



## One Council Overview and Scrutiny Committee

**Wednesday, 25 January 2012 at 7.30 pm**  
Committee Room 4, Brent Town Hall, Forty Lane,  
Wembley, HA9 9HD

### Membership:

#### Members

Councillors:

Ashraf (Chair)  
Colwill (Vice-Chair)  
Beckman  
Chohan  
Lorber  
McLennan  
Mitchell Murray  
Sheth

#### first alternates

Councillors:

Brown  
BM Patel  
Van Kalwala  
Hirani  
Matthews  
Harrison  
Denselow  
Kabir

#### second alternates

Councillors:

Beck  
Kansagra  
Mashari  
Hossain  
Brown  
Hector  
Gladbaum  
Kataria

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**The press and public are welcome to attend this meeting**

# Agenda

Introductions, if appropriate.

Apologies for absence and clarification of alternate members

Item	Page
<b>1 Declarations of personal and prejudicial interests</b>	
Members are invited to declare at this stage of the meeting any relevant financial or other interest in the items on the agenda.	
<b>2 Deputations (if any)</b>	
<b>3 Minutes of the last meeting held on 22 November 2011</b>	1 - 10
The minutes are attached.	
<b>4 Matters arising</b>	
<b>5 Presentation - Project Athena</b>	
This is a Pan London project involving 6 Local authorities to create a single ICT and shared services platform for London public sector. A presentation will be delivered by Clive Heaphy, Director of Finance and Corporate services, giving details of the project including the benefits of the project, the implementation proposal, timescales and costs.	
<b>6 Future of Customer Services</b>	11 - 18
This report explains plans to change customer service arrangements in Brent to drive up standards of service to residents in response to society's changing attitudes towards higher standards of service delivery, quality and customer care. The report therefore sets out principles that drive improvements to customer services through One Council projects.	
<b>7 Performance report for quarter 2, 2011-12</b>	
This report summarises performance information in relation to Health and Wellbeing Strategy and other strategies which collectively enable the Council to deliver Brent's Borough Plan.	
I have attached hard copies produced in colour for members only.	

## 8 One Council Overview and Scrutiny work programme

19 - 22

The work programme is attached.

## 9 Date of next meeting

The next meeting of the One Council Overview and Scrutiny Committee is scheduled for 21 March 2012.

## 10 Any other urgent business

Notice of items raised under this heading must be given in writing to the Democratic Services Manager or his representative before the meeting in accordance with Standing Order 64.



- Please remember to **SWITCH OFF** your mobile phone during the meeting.
- The meeting room is accessible by lift and seats will be provided for members of the public.
  - Toilets are available on the second floor.
  - Catering facilities can be found on the first floor near the Paul Daisley Hall.
  - A public telephone is located in the foyer on the ground floor, opposite the Porters' Lodge

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## MINUTES OF THE ONE COUNCIL OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE Tuesday, 22 November 2011 at 7.30 pm

PRESENT: Councillor Ashraf (Chair) and Councillors Beckman, Brown (alternate for Councillor Lorber), Chohan, Gladbaum (alternate for Councillor Mitchell Murray), McLennan and Sheth.

Also Present: Councillors Butt (Deputy Leader of the Council/Lead Member for Resources) and Long (Lead Member for Housing).

Apologies were received from: Councillors Colwill, Lorber and Mitchell Murray

### 1. **Declarations of personal and prejudicial interests**

None declared.

### 2. **Minutes of the last meeting held on 14 September 2011**

RESOLVED:-

that the minutes of the last meeting held on 14 September 2011 be approved as an accurate record of the meeting.

### 3. **Matters arising**

*Work programme - Brent Fairtrade task group*

The Chair sought an update on progress with regard to the proposed Brent Fairtrade task group. In reply, Jacqueline Casson (Senior Policy Officer, Strategy, Partnerships and Improvement) informed the committee that Brent Fairtrade Network (BFN) were pursuing schools and businesses as potential partners and the future of the task group depended on the outcome of BFN's application for Fairtrade status this month.

### 4. **Arrangements for the future of Brent Housing Partnership**

Andy Donald (Director of Regeneration and Major Projects) presented the report that summarised the progress made on implementing the recommendations agreed by the Executive on 18 July following an independent review of the council's housing stock. The decisions included:-

- Council retention of ownership of the housing stock
- Undertake consultation with tenants and residents on the preferred option to manage the housing stock through an Optimised Arms Length Management Organisation (ALMO) arrangement with Brent Housing Partnership (BHP)

- The drafting of a new management agreement between the council and BHP with full heads of terms to be completed by October 2011
- A full review to be undertaken of key functions in order to deliver improvements and efficiencies
- A joint governance review is undertaken between the council and BHP

Andy Donald advised that the proposed optimised ALMO with BHP would maintain a strong relationship with residents and facilitate input from them. The arrangement would focus exclusively on housing management with the objective of achieving top quartile performer status in both delivery of housing management services and for value for money. In order to ensure success of this model, it was essential that a redefining of the relationship between the council and BHP was undertaken, with the council remaining responsible and accountable for housing management and BHP delivering the housing management service on behalf of, and being accountable to, the council. The relationship with the council and BHP would be bought forward through the governance review which was currently at draft stage, an efficiency review and a review of the Management Agreement between the two organisations.

