



Haringey Council

Overview & Scrutiny Committee

On 6th December 2007

Report Title: Response to the Scrutiny Review of Customer Services - 2007 Update

Report of: Director of Corporate Resources

Wards(s) affected: All

Report for: Non-Key Decision

1. Purpose

To agree the report outlining the conclusions and recommendations of the Review.

2. Recommendations

That Members review and agree the progress made by Customer Services in relation to the recommendations of the Customer Service Scrutiny Review report.

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3. Executive Summary

This report is to provide an update for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, of actions taken to date resulting from the Scrutiny Review of Customer Services 2006.

4. Reasons for any change in policy or for new policy development (if applicable)
N/A

5. Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

4. Strategic Implications

4.1 None

5. Chief Financial Officer Comments

5.1 The Chief Financial Officer has been consulted on the contents of this report. There are no direct financial implications as all the recommendations have been undertaken within existing cash limited resources however, a number of the recommendations have led to improved value for money and improved efficiency.

6. Legal Implications

6.1 The Head of Legal Services has been consulted on the content of this progress report and has no specific comment to make.

7. Equalities Implications

7.1 None

8. Consultation

8.1 The Review report has been submitted to the relevant departments for consideration of technical accuracy and feasibility of the recommendations.

9. Feedback Report

9.1 Background

The Overview & Scrutiny Committee commissioned a Scrutiny Review into Customer Services as part of its work programme for 2005/06. The review topic was chosen because of concerns previously raised about the performance of Customer Services (CS). The Scrutiny Review Panel's aim was to look at the performance of the Council's four Customer Service Centres (CSCs) and the Contact Centre and make recommendations on ways they could be further improved.

Of the 25 recommendations made in the Scrutiny Review report, CS accepted 19. A tabular tracking report has been attached as appendix 1 which describes achievements and charts progress made to date.

9.2 Highlights

Of the 19 accepted recommendations some of the most significant successes have been highlighted in the points below.

- Recommendation 6 related to the enhancement of staff feedback, particularly with regards to a staff suggestion scheme. This process is now working well in the CSCs, and additional work is currently being done to improve feedback in the Contact Centre.

- Recommendation 15 was that parking permits be rolled out to all centres. This was implemented immediately after the report was released.
- Recommendation 17 was that CS provides a 'Sign Video' system for deaf service users at the CSCs and a 'Type Talk' system at the Contact Centre, to replace the existing Minicom facility and deaf sign language interpreters. The Sign Video service is now operation in Wood Green CSC, with roll out to the Apex House CSC planned for the coming year. The Type Talk service replaced the Minicom service in the Contact Centre in August 2007.
- Recommendation 19 asked that the single queue at Apex House CSC be reconfigured as a matter of urgency. This issue was addressed immediately after the report was released.
- Recommendation 22 asked that regular service liaison meetings between management and staff from CS and Client Services be held as required, with at least one member of staff from CS participating. A recommended agenda was also provided. The agenda is now being used at all service liaison meetings, which are held monthly with operational staff in attendance, and quarterly with senior management representation.
- Recommendation 23 was to ensure that all new employees visit the Contact Centre and a CSC, as part of the Corporate Induction. Organisational Development and Learning have included a visit to the Contact Centre, and the CSC locations into the Corporate Induction tour of the Borough.

9.3 Next Phase Activities

With ongoing reference to the Scrutiny Review report, future activities have been planned to take forward CS to improve performance and service delivery.

Recommendation 1 of the report was not initially accepted as it was found that the management costs of monitoring and tracking the reduced survey, outweighed the benefits of the reduction. However, the service has reconsidered its position and is looking to implement the recommendation as part of the development of a new SAP CRM system, to be introduced in May 2008.

Recommendation 7 was also not accepted. It asked that a review be undertaken of all aspects of Information Technology and Communications (ICT) support to CS. As a result of the Council re-shaping exercise in 2006, a new leadership structure has been put in place which now links ICT with CS. The new Assistant Director of Access and Customer Focus will ensure that the customer experience is improved using technology, via joint working solutions.

