# Overview & Scrutiny

## Budget Scrutiny Task Group - Customer Services

All Members of the Budget Scrutny Task Group Customer Services are requested to attend the meeting to be held as follows:

**Monday, 5th October, 2015**

**7.00 pm**

**Room 102, Hackney Town Hall, Mare Street, London E8 1EA**

Contact:
Tracey Anderson
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**Gifty Edila**
**Corporate Director of Legal, Human Resources and Regulatory Services**

**Members:** **Cllr Christopher Kennedy, Cllr Tom Rahilly, Cllr Rebecca Rennison (Chair) and Cllr Louisa Thomson**

## Agenda

### ALL MEETINGS ARE OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | **Apologies for Absence** | |
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| 4 | **Minutes of the Previous Meeting** | (Pages 1 - 12) |
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Hackney

## Access and Information

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Providing oral commentary during a meeting is not permitted.

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# ⊖ Hackney

| Budget Scrutiny Task Group Customer Services<br><br>5<sup>th</sup> October 2015<br><br>**Minutes of the Previous Meeting** | Item No<br><br>**4** |
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**OUTLINE**

Attached are the draft minutes for the meeting on 9<sup>th</sup> September 2015.

**ACTION**

The Budget Scrutiny Task Group is requested to agree the minutes.

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# Hackney

London Borough of Hackney
**Budget Scrutiny Task Group - Customer Services**
**Municipal Year 2015/16**
**Date of Meeting Wednesday, 9th September, 2015**

Minutes of the proceedings of the Budget Scrutiny Task Group – Customer Services held at Hackney Town Hall, Mare Street, London E8 1EA

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| **Chair** | **Councillor Rebecca Rennison** |
| **Councillors in Attendance** | **Cllr Christopher Kennedy, Cllr Tom Rahilly and Cllr Louisa Thomson** |
| **Apologies:** | |
| **Co-optees** | |
| **Officers In Attendance** | **Kay Brown (Assistant Director for Revenues and Benefits), Edward Rogers (Head of Libraries, Archives and Information Services) and Kim Wright (Corporate Director Health and Community Services)** |
| **Other People in Attendance** | **Councillor Geoff Taylor (Cabinet Member for Finance)** |
| **Members of the Public** | |
| **Officer Contact:** | **Tracey Anderson**<br>☎ 02083563312<br>✉ tracey.anderson@hackney.gov.uk |

## Councillor Rebecca Rennison in the Chair

**1 Election of Chair**

1.1 Following formal nominations for the position of Chair, Councillor Rebecca Rennison was elected by the Members as Chair of Budget Scrutiny Task Group Customer Services.

**2 Apologies for Absence**

2.1 None.

**3 Urgent Item / Order of Business**

3.1 As per the agenda.

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**4        Declaration of Interest**

4.1      None.

**5        Terms of Reference for Budget Scrutiny Task Groups**

5.1      The Chair informed the Budget Scrutiny Task Group that the Governance and Resources Scrutiny Commission approved the Terms of Reference at its meeting on Tuesday 8th September 2015.

5.2      The work of the scrutiny task groups is defined in the TOR on pages 1-8 of the agenda.

5.3      There will be two phases of work.  Phase 1 will consider the approaches to budget savings for 2016/17 to give Members an understanding of the direction of travel and where savings will come from.

5.4      Phase 2 will look at the budget savings for 2017/18 through to 2019/20 and help shape the priorities for budget savings in 2017/18, 2018/19 and 2019/20.

5.5      The Budget Scrutiny Task Groups are aligned to ongoing officer work on the corporate cross cutting programmes.  The Groups are:
• Customer Services
• Enforcement
• Public Realm
• Adult and Children Social Care.

5.6      Members noted the Terms of Reference.

**6        Potential Areas for Savings 2016-17**

6.1      The Chair welcomed Edward Rogers, Head of Libraries, Culture and Heritage and Kim Wright, Corporate Director Health and Community Services from London Borough of Hackney to the meeting.

