



Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Report from the Director of Business Transformation

For
Action/Information

Wards Affected:
ALL

Report Title: One Stop Service Redesign Project Update

1.0 Summary

1.1 This report updates elected members on the following matters concerning the One Stop Service Redesign Project in furtherance of the report submitted to Overview and Scrutiny on 9th July 2009:

- The achievement of efficiency savings identified through the business case for the One Stop Service Redesign project.
- Customer contacts received via the self service facilities as part of the One Stop Service Redesign including the nature of enquiries received and any increases and decreases in particular service uses.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 Members are requested to note the following:

2.2 There is a renewed focus on securing effective customer service arrangements with a review of the current service models in place and a desire to better consolidate how these are delivered in practice to achieve agreed outcomes.

2.3 The One Stop Service remains key to this evolving vision and members will be kept advised of further recommendations concerning the future and which are currently being considered as part of the One Council - Reshaping Customer Contact Gold Project.

3.0 Detail

3.1 One Stop Service Redesign Project Update

Members may recall that the One Stop Service Redesign Project was part of the wider Customer Contact Transformation Programme agreed in March 2007. This included a vision of the future of customer contact not only in the One Stop Service, but across the Council and is now incorporated into the work of the new 'Reshaping Customer Contact Gold Project' in line with the One Council improvement and efficiency agenda. The

future customer interaction and transaction arrangements will be determined by the main service delivery departments who will work closely with the existing One Stop Service to modernise and improve service delivery. Some additional related changes are being implemented in line with efficiency targets and the improvement 'journey' however the service is delivering 'business as usual'. The One Stop Service Redesign project scope dealt with here covers the work to date regarding the physical locations in relation to face to face service delivery and was to achieve the following:

- The provision of sharper, more efficient and better targeted customer services and
- The realisation of significant cost savings in the medium and long term.

3.1.1 Key objectives of the One Stop Service Redesign Project were as follows:

- To replace 4/5 Local Offices with Customer Contact Points with facilities for pre-arranged appointments and / or self service and improved signposting for Council services,
- To encourage customer use of the phone and Internet instead of more expensive face to face enquiries,
- To improve the overall service and ensure that the needs of more vulnerable members of the community and those with complex enquiries are met,
- To migrate 25% of One Stop customer contact from face to face to phones and online media as part of a channel migration plan,
- To deliver identified efficiency savings of £479,000 by 2011,
- To maintain and improve existing high standards of customer service.

Whilst these were the objectives for the OSS Redesign Project, further robust targets are now being considered for the immediate future with a renewed focus on improving day to day service delivery.

3.1.2 In relation to the £479,000 identified efficiency savings to be achieved by 2011, the proportion of these due up to and including 2009/10 (i.e. £300,000) has already been achieved with the remaining £179,000 planned for achievement in 2010/11 as previously scheduled.

3.1.3 In relation to the 25% target for migrating customer face to face contact to phones and other media, a 27% reduction in customer demand has been identified for the period April to November 2009 in comparison to the same period in 2007, following the closure of Kingsbury and Kilburn Local Offices. However, it has not been possible to determine how much of this reduction is due to customers accessing other communication channels such as telephones as these have also shown reductions in customer demand. For example, for the same periods as above, telephone enquiries reduced by 18%. However, volumes of enquiries received via email have increased from 10,463 for the period April to November 2008 to 11,620 for the same period in 2009 thus representing an increase of 11%.

3.1.4 Since the last update report in July 2009, construction work has been continuing at Harlesden Library in preparation for the revised re-opening date of the premises in early March and the establishment of the shared service arrangement incorporating the new Brent Contact Point, Library Service and Brent Adult and Community Education Services (BACES).

3.1.5 Members may recall that in the July 2009 report, reference was made to the fact that a customer engagement programme had been carried out at Harlesden Local Office and that

from the responses received, there was a proportion of customers that wanted Harlesden One Stop Service to remain open in its existing format.

- 3.1.6 From the engagement programme, it was identified that further publicity and promotion of the services available from Harlesden Library Plus (HLP) would be needed to ensure that customers were fully aware of the services available to them.
- 3.1.7 Since that time, a Focus Group meeting has been held in November 2009 with a selection of Harlesden customers that participated in the earlier customer engagement programme at Harlesden Local Office. The objective of the meeting was to establish the views of local residents and potential service users concerning the services that would be available from the new premises, how they might use the services available and what would encourage them to make greater use of the facilities.
- 3.1.8 Attendees were informed that the new arrangements would include the following services:
- Pre-arranged appointments,
 - Facilities for handing in documents,
 - Freephones and self service computers,
 - Library facilities including designated areas for study, children and cultural and social interests for the local community,
 - Brent Adult Community Education Services IT suite and formal learning rooms.

