London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham

Report to: Public Services Reform Policy and Accountability Committee

Date: 02/09/2020

Subject: Overview of the Resident Experience and Access Programme (REAP)

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Responsible Director: Sharon Lea, Strategic Director for the Environment

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Summary

The Council's Resident Experience and Access Programme (REAP) is its flagship initiative for driving transformation, improved access, reliability and quality across all front-line services. The programme involves:
- Improving the delivery of our services via digital means, giving more opportunities for residents to self-serve and introducing more automation and integration of systems to enable efficient processes;
- Consolidating our contact centres and services where possible so we can deal with the residents' whole enquiry at first point of contact and reduce the need for our residents to contact different services; and
- Looking at the needs of our residents and their families and building a solution that addresses all their needs potentially working with other areas such as the voluntary sector.

A summary of the impact of the changes for residents, local businesses, council partners, resident advisors, services areas and councillors is included in Appendix 1.

This is an invest to save programme and is critical for the Council's commitment to continue to be the best value Council in the country. Following initial work, the programme is now in an excellent position to deliver the biggest single saving to front line service delivery costs over the medium term.   The programme will resolve the relatively low level of digital access that residents of the borough currently experience, ensuring that there is digital inclusion and choice. It is also learning from the Council's success in delivering services and support through the Covid-19 pandemic and is using this experience as an accelerator for transformation and delivery of a range of local priorities including tackling isolation and ensuring our services are easily accessible to disabled people.

Arrangements to co-produce delivery of the programme have been put into place led by a dedicated resident implementation group. Now that a significant level of preparatory work has been undertaken, residents can meaningfully lead the process. The programme will run up to April 2023 and the aim is to begin to deliver savings as early in the programme as possible.

Recommendation

That the committee note the programme scope and progress to date.

Wards Affected: ALL

H&F Priorities

Our Priorities	Summary of how this report aligns to the H&F Priorities
Building shared prosperity	A central aim of the programme is to provide high quality services that are accessible to all. The scope of the Resident Experience and Access Programme is wide ranging and incorporates key services that are vital to delivering shared prosperity including benefits, housing advice, adult education and employment services. Relevant support will be provided to residents that are vulnerable and/or excluded from shared prosperity
Creating a compassionate council	The first phase of delivery for the programme focuses on universal services to all residents, as well as some specialist support services such as Accessible Transport and Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support. The second phase will focus on more complex services that reflect specific needs. Demonstrating compassion in terms of both a caring approach and effective practical support to those residents that need it the most cuts across the whole programme.
Doing things with residents, not to them	The programme is in the process of establishing a dedicated residents' implementation group that will ensure it is in the business of co-produced change. The group will be aligned to the work of all the Council's resident's commissions and wider system for resident engagement and involvement. Assuring accessibility of digital services, continued choice around telephone and face to face channels and the development of the 'compassionate council' service offer will be led by this group.
Being ruthlessly financially efficient	This programme is about applying ruthless financial efficiency to systems and processes and developing a joined-up system for demonstrating compassion in all our contacts with residents, businesses and visitors. The business case for the programme sets out a clear more for less plan and substantial savings. This plan has been validated by a deep and specialist level of analysis and modelling.
Taking pride in H&F	Environment services including street cleansing, community safety and public realm management that are key to this priority are at the forefront of this programme.
Rising to the challenge of the climate and ecological emergency	This programme will contribute to a significant reduction in printing and use of paper by the Council due to moving from paper permits and forms to a fully digitalised process. The programme will seek to incorporate addressing the climate emergency where possible into every stage of the programme.

Background

1. Detailed planning work to set out a clear business case and delivery plan for the transformation of residents' services across the Council took place during 2019. An associated governance and delivery structure for a Resident Experience and Access Programme was established in June 2019 to assure the quality and viability of this plan and oversee successful delivery. The programme is currently being led by the Environment Directorate with a joint management arrangement with Finance and the full involvement of all service Departments. This reflects Phase 1[1] of the programme, which focuses on delivering the digital infrastructure and corporate customer services needed for the programme and transforming the universal and transactional services provided by the Environment Directorate. Phase 2 of the programme is being led by Social Care and Public Health as the focus is on residents and families that need targeted support. The design work undertaken represents an unprecedented level of collaborative work across the Council.

