

The Executive
On 25 July 2006

Report Title: **Executive Response to the Scrutiny Review of Customer Services**

Report of: **Assistant Chief Executive (Access)**

Wards(s) affected: **All**

Report for: **Non Key decision**
1. Purpose

1.1 To propose the Executive's response to the proposals of the Scrutiny review of Customer Services

2. Introduction by Executive Member

2.1 Scrutiny has produced a report which acknowledges the improvements that Customer Services has brought to the Council in caring for its customers and includes helpful recommendations.

2.2 The Executive Member is pleased to accept many of these recommendations and indeed some have already been actioned.

3. Recommendations

3.1 That the Executive agree the proposed response.

Report Authorised by:

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4. Executive Summary

4.1 The Scrutiny review report recognises the improvements made in service level to customers over the years since the service was initiated in 2001 and the positive

impact that Customer Services has made on customer satisfaction. Overall it is a positive report.

4.2 The full report is attached as Appendix 2 and the tabulated action plan which responds to the 26 recommendations is attached at Appendix 1.

5. Reasons for any change in policy or for new policy development (if applicable)

6. Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

7. Background

7.1 Customer Services as a service delivery model was initiated in July 1999 at a Leader's Conference and was inaugurated as a service in July 2001 with its first service offering in the Call Centre in October 2001 supported by a Customer Relationship Management System.

7.2 The first Customer Services Centre was opened in December 2001 in Hornsey, with a further centre opened at Apex House in South Tottenham in January 2002. Two further centres were opened in North Tottenham and in Wood Green in 2004, completing the initial service delivery vision of face to face and telephone accessibility improvements.

7.3 The initial services offered were:

- Benefits and Local Taxation
- Housing landlord matters
- Housing and homelessness advice
- Parking Services
- Concessionary travel
- Some more general service enquiries

7.4 Services offered through Customer Services have subsequently been widened (more services offered) and deepened (more of the process done by Customer Services before handing off to the client service for completion) for some services through the Customer Services Strategy Realisation project.

7.5 In addition improvements have been made to the operation of the Customer Relationship Management, making it a much more useful tool for staff to use and improve its reporting capabilities so that its data can be used more widely than in Customer Services. We are beginning to explore its reporting capabilities with client services to drive service improvement in the customer experience.

7.6 The Scrutiny review was carried out, in the main, prior to the depot fire at Hemel Hempstead which destroyed the Managed Service Provider's data centre which hosted the Benefits and Local Taxation system and the website. Both of these are resources that are heavily used by Customer Services staff to service customer service enquiries and requests, and this loss of service and subsequent disturbance has badly affected subsequent service levels, particularly in the Call Centre. These issues are now

resolved and there is evidence that service levels are improving, and there is now in place a Call Centre Recovery Plan to focus attention and action on this very important area. The Call Centre Recovery Plan is attached as appendix 3.

8. Description

8.1 The Scrutiny Review report makes 26 recommendations and the proposed responses to these are included in Appendix 1

9. Consultation

9.1 The Scrutiny Panel carried out consultation with staff from Customer Services and client service departments.

9.2 Many of the recommendations made have been discussed by Customer Services managers with client service managers through service liaison meetings, and the report includes contributions from service that support Customer Services in delivering service (IT and Property Services)

10. Summary and Conclusions

10.1 Many of the recommendations were capable of implementation by management and strides have already been made in so doing, this is reflected in the action plan at Appendix 1.

11. Recommendations

11.1 Consider and endorse the response to the Scrutiny Review.

12. Comments of the Director of Finance

12.1 Whilst some recommendations can be taken forward within existing resources, others would require additional resources and are subject to the required resources being made available through future business planning processes.

13. Comments of the Head of Legal Services

13.1 There are no specific legal implications of these recommendations.

14. Equalities Implications

14.1 The underlying principles of the Customer Services Strategy are:

- Accessing services should be a good quality experience
- Services should be accessible in one place, which suits the individual
- The service should be consistent
- The service should deliver a result

14.2 These principles support people who have had poor service experiences and are less able to access services. Customer Services offers support to less able customers appropriate to their needs to ensure that their service experience is as good as any other customer. Consequently, Customer Services has developed policies and practices to support language needs, visual and aural impairment and service extension of hours.

15. Use of Appendices / Tables / Photographs

Appendix 1 – Table of Recommendations and Responses

Appendix 2 – The Scrutiny Review Report
Appendix 3 – Call Centre Recovery Action Plan