



**Overview and Scrutiny Committee**  
24 March 2009

**Report from the Director of  
Business Transformation**

For Information

Wards Affected:  
ALL

**One Stop Service Redesign Project Update**

**1.0 Summary**

1.1 This report updates elected members on progress made in delivering the Council's One Stop Service Redesign Project agreed by the Executive in March 2007.

**2.0 Recommendation**

2.1 Members are requested to note the contents of this report.

**3.0 Detail**

**3.1 One Stop Service Redesign Project Update**

Members may recall that the One Stop Service Redesign Project is part of the wider Customer Contact Transformation Programme agreed in March 2007 which included a vision of the future of customer contact not only in the One Stop Service, but across the Council and which would 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.

Key objectives of the One Stop Service Redesign Project are 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,
- To maintain and improve existing high standards of customer service.

### 3.2 **One Stop Service Redesign Programme - Review of Progress to Date**

Since March 2007, the One Stop Service Re-design Project has been progressed and an update on each of the individual projects being implemented is detailed below. The development of Contact Points in Libraries to replace more traditional “drop-in” arrangements has been varied according to specific customer needs determined from demographic research, customer focus group meetings and surveys and based upon our experiences and findings from the pilot in Kingsbury. Consequently, there are variations in the degrees of services available from the Contact Points established. This is detailed for each of the individual projects in terms of the facilities and services available.

A summary of the Redesign project timetable is shown in Table 1 below.

**Table 1**

<b>Milestone</b>	<b>Planned date</b>	<b>Actual/Forecast date</b>
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	Apr 08
Kilburn Contact Point Open	Feb 08	Sep 09
Town Hall OSS development	June 08	Sept 08 to Feb 09
Willesden OSS development	Dec 08	Jan 09
Harlesden OSS replaced	Feb 09	Feb 10

### 3.3 **Kingsbury Library Plus (KLP)**

On 14<sup>th</sup> April 2008, KLP opened for business incorporating a modernised library and the first new Brent Contact Point. Brent Contact Point comprises self service customer computers, freephones, improved signposting and interview rooms for pre-arranged appointments for vulnerable customers and more complex enquiries that cannot be resolved by telephone or email. This

was intended as a “pilot” arrangement in order to provide the opportunity for experiential learning prior to the proposed roll-out of other proposed Contact Points across the Borough.

Kingsbury Library Plus has proved a success. Library visitor numbers to the premises have been much higher than previously recorded at the former Stag Lane Library and, since opening, there has been a general increase in usage of the self service computers and free phones as customers become more familiar with the facilities available. However, there has been virtually no demand for pre-arranged appointments. This is considered to be predominantly due to the following factors:

- A recent demographic analysis has indicated a low proportion of Housing Benefit customers resident in the Kingsbury area. As these traditionally account for a significant proportion of customer enquiries particularly from vulnerable members of the community and customers with complex enquiries, the potential for such enquiries at KLP would be lower than for other Local Offices in the Borough.
- This, together with the Town Hall nearby now continuing to offer a customer “drop in” facility is believed to have contributed to the absence of any take-up of the pre-arranged appointments service.

To assist in identifying customer perceptions and future service requirements, a customer focus group meeting has recently been held. This indicated a general awareness of the services and facilities available at the premises and high levels of customer satisfaction. The One Stop Service intends to carry out renewed publicity for the services and facilities available at KLP early in the new financial year following on from the success of the recent focus group meeting.

#### 3.4 **Town Hall**

In September 2008, improved self service arrangements were introduced through the installation of customer computers with touch screens and free phones to access Council services and information. To reflect changing patterns in demand and provide greater flexibility, the number of main counter enquiry desks was reduced in February 2009 from 6 to 4 and the reception desk capacity increased to accommodate up to three staff. The more traditional customer “drop-in” facility has been retained at the Town Hall but there is now a greater presence given to accessing information and advice through self service provision. The Town Hall was not redesigned to become a Contact Point as both the Town Hall reception and Library are affected by future plans for the Civic Centre. Additionally, the cost of establishing a Contact Point within the Town Hall for a relatively short timescale would not be justified.

#### 3.5 **Neasden Library Plus (NLP)**

In 2008, an opportunity arose to work in partnership with the Library Service once again to implement a Brent Contact Point as part of a refurbished Neasden Library. This opened on 9<sup>th</sup> February 2009. The former Neasden Library premises now comprise the Library, Brent Contact Point and formal learning rooms for BACES customers. This additional Brent Contact Point

was implemented within the original budget for the One Stop Service Redesign Programme.

Brent Contact Point now affords customers the opportunity to contact the Council and enquire about services using freephones or the self service customer computers available in the premises. Library staff offer support to customers using the facilities for the first time and improved signposting for Council services has been provided.

The service was launched on 14<sup>th</sup> February 2009 and customer feedback was very positive. This will continue to be monitored and reviewed over the coming months.

### 3.6 **Harlesden Library Plus (HLP)**

The One Stop Service, Library Service and BACES have jointly been developing plans for the refurbishment of Harlesden Library that closed in August 2008 and these are now at an advanced stage.