Andy Donald advised that whilst the independent review had identified a number of strengths in the governance arrangements, some structural weaknesses had also developed particularly in respect of the council's expectations of what BHP had been expected to deliver. Members were referred to the measures to be undertaken to provide critical improvements as set out in the report. The efficiency review required 15% savings in back office costs within BHP to be achieved over a four year period, however it was possible this could be attained in three years. It was also important that this target was reached as this saving had been assumed within the context of the current remodelling of debt repayments in relation to the Housing Revenue Account (HRA). Andy Donald concluded by stating that following the tenants and residents consultation in January 2012, the final report would be put to the Executive in February 2012 with a view to securing a formal agreement in the summer of 2012.

During discussion by committee, Councillor Brown queried whether the comparatively high number of complaints received by BHP reflected their ability to accurately record complaints. He commented that other local authorities did not operate housing stock through ALMOs and sought further information on what were the advantages of the council continuing with the ALMO arrangement. He also enquired how long it would take for the debt repayments to be paid off. Councillor Sheth sought clarification concerning staff efficiencies and whether this could impact on customer satisfaction and the number of complaints received. He also sought views with regard to the possible impact of rent increases on rent collection rates and what measures were in place to stop these rates falling. Councillor McLennan asked whether the reduction on resources would also impact upon collection rates. In respect of the 15% savings, she enquired whether this was partly due to the move to the Civic Centre and sought information concerning what the staff ratio was likely to be.

The Chair asked whether BHP's move to the Civic Centre would allow them to work closer with the council and increase efficiency. Noting that approximately a third of complaints received by the council related to BHP, he enquired what measures were in place under the new arrangements to tackle this issue. The Chair also

sought clarification concerning BHP's apparent involvement in the purchasing of property in Barnet and Ealing and what measures were in place to ensure there was no repeat of such an incident.

In reply, Andy Donald advised that under the Efficiency Review, BHP would now share a number of procurement activities and back office functions. There were a number of contracts that were due to end shortly and ways of joint procurement were to be explored, including with other service areas and housing management organisations. Andy Donald explained that it was felt retaining BHP as an ALMO would help the BHP to achieve top quartile performer status. It was also possible that in the future BHP could undertake tasks beyond that of housing management, such as regeneration and an ALMO arrangement provided such flexibility. The arrangement facilitated residents' engagement and involvement and it was noted that resident involvement was already high through residents' panels and representation on the Board. There was also the possibility that moving housing services internally would have damaged the relationship enjoyed with residents who clearly valued BHP. The committee heard that it was hoped to reduce complaints through improving the performance of BHP and quality of services and a few areas in particular would be focused on. It was noted that there was a housing complaints procedure separate from the council's own corporate complaints procedure. A large number of local authorities received a significant proportion of housing related complaints. It was anticipated that the move to the Civic Centre would help harmonise the relationship between the council and BHP.

Andy Donald advised that it would take between 12 to 14 years to achieve some headroom with regard to the borrowing debt that would allow further activities to be able to be undertaken and a total of 20 years for the HRA pay-off to be completed. Although the council had been a benefactor in terms of the new funding arrangements, the funds remained ring-fenced for housing. Andy Donald explained that under the new efficiencies to be delivered, the council and BHP's finance teams would be brought together and there would be an overall reduction in back office posts. Some of these savings were attributable to the move to the Civic Centre, whilst the staff ratio was presently being discussed. Front office savings would be lesser and would be achieved mainly through a reduction in the number of contractors. Andy Donald acknowledged that rent increases posed a significant risk for rent collection rates and added to the overall reduction in benefits this was a big issue nationally. Maintaining dialogue with tenants and support services would be essential in addressing this issue and there were a number of practical measures that could be put in place to help tenants, such as arranging direct debit payments.

With regard to BHP erroneously purchasing properties in Barnet and Ealing, Andy Donald stressed that the new governance arrangements would ensure that such an event would not be possible in future. Clarity would be provided with regard to Board arrangements and the appropriate scrutiny measures would be put in place. A review of management arrangements would take place once the new Board was in place. Steps were also being taken to strengthen the relationship between the council and BHP and quarterly meetings between the two organisations were taking place.

With regard to complaints, Phillip Mears (Corporate Complaints Manager) confirmed that BHP had arrangements in place that ensured complaints were accurately reported and that it was usual for local authorities to have a large

proportion of housing related complaints. However, he added that there had been a significant reduction in the number of BHP complaints and similarly with the number being escalated.

Councillor Long (Lead Member for Housing) added that there would be opportunities to review the re-structure of BHP that had taken place seven years ago. She advised that a BHP sub-committee had identified the error with regard to properties bought in Barnet and Ealing, however further consideration needed to be undertaken with regard to scrutiny arrangements.

The Chair asked that an update on the housing transformation and governance arrangements be provided at a future meeting.

RESOLVED:-

that the report on arrangements for the future of Brent Housing Partnership be noted.

