
Scrutiny Review - Customer Services

WEDNESDAY, 14TH DECEMBER, 2005 at 19:00 HRS - CIVIC CENTRE, HIGH ROAD, WOOD GREEN, N22 8LE.

MEMBERS: Councillors Bevan (Chair), Bax, Bull, Gilbert, Millar, Oatway and Peacock

AGENDA

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (IF ANY)

2. URGENT BUSINESS

The Chair will consider the admission of any late items of urgent business. Where the item is already included on the agenda, it will be dealt with under that item but new items of urgent business will be dealt with at item 7.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST, IF ANY, IN RESEPECT OF ITEMS ON THIS AGENDA

A member with a personal interest in a matter who attends a meeting of the authority at which the matter is considered must disclose to that meeting the existence and nature of that interest at the commencement of that consideration, or when the interest becomes apparent.

A member with a personal interest in a matter also has a prejudicial interest in that matter if the interest is one which a member of the public with knowledge of the relevant facts would reasonably regard as so significant that it is likely to prejudice the member's judgment of the public interest.

4. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING (PAGES 1 - 26)

That the Panel confirm the notes of the meetings held on 7th & 29th November 2005 as an accurate record of the proceedings.

5. HOUSING MOCK INSPECTION - CUSTOMER SERVICES (PAGES 27 - 38)

The Panel to note the issues raised in the housing mock inspection and consider the Action Plan.

6. CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS (PAGES 39 - 42)

To consider the attached draft conclusions and recommendations.

7. URGENT BUSINESS

To deal with any new items of urgent business admitted at item 2 above.

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SCRUTINY REVIEW OF CUSTOMER SERVICES

NOTES OF MEETING HELD ON 7TH NOVEMBER 2005

Members Present: Cllrs John Bevan, Susan Oatway & Sheila Peacock

Also present: Cllr Takki Sulaiman (Executive Member for Organisational Development & Performance), Cllr Lorna Reith (Executive Member for Community Involvement), Justin Holliday (Assistant Chief Executive – Access), Kim Ross (Call Centre Manager), Lisa Cass (CS Service Development Manager), Mark Saffrey (IT Prioritisation Manager), Steve Cornell (IT Security Manager), David Airey (IT Programme Manager), Afazul Hoque (AH) (Principal Scrutiny Support Officer).

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (IF ANY)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Judith Bax & Gideon Bull.

2. URGENT BUSINESS

None.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST, IF ANY, IN RESPECT OF ITEMS ON THIS AGENDA

None.

4. NOTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The notes of the meeting held on 4th October 2005 were agreed as an accurate record of the proceedings. Members of the Panel requested the following further information:

- Issues relating to CS in the Housing Mock Inspection and the Action Plan – **Action : AH**
- Further information on the New Start Scheme, in regards to where it is funded from and for how long – **Action: JW**
- Details of who undertook the Customer Services for London Group's 'Sig Survey' – **Action HG**

5. ORAL EVIDENCE FROM THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Councillor Lorna Reith was sent some written questions prior to the meeting which are attached as Appendix A along with her written response.

Cllr Reith informed the Panel that the aim of the service was to ensure that over time residents are able to access all Council services through one channel. This contributes to the Council's overall priority of delivering excellent services resulting in improved perception rating of the Council. She explained that there were still some groups of people who are hard to reach and it was important that the Council

continues to provide services in different ways to reach out to different communities and at their convenience. The 80/80 vision is part of the Customer Services Strategy, to ensure that over time 80% of customer contacts with the Council will be handled through the Customer Services channels and 80% of those will be resolved at first point of contact. An important aspect of the realisation of this vision is ensuring Customer Services have the necessary resources which include the support programmes.

A key challenge facing Customer Services is ensuring that the ALMO perceives the Customer Services Channels as their service of choice, which demonstrably offers value for money. The Value for Money agenda is being addressed through the development of a performance management system, efficiency gains which will be delivered as a result of the Siebel Development programme and the Council playing a lead role on the London wide benchmarking exercise to make comparison of costs.

Cllr Reith explained to the Panel that a key performance target this year for Customer Services is to answer 80% of all calls presented. She explained that this was a reasonable target and added that an area of concern for her was the 15 minutes target for residents when they visit a Customer Services Centre. She felt this was too long and the Council should look at ways of reducing this time.

Cllr Reith commented that the Corporate Customer Focus Manager was working on a 'Receptions Project'. The project had reported to the Customer Services Member Working Group in September 2005 on its initial findings. The key aim of the project is to ensure the Council provides a consistent level of service across all Council receptions, the design and information available is consistent across all Council receptions. She added that the implementation of this project would further improve residents' perception of the Council.

Action: The Panel requested that the Corporate Customer Focus Manager provide further details of this project.

Members of the Review Panel queried whether security guards were needed at the Customer Service Centres. Cllr Reith stated that this was another issues being looked by the Corporate Customer Focus Manager as there seems to be inconsistency amongst the various buildings on the role of the security guard. One off the issues that is being looked into is whether the security guards can have a greater role in welcoming residents. It was noted that Job Centres had staff that were floor walkers and played a dual role of welcoming clients and providing security. The Assistant Chief Executive (Access) advised the Panel that work is being undertaken in this area and consideration was being given to whether Property Services should be managing all such issues.

Action: The Panel requested that the Corporate Customer Focus Manager provide further details of this review.

The Review Panel Members expressed concerns that during their visit to the Customer Service Centres they found that the display and storage of leaflets were not organised. Cllr Reith explained that this was also part of the Receptions Project and the Panel should seek further guidance from her.

Action: The Panel requested that the Corporate Customer Focus Manager provide details on this.

Cllr Reith was asked whether the Council was considering joining the Institute of Customer Services. She advised that the Corporate Customer Focus Manager could provide further details.

Action: The Panel requested that the Corporate Customer Focus Manager provide further details.

Cllr Reith reassured Members that recruitment of staff for Customer Services are open and encourage people from the local community. As well as using the website at the last recruitment an open day was held at the Wood Green Customer Service Centre.

Cllr Reith stated that Internet facilities for residents was available at the Wood Green Centre and this was planned for other Centres with 639 High Road being the next priority.

Cllr Bevan asked how client services are charged for the services as this does not seem to be clear. The Assistant Chief Executive (Access) explained that at the beginning of each year the department would review the activities and length of calls for each of their Client Departments and the charges would be based on this. Cllr Oatway commented that if Client Services are given a better idea about how they effect Customer Services and the resulting effect on residents then it would improve communication.

Cllr Reith commented that it would be helpful if the Review Panel could make recommendations on regular liaison meetings, forward planning between Customer Services and Client Services.

There being no further questions, the Chair thanked Cllr Reith for her attendance and contribution.

6. ORAL EVIDENCE FROM THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT & PERFORMANCE

Cllr Takki Sulaiman informed the Review Panel that there were a lot of new developments taking place in the Council providing residents with a modern, better quality, and accessible services for everyone who needs them. The e-government initiative is giving residents wider choices of services at their convenience through the website. The further development of the transactional features of the website have significantly enhanced residents ability to access services at their convenience. A Scrutiny Review of the Council Website in the municipal year 2004/05 had recommended further development to the website to encourage greater usage. Those recommendations are being implemented leading to increase in usage of the website. This would provide the Council with further legitimacy on our journey to achieving a priority in our Community Strategy to 'improve services' to residents.

