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DATE: 23 June 2020

To: Members of the
**EXECUTIVE, RESOURCES AND CONTRACTS POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

Councillor Simon Fawthrop (Chairman)
Councillor Christopher Marlow (Vice-Chairman)
Councillors Gareth Allatt, Julian Benington, David Cartwright QFSM, Mary Cooke,
Ian Dunn, Nicky Dykes, Robert Evans, Will Harmer, Russell Mellor,
Michael Rutherford, Michael Tickner, Stephen Wells and Angela Wilkins

A meeting of the Executive, Resources and Contracts Policy Development and
Scrutiny Committee will take place on **WEDNESDAY 1 JULY 2020 AT 6.30 PM**

**PLEASE NOTE: This will be a 'virtual meeting', and a link will be available on
the Council website to enable members of the press and public to see and hear
the Committee. The link will be published before the start of the meeting.**

MARK BOWEN
Director of Corporate Services

*Copies of the documents referred to below can be obtained from
<http://cde.bromley.gov.uk/>*

PART 1 AGENDA

Note for Members: Members are reminded that Officer contact details are shown on each report and Members are welcome to raise questions in advance of the meeting.

STANDARD ITEMS

- 1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS**
- 2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**
- 3 QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS AND MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC ATTENDING THE MEETING**

In accordance with the Council's Constitution, questions that are not specific to reports on the agenda must have been received in writing 10 working days before the date of the meeting.

Questions specifically on reports on the agenda should be received within two working days of the normal publication date of the agenda. Please ensure that questions specifically on

reports on the agenda are received by the Democratic Services Team by **5pm on Thursday 25th June 2020.**

a QUESTIONS FOR THE CHAIRMAN OF EXECUTIVE, RESOURCES AND CONTRACTS PDS COMMITTEE

b QUESTIONS FOR THE RESOURCES, COMMISSIONING AND CONTRACTS MANAGEMENT PORTFOLIO HOLDER

4 MINUTES OF THE EXECUTIVE, RESOURCES AND CONTRACTS PDS COMMITTEE MEETINGS HELD ON 18 MAY 2020 AND 27 MAY 2020 (EXCLUDING EXEMPT ITEMS)
(Pages 5 - 18)

5 FORWARD PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS (Pages 19 - 24)

HOLDING THE EXECUTIVE TO ACCOUNT

6 PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY OF EXECUTIVE REPORTS DUE TO BE CONSIDERED BY THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

Members of the Committee are requested to refer to the separate report pack containing proposed decisions for consideration by the Leader.

POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND OTHER ITEMS

7 BENEFITS SERVICE MONITORING REPORT AND COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT REDUCTION 2021/22 (Pages 25 - 46)

8 REVENUES SERVICE MONITORING REPORT (Pages 47 - 66)

9 EXCHEQUER SERVICE - CONTRACT PERFORMANCE REPORT (Pages 67 - 90)

10 CUSTOMER SERVICES CONTRACT MONITORING REPORT (Pages 91 - 102)

PART 2 AGENDA

11 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 AS AMENDED BY THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) (VARIATION) ORDER 2006, AND THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000

The Chairman to move that the Press and public be excluded during consideration of the items of business listed below as it is likely in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings that if members of the Press and public were present there would be disclosure to them of exempt information.

Items of Business

Schedule 12A Description

- | | | |
|-----------|---|---|
| 12 | EXEMPT MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 18 MAY 2020 (Pages 103 - 104) | Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information) |
| 13 | PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY OF EXEMPT EXECUTIVE REPORTS DUE TO BE CONSIDERED BY THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL (IF ANY) | |

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EXECUTIVE, RESOURCES AND CONTRACTS POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held at 6.00 pm on 18 May 2020

Present:

Councillor Simon Fawthrop (Chairman)
Councillor Christopher Marlow (Vice-Chairman)
Councillors Gareth Allatt, Julian Benington,
David Cartwright QFSM, Mary Cooke, Ian Dunn,
Nicky Dykes, Robert Evans, Will Harmer, Michael Rutherford,
Michael Tickner, Stephen Wells and Angela Wilkins

Also Present:

Councillor Graham Arthur, Portfolio Holder for Resources,
Commissioning and Contract Management
Councillor Colin Smith, Leader of the Council

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

Councillor Mellor submitted apologies for absence.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Fawthrop declared that his wife was an employee of the London Borough of Bromley.

3 QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS AND MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC ATTENDING THE MEETING

No questions were received.

4 MINUTES OF THE EXECUTIVE, RESOURCES AND CONTRACTS PDS COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 5th FEBRUARY 2020 AND THE INFORMAL BRIEFING HELD ON 26th MARCH 2020 (EXCLUDING EXEMPT ITEMS)

The minutes of the meeting held on 5 February 2020, and the notes of the informal briefing held on 26th March 2020, were agreed and signed as a correct record.

The Committee noted that a report on the Council's Property Portfolio was due for consideration in September 2020. The Portfolio Holder for Resources, Commissioning and Contract Management explained that the current COVID-19 pandemic would inevitably have an impact on the revenue stream from the property portion however it had not yet been possible to quantify the impact.

The Committee also noted that that there had been no further progress on the emerging proposals for solar farms following the update from the Executive Assistant for Resources, Commissioning and Contracts Management at the Committee's meeting in February 2020.

In response to a question from a Member concerning the percentage of residents currently not paying Council Tax, it was agreed that the Director of Finance would be asked to provide an update following the meeting.

5 FORWARD PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS

The Committee noted the Forward Plan of Key Decisions covering the period April 2020 to July 2020.

The Chairman suggested that it would be helpful for the Forward Plan to indicate a timeframe for decisions by reflecting not just a "not before" date but also a "no later than" date.

6 PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY OF EXECUTIVE REPORTS

The Committee considered the following Part 1 reports for decision by the Leader on or after 19th May 2020

(1) THE LONDON BOROUGH OF BROMLEY'S RESPONSE TO THE COVID 19 PANDEMIC

The report provided the Executive with an update on the London Borough of Bromley's response to the coronavirus pandemic as well as a summary of the current situation in relation to COVID-19 cases in the Borough and the local and pan-London resilience structure.

The report also provided an overview of the Council-wide response to the pandemic, as well as the specific responses for each service area, initial plans for social and economic recovery, and an overview of the Council's current financial position.

The Chief Executive introduced the report explaining that there had been a need to take a number of rapid decisions in response to the developing COVID-19 pandemic. A detailed log of these decisions was kept and would be shared with Members in due course. The practice of keeping a decision log was a pan-London one and enabled decision makers to return to decisions and see when and why they were taken.

In response to a question from the Chairman concerning the impact of the virus on BAME staff and the action that was being taken across the Council to ensure that BAME staff in particular were protected from the effects of the virus, the Chief Executive reported that the Council was following the guidance from Public Health England (PHE) and this guidance was routinely discussed at the Council's COVID-19 Strategic Group. In addition, a profile of Council staff had been completed giving HR and managers across the Council a clear indication of levels of self-isolation and sickness. Risk Assessments had been undertaken to

enable the Council to adequately manage the risks involved and a programme of training had been put in place to provide managers with the tools they needed to support staff. The Council was now in the process of developing a handbook for staff to support the phased return to the workplace. The handbook was designed to provide details of the key measures in place to support and protect staff returning to the office environment. In relation to testing, all staff had been encouraged to get themselves tested if they exhibited any of the symptoms of COVID-19 and where necessary BAME staff had been provided with PPE to support them in their roles.

In response to a question, the Chief Executive confirmed that the Council had an adequate supply of facemasks for staff use on their return to work as well as hand sanitiser. The newly developed handbook provided comprehensive guidance however where possible staff would still be encouraged to use IT to support working from home. Discussions had taken place with Departmental Representatives and the Chief Executive confirmed that he felt satisfied about the safety of the environment to which staff would be returning. Members were reminded that as Head of Paid Service the Chief Executive had a personal liability in ensuring the health and safety of staff at work.

Councillor Cooke, as Chairman of the Adult, Care and Health PDS Committee, reported that Members of that Committee had been very active in their scrutiny role and had submitted a number of questions in relation to the report. It was agreed that Officers would be asked to provide answers which could then be circulated to the Committee.

In response to a question, the Chief Executive confirmed that Bromley's 4 MPs were provided with regular updates on the developments in relation to COVID-19 across the Borough. The Committee were reminded that data in relation to the number of residents across the Borough who were shielding was provided by the NHS. These numbers had crept up over the 9 weeks of lockdown and there were now 11,000 people across the Borough who were shielding. In relation to testing prior to discharge from hospital to care homes, Bromley had been a pilot for such testing and had consequently performed quite well.

Members of the Committee suggested that it may be helpful if ward level data could be provided in relation to rates of infection. The Chief Executive noted that different data would emerge as part of the move towards increased testing and contact tracing and it was agreed that this would be taken away as an action point to see if ward level data could be provided.

In respect of the phased return of schools, the Chief Executive confirmed that the Director of Education had been liaising with academies across the Borough and as yet no schools had indicated that they would not be implementing the phased return if required from 1st June 2020.

Members further noted that the Government had recently encouraged Council's to make their streets and roads safe for social distancing. The announcement had been made following the publication of the report before the Committee, however Members stressed the importance of progressing the work in relation to

appropriate social distancing as it was important to avoid any trouble spots when schools reopened.

Turning to the issue of the Council's suppliers, in response to a question, the Chief Executive confirmed that he was confident that a good level of support had been provided to the Council's service providers and there was nothing to suggest that any provider would go out of business. The Portfolio Holder for Resources, Commissioning and Contracts Management further noted that the procurement team had been in regular dialogue with providers and frank discussions were taking place.

The Portfolio Holder also highlighted that it was Mental Health Awareness week and there was a need to keep in mind that the majority of staff were working from home and consequently some had been working in isolation for a number of weeks. A range of initiatives had been put in place to support staff, such as training and Mental Health First Aiders were available to support staff if required.

The Chairman reported that he often received updates on the decisions taken under delegated powers in respect of procurement and urgent contract awards. It was agreed that once the emergency delegations had been lifted the full list of decisions that had been taken should be published.

Councillor Wilkins proposed, Councillor Fawthrop seconded and the Committee unanimously agreed that an expression of thanks should be made to all staff across the Council for their dedication and commitment during the pandemic. The Chief Executive was asked to forward this vote of thanks from the Committee onto all staff.

RESOLVED: That

- 1. An expression of thanks be made to all staff across the Council for their dedication and commitment during the pandemic and the Chief Executive be asked to forward this vote of thanks from the Committee onto all staff.**

 - 2. The Leader be recommended to note the report and the Council's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, working together with our residents, local businesses, partner organisations, the voluntary and community sector, to support the most vulnerable in our borough safely during this crisis.**
- (2) AWARD OF CONTRACT TO BLOOM PROCUREMENT LTD FOR THE PROVISION OF SPECIALIST RESOURCES
Report CEF20009**

The Council was currently making use of Bloom Procurement Services Ltd via the NEPRO Framework, and the report sought to make further use of that arrangement to support the implementation of a new Social Care Information Management System following a successful first phase. Funding to enable the award of contract was approved by the Executive in a business case to replace

Bromley's Social Care Information Management System (September 2018, Gateway 1 Report ED10868). The programme remained on track, on time and on budget.

The Assistant Director for Strategy, Performance and Corporate Transformation introduced the report explaining that, if agreed, the continued use of Bloom Procurement Ltd would enable ongoing access to the specialist expertise required to effectively implement the programme.

In response to a question from the Chairman concerning the impact of social distancing on implementation of the programme, the Assistant Director explained that Officers were currently working to develop virtual meeting and virtual training solutions to ensure the continuation of a smooth implementation process.

The Committee noted that overall the programme was within budget and as the system would be in place for a number of years it was important that the necessary expertise was secured to facilitate the smooth implementation of the programme.

RESOLVED: That the Leader be recommended to

- 1. Approve the continued use of Bloom Procurement Services Ltd via a direct award on the NEPRO Framework of a further £866k of specialist resources to support the implementation of a new Social Care Management Information System.**
- 2. Delegate to the Chief Officer in consultation with the Executive Member for RR&CC the approval of the award from the framework of individual contracts following further competition as/if required.**
- 3. Delegate to the Chief Officer in consultation with the Executive Member for RR&CC the approval of the award from the framework of individual contracts without further competition, subject to the agreement of the Assistant Director Governance & Contracts, Director Corporate Services and Director of Finance.**

**(3) AWARD OF CONTRACT FOR THE REPLACEMENT SOCIAL CARE CASE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM
Report CEF20010A**

The report accompanied the Part 2 Report also being considered on the agenda which recommended that the Council award a contract to purchase a replacement Social Care Case Management System.

In response to a question, the Assistant Director for Strategy, Performance and Contracts Management confirmed that advice had been sought from procurement in respect of the contract award. Members noted that Officers had prepared a detailed specification which resulted in a strong bid from the market leader.

RESOLVED: That the Leader be recommended to award the contract for the purchase of a fully integrated Social Care Case Management System as

detailed in the accompanying Part 2 report for a contract period of 5 years, with the option to extend for a further 2 years.

7 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 AS AMENDED BY THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) (VARIATION) ORDER 2006, AND THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000

RESOLVED that the Press and public be excluded during consideration of the items of business referred to below as it is likely in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings that if members of the Press and public were present there would be disclosure to them of exempt information.

**The following summaries
refer to matters involving exempt information**

8 PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY OF EXEMPT EXECUTIVE REPORTS

The Committee considered the following Part 2 reports for decision by the Leader on or after 19th May 2020

**(4) Award of Contract for the Replacement Social Care Case Management System
Report CEF20010B**

The Committee noted the report and made recommendations to the Leader.

**(5) COVID 19: TRANSPORT PAYMENTS TO CONTRACTORS
Report CSD20068**

The Committee noted the report and made recommendations to the Leader.

The Meeting ended at 7.21 pm

Chairman

**EXECUTIVE, RESOURCES AND CONTRACTS POLICY DEVELOPMENT
AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

Minutes of the meeting held at 6.30 pm on 27 May 2020

Present:

Councillor Simon Fawthrop (Chairman)
Councillor Christopher Marlow (Vice-Chairman)
Councillors Gareth Allatt, Julian Benington,
David Cartwright QFSM, Mary Cooke, Ian Dunn,
Nicky Dykes, Robert Evans, Will Harmer, Russell Mellor,
Michael Rutherford, Stephen Wells and Angela Wilkins

Also Present:

Councillor Graham Arthur, Portfolio Holder for Resources,
Commissioning and Contracts Management
Councillor Yvonne Bear, Executive Assistant for Renewal,
Recreation & Housing
Councillor Peter Morgan, Portfolio Holder for Renewal,
Recreation & Housing
Councillor Colin Smith, Leader of the Council

**9 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NOTIFICATION OF
SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS**

There were no apologies for absence.

10 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no additional declarations of interest.

11 PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY OF EXECUTIVE REPORTS

The Committee considered the following reports which were due to be presented to the Leader for decision

**a DISCRETIONARY BUSINESS GRANTS
Report HPR2020/011**

The report sought approval for officers to distribute the government grant funding for businesses in line with locally defined government criteria in addition to the local eligibility criteria. Council officers had spoken to members of the business community and other London local authorities during the development of the criteria.

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Central Government (through the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy) had confirmed further grant funding for businesses, to be distributed by Local Authorities at their discretion. Guidance had been provided and at the time of writing the report a further technical note to inform local decision making was expected which had been received by the time the Committee considered the report. The amount of funding for distribution in the Borough of Bromley would be £2.4m. The Government had identified a set of business types that should benefit from the scheme, which largely recognised those that would have missed out on the previous Business Rate grant funding:

- Small businesses in shared offices or flexible workspaces, including units in larger complexes.
- Regular market traders with fixed property costs.
- Bed and breakfasts that pay Council tax instead of business rates
- Charity properties in receipt of charitable rate relief.

In addition Bromley Council would specifically include park cafes within its advertised list of eligible business types as quality green spaces was a Council priority. Park cafes normally did not pay business rates and therefore would have been excluded from the previous grant funding available.

The Committee noted that the Government had placed a cap on the level of funding available and as such the Council had to work within the financial envelop of £2.4m.

In opening the debate, with reference to the local eligibility criteria, the Vice-Chairman suggested that the criteria should refer to “salaried” internships to ensure that interns and apprentices were paid the national minimum wage or more, not simply expenses. It was agreed that the Committee would make this recommendation to the Leader.

Members noted that in order to be eligible for the grant, businesses would have to meet at least two out of the five local eligibility criteria. The local eligibility criteria that were proposed were to ensure that the businesses who contributed the most to the Borough would benefit from the grant finding that was available.

In response to a question concerning whether the Council would be able to reclaim administration costs from the Government, the Assistant Director for Culture and Regeneration confirmed that the guidance that had recently been received indicated that new burdens placed on local authorities would be funded however the details of this and the level of any funding was as yet unclear. The £2.4m grant funding would go in its entirety to businesses operating in the Borough. Members noted that Discretionary Business Grants would largely be administered by Liberata on behalf of the Council. Bromley staff would be providing support to businesses applying for the grant.

Members noted that a number of businesses across the Borough were already aware of the grant. In addition a great deal of work had been undertaken to identify businesses that would be eligible for the grant. Plans were also in place to enable the availability of the grant to be promoted through the Council's social media platforms and through press releases. With reference to promotion of the grant, the Chairman noted that ward councillors were receiving enquiries and it was agreed that the generic email address for enquiries should be sent to Members to assist with these enquiries.

The Committee noted that as a result of the technical guidance that had now been received from Government only minor changes to the scheme using delegated authority were required. In the future if any more significant changes were required these would only be implemented with Member approval.

Turning to the local eligibility criteria, in response to a question concerning how businesses would be able to evidence a 50% drop in turnover since March 2020, the Assistant Director for Culture and Regeneration confirmed that businesses would have to evidence this through bank statements. The Committee noted that there had been extensive consultation with businesses across the Borough with respect to the local eligibility criteria.

The Chairman highlighted the need to ensure that there were robust anti-fraud measures in place. The Assistant Director for Culture and Regeneration provided assurances that the Council's Audit Team had informed the approach to the distribution of the grant. In addition the Council would be utilising the Government's Spotlight system to try to combat fraud and it was clear that the Council would be able to recover any funding received through fraudulent means. The Director of Finance also highlighted that robust pre-application and post-application checks would be in place and these would mitigate some of the risk. Members noted that that there was the possibility that businesses operating in multiple areas could make claims to multiple local authorities. The Assistant Director for Culture and Regeneration confirmed that this issue had been raised with the Government and businesses were required to sign a declaration confirming that they had not submitted claims for discretionary businesses grants any where else.

In respect of the distribution of the grant, Members noted the importance of recognising the limited amount of grant funding that was available when compared to the number of businesses that may be eligible for the grant. The aim was to spread the funding as fairly as possible and the size of the grants distributed would be defined by the number of applications. As such, it was unlikely that any businesses would receive grants of £25,000. The Committee also noted that banding would be employed for the distribution of grants with all businesses within each defined band receiving the same level of grant.

The Portfolio Holder for Resources, Commissioning and Contract Management stressed the importance of being clear about the timescales for

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distribution of grant funding in order to manage the expectations of local businesses. Noting that a number of businesses were relying on the grant for short term support, the Portfolio Holder suggested that it may be helpful to employ a simplified process which enabled an immediate payment of a lower amount. Many if not most of the businesses seeking to claim funding would be small businesses which would benefit from an initial lower amount of funding.

In summing up the debate the Chairman highlighted that the Committee would be making the following three additional recommendations to the Leader

1. Investigate whether a simplified process can be put in place to enable initial interim payment of grants of up to £2k to be distributed to businesses, prior to the final grant amount being determined.
2. That the local eligibility criteria be amended to clarify that they apply to *salaried* internships..
3. To ensure there is due diligence and anti-fraud measures built into the processes and that these be presented to the Leader prior to a decision being taken.

The recommendations to the Leader and the three additional recommendations were unanimously agreed by the Committee.

RESOLVED: That the Leader be recommended to

- 1. Approve the recommendations for the distribution of this grant fund set out in the commentary of this report, namely: the recommended local parameters in relation to the national guidance set out in paragraphs 3.6 and 3.7; and the local eligibility criteria set out in paragraph 3.9.**
- 2. Agree that the Director of Housing, Planning, Property and Regeneration has delegated authority to: make changes to the grant distribution approach if required once the Government's technical note is issued; and to exercise limited discretion during the award process. This delegated authority will include consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Renewal, Recreation and Housing.**
- 3. Investigate whether a simplified process can be put in place to enable initial interim payment of grants of up to £2k to be distributed to businesses, prior to the final grant amount being determined.**
- 4. Agree that the local eligibility criteria be amended to clarify that they apply to salaried internships.**

5. Ensure there is due diligence and anti-fraud measures built into the application and distribution processes.

**b PROVISIONAL FINAL ACCOUNTS 2019/20
Report FSD20046**

The report considered the 2019/20 provisional outturn at portfolio level and Council wide as well as the potential implications for the Council's financial position in 2020/21. The purpose of the report was to give a broad overview of the financial outturn. The 2019/20 provisional outturn provided for no variation in general fund balances, subject to the recommendations in the report being agreed. More detailed reports would be submitted to individual PDS Committees in due course. Details of the carry forward requests and a summary of the Council's capital programme were also considered in the report.

In response to enquiries from a Member concerning further detail around income from investment properties, the Director of Finance confirmed that reports on Treasury Management were produced twice a year and the Committee had also previously agreed that Income from Investment Properties monitoring reports were presented with the same frequency. The Chairman advised that the income from investment properties report was due in September 2020 and Members suggested that it would be helpful to have the Income from Investment properties report at the July 2020 meeting if this were possible.

The Director of Finance confirmed that through being a part of the Business Rate Pool the Council was estimated to have received an additional £2.3m in 2019/20. Members noted that there could be potential losses in 2020/21 as a result of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on business but it was not yet possible to quantify the overall financial impact.

In response to a question, the Director of Finance explained that the majority of business rates collected was passed onto the Government and the GLA. There is a part retained by the Council which forms part of the Council's overall funding assessment by Government.

Turning to the issue of underspends on staffing within the Finance Division, the Director of Finance confirmed that the vacancies had impacted on the Team and that the work required of the Team had only been delivered as a result of the commitment and dedication of staff. The Director of Finance explained that there was difficulty recruiting good finance staff, stressing the importance of ensuring that a skilled workforce was in place to manage the large council budgets. However, the ongoing staff vacancies were not sustainable going forward and the position would be reviewed over the coming year.

