

	<p>Performance and Contract Management Committee</p> <p>17 November 2015</p>
Title	<p>Members' Enquiries Service: A Review</p>
Report of	<p>Customer Services Operations Director</p>
Wards	<p>All</p>
Status	<p>Public</p>
Urgent	<p>No</p>
Key	<p>No</p>
Enclosures	<p>Appendix A: Initial Improvement Plan Appendix B: New Actions Arising From Workshops Appendix C: Members' Enquiries Service Performance Data Appendix D: Detailed Notes From Workshops</p>
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<p>Summary</p>
<p>CSG Customer Services provide and manage a Members' Enquires service. As a result of some Members receiving an inconsistent service, a review of the service was requested by Members of this Committee to ensure that the service standards were understood and to identify areas for improvement.</p> <p>This report follows up a report to this Committee on 1 September 2015, and contains the outcomes of two meetings that have taken place with Members of this Committee to better understand and address concerns about how the service works. It therefore contains a number of additional actions to be taken forward. These include actions for the Council, such as ensuring stronger induction processes for new Members, and providing a forum for complex ward issues to be identified and prioritised by ward members. It also includes further process improvements to be introduced to the members' enquiries process by Customer Services.</p>

Recommendations

- 1. That the Committee consider and agree that the outcomes from the informal working group, as outlined in Appendices A and B, accurately reflect Members' collective position**
- 2. That the Committee note the actions that have been taken, together with those that are planned and agree that they are appropriate based on the discussions that took place with the informal working group.**
- 3. That the Committee agree that a follow up action plan progress report will be provided for the next Committee meeting.**

1. WHY THIS REPORT IS NEEDED

- 1.1 The Customer Services team provides an enquiry handling service for all Members of the Council and local MPs. The service ensures that all enquiries are logged, routed to the appropriate Officer for a response, tracked, and resolved. Although the Customer Services contact centre at Coventry operates the Members' Enquiries service, it is important that all parts of the council manage Members' Enquiries consistently and meet Member expectations.
- 1.2 Feedback had been received by Members regarding problems they had experienced with the service. A report was presented to this Committee in September which provided an analysis of the examples of problems that had been received from Members, and a detailed action plan to resolve the root causes of the problems.
- 1.3 One of the actions from the last Committee meeting was that workshops be organised to enable members to provide more detailed feedback and for them to get an understanding of how the Members' Enquiries service works. These workshops took place on 12 October 2015 in Barnet and on 19 October at the Customer Services site in Coventry, where the Members' Enquiries team is situated.
- 1.4 This report was requested by Members in order to provide an update on the actions outlined in the previous report and the key outcomes of the planned workshops.
- 1.5 Customer Services has implemented a number of improvements, and the results can be seen in the increased number of members enquiries both responded to and resolved in five days. Between 1 January 2015 and 22 October, the Members' Enquiries team has handled 3,459 enquiries; 2,448 of which have been closed within five days (71%) and 3,277 (95%) have been responded to within five days.
- 1.6 October to date exceeds these averages with 266 out of 312 enquiries resolved within five days (85%) and 306 of those enquiries being responded to within five days (98%). The full data for 1 January 2015 to 22 October 2015 can be found in Appendix C.
- 1.7 In addition, Customer Services has been actively encouraging officers in delivery units to close enquiries. In the workshop on 19 October 2015 Members requested information regarding how long enquiries had been open. Table 1 (below) shows open Members' Enquiries as at 22 October 2015:

Table 1

Position at 22/10/15	Less than 10 days old	10 to 19 days old	20 to 29 days old	30 to 39 days old	40+ days old	Total > 10 Days
Adults & Communities	3	0	0	0	0	0
Commissioning Group	13	1	0	0	0	1
CSG	7	0	0	0	0	0
Education & Skills	5	0	0	0	0	0
Family Services	0	0	0	0	0	0
RE	44	5	1	0	0	6
Street Scene	26	0	0	0	0	0
Total	98	6	1	0	0	7

This compares to a report produced using the same search criteria searched on 22 September 2015 in Table 2 below.

Table 2

Position at 22/09/15	Less than 10 days old	10 to 19 days old	20 to 29 days old	30 to 39 days old	40+ days old	Total > 10 Days
Adults & Communities	3	0	0	0	0	0
Commissioning Group	8	0	0	1	2	3
CSG	6	2	0	0	4	6
Education & Skills	1	0	0	0	0	0
Family Services	2	0	0	0	0	0
RE	39	0	0	0	2	2
Street Scene	13	1	0	0	0	1
Total	72	3	0	1	8	12

The contrasting results show a reduction in the number of enquiries that have been open for more than 10 days and a significant improvement in the number of enquiries that have been open for more than 20 days.

Table 3 below indicates the volume and percentage of members enquiries closed within five days across the delivery units:

Table 3

Position at 22/10/15	% closed in 5 days in Q3 to date 01/10/15 to 22/10/15		% closed in 5 days in Q2 July to Sept 2015		% closed in 5 days in Q1 April to June 2015	
	Vol	%	Vol	%	Vol	%
Adults & Communities	7	85.7%	28	92.9%	17	70.6%
Commissioning Group	39	79.5%	73	72.6%	24	83.3%
CSG	27	92.6%	133	74.4%	190	76.3%
Education & Skills	10	100.0%	35	85.7%	39	61.5%
Family Services	3	66.7%	15	60.0%	14	78.6%
RE	133	83.5%	614	66.1%	514	58.0%
Street Scene	91	86.8%	260	88.8%	201	68.2%
Total	310	85.2%	1,158	73.7%	999	64.8%

Table 3 shows a significant improvement in the rate of closure of enquiries within five days

Details of Informal Working Group

1.8 As requested by the Committee the Customer Services Management Team contacted Committee Members and invited them to join an informal workshop to discuss members' concerns and suggestions for improving the service. Two workshops were arranged; the first in North London Business Park in Barnet on 12 October 2015, the second in Capita's offices in Coventry on 19 October 2015. Seven members of this Committee attended one of these, in addition to the Customer Services Management Team.