**Libraries, Heritage and Culture**
6.2      The report is as set out in the agenda.  The main points highlighted from the report were:

6.2.1   Hackney Heritage Service comprises Hackney Museum and Hackney Archives. Hackney Museum holds over 7,000 artefacts reflecting the history of the borough and hosts a regular programme of exhibitions which are free to the public.  Hackney Archives holds the documentary and pictorial history of the borough.

6.2.2   The Heritage Education Team delivers learning activities related to current programmes of events and topical themes across both the archives and the museum, and engages with every non-independent primary school in the borough.

6.2.3   The heritage service was used by 38,413 people in 2014/5, and in addition to this dealt with 1,551 remote enquiries.

6.2.4   The Cultural Development Team supports the cultural and creative industry sector in the borough with business and fundraising advice, and work to ensure that art in the public realm and in regeneration projects is of quality and relevance to local residents.

6.2.5   The work of cultural development is largely in providing an advisory role to the cultural sector and delivers the Hackney One Carnival and Discover Young Hackney Youth Arts Programme.

6.2.6   In 2014/15, there were £1.7 million visits to Hackney Libraries.  This is 11% more than in 2010/11.  To date they have delivered £1.2 million in savings.  This service has made efficiencies in relation to procurement and staff.

6.2.7   Hackney has 8 libraries in the borough.  7 are managed by LBH staff.

6.2.8   In Hackney 1 library is run by volunteers but this is a very small library in comparison to the other libraries in the borough.  Having volunteers running a library works well in rural areas and villages.  This model has worked in a limited number of urban settings e.g. Merton.  The volunteer model requires 10 volunteers in replacement for 1 FTE member of staff.  A volunteer run library service in Hackney may be part of the answer for savings proposals.

6.2.9   Monitoring data shows libraries are generally used for studying and accessing the internet.  The length of time spent in libraries per individual has increased.

6.2.10 The current model for the library service is to provide sufficient staff to retain the current opening hours, lending facilities, study space and access to computers and information; and to deliver activities and events to the public.

6.2.11 Libraries in well located buildings and with high footfall, are used for events and activities and these are delivered through a combination of staff led programmes and partnerships with external bodies at no cost to the service.

6.2.12 Channel migration such as self-service has also helped to provide efficiencies in the library services.

6.2.13 The Council is considering working across borough boundaries.  In the past there was reluctance to do this but resource constraints are making this more of a possibility.

6.2.14 The Council is looking at 3 buildings to consider how they can achieve best use of the resource and co-location with providers of other services.  This includes sharing staff too.  A variety of models are being considered.

6.2.15 For archiving services they are investigating working jointly with other boroughs.

6.2.16 Hackney Libraries are by far the largest free providers of internet access in the borough and all libraries offer free Wi-Fi. There are 210 computers available for

public use and there are more than 100 additional spaces for private study. The computers were used for over 275,000 hours in 2014/15.

6.2.17 The Libraries, Culture and Heritage Service has a budget of £6.85M for 2015/16 excluding support service provided by other Council departments.

6.2.18 Libraries generate income from DVD, CD and hall rentals and photocopying.

**Customer Services**

6.3 The Chair welcomed Kay Brown, Assistant Director Revenues and Benefits from London Borough of Hackney to the meeting.

6.4 The main points from the presentation were:

6.4.1 Revenue and Benefits are responsible for the Council's front facing customer services. These include: the Hackney Service Centre, Cashiers, Business Support and the Customer Contact Centre.

6.4.2 The HSC is home to the majority of the Council's frontline services such as CYPS, Adult Services and Registrars.

6.4.3 Savings in the areas of customer services being pursued will come from the digital pathway. The trend is more and more people are using the web to access services. However it's estimated that there is still 9% of the population digitally excluded. This has reduced over the last few years from 17% to 9% in 2013.

