



BROMLEY CIVIC CENTRE, STOCKWELL CLOSE, BROMLEY BRI 3UH

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DATE: 23 December 2021

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

Councillor Christopher Marlow (Chairman)
Councillor Kira Gabbert (Vice-Chairman)
Councillors Yvonne Bear, Nicholas Bennett MA J.P., David Cartwright QFSM,
Mary Cooke, Nicky Dykes, Robert Evans, Will Harmer, Colin Hitchins, Simon Jeal,
Melanie Stevens, Michael Tickner, Pauline Tunnicliffe and Angela Wilkins

A meeting of the Executive, Resources and Contracts Policy Development and
Scrutiny Committee will be held Bromley Civic Centre on **WEDNESDAY 5
JANUARY 2022 AT 7.00 PM**

PLEASE NOTE: This meeting will be held in the Council Chamber at the Civic
Centre, Stockwell Close, Bromley, BR1 3UH. Members of the public can attend the
meeting: you can ask questions submitted in advance (see item 3 on the agenda) or
just observe the meeting. There will be limited space for members of the public to
attend the meeting – if you wish to attend please contact us, before the day of the
meeting if possible, using our web-form:

<https://www.bromley.gov.uk/CouncilMeetingNoticeOfAttendanceForm>

Please be prepared to follow the identified social distancing guidance at the meeting,
including wearing a face covering.

TASNIM SHAWKAT
Director of Corporate Services & Governance

Copies of the documents referred to below can be obtained from

<http://cds.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 Tuesday 29th December 2021.**

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 MEETING HELD ON 18 NOVEMBER 2021 (EXCLUDING EXEMPT ITEMS) (Pages 5 - 20)

5 MATTERS OUTSTANDING AND WORK PROGRAMME (Pages 21 - 26)

6 FORWARD PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS (Pages 27 - 34)

HOLDING THE RESOURCES, COMMISSIONING AND CONTRACTS PORTFOLIO HOLDER TO ACCOUNT

7 SCRUTINY OF THE RESOURCES, COMMISSIONING & CONTRACT MANAGEMENT PORTFOLIO HOLDER

HOLDING THE EXECUTIVE TO ACCOUNT

8 PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY OF EXECUTIVE REPORTS

Members of the Committee are requested to bring their copy of the agenda for the Executive meeting on 12 January 2022.

POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND OTHER ITEMS

9 SCRUTINY OF THE EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT TO THE LEADER

10 BENEFITS SERVICE MONITORING REPORT (Pages 35 - 62)

11 REVENUES SERVICE MONITORING REPORT (Pages 63 - 82)

12 EXCHEQUER SERVICE - CONTRACT PERFORMANCE REPORT (Pages 83 - 104)

13 CUSTOMER SERVICES CONTRACT MONITORING REPORT (Pages 105 - 122)

14 COST OF AGENCY STAFF (Pages 123 - 128)

PART 2 AGENDA

15 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

16 PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY OF EXEMPT EXECUTIVE REPORTS (IF ANY)

17 POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND OTHER ITEMS

a PART 2 COST OF AGENCY STAFF (Pages 129 - 134)

Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)

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EXECUTIVE, RESOURCES AND CONTRACTS POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held at 7.00 pm on 18 November 2021

Present:

Councillor Christopher Marlow (Chairman)
Councillor Kira Gabbert (Vice-Chairman)
Councillors Yvonne Bear, Nicholas Bennett MA J.P.,
David Cartwright QFSM, Mary Cooke, Nicky Dykes,
Colin Hitchins, Simon Jeal, Melanie Stevens,
Michael Tickner, Pauline Tunnicliffe and Angela Wilkins

Also Present:

Councillor Michael Rutherford, Portfolio Holder for
Resources, Commissioning and Contracts Management
Councillor Colin Smith, Leader of the Council

51 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

Apologies were received from Councillor Robert Evans. Apologies for lateness were received from Councillor Angela Wilkins.

52 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

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

No questions were received.

54 MINUTES OF THE EXECUTIVE, RESOURCES AND CONTRACTS PDS COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 13 OCTOBER 2021 (EXCLUDING EXEMPT ITEMS)

The minutes of the meeting held on 13 October 2021, were agreed, and signed as a correct record.

55 MATTERS OUTSTANDING AND WORK PROGRAMME Report CSD21131

The report dealt with the Committee's business management including the proposed work plan for the remainder of the year.

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The Chairman reported that the 5 Year Biggin Hill Airport NAP review had been deferred until the January 2022 meeting as it had proved necessary to engage external counsel to ensure that certain legal questions could be fully dealt with to enable formal consideration of the NAP.

The Vice-Chairman sought two additional volunteers for the Housing and Capital Finance Task and Finish Group.

In response to a question from the Chairman, the Director of Finance confirmed that the national spending review had not included any specific funding for the impact of Covid in 2022/23. Going forward, Budget Monitoring Reports would include information on the ongoing impact of Covid and more detailed information would be provided in the draft budget report.

The Committee noted that the revised post-Brexit procurement legislation had not been included in the Parliamentary timetable until 2023.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

56 FORWARD PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS

The Committee noted the Forward Plan of Key Decisions covering the period October 2021 to January 2022.

57 RESOURCES, COMMISSIONING AND CONTRACTS MANAGEMENT PORTFOLIO - PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY

The Committee considered the following reports where the Resources, Contracts and Commissioning Portfolio Holder was recommended to take a decision:

a TREASURY MANAGEMENT - QUARTER 2 PERFORMANCE 2021/22 AND MID-YEAR REVIEW Report FSD21067

The report summarised treasury management activity during the second quarter of 2021/22 and included a mid-year review of the Treasury Management Strategy Statement and Annual Investment Strategy. The report ensured that the Council was implementing best practice in accordance with the CIPFA Code of Practice for Treasury Management. Investments as at 30 September 2021 totalled £427.6m (£373.3m at 30 September 2020) and there was no external borrowing.

In opening the discussion, the Chairman confirmed that he was supportive of the recommendations relating to Sovereign Bonds.

In response to a question from the Chairman concerning variations in the counterparty limits for different banks, the Director of Finance explained that

previous assumptions had been made around risks however this was something that was reviewed on an annual basis.

Members discussed the number of investments with banks with a connection to the Middle East, noting that investments were approaching £55-£60m which was a significant sum invested in one geographical area (although it amounted to 15% of overall investments). The Director of Finance recognised the concerns being raised and explained that controls were in place around FCA regulation, rather than the countries themselves. Resources were managed through the UK and controls were in the UK although Officers would be happy to review the investments.

RESOLVED: That the Portfolio Holder be recommended to:

- 1. Note the Treasury Management performance for the second quarter of 2021/22;**
- 2. Agree the amendment to the Council's Treasury Management Strategy Statement allowing investment in Sovereign Bonds (Sterling denominated only and subject to a maximum duration of three years with a total exposure of no more than £25m); and**
- 3. Recommend that Council approve the 2021/22 prudential indicators as set out in Appendix 4.**

**b INSURANCE FUND - ANNUAL REPORT 2020/2021
Report FSD21064**

The report advised Members of the Insurance Fund position as at 31st March 2021 and presented statistics relating to insurance claims for the last two years. In 2020/21, the total Fund value decreased from £4.396m to £4.383m. A mid-year review of the Fund had also been carried out and at this stage, it was estimated that the final fund value as at 31st March 2022 would increase to approximately £4.413m. The position would continue to be monitored throughout the year.

In response to a question from the Chairman, the Insurance and Risk Manager confirmed that the Council's Insurance Services had moved over to LB Sutton on 1 April 2020, and since the move claims handling performance had been good. In relation to whether there was an expectation that the balance would increase, the Insurance and Risk Manager explained that whilst there may be fewer claims, they may be of a higher value or one claim with a significant value.

In response to a question, the Insurance and Risk Manager explained that Employer's Liability cover was in place for any personal injury claims submitted by employees but there was no cover for liability arising from Employment Tribunals or settlement costs. The Employer's Liability Policy

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simply covered personal injury to employees and did not cover staff working from home. The Committee noted that there had been no claims for personal injury in the last year and where staff had any issues with arrangements for working at home there was clear guidance that these should be raised with line managers in the first instance. The Portfolio Holder for Resources, Commissioning and Contracts Management confirmed that he had spoken with the Director for Human Resources, Customer Services and Public Affairs who had provided assurances that clear policies were in place for arrangements for working at home.

In relation to the Council equipment used by staff when they were working from home, the Committee noted that in the event of a fire at an employee's home any investigation of a claim would look at legal liability and from an insurance perspective the Council had adequate cover. Members asked for information regarding the arrangements for PAT Testing staff laptops and it was agreed that a response from the IT Department would be sought following the meeting.

The Committee noted that there were currently risks around anything that could have been attributed to Covid, whether directly or indirectly. Other areas of potential risk were claims associated with Highways and Trees.

In response to a question from the Chairman, the Insurance and Risk Manager confirmed that it was normal for local authorities to balance cost and risk by taking a high excess in order to reduce the premium and this level of self-insurance was reviewed at every tender.

RESOLVED: That the Portfolio Holder be recommended to note the report.