## **5. Annual Complaints Report 2010/2011**

Phillip Mears introduced the report and confirmed that in terms of the number of complaints under the council's Corporate Complaints Procedure referred to the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO), this had been the most successful year since recording had begun. A total of 72 decisions were made by the LGO in respect of council complaints, of which only four went to local settlement, representing 6% of LGO investigations where the council was requested to take action to resolve a complaint, the lowest in London against a London average of 21% and a national average of 27%. Members heard that the number of complaints had fallen by 36% compared to 2009/10 and there had been a reduction in stage two and stage three complaints of 28% and 42% respectively. One of the largest stakeholders, Revenue and Benefits, had seen a reduction of 70%. BHP had also experienced a significant reduction and this was partly attributable to changes in maintenance and repair arrangements.

Turning to annual complaints in Children and Families, Phillip Mears reported that 97% of stage one complaints were resolved at this stage, with only six complaints being escalated. By resolving complaints earlier, this helped the council achieve savings and the council was improving in this area in terms of accepting when mistakes had been made and was better prepared to remedy complaints. With regard to Adult Social Care, Phillip Mears stated that recent significant changes to legislation had led to increases in complaints, however the number received this year was still well below the number received in 2009 when the new procedure was implemented.

Phillip Mears commented that the improvements were attributable to improved training for complaints and in seeking to resolve complaints at the earliest stage possible. It was also anticipated that the Customer Services project would help increase the ability for early resolution of complaints. Members heard that the complaints process would be reduced from three to two stages next year and this would present a different challenge to ensuring that complaints were handled in an effective manner.



During discussion, Councillor Gladbaum sought further details in respect of the move from three to two complaint stages. In noting the lack of school places, she enquired whether a large number of complaints were received in respect of school admissions and what measures were being taken to address this. Councillor McLennan welcomed the progress that had been made but asked whether further savings through the One Council programme and changes to BHP and Benefits may lead to complaints rising. She also sought information with regard to a vexatious complaints policy and what percentage of complaints had been classified as vexatious.

The Chair also welcomed the decrease in complaints, however he noted the increase in compensation given in relation to complaints relating to BHP and he sought an explanation for this. Clarification was sought with regard to the LGO receiving 79 complaints but only providing 72 decisions. The Chair enquired whether there were serious concerns about the rise in the number of Children and Families related complaints. He commented that often a reason why residents may feel aggrieved about a particular issue was that they had felt that they were not being listened to and he suggested that this could be improved through greater engagement with them. Views were also sought as to reduction in complaints against the backdrop of service transformation.

In reply to the issues raised, Phillip Mears explained that the reason why the decisions made by the LGO were less than the complaints received was because a number of the complaints were still under investigation at the point at which the annual figures were compiled. Compensation payments had risen in respect of BHP despite a fall in complaints because some complaints may have a widespread and significant impact. Children and Families complaints were subject to statutory regulation and independently investigated and additionally the nature of the issues involved often made the complaints challenging and complicated to resolve. The committee noted that under changes to be made next year, stages one and two of the complaints process would be merged, with the council seeking to resolve the complaints in 20 working days. Should the complaint be escalated, it would be reviewed independently of the department by Phillip and his team on behalf of the Chief Executive. Phillip Mears advised that there were a significant number of complaints in relation to school admissions which remained a challenging issue because of the demand for places in the borough. Phillip undertook to provide the Committee with further information on how school admissions complaints were handled within Children & Families.

Phillip Mears stated that it was anticipated that complaints would rise as further savings needed to be made and the changes to Housing Benefits came into effect. However, he cited an earlier example concerning parking permit increases where the council had fully explained the reasons for these changes, resulting in a very few number of complaints being escalated beyond stage one and such an approach would be needed in future. In the case of changes to Benefits, careful consideration would be needed to explain that this was due to a Government initiative and to explain options to residents if this presented them with difficulties. Phillip Mears acknowledged the importance of engagement with complainants and cited Children and Families as an example who invited complainants in to discuss their problems with the relevant service manager which helped to resolve issues. In addition, a new Corporate Investigations Standard would be introduced under the new two stage procedures and would include the requirement for the officer

investigating the complaint to contact the complainant. With regard to the drop in complaints continuing despite the transformations in service and efficiencies, Phillip Mears commented that this was clearly not discouraging news, especially as complaints lodged to the LGO were not rising. Improvements in complaints training and a proactive and positive approach to complaints would also help the council in the future. The committee noted that around 2% of complaints were decided as vexatious.

The Chair requested an update on complaints during the next municipal year.

## **6. The One Council Programme - second update - 2011/12**

Phil Newby (Director of Strategy, Partnerships and Improvement) provided an update on the One Council programme and informed Members that some projects were in the process of closing and were now helping to deliver services. The overall status of the programme remained amber, however further savings were required so there was to be an expansion in the range of projects and there would be an element of risk involved in some of these. Individual Directorates were playing a greater role in the delivery of projects and there was an implicit need to achieve the savings targets set. Seven projects had now been completed, whilst 15 new projects were due to start. Phil Newby explained that the nature of the programme was changing, with initial goals focused on achieving efficiencies, however this now included implementing a transformation of services which sought to achieve the desired outcomes despite the fewer resources available. Risk areas included procurement, where savings were taking longer to achieve than anticipated, however efforts were being made to further professionalise staff in that area, despite the heavy demand for such skills. It was intended to undertake procurement activities at a larger scale, including working with other West London boroughs, although this would require a longer period to be achieved. There were also moves to migrate skills and knowledge more widely across the council to minimise the need for external assistance. The committee noted that the programme was on track to achieve the £27.8m savings target for 2011/12. Phil Newby then referred Members to appendix one of the report that outlined the structure of the One Council programme.