6.4.4 Last year the Council recorded over 330,000 face to face visits, with the HSC seeing approximately 178,000 alone. The contact centre dealt with approximately 664,000 queries that covered 26 service areas. Interactions with online services increased to 13 million hits.

6.4.5 The data is showing a downward trend for face to face visits as customers move towards using digital services. More customers are accessing the Council's website via smartphones, tablets and PCs, indicating they are accessing services on the go.

6.4.6 There are three drivers for pursuing the digital pathway. The first driver is the surge in cashless payments is predicted to rise. In Hackney cashless payments rose by 7% last year. A government study highlighted the most frequent reason people use digital services is because:
- It saves time
- The website is easy to use
- They can do it at their own convenience.

6.4.7 Hackney is of the view any digital services developed need to encapsulate the three points outlined above.

6.4.8 The second driver for moving towards more digital services is welfare reform. The introduction of Universal Credit sees 6 benefits rolled into one which will only be accessible online. Therefore residents must become more comfortable with using online services so they can access their benefits.

6.4.9 The third driver is loss of financial resources. The cost of providing face to face services is more expensive and the Council needs to reduce costs in the face of reduced resources. Although the Council is moving towards more online services there will always be some element of support needed.

6.4.10 A project commenced in the summer 2015 with IT and Revenues and Benefits to develop digital customer services.

6.4.11 To improve access the Council is designing an online portal called "One Account" this will eventually provide the gateway to Council Services with users being able to report a change of circumstance, set up a direct debit or conduct other Council business.

6.4.12 This project will simplify webpages and where possible capture the information in a way that can be transferred to back office systems without the need to re-enter data for a second time. The aim is that customers will only need to provide their information once. To date they have identified 32 processes and 14 are being developed and investigated for automation. They have started with revenue and benefits and a soft launch of the "One Account" took place in July 2015 for transactions online.

6.4.13 Tools to manage social media transactions better are being reviewed, so they can respond quicker to queries. They are reviewing the Customer Service Team for retraining to ensure they have the skills to deal with these types of queries. In addition they are working with housing association partners to develop training opportunities.

6.4.14 Being conscious that the internet is still an unknown to some of its residents. The Council provides training and access to hubs to use the internet or to obtain computer skills.

6.4.15 The project is scheduled to complete in January 2016. The plan is to promote online accounts and services in March in line with the Council Tax bill information.

6.4.16 Parallel to this project is the Parking Customer Journey Project (permits). This project aims to introduce a virtual permits system. This is also expected to reduce the footfall to cashiers too once implemented.

6.4.17 A benefit realisation tracker is being developed so that as more services move online they can monitor progress and success.

6.4.18 A Housing Needs and Housing Benefits team restructure is being prepared and generic job descriptions are being developing to enable best use of resources.

6.4.19 In 2014/15 £600,000 of savings were identified from Revenues and Benefits. Additional savings are expected to be found over the next 12 months and these are scheduled to be achieved at the same times as Universal Credit is being rolled out.

6.4.20 The project has identified £2m in savings arising from the automation and streamlining of processes to be delivered for 2016/17. A restructure is planned to take into account the changes in staffing levels from this work. It is

anticipated there will be a 16% reduction in frontline staff.  As part of the restructure staff are expected to be released in phases up to year end.

6.4.21 The Council is looking to widen its payment options.  Once all the changes have been implemented they will be reviewing the future of the cashier office.

6.4.22 The Contact Centre has seen a reduction in calls outside of working hours and weekends and they will be looking to redesign the service taking into consideration the fall in contact numbers.

6.4.23 Consideration is being given to how the customer service space in the HSC can be used once Universal Credit is fully implemented.  Revenues and Benefits is currently investigating the prospect of joint services with libraries and job share opportunities with Jobcentre Plus.

6.5    **Question answers and discussions**
 (i)    **Members enquired if library services were statutory**.

The Corporate Director Health and Community Services advised the legislative requirement is to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service.  This is open to interpretation.