58 SCRUTINY OF THE LEADER

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Colin Smith, attended the meeting to respond to questions from the Committee. Councillor Smith gave a brief introduction highlighting the following issues:

- Two new Directors had recently joined the Council. The review of succession planning was ongoing and remained a corporate priority.
- The new Corporate Plan – Making Bromley Even Better – had been finalised.
- The 2021/22 staff pay award had been implemented in a timely manner in April 2021.
- The Council's Loneliness Strategy had been launched and would soon be having a positive multi-generational impact across the Borough.
- Preparations were underway for next year's budget.
- A number of housing schemes had recently been launched.

- The tree planting programme was underway.
- The Electric Vehicle Strategy was moving forward and the Open Spaces Strategy had been considered at the Environment and Community Services PDS Committee on 17 November 2021.
- Good progress was being made in the Adult Care and Health Portfolio and the Council had a nationally recognised Hospital Discharge Strategy.
- The pandemic was a long way from being over and the Leader urged all those who were eligible to take up the offer of a vaccine and for all Members to keep hammering that message home at every opportunity possible.

Councillor Smith then responded to questions, making the following comments:

- The Loneliness Strategy straddled both the Adult Care and Health Portfolio and the Children, Education and Families Portfolio. Programmes would be developed led by the Executive Assistant to the Leader who was working closely with the relevant Portfolio Holders and PDS Chairmen. The Committee noted that Members of the Children, Education and Families PDS Committee had been invited to the Adult Care and Health PDS Committee meeting the following week to engage in the discussion around the Loneliness Strategy.
- The Leader confirmed that there was no intention sell parks, although it was acknowledged that the initial wording of the draft Open Spaces Strategy may have been clumsy and led to confusion. In terms of the differing response rates to consultations, the Leader suggested that difference could be attributed to levels of interest for specific issues across the Borough as well as the ways in which different consultations were publicised.
- The Council's Communications Team had been further enhanced and a new member of staff had joined the team. Work was underway to improve communications across the Council.
- In relation to the Afghan refugee issue, there had been a pan-London hiatus, although there was an understanding across London that the families needed to be evenly spread across the 32 boroughs. Significant numbers of families remained in hotel accommodation as there was a basic shortage of available housing and a decision from Government was still awaited in terms of locating families outside London.
- Discussions with the Government continued around fairer funding and the need for a three-year settlement.
- The Committee noted that the Leader had been nominated as the Conservative Lead for homelessness/rough sleeping

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reduction at London Councils and had accepted the role until next May.

- Further details were awaited around planning reforms now the new Secretary of State was in place.

The Committee thanked the Leader to his update.

59 PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY OF EXECUTIVE REPORTS

The Committee considered the following reports on the Part 1 agenda for the meeting of the Executive on 24 November 2021:

(5) BUDGET MONITORING 2021/22 Report FSD21075

The report provided the second budget monitoring position for 2021/22 based on expenditure and activity levels up to the end of September 2021. The report also highlighted any significant variations which would impact on future years as well as any early warnings that could impact on the final year end position. This report also provided an update on the Covid grant position.

In opening the discussion, the Chairman noted that most of the forecast overspend was concentrated in the Children, Educations and Families portfolio. Members noted that whilst there were some early signs of a return to normal there remained challenges in terms of the budget and mitigations would need to be put in place. SEN Transport and SEN provision remained key areas of national concern and would require a great deal of attention and work at both Officer and Member Level. One of the key challenges was that these were statutory obligations and this to some extent limited the mitigations that could be put in place.

The Committee noted that in January 2021, the Children, Education and Families PDS Committee had established a Budget Task and Finish Group to look at budget pressures. In addition to the issue of SEN Transport, SEN provision and the exponential increase in the number of Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) were regularly considered by the Committee with it being noted that Bromley was not an outlier. The Chairman of the Children, Education and Families (CEF) PDS Committee highlighted that it took only one complex case to derail the budget and that committee received data demonstrating a sustained increase in the number of cases coming through the front door. Members noted that continued pressure needed to be placed on the Government to deliver the proposed reforms to the national SEN Structure as the system was currently not adequately funded. It was agreed that the recommendations from the CEF PDS Budget Task and Finish Group would be circulated to the Committee along with some benchmarking data considered by the Task and Finish Group. A Member noted that prior to the pandemic there had been a trend in the number of looked after children and the number of EHCPs being consistently higher than the agreed budget. The

Member highlighted the need to review these historic trends and set a realistic budget.

Members noted that further detailed work was being undertaken on whether some Covid grants could be used to fund some of the increases in the cost of SEN Transport arising from the pandemic. The next budget monitoring report would be more explicit around Covid funding.

In response to a question, the Director of Finance agreed to review the data around Section 106 contributions and provide an update following the meeting.

The Committee noted that the contingency budget provided cover for overspends and that there was always rigor in the use of the contingency budget. It was noted that in the previous financial year much of the contingency had gone towards housing initiatives and the contingency was currently healthy.

RESOLVED: That the Executive be recommended to:

- 1. Consider the latest financial position;**
- 2. Note that a projected net overspend on services of £2,458k is forecast based on information as at September 2021.**
- 3. consider the comments from Chief Officers detailed in Appendix 2 of the report;**
- 4. Note a projected reduction to the General Fund balance of £345k as detailed in section 3.4 of the report;**
- 5. Note the full year cost pressures of £10.67m as detailed in section 3.5 of the report;**
- 6. Agree to the release of £30k from the 2021/22 Central Contingency relating to local elections as detailed in para. 3.2.2 of the report;**
- 7. Agree to the release of £40k from the 2021/22 Central Contingency relating to Crystal Palace Park as detailed in para. 3.2.3 of the report;**
- 8. Agree to the release of £587k from the 2021/22 Central Contingency relating to Waste services as detailed in para. 3.2.4 of the report;**
- 9. Agree to the release of £170k from the 2021/22 Central Contingency relating to Legal Services as detailed in para. 3.2.5 of the report;**

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- 10. Agree to the release of £91k from the 2021/22 Central Contingency relating to Property Valuation as detailed in para. 3.2.6 of the report;**
 - 11. Agree to the release of £213k from the 2021/22 Central Contingency relating to Public Health grant increase as detailed in para. 3.2.7 of the report;**
 - 12. Agree to the release of £89k from the 2021/22 Central Contingency relating to Obesity Grant as detailed in para. 3.2.8 of the report;**
 - 13. Agree to the release of £69k from the 2021/22 Central Contingency relating to COVID Recovery grant as detailed in para. 3.2.9 of the report;**
 - 14. Agree to the release of £500k Education Risk Reserve as detailed in para. 3.3 of the report;**
 - 15. Note the COVID allocation and expenditure in Appendix 7 of the report;**
 - 16. Identify any issues that should be referred to individual Portfolio Holders for further action.**
- (6) CAPITAL PROGRAMME MONITORING – 2ND QUARTER 2021/22 Report FSD21071**

The report summarised the current position on capital expenditure and receipts following the 2nd quarter of 2021/22 and sought the Executive's approval to a revised Capital Programme.

In opening the discussion, the Vice-Chairman noted that spending on the Liquid Logic project has significantly increased. The Vice-Chairman reported that she had received a response from the Assistant Director for Strategy, Performance and Corporate Transformation concerning the reasons for the increase in costs, however, the Committee were advised that more information was needed to understand the reasons. The Chairman requested that a more detailed response be sent to the Vice-Chairman following the meeting.

Members noted that Bromley had not borrowed to fund its capital programme and as such no loan charges were paid. However, the Director of Finance advised that the situation would need to be kept under review as the current model may not work in the event of a big capital scheme in the future. There would be a need to consider how schemes were funded in the future.

Members noted that there were capital receipts in the pipeline however, anything that was not currently approved by Officers would not be presented in the Capital Programme report.

RESOLVED: That the Executive be recommended to:

- 1. Note the report, including a total re-phasing of £339k from 2021/22 into future years, and agree a revised Capital Programme.**
- 2. Approve the following amendments to the Capital Programme (paragraph 3.3 of the report):**
 - (i) Increase of £57k in relation to Formula Devolved Grant**
 - (ii) Increase of £375k for Schools Capital Maintenance**
 - (iii) £12k decrease in relation to the Scadbury Park Moated Manor Scheme**
 - (iv) Increase of £130k for additional costs on the Anerley and Bushell Way Housing Scheme**
 - (v) Increase of £98k for additional costs on the Burnt Ash Lane Housing Scheme**
 - (vi) Increase of £536k for additional costs related to the Liquid Logic implementation.**

**(7) COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT/REDUCTION SCHEME 2022/23
Report FSD21068**

The report advised Members of the outcome of the public consultation exercise and sought approval for the scheme to be forwarded to Full Council.

The Committee noted that Officers were disappointed with the low response rate to the consultation which made it difficult to determine whether the responses provided were representative. A Member noted that some of the responses indicated that respondents had found it difficult to answer some of the questions and Members looked forward to seeing suggestions for the consultation the following year.

The Portfolio Holder for Resources, Commissioning and Contract Management highlighted that the scheme had been kept at the same level for a number of years and there had been a positive response from the respondents.

A Member suggested that further consideration was required, particularly around the ongoing impact of the pandemic and the increases in the cost of living which were impacting many families.

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In response to a question, the Director for Corporate Services and Governance confirmed that there were no concerns around the legality of the Equalities Impact Assessment and that there was no standard for Equality Impact Assessments with each undertaken on a case-by-case basis.

The Committee noted that 193 households had received help from the Hardship Fund and last year the collection rate for customers in receipt of Council Tax Support was 83%. The Committee was informed that the number of households in receipt of Council Tax Support was already falling compared to the peak during the height of the pandemic, but was still above the pre-pandemic level.