In response to a question, the Director of Finance explained that across the Council as a whole there were growth pressures which the Transformation Programme was seeking to address. Departments were continually looking at

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value for money and were seeking to keep costs low but there were a number of challenges. Members noted that there were two key issues for 2020/21 – the impact of COVID-19 and what the Government would do about local authority funding. In light of these challenges, the Director of Finance stressed the importance of maintaining rigor in the budgetary process by considering mitigation before approving growth and containing cost pressures where possible.

In response to a question surrounding government reimbursement for lost parking income, the Director of Finance explained that the situation was currently very fluid. At the start of the response to the COVID-19 pandemic the Government had given an indication to provide adequate funding for any net costs arising from Covid-19. However, over the course of the pandemic it was becoming less clear and there has been reference made to Local Authorities sharing the burden although the Government had said that Council's would be reimbursed for the things they had been asked to do. Ultimately it remained unclear whether there would be any reimbursement of lost income.

The Committee noted that there continued to be pressures within the Corporate Services division with an overspend in Legal Services. The Director of Corporate Services explained that there had been some budgetary pressures around the planning legal function with the need to fund counsel to support the Local Plan process and respond to the subsequent legal challenge to the Local Plan. There also remained budgetary pressures arising from children's social care which were being addressed through the Transformation Programme.

It was noted that the issue of the £500,000 increase in the cost of the Home and Hospital Education Service would be raised at the informal meeting of the Children, Education and Families PDS Committee which was due to take place on 18th June 2020..

In relation to the Council's Audit function, the Director of Finance confirmed that external audit fees were included in the audit budget with the cost of any objection to the accounts being reported to Audit Sub-Committee. Members noted that as a result of objections to the accounts in recent years the cost of external auditors had been increasing year on year as the external auditors from three years ago were still dealing with complaints about that set of accounts and these were costs that were outside the control of the Council.

At the conclusion of the discussion it was unanimously

RESOLVED: That the Leader be recommended to

- 1. Consider the provisional revenue and capital outturns for the 2019/20 financial year and the earmarked balances on the General Fund as at 31st March 2020;**

2. Consider the variations in 2019/20 impacting on the Council's 2020/21 financial position;
3. Consider the comments from Chief Officers as detailed in Appendix 2 of the report;
4. Approve the requests for carry forwards totalling £910k (net) as detailed in Appendix 6 of the report, subject to the funding being allocated to the Central Contingency in 2020/21 to be drawn down on the approval of the relevant Portfolio Holder;
5. Agree the release of £315k from the 2019/20 Central Contingency as detailed in paragraph 3.6.2 of the report;
6. Agree the release of £52k from the 2019/20 Central Contingency as detailed in paragraph 3.6.3 of the report;
7. Agree the release of (£2,200k) from the 2019/20 Central Contingency as detailed in paragraph 3.6.4 of the report;
8. Agree the release of £28k from the 2019/20 Central Contingency as detailed in paragraph 3.6.5 of the report;
9. Agree the release of £25k from the 2019/20 Central Contingency as detailed in paragraph 3.6.6 of the report;
10. Note the return to contingency of £474k of additional grant to the 2019/20 Central Contingency as detailed in paragraph 3.6.7 of the report; and
11. Agree that a sum of £8,821k be set aside as a contribution to the Housing Invest to Save Fund earmarked reserve as detailed in paragraph 3.7.2 of the report.

**c CAPITAL PROGRAMME OUTTURN 2019/2020
Report FSD20044**

The report set out the final outturn on capital expenditure and receipts for 2019/20. Capital expenditure in the year was £23.4m, compared to the final approved budget of £30.9m, resulting in a total net variation of Cr £7.5m. For funding purposes, £5.0m slippage was assumed in the Quarter 3 capital monitoring report, so there was an overall variation of Cr £2.5m in the use of capital receipts and external and revenue contributions.

The Committee unanimously

RESOLVED: That the Leader be recommended to

1. Note the report;

- 2. Approve the following amendments to the Capital Programme for 2020/21:**
 - a) Increase of £800k to the Bromley Town Centre Improvements capital scheme, as agreed by the Executive on April 1st, as detailed in paragraph 3.2.1;**
 - b) Addition of £250k to the capital programme for Children's Centres, as agreed by the Executive on April 1st, as detailed in paragraph 3.2.2;**
 - c) Approve the increase of £2,153k to the Disabled Facilities Grant scheme to reflect the 2020/21 allocation as detailed in paragraph 3.2.3; and**
 - d) Approve the increase of £1,442k to the Capital Maintenance in Schools capital scheme to reflect the allocations for 2017/18, 2018/19 and 2019/20 as detailed in paragraph 3.2.4.**

The Meeting ended at 7.55 pm

Chairman

LONDON BOROUGH OF BROMLEY

FORWARD PLAN OF KEY AND PRIVATE EXECUTIVE DECISIONS PUBLISHED ON: 10 JUNE 2020

PERIOD COVERED: June 2020 - September 2020

DATE FOR PUBLISHING NEXT FORWARD PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS: 20 August 2020

WHAT IS BEING DECIDED?	WHO IS THE DECISION MAKER?	WHEN WILL THE DECISION BE MADE AND WHO WILL BE CONSULTED BEFORE THE DECISION IS MADE?	HOW WILL THE CONSULTATION TAKE PLACE?	HOW CAN YOU MAKE COMMENTS ON THE DECISION BEFORE IT IS MADE?	WILL THIS ITEM BE CONSIDERED IN PUBLIC OR IN PRIVATE?	WHAT SUPPORT DOCUMENTS AND OTHER INFORMATION WILL BE AVAILABLE?
COUNCIL						
SAFER BROMLEY PARTNERSHIP STRATEGY	Council	20 July 2020 Executive Public Protection & Safety PDS Committee Partners	Meetings	Contact Officer: Joanne Stowell Tel: 020 8313 4332 Joanne.Stowell@bromley.gov.uk	<u>Meeting in public</u>	Report and relevant background documents
HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT	Council	20 July 2020 Executive Executive, Resources & Contracts PDS Committee	Meeting	Contact Officer: Sara Bowrey Tel: 020 8313 4013 sara.bowrey@bromley.gov.uk	<u>Meeting in Public</u>	Meetings
CIVIC CENTRE PROGRAMME AND OFFICE ACCOMMODATION PROPOSALS	Council	20 July 2020 Executive Executive, Resources & Contracts PDS Committee	Meetings	Contact Officer: Catherine Pimm Tel: 020 8461 7834 Catherine.Pimm@bromley.gov.uk	<u>Meeting in public</u>	Report and relevant background documents
EXECUTIVE						

WHAT IS BEING DECIDED?	WHO IS THE DECISION MAKER?	WHEN WILL THE DECISION BE MADE AND WHO WILL BE CONSULTED BEFORE THE DECISION IS MADE?	HOW WILL THE CONSULTATION TAKE PLACE?	HOW CAN YOU MAKE COMMENTS ON THE DECISION BEFORE IT IS MADE?	WILL THIS ITEM BE CONSIDERED IN PUBLIC OR IN PRIVATE?	WHAT SUPPORT DOCUMENTS AND OTHER INFORMATION WILL BE AVAILABLE?
ESSENTIAL HOUSEHOLD GOODS	Executive/Leader of the Council	Between 8 July 2020 and 31 July 2020 Renewal, Recreation & Housing PDS Committee	Email/meetings	Contact Officer: Tracey Wilson Tel. 020 8313 4515 tracey.wilson@bromley.gov.uk	<u>PDS Meeting in Public</u>	Report and relevant background documents
CONTACT TRACING	Executive/Leader of the Council	Between 8 July 2020 and 31 July 2020 Executive, Resources & Contracts PDS Committee	Meetings	Contact Officer: Dr Jenny Selway Tel: 0208 313 4769 jenny.selway@bromley.gov.uk	<u>PDS Meeting in public</u>	Report and relevant background documents
GATEWAY REPORT: PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENTS WITH GENERAL PRACTICES	Executive/Leader of the Council	Between 8 July 2020 and 31 July 2020 Adult Care & Health PDS Committee	Meetings	Contact Officer: Mimi Morris-Cotterill Tel: 020 8461 7779 mimi.morris-cotterill@bromley.gov.uk	<u>PDS Meeting in public</u>	Report and relevant background documents

WHAT IS BEING DECIDED?	WHO IS THE DECISION MAKER?	WHEN WILL THE DECISION BE MADE AND WHO WILL BE CONSULTED BEFORE THE DECISION IS MADE?	HOW WILL THE CONSULTATION TAKE PLACE?	HOW CAN YOU MAKE COMMENTS ON THE DECISION BEFORE IT IS MADE?	WILL THIS ITEM BE CONSIDERED IN PUBLIC OR IN PRIVATE?	WHAT SUPPORT DOCUMENTS AND OTHER INFORMATION WILL BE AVAILABLE?
CONTRACT AWARD: INFRASTRUCTURE SUPPORT SERVICES FOR THE VOLUNTARY, COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL ENTERPRISE SECTOR	Executive/Leader of the Council	Between 8 July 2020 and 31 July 2020 Adult Care and Health PDS Committee	Email/meetings	Contact Officer: Gerry Clark Tel: 020 8313 4024 Gerry.Clark@bromley.gov.uk	<u>PDS Meeting in public (with supplementary information in a part 2 report)</u>	Report and relevant background documents
AGENCY WORKER PROVISION CONTRACT	Executive/Leader of the Council	Between 8 July 2020 and 31 July 2020 Executive, Resources & Contracts PDS Committee	Email/meetings	Contact Officer: Emma Downie Tel. 020 8313 4082 emma.downie@bromley.gov.uk	<u>PDS Meeting in public (with supplementary information in a part 2 report)</u>	Report and relevant background information
ENERGY PROCUREMENT	Executive/Leader of the Council	Between 8 July 2020 and 31 July 2020 Executive, Resources & Contracts PDS Committee	Meetings	Contact Officer: Zac Ajia Tel. 020 8313 4013 zac.ajia@bromley.gov.uk	<u>Private meeting - Exempt information- Financial/business affairs of a person or body</u>	Part 2 Report - Not for publication

WHAT IS BEING DECIDED?	WHO IS THE DECISION MAKER?	WHEN WILL THE DECISION BE MADE AND WHO WILL BE CONSULTED BEFORE THE DECISION IS MADE?	HOW WILL THE CONSULTATION TAKE PLACE?	HOW CAN YOU MAKE COMMENTS ON THE DECISION BEFORE IT IS MADE?	WILL THIS ITEM BE CONSIDERED IN PUBLIC OR IN PRIVATE?	WHAT SUPPORT DOCUMENTS AND OTHER INFORMATION WILL BE AVAILABLE?
TRANSFORMING PROPERTY SERVICES	Executive/Leader of the Council	Between 8 July 2020 and 31 July 2020 Executive, Resources and Contracts PDS Committee	Meetings	Contact Officer: Michael Watkins Tel: 020 8313 4178 Michael.Watkins@bromley.gov.uk	<u>Private Meeting - exempt information - Financial/business affairs of a person or body</u>	Part 2 Report - Confidential
MANAGEMENT OF PROPERTY INVESTMENT PORTFOLIO	Executive/Leader of the Council	Between 8 July 2020 and 31 July 2020 Executive, Resources & Contracts PDS Committee	Meetings	Contact Officer: Michael Watkins Tel: 020 8313 4178 Michael.Watkins@bromley.gov.uk	<u>Private Meeting - Exempt information - Financial/business affairs of a person or body</u>	Part 2 Report - Confidential
TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME - PROJECT REPORTS	Executive/Leader of the Council	Between 1 September 2020 and 30 September 2020 Executive, Resources & Contracts PDS Committee	Meetings	Contact Officer: Naheed Chaudhry Tel: 020 8461 7554 Naheed.Chaudhry@bromley.gov.uk	<u>PDS Meeting in public</u>	Reports and relevant background documents

WHAT IS BEING DECIDED?	WHO IS THE DECISION MAKER?	WHEN WILL THE DECISION BE MADE AND WHO WILL BE CONSULTED BEFORE THE DECISION IS MADE?	HOW WILL THE CONSULTATION TAKE PLACE?	HOW CAN YOU MAKE COMMENTS ON THE DECISION BEFORE IT IS MADE?	WILL THIS ITEM BE CONSIDERED IN PUBLIC OR IN PRIVATE?	WHAT SUPPORT DOCUMENTS AND OTHER INFORMATION WILL BE AVAILABLE?
EDUCATION CAPITAL UPDATE INCLUDING BASIC NEED, S.106 AND POST COMPLETION REPORTS	Executive/Leader of the Council	Between 18 September 2020 and 30 September 2020 Children, Education & Families PDS Committee	Email/meetings	Contact Officer: Robert Bollen Tel: 020 8313 4697 Robert.Bollen@bromley.gov.uk	<u>PDS Meeting in public</u>	Report and relevant background documents
ADULT CARE & HEALTH PORTFOLIO						
EXTENSION OF SEXUAL HEALTH CONTRACT	Portfolio Holder for Adult Care and Health	Between 30 June 2020 and 31 July 2020 Adult Care & Health PDS Committee	Email/meetings	Contact Officer: Mimi Morris-Cotterill Tel: 020 8461 7779 mimi.morris-cotterill@bromley.gov.uk	<u>Published Report</u>	Report and relevant background documents
GATEWAY REPORT 0/1: DEMENTIA CARERS RESPITE	Portfolio Holder for Adult Care and Health	Between 29 September 2020 and 30 October 2020 Adult Care & Health PDS Committee	Email/meetings	Contact Officer: Heather Sinclair-Constance Tel. 020 8313 4641 heather.sinclair-constance@bromley.gov.uk	<u>Published report</u>	Report and relevant background documents

WHAT IS BEING DECIDED?	WHO IS THE DECISION MAKER?	WHEN WILL THE DECISION BE MADE AND WHO WILL BE CONSULTED BEFORE THE DECISION IS MADE?	HOW WILL THE CONSULTATION TAKE PLACE?	HOW CAN YOU MAKE COMMENTS ON THE DECISION BEFORE IT IS MADE?	WILL THIS ITEM BE CONSIDERED IN PUBLIC OR IN PRIVATE?	WHAT SUPPORT DOCUMENTS AND OTHER INFORMATION WILL BE AVAILABLE?
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CHILDREN, EDUCATION & FAMILIES PORTFOLIO

PROVISION OF HOLIDAY AND SATURDAY GROUP BASED SHORT BREAKS	Portfolio Holder for Children, Education and Families	Between 18 June 2020 and 31 July 2020 Children, Education & Families PDS Committee	Email/meetings	Contact Officer: Kelly Sylvester Tel. 020 8461 7653 kelly.sylvester@bromley.gov.uk	<u>Published Report</u>	Report and relevant background documents
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ENVIRONMENT & COMMUNITY SERVICES PORTFOLIO

PUBLIC PROTECTION & ENFORCEMENT PORTFOLIO

RENEWAL, RECREATION & HOUSING PORTFOLIO

RESOURCES, COMMISSIONING & CONTRACT MANAGEMENT PORTFOLIO

London Borough of Bromley: 020 8464 3333 www.bromley.gov.uk

Contact Officer: Graham Walton, Chief Executive's Department: 020 8461 7743, graham.walton@bromley.gov.uk

Report No.
FSD20049

London Borough of Bromley

PART ONE - PUBLIC

Decision Maker: EXECUTIVE, RESOURCES AND CONTRACTS POLICY
DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date: Wednesday 1 July 2020

Decision Type: Non-Urgent Executive Non-Key

Title: BENEFITS SERVICE MONITORING REPORT AND COUNCIL
TAX SUPPORT\REDUCTION 2021/22

Contact Officer: Claudine Douglas-Brown – Assistant Director, Exchequer Services

Chief Officer: Peter Turner, Director of Finance

Ward: (All Wards);

1. Reason for report

- 1.1 This report provides information regarding the performance of the benefit services provided by Liberata during the period 1 October 2019 to 31 March 2020. A letter from Amanda Inwood-Field, Liberata's London Regional Contract Director, is attached as Appendix 1. This communication provides Liberata's perspective on performance, together with an update on initiatives to be introduced in the coming months.

2. **RECOMMENDATION(S)**

2.1 **The PDS is requested to:**

- **note the information contained with the report and the letter provided by Liberata detailed in Appendix 1; and**
- **consider the Council Tax Support\Reduction scheme options recommended for the public consultation exercise for the financial year 2021/22 for**

- 2.2 **The Portfolio Holder to approve the scheme to be recommended in the consultation exercise for the Authority's 2021/22 Council Tax Support\Reduction scheme.**

Impact on Vulnerable Adults and Children

1. Summary of Impact: The Benefits Service impacts on all benefit recipients including vulnerable adults and/or those with children.
-

Corporate Policy

1. Policy Status: Not Applicable
 2. BBB Priority: Excellent Council
-

Financial

1. Cost of proposal: Not Applicable
 2. Ongoing costs: Not Applicable
 3. Budget head/performance centre: Exchequer - Benefits
 4. Total current budget for this head: £3.92m
 5. Source of funding: Existing revenue budget 2019/20 including Government Grants and Subsidy
-

Personnel

1. Number of staff (current and additional): 4 plus Liberata staff
 2. If from existing staff resources, number of staff hours: Not Applicable
-

Legal

1. Legal Requirement: Statutory Requirement
The main pieces of legislation covering the service are:
Housing Benefit Regulations 2006
The Council Tax Reduction Schemes Regulations 2012
The Local Government Finance Act 2012
 2. Call-in: Applicable:
-

Procurement

1. Summary of Procurement Implications: The Benefits Service is provided by Liberata as part of the Exchequer Services contract.
-

Customer Impact

1. Estimated number of users/beneficiaries (current and projected): 17,808 (approx)
-

Ward Councillor Views

1. Have Ward Councillors been asked for comments? No
2. Summary of Ward Councillors comments: Not Applicable

3. COMMENTARY

3.1 The Exchequer Services Team monitors the contract, sets targets and performance standards, liaises with partners, progresses the development and improvement of services through leadership on specific improvement initiatives. The team also ensures the services comply with current legislation, financial regulations, contractual obligations and audit requirements. Graphical illustrations as to the level of performance being achieved are attached as appendices to this report.

3.2 To maintain the drive for improved service performance, monthly service review meetings are held with operational and senior Liberata management. Regular meetings take place between senior managers in both organisations to discuss escalated items, technological advances and further development opportunities.

3.3 Outstanding work

The target in the specification requires that the level of outstanding work is less than 5,700 documents of which 2,200 are in pending. At the 31 March 2020 there were 3497 outstanding documents. Of the 3497 documents, 1,705 were in pending awaiting further information.

3.4 The level of outstanding work since April 2017 is illustrated at Appendix 2

3.5 Claim Processing

The speed of processing indicator is a combination of the time taken to assess new claims and change of circumstances.

The below table shows the Benefits Sections performance under the Right Time Indicator, the annual target for which is 13 days:

Apr 19	May 19	Jun 19	Jul 19	Aug 19	Sep 19	Oct 19	Nov 19	Dec 19	Jan 20	Feb 20	Mar 20
4.75	6.30	10.16	7.12	6.51	6.93	9.18	8.27	8.16	7.53	2.91	5.29

Average 2015/16 **11.40 days**

Average 2016/17 **10.20 days**

Average 2017/18 **8.53 days**

Average 2018/19 **9.40 days**

Average 2019/20 **6.22 days**

Performance under the Right Time Indicator is illustrated as Appendix 3

3.6 Tabled below are the performance figures in respect of the 2 components, new claims and change of circumstances.

New claims

Apr 19	May 19	Jun 19	Jul 19	Aug 19	Sep 19	Oct 19	Nov 19	Dec 19	Jan 20	Feb 20	Mar 20
14.09	16.21	14.17	13.34	14.44	12.92	13.02	13.89	13.62	14.96	13.11	16.91

Average 2015/16	19 days
Average 2016/17	19 days
Average 2017/18	20 days
Average 2018/19	20 days
Average 2019/20	14 days

3.7 Change in circumstances

Apr 19	May 19	Jun 19	Jul 19	Aug 19	Sep 19	Oct 19	Nov 19	Dec 19	Jan 20	Feb 20	Mar 20
4.36	5.65	9.54	6.81	6.12	6.51	8.77	7.81	7.71	6.96	2.67	4.76

Average 2015/16	10 days
Average 2016/17	10 days
Average 2017/18	10 days
Average 2018/19	9 days
Average 2019/20	6 days

3.8 The average processing days covers a wide variance amongst claims. Appendix 4 and 4a show the “spread” in respect of new claims and change of circumstances.

Detailed below are explanations for those new claims and change of circumstances that are recorded as taking in excess of 100 days to process. For the period 1st October 2019 to 31st March 2020, 1,017 new claims were processed, 1 new claim (0.09%) took in excess of 100 days. Of the 34,684 changes in circumstances processed, 15 changes (0.04%) took in excess of 100 days to process. The reasons why are detailed below:

New claims

Reason why the claim was processed in excess of 100 days	Number of claims
Additional time given for the claimant to provide information (temporary accommodation claim)	1
Total	1

Change in circumstances

Reason why the change was processed in excess of 100 days	Number of claims
Additional time given for the claimant to provide information	2
Incorrect data input	5
Retrospective changes advised by DWP report (Atlas)	10
Total	15

Attached as Appendix 5 is the latest benchmarking figures released by the DWP in respect of new claims and change of circumstances processing. The tables/graphs show performance for the period 1 October 2019 to 31 December 2019 (Quarter 3, 2019/20).

3.9 **Error rate**

The Exchequer Services specification requires the contractor to ensure that financial errors are found in less than 5% of the cases checked by the Authority's monitoring team. The level of tolerance for errors is strict compared to many other authorities; with DWP statistics indicating that the average error rate nationally is in excess of this figure. However, the tolerance was set in the knowledge that errors result in poor customer service and waste of resources through reworking.

The contractor remained within the 5% tolerance contained in the specification and the 4% "soft target" for the 6 months covered in this reporting period as shown in the table below. A graphical illustration is entered as Appendix 6.

Apr 19	May 19	Jun 19	Jul 19	Aug 19	Sep 19	Oct 19	Nov 19	Dec 19	Jan 20	Feb 20	Mar 20
1.1%	0.6%	2.2%	1.3%	1.9%	5.6%	3%	1.6%	0.5%	2.8%	1.7%	0%

3.10 **Complaints**

Considerable changes have occurred in both Housing Benefit legislation and Council Tax Support since April 2013, with many experiencing a reduction in entitlement. In many cases this has led to a complaint and/or an appeal as a result of the claimant not comprehending the revised entitlement is due to changes in the scheme. There were no "Stage 2" complaints during 2019/20 which is a good indication of the service being provided given that the Section has previously been given the opportunity to address the customer's area of discontent.

