



ONE STOP SERVICE

ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT

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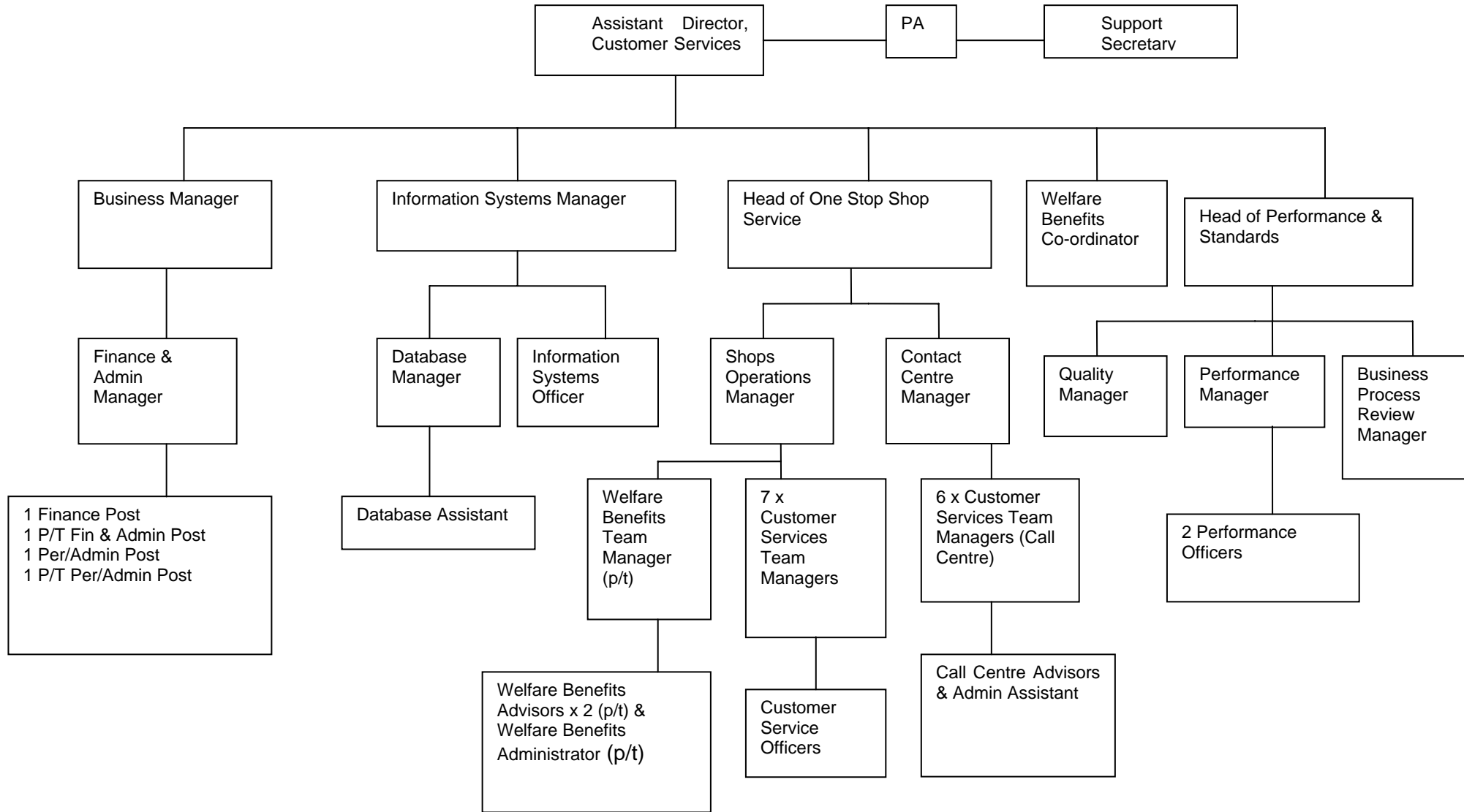
1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. The purpose of this report is:

- i. To describe the Council's One Stop Service (OSS) organisation and:
 - The Service it provides to other Service Units and the public
 - Its leadership role in setting standards for customer services across the Council
 - Its role in the wider customer services community across London.
- ii. To show how demands for its services have changed in the period to 31st March 2006 and how its performance during 2005-6 compared with its targets.
- iii. To explain the key challenges it faced and how these are being addressed in 2006-7 and will need to be addressed further into the future.

2. OVERVIEW OF THE ORGANISATION AND THE SERVICES PROVIDED

- 2.1.1. In order to reflect the wide range of services being provided, the name of One Stop Shops service unit was changed to One Stop Services (OSS) during the course of 2005-6. The One Stop Service organisation consists of:
- Six Local Offices (formerly known as One Stop Shops). This includes a small Welfare Benefits take-up team
 - The Telephones and On-line service (formerly known as the Contact Centre).
 - A central team responsible for overall management, customer service policy and standards, quality assurance, performance monitoring, financial control and IT.
- 2.1.2 The service has a staffing establishment of 157 staff located across six Council buildings. This includes an additional ten staff that joined the One Stop Service when it took over responsibility for the Revenues and Benefits front-office at Brent House. A further seven posts were also created through Department of Work and Pensions funding for Housing Benefit customer service staff to improve call handling performance.
- 2.1.3 The One Stop Service organisational structure chart is provided below/overleaf.



2.2. The Local Offices

2.2.1. Brent Council was the first London Borough to set up one-stop shop Local Offices and over the past decade has won seven major external awards including this year's fourth consecutive Charter Mark. However, as discussed later, changes will be needed if service levels are to be maintained in the face of tight financial pressures and changes in demand.

2.2.2. Each Local Office has between 3 and 13 service desks and a general reception desk. They provide a drop-in service whereby members of the public can call in at any time during opening hours with any enquiry, request for service or complaint relating to the Council's services. As shown in Appendix I its customers reflect the diverse nature of the community and their differing needs. Enquiries range from straightforward information requests or 'signposting' to assistance for the more vulnerable whose requirements can be more complex involving multiple enquiries – for example rent payments, backlogged benefit applications and housing repairs.

2.2.3. The six Local Offices are conveniently located in high streets around the borough. These are listed below, together with their opening hours and the number of service desks in each:

Local Office	Number of Service Desks	Opening hours
Brent Town Hall	4	Mon-Fri, 9.00 AM to 5.00 PM
Brent House	13 including document desks	Mon-Fri, 9.00 AM to 5.00 PM (except last Thursday in each month when the office closes at 1.00 PM) Sat 9.00 AM to 1.00 PM
Harlesden High Street	5	Mon -Thurs 9.00 AM to 5.00 PM, Fri 9.00 AM to 1.00 PM
Kilburn – Dyne Rd	5	Mon-Fri 9.00 AM to 5.00 PM except Thurs 9.00 AM to 1.00 PM
Kingsbury High Road	3	Mon-Wed 9.00 AM to 5.00 PM
Willesden Green Library Centre	5	Mon-Fri 9.00 AM to 1.00 PM except Wed 9.00 AM to 1.00 PM

2.2.4. Face-face-enquiries at Local Offices are divided into reception information requests and main counter service requests. Information requests are fast-track enquiries, sign posting and receipts for documents handed in. Customers with more complex, in-depth enquiries are issued with a ticket by reception to wait for the main counter service.

2.2.5. Included in the above is a small Welfare Benefits take-up team 3 part time staff responsible for increasing the uptake of benefits for the most vulnerable and low income residents. The increased income generated through this service should improve the quality of life for recipients.

2.2.6. One Stop Service staff in the Local Offices have on-line access to key Council systems and aim to resolve 80% of customers' enquiries on the spot. Between them, the six local offices handled over 230,000 enquiries/requests for service during 2005-6.