Recommendation 25 referred to the recharging arrangements to Client Services, and asked that these be clarified. The intention was to provide information to the Client

Services that would encourage a reduction in repeat visits / calls and to streamline processes to reduce transaction times. Analysis has been provided to the Client Services that has been used to explore the reasons for increased contacts, the next steps being to develop strategies to reduce the need for customer contacts, by improving processes and the customer experience.

Service performance has increased since the implementation of the scrutiny review recommendations. That said, the service has continued to struggle with performance both in the Service Centres and in the Contact Centre. In 2006, Customer Services merged a local improvement plan with the recommendations from the scrutiny action plan to form a merged improvement plan. This plan has achieved an improvement in performance and has recently been supplemented by a plan to accelerate performance to the required standard.

9.4 Conclusions

Customer Services has continued to develop since the scrutiny report was issued. A number of new services have been moved into the Contact Centre and Service Centres. This has increased the range and depth of services available to residents and has made the experience that the service delivers more complete through the resident's eyes.

Since the review, performance in Customer Services has improved. The average cost per call has also reduced over this period with the service now representing much better value for money. However, a new challenge for the service will be in managing the transition of the Homes for Haringey repair calls and resulting reduction in workload.

Table of responses, Scrutiny Review of Customer Services

Recommendation	Response	Progress 2006	Update Nov 2007	Ownership
CUSTOMER SERVICES PERFORMANCE				
<p>Recommendation 1 That Customer Services Department considers the value of the user satisfaction survey undertaken by Customer Services Officers after each interaction. The Panel believes this practise should be ceased to improve service time.</p>	<p>Not accepted The service has considered the recommendation and is proposing to continue with the user satisfaction survey at the end of each service request. A great deal of useful data is derived from the survey and an enhancement (shortly to be introduced) will add more value by allowing staff to include details of the reason for dissatisfaction against the service request</p>	<p>2006 update: Data is now being analysed each month and arrangements are being developed to provide a suite of information to service managers and to client services.</p>	<p>2007 update: A number of pilot initiatives were undertaken to address this recommendation. A review of these pilots concluded that the recommendation should not be implemented, as measure wasn't value for money. However we are reviewing this position in light of an update to the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system. This will allow fewer surveys to be completed with better quality and richer information.</p>	<p>Assistant Director, Access and Customer Focus</p>
<p>Recommendation 2 That Customer Services develop a mystery shopping exercise as part of their performance assessment process. The mystery shoppers to include local residents, disabled people, businesses and council officers. The mystery shopping should include testing access for disabled users including parking facilities.</p>	<p>Accepted The service is working towards undertaking a mystery shopping exercise by September 2006</p>		<p>2007 update: The Customer services for London group (CSLG) have been working to deploy a low cost mystery-shopping model based on mutual aid from other London Borough. This project has been delayed. We are therefore looking at short-terms solutions while the pan London initiative completes its pilot stage.</p>	<p>Service Development Manager</p>

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<p>Recommendation 3 That the monthly award scheme for staff in Customer Services be re-introduced to recognise and reward excellent customer service.</p>	<p>Accepted The scheme has now been re-activated. Awards for the past year are about to be made.</p>	<p>2006 update: As a one-off, and to reward staff at a particularly busy period of the year the award from April is to be 2 x £100 (1 each for a member of staff in the Contact Centre and the Customer Services Centres).</p>	<p>2007 update: The WOW awards have added to the reward and recognition work that the service has undertaken. A new scheme is currently being piloted at the North Tottenham CSC. Once evaluated the scheme will be rolled out across the service.</p>	<p>Finance & Performance Manager</p>
<p>Recommendation 4 That training for Customer Services and Client Services staff be co-ordinated and where possible shared.</p>	<p>Partially accepted It is accepted that we should co-ordinate training and action is in hand to make this happen, where it is possible. However the very different nature of the training required by Customer Services and client services staff means that shared training is not always feasible</p>		<p>2007 update: A number of joint training programmes have been completed to cover legislative issues which are joined by client services. Benefits and Local Taxation has been a key partner in sharing training resources and programmes.</p>	<p>Service Development Manager</p>
<p>Recommendation 5 That Team Managers keep log of reasons for calls to Client Services and that this be reported to liaison meetings. All calls to Client Services by Customer Services staff must be authorised by Team Managers.</p>	<p>Partially accepted Calls to client services are, in many cases, part of the standard procedure agreed with the client service. It is agreed that all calls outside the processes should first be authorised by managers before being made.</p>	<p>2006 update: log in place</p>	<p>2007 update: This process has proved to be impractical due to the volume of contacts. New Customer Service Officers (CSO) targets are currently being piloted that focus on keeping contact with client departments down to 20% or less.</p>	<p>Assistant Contact Centre Managers</p>
<p>Recommendation 6 Staff feedback needs to be enhanced, bottom up. In addition the staff suggestion scheme should be reintroduced.</p>	<p>Accepted</p>		<p>2007 update: Process working well in CSCs. Additional work has been put into the Contact Centre as part of an improvement plan. Groups representing CSO, Team Manager, Trade Unions and senior managers meet with AD Access</p>	<p>Assistant Director, Access and Customer Focus</p>

