❋ HARINGEY COUNCIL ❋

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 connivance. 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. Ie 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.

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Cllr John Bevan
Chair, Scrutiny Review of Customer Services

Appendix A

<u>**Answers to Questions to Executive Member for Community Involvement**</u>
<u>**Scrutiny Panel on 7 November 2005**</u>

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.

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.

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.