

December 2013

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Putting the Customer First
Customer Care at Harrow Council

Report from the Scrutiny Review

Members of the Review Group

Councillor Paul Osborn (Chairman until September 2013)

Councillor Nana Asante

Councillor Camilla Bath

Councillor James Bond

Councillor Krishna James (until May 2013)

Councillor Jean Lammiman

Councillor Jerry Miles (Chairman from September 2013)

Councillor Chris Mote

Councillor Stephen Wright

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CHAIRMAN'S INTRODUCTION

As an elected councillor I am delighted that this Scrutiny Review of Customer Care has put the spotlight on Customer Care, the way that Harrow Council deals with requests from residents, businesses and visitors. Like other councils Harrow is under enormous pressure to improve services using limited resources. This review will help the council meet that challenge.

I am particularly pleased that the council has been open and transparent in identifying areas of weakness needing improvement as well the many examples of good quality customer service.

When the Overview and Scrutiny committee commissioned this project, we recognised that there had been significant improvements to the way in which the council communicates with and relates to our customers. At the same time however, we also knew that, whilst our overall policies had improved and there had been a tangible improvement in residents' satisfaction, there were still areas in which we could improve the overall customer experience. It is from this perspective that we have approached this project.

The group is extremely grateful for the help we have received in undertaking this project, and in particular we would like to thank Jonathan Milbourn, Head of Customer Services & Access Harrow, and his staff in Access Harrow for the advice they have given us and for the access they gave to us to the real customer care environment.

We would also like to thank the staff in Libraries, Housing, Street Cleansing and Waste Collection services who allowed us to learn from their experience of working on the front line of service delivery.

We would also like to thank our colleagues in Camden, Croydon and Ealing who gave us the opportunity to understand their own approach to customer care and to learn from their experience.

I would also like to thank Cllr Paul Osborn, who chaired this project until the change in political leadership of the council in September 2013.

Our project is now complete, but we do not believe that this means that the resident experience of service delivery cannot be improved further and we know that our staff are driven by the desire to ensure that all residents receive the best possible service from us. We hope that our recommendations will help them to continue to improve and will encourage them to continue their drive to excellence.

On behalf of the review group, I commend this report.

Councillor Jerry Miles
Chairman of the Review Group

SUMMARY

PREAMBLE

1. Harrow Council is responsible for services that touch the lives of every resident and business in the borough. They meet a wide range of needs, some every week of the year such as waste collection, some at different stages of people's lives such as children's and adult services, some are about ensuring statutory rights or obligations are met, some where participation is entirely voluntary such as parks and leisure facilities and some which help to build and promote the local community.
2. One thing all these services share are customers, the residents and businesses of Harrow as well as visitors who come to shop or see local attractions. This review is about the way Harrow Council handles the many customer requests it receives everyday and the relationships it builds with each of them.
3. Most service requests come from residents, and those have been the main focus of this review. However the principles of customer care apply to all who use Harrow Council services.
4. The review was mainly conducted by elected councillors talking to those involved in running services and observing their delivery. The Review Group also received evidence on customer views and looked at the experience of other councils.

Starting point

5. The review group recognise the degree of progress Harrow Council has already made in customer service. One example is the extent of 'channel shift': changes in the way customers communicate with the council, moving towards more web-based methods and away from using the post or attending in person.
6. An essential part of that is 'My Harrow Account', a personalised internet service that allows individuals to make service requests and payments on line. The council's investment in My Harrow Account is paying off, and there are now about 37,000 individual accounts.
7. Harrow appears to be ahead of other councils in making this transition. The review group noted the frequent visits other councils make to Harrow (over forty in the last twelve months) to learn about how this has been achieved and Harrow's plans to go further.
8. 'Access Harrow' also operates the council's Contact Centre for customer telephone calls and the 'One Stop Shop' for people who need to deal with the council in person as well as responding to emails and web forms. Access Harrow is also responsible for the Council's website and the Corporate Complaints policy.

9. Investment in the Contact Centre has improved the level of service available to customers who telephone the council. Customer agents now have immediate access to a much wider range of service information and are able to give advice to more callers without the need to pass onto other departments. They are also better able to track the progress made on previous enquiries.
10. The improved service offered through the Contact Centre and My Harrow Account has led to a large fall in the number of people needing to attend the One Stop Shop routinely. The first three months in 2013/14 have seen a 53% drop in enquiries compared to last year. that in turn has allowed improvements in service there.