Cllr Sulaiman then presented to the Panel the 'Implementing Electronic Government Return 2000 Mid Term (IEG4.5)', which went to the Executive in October 2005. He explained that the Council was on target to achieve the Priority Service Outcomes (PSO) and the Best Value Performance Indicator 157 targets, which would ensure that the Council has a more positive effect on local residents. After Christmas there would be 47 services on the website which residents can use. He added that a lot of investment had been made on e-government and the resulting impact would be huge and exciting for everyone involved with the Council. The end benefit would be

measured by customer satisfaction and initial results show an increase in satisfaction.

Responding to a question, Cllr Sulaiman stated that the latest figures on the availability of applications and network were high.

Cllr Bevan expressed concerns that a lot of investment had been made on e-government but usage seem to be low. Cllr Sulaiman commented that as the availability of services go up, the usage would go up. Ownership of personal computers and access to internet was also on the rise in the borough and will effect usage.

Cllr Bevan asked whether the Executive Member felt that eventually people would stop calling the Council and just use the website? Cllr Sulaiman explained that Central Government would like to set up a 'Citizen Gateway'. This will be an electronic gateway of interaction between residents and all government departments, and reduce transactions and interactions through other customer service channels.

Members expressed concerns that the system downtime were frustrating staff in Customer Services and this obviously was having a negative effect on service provision. The Panel were advised that relationship with the IT department were very good and problems are usually resolved as soon as possible. The development of the new Siebel system would result in more efficient service provision. The base performance in terms of system availability would also improve. The refreshed environment will also ensure better system availability.

Cllr Sulaiman reported that he received monthly updates for system downtime, but this was not presented to the Customer Services Member Working group. The Assistant Chief Executive commented that system availability was part of his Performance Appraisal. Cllr Sulaiman added that the Council was an complex organisation with various different software's being used and therefore there are bound to be some unexpected problems.

There being no further questions, the Chair thanked Cllr Sulaiman for his attendance and contribution.

7. CUSTOMER SERVICES – PRE BUSINESS PLAN REVIEW 2006/07

The Assistant Chief Executive (Access) was sent some written questions prior to the meeting which are attached as Appendix B along with his written response.

The Review Panel's attention was drawn to the key points of the Pre Business Plan Review which included the proposed saving, investment and planned activites for the next year.

8. ORAL EVIDENCE FROM THE IT PRIORITISATION MANAGER

The IT Prioritisation Manager was sent some written questions prior to the meeting which are attached as Appendix C along with his written response.

The Review Panel was informed that the majority of the software's being used by Customer Services have third party support. le mainly from the company that had supplied the software. When a problem with IT occurs in Customer Services, the Council's IT department would do basic checks if this do not resolve the problem, they would contact the contractor who are able to dial into Haringey's system and do

necessary checks to resolve any issues. This was a well founded support system and worked well.

The Panel was informed that work was being undertaken to ensure all e-mail received by the Customer Services Department from customers are dealt with through the Siebel System, to ensure e-mail can be more effectively monitored and residents queries dealt with more swiftly. In addition work was being undertaken on system integration. This will help reduce the number of software's being used by Customer Services Officers and thereby reducing transaction time. A pilot is planned for next year which was part of the Customer Services Strategy.

Some additional questions relating to IT were sent to Jane Waterhouse (Head of Customer Services). These along with her written response are attached in Appendix D.

9. URGENT BUSINESS

There were none.

Meeting ended at 9.10pm.

Cllr John Bevan
Chair, Scrutiny Review of Customer Services

Appendix A

Answers to Questions to Executive Member for Community Involvement
Scrutiny Panel on 7 November 2005

1. Can you tell us what the current and prospective customer services strategies are? What is the aim of the service and how does this link across the services of the council? What are the key barriers if any to achieving the strategy?

The Customer Services strategy is based on four simple premises:

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

In the longer term, we want the primary way into the Council to be the web because it is both convenient for users and cost effective. This is becoming increasingly possible as tactical technological solutions are developed, but some of our residents do not feel comfortable using the web or have no easy access to it. In the meantime, residents can access us in one of our four Customer Service Centres or preferably, the Call Centre. We will also have a number of places, receptions and libraries, where enquiries will be dealt with well, where public access PCs are available for use and where their use will be supported.

This is the underpinning for the vision, which is:

Over time, 80% of customer contacts with the Council will be handled through Customer Services channels (customers services centres and call centre, e-mail, the internet and other self service channels) and 80% of these will be completed at first contact, so that customers may contact the Council when, where and how they need to.

This work contributes to the Council's overall priority of delivering excellent services and, when successful, will result in improved perception ratings of both the Council overall and individual services.

The key challenges are:

- Continuing to improve the working between client services and Customer Service;
- Fully exploiting our investment in information technology: Customer Services is essentially a paperless environment and this presents significant challenges in maximising the availability and functionality of our systems; and
- Continuing to invest in and extract value from the Customer Relationship Management system. We have invested in an industrial strength system with massive capabilities and there are substantial development opportunities. We have proactively replaced our supplier and the new supplier (CapGemini) started work in January 2005. We anticipate substantial activity in 2005/06 in resolving basic configuration issues within the system and improving the capability to achieve more strategic objectives.

2. What are the key corporate customer services improvement targets in place and what plans are there to achieve them?

The key corporate customer service improvement targets are detailed in the PBPR and are as follows:

- Continued improvement of service levels in the Call Centre – in terms of calls answered in 15 seconds, calls answered as a percentage of calls offered and average waiting times;
- Increased services offered through all channels, and the web site in particular; and
- Progress towards the 80/80 vision.

The specific proposed targets are in the PBPR which is elsewhere on the agenda.

3. How is the value for money and efficiency agenda being addressed?

The revised CPA arrangements increase the focus on being able to demonstrate Value For Money. Taken with the decision to establish an Arms Length Management Organisation (ALMO) for the Council's housing, there is a challenging agenda to ensure that the Customer Services channels are perceived by the residents and the ALMO as their service of choice, which demonstrably offers value.

Customer Services has a developed performance management system and the IT systems that we use enable us to measure and manage our performance. Consequently, we do understand how much of our staff time is productive and how efficient that time is. Over the last 18 months, we have made improvements in efficiency, by reducing transaction times and by managing non-productive time downwards.

Further efficiency gains will be delivered as a result of the Siebel Development programme. We are anticipating a reduction of 1 minute per transaction increasing the capacity of Customer Services and reducing the unit cost per transaction further. This is reflected in the proposals in this year's budget savings to extract around £900k of efficiency savings from the Customer Service operation over the next three years.

The Council has been leading bench marking activity on a pan London basis so that we can compare the cost and quality of our operation and we are commissioning research to retest the value which customers attach to the way we organise our service.

4. What is the balance between cost and performance (customer satisfaction) and how is this decided on?

There is a balance to be struck between cost and service level offered to the customer. The targets in the PBPR over the planning cycle reflect a pragmatic approach to achieving that balance.