Irene Bremang (Programme Management Officer Manger, One Council Programme) then explained some of the processes involved in delivering the programme and advised that all projects were required to submit monthly project status reports to the Programme Management Office (PMO), and that the Programme Board meets every two weeks. The piloting of Departmental Portfolio Boards (DPB) was being undertaken within Environment and Neighbourhood Services, whereby the DPB ensures that greater departmental responsibility and ownership of One Council projects was undertaken, although these would still be reported back to the Programme Board, who would only intervene if problems had been identified. It was anticipated that additional DPBs would be phased in over the next quarter. Irene Bremang explained that a new project initially required the submission of a concept paper, followed by a business case outlining the justification for the project; the alignment with the Programme's strategic objectives and its relationship with other projects and activities. The next stage involved submitting a Project Initiation Document (PID) that needed to demonstrate how the project would be delivered and identify how dependencies and risks would be

managed. Once the PID was signed off by the Programme Board, the project would then be reported back to the Board on a monthly basis.

During discussion, Councillor McLennan sought further details with regard to the 15 new projects, including how these would be resourced, and what the role of DMTs would be. Councillor Sheth asked for further information about prospective closure of existing projects and with regard to the trade waste project. Councillor Brown requested that future updates show the date when a project is completed. In noting the parking and highways projects addressing procurement and contractual issues, Councillor Brown suggested that these factors should be a consideration as a matter of course and he sought a further explanation.

The Chair asked what were the underlying causes for total project operational savings and net savings from the programme having a red RAG status and how could it be determined that projects are achieving their objectives. Information was requested on spending on external consultants and on the success of projects that had closed and reasons as to why the consultancy firms and managed services project was withdrawn was sought. He noted the large degree of dependencies relating to IT and asked for further information on Project Athena and whether there was a project related to planning. The Chair asked for details of the success of projects that had since been closed be reported at future meetings of this committee.

In reply to the issues raised, Phil Newby explained that there would be a phased approach taken to the 15 new projects that would start at different times. The business case for each new project would be required to demonstrate both financial and other benefits and would require PID approval by the Programme Board. With regard to DMTs, their role varied depending on the project, although each project had a project manager. It was acknowledged that some projects may need more resources initially to help them succeed. A pool of internal staff was available to help with projects and some posts for these were also advertised internally. If a need for skills for a certain project were not available internally, then external resource would be sought with a view to training internal staff in order to prevent using external resources any longer than necessary. However, occasionally the use of external consultants was unavoidable and the balance of internal/external costs could be provided. Phil Newby advised that additional projects were needed to help achieve the additional savings required and a fundamental review of activities may also be undertaken. A closing report needed to be completed prior to a project closing, along with an explanation to the Programme Board as to how the targets had been achieved and it was noted that four were due to close in 2012. The dates of when projects closed could be provided. Savings targets for projects were regularly checked throughout the financial year. With regard to trade waste, Phil Newby explained that this had been a long running issue and that the Commercial Opportunities Group was looking into this, including whether the council could provide a trade waste service on a commercial basis. It was noted that Project Athena was led by Clive Heaphy, Director of Finance and Corporate Services and that the possibility of sharing an IT platform with other local authorities was being looked at. Initially, the scope of the project was to share HR functions, whilst sharing of financial processing would follow in the longer term. Phil Newby advised that planning was driven by statutory legislation, however elements of the future customer services project would help transform how customers used Planning Services.

Irene Bremang added that a systematic approach was taken to ensure the Programme delivered the significant changes in a co-ordinated way. The progress of the Programme was constantly under review and where hotspots had been identified, a review of what action would be required was promptly undertaken. The consultancy firms and managed services project had originally been set up when consultants were being used more often, however DTMs are now required to justify any use of external consultants and there are a number of control mechanisms in place which similarly are applied in the use of temporary or agency staff. Irene Bremang advised that the parking and highways projects were currently at the conceptual stage, however one of the purposes of these projects was looking at ways to change the way in which procurement was undertaken to ensure better value and provide improvements and efficiencies and this was also being undertaken across the wider council. There were also steps being taken to ensure better practice when undertaking procurement activities. Irene Bremang informed Members that an IT Programme Board met on a monthly basis to ensure that the necessary IT resources were available to ensure the transformation in services could be undertaken.

The committee agreed to the Chair's suggestion that there be a presentation on Project Athena at the next meeting.

RESOLVED:-

that the report on the One Council Programme be noted.

#### **7. Performance and Finance Review, Quarter 1, 2011-12**

Phil Newby advised that this report would be presented in a different format at future meetings with a more streamlined format. Members heard that some performance indicators were no longer required to be reported on. However, performance and finance data would still be presented.

The Chair asked if the increase in the number of indicators under Vital Signs being below or missing their targets altogether was of serious concern. He also expressed concern about costs in respect of pothole repairs.

In reply, Phil Newby advised that the Vital signs performance was being looked at and stated that it was complicated by the fact that a lot of the information was being provided by partner agencies. Members noted that the Highways programme was considering how costs for pothole repairs could be brought down.