2.3. The Telephone and On-line Service

- 2.3.1. Brent Council was one of the first London boroughs to establish a call centre. The Telephones and On-Line Service now operates from a 60-seat contact centre in Brent House. It is open from 8.00 AM to 8.00 PM each weekday 9.00 AM to 1.00 PM on Saturdays.
- 2.3.2. It has a modern Automatic Call Distribution system (ACD) which routes calls to the appropriate members of staff and which provides call monitoring and management reporting facilities. This includes a dedicated Gujarati line, although the number of calls to it has dropped substantially to only 300 a year and its future is subject to review.
- 2.3.3. Like the Local Offices, the Telephones and On-Line Service has on-line access to key Council systems. It aims to resolve 80% of the telephoned enquiries/service requests it receives while the caller is on the line. During 2005-6 it received 735,900 telephone calls and over 11,000 on-line or emailed enquiries. The Telephone and On-line Service is comprised of:
- A generic team that handles any enquiry
 - A dedicated StreetCare team
 - A dedicated Revenues and Benefits team
 - Dedicated Social Services lines
 - Switchboard
- 2.3.4. The Telephones/On-line service also deals with requests that come in by letter. In 2005-6 it handled about 200 of these.

2.4. The Support Team

- 2.4.1. Management and a Finance & Admin team is located at the Town Hall. The IT Development and the Performance & Standards teams are based at Kingsbury (at the rear of the Kingsbury Local Office).
- 2.4.2. The central management team plays a lead role in setting customer service policies and standards, both for the One Stop Service and (through the Customer Services Steering Group) corporately.

2.5. Corporate and London-Wide Roles

- 2.5.1. The Assistant Director, Customer Service, Housing & Community Care chairs the Council's Customer Service Steering Group, responsible for developing and implementing best practice in customer services throughout the Council. She also chairs the Customer Services for London Group, whose aim is to encourage good customer service practice throughout the public sector in London.
- 2.5.2. **The Customer Services Steering Group (CSSG).** The CSSG is sponsored by the Director of Housing & Community Care, chaired by Assistant Director, Customer Service, Housing & Community Care and consists of senior staff from every Service Area. It meets approximately once a month and reports to the Council's Improving Brent Board. Its key objectives are to work with Service Areas to:
- i. Ensure that agreed customer service standards and policies are followed throughout the Council. Examples of how it has done this are:

- Telephone training. Approximately 600 staff attended a half-day skills training course provided by an external training organisation. Feedback was very positive. Further courses for 800 staff have been commissioned for 2006-7.
 - Communications strategy. An internal and external Customers Come 1st' communications strategy is being implemented by the CSSG using the Intranet, "Customers Come 1st" booklets and a number of presentations to departmental management teams.
- ii. Develop and implement recommendations for improvements in the overall service received by the customer. Examples of its activities have been:
- Supporting the Gershon agenda through encouraging and facilitating process reviews (e.g. Criminal Records Bureau checks and complaint handling).
 - Self-service centres. These have been set-up in all Libraries. They consist of a self-help workstation, with access to the Brent website and certain other websites such as Transport for London, dedicated telephones and appropriate signage.
 - The Name badges project. The CSSG instigated this project, commissioned a feasibility study and was instrumental in managing the project to ensure its success. A further benefit is that the photographs taken for name badges can be used in the new telephone directory.
 - Facilitating the implementation of three SignVideo videophones in two Local Offices, Brent House & Willesden Green and in the Adult Disabilities building in London Road. Sign Video enables deaf BSL users to communicate easily with the Council using the Significant call centre. The equipment was obtained through ODPM funding. The service went live in Brent in November 2005 and was featured in the Channel 4 See Hear programme on 10th December.
- iii. Measure and improve overall customer satisfaction. The CSSG developed procedures for undertaking customer satisfaction surveys by all relevant Service Areas. These were agreed by Corporate Management Team. In future there will be a continuing role for the CSSG to monitor whether at least one satisfaction survey per year is carried out by major Service Units supplying services directly to the public.
- iv. Future of Customer Contact. During 2005/6 the CSSG contributed significantly to the identification and assessment of options for the future of customer contact to enable the Council to maintain its high standard of customer services while meeting budgetary constraints and the Gershon agenda. This work is continuing and will become the key focus of activity during 2006-7 and beyond.

2.5.3. The Customer Services for London Group (CSLG). The Assistant Director, Customer Service, Housing & Community Care chairs this group, which Brent established in 2004. All London boroughs are represented, together with the Metropolitan Police, Fire Brigade, Transport for London and the DWP. Primary Care Trusts have also been invited to join. The CSSG has assigned some work to the CSLG in order to take advantage of the resources that are available (currently these are very limited) and to obtain a pan-London perspective. This work includes:

- Customer satisfaction surveys for visitors to Council reception points (Brent did very well).
- Mystery shopping. A successful pilot exercise was undertaken in 11 boroughs (including Brent). A similar exercise will be undertaken in October 2006.

3. SERVICE DEMANDS AND TRENDS

3.1. Overall Demand

3.1.1. Two changes took place in 2004-5 which added significantly to the numbers of enquiries handled by the Local Offices and Telephone and On-line Service. These were:

- In November 2004, the document desk function at Brent House was transferred to OSS. The first full year of recording 2005-06 produced an additional demand of 11,600 enquiries.
- In September 2005, following the integration of the Generic and Revenues and Benefits main counters at Brent House an additional demand of 12,300 was recorded. Demand has increased at Brent House by 30% in the 7 months to 31st March 2006.

3.1.2. Appendix II shows detailed demand within individual local offices and telephone teams.

3.1.3. The Table below gives the overall demand at all six local offices and for the telephone/on-line service. It shows demand in the Local Offices calculated on the same basis as previous years, plus the adjustments resulting from the factors described above. Demand is measured as the number of recorded enquiries during the period,

	2005/06		2004/05		Change in Demand (000's)	% Change in Demand
	Demand (000's)	% of total	Demand (000's)	% Total Demand		
Local Offices:						
Base demand	207	21.20%	208.5	22.2%	-1.5	-0.70%
Adjustments	23.9	2.40%	-	-	-	-
Sub Total	230.9	23.6%	208.5	22.2%	22.4	10.7%
Telephone/On-line:						
Telephone	422.8	43.20%	399.7	42.5%	23.1	5.7
Switchboard	313.1	32.00%	323	34.4%	-9.9	-3.1%
Emails/On-line	11.4	1.20%	8.2	0.9%	3.2	39
Correspondence	0.2	0.00%	0.2	0.00%	0	0
Sub Total	747.5	76.4%	731.1	77.8%	16.4	2.2%
Grand Total	978.4	100%	939.6	100%	38.8	4.1%

3.1.4. As can be seen from the above, underlying demand for face-to-face contact in the Local Offices declined slightly, although this was heavily outweighed by the increases resulting from the additional workload that was transferred to the One Stop Service.

3.1.5. The demand for telephone and on-line access increased significantly, telephone demand increasing by 5.7% and email/on-lines increasing by 39%, albeit from a low base.

3.1.6. As well as the additional work that the One Stop Service took on in 2005-6, other factors affecting demand were:

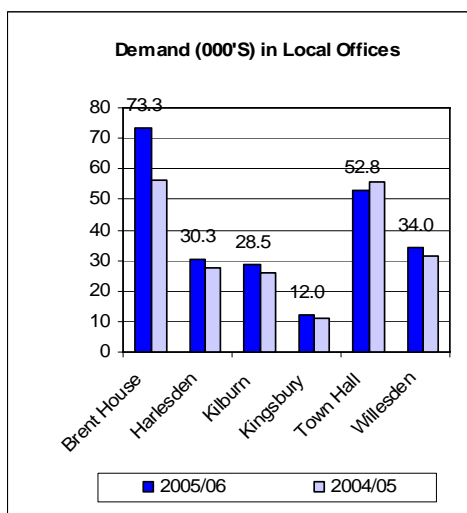
- Brent House opening on Saturday mornings which has transferred existing R&B demand as a result of the service integration and possibly either transferred some weekday demand or created new demand from customers to the revised Saturday service and who are unable to visit Brent House on a weekday.

