



## **Report for: Cabinet**

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<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	16 November 2023
<b>Subject:</b>	Overview & Scrutiny Customer Experience scrutiny report response
<b>Key Decision:</b>	No
<b>Responsible Officer:</b>	Jonathan Milbourn (A. Director of Digital, Data & The Customer Experience)
<b>Portfolio Holder:</b>	Councillor Stephen Greek Portfolio Holder for Performance, Communications and Customer Experience
<b>Exempt:</b>	No
<b>Decision subject to Call-in:</b>	No
<b>Wards affected:</b>	All Wards.
<b>Enclosures:</b>	Customer Experience Scrutiny Report (Appendix A)

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

This report sets out the response to the Customer Experience scrutiny response.

**Recommendations:** Cabinet is requested to consider the Customer Experience Scrutiny Report at Appendix A and agree the recommendations set out in Section 4 of that report.

**Reason:** In agreeing the recommendation, officers can work up action plans to further enhance the customer experience.

## **Section 2 – Report**

### **Options considered**

1. Review the recommendations of the scrutiny report and work towards improving the customer experience.
2. To reject the recommendations.

Option 1 is seen as the most beneficial as it will improve the customer experience, although Cabinet may consider accepting some of the recommendations and not others or ask officers to work up more detailed plans for some areas and bring these back for a future decision.

### **Current situation**

In May 2022, Cabinet agreed that one of their key priorities was to put residents first and to treat both residents and businesses as valued customers. A customer experience strategy was agreed at Cabinet in July that year followed by an action plan that was signed off in December 2022.

Improving the customer experience for Harrow residents is a significant focus of this administration, and a large amount of work has been done, and continues to be done, to achieve this.

The interest from Overview and Scrutiny members on this topic is very timely, and constructive feedback is very much to be welcomed as the Council's work continues and develops.

Scrutiny agreed a scope to review progress against the Customer Experience action plan in March 2023 which focussed on the following areas:

- Provide alternative channels where required – support people to self-serve or provide an alternative means of contact for more complex issues.
- Reduce the need for contact – get things right first time and be proactive when there is a problem.
- Services are the best that they can be – ensure that services are built around the customer and identifying where the key problems are.

The approach was to experience the customer journey from end-to-end across all channels to understand how our residents interact with the Council.

The key objectives were as follows:

- To monitor the progress on more intuitive digital access for residents
- To better understand digital exclusion and those affected by it

- To ensure an improvement in the customer journey using the webpage and phone lines
- Review how services are delivered (such as the front door to Adult Social care and Council Tax) and key customer journeys (such as subscribing to Garden Waste, reporting bin issues and ordering a parking permit)
- To ensure an improvement in the council's complaints process and interaction with elected members

As part of the process, Members visited key Customer Service sites at Greenhill library and Gayton Road to observe and participate in following the cycle of a customer enquiry through to resolution.

The working party also analysed a number of data sets including the 2023 Resident Survey, customer demand by channel and customer survey responses.

The members also carried out a Challenge Panel which was designed as a way for the scrutiny group to discuss key findings from the Customer Experience review and to make recommendations for the further development of the policy.

A report outlining the findings of Scrutiny along with recommendations made was produced in September 2023 and the response to these can be found below.

<b>RECOMMENDATION</b>	<b>DETAIL</b>
<p><b>1.</b> Using one site (Gayton Road) for the council service front-door instead of two (Greenhill Library and Gayton Road)</p>	<p>We acknowledge that there have been challenges in managing two different sites for customer access once the Civic Centre was closed.</p> <p>A review is underway to assess the impact of the new front door arrangements at both Gayton Road and Greenhill library.</p> <p>The Civic Centre site has been closed for over six months and in that time, we have helped over 16,000 people at Greenhill library where satisfaction rates are improving (currently at their highest of 80%)</p> <p>The design of Greenhill library was to support people with self-service however residents have told us that there is a wish for a deeper service for Council Tax and</p>

	<p>Benefits and room for more private interactions.</p> <p>Further work is underway to best define and improve the offer at Gayton road where we support our most vulnerable residents.</p> <p>We will review how we best work with the Citizens Advice Bureau who are also now based next door at Gayton Road.</p>
<p><b>2. Improved signage to both Greenhill Library and Gayton Road sites</b></p>	<p>We acknowledge that there is more work to be done in improving signage for the resident-facing offices.</p> <p>Street signage and building signage will be picked up as part of the face-to-face review.</p> <p>When moving out of the Civic Centre in Station Road, resident communication was carried out via a number of channels including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Two centre page spreads in the Harrow People magazine</li> <li>• Details on the relevant website pages</li> <li>• Regular messaging on the MyHarrow e-newsletter</li> <li>• Signage at the Civic Centre site</li> <li>• Through our Social Media channels</li> </ul> <p>Any further changes will be managed through the Corporate Communications team.</p>
<p><b>3.A more accessible front-door service</b></p>	<p>Once the review of the face to face service provision has been completed, we will aim to implement any changes by the end of the 2023/24 financial year.</p> <p>Throughout 2024/25 we will look to strategically expand the face to face provision through the library network.</p> <p>We are assessing how we best support the Voluntary Sector to provide information and advice to their clients.</p> <p>Our digital channels are frequently reviewed and measured by a third party to</p>