Customer demand on the service is bursty and unpredictable within reasonable statistical tolerances over short time periods (say 15 minutes), consequently to achieve high levels of service e.g. a high proportion of calls answered in 15

seconds, it is likely that customer service staff would have to be waiting for calls for an unacceptably high proportion of their time.

The overall approach is, therefore, based on:

- Setting realistic targets;
- Further improving our management of peaks and troughs in demand; and
- Considering initiatives to extend the range of contacts with which Customer Services deals.

5. How does Customer Services performance compare against other authorities?

Customer Services service delivery design is different from many of our comparators. For example, our average transaction time is much longer than our comparators and this will be because:

- Our cut off point is deeper than other authorities (we complete more at first contact)
- We have much more data entry, Customer services staff are using the CRM system and client service systems with as yet no system integration.

In terms of service level in the Call Centre particularly, performance is amongst the best.

There is little comparative data for Customer Service centres. The Council has supported and analysed a survey across 14 London Boroughs. The results of this are encouraging:

Customer Services for London Survey results	London average	Haringey
Was the Customer Services Officer you spoke with welcoming and professional	98.7% yes	97.8% yes
Was the time that you waited acceptable given the nature of your enquiry	92.4% yes	94.8% yes
How long did you wait - more than 15 minutes	15.1%	11% 89% seen within 15 minutes (our target 70%)
Was the environment welcoming and user friendly	94.6% yes	98.9% yes
Were we able to provide the service that you wanted or direct you to the correct point of contact	95.9% yes	94.8%
How do you rate the service received	1.3% said poor	0.5% said poor
Why did you choose to visit the service - better service	23.9%	28.8%
Why did you choose to visit the service - only way for the enquiry to be handled	33.9%	26.1%
Why did you choose to visit the service - convenience	20.6%	34.8%

6. Please explain the impact customer services have on the residents of Haringey? To what level of customer service do you think the council should aspire to?

As the face of the council, Customer Service Centres deal with a wide and diverse range of people in the local community. The services we offer span across the whole community. Specific groups in the community are targeted by virtue of the services they require e.g. pensioners applying for their bus passes.

Parking	Resident and local business vehicle users, non-Haringey residents and businesses parking in the area
Abandoned Vehicles	Haringey residents and non-Haringey residents
Graffiti removal	Haringey residents and non-Haringey residents
Concessionary travel	Resident pensioners and disabled residents
Housing	Any Haringey Council tenant and/or resident in housing need
Benefits and Local Taxation	Any lower income resident for benefits and any resident for Council Tax
Child Protection	Anyone with concerns about a resident child.
The Children's Service	Parents and children resident in Haringey or attending Haringey schools

We provide services and information to residents, businesses and visitors to the borough as follows:

Customer grouping	No. of telephone callers per year	No. of personal callers per year	Total No. of callers
Street Scene: Parking Abandoned Vehicles Concessionary Travel Permits Graffiti Removal	75949	8941	84890
Housing Management and Repairs	72890	20856	93746
Housing Strategy and Needs	6813	12049	18862
Benefits and Local Taxation: Benefits Council Tax	144169	100421	244590

Children's Service	0	12147	12147
Others			
Total	299821	154414	454235

The level of Customer service to which the Council should aspire is best of breed: that is top quartile perception ratings.

7. How do you think customer service could continue its improvement in performance?

By continuing with the strategies that have been employed successfully so far:

- Performance management
- Process improvement to reduce transaction times.
- Understanding what factors create demand and taking action jointly with client services to avoid them.
- Migration of services and customers to the web services.

8. Are there any communities you feel the Council are not reaching out through the customer services channels? How do you think we should reach out to these hard to reach groups?

A clear analysis of the service user base is essential to enable the service to identify quality or service take-up issues. All data gathered as part of customer consultations or as part of service delivery aims to add to this.

Our CRM system is designed to allow detailed analysis of our user base and the targeting of services/promotions etc. Measures are in hand to improve the collection of data will lead to a comprehensive view of the demographics of our customers

Customer consultation is based on the clear identification of community sectors (disability, ethnicity, employment, age, housing status) and enables analysis of results as a very specific level. In 2005 the overall satisfaction rate was 77.1%, which disaggregates as follows:

- Disabled users 79.3%
- White users 75%
- Asian users 64.1%
- Black users 77.3%
- Council tenant users 80.7%.

We do not yet understand why the Asian communities' satisfaction level is so different and will be undertaking some focus group work to explore this.

Perception of service quality is high and in most cases improving.

To ensure that improvement is recognised survey results will continue to be publicised widely together with details of actions to be taken to deal with issues arising.

9. Any future changes in areas which are likely to impact on customer service centres and the call centre?

Any legislative, organisation, process or technology changes that arise in Client Services will have an impact on Customer Services.

The successful ballot for developing an Arms Length Management Organisation (ALMO) for the Council's housing offers focus for improving the accessibility of services to Council tenants and leaseholders, consolidating more of these services through the Customer Services channels, particularly the CSCs and Call Centre. This development also poses challenges to ensure that the Customer Services channels are perceived by the ALMO as their service of choice, and satisfying the inspection requirements to demonstrate efficiency and value for money.

10. Does the Council have any aspirations to secure a Charter Mark in Customer Services?

We have no current plans to do this.

Appendix B

Questions for Assistant Chief Executive (Access)

- 1. Is there a specific date when you expect to meet the 80/80 vision, as in the business plan and other documents it mentions over time. Do you think that we should set a specific date for achievement of this target?**

The Council agreed the Customer Services Strategy at Council Executive in July 2004 to achieve the vision of 80% of Customer Contacts to be handled through Customer Services channels and that 80% of these are to be completed at first contact.

This is an aspiration rather than a specific target. Whilst I still believe that the aspiration is realistic and that we are working towards it, I would be reluctant to set a specific target until there are firm plans in place and the requisite funding is agreed. This is probably a matter for the next administration.

- 2. Why has the total cost per call/visit increased from £4.43 in 04/05 to £4.54 in 05/06? How can we reduce this cost?**

This is a 2.5% increase, less than the increase in costs and, therefore, a real terms saving. Cost per call is calculated by dividing the total Customer Services budget by the number of contacts (calls answered and customer visits).

Dealing with an increased amount of customer contacts without increasing staff resources will reduce both spare capacity and cost per call. The Customer Services Strategy will deliver additional customer contacts. At the same time the service will be working to reduce transaction times and increase productivity allowing us to deal with these additional customer contacts without increasing staff numbers.

Please also note that the 05/06 is a year to date figure and so will vary as customer demand changes over the year.

- 3. How is the total cost of customer services allocated and billed to the clients who use it facilities?**

Customer services costs are recharged to clients through the corporate overhead process, based on the volume of activity weighted by the average duration of the interactions.

The initial funding is transferred from the client service based on a scoping exercise which assesses the numbers of staff required to undertake the work.

