



OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY BOARD

DATE

7 December 2011

REFORMING CUSTOMER ACCESS AND PUBLIC SERVICE DELIVERY

Wards

All wards

In response to the administration's priorities of reforming public service delivery and to ensure best possible outcomes at lowest cost, it is recognised that the Council needs to transform relationships with customers. The Customer Access and Service Delivery Portfolio is one of 4 key and cross cutting portfolios that is developing and delivering new ways of delivering services in addition to MTFS savings. In 2011/12 and 2012/13 a key focus for the portfolio is 'self service' and delivery of an 'e-services' programme.

This report introduces Scrutiny to the Customer Access and Service Delivery Portfolio with a particular focus on the self serve strategy and e-services programme. As we move from design into implementation, Scrutiny are asked to consider how we can best engage with our customers to encourage and support them to interact with services in different ways and to do more for themselves.

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RECOMMENDATION(S):

- To note the aims and objectives of the customer access and service delivery portfolio;
- To note the self service strategy and role of e-services within this;
- To make recommendations on how we could encourage and support our customers to engage with us in different ways including increasing self service and uptake of e-services.

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NEXT STEPS

Scrutiny recommendations will be fed into the self serve strategy and in particular the E-services programme of work.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 In response to the administration's priorities of reforming public service delivery to ensure best possible outcomes at lowest cost, Like many authorities, officers at H&F realise that continuing to operate and drive savings within departmental service silos will not deliver against the current fiscal challenge and is not a sustainable approach. The Council has therefore put in place 4 transformation portfolios as vehicles for governing and delivering cross Council projects and programmes to drive Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) savings. These are outlined in Table 1.

Portfolio	Vision	Purpose	Scope
Customer Access and Service Delivery	To deliver the lowest cost, best possible quality, customer-focused self-service/s	To drive MTFS savings while maintaining or improving the customer experience. Providing services that are delivered with better customer self-service and designed to keep costs lowered	Through key strategic projects, focus on the ways customers access our services. Deliver current transformation programmes or cross cutting enabling projects with a customer theme. Focus on next steps, innovations and plan for growth benefiting H&F and our customers
Market Management	To become a more commercially focused and effective organisation that is customer/client focused, minimising cost and maximising potential revenue	To drive MTFS savings and meet changing residents' needs by becoming more commercially oriented in the way we buy, supply, manage and sell our services. To provide expert knowledge and support to enable the development of new provider models such as social enterprises and	Partner and market management, commercialisation and procurement

		employee-led mutuals	
Transforming the way we do Business	To be a 'fit for business' organisation, improving services through innovative and productive ways of working	To drive MTFs savings through developing more efficient use of resources, increased self-service internally, innovative working practices and streamlined service design to improve services for our customers and enable high productivity	Assets and resources, processes, people and culture, technology and information
Housing and Regeneration	To build a strong community/a borough of opportunity for all	To drive a step-change in physical, social and economic opportunities by raising aspirations, increasing employment and affordable home ownership. To contribute to HRA and general fund savings and a medium to long-term reduction in demand for council services	Projects which transform neighbourhoods through increased employment, educational attainment and home ownership opportunities, reducing crime and supporting equality of health outcomes

1.2 This report introduces Scrutiny members to the Customer Access and Service Delivery portfolio, its background and purpose. Particular focus is then given to the Council's self serve strategy and associated e-services programme. Reports on other portfolios are programmed for future Overview and Scrutiny meetings.

2.0 BACKGROUND TO THE CUSTOMER ACCESS AND SERVICE DELIVERY PORTFOLIO

2.1 There have been a number of key developments and achievements at H&F over recent years, illustrating that the Council serves many of its customers well. These include the development and delivery of a customer access strategy in 2006 using predictive Experian Mosaic data and live customer feedback to inform service configuration. This led to the formation of H&F Direct and H&F Advice centres and an outsourced contact centre.

- 2.2 It is however recognised that whilst significant progress has been made, there are a range of further opportunities for the organisation to transform the way it engages with and provides services to customers. A renewed and co-ordinated focus on understanding and delivering the right services to our customers in the right way is required in order to deliver council priorities of reforming public service delivery to ensure best possible outcomes at lowest cost.
- 2.3 In response to this challenge, the Customer Access and Service Delivery portfolio was set up as a delivery and governance vehicle for the development and delivery of key strategic customer projects and programmes across the Council. The aim of the portfolio is to drive MTFs savings and maintain or improve the customer experience whilst transforming the way that services are delivered. The current portfolio of work includes a range of projects and programmes that will deliver £1.583 million in 2012/13.
- 2.4 For the avoidance of doubt, the term 'customer' refers to anyone using or interacting with services delivered by the authority; this includes residents, visitors and businesses.