Benefits accruing from the above include:

- Removal of the need to queue to see a member of staff,
- Appointments for vulnerable members of the community and for complex enquiries,
- Access to multi Council services, information and advice in one building,
- Staff available to support and assist customers with the new service arrangements Better value for money and service efficiency.

The meeting identified some specific issues / comments from residents concerning the One Stop Service including the following:

- An absence of personal experience in using computers,
- A perception that the introduction of self service will lead to a loss of personal contact with Brent Council employees,
- The perceived security risks associated with using computers for conducting online transactions,
- A preference for appointments was expressed although with an expectation that this will operate on an identical level to the present "drop in" system.

- 3.1.9 Whilst the Focus Group meeting was helpful in obtaining customer engagement and feedback, it was clear that there were some strong views held by members of the Group that wished the present service arrangements available from Challenge House to continue unchanged. Despite the above assurances that were given, it is therefore considered likely that it may take time for the new service arrangements to be fully accepted by some customers. Senior managers from the OSS, Libraries Arts & Heritage and BACES also recently attended the Stonebridge & Harlesden Area Consultative Forum on 12th January 2010, to provide an update to local residents on the developments and services that will be available from the new Harlesden Library Plus.
- 3.1.10 In response to the issues raised, the One Stop Service in conjunction with the Library Service will have staff available to assist and support customers with accessing information and using the computers for self service transactions. This will be monitored and reviewed as customer confidence in the use of the facilities increases. Personal contact will be achieved through the provision of pre-arranged appointments for complex enquiries and more vulnerable members of the community and through the deployment of "floor-walking"

staff to assist customers with accessing the information they require. Online transactions for L B Brent services routinely apply secure encryption standards although it is recognised that overcoming customer concerns and perceptions concerning security risks will require a longer term strategy to change these. An appointments system will be operational when the premises opens although this will not operate as a “drop in” arrangement and further marketing of the services available will be carried out in the period prior to the re-opening of the premises.

- 3.1.11 As indicated in the July 2009 report, a Brent Contact Point was being considered within the existing BACES Carlton Centre in South Kilburn. The arrangements for this have now been agreed and it is currently intended that the new self service facility will open in February 2010. This will provide customers with self service touch screen computers and freephones for contacting Council personnel.

3.2 Self Service – Freephones

There are currently four Local Offices (Harlesden, Town Hall, Brent House and Willesden) within the Borough and two contact points (Kingsbury and Neasden). The Local Offices provide a “drop-in” service for customer enquiries plus as well as the provision of freephones and personal computers that are available for customers to use to access Council information and advice.

- 3.2.1 The two Contact Points provide freephones and personal computers for accessing Council information and advice. Kingsbury Library Plus also offers a pre-arranged appointments service. The self service PC's enable customers to search for information and advice and carry out online transactions for accessible web addresses including the Council, Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and Transport for London (TFL). The provision of these facilities often enables customers to obtain information they require without the need to queue or phone and reduces overall transaction time.
- 3.2.2 An analysis of the service enquiry volumes associated with freephones for each Local Office and Contact Point have been provided in Tables 1 to 3 of Appendix A to this report and may be summarised as follows:
- 3.2.3 Neasden and Kingsbury Customer Contact Points have the lowest average use for all of the freephones available. It is feasible that this is because these Customer Contact Points have been open for a shorter duration than other more established Local Offices and hence have not yet reached an optimum level of usage. However, the relatively close proximity of the Town Hall that operates a “drop in” personal enquiry service attracts a significant number of Kingsbury residents and a small number of Neasden residents (i.e. an average of 416 and 69 per month respectively) and therefore also has an impact.
- 3.2.4 Opening hours at each location determine the time availability for customers to access free-phone services and hence relative usage. However, whilst both Kingsbury and Neasden Contact Points have longer opening hours (i.e. 56 and 43 respectively compared to an average of 38 for the other Local Offices) general access to the Call Centre via the freephones will be restricted to normal service opening hours, which is 8am to 8pm Monday to Friday and 9am to 1pm on Saturdays
- 3.2.5 Willesden Local Office had the greatest average demand for its free-phones during the period April 2009 to November 2009 although Harlesden Local Office and Brent House also experienced a significant amount of usage. These offices all retain a traditional “drop in” personal enquiry service unlike the two current Contact Points and as such

customers appear to be more likely to use free-phones at these premises based upon current findings.