The Head of Libraries informed members that the Council intends to retain this statutory provision.  It was highlighted that the community have the right under legislation to challenge service provision.  The majority of challenges have been unsuccessful, however in the late 2000s the Government did intervene when a Council closed its library service.  This was in the early days of austerity.

(ii)    **Members enquired about the income of the services and if there was the possibility of generating income.**

(iii)    **Members enquired if the Culture service charged the creative industry for the support and joint events?**

The fees and charges in Hackney are lower than the London average.  It was acknowledged they could benefit from being reviewed.

The Head of Libraries confirmed the creative industry is not charged.  The Culture Team accesses grant funding and this helps to pay for the delivery of events in libraries.

(iv)    **Members enquired if a library acquires income from a café situated in the premises?**

The Head of Libraries confirmed they do use excess space to generate income.  For example excess space in Stamford Hill Library is mainly used by the voluntary sector.  There is only one library with a café that is Dalston.  It is estimated that for Stoke Newington library they are only using 50% of their capacity for the library itself.

(v)    **Members referred to the income and enquired what proportion income would come from income generation, co-location etc**.

The Head of Libraries advised they could generate more income from fees and charges but this would not be high. In terms of co-location, this would depend on the specific co-location agreement and these types of agreements can take some time to set up.

The Corporate Director Health and Community Services advised they were doing all they can through efficiencies in relation to structure of the service and income generation to fill the gap. However they still face a gap is resources.

(vi)    **Members asked for clarification in relation to 16/17 savings and beyond. Members enquired if the efficiencies described in the report covered 2016/17 and if the options for further savings related to the significant challenge they would face in 2-3 years.**

The Corporate Director Health and Community Services confirmed that was correct.

(vii)   **Members enquired if the service had knowledge of who was using the service and when and the patterns of usage?**

The Head of Libraries confirmed he did have knowledge about who used the library service and when and they have established the pattern of usage. They have knowledge of the highs and lows and these matched their staffing levels. They also maintained good demographic records about the people who used the service too.

The Corporate Director Health and Community Services explained the Head of Service and his team have a detailed understanding of the service area.

(viii)  **Members referred to Woodberry Downs the newly built library and enquired if it was always staffed by volunteers or if the Council replaced staff with volunteers?**

The Head of Libraries explained the library service has always used volunteers to provide an enhanced service and deliver events. Informed by the 2010 Libraries Strategy. Woodberry Downs library has part time staff, however the cost of this model per visit is more than the other libraries.

(ix)    **Members enquired how many volunteers were needed to run a library.**

The Head of Libraries advised 10 volunteers are needed to replace 1 FTE staff and the service will require a person to manage the volunteers.

(x)     **Members asked if any assessment has been made in relation to the different options and if they have identified a model that will work in Hackney.**

The Head of Libraries informed members that they are identifying potential partners through some soft market testing to consider potential savings related to sharing resources and staff for libraries.

The Head of Libraries confirmed they have not carried out any detailed investigation to review the prospect of using volunteers to run libraries. Nevertheless this does not rule out this model as an option. The sharing of buildings depends on the shape of the building and the relationship with property services.

(xi)    **Members enquired if there was mapping of all options and solutions**?

The Head of Libraries advised there is a matrix of options to be considered which would include the options outlined in the report and commissioning an external provider to run the service.

(xii)   **Member enquired if officers have identified why external providers can operate library services cheaper than the Council.**

The Head of Libraries informed members that external providers like Greenwich Leisure get rate relief for the provision of library services whereas the Council has to pay rates. The annual rates bill for libraries is approximately £267,000.

(xiii)  **Members enquired about stock purchasing for libraries and if this cost was or could be shared?**

The Head of Libraries advised that the Council is part of a purchasing consortium called London Libraries Consortium with 18 local authorities.

They are also able to borrow books from other libraries in other boroughs.

