

**REPORT FOR: PERFORMANCE AND
FINANCE SCRUTINY
SUB-COMMITTEE**

Date of Meeting: 2 February 2012

Subject: Access Harrow - Customer Service Performance

Responsible Officer: Carol Cutler- Divisional Director for Business Transformation & Customer Service

Scrutiny Lead Member area: All Areas

Exempt: No

Enclosures: Appendix 1 – Avoidable Contact Data

Section 1 – Summary and Recommendations

This report provides information on Access Harrow performance, details of popular service requests and levels of avoidable contact.

Recommendations:

The report be noted

Section 2 – Report

Introductory paragraph

As the first point of contact for the Council, Access Harrow captures a wealth of information regarding Harrow residents. The following services have joined Access Harrow since July, through the CCAD Project (Customer Care Assess and Decide)

- Place Shaping – Processing of Planning & Building Control Applications
- Registration Services – Nationality Checking, Cemeteries, Land Charges
- CAP/CAR – Accounts Payable/Accounts Receivable
- Adult Services – New and existing users, Concessionary Travel
- Harrow Helpline – Community Alarm

Access Harrow captures a wide range of data through CRM technology. This data allows us to understand our customer needs and to improve service delivery through working with individual service areas.

Access Harrow is making savings by reducing unnecessary contact, migrating customers to cheaper communication channels and by exploiting new technology

In 2008, a new national indicator was introduced (NI14) to capture levels of avoidable contact and failure demand across the Council. As the main portal for customer contact, Access Harrow took responsibility for the data and built a new field within the CRM system to capture the data against all reasons for contact.

The level of avoidable contact in Harrow was reported at 27% across 400,000 enquiries at the end of the first accounting year.

Two years later, the indicator was scrapped nationally, however following the positive outcomes attributed to collecting this data we have continued to capture, analyse and share this information with our service partners.

During this period, we had reduced the level of avoidable contact to 17%

This report highlights the level of performance sustained by Access Harrow over quarter three; the most common enquiries handled and the areas of higher avoidable contact.

Appendix 1 attached provides data on avoidable contact for December 2011.

Customer, Complaints & Performance

Qtr 3 – October to December 2011

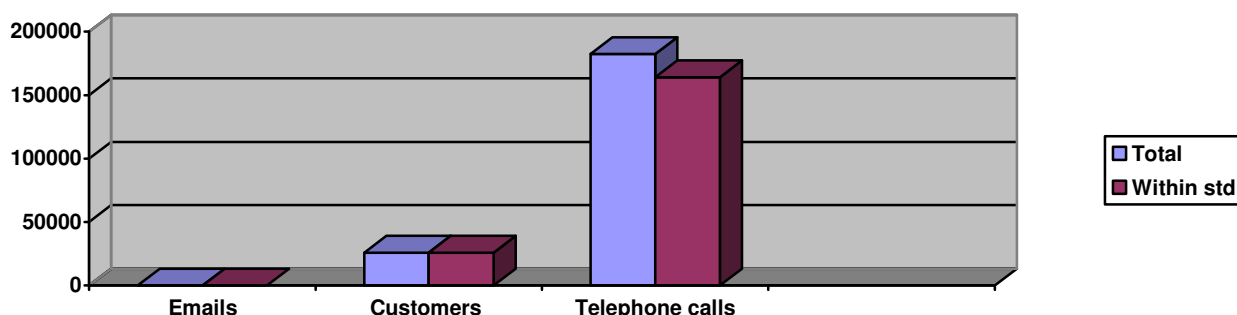
Customer Service standards

- 90% of all calls to be answered in 30 Seconds
- <5% Abandoned rate
- 15 minute average wait time in the One Stop Shop
- <72hr turnaround for emails

| Telephone Calls | Calls answered to standard | Standard | Q3 Status | Q2 Status |
|-----------------|----------------------------|----------|-----------|-----------|
| 224,391 | 217,659 | 90% | 90% | 90% |

| OSS Visitors | Customers seen to standard | Standard | Q3 Status | Q2 Status |
|--------------|----------------------------|----------|-----------|-----------|
| 25,755 | 25,755 | 00:15:00 | 00:07:51 | 00:09:26 |

| No. of emails | Emails answered to standard | Standard | Q3 Status | Q2 Status |
|-----------------|-----------------------------|----------|-----------|-----------|
| 38,905 (ytd) | 35,792 | <72 hrs | 92% | 91% |



