

**Draft**  
**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:

<b>Customer Services for London Survey results</b>	<b>London average</b>	<b>Haringey</b>
Was the Customer Services Officer you spoke with welcoming and professional	98.7% yes	97.8% yes
Was the time that you waited acceptable	92.4% yes	94.8% yes

<b>Customer Services for London Survey results</b>	<b>London average</b>	<b>Haringey</b>
given the nature of your enquiry		
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.

<b>Parking</b>	Resident and local business vehicle users, non-Haringey residents and businesses parking in the area
<b>Abandoned Vehicles</b>	Haringey residents and non-Haringey residents
<b>Graffiti removal</b>	Haringey residents and non-Haringey residents
<b>Concessionary travel</b>	Resident pensioners and disabled residents
<b>Housing</b>	Any Haringey Council tenant and/or resident in housing need
<b>Benefits and Local Taxation</b>	Any lower income resident for benefits and any resident for Council Tax
<b>Child Protection</b>	Anyone with concerns about a resident child.
<b>The Children's Service</b>	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
<b>StreetScene:</b> Parking Abandoned Vehicles Concessionary Travel Permits Graffiti Removal	75949	8941	84890
<b>Housing Management and Repairs</b>	72890	20856	93746
<b>Housing Strategy and Needs</b>	6813	12049	18862
<b>Benefits and Local Taxation:</b> Benefits Council Tax	144169	100421	244590
<b>Children's Service</b>	0	12147	12147
<b>Others</b>			
<b>Total</b>	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.