The Chairman proposed that the Executive be recommended to:

1. Consider the updated Impact Assessment at Appendix 1.
2. Consider the responses to the public consultation exercise at Appendix 2 & 3.
3. Consider that the Council Tax Support/Reduction scheme for 2022/23 retains the calculation of entitlement for working-age claimants on 75% of the households Council Tax liability. Thereby the maximum assistance provided to a claimant of working-age is 75% of his/her Council Tax liability.
4. Recommend to Council the Council Tax Support/Reduction scheme for 2022/23 including maintaining the Discretionary Hardship Fund at £200k.

The motion was seconded by Cllr Gabbert, put to the Vote and CARRIED.
(Cllrs Wilkins and Jeal voted against, all other members voted in favour)

RESOLVED: That Executive be recommended to:

- 1. Consider the updated Impact Assessment at Appendix 1.**
- 2. Consider the responses to the public consultation exercise at Appendix 2 & 3.**
- 3. Consider that the Council Tax Support/Reduction scheme for 2022/23 retains the calculation of entitlement for working-age claimants on 75% of the households Council Tax liability. Thereby the maximum assistance provided to a claimant of working-age is 75% of his/her Council Tax liability.**
- 4. Recommend to Council the Council Tax Support/Reduction scheme for 2022/23 including maintaining the Discretionary Hardship Fund at £200k.**

**(8) ACADEMY INFORMATION SYSTEM AND ASPIEN CORPORATE
DEBT MANAGEMENT SYSTEM SOFTWARE LICENSE AND
MAINTENANCE ARRANGEMENTS
Report FSD21072**

The report sought authorisation to review the license agreement for the Academy System and the Aspien Corporate Debt Management System beyond 2022.

In response to a question, the Assistant Director for Exchequer Services explained that Oracle Fusion would be implemented in April 2022. Once the system had been implemented and had bedded in Officers would look to implement advanced collections. The timeframe set out in the report would enable a full review of advanced collections and implementation in stages. Members noted that there would be a parallel running of the two systems.

RESOLVED: That the Executive be recommended to:

- i) Approve the renewal of the agreement for the Academy Information system until 1 April 2024 at an estimated annual cost of £163.24k;**
- ii) Approve the renewal of the agreement for Aspien Corporate Debt Management System until January 2024 at an annual cost of £9k.**

**(9) PLATINUM JUBILEE CELEBRATION
HPR2021/062**

HM The Queen's national Platinum Jubilee celebrations were planned to take place during 2nd to 5th June 2022. The London Borough of Bromley would be enabling street parties across the Borough by waiving the road closure fee, taking part in the national lighting of the beacons and the Queen's Green Canopy, and delivering a cultural activity programme.

Members expressed disappointment with the report which they considered provided insufficient detail of the planned celebrations for the jubilee of a Monarch who had served the country for 70 years. The Committee felt that there had been insufficient consultation with Members in order to develop a Borough-wide approach to the Jubilee Celebrations and it was noted that the report before Members provided no details of the Communications Strategy for the event and who would be leading on the various projects.

It was noted that there were a number of community groups and uniformed organisations such as Residents' Associations and the Scouting Movement who would also want to engage in the celebrations. As such it was essential

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that the Council played a co-ordinating role, and it was suggested that the Mayor should write to all community groups to launch a public consultation concerning what local people would like to see from any Jubilee Celebrations and to publicise the grants that were being made available. It was further suggested that ward councillors could encourage community groups to apply. A Member highlighted that there needed to be cross-departmental input into plans for Jubilee Celebrations and stressed the importance of including the Council's Looked After Children, for whom Members had Corporate Parenting responsibilities, in the development of any plans.

A Member also noted that opportunities for aspects such as business sponsorship needed to be further explored and every Member of the Council should be contacted for their views on the Jubilee Celebrations across the Borough. In addition, more research should be done into the history of the Borough and its relationship with the monarchy, especially in terms of the Beacon lighting. Members considered that lighting only one Beacon for the whole of the Borough was insufficient.

Whilst not wanting to see delays in publicising the availability of grants, the Committee expressed serious reservations around the £20,000 ceiling on community grant funding, noting that this would mean that some wards may not receive any funding at all. It was agreed that there needed to be more of an idea of the scale of grant applications that may be received before any grant ceiling could be established. It was important to understand what community groups wanted to do to celebrate the Jubilee and following this local ward councillors could then assist with local allocation of grant funding. It was further noted that there would need to be clear and robust criteria for the allocation of funding in order to avoid allegations of unfairness.

In relation to the road closures, a Member questioned why the Council was only allowing road closures on the Sunday, suggesting that in order to facilitate street parties and wider celebrations, road closures should be permitted across the whole of the bank holiday weekend. It was also suggested that consideration should be given to permitting a shorter notification period for road closures.

It was suggested that a dedicated Officer was required to co-ordinate the Council's Jubilee celebrations. A Member expressed concern that there may be insufficient resources within the Regeneration Team to deliver the expectations of Members. The Committee were reminded that the Team were currently undertaking a great deal of work administering Covid Grants and Members needed to recognise that meaningful resource would be required in order to organise the Jubilee Celebration.

The following questions were raised by Members for response following the meeting:

- How did the current Diamond Jubilee proposals compare with the celebrations for the Golden Jubilee in 2002 and the Diamond Jubilee in 2012?
- What was the Council itself doing to celebrate the Monarch's Platinum Jubilee?
- Why were road closures only allowed on the Sunday – could this be extended to the whole of the bank holiday weekend?
- Could consideration be given to a shorter notification period for road closures?
- Could the total community grant available be increased or could the criteria be reviewed to allow for one application per ward?
- Could grants be made available for more permanent memorials?

RESOLVED: That the Executive be recommended to:

- 1. Defer consideration of the report to enable a more detailed and comprehensive report to be provided to Members in January 2022;**
- 2. Request that further details of the community grant programme be presented to the meeting in January 2022, setting out the full criteria for the allocation of grants and more detailed proposals for a revised community grant ceiling;**
- 3. Request that a cross-departmental approach be taken to preparations for Platinum Jubilee Celebrations across the Borough with particular reference to the Local Authority's Looked After Children;**
- 4. Request that further details be provided on the Council's own plans for Platinum Jubilee Celebrations; and**
- 5. Agree that road closures be permitted across the whole of the bank holiday weekend.**
- 6. Agree that the Leader should request that the Mayor writes to community groups publicise the grants that are being made available and encourage their involvement in the Jubilee Celebrations.**

**60 BT/ICT CONTRACT MONITORING REPORT
Report CSD21130**

The report presented the BT/ICT contract performance report, utilising the Pan London Framework, covering the period 1 September 2020 to 30 August 2021.

The Chairman welcomed Mr Ian Withycombe and Mr Alan Gardener from BT to the meeting.

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The Assistant Director for IT Services confirmed that comments around the format of the report and the use of jargon and abbreviations had been fed back to BT and would be taken on board for future reports.

In response to a question from the Chairman, the Assistant Director for IT Services explained that the decision around service credits had been taken by the pan-London Framework in consultation with LBB Officers.

The Committee noted that Bromley was not an outlier in terms of the decision not to implement the latest version of Windows (Windows 11). Members noted that when new versions were released there were often a number of bugs and fixes that were required and it was therefore considered more appropriate to remain one version behind the latest to ensure that all the corporate IT systems were able to interact with the new operating system.

A Member highlighted the need to ensure that the communications system used by the IT Helpdesk allowed Members to return calls. In response, the Assistant Director confirmed that he would ensure that direct telephone lines were provided when messages were left.

In response to a question, Mr Gardener confirmed that during the period of the pandemic when new laptops were being rolled out to staff, call volumes to the help desk increase by approximately 40%. Feedback from staff indicated that they were happy with the new devices. Although the laptop rollout to staff was drawing to a close the service continued to work on a number of projects such as the upgrade to the servers, work on Skype for Business and Office 365. In addition calls to the help desk remained high as staff worked from home and there were less opportunities to share knowledge and best practice in the Office.

The Committee noted that the outcome of the Review of Members' IT would be presented in January 2022, and Members would have an opportunity to consider the range of options available prior to a decision being taken.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

61 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

**62 EXEMPT MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 13 OCTOBER
2021**

The Part 2 (exempt) minutes of the meeting held on 13 October 2021 were agreed, and signed as a correct record.

63 PART 2 POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND OTHER ITEMS

**a PART 2 CONTRACTS REGISTER AND CONTRACTS
DATABASE
Report CSD21129B**

The report presented November 2021's Corporate Contracts Register for consideration. Detailed scrutiny of individual contracts was the responsibility of the six PDS Committees with ERC PDS taking an overview of the Council's larger value (£200k+) contracts to ensure that commissioning and procurement activity was progressed in a consistent manner. The report provided both the Council wide £200k+ register together with the £50k+ register specific to the ERC Portfolio. The Part 2 Contracts Register included a commentary on each contract to inform of any issues or developments.

In response to a question, the Assistant Director for Governance and Contracts explained that the way in which contracts were advertised depended on the tender with there being specific requirements dependent on the value of the contract being tendered. Local businesses were encouraged to sign up to the London tender portal, Contracts Finder and Find A Tender to receive alerts on opportunities relevant to them. In addition, Officers should consider suitable market engagement and awareness raising prior to tender. For lower value tenders, there are also specific policies on local engagement, including inviting (as appropriate) tenders from at least one local business. Members noted that within the Council's Gateway reports there was a section on market engagement.