Customer satisfaction

11. Improvements in measures of satisfaction suggest that many customers prefer the newer methods of communication. This is reflected in the most recent performance data for Access Harrow (2012-13 Quarter 4) showing significant improvements.
12. This is also evidenced in Access Harrow recently being chosen as 'Contact Centre of Year' at the 2013 London & South East Call Centre awards ceremony, beating off competition from private sector companies. The award was for the best overall contact centre over 100 seats. The judging criteria included use of technology, staff development & satisfaction, key performance indicators such as speed at which calls are answered (last year 87 per cent of calls were answered within 30 seconds), resolution at the first point of contact, and customer satisfaction.
13. The changes Harrow Council has made in the way it interacts with customers have helped to reduce administrative costs and allowed more money to be put into front-line services. The average cost to the council of dealing with customer telephone calls has dropped significantly in recent years from £2.23 in 2006/7 and 99p eighteen months ago and is now only 80p per contact (September 2013).
14. The review group received evidence of many examples of good customer care provided by staff in the service-delivery departments (sometimes called the 'back office'). These included: a low rate of reported missed bin collections (15 out of 35,000 addresses attended per day); positive feedback for the Civic Amenity Site; comments from members of the public about the Town Centre Street Cleaning Team; and survey information from customers visiting Housing Needs and the borough's Libraries.

HOW THE REVIEW WAS CONDUCTED

Origins

1. Councillors were aware that, despite many improvements in Harrow Council's customer care, there were still areas needing improvement. Residents were still bringing to councillors' attention cases of poor customer care. These often involved communication and keeping customers informed about the progress being made with their request; for example, there was sometimes a lack of clarity in distinguishing between cases where a request would be met but after delay from those where it was not within council policy to meet the request. Councillors were also aware that the ability of Access Harrow to keep customers up to date varied between services and the extent to which Access Harrow had access to all the council's computer systems.

Remit

2. In 2012 Harrow's Overview and Scrutiny Committee commissioned this review of Customer Care. Its scope was agreed as follows:
 - To gain a picture of Harrow Council's customer care.
 - To be in a position to congratulate those parts of the council that address customers' concerns well.
 - To help those parts of the council that do not address customers' concerns well to correct failings by making suggestions as to how the council can improve its customer care.
 - To ensure that Harrow's customer care systems and culture are as good as they can be.
3. The Committee also set the following measure of success for the review:
 - Increased customer satisfaction with how the council deals with customers' queries so that the customer experience is better as a result of the scrutiny review's recommendations. The review group took as a baseline, the Reputation Tracker score for the measure of how satisfied or dissatisfied residents are with the way Harrow Council runs things:

'Taking everything into account, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the way Harrow Council runs things? 54% of residents asked were very satisfied or satisfied as at May 2013

Definitions

4. At an early stage the review group considered the various aspects of an organisation's relationship with its customers and made the following distinctions:
 - **Customer Service:** the business of meeting customer requests and resolving problems

- **Customer Care:** establishing a relationship with the customer, usually over a longer period (e.g. 'cradle to grave') and embedded in the organisation's culture
- **Customer Satisfaction:** customers' views and feelings towards an organisation that can be measured through a series of snapshots through time to identify trends such as 'improving', 'staying static' or 'failing'.

Key questions

5. The review group agreed the focus for their enquiries should be on the following questions:

- Q1 How does the service measure customer satisfaction?
- Q2 How are performance and complaints data used to improve services?
- Q3 Do service responses vary according to whether the initial contact is face-to-face, by phone, by letter or on line?
- Q4 Does the service keep its own record of complaints and performance measures, and how does this feed into the corporate level?
- Q5 How are customer service standards and outcomes publicised?

Special areas of interest

6. The review also identified the following special areas of interest:

- How far ownership of the customer relationship is shared across the whole council?
- How well the relationship between the main customer contact point (Access Harrow) and service departments is working?
- The impact on customer satisfaction.