3.11 **Housing Benefit Overpayments**

At the May 2016 meeting of the Executive it was agreed that the recovery target and the corresponding penalty/incentive scheme should be suspended from the 1 September 2014. The level of overpayments being created as a result of Real Time Information and projected under Optional Real Time Information making the terms included in the Exchequer Services specification unattainable.

Appendix 7 shows the monthly recovery rates since April 2018.

3.12 **Call Centre (Help line)**

The graph at Appendix 8 details the performance of the Call Centre from April 2017.

The number of calls received for the period October 2019 to March 2020 was 53,875 this has reduced by 8,300 compared to the same period in 2018/19. The reduction is a result of customers moving to the on-line self-service system.

The average abandonment rate for the 2nd half of 2019/20 was 5% which is the tolerance allowed for under the specification. The reduced performance in March 2020 was due to the impact of COVID-19.

3.13 Caseload

A graph showing the number of claims in payment is attached as Appendix 9. There was a significant increase in the overall caseload following Liberata first becoming responsible for the service in 2002. However, in recent years the number of claims has shown a consistent reduction and was 17,808 on the 31 March 2020.

3.14 Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP's)

The DWP allocation for 2019/20 was £628,202; the actual sum spent was £629,288. The DWP have allocated Bromley £893,289 for awarding DHP's in 2020/21; the increase given to reflect the affordability pressures in the private rented sector. It is envisaged that it will be fully utilised

3.15 Council Tax Support/Reduction (CTS)

The Council Tax scheme for 2019/20 retained the minimum contribution of working-age claimants to 25% of the household's Council Tax liability.

At the 31st March 2020 there were 14,379 households in receipt of Council Tax Support. It is anticipated that the caseload will increase due to the impact of COVID-19.

In response to COVID-19, the Government provided local Authorities in England £500m to support "economically vulnerable people and households in their local area". Bromley were allocated £1,814,229.

This has effectively reduced working-age claimants local Council Tax liability by £150 for the financial year 2020/21.

3.16 Council Tax Support\Reduction scheme for 2021/22

The Authority is required to undertake an annual consultation exercise to seek resident's views on the scheme to be operated in the following financial year. It is recommended that the Authority commences a consultation exercise in August 2020.

Officers investigated various schemes. The table below shows the options available based on the 2020/21 Council Tax levels and an estimated 20% increase in claims from working-age households:

Option	Proposed scheme	Net variation in costs £000's
1	Working-age minimum liability reduced to 20%	+ 412
2	Working-age minimum liability reduced to 20% and entitlement restricted to band "D" Council Tax liability	+206
3	Working-age minimum liability 25% - current scheme – see note	0
4	Working- age minimum liability 25% and entitlement restricted to band "D" Council Tax liability	-139
5	Working-age minimum liability increased to 30%	-296
6	Working-age minimum liability increased to 30% and entitlement restricted to band "D" Council Tax liability	-409

Note: COVID19 Hardship Fund contribution represents 9% of band “D” Council Tax liability (effectively reducing the individual contribution from 25% to less than 16%)

3.17 **Universal Credit (UC)**

Universal Credit (UC) ‘Full service’ started in Bromley on 25th July 2018. The removal of temporary accommodation Housing Costs from Universal Credit has lessened the financial impact for Bromley Council. The removal of the need for clients in receipt of Severe Disability Premium to claim Universal Credit has also eased the pressure on clients less able to navigate the Universal Credit application process.

The Department of Works and Pensions (DWP) statistics show 7705 households in Bromley are now on Universal Credit (latest figures from February 2020) with 9386 people in total on UC of which 3327 are in employment).

The DWP statistics also show 93.5% of new Universal Credit claims are being paid in full at the initial 1st payment date (5 weeks from application date). Advance payments for clients who cannot manage for the first 5 weeks are available and easy to apply for once the initial application and Identification checks are completed, these are loans that will need to be paid back from future entitlement.

The DWP terminated the partnership with all Local Authorities to deliver support from 1st April 2019 therefore Bromley no longer have a role to assist their residents in applying and assisting with budgeting when having to claim UC. The Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) have been contracted to deliver this assistance and they provide both assistance in claiming UC and follow that through with Budgeting support. This service is available in person at Bromley Jobcentre Plus and also via telephone.

It was announced in February 2020 that the existing working-age Housing Benefit claimants will be transferred over to Universal Credit by 2024, it was previously stated that the transfer would happen in 2023.

4. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support present significant “business”. The 2019/20 budget includes payments in excess of £100m for Housing Benefit and £12m (net) for Council Tax Support. Any deterioration in performance could result in, for example:

- Increase in “Local Authority Error” overpayments, leading to receipt of reduced subsidy from Central Government
- Potential increase in overpayments which may not be recoverable.

The Council Tax Support\Reduction scheme options for 2021/22 referred to in paragraph will 3.16 will have financial implications..

5. **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

Full legal implications were set out in the report considered by members of the Executive on the 2 August 2019. However, in summary Section 33 (1) (e) of the Welfare Reform act 2012 abolished the national of Council Tax benefit. Section 10 (1) of that Act introduced a new

Section 13A (2) into the Local Government Finance Act 1992 which obliged each local authority to make its own scheme for those it considered to be in financial need.

Schedule 1A of the 1992 Act sets out the procedural steps required to make a revised scheme. These include the obligation to consider whether or not to change a scheme for any financial year. Where changes are made there is a statutory obligation to publish a draft scheme and to consult with such persons as we deem to have an interest. This will include both individuals who receive benefit and those who don't. Any new scheme must be adopted by 31st January in the financial year preceding that in which it is to apply.

Non-Applicable Sections:	Impact on Vulnerable Adults and Children, Policy, Personnel, Procurement and Legal
Background Documents: (Access via Contact Officer)	

Claudine Douglas-Brown
Assistant Director of Exchequer Services
London Borough of Bromley
Civic Centre
Stockwell Close
Bromley
BR1 3UH

Date: 15 June 2020

Our Ref: AIF/GT

Dear Claudine,

As we approach the July Executive, Resources & Contracts PDS meeting where we consider and review the performance of the Benefits service, we take this opportunity to write to you with Liberata's assessment of the performance of this critical, high profile service that we provide to London Borough of Bromley (LBB) and its citizens.

The COVID19 pandemic created a number of operational challenges for Liberata to overcome however, our Business Continuity plans were successfully implemented and we were able to get all staff working remotely from home with minimal disruption to services. Liberata's infrastructure allowed us to flex resources, maximise the use of the digital and hybrid mail solution and enable flexible working arrangements. The online application functionality ensured that customers were still able to apply for services safely online and provide information through the Evidence Upload Facility.

During the lockdown period, we saw a significant increase in customers interacting online, which enabled us to deliver more timely services compared to dealing with legacy paper applications. We also incorporated the DWP's 'Trust and Protect' principles which enable us to make prompt decisions on Benefit claims, verifying the evidence at a later stage when it is safe to do so.

Now that the new Bromley contract has commenced, our commitment to channel shift customers to online services has never been so crucial in the delivery of services. As we are unclear as to what the future holds, increasing online services is key to enable ongoing delivery of council services, whilst maintaining a specific focus on vulnerable customers that require assistance to transact online.

This summary covers performance for the period 1 October 2019 to 31 March 2020.

1. Current Status of the Benefits Service

The Benefits caseload, which measures all households receiving Housing Benefit (HB) and/or Council Tax Support (CTS), was 17,808 as at the end of March 2020. The caseload at the same time last year was 18,718.

In terms of our position for the nationally recognised Right Time Indicator, our average performance was 6.22 days. This is against an annual contractual target of 13 days. This constitutes a significant improvement from the previous year where the average performance was 9.40 days.

As at the end of March 2020, the amount of outstanding work totalled 3,497 items. This included 1,705 items pended whilst awaiting information from the claimant and/or third-party. During March, we began to see the impact of the COVID19 lockdown and as a consequence received an increase in volume of new Universal Credit (UC) award notices and changes. This increased volume has continued into the new financial year and will result in an increase in the number of CTS claims being made.

1.1 Temporary Accommodation

We have strong relationships with the LBB Housing Teams, Orchard and Shipman and the Mears Group. Through regular monthly liaison meetings we have been able to resolve any benefit issues or queries quickly and also fast track applications where required. This enables the Housing teams to engage with their tenants early to minimise the opportunity for arrears to accumulate and help sustain tenancies.

The dedicated Temporary Accommodation assessment staff have formed strong relationships with LBB Housing staff and stakeholders with the main focus being to ensure that Benefit claims are paid as quickly and efficiently as possible.

1.2 Verify Earnings and Pensions (VEP) Alerts Service

The VEP alerts, which we receive from the DWP, have proven to be an effective tool in ensuring the earnings and pension information within the Academy system is accurate. The specialised VEP Team, based in the Pendle office, play a key role in ensuring that the daily VEP files provided by the DWP are downloaded and processed. The VEP alerts draw relevant information held by various organisations and provide 'real time' information which is essential in the administration of Benefits.

The efficient processing of the VEP alerts not only ensures that the database is accurate, but also significantly reduces the potential for overpayments where the customer had not notified the Council of any changes in their household income.

1.3 ATLAS

ATLAS is a process of transferring data from the DWP systems to the Local Authority systems. This includes state benefit changes which may not have been previously notified to us by the customer. A significant volume of our ATLAS files have been developed to automate directly into the benefits database which improves speed of processing and reduces the risk of input error by assessors when re-keying information.

1.4 Quality

We continue to be firmly focused on quality and strive to eradicate error from the assessment process. The average financial error rate for the 2019/20 reporting period was 1.9%. Compared to a contractual target of 5% and a 'soft' target of 4%.

All new and upskilled employees undergo an intense training program with significant post completion monitoring to ensure accuracy rates remain at a high level. Quality plays a vital role within our organisation, so regular refresher training is also undertaken by all staff to ensure that knowledge and understanding is consistent with policies, procedures and current legislation.

The DWP accept that a certain level of error will be made in the administration of Benefits. As such, an upper and lower threshold of Local Authority error is outlined by the DWP. Liberata's performance has remained below the lower threshold which attracts maximum subsidy for the Authority.

1.5 Overpayment Strategy

The creation of overpayments is a natural bi-product of the administration of Housing Benefit & Council Tax Support, with recovery needing to be sought from some of the most vulnerable members of the community.

The Housing Benefit recovery rate as at 31 March 2020 was 99.17%. Liberata continues to effectively recover debts by using a variety of techniques including Blameless Tenant recovery, Direct Earnings Attachment and Debt Collection Agencies. These recovery techniques remain highly effective tools in securing the repayment of these debts.

1.6 Universal Credit

During the COVID19 lockdown in March we saw a significant increase in the number of Universal Credit Council Tax Support claims, with the upward trajectory continuing into the new financial year. We have created an online web form which is on the Bromley website to simplify the application process.

Liberata continue to receive high volumes of UC notifications and are currently testing an automated solution which will upload the notifications directly into the

Benefits system. The solution will require changes to internal policy which we are currently discussing with the Council. This will ensure that assessment errors in re-keying data are significantly reduced and also increase performance in processing claims.

The dedicated Single Point of Contact (SPOC) continues to liaise directly with the DWP to ensure that any requests are administered within the agreed 5 days service level.

Liberata's Customer Services team play an active role in sign posting customers to the Job Centre Plus when they visit the Civic Centre reception and are unclear as to where to claim assistance with their housing costs.

2. Corporate Visiting Team (CVT)

The CVT Visiting Officers continue supporting all service lines and provide an effective channel for vulnerable customers to access a number of services. This has created resilience for the service lines as back office staff can focus on processing workloads.

Since the COVID19 lockdown, Visiting Officers are conducting interviews with customers over the phone and have incorporate the DWP's 'Trust and Protect' principles, which means that information required from the customer in respect of income and capital is accepted verbally or by email which will be verified at a later date. This ensures that benefit claims are not held up during this difficult period.

3. Call Centre & Customer Services

The number of Revenues & Benefits customers seen in Customer Services for the period 1 October 2019 to 31 March 2020 totalled 10,701 of which 88% of customers were seen within 15 minutes. The footfall represents a reduction of 24% on the same reporting period October 2018 to March 2019.

The reported figures are up to 23rd March, the last day the service was open to customers before the COVID19 lockdown was imposed. The service did not open again during the reporting period.

The Contact Centre (Help Line) received 53,875 calls which was 13% lower than the same period in the previous year. During the period 94% of calls were answered, with this figure being significantly impacted by March performance.

COVID19 had a major impact on our staff with many having to self-isolate. This had a significant effect on March's performance, prior to the home working solution being put in place early April.

4. Service Developments

Liberata's goal is to continue to improve and enhance the services provided to the Council and its citizens through the introduction of innovative and effective solutions.

Examples of current year new and ongoing initiatives;

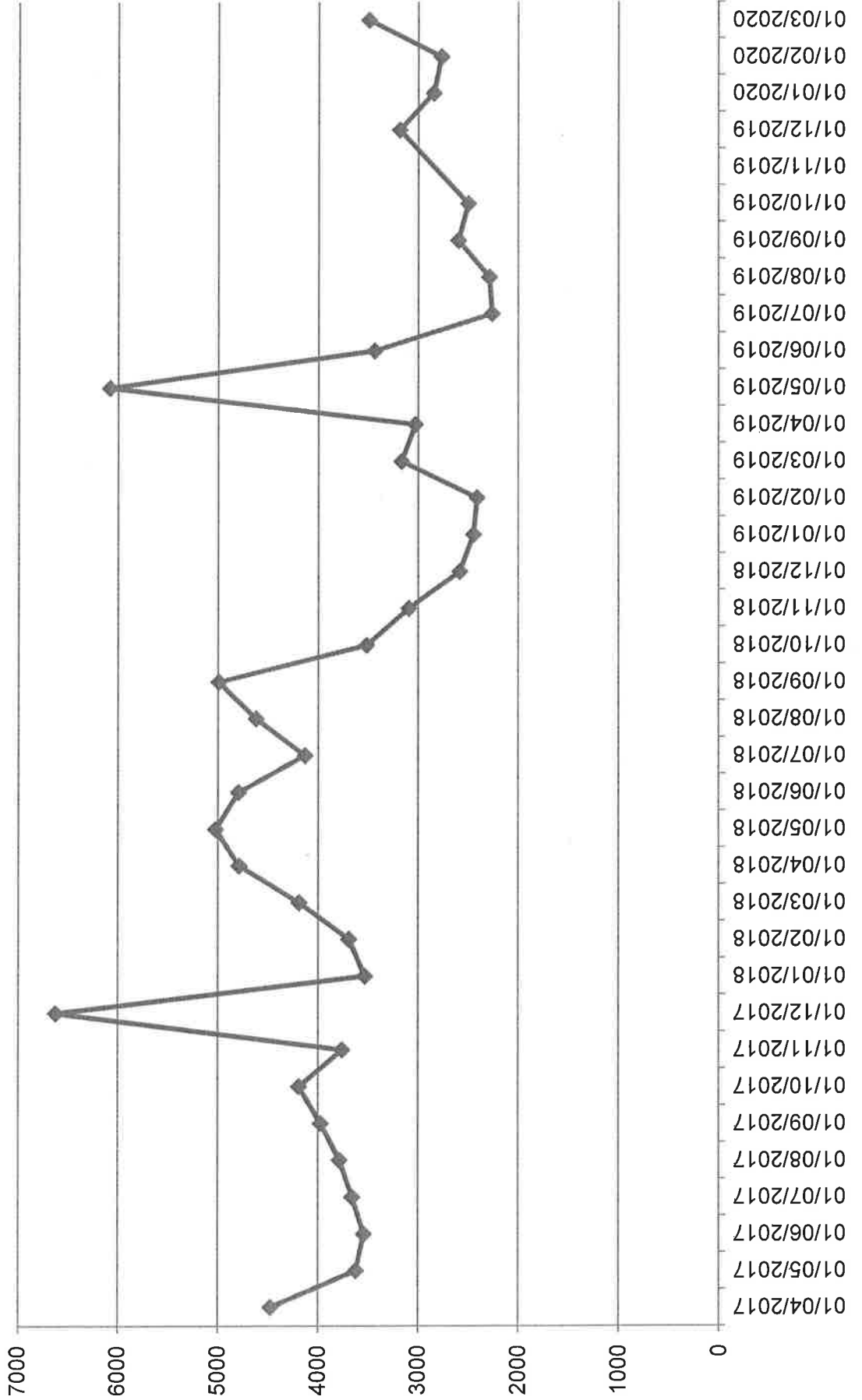
- An online UC CTS web form has been produced and is live on the Bromley website. This enables customers to transact with us online and has been really successful during the COVID19 lockdown period.
- On-going annual reviews of Self Employed cases to ensure that the Benefits database remains accurate and Benefit entitlements are correct.
- On-going implementation of the Capita Advantage Digital product. This will enable customers to use online forms to make a new claim or report changes to an existing claim. The information on the forms will be integrated with the back office processing system.
- Automation of benefit claims will be introduced as part of the implementation of the Capita Advantage Digital product. This will significantly improve speed of processing of claims and the overall customer experience.
- Risk Based Verification (RBV); the policy has now been approved by the Council and is available on the Bromley website. Once we have successfully implemented the Capita One Digital self-serve modules; eClaims and eChanges they will be used in conjunction with RBV. Once this is live, it will provide customers with an enhanced customer experience and significantly improve processing times for both new claims and changes.
- Liberata are reviewing the content of the LBB website and also the letters which are sent out by the Benefit Service. This is planned to drive those customers that are able to use the online functionality as part of our ongoing digital transformation programme.

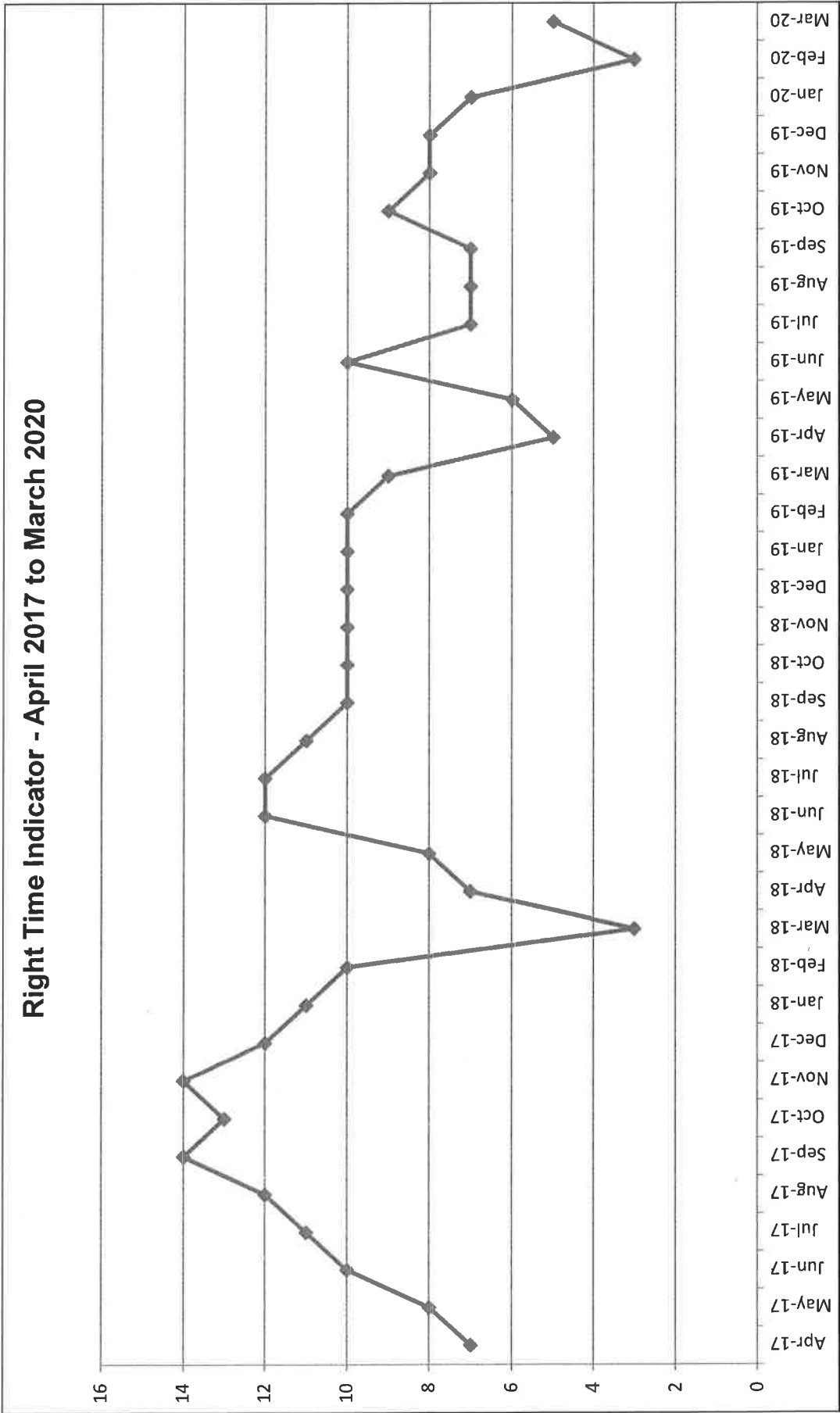
Liberata remains firmly committed to delivering an outstanding service to the London Borough of Bromley and its citizens.