RESOLVED: That the contracts Register be noted.

The Meeting ended at 9.25 pm

Chairman

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Agenda Item 5

Report No.
CSD22001

London Borough of Bromley

PART ONE - PUBLIC

Decision Maker: Executive, Resources & Contracts PDS Committee

Date: Wednesday 5 January 2022

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

Title: MATTERS OUTSTANDING & FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

Contact Officer: Philippa Gibbs, Democratic Services Officer
Tel: 0208 313 4508 E-mail: Philippa.Gibbs@bromley.gov.uk

Chief Officer: Tasnim Shawkat, Director of Corporate Services and Governance

Ward: (All Wards);

1. Reason for report

This report deals with the Committee's business management including:

- Monitoring progress against actions arising from previous meetings;
- Developing the 2021/22 Forward Work Programme; and
- A schedule of Sub-Committees and Working Groups across all PDS Committees

2. **RECOMMENDATION(S)**

That PDS Committee reviews and comments on:

1. Progress on matters arising from previous meetings;
2. The 2021/22 work programme, indicating any changes or particular issues that it wishes to scrutinise for the year ahead.

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: No Cost
 2. Ongoing costs: Not Applicable
 3. Budget head/performance centre: Democratic Services
 4. Total current budget for this head: £359k
 5. Source of funding: Revenue Budget
-

Personnel

1. Number of staff (current and additional): 6.67 FTE
 2. If from existing staff resources, number of staff hours: N/A
-

Legal

1. Legal Requirement: None
 2. Call-in: Not Applicable: This report does not involve an Executive decision.
-

Procurement

1. Summary of Procurement Implications: N/A
-

Customer Impact

1. Estimated number of users/beneficiaries (current and projected): This report is intended primarily for the benefit of Committee Members.
-

Ward Councillor Views

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

Non-Applicable Sections:	Impact on Vulnerable People and Children/Policy/Financial/Legal/Personnel/Procurement
Background Documents: (Access via Contact Officer)	Minutes of previous meetings

3. COMMENTARY

Matters Outstanding from Previous Meetings

- 3.1. There are currently no matters outstanding from previous meetings.

Work Programme

- 3.2 Each PDS Committee determines its own work programme, balancing the roles of (i) pre-decision scrutiny and holding the Executive to account, (ii) policy development and review and (iii) external scrutiny. ERC PDS Committee has the additional role of providing a lead on scrutiny issues and co-ordinating PDS work.
- 3.3 PDS Committees need to prioritise their key issues. The work programme also needs to allow room for items that arise through the year, including Member requests, call-ins and referrals from other Committees. Committees need to ensure that their workloads are realistic and balanced, allowing sufficient time for important issues to be properly scrutinised. Members also need to consider the most appropriate means to pursue each issue – the current overview and scrutiny arrangements offer a variety of approaches, whether through a report to a meeting, a time-limited working group review, a presentation, a select committee style meeting focused on a single key issue, or another method.
- 3.4 **Appendix 1** sets out the ERC PDS Committee Work Programme for 2021/22, including: the provisional report title (or activity); the lead division; and Committee's role. Committee is invited to comment on the proposed schedule and suggest any changes it considers appropriate.
- 3.5 At its meeting on 25 May the Committee agreed that its four overarching priorities for the 2021/22 municipal year would be
1. The Income and Expenditure of the Council post Covid-19,
 2. A Review of the best sources of funding for the Council's Housing and Capital Programme,
 3. A Review of the Procurement Framework post Brexit, and
 4. Review of the timetable for the Council's Transformation Programme and monitor the Transformation Programme to ensure that new technology was used wherever appropriate in order to ensure that the Council's operations were economic, effective and efficient.
- 3.6 Other reports will be added to the 2021/22 Work Programme as items arise. In addition, there may also be references from other committees, the Resources, Contracts and Commissioning Portfolio Holder, or the Executive.

Sub-Committees and Working Groups

- 3.7 The Policy Development and Scrutiny Toolkit suggests that each Committee should aim to carry out no more than two or three full scale reviews each year, and it offers guidance and techniques for prioritising reviews. At a time of pressure on Member and officer resources it is important that any additional work is carefully targeted at priority issues where improvements can be achieved. In recent years, this Committee has examined a number of issues through its Working Groups - part of the Committee's workload may include follow-up work on some of these reviews.
- 3.8 For 2021/22, the Committee has established a Housing and Capital Finance Task and Finish Group focusing on one of the Committee's priorities for the year – that of sources of funding for

the Council's Housing and Capital Programme. The Task and Finish Group is being Chaired by Councillor Kira Gabbert, Vice-Chairman of the Executive, Resources and Contracts PDS Committee.

MATTERS OUTSTANDING FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS

Minute Number/Title/Date	Action/PDS Request	Update	Action by	Expected Completion Date
57b Insurance Fund – Annual Report 2020/21 18/11/21	That information regarding the arrangements for PAT Testing staff laptops be provided following the meeting	Although laptops don't require PAT testing, power leads often do and a regime of testing or replacement will be implemented at the appropriate time in line with HSE guidance.	Head of FM and Capital Projects	December 2021

**EXECUTIVE, RESOURCES & CONTRACTS PDS COMMITTEE
WORK PROGRAMME 2021/22**

Meeting Date: 2 February 2022	Division	Committee Role
Matters Arising/Work Programme/Forward Plan	Democratic Services	Standard Items
Treasury Management – Annual Investment Strategy and Quarter 3 Performance 2021/22	Finance	PH Decision
Executive Agenda	Various	Pre-decision scrutiny
Scrutiny of the Chief Executive	N/A	PDS Committee
Scrutiny of the Resources, Commissioning and Contract Management Executive Assistant (<i>if applicable</i>)	N/A	PDS Committee
Contracts Register and Contracts Database Update	Procurement	PDS Committee
Property Investment Update	Property	PDS Committee
Risk Register (Red Risks)	Audit & Assurance	Information Item
Meeting Date: 24 March 2022	Division	Committee Role
Matters Arising/Work Programme/Forward Plan	Democratic Services	Standard Items
Executive Agenda	Various	Pre-decision scrutiny
Post Completion Report – Banbury House Demolition/Site Prep	Housing	PDS Committee
Scrutiny of The Leader	N/A	PDS Committee
Annual PDS Report 2021/22	Democratic Services	PDS Committee