The Customer Services budget comprises (in round terms):

Customer Service Officers	£3.4m
All Other Staff	£2.0m
Supplies and Services	£0.1m
Overhead recharges	£2.8m
Total Recharged to client services	£8.3m

- 4. Please provide details as to how and where from the next 3yrs savings are to be found, 900k.**

Customer Services are expected to save £899k over the next three years. These saving will be achieved through our Siebel development programme resulting in

improved efficiencies including process improvement, understanding what creates demand and taking action to satisfy needs and reduce demand and migration to self service channels. These will be delivered through a combination of taking on new services (more service from the same resource) and some Customer Service staff reductions, through natural turnover.

5. Are there any plans for the Hornsey CSC when the town hall site is developed?

There is a continued demand for a CSC in Hornsey CSC. Any changes that affect the CSC are being discussed between Customer Services Management and Property Services

6. Has it been agreed with all interested parties for housing to conduct its interviews at the csc. If not what parties have still to agree, is the start date agreed?

The Director of Housing has agreed with the Head of Customer Services that Housing should conduct interviews at a Pilot CSC (Hornsey) from December 2005. There are some residual issues which are being worked through.

7. Has the need for Saturday opening been tested, if not why, if so what was the result? Does staff attendance on Saturdays incur premium pay rates?

A recent customer survey identified Monday evenings as a the most preferred extended opening for CSCs, with Saturday mornings as the next preferred option. A pilot recently commenced in Wood Green CSC where opening hours have been extended to 7pm on Monday evenings. This pilot will allow us to understand customer demand and determine if further extending opening hours would be cost effective.

The Call Centre is now open until 8pm Tuesday to Wednesday. Joining up with the Out of Hours service will give us the opportunity to further extend opening hours.

Recently recruited staff have contracts which include Saturdays as standard working hours and so it would not be necessary to pay premium pay rates.

8. Are there any plans to use job centre plus programmes / new deal programmes etc to recruit and train new staff? Utilizing any government funding that may be available.

Customer Services have employed 2 to 3 young people a year through the new start scheme and the majority have secured permanent jobs with the Council. There may be a possibility of setting up a Customer Services Academy which is self financing. This will obviously need to be thoroughly thought out with sufficient resources invested

9. What is the Customer Focus Stream Board? What is the Member Working Group on Customer Services? What do these Groups do? Please explain the impact of these groups on service provisions.

Customer Services Member Working Group

The Customer Services Member Working Group Terms of Reference is:

1. To support, challenge and champion Customer Services and customer service across the Council, from the customer experience through to the technology enablers.
2. To oversee the implementation of the customer services strategy.
3. To oversee the implementation and development of the IS/IT strategies.
4. To support the member e-champion in their role.
5. To maximise the opportunities for customer feedback and input into the future development of customer services.
6. To monitor and challenge the performance within customer services and on key corporate customer service metrics.
7. To monitor and promote the development of e-democracy and the provision of Members' IT facilities.
8. To support Member capacity to lead and publicise Customer Services as above.

Membership of the Group is Cllrs Adje, Sulaiman, Reith and Milner.

Customer Focus Stream Board

The Purpose of the Board is to oversee the assigned projects and ensure their coherence and delivery. The Board meets monthly, is chaired by the board Assistant Chief Executive (Access) and attended by representatives from each Directorate. The Board is accountable to and escalates to the CEMB Programme Board. The objectives of the Board are:

- to oversee a range of projects, providing strategic insight and providing coherence between projects and streams;
- to co-ordinate with other streams;
- to consider and approve/recommend to programme board project briefs and business cases;
- to manage and monitor the realisation of the expected benefits from the stream;
- to resolve (or find ways of resolving) risks, issues and policies escalated by other stream boards and/or projects; and
- to monitor, support and challenge assigned projects; and
- **to provide service input to stream activity and facilitate activities within directorates.**

Projects that report to the Stream Board include:

- Benefits and Local Taxation Improvement Project
- Customer Services Strategy Realisation Project
- Siebel Development Project
- E-Payments Project
- Highways Implementation Project
- Homelessness & Housing Options Project
- Housing Repairs Project
- Leisure System Replacement Project
- Local Land and Property Gazetteer Project

- Property Management System Project
- SAP Realisation of Benefits Project
- Web Development
- Tech Refresh Project
- E-democracy Project

Appendix C

Questions for IT

Q 1 What is your perception of the IT support provided and what are the strengths and weaknesses? How are the weaknesses resolved?

The perception of support is generally good, but we are constantly working to improve performance.

Our Strengths are:-

- Incidents for Customer Services are treated as a high priority (due to the impact)
- Clear escalation process
- ITIL frame work in place
- Regular meeting with our suppliers

Our challenges are;-

- We're currently supporting two environments: legacy and the refreshed environments. This will be resolved by the completion of refresh.
- Contracts need to be reviewed to reflect our core business hours. (This assumes that funding can be identified)
- A significant amount of change is required to manage a continuous stream of government projects. This is managed through robust project and programme management.
- The extent to which Customer services are reliant on IT solutions. This managed by extensive support.

Our sources of learning to improve the service are

- Lessons learnt from previous issues
- Industry recognised techniques and best practices used within other organisations or taken from the ITIL frame work to address a weakness
- Post implementation review with suppliers and Project Managers
- Reviews and recommendations by internal audit
- Risk management using the BS7799 approach
- Feedback from users and from training to improve the education of our staff and Users.

Q2 Current Plans

The next phase of our plans is to deploy a new version of Siebel, which will be deployed week commencing 7 November. This is a major upgrade utilising the Public Sector version of the Siebel product. It introduces new "easier to use" processes and activities for the Customer Services operatives in the Call Centre and Customer Service Centres and also provides the foundation for the continued evolution of Siebel.

Future enhancements to Siebel will be aimed at continuing to both widen the services provided by Customer Services and "deepen" the service offerings through integration between Siebel in the front-office and the back-office "departmental" systems. This evolution will include Siebel interacting with various customer channels such as face-to-face, web, phone, fax, SMS etc.

The plans are not rigid, it allows for flexibility to support the evolution and any changing priorities of the Customer Services Strategy.

Q 3 How are system downtimes resolved? How do you minimise the time it takes to resolve such issues?

Down time is measured from the moment the call has been logged within Clarify (the call logging system) until the call is resolved (deemed fixed by the user). The resolution process is to:

- Log it with the Helpdesk. All IT are logged and classified within our call handling system, Clarify; Details taken from the user assist the helpdesk analyst determine a number of categories eg: Impact and issue, Urgency and Priority,
- All incidents are given a Priority categorised between P1-P5 and then passed to the appropriate resolving team. There are 11 resolving teams used to support 'all councils' systems, who in turn are supported by third parties with appropriate contracts and Service Level Agreement (SLA)
- During the life span of an incident, an owner is allocated to the incident (as it's possible for a call to be passed between teams) it's the responsibility of the owner to investigate the issue and where possible implement an appropriate fix. Where a fix has been tried and failed or the impact deem to be disrupting or affecting a building or business unit performance or their operational functionality, the incident is escalated within the IT services management structure.
- There is a clear escalation route when issues are not resolved.

All systems and services deployed during the last 12 months have added resilience built into the design of the systems/services, these include:-

- Hot fixes for hardware (hardware can be removed without effecting the services or impacting the users further)
- Network resilience for infrastructure failures (alternate routing for data should the network fail.)
- Uninterruptible power supplies (UPS) and generators for power failures.
- Third parties can also connect to our network to provide a prompt fix/investigate reported issues.
- System best practices such as monitoring system performance and management of data growth are conducted on a daily basis.