Yours sincerely,

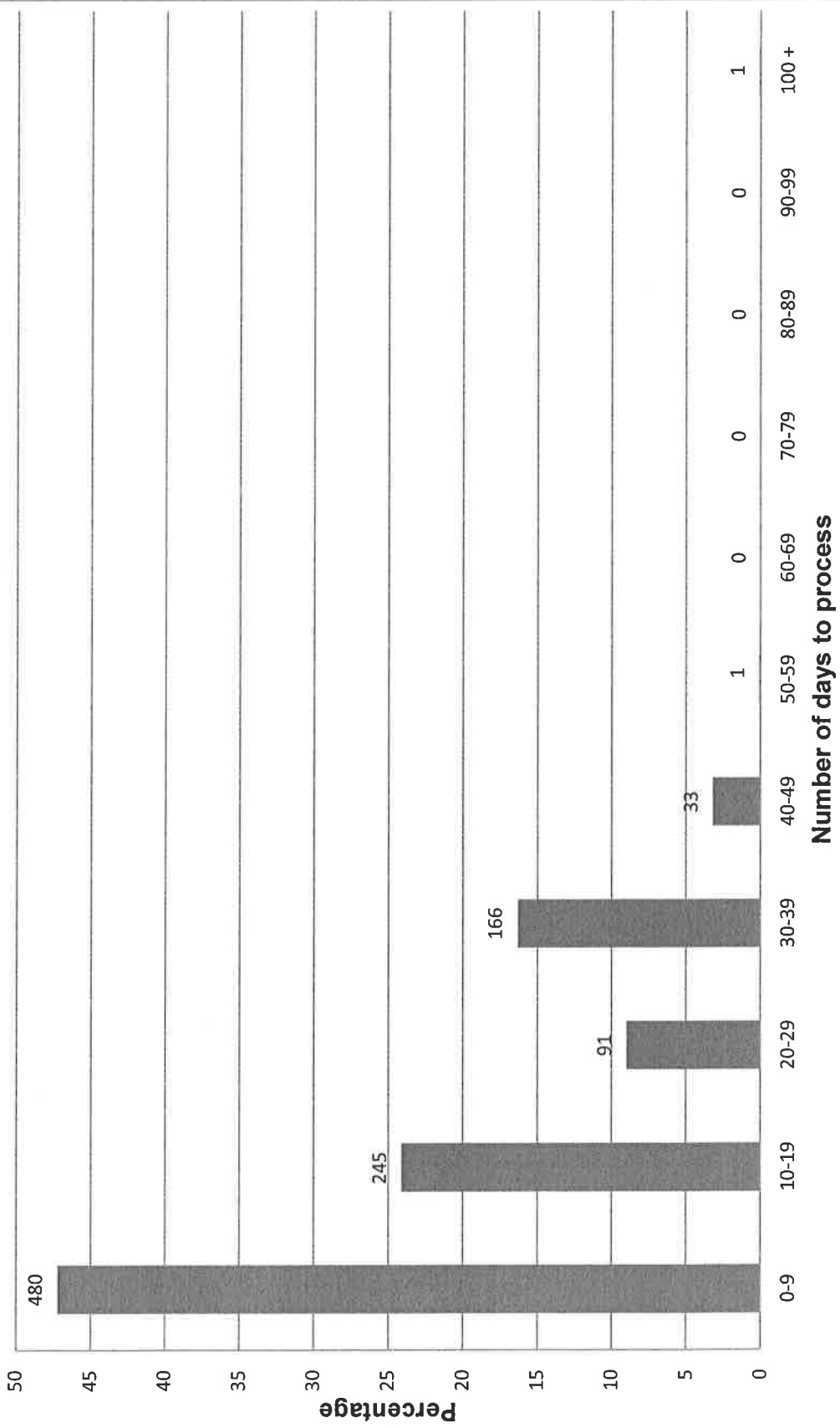
Amanda Inwood-Field
London Regional Contract Director

Outstanding Work April 2017 to March 2020

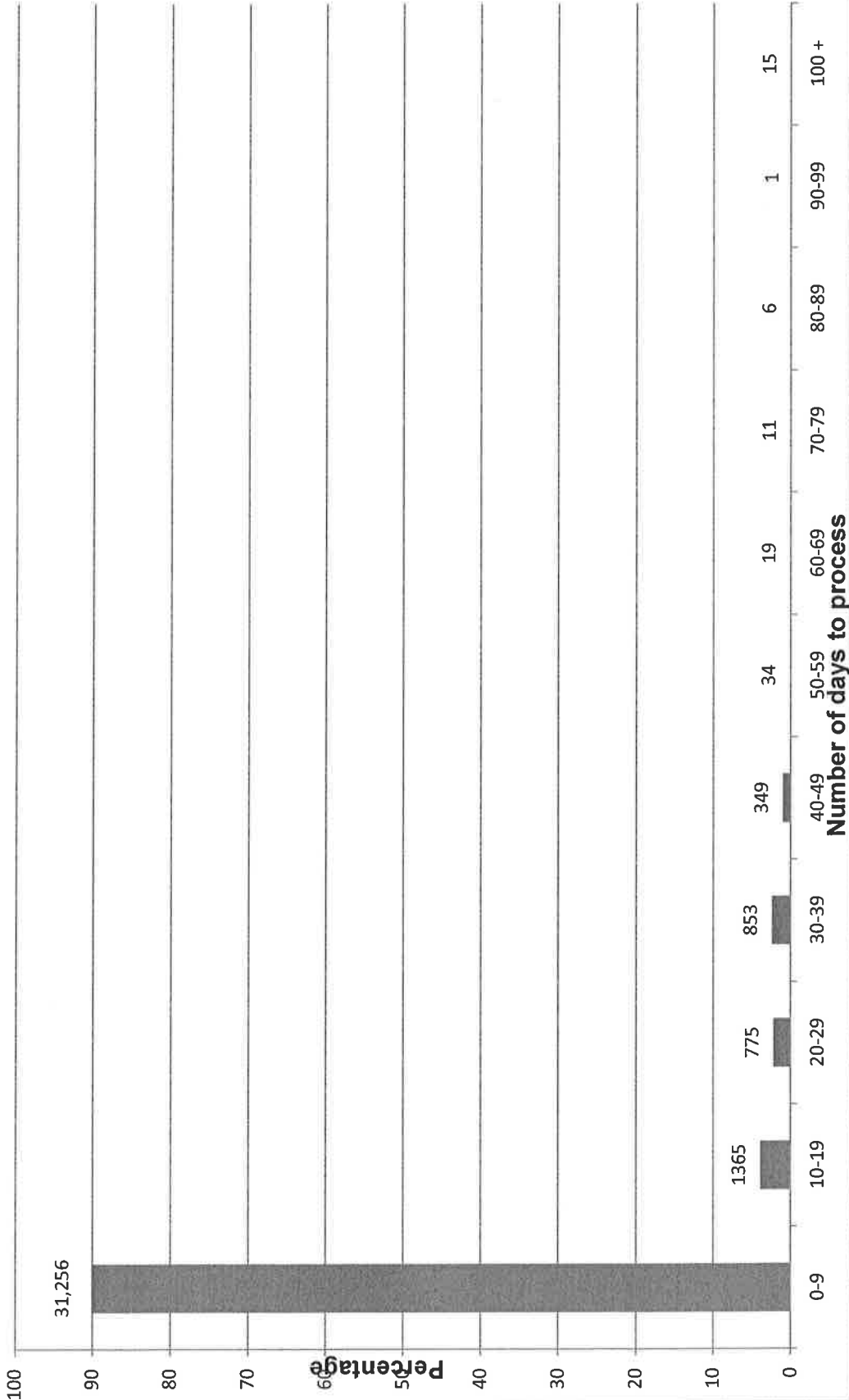


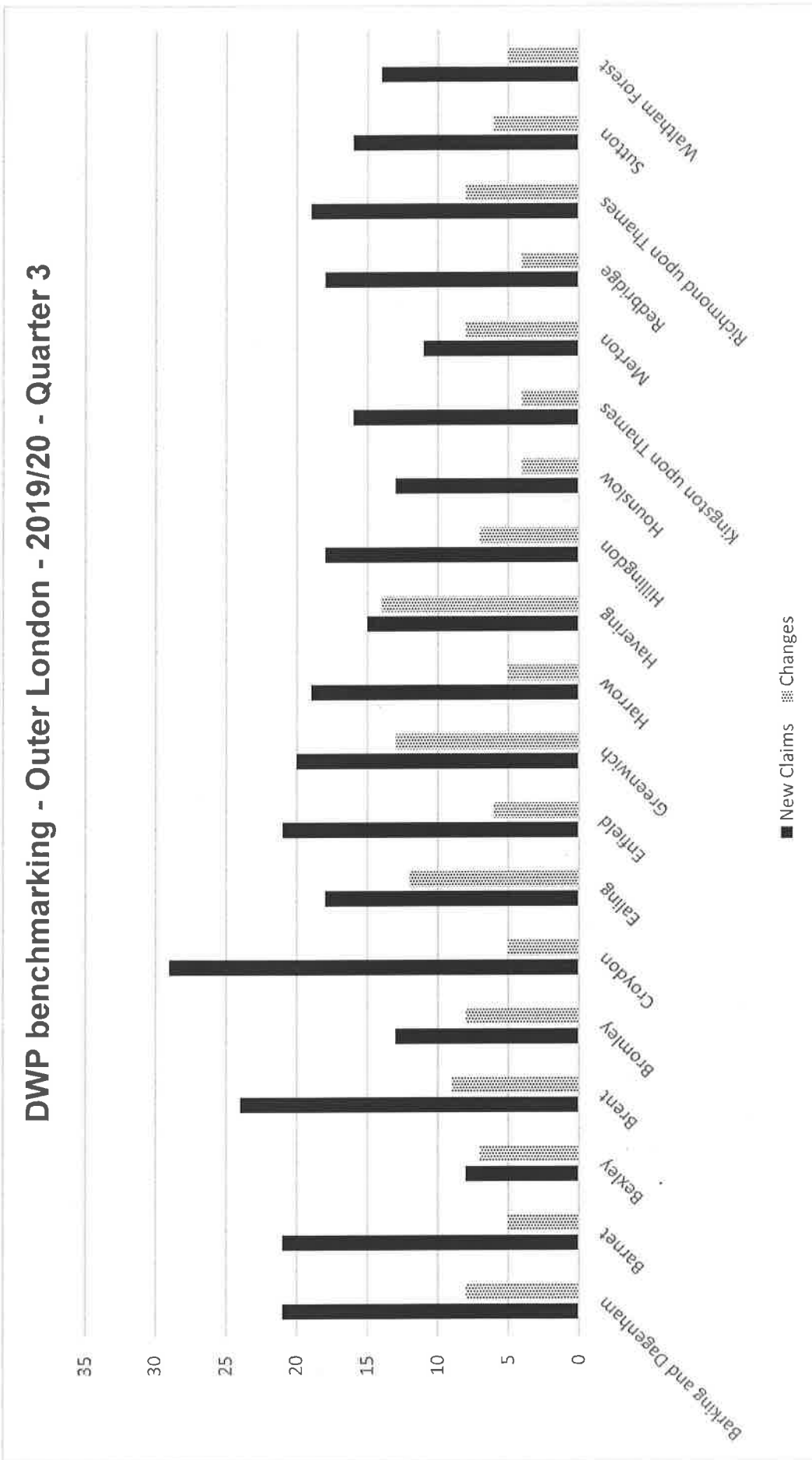


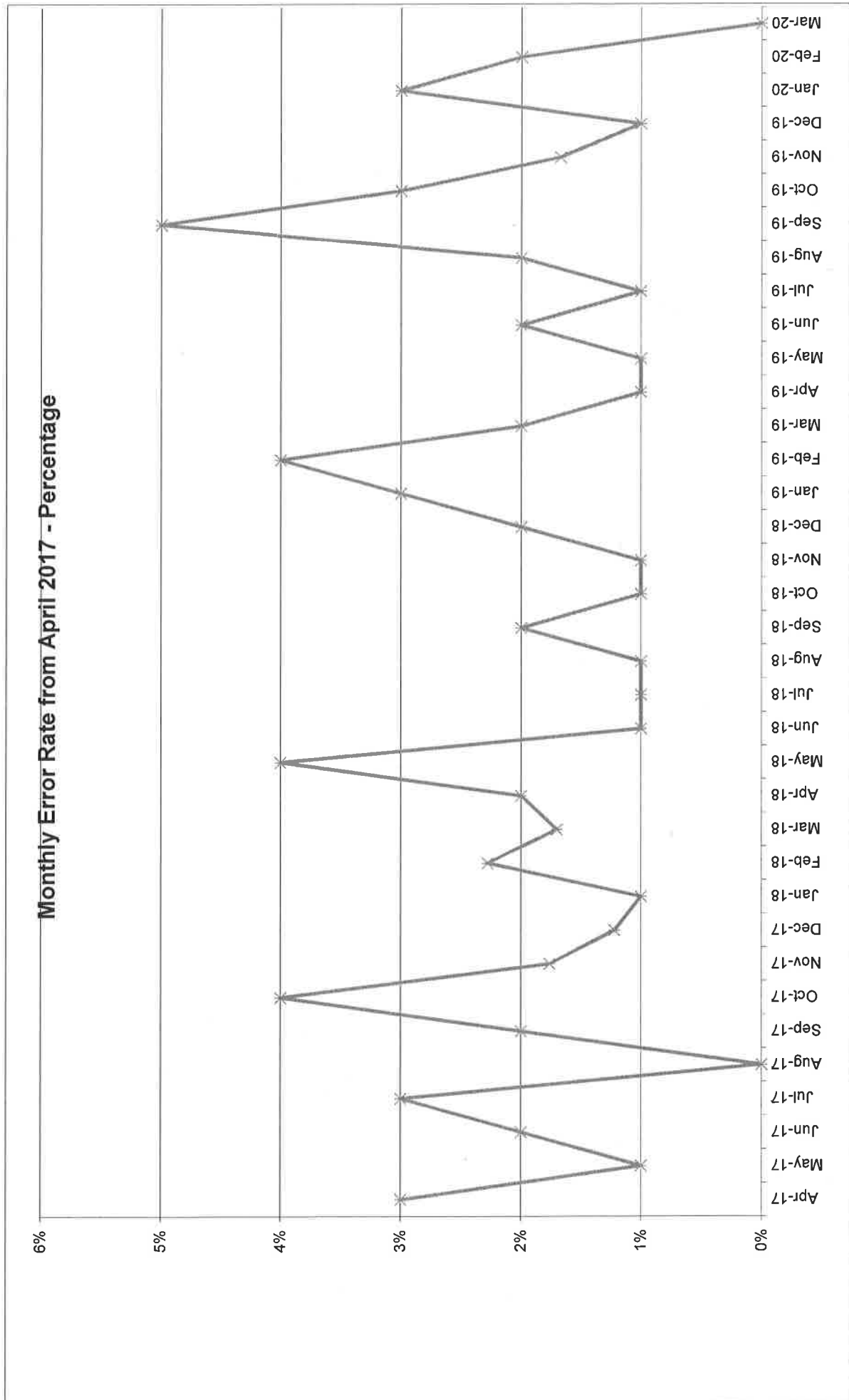
Housing Benefit - processing time breakdown October 2019 to March 2020
 New Claims (1017 cases)



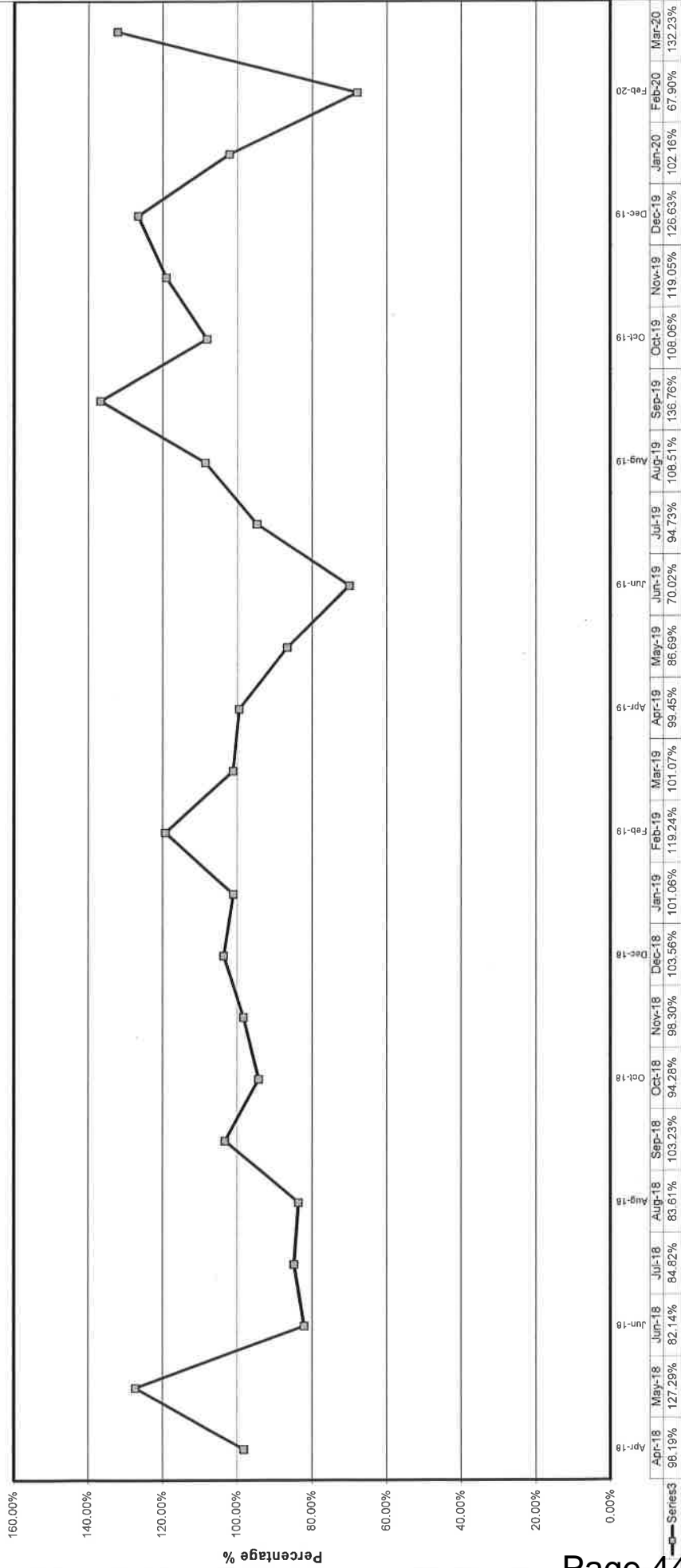
Housing Benefit - processing time breakdown - October 2019 to March 2020
 Change in Circumstances (34,684)



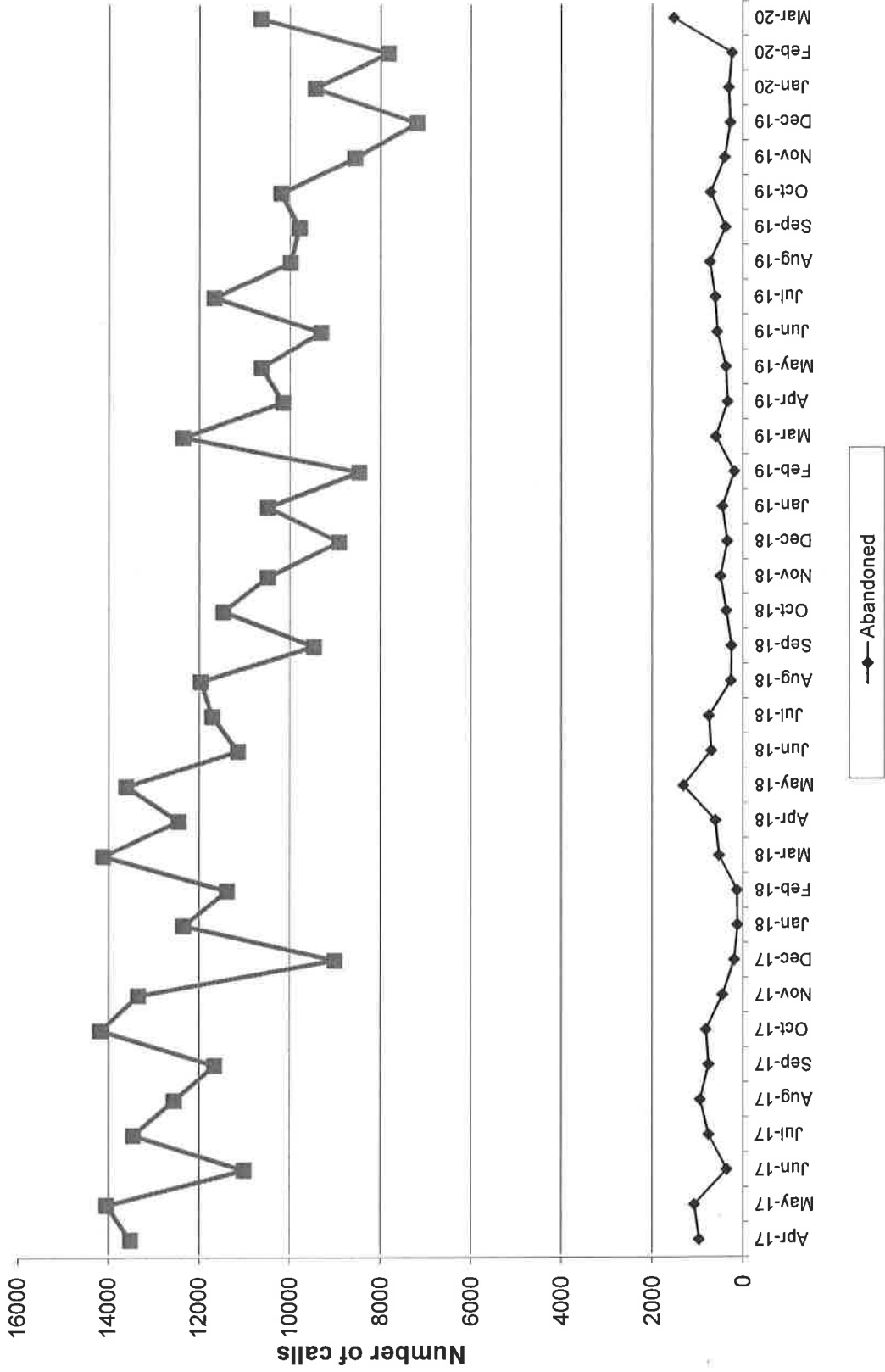




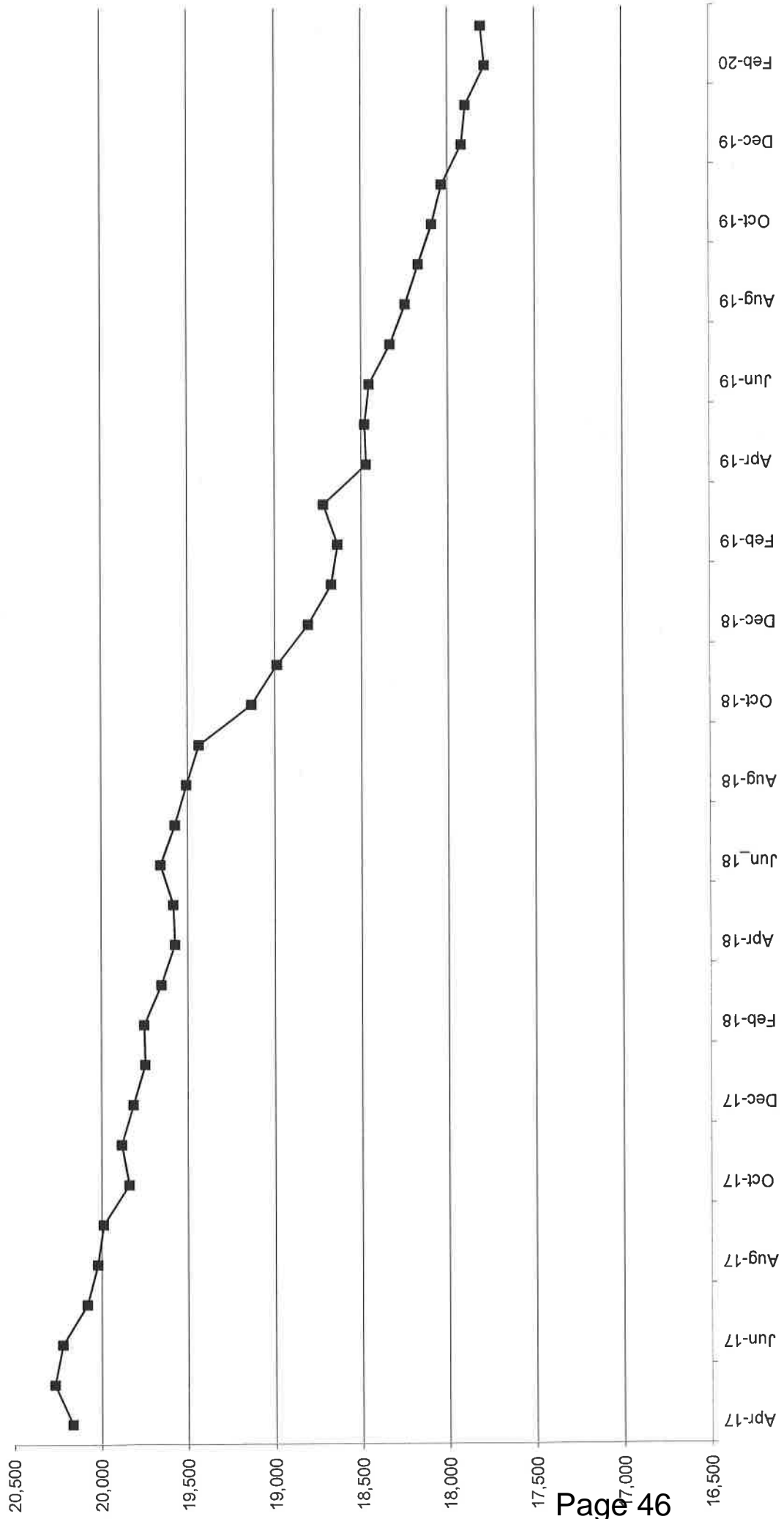
Monthly Overpayment % recovered against that created since April 2018



Calls Received and Abandoned monthly from April 2017



Caseload from April 2017 - every 2 months



Report No.
FSD20050

London Borough of Bromley

PART ONE - PUBLIC

Decision Maker: EXECUTIVE, RESOURCES AND CONTRACTS POLICY
DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date: Wednesday 1 July 2020

Decision Type: Non-Urgent Non-Executive Non-Key

Title: REVENUES SERVICE MONITORING REPORT

Contact Officer: Claudine Douglas-Brown, Assistant Director, Exchequer Services

Chief Officer: Peter Turner, Director of Finance

Ward: (All Wards);

1. Reason for report

- 1.1 This report provides information regarding the performance of the Revenues Services provided by Liberata for the 6 months from 1 October 2019 to 31 March 2020. A letter from Amanda Inwood-Field, Liberata's London Regional Contract Director, provides an update on each individual service and is attached at Appendix 1 with statistical data relating to the Revenues Service attached at Appendix 2.