Evidence sources

7. As well as briefings from officers on Harrow Council's customer service arrangements and the information systems used to capture customer requests & commission further work the review group's main sources of evidence were as follows:

- Meetings with Access Harrow staff
 - Observations in service-delivery departments
 - Visits to other councils.
8. Review group members also looked at the customer service standards in each council.
9. The project scope is attached to this report as Appendix One.

EVIDENCE GATHERING

HARROW COUNCIL

Complaints case studies

1. Two members of the review group met with an Access Harrow Service Manager on 19th December 2012 to examine a small sample of complaints. The sample had been chosen because of concerns that had already been identified about the way the cases had been handled.
2. The review group members noted the following:
 - The tone used in responses was defensive.
 - Letters sent by the council were incomplete and follow-up letters were needed rather than a single correspondence.
 - It was not clear that an appropriately senior officer had signed off letters.
 - The extent of oversight and investigation from outside the area of complaint was not always clear.
 - There were indications that the corporate procedure for handling complaints was not well understood across the council, beyond the technical aspects of using the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system.
 - There seemed to be a lack of advice for staff on raising concerns about the progress on a specific complaint.
 - The process for quality assurance was unclear.
 - Where a number of services are involved in investigating a complaint, it was not clear how a response is coordinated.
 - Variations in the way different IT systems record and monitor complaints and their responses can make it difficult to ensure a consistent approach across the council.
 - Access Harrow cannot monitor an issue with a contractor once it has become the contractor's responsibility. Access Harrow only become aware if the customer makes another contact. This means there is no visibility for the council in the resolution or otherwise of residents' complaints.

Call listening

3. Members of the review group each spent an hour sitting alongside Access Harrow customer agent staff monitoring telephone calls from customers. There were two sessions, on 15th & 23rd January 2013, and the calls monitored covered a range of the council's services.

4. The review group was impressed by the knowledge and helpful attitude of staff and by many aspects of the technology they used. The review group's concerns were;
 - The varying extent to which Access Harrow staff were able to deal with calls covering different departments. In areas where Access Harrow's systems were integrated with the relevant service department's IT system customer agents were able to advise callers themselves. In other areas calls had to be handed on. This variation could be confusing for customers who needed to deal with more than one service area.
 - There was some inconsistency in the way customer agents defined an 'avoidable contact'. An 'avoidable contact' is one that the council has caused unnecessarily, for example from failure in meeting a customer's previous request.
 - The number of avoidable contacts is an important performance measure in monitoring how well services are being provided, so inconsistency in its application could give misleading indications.

A special meeting of the Customer Services Working Group

5. Two members of the review group attended the meeting on 18th April 2013 and met staff from all the council's customer-facing departments.
6. The review group members heard about how recent changes to procedures in some areas were progressing. Concerns raised included understanding of the sign-off processes in some departments when work has been completed. There was also an agreed view that it would be helpful if Access Harrow could do more to manage customers' expectations, for example about when a job would be done.

Focus group discussion with Access Harrow staff

7. Four member of the review group met a small group of customer agent staff on 8th May 2013 who dealt with the following service areas:
 - Adult Social Care
 - Housing, Rents & Repairs and Council Tax
 - Public Realm
 - Revenues and Benefits.

8. Issues raised included:

Benefit claim assessment time targets

9. Although the council's 20 working days target to complete Council Tax Benefit assessments is specified in claim forms and letters, many customers – residents and landlords – call to check on the progress of claims.

10. Review group members thought the concept of working days could be difficult to understand, remember and calculate. They suggested instead experimenting with targets that are easier to recall e.g. one month.

Communicating with customers

11. Staff thought this was part of a wider issue. Although council letters were often clear in specifying dates for action and similar information, some members of the public still call for explanation. Council Tax bills are the best example. They state that any payment made between 1st and 17th March will not be reflected in the statement. Despite that, calls about such payments are one of the largest single sources of calls each year.
12. Staff thought that in general letters from the council had improved in clarity, and there is greater use of ordinary language. However there were still many calls from residents seeking clarification particularly for letters referring to individual requests or circumstances, and there had been similar problems some general consultation letters and guidance issued about new procedures. It seemed such explanatory letters could generate more calls even though their aim was to avoid the need for calls to Access Harrow.
13. Staff also said that the Access Harrow One-Stop-Shop continued to receive callers in person who said they were confused what to do after receiving a council letter. These were often older people. Review group members said it would never be possible to avoid all cases of customers needing to speak to a member of council staff in person. The aim should be to make council communications as clear as possible and encourage the public to use the website and My Harrow to find further information. In that way the demand for in-person visits and telephone calls could be kept to a minimum.