Q4 Plan & Introduce New Systems

A project Board has been established for Customer Services. It is chaired by Head of Customer Services and includes management representation from both Customer Services and IT Services. Currently this board is focussing upon the upgrade to the Siebel Public Sector version in November.

The Board manages the priorities for IT investment based upon the needs of the Customer Services Strategy. Projects are planned and executed in accordance with the Council's Project Management Framework and are jointly staffed and led by Customer Services and IT project managers.

Customer Services lead the business implementation, undertaking change management activities with the appropriate level of support from IT. In the case of Siebel, over the course of the next 24 months it is anticipated that on average, 3 new releases per year will take place in line with the roadmap, thereby providing new functionality in a regular and controlled manner and avoiding the higher risks associated with “Big Bang” deployments

Q5 When is the tech refresh project planned for the customer services department?

Customer Services are planned to be deployed w/c 5th December 2005.

Q6 Do you think the implementation and post implementation process will affect the performance of customer services? What contingency plans are there to minimise system down time during this period?

The implementation of Tech Refresh should have minimal affect on Customer Services operation. The deployment of the new technology will be scheduled with the business unit to ensure cover can be provided by other operators whilst users are cutover. The switch over of a user takes approximately 15 minutes and can be coordinated with break times or overnight. Post implementation floor walkers are present to deal with issues arising immediately in addition to User handouts and guides. The number of floorwalkers is based on the umber of users being refreshed at one time.

Appendix D

**Answers to Questions for Jane Waterhouse on IT
Scrutiny Panel on 7 November 2005**

1) What is the CRM system and how does it affect Customer Services?

The CRM system comprises;

- A customer database which includes a history of each customer's contacts with the Council and their outcomes.
- A source of business rules and processes to ensure that customers enjoy consistent treatment and outcomes for any given set of inputs/requests for service or information.
- A knowledge base of information
- A source of support for customer service staff operation of client service systems.

The system enables the generic Customer Services staff to handle a wide range of request for service and information consistently and professionally. Without it, specialist staff would be required creating bottlenecks and impacting on service levels and flexibility of staff deployment.

The system is a very large database with enormous analytical capabilities. The next release of Siebel (developed with CapGemini) will allow us to exploit this capability. Outputs we are expecting post release 1 include:

- Dynamic monitoring of service delivery against a number of demographic profiles
- Regular tracking of user satisfaction at the point of service
- Comprehensive and real time measurement of the degree of resolution at first point of contact.

2) Options for enhancements – What options are there, how much and in which direction, what's happening in the industry generally and what future possibilities are there?

The changes in the contracting arrangements for the Siebel Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system and system development undertaken by our new integration partner, offer opportunities to improve efficiency in Customer Services and improve the quality of experience for our customers. The new Siebel configuration to be released shortly also offers the opportunity to access greater functionality such as case management. This additional functionality will be used to enrich the processes used, to improve data quality, data capture and analysis, to improve efficiency and to improve customer service and accessibility further, both through the self service and the mediated (face to face, telephone and e-mail) channels. Consequently, we are developing a longer term investment programme to exploit the investment in this functionality.

The Siebel system will also be accessed wider than Customer Services:

- It is already used to support Freedom of Information request fulfilment;
- We have firm plans for it to be used to support e-mail response via the web in all Council services (due for roll out after Christmas); and

- We will be using it in the short term to track contacts with businesses across the borough wide in those services that do not currently have a mechanism to record them. This last improvement will support the development of recommendations about how the Council improves its support to the borough's business community.

Customer Services in local authorities are increasingly investing in Customer Relationship Management systems, partly as a direct result of the Government's expectation embodied in the priority service outcomes for eGovernment. Increasingly local authorities are seeing the strategic benefits of understanding how customers interact with them, seeing the customer contact points with all their services in one single view of a particular customer but also the patterns of contact over a wider demographic profile. This vision will enable local authorities to serve their customers better and design their service delivery structures to suit customers' needs better and more efficiently.

3) Can you tell us about the current CRM system and its strengths and weaknesses?

Many of the systems strengths are listed in the answer to the previous question.

In addition, the system is "industrial strength", i.e. it is designed for commercial use and many large organisations use it to manage their customer relationships. In such cases their success criteria are about return business and sales target achievement. In transferring this thinking to local authorities, for us, it's about successful interactions with our customers that require no further action by the customer and increased user satisfaction.

The system is also highly configurable to meet our specific needs and now includes specific features which have been developed for the public sector, such as case management which we are going to be using in Freedom of Information request fulfilment.

The system is a brand leader and is extremely well supported by Siebel and is now owned by Oracle.

The challenge, which is shared with many of our IT applications, is that there is on an going need to invest in developing and improving the system. We need to ensure that investment in it will deliver a payback to the Council. In this case, the development of Release 1 is expected to deliver a reduction in the average transaction time of a minute and is enabling Customer services to achieve the savings target in the PBPR in the coming years.

4) Please tell us the costs and benefits of this new system and how in your view it will affect the performance of customer services?

The system has been in place for over 4 years now. It went live with the first service, Parking, on 31 October 2001.

The system is hosted by Serco (formerly ITnet) and is to be supported from Release 1 by CapGemini. In addition, the management of the contractual arrangements are supported by Central IT Services and Northgate Services also have an input of fault resolution and supporting change as it affects the

Council infrastructure. The cost of these arrangements and the site licence for the software is approximately £825K per annum.

The benefits of the system and how it affects Customer Services performance have been described in the answer to questions 2 and 3.

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SCRUTINY REVIEW OF CUSTOMER SERVICES

NOTES OF FOCUS GROUP – STAFF & CLIENT SIDE

29th NOVEMBER 2005

Members Present: Cllrs John Bevan, Sheila Peacock & Brian Miller

Also present: Colin Morgan (CSO), Handan Veleddin (CSO), Esther Walters (CSO), Yvonne Johnson (CSO), Tijen Ali (CSO), Muideen Akorede (CSO), Vince Piraino (CSO), Lisa Cass (Cs, Service Development Manager), Cecilia Verry (Housing Administrator), Mel Davis (Housing Manager), Helen Kent (Council Tax Assistant), Maxine Broadbridge (Benefits & Local Taxation Manager), Sinem Mustafa (Senior Benefits Caseworker), Ryan Ledger (Benefits, Communications Officer), John Forde (Deputy Head of Student Finance), Ray Gallo (OD&L Consultant), Michael Carr (Principal Scrutiny Support Officer), Afazul Hoque (Principal Scrutiny Support Officer).

1. WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS

Cllr John Bevan welcomed all present and gave a brief background to the Scrutiny Review Process.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (IF ANY)

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Oatway.