2. **RECOMMENDATION(S)**

- 2.1 The PDS is requested to note the information contained within the report and the letter provided by Liberata attached as Appendix 1.

Impact on Vulnerable Adults and Children

1. Summary of Impact: The Revenues Service impacts on all residents in the Authority including vulnerable adults/and those with children.
-

Corporate Policy

1. Policy Status: Existing Policy
 2. BBB Priority: Excellent Council
-

Financial

1. Cost of proposal: Not Applicable
 2. Ongoing costs: Not Applicable
 3. Budget head/performance centre: Exchequer - Revenues
 4. Total current budget for this head: £3.00m
 5. Source of funding: Existing revenue budget for 2019/20
-

Personnel

1. Number of staff (current and additional): 2 plus Liberata
 2. If from existing staff resources, number of staff hours: Not Applicable
-

Legal

1. Legal Requirement:
Local Government Finance Act 1988
The Council Tax (Administration and Enforcement) Regulations 1992
The Local Government Finance Act 2012
Rating Law and Practice: England and Wales
LGPS Regulations 2013
 2. Call-in: Not Applicable
-

Procurement

1. Summary of Procurement Implications: The Revenues Service forms part of the Exchequer Service contract.
-

Customer Impact

1. Estimated number of users/beneficiaries (current and projected): The Services covered in this report affect all Council Taxpayers, Business rate payers, Members and Pensioners; this could be estimated to 150,000 households.
-

Ward Councillor Views

1. Have Ward Councillors been asked for comments? No
2. Summary of Ward Councillors comments: Not Applicable

3. COMMENTARY

The Exchequer Service team monitors the contract, sets targets and performance standards, liaises with partners, progresses the development and improvement of services through leadership on specific improvement initiatives. The team also ensures the services comply with the current legislation, financial regulations, contractual obligations and audit requirements. A summary of performance by service is contained in Appendix 2.

To maintain the drive for improved service performance, monthly service review meetings are held with operational and senior Liberata management. The Heads of Service of Liberata and Bromley meet regularly to deal with escalated issues, review policies and develop new ideas.

3.1 Council Tax

The in-year Council Tax collection rate for 2019/20 was 97.86% which was a 0.14% reduction on that achieved in the financial year 2018/19. The final collection figure was affected by the changes in recovery processes implemented in March as a result of the Coronavirus.

Bromley's in-year collection in 2019/20 was the 4th highest performance based on the benchmarking data available from 21 of the 33 London Authorities. .

The collection rate on current year and arrears was 97.85% which was a 0.04% negative variance when compared to the last financial year.

There is no benchmarking data available on this indicator.

At the 31/3/20 the number of households registered for Council Tax was 141,383 which was an increase of 475 on the previous year. Over the same period the number of households receiving SPD was 42,951, this is reduction of 4 on 2018/19.

As requested at January 2020 Executive, Resources and Contracts PDS meeting future reports will include information regarding the number of residents who attend Summons Surgeries or seek assistance from the Helpline.

The table below shows the number of Summonses issued and the number of residents who sought assistance from October 2019 to March 2020:

Month	Number of Summonses issued	Number of people attending Surgery	Number of people contacting Helpline
October 2019	559	20	Not available
November 2019	293	15	Not available
December 2019	0	n/a	Not available
January 2020	778	21	197
February 2020	569	10	163
March 2020	463	9	181

Note: statistical information on the number of residents who contacted the Help-line following the receipt of a summons was not available until January 2020.

3.2 Business Rates

The in-year Business Rates collection rate for as 2019/20 was 98.03% which was down by 0.50% on the previous year. Once again collection was adversely affected by the impact of the Coronavirus and the suspension of recovery action during March as noted above. However, it should be acknowledged that the value of cash collected increased by £0.71m (0.7%) compared to the previous year.

Based on the benchmarking data available from 18 of the 33 London Authorities Bromley's in-year collection in 2019/20 was the 8th highest performance. If Bromley was to include credit balances, as some other authorities do, it would increase our collection rate to 99.10% and our performance to 2nd.

The 2019/20 collection rate for current year and arrears was 95.68%, which was a 1.68% increase compared to the previous financial year. This large year on year increase was partly due to the previous year's collection figure being deflated by the large number (£4.9m) of repayments that were made.

Further commentary is contained in Liberata's letter attached as Appendix 1.

As at the 31/3/20 there were 7,432 registered for Business Rates an increase of 68 on the figure as at the 31/3/19.

3.3 Cashiers

In the financial year 2019/20, payments to the value of £10,898,516 (28,168 transactions) were taken, compared to £15,797,794 (32,045 transactions) in 2018/19. This equates to a reduction of £4.9m, the downward trend had already been visible during the year but was exacerbated in March 2020.

However, the payment kiosks sited in the Civic Centre central reception and in Penge Library continue to take a high volume of payments with only a small decrease as shown below:

Civic Centre Kiosk

	Council Tax	Business Rates	Other	Total	Number of transactions
2018/19	£1,545,745	£100,292	£423,636	£2,069,673	16,506
2019/20	£1,527,138	£72,255	£409,118	£2,008,512	15,841
Variance	-£18,607	-£28,037	-£14,518	-£61,162	-665

Penge Kiosk

	Council Tax	Business Rates	Other	Total	Number of transactions
2018/19	£223,743	£1,050	£0	£224,793	2,981
2019/20	£246,429	£0	£60	£246,489	2,973
Variance	£22,686	-£1,050	£60	£21,696	-8

Both Kiosks

	Council Tax	Business Rates	Other	Total	Number of transactions
2018/19	£1,769,488	£101,342	£423,636	£2,294,466	19,487
2019/20	£1,773,567	£72,255	£409,178	£2,255,000	18,814
Variance	£4,079	-£29,087	-£14,458	-£39,466	-673

3.4 Payroll

The number of payments made in March 2020 was as follows:

LBB General/Schools 2,460

Pensions 5,322

3.5 Pensions

Membership numbers recorded on the pension administration system as at 31 March 2020 were 6,253 actives, 6,402 deferred and 5,592 pensioners.

Liberata have provided assurance that all pension entitlement and benefits are calculated and paid in accordance with Legislation and the Local Government Pension Scheme Regulations.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 The report refers to the significant income collection undertaken through the Exchequer Services contract with Liberata. For 2019/20 the key financial elements of the Revenues Service are:

- £223.5m - Council Tax raised
- £101.8m - Business rates raised
- £60.8m - gross annual amount paid in staff salaries (inclusive of schools but excluding Academies).
- £29.8m - gross annual amount paid in Pensions
- £ 10.9m - annual revenue on 28,168 transactions (including kiosks)

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 This is a contract monitoring report pursuant to CPR23. There are no specific legal implications arising from this report.

Non-Applicable Sections:	Impact on Vulnerable Adults and Children, Policy, Personnel and Procurement
Background Documents: (Access via Contact Officer)	



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 Croydon CR0 6SR
 United Kingdom

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 F +44 (0)20 7378 3701

www.liberata.com

18 June 2020

Our Ref: AIF/RJ

Dear Claudine,

As we approach the July 2020 Executive Resources & Contracts PDS meeting where we consider and review the Exchequer service, we take this opportunity to write to you with Liberata's assessment of the performance that we have provided to London Borough of Bromley (LBB) and its citizens.

This summary covers performance for the year ended 31st March 2020.

Council Tax

The in-year collection for the year was 97.86% and was equivalent to £206.7m of cash collected. The 2019/20 in- year collection was 0.14% lower than the previous year. However, this reflected the impact that the Coronavirus had on our recovery activity. In line with the Council's objective of being sympathetic to residents rapidly worsening financial position, we amended our recovery processes accordingly. Although we still issued reminder letters we stopped all other activity from Enforcement Agents, ceased issuing any court summonses and instead encouraged residents to contact us so we could discuss and agree on achievable repayment plans or implement short term payment deferrals.

In Year Collection

	31/03/2020	31/03/2019	Variance
In Year	£m	£m	£m
Net Collectable Debt	£211.18	£198.30	£12.88
Amount Collected	-£206.66	-£194.33	£12.33
Debt Remaining	<u>£4.52</u>	<u>£3.97</u>	
Collection Rate	97.86%	98.00%	-0.14%

The all-years collection figure achieved was 97.85% and was a decrease of 0.04% compared to the previous year.

All Years Collection

	31/03/2020	31/03/2019	Variance
All Years	£m	£m	£m
Net Collectable Debt	£213.78	£201.09	£12.69
Amount Collected	<u>-£209.19</u>	<u>-£196.84</u>	£12.35
Debt Remaining	<u>£4.59</u>	<u>£4.25</u>	
Collection Rate	97.85%	97.89%	-0.04%

The on-going project to roll out additional self-service modules continued during the year. The facility for residents to receive bills and other correspondence regarding their Council Tax electronically rather than in paper format was launched in late 2019. We had planned a major publicity campaign to encourage residents to sign up for this service prior to the issuing of annual bills in mid-March. The impact of the campaign has been affected by the current situation however, we still achieved sign ups of over 3,000 households. The number of MyBromley Accounts currently stands at nearly 70,000 generating nearly 12,000 online transactions or webpage visits per month. The go live of the module to automate the application process for discounts and exemptions had been planned for early 2020 but has now had to be pushed back until later this year. Currently residents are able to conduct the following online activities:

- View Council Tax annual bills, copy bills, payment details, discount and exemptions status
- View system generated correspondence
- Set up direct debits
- Advise of a change in address
- Set up a payment arrangement
- Receive e-bills for Council Tax and Business Rates
- View Benefit account information and system generated correspondence
- View NNDR annual bills, copy bills, payment details, discount and exemptions status

Business Rates

The in-year collection rate was 98.03% which was down by 0.50% compared to the previous year's figure. Once again our collections were adversely affected by the impact of the Coronavirus which saw many business in the borough having to close temporarily.

In Year Collection:

	31/03/2020	31/03/2019	Variance
In Year	£m	£m	£m
Net Collectable Debt	£96.51	£93.73	£2.78
Amount Collected	<u>-£94.61</u>	<u>-£92.35</u>	£2.26
Debt Remaining	<u>£1.90</u>	<u>£1.38</u>	
Collection Rate	98.03%	98.53%	-0.50%

The all years collection rate for the year was 95.68%, an improvement of 1.68% compared to the previous year.

All Years Collection Rate:

	31/03/2020	31/03/2019	Variance
All Years	£m	£m	£m
Net Collectable Debt	£98.44	£97.43	£1.01
Amount Collected	<u>-£94.19</u>	<u>-£91.59</u>	£2.60
Debt Remaining	<u>£4.25</u>	<u>£5.84</u>	
Collection Rate	95.68%	94.00%	1.68%

Business Improvement Districts (BID)

As in previous years Liberata have continued to manage the billing and recovery for a number of BID boards within the borough. The collection rates achieved are shown below and in some cases, in line with our other debt recovery services, the figures were adversely affected by the Coronavirus:

BIDS	31/03/2020 £000	31/03/2019 £000	Variance
Orpington BID			
Collectable Debt	£189.92	£191.93	-£2.01
Amount Collected	-£186.13	-£187.09	-£0.96
Debt Remaining	£3.79	£4.84	
Collection Rate	98.01%	97.48%	0.53%
Bromley BID			
Collectable Debt	£639.10	£612.71	£26.39
Amount Collected	-£598.10	-£591.81	£6.29
Debt Remaining	£41.00	£20.90	
Collection Rate	93.58%	96.59%	-3.00%
Beckenham BID			
Collectable Debt	£245.66	£243.56	£2.10
Amount Collected	-£223.28	-£210.61	£12.67
Debt Remaining	£22.38	£32.95	
Collection Rate	90.89%	86.47%	4.42%
Penge BID			
Collectable Debt	£147.85	£144.66	£3.19
Amount Collected	-£134.28	-£132.29	£1.99
Debt Remaining	£13.57	£12.37	
Collection Rate	90.82%	91.45%	-0.63%

Cashiers

We collected nearly £10.9m during the year which covered 28,168 transactions and included amounts taken via the Kiosk, post and central income.

Pensions and Payroll

The Pension Team achieved an average of 99.27% service level compliance over the year to 31st March 2020. The Payroll Team also continued to provide a valued service with an average accuracy rate of 99.98% across the Council's Corporate, Schools and Pensions payrolls.

Impact of the Coronavirus

As detailed above the Coronavirus deeply impacted how residents and local businesses interacted with the Council. Our debt recovery processes and communications were quickly amended to take account of the changing national economic position which affected individuals and businesses alike. With the move to total lockdown and the closure of the Civic Centre and our Shared Service Centres across the UK, we also had to steer residents and business to use the Council's website in order to communicate with us. This was to ensure that we were able to manage the rapid rise in queries and notifications of changes in circumstances that we were receiving.

Our approach was to promote the use of self-serve, where available, so residents could quickly access the information that they required or make any necessary changes to their accounts. We also implemented a number of web based 'Contact Us' forms for different service lines. These were designed to ensure that residents provided us with key information in a structured format that allowed us to establish the nature of their query and then resolve it as quickly as possible.

The preparatory work that had commenced as part of the new contract meant that we were quickly able to deploy the necessary IT equipment to all staff to enable them to work from home with limited disruption to the services provided. The idea of promoting more web based interaction with residents and business via channel shift was also one of the fundamental themes of the new contract. This meant that as well as maintaining current services we were also able to work with the Council to design, implement and manage an online solution for the Small Business Grants, the Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grant and the Discretionary Grant that the Government introduced to assist businesses affected by the Coronavirus. Over the last two months, we have processed over 5,000 applications from businesses, over 3,000 of which have been approved, and paid out over £43.5m in grants.

Liberata remains firmly committed to delivering an outstanding service to the London Borough of Bromley and its citizens.

Yours sincerely

Amanda Inwood-Field
London Regional Contract Director

The key elements of the Revenues Service includes (2019/20 figures):

- **£223.5 million** – Annual amount of Council Tax raised.
- **£101.8 million** – Annual amount of Business Rates raised
- **£12.5 million** – Annual payment of Council Tax Support
- **£97 million** - Annual payment of Housing Benefit
- **£60.8 million** – Gross payment of staff salaries (through the LBB payroll service, including schools, excluding Academies) for the period from 1st April 2019 to 31st March 2020
- **£29.8 million** – Payment of Pensions from 1st April 2019 to 31st March 2020
- **£10.9 million** – 1st April 2019 to 31st March 2020 revenue on 28,168 transactions, this includes Kiosk
- (1,141 Loomis cash collections during the year to 31st March 2020)

Council Tax Data:

In year collection performance by Liberata is shown below:

Best Value PI's	Actual 08/09	Actual 09/10	Actual 10/11	Actual 11/12	Actual 12/13	Actual 13/14	Actual 14/15	Actual 15/16	Actual 16/17	Actual 17/18	Actual 18/19	Actual 19/20
BV9:CTAX Collected	97.03%	97.28%	97.59%	97.65%	97.76%	97.50%	97.70%	97.79%	97.93%	98.04%	98.00%	97.86%

Actual 31st March 2020 – 97.86%

The amount of collectable debt raised for the year 2019/20 was £223.5m in respect of 140,802 properties.

238 Cheque refunds and 4,736 BACs refunds totalling **£1,549,727.84** have been issued from 1st April 2019 to 31st March 2020.

The following Council Tax recovery notices were issued:

	31/3/10	31/3/11	31/03/12	31/03/13	31/03/14	31/03/15	31/03/16	31/03/17	31/03/18	31/03/19	31/03/20
Reminders	34,892	34,971	51,920	45,816	56,256	54,745	52,125	55,553	78,657	63,387	57,196
Summonses	17,061	19,774	16,436	16,168	19,267	13,158	9,543	14,052	10,755	9,375	9,561
Liability Orders	10,713	12,956	9,396	10,868	9,999	8,645	8,337	10,338	9,115	8,105	8,606
14 day letters – Enforcement Agent warning	13,127	11,823	11,757	12,518	15,816	10,103	12,214	8,247	8,647	10,074	9,129
Accounts passed to Enforcement Agent	9,724	9,538	All at 14 day stage	All at 14 day stage	All at 14 day stage	All at 14 day stage	All at 14 day stage	All at 14 day stage	All at 14 day stage	All at 14 day stage	All at 14 day stage

NB: The first 14 day letters were issued directly to the bailiffs from **11 July 2011**.

The 2018/19 debt carried forward at the 1st April 2019 was £4,396,384.84

Council Tax - Summoned Debt	
Summonses / costs	£510,867.58
Arrangement	£375,226.60
Bailiff /14 DAY	£1,770,840.37
Attachment	74,647.14
Bankruptcy	£0
Liability	£607,990.72
Un-summused Debt	
Finals	£467,088.10
Un-summused	£589,724.33
Total	4,396,384.84

The breakdown analysis of the total 2018/19 debt outstanding at the 1st April 2019 of £4,396,384.84 is shown above.

The balance of the total 2018/19 debt outstanding as at the 31st March 2020 is £2,637,420.79 a reduction of £1,758,964.05

Council Tax Arrears Breakdown as at 31st March 2020

	Arrears B/F 31.03.2019	Arrears carried forward	Net reduction	Actual % collection
1998	£1,810.57	£384.89	£1,425.68	
1999	£3,282.87	£8.97	£3,273.90	
2000	£9,290.88	£2,837.58	£6,453.30	
2001	£16,823.35	£9,180.51	£7,642.84	
2002	£25,473.60	£18,562.19	£6,911.41	
2003	£40,921.19	£29,373.47	£11,547.72	
2004	£52,439.32	£37,897.21	£14,542.11	
2005	£82,479.43	£60,856.92	£21,622.51	
2006	£118,358.12	£92,649.51	£25,708.61	
2007	£143,387.58	£118,820.19	£24,567.39	
2008	£188,732.34	£153,220.53	£35,511.81	
TOTAL	£682,999.25	£523,791.97	£159,207.28	23.31%
2009	£217,307.95	£177,522.47	£39,785.48	18.31%
2010	£261,999.10	£217,068.30	£44,930.80	17.15%
2011	£347,573.09	£275,722.53	£71,850.56	20.67%
2012	£445,144.54	£359,346.77	£85,797.77	19.27%
2013	£723,085.22	£585,632.18	£137,453.04	19.01%
2014	£921,277.23	£752,041.09	£169,236.14	18.37%
2015	£1,164,803.55	£963,191.92	£201,611.63	17.31%
2016	£1,609,042.38	£1,276,545.41	£332,496.97	20.66%
2017	£2,347,256.44	£1,750,637.73	£596,618.71	25.42%
2018	£4,396,384.84	£2,637,420.79	£1,758,964.05	40.01%
TOTAL	£13,116,873.59	£9,518,921.16	£3,597,952.43	27.43%

Business Rates Data:

In year collection performance by Liberata is shown below:

Best Value PI's	Actual 08/09	Actual 09/10	Actual 10/11	Actual 11/12	Actual 12/13	Actual 13/14	Actual 14/15	Actual 15/16	Actual 16/17	Actual 17/18	Actual 18/19	Actual 19/20
BV10:Rates Collected	99.1%	99.02%	98.9%	98.81%	98.72%	98.70%	98.80%	99.05%	98.87%	98.53%	98.53%	98.03%

The amount of collectable debt raised for the year 2019/20 is **£101.8 million**.

There have been 986 refunds actioned from the 1st April 2019 to the 31st March 2020 amounting to **£3,992,497.31** in respect of vacation and rateable value reductions.

