

## LONDON BOROUGH OF BRENT

Executive - 12 September 2005

### Report from Director of Housing & Customer Services

For information

Wards affected:  
All

**Report Title: One Stop Shop Annual Performance Report  
March 2004 - April 2005**

Forward Plan Ref: HSG&CS-05/06-07

#### 1.0 Summary

- 1.1 This covering report introduces the attached detailed report, which provides Members with performance information for the One Stop Shop service (6 customer drop in centres and a 60 seat contact centre) for the period April 2004 to March 2005.

#### 2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are asked to note the report, the broad role that the One Stop Shop performs which includes customer care standards organisational leadership, performance, challenges and service priorities for 2005/06 and determine further or additional information requirements.

#### 3.0 Financial Implications

- 3.1 The One Stop Shop spent £4.9m in 2004-05, which was in line with the budget for the year.
- 3.2 The current net General Fund budget for the One Stop Shop in 2005-06 is £4.068m. The Unit also generates other income through internal trading within the Council and with Brent Housing Partnership. There are budget pressures facing the One Stop Shop in 2005-06, most notably the impact of a job evaluation exercise. Officers have been able to reduce the impact of this on the 2005-06 budget through one-off funding without any impact on service delivery, and currently predict that the outturn for the year will be in line with budget. However there remains a problem of around £200k in relation to this issue for 2006-07 and beyond, which will be addressed through the upcoming budget process.
- 3.3 If members require further or additional information this may have financial implications in terms of system changes / staffing resources.

#### 4.0 Legal Implications

There are no legal implications

## **5.0 Diversity Implications**

The service aims to ensure that frontline staff represent the diverse community served. Also, that customers are treated as individuals and diverse special needs are sensitively identified and wherever possible catered for to ensure maximum access to the service and consistent and fair treatment.

## **6.0 Detail**

6.1 This year's report has been streamlined and represents demand and performance information only. Equalities, Service Development and Corporate Customer Service initiatives and progress are no longer included to avoid duplication of reporting. These areas are reported in separately to the appropriate forums.

### **Demand & Performance**

6.2 Overall, 939,600 customer enquiries (via personal visits, telephone, fax, letter and e-mail) were dealt with by the One Stop Shop compared to an overall 1,007,500 during the previous year. There has been a reduction of 6% in total demand during 2004/05.

6.3 This is the second year of full electronic recording of performance statistics as a result of the introduction of our new Customer Relationship Management 'E Shop' software in 2002. This continues the production of more accurate performance data.

6.4 The Shop 'drop in' service accounts for 22% (208,500) of overall demand and Brent House remains the busiest location with 56,200 enquiries (a major refurbishment of Brent House will take place during 05/06) followed closely by the Town Hall with 55,900 . After the Kilburn relocation and increased opening hours last year and the subsequent 141% rise in demand, levels have reduced by 21%, Kingsbury's reduction of 39% is a direct result of reduced opening hours. Housing Benefit, Housing Resources and Council Tax enquiries remain the highest 3 areas of demand in the Shops.

6.5 Average waiting times (time waiting to be seen by an officer from arrival) increased slightly by 1 minute but were still within the target 20 minutes. Interview times (actual time spent with an officer dealing with enquiry plus any additional activity necessary once customer has left) increased by 6 minutes but again were still within the target 30 minutes.

6.6 Contact Centre enquiries reduced this year by 19,800. Highest demand remains with Council Tax and Housing Benefit enquiries. Contact Centre demand accounts for 79% of overall service demand at 765,916 (this also includes on-line demand). The busiest Contact Centre teams in order of demand are, Switchboard, Revenue & Benefits, Streetcare and the Generic team. The top ten enquiries to the Generic team vary slightly each year but General Information, Social Services and Council Tax remain within the top five.

6.7 A new Saturday morning 9am -1pm telephone service was successfully launched in July 2004 and demand averages 396 per month (3,568 per annum) and is increasing.

- 6.8 Public awareness of the 'extended hours' service between 5pm and 8pm on weekdays has grown and demand was 16,348 an increase of 6% (926 calls). The Cashiers Line (credit card payments) demand increased by 59.2% and £1,308, 125 Council Tax was collected, a revenue increase of 6% compared to last year.
- 6.9 Answer rates vary across the teams with a good standard of performance in all areas except for Council Tax and Housing Benefit. Some aspects of Customer service in this area remains poor. Challenges still remain including replacing the majority of temporary agency staff with permanent staff, improving the quality for enquiry handling towards greater resolution and external funding to increase resources to improve call answer rates .
- 6.10 On-line enquiries continue to show a year on year increase in demand. 8,200 e-mail/on-line enquiries were received, which is up by 9.3% (650) this year, which is taken up additional staffing resource. Council Tax, Streetcare and General enquiries account for the top 3 areas of demand. Written correspondence continues to decrease.
- 6.11 A number of initiatives have been implemented to meet the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. These include interactive voice response (IVR) for visually impaired customers and high back chairs in shop environments.