#### **8. One Council Overview and Scrutiny work programme**

Jacqueline Casson advised that Project Athena, the future of customer services and the performance and finance review quarter two would be considered at the next meeting. Councillor Brown suggested that information be given as to the proportion of projects at red RAG status. In reply, Phil Newby advised that projects' RAG status often moved and that reasons needed to be identified for those of red RAG status. He added that RAG status of projects could possibly be included in future meetings. The Chair suggested that those projects deemed as high risk

could be put before the committee at future meetings if was felt that this was appropriate.

9. **Date of next meeting**

It was noted that the next meeting of the One Council Overview and Scrutiny Committee was scheduled for Wednesday, 25 January 2012 at 7.30 pm.


10. **Any other urgent business**

None.

The meeting closed at 9.40 pm

J ASHRAF  
Chair

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	<p><b>One Council Overview &amp; Scrutiny Committee 25 January 2012</b></p> <p><b>Report from Director of Customer and Community Engagement</b></p>
For Information	
<p><b>Report Title: Future Customer Services: Delivering change to the way Brent residents access services</b></p>	

## 1.0 Summary

- 1.1 This report explains plans to change customer service arrangements in Brent to drive up standards of service to residents. Society's attitudes towards standards of service delivery, quality and customer care are continuing to change in many ways. People are no longer prepared to be passive recipients of services, or settle for second best.
- 1.2 Brent was a leader in this field through the development of the One Stop Service. However, as a result of the fragmented nature of structures and processes, the council has not been able to keep up with developments that other councils have achieved in this area. The customer experience is therefore not as good as it could be and costs are higher than they need be.
- 1.3 The report:
- a. Sets out principles that drive improvements to customer services through One Council projects. These include:
    - i. better understanding of our customers so that services can be sensitive to personal needs;
    - ii. improved efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery to customers so that we better meet customer needs and reduce the call on council resources;
    - iii. moving services to the front office so that we can resolve enquiries at the first point of contact, ensure consistently high standards and have a consistent approach to improving our customer services;
    - iv. developing a shared customer offer with partners;
  - b. Describes the main changes that are being introduced as part of the Future Customer Services project which will provide the basis for achieving the improvements needed;
  - c. Outlines the culture and other changes needed to drive change in customer services in Brent.

## **2.0 Recommendation**

2.1 Overview and Scrutiny Committee note and consider the contents of this report.

## **3.0 The principles driving change**

3.1 Society's attitudes towards standards of service delivery, quality and customer care are continuing to change in many ways. Expectations are continuing to rise at an ever increasing pace. People are no longer prepared to be passive recipients of services, or settle for second best. They expect more control, more choice and high quality services which are value for money.

3.2 Each year many of our residents will contact the council at some point and in doing so the way they are treated, the standards of customer care and the quality of the outcomes they receive will influence their perception of the council as a whole.

3.3 This is why we have to drive up the standards of customer service we provide to residents. Whilst efficiency savings are a key objective of the One Council Programme, ensuring that we are delivering high quality services, developed around the needs of the customer and not the council, is also embedded in the approach we are taking.

3.4 Future Customer Services is about (a) introducing more efficient and effective ways of people contacting the council – through web, telephone, face to face or post; and (b) ensuring that this happens within an overall customer and channel strategy which determines priorities for improvement and ensures that resources are aligned to demand.

3.5 But the processes need to be in place to ensure that initial contact results in the customer's request for information being met or a service being provided. Historically, the One Stop Service signposted customers to services but was not responsible for ensuring resolution of the customer query or ensuring a service was provided. We have to move on from this approach which is costly and does not ensure customers gets what they want when they need it.

3.6 So services are only being transferred into the new Brent Customer Services environment when we are sure that processes and systems are in place to ensure resolution of the customer request. That is why work within Revenues and Benefits, Adult Social Care and BHP repairs and maintenance services aimed at addressing the whole customer journey is so important. Similar work is being carried out through the Housing Needs Transformation project – the front office arrangements for housing needs will only be transferred once the new processes and systems have bedded in. And as part of the Future Customer Services project, systems and processes in various Environmental and Neighbourhood Services and in the Chronically Sick and Disabled Team are being reviewed prior to transfer in to Brent Customer Services.

3.7 The principles underpinning our approach are set out in the following paragraphs.

### Personalisation and customer empowerment

3.8 We need a better understanding of our customers and to plan and deliver our services in ways that make sense to them and through access channels – web, telephone, face to face – that are convenient for them and cost effective for the Council. This involves:



- a. Customer insight – sharing information we have on our customers in a timely and effective way to improve our understanding of their needs and aspirations;
- b. Customer journey mapping - tracking experiences that customers have as they encounter a service or set of services to reveal opportunities for improvement and innovation, acting as a strategic tool to ensure every interaction with our customers is as positive as it can be;
- c. Customer centric service delivery – moving away from a silo based provider approach designed around the council's structures to one more aligned to reflect our residents' and service users' own needs and circumstances. At its simplest, it means making sure that customers receive the information they require or access to the service they have requested without having to pass through several hoops. But it also means developing an integrated offer for customers where their broader needs are anticipated and met by understanding the cluster of services a person might need access to and ensuring the appropriate technological and cultural links to enable these to be delivered.