- Continuing major works programme by BHP resulting in a decrease in demand through less general repairs enquiries and complaints due to property upgrades.

3.1.7. Details of demand in individual offices and the telephone teams is given in Appendix II.

3.2. Local Office Demand

3.2.1. The Table below shows the demand recorded at each of the Local Offices.



3.2.2. Brent House, Town Hall and Willesden remain the busiest of the local offices. All local Offices had an increase in demand except for the Town Hall which decreased by 6%.

3.2.3. The largest increase in demand was at Brent House with 30%. This was largely as a result of the Revenues and Benefits counter in Brent House being integrated with the Local Office. In addition, the Brent House Local Office was refurbished and a revised service is now available on Saturday mornings.

3.2.4. The breakdown of enquiries in each of the Local Offices is shown in the Table below.

Location	Reception Enquiries		Main Counter Enquiries	
	05/06 (000's)	% Change on 04/05	05/06 (000's)	% Change on 04/05
Brent House	50.6	+7%	22.7	+149%
Kilburn	20	+8%	8.5	+10%
Willesden	25.8	+21%	8.1	-18%
Kingsbury	7.4	+6%	4.6	+8%
Harlesden	19.7	+3%	10.6	+26%
Town Hall	39.6	-10%	13.2	+11%
Total	163.2	+4%	67.7	+32%

3.2.5. The rise in main counter demand of 32% was mainly due to the integrated Revenues and Benefits services now provided by Brent House. This reversed the previous year's decrease of 35%. The increase in demand for reception/documents of 3.9% continued the previous year's increase of 2.2%.

3.2.6. In the above, Reception enquiries includes a document service enabling customers to present documents and obtain a receipt. Brent House operates a separate documents desk for this to help reduce the waiting times at the main reception counter for customers with quick enquiries. This has proved successful and took over 30% of the Brent House reception desk enquiries. As a result, document desks will also be installed at the Town Hall and Harlesden locations in 2006-7.

3.2.7. The proportions of the top 5 enquiries for the Local Offices during 2005-6 are shown in the Table below for the main counter and for the reception desks:

Reception – Information Requests		Main Counter – Service Requests	
Enquiry Type	% of Reception Enquiries	Enquiry Type	% of Main Counter Enquiries
Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit	37%	Housing and Council Tax Benefit	57%
General Enquiries	13%	Council Tax	18%
Council Tax	9%	Brent Housing Partnership	9%
Housing	10%	Environment & Culture	7%
Brent Housing Partnership	5%	Adult Care	3%
Total Top 5	74%	Total Top 5	94%
Sign-posting internal	10%	Other	6%
Sign-posting external	5%		
Other	11%		
Total Reception	100%	Total Main Counter	100%

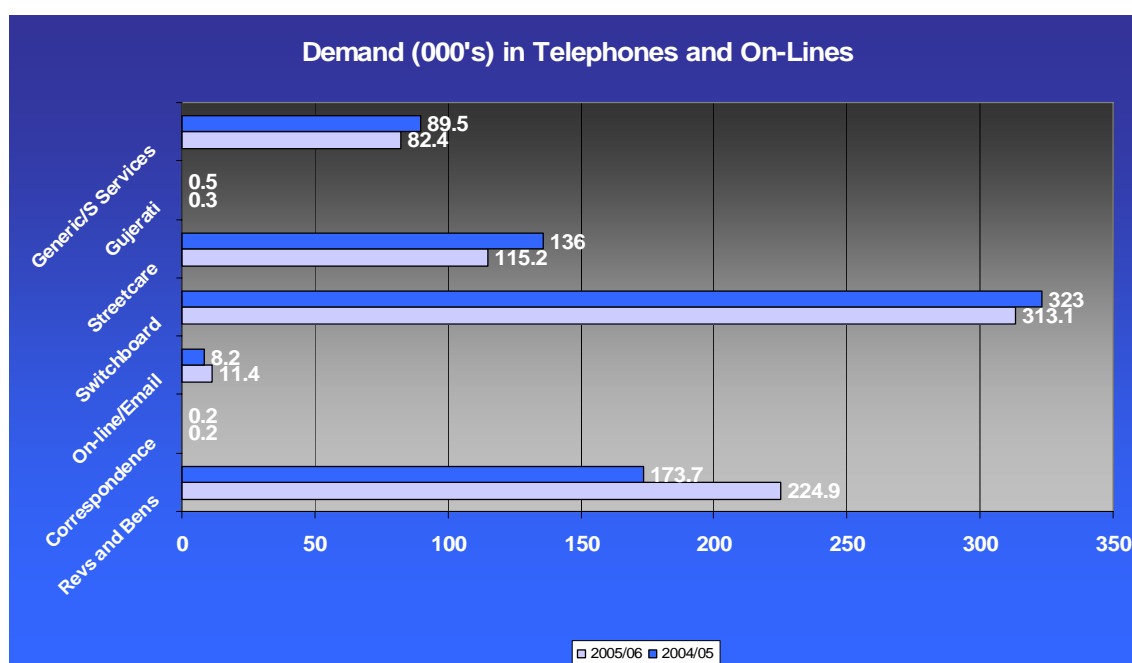
3.2.8. The main changes in the demand for particular services compared with 2004-5, and the reason for them, are:

- Benefits +66% (Merger with R & B Counters)
- Council Tax +31% (Merger with R & B Counters)
- Corporate Services –29% (There had been an increase in 2004-5 due to local elections)
- Building Control/Consultancy –29% (Self help facilities are now available for customer on line).
- Signposting -25%. (Increased website content providing support and assistance)

- StreetCare –22% (Customers using free phone facility more)
- Planning –21% (self help facilities are now available for customer on line).
- BHP -19% (reduced enquiries due to programme of property upgrades).
- Environmental other –16% (improved information on council website)
- General Enquiries –15%. (improved information on council website)
- Social Services -9% (improved information on council website)

3.3. Telephone and On-line Service Demand

3.3.1. The chart below shows the demand for each of the services within the Telephones/On-line service.



3.3.2. Overall, the number of calls increased. This was due to an increase in Revenues and Benefits calls - other areas saw a slight reduction in calls during the normal working day, possibly as a result of the growing and more comprehensive website service offered by the council as detailed below.

3.3.3. Although a small percentage of the total, on-line and email enquiries continued to grow at as a popular method of contact and increased by 39%.

3.3.4. Contact by correspondence was unchanged after a sharp decline in previous years.

3.3.5. The Gujarati line is staffed to take calls as opposed to recording messages but the demand for this line has reduced 40% from 500 to 300 in the last year. Such a large reduction if continued into the next year will require a review of the existing arrangements.