Access Harrow working with other departments

14. Review group members emphasised the need for Access Harrow staff to be able to contact all departments quickly and reliably and were concerned about the quality of feedback from other departments to service requests, either from Access Harrow staff or via My Harrow. Systems and processes needed to allow for unpredictable factors such as staff illness.
15. Review group members suggested there could be merit in a system of 'auto escalation or referral' when a staff member was not in the office and/or hadn't responded within a specified time, possibly to Director level. Customers should always be told the expected time it will take to deal with a case. Where managers had not logged into their telephone account and therefore could not be contacted, this should be reported to a senior manager in Access Harrow.

16. Review group members emphasised the importance of always telling the customer the outcome of their service request or other case. Where a request cannot be met because it isn't policy to do so, the customer should be told. The request (or 'ticket') should be closed, not left open. Customers should also be told if it will take longer to deal with a request than the usual/specified time.

Customer expectations

17. Staff thought there were variations in how well the council manages customer expectations. One area is the difference between an 'urgent' case and an 'emergency'. For example, loss of water supply would usually be urgent, but not an emergency requiring immediate action.
18. However it was also important that less urgent or lower priority items are dealt with and not just pushed to the back. It was hoped the new technology projects would give Access Harrow better information on the progress of service requests within Public Realm.

Service observations

19. Review group members met managers and staff from four front-line services:

- Libraries (29th January 2013)
- Housing (14th March 2013)
- Street Cleansing (11th March & 29th April 2013)
- Waste Collection (18th March & 17th April) 2103.

20. Each service area had their own experience of meeting customer need. Libraries had recently moved towards self-service. In Housing a key problem was the separate location of the customer reception area away from the 'One Stop Shop' meaning customers often had to go to and fro between different buildings at the Civic Centre.

21. Street Cleansing is a stretched team trying hard to deliver the level of service residents expect. Staff visibility on the street seemed to have a positive impact on residents' perception of cleanliness even though some parts of the service had been reduced. Although there was not much customer contact during the observed bin collections, resident feedback on Waste Collection was usually positive. The investment in technology to keep better track of bin collection had improved capacity to report & resolve problems. Members' said constituency cases involving 'missed bins' had greatly reduced since its introduction.

22. Members found the attitude of staff in all the services they observed encouraging and positive and welcomed the suggestions for improvements they had received.

VISITS TO OTHER COUNCILS

23. The visits review group members made to other councils provided insights into how those councils were working to improve their own customer service as well as the basis for some of the recommendations in this report. Review group members visited the following councils as part of their review:

Croydon – 21st January 2013	
Graham Cadle	Director of Customer, Transformation and Communication Services
Hayley Lewis	Head of Customer Communications and Strategy Service
Karen Sullivan	Head of Customer Contact Centre

Ealing – 21st January 2013	
Alison Reynolds	Director Customer Services
Helen Shacklock	Assistant Director Customer Services
Louisa Wood	Project Manager, Customer Services

Camden – 25th March 2013	
Councillor Patricia Callaghan	Deputy Leader; Cabinet Member Adult Social Care & Health
Fiona Dean	Assistant Director for Culture and Environment
Barry May	Head of Customer Services

24. The three councils were at different stages in improving their customer services, but the main themes to emerge were the importance of:

- 'Channel shift' in improving customer experience and reducing running costs
- A more transactional focus to their websites
- Raising the profile of complaints, dealing with them positively and using the information gained to change practice and raise performance.