3. STAFF & CLIENT SIDE FOCUS GROUP

Ray Gallo from Organisational Development & Learning introduced himself and asked all present to introduce themselves. Following which Ray explained to the group that the aim of this focus group was to 'raise awareness of the strengths and areas for improvements in Customer Services including relationships and communication with Client Side'. He explained that the session will take place in four parts which are as follows:

1. From a Customer Services perspective list the strengths, areas for improvement and relationship and communication with internal customers;
2. The whole group to discuss and highlight their main concerns under each of the headings;
3. Individuals to rank in terms of priority for improvement each of the heading;
4. Each group to choose one of the highest ranking heading to define what the issue is, and how it can be resolved and to finally present this to the whole group.

The Focus Group raised the following issues:

AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

Staff Training & Motivation

- Involve client side in CS training to ensure customers receive consistent service and also send CS staff to Client Side training;
- Targeted training for specific staff;
- CS staff need recognition and incentives for achieving targets, such as a monthly award;
- There needs to be a balance between targets and quality of service expected, to reduce pressure on staff trying to balance both;
- Customers expect staff to have full knowledge of an area when they contact Customer Services. Basic knowledge of staff in CS of client services may be detrimental to other services;
- Generalists vs Specialists;
- Quality vs Quantity (targets)

Waiting Times

- Depends on the time when the customer contacts CS;
- CS staff under constant pressure to keep waiting times down, this may compromise the quality of service;
- Customers wanting basic information have to wait in a queue. This may be fast tracked by having a specific desk for basic queries, or handing in documents etc;

Performance

- Targets to be realistic – Quality vs Quantity
- Currently balance between targets and service expected is not right;
- Client Side not aware of CS targets and vice versa;
- CS and Client Side offering different standards of services;
- Client Side expect a lot of their customers queries to be dealt at first point of contact;
- Queries are not being dealt with at first point of contact because of lack of knowledge on subject which comes to the training of staff;
- Staff not aware of the cut off point between the role of CS and Client Side;
- There are a large number of repeat customers contacting CS because Client Side are not completing tasks. I.e Repairs not been undertaken.
- Only Team Managers are allowed to contact Client Side staff;
- Customer contacting about student finance face different service levels because they may have to contact different organisations such as the student grants department;
- IT has a significant effect on performance.

First Impressions & Elderly Service Users

- Elderly customers are often confused and frightened by letters sent by the Council. There needs to be a different way of dealing with this group of customers;

- They need a personal touch, empathy and understanding;
- Letters sent out by the Council could be simplified;
- Queries about repair service take long time and create a bad impression because there are only 3 staff in back office to take calls and therefore lines are often engaged;

Client Services

- Communication breakdown between the two services;
- No clear cut off point between different areas of responsibility ;
- Lack of understanding about each others roles;
- Each service area needs to be approached individually and a service provided according to their needs;
- Different priorities for each service (CS calling Client Side affects their staffs ability to meet their targets);
- General perception of CS within the Council may be one of resentment for various reasons;
- Staff within the Council need to realise that everyone needs to work together as everyone working towards the same goal;

STRENGTHS

Training

- Well structured and regular;
- There is a need for Team Managers to acquire greater knowledge of a service area to reduce calling client side. Each Team Manager should have full knowledge of the process involved in the Client Side especially for the key services;
- Shadowing of staff in Client Side may be a good way of improving knowledge;
- Customers have stated that the CSC are nice and staff approachable and friendly.

Customer Focus

- Customers said the experience of visiting a CSC was better then before;
- Customers treat staff with more respect because of the service they receive and the environment in which they receive that service.

Access

- More ways available for residents to contact the Council;
- Improvements have been made to providing services to the diverse communities through specific surgeries such as the Turkish Surgery;

COMMUNICATION & RELATIONSHIPS WITH CLIENT SIDE

- Lack of communication;
- Better understanding of each others roles and what is expected from each other;
- Us vs them attitude;

- When CS set up did not give enough consideration on the impact it would have on staff in other services;
- There is a need for all staff to show that they can work together;
- CS and Client Side have different priorities;
- Management need to be trained on each of the key service areas;
- Better communication to staff from Management from both CS and Client Side.

Following on from the above discussions the groups looked at an issue and suggested ways of improving that issue:

Area of Concern: Service capacity and training – Process / knowledge/ expertise	
What is it?	How can we improve it?
Home Visit	Written solutions / follow up (Information pooling)
Definition of roles	Clarification and communication
Specialist / expertise	Share skills & knowledge – relationship between CS and Client Side

Area of Concern: Relationships with Client Side	
What is it?	How can we improve it?
Communication	Feedback on liaison, shadowing of services (both Client Side & CS)
Priorities	Understanding each others roles, include visit to CSC for new staff as induction
Information	Prioritise information sent and at the right time
Customer Focus is the responsibility of the whole Council not just Customer Services.	

Area of Concern: Quality not quantity	
What is it?	How can we improve it?
Transaction times	Revised transaction time depending on nature of enquiry.
	Specialist Team Leaders

Cllr John Bevan thanked everyone for attending and explained that the Panel would be producing a report from all the information they have received. The report and its recommendations will have to go through the Overview & Scrutiny Committee and the Executive before any recommendations are implemented. He said that the final copy of the report would be sent to all participants.

The meeting finished at 9.10pm.

Cllr John Bevan
Chair, Scrutiny Review of Customer Services

HOUSING MOCK INSPECTION
CUSTOMER SERVICES



CSC offices

- All similar, branded, look All are presentable, but some feel airy and cleaner – Wood green, N Tottenham. Hornsey – more congested, a little worn, Apex Hse – appears dark, dirty and littered
- Varied from congested and noisy to spacious
- Auto doors, level or gently ramped access
- Carpeted, with plenty of seats, some of reasonable height with arms
- Reception desk for initial queries – customers are either served or given a ticket
- Play equipment is a large, wooden, sit in, see-saw

hqns:



CSC offices ... (cont'd)

- Fluorescent number and a tannoy calls people to booths, with desk height counters and seats (reception desks tend to be higher)
- Different leaflets on show in each office. Some out of reach, a few out of date or not dated leaflets. Little information on view and poorly organised making it hard to spot. Little for people to read
- Telephones available, so the public can call other sections of the council. These have no privacy but lack privacy and anywhere to write notes
- Very little information or signage in community languages, both within and outside the CSCs

hqns:

Customer care and complaints handling

hqns:

Customer care – Strengths

- Some customer care standards in place
- Some targets in place with monitoring and reporting
- Traffic light system used for reporting – makes it clear what the issues are
- SLA with Customer Service Centre (but we were not given a copy) with appointed liaison managers to review and monitor. Issues register compiled to record the points raised and action taken
- CSC able to make appointments for repairs at first point of contact
- Customers able to call in at any CSC across the borough and deal with a range of issues

hqns:

Customer care – Strengths

- Examples of consultation with residents e.g. opening preferences at Wood Green
- Access to languages, loop system, different formats offered etc. Some signage in two languages e.g. Turkish and set days for interpreters
- CSC receptions – generally good appearance and standard (but see office shopping)
- Frontline staff speak of good communications generally e.g. notified about mailouts
- Collecting data and information on customers e.g. diversity, preferred communication (but no links between CSM and OHMs. Systems can be slow and this can lead to delays in customer being seen)
- CSC – focus on repairs and now being extended to wider housing management issues e.g. leaseholder, rents, ASB. Measured approach taken

hqns:

Customer care – Weaknesses

- No clear vision/statement for customer care
- Lots of different targets e.g. 70%, 75%, 80% and 85% of calls to be answered within 15 (or 20) rings
- Staff vague about targets and current performance e.g. waiting times for customers
- Many of the targets are not SMART and cannot be measured.
- Limited office opening – inspectors do not consider 6.00 pm is a late night opening. Opening times differ between offices – no demonstrable link to customer preferences e.g. Broadwater Farm
- Limited (if any) publicity provided to customers to explain the service:
 - Who can do what and where
 - The process to follow
 - Difficult for customers to know what will happen to them, how long it will take and how far their enquiry will be dealt with

hqns:



Customer care – Weaknesses ... (cont'd)

- Sparse CSC reception areas:
 - limited leaflets (you have to ask, kept behind the counter as they get messed up), not really being used to promote the service
 - Security guards – potential for a more customer focused role has not been taken advantage of
- Spooky Area Office receptions:
 - Give out the wrong messages and signs – look as if you are operating behind closed doors
 - Not making best use of prime space – ground floor, high street locations
 - Shabby appearance – is this the image you want to project?
- Has anyone “walked” the experience from a customer perspective – see reality checks?
- CSC do not have access to diaries for housing staff – unable to make an appointment. Inconsistent with repairs



hqns:

Customer care – Weaknesses ... (cont'd)

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hqns:

Customer care – Weaknesses ... (cont'd)

- Comprehensive guidelines covering everything from body language to dress code but does anyone take any notice of them and are they sufficiently challenging?
 - Don't wear revealing clothes, beach wear or shorts – but should you wear a name badge?
 - Poster displays – should not be stuck using cellotape. Look at the front entrance to Wood Green Area Office
- Some potential morale issues amongst CSC staff due to pay differentials
- Wood Green CSC – volume of callers influenced mainly by HB, Council tax and education. Need to monitor and ensure adequately staffed at peak times and services reflect priorities (could be conflicts) for ALMO customers
- Good take up of Turkish surgeries but lack of monitoring and taking this forward
- Many of the AC recommendations need to be reviewed and actioned further...

hqns:

Audit Commission recommendations

Clear aims – for service users?	No ALMO aim, different targets quoted, vague targets, no explanation of the service offered
Standard of offices	Refurbished CSCs. Scope for improvement – cleanliness, information etc. Area Office reception areas – poor.
Opening times	Limited – but open at the times advertised
Dedicated housing desk	No
Queuing system	Need to queue to get a number. No explanation about how the system works
Waiting time	Monitored and displayed but confusion amongst frontline staff about waiting times and targets. Standards not on display for customers
Telephone callers	Calls go through CC
Tenants charter	Turkish version available

hqns:

Audit Commission recommendations ...

Appointment system	CSC cannot make an appointment for HMs. Appointment needed for HM. CSC deal mainly with repairs – and low level aspects of housing management. Not clearly explained to customers
Reception telephone facility	Telephones in reception areas but lack of privacy (see office shopping)
Email website	Really difficult to find housing
interpreting	Available – some posters offering. Surgeries for Turkish and Kurdish customers but not promoted in reception
Information leaflets	Limited and you have to ask for most of them as kept behind the counter
Customer care performance	Monitoring reports on to DMT and SMT regularly
Access to staff	CSC – but access to other staff not clear Notice board at Broadwater farm with photos of staff

hqs:

Recommendations

Customer care

- Establish a clear vision and statement for the ALMO service (with customer involvement). Use this as an opportunity to ratchet up and reinforce expectations
- Establish clear monitoring of the CSC and CC – ensure there is evidence in terms of quality, timeliness and value for money (involved customers in setting standards and monitoring and report performance to them). Ensure ALMO customers are not disadvantaged during peak usage by other customers
- Rationalise the targets and measures – make sure all targets are SMART and customer know what to expect
- Provide clear explanations of the service – who does what. Ensure the process is customer focused

hqs:

Recommendations ... (cont'd)

Customer care

- Review the use of the Area Offices – can housing staff interview at the CSCs?
- Review the opening times – in response to customers' preferences
- Review the customer care guidelines/standards for staff
- Ensure appointments can be made for housing as well as repairs at the first point of contact
- Use the liaison meetings between housing and CSC to flag up customer feedback and suggestions
- Monitor usage of Turkish surgeries and develop further
- Ensure previous AC recommendations have been fully addressed – demonstrate the improvements



Our judgement



Uncertain prospects for improvement

Many positive elements however lack of clarity, direction and drive on ALMO customer care and expectations

Little evidence of services being tailored to reflect customer preferences

Complaints – Not a learning organisation yet

Scope for improvement on many of the AC recommendations



Objective	Benefit to Residents	Actions	Target Date	Resources	Progress
Develop improved customer focus		More customer focused use of information in Customer Services: A) Firm up Data Protection procedures for rent enquiries; B) Review collection of Ethnicity and DOB information and how this can be shared with Housing/used in a customer focused way	Aug-05; Jan-06	N/A	A) R Daisley emailing all housing staff & including in team brief, B) no update
		Clean and smarten up Apex House	01-Feb-06	Customer Services	Awaiting update
		Ensure ALMO standards are replicated in Customer Services to ensure consistency	01-Mar-06	Customer services	No current concerns, but dependant on review of service standards
Improved access to services – Customer Services	Improved Housing customer service experience through CSC's	Formulate project plan and form project group to review WI's and M & P's to ensure smooth end to end process with appropriate hand over, transparent process for staff and customer, more customer focused approach.	01-Aug-05	staff Time./ customer services/ Morris Persaud	Initial steering group meeting; project plan to be shared by 1st week Sept
		What are actions coming out of above? - SM to add milestones	?		
		Develop list of key Housing leaflets and ensure all are available for customers in all CSC's without the need to queue	01-Aug-05	Richard Daisley	Update due
		Establish procedure for Customer service staff to be able to make appointments for Housing Managers at first point of contact - via "escalation line"	01-Aug-05	N/A	Awaiting update, action due

		to Area Offices			
		Develop checklist for Sheltered Housing information and ensure full range is provided in all Customer Service Centres	01-Aug-05	Martina Smith	Quick win, but no update received yet
		Develop checklist for ALMO information and ensure full range is provided in all Customer Service Centres	01-Aug-05	N/A	Quick win, but no update received yet
		Improve experience of using internal freephones in CSC's - provide greater privacy (hoods?); shelf in order to write things down; list of key Housing contact numbers without having to queue at reception	01-Sep-05	customer services	No update received
		Review use of CSC security staff to be more customer focused	01-Oct-05	customer services	No update received
		Investigate feasibility of putting a procedure in place to enable Customer Services staff to make Pest Control appointments for tenants and leaseholders	01-Nov-05	TBC	No update received
		Improve awareness of language surgeries in AO's and CSC's by better advertising	01-Dec-05	Winston Reid, Printing & design	No update received
		Establish procedure for Customer service staff to be able to make appointments for Housing Managers at first point of contact - direct to Housing Manager's diaries	01-Jan-06	IT, training, Richard Daisley	No update received