	<p>ensure that online access is easily understood and accessed.</p> <p>The provision of telephony services is monitored to ensure that we assist those residents who cannot use our digital channels.</p>
<p><b>4. Better communication and engagement with the Council</b></p>	<p>The Customer Commitments were agreed at Cabinet on 29 June 2023 to set clear expectations to our residents of how our services should operate.</p> <p>We have reviewed our customer-facing email accounts to ensure clear messaging and consistency.</p> <p>The Council has agreed new protocols for resident consultation and engagement. It has also launched a new consultation website, MyHarrow Talk, to improve consultation with residents.</p> <p>The MyHarrow e-Newsletter is delivered to over 90,000 residents, keeping them informed.</p> <p>The Conversation Café is a relatively new initiative and discussions are in place to assess how Council services best integrate with this initiative, especially as funding has been established to continue the service into the next financial year.</p> <p>The launch of the new website in 2024 will make it easier for residents to track progress of service requests, reports and complaints.</p>
<p><b>5. A refined complaint process</b></p>	<p>The Complaints policy and process was agreed at Cabinet on 29 June 2023.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In Q1, (April to June) 95% of complaints were responded to within timescale against a target of 90%.</li> <li>• In Q2 (July to September) 94% of complaints were responded to within timescale</li> </ul> <p>The new Customer Commitments, as referenced above, set a default response time of five working days to resident</p>

	<p>queries, unless a specific service standard has been set. They also specify that residents should receive an update if their query is taking longer to answer.</p> <p>The new Member/MP process, whereby a dedicated email address was set up for each directorate, was implemented eighteen months ago.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The number of responses given within the five day target has been consistent at between 85% - 90% over the last twelve months.</li></ul> <p>Further monitoring and training is underway to improve the quality and frequency of response.</p>
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We are grateful to Scrutiny for their report and recommendations and look forward to working together to further improve the customer experience.

## Implications of the Recommendation

### Considerations

#### Resources, costs

A move to Gayton Road from Greenhill library will need to be costed and funding agreed.

#### Staffing/workforce

There will potentially be a change to the way the face-to-face service is run utilising more experienced officers at the front line. This will aid resolution at the first point of contact and improve resident satisfaction.

#### Ward Councillors' comments

Not Applicable

#### Performance Issues

There are no Performance issues associated with this report.

#### Environmental Implications

There are no environmental implications associated with this report

#### Data Protection Implications

There are no data protection implications associated with this report.

#### Risk Management Implications

Risks included on corporate or directorate risk register? **YES**

"Vulnerable and digitally-excluded customers cannot contact us" is included on the directorate risk register and rated at C3 (medium likelihood/moderate impact)

Separate risk register in place? **NO**

Are the relevant risks contained in the register are attached/summarised below? **NO**

The following key risks should be taken onto account when agreeing the recommendations in this report:

Risk Description	Mitigations	RAG Status
The recommendations are not taken forward	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>There is an existing improvement plan in place for the Customer Experience</li><li>There are processes in place to best resolve enquiries from Members and Customer Complaints</li></ul>	GREEN

### **Procurement Implications**

There are no procurement implications associated with this report.

### **Legal Implications**

There are no Legal implications associated with this report.

### **Financial Implications**

A move to Gayton Road from Greenhill library will need to be costed and funding will need to be agreed.

### **Equalities implications / Public Sector Equality Duty**

An initial equality impact assessment is underway as part of the Customer Experience programme.

### **Council Priorities**

This report delivers the following Council priorities:

- 1. A council that puts residents first**
- 2. A borough that is clean and safe**
- 3. A place where those in need are supported**

The report and action plan are designed to improve the customer experience to ensure that residents are at the heart of service delivery.

**Has the Portfolio Holder(s) been consulted? Yes**

**Date: 3 November 2023**

## **Section 3 - Statutory Officer Clearance**

**Statutory Officer: Sharon Daniels**

Signed by the Chief Financial Officer

**Date: 6 November 2023**

**Statutory Officer: Sarah Wilson**

Signed on behalf of the Monitoring Officer

**Date: 3 November 2023**

**Chief Officer: Alex Dewsnap**

Signed by the Managing Director

**Date: 4 November 2023**



**Head of Procurement: Nimesh Mehta**

Signed by the Head of Procurement

**Date: 6 November 2023**

**Head of Internal Audit & Corporate Anti-Fraud: Neale Burns**

Signed by the Head of Internal Audit

**Date: 6 November 2023**

## **Mandatory Checks**

**Ward Councillors notified: NO**, as it impacts on all Wards

**EqlA carried out: NO**

An initial equality impact assessment is underway as part of the Customer Experience programme.

## **Section 4 - Contact Details and Background Papers**

**Contact: Jonathan Milbourn,**

**Assistant Director for Digital, Data & The Customer Experience**

[jonathan.milbourn@harrow.gov.uk](mailto:jonathan.milbourn@harrow.gov.uk)

**020 8736 6711**

**Background Papers: NONE**

**Call-in waived by the Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee: No**