

## BRIEFING PAPER FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CUSTOMER FIRST CHANNEL STRATEGY

The Purpose of this paper is to summarise the main aspects of the Customer First Channel Strategy and to outline the next steps for implementation of each of the three new business units that will be created as a result of the strategy, namely:

- Residents Direct
- Smarter Borough
- Community Support

This document will summarise the main points from the Customer Channel Strategy document. It will achieve this by looking at the main points of the strategy including the rationale behind the project, the changes that the strategy will involve and outline the approach to be taken to complete the next steps in the implementation of the programme.

The Document will be set out in three main parts:

- General Information, including the reason for the strategy, who the customers are and what the situation is like at the moment
- Specific information relating to the Community Support business unit
- The next steps that are to be taken as part of the mobilisation

### **Background to the Customer Channel Strategy**

The Customer Channel Strategy has been developed to answer questions on how to improve the current customer access to services in the council. The development of this strategy has been based on:

- Reaching a clearer understanding of who our customers are based on some segmentation of the residents with similar behaviours, characteristics, needs and aspirations
- Building a model of how our residents access services to identify which services different segments want to undertake, from which locations and over which channels
- Applying the model to recommend where the council should target its investment to ensure that customer expectations and satisfaction is fulfilled and that delivery of services is economic for the council too.

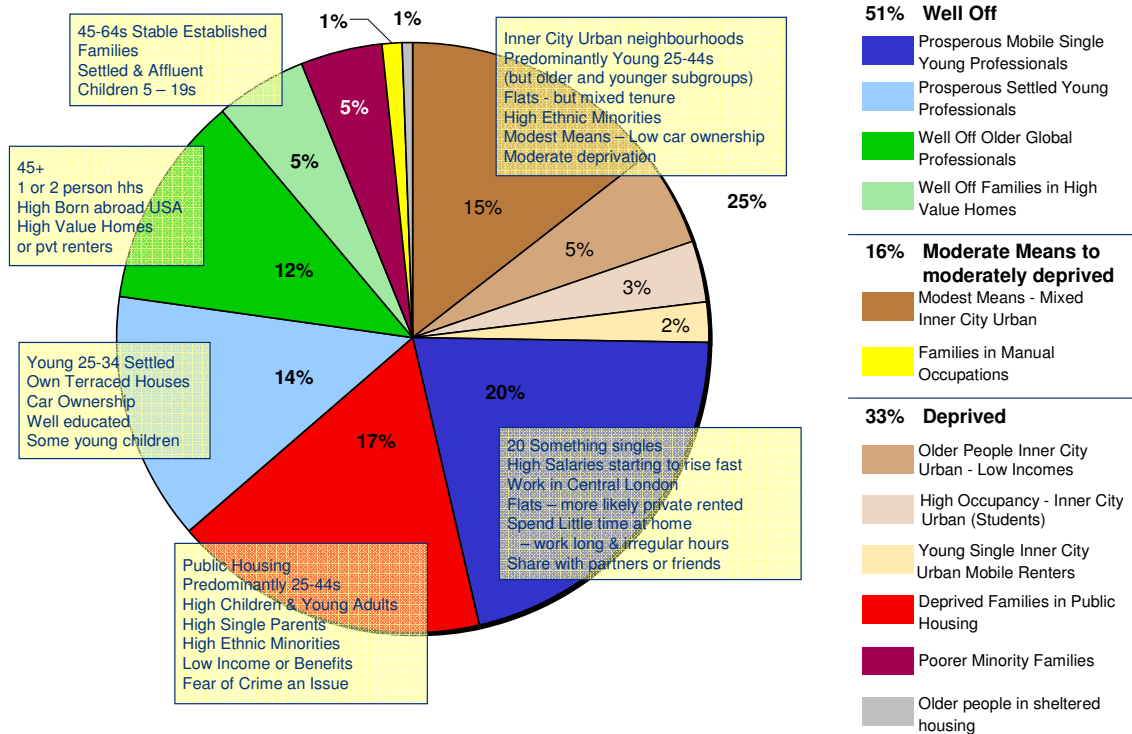
The Customer Channel strategy provides a direction of travel, agreed by the senior management team and the members, based on the premise of delivering improved access to services for residents in a way which is both feasible and cost effective for the council. This strategy provides a blueprint for how services should be configured based on an understanding of who our customers are, how they wish to consume services and how these services need to cohere with each other as part of a typical customer experience.