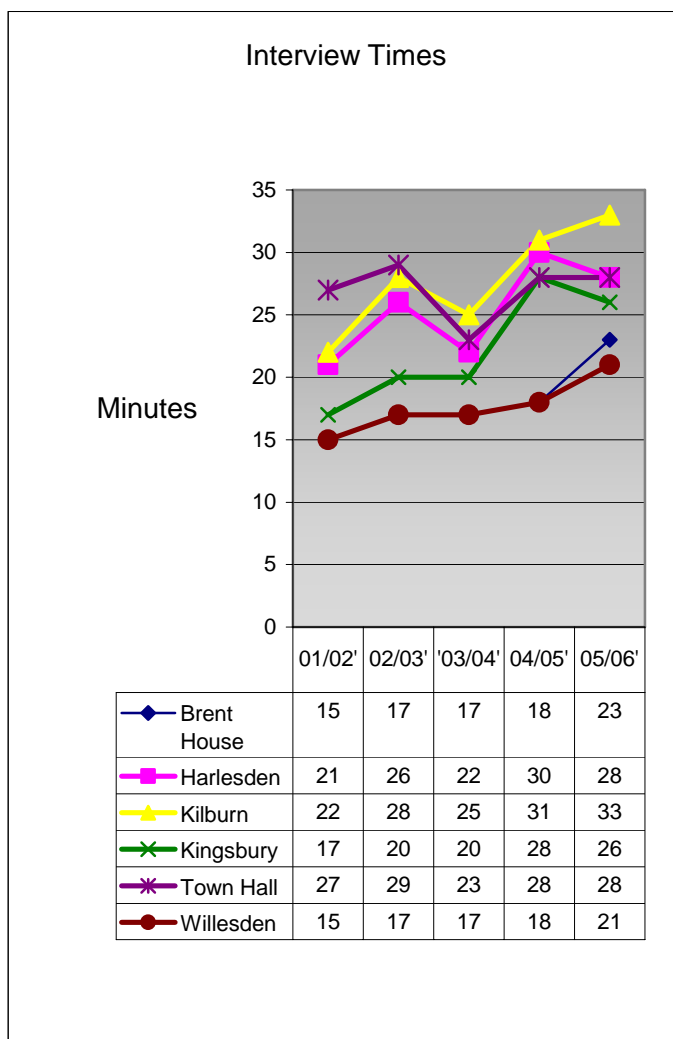
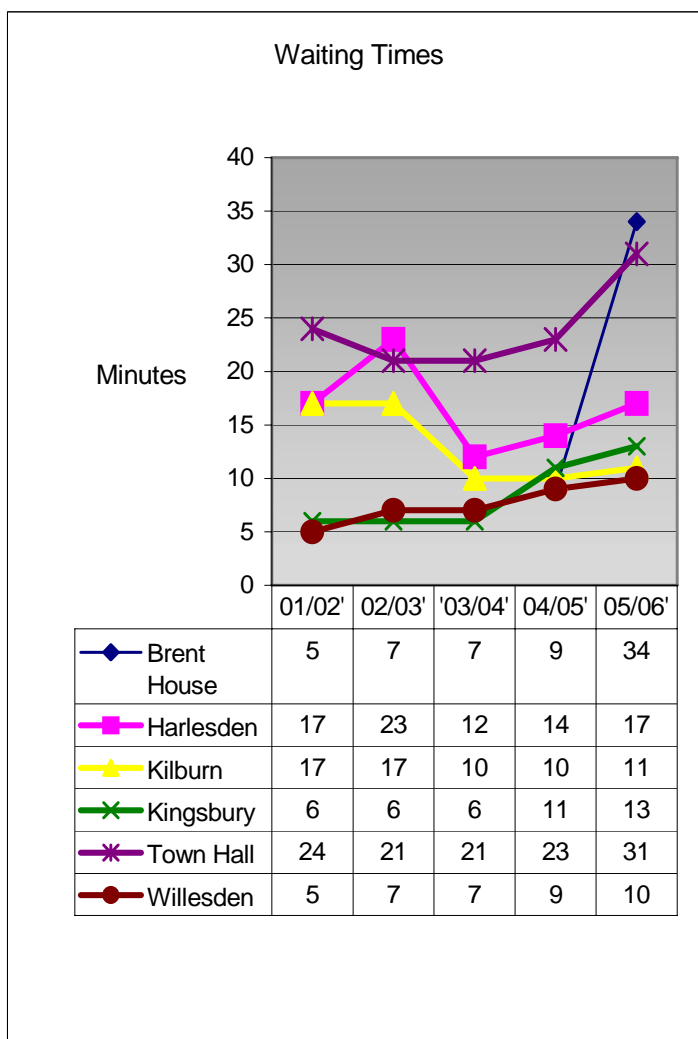
3.3.6. Included in the above are calls during the extended hours (from 5.00 PM to 8.00 PM) In 2005-6 these totalled:

- 7,200 for StreetCare (increased from 5,900 in 2004-5)
- 4,700 for the Generic line (no change from 2004-5)
- No calls for Cashiers as this line was replaced by an automated payment service in March 2005, (There had been 4,400 calls in 2004-5)

4. PERFORMANCE

4.1. Local office Main Counter Waiting and Interview times

4.1.1. The two charts below show the trend in waiting times and interview times in each of the Local Offices since 2001-2. As can be seen, after a general improvement until 2003-4, the position in recent years has declined. As discussed below, there are some special factors that have contributed to this, although some is undoubtedly due to pressures to reduce costs and hence staffing levels.



- 4.1.2. Waiting times at Brent House rose significantly following the integration of the Revenues and Benefits front desks. This is because the average waiting time for the dedicated Revenues and Benefits desk was 59 minutes, which was far greater than other Local offices as a result of transitional and temporary arrangements.
- 4.1.3. Waiting times at the Town Hall rose from 23 minutes in 2004-5 to 31 minutes in 2005-6. As a result two new interview desks were installed at the Town Hall in February 2006 to meet the additional demand and are expected to improve performance in 2006-7.
- 4.1.4. The time to process enquiries has been increasing over the last five years. This is principally due to frontline staff now having greater empowerment to deal with complex enquiries involving e.g. Council Tax enquiries, which were previously dealt with in the 'back office'.
- 4.1.5. Further details of waiting times are given in Appendix III.

4.2. Local Office Performance Indicators

- 4.2.1. The Table below shows the waiting and interview times compared with the target. Brent House has been identified separately as its performance was very significantly affected by the integration with the Revenues and Benefits front desk.
- 4.2.2. Also shown is the level of customer satisfaction obtained from comment cards (see Appendix IV for details) and from Local Office surveys.

Indicator	Standard	2005/06	2004/05	Comments
Waiting Times	80% seen within 20 minutes	80%	84%	On target
Waiting Times BH only	* 30 minutes	34 minutes	9 minutes	4 minutes worse than target
Interview Times	30 minutes	26 minutes	27 minutes	4 minutes better than target
Customers completing comment cards	20%	24.9%	31.6%	4.9% better than target
Customer Satisfaction-comment cards – local offices	95%	98.5	98.8%	3.5% better than target
Customer Satisfaction-Surveys – local offices	95%	99%	97%	4% better than target

* Revised from 20 to 30mins in February 2006.

- 4.2.3. The key point from the above is that all Local Office performance targets, with the exception of waiting times at Brent House, are being equalled or bettered. However, performance has declined compared with the previous year. In part, this reflects the increase in numbers of enquiries and pressures on staff and budgets.
- 4.2.4. Further details of the customer satisfaction the surveys and analyses are given in Appendix V.

4.3. Telephone and On-Line Service Performance Indicators

4.3.1. The Table below shows the performance targets for the Telephone and On-line service over the past two years.

Indicator/Team	Standard	2005/2006	2004/2005	Comments
Enquiry Line				
Generic & Social Services	80% answered by officer within 15 secs	73%	71%	7% below target
StreetCare	75% answered by officer within 15 secs	74%	60%	1% below target
Switchboard	95% answered by officer within 15 seconds	97%	97%	3% better than target
Extended Hours	80% answered by officer within 15 seconds	70%	65.5%	10% below target
Gujarati	No standard	59%	100%	n/a
On-line and email enquiries	100% within 1 working day	87%	57%	13% below target
Housing Benefits	70% answered by an officer within 15 seconds	50%	21%	20% below target
Council Tax	70% answered by an officer within 15 seconds	48%	20%	22% below target
Customer Satisfaction Survey				
Generic & Social Services	95% either satisfied or very satisfied	94%**	95%	Considered on target, allowing for the small sample size
StreetCare	95% either satisfied or very satisfied	94%*	78%	

* based on 42 interviews, **based on 33 interviews

4.3.2. Calls to the Telephone/On-line Service Centre can either be answered by officer or via the Automatic Call Distribution system (ACD). Customers have the option of leaving a message which will be responded to on the same working day. The Switchboard exceeded its speed of response target of 95% by 2% but other areas did not achieve the set target because staffing shortages and temporary cover have hindered performance.