1.9 The key outcomes are outlined below.

Key Outcomes from 12 October Workshop

Description
<p>Induction and Training: Several Councillors commented that the induction and training for Members is lacking in this area, resulting in confusion. While significant institutional knowledge exists, it can be difficult for new Members to navigate the system and be as effective as they would like to be.</p>
<p>Better Status Updates: A key area for improvement was status updates, including updates post-completion. Councillors did not feel adequately informed of progress with their issues, which fed through to them being inadequately informed when discussing particular issues with the Public. Additionally, having accurate and timely reports of completion of works was flagged as greatly desired.</p>
<p>Greater Clarity on the Service Structure: Relating to the 'Induction and Training' item described above, there is at present a lack of clarity on the structure of the service, and the difference between types of interactions – for example between a Service Request and a Member's Enquiry. Clarification of these distinctions and the overall structure would be useful for Members and allow a more efficient use of the service.</p>
<p>Clearer Mutual Expectations: At present, and relating to the lack of clarity on the service described above, there are areas where the mutual expectations between the Councillors and the Members' Enquiries Team are not clear. A good example of this is the expectation of Councillors when they 'cc' the Members' Enquiries Team into an email directly to a Council Officer.</p>

Key Outcomes from 19th October Workshop

Description
Escalations: A clearer understanding of the escalation points is required and is forthcoming in a communication to go to all members.
Service Requests vs. Members' Enquiries: Clarity on what is a Service Request vs. a Member's Enquiry is still required, and will be in the communication mentioned above. There was some debate about the practicalities of members not using the member enquiries service for service requests that were not previously raised by residents.
Member's Enquiries cc'd into an Email: The question raised about Councillors sending an email to an Officer directly, but cc'ing Members' Enquiries, was asked. The answer was that this should be monitored and tracked as usual by Members' Enquiries.
Multiple Stakeholders: The added utility of being able to keep multiple stakeholders informed via email was flagged as a critical difference between the email-based Members' Enquiry process versus web-based reporting. Going forward, this distinction is critical for Councillors who need to keep their Ward Colleagues (and other stakeholders) informed, and requires further examination.
Ward Level Reviews: Members would like more support in resolving key complex issues affecting their wards, where the Members' Enquiries process is not the best vehicle to raise or resolve these matters.

The detailed notes from each workshop can be found in Appendix D.

Actions Already Taken or In Progress

- 1.10 Prior to the working group being set up the Customer Services Team had already devised an action plan to tackle known issues with the service based on previous feedback from Councillors. Appendix A outlines the actions that have been taken and current status of each action.
- 1.11 Appendix B shows the actions we are planning to take as a result of the feedback from the workshops.

2. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 To continue to improve the Members' Enquiries Service to ensure it meets customer needs and expectations to support the residents of Barnet.

3. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND NOT RECOMMENDED

3.1 Not applicable.

4. POST DECISION IMPLEMENTATION

4.1 Many of the improvements described have already been implemented. The action plans in Appendices A and B provide more details of due dates.

5. IMPLICATIONS OF DECISION

5.1 Corporate Priorities and Performance

5.1.1 Customer Services is a corporate priority for Barnet as described in the Corporate Plan.

5.1.2 The Corporate Plan explains that Customer services will be intuitive and flexible, with increased user satisfaction:

- By 2020, the majority of customer interaction with the council will be via the web and other self-service channels which will be quicker and more flexible.
- Customers will experience a consistently high quality personalised service, focussed on achieving fast and effective resolution of queries and requests.
- Customer services will be intuitive, recognising the interests of users and sign-posting them to other services they might require.
- Resolution of issues raised at the first point of contact with the council will occur over 80% of the time and satisfaction with the services people receive will consistently exceed 90%.

5.1.3 The Performance Indicator for responding to Member Enquiries is 95% within five days, where responding includes advising of any delay. Customer Services is responsible for replying to delivery units' outstanding enquiries where delay is advised.

5.2 Resources (Finance & Value for Money, Procurement, Staffing, IT, Property, Sustainability)

5.2.1 The action plan utilises existing resources within Customer Services, there are no additional resource implications, and no requirement for additional IT investment. There are a few minor configuration changes to the email and Lagan CRM (customer relationship management) system resulting from the action plan the costs of these will be managed within existing resources.

5.3 Social Value

5.3.1 Continued improvements to the Members' Enquiries process will ensure Members receive quicker and more accurate responses to enquiries which are raised in response to concerns from residents, or are raised for the benefit of residents.

5.3.2 The Committee is advised that the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2013 requires people who commission public services to think about how they can also secure wider social, economic and environmental benefits. Before commencing a

procurement process, commissioners should think about whether the services they are going to buy, or the way they are going to buy them, could secure these benefits for their area or stakeholders.

5.4 Legal and Constitutional References

5.4.1 [Council's Constitution, Responsibility for Functions, Annex A](#) details the functions of the Performance and Contract Management Committee which include (amongst other responsibilities):

- Overall responsibility for quarterly budget monitoring, including monitoring trading position and financial strategy of Council Delivery Units.
- Monitoring of Performance against targets by Delivery Units and Support Groups including Customer Support Group; Re; the Barnet Group Ltd (including Barnet Homes and Your Choice Barnet); HB Public Law; NSL; Adults and Communities; Family Services; Education and Skills; Street Scene; Public Health; Commissioning Group; and Assurance.
- To receive and scrutinise contract variations and change requests in respect of external Delivery Units.
- To make recommendations to Policy and Resources and Theme Committees on relevant policy and commissioning implications arising from the scrutiny of performance of Delivery Units and External Providers.

5.5 Risk Management

5.5.1 The process review and the improvements being undertaken will reduce the risk of Members' Enquiries not being resolved in a timely manner.

5.5.2 There have been no new risks identified as result of the implementation of the improvements from the action plan.

5.6 Equalities and Diversity

5.6.1 The 2010 Equality Act outlines the provisions of the Public Sector Equalities Duty which requires Public Bodies to have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010
- advance equality of opportunity between people from different groups
- foster good relations between people from different groups

5.6.2 The improvements described in this report support Members in their advocacy for all Barnet residents. Improved processes ensure that all residents have their cases managed effectively and that any protected characteristics are taken into account appropriately.