- 3.2.6 The Town Hall experienced the lowest average use per freephone for a Local Office although as 6 of the freephones at this location were installed in September 2008, the current demand pattern is unlikely at present to represent an optimum level of demand. Additionally, as the number of freephones available at this location is currently 8 compared to a maximum of 4 available elsewhere (i.e. At Brent House), the average number of calls per freephone is low in comparison. For example, at Harlesden Local Office, there is only one freephone and consequently the average number of calls per freephone for this location is higher than the Town Hall despite also showing an overall reduction in the number of personal enquiries at the premises.
- 3.2.7 An analysis of the services that freephones are used to contact, shows that almost all of them are used to contact the Council Tax, Housing Benefit and Streetcare services. The freephone at Harlesden Local Office is additionally used to contact Brent Housing Partnership Repairs. This is due to the relatively close proximity of Council Housing in that area to the Local Office and the area formerly having a dedicated BHP Repairs Office. The freephone at Neasden Contact Point is being used to contact the Education Information Service due to the provision of BACES services in the same premises. Environmental enquiries feature in the top five service enquiries for the Town Hall and Brent House although the specific reasons for this are not known and require further investigation.
- 3.2.8 Freephone usage will continue to be monitored and reviewed particularly in relation to the Contact Points and following the recent promotion of services available from Kingsbury Library Plus on Brent Transport buses. Should there be a need to consider varying the current freephone service available from any location this will be based upon trends supported by primary information and data obtained.

3.3 Self Service Personal Computers (PC's)

- 3.3.1 An analysis of the service enquiry volumes associated with the self service PC's at each Local Office and Contact Point has been provided in Table 4 of Appendix A to this report and may be summarised as follows:
- 3.3.2 Harlesden Local Office has a strong showing of customer enquiries in relation to Housing Benefits and Council Tax services and this is generally replicated across other Council premises. Housing Resource features as the top service area contacted from Harlesden Local Office and also features in the top five for Willesden Local Office predominantly due to the location of Council properties in close proximity to these offices.
- 3.3.3 An analysis of customer demand for the self service personal computers available at Local Offices and Contact Points has shown that Locata and Council job vacancies feature strongly in terms of information access although certain services appear to have a stronger showing in some locations than others. For example, access to the Brent Library catalogue features particularly at Neasden and Kingsbury as the Contact Point at each of these locations is in premises shared with the Library Service.
- 3.3.4 Data captured from personal enquiries and telephone calls will continue to be used to review the information available via the Council website and to maximise the potential for customers to obtain their advice and information through self service provision. Additionally, customer trends in accessing websites will be used to ensure that local issues

are afforded the relevant priority in terms of maintaining and updating online information and maximising the potential for online communications.