- 4.3.3. Although some areas did not achieve their targets, there were significant improvements compared to the previous 12 months. An improvement plan was drawn up for the Telephone/On-line Service and regular monitoring is carried out for all telephone lines. Calls answered within target by the Generic line improved by 2% to 73%, StreetCare improved by 14% to 74%, Housing Benefit improved by 29% to 50% and Council Tax improved by 2.8% to 48%.
- 4.3.4. All emails to the Telephone/On-line Service get an automated acknowledgement. The One Stop Service aims to provide the customers with a response within 24 hours of receipt.
- 4.3.5. The volume of emails continued to rise rapidly and the response rate within target improved by 30% to 87%. In the early part of 2005-2006 there was a backlog of emails as the method of processing them through E-shop proved to be too slow. There were also issues with Council Tax e-mails, which should be dealt with by Capita.
- 4.3.6. Feedback from customers also confirmed that the method of processing and obtaining a response to emails was not satisfactory. A review was carried out and a new software package (Eptica) is to be installed during 2006. This is expected to enable email and on-line targets to be met in 2006-7.
- 4.3.7. Appendix VI shows the calls presented and answered for each of the main areas within the Telephones and On-line Service. It shows that the number of calls answered increased by 0.5%, while abandoned and engaged calls reduced over the year.
- 4.3.8. Customer satisfaction targets were met and in most areas exceeded. Details of the surveys are given in Appendix V.

4.4. Welfare Benefits Take-up

- 4.4.1. The Welfare Benefits service was re-launched on 1st April 2005 after being suspended from 1st September 2004 to 31st March 2005 due to difficulties in retaining temporary staff. It booked a total of 671 appointments for 2005/2006. An estimated total benefit of £423,000 was obtained.
- 4.4.2. The figures for 2005-6 compare very favourably with the previous year (during 2004/05 only 226 appointments were conducted with £249,000 of benefits received), which was affected by the seven month service suspension.
- 4.4.3. Since the Welfare Benefits initiative began in November 2000 it is estimated that over £6.5million has been raised in benefits.

4.5. Complaints

- 4.5.1. As shown in the Table below, the number of complaints increased by 10% during 2005-6. However, this still represents only 0.03% of all enquiries.

	2004-2005	2005-2006
Stage one complaints	233	247
Stage two complaints	4	12
Stage three complaints	0	1
Total received in the year	237	260

4.5.2. Further details of the complaints received are given in Appendix VII Key points are:

- Only 53% had some justification compared with 81% last year. In other words, the number of justifiable complaints dropped from 192 to 138.
- The target response time for Stage 1 complaints is 15 working days, for Stage 2 it is 20 working days and for Stage 3 it is 30 working days. 86% of the responses from Local Offices and 89% of the responses from the Telephones and On-line Service were within these targets.
- 74% of the complaints received related to Revenues and Benefits [service](#). Most responses to complaints that were outside target times related to Council Tax and Housing Benefit cases as these often require an in-depth investigation.

5. STAFFING

5.1. Establishment

5.1.1. At the beginning of 2005-6 there were 140 established posts. In September this was increased to 150 with the integration of the Revenue & Benefits Service at Brent House. In addition there were 7 posts which were funded by a Department of Work and Pension (DWP) grant, bringing the total number of established posts in 2005/2006 to 157.

5.2. Staff Turnover

5.2.1. Staff turnover averaged 12.9% during 2005/06 which is an increase from the 10.9% during 2004/05. There were nine Maternity Leave absences during 2005/06, an increase of five on the previous year.

5.2.2. On average it takes around 3 months, from closing date for applications to the date employee commences employment. It then takes a further 2-3 months for staff to be trained and become fully operational. This time (5 months), and absences for other reasons, need to be covered by agency temps to maintain service. This in turn impacts on performance.

5.2.3. During 2005/06 a total of 23 new staff joined the service and three existing members of staff were appointed to new positions within the service. These were:

Number	Position
1	R&B Training & Quality Manager (temp/DWP funded)
12	Call Centre Advisers (6 funded by DWP for 6 months only)
3	Customer Services Team Manager
1	Assistant Customer Services Officer
7	Customer Services Officers
1	Management Support Team Secretary
1	Head of Performance and Standards

5.3. Sickness Absence

- 5.3.1. Average sickness absence has increased slightly from the previous year from 9.0 to 10.3 days sick per person per annum, compared with a target of 10 days or less. One member of staff was dismissed under the Council's incapability procedures as a result of unacceptable sickness absence.
- 5.3.2. Managers worked with Occupational Health to provide any necessary support to staff in order for them to improve attendance at work. The Table overleaf shows sickness levels and the numbers of referrals that were made to Occupational Health.

	April 03 – March 04	April 04 – March 05	April 05 – March 06
Total Staff (Full Time Equivalent)	91	85	124
Total sickness (days)	1527	763	1275
Total Occupational Health referrals	17	17	18
Average sickness (days)	16.8	9.0	10.3
% Sickness Absence (assumed average working days 224, allowing for holidays)	7.5%	3.4%	6%

6. FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION

6.1. Budget Performance

- 6.1.1. The full year budget for the One Stop Service in 2005/2006 was £5.6m including a £131k grant funding from the DWP.
- 6.1.2. The Revenue & Benefits Service Integration took effect from September 2005 and a part year budget of £227k was transferred.
- 6.1.3. At 31 March 2006 the One Stop Service reported a break even position, with a surplus of just £52. There was a surplus of £6k on the DWP grant funding and this was carried forward into 2006/2007 as an earmarked reserve.
- 6.1.4. During 2005/2006 the OSS Brent House refurbishment project incurred expenditure of £337k met by Capital funding.
- 6.1.5. There was also £50k Capital funding for Harlesden Local office refurbishment which was brought forward into 2006/07.

7. PARTNERSHIPS

7.1. Deaf Customer Surgeries

- 7.1.1. The aim of the surgeries was to improve access for the deaf community by providing a British Sign Language interpreter at each local office.
- 7.1.2. The surgery was provided by an organization called Quest and was held monthly at the Town Hall.
- 7.1.3. The surgeries ceased at the end of March 2006 due to poor take up. Only 7 people were assisted during the year and so this was no longer cost effective.
- 7.1.4. A new sign video facility, "Significant", will be launched at Brent House and Willesden Local offices in 2006/07 to replace the surgeries and also within Adults Social Services at London Road. This Sign video Call Centre operates via an internet link between the local office and signer who is based off site at a "Significant" central office.

7.2. Victim Support

- 7.2.1. The aim of these surgeries is to improve access to support services for victims of crime. Surgeries were held weekly at Kilburn and monthly at the Town Hall. In total the Kilburn office assisted 20 people and the Town Hall assisted 6 people.

7.3. Department of Works and Pensions

- 7.3.1. The OSS hosts weekly DWP surgeries at the Kingsbury location. Pensioners are given advice on State Retirement Pensions, Pensions Credits, Pensions for Disabled People and Winter Fuel payments amongst other benefits.
- 7.3.2. The aim of the surgeries is to improve access to information and benefits and reduce pensioner poverty.
- 7.3.3. The surgeries were well attended and over 20 pensioners were assisted each month.

7.4. Visits

- 7.4.1. There were 10 visits to the One Stop Service during the year. These included visits from seven other local authorities and visits from the British Council and Russian Delegation, Action for Blind and the College of North West London.