#### Efficiency and effectiveness

3.9 Improving efficiency and effectiveness is not only about enabling the council to live within its reduced resource base, but also recognises that customers' time is valuable. We need to:

- a. Maximise productivity of our staff – at the moment calls go unanswered at the same time as staff time is not fully utilised. There is the potential to use our Automatic Call Distribution and Workforce Management systems more effectively to ensure greater productivity, thereby reducing numbers of abandoned calls;
- b. Minimise avoidable contact – using our knowledge of when customers have to contact the council more than once because of failure to address the issue in the first instance. This allows us to address inefficiencies in services, systems and processes that gave rise to the failure and thereby increase resolution of issues at first point of contact;
- c. Achieve channel shift – giving people the opportunity to use web based services or telephone rather than having to visit our offices to get issues resolved. 68% of residents in Brent have access to the internet and 42% have a high propensity to use electronic forms of transaction but only 1% of the council's customer transactions are via the web.
- d. Renew our web - to achieve channel shift, there will need to be significant investment in our web. This will ensure people have access to the information they need via the web; but in order to get the full benefit of transactions on the web, there need to be proper links between the web and back office systems and a culture where resolving customer service needs is the fundamental objective of customer services.

#### Moving services to the front office

3.10 Whilst the council has had a long established One Stop Service, most of customer enquiries continue to go to individual services. By bringing together the majority of first contacts within the new Brent Customer Services division, it is possible both to ensure a consistently high quality of response and the on-going development of an effective cross-council approach to developing

more efficient and effective ways of delivering customer services. We need to:

- a. Transfer the customer facing aspects of services into the new Brent Customer Services division once we are satisfied that processes and systems are in place to ensure end-to-end service delivery;
- b. Have a council wide approach to web development, post-handling and telephone numbering;
- c. Reduce the plethora of separate face to face outlets the council has, so that where needed, customers know where to go to for issues to be resolved and they do not need to visit several buildings to access the specific services they need;
- d. Ensure all services use the council's Customer Relationship Management system to enable us to understand customer needs and contacts so that we can develop services accordingly.

#### Developing a shared offering with partners

3.11 The work on the various customer journey projects and the development of Future Customer Services has been about improving the offering by the council. From a resident's point of view, it is largely irrelevant which public service organisation provides the service and in many cases it is not clear to them who provides it. Brent has been good at working at a strategic level with partners but we have not been good at working with our partners to design services around customers. This is an area we will need to focus on in the future. Opportunities include:

- a. The Civic Centre and Willesden Green developments. Both of these will involve state of the art face to face facilities which provide opportunities to share with partners. Plans are already advanced for the Willesden Green front office to share facilities with Job Centre Plus in Harlesden during the decant period.
- b. Increased integration of Adult Social Care and health. The Adult Social Care customer journey project has already led to significant improvements in the way in which adult social care processes service requests, including much more effective first point of contact arrangements. The Integrating Health and Social Care project will allow us to build on this.
- c. The Tell Us Once project where we are working with the DWP and neighbouring boroughs (Harrow and Westminster) to ensure that information on births and deaths is shared with all relevant public services rather than individuals having to notify all agencies separately.
- d. Services which we already provide across borough boundaries, including registration and nationalities and trading standards.

#### **4.0 Changes being implemented as part of the Future Customer Services project**

4.1 Phase 1 of the Future Customer Services project, up to October 2012, will provide the foundations for the improvements needed to customer services in Brent. The changes put in place will allow:

- a. The development of a coherent cross-council strategy for Customer Services;
- b. The provision of clear and consistent customer access arrangements;

- c. Understanding of all customer demand and forecast changes;
- d. The flexible use of resources to meet customer demand.

4.2 The changes introduced as part of Phase 1 of the Future Customer Services project are as follows:

Creation of a new Brent Customer Services division in January 2012

4.3 Brent Customer Services has brought together the One Stop Service, Revenues and Benefits, and Pupil and Parent Support within Children and Families. It has responsibility for handling customer contact relating to benefits, council tax, adult social care, a range of Environment and Neighbourhoods services including streetcare and pest control, school admissions, the schools information service and general customer enquiries.

4.4 Further services are planned to transfer to Brent Customer Services over the next 15 months or are being reviewed to determine how customer contact can best support effective resolution of customer enquiries. These include:

- a. The children's information service which provides advice and information to parents and other agencies about child care and other services supporting families in Brent. This will transfer in April 2012.
- b. Environment and Neighbourhoods Services including licensing, permits, street lighting, transport ( dropped kerbs etc ), sports and cultural services enquiries. A review of customer service activities is ongoing and decisions about which services will transfer will be made by April 2012, with any services transferring in October 2012.
- c. Chronically sick and disabled team which deals with blue badges, freedom passes and the taxi card scheme. This will transfer by October 2012.
- d. Housing resource centre and Housing solutions customer contact which covers homelessness and housing applications. This will transfer by April 2013.

4.5 New services will only transfer into Brent Customer Services following a review of processes and systems to ensure that the new arrangements meet customer needs.