3. DEVELOPING A 'SELF SERVE' STRATEGY

- 3.1 Self serve is not a new concept. Self serve is a deliberate and a critical element of the operating models of a range of private sector service organisations such as banks, supermarkets and utilities to put the customer in control and to reduce business operating costs. As part of this, customers are provided with the means (but not necessarily restricted to) self serve a range of products and services on the web, telephone and indeed in face-to-face operations (e.g. self serve checkouts in supermarkets).
- 3.2 Learning from these experiences, H&F officers are analysing how the concept of self serve can be applied more fundamentally in a Local Authority context and as a core part of the operating model to reduce costs.
- 3.3 Self serve is not just about access to services but indeed can be applied to end-to-end service delivery. In addition, the concept of self serve is not just applicable to transactional services. Examples from the health sector such as technologies that enable people to pass blood pressure readings down a phone line from the comfort of the patient's home, indicate how self serve can be applied to personal services.
- 3.4 Experience from other industries indicates that to successfully achieve a shift in customer behaviour and thus to reduce costs of customer access and service provision requires a more intelligent and customer focused approach. Moving away from a 'build it and they will come' philosophy, the most successful businesses have recognised the need

to effect a capability shift e.g. developing our telephony and web capability as well as a mindset shift e.g. customers being motivated and actively doing more for themselves.

- 3.5 Officers would welcome Scrutiny recommendations on how we could encourage and support customers to do more for themselves in line with self serve principles.

4. THE ROLE OF 'E-SERVICES' IN THE SELF SERVE AGENDA

4.1 E-services are a key enabler to delivering a self serve agenda. The development of 'My Account' (our web based customer portal) in 2010/11 has been a significant step in improving the transactional capability of our website and indeed improving our online experience for customers. Since launching, 42,000 customers have registered and are actively using the portal. As a result, our website is deemed to be one of the best in the country. The development of this and other improvements have attracted a range of interest from other authorities who are trying to develop online services.

4.2 A recent external review of our website placed us in the SOCITM top 20, rating our website 17th in the country and third in London.

4.3 However, it is recognised that there is more that we can do. Further developing our e-services (website, telephony and mobile technologies) to deliver a wider range of services and indeed delivering full, rather than parts of services is a critical element in reducing the costs of service delivery and is a key focus for the Customer Access and Service Delivery portfolio in 2011/12.

5. 2011/12 SELF SERVE STRATEGY AND KEY BENEFITS

5.1 Our 2011/12 strategy and associated programme of work focuses on applying self service principles to high volume, transactional areas of the Council. By May 2013 we will provide a full self service offer to customers in the following areas:

- Housing Register
- Development Management (Planning)
- Licensing
- Building Control
- Libraries
- Environmental Reporting
- Adult Learning

5.2 The key benefits for the customer and the Council of this approach include:

- Providing 'end to end' e-enabled transactions- making it easier for our customers to transact with us both in terms of reporting, applying for, booking or paying for services;

- Enabling customers to access services whenever they choose to do so – up to 365 days per year and up to 24 hours per day.
- Improving turnaround times for service provision by getting the customer to provide more information themselves or providing it in such a way that it enters direct into our systems, therefore not reliant upon officer input;
- Managing customer demands more effectively and reducing error demand (such as submission of incomplete forms that need to be returned);
- Reducing our operating costs through lower transaction costs;
- Protecting or in some cases driving up income including through cross selling services;
- Exploring implementing differing service levels and associated variable charging models to drive income and also incentivise behaviour. Like many insurance companies, we will also explore discounting to encourage customers to access services in ways that are cheaper for the Council to administer.

6.0 PROVIDING CUSTOMER CHOICE AND SUPPORTING CUSTOMERS TO DO MORE FOR THEMSELVES

- 6.1 The Council provides a wide range of services to a diverse set of customers. The e-services and wider self serve agenda is not about restricting customer access solely to the web and we will take great care not to disadvantage vulnerable groups. Instead it is about putting in place key capability and then understanding what it would take to make e-services the preferred access route for customers.
- 6.2 To support delivery we are exploring the potential for libraries to offer mediated support for those people who are unsure of how to transact with us through e-services (with a particular focus to online services) and/or do not have access to a computer at home. Equality Impact Assessments will be completed for each of the key services when service redesign options are being considered to manage the potential impact of service changes.
- 6.3 Officers would welcome recommendations from Scrutiny members on how we could support customers to engage with our e-services agenda and to encourage them to do more for themselves going forwards.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 Scrutiny members are asked to:
- Note the aims and objectives of the customer access and service delivery portfolio;
 - Note the self service strategy and role of e-services within this;
 - Make recommendations on how we could encourage and support our customers to engage with us in different ways including increasing self service and uptake of e-services.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 2000
LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

No.	Description of Background Papers	Name/Ext of holder of file/copy	Department/ Location
1.	NONE		