5.7 Consultation and Engagement

5.7.1 The improvements in this report do not require consultation with the public.

5.8 **Insight**

- 5.8.1 An effective Members' Enquiries process supports the council in understanding the concerns of residents and applying this to service improvement decisions.

6. **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

The following link can be used to access the report submitted to the committee on 1 September 2015

<http://barnet.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=693&MId=8401&Ver=4>

Appendix A

INITIAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Plan updated as at 22nd October 2015

ACTION		Owner	Due Date	Status
1	Improved escalation process to be agreed and implemented, and agreed with Delivery Units	CSG Operations Manager	12/06/2015	Complete
2	Generate an ME escalation mailbox (Barnet.gov.uk) for Members to use to escalate enquiries which have not been dealt with, which is to be monitored regularly and at least daily.	CSG Head of Business Assurance	12/06/2015	Complete
3	Identify the escalation points for each delivery unit service area with the lead officer and regularly check the accuracy of this list in Service Improvement Meetings on an annual basis for review.	CSG Customer Experience Manager	19/06/2015	Complete
4	Review the documented Members Enquiries process to reflect process improvements made, produce revised process document & training materials. Issue to the Head of Customer Strategy & Programmes with a proposal for dealing with categorisation issue and define deadline.	CSG Head of Business Assurance	30/11/2015	In progress
5	Review the Members' Enquiries process with appropriate Delivery Units / service areas. The process differs by service area and would be more efficient if all Members' Enquiries were managed with a common system.	CSG Operations Manager	14/08/2015	Complete & Ongoing
6	Ensure completed process improvements are communicated to Members.	CSG Operations Manager	31/08/2015	Complete
TRAINING				
7	Deliver scenario based training workshop based on actual real life examples and results of training needs analysis to colleagues that manage Members Enquiries. This is part of our regular training regime for staff dealing with Members Enquiries.	CSG Operations Manager	26/06/2015	Complete
PEOPLE				
8	Review resource allocated and existing skill set within Members' Enquiries team. Target Operating Model in place. Job advert issued and development plan discussed. Recruit and train new case officers.	CSG Operations Manager	31/08/2015	Complete Training to be scheduled
9	Organise a visit to the Coventry contact centre for Members to see the Members' Enquiry process and the quality procedures in place.	CSG Operations Manager	30/08/2015	Complete

MANAGEMENT INFORMATION				
10	Review the opportunities to deliver proactive reporting regarding delivery of Member enquiries by DU. This will be communicated via CSWG.	CSG Customer Experience Manager/Operations Manager	30/09/2015	Complete
11	Provide case data for the weekly customer bulletin.	CSG Customer Experience Manager	31/07/2015	Complete
12	Conduct additional investigation into Members Enquiries which are reported to have been incorrectly categorised, and give attention to correct categorisation of service requests & FOI with feedback on improvements being made to the operational team. <i>This Action ties into process document review.</i>	CSG Operations Manager	30/08/2015	Complete
QUALITY MANAGEMENT				
13	Continued implementation of improved quality management regime into the contact centre which includes all communication channels and services.	CSG Head of Business Assurance	30/10/2015	In progress
14	Continued monitoring of emails by the Business Assurance team, feedback and coaching to be delivered by the Team Manager, and root cause analysis to be included in Service Improvement Plans. Monitoring includes assessing misdirected enquiries and enquiries which have been incorrectly categorised.	CSG Head of Business Assurance	On-going	Ongoing
15	Investigate the use of systems to provide further analysis of Members' enquiries to enhance root cause analysis.	CSG Head of Business Assurance	31/10/2015	In progress
16	Identify opportunities to improve management information regarding the length of time taken to close cases.	CSG Management Information Manager	31/10/2015	Open
ACTIONS ADDED SINCE LAST COMMITTEE REPORT				
17	ME case only to be re-opened or reclassified with appropriate approval – incorporate into the process	CSG Operations Manager / Contract Manager	14/09/2015	Closed
18	Take examples of categories and workshop them with Streetscene and Re to arrive at the robust solution (feedback and process improvement), feedback to Head of Customer Strategy & Programmes	CSG Operations Manager	15/11/2015	Open
19	Create Customer Service working group with members	CSG Operations Director	31/10/2015	Closed
20	Diarise the due dates of enquiries that have been 'delay advised' and follow up with Delivery Unit to ensure update is sent to the Member	CSG Contract Manager	31/10/2015	Ongoing

21	New task to be added to LAGAN to allow tracking number of chasers. Reporting to include days to close.	CSG CDT / Operations Manager	31/10/2015	Process change dependent
22	<p>Agree and document new processes with Delivery Units in particular the following</p> <p>Where a closed case requires an update to the Member implement a solution that flags the due date to the ME Team to follow up with the Delivery Unit. In the interim this will be managed via a spreadsheet process</p> <p>Work with Delivery Units to provide examples of enquiries that have not had the required follow up to satisfy Members expectations</p> <p>Work with Delivery Units to target responding on 4th day at the latest to ensure cases do not exceed the expected service level</p>	CSG Operations Manager	30/11/2015	In progress
23	Clarify with Bill Murphy and Head of Customer Strategy & Programmes the definition of a service request - include into workshop discussion with members	CSG Operations Manager	09/10/2015	Closed