#### **Customer satisfaction**

- 6.12 Ratings remain high. 31.6% of customers visiting the Main Desk returned a 98.8% satisfaction rating, exceeding the 95% target. 11.7% of shop customers returned a 98% combined very good/good service rating which exceeds the 95% target. 97% of customers involved in a 'snap-shot' survey of the shops rated the service very good to satisfactory. Similar snap-shot surveys showed the following levels of satisfaction Streetcare Contact Centre 78%, Generic Contact Centre 95% and E-Mail service within the Contact Centre 61%. Whilst the overall number of complaints received about the service was just 0.02% (235) of all enquiries, complaints levels have increased by 58% (89% regarding R&B) and this is directly linked to Council Tax & Housing Benefit telephone customer service joining the One Stop Shop. 235 complaints were received and 44 were not upheld. 91 were partially upheld. 111 were fully upheld. The remainder are still pending or were withdrawn. The complaints have provided valuable management information which is used to improve the service.
- 6.13 The One Stop Shop dealt with 589 complaints on behalf of other service areas, a reduction of 31%.

## **Staffing**

- 6.14 Staff turnover increased this year from 9.6% last year to 10.9%. There were 4 maternity related absences – this trend remains static. A total of 28 staff were recruited to cover turnover, secondments and promotions. Two individual members of staff achieved staff awards through public and colleague nomination at the annual ceremony. Sickness absence levels significantly improved from an average of 16.8 days sick per person last year to 9.0 days this year though the previous high levels were caused by some long term sickness absence. One member of staff was dismissed under the Council's Incapability procedure due to unacceptable sickness absence.

## **Budget**

- 6.15 The service performed well given the challenge of a job re-evaluation exercise, which increased the salaries budget considerably. Careful management of the budget and expenditure resulted in a contained, 0.1% (£4.5k) overspend budget variance on the full year budget of £4.9m. There are longer term implications, see 2.1.

## **IT: E-Shop**

- 6.16 Development continued around the E-Shop system demanding most of the IT resources to deal with implementation and teething problems. Revs & Bens Viewstar access remained problematic during the year. The One Stop Shop hosted 16 visits in the year including 2 CRM open days hosted by the CRM National Project and attended by 21 Local Authorities. There were 15 requests for information about CRM and IT in the One Stop Shop

## **Welfare Benefits Take Up Service**

- 6.17 The Welfare Benefits Service booked 226 appointments for 2004/2005. This is a decrease of 78% compared to the previous year (2003/2004). The Welfare Benefits Service was restructured in 04/05 to achieve financial savings. The service was reduced during the year due to difficulties in retaining temporary staff and conflicting priorities. The service was suspended from 1<sup>st</sup> September 2004 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2005.
- 6.18 The total estimated benefits claimed for 2004/05 was £249,320.37 compared to £1,629,715.51 last year. This is a decrease of 84% - again this is attributable to the suspension of service. Since the Welfare Benefit's initiative began in November 2000, it is estimated that just over 6 million pounds (£6,172,451.37) has been raised in previously unclaimed benefits.
- 6.19 This aspect of the service has been affected by staff turnover and reliance upon temporary agency staff has caused problems this year. Permanent staff will be recruited next year.

## **Conclusions**

- 6.20 The service has experienced reduced take up for the second successive year as a result of changing demand trends, the re-design of service across the organisation and improved efficiency in Revenues & Benefits back office.

- 6.21 The Revenues & Benefits telephone team merger with the One Stop Shop Contact Centre continued to impact upon management time because the service has serious under performance issues when it transferred back in house, and inherited resource levels at the end of the EDS contract have determined the standard and level of service that can be provided and the rate of progress that can be made to improve the situation. The three year improvement plan is being implemented and overall performance is slowly beginning to improve.
- 6.22 Both the volume and the nature of customer demand continue to change and the service remains flexible to respond to the needs of the organisation and customers. Reducing demand in some areas has not resulted in surplus capacity but has enabled increased activity in other areas to address changing priorities. The service is both pro active and reactive and is able to take on more detailed transactions on behalf of the service providers as needs dictate by the effective and flexible use of resources. Progress was made with Council Tax processes this year and One Stop Shop staff became further empowered to resolve enquiries in partnership with BFS and Capita. This approach will continue with the further integration of the Council Tax and Housing Benefit service and will be extended to Brent Housing Partnership and Contact Centre expansion.
- 6.23 Annual variation in demand for the One Stop Shop service occurs for a number of reasons such as changes to corporate or service area priorities, initiatives or problems. The increased accuracy and reliability of performance data for managers will enable improved service efficiency and the longer term customer service planning and development. Both this year's and next year's demand reports will help to influence and determine the re-design of customer service for the next ten years in line with Gershon efficiency requirements and the Council's plans for a new Civic Centre.

### **Background Papers**

Quarterly performance reports 2004/05

### **Contact Officers**

Any person wishing to inspect the above papers should contact

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