unnecessary barriers to accessing officers or services.

Details Of Consultation:

42. The appointment-only arrangement has been considered in the context of the Town Hall building project and the subsequent changes to the use and operation of the building.

43. Consideration has been given to the increased public use of the Town Hall, including events and Town Hall tours, and the impact this has had on the environment in which the office operates.

44. Consideration has also been given to the impact of evening and weekend events on officers' working arrangements and the resulting requirement for staff to flex their working hours.

45. The increased number of staff working within the office, the limited physical space and the challenges presented by the open-plan layout have also been considered.

46. The need to maintain appropriate confidentiality and privacy for sensitive and private conversations has been considered, including the continued use of the Mayor's Parlour where appropriate

Climate Change:

47. The proposal is not expected to have any significant direct impact on climate change.

48. An appointment-only arrangement may reduce unnecessary journeys to the Town Hall where a face-to-face meeting is not required or where an alternative method of communication is appropriate.

49. Where appropriate, telephone, email or online meetings can continue to be used as alternatives to face-to-face appointments.

50. Making effective use of the existing office accommodation may also reduce the need for additional physical space.

51. The proposal therefore has no significant adverse climate change implications.

Impact Equality Assessment

52. The appointment-only arrangement will be implemented in a manner which ensures that Members and members of the public can continue to access appropriate officers and services.

53. Reasonable adjustments will be considered where required to support individuals who may experience difficulty accessing services through the standard appointment process.

54. Alternative methods of communication, including telephone, email or other appropriate arrangements, will remain available where suitable.

55. The ability to arrange appointments outside the standard 9.30am to 4.00pm hours, where officer availability permits, provides additional flexibility for individuals who may be unable to attend during those hours.

56. The arrangement will be kept under review to ensure that it does not disproportionately disadvantage any individual or group and that appropriate adjustments can be made where required.

Supporting Papers:

N/A

Further Information, Please Contact: Naomi Crewe