8. CONCLUSIONS

8.1. Overall

- 8.1.1. The One Stop Service remained a very busy and in demand service in a year when organisational changes had a significant impact upon it. Despite the challenges faced the service maintained a high level of customer satisfaction and is the central focus of the council's excellence in customer service delivery.
- 8.1.2. Demand increased, mainly as a result of the transferred demand from the Brent House counters integration. Demand for the Telephone and on-Line Service continued to increase. The underlying trend is a shift from face-to-face contact to telephone and on-line access.

- 8.1.3. There has been an increase in the time taken to process face to face enquiries as more complex and time consuming enquiries are now being handled by frontline staff rather than back office staff. This has however resulted in back office efficiencies enabled by process review and increased staff empowerment. The implementation of the document desk at Brent House has shown that queues can be managed better by filtering document related enquiries to a dedicated area. This approach will be implemented in the largest Local Offices.
- 8.1.4. Significant improvement was made in telephone performance with more answered calls and a reduced number of abandoned and engaged calls, although the standards set had not yet been achieved.
- 8.1.5. Complaints received rose by 10% as a result of the service integration with the Revenues & Benefits. Complaints, as a proportion of enquiries however, remains low at 0.03%.
- 8.1.6. The OSS maintained an effective and influential presence for corporate customer services by chairing the Customer Services Steering Group and the Customer Services for London Group. The CSSG achieved notable successes during the year through its inception and management of customer service projects.

8.2. Key Factors affecting performance (Quality Issues)

- 8.2.1. Listed below are the main factors that have adversely affected performance achieved over the last 12 months.
- Staffing levels determine the standard of service provided. Periodically these levels have dropped below the minimum requirement needed to ensure staff safety at Local Offices. This has resulted in minor disruption to morning opening times. The telephone service has also been affected by staffing shortages, which impacts upon answer rates.
 - Management capacity has been overstretched due to the demands of managing a busy and complex frontline service. This has been exacerbated by additional work associated with the establishment of the new Housing & Community Care department. As a result a number of development projects have been delayed. A service unit restructure is planned in 2006-7 in order to assess capacity and meet demands for Gershon savings.
 - Unexpected staff changes within the Benefits Service impacted upon the system of urgent referrals for Benefits processing causing processing delays. This lasted for a period of between 5 to 6 weeks.

8.3. Performance Priorities For Next Year

- 8.3.1. The Service Plan priorities for 2006/2007 include the following key areas for targeted improvement activity:
- 8.3.2. Customer Waiting Times. These need to be improved at Brent House, Town Hall, Harlesden and Kilburn.
- 8.3.3. Revenue & Benefit Telephone Performance. One of the key issues is the lack of resources to cope with the volume of calls presented. The emphasis on service quality and increased empowerment for frontline staff, has meant that call durations have increased considerably. This affects our call answer rates and therefore processes and use of technology need to be reviewed.

- 8.3.4. Call Answering Targets. The Council's target of 100% of calls answered by a person within 15 seconds is not achievable with current staffing levels. A more realistic target needs to be set, particularly as the ACD (Automatic Call Distribution) system enables all calls to be answered almost immediately with a message advising customers how long they may have to wait before an officer can take their call. Further pilots will take place during 2006/07 to assess how the use of communications technology can improve performance.
- 8.3.5. Customer Consultation. Whilst the OSS obtains feedback from comment cards and surveys, there is a gap in the information obtained through consultation. Consequently, the OSS will proactively obtain feedback from internal and external customers to help shape service priorities.
- 8.3.6. Other activities include:
- Working to develop and implement recommendations for the future of customer contact to enable the Council to maintain its high standard of customer services while meeting budgetary constraints and the Gershon agenda.
 - Raise awareness of customer self-service facilities and options.
 - Upgrading the Automatic Call Distribution System to make more efficient use of staffing resources and facilitate customer self-service.
 - Assess resources and capacity available to undertake process review work to facilitate enquiry resolution definition and measurement.
 - Working with BHP to implement improvements from the 2005 Best Value Service Review.
 - Leading Corporate Customer Services improvement through the Customer Services Steering Group, so helping to help raise customer service standards across the organisation.
 - Selection of new or upgrade Customer Relationship Management System in partnership with Information Technology.
 - Equalities and Diversity. Improving data collection, analysis, monitoring and consultation to better inform service planning.
 - Maintain the Welfare Benefits take up service and increasing income generation.
 - Review OSS Management structure and capacity in line with departmental restructure to address resource and performance demands and issues.

APPENDIX I - DIVERSITY

ETHNIC ORIGIN	April 2004 - March 2005 of new customers	April 2005 - March 2006 of new customers	April 2005 - March 2006 where ethnicity is given	Census 2001
Black Total	23.7%	22.9%	25.5%	19.9%
Caribbean	6.0%	5.2%	5.7%	10.5%
African	10.6%	9.3%	10.4%	7.8%
British	4.4%	4.1%	4.6%	
Other	2.6%	4.3%	4.8%	1.6%
White Total	23.8%	20.6%	23.0%	45.3%
British	10.5%	8.3%	9.2%	29.2%
Irish	3.1%	2.2%	2.5%	7.0%
Other	10.3%	10.2%	11.3%	9.1%
Asian Total	21.8%	24.4%	27.2%	27.7%
Bangladeshi	0.2%	0.3%	0.3%	0.4%
Indian	7.3%	10.0%	11.2%	18.5%
Other	9.7%	9.4%	10.5%	4.8%
Pakistani	2.5%	2.9%	3.2%	4.0%
British	1.5%	1.4%	1.6%	
African	0.6%	0.4%	0.4%	
Chinese Total	1.0%	0.8%	0.9%	3.4%
Chinese	0.6%	0.6%	0.7%	1.1%
British	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	
Other	0.3%	0.1%	0.2%	2.3%
Mixed Total	1.7%	1.4%	1.4%	3.8%
White & Black Caribbean	0.8%	0.5%	0.5%	1.0%
White & Black African	0.4%	0.4%	0.4%	0.7%
White & Asian	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	1.0%
Other	0.5%	0.4%	0.4%	1.1%
Middle Eastern	2.6%	2.2%	2.4%	
Other Nationalities	14.2%	17.6%	19.6%	
Declined Answer to	0.9%	1.0%		
Not Known	6.0%	5.7%		
Not Requested	4.2%	3.5%		

APPENDIX II - DEMAND

Demand by Local Office

Location	Total for 2005/2006 (000's)	Totals for 2004/2005 (000's)	Annual Change (000's)	% of total demand for 2005/06	% change since 2004/05
Brent House	73.4 (1)	56.2 (1)	+17.2 (1)	32% (1)	+30% (1)
Kilburn	28.5 (5)	26.2 (5)	+2.3 (4)	12% (5)	+9% (4)
Willesden	34.0 (3)	31.2 (4)	+2.8 (2)	15% (3)	+9% (3)
Kingsbury	12.0 (6)	11.3 (6)	+0.7 (5)	5% (6)	+6% (5)
Harlesden	30.3 (4)	27.6 (3)	+2.7 (3)	13% (4)	+10% (2)
Town Hall	52.8 (2)	55.9 (2)	-3.1 (6)	23% (2)	-6% (6)
Total	231	208.4	+22.6	100%	+11%