2. At every stage, co-production will be used to make sure that the new arrangements for residents' access make it easier for all residents to interact with the council and get help and support. There are three main programme deliverables:
    *   the biggest programme of digital development for front line service delivery the Council has ever embarked on
    *   the bringing together and improvement of telephone and face-to-face customer services
    *   the development of associated policies and our operating model for how our services will work together more closely to more effectively and efficiently meet needs in the future – including the Council's key priority to demonstrate compassion to residents and families in need

3. The programme is now ready to move to its delivery phase. It has completed detailed work to remodel service delivery for the main aspect of Phase 1 and plans to complete design work for Phase 2 by the end of October 2020. The programme has set a target for digital delivery from its current low base level of 32% to 60% by April 2023 in line with the best performing councils for digital delivery.

Context

4. The Council has over 1.7m interactions with its residents and businesses annually, many of whom receive multiple services. At the time of the analysis the breakdown of how residents get in touch with the council was:
    *   Digital 29%
    *   Telephone 46%
    *   Face to face 9%
    *   Email/Letter 16%

5. Residents are keen to interact with the Council in a modern, joined up and streamlined way. Most now expect access online, wherever and whenever

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[1] Annex 1 provides a breakdown of the different phases and tranches of the programme.

suits them, as the norm. This is also key to the further delivery of efficiency savings over the medium term.

6. In June 2019, a review of the way residents access and engage with all services that the Council provides was completed. The review considered all channels: digital; telephone; mail; and face-to-face. It concluded that there is very limited consistency in the way resident contact is managed across the Council and IT arrangements supporting resident access are complex and fragmented with costs high compared to other authorities.

7. For example, there are multiple contact centres which deliver different levels of service and experience to residents. The digital offer is limited with many services relying on downloadable PDFs and emails to process service requests or paper and/or physical infrastructure. Residents and managers of services are unable to track requests digitally. There is an over reliance on non-digital channels for chasing and processing evidence leading to delays and inefficiency.

8. This review also set out an overview business case for the programme and the Council's Strategic Leadership Team mandated continued work to validate the business case with a further level of analysis and re-design work for the first and biggest tranche of service development that incorporates the biggest of residents' services provided by the environment department.

9. A summary of the structure and tranches of the programme is set out in annex 1 to this report.

Aims and vision of the programme

10. The Resident Experience and Access Programme sets out a vision that not only improves access but also improves experience for residents, businesses, partners, staff and Councillors whilst also delivering substantial financial efficiencies.

11. This is a transformational programme that will significantly extend the breadth and depth of services that can be delivered online and learn from Councils that have managed to do this well through the application of cutting-edge technology. In addition, uniquely to Hammersmith & Fulham, the programme focuses on ensuring equitable access for all residents and developing a new single front door operating model for delivering the Council's 'compassionate service offer'. This will putting community-based solutions at the front and centre developing the assets that have been developed in responding to Covid-19.

12. The programme has the following aims:
     - To provide a consistent approach and standard for resident access across all Council services.
     - To bring more Council services online so that residents can self-serve from initial contact to fulfilment and move towards digital service solutions.

- To provide an assisted digital offer so that disabled residents and those who are digitally excluded can continue to access the services they need.
- Provide joined up, targeted and practical support for vulnerable residents that need our compassion and assistance.
- To realise the expected savings and other benefits of the programme. One-off council reserves investment of £3.352m is required to deliver an estimated cumulative net saving of £9.281m by the end of 2024/25.

13.   The wider vision for the service is set out in pages 7 to 9 of Appendix 1.

Case for Change

14.   An overview of the case for change is set out below.

Strategic fit, building on progress so far	• The Council's strategic priorities and business plan set a clear direction of how the Council would like to interact with Residents including improving digital technology to make it quicker and easier for Residents to contact the Council. • Like many others, the Council is under pressure to be 'ruthlessly financially efficient'. There is scope to drive financial savings by changing the way Residents access services because digital transactions are cheaper and there is scope to move more online.
Variable Resident Experience	• There is no overall approach to Resident Access across the Council and current performance varies. • It is difficult for Residents to navigate the Council's 'front door': there are multiple telephone numbers, emails and postal addresses. • Website content is often unclear or difficult to navigate, resulting in high volumes of calls into the Council • There is limited or no ability to 'track' the progress of a service request, leading to high volumes of calls from Residents who are often highly stressed or frustrated.
Residents' needs have changed	• Expectations of the way Residents access the Council's services is changing. • Residents are more willing and able to transact digitally. • Resident choice for accessing the Council's services is restricted as the Council's digital offer is limited beyond viewing My Account, reporting issues, completing payment transactions and some simple applications.
Limited digital offer	• Many services still rely on e-forms, downloadable PDF forms or emails. • Email or face-to-face channels are heavily relied on for processing evidence. • Non-digital payment channels are regularly offered (e.g. cheques or card payments over the phone). Many services still rely on paper or physical infrastructure to deliver services which other Councils no longer use and generate additional cost and process (e.g. paper billing, paper permits, pay and display machines).