Recommendation	Response	Progress 2006	Update Nov 2007	Ownership
<p>Recommendation 7 That a review be undertaken of all aspects of Information Technology and Communications support to Customer Services. Led by independent experts and supported by Council's IT Services.</p>	<p>Not accepted It is accepted that the Customer services operation is wholly dependent on the availability of effective IT systems in both Customer Services and client services. In the last year or so, there have been interruptions in service due to failures in our IT managed service and as a result of the Hemel Hempstead depot fire. These have been dealt with appropriately and have resulted in changed contractual arrangements, and the in-sourcing of ICT management. Support to Customer services will continue to be a priority. Accepted</p>		<p>and Customer Focus to share in the development of the service and highlight bottom up issues. 2007 update: A new leadership structure has been put in place linking IT services with CS. Joint ad-hoc "SWAT" teams are being formed around key technology challenges impacting on customer service. This year a major project to upgrade the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system is underway. The new Assistant Director of Access and Customer Focus is sponsoring this work to ensure that this system further improves the customer experience and reduces the cost per transaction to the authority.</p>	Head of IT
<p>Recommendation 8 That logs of system down-time be reported to each Customer Services Member Working Group meeting.</p>			<p>2007 update: Improvements in the IT helpdesk has reduced the number of issues. Further improvements are expected as part of the new joint management structure.</p>	Assistant Director, Access and Customer Focus
<p>Recommendation 9 That the planned saving targets for the next three years are considered to be achievable whilst</p>	Accepted		<p>2007 update: The saving target for Customer service is being address via the budget setting process. Key in achieving the saving is delivery of the service target.</p>	Assistant Director, Access and Customer Focus

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maintaining existing targets.			<p>Two streams of work are underway ensure that the budget target does not impact on performance.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Value for money review of the service in relation to nearest neighbours. This to enable best practice to be applied to CS and efficiencies others have been able to demonstrated to be built into CS. 2. Channel shift, to move those customer who are able to cheaper ways of doing business with the Council. 	
CUSTOMER CARE				
<p>Recommendation 10 The Review Panel endorsed the projects being developed by the Corporate Customer Focus Manager. This includes the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further developing Customer Focus throughout the Council through a Customer Focus Strategy; • Membership of the Institute of Customer Services, including opportunities for staff development/qualifications in the field; 	Accepted		<p>Update 2007: The Council won the National Customer Service Award for its successful implementation of the WOW awards.</p> <p>Over a thousand nominations have been received from customers.</p>	Customer Focus Manager

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> That the Communication Unit manages and controls 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. In addition, electronic copies of posters and leaflets be made available on the Council Website. 				
<p>Recommendation 11</p> <p>That in line with the findings of Reception Project report, it is recommended that firstly the need for security staff at all Customer Service Centres be investigated. Secondly if there is a need, that they be employed permanently by the Council with a varied role to include some of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Welcoming customers; Direct customers to appropriate officers; Provide answers to basic queries; Be responsible for the 	<p>Partially accepted</p> <p>The main recommendation to review the use of security staff is accepted.</p> <p>It is appropriate that their role should include meeting and greeting customers, directing them to reception and staff within the centre and assisting with maintenance and updating of leaflets.</p> <p>However, it is not considered appropriate for them to provide answers to basic queries, other than hours of opening, how the centre's queuing is arranged, where other offices are. Definition of what is acceptable will be required and clear guidance given.</p>	<p>Further investigations are to be undertaken.</p>	<p>Update 2007: The service mix within the CSC has changed. With the addition of Housing Preventions and Options case handling (Homeless management), the focus on the security staff has been on providing a safe environment for all service users and staff.</p> <p>A review of the security at CSCs was presented to the Council and Employee Joint Consultative Committee (CEJCC) on 12th November 2007. The report: "Review of security and safety in Customer Care Centres" by Head of Housing Needs and Strategy, updated the panel and drew attention to the safe and secure environment needed to provide this service.</p>	<p>Customer Service Managers</p>