*Part 2 (Exempt) Report

LONDON BOROUGH OF BROMLEY

FORWARD PLAN OF KEY AND PRIVATE EXECUTIVE DECISIONS PUBLISHED ON: 15 DECEMBER 2021

PERIOD COVERED: December 2021 - March 2022

DATE FOR PUBLISHING NEXT FORWARD PLAN OF KEY AND PRIVATE EXECUTIVE DECISIONS: 11 January 2022

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						
COUNCIL TAX LEVEL 2022/23	Council	28 February 2022 Executive, PDS Committees, business community and local residents	Meetings	Contact Officer: Peter Turner Tel: 020 8313 4668 peter.turner@bromley.gov.uk	<u>Meetings in public</u>	Report and relevant background documents
REVENUE BUDGET 2022/23	Council	28 February 2022 Executive, PDS Committees, business community and local residents	Meetings	Contact Officer: Peter Turner Tel: 020 8313 4668 peter.turner@bromley.gov.uk	<u>Meetings in public</u>	Report and relevant background documents
CAPITAL STRATEGY 2022 to 2026	Council	28 February 2022 Executive, PDS Committees and key stakeholders	Meetings	Contact Officer: David Dobbs Tel. 020 8313 4145 david.dobbs@bromley.gov.uk	<u>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?
ANNUAL INVESTMENT STRATEGY 2022/23	Council	28 February 2022 Executive, Resources and Contracts PDS Committee	Meetings	Contact Officer: David Dobbs Tel. 020 8313 4145 david.dobbs@bromley.gov.uk	<u>Meeting in public</u>	Report and relevant background documents
EXECUTIVE						
BIGGIN HILL AIRPORT - TENURE	Executive	12 January 2022 Executive, Resources & Contracts PDS Committee	Meetings	Contact Officer: Michael Watkins Tel: 020 8313 4178 Michael.Watkins@bromley.gov.uk	<u>Meeting in public</u>	Report and relevant background documents
BIGGIN HILL AIRPORT NOISE ACTION PLAN REVIEW	Executive	12 January 2022 Executive, Resources & Contracts PDS Committee	Meetings	Contact Officer: Matthew Amer Tel. 020 8313 4938 matthew.amer@bromley.gov.uk	<u>Meeting in public.</u>	Report and relevant background documents.
PLATINUM JUBILEE CELEBRATIONS	Executive	12 January 2022 Executive, Resources & Contracts PDS Committee	Meetings	Contact Officer: Lydia Lee Tel: 020 8313 4456 lydia.lee@bromley.gov.uk	<u>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?
WEST WICKHAM LEISURE CENTRE	Executive	9 February 2022 Renewal, Recreation & Housing PDS Committee	Meetings	Contact Officer: Lydia Lee Tel: 020 8313 4456 lydia.lee@bromley.gov.uk	<u>Meeting in public</u>	Report and relevant background documents
EMPTY HOMES	Executive	9 February 2022 Renewal, Recreation & Housing PDS Committee	Meetings	Contact Officer: Lydia Lee Tel: 020 8313 4456 lydia.lee@bromley.gov.uk	<u>Meeting in public</u>	Report and relevant background documents
CRYSTAL PALACE PARK SUBWAY	Executive	9 February 2022 Renewal, Recreation & Housing PDS Committee	Meetings	Contact Officer: Lydia Lee Tel: 020 8313 4456 lydia.lee@bromley.gov.uk		
CRYSTAL PALACE PARK EVENT MANAGEMENT	Executive	9 February 2022 Renewal, Recreation & Housing PDS Committee	Meetings	Contact Officer: Lydia Lee Tel: 020 8313 4456 lydia.lee@bromley.gov.uk	<u>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?
ORPINGTON TOWN CENTRE SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT (SPD) - CONSULTATION DRAFT	Executive	9 February 2022 Development Control Committee and Renewal, Recreation & Housing PDS Committee	Meetings	Contact Officer: Ben Johnson Tel. 020 8461 7845 ben.johnson@bromley.gov.uk	<u>Meeting in public</u>	Report and relevant background documents
PLANNING OBLIGATIONS SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT (SPD) UPDATE - CONSULTATION DRAFT	Executive	9 February 2022 Development Control Committee and Renewal, Recreation & Housing PDS Committee	Meetings	Contact Officer: Ben Johnson Tel. 020 8461 7845 ben.johnson@bromley.gov.uk	<u>Meeting in public</u>	Report and relevant background documents
PROCEED TO PROCUREMENT (GATEWAY 1) ADVOCACY SERVICES	Executive	9 February 2022 Adult Care & Health PDS Committee	Meetings	Contact Officer: Garnett Clough Tel. 020 8461 7304 garnett.clough@bromley.gov.uk	<u>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?
TENANCY SUPPORT FOR YOUNG PEOPLE	Executive	9 February 2022 Renewal, Recreation & Housing PDS Committee	Meetings	Contact Officer: Lynnette Chamielec Tel. 020 8313 4009 Lynnette.Chamielec@bromley.gov.uk	<u>Meeting in public</u>	Report and relevant background documents
LEARNING DISABILITY RESPITE STRATEGY AND GATEWAY REPORT	Executive	30 March 2022 Adult Care & Health PDS Committee	Meetings	Contact Officer: Colin Lusted Tel: 0208 461 7650 Colin.Lusted@bromley.gov.uk	<u>Meeting in Public</u>	Report and relevant background documents
BASIC NEED/CAPITAL PROGRAMME UPDATE	Executive	30 March 2022 Children, Education and Families PDS Committee	Meetings	Contact Officer: Robert Bollen Tel: 020 8313 4697 Robert.Bollen@bromley.gov.uk	<u>Meeting in public</u>	Report and relevant background documents
ADULT CARE & HEALTH PORTFOLIO						
CHILDREN, EDUCATION & FAMILIES PORTFOLIO						

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?
AWARD OF CONTRACT - EDUCATION CAPITAL PROJECTS	Director of Children's Services	Between 1 February 2022 and 28 February 2022 Children, Education & Families PDS Committee	Email	Contact Officer: Robert Bollen Tel: 020 8313 4697 Robert.Bollen@bromley.gov.uk	<u>Report is expected to be considered in the public part of the agenda, with confidential material considered during exempt proceedings</u>	Report and relevant background documents
CHILDREN AND FAMILIES CENTRE - CLEANING CONTRACT	Portfolio Holder for Children, Education and Families	Between 15 March 2022 and 31 March 2022 Children, Education & Families PDS Committee	Meetings	Contact Officer: Rachel Dunley Tel. 020 8461 7261 Rachel.Dunley@bromley.gov.uk	<u>Meeting in public</u>	Report & relevant background documents
ENVIRONMENT & COMMUNITY SERVICES PORTFOLIO						

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 INFORMATION DISPLAY UNITS CONTRACT EXTENSION	Portfolio Holder for Environment and Community Services	Between 1 January 2022 and 31 January 2022 Environment & Community Services PDS Committee	Meetings	Contact Officer: Andrew Rogers Tel: 020 8461 7670 andrew.rogers@bromley.gov.uk	<u>Meeting in public</u>	Report and relevant background document
PUBLIC PROTECTION & ENFORCEMENT PORTFOLIO						
RENEWAL, RECREATION & HOUSING PORTFOLIO						
ARTICLE 4 DIRECTION - UPWARDS EXTENSIONS	Portfolio Holder for Renewal, Recreation and Housing	Between 26 January 2022 and 28 February 2022 Development Control Committee and Renewal, Recreation & Housing PDS Committee	Meetings	Contact Officer: Ben Johnson Tel. 020 8461 7845 ben.johnson@bromley.gov.uk	<u>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?
ARTICLE 4 DIRECTION - OFFICE TO RESIDENTIAL DEMOLITION	Portfolio Holder for Renewal, Recreation and Housing	Between 26 January 2022 and 28 February 2022 Development Control Committee and Renewal, Recreation & Housing PDS Committee	Meetings	Contact Officer: Ben Johnson Tel. 020 8461 7845 ben.johnson@bromley.gov.uk	<u>Meeting in Public</u>	Report and relevant background documents
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.
FSD22002

London Borough of Bromley

PART ONE - PUBLIC

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

Date: Wednesday 5 January 2022

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

Title: BENEFITS SERVICE MONITORING REPORT

Contact Officer: Jayne Carpenter, Revenue and Benefits Manager
Tel: 020 8461 7996 E-mail: Jayne.Carpenter@bromley.gov.uk

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 Benefits Service provided by Liberata for the period 1 April to 30 November 2021. A letter from Amanda Inwood-Field Liberata's London Regional Contract Director is attached as Appendix 1. This communication provides Liberata's perspective of 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

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 and Admin
 4. Total current budget for this head: £5.865m
 5. Source of funding: Existing revenue budget 2021/22 including Government Grants and Subsidy
-

Personnel

1. Number of staff (current and additional): 3 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\Support Schemes Regulations 2012
The Local Government Finance Act 2012
 2. Call-in: Not 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):17,966
-

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 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 The Exchequer Service specification effective from 1 April 2020 introduced key performance indicators for the processing of new claims and change in circumstances as well reducing the tolerance level for errors to 4% (previously 5%).
- 3.4 During this reporting period there has been a significant increase in reported change in circumstances and Universal Credit notifications as a result of the ongoing effects of Covid19 and the changes to Universal credit scheme. The Service has remained stable and has been able to mitigate the impact by using automated processes and re-prioritising tasks.

3.5 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 30 November 2021 there were 3297 outstanding documents. Of the 3297 documents, 875 were in pending awaiting further information. A graph showing the level of outstanding work since November 2019 is attached at Appendix 2.

A graph illustrating the number of Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support new claims, change in circumstance and Universal Credit notifications (new, changes and stops) since January 2021 is attached at Appendix 3

3.6 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 21	May 21	Jun 21	Jul 21	Aug 21	Sep 21	Oct 21	Nov 21	Dec 21	Jan 22	Feb 22	Mar 22
6.51	7.25	11.04	8.63	7.35	7.59	8.43	11.37				

Average 2019/20 **6.22 days**
Average 2020/21 **6.13 days**
Average 2021/22 **8.24 days (to date)**

Performance under the Right Time Indicator is illustrated as Appendix 4

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

New claims – target for 2021/22 is 19 days

Apr 21	May 21	Jun 21	Jul 21	Aug 21	Sep 21	Oct 21	Nov 21	Dec 21	Jan 22	Feb 22	Mar 22
12.93	12.47	13.42	12.58	13.72	14.11	11.42	14.25				

Average 2019/20 **14 days**
Average 2020/21 **14 days**
Average 2021/22 **13.15 days (to date)**

3.8 **Change in circumstances – target for 2021/22 is 9 days**

Apr 21	May 21	Jun 21	Jul 21	Aug 21	Sep 21	Oct 21	Nov 21	Dec 21	Jan 22	Feb 22	Mar 22
6.26	9.94	10.88	8.34	6.78	6.97	8.11	11.08				

Average 2019/20 **6 days**
Average 2020/21 **7 days**
Average 2021/22 **7.89 days (to date)**

3.9 The average processing days covers a wide variance amongst claims. Appendix 5 and 5a show the “spread” in respect of new claims and change of circumstances.

For the period 1 April to 30 November 2021, 1113 new Housing Benefit claims were processed, no claim took in excess of 100 days to process. Of the 15,792 changes in circumstances processed, 14 (0.08%) took in excess of 100 days to process. The reasons why are detailed below:

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	3
Administration delay	0
Retrospective changes advised by DWP report (Atlas)	11
Total	14

DWP Benchmarking - processing times for new claims and changes

The table below shows the latest benchmarking figures released by the DWP in respect of new claims and change of circumstances processing for the 19 Outer London authorities:

Local Authority	Quarter 1 2021/22	Changes	Quarter 4 2020/21	Changes
	New Claims		New Claims	
Barking and Dagenham	23	8	18	3
Barnet	27	9	24	5
Bexley	9	9	10	6
Brent	45	11	54	8
Bromley	14	9	13	4
Croydon	40	6	41	3
Ealing	26	7	21	4
Enfield	34	4	26	3
Greenwich	24	10	18	3
Harrow	22	4	21	3
Havering	17	5	15	4
Hillingdon	23	5	26	3
Hounslow	12	4	8	2
Kingston upon Thames	32	8	22	3
Merton	11	16	14	7
Redbridge	14	4	19	2
Richmond upon Thames	24	7	24	6
Sutton	14	7	14	3
Waltham Forest	13	4	22	2

Based on the Quarter 1, 2021/22 data Bromley's performance for new claims was joint 5th and joint 12th for changes.