(xiv)   **Members enquired about feedback from residents and their views about what they want from library services.**

The Head of Libraries confirmed they regularly get feedback from services users about services both positive and negative. In general the complaints they get relate to lack of resources, opening hours and about the IT system being slow.

(xv)    **Members enquired if there are plans to involve service users in the process at some point?**

The Head of Libraries informed members that they have a Friends of the Libraries user group. When decisions are due to be made he believes it will be prudent to consult with the user group to help fine tune the proposals within the parameters of the required savings.

(xvi)   **Members were pleased that £2 million in savings were identified for 2016/17 in customer services. They enquired how confident the service was of achieving the £2 million identified.**

The Assistant Director Revenues and Benefits advised they have already started the channel shift and they are 3 quarters through the restructure. The digital project work is expected to finish by the end of the year. Universal Credit is coming, so there will be reductions to the services. The Councils plans for this reduction to be a phased process.

(xvii) **Members enquired about the impact of withdrawing Cashier service and if the service was aware of why people still used the cashier service.**

The Assistant Director Revenues and Benefits explained the £2 million savings does not include any changes to cashier services.

Consultations with residents about the use of cashiers revealed the continued use down to the service still being available. The majority of transactions related to vouchers or permits. Once the virtual system is introduced it will reduce these transactions at cashiers. The Cashier building also has 3 Kiosk terminal that accepts all forms of payments and these are well used too.

(xviii) **Members enquired if the terminals in the HSC are successful too.**

The Assistant Director Revenues and Benefits advised they continue to promote the IT hub and the access to free internet services. They have recruited digital champions from staff to help support residents. They plan to introduce scanning services too so residents can scan their own documents.

(xix) **Members enquired if residents were encouraged to use online services.**

The Assistant Director Revenues and Benefits believed the training sessions encouraged local residents to some degree.

(xx) **Members enquired if there was an example of where services are completely digital and the usage.**

The Assistant Director Revenues and Benefits explained that no local authority can have completely digital services. It is unlikely councils can have fully digital services because there would still be some residents who were not confident in using internet services. Their aim is to give enough training and support and provide assisted support when required.

(xxi) **Members enquired as to whether as staffing levels are reduced and the changes implemented, if they had estimated the potential saving on the estate for Revenues and Benefits.**

The Assistant Director Revenues and Benefits advised they have not calculated any saving on desk space. This will become clearer after the full restructure is implemented.

Their aim is to introduce home working as much as possible. Currently the Benefits services have a number of staff that work from home. However there will always be some services that need to remain in council offices.

Members commented they would like to receive an update in the future on the progression of the savings.

The Cabinet Member for Finance commented he would welcome the task group's views on service areas undecided.

**7     Date of Next Meeting**

7.1     Members agreed the next meeting would be 5$^{th}$ October 2015.

7.2     Members commented on reviewing the following at the next meeting:
- Information on the cross cutting Customer Service programme from point of contact to resolution for a customer
- High level modelling from libraries on the potential savings based on the options presented in the paper and discussed the meeting
- Information on the customer service side of Planning Services.

7.3     The Cabinet Member for Finance from LBH highlighted the Council is facing big financial challenges and there are a number of unknowns in relation to changes being made by the Government e.g. Housing Revenue Account (HRA).  The Cabinet Member informed G&R would be proposing to hold a special session with Living in Hackney Scrutiny Commission to discuss the funding of the HRA.


**8     Any Other Business**

8.1     None.


 Duration of the meeting: 6.30  - 8.15 pm

**⊕ Hackney**

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| **Budget Scrutiny Task Group Customer Services**<br><br>5<sup>th</sup> October 2015<br><br>**Customer Service Cross-cutting Programme** | Item No<br><br>**7** |

OUTLINE

Customer Service cross-cutting programme

**1. Purpose**

1.1 Several of the Mayor's manifesto commitments from 2014 are essentially about providing better customer service. Given that these commitments are made in the context of significantly reducing resources, this cross-cutting programme has set out to establish principles for how we will provide better, more efficient services by responding more effectively to demand, reducing wasted effort.