Consolidation of web functions within Brent Customer Services from January 2012

4.6 The transfer of these functions into Brent Customer Services enables the council to develop a strategy which manages customer contact with the council across all main access channels. Developments which will be part of this work include:

- a. targeted action to improve the council's on line offer using the council's current system, including a redesign of the web home page, ten new online forms and a new online booking system for services such as pest control and bulky waste collections. These will be in place by April 2012;
- b. an overhaul of web governance arrangements (content and design) to ensure buy-in across the council to decisions about the purpose of the web. A clear, focused purpose for the council's website will allow the development of a site which enables greater ease of use by customers and is integral to the vision of shifting service delivery, wherever possible, on to the web;

- c. developing a business case for replacing the council's current web infrastructure by February 2012 – a corporate decision will be required as to whether the council moves to a new content management system and a new 'online forms' solution. There is a need to redesign our current web pages to make these easier for customers to navigate and use and to increase customers' ability to transact with the council through the web where this is possible. The current content management system has limitations in its flexibility and thus may not support our aim to significantly increase customer self service through use of online information and forms. If the business case is agreed, it is envisaged that the redesign of our web content and implementation of the new system will be in place by December 2012.

#### Consolidation of post functions within Brent Customer Services by December 2012

- 4.7 A review of post functions will be completed by May 2012 with implementation by December 2012. The new centralised post function will form part of the new Brent Customer Services division and will operate from a central digital post room, following the move to the Civic Centre. This is linked to the various plans for preparing for the move to the Civic Centre and implementation of associated technology to support new ways of working. The central digital post team for the Civic Centre will receive all Council post, arrange for this to be scanned onto a document management system, and aim to deliver the majority of post electronically to desk tops across the Council.

#### The automation of telephony by January 2012 and streamlining of the council's published telephone numbers by October 2012

- 4.8 The automated switchboard went live for external users in January 2012 and should enable 80% of switch board calls to be automatically routed to the correct extension number. This will enable Brent Customer Services staff to focus on handling more complex customer enquiries and thus increase our capacity to handle these more efficiently and effectively. We are also configuring the automatic call distribution system to enable more effective telephone call routing. We will look to agree and implement a new telephone numbering strategy by October 2012. This will aim to reduce the number of published telephone numbers available to customers from approximately 140 at present to a more manageable number, with an aim to eventually reduce these to around ten.

#### Consolidation of face to face contact

- 4.9 There are currently three One Stop Shops – Brent House, Willesden Green, and the Town Hall – and a number of separate access points for specific services including housing reception at Mahatma Ghandi House, the education shop at Chesterfield House, Registration and Nationalities reception at the Town Hall and two parking shops. From 2014 there will be two main customer access points – the Civic Centre (from 2013) and the Willesden Green Centre (from 2014).
- 4.10 If possible we will aim to mirror the two customer centre approach, in advance of the opening of the Civic Centre, by reconfiguring our customer offer at the Town Hall to focus more on Registration and Nationality services and redirecting enquiries about other services to Brent House and Willesden. Interim arrangements are also being made to provide a temporary customer access point in the South of the Borough during the redevelopment of the

Willesden Green Centre. We are currently in discussions with Job Centre Plus and are hoping to create a shared access point at their Harlesden JCP location for the duration of the Willesden redevelopment. Harlesden JCP is located on the High Street and easily accessible for customers currently visiting Customer Services at Willesden Green.

## **5.0 Driving change in customer services**

5.1 In order to deliver fundamental change in customer services in Brent, there will need to be a significant culture shift within the customer services environment and across other council services. Emphasis will need to be put on meeting customer needs, which means looking at the whole customer experience from the time they contact the council to the time their issue is resolved or service provided. Processes will be developed that ensure that there are as few unnecessary contacts as possible and that customer issues are resolved quickly and efficiently. There needs to be better use of available technology so that information is only collected once and requests for a service are automatically passed to the relevant service providers to action. There will need to be close co-ordination between people in customer services dealing with customers and the service areas that provide the services to ensure an effective end-to-end service. There will also need to be a much greater emphasis on performance management, ensuring that customers are dealt with quickly and efficiently so others are not kept waiting and also ensuring that peaks and troughs of work are dealt with effectively. The council has already implemented significant changes of this kind in Revenues and Benefits and Adult Social Care, which have delivered both financial savings and improved customer service. The approaches developed in these areas need to be rolled out to other areas.

5.2 There will also need to be changes in the way that customers see contact with the council working. Customers will be encouraged to use the web rather than contact the council through other means wherever this is appropriate. For this to happen though there will have to be a significant improvement in the quality and effectiveness of the council's web information and web transactions. The Future Customer Services project will develop a business case for a major upgrade of the web but the upgrade itself is outside the scope of the project. Without this upgrade, the scope for encouraging changes in customer behaviour will be limited and the ability to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of customer contact will be more limited than it otherwise would be.

## **6.0 Financial Implications**

6.1 The changes implemented as part of the Future Customer Services project will deliver savings of £697k in 2011/12, £1.573m in 2012/13, and £1.722m per annum from 2013/14. In addition, savings from the related review of processes in Housing Needs service are expected to deliver savings of £950k in 2012/13 and £1.3m per annum from 2013/14.

6.2 Project costs are estimated at £657k in 2011/12 and a further £171k in 2012/13. Redundancy costs are currently being assessed based on redundancies identified as part of the setting up of the new Brent Customer Services division.

6.3 No allowance has been made for costs of a substantial upgrade of the web. The business case that is being developed for this will set out costs and potential benefits which will then be used as a basis for determining the improvements that will be made.