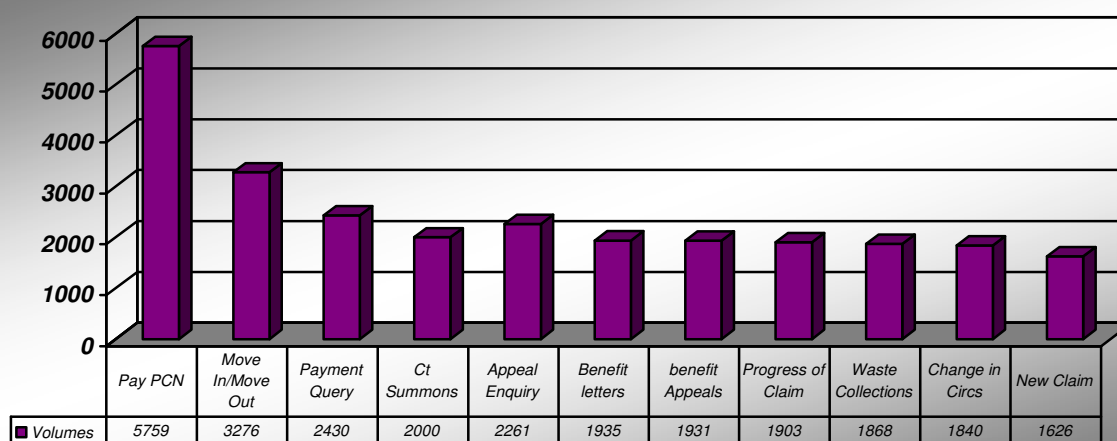
Narrative on Performance for the Quarter

As anticipated, enquiry volumes declined during quarter three in the run up to Christmas. The clement weather has also contributed to a 10% reduction in calls compared with last year when the snow created an increase in enquiries.

Wait times in the One Stop Shop have continued to fall as a result of improved resource management and the adoption of the new queuing system

Top 10 reasons for contact and volumes for the Quarter

| Reasons for Contact | Service Area | Volumes |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------|---------|
| Pay PCN | Parking | 5,759 |
| Move In/Move Out | Council Tax | 3,276 |
| Payment Query | Council Tax | 2,430 |
| Appeal Enquiry | Parking | 2,261 |
| Benefits Document Received | Housing Benefit | 1,935 |
| Response to Assessor Letter | Housing Benefit | 1,931 |
| General Enquiry (Tenancy Management) | Resident Services | 1,903 |
| Household waste - collection services | Community & Environment | 1,868 |
| Changes in Circumstances | Housing Benefit | 1,840 |
| New Claim | Housing Benefit | 1,626 |



Narrative on Ten Top Reasons for contact for the Quarter (across all services)

A change to the initial Parking message, directing customers to our automated telephone payment system, has resulted in a reduction of the number of requests to pay a parking ticket. However it remains the most popular service request in Access Harrow. Further work will continue on the contact avoidance strategy to reduce enquiries. Appeal enquiries are also high whereas only a minority have actual cause for appeal and the webform continues to be developed to outline valid reasons for an appeal.

Enquiries regarding Council Tax and Housing Benefits dominate the top ten list which is unsurprising considering they are the highest volume services.

Work is being carried out to understand the make up of General Enquiry (Tenancy Management) and further process ID codes will be set up if required to capture the cause of these contacts so that we can take action to reduce them.

Contact Centre Service Levels achieved per Service for the quarter

| Services | Calls offered | Calls Answered | % Answered | Answered within 30 seconds |
|--|----------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Gen Enquiries | 62,824 | 56,542 | 98% | 99% |
| Housing Repairs | 9,428 | 9,239 | 98% | 82% |
| Resident Services | 8,596 | 8,424 | 98% | 94% |
| Parking | 7,025 | 6,955 | 99% | 88% |
| Public Realm | 14,574 | 14,428 | 99% | 90% |
| Neighbourhood Champions | 168 | 166 | 99% | 93% |
| Housing Benefits | 18,945 | 17,998 | 95% | 74% |
| Council Tax | 19,041 | 18,089 | 95% | 75% |
| Education | 6,384 | 6,320 | 99% | 95% |
| Pitch bookings & Allotments | 706 | 699 | 99% | 96% |
| Planning | 8,071 | 7,990 | 99% | 94% |
| Electoral Services | 1,395 | 1,367 | 98% | 86% |
| Adult Services | 18,800 | 18,048 | 96% | 86% |
| CAP/CAR | 3,543 | 3,508 | 99% | 97% |
| Registration Services | 2,843 | 2,701 | 95% | 84% |

Call volumes have followed the predicted trajectory over the three month period and with no snow or heavy frost, enquiries for Public Realm and Housing Repairs have been lower than previous years.

