

London Borough of Brent
Overview & Scrutiny Committee 11th December 2007 Briefing Note

Customer Contact Transformation - Progress to 28 November 2007

1. Introduction

- 1.1. In March this year, the Executive Committee agreed to a strategy by which the One Stop Service would be modernised and re-designed over the next two years to provide more cost-effective customer contact arrangements. It included a vision of the future of customer contact not only in the One Stop Service, but across the Council. This would:
- Provide sharper, more efficient and better targeted customer services.
 - Realise significant cost savings in the medium and long terms.
- 1.2. Members agreed to begin implementing the strategy by:
- Replacing the Kingsbury Library in Stag Lane and the One Stop Local Office in Kingsbury with a modern Library and Customer Contact Point in the Kingsbury One Stop Service premises.
 - Seeking to replace the Kilburn Local Office with a Customer Contact Point on premises shared with another partner.
- 1.3. This briefing paper gives a summary of the work that was planned, the progress that has been made so far, the budgetary position, the issues and learning points that have arisen and the actions we are taking.

2. The Vision for the OSS

- 2.1. The Vision was to replace five OSS Local Offices with "Customer Contact Points". The Contact Points would be smaller than existing OSS Local Offices and would
- Share a reception and reception duties with a range of partners such as Libraries
 - Have a 'pre-arranged' appointment system that could be used by reception staff, the Council's Telephone/On-line centre or by customers themselves
 - Have interview facilities, which would be staffed by a rota of experienced customer services officers.

- Have self-service facilities that reception staff would encourage and support customers to use. This would be available for customers throughout opening hours
- 2.2. This would provide the potential for savings and increased efficiency through reduced staffing levels and reduced accommodation, although some additional staffing would be needed in the Telephone/On-line Service.
- 2.3. In addition, the Automatic Call Distribution system ACD system would be upgraded to enable greater use of automated responses through IVR (Interactive Voice Response) and other facilities.
- 2.4. Although customers would generally no longer be able to drop in for a face-to-face discussions without an appointment (other than at Brent House), customer service and accessibility should be improved because:
- Service would be available over a longer period through self service.
 - There should be fewer long queues
 - A significant number of customers would learn about the on-line and telephone services available and begin to realise their advantages in terms of convenience and speed of response.
 - Vulnerable customers with complex or simple enquiries would receive improved quality service through local dedicated appointment service.

3. The Vision – Cross-Council

- 3.1. Two strands of activity were agreed to make the implementation of Customer Contact Points a success and to obtain further substantial savings throughout the Council. These were:
- Business process improvement. - a cross-Council view from initial customer contact through to fulfilment of the service request by the back office service unit,
 - Channel Migration - encouraging customers to change from face-to-face to other forms of contact:
- 3.2. The aim of the above is to achieve greater efficiency, increased customer satisfaction, fewer complaints and a further reduction in the numbers of face-to-face visits and phone calls.

4. The plan and progress to date

- 4.1. The plan has three strands:
- Transforming OSS Local Offices to Customer Contact Points

- Upgrading the ACD system and increasing the capacity of the telephone service
 - Improving business processes across the Council
- 4.2. The originally planned milestone dates for some of the main activities are shown in the Table below, together with the current forecasted dates.

Milestone	Planned date	Actual/Forecast date
Kilburn and Kingsbury close	April 07	April 07
Kilburn interim appts opens	May 07	May 07
Upgrade ACD	July 07	Mar 08
Kingsbury Pilot Contact Point Open	Sept 07	Feb 08
Kilburn Contact Point Open	Feb 08	Mar 08
Town Hall OSS transformed	June 08	TBA
Willesden OSS transformed	Dec 08	TBA
Harlesden OSS replaced	Feb 09	Sept 10