The project, which is being funded by the Council, Learning and Skills Council and Lottery Fund will see the opening of Harlesden Library Plus in early 2010, and will comprise the library, formal learning rooms for BACES customers and a Customer Contact Point. The Brent Contact Point will comprise self service customer computers with touch screen access, freephones and a facility for handing in documents that will be resourced by a permanent One Stop Service staff presence.

This service offering has been determined from an evaluation of recently obtained demographic data and supplements the previous proposal solely for pre-arranged appointments. This development also builds on the learning and experience gained from Kingsbury Library Plus and will be designed to promote flexibility thereby enabling a timely response to be made to emerging customer behaviours and changing needs.

During the period of the works, the One Stop Service will continue to provide customer services from its existing location at Challenge House in Harlesden. Communication and publicity arrangements for local residents will be provided through our One Stop Staff based at Challenge House and attendance at the Harlesden Area Consultative Forum is currently scheduled within our plans for June 2009.

Additionally, we will be contacting key stakeholder organisations in the local community as part of our publicity and promotion plans and to identify any potential impact upon community members that may be considered.

### 3.7 **Willesden Local Office**

It was originally proposed that a Brent Contact Point would be established within Willesden Green Library and that the existing Local Office would be closed. However, supported by our experiences and findings from KLP and more recent demographic data that has become available, it was decided that these premises should continue to provide the more traditional “drop in” service facility in the South of the Borough. Additional freephones and self service computers have been installed within the main Willesden Green

Library foyer area to improve accessibility and encourage the use of these facilities for Council enquiries.

The use of these premises will be kept under review to enable us to respond in a timely manner to actual or likely changes in customer behaviour patterns.

### 3.8 **Kilburn**

Members may recall that the former Kilburn Local Office closed in April 2007 as an initial phase of the One Stop Service Re-Design Strategy and a temporary arrangement was established for holding pre-arranged appointments using the Ancient Order of Foresters Meeting Hall. However, despite the facility for pre-arranged appointments being available, take-up has been minimal to date.

With the Willesden Local Office being in close proximity to the former Kilburn Local Office and both served by a local bus service, our monitoring has indicated that customers have chosen to use the Willesden Local Office instead of the temporary service at the Ancient Order of Foresters. This has been confirmed through a survey that was undertaken by the One Stop Service. There have been no formal complaints from customers as a consequence of the closure.

Extensive enquiries were conducted in the Kilburn Local Office with a view to securing a partnership arrangement permitting the provision of customer services from shared premises and staff. However, a suitable partner with premises available for sharing could not be found.

In view of this, the feasibility of using Council premises in the wider Kilburn locality was re-examined and Kilburn Library was identified as a possible solution.

Discussions have subsequently been held with the Library Service concerning the practicality of establishing a Customer Contact Point comprising self service computers and freephones only within Kilburn Library. These are continuing with the aim of securing a provisional agreement subject to cost, risks and service logistics by the end of March 2009.

### 3.9 **Automatic Call Distribution System (ACD) Upgrade**

An important part of the One Stop Service Redesign Project focuses on encouraging customers to phone or email the Council in the first instance and in ensuring that the required levels of staffing and infrastructure are in place to underpin and support the strategy through better use of resources, increased capacity, improved processing and overall improved call handling.

To ensure that the channel migration was underpinned by an effective and resilient infrastructure, a call centre software upgrade was implemented in May 2008 having been previously delayed for technical reasons from a scheduled completion date of July 2007.

The delayed implementation has meant that other changes to increase call centre capacity through a range of enhancements have had to be deferred also and are now intended to be implemented during 2009/10.

These include the use of voice recognition for the following:

- Increased self-service service facilities
- Fulfilling frequently requested transactions,
- Evaluating customer satisfaction levels from callers and
- Prioritising calls according to customer requirements.

### 3.10 **Financial Implications**

The One Stop Service capital funding requirement for the implementation of the redesign programme was originally identified as being £796,000 although this subsequently was revised to £946,000 as a consequence of the increased cost of the refurbishment works at Kingsbury Library Plus. However, from the lessons and experiences gained through the implementation programme and from more recently available demographic data, capital funding requirements have since been reduced to £788,000 representing a reduction of £158,000 on the revised funding level and more than offsetting the increased Kingsbury refurbishment costs. The One Stop Service remains confident that the originally identified savings of £479,000 per annum arising from the redesign project will be achieved by 2010/11 as planned.

### 3.11 **The Future**

Customer demand is decreasing as a result of cross Council service improvements such as recently achieved within the Revenues and Benefits department. This continues to shape and inform service redesign. The One Stop Service continues to work closely with Adults and Social Care, Children & Families, Revenues and Benefits and Environmental Health to re-specify customer interaction and transactions during 2009/10 to meet changing customer needs and it is anticipated that this should result in further improvements. The new NI 14 performance indicator "Reducing Avoidable Contact" is driving some of the initiatives and has a targetted 50% reduction in avoidable contact by 2011 that will also result in further reductions over the next 3 years.

These developments will be kept under review so that we can ensure that we continue to provide a cost-effective service that meets the needs of the Council's customers.

#### **Contact Officers**

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#### **Background Papers**

The Future of Customer Contact – CMT 14<sup>th</sup> December 2006

Executive 12<sup>th</sup> February 2007

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