25. Because of the differences in the approaches the councils had taken, other comparisons were harder to make. The specially designed area for one council's equivalent of the 'One Stop Shop' appeared to work well in catering for a large volume of customers; another had focused on bringing teams together and improving quality control to reduce avoidable contacts. The third had made extensive use of customer surveys. The most striking differences were in the way each council handled complaints, especially senior management involvement. All three councils had visited Harrow, in particular to look at My Harrow and linking up IT systems

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CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

THE CHALLENGE AHEAD

1. The review group recognise that Harrow is fortunate to have a dedicated staff who put customers first, working to improve service for customers. However, the review group also know from their own experience as residents and as councillors that there is scope to go further in raising the quality of the customer experience. This is all the more important in times of tightened financial constraints.
2. The review group approached this topic in a positive context seeking to build on the progress already made. Their conclusions and recommendations are set out below under the following headings:
 1. General
 2. Customer service standards
 3. 'Channel shift'
 4. The council's website
 5. Telephone calls
 6. 'In person' visits
 7. Quality assurance
 8. Customer feedback and complaints
 9. Service contacts: working with 'back office'

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

General

1. The council should include customer care standards and staff responsibilities in relation to these standards in induction training for new staff
2. The council, and especially its contact centre agents, needs to have a single view of customers that includes all the council's transactions with that person or business.
3. Bringing together staff who deal with customer transactions and joining up the systems they use is essential to improving the quality, speed and reliability of customer service.
4. Customer satisfaction should be a key test for all council services. Feedback should be obtained whenever possible when a case closes.

5. The council should continue to do all it can to exploit taxpayers' investment in My Harrow and expand the services it offers. The council should remind customers that it is quicker and more reliable to contact the council using My Harrow than other routes.
6. Customers should be able to find out easily what is happening to their enquiry or service request and should always be informed when their request has been completed. The My Harrow Account is the best route for this through the personalised alert system.
7. The council needs to do more to ensure all customer service requests are closed and to monitor those cases remaining open for a longer period than usual. All customer requests should be closed on the Customer Relationship Management system when the requested information or service has been completed. Requests that are still open after 30 days should be escalated automatically to the senior manager and portfolio holder and perhaps reported through the Improvement Board process.
8. The council needs to manage customers' expectations better about whether a request will be met. The council should make it clear at the earliest possible stage whether a customer's request can be met, or whether it will be declined because it is not policy to do so. Those cases need to be clearly distinguished from those that are still open and awaiting completion. No case should remain open longer than 60 days.
9. All accepted recommendations should be fully notified and discussed with all council service providers

Customer Service Standards

10. The council should standardise its customer service responses between services
11. The council should publish more information on its performance in meeting its customer service standards, distinguishing those requests submitted using My Harrow from those made via other channels.

'Channel shift'

12. The Council should continue to monitor changing customer preferences for contacting the Council and encourage customers to use the more cost-effective methods of communication and transaction. These could include 'self-service' kiosks and PCs as well as My Harrow Account.

13. The council needs to strike the right balance in encouraging channel migration. It should avoid being too aggressive and provide re-assurance that it aims to take people with it. The council will need to ensure that no one is left behind, for example customers without ready access to IT systems. It is recognised there will always be a need for phone calls or in-person visits for some types of transactions. Access Harrow should continue to offer residents training on the website and My Harrow Account to improve user-confidence.
14. Where possible the council should seek customers' agreement that their details can be shared between council departments. It should be made clear that this will allow the council to achieve a single view of its transactions with customers.
15. The council should review the ways it seeks proof of identity with a view to agreeing a standard approach across all services subject to over-riding national statutory requirements. This review should include an option for residents to agree their electoral roll registration can be used for this purpose.
16. The council should continue to explore other ways to widen customer access through new outlets/service points e.g. using Libraries to deliver more services and to encourage My Harrow take-up.
17. The council should re-invest savings released by channel shift in further website and web form development.

Website

18. The council's website should continue to adopt a 'transactions' focus with less emphasis on promoting news stories about the Council.
19. The council should ensure there are as few web pages as possible that customers need to visit in order to obtain information, request a service or make a payment. The total number of web pages should also be kept to a minimum.
20. The council should continue to investigate the different approaches people use to access information to ensure those using a search engine and therefore skipping the 'home' pages can see key messages.
21. The council's aim should be to make web forms the standard method for customers to make electronic contact and to close down those email accounts used for that purpose.
22. The Council should ensure web forms are as user friendly as possible, avoiding asking for unnecessary information and entering information more than once.