- 4.3. In parallel with the above, processes were planned to be reviewed in the OSS and across the Council
- 4.4. Since the project started at the end of March 2007, the following progress has been made:
- The Kingsbury Local Office has been closed and a contract for the re-development has been specified and let. Construction is in progress and the new shared services Customer Contact Point should be live in February 2008.
 - The Kilburn Local Office has been closed and an interim appointments service established with the Ancient Order of Foresters. 17 options were reviewed for a long-term partner in Kilburn and detailed negotiations now in progress with the Library Service.
 - The ACD upgrade has unfortunately been delayed due to procurement issues. It is now expected to be implemented in March.
 - Council-wide customer contact transformation has begun and:

- Work has started on reviewing Revenues and Benefits process in the OSS to interface with the new Customer Relationship Management system.
- A new Customer Services Steering Group with senior representation from all departments has been established to develop and oversee the customer contact transformation strategy.
- A Customer Services Working Group has been established to provide operational advice and support to the CSSG.
- A detailed workplan is being developed.

5. The financial position

5.1. Three factors have affected the financial position:

- The Kingsbury re-development has cost £150,000 more than expected.
- The Kingsbury pilot project is likely to take six months longer than planned, with the result that there will be a delay in obtaining the practical knowledge we need to confirm or refine the OSS operational model. This in turn affects the rollout of future customer contact points.
- The ACD implementation is likely to be delayed by eight months, so that telephone service efficiency improvements have been delayed. This means that additional staff resources will be needed in 2008/9 and 2009/10.

5.2. The resulting budgetary position is shown in the Tables below.

Expenditure Budget (£'000)				
Item	Budget	Forecast	Variance	Comments
2007/8 Capital	549	799	150 over	Additional Kingsbury cost
2007/8 Revenue	100	100	Nil	
2008/9 Capital	247	247	Nil	
2008/9 Revenue	100	100	Nil	

Total	1,196	1,346	150 Over	
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Savings Budget (£;000)				
Item	Budget	Forecast	Variance	Comments
2007/8	13	13	Nil	
2008/9	130	70	60 under	Kingsbury and ACD delays
2009/10	413	353	60 under	
20010/11	479	479	Nil	

6. Lessons and issues so far

- 6.1. Although there is no experience yet of operating the Kingsbury Customer Contact Point, it is clear that:
- There is very little need for an appointments service in Kilburn – Customers are going to Willesden
 - There is a need for local drop-in points for document submission (eg for the Housing Benefit Verification Framework)
- 6.2. The delays have reinforced the need to ensure that savings, and customer service improvements come from across the Council and not just from the OSS.
- 6.3. The decision on the Civic Centre has not been made. The OSS is reluctant to re-model the Town Hall Local Office in case it is needed to provide a drop-in service while Brent House is being developed as the Civic Centre.
- 6.4. There is a clear imperative for departments to work together to reduce avoidable contact to support the transformation. This has been greatly increased due to the latest government Performance Indicator N14 requiring a 50% reduction in avoidable contact between 2008 and 2011 against specific London Borough services.

7. Next steps

- 7.1. As a result of the lessons learned and issues that have arisen so far, the operational vision and implementation plan will be reviewed and refined. The actions planned over the next few months are to:

- 7.1.1. Complete the cross-Council improvement plan for the CSSG and CSWG which includes meeting the new Performance Indicator N14 as referred to at 6.4.
- 7.1.2. Increase the capacity in the Contact Centre and launch a "Phone us First" publicity campaign.
- 7.1.3. Start work with the Library Service to plan the Harlesden Customer Contact point.
- 7.1.4. Refine the OSS model in the light of the need for local document handling using further research outcomes.
- 7.1.5. Implement the Kingsbury Customer Contact Point as planned.
- 7.1.6. Implement the Kilburn Customer Contact Point, taking account of the refined model.
- 7.1.7. Plan the implementation of the Town Hall Customer Contact Point after the Civic Centre decision has been confirmed.
- 7.1.8. Further refine the OSS model in June 2008 in the light of operational experience from the Kingsbury Customer Contact Point.

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28th November 2007