Agree standard of provision to be delivered by CSC's and CC	Ensure ALMO customers are not disadvantaged during peak usage by other customers	Display improved signage in CSC's- in community languages - advising customers to take a ticket and explaining queuing process	01-Feb-06	customer services	No update received
		Launch steering group to review the access issues and options - include use of Area Offices and Opening Times and produce recommendations to DMT; include residents in this process	01-Aug-05	TBC - potential for substantive financial outlay	First meeting held 26/07. 2 further meetings planned and actions agreed.
		Implement actions arising from 'Access' steering group (see above) a) Pilot new arrangements in Hornsey b) Roll out to North Tottenham & Wood Green c) Complete full co-location	TBC	TBC	
		Agree channel strategy for ALMO - to include use of CSC downtime (shared efficiencies), review demarcation, services in scope etc.;	01-Jan-06	TBC	Sorrel Brookes to agree with DMT who will be the client for customer services for the ALMO. No action until this is resolved. SH to talk to JT to enable this work to start.
		Develop ALMO SLA and consider inclusion of penalties for not achieving targets			
		Establish appropriate change control mechanism for relationship between ALMO/Customer Services - allowing flexibility for the introduction of minor change/fixes expediently	01-Jan-06	TBC	Sorrel Brookes to agree with DMT who will be the client for customer services for the ALMO. No action until this is resolved
		Establish dedicated, branded ALMO area's in all CSC's - stocked and updated by CSC staff	Mar 06 & then BAU	Martina Smith, Winston Reid	No update received

		Route all Housing minicom's to contact centre	01-Apr-06	TBC; minimal	Agreed in principle with SB, initial conversation held with Carla Segel. SH to progress
		Phase out minicoms and replace with Typetalk	?		
		Investigate SMS as means of access (1 in 5 only has internet access, how many have mobile phone)	01-Jun-07	Customer services	Customer services state this will be delivered in 2 years
Capture informal complaints comments and suggestions	Able to influence service delivery without having to submit a formal complaint	Comment card/book in Turkish/Kurdish to gather user feedback from Turkish/Kurdish surgeries in CSCs	01-Oct-05	Comms/ Printing - minimal	No update received
		Add field in CSC/Housing improvement plan to highlight customer/staff suggestions; & ensure these feed into housing "learning library"	Aug-05; Jan-06	N/A	Quick win, but no update received yet

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DRAFT CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That Customer Services in consultation with Property Services provide parking facilities for customers with disability as near as possible to the Customer Service Centres, which should be clearly marked for the use of disabled customers only.
2. That Customer Services provide 'Sign Video' system for deaf service users at the Customer Service Centres and a 'Type Talk' system at the Call Centre. This should replace the Minicom facility and deaf sign language interpreters.
3. The Review Panel endorses and agrees with the recommendations in the 'Reception Project' that the Communication Unit manages and control the printing and distribution of posters and leaflets. All leaflets and posters should include versions/ date of issue indicators, to assist in removal of obsolete items. It also further suggested that electronic copies of posters and leaflets be made available on the Council Website.
4. That all new employees visit the Call Centre and a Customer Service Centre as part of the Corporate Induction to the Council.
5. That Customer Services develop a forward plan in conjunction with Client Services of all major letters, information, bills, reminders etc being sent to residents throughout the year to enable Customer Services to prepare resources adequately.
6. That Customer Services cease the practise of asking customers their opinion of the service received after each call. That Customer Services seek to purchase a 'cast view' system which enables customers to give their opinion on a recorded system, the service received after each call, which includes ability to leave additional comments.
7. That Customer Services develop a mystery shopping exercise as part of their user consultation. The mystery shoppers to include local residents, businesses and council staff. The mystery shopping should include testing access for disabled users including parking facilities.
8. The Review Panel endorses the work being undertaken in further developing Customer Focus throughout the Council, this includes the Membership of the Institute of Customer Services.
9. That a monthly/quarterly award scheme for staff in Customer Services be introduced to recognise and award excellent customer service.
10. That regular service liaison meetings between Customer Services and Client Services be held. At each meeting at least one member of staff

from Customer Services should participate. The meetings should cover some of the following issues:

- Forward plan requirements;
- Service level performance;
- Consider reports from Team Managers from Customer Services for reasons for calls to Client Services;
- To confirm that cut of points are still correct;
- To compare data on number of issues which require Client Service actions and what proportion of those have been completed;
- Repeat calls statistics to be discussed including reasons;
- Information on key issues affecting the borough to be better communicated to Customer Services Officers. i.e. Parking enforcement during Christmas period;

In addition, all staff and team managers in Customer Services and Client Services should be advised of key outcomes arising out of service liaison meetings.

11. That a review be undertaken of IT support to Customer Services led by independent experts and supported by Council's IT Services.
12. That logs of system downtime be reported to each Customer Services Member Working Group meeting.
13. That Team Managers and senior staff members be trained to specialise (as a service champion) in particular service areas to reduce calling Client Services and improve service time. In addition, Team Managers to keep log of reasons for calling back office which is to be reported to liaison meetings.
14. That training in Customer Services and Client Services be co-ordinated and where possible shared. Where appropriate, staff from the switchboard to be included in this training.
15. That inline with the findings of Reception Project report, it is recommended that Security Staff at the Customer Service Centre be employed permanently by the Council with a varied role to include some of the following:
 - Welcoming Customers;
 - Establish the purpose of their visit and direct them accordingly;
 - Provide answers to basic queries;
 - Be responsible for the maintenance and updating of application forms, posters and leaflets display.
16. That Customer Services staff and Client Services staff be better informed of each others targets and performance. In addition, the 'cut of' point for each service as to different areas of responsibility needs to

be clearly defined and to be made readily and permanently available to all staff.

17. That the Call Centre be renamed 'Contact Centre' as it now deals with e-mails.
18. That Customer Services investigate the possibility of outside funding to further assist in the recruitment and training of new recruits.
19. That the roll out of parking permits to all centres be completed immediately.
20. That the charging arrangements for all client services be clarified. Client services need to be made aware of the number of calls / visits handled on their behalf along with the average time of their transaction, repeat visit / calls information to be included. Provision of this information will encourage client services to ensure a reduction in repeat visits / calls and to streamline their transactions to achieve reduced transaction times.
21. That the Customer Services Department aspires to achieve a Charter Mark award for Customer Services. It is the opinion of the Scrutiny Panel that the ability is there to 'win'.
22. That Customer Services look at purchasing a phone system that indicates the callers positioning in the queue and the estimated time of waiting.
23. That all Customer Service Centres introduce the facility to take credit/debit card payments.
24. That if Hornsey Town Hall is sold and there is a need to move the Customer Service Centre, that it be relocated to Hornsey Library;
25. Staff feedback needs to be enhanced, bottom up. Four issues below were raised with members of the Scrutiny Panel and indicate that feedback opportunity for staff is not as effective as it should be.
 - Housing Benefit application form needs to have section for applicants to give permission at the time of application for others to make enquiries / representations on the applicant's behalf.
 - Housing surveyors need to leave a slip stating what is to be done.
 - Income Support and Housing Benefit to check if there is a claim being processed prior to taking of income recovery action
 - Parking enforcement during public holidays, especially Christmas holidays.

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