Service Desk Enquiries

Location	Annual Change in Demand (000's)	Reception Enquiries 05/06 (000's)	% Change on 04/05	Actual Change (000's)	Main Counter Enquiries 05/06 (000's)	% Change on 04/05	Actual Change (000's)
Brent House	+17.1 (1)	50.6 (1)	+7.5%	+3.5 (2)	22.7 (1)	+149.5%	+13.6 (1)
Kilburn	+2.3 (4)	20.0 (4)	+8.1%	+1.5 (3)	8.5 (4)	+10.3%	+0.8 (4)
Willesden	+2.7 (2)	25.8 (3)	+21%	+4.5 (1)	8.1 (5)	-18%	-1.8 (6)
Kingsbury	+0.7 (5)	7.4 (6)	+5.7%	+0.4 (5)	4.6 (6)	+7%	+0.3 (5)
Harlesden	+2.7 (3)	19.7 (5)	+2.6%	+0.5 (4)	10.6 (3)	+26%	+2.2 (2)
Town Hall	-3.1 (6)	39.6 (2)	-10%	-4.4 (6)	13.2 (2)	+10.9%	+1.3 (3)
Total	+22.4	163.1	+3.9%	+6.0	67.7	+32%	+16.4

Demand in Telephone/On-line Service

	2005/06	%	2004/05	%	Change in	%
	(000s)	Demand	(000s)	Demand	(000s)	
Revs and Bens	224.9	30%	173.7	24%	+51.2	+29.5%
Total Demand	747.5	100%	731.1	77.8%	+16.4	+2.24%
Generic & Social Services Enquiry Line	82.4	11%	89.5	12%	-7.1	-8.8%
Gujarati Line	0.3	0%	0.5	0%	-0.2	-40%
StreetCare	115.2	15%	136.0	19%	-20.8	-15.3%
Switchboard	313.1	42%	323.0	44%	-9.9	-3.1%
On-Line & E-Mail	11.4	2%	8.2	1%	+3.2	+39%
Correspondence	0.2	0%	0.2	0%	0	0%
Sub-Total	522.6	69.91%	557.4	76%	-34.8	-6.2

APPENDIX III – WAITING AND INTERVIEW TIMES

Shop locations average waiting & interview times – Main Counter

Location	Actual Change in Counter Demand (000's)	Waiting 05/06 (mins)	Waiting 04/05 (mins)	Annual Change (mins)	Interview 05/06 (mins)	Interview 04/05 (mins)	Annual Change (mins)
*Brent House	+13.6 (1)	34 (6)	9 (1)	+25 (6)	23 (2)	18 (1)	+5 (6)
Kilburn	+0.8 (4)	11 (2)	10 (3)	+1 (1)	33 (6)	31 (6)	+2 (4)
Willesden	-1.8 (6)	10 (1)	9 (1)	+1 (1)	21 (1)	21 (2)	0 (2)
Kingsbury	+0.3 (5)	13 (3)	11 (4)	+2 (3)	26 (3)	28 (3)	+2 (4)
Harlesden	+2.2 (2)	17 (4)	14 (5)	+3 (4)	28 (4)	30 (5)	-2 (1)
Town Hall	+1.3 (3)	31 (5)	23 (6)	+8 (5)	28 (4)	28 (3)	0 (2)
Average	+16.4	19	13	+6	27	26	1

* Target waiting time for Brent House is 30 minutes – others 20 minutes

APPENDIX IV – CUSTOMER COMMENT CARD DETAIL

How did you first hear about the service?

For first time users the most common way to find out about the One Stop Service was through word of mouth (62%).

For repeat customers 52% were visiting with the same enquiry and 48% were visiting with a different enquiry.

How friendly and helpful did you find the staff?

Overall 98.88% of customer found the staff “Very” or “Quite” friendly and helpful which is a decrease of 0.32% on last year. These findings are consistent across the OSS locations.

How long did you have to wait?

The percentage of customers who believed they were seen in 20 minutes decreased from 52.3% to 42.63%. However the percentage spread is wide with Kilburn seeing 63.3% of all customers immediately, whilst the Town Hall only saw 29% immediately.

Waiting times have increased at both Brent House and the Town Hall this year due to increased demand. Both locations have having intelligent queuing systems installed so waiting times can be monitored more effectively.

Was the information/actions clearly explained?

98.7% of customers said that the information had been “very” or “quite” clearly explained by the One Stop Service officers. This is an increase of 0.3% compared to last year.

Was the information on display useful?

On average 79.52% of customers responding found the information on display either “Quite” or “Very” useful. This is an increase on last year of 6.02%.

How would you rate the service you received?

98.45% of customers responding rated the service as either “good” or “very good”, compared to 98.8% last year.

APPENDIX V – CUSTOMER SATISFACTION SURVEYS

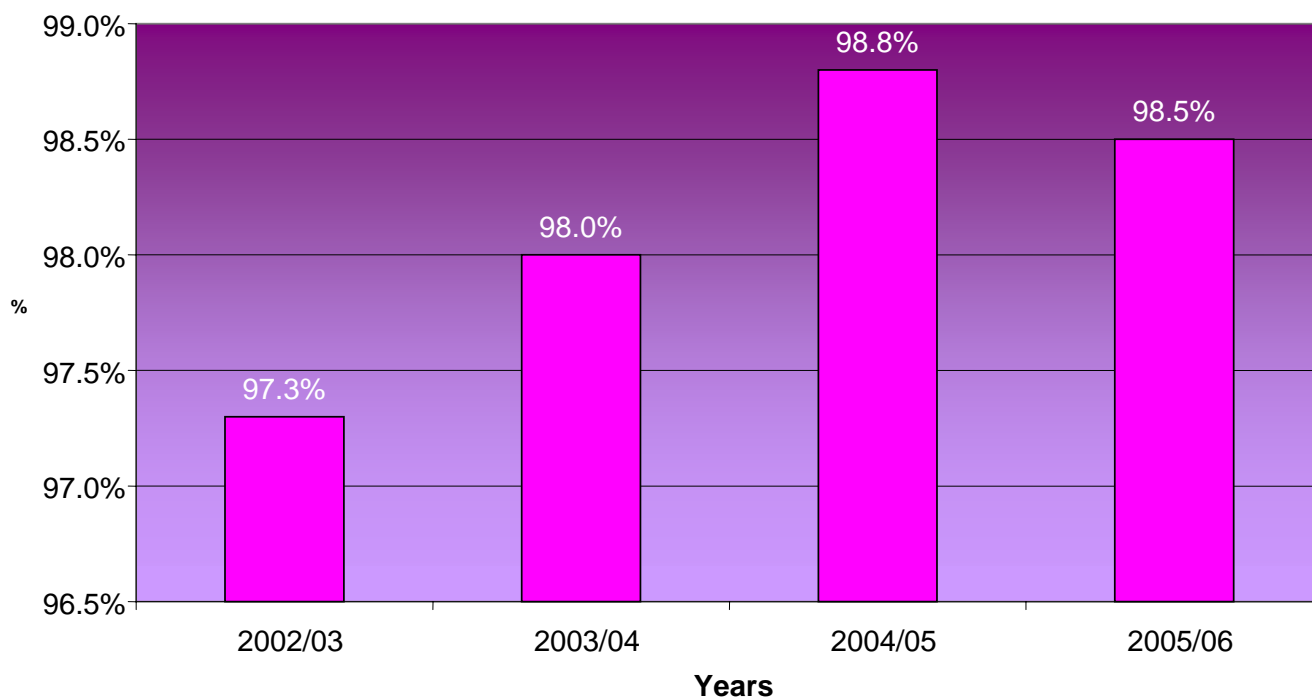
Local Offices

The customer satisfaction for the locals is collected via comment cards completed by customers during their visits to the shops or by Snapshot Surveys carried out at each of the 6 locations.

For the Telephone and on-line service the information is collected in three ways :-

- Through a survey conducted by post to customers who had made contact by person.
- Through an email survey sent to a sample of customers who had made contact by this method.
- Through a telephone survey.

Local Offices: Customer satisfaction



OSS Comment Cards

The comment cards reflect the customer's opinion on their visit experience i.e. the level of satisfaction for the service received from the One Stop Service.