Attached as Appendix 6 and 6a are graphical illustrations of Quarter 1, 2021/22 and Quarter 4, 2020/21 performance against the contractual target.

3.10 Error rate

From 1 April 2020 the Exchequer Services specification requires the contractor to ensure that financial errors are found in less than 4% 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 4% tolerance contained in the specification for the 12 months covered in this reporting period as shown in the table below. A graphical illustration is entered as Appendix 7.

Apr 21	May 21	Jun 21	Jul 21	Aug 21	Sep 21	Oct 21	Nov 21	Dec 21	Jan 22	Feb 22	Mar 22
1.4%	0%	2.1%	1.8%	0.6%	1.1%	0.5%	0.4%				

3.11 **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 the period April 2021 to November 2021 which is an indication that a good service is being provided and that the customer’s areas of discontent are being resolved therefore preventing unnecessary complaints.

3.12 **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 8 shows the monthly recovery rates since November 2019.

3.13 **Call Centre (Help line)**

The graph at Appendix 9 details the performance of the Call Centre from April 2019.

The number of calls received for the period April 2021 to November 2021 was 59,514. This is a slight increase when compared to the 59,683 calls received for the same period in 2020/21 and has been attributed to the migration of Housing Benefit claims to Universal credit and the move to self service via MyBromley Account.

The average abandonment rate for the period April 2021 to November 2021 was 1.2 % which is within the 5% tolerance allowed for under the specification.

3.14 **Caseload**

A graph showing the overall number of claims in payment and the Council Tax Support caseload is attached as Appendix 10. Prior to Covid-19 the overall caseload had been consistently reducing due to the natural migration of working age Housing Benefit claimants to Universal Credit.

At the end of November 2021, the combined caseload was 17,966 and the Council Tax Support was 14,912.

3.15 **Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP’s)**

The DWP allocation for 2021/22 was £723,755. This was reduction of £169,534 on the 2020/21 allocation of £893,289. From 1 April 2020 the DHP fund has been administered by Liberata and monitored by Bromley. It is envisaged that the fund will be fully utilised.

3.16 **Council Tax Support/Reduction (CTS)**

The Council Tax scheme for 2021/22 retained the minimum contribution of working-age claimants to 25% of the household’s Council Tax liability.

At the end of November 2021 there were 14,912 households in receipt of Council Tax Support of which 9704 were of working age and 5,208 were elderly.

The working age and elderly caseload split by Council Tax band is shown below:

Council Tax Band	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	Total
Number of working-age claims	345	1928	3938	2505	728	202	56	2	9704
Number of elderly claims	277	997	1805	1462	478	138	49	2	5208

By March 2021, as a result of the pandemic the number of working age households in receipt of CTS had increased by over 12%. Although the working-age caseload has started to reduce the situation remains volatile and it is anticipated that it will fluctuate during the next 12 months.

3.17 Service Development

We committed to improving and enhancing the service by implementing initiatives that will allow us to automate our back office processes which eventually will lead to a significant reduction in processing times.

So far, we have introduced on-line applications forms for Housing and Council Tax Support which in the coming months will enable us to automate the processing of low risk claims. We are currently focusing, on increasing the percentage of Universal Credit notifications, due to the high volumes that are currently being received, that can be determined without any manual intervention as we believe this will enhance the customer journey and deliver a reduction in the processing times for change in circumstances.

3.18 Universal Credit (UC) update

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.

The October 2021 Budget the Government amended the taper rate for UC (reducing an amount for every £1 you earn over the government set figure) therefore for every £1 a client earns the benefit reduces by 65p when on Housing Benefit (HB) but in Universal Credit it reduces by 55p. This change makes it more beneficial to clients who are earning and on a low income to claim UC rather than remain on HB.

The Budget also advised that there are plans to create a new housing element of Pension Credit, replacing pensioner Housing Benefit, is now intended to take effect in 2025, to align with the full rollout of working-age Housing Benefit into Universal Credit.

The inclusion of Pensioners was initially in the plans for Universal Credit but all reference to them being included had been missing for a few years and wasn't expected to be so soon, if at all. The impact of this will be significant to the Borough as the pensioner caseload is proportionally high. This also suggests that from 2025 the only residents in Bromley on HB will be those in temporary or supported/exempt accommodation.

The Department of Works and Pensions (DWP) statistics show 15,839 households in Bromley were on Universal Credit (latest provisional figures from August 2021, decreased from highest of 17,206 in March 2021) with 21,218 people in total on UC of which 8,446 are in employment increased from 3,253 since February 2020.

The DWP also advise that 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 Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) have been contracted to deliver 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.

4 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support present significant "business". The 2021/22 budget includes payments in excess of £90m for Housing Benefit and £14m (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.

5 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 One of the "Making Bromley Even Better" ambitions is to manage our resources well, providing value for money, efficient and effective services for Bromley's residents. To achieve this, we will ensure robust contract management with a focus on efficiency and innovation to improve services for Bromley residents.

6 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 This is a contract monitoring report pursuant to CPR23. There are no specific legal implications raising from this report.

Non-Applicable Sections:	Impact on Vulnerable Adults and Children, Personnel and Procurement
Background Documents:	

(Access via Contact Officer)	
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Claudine Douglas-Brown
Assistant Director of Exchequer Services
London Borough of Bromley
Civic Centre
Stockwell Close
Bromley
BR1 3UH

Date: 10th December 2021

Our Ref: AIF/GT

Dear Claudine,

As we approach the June 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 customers.

Liberata's Business Continuity plans remain in place and employees continue working from home. As a result of the recent Government announcement there are no plans to change this arrangement however, this will be reviewed in the New Year.

Our experience during the COVID pandemic has enabled us to continue successfully building on the online strategies in line with the Council's transformation programme. In January we will implement the 'Channel Shift Strategy' which includes a number of initiatives that should encourage customers to transact with the service online. This will include adding 'how to' videos on the Bromley website which will highlight how easy and convenient the online applications forms are to use. The additional provision now in place for vulnerable customers has proven critical in ensuring that services can be accessed seamlessly by all citizens within the borough.

This summary covers performance for the period: 1st April 2021 to 30th November 2021.

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 17,999 as at the end of November 2021. The caseload at the same time last year was 18,443.

In terms of our position for the processing of New Claims and Changes, the average performance for the period April 2021 to November 2021 was 13.15 days for New Claims compared to 14.34 days for the same period last year. For Changes it was 7.89 days compared to 6.89 days. Although this demonstrates a slight deterioration, this is as a direct result of the increase in UC notifications. This is against an annual contractual target of 19 days and 9 days respectively.

As at the end of November 2021, the amount of outstanding work totalled 2,422 items. We also had 875 items pending, whilst awaiting information from the claimant and/or third-party. This compares to 6,229 items and 1,282 items respectively for the same period last year. Though volumes have reduced, we continue to see a high volume of new Universal Credit (UC) award notices and changes. The reduction in outstanding work is a combination of both work volumes and the automation of UC notifications.

1.1 Temporary Accommodation

Liberata have maintained strong relationships with the various LBB Housing Teams, Orchard & Shipman and the Mears Group. Our ongoing operational meetings continue each month and have proven effective in resolving any benefit issues swiftly. Where necessary we fast track cases to minimise the risk of arrears accumulating which ultimately sustains tenancies and prevents homelessness.

The dedicated Temporary Accommodation benefit assessment staff and LBB's Housing staff and stakeholders have created a robust, collaborative virtual team which focuses on benefit claims being paid quickly and efficiently.

1.2 Verify Earnings and Pensions (VEP) Alerts Service

Liberata continue to receive VEP alerts, from the DWP. The processing of the alerts are an effective tool in ensuring the earnings and pension information within the Academy benefits system is accurately maintained.

Liberata's specialised VEP Team, based in the shared service centre, plays a key role in ensuring that the daily VEP files provided by the DWP are downloaded and processed in accordance with the information being provided. The VEP alerts draw relevant information held by various organisations including HMRC and the Pension Service which provide 'real time' information essential in the administration of Benefits.

The effective processing of the alerts not only ensure that the Academy database is accurate, but also significantly reduces the potential for overpayments where the customer has delayed or 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. The majority of the ATLAS files which we receive now automate directly into the benefits database, which improves the speed of processing and reduces the risk of input error by assessors when re-keying information. We have seen a significant reduction the number of ATLAS files being transmitted as a number of these cases come through the UC channels.

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 period April 2021 to November 2021 was 1.0% which is a significant improvement from the same reporting period last year when it was 2.1%. This is compared to a contractual target of 4%. Quality assurance checking undertaken during the year was key in ensuring that Liberata deliver a high quality service to customers and mitigating the risk of financial error.

Liberata undertakes an intense training program for all new recruits and the upskilling of existing employees. This involves significant post completion monitoring and mentoring to ensure accuracy rates remain at a high level. Errors which have been identified are addressed immediately with employees and additional refresher training or mentoring is provided to maintain our high standard of quality in the assessments that are undertaken.

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 continues to remain well below the lower threshold attracting 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 recovery rate of overpaid Housing Benefit as at the end of November 2021 was 120.03%. This underlying trend includes the recovery of current year and previous year debts. 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 have proven effective tools in securing the repayment of these debts.