It also seeks to bring into focus and prioritise specific initiatives required to improve telephone services, main initiatives for web site development, and the location and mode of operation of face to face reception facilities.

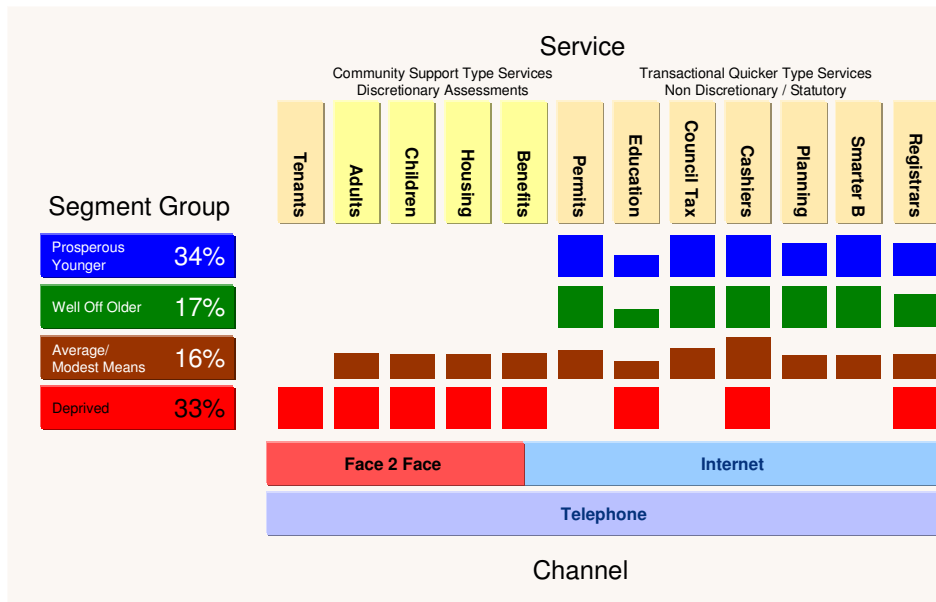
### Who are the council's customers?

Research has been carried out and has identified the main types of customer the council serves in the borough, what channels of communication each group prefers and how these groups wish to access services.

### LBHF Customer Segmentation Summary



The Borough has a reasonably high proportion of well off customers (51%), a significant group of young average means customers (16%) and a sizeable minority (33%) of deprived residents dependant on welfare benefits. As expected these groups use a range of different services with the community support type services (such as Adults, Children Social Services, Housing and Benefits) being predominantly consumed by the more deprived segments.



Customers also prefer to use different channels to access the services. Whilst the telephone is important to all groups and is the channel of choice there is significant evidence that the well off segments and to a slightly lesser degree the average segments would prefer to use the internet to access the services and fewer services face to face. This is strongest in Parking Permits. The deprived segments prefer face to face but even this group (probably the younger elements) would like some more opportunity for internet access.

### Current Situation

The way customer access is currently organised is ineffective for the customer. Some services, for example Parking, Planning and Council Tax, have too much dependence on face to face channels and it has been shown that the customer groups that use these services would prefer to be making more use of the internet or telephone.

Customers of Community Support type services have to visit too many face to face units which are widely spread around the borough. Some of these are inconveniently located for the customer and uneconomic for the council to run because of very low demand. There are too many (around 30) different reception points in the Borough.

The current telephone arrangements (70 different numbers and 5 call centres) are unable to maintain a high quality service. There are too many numbers being operated by too small teams which make services susceptible to staff shrinkage. This is also confusing for the resident. Residents indicated in a survey that they would prefer no more than 6 telephone numbers.

The current corporate call centre facility has a high number of call losses in the areas it receives the most enquiries when demand is high. The inability of staff to multi skill across service areas means that there is little flexibility when demand is high.