The following recovery notices were issued -

	31/3/10	31/3/11	31/03/12	31/03/13	31/03/14	31/03/15	31/3/16	31/3/17	31/3/18	31/03/19	31/03/20
Reminders Issued	3,977	3404	2,536	4,023	3,545	4,445	4,263	4,288	3,525	3,245	3,447
Final Notices Issued	1,892	1,824	1,741	2,014	2,472	2,353	1,560	1,960	1,985	1,312	2,201
Summonses Issued	903	725	1,156	987	1,091	1,053	535	1,123	768	601	429
Liability Orders	666	672	749	683	771	734	411	525	522	550	438
7 day letters issued	674	367	471	501	No longer used	No longer used	No longer used	No longer used	No longer used	No longer used	No longer used
Accounts passed to Enforcement Agent	316	430	537	645	650	444	283	184	159	203	369

The **2018/19** debt carried forward at 1st April 2019 was **£1,470,359.14**

NNDR recovery stage	Amount
Un-summonsed	£369,180.08
Arrangement	£86,216.25
Enforcement Agent	£249,750.98
Final	£240,169.00
Liability	£307,413.38
Reminders	£140,434.54
Summonsed	£77,194.91
Total	£1,470,359.14

Movement in arrears for reporting period –

Arrears total 2001 - 2018/19 as at **01/04/19** **£3,192,632.62**

Arrears total 2001 - 2018/19 as at **31/03/20** **£1,458,592.74**

Reduction in Overall arrears **£1,733,039.88**

Business Rates Arrears breakdown as at 31st March 2020

	Arrears B/F 31.03.2019	Arrears carried forward	Net reduction	Actual Collection %
2008	3,658.03	2,226.54	-1,431.49	39.13%
2009	18,695.36	2,295.44	-16,399.92	87.72%
2010	12,087.57	11,415.65	-671.92	5.56%
2011	18,487.20	17,763.66	-723.54	3.91%
2012	66,134.43	45,096.04	-21,038.39	31.81%
2013	67,587.48	48,379.15	-19,208.33	28.42%
2014	143,513.10	75,580.35	-67,932.75	47.34%
2015	255,896.31	88,970.89	-166,925.42	65.23%
2016	401,212.31	186,048.94	-215,163.37	53.63%
2017	734,001.69	366,700.81	-367,300.88	50.04%
2018	1,470,359.14	614,115.27	-856,243.87	58.23%
	3,191,632.62	1,458,592.74	-1,733,039.88	54.30%

Backdated revaluations and the removal of discounts and exemptions can result in a backdated increase in arrears

Cashiers Data

The cashiering service dealt with the following transactions in the period 1st April 2019 to 31st March 2020:

Civic Centre Total	Transactions including Kiosk
£10,898,516.32	28,168

Payroll Data:

The average number of payments made each month/annually is shown below:

	Monthly	Annually
Non-Teaching/Teaching	2,438	29,258
Pensions	5,277	63,319

Complaints Data:

Service	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
Council Tax	125	118	277	372	540	427	348	373	344	337
	2	1	7	4	21	10	6	3	4	3
NNDR			(7 unfounded)	(4 unfounded)	(7 unfounded)	(9 unfounded)	(3 unfounded)	(2 unfounded)	(3 unfounded)	(1 unfounded)
Pensions	7	7	3	4	4	2	4	2	4	8
	(4 unfounded)	(2 unfounded)	(2 unfounded)	(2 unfounded)	(1 unfounded)		(2 unfounded)	(1 unfounded)	(2 unfounded)	(5 unfounded)
Payroll	9	4	9	5	9	4	1	0	3	3
	(3 unfounded)		(2 unfounded)	(2 unfounded)	(7 unfounded)	(2 unfounded)	(1 unfounded)		(2 unfounded)	(3 unfounded)
Cashiers	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Report No.
FSD20051

London Borough of Bromley

PART ONE - PUBLIC

Decision Maker: EXECUTIVE, RESOURCES AND CONTRACTS POLICY
DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date: Wednesday 1 July 2020

Decision Type: Non-Urgent Non-Executive Non-Key

Title: EXCHEQUER SERVICE - CONTRACT PERFORMANCE
REPORT

Contact Officer: Claudine Douglas-Brown, Assistant Director: Exchequer Services
Tel: 020 8461 7479 E-mail: Claudine.Douglas-Brown@bromley.gov.uk

Chief Officer: Director of Finance

Ward: (All Wards);

1. Reason for report

This report provides information regarding Liberata's performance in the provision of Exchequer Services for the period 1st April 2019 to 31st March 2020.

- 1.2 A letter from Amanda Inwood-Field, Liberata's Contract Director, provides an update on each individual service and is attached at Appendix 1 with statistical data relating to the services shown in subsequent appendices.
-

2. **RECOMMENDATION(S)**

The Committee is requested to note the information contained within the report on Liberata's performance and the action taken to address any performance issues.

Impact on Vulnerable Adults and Children

1. Summary of Impact: None
-

Corporate Policy

1. Policy Status: Existing Policy:
 2. BBB Priority: Excellent Council
-

Financial

1. Cost of proposal: Not Applicable:
 2. Ongoing costs: Not Applicable:
 3. Budget head/performance centre: Exchequer Service – Payment, Income and Charging
 4. Total current budget for this head: £1.82m
 5. Source of funding: Existing budget 2019/20
-

Personnel

1. Number of staff (current and additional): 5fte plus Liberata staff
 2. If from existing staff resources, number of staff hours: Not Applicable
-

Legal

1. Legal Requirement: Statutory Requirement:
Public Health (Control of Disease) Act 1984
Late Payment of Commercial Debts (interest) Act 1998
The County Court Act 1984
The Civil Procedure Rules
Environmental Protection Act 1990
Housing Act 2004
The Care Act 2014
The Public Contracts regulations 2015
 2. Call-in: Not Applicable:
-

Procurement

1. Summary of Procurement Implications: None
-

Customer Impact

1. Estimated number of users/beneficiaries (current and projected): The services covered in this report affect those who owe general income to the Council, all of the Council's suppliers and all adult social care clients. This amounts to an estimated 40,000 people
-

Ward Councillor Views

1. Have Ward Councillors been asked for comments? Not Applicable
2. Summary of Ward Councillors comments: Not Applicable

3. COMMENTARY

- 3.1 This report provides information regarding the performance of the Exchequer Services provided by Liberata for the period 1st April 2019 to 31st March 2020.
- 3.2 The Exchequer Client Unit monitor the contractor's compliance against the contract to ensure that services are provided to the required standard, meeting the agreed targets and performance standards. Where there are areas of concern or underperformance, the Assistant Director, Exchequer Services will agree an action plan with Liberata to address these issues. The team also ensures the services comply with current legislation, financial regulations, contractual obligations and audit requirements.
- 3.3 To maintain the drive for improved service performance, monthly service review meetings are held with operational and senior Liberata management. To further illustrate the commitment to the continuous improvement agenda the Contract Director and Finance Service Delivery Director meets with Bromley regularly to deal with escalated issues, review policies and develop new ideas.
- 3.4 The Exchequer Services covered in this report are:-
- Sundry Debtors, Mortgages and Corporate Debt
 - Accounts Payable
 - Financial Assessment and Management
 - Appointee and Deputyship

4. SERVICE PROFILE/DATA ANALYSIS

4.1 Sundry Debtors, Mortgages & Corporate Debt

- 4.1.1 The sundry debts performance is measured on the amounts recovered at the end of each reporting period. At the 31st March 2020, there were 2,884 invoices outstanding totalling £11.9m. Of the total amount, £5.04m (42.36%) had been outstanding for less than 30 days.
- 4.1.2 As at 31st March 2020, the amount recovered in respect of invoices raised between 1st April 2019 and 31st March 2020 was £57.08m or 86.77% against a target of 92%.
- 4.1.3 The different factors that adversely affected in-year collection are shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1

Description	No. of Invoices	Value of Invoices
Invoices raised during the last 14 days of the month	462	£3,692,022.39
Community Infrastructure Level (CIL) invoices due after 31st March 2020	8	£1,465,152.04
Disputed and escalated debts	150	£820,133.41
Debts secured by Charging Orders	2	£92,319.73
Debts placed on hold	10	£2,512,997.04
Total	632	£8,582,624.61

- 4.1.4 Table 2 shows the in-year collection rate however to reflect Liberata's recovery performance it has been adjusted to take account of those debts where Liberata could not pursue payment. This gives a revised collection rate of 99.79% at 31st March 2020 which was above the target.

Table 2

	As at 31/03/18	As at 31/03/19	As at 31/03/20
Unadjusted Collection Rate	86.64%	86.63%	86.77%
Adjusted Collection Rate	97.13%	94.03%	99.79%

4.1.5 **Appendix 2** shows the comparison between the levels of outstanding debt for each month from April to March for the years 2015-16 through to 2019-20.

4.1.6 **Appendix 3** shows the comparison between the numbers of invoices outstanding each month from April to March for the years 2015-16 through to 2019-20.

Aged Debt as at 31st March 2020

4.1.7 The out-of-year collection rate across all financial years was 99.45% with £5.34m collected in 2019/20. The factors which continue to affect out-of-year collection are shown below.

Table 3

Description	Value of Invoices
Disputed and escalated debts	£1,115,747.42
Debts awaiting write off	£730,472.39
Debts with LBB's legal team	£170,574.25
Debts secured by Charging Order	£249,330.73
Total	£2,266,124.79

4.1.8 Table 4 shows the movement in the out-of-year debt for the year 1st April 2019 to 31st March 2020 along with the overall % reduction.

Table 4

	31-Mar-19	31-Mar-20	Reduction since 31/03/19
	£,000	£,000	%
Pre 2016	1,254	1,122	11%
2016/17	517	449	13%
2017/18	1,021	756	26%
2018/19	5,757	881	85%
Total	8,549	3,208	62%

4.1.9 **Appendix 4** shows the overall recovery position of debts in each financial year up to 31st March 2020.

4.1.10 The categories with the largest debt are “With LBB for instructions” and “In dispute/under query”. Liberata continue to work with LBB officers in order to resolve queries and disputes as quickly as possible so that recovery action can continue.

4.1.11 Cases are escalated by Liberata to the Exchequer Client Unit who liaise with senior LBB officers regarding pursuing the debt or writing it off if it is uncollectable.

Utilities

4.1.12 The total debt outstanding for utilities was £190k as at 31st March 2020, which was £43k higher than the previous year. This was mainly due to an increase in the Thames Water debt which increased by £49k. However it should be noted that of the £112k outstanding £103k is less than 30 days old. The outstanding debt for BT is now under £26k and although £15k is in dispute, this remains a much improved position than in previous years. LBB officers continue to liaise with the service department regarding the disputed sum.

4.1.13 **Appendix 5** shows a summary of Utility debts as at 31st March 2020.

Income

4.1.14 The Income Team raised 10,769 sundry invoices (excluding Trade Refuse invoices) with a value of £71m from 1st April 2019 to 31st March 2020.

4.1.15 During the same period 1,125 invoices relating to all financial years, with a total value of £5.44m were subsequently cancelled. This includes invoices for charges raised in advance where the service was subsequently cancelled.

4.1.16 **Appendix 6** shows the value of invoices raised month by month for the period from 1st April 2019 to 31st March 2020 compared to the same periods in the previous three financial years.

4.1.17 **Appendix 7** shows the number of invoices raised month by month for the period from 1st April 2019 to 31st March 2020 compared to the same periods in the previous three financial years.

4.1.18 The outstanding debt for Trade Waste was £113k as at 31st March 2020. Table 5 provides an analysis of the outstanding debt and compares it to the position as at 31st March 2019. This shows a slight decrease of 3.34% (£4k) since 31st March 2019.

Table 5

Age Analysis of Trade Balance	As at 31st March 2019	As at 31st March 2020	Variance	
			£k	%
Under 30 days old	£13	£1,711	£1,698	
Invoices 31-365 days old	£20,431	£28,738	£8,306	
Invoices over 1 year old	£96,192	£82,298	£-13,894	
Total	£116,637	£112,747	£-3,890	-3.34%
Recovery Status of Trade Balance				
Payment arrangements/Direct Debits	£0	£169	£169	
Invoices in dispute	£12,665	£22,073	£9,407	
Awaiting cancellation	£0	£0	£0	
Awaiting write off	£42,684	£49,073	£6,388	
Active Recovery	£61,287	£41,432	£-19,855	
Total	£116,637	£112,747	£-3,890	-3.34%

Nightly Paid Accommodation Charges

- 4.1.19 The outstanding debt for Nightly Paid Accommodation charges as at 31st March 2020 was £6.2m for current and former occupiers. Table 6 gives a breakdown of the outstanding debt as at 31st March 2019 and 31st March 2020 which shows an increase of £676k.
- 4.1.20 The collectable rent continues to grow, with an increase of £2.4m (27.82%) since 31st March 2019. There has been a small decrease in Housing Benefit (HB) in the same period; £17k (0.30%), and cash collections have decreased by £271k (12.56%). It should be noted that in previous years the cash payments also included payments made by the DWP for clients in receipt of Universal Credit (UC) however a number of these clients now receive HB instead of the housing element of UC.
- 4.1.21 Liberata participated in the implementation of the Orchard Housing system along with Housing Officers and phase one went live on 18th December 2019. However recovery has been adversely impacted by the implementation including a number of system issues. Although some of the issues are yet to be resolved, the new IT system offers clearer workflow processes which can identify cases at all stages of arrears recovery and effectively flag them for action. This will ensure all cases are actioned quickly and effectively. As well as more robust processes the system also provides improved monitoring tools. Liberata continue to work with the Housing Systems team to resolve the issues.

Table 6

	Arrears as at 31 March 2019	Arrears as at 31 March 2020	Variance %
Charges raised for current year	£8,671,275	£11,083,686	28%
Charges raised and arrears brought forward for previous years	£4,955,279	£2,859,063	-42%
Payments received from debtors	-£2,155,760	-£1,885,102	-13%
Housing Benefit awards	-£5,806,531	-£5,789,082	0%
Sub total	£5,664,264	£6,268,565	11%
Less combined total debts written on/off	-£125,596	-£53,425	-57%
Total	£5,538,667	£6,215,139	12%

4.2 Accounts Payable

- 4.2.1 Under the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 the Council is required to publish prompt payment data showing the percentage of undisputed invoices paid within 30 days.
- 4.2.2 A BV8 summary covering the period from 1st April 2019 to 31st March 2020 is shown below. This shows that the percentage of undisputed invoices that were paid within 30 days was 99%, against a target of 98%. The percentage of invoices paid within 20 days was 97%.

Table 7

Target: 98%	Invoices Over 30	Invoices Under 30	Total	%	Invoices Over 20	Invoices Under 20	Total	%
Manuals	35	18,305	18,340	100%	230	18,110	18,340	99%
I-Proc	478	14,410	14,888	97%	906	13,982	14,888	94%
Carefirst	157	17,684	17,841	99%	348	17,493	17,841	98%
Adults	6	827	833	99%	64	769	833	92%
Cumulative YTD Total	676	51,226	51,902	99%	1,548	50,354	51,902	97%

4.2.3 Table 8 below shows the percentage split in the method of payments to suppliers. The percentage of suppliers paid by BACS from 1st April 2019 to 31st March was 92%. This is an increase in BACS payments of 1% compared to last year.

4.2.4 Officers recognise that it is more cost effective to make payments by BACS and are working with Liberata to continue to reduce the number of cheque payments further.

Table 8

Month	2018/2019				2019/2020			
	BACS		Cheque		BACS		Cheque	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Apr	2,817	94%	190	6%	2,966	93%	214	7%
May	2,607	91%	253	9%	2,440	91%	235	9%
Jun	2,296	91%	235	9%	2,485	89%	297	11%
Jul	2,779	92%	248	8%	2,639	92%	215	8%
Aug	2,277	89%	286	11%	2,114	91%	214	9%
Sep	2,597	93%	209	7%	2,596	92%	227	8%
Oct	2,470	91%	252	9%	2,406	93%	189	7%
Nov	2,559	90%	300	10%	2,248	93%	174	7%
Dec	2,202	92%	188	8%	2,941	95%	145	5%
Jan	3,257	93%	244	7%	2,644	92%	217	8%
Feb	2,436	92%	217	8%	2,500	94%	170	6%
Mar	2,893	90%	308	10%	3,012	93%	217	7%
Total	31,190	91%	2,930	9%	30,991	92%	2,514	8%

4.3 Financial Assessment and Charging

4.3.1 The Key Performance Indicator figures for the team covering the period from 1st April 2019 to 31st March 2020 are shown in table 9 below.

Table 9

Indicator	Target	Actual 2016/17	Actual 2017/18	Actual 2018/19	Actual 2019/20
Complete Financial Assessments within 10 working days	100%	92%	95%	80%	65%
Produce the charging file from CareFirst weekly	100%	100%	97%	100%	100%

- 4.3.2 During the first half of the year a number of experienced staff on the team left over a short period of time and this led to a backlog resulting in Liberata being unable to achieve the KPI for completing financial assessments within 10 working days.
- 4.3.3 A recovery plan was put in place and closely monitored by the Exchequer Client Unit with progress against the plan reported on a weekly basis and by December 2019 the backlog had been cleared and the performance had improved to an average of 83% a month in the final quarter of 2019/20. Performance for the first quarter of 20/21 is expected to be higher and this will be reported in the next monitoring report.
- 4.3.4 Performance in the latter part of the year improved as additional staff were deployed in both the local team and the Shared Service Centre. February/March sees an increase in work due to the annual uplift of charges however in March this year there were additional challenges arising from the Coronavirus which meant some staff having to self-isolate. Liberata were able to quickly address this by enabling staff to work remotely.
- 4.3.5 Additional resources have been appointed to the Shared Service Centre to increase resilience on the Bromley contract and undertake the quality checking of assessments. Liberata have also undertaken additional targeted quality checking on new staff or when new processes have been introduced in order to provide assurance on accuracy and compliance.

Plans for ongoing improvements

- 4.3.6 The Information@Work Data Management System (DMS) is now live and being used by the Financial Assessment processing team. The Liberata management team are now able to manage the workload more effectively through the workflow system. The suite of Information@Work reports in use will enable the benchmarking exercise to be undertaken which will play a key role in Performance Management.
- 4.3.7 Liberata's Quality and Appeals (QA) team independently carry out quality checking of the assessments undertaken by the Financial Assessment team. This is used as part of the employee review and to identify any additional training requirements.
- 4.3.8 Liberata have now produced an online Financial Assessment Residential Review web form. This enables clients to complete their review form online and also submit evidence digitally through the Evidence Upload portal. Liberata are in the process of designing a new integrated online Financial Assessment smart web form. This will significantly streamline the process for providing financial information and improve the overall service for social care customers. Although COVID-19 placed a hold on development of the form, it is being treated as a high priority so that it can be made available to as soon as possible.

4.4 Appointee and Deputyship

4.4.1 The Key Performance Indicator figures for the team, covering the 12 months to 31st March 2020, are shown in table 10 below. This shows the service continues to perform well.

Table 10

Indicator	Target	Actual 2016/17	Actual 2017/18	Actual 2018/19	Apr 19 to Sept 19
Referral of applications to the Panel within 14 working days	100%	97%	100%	100%	100%
Raise invoices within 2 months of the anniversary of the court order	100%	100%	100%	99%	100%

5. USERS/STAKEHOLDER SATISFACTION

5.1 Complaints are treated as free intelligence to drive improvement and learning. Each complaint is used as a tool for improvement, with individual errors seen as an opportunity to put things right not just for the individual complainant but for the wider community.

5.2 The table below shows the number of complaints received since April 2016 split between justified and unjustified. For the range of services being provided the number of complaints is relatively low however there was an increase in the number of complaints received by the Financial Assessment and Management team due to the issues referred to in 4.3.4 above. These cases are highly sensitive relating to charges for social care so a failure to provide prompt and accurate information will often lead to complaints from families and representatives.

5.3 Liberata strives to deal with such cases with extra care and consideration and will continue to improve processes based on feedback received, where appropriate.

	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
Sundry Debtors/Income				
Justified	7	2	6	4
Unjustified	4	2	8	3
Total	11	4	14	7
Accounts Payable				
Justified	-	-	-	-
Unjustified	1	1	-	-
Total	1	1	-	-
Financial Assessment & Management				
Justified	14	20	6	13
Unjustified	12	5	2	5
Total	26	25	8	18
Appointee & Deputyship				
Justified	-	1	-	-
Unjustified	1	-	-	-
Total	1	1	-	-

6. IMPACT ON VULNERABLE ADULTS AND CHILDREN

- 6.1 The Single Financial Assessment Unit are required to carry out timely and accurate financial assessments so that the adults receiving social care and support are informed as early as possible how much they are required to pay towards their care. When there are delays in completing financial assessments or providing information this can cause distress or anxiety for clients and their families.
- 6.2 The Accounts Payable Team are responsible for making direct payments to vulnerable adults, children with disabilities, foster carers and care homes. Making the correct payments on time ensures there is no impact on vulnerable adults or children.
- 6.3 The Appointee and Deputyship Team provide services to vulnerable adults who lack the capacity to manage their finances. Prompt submission of court and DWP applications ensures that the risk of financial abuse is removed as early as possible.
- 6.4 The Appointee and Deputyship Team also carries out protection of property in order to prevent or mitigate the loss or damage to property belonging to adults in Bromley who are receiving care and support from the Council or are in hospital and no suitable arrangements have been made.

7. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 Although annual changes to the Council's Personal Budget and Contribution's policy impact on the work undertaken by the contractor these are generally not significant to affect the contract price.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 The services provided through the Exchequer Services Contract referred to within this report deal with significant financial transactions with examples illustrated below:
 - Accounts Payable - £500m per annum
 - Sundry debts (income) - £65m per annum
 - Financial Assessments - £14m per annum
 - Appointee and Deputyship - £3m per annum
- 8.2 For 2019/20 the contract overspent by £20k. This variation across the Payment, Income and Charging element of the contract was funded from underspends across the rest of the Exchequer contract.
- 8.2 For 2019/20, the total cost of the contract was £1.84m, which was £20k over the revenue budget provision for the year. This variation across the Payment, Income and Charging element of the contract was funded from underspends across the rest of the Exchequer contract.
- 8.3 The additional costs were in relation to work that was transferred to Liberata however this cost is now contained within the overall contract price.

9. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

None

10. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

This report is a contract performance report for Exchequer Services and is submitted in compliance with rule 23 of the Contract Procedure Rules which requires an annual update report to be submitted when the value of the contract is in excess of £1 million.

11. PROCUREMENT IMPLICATIONS

None

Non-Applicable Sections:	9 and 11
Background Documents: (Access via Contact Officer)	Appendices 1-7

Claudine Douglas-Brown
Assistant Director of Exchequer Services
London Borough of Bromley
Civic Centre
Stockwell Close
Bromley
BR1 3UH

18 June 2020

Our Ref: AIF/RJ

Dear Claudine,

As we approach the July 2020 Executive Resources & Contracts PDS meeting where we consider and review the Exchequer service, we take this opportunity to write to you with Liberata's assessment of the performance that we have provided to London Borough of Bromley (LBB) and its citizens.