1.6 Universal Credit

The volumes of UC notifications, though reduced from last year, continue to be higher than pre-pandemic volumes. Liberata has now implemented automation which was made available by the Academy software supplier. This means that around 40% of UC new claim notifications are automated through the system without the need of manual intervention. This ensure that processing errors are mitigated and the speed of processing these cases has increased.

We are now awaiting a further release from the Academy software supplier which will enable UC new claim notifications to benefit from a greater level of automation.

The new online smart forms for new claims and changes which were implemented earlier this year have proved effective with higher number of customers now using this online channel. Vulnerable customers that are not able to transact with the service online are provided with additional support from our Customer Services team.

1.7 Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP)

Liberata now administers DHP on behalf of LB Bromley and are able to assist some of the most vulnerable customers within borough. This enabled us to support customers that are experiencing issues with rent arrears and rent shortfalls which mitigated the risk of evictions. Liberata work closely with LB Bromley to ensure that assistance from the discretionary fund is targeted at people that are in genuine need of support.

2. Corporate Visiting Team (CVT)

During the pandemic Visiting Officers have been unable to conduct face to face visits with customers in their home. However, these recommenced in October when COVID restrictions were eased. Visits have now been scheduled to verify customer information which was previously assessed using the DWP's 'Trust and Protect' protocol which enabled the service to accept income and capital verbally or by email. New visit requests are also being scheduled to ensure that vulnerable customers are supported in accessing the service.

3. Call Centre & Customer Services

The Revenues & Benefits Call Centre received 59,514 calls for the period 1st April to 30th November 2021, which is a similar volume in the same reporting period last year. We answered 98% of calls with an average speed to answer of 38 seconds. Of these calls 87% were answered within the service level target. The Call Centre also received 2,806 NNDR calls which is significantly lower than the

same period last year which saw 6,061 calls being offered. The volumes this year are much more in line with expectation.

The Customer Services front facing team continued to operate mainly an appointment only service, but vulnerable customers who presented without an appointment were seen. During this reporting period, the team saw just 1,058 R&B customers compared to 18,717 during the same period in 2019. This large reduction does not appear to have been to the detriment of customers being able to transact with the Council, and there have been no complaints about the appointment only service.

This reporting period has seen more on-line self-service forms becoming available to customer through LB Bromley's website portal, this uptake by citizens has undoubtedly driven down call and footfall volumes.

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;

- Risk Based Verification (RBV) has been implemented; this now plays a pivotal role in enabling claims to be risk scored in line with the customers circumstances. Customers deemed as low risk have their new claims and changes processed without the requirement for them to provide additional information to validate their claims. This provides enhanced customer experience and improves the speed of processing times.
- Investigating RBV automation; this would enable low risk claims to be automated through the back office database without the need of re-keying information. This will also significantly increase the processing times for new claims and changes as well as a further enhancement to customer experience.
- Benefits self-service portal fully implemented; this is now being widely used by customers, LB Bromley's Housing teams, Leaving Care and the Citizens Advice Bureau. This enables online new claims and changes to be submitted directly into the back office system.
- Liberata in conjunction with LB Bromley have now reviewed the content of the website and also the letters which are sent out by the Benefit Service. This forms part of our ongoing digital transformation programme to channel shift customers to online services.
- Housing Benefit Award Accuracy Initiative (HBAAI); Liberata will commence processing HBAAI workloads in April 2022. Cases identified by

the DWP will be reviewed to ensure that current awards of Benefits are accurate and the Benefits database is up to date with current information.

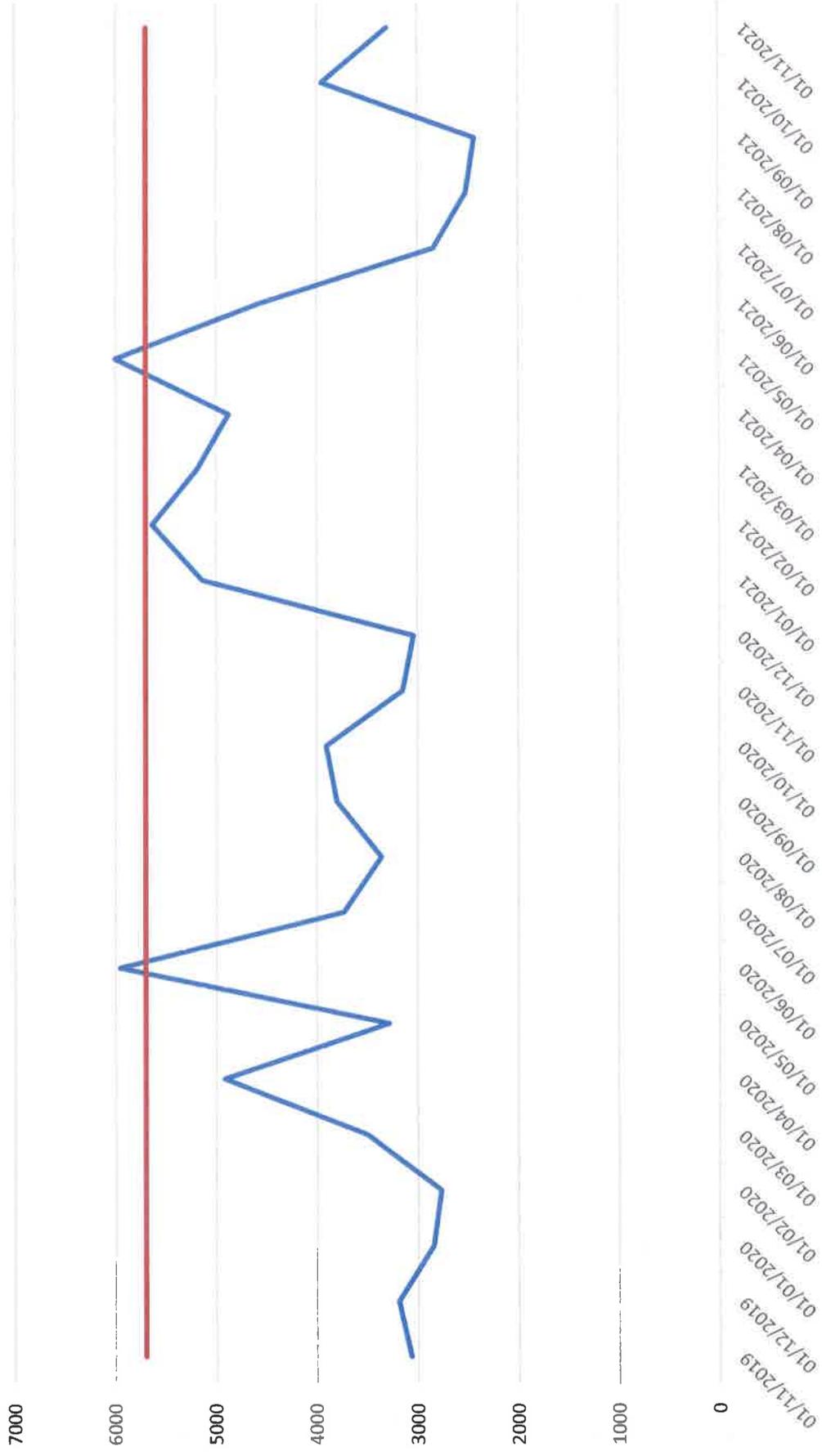
- Universal Credit (UC) Automation; We will be implementing a further level of UC automation at the beginning of 2022. This will enable us to automate a higher volume of UC notifications and reduce errors as a result of manual re-keying of data into the database.