Appendix B

NEW ACTIONS ARISING FROM WORKSHOPS

Plan Formulated on 26th October 2015

ACTION	Owner	Due Date	Status
1	Investigate how best to support members in resolving key complex issues affecting their wards, where the Members' Enquiries process is not the best vehicle	Strategic Commissioning Board	31/11/15 Open
2	Ensure Members receive a communication that clarifies how to use the Members' Enquiries process and in particular how to escalate any issues	Head of Customer Strategy & Programmes CSG Operations Manager Barnet Partnership – Customer Services Director	30/11/15 Open
3	Review process for keeping Members updated on progression of works	Barnet Partnership – Customer Services Director	31/12/15 Open
4	Follow up Members feedback regarding induction process	Assurance Director	31/12/15 Open
5	Ask the person responding to the member's enquiry to ensure all that those originally copied in by the Member are also copied into the response, unless the member requests otherwise or there is a confidentiality issue.	CSG Operations Manager	06/11/15 Open
6	Identify how well the primary customer channels such as My Account can support members when they raise service requests (such as request to repair a road or clear flytipping) on behalf of residents, so that key stakeholders can be kept informed and these items do not need to be duplicated through the members enquiries process	Head of Customer Strategy & Programmes	30/11/15 Open
7	Ensure Members Enquiries team are adhering to the expectations of Members to progress chase enquiries that they are copied into	CSG Operations Manager	31/10/15 Open
8	Where an Enquiry has generated multiple reference numbers due to more than one Delivery Unit being involved, emails back to Members should be clear on the originating issue/reference number, and should include the email trail for ease of reference.	CSG Operations Manager	31/10/15 Open
9	Work with Delivery Units to ensure responses to Service Requests and Members' Enquiries include notification of whether a budget issue is likely to arise in relation to the Request	CSG Operations Manager Barnet Partnership – Customer Services Director	30/11/15 Open

10	Look to track and report on sending an enquiry to the correct Officer and the time for the Officer to notify Customer Services if the enquiry is routed incorrectly. Work with Officers to ensure they triage all enquiries as soon as possible to prevent unnecessary delay in the event of being routed incorrectly.	CSG Operations Manager Barnet Partnership – Customer Services Director	31/12/15	Open
11	Review the content of emails and standard templates being sent to Members regarding the status of the enquiry to make sure that the update is more specific and less generic (template driven) and implement improvements	CSG Operations Manager / Head of Business Assurance	30/11/15	Open

Appendix C

Members' Enquiries Service Performance Data

The following table shows the total volume of enquiries submitted and the closure and response rates. This illustrates an improvement in both measures since March 2015

Month	Items due	Closed in 5 days	% Closed in 5 days	Not closed in 5 days	% Not closed in 5 days	Delay advised	% Delay advised	Responded to in 5 days	% Responded to in 5 days
January	298	220	73.8%	78	26.2%	64	21.5%	284	95.3%
February	324	239	73.8%	85	26.2%	69	21.3%	308	95.1%
March	365	221	60.5%	144	39.5%	102	27.9%	323	88.5%
April	374	231	61.8%	143	38.2%	129	34.5%	360	96.3%
May	288	210	72.9%	78	27.1%	69	24.0%	279	96.9%
June	340	207	60.9%	133	39.1%	113	33.2%	320	94.1%
July	449	334	74.4%	115	25.6%	90	20.0%	424	94.4%
August	305	227	74.4%	78	25.6%	64	21.0%	291	95.4%
September	404	293	72.5%	111	27.5%	89	22.0%	382	94.6%
October up to 20/10	312	266	85.3%	46	14.7%	40	12.8%	306	98.1%
Total	3,459	2,448	70.8%	1,011	29.2%	829	24.0%	3,277	94.7%

The following table shows the volumes of enquiries, closure and response rates for each Delivery Unit between 1st January 2015 and 20th October 2015

DU	Items due	Closed in 5 days	% Closed in 5 days	Not closed in 5 days	% Not closed in 5 days	Delay advised	% Delay advised	Responded to in 5 days	% Responded to in 5 days
Adults & Communities	72	53	73.6%	19	26.4%	6	8.3%	59	81.9%
Assurance Group	8	5	62.5%	3	37.5%	3	37.5%	8	100.0%
Barnet Group	6	4	66.7%	2	33.3%	1	16.7%	5	83.3%
Commissioning Group	165	129	78.2%	36	21.8%	29	17.6%	158	95.8%
CSG	118	83	70.3%	35	29.7%	26	22.0%	109	92.4%
CSG - Benefits	62	52	83.9%	10	16.1%	6	9.7%	58	93.5%
CSG - Council Tax	128	81	63.3%	47	36.7%	44	34.4%	125	97.7%
CSG - Customer Services	216	181	83.8%	35	16.2%	18	8.3%	199	92.1%
Education & Skills	110	81	73.6%	29	26.4%	23	20.9%	104	94.5%
Family Services	45	30	66.7%	15	33.3%	14	31.1%	44	97.8%
RE	1,787	1,163	65.1%	624	34.9%	532	29.8%	1,695	94.9%
Street Scene	742	586	79.0%	156	21.0%	127	17.1%	713	96.1%
Total	3,459	2,448	70.8%	1,011	29.2%	829	24.0%	3,277	94.7%

Description	Raised by:
<p>on the structure of the service, and the difference between types of interactions – for example between a Service Request and a Member’s Enquiry. Clarification of these distinctions and the overall structure would be useful for Members and allow a more efficient use of the service.</p>	
<p>Clearer Mutual Expectations:</p> <p>At present, and relating to the lack of clarity on the service described above, there are areas where the mutual expectations between the Councillors and the Members’ Enquiries Team are not clear. A good example of this is the expectation of Councillors when they ‘cc’ the Members’ Enquiries Team into an email directly to a Council Officer.</p>	C.KL