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<p>maintenance and updating of displays containing application forms, posters and leaflets etc.</p>				
<p>Recommendation 12 That the Call Centre be renamed 'Contact Centre' as it now deals with e-mails.</p>	<p>Accepted This name more closely reflects the changing nature of the centre</p>	<p>Update 2006: Plan to formalise name change to be brought forward.</p>	<p>Update 2007: Informally referred to as the Contact Centre, however still inconsistent as no formal action has taken place. As part of the next phase of development the Call / Contact Centre needs to establish an internal identity that conveys to internal and customers the brand values that the organisation wishes to project around customer service over the phone.</p>	<p>Assistant Director, Access and Customer Focus</p>
<p>Recommendation 13 It is the opinion of the Scrutiny Panel that the ability is there to 'win' a national award for the excellent service provided by the department. The Panel encourages Customer Services to apply for a Charter Mark award or other national awards for Customer Services.</p>	<p>Accepted The Charter Mark is currently being revised and the resource requirement to achieve it is not yet known. There is a balance to be struck between the benefit of the recognition and the cost of resourcing the preparation of a submission. There may be opportunities for other forms of recognition which can be pursued more cost effectively.</p>		<p>Update 2007: The service has not been successful in any applications. A key problem holding the service back has been its performance. Once this is corrected, the service will again look for recognition.</p>	<p>Assistant Director, Access and Customer Focus</p>
<p>Recommendation 14 That all Customer Service Centres introduce the facility to take credit/debit card payments immediately.</p>	<p>Accepted The timescale for implementation is dependent on IT investment and implementation programmes.</p>		<p>Update 2007: Facility now available at all CSCs.</p>	<p>Service Development Manager</p>

Recommendation	Response	Progress 2006	Update Nov 2007	Ownership
<p>Recommendation 15 That the roll out of parking permits to all centres be completed immediately.</p>	<p>Accepted The timescale for implementation is dependent on IT investment and implementation programmes.</p>	<p>Update 2006: Hornsey CSC parking permit issue has gone live, the remaining CSCs will go live over the next two months</p>	<p>Update 2007: Process completed. New "Match Day" scheme has also gone live in North Tottenham CSC.</p>	<p>Service Development Manager</p>
<p>Recommendation 16 That it be investigated whether the demand and usage of the Customer Service Centre in Hornsey justifies the need for a centre in the area. In addition that in future the Accommodation Strategy considers, there is a need to move the Hornsey Customer Service Centre, that it be relocated to Hornsey Library.</p>	<p>Partially accepted At the time of the Scrutiny Review Hornsey was underutilised. However, initiatives have been implemented which are increasing its use.</p>	<p>Update 2006: The co-location, in the Customer Service Centre of Homes for Haringey is introducing new client groups to the centre.</p>	<p>Update 2007: Work underway to evaluate options for Hornsey CSC as part of the wider Hornsey Town Hall Redevelopment plan. Corporate Property services are working on a plan with options for consideration.</p>	<p>Head of Property Services</p>
<p>Recommendation 17 That Customer Services provide a 'Sign Video' system for deaf service users at the Customer Service Centres and a 'Type Talk' system at the Contact Centre. These should replace the Minicom facility and deaf sign language interpreters.</p>	<p>Accepted</p>	<p>Update 2006: The Sign Video service is now operation in both centres. Promotion of the service will be taking place in July. The Type Talk service is scheduled to be introduced to replace the existing Minicom service in late summer, subject to resolution of residual telephony issues.</p>	<p>Update 2007: SignVideo rolled out Wood Green CSC. Type Talk has also been successfully introduced.</p>	<p>Lead Customer Service Centre Manager Contact Centre Manager</p>
<p>Recommendation 18 That Customer Services in consultation with Property</p>	<p>Accepted</p>	<p>Update 2006: A review of disabled bay positioning and enforcement is being undertaken</p>	<p>Update 2007: Bays in place. Requirement now built into the specification of CSCs.</p>	<p>Head of Property Services</p>