3.4 Customer Demand Patterns at Local Offices

- 3.4.1 Customer demand for personal enquiries across the Local Offices has shown a 15.3% overall reduction for the period April 2009 to November 2009 in comparison to the same period in the preceding year with the overall number of enquiries reducing from 124,235 to 103,955. Further analysis of customer demand has been shown in Tables 5 to 9 in Appendix A to this report.
- 3.4.2 Some specific events have affected customer demand in 2008/9 and 2009/10 including the introduction of the “lean” process within Brent Housing Partnership, the introduction of compulsory recycling and the One Stop Service “Phone us First” campaign, although these alone are insufficient to explain the broader overall reductions in customer demand experienced.
- 3.4.3 Much of the reduction in customer demand is attributable to more general reductions experienced across the majority of service areas as a consequence of increased availability of service information via both the Council website and other communication media and the provision of online transactions for enquiries that were formerly carried out in person.
- 3.4.4 In the case of volumes of Building Control and Planning enquiries, these have reduced due to the combined effects of the recession resulting in less expenditure on property adaptations and building work generally as well as the facilities available for making online planning and building regulation applications.
- 3.4.5 Education Service enquiries have diminished predominantly due to the dedicated Education team that was established to manage school admission enquiries just over two years ago.
- 3.4.6 Adult Social Services appear to have shown a decrease in the volume of personal enquiries although this contrasts with an increase in call volumes for generic enquiries represented in Table 10 of Appendix A and which now includes Adults and Social Care. Consequently, it appears likely that the increase in call volumes for this service may be due to a migration of personal customer enquiries to telephone as well as the transfer of the call handling service from Adult and Social Care to the One Stop Service.
- 3.4.7 The overall reduction in personal enquiries has been experienced at a time when the economic climate may have been perceived as likely to increase the potential for personal enquiries in certain services. For example, Council Tax collection performance and Housing Benefits caseload may be considered as indicators of general economic well being. However, despite the current economic situation, all service areas have shown reductions in personal enquiries and this trend is anticipated to continue.
- 3.4.8 The One Stop Service will continue to offer existing services from its four Local Offices and two Contact Points until Harlesden Library Plus opens. At that time, Harlesden Library Plus will replace the current Harlesden Local Office and provide self service facilities, pre-arranged appointments and a document handling facility. It is also anticipated that the economic climate will begin to show the early signs of recovery in early 2010 and therefore potentially reduce demand for some of the services traditionally more sensitive to economic conditions such as Housing Benefits and Council Tax.

3.4.9 The One Stop Service will continue to closely monitor customer demand for services in partnership with individual service areas and take appropriate steps to address any variances in trends and performance that may be identified.

3.5 Customer Demand Patterns at Call Centre

3.5.1 An analysis of the service enquiry volumes associated with the call centre has been provided in Table 10 of Appendix A to this report and may be summarised as follows:

3.5.2 As with personal enquiries, the volumes of calls experienced through the Call Centre has shown a reduction over the past two years with an overall reduction of 6.39% from the 447,559 calls received in the same period for 2008/9.

3.5.3 Much of the general reduction in calls is due to a combination of factors including improved service delivery and signposting and more widely available information via the Council website and Internet generally as indicated in the July 2009 report.

3.5.4 However, general enquiry call volumes have shown an increase in the past 12 months, due to the inclusion of Adult and Social Care enquiries that are now received directly by the One Stop Service.

3.5.5 The overall trend in reduction of telephone enquiry volumes is anticipated to continue as further service improvements are identified and implemented and increased online processing of transactions becomes effective.

3.5.6 The One Stop Service will continue to work closely with other service areas and as part of the Reshaping Customer Contact-Gold Project to ensure that these are effectively co-ordinated and controlled to achieve value for money, realise identified benefits and meet customer standards.

Contact Officers

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Background Papers

The Future of Customer Contact – CMT 14th December 2006

Executive 12th February 2007

One Stop Service Redesign Project Update – Overview and Scrutiny 24th March 2009

One Stop Service Redesign Project Update – Overview and Scrutiny 9th July 2009

GRAHAM ELLIS

Director of Business Transformation

Appendix A

Service Volumes for Personal Enquiries and Telephone Calls

An analysis of customer use of the freephone service available at the Local Offices and Contact Points are shown in Tables 1, 2 and 3 below.

Table 1 represents freephone usage at the OSS Local Offices for the period April 2009 to November 2009 inclusive (except Neasden which is shown for the period mid August

2009 to November 2009) and Table 2 indicates usage at Brent Customer Contact Points.

Table 1

Local Office	Number of freephones	Average number of monthly calls made	Average number of monthly calls made per freephone
Harlesden	1	260	260
Willesden	2	846	423
Town Hall	8	798	100
Brent House	4	1001	250

Table 2

Customer Contact Point	Number of freephones	Average number of monthly calls made	Average number of monthly calls made per freephone
Neasden	2	105	53
Kingsbury	5	150	30

Table 3 below shows the top five service areas accessed from each location for the periods April 2009 to November 2009 inclusive (except Neasden which is shown for the period mid August 2009 to November 2009).