	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	Change 05/06- 04/05	2004/5 Targets
Comment Cards received	4,595	9,267	13,600	14156	+556	
Customers seen on main counter	78,695	78,920	42,998	56775	+13777	
% of customers completing cards	5.8%	11.7%	31.6%	24.9%	-6.7	20.0%
Friendly & helpful	96.0%	98.7%	99.2%	98.9%	-0.3	
Seen within 20 minutes	82.0%	79.8%	84.7%	79.6%	-5.1	80.0%
Actions taken clearly explained	97.5%	98.0%	99.1%	98.7%	-0.4	
Leaflets / information on display useful	78.0%	76.2%	77.2%	79.5%	+2.3%	
Customers satisfied	97.3%	98.0%	98.8%	98.5%	0.3%	95.0%

	TH	BH	HAR	KINGS	KIL	WILLS	TOTAL	2004/5 Targets
Comment Cards received	4037	4016	1971	1112	1,375	1645	14156	
Customers seen on main counter	10,674	19,802	8,925	3,740	6,652	6,982	56,775	
% of customers completing cards	37.8%	20.3%	22.8%	29.7%	20.6%	23.5%	24.9%	20.0%
New customers	51.9%	46.0%	61.0%	43.4%	60.2%	78.0%	54.6%	
Repeat customers	48.1%	53.9%	36.4%	51.9%	39.7%	19.8%	44.3%	
Friendly & helpful	99.3%	99.1%	99.6%	98.7%	99.5%	96.0%	98.9%	
Seen within 20 minutes	65.1%	77.2%	89.2%	89.7%	92.2%	93.3%	79.6%	80.0%
Actions taken clearly explained	89.0%	98.9%	99.3%	96.4%	99.3%	97.3%	98.6%	
Leaflets / information on display useful	76.9%	73.1%	90.0%	82.3%	86.5%	82.0%	79.5%	
Customers satisfied	98.61%	98.4%	99.4%	98.6%	99.3%	96.1%	98.4%	95.0%

Telephone Surveys

A total of 95 surveys were conducted, 42 for StreetCare Service, 33 for the Generic Service and 20 for the Revenues and Benefit Service with the following result

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 48% of calls answered within 5 rings (76% within 10 rings)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 82% felt quality of information was good or excellent
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 93% rated the officer dealing with enquiry as good or very good
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 88% thought service was very good or excellent

In addition, of the Revenues and Benefits customers surveyed:

- 40% of thought services had improved, 15% thought they had stayed the same.
- 95% were happy with the speed of response but many stated that they have waited for significantly longer in the past.
- 55% said their enquiry had been 'Completely resolved to their satisfaction', another 30% said it was 'Nearly resolved, awaiting further action.'

Email and on-line surveys

An email survey was sent to 250 customers and 18% were returned.

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 74% received a response within 2 days, 26% waited longer than 2 days
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 57% happy with speed of response,
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 61% said quality of information was excellent, very good or satisfactory
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 85% rated the officer dealing with the enquiry as good or very good
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 59% said quality of service was excellent, very good or satisfactory
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 59% said their enquiry had been either completely or nearly resolved, 20% said enquiry was still on-going

Local Office snapshot day surveys.

A total of 218 customers visiting local offices were surveyed during May and November 2005.

- Service Levels – Brent Council local One Stop Service is very popular with residents and 80% said this is their preferred method of contacting the Council. They also scored highly in terms of quality of staff and service level.
- Waiting Times reception – 65% of customers said they were seen immediately on arrival at the reception desk, 30% waited between 5 and 10 minutes and only 5% waited longer than 10 minutes.
- Waiting Times main counter- 67% of customers said they were seen within 10 minutes, 13% said they had to wait between 10 and 20 minutes. 20% said they had to wait 20 minutes or longer.
- Environment – 92% of customers thought the One Stop Service environment was either "good" or "very good".
- Special Needs – 22 (10%) customers completing a survey revealed that they had special needs. 95% of these said that the One Stop Service has met these needs.

- Council Telephone contact – Some customers had expressed a preference for the face to face service as it was sometimes difficult to get through on the telephones. Also documents could be submitted through the local offices.
- Council Back Office Services – The One Stop Service was viewed more favourably than the back office service. The interviewees were very happy with the level of service provided by the OSS and were able to see the attempts the One Stop officer had made to resolve their enquiry. In quantifying their leaning toward the One Stop Service, examples were cited of lost documents and speed of response to letters when dealing with the 'back office'.
- Overall standard of service – 193 customers interviewed (90%) said they thought that Brent Councils customer services are improving. Some of the other customers could only give general feedback about this question as they had little experience of using Brent's customer services.

Welfare Benefits Comment Cards

A total of 348 (41%) customers who were seen by the Welfare Benefits service returned a comment card. Analysis of the returned cards showed:

- 97% said the staff were very helpful and friendly
- 100% said the officer explained any entitlement to benefits clearly
- 94% were seen immediately (with a further 4% saying they waited up to 10 minutes to be seen)
- 95% were very satisfied with the service (a further 5% said they were quite satisfied)

APPENDIX VI – CALLS PRESENTED AND ANSWERED

Team	Calls Presented (000s - except ^a)		Actual Change (000's)	Calls Answered (000's - except ^a)	
	05/06	04/05		05/06	04/05
Generic Line	94.3	103.6	-19.4	82.4	89.5
Gujarati Line	490 ^a	566 ^a	-0.076	304 ^a	488 ^a
StreetCare	123.1	154.7	-31.6	115.2	136
Switchboard	317.9	327.8	-9.9	313.1	323
Council Tax	141.5	124.8	+16.7	125.1	99.5
Housing Benefit & Council Tax Benefit	109.1	91.8	+17.3	99.8	74.2
Total OSS Revenues & Benefits	250.6	216.6	+34	224.9	173.7
Extended Hours Service #					
Cashiers	n/a	5.5	n/a	0	4.4
Generic Line	5.6	5.7	-0.1	4.7	4.7
StreetCare	6.5	8.3	-1.8	5.9	7.2
Extended Hours Service Total	12.1	20	-7.9	10.6	16.3

includes calls between 8am and 9am

APPENDIX VII – COMPLAINTS

Complaints local offices

Response time	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3
Within target working days	52	3	n/a
Outside target working days	7	1	n/a
Total responded to in the year	59	4	1
Average working days to respond	8.2	13.25	Responded to by Corporate complaints

- Stage 1 Target = 15 working days
- Stage 2 Target = 20 working days
- Stage 3 Target = 30 working days

Complaints - Telephone and On-line Service

Response time	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3
Within target working days	171	4	0
Outside target working days	17	4	0
Total responded to in the year	188	8	0
Average working days to respond	7.52 days	18 days	0

Complaint Outcomes

Outcome	2003-2004		2004-2005		2005-2006		
	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3
Fully Justified	76	2	111	0	53	4	0
Partially Justified	39	5	90	2	76	5	1
Not Justified	25	2	43	2	110	2	0
Pending a response	15	0	1	0	8	1	0
Totals	156	9	245*	4	247	12	1

*includes responses from complaints in previous year

Complaints by Location.

Locations	2003-2004	2004-2005	2005-2006
Brent House	8	5	18
Harlesden	1	2	2
Kilburn	2	4	8
Kingsbury	2	1	2
Town Hall	13	9	13
Willesden	1	5	18
Generic line	4	5	3
StreetCare line	11	2	1
Revenues & Benefits	102	210	192
Welfare Rights	0	0	0
General OSS	1	0	3
Pending a response	15	3	0
Total	165	248*	260

* some complaints involve more than one location

Reasons for OSS Complaints

54% of complaints were regarding the quality of service. The most common reasons for complaints were Quality of Service and Information given, with 54% of all complaints logged. 8% were about staff conduct which is a 20% improvement on the previous year.