

	<p style="text-align: center;">Overview & Scrutiny Committee 9th July 2009</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Report from the Director of Business Transformation</p>
Wards Affected: None	
One Stop Service Redesign Project Update	

1.0 Summary

1.1 This report updates elected members on the following matters as requested at the Overview and Scrutiny meeting of 24th March 2009:

- User 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 including enquiries related to school places.
- The contingency arrangements in place to manage any anticipated increase in user demand associated with the economic recession including a returning demand for face to face

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:

3.1.1 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 of £479,000 by 2011,
- To maintain and improve existing high standards of customer service.

3.1.2 Members may recall that under the Redesign Programme, Kingsbury Library Plus opened in April 2008 and more recently Neasden Library Plus opened in February 2009.

3.1.3 Since the last update report in March 2009, work has continued with progression of the One Stop Service Redesign Programme. In particular, preparatory work is now underway at the Harlesden Library premises to establish a new shared service which will include a Brent Contact Point. The interior redesign and refurbishment of the new Harlesden Library Plus is scheduled for completion in February 2010. When open, the new service arrangements will comprise a document handling service, freephones, self service PC's and prearranged appointments in addition to the library service and Brent Adult and Community Education Services (BACES) formal learning rooms.

3.1.4 We have recently commenced a publicity and communication process engaging with customers at Harlesden Local Office many of whom may not yet fully appreciate the new customer service that Harlesden Library Plus will offer. The Harlesden customer engagement has seen in excess of 300 customers responding and One Stop Service representatives have also recently attended the June 2009 Harlesden Area Consultative Forum to update attendees on the proposals and plans concerning the new shared service arrangements at Harlesden Library Plus.

The majority of customer responses received from the engagement process indicated that customers would use Willesden Local Office (39%) or Brent House (32%) if they did not use HLP although the Town Hall also featured as an alternative (11%).

Additionally, of the 312 customers that responded, 31.7% provided additional "free-format" comments. The greatest proportion of comments received included the following:

"Pleased with the service, good / useful" (21%)

"Harlesden One Stop Service should remain open in its existing format" (58.5%)

Additional to the above, we are considering options for an enhanced and modernised customer service for 2013 onwards concerning local customer contact. This includes reviewing partnership arrangements similar to those currently in place with the Library Service to ensure that value for money and customer service are optimised whilst achieving economies of scale in the use of resources and infrastructure.

3.1.5 With reference to the comment that "Harlesden One Stop Service should remain open in its existing format", this suggests that further publicity and promotion of the services available from Harlesden Library Plus (HLP) will be needed to ensure that customers are fully aware of the services that will be available. This is particularly the case as face to face enquiries will be available from HLP when it opens in 2010 although the method of service delivery will be different. To support the service transition, the One Stop Service is already providing assistance to customers in the application and use of on line transactions and enquiries when they visit Harlesden Local Office and intends to promote the new services available from HLP more widely over the coming months.

3.1.6 The One Stop Service has written to the participating customers to thank them for their comments and is now planning to establish a small focus group from the respondents to develop the new service arrangements at Harlesden Library Plus.

3.1.7 Discussions took place in March 2009 with Library Service representatives concerning the establishment of a proposed Brent Contact Point within Kilburn Library and a site visit was undertaken by the Council’s Property Asset and Management Service team to assess the extent of works required and associated cost involved. As a consequence of the assessment, it was determined that the cost of remedial works required prior to installation of a Brent Contact Point could not be achieved within the 2009/10 financial year and therefore alternative arrangements would need to be considered. A proposal to establish a Brent Contact Point within the existing BACES Carlton Centre in South Kilburn is now actively being explored. A proposal has been developed and submitted to the Head of BACES and a meeting will take place shortly to discuss its feasibility.

3.2 Self Service – Freephones and Personal Computers (PC’s)

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 customer use of the freephone service available at the Local Offices and Contact Points has been concluded and the findings from this are shown in Tables 1, 2 and 3 below.

Table 1 represents freephone usage at the OSS Local Offices 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	401	401
Willesden	2	650	325
Town Hall	8	653	82
Brent House	4	934	234

Table 2

Customer Contact Point	Number of freephones	Average number of monthly calls made	Average number of monthly calls made per freephone
Neasden	2	91	41
Kingsbury	3	148	49

Table 3 below shows (for the more significant volumes) the proportion of calls made to individual service areas from each location as a proportion of the total calls made from that location:

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 Benefits	13.9%	6.3%	9.6%	10.5%	13%	12%
Council Tax	7.9%		8%	10.6%		6.9%
Housing	7.5%	3.7%		2.7%	14.5%	9.2%
Housing Repairs	6.9%					7.2%
Education Information Service	5.8%			3.1%		2.9%
Streetcare	4.4%			6.8%	7.5%	4.5%
Operator	4%			2.8%		
Environmental Health	2%		8.3%	2.3%		
General Enquiries		10.7%	35%			4.9%
IT		3.7%				
Adults and Social Care			3.9%			
Credit Card Hotline				2.2%		
Planning Enquiries				1.6%		
Business Rates				1.6%	2.6%	
Housing – Private Sector Options					3.5%	
General Enquiries – Tenancy Enquiries					2.4%	
Housing – Private Housing					1%	
IVR					11.6%	

The findings from the above tables may be summarised as follows:

- Neasden and Kingsbury Customer Contact Points have the lowest average use of all the freephones available.

- This is because the existence of this service at these premises has been of lesser duration than other premises. Kingsbury Library Plus for example opened on 7th April 2008 and Neasden Library Plus opened on 9th February 2009.
- It is also recognised that opening hours at each location will determine the time availability for customers to access free-phone services and therefore influence usage.
- Harlesden Local Office has the greatest average demand for its single free-phone although Willesden and Brent House experience a significant amount of usage.
- The Town Hall experiences the lowest average use per freephone although it is important to note that 6 of the freephones at this location were installed in September 2008 and therefore the current demand pattern will not reflect a full year's usage or indeed an optimum level of demand at present.
- Harlesden Local Office has a strong showing of customer enquiries in relation to Housing Benefits and Council Tax and this is generally replicated across other Council premises.
- There is little current demand for Council Tax enquiries at Neasden Library Plus.
- There appears to be a significant proportion of customer demand for general information from both Kingsbury Library Plus and Neasden Library Plus in comparison to other service enquiries made from the same locations.
- Adults and Social Care enquiries also appear to feature strongly in Kingsbury possibly due to the proportion of customers aged 65 and over resident within that region.
- Environmental Health enquiries have a stronger showing in Kingsbury Library Plus, the Town Hall and Harlesden and Housing Repairs feature strongly in Harlesden and Willesden Local Offices possibly due to the location of Council properties in the area.

Table 4 below indicates the top eight most frequently accessed web sites from self service PC's in order of frequency (with the most frequently accessed at the top):

Table 4

Harlesden Local Office	Neasden Customer Contact Point	Kingsbury Customer Contact Point	Town Hall Local Office	Brent House Local Office	Willesden Local Office
Vacant property list by area	L B Brent website search facility	L B Brent corporate website	L B Brent website search facility	L B Brent corporate website	L B Brent corporate website
L B Brent corporate website	Wembley stadium.com	Brent Library catalogue	Vacant property list by area	Locata	Wembley Stadium.com
Vacant property list by type	Brent library catalogue	Locata	Council jobs	Vacant property list by area	Council jobs
Brent Homefinders	Library joining	Council jobs	Locata	Jobseekers Direct	NHS Direct

Vacant property list by rent	Graffiti removal	Brent maps	Vacant property list by type	Direct.gov.uk	Department for Work and Pensions
Locata	Council jobs	Transport for London	Brent maps	Council jobs	Jobseekers
Brent website for navigation and accessibility	Locata	Wembley Stadium.com	Vacant property list by rent	Brent Homefinders	Vacant property list by area
Council jobs	Council jobs	Planning	Transport for London	Vacant property list by type	Transport for London

The findings from the above may be summarised as follows:

- 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, graffiti removal has a significant proportion of customer access from Neasden Customer Contact Point.

3.3 Customer Demand Patterns at Local Offices

3.3.1 Customer demand for personal enquiries across the Local Offices has shown a 5% overall reduction in the past 12 months in comparison to the preceding year, with the overall number of enquiries reducing from 226,016 to 196,975. Within the individual Local Offices, there has been a reduction in customer demand of 14% at Brent House, 13% at Harlesden, 16% at the Town Hall and 5% at Willesden.

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 over the past two years and the proportionate change in customer demand over the same period.

Table 5

Harlesden

Service Area	No of enquiries 2007/8	No of enquiries 2008/9	Percentage change
Housing Benefits	22516	20342	-9.6%
Revenues	3403	3512	3.2%
Housing Resource Centre	2674	2489	-6.9%
General Enquiries	1728	1399	-19.0%
BHP	1541	1054	-31.6%

Table 6Brent House

Service Area	No of enquiries 2007/8	No of enquiries 2008/9	Percentage change
Housing Benefits	52101	41680	-20.0%
Revenues	11012	12087	9.76%
Planning	5394	4221	-21.7%
General Enquiries	3427	2630	-23.2%
External signposting	3377	2618	-22.4%