The current website provides no economic benefits to the council and little improvement in convenience for the customer. It is predominantly not working as a true self serve facility and operates more like an electronic post channel: service requests are electronically notified to the back office which deals with the query in the same way as if the customer had written to us.

## The Future Business Units

There are a number of principles developed in the Custom Channel Strategy around which new access units should be designed. Primarily these are:

- Customer Access business units should be redesigned by firstly joining up services which are similar.
- Business units should be configured according to the similar customer segments that use the services so that locations and channel preferences can be tailored for the common customer group
- Units should accommodate services and functions of a similar nature and length, especially where the processes concerned involve the production of similar evidence or data by the customer.
- Services in the same business unit should be multi skilled wherever possible to provide a more efficient service for customers and to better manage changes in demand
- Low demand, uneconomic Face to face receptions should be brought together and formed into large face to face units.
- The high number of low volume telephone numbers should be streamlined to eliminate small call groups
- The web services should be true self serve
- These business units should be given a strong brand so that it is clear to customers what their functions are and which units should be visited for particular reasons.
- These business units should take account of predicted demand and be large enough to be resilient to service impairment from staff shrinkage and sustain a level of demand that is both economic for the council to operate and convenient for the customer in terms of waiting times.
- The Face to Face, Telephone and Internet services should complement each other.

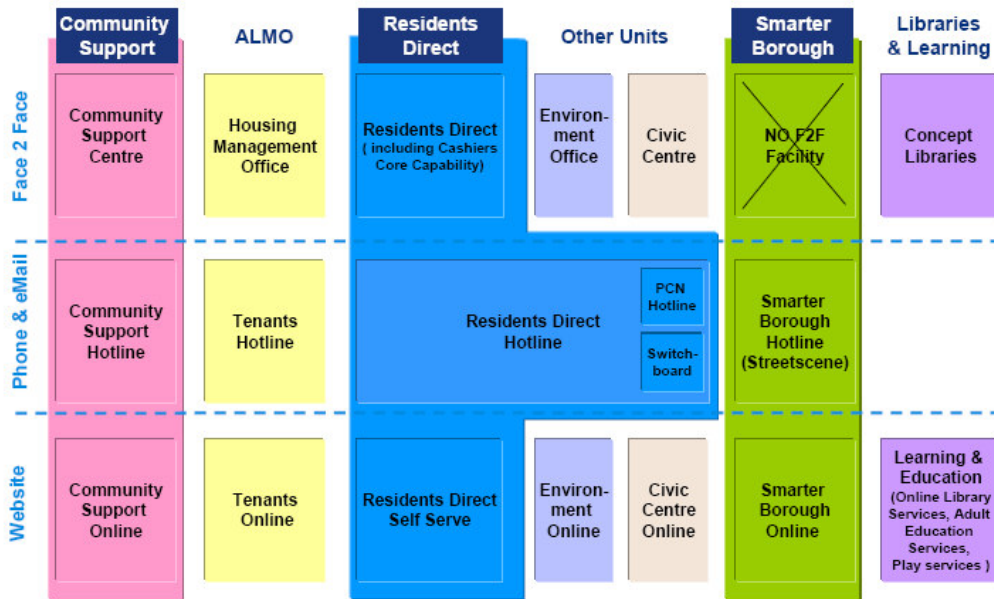
Based on these principles, the three main business units will be:

1) **Residents Direct:** focusing on offering residents the ability to perform a range of transactions in a single episode via their access channel of choice with one face to face reception facility around Hammersmith Town Hall

2) **Smarter Borough/SNEN:** focusing on a one stop solution for all Streetscene, anti-social behaviour and enforcement type enquiries operated on the telephone and web channels only.

3) **Community Support:** focusing specifically but not exclusively on the needs and aspirations of the less well off and deprived segments of the community. These will include a web information service, a single Community Support Hotline and 2 Face to Face reception points in Fulham and Shepherds Bush (or White City)

## Summary of Configuration of Services



### What will be the main function of Community Support?

Community Support will mainly deal with the more deprived customer segments, its main aim is to deal with issues of personal crisis that may be due to social problems, health or other factors. It will also assess customers for benefits including housing. The Service can be accessed using three main channels which will be:

- 1) Face to Face: Community Support Centre
- 2) Phone: Community Support Hotline
- 3) Website: Community Support Online.