Table 3

Harlesden (Local Office)	Neasden (Customer Contact Point)	Kingsbury (Customer Contact Point)	Town Hall (Local Office)	Brent House (Local Office)	Willesden (Local Office)
Housing Resource	Social Services	General Enquiries	Council Tax	Housing Benefits	Housing Benefits
Housing Benefits	Education Information Service	Housing Benefits	Housing Benefits	Council Tax	Council Tax
Council Tax	Council Tax	Council Tax	Housing Resource	Housing Resource	Streetcare
BHP Repairs	Streetcare	Streetcare	Streetcare	PHIU Lettings	Housing Resource
Education	General Enquiries	Corporate voicemail service	Environmental Health	Environmental Health	BHP South Kilburn Repair Team

Table 4 below indicates the top five most frequently accessed web sites from self service PC's in order of frequency (with the most frequently accessed at the top) for the period September 2009 to November 2009:

Table 4

Harlesden Local Office	Neasden Customer Contact	Kingsbury Customer Contact Point	Town Hall Local	Brent House Local Office	Willesden Local Office
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complete	Point		Office	Complete	
PHIU Home-finders	L B Brent website search facility	Brent Library catalogue	L B Brent website search facility	L B Brent website search facility	L B Brent website search facility
L B Brent website search facility	You Tube	L B Brent website search facility	Locata	Locata	PHIU Home-finders
Locata	Brent Library catalogue	Locata	PHIU – Home-finders	PHIU Home-finders	Locata
Transport for London	Locata	Job vacancies	Job vacancies	Job vacancies	Job vacancies
Multimap	Education	Job Seekers Direct	Multimap	Wembley stadium	Wembley Stadium

Tables 5 to 8 below show the top five services (the most frequent service enquiry being at the top) for which enquiries were received at each of the Local Offices during the period April to November inclusive for both 2008/9 and 2009/10 and the proportionate change in customer demand over the same period.

Table 5 - Harlesden

Service Area	No of enquiries 2008/9	No of enquiries 2009/10	Percentage change
Housing Benefits	11763	10958	-6.8%
Revenues	2090	2009	-3.9%
Housing Resources	1499	1071	-28.6%
General Enquiries	669	787	17.6%
BHP	841	325	-61.3%

Table 6 - Brent House

Service Area	No of enquiries 2007/8	No of enquiries 2008/9	Percentage change
Housing Benefits	26068	22521	-13.6%

Revenues	7416	6774	-8.7%
Planning	3070	2245	-26.9%
Housing Resource Centre	2176	1838	-15.5%
Internal Signposting	1608	1162	-27.7%

Table 7 - Town Hall

Service Area	No of enquiries 2008/9	No of enquiries 2009/10	Percentage change
Housing Benefits	9723	9363	-3.7%
General Enquiries	4573	4826	5.5%
Revenues	5916	4115	-30.4%
Internal Signposting	4405	4061	-7.8%
Housing Resource Centre	1145	967	-15.5%

Table 8 - Willesden

Service Area	No of enquiries 2008/9	No of enquiries 2009/10	Percentage change
Housing Benefits	13192	13835	4.9%
Revenues	3144	2657	-15.4%
General Enquiries	1551	1561	0.6%
Housing Resource Centre	1211	1194	-1.4%
BHP	935	551	-41.1%

Table 9 below shows the total volume of personal enquiries received by department / service area for the period April to November 2008/9 and 2009/10 respectively.

Table 9

Department	2008/9	2009/10	% Change
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Adult Social Services	3345	1873	-44.0%
Housing Benefits	60746	56677	-6.7%
Brent Housing Partnership	4087	1858	-54.5%
Building Control	1061	732	-31.0%
Childrens Services	736	360	-51.1%
Corporate enquiries	1350	974	-27.9%
Education Services	2265	1026	-54.7%
Environmental Health	113	61	-46.0%
Other environmental enquiries	1059	669	-36.8%
General enquiries	8762	8330	-4.9%
Housing Resources	6031	5070	-15.9%
Planning	3253	2368	-27.2%
Private Housing	1659	825	-50.3%
Revenues (Council Tax)	18566	15555	-16.2%
Streetcare	1546	877	-43.3%
Internal signposting	6384	5652	-11.5%
External signposting	3272	2317	-29.2%
TOTALS	124235	105224	-15.3%

Table 10

Table 10 below shows the total volume of telephone enquiries received by the contact centre for each service area listed between the period of April and November for 2008/9 and 2009/10 respectively.

Department	2008/9	2009/10	% Change
General Enquiries	40336	49523	+22.76
Housing Benefits	58336	55868	-4.23
Council Tax	84336	72385	-14.17
Streetcare	57310	55059	-3.92

Environmental Health	27349	24203	-11.50
Switchboard	179892	161887	-10.00
Totals	447559	418925	-6.39