23. While emails continue to be used, the council should introduce software to interrogate emails for faster routing. The management of group email accounts also needs to improve e.g. monitoring the inbox and closing down redundant accounts.
24. The council should give residents the option to upload photos when making a request or reporting an incident (e.g. graffiti).

Telephone calls

25. As a priority, the council needs to clarify 'ownership' of calls that are handed on from Access Harrow to 'back office' departments and who is responsible for answering the customer's request and closing the case.
26. The council should monitor whether managers and staff are logged into their telephone account. Failure to do so can mean it is not possible to contact the person concerned and should be reported to a senior manager in Access Harrow.
27. The council needs to review the way staff apply the definition of 'avoidable contact' so that it is less open to variations in individual interpretation. This might be done in part through listening to a random sample of calls and reviewing how they were categorised.
28. The council needs to do more to examine patterns of repeat calls and to have a clearer view about how such cases should be escalated to supervisors and senior management level.

'In person' visits

29. The council needs to confirm its Civic Centre estate strategy and take advantage of the reduced One-Stop-Shop footfall so that the in-person customer contact points for all services are located together. This needs to be a priority in any longer-term plan to rebuild the Civic Centre.

Quality Assurance

30. The council should continue its programme of 'mystery shopping' and examine the option of using volunteer staff and residents to expand it.
31. The council should do more to exploit the knowledge and experience of frontline staff in improving and extending quality assurance techniques.
32. The council needs to revisit the way it commissions services with the aim that those who commission services ensure robust quality assurance is included.

Customer feedback and complaints

33. The council should encourage customers to give both positive and negative comments on the service they receive wherever possible.
34. When a complaint has been made or something has gone wrong, it is vital to respond positively and politely to regain customer trust as soon as possible and also vital to record the complaint on the complaints system.
35. The aim should be for conversation about resolving a complaint and learning from it rather than contesting responsibility.
36. The council should ensure the timetable for responding to complaints is clear and accessible. It needs to be common across all council services, subject to any overriding national statutory requirements.
37. The council should give complaints a higher profile and improve learning from them. This should involve making complaints more visible within the council and on the website.
38. The council should re-examine the formal process it uses to deal with complaints and those used in other councils and look at the case for moving to a two-stage process rather than the current three stages.
39. The council needs to ensure there is a consistent approach to logging and recording of all complaints and that it includes those submitted outside the standard routes e.g. via a councillor.
40. The council should review the following:
 - The tone used in responses (avoid defensive)
 - The completeness of response letters
 - Oversight/investigation from outside the area that is the subject of the complaint.
41. The council needs to ensure all staff dealing with complaints are trained in the corporate procedure and on the use of the Customer Relationship Management system to ensure accurate reporting.
42. The council needs to clarify how complaints involving more than one service are coordinated.
43. The council needs to review how Access Harrow can monitor the progress of complaints involving an external contractor.

Service contacts: working with ‘back office’

44. Where calls and other cases have been transferred to the ‘back office’ the council needs to ensure there is clear responsibility for telling customers their request will or will not be met. Calls must be closed off so that customers are not left in the dark. Leaving customers to contact a councillor in frustration is the worst option: it shows the system has failed.
45. The council should look at extending to all services the practice in some areas of asking a sample of customers for feedback six weeks after a request has been completed.
46. The council should encourage frontline staff engaged in responding to a service request to ask customers whether there are other related requests that need attention and to report back.

DECISIONS NEEDED

1. The review group’s conclusions and recommendations are in line with existing Council policy direction and, with one exception, do not need formal Cabinet decisions before they can be implemented. The exception is recommendation 38 that proposes a review of the council’s complaints process. A resulting move to a two-stage process would require a Cabinet decision to go ahead.

