

LONDON BOROUGH OF HARROW

Meeting:	Tenants' and Leaseholders' Consultative Committee
Date:	Thursday 3 July
Subject:	Customer Charter for Housing Services
Key decision:	No
Responsible Chief Officer:	Head of Housing & Environmental Health Services
Relevant Portfolio Holder:	Planning, Development and Housing Portfolio Holder
Status:	Part 1
Ward:	All
Enclosures:	See 10.1: Council's customer contact standards

1. Summary/ Reason for urgency (if applicable)

- 1.1 This report sets out the background to and the process for the development of a Customer Charter for Housing Services which will supplement the Council's contact standards developed from the First Contact best value review.
- 1.2 The creation of a Customer Charter has several objectives:
- To ensure a good quality, consistent service to our customers.
 - To put in place service – specific standards, where appropriate, for the benefit of customers and staff.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 The Tenants and Leaseholders Consultative forum are asked to note the creation of a customer charter for Housing Services and to comment on the draft service standards (to follow).

3. Consultation with Ward councillors

- 3.1 Not applicable

4. Policy Context (including Relevant Previous Decisions)

- 4.1 Cabinet on 12 November 2002 approved as part of the First Contact Review Improvement plan that ‘... the authority adopts a common set of standards for all customer contacts...’
- 4.2 The Best Value Advisory Panel of 5 November 2002 considered a report on the Housing Best Value Review – Your Home Your Needs – which includes consideration of customer services across the housing service.

5. Relevance to Corporate Priorities

- 5.1 This work supports the priorities of the New Harrow Project in raising standards of customer service across the Council.

6. Background Information

- 6.1 The Housing Best Value Review has established there is a need for a standard for staff and customers outlining what customers can expect from Housing Services. The Tenant conference 2002 illustrated the potential benefits from a common set of standards regarding customer service provision. These would build on the First Contact work which recommends that common Standards be set for customer contacts and that activity should be monitored and the results published.
- 6.2 Via research into good practice elsewhere we have produced a draft Customer Charter for Housing Services. This is to be presented to Tenants and Leaseholders Consultative forum for information and comment.
- 6.3 The draft charter will be presented at the Tenants and Leaseholders Open day on 8 July 2003 to which all tenants and leaseholders are invited. Tenants and leaseholders will have an opportunity to ask questions, make suggestions and raise issues about the draft Customer charter.
- 6.4 Following consultation, the final Customer charter will be available in 3 A5 booklets:
 - 1. ‘Making Contact’ Harrow Council’s new booklet on corporate customer care standards.
 - 2. Tenant Services Customer charter – to cover standards specific to landlord services.
 - 3. Housing Needs/Strategy Customer Charter – This is to cover customer care standards for the sections of Housing Services that are to remain within the Council.
- 6.5 Performance against the housing service standards will be regularly monitored and reported on. Such monitoring is to include for example

monitoring of telephone calls, response times to letters and use of Mystery shopping. The results of such monitoring will also be used to review and further improve customer services within Housing Services and within the new ALMO.

7. Consultation

- 7.1 Housing Needs customer care standards were developed via consultation at the LOCATA open day held on 2nd December 2002 to which all those on the Housing register were invited.
- 7.2 Tenant services customer care standards were arrived at through various consultation events e.g. Repairs stakeholder workshops on October 22nd 2002. There have been follow-up meetings to this. In addition there have been several consultations with Harrow Federation of Tenants and Residents association and consultation with Housing Services staff at team meetings and a Best Value open day. Finally the Housing Best Value Steering Group, including tenant and leaseholder representatives has commented on the proposed standards.

8. Finance Observations

- 8.1 None

9. Legal Observations

- 9.1 None

10. Background Papers

- 10.1 Please see attached Council service standards – ‘Making Contact’ leaflet and ‘Contact Standards’ – Staff guidance. These papers have been distributed to all Housing Services staff.

11. Author

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