Fragmented, high cost Enterprise Architecture	• **Resident Access is fragmented and costly to the Council. There are multiple forms packages in place across the Council which generate additional cost and inconsistency in the Resident Experience.** • **The Council has recently migrated to Firmstep but is not currently maximising the rich functionality it provides, leading to duplication in workload and cost.** • **Limited or no integration with Line of Business systems leading to substantial manual re-keying by staff** • **Lack of innovation such as use of online web-chat facility to support with demand management.**

15. The Council's strategic priorities and business plan set a clear direction of how the Council would like to interact with residents, including improving digital technology to make it quicker and easier for residents to contact the Council.

16. The continued impact of austerity requires the Council to constantly drive for further efficiency, with the Council always working to be 'ruthlessly financially efficient' with the use of resources. There is scope to drive financial savings by changing the way residents access services by moving more interaction with the Council online.

17. There is no overall approach to or standard for, resident access across the Council and current performance varies, leading to variable and sometimes confusing resident experience. It is difficult for residents to navigate the Council's current 'front door' and there are multiple telephone numbers, emails and postal addresses. Website content is often unclear, out-of-date or difficult to navigate, resulting in high volumes of calls into the Council. There is limited or no ability to 'track' the progress of a service request, leading to high volumes of calls from residents who are often highly stressed or frustrated.

18. Expectations of the way residents access the Council's services is changing. Residents are keen to transact digitally but they are restricted by the Council's digital offer, which is limited beyond viewing 'My Account', a digital interface that allows residents to report certain issues, make some payments and complete some simple applications. There is further scope to derive additional value from the 'My Account' platform, which the Council is reviewing.

19. In addition, many services still rely on paper or physical infrastructure to deliver services which other councils no longer use and generate additional cost and processes (e.g. paper permits).

20. Resident access is fragmented and its enterprise architecture costly to the Council. There are multiple form packages which generate additional cost and inconsistency in the resident experience.

Proposed operating model

21. The new operating model is underpinned by a standard framework for handling and managing all future resident contacts so that there is a more consistent resident experience across services.

22. Although every service within the Council is different, resident journey types are largely consistent and fall into a handful of categories:
    - Information, Advice & Signposting
    - Report it
    - Apply for it
    - Pay for it
    - Book it
    - Updates and Changes
    - Track

23. The proposed operating model is based on a standard framework for these categories that the Council can use to increase resident satisfaction, create a more consistent experience, reduce cost and create change at pace within the organisation.

24. The 'Further Detail' section, from paragraph 35 on, illustrates what how the programme and the new operating model will affect residents, businesses, partners, staff, services and councillors and what it means for each group in practical terms.

Benefits

25. A new operating model for Resident Access will deliver the following benefits:
    - Resident choice
    - A better quality, more consistent, joined up and efficient service for residents
    - The ability to deliver more value and shape services by predicting and anticipating needs through improved analytics
    - Lower delivery costs
    - Reductions in failure demand
    - Process improvements and standards
    - Better use of resources and significant savings.

26. Once an enhanced digital solution is available online, proactive channel shift initiatives can commence. As residents increasingly utilise online self-service, the volume of contacts coming into the Council that require a staff response will reduce enabling a channel shift saving.

27. As residents' requests for services will automatically update business systems, it is possible to generate efficiencies in the middle office processing team, for example removing re-keying applications into Line of Business systems, or validation by exception, thereby achieving a middle office processing saving.

28. As services reach greater levels of digital delivery, it is possible to reduce non-FTE costs such as printing, postage or other non-digital infrastructure such as pay and display machines.

