

---

**REPORT FOR: CABINET**

---

<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	21 February 2019
<b>Subject:</b>	Customer Services – Channel Migration Schedule
<b>Key Decision:</b>	Key Decision - the decision is significant for the purposes of making savings of an amount in excess of £500,000 for revenue expenditure.
<b>Responsible Officer:</b>	Carol Cutler, Director of Customer Services & Business Transformation
<b>Portfolio Holder:</b>	Graham Henson Leader of the Council; Portfolio Holder for Strategy, Partnerships, Devolution & Customer Services
<b>Exempt:</b>	No
<b>Decision subject to Call-in:</b>	Yes
<b>Wards affected:</b>	All
<b>Enclosures:</b>	None

## **Section 1 – Summary and Recommendations**

This report sets out the plan to migrate customer access to key services through self service channels in order to release savings of £560,000

### **Recommendations:**

Cabinet is requested to:

1. Note progress to date;
2. Approve the channel migration plan as set out in this report.

### **Reason: (For recommendations)**

The Council has delivered significant savings over the last 5 years through channel migration and digitalisation. Across all services, 89.4% of all customer enquiries are handled through self service.

In order to release savings of £560,000 over the next two financial years (2019/20, 2020/21), a programme of enforced channel migration is required for certain services where the appropriate self service options are available.

Mitigations are in place to assist the channel shift programme and to support residents where required.

## **Section 2 – Report**

### **Introduction**

Like many Local Authorities, Harrow has faced steep financial challenges over the last few years.

Since its inception in 2006, Access Harrow has made cashable savings in excess of £2,000,000 through effective use of technology, channel shift through digital access, performance management and multi-skilling of agents to create economies of scale and by process improvements.

In order to make further savings, the Council continues to deliver not only new technology for customers to access services more efficiently, but to change customer behaviour and move away from telephony-based customer service.

This shift will need to increase further over the next two years in order to realise savings of £560,000.

### **Options considered**

The following options have been considered:

1. Continue with the natural progression towards channel shift
2. Implement a staggered channel shift proposal over two years
3. Implement a 'big bang' channel shift proposal from April 2019

It is recommended to implement option 2, a staggered channel shift proposal over two years as this will enable the savings to be realised whilst giving the time to implement customer-led solutions and support those who need assistance.

## **Background**

The Council's website offers access to many services through integrated web forms and through customer authentication, where required, before being able to accept and share personal data.

The MyHarrow account was launched in 2011/12 as a single sign-in portal for residents to access personal and sensitive information. The account is available 24/7 (over 300 people logged in on Christmas Day) and offers integrated access to Council services. Customers authenticate themselves as they would for on-line banking ensuring that data was shared in a secure environment alleviating fear of personal information being accessed by other parties.

Once authenticated, customers can access services where authentication is required because of personal data such as Council Tax, Housing Benefits, Electoral Registration and Housing Rents alongside access to the library catalogue, local Planning detail, updates on service requests and non-sensitive details such as waste services.

The single sign-in is a vital component and the technology pulls together all a customer's interactions with the Council under a single login and password.

As the account is authenticated against an address (personal or business), the account utilises web services from other databases to personalise the site. Once logged in, the home page is populated with personalised location based your next bin collection date, open planning applications and licencing proposals within half a mile of your property and a link to your ward Councillors.

This has resulted in the Council being a leader in technology and digitalisation, offering services in a way that are unique to Harrow.

The Council has already achieved a channel shift rate of 89.4% whereby nine in ten transactions are carried out through self service.

In the last twelve months, the Council handled 4.4 million enquiries made up of access through the following channels:

Web Forms	9.3%
MyHarrow Account log-in	10.4%

Unique web visit	60.3%
IVR Telephony	8.2%
Face-to-face self service	1.2%

The traditional channels of face to face, telephony and email made up the remaining 10% of access channels.

Even excluding the unique web visits, over 73% of transactions were carried out without the resident interacting with a member of staff.

In order to realise the required savings, a step-change is required through the closure of access channels (telephone and email) where the service has a strong digital offering.

The Council has already closed telephone and email channels in certain services, including

- PCNs
- Payments
- Free School Meals
- Housing Benefit claims

### **Current situation - Why a change is needed**

From April 2019, the Council will close the telephone and email channels for certain services and as a result enforce channel migration through the Council's website and the MyHarrow account.

The programme of transition will be as follows:

April 2019	Education
October 2019	Public Realm
April 2020	Planning & Building Control Allotments
October 2020	Benefits Revenues

In many cases, the self service offering already provides the entire service but as a telephone number is available and publicised, people call for reassurance.

Education & School Admissions is a good example of this. Applications are made online; school waiting lists are available through the MyHarrow account and all relevant information is available on the website however calls are received to check that the information is correct or that an application has been received.

The tables below show the progress made in Education & School Admissions to transition people to self serve.

	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
Calls	19,964	15,061	13,945	13,794	8,232
Email	7,865	5,669	2,254	1,753	1,218
Visits	65	0	0	0	0
IVR	7,312	5,859	3,945	3,447	3,879
MHA	0	0	0	29,959	24,811
Web Forms	8,379	8,098	11,238	13,843	9,938
<b>Total</b>	<b>43,585</b>	<b>34,687</b>	<b>31,382</b>	<b>62,796</b>	<b>48,078</b>

	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
Calls	46%	43%	44%	22%	17%
Email	18%	16%	7%	3%	3%
Visits	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
IVR	17%	17%	13%	5%	8%
MHA	0%	0%	0%	48%	52%
Web Forms	19%	23%	36%	22%	21%
<b>SHIFT</b>	<b>36%</b>	<b>40%</b>	<b>48%</b>	<b>75%</b>	<b>80%</b>

Over the last six months, the reason for every call to Access Harrow for Education & School Admissions has been checked against the website and in every case the contact to the Council was accessible via self-service.