Table 7Town Hall

Service Area	No of enquiries 2007/8	No of enquiries 2008/9	Percentage change
Housing Benefits	19292	16255	-15.7%
Revenues	8711	7993	-8.2%
General Enquiries	8980	6916	-22.9%
Internal Signposting	8110	7230	-10.8%
Housing Resource Centre	2029	1798	-11.3%

Table 8Willesden

Service Area	No of enquiries 2007/8	No of enquiries 2008/9	Percentage change
Housing Benefits	25221	23373	-7.3%
Revenues	5169	4974	-3.7%

General Enquiries	3304	2541	-23.0%
Housing Resource Centre	2145	1930	-10.0%
BHP	1562	1405	-10.0%

Table 9 below shows the total volume of personal enquiries received by department / service area.

Table 9

Department	2007/8	2008/9	% Change
Adult Social Services	5567	4616	-17.0%
Housing Benefits	119130	101650	-14.6%
Brent Housing Partnership	7039	5668	-19.4%
Building Control	1641	1599	-2.5%
Childrens Services	898	946	5.3%
Corporate enquiries	2027	1699	-16.1%
Education Services	3302	2846	-13.8%
Environmental Health	162	139	-14.1%
Other environmental enquiries	1544	1613	4.4%
General enquiries	17439	13486	-22.6%
Housing Resources	10204	9727	-4.6%
Planning	5709	4479	-21.5%
Private Housing	3164	2420	-23.5%
Revenues (Council Tax)	28100	28761	2.3%
Streetcare	2017	2089	3.5%
Internal signposting	12812	10239	-20.0%
External signposting	5261	4998	-4.9%
TOTALS	226016	196975	-12.8%

Table 9 indicates the following:

- Significant reductions in demand have been experienced in proportionate terms for most service areas over the past two years.
- Much of this is believed to be due to general improvements that have been made in service delivery as well as greater availability of information to customers via the Council website and other online sites.
- Increased volumes of customer demand have been experienced for Council Tax, Childrens Services, environmental enquiries and Streetcare.
- An analysis of customer enquiries concerning schools admissions over the past three years has indicated that such enquiries have reduced year on year with 179 enquiries in 2006/7, 136 in 2007/8 and 121 in 2008/9. This is contrary to the experience of the Education Service that has seen an underlying increase in such enquiries since January 2006 predominantly due to the dedicated team they have established to manage school admission enquiries.

3.3.2 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 often be used as indicators of general economic well being. However, despite the current economic situation, the majority of service areas have shown reductions in personal enquiries and this trend is anticipated to continue. Within the Revenues and Benefits service area specifically, efficiencies achieved within back office processing have significantly improved service delivery to support the ability to respond to any general variations in customer demand. However, we will continue to monitor levels of customer demand across individual service areas and take appropriate steps should this situation change.

3.3.3 It is our current belief that customer demand for personal enquiries is unlikely to return to levels experienced two years ago and that we can currently manage the general variations in enquiry levels typically experienced during the year. Where increases in personal enquiries are forecast due to known changes in statute or operational procedures, these will be resourced in accordance with predetermined plans agreed in advance of the change. Additionally, the work activities currently in progress to reduce levels of avoidable customer contact are anticipated to yield reductions in demand that will benefit capacity within the service generally.

3.3.4 However, in the event that there should be increased demand that is not anticipated, we will consider the options available in determining the most effective strategy to pursue. There is unlikely to be one solution to such an event and therefore a combination of options is considered more likely to yield a timely and effective response to any increased level of demand for personal enquiries.

3.3.5 The One Stop Service will continue to offer existing services from its four Local Offices and two Contact Points until early in 2010 when 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 at that time the economic climate will start to show the early signs of recovery and therefore potentially impact upon demand for some of the services traditionally more sensitive to economic conditions such as Housing Benefits and Council Tax.

3.3.6 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 that may be identified.

3.4 Customer Demand Patterns at Call Centre

3.4.1 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 12.5% from the 742,675 calls received in 2007/8.

Table 10 below shows the total volume of telephone enquiries received by the contact centre for each service area listed.

Table 10

Department	2007/8	2008/9	% Change
General Enquiries	82076	58602	-28.6%
Housing Benefits	102345	88584	-13.4%
Council Tax	142337	121725	-14.4%
Streetcare	110251	85380	-22.5%
Environmental Health	44635	37632	-15.6%
Switchboard	261031	257454	-1.3%
Totals	742675	649377	-12.5%

Table 10 indicates the following:

- Although Council Tax, Streetcare and Environmental enquiries have reduced, this is in contrast to personal enquiry volumes received for these services.
- It is considered that much of the general reduction in calls is due to a combination of factors including improved service delivery and more widely available information via the Council website and Internet generally.

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

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