1.2 Projects include looking at specific services in this light, for example, housing repairs, including responsive repairs and the repairs call centre, and the communal repairs service. We are also reviewing our approaches to performance management and complaints handling, and data-sharing, focusing on using our intelligence about service delivery and residents' needs in order to prevent demand that does not add value.

**2. Wider context**

2.1 The driver for this programme is the need to find substantial savings by providing better services, i.e. more responsive, more effective services, and while this clearly sounds counter-intuitive, this is an approach that is becoming more widespread across local government, both with more straight-forward transactional services, and for more complex services designed for vulnerable residents. Camden have reviewed their repairs service in this way (among other services) and Greater Manchester have studied the extent of "failure demand" in their approach to Troubled Families.

2.2 The RSA report "Managing demand: building future public services" (2014) talks about three different "steps" of demand management, the first of which is described as "emerging science", within which one of

five approaches is to understand and manage "failure demand". It is this approach that this programme will develop.

2.3    Similarly outsourcing company Capita, in their report "Re-imagining local government: creating opportunities from an uncertain future", talk about levels of maturity in organisations to deal with the scale of budget reductions we are facing, identifying a future operating model "mark 2" (of 3) as the stage at which a "one-and-done mentality" (or "right first time") removes, "all failure demand: the number of transactions will halve and there will be a real focus on what really matters."

## 3.    The approach

3.1    The approach is based on two fundamental ideas. The first is that it helps to look at your service, or group of services as a whole system from the residents' point of view, understanding services from the outside in. This enables us to look at how we respond to the demand, i.e. what adds value in terms that matter to residents rather than in our terms, and then we can look at how the work flows round the system, enabling us to identify what gets in the way of being able to do the best possible job.

3.2    The second idea is about how to change your system. The fundamental principle is that command and control, i.e. "do it or else", does not work, nor does the rational approach, i.e. "we've looked at it logically and this is the only way to do it". This approach is normative, i.e. "see it for yourself", involving the people who do the work in the redesign to answer the question, "What stops you from being able to do the best possible job?" and, "How can your managers help you by removing these blockages?"

3.3    So the starting point is to re-state the purpose of this service from the resident's point of view. And then, how effectively are we fulfilling this purpose? If we are doing things that are not helping to achieve this, why are we doing it, and what can we stop doing? This means targeting wasted efforts rather than targeting savings, but the inevitable consequence is savings plus better services.

3.4    We have tested this approach across a range of different areas, including single services, and services that collectively make up our response to a set of issues:
   - Problems with the process for applying for, and renewing, a parking permit, which appeared initially as an IT problem, but, when assessed against purpose, was clearly overly-bureaucratic;
   - Our ability to respond to the growth of the hospitality economy in the borough including Waste, Parks, Noise, Licensing, Communications and Regeneration Delivery;
   - Clear opportunities to improve the responsiveness of the repairs service in the light of the manifesto commitment to getting it right first time;

- Working with the Governance and Resources Scrutiny Commission on developing an innovative approach to tackling persistently high levels of long-term unemployment in Hackney.

3.5    The work we have done with the repairs service is informed by a similar approach implemented in Camden. The headline from Camden's work is that they used to have an average of 3.5 visits to properties per repair and now that is about 1.5. They stressed that this is an approach to continuous improvement, led by the staff who do the work, focused on what residents want.

3.6    Our initial work with the Hackney Homes repairs service found that:

- We tend to look at each call and each visit as an individual job rather than as linked.

- We measure and reward activity and not the fulfilment of the purpose of the activities.

- Because of this there is a significant level of what you could describe as "waste" in the system, i.e. repeat visits with a short term fix, not a first time fix.

3.7    We are implementing changes to the repairs service now, based on these and other findings, which will be reported back to the Living in Hackney Scrutiny Commission later this year.


**ACTION**

The Budget Scrutiny Task Group is requested to note the report and ask questions.

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