## Mitigations

As highlighted in the Equalities Impact Assessment, there will be a small number of residents who cannot utilise technology to self-serve. The Council is committed to ensuring that services are accessible to all and will put in place comprehensive mitigations over the next two years to support those who have difficulty accessing services online.

- The MyHarrow account will be moved to a new platform in late 2019 through to March 2020 offering a modern portal with additional functionality.
- In conjunction with the online account, the Council's website will be upgraded using digital signals to provide customers with a personalised look and feel based upon the services that are important to them.
- All existing and new web forms will be reviewed for customer ease, re-worded and moved to a new platform
- To support residents who struggle with online services, a digital inclusion officer will be introduced to work with community groups and residents to demonstrate how to access services. The post will work from the Civic Centre and the library network, holding training sessions and workshops

- A small team will work proactively to contact residents through text alerts and/or email where there are service failures such as persistent missed bin collections or excessive delays.
- We will investigate the use of artificial intelligence (AI) and precision IVR routing (intelligent telephony) to ensure that the most vulnerable residents are able to access the Council where required.

## **Implications of the Recommendation**

### **Resources, costs**

The recommendations within this report will result in a reduction in budget of £560,000 over two years from Customer Services

### **Staffing/workforce**

The recommendations within this report will result in a reduction in headcount of 23 FTE from Customer Services.

The staff reduction will predominantly be agency staff with less than five permanent staff being affected.

### **Performance Issues**

The recommendations within this report are not anticipated to have an impact on current or future performance levels of the service.

### **Environmental Implications**

There are no environmental implications arising from the recommendations set out within this report.

### **Data Protection Implications**

A Privacy Impact Assessment has been completed in relation to digital services and the Council will comply with data protection requirements arising from channel migration.

### **Risk Management Implications**

Risk included on Directorate risk register? No

Separate risk register in place? Yes

Risks associated with the channel migration plan are effectively managed through the controls established at the commencement of the project. These

are documented on the project risk register and managed through the Project Management arrangements.

## **Procurement Implications**

There are no Procurement implications associated with this project.

## **Legal Implications**

An Equalities Impact Assessment for the recommended changes has also been completed. And the Council is committed to ensuring that services are accessible to all and will put in place comprehensive mitigations over the next two years to support those who have difficulty accessing services online.

Any employment related matters, including potential redundancies, will have to be managed in line with the Employment Rights Act 1996 (as amended) and the Equalities Act 2010, and Council's Managing change policy and procedure.

## **Financial Implications**

Since its inception in 2006, Access Harrow has made cashable of savings in excess of £2,000,000 through effective use of technology, performance management, multi-skilling of agents to create economies of scale and by process improvements.

The staffing levels within Access Harrow has been reduced by approximately 50% over the last six years as services have been redesigned and transferred to a secure online process.

There are 45,000 log-ins each month to the MyHarrow account and the cost of employing staff to respond to this level of enquiries is over £1,500,000 per annum. A further 40,000 integrated web forms are completed each month which update line of business systems and the cost of employing staff to respond to this level of enquiries would be £1,300,000 per annum

In addition, complex integrations and process automation has been built into the MyHarrow Account saving the Council a further £500,000 per annum (realised through Project Minerva).

Any increased revenue costs will need to be contained within the existing revenue budget for Access Harrow.

Any new technical solution required as a result of ongoing analysis and consultation will be costed and a capital bid will be made accordingly.

The schedule of staff release and subsequent savings is as follows:

Date of Closure	Service	FTE Release	2019/20 £'000	2020/21 £'000	2021/22 £'000
1/4/2019	Education	1	25		
1/10/2019	Public Realm	4	50	50	
1/4/2020	Planning & BC	3	-	75	
1/4/2020	Allotments	1	-	10	
1/10/2020	Revenues	6	-	75	75
1/10/2020	Benefits	8	-	100	100
		<b>23</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>310</b>	<b>175</b>

## Equalities implications / Public Sector Equality Duty

The service continues to assess whether any particular groups are likely to be affected more than others and if so, how these may be addressed.

An Equalities Impact Assessment for the recommended changes has also been completed.

Consequently, the recommendations within this report are proposed on the basis that due regard has been given to the Council's Equalities obligations and that the adverse impact identified within the Equalities Impact Assessment is justified in terms of the policy intent and recommendations concerned.

## Council Priorities

The Council's vision: **Working Together to Make a Difference for Harrow**

The recommendations contained within this report support the corporate priorities for the following:

- Making a difference for the vulnerable
- Making a difference for communities
- Making a difference for local businesses
- Making a difference for families



### Section 3 - Statutory Officer Clearance

Name: Sharon Daniels	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the Chief Financial Officer
Date: 17 January 2019		
Name: Stephen Dorrian	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the Monitoring Officer
Date: 4 February 2019		

### Section 3 - Procurement Clearance

Name: Nimesh Mehta	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Head of Procurement
Date: 7 February 2019		

<b>Ward Councillors notified:</b>	<b>NO, as it impacts on all Wards</b>
<b>EqIA carried out:</b>	<b>YES</b>
<b>EqIA cleared by:</b>	Alex Dewsnap

### Section 4 - Contact Details and Background Papers

Background Papers: None

**Contact:** Jonathan Milbourn  
Head of Customer services & Business Support  
020 8736 6711  
[Jonathan.milbourn@harrow.gov.uk](mailto:Jonathan.milbourn@harrow.gov.uk)

**Call-In Waived by the  
Chair of Overview and  
Scrutiny Committee**

**NO – CALL IN APPLIES**