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

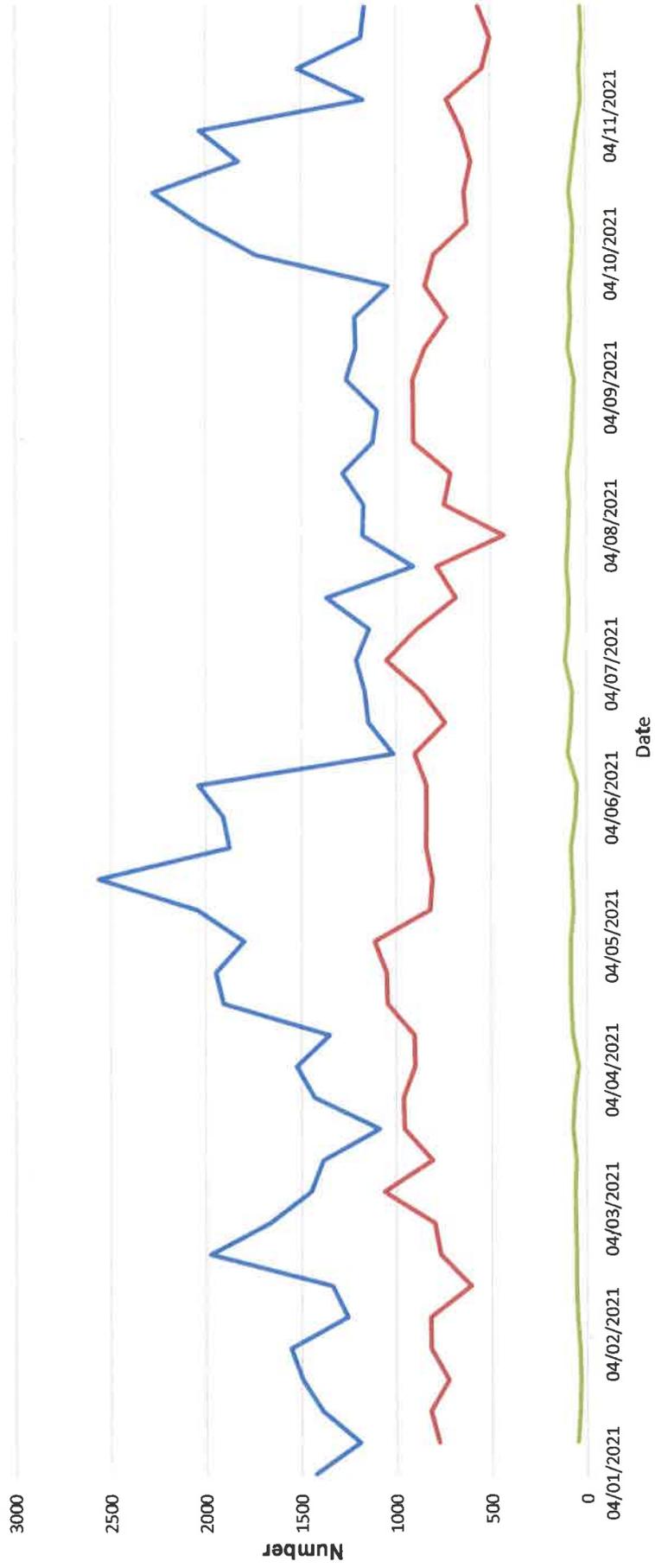
Yours sincerely,

Amanda Inwood-Field
London Regional Contract Director

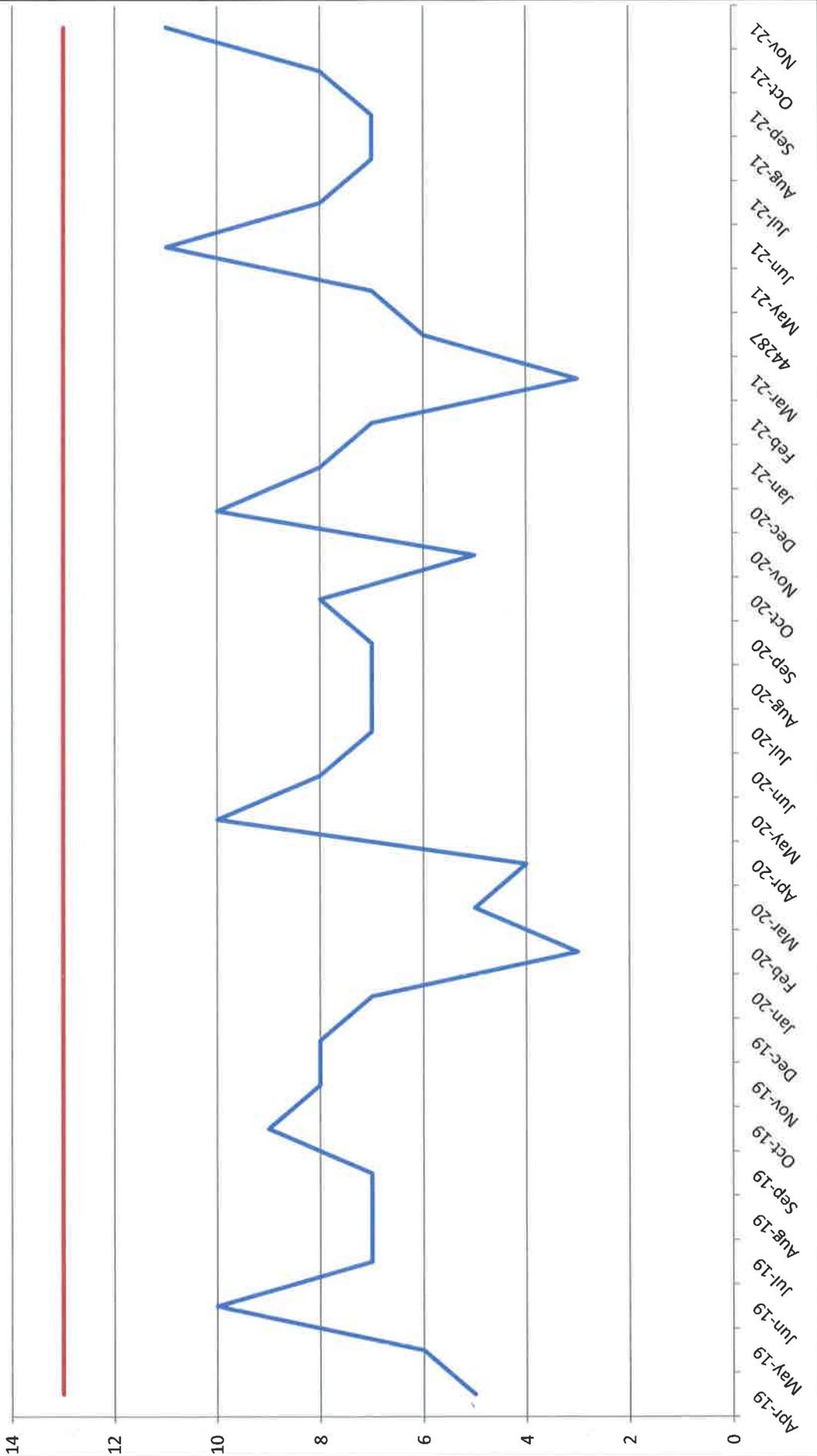
Outstanding Work - November 2019 to November 2021 Target - 5700



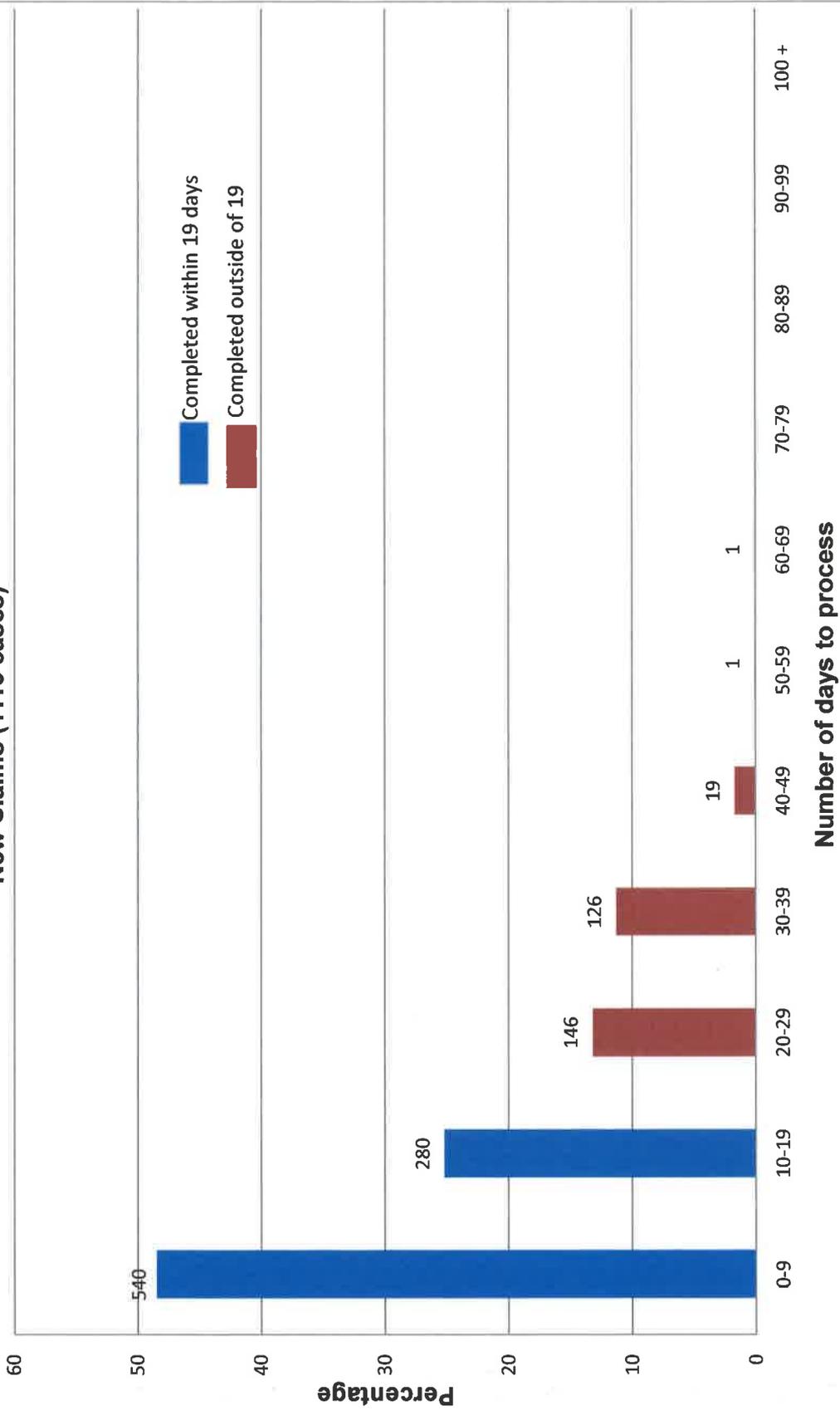
New claims, Changes in Circumstances and Universal Credit notifications received since January 2021