This summary covers performance for the 12 months to 31st March 2020.

Debtors and Income

The Sundry Debts unadjusted in-year collection figure for the year was 86.77%. This represented cash of £57.1m, which was an increase of £9.4m on the previous year. The adjusted collection figure, which excludes debts where recovery action is not possible, was 99.79% and was 7.79% above the target. Details of the excluded debts are listed below:

- £1.47m of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) invoices were raised during the year but were not due for payment until after the year end.
- Invoices totalling £3.69m were issued within the last 14 days of the year. However, active recovery action can only commence on these debts after 21 days.
- A number of debts were placed on hold either due to the debt being in dispute or because we were awaiting further instructions from the Council.
- Debts totalling £90k had been secured by Charging Orders.

In Year Collection	31/03/2020	31/03/2019	Variance
	£m	£m	£m
Net Collectable Debt	£65.78	£55.07	10.71
Amount Collected	£57.08	£47.71	9.37
Unadjusted Collection Rate	86.77%	86.63%	0.14%
Adjustments to Net Collectable Debt:			
- CIL Debts	-£1.47	-£0.33	
- Disputed Debts	-£0.82	-£0.58	
- With LBB	-£2.51	-£0.09	
- Charging Orders	-£0.09	-£0.22	
- Invoices less than 14 days old	-£3.69	-£3.09	
Adjusted Net Collectable Debt	£57.20	£50.76	£6.44
Adjusted Collection Rate	99.79%	94.03%	5.76%

Our collection rate on out of year debt was 99.45% and represented £5.34m. As with the in-year collections we have a number of debts where we are unable to take any active recovery action. These debts represented 70.6% of the total outstanding balance and are summarised below:

- £1.3m of debt was either in dispute or were on hold pending instructions from the Council.
- £730k of debt had been either recommended for, or was awaiting, write off.
- £249k of debt had been secured by Charging Orders.

The new Orchard Housing System went live in December 2019. Unfortunately ongoing issues with the system meant that there was a four month period when we were unable to take any recovery action on the Nightly Paid Accommodation debts due to uncertainty over the outstanding balances. This, together with the £2.4m (27.82%) increase in current year charges, contributed to the increase in the year end debt position of £676k.

Accounts Payable

For the year to 31st March 2020, the percentage of undisputed invoices that were paid within 30 days was 99% which was 1% above the annual target. The percentage of invoices paid within 20 days was 97%. The percentage of suppliers paid by BACS during the year was 92% which was 1% higher than the previous years' figure.

Financial Assessment and Management Team

Our client base, as at 31st March 2020, comprised of 791 clients receiving residential care and 3,297 clients receiving non-residential care. We had previously reported that a new online assessment form was being piloted by the Visiting Officers.

Liberata is the trading name of Liberata UK Limited (Registered in England and Wales - No 1238274) and other Liberata group companies. Registered Office: 1st Floor, 100 Wood Street, London EC2V 7AN. Liberata UK Limited is a subsidiary of Ardvarna Investment Capital Limited (Registered in England and Wales - No 7358243). Registered Office: 1st Floor, 100 Wood Street, London EC2V 7AN.

However, the results of this pilot showed that, due to the volume of information contained within the form, this was not the most efficient type of form for use by the general public. As a result a full review was undertaken and we are now creating a fully integrated data form. We are aiming to have this live on the Bromley website later this year. In the meantime we have rolled out an online review form for residential care clients which has been used as part of the annual uplift process.

Liberata has invested in additional staff based in our Shared Service Centre (SSC). This has created significant resilience for both the residential and non-residential assessments service and will enable us to ensure that KPI's are achieved and maintained during spikes in workload and at specific times throughout the year. The SSC continues to undertake Quality Checking and identifying best practice across our London contracts.

The Information@Work Data Management System (DMS) is now live. The workload is distributed in priority order to employees via workflow. Liberata management now have a greater, in depth view of the workload and have the ability to allocate work in line with KPI requirements. The suite of automated reporting within DMS outlines the performance of employees and provides the foundation for benchmarking which underpins Liberata's Performance Management procedure.

Appointee & Deputyship Team

As at 31st March 2020, the team had 257 clients of which 192 were for Appointeeship and 65 were for Deputyship. The arrangements to switch from Lloyds Link to Lloyds Commercial Online Banking was finalised and put into effect from mid-September 2019. This has improved transaction times when processing payments to clients and payment of invoices to LBB.

The implementation of Information@Work Data Management System (DMS) across the Adult Social Care services has now enabled a more robust management of the caseload as well as providing the opportunity to utilise expertise in this area across the London contracts. This has improved resilience and allows for the adoption of best practice.

Impact of the Coronavirus

The Coronavirus had a profound impact on the way that Liberata were able to provide a service to the Council and the residents of Bromley. However, we were aided in this respect by both the additional measures we had started to implement as part of the mobilisation project for the new contract and the strong ethos of partnership working that exists between Liberata and Council employees.

Preparations to mitigate the effects of the virus began in February when Liberata undertook a scenario based Business Continuity/Disaster Recover exercise to test our plans for dealing with a pandemic. This was followed up in early March with

online training courses for managers in dealing with pandemics, bi weekly company-wide impact monitoring meetings and then, from mid-March, with weekly contingency planning meetings with our key contacts in the Council.

Under the new contract we had committed to roll out technology to allow employees to work remotely as part of our Business Continuity plan. This project started in December 2019 and was due to conclude during Quarter 1 of 2020. The advent of the Governments' lockdown meant that we had to complete the roll out and training on the new technology ahead of schedule. As a result we were able to empty the Civic Centre, initially of all vulnerable employees and those that needed to shield relatives, and then of all remaining employees by 24th March while still being able to provide our normal services.

As well as changing our technology we also had to amend many of the existing processes in order to allow for remote working and the digital transfer of documents in place of paper copies. Once again we were aided in this exercise by the work we had already started in advance of the new contract where we have a number of projects aimed at increasing automation and allowing residents to transact online for the Debtors and Income and Accounts Payable services.

As a result of the above we were quickly able to implement revised debt recovery processes to take account of the overnight change in residents and businesses finances by offering payment deferrals, renegotiating payment plans and placing all Enforcement Agents visits on hold for an initial period of three months. Process changes were put into place to allow us to pay care providers and suppliers of Personal Protection Equipment as quickly as possible as a way of supporting these key service providers.

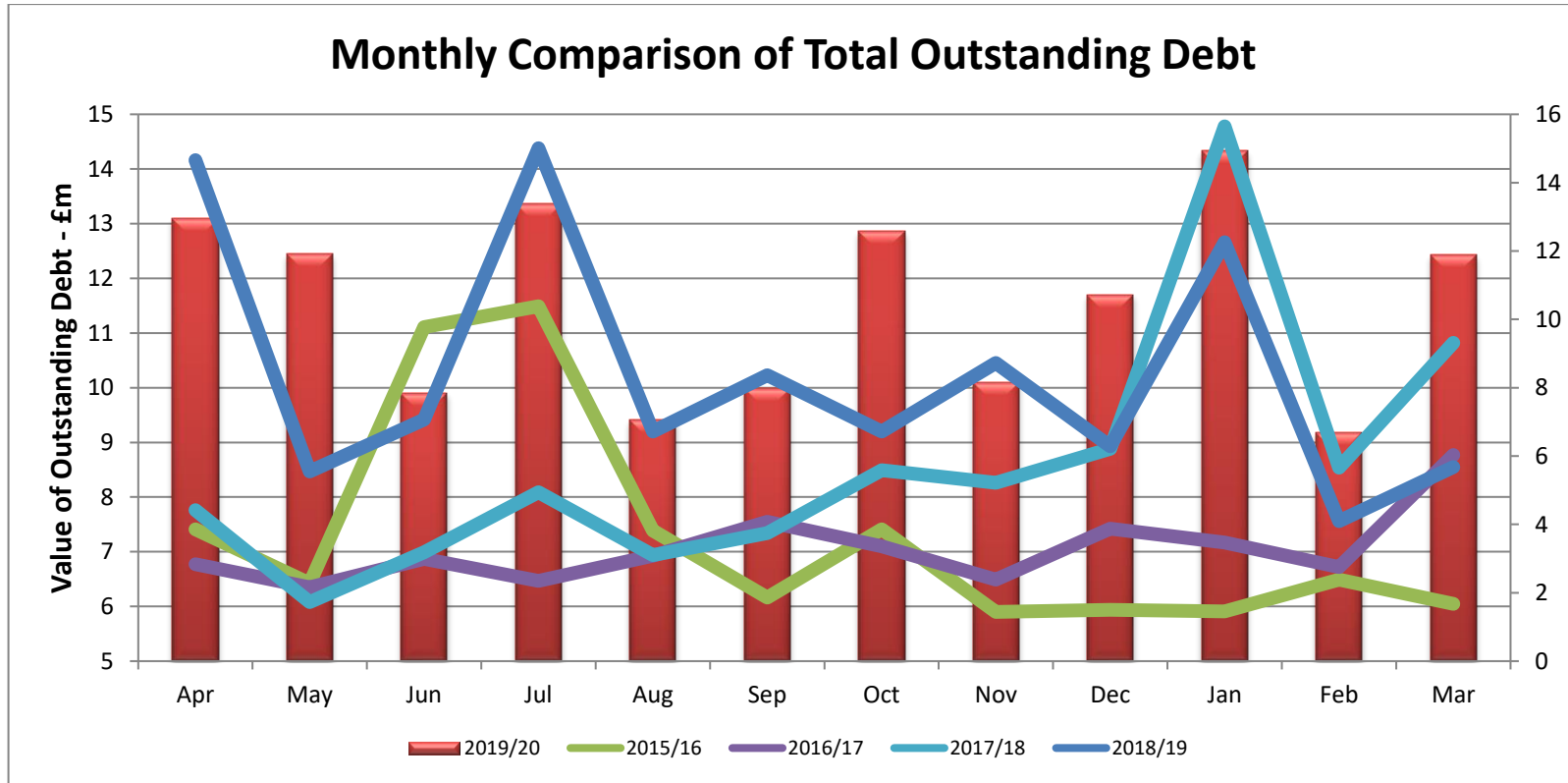
The virus also created significant challenges which needed to be overcome to enable us to continue delivering the Appointee & Deputyship service to some of our most vulnerable customers. Immediate changes to our processes were designed, agreed and implemented to enable us to continue providing customers with their personal financial support during the lockdown period.

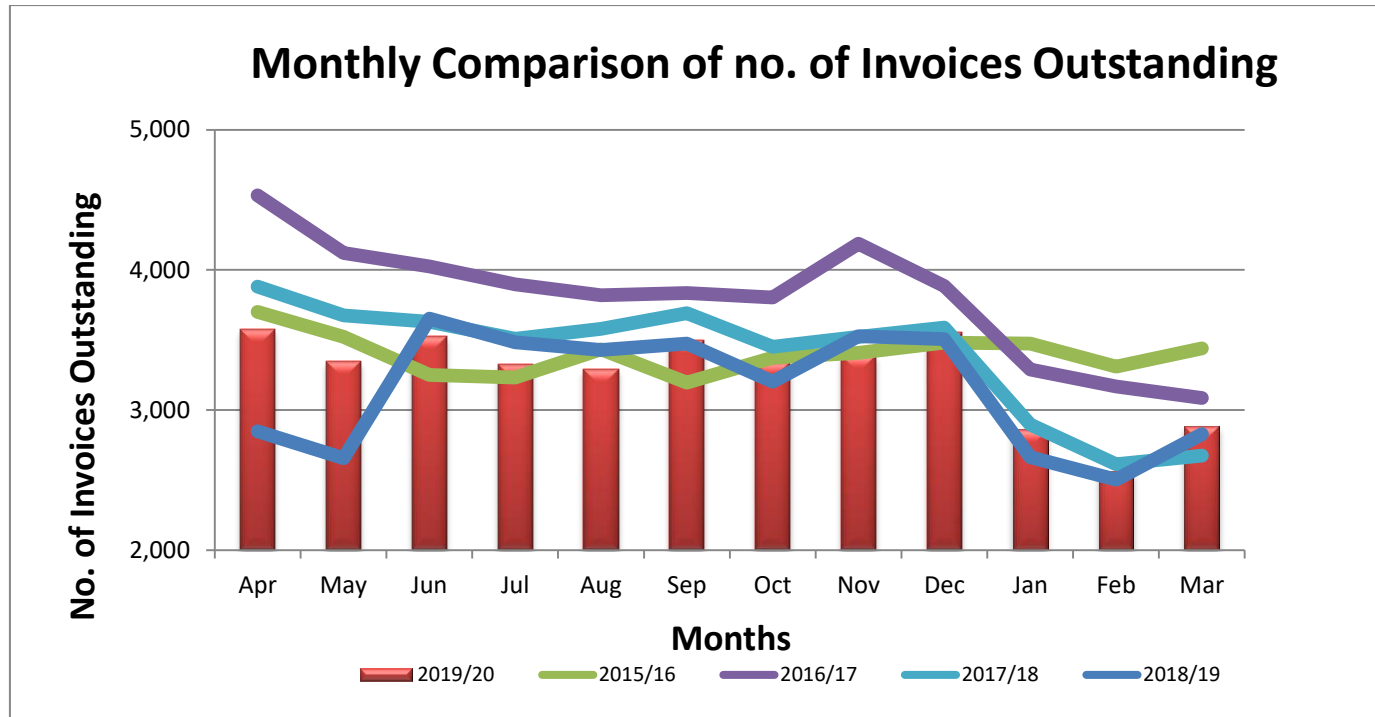
Liberata remains firmly committed to delivering an outstanding service to the London Borough of Bromley and its citizens.

Yours sincerely

Amanda Inwood-Field
London Regional Contract Director

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Overall recovery position of outstanding debts as 31st March 2020

Fin Year in which the original debt was raised	Pre 2015	15-16	16-17	17-18	18-19	19-20	Grand Total
	£,000	£,000	£,000	£,000	£,000	£,000	£,000
In reminder letter cycles (no pro-active recovery)						2,966	2,966
Recovery being actively pursued		17	3	8	86	440	554
In Recovery, paid by instalments	36	23	14	8	18	1,378	1,477
Appointee & Deputyship in place	5			3	1	26	34
Deceased Accounts		5	5	14	29	123	176
Searching for probate				12	12	1	26
Probate granted (in recovery)	3				11	6	21
With LBB for Instructions				2	27	2,513	2,543
Pre Debt Collector checks		1	6	6	1	4	18
With Debt Collector	23	7	8	28	22	39	127
Returned from Debt Collector	2		7	4	3	2	17
Court Action (pre-legal action review & application)	75	29	114	84	69	180	550
Judgement obtained - Enforcement options in review	5	16	40	2	4		68
Judgement obtained - Attachment of Earnings							
Judgement obtained - Charging Order	24	1	1		224	92	342
Judgement obtained - Post CCJ Payment Arrangement	9						9
Judgement obtained - High Court Enforcement	16	2	7	1		1	27
Judgement obtained -Third Party Debt Order							
Judgement obtained - Bankruptcy					13		13
With LBB Legal Dept for instructions	68	13	40	35	15	5	175
Awaiting cancellation					3	5	8
Recommended for Write Off	526	25	49	104	26	31	761
In dispute/under query (with LBB service departments)	114	76	158	445	317	866	1,976
Premises Licences - awaiting instruction from department						5	5
Grand Total	907	216	449	756	881	8,683	11,892

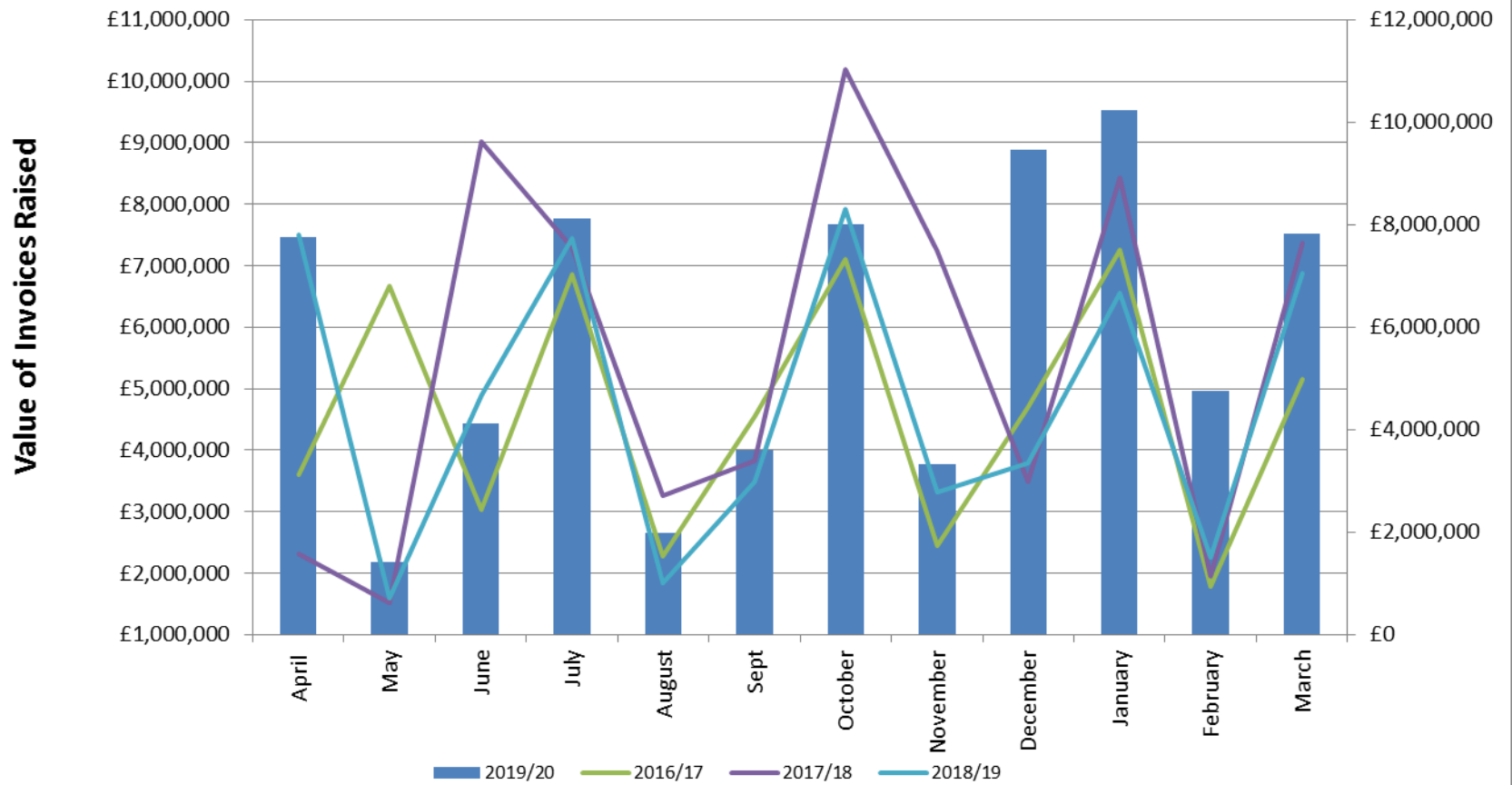
Age Profile of outstanding Utility Debts as at 31st March 2020

Utility	Pre 2015	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	TOTAL BALANCE
Virgin Media	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£13,208	£13,208
British Telecom	£14,660	£609	£0	£95	£0	£10,314	£25,678
EDF	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0
UK Power Networks Ltd	£2,068	£0	£345	£0	£0	£4,168	£6,581
Southern Gas	£0	£0	£0	£0	£1	£5,520	£5,521
Thames Water	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£112,466	£112,466
Other Utilities	£4,988	£3,040	£2,804	£3,270	£615	£11,937	£26,654
TOTAL	£21,716	£3,648	£3,149	£3,365	£616	£157,612	£190,106

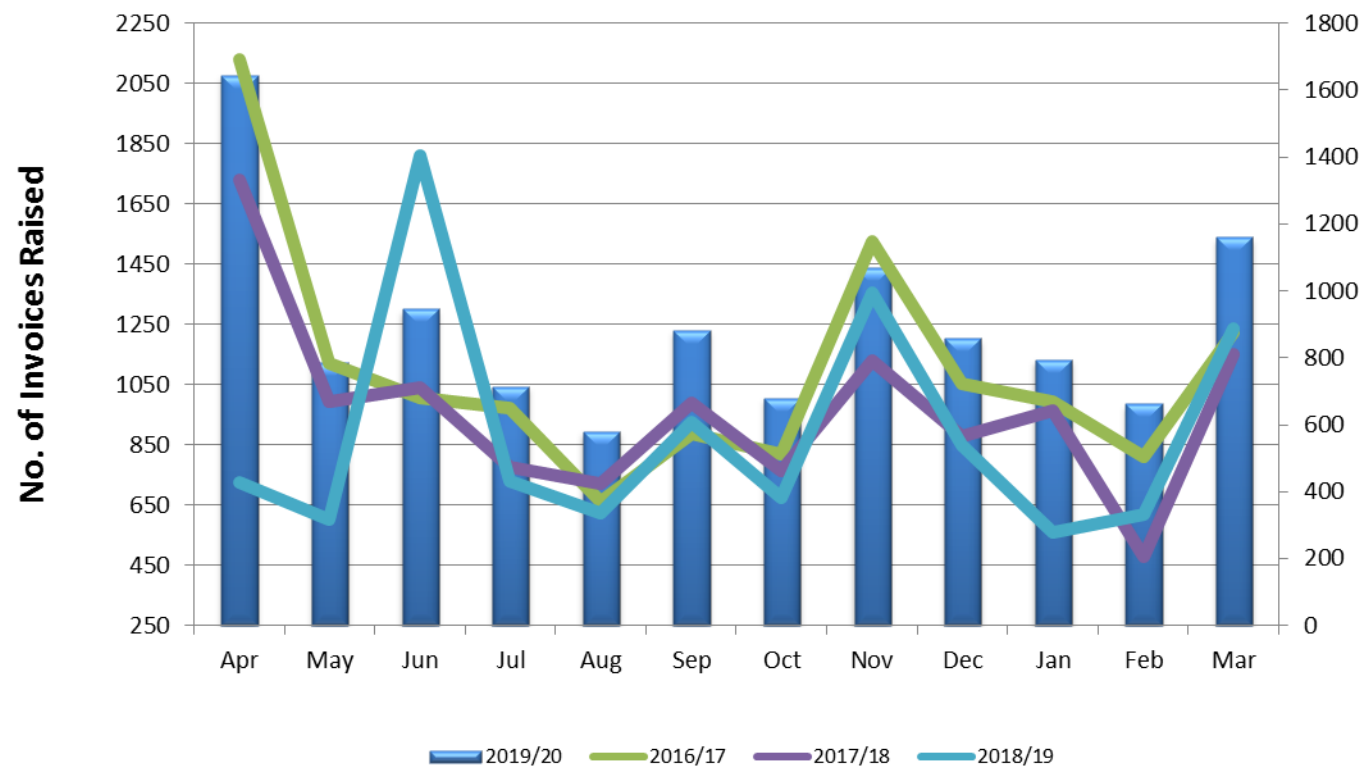
Overall Recovery Position of outstanding Utility Debts as at 31st March 2020

Utility	Total under 30 days old	Total over 30 days old	Total outstanding	No. of invoices in dispute	Amount of invoices in dispute	Amount marked for write off
Virgin Media	£13,208	£0	£13,208	0	£0	£0
British Telecom	£7,702	£17,976	£25,678	7	£15,364	£0
EDF	£0	£0	£0	0	£0	£0
UK Power Networks Ltd	£2,488	£4,093	£6,581	0	£0	£2,413
Southern Gas	£5,283	£238	£5,521	1	£238	£1
Thames Water	£103,216	£9,250	£112,466	0	£0	£0
Other Utilities	£9,076	£17,578	£26,654	8	£6,751	£1,770
TOTAL	£140,971	£49,135	£190,106	16	£22,352	£4,184

Monthly Comparison of the Value of invoices Raised



Monthly Comparison of No. of Invoices Raised



Report No.
CSD 20073

London Borough of Bromley

PART ONE - PUBLIC

Decision Maker: EXECUTIVE, RESOURCES AND CONTRACTS POLICY
DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date: Wednesday 1 July 2020

Decision Type: Non-Urgent Non-Executive Non-Key

Title: CUSTOMER SERVICES CONTRACT MONITORING REPORT

Contact Officer: Duncan Bridgewater, Assistant Director – Customer Services
Tel: 0208 461 7676 E-mail: Duncan.Bridgewater@bromley.gov.uk

Chief Officer: Director of Human Resources and Customer Services

Ward: (All Wards);

1. REASON FOR REPORT

This report provides information on the performance of the Customer Service Contract provided by Liberata for the period 1st December 2019 to 31st May 2020.