Recommendation	Response	Progress 2006	Update Nov 2007	Ownership
<p>Services/ Highways Department 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 and clamping be enforced for unauthorised parking.</p>		<p>with Facilities Management.</p>		
<p>Recommendation 19 That the single queue at Apex House Customer Service Centre be reconfigured as a matter of urgency.</p>	<p>Accepted</p>	<p>Update 2006: This has been addressed by improvements to the Customer Relationship Management System which has reduced the interaction and time spent at reception and eliminated the bottlenecks.</p>	<p>Update 2007: With the redevelopment of Apex House, CS is looking at how to improve the flow of customers in site and how to have the lessons learnt taken forward to the new site. Opportunities to co-locate with Health and other providers are also being explored.</p>	<p>Lead Customer Services Manager</p>
CLIENT SERVICES				
<p>Recommendation 20 That Team Managers and staff members be trained as service champions in particular service areas to reduce calling Client Services and improve service time.</p>	<p>Accepted</p>	<p>Update 2006: Complete</p>		<p>Service Development Manager</p>
<p>Recommendation 21 That Customer Services be responsible for the development and update of</p>	<p>Accepted</p>		<p>Update 2007: Forward plan in place around Benefits and Local Taxation and Parking events.</p>	<p>Service Development Manager</p>

Recommendation	Response	Progress 2006	Update Nov 2007	Ownership
<p>a forward plan in conjunction with Client Services which has details of all major letters, information, bills, reminders etc being sent to residents throughout the year to enable Customer Services to prepare resources adequately.</p>				
<p>Recommendation 22 That regular service liaison meetings between management and staff from Customer Services and Client Services be held as required. At each meeting at least one member of staff from Customer Services should participate. The meetings should cover some of the following issues:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Forward plan requirements; 2. To check/monitor how service level agreements are being applied; 3. Consider reports from Team Managers from Customer Services for reasons for calls to Client Services; 4. To confirm that cut of 	Accepted	Update 2006: Complete	Update 2007: Process working well with improved communication and joint working.	Service Development Manager

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<p>points are still correct;</p> <p>5. To compare data on number of issues which require Client Service actions and what proportion of those have been completed;</p> <p>6. Repeat calls statistics to be discussed including reasons;</p> <p>7. Information on key issues affecting the borough to be better communicated to Customer Services Officers. i.e. Parking enforcement during Christmas period;</p> <p>8. Customer Services and Client Services performance targets;</p> <p>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.</p>	Accepted		Update 2007: Corporate Induction now includes Customer Services and a visit to Contact Centre.	Head of OD & L
<p>Recommendation 23 That as part of the Corporate Induction, organised by Organisational Development & Learning, all new employees visit the Contact</p>				

Recommendation	Response	Progress 2006	Update Nov 2007	Ownership
<p>Centre and a Customer Service Centre.</p>				
<p>Recommendation 24 That Customer Services investigate additional funding streams to further assist in the recruitment and training of new recruits.</p>	Accepted		<p>Update 2007: permanent recruitment is currently on hold. Once the current budget round has been completed this recommendation will be reviewed as part of our people strategy.</p>	Assistant Director, Access and Customer Focus
<p>Recommendation 25 That the recharging arrangements to 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.</p>	Accepted	<p>Update 2006: The analysis has been provided to the Client Services and has been used to explore the reasons for the increase in contacts.</p> <p>The next steps are to develop strategies to reduce the need for customers to contact the Council, by improving the end-to-end process and the customer experience of it</p>	<p>Update 2007: Funding strategy of CS to be review in light of transfer of HFH Repairs call handling.</p>	Assistant Director, Access and Customer Focus