APPENDIX ONE: CUSTOMER CARE SCRUTINY REVIEW – SCOPE

1	SUBJECT	Customer Care Scrutiny Review
2	COMMITTEE	Overview & Scrutiny Committee
3	REVIEW GROUP	<p>Councillors:</p> <p>Councillor Nana Asante Councillor Camilla Bath Councillor James Bond Councillor Krishna James Councillor Jean Lammiman Councillor Jerry Miles Councillor Chris Mote Councillor Paul Osborn (Chairman) Councillor Stephen Wright</p> <p>Co-optees: To be recruited from the Pool of Advisors</p>
4	AIMS/ OBJECTIVES/ OUTCOMES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To gain a picture of Harrow Council's customer care. • To be in a position to congratulate those parts of the council that address customers' concerns well. • To help those parts of the council that do not address customers' concerns well to correct failings by making suggestions as to how the council can improve its customer care. • To ensure that Harrow's customer care systems and culture are as good as they can be.
5	MEASURES OF SUCCESS OF REVIEW	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased customer satisfaction with how the council deals with customers' queries so that the customer experience is better as a result of the scrutiny review's recommendations.
6	SCOPE	At this stage, no areas of scope are to be excluded as all contacts with the council are regarded relevant. As the review progresses in gathering evidence, the review group will refine its focus as appropriate.
7	SERVICE PRIORITIES (Corporate/Dept)	<p>This review relates to all four of the Corporate Priorities 2011/12:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keeping neighbourhoods clean, green and safe • United and involved communities: a Council that listens and leads • Supporting and protecting people who are most in need • Supporting our Town Centre, our local shopping centres and businesses
8	REVIEW SPONSOR	Tom Whiting, Corporate Director Resources

9	ACCOUNTABLE MANAGER	Lynne Margetts, Service Manager Scrutiny
10	SUPPORT OFFICER	Guy Fiegehen, Scrutiny Officer
11	ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT	Scrutiny Team
12	EXTERNAL INPUT	<p>Input from the following may be gauged through the course of the review:</p> <p>Stakeholders:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members • Residents and members of the public • Frontline staff involved in delivering customer care on behalf of Harrow Council • Relevant corporate director(s) and service director(s) • Relevant portfolio holder <p>Experts/advisers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Centre for Public Scrutiny • Public policy think tanks • Other local authorities
13	METHODOLOGY	<p>Light touch review using;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Briefings from senior managers about local context • Analysis of Access Harrow performance and mystery shopping data • Random screening of recorded calls • Customer journey mapping • Intelligence from members' caseloads and members' complaints system • Benchmarking information from other local authorities and/or the private sector to identify good practice • Visits to leading local authorities in the field and/or private sector companies to share learning • Use press media and social media platforms to gather residents' views and experiences • Surveys of the Residents Panel (questionnaire or focus group) to get wider residents' perspective • Desktop research on previous studies of council customer care e.g. other scrutiny reviews

14	EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS	<p>The council's customer care impacts upon everyone who makes contact with the council. Given the nature of the services that the council provides, it has particular implications for some of the most vulnerable members of the community, as well as more broadly all residents.</p> <p>The review will consider during the course of its work, how equality implications have been taken into account in current policy and practice and consider the possible implications of any changes it recommends.</p> <p>In carrying out the review, the review group will also need to consider its own practices and how it can facilitate all relevant stakeholders in the borough to have their voices heard.</p>
15	ASSUMPTIONS/ CONSTRAINTS	<p>The review will require a long-term commitment from members and officers. Success will depend upon the ability and willingness of officers, partners and stakeholders (as relevant) to participate and contribute fully in this review.</p> <p>Recognition of the current financial context for local authorities and the public sector as a whole should also be considered as part of the review.</p>
16	SECTION 17 IMPLICATIONS	The review will have regard to the possible community safety implications of any recommended changes to policy or practice.
17	TIMESCALE	Evidence gathering in Spring/Summer 2012 with a view to reporting back to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in October 2012. <i>[The project was delayed as a result of staff shortages in the Scrutiny Team]</i>
18	RESOURCE COMMITMENTS	To be met from existing scrutiny budget. No significant additional expenditure is anticipated.
19	REPORT AUTHOR	Guy Fiegehen/Lynne Margetts, as advised by the review group.
20	REPORTING ARRANGEMENTS	<p>Outline of formal reporting process:</p> <p>To Service/Corporate Director <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> throughout the course of the review and when developing recommendations</p> <p>To Portfolio Holder <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> as a witness in the review and when developing recommendations</p> <p>To CSB <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> To be confirmed</p> <p>To O&S <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 24 October 2012</p> <p>To Cabinet <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> To be confirmed</p>
21	FOLLOW UP ARRANGEMENTS (proposals)	Review by the Performance and Finance Sub-committee 6 months after the final report has been considered by Cabinet.

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