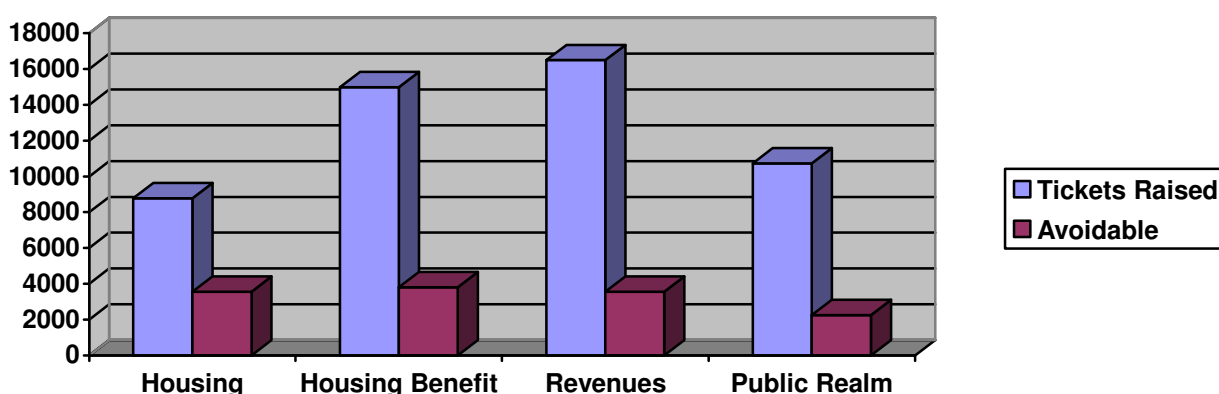
Call volumes for the new services to Access Harrow (Adults, Place Shaping, Registration Services and CAP/CAR) have been included but do not all yet have three months data. The Q4 will be the first full reporting period for these services.

From April 2012, data will include Helpline data, processing information and postal enquiries for the first time to show the full workings of Access Harrow.

Avoidable Contact NI 14 – Top Four Services with high percentage of avoidable contact

These are the 4 Services with the highest percentage of avoidable contact. The table, graph and narrative below provide additional information on the relevant services.

| Service | Tickets issued | Avoidable | Percentage |
|------------------|----------------|-----------|------------|
| Housing | 8,784 | 3,553 | 40% |
| Housing Benefits | 14,986 | 3,810 | 25% |
| Revenues | 16,489 | 3,552 | 22% |
| Public Realm | 10,730 | 2,256 | 21% |



Narrative on Avoidable Contact

Avoidable Contact is where a customer has had to contact us unnecessarily. Some examples of avoidable contact could be:

- Customers are having to progress chase
- We have failed to deliver a service as expected
- We haven't been clear in the information we have given

Through the SAP CRM (Customer Relationship Management) system all reasons for contact are recorded by the Customer Services advisors by the selection of a process ID.

The advisors also complete the mandatory field to identify if the customer has had to contact us unnecessarily. This data is analysed on a monthly basis to identify opportunities to reduce these avoidable contacts. As part of this process, meetings are held with managers in each service area to discuss these opportunities and work together to agree solutions to reduce avoidable contact.

Examples of actions identified for the top 4 services are as follows:

Housing

- Kiers have a base within Access Harrow whereby staff can immediately address any issues with the repair
- Staff explain realistic timescales with customers in order to manage expectations.
- Kier visits are managed in four hour slots and Kier operatives call ahead to let residents

know they are on their way. This helps to alleviate unnecessary calls at the start of a four hour period.

- Access Harrow staff are involved in the tender for the new repairs contract to ensure a seamless service is in place for residents.
- Clarity requested on the Repair Policy as to what the Council can and will do
- Housing Repairs team to revisit variation procedures and Kiers to reinforce what operatives can and cannot say - to reduce unnecessary request for repairs.

Housing Benefit

- Initial data showed high volumes of avoidable contact where customers did not understand the entitlement letter sent following a new claim. A new cover letter was created explaining the basics and this resulted in a significant drop in related enquiries. We are now monitoring customers who contact us following the receipt of a letter to take further action.
- Addition of FAQ given to new claimants.
- Provide customers with clear expectations of timescales for processing applications
- Further promotion of the My Harrow Account both through Access Harrow and the service area.

Revenues

- We have added service standard timescale to webforms and civica W2 application forms so customer's expectations are managed.
- Refresher training delivered on backdating of exemption and discount requests.
- Revenues staff to notify the customer if an account is deleted.

Public Realm

- Fast track resolution process in place with back office to clarify non-collections and rectify incidents of missed bins.
- Regular meetings with back office to discuss policy updates and common reasons for non collection

Financial Implications

There are no financial implications associated with this report.

Performance Issues

This report outlines the performance of Access Harrow

Environmental Impact

None specific to this report

Risk Management Implications

None specific to this report

Equalities implications

Was an Equality Impact Assessment carried out? Yes () No ()

This report is a performance update and therefore an EqIA is not required.

Corporate Priorities

Please identify which corporate priority the report incorporates and how:

- 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.

High quality customer data is used effectively to support the Corporate Priorities.

Section 3 - Statutory Officer Clearance

Not required for this report.

Section 4 - Contact Details and Background Papers

Contact:

Jonathan Milbourn, Head of Customer Services, Ext: 6711

Background Papers:

Appendix 1 – Avoidable Contact Data –December 2011