## **7.0 Legal Implications**

7.1 None.

## **8.0 Diversity Implications**

8.1 A predictive equality impact assessment has been carried out for the Future Customer Services project. This identified the need to carry out customer consultation in regard to issues relating to channel shift and our customers' propensity to increasingly move towards web enabled services. However, the previous and current project scope and plans do not remove access channels but are aimed at encouraging a change in customer behaviour towards increased web services. We are carrying out consultation to develop the business case for developing the web, and expect the results to be available by the end of February 2012.

## **9.0 Staffing/Accommodation Implications**

9.1 Total FTE posts that will be deleted as a result of the project are 45 (excluding the Housing Needs Transformation). The vast majority of these reductions have been achieved without redundancy arising, through deletion of vacant posts, reductions to agency staff and realignment of displaced staff to new roles in the structure. The first phase of the project which created the new Customer Services division, has resulted in voluntary redundancy of 3.5 posts and compulsory redundancy of 5 posts.

9.2 Staff within Children and Families who previously worked at Chesterfield House has now moved to Brent House. It is not intended that Chesterfield House will close as there are other services operating from there, including the Youth Service and Locality Teams.

9.3 Consideration is being given to a change in the use of the Town Hall with a view to expanding Registration and Nationality services delivered and redirecting enquiries about other services to Brent House and Willesden Green. This will reflect face to face arrangements from 2013 when the Civic Centre centre opens.

9.4 Work is also being carried out to an interim customer access point in the south of the borough during the redevelopment of Willesden Green and this is likely to be a shared customer access point at Harlesden Job Centre Plus.

## **Contact Officers**

Toni McConville, Director of Customer and Community Engagement  
Margaret Read, AD Corporate Customer Services

**One Council Overview & Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2011/12  
Chair Cllr Ashraf**

<b>Date of Meeting</b>	<b>Agenda item</b>	<b>Requested Information / Evidence</b>	<b>Invited witnesses</b>	<b>Notes</b>
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> June 2011 Joint Meeting</b>	<b>Update from the Leader of the Council</b>	The Leader of the Council will answer questions on the administration's priorities. This will happen twice in 2011/12. – Held as part of the Joint Committee	<b>Councillor Ann John</b>	
	<b>Brent – An Overview</b>	An update on the latest statistical information highlighting the issues in Brent	<b>Cathy Tyson</b>	
	<b>The Localism Bill</b>	The key aspects of the localism bill and Brent's initial response them	<b>Cathy Tyson</b>	
<b>6<sup>th</sup> July</b>	<b>Housing Need Transformation Project</b>	An overview of the Housing Needs Transformation Project to include information on project work streams progress to date, and how the impact of the project will be measured	<b>Perry Singh</b>	
	<b>One Council Programme Update</b>	To provide members with information on the status of the programme and the individual project within the programme.	<b>Phil Newby</b>	

	<b>Car repair and spray painting task group</b>	Focusing on progress, risks, dependencies and benefits.  The final report of the task group which was set up following a motion to council.	<b>Councillor Moloney</b>	
<b>14<sup>th</sup> September</b>	<b>The waste and recycling transformation project</b>	To provide members with an update about the implementation of the waste and recycling transformation project.	<b>Chris Whyte &amp; David Pietropaoli</b>	
	<b>Quarterly Performance &amp; Finance Report Q4 2010/11</b>	To provide members with performance information	<b>Phil Newby</b>	
	<b>The Localism Bill</b>	To provide members with an update on changes made to the bill during its progression through parliament and the implications for Brent	<b>Cathy Tyson</b>	
	<b>Work programme report &amp; Fairtrade Status for Brent</b>	To provide members with the opportunity to discuss the committee's		



	<b>task group scope</b>	work programme and the scope for a task group on Fairtrade.		
<b>22<sup>nd</sup> November 2011</b>	<p><b>Optimised BHP</b></p> <p><b>Complaints Annual Report</b></p> <p><b>One Council Programme update</b></p> <p><b>Quarterly Performance Information</b></p>	<p>Members of the committee have request a report on the new BHP arrangements including how the relationship will be managed and the arrangements for monitoring the contract.</p> <p>This report will provide members with information on how the council has dealt with complaints during 2010/11 and progress towards revising the complaints procedure.</p> <p>The committee will receive an update on the status of the programme and the individual project within it.</p> <p>To provide members with the latest performance information</p>	<p><b>Andy Donald</b></p> <p><b>Philip Mears</b></p> <p><b>Peter Stachniewski</b></p> <p><b>Phil Newby / Cathy Tyson</b></p>	
<b>25<sup>th</sup> January 2012</b>	<b>Future Customer Contact Project</b>	When members discussed this project in February 2011 they requested further information as the project progressed and changes were being implemented	<b>Tony McConvile / Margaret Read</b>	

	<b>Project Athena</b>	Members have requested more information about the cross borough project and how it is being managed.	<b>Clive Heaphy</b>	
	<b>Quarterly Performance Information</b>	To provide members with the latest performance information. Q2	<b>Phil Newby / Cathy Tyson</b>	
<b>21<sup>st</sup> March 2012</b>	<b>Direct Services Project</b>	Members have requested a report on the implementation / delivery of the project - to include information on assessments and impacts.		
	<b>One Council Update</b>	Members will receive an update on the status of the programme and the individual project within it.		
	<b>Quarterly Performance information</b>	To provide members with the latest performance information. Q3		

*Other issues the committee would like to cover date to be confirmed:*