Financial Impact

29.   Investment costs for delivering the programme are based on estimates from the externally appointed consultant and intelligence they have provided from their work supporting the delivery of similar programmes in other local authorities. These costs are subject to further validation by services (particularly digital services) as part of the delivery phase of the programme. Savings levels have been set to provide a high level of assurance for delivery and any opportunity to extend them further will be taken.

30.   One-off council reserves investment of £3.352m is required to deliver an estimated cumulative net saving of £9.281m by the end of 2024/25. This incorporates an annual reoccurring saving of £3.414m from April 2022 (subject to validation of all costs and the second phase savings). Investment costs will be capitalised where possible (e.g. IT costs), in order to keep revenue costs to a minimum and thereby minimise the call on one-off council reserves.

31.   The recent Covid-19 response experience is impacting positively on the scope and speed of the programme in two main ways. Firstly, as an accelerator for channel shift and use of corporately delivered telephone and face to face services and secondly, developing the local Community Action Network for the provision of practical support at the local neighbourhood level. The Council's Recovery Programme is supporting the development of Phase 2 of the programme through a cross-Council working group.

Table 1: Overview Summary of the Programme's Financial Costs and Benefits

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	
	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	5 Yr Total
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
Savings - Tranche 1A *(validated)**	238	940	1,492	1,684	1,684	6,039
Savings - Tranche 1B, 2 & 3 *(not yet validated)*	97	1,372	2,364	2,364	2,364	8,560
Total ongoing savings	336	2,311	3,856	4,048	4,048	14,598
Ongoing costs** *(not yet validated)*	198	442	442	442	442	1,965
<u>Estimated</u> net ongoing savings	138	1,870	3,414	3,606	3,606	12,633
One-off Investment*** *(not yet validated)*	1,526	1,067	516	243	0	3,352
Ongoing savings net of one-off investment	(1,388)	803	2,898	3,363	3,606	9,281
Cumulative savings/(cost)	(1,388)	(585)	2,313	5,675	9,281	

*These figures include approximately £131k of non-cashable savings (costs avoided from bringing services back in-house)

**Net increase in annual IT costs (£0.115m) and new annual staffing costs (£0.327m). Ongoing IT costs assumed to start in Year 2. Year 1 costs are part year costs.

***Programme Resources (£1.427m), Specialist advice and interim support (£0.295m), Technology (£1.325m), 10% Contingency (£0.304m)

32.   Budgetary savings of £0.740m that relate to this programme are already included in the Council's base budget for Environment services, relating to commitments made in prior years where savings have been delayed (resulting in an existing ongoing budget pressure).   Addressing the current overspend/budget pressure will be the first call on the new ongoing savings identified for Tranche 1A. Existing committed savings relating to Tranches 2 and 3 will be considered as part of the savings validation of those phases. New programme savings (over and above those already included in the council's savings plans) will be factored into the council's base budget as part of the annual medium-term financial strategy process. The validation of Phases 2 and 3 will also confirm the level of Housing Revenue Account (HRA) savings and a corresponding HRA contribution to the required investment.

33.   The business case has been informed by benchmarking with local authorities that have successfully delivered programmes of this nature and associated specialist expertise of consultancy firm 31Ten who have supported development of the plan. The Council is building its capability to undertake this sort of work and most of the design work for Phase 2 will be delivered in house. However, a procurement exercise is underway to provide for further consultancy support to ensure that the programme stays on track and where specialist expertise is needed e.g. getting the very best deal on new contracts for IT system development.

34.   The Cabinet Members for Finance and Public Services Reform are the Lead Members accountable for the programme. Given the wide-ranging scope of the programme the option of a cross-member working group or regular dedicated review meetings should be considered to provide additional member direction, oversight and support.

Next Steps

- Funding agreed for interim resources – working on securing these for programme management, technology and digital development
- Report to 12th October Cabinet
- Delivery phase to commence October 2020

Further Detail - the impact of the programme and new operating model

35.   For **Residents**:

Each resident will have their own account, accessible at any time from their laptop, tablet or smartphone. Upon securely logging into their account, they will see information pertinent to them such as:

- Their next waste collection date and their next street cleansing date
- Their council tax bill and an option to make an immediate online payment
- Any planning applications within their vicinity and the opportunity to provide feedback or raise an objection

If a resident wants to report an issue such as a fly tip or a planning enforcement issue, they can do so on a smart web form, which will display any existing incidents that have already been reported on a map view. If the incident:

- Has already been reported, the resident can sign up for an e-mail or SMS alert when the Council have cleared the incident
- Has not been previously reported, the resident can complete a web form and attach a photograph of the incident. The resident will immediately receive a reference number and timeframe by which the incident will be resolved. They will subsequently receive e-mails or SMS alerts providing status updates until the incident is cleared.

