



# SPOC Protocol

## Background

Most interactions between the Council and residents or businesses will involve single or low impact regular interactions (for example, a resident making a noise complaint or a benefit claimant reporting changes in their income). However, there can be situations where interactions can last for several months. An example of this would be in the case of a major planning application which sparks regular contact between the Council, the developer, consultees, and objectors or supporters. These types of interactions are predictable and can be managed either through BAU (business as usual) processes or by the provision of additional paid for services such as a Planning Performance Agreement (PPA).

Sometimes the council receives a very high level of contact from an individual or an organisation over an extended period that cannot easily be managed by the Council's BAU arrangements, and where the individual or organisation is unable or unwilling to purchase additional paid for services.

This protocol outlines how the Council will deal with these situations in a way that looks to ensure the service we provide is cohesive, comprehensive, and proportionate. We will also make sure that resources are not unreasonably diverted away from other residents and organisations that also need to access Council services.

For situations such as these, we will set up a Single Point of Contact (SPOC) within the Council who will be responsible for communicating with the identified person or organisation, ensuring that all enquiries and service requests are coordinated across the Council and delivering a cohesive level of service that is consistent with the service provided to all other customers of the Council.



## Arrangements

The SPOC arrangements will be as follows: -

- The Council will nominate one officer to be the SPOC for the identified resident or organisation.
- The Council will ensure that a deputy is also identified so that the level of service provided is maintained when the SPOC is absent for leave, sickness, training etc.
- The Council will provide the identified resident or organisation with the SPOCs email address and contact details for physical mail.
- Officers will be asked to forward any emails or physical mail received from the identified resident or organisation to the SPOC. This is to cover situations such as technical or administrative error, or the use of a previously unidentified email address from the identified resident or organisation.
- Members will be informed of the SPOC and be given the option to forward any emails or physical mail that they receive to the SPOC for reply, although this will be their choice.
- To ensure responses are comprehensive and to avoid misunderstandings, communication will not be done by telephone. This is because it is important that all communications are fully recorded and understood, and that there is a common record of the substance and nature of these communications.\*
- The SPOC will identify which contacts from the resident or organisation need a response, which officer is best placed to provide the required information



and will then obtain that information and produce a coordinated weekly response.

- Where the communication between the Council and the identified resident or organisation requires the involvement of the legal service, the SPOC will request services via the Deputy Head of Legal (with the advice of the relevant technical experts) and the commissioning officer will be the Head of Transformation, HR and Corporate Services.
- To ensure a structured comprehensive dialog with the identified resident or organisation, the SPOC will issue a weekly response with all the information available to them at time of writing. Where the SPOC is awaiting details from another Council officer on an issue at the time of sending the weekly response, the response to that issue will be included in the following week's response.
- The SPOC will copy all appropriate officers (and relevant members) into the weekly response to ensure all are kept informed of developments.
- On occasion, the SPOC will decide that a particular issue should be dealt with outside of the regular timescales and initiate a single-issue response. This will normally only be initiated where it is needed to meet statutory timescales.
- The normal timescales for responding to individual enquiries and service requests will apply to responses by the SPOC.
- Freedom of Information (FOI) and Environmental Impact Regulation (EIR) requests made by the identified resident or organisation will be undertaken by the information team shared by Huntingdon District Council, South Cambridgeshire District Council, and Cambridge City Council. We will ask that the request be addressed to the SPOC in the first instance and the response will be sent back to the identified resident or organisation via the SPOC in the



usual way (normally as part of the weekly response). The usual timescales will apply to FOI/EIR requests.

- Should the level of enquiries or service requests from the identified individual or organisation reduce to the level more normally received, the SPOC can – after informing the identified individual or organisation, relevant officers of the Council and appropriate members – terminate the SPOC arrangements with two weeks' notice. The SPOC arrangements can be reinstated at any time should the level of enquiries increase again to the level where the SPOC arrangements allow the most equitable and efficient delivery of service.
- When a SPOC has been put in operation its continued need will be reviewed by Leadership Team after 6 months.

\* Where the identified resident or organisation representative has a disability requiring they use the telephone to communicate then telephone communication can be undertaken at the SPOC's discretion. Where the identified resident or organisation wishes to verbally request information under the Environmental Information Regulations this can be done via the call centre and the request will be forwarded to the SPOC.