Notes	Raised by:
<p>Induction:</p> <p>The existing process for inducting new Members is lacking, and an improvement there could help reduce friction in this process.</p> <p>Suggestion that any process maps/descriptions be written in such a way that they could be shared with new Members as part of their induction.</p>	KL & RB
<p>Keeping Members & The Public Informed:</p> <p>There is a general sentiment that the process for keeping Councillors informed of the progress of Enquiries could be improved.</p> <p>Cllr. Levine pointed out that it is especially important for Members to have good answers for the Public when they are questioned about the progress of particular cases. Cllr. Grover later made a similar comment about having a good explanation for Residents why a particular repair might be lower down the list of priorities for repairs.</p> <p>JG commented that this requires a significant degree of specificity for why delays or lower prioritizations might affect a Resident.</p>	BM
<p>Understanding the Process:</p> <p>Cllr. Grover pointed out that there is a lack of awareness/understanding about the distinctions between a Service Request and a Members’ Enquiry, and that this is leading to dissatisfaction with and non-optimum use of the Members’ Enquiries Service.</p> <p>BM pointed out that Kari Manovitch has broadly described the distinction thus: the Members’ Enquiries process is an escalation point for Service Requests that have not been handled appropriately in the first instance.</p>	C.RG
<p>Expedited Process for ‘Urgent’ Items:</p> <p>In response to an example about rubbish causing obstructions, and thus presenting as an ‘urgent’ issue, KL pointed out that certain things are raised as Service Requests with a very short SLA, and this should not be seen as conflicting with the Members’ Enquiries process,</p>	KL

Notes	Raised by:
which can address root cause questions for significant problems.	
<p>Ongoing Updates/Follow-ups:</p> <p>Cllr. Mitra raised the point that there is a lack of clarity on when things are completed. He reported that he had been told certain things – like cracked pavements – are reported as fixed but on inspection have not been.</p> <p>BM said that while he can't answer for all elements of the Council (like Barnet Homes, referenced in Cllr. Mitra's point), the areas under his purview were getting better at making sure these types of things were reported accurately and in a timely manner. BM also raised the point that, given the budgetary conditions prevailing, more needs to be done to help residents understand that certain non-emergency items are lower priority, and may not be fixed with the same speed as higher priority (risk-causing) repairs.</p>	C.AM
<p>DPA:</p> <p>Cllr. Hutton raised that it is not clear whether a resident's details should be included in the message to Members' Enquiries.</p> <p>Cllr. Grover and KL both commented that DPA consent is implicit in the Members' Enquiries process, and so it would not be a DPA issue to share the resident's data when communicating.</p>	C.AH
<p>Reply to the Member or to the Resident:</p> <p>BM flagged that it is not always clear whether the Members' Enquiry respondents are expected to respond directly to the Resident, or to send the response to the originating Member to allow them to take it to the Resident.</p>	BM
<p>Self-Service:</p> <p>KL indicated that encouraging more self-service will improve the Residents' customer experience, and also reduce the burden on the Members and the Members' Enquiry process.</p> <p>Cllr. Grover agreed that pushing towards self-service and the web in the first instance was appropriate, and that Residents could then escalate for additional support from Members if the normal process did not work as hoped. Cllr. Hutton stated she was less satisfied with this, indicating she did not want to redirect people who had come to her for help back to the web.</p> <p>Cllr. Levine suggested taking a laptop to Members' surgeries and 'assisted self-serving' in the meeting with constituents as a happy medium.</p>	KL
<p>Self-Service & Customer Advocacy:</p> <p>It was flagged that the goal is to move those who can self-serve towards that route, and then have more of the remaining resource dedicated to Customer Advocacy, especially for vulnerable customers, but also for those for whom the regular process has broken down (particularly around repeat requests for help on the same issue).</p>	KL & JG
<p>CC'ing Members' Enquiries – what is the expectation?</p>	JG

Notes	Raised by:
<p>Some Members will write directly to the relevant Council Officer, and cc Members' Enquiries. This has created confusion for Members' Enquiries as the expectation is ambiguous on the teams' responsibilities in this instance.</p> <p>This was clarified by Cllr. Levine – the Cllr. said they would like these requests recorded and actioned in the normal way, as measuring these interactions was valuable for Members.</p> <p>JG suggested doing this in reverse – instead of writing to the Officer and cc'ing Members' Enquiries, write to Members' Enquiries and cc the Officer. KL added that writing to both the Officer and the Members' Enquiries Team can create problems by generating duplication and parallel conversations.</p> <p>Going through Members' Enquiries also allows for catching potential duplicates – that an Enquiry has already been raised via a different route and is raised again by the Member.</p>	
<p>Things that are not Members' Enquiries:</p> <p>BM highlighted a few areas, particularly in Planning, where the Members' Enquiries process cannot add much value. In particular, this relates to long-running issues or conversations with planning, such as where a planning decision is being awaited, or where a Member is dissatisfied with the outcome of a decision. Members' Enquiries should not be included in these conversations as they add minimal value.</p> <p>JG and BM presented the distinction with the examples that if someone is upset at not being given an opportunity to consult, that could fall into the Members' Enquiries process. If they are writing to contest the way things are progressing, that should not fall within Members' Enquiries.</p>	BM
<p>The Need for a Defined Process:</p> <p>KL stressed the value of a clear, well-defined process, including categories of what is a Members' Enquiry and what isn't. She suggested this should be as close to black and white as possible, but, in response to Cllr. Hutton's comment, not everything can (or should) be black and white. There will be areas which require a judgement call.</p>	KL
<p>Service Request vs. Members' Enquiries:</p> <p>Cllr. Levine flagged that previously she had not been aware of Service Requests, thinking that Members always used the Members Enquiries process to raise issues.</p>	C.KL
<p>Add More Detail to the Draft Communication:</p> <p>JG raised the draft communication being put together for all Members, and said the Members' Enquiries process and changes thereto would form part of that communication.</p> <p>KL stated that a clarification of the distinction regarding planning (discussed above) would be included in that communication.</p> <p>Additionally, that Communication should be updated with the key contact numbers for Councillors in the event of an emergency. (Key Action)</p>	JG & KL
<p>The More the System is Used, the Better it Will Be:</p>	JG & KL

Notes	Raised by:
<p>JG & KL both stated that while there would be no intention to try and stop Councillors from speaking to Council Officers directly (an impossible task in any case), the more the Members' Enquiries system is used the more robust and efficient it will become, providing a better service to Members.</p>	
<p>More Promotion of Self-Service:</p> <p>Cllr. Levine indicated that the self-service routes are not well-enough known and should be promoted more. KL stated that a broad promotional push for My Account will be rolling out imminently, and that this should help rectify that lack of awareness among Residents regarding self-service.</p>	C.KL

Minutes

The granular minutes and slides are available on request from the report author.

Description	Raised by:
<p>Multiple Stakeholders:</p> <p>The added utility of being able to keep multiple stakeholders informed via email was flagged as a critical difference between the email-based Members' Enquiry process vs. the web-based Report It. Going forward, this distinction is critical for Councillors who need to keep their Ward Colleagues (and other stakeholders) informed, and requires further examination.</p>	C.GC
<p>Process Changes/Suggestions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Where an Enquiry has generated multiple reference numbers due to more than one DU being involved, emails back to Councillors should be clear on the originating issue/reference number, and should include the email trail for ease of reference. (The Members' Enquiries Team) 2) Councillors are also requested to be clear on splitting out the individual questions (and numbering them) where a Request has multiple parts. (All Councillors) 3) Responses to Service Requests and Members' Enquiries lines should include notification of whether a budget issues is likely to arise in relation to the Request's or Enquiry's substance. (All Responding Officers in the Delivery Units) 4) A measure should be introduced to determine how frequently the Members' Enquiries Team send an Enquiry to the correct Officer the first time. (Sam Fennell and Natasa Patterson) 5) An SLA should be introduced for Officers responding to Members' Enquiries where they have been forwarded the Enquiry inappropriately, so as to prevent wasted time while the Members' Enquiries Team awaits their response. This performance should also be tracked. (Sam Fennell and Natasa Patterson) 6) A policy conversation is to be held with Kari Manovitch around Councillors using the Report It function on the website vs. the Members' Enquiries channel. (Kari Manovitch) 7) The communications to Councillors about what is being done, and what won't be done, must be more explicit, including budgetary information where access to funding is required to resolve an issue. (All Responding Officers in the Delivery Units) 8) Create a 'middle' response beyond the binary yes/no of satisfaction, stating a Councillor is happy with what has been received, but that it still requires further work. (Sam Fennell and Natasa Patterson) 9) The Members' Enquiries Team should respond to all stakeholders in an email, rather than just to the Councillor (unless clearly indicated otherwise). (The Members' Enquiries Team) 10) A conversation to be held with the Chief Exec recognising that some issues require a longer conversation rather than being processed as a member enquiry (e.g. street drinking). Each Ward to identify these issues (say 3) outside of the member enquiries process. (Bill Murphy) 	ALL

Discussion Notes:

Notes	Raised by:
<p>Members' Enquiries Team (henceforth referred to as 'MET') - Presence:</p> <p>Cllr. Zinkin opened the meeting by asking why the MET were not present. JG answered that they were represented by NP and SF, but the Members' Enquiries Officer Kerry Higgerson and her manager Mary Colorado were invited into the session at an appropriate moment, allowing all of the Councillors to discuss the process with them.</p>	<p>C.PZ</p>
<p>MET – Oversight:</p> <p>In response to a request from Cllr. Zinkin, NP and SF also clarified their expertise in overseeing the MET, particularly regarding past experience managing similar services and quality assurance thereof.</p>	<p>C.PZ</p>
<p>MET – Escalation:</p> <p>BM covered the continuing work to improve and clarify the escalation process across the organisation. The MET has improved this function, but there is still scope for greater efficiency, especially where Enquiries go around the organisation rather than to a single DU.</p> <p>(The question was left initially and returned to later)</p> <p>The escalation process was clarified with the MET that, previously, the chasers had just gone to the Lead Officer, but the Process had been redefined to include chasers/escalations to the manager of the Lead Officer in question. In this context, BM reported back that he receives a small number of calls each week about escalated Members' Enquiries for chasing as he sits over some of the relevant people and can help expedite things.</p> <p>Cllr. Khatri also asked about the person to whom Councillors should escalate when their concern was with the MET. JG responded that there was now a Members' Escalation Inbox centrally maintained and monitored. Cllr. Zinkin thought this might create issues as Members flooded that inbox. Communication of the presence of this inbox is being held by Kari Manovitch pending a full communication about the updated system (including the outcomes of the meeting last week and this workshop.)</p>	<p>BM and later C.GC and C.SK</p>
<p>MET – Knowledge Base / Knowledge Management & End-to-End Process:</p> <p>Cllr. Cooke asked how knowledge of the process and organisation is formally stored within the MET and within the service more broadly – is there both a formal process and a system for ensuring that knowledge is not simply tacit, and thus at risk of loss if a key staff member is absent for whatever reason. Cllr. Cooke (with a concurrence from Cllr. Zinkin) wanted to understand the end-to-end process from an Enquiry arriving through the process.</p> <p>JG suggested bringing in Mary Colorado and Kerry Higgerson as previously mentioned. When they joined the workshop, they talked the Councillors through the process and answered some specific questions (some of which are highlighted below in specific 'raised' examples, and more</p>	<p>C.GC</p>

Notes	Raised by:
<p>of which can be found in the granular minutes if so desired).</p>	
<p>'Edge Ward' Difficulties – Specific Example:</p> <p>Cllr. Zinkin raised a particular example of an Enquiry that had run into difficulties, but which was typical of certain Enquiries in 'edge wards' that border other Boroughs. The example itself highlighted some specific issues, but was raised for illustrative purposes around the difficulties encountered in liaising with other Councils.</p> <p>This particular example was flagged by Kerry Higgerson as one where, with hindsight, the specific handling could have been improved. However, Cllr. Zinkin was more concerned about the process where these multi-borough issues arise, and conceded that they were complex and not easily handled. BM also added that such issues often fall within the remit of TFL, meaning there is a further organisation with which to liaise, adding complexity.</p>	<p>C.PZ</p>
<p>The Option of Three, Different Responses Required:</p> <p>Cllr. Zinkin gave another example of difficulties when the issue relates to something like Planning Enforcement, which might take a long time to resolve. While the Councillor appreciates that the MET cannot expedite these matters, he expressed frustration that, firstly, there was no proactive informing of Councillors of the status of such issues, creating difficulties, but furthermore, that where responses did come back, Councillors can only respond with a binary 'yes/no' regarding whether the matter has been satisfactorily handled.</p> <p>This creates difficulties as in many instances the response might deal with part of the Enquiry, but leave other elements open, and so a 'middle' response would be beneficial in allowing Councillors to say they are happy with the response, but that it still requires further follow-up actions.</p> <p>BM conceded that keeping Councillors informed of status issues with planning was a point of particular attention at present and going forward. The nature of such issues and the general structure of the Council (Committee vs. Cabinet) and the impact thereof on the planning process were also briefly discussed.</p>	<p>C.PZ</p>
<p>Tracking and Monitoring of Enquiries:</p> <p>Cllr. Zinkin reiterated the question of how Enquiries are tracked and monitored, particularly when they will take a long time to resolve. He gave the example of a proposed new CPZ in his Ward... The Councillor's enquiry was around the specific structure and methodology of tracking and monitoring enquiries, and the metrics measured and reported on to show performance.</p> <p>The MET, when they joined the workshop, gave detail on this. They maintain two logs – one of Enquiries within SLA, and one of Enquiries that have fallen outside of SLA, but this latter log has reduced considerably since the Process has been revamped.</p>	<p>C.PZ</p>
<p>Understanding the Performance Metrics:</p>	<p>JG and C.PZ</p>

Notes	Raised by:
<p>JG responded to a Councillors question about performance by saying that the KPI is for 95% of Enquiries to be responded to within 5 days. Cllr. Zinkin queried whether that could be drilled down further, as the Councillor's experience is that an initial response saying 'it's gone to a particular Officer' very quickly, but the Councillor wanted to understand how that response relates to the KPI previously mentioned. JG clarified that the initial response being referred to was, within the organisation, intended to go out the day the Enquiry is received, to give the relevant Officer in the Council the maximum amount of time to work through the Enquiry.</p> <p>Cllr. Zinkin understood this, but queried whether we are measuring not just the speed, but the accuracy of these assignments – how often does the MET assign to the correct officer first time? JG conceded this was not currently done, but was worth exploring going forward as a performance measure.</p>	
<p>MET cc'd into Email with Officer:</p> <p>Cllr. Cooke raised the question, discussed last week as well, about instances where the MET is cc'd in an email directly to the relevant Officer. Cllr. Cooke acknowledged that this causes confusion and asked what could be done to fix this process. Cllr. Khatri added that he had previously developed his own personal system for tracking these things, but that the new Members' Enquiries process was supposed to supersede and standardize this, which was much needed. However, Cllr. Khatri feels the system has become very complicated, and is at times more a hindrance than a help in dealing with Residents.</p> <p>Cllr. Zinkin added that this comes down to the basic function of the MET, which he sees as falling into two categories:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) As a gateway to direct Enquiries where the Councillor is unsure of the appropriate owner; and 2) To track those Enquiries where the Councillor knows who is to answer it, but where the MET can provide support in monitoring progress and chasing as necessary. <p>If this separation were better built into the process, then the confusion would be reduced.</p> <p>JG mentioned that where the MET is cc'd, we do basically provide the second function, and the first is understood already, but we could do better particularly around measuring the accuracy of 'first time referral' to the appropriate Officer.</p> <p>In response to another example from Cllr. Zinkin about an Enquiry that kept circulating due to an Officer either being long-term sick or having left the organisation, BM mentioned that this was another way in which the standardized process would provide a superior service to Councillors who couldn't be expected to keep track of all the staff movements within the Council.</p>	<p>C.GC and C.SK</p>
<p>Explicit Description of Priorities:</p> <p>Cllr. Zinkin raised the point that some things are priority repairs, and some things will be put off due to budgetary restrictions. This was understood and accepted, but it was queried whether this could be made more explicit to better manage expectations.</p> <p>BM responded that Residents receive a standard response to that effect when they raise a Service Request, but Cllr. Zinkin responded that this could be more explicit, especially in the communication to Councillors.</p> <p>(This echoes a point raised last week).</p>	<p>C.PZ</p>

Notes	Raised by:
<p>Service Request vs. Member's Enquiry:</p> <p>BM raised the distinction between a Service Request and a Member's Enquiry, and how the Council Officers had instructed Capita to distinguish between the two. Cllr. Zinkin asked where this had been codified, and the response from JG and KL was that this codification was one of the outcomes of the ongoing improvement process of which this workshop was one element.</p> <p>The distinction – Service Request for first time raised, and Member's Enquiry for escalation or policy issues – was reiterated and largely accepted. Cllr. Zinkin had some questions around how things are measured – were historical Member-raised Service Requests being included or excluded from the reporting figures? JG – included. The different SLA's and resolution-routes for Service Requests compared to Members' Enquiries were also discussed.</p> <p>Cllr Zinkin and KL further discussed both the need for greater clarity in what is a Service Request vs. a Member's Enquiry, and also the need for greater explicitness for Members about what Service Requests had attached budgets for resolution of the underlying issue. KL highlighted that as the website improves (a continual piece, but something on which much work has already been done) Residents will increasingly self-serve, leaving only the more complicated, 'high value' issues for Councillors to deal with.</p> <p>Cllr. Cooke also queried why Members would have two systems – Service Requests and Members' Enquiries – when in the past he had had only the one (Members' Enquiries). He sees sticking with the 'email Members' Enquiries' as the path of least resistance and would need good cause to change. KL explained how, should everything work properly, the regular Service Request would often result in a faster SLA due to the lack of 'extra steps,' but that the MET would still be there as an escalation point when things didn't work as they should.</p>	<p>BM</p>
<p>Keeping Multiple Stakeholders Informed:</p> <p>Cllr. Cooke has an issue with the website in that where multiple stakeholders need to be kept informed (the other Ward Councillors and the original resident, for example) the website does not offer that functionality. He also stated that the MET sometimes did not respond to all the people cc'd in an email chain, requiring Cllr. Cooke to forward the response himself.</p> <p>KL and JG both indicated that the website does not have that level of sophistication at present, but that the type of issue which would require those stakeholders being kept informed would be a Member's Enquiry in any case. The issue of responding to all stakeholders in an email was a training/process point that could be picked up.</p> <p>Cllr. Zinkin added that the 'Report It' function can still be more laborious for Councillors, which is a problem if they're having to use it regularly (unlike Residents). Using this system could make it harder for Councillors to keep communicating with all the people they need to as part of their role... KL responded that, as discussed last week, the more this system is used, the more robust it will become, and so only those escalations really requiring a Member's attention will reach the Members.</p> <p>RB asked whether, if the website did have the functionality of keeping stakeholders informed in the way described above, it would be a preferable route. Cllr. Cooke replied 'yes, assuming it's easy,' but said reading his emails and forwarding them was pretty easy.</p> <p>KL summarised that there is a potential policy question here that will need to be worked through with Kari Manovitch and the Council.</p>	<p>C.GC</p>
<p>Fixing the Problem vs. Answering the Full Question:</p>	<p>C.PZ</p>

Notes	Raised by:
<p>Cllr. Zinkin gave another example to illustrate the point that sometimes we will fix the proximate cause of a problem, but ignore requests for an investigation into why the problem occurred in the first place. To illustrate, he described a Resident who had followed all the correct procedures, but still not received an appropriate response, and thus escalated to Cllr. Zinkin. The Councillor had received word that the problem itself was being addressed, but was concerned that the answer he received did not include the root-cause analysis also requested.</p> <p>JG and BM acknowledged both the need for, and difficulty of, this type of advocacy, but they also mentioned that in technical areas, it was hard for the MET to gainsay the Back Office on their answers. What could be more stringently quality-assessed was whether all parts of the question had received an answer, regardless of the propriety of that answer in terms of technical knowledge.</p> <p>In that line, each of the Councillors agreed that a clearer breakdown within an Enquiry as to the constituent parts of a question would be something they could do to make Enquiries easier to answer in their totality, and Kerry Higgerson had stated the MET could respond to complex requests with a clarification email stating what they'd understood was being requested so as to smooth this and not lose time to misunderstandings.</p>	
<p>Multi-Part Problems and Multiple Reference Numbers:</p> <p>Following from the issue about fixing the problem vs. answering the question, that example was flagged by Cllr. Khatri as the one issue had received three reference numbers. Cllr. Khatri asked whether there was a way to link the reference numbers quoted to Councillors as part of the Members' Enquiries process to ease recollection and reference for the Councillors.</p> <p>JG responded that this was not currently possible within the system, and for reporting purposes CSG needed to maintain each of the reference numbers. There could be a process of including the email trail in responses to make it easier for Councillors to refresh on the case to which each reference number refers, which was accepted. This was also highlighted by BM as significantly the responding Officer's responsibility as much as the MET, where the Officer should handle the complexity of a multi-part case, with the MET acting as advocate rather than respondent.</p> <p>Kerry Higgerson acknowledged that the process could include ways to make this easier on the Councillors, like the email trail change mentioned above.</p> <p>Cllr. Zinkin commented that this was relatively clear where each part of the question was to a different DU, but what about where the different parts go to the same DU. JG responded that the nominated Officers for responding to Members' Enquiries have the degree of seniority to handle these kinds of complex, multi-part issues, or at least know where to get them answered.</p>	<p>C.SK</p>
<p>SLA for Officers to Respond to MET:</p> <p>Cllr. Cooke raised the question of whether Council Officers have an internal SLA for responding to MET, even where the Enquiry is clearly not within their remit.</p> <p>JG said that there isn't, and that it's a problem that's being looked at as it causes a loss of time against the 5 day SLA. This is also part of why, in relation to the 'Multi-Part Issues' discussed previously, there is a need to track them separately. Each DU is measured against its response time, and this can only be done if each DU's element has its own reference number.</p>	<p>C.GC</p>
<p>Members' Enquiries that are Bigger than Members' Enquiries:</p>	<p>C.PZ and JG</p>

Notes	Raised by:
<p>Cllr. Zinkin and JG discussed some issues – like public drinking or rough-sleeping – that get raised through the Members’ Enquiries process, but which are much bigger than that and require a deeper policy conversation. BM mentioned that this type of issue was currently with the Chief Exec, and there should be a communication out soon around the next steps. Ward walks have not worked particularly well in the past as they either create a list of too many issues, or else focus on the same intractable issues year after year. Cllr. Zinkin added that, for the 2-3 intractable issues that it seems each ward has, there is also not enough ownership of follow up actions resulting from the Ward walk.</p> <p>Even if the MET cannot close such issues, ‘closure’ could simply be clarity on who the next step will be taken by and when that will be, according to Cllr. Zinkin.</p> <p>The change to the Council structure (Cabinet vs. Committee) and the planning processes were also discussed again in line with this issue. The necessity for a better expectation-setting induction, mentioned last week, was raised again.</p>	
<p>RE Members’ Enquiries and Other Mailboxes/Processes Internally:</p> <p>Cllr. Khatri flagged that there was some confusion as RE seemed to have their own Members’ Enquiries mailbox, but BM explained that this was just an internal mailbox for convenience, to keep all the emails around Members’ Enquiries going around RE routed through somewhere central and monitored. Cllr. Cooke stated that this could create confusion, and said it was probably best if all Councillors just went to the one inbox (the official MET inbox).</p> <p>However, Cllr. Cooke also flagged that the Children’s Service had their own process, and the divergence was confusing. SF noted that part of this difference was due to Data Protection concerns raised by the Children’s Service, which the MET had to respect, but it was acknowledged that more could be done to clarify this process and make it less peculiar and easier to navigate for Councillors.</p> <p>JG more work needs to be done to make sure that the MET have a good process for tracking enquiries that go into the Children’s Service, including those where a Lagan case should be created (allowing tracking by the MET) but hasn’t been.</p>	<p>C.SK and C.GC</p>
<p>Next Steps:</p> <p>The outcomes of this workshop and what will be done with them were the final elements discussed.</p>	<p>All</p>

Minutes

The granular minute and slides are available on request from the report author.