A letter from Amanda Inwood-Field, Contract Director for Liberata, provides her update on each individual element and is attached at Appendix 1.

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

The Committee is requested to note and comment on the information contained within the report and the letter provided by Liberata detailed in Appendix 1.

Impact on Vulnerable Adults and Children

1. Summary of Impact: An Equality Impact Assessment indicates that ongoing support for vulnerable adults and children will be provided by Customer Service by phone and face to face for those unable to access digital services. For those unable to visit or phone us, the service supports the enhancement of self-service options.
-

Corporate Policy

1. Policy Status: Existing Policy
 2. BBB Priority: Excellent Council
-

Financial

1. Cost of proposal: Estimated Cost No Cost Not Applicable: Further Details
 2. Ongoing costs: Recurring Cost Non-Recurring Cost Not Applicable: Further Details
 3. Budget head/performance centre: Customer Services Contract
 4. Total current budget for this head: £900k 2020/2021
 5. Source of funding: Existing revenue budget
-

Personnel

1. Number of staff (current and additional):1
 2. If from existing staff resources, number of staff hours: N/A
-

Legal

1. Legal Requirement: Non-Statutory - Government Guidance:
 2. Call-in: Not Applicable:
-

Procurement

1. Summary of Procurement Implications: None
-

Customer Impact

1. Estimated number of users/beneficiaries (current and projected): 64,000 visitors, 680,000 phone calls, 20,000 e-mails and 4.5 million web visits annually.
-

Ward Councillor Views

1. Have Ward Councillors been asked for comments? No
2. Summary of Ward Councillors comments: N/A

3. COMMENTARY

- 3.1 The Customer Services contract covers three key areas: Corporate Contact Centre, Reception Services, Web Team (Bromley Knowledge) and Blue Badge/Freedom Pass processing. The Corporate Contact Centre deals with telephone enquiries regarding environmental services, electoral, registrars, parking, blue badges, disabled freedom passes as well as the switchboard and a general enquiry line.
- 3.2 Reception deals with face to face enquiries for all areas of the council with the exception of registrars, because they are located on the first floor in Stockwell and therefore require their own reception point.
- 3.3 The Web Team (Bromley Knowledge) maintain the corporate website (www.bromley.gov.uk) in terms of its technical functionality, performance and accuracy of the content. Administration of Blue Badge and Discretionary Disabled Freedom Passes applications and renewals is also carried out within the contract.
- 3.4 Overall the contractor has performed well throughout this monitoring period, with some evidence of under-performance outlined in the report. Volumes of calls fluctuated mainly as a result of the residential waste collection changes and due to the Green Garden Waste renewals that were sent out at the beginning of the year, before lockdown. There was also an increase in customer contact due to the Election that took place in December 2019. E-mail processing has also been affected by this. Web traffic increased significantly from March as customers were advised to use online services instead of traditional contact channels. Many web transactional services increased over the period with overall traffic to the website has remained at more than double its normal rate.
- 3.5 Face to face enquiries were consistent until the Government initiated its COVID-19 lockdown measures on the 23rd of March. From the 24th of March all face to face reception services were closed and the service did not open again during this reporting period.
- 3.6 From the 1st of April, Liberata implemented a home telephony solution including a full desk top deployment for their staff which enabled them to work from home and not come in to the Contact Centre. This has been observed to be working well and has enabled Liberata to run the service to its usual standards.
- 3.6 During this reporting period, the new Liberata contract commenced on the 1st of April 2020 with a seamless transition. The Key Performance Indicators for this contract are listed in the table below, and referenced in appendix 2; they measure the headline activities within the contract in order that our customers get a quick response and access to our services efficiently and effectively.
- 3.7 The Contractor has provided benchmark comparison data across some of their other key contracts in appendix 3

	Measure	Definition	Target
1	Call Management	Number of calls answered by the agents within the specified timescales compared to total number of calls received	50% Calls answered within 1 minute
2	Call Management	Number of days that the service dropped below 40%	Daily service level does not drop below 40% of call answered

			within 1 minute
3	Email Management	Number of emails responded to within 5 working days compared to total number of emails received	100% responded to within 5 working day
4	Face to Face Management	Number of customers entering the reception areas must be seen within 5 minutes of their arrival compared to total number of customers, remainder within 15 minutes	80% of customers seen within 5 minutes of arrival
5	Switchboard Management	% of calls bailed to operator or requesting operator answered within 15 seconds	50% Calls answered within 1 minute
6	Customer Satisfaction	% of randomly selected customers, across different channels are either satisfied or very satisfied	90%

3.7 **Customer Services – Contact Centre:** This area performed well and within service level. Volumes increased in December through to February as a result of the household waste collection day changes, Green Garden Waste renewals and Election enquiries.

Call volumes dropped considerably in March and April due to the COVID-19 pandemic. On the 24th of March, the Council directed Liberata to close all non-essential telephone lines to prioritise customer calls on the Revenue and Benefit lines. The following lines were closed; Waste, Electoral, Streets, Parks, Freedom Pass & Blue Badge and Parking. All service lines were reinstated by the 1st of April except Waste which became live again on the 8th of April. During this time, customers were encouraged to use online services as an alternative.

Contact Centre Target – 50% within 60 secs	Dec 19	Jan 20	Feb 20	Mar 20	April 20	May 20
Answered	9,696	10,277	9,554	6,979	6,217	9,061
% of calls ans. in 60 secs	75.8%	87.9%	74.6%	75.6%	89.2%	85.80%
Average wait time (secs)	00:00:50	00:00:26	00:00:56	00:00:54	00:00:26	00:00:27
Number of day's service fell below 40%.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	0	0

3.8 **Switchboard:** Performance and volumes for this area were as expected and within service level. In March there was a dip in service level although service level was still within target. This was due to the COVID-19 pandemic as the Council directed Liberata to prioritise the Revenue & Benefit lines over other non-essential lines as mentioned above.

Switchboard Target – 50% within 60 secs	Dec 19	Jan 20	Feb 20	Mar 20	April 20	May 20
Answered	4,291	6,304	5,717	6,066	4,044	3,054
% of calls ans. in 60 secs	95%	96.8%	93%	88.6%	97.4%	96.80%

Average wait time (secs)	00:00:13	00:00:10	00:00:16	00:00:16	00:00:08	00:00:10
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3.9 **Reception:** Normal seasonal volumes were seen in this area, and performance within service level. Due to COVID-19, under the Governments advice, Reception services were closed from the 24th of March, as the country went into lockdown. Planned phased re-opening is due to take place from the 29th of June by appointment only.

Reception	Dec 19	Jan 20	Feb 20	Mar 20	April 20	May 20
Number of customers seen	726	1090	984	532	N/A	N/A
80% within 5 minutes	86%	97.90%	94%	93.1%	N/A	N/A
100% within 15 minutes	98.90%	99.40%	100%	100%	N/A	N/A

3.10 **E-mail:** Towards the end of the last reporting period, there was a large increase in email contact associated with the waste collection changes. Additional resource was provided to clear the back log of emails through offering overtime to existing staff and transferring resource from other areas to assist which ended in December. In December the service also received a higher than normal volume of customer enquiries about the General Election which were prioritised during this month.

Emails Target – 80% within 1 day and 100% within 5 days	Dec 19	Jan 20	Feb 20	March 20	April 20	May 20
Number of emails received	2420	2664	2489	2019	2286	2252
% emails processed within 1 day	64%	80%	93%	81%	84%	96%
% emails processed within 5 days	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

3.11 **Out of Hours Emergency Call Centre:** Performance and volumes for this area were as expected other than in February when the Out of Hours operator took on a large volume of calls due to the unexpected storms that happened over this period.

Out of Hours (Appello) Target – 80% within 30 secs	Dec 19	Jan 20	Feb 20	Mar 20	April 20	May 20
Answered	1,091	1,095	1,195	1,048	1,127	1,452
% of calls ans. in 30 secs	84.6%	90.6%	69.09%	80.32%	89.39%	89.60%
Average wait time (secs)	23.80	15.88	60.80	26.69	14.09	12.08

3.12 **Web – Bromley Knowledge:** The web team achieved 100% against most targets; some regular updates closely failed the 5 day deadline target.

Web site – Target 100%	Dec 19	Jan 20	Feb 20	March 20	April 20	May 20
Critical updates within 1 working hour	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Urgent updates within 1 working day	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Important updates within 2 working days	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Regular updates within 5 working days	97%	98%	100%	100%	100%	100%

3.13 Blue Badge and Discretionary Freedom Pass

Changes made to the hidden disabilities assessment criteria from 30 August 2019 have triggered a significant increase in application numbers. As a consequence, this has affected performance, although still good. The Contractor has deployed additional temporary resources, and a financial contingency was established by Officers and approved by Executive in November. Additional resources were deployed from December to March to deal with the influx of applications in relation to the hidden disabilities assessments and to help with the renewal exercise that was undertaken for Freedom Pass holders whose pass was due to expire on the 31 March 2020.

Blue Badges – target 80% within 4 weeks	Dec 19	Jan 20	Feb 20	March 20	April 20	May 20
Volume	263	388	403	392	291	227
% processed within 4 weeks	100%	100%	100%	100%	97%	100%

Freedom Pass – Target 100% within 4 weeks	Dec 19	Jan 20	Feb 20	March 20	April 20	May 20
Volume	185	123	421	73	64	27
% processed within 4 weeks	100%	96%	100%	100%	100%	100%

3.14 MyBromley Account

The tables below outline the volume usage for the services currently available to registered users, and volume of customers registering and re-registering in this monitoring period. MyBromley Account continues to grow and as of the end of March 2020 the number of registrations had risen to 71,698 which equates to 51.2% of households in Bromley.

Promotion of this service continues through the call centre, receptions and council tax billing. There was a peak in registrations during the annual Council Tax billing period that took place from February through to April. On-line evidence submission is now available through this service.

MyBromley registrations	Dec 19	Jan 20	Feb 20	March 20	April 20	May 20
Volume	1,396	1,751	5,046	4,065	3,114	1,996
Cumulative Volume	55,726	57,477	62,523	66,588	69,702	71,698

3.15 Customer Satisfaction: The number of customers surveyed and responses are outlined below, satisfaction is above target for this service. Customers can complete a survey anytime and links are added to all outgoing e-mail. At the last meeting, a decision was made to review and update the existing customer satisfaction survey to reflect the service delivered from the customer contact centre. We are progressing well with the survey but development has been delayed by Covid-19. We will be in a position to present the results from the new survey along with an overview of the new questions at the next PDS meeting.

Customer Satisfaction Target – 90% Customer Satisfaction	Dec 19	Jan 20	Feb 20	March 20	April 20	May 20
Number of surveys sent	155	140	0	0	0	0
Number of responses	36	17	3	11	29	79
% Customer Satisfaction	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

3.16 **Compliments and Complaints:** During this period, five customers called back to thank the staff for exceptional service.

In summary the complaints received during this reporting period were in relation to:

- A Blue Badge application issue which was rectified through additional training for the CSC advisor.
- Contact Centre processes associated to Manager call back requests, which were resolved by implementing a new procedure for requesting Manager call backs.
- A Data Protection issue that took place in the front facing reception area which was found to be unfounded.
- A customer unable to contact the Children Social Services via the switchboard which was found to be associated with the Children’s Social Services Team.
- During the Freedom Pass renewal exercise (Jan – March) there was a series of customers that did not receive their renewal letters due to postal issues with Royal Mail. The Council received 15 complaints from customers who had their pass deactivated and were unable to use it. Liberata have raised a formal complaint with Royal Mail which is now under investigation. An action plan will be provided by Liberata to avoid re-occurrence once the investigations are complete, and the causes fully known.

Compliments & Complaints	Dec 19	Jan 20	Feb 20	March 20	April 20	May 20
Complaints	2	4	9	4	0	0
Compliments	2	1	1	0	1	0

4. IMPACT ON VULNERABLE ADULTS AND CHILDREN

4.1 An Equality Impact Assessment indicates that ongoing support for vulnerable adults and children will be provided by Customer Service by phone and face to face for those unable to access digital services. For those unable to visit or phone us, the service supports the enhancement of self-service options.

5. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

None

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 It is currently expected that the contract expenditure will be to budget 2020/21 at around £900k.

6.2 For information, the actual spend for the contract for 2019/20 was £871k against a budget of £860k.

7. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

None

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 The Council's Constitution provides the terms of reference for the Executive, Resources and Contracts Policy Development and Scrutiny Committee as it relates to the Executive and the Resources, Commissioning and Contract Management Portfolio, including receiving reports and making recommendations on performance monitoring of services falling within the remit of this portfolio.
- 8.2 Contract Procedure Rule 23.4 provides that a Council agreed Gateway Review process must be applied to all Contracts deemed to be High Risk, High Value or High Profile. The process must be applied at key stages of major procurements.
- 8.3 Contract Procedure Rule 23.3 provides that for all Contracts with a value higher than £1,000,000, or which are High Risk, an annual report must be submitted to the Executive- the responsible Officers having submitted for consideration a formal Gateway Review, covering, as appropriate, the matters identified in the Council's standard Gateway Review Template for consideration as part of Contract Monitoring/Management requirements.

9. PROCUREMENT IMPLICATIONS

None

Non-Applicable Sections:	5, 7, 9
Background Documents: (Access via Contact Officer)	Appendix 1 – Letter from Liberata Appendix 2 – Key Performance Indicators Appendix 3 – Benchmarking Data

London Borough of Bromley
Civic Centre
Stockwell Close
Bromley
BR1 3UH

Date: 10th July 2020

Dear Duncan,

As we approach the July Executive & Resources PDS meeting where we consider and review the performance of Corporate Customer Services, we take this opportunity to write to you with Liberata's assessment of the performance of this critical high profile service that we provide to London Borough of Bromley (LBB) and its citizens.

This summary covers performance for the period 1st December 2019 to 31st May 2020.

Customer Services Performance

The Corporate Contact Centre delivered an overall service level of calls being answered within 60 seconds of 80% against a target of 50%, with 97% of calls answered. Call volumes reduced by 8% in comparison to the 6 month period of December 2018 to 31st May 2019.

During the period, the team answered 98% of all Switchboard calls, with an overall service level of 95% against the target of 50%.

The Corporate face-to-face team achieved an average service level of 91% of customers being seen within 5 minutes, and a total of 99% of customers were seen within 15 minutes. Both these figures are up to 23rd March, the last day the service was open to customers before the Coronavirus lockdown was imposed. The service did not open again during the reporting period.

The Coronavirus issue had a major impact on our staff with many having to self-isolate, but thankfully none contracting the disease. We were able to implement a home telephony solution including a full desk top deployment, and as such disruption to customers contacting the Council was seamless with 98% of calls being answered from 24th March to 31st May.

Website performance

Performance by the Bromley Knowledge team since December has again been strong, with the team achieving 100% for 3 of their main KPI's and 99.2% for the 4th. These include;

- Critical updates completed with 1 hour (100%)
- Urgent updates completed within 1 working day (100%)
- Important updates completed within 2 working days (100%)
- Regular updates completed within 5 working days (99.2%)

Like most services, the BK team have had to deal with the impact of Covid – 19 and have relocated to work from home. The team also agreed to be on call until 10.00 pm Monday to Friday and at weekends to deal with the information that needed to be published at short notice.

While the volume of work changed slightly, the balance between regular and urgent work changed dramatically, with many more requests for urgent updates to the website.

Naturally, since the pandemic started, residents have looked to the council website for information and support. This has resulted in a significant increase in traffic to the site, increasing from an average of 365k per month to 1.4m million visitors in March, April and May.

MyBromley Account Developments

MyBromley Account continues to grow and as of the end of March 2020 the number of registrations had risen to 71,698 which equates to 51.2% of households in Bromley.

Activity in the portal also continues to grow and currently 8,000 to 11,000 transactions are carried every month in relation to Revenues and Benefits. Similarly, our other online forms received over 54,000 forms with March, April and May receiving between 11,000 and 13,000 each month.

With the closure to face to face customer services, customers have increased the use of our online evidence upload facility and over 2,400 residents' in May alone submitted information using this application. Since the start of March, over 4,200 pieces of evidence have been submitted using this facility.

In March, Liberata launched a paperless billing campaign to encourage more residents to switch to Council Tax e-bills. While relatively successful, with over 3400 residents choosing to switch, the impact of the pandemic meant people's priorities were elsewhere and not as many switched as was hoped for. Further campaigns however, are being planned for later in the year.

Performance

Liberata remains firmly committed to delivering an outstanding service to the London Borough of Bromley and its citizens. We have increased our engagement in the various forums to ensure that the Council remains at the forefront of Digital engagement amongst its peers.

Yours sincerely,

Amanda Inwood-Field
London Regional Contract Director

Appendix 2 - Performance Monitoring

Customer Contact Centre - Key Performance Indicators (KPI's)

	Measure	Definition	Target
1	Call Management	Number of calls answered by the agents within the specified timescales compared to total number of calls received	50% Calls answered within 1 minute
2	Call Management	Number of days that the service dropped below 40%	Daily service level does not drop below 40% of call answered within 1 minute
3	Email Management	Number of emails responded to within 5 working days compared to total number of emails received	100% responded to within 5 working day
4	Face to Face Management	Number of customers entering the reception areas must be seen within 5 minutes of their arrival compared to total number of customers, remainder within 15 minutes	80% of customers seen within 5 minutes of arrival
5	Switchboard Management	% of calls bailed to operator or requesting operator answered within 15 seconds	50% Calls answered within 1 minute
6	Customer Satisfaction	% of randomly selected customers, across different channels are either satisfied or very satisfied	90%
7	Blue Badge Processing	% of Blue badge application and renewals processed within 4 weeks of receipt of complete application form	80%
8	Discretionary disabled Freedom Pass Processing	% of discretionary Disabled Freedom Pass applications and renewals processed within 4 weeks of receipt of complete application form	100%

Web Management – Key Performance Indicators (KPI's)

Title	Measure	Monitoring Frequency	Reporting Frequency	Target
Critical Updates	% completed within 1 working hour	Daily	Monthly	100% within 1 working hour
Urgent Updates	% completed within 1 working day	Daily	Monthly	100% within 1 working day
Important Updates	% completed within 2 working days	Daily	Monthly	100% within 2 working days
Regular Updates	% completed within 5 working days	Daily	Monthly	100% within 5 working days

Appendix 3 – Benchmark Data

R&B Contact Centre	Bromley R&B Contact Centre			Hounslow R&B Contact Centre		Hillingdon R&B Contact Centre		
	Call Volumes	Performance (KPI = 95% in 90 secs.)	Performance (KPI = 5% abandoned)	Call Volumes	Performance (KPI = 7% abandoned)	Call Volumes	Performance (KPI = 80% in 120 secs.)	Performance (KPI = 15% abandoned)
December	6,916	70.0%	4%	4,314	5%	8,705	82.0%	4%
January	9,448	69.0%	3%	7,236	4%	11,444	86.0%	3%
February	7,835	75.0%	3%	5,697	8%	9,774	71.0%	6%
March	10,639	45.0%	14%	6,238	20%	14,585	29.0%	27%
April	7,562	72.0%	5%	7,448	4%	8,725	56.0%	18%
May	6,871	86.0%	3%	8,083	3%	9,805	80%	5%

R&B F2F	Bromley R&B F2F		Hounslow R&B F2F	
	Footfall	Performance (KPI = 85% in 15 mins.)	Footfall	Performance (KPI = 95% in 15 mins.)
December	1,455	86.3%	2,420	96.0%
January	2,076	93.0%	3,965	96.0%
February	2,142	94.0%	3,430	96.0%
March	1,995	87.0%	2,603	89.0%
April	0	N/A	0	N/A
May	0	N/A	0	N/A

Corporate Contact Centre	Bromley Corporate Contact Centre		Corporate F2F	Bromley Corporate F2F		
	Current Year (Actual)	Performance (KPI = 80% in 5 mins.)		Current Year (Actual)	Performance (KPI = 80% in 5 mins.)	Performance (KPI = 100% in 15 mins.)
December	9,696	75.8%	December	726	86%	98.9%
January	10,277	87.9%	January	1090	97.90%	99.40%
February	9,554	74.6%	February	984	94%	100%
March	6,979	75.6%	March	532	93.1%	100%
April	6,217	89.2%	April	0	N/A	N/A
May	9,061	85.80%	May	0	N/A	N/A

By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

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