If a resident wants to make an application, such as for Housing Benefit, they can do so online by using smart web forms that will:

- Validate the information they have entered
- Save progress so they can complete the form later
- Track the progress of their application from start to finish
- Allow evidence and documents to be uploaded to support the application

If a resident has difficulty completing the online form or finding the information they require on our website, they can speak to us through webchat. Simple enquiries through webchat will be answered with artificial intelligence but more complex will be dealt with by a resident advisor.

If the resident needs help to complete the application, they can call or visit, and resident advisors will be able to see the progress made by the resident and help them complete the form. Once a benefit application has been approved, the resident will be automatically alerted by e-mail or SMS.

Residents will also be able to sign up to, in accordance with data protection legislation, Council communications that they may have an interest in or notifications from Council partners such as the Police.

If a resident contacts the Council by telephone or face-to-face they will speak to one of our resident advisors who will have access to the information and knowledge to be able to answer the enquiry at the first point of contact. This will be for multiple services and the advisor will identify all the services that the resident needs e.g. on moving into the borough. Where this is not possible, they will hand over to the relevant specialists, but this will be by exception and as agreed with the service.

36. For **local businesses**, this means that they will have their own account tailored to business needs. This can present pertinent information on logging on such as details of their business rates account and details about business seminars.

37. For **Council partners**, this means that they can have their own account enabling them to log service requests on behalf of their clients.

38. For **resident advisors** this means that staff dealing with customer contact will:

- Have one system where they can manage and see all interactions with the resident. This will reduce the time it takes for a resident advisor to become multi-skilled across services
- No longer double or triple handle information. They will use the same forms as the customer to report an issue raised via telephone / face-to-face. These forms will integrate straight into service areas' back office systems
- Have access to status updates and therefore give the customer up to date information as to the progress of their request
- Become data rich allowing analysis of customer reports to inform service improvement.

39. For **service areas** this means services will:

- Receive validated and complete information into their back-office system from the resident or resident services. This means they can deliver the requested service without the need to contact the customer for more information
- Receive consistent and structured information across all contact channels (telephony, face-to-face and online will effectively use the same web forms)
- No longer need to field follow-up or progress chasing calls. Residents will be given service levels at the point of contact and automatic status updates. If a resident still calls, resident services will be able to handle the request
- Receive fewer duplicated requests through better information available on maps at the point of contact
- Remove the need to double handle information or data as a result of integration.

40. For **Councillors** this means:

- Councillors will have their own Councillor Account that will allow them to

raise requests on behalf of residents in their ward, view when the request is due to be completed (i.e. the service level) and its current status

- Be able to see all reported incidents, in line with data protection legislation, in their ward
- As per the Resident Account, requests raised from the Councillor Account will be integrated and sent to the right service team and the right system. Councillors will therefore know their requests are queued and ready to be reviewed by the services. Councillors will pro-actively receive e-mail notifications or can log into their account to see an update, meaning they no longer need to 'chase' for an update
- By being able to view all reported incidents within their ward, Councillors will be able to hold more meaningful, evidential based engagement with residents, businesses and the Council itself.

Annex 1: Structure and Tranches of the Programme

	Phase 1 of the Programme		Phase 2 of the Programme	
	Tranche 1A	Tranche 1B	Tranche 2	Tranche 3
Services	• Council Tax Business Rates • Benefits • Parking • Permits • Cleaner Greener • Accessible Transport	• Regulatory Services • Environmental Health • Community Safety • Highways • Registrars • In Touch • Planning & Building Control • Mail Room	• Adult Social Care • Housing	• Children's • Early Help • Adult Education • Any additional service activity
Total contact volumes (18/19)	1,002,343	164,928	459,473	60,421

Cross Programme Management:
- Design and delivery driven by analytics and co-production
- Use of phase 1 assets including; underpinning IT infrastructure, web development and corporate contact centre
- Single view and account of residents and families
- Self service and community solutions first
- Phase 2 incorporates some transactional aspects (e.g. housing applications) and phase 1 some services that are vital for supporting residents in need (e.g. Council Tax Support and accessible transport)