The business unit will be aimed mainly at the deprived groups of residents. It has been found that this group prefer using the face to face channel, this is because of the nature of their enquiries and their lack of access to channels like the internet. For this reason focus will be put on the face to face units and the hotline so that transactions can be undertaken more effectively without redirections and handoffs.

### Channel 1: Face to Face

It is anticipated that this facility will offer services to vulnerable residents who are experiencing some kind of personal crisis in their lives or residents who have some kind of care need and require intervention from the council. The Unit may also have to intervene on the behalf of children who require protection or have special needs, it may also help young adults who are incapable of funding for themselves.

The service should allow residents to gain a rounded assessment of their needs from a number of different council departments. Residents will be able to refer themselves and will also be referred. Customers visiting the unit will benefit from the full range of social services.

Housing all aspects of the business unit under one roof would prove to be very practical for Community Support, this is because the provided services are usually consumed in one visit.

Similar evidence and proof of circumstances is also required by many of the departments, having them all under one roof would mean that residents will only have to produce this once.

### **Channel 2: Phone**

It is important that the Community Support Hotline maintains a similar brand and identity to its face to face equivalent and complements the services offered by the centre.

The service should provide information and advice on housing options, initial needs assessment for level 1 services and make referrals and appointments for level 2 and 3 services. It should handle children referrals and initial assessments with follow up to duty social workers, and provide information on emergency financial assistance.

With multi-skilling, the virtual call centre will ensure that a much larger pool of suitably experienced staff are frontline to access calls at all times.

Staff are required to provide a safe service to residents and need to be in regular contact with other social and care workers and would not benefit from operating away from the face to face unit.

### **Channel 3: Internet**

*Community Support Online* will complement the phone and face to face services. It will provide detailed information on children and adults social services, housing advice and options and will allow residents to perform initial needs assessments for level 1 services and make referrals and appointments for level 2 and 3 services. It should handle children referrals and initial assessments with follow up face to face.

### **What will be the main function of the Smarter Borough/ SNEN initiative?**

The aim of the initiative is to deal with all environmental concerns within the Borough. The types of services that are offered by the initiative range from waste enquiries to reporting anti-social behaviour and graffiti. Unlike Residents Direct and Community Support this business unit will not have a face to face unit and will be based solely around 2 channels:

- 1) Phone: Smarter Borough Hotline
- 2) Website: Smarter Borough Online

The business unit will be aimed mainly at the Prosperous Younger, Well Off Older and Average/Modest Means customer groups. These groups prefer the phone and the internet channels so the need to offer a face to face service is minimal.

### **Channel 1: Phone**

The Smarter Borough Hotline will offer services including Waste & Cleaning enquiries, such as requests for street cleansing and litter removal, bulky waste collection requests, information on bin collections, payments for waste removal services, receiving reports and dealing with graffiti, fly tipping, and abandoned vehicles. These are all clearly related to a cleaner environment and are easily associated with the *street scene* in customer minds.

It is recommended that the services of the *Smarter Borough Hotline* be extended to encompass other services to do with the street and local neighbourhood that residents tend to associate with *streetscene*. These are services that are currently offered in the main by the environment department on the environment hotline which is confusing for residents in knowing which line to call.

The current proposal is for the hotline to have a single national emergency number (SNEN) which will become a 101 equivalent of the current 999 service and is likely to deal with Smarter Borough type enquiries such as reporting anti-social behaviour etc.

### **Channel 2: Internet**

*Smarter Borough Online* will provide online information about all Smarter Borough services and provide full self serve access to the main high volume transactional requests for services. This will include booking and paying for Bulky Waste collections online, reporting and being able to monitor the progress of street scene incidents such as fly tipping, graffiti, street and lighting faults, trees, pests and noise pollution.

The self service should be end to end, the service requests should feed directly to officers on the street who will be equipped with the suitable mobile technology to deal with the incident and report back the progress so that customers will be able to monitor this online.

### **What will be the main function of Residents Direct?**

The aim of Residents Direct is to be the main council business unit which will cover mainly quick business i.e. Cashiers, Parking, Council Tax and Benefits. Some aspects of low volume transactions such as private sector Housing, some Education services and some environment services such as skip licences will also be provided. Current social services such as Blue Badges and Freedom Passes will also be included. The services can be accessed using three main channels which will be:

- 1) Face to Face: 1 Residents Direct Shop in Hammersmith around the existing Town Hall
- 2) Phone: 1 Residents Direct Phone Number
- 3) Website: Allowing the customer to serve themselves.

This business unit will be aimed mainly at the well off and moderate means groups who will use it to pay council tax and re-new parking permits. It has been found that these two groups prefer using and have more access to channels like the internet. For this reason a lot of focus will be put on the website and phone service so that transactions can be carried out quickly online or over the phone.

### **Channel 1: Face to Face**

The Residents Direct Face to Face unit will allow customers to carry out their transactional business in a single main council building. This could be a current council building which will be refurbished or a totally new building. Most of the transactions which will take place will involve some sort of financial element as it is where residents will come to make rent and council tax payments etc. Residents will also be able to apply for and renew parking permits, notify change of circumstances and make bookings for council facilities amongst other things.

Residents Direct will provide a service which will mainly deal with quick, high volume transactions as described above. The unit will be split up into 4 main areas which are:

- 1) Information and Reception
- 2) Quick Zone ( this will deal with Parking and Payment matters)
- 3) Assessment zone ( Benefits etc)
- 4) Public Area

Staff at the unit should be multi-skilled. Cashiers and Parking staff would be expected to become multi skilled in the same way they do currently in the HTHX finance office and would be able to provide some of the other services such as Blue Badges, simple council tax enquiries, issue and take payment for skip licences etc. These services would all be offered in the quick zone.

The assessment zone would deal with longer running transactions such as benefits, more complex council tax enquiries and general change of circumstances. Information and reception would provide information and be able to direct customers to the correct zone.

### **Channel 2: Phone**

The Residents Direct Hotline, like the face to face unit will deal with high volume enquiries such as parking, council tax and benefits. Research has shown that telephone is the channel which all groups are willing to use the most and it is predicted that the hotline will receive a huge volume of calls.

The main hotline teams should be multi skilled to deal with enquiries in the areas which will receive the most calls and they should also be able to deal with basic enquiries regarding the low volume areas. The hotline should be efficient and flexible to cater for changes in demand.

An automated PCN hotline will also be set up that will let residents pay parking fines without any intervention from staff. Customers who require help will be able to contact the main call centre via the hotline.

### **Channel 3: Internet**

The Residents Direct Self Serve will provide important information to residents on Parking, Council Tax and Benefits. One of the most beneficial parts of the site is that it will let residents renew parking permits online. Residents who have already shown all of the required paper work will be able to renew and pay for them.

The website will also allow users to make Council Tax enquiries online including looking at transactions they have made and checking the balance of their accounts. Residents will also be able to change direct debits and change accounts when moving in or out of the Borough. They will only have to give this information once and it will be automatically given to other departments providing services to the customer.

Benefit applications will be able to be made online and information including how applications are processed, the level of entitlement and eligibility will be provided. Residents should also be able to start an application online and then complete it face to face. This will not be a one size fits all form but an intelligent e-form which provides help and only offers the sections that the customer needs.

### **What are the next steps?**

Stakeholders will help to determine the impact of the changes on existing programs of work. This will then help to show where modifications need to be made.

We are currently about to commence on the mobilisation of the strategy and setting up the EIGs. Participants in the EIGs will have a major role in shaping the new organisation units and facilitating access to more detailed information within their departments to plan for these. At the end of the mobilisation phase we should have a detailed implementation plan for each of the units, a new organisation structure and a business case outlining the feasibility of this programme.

What we are about to embark on is a very new and exciting initiative that will enable the council to serve their residents in a more efficient and effective nature than ever before. A great deal of

support has been shown by the council leadership and management team who are also very excited about putting the strategies into action. The sooner that we start to implement these changes the sooner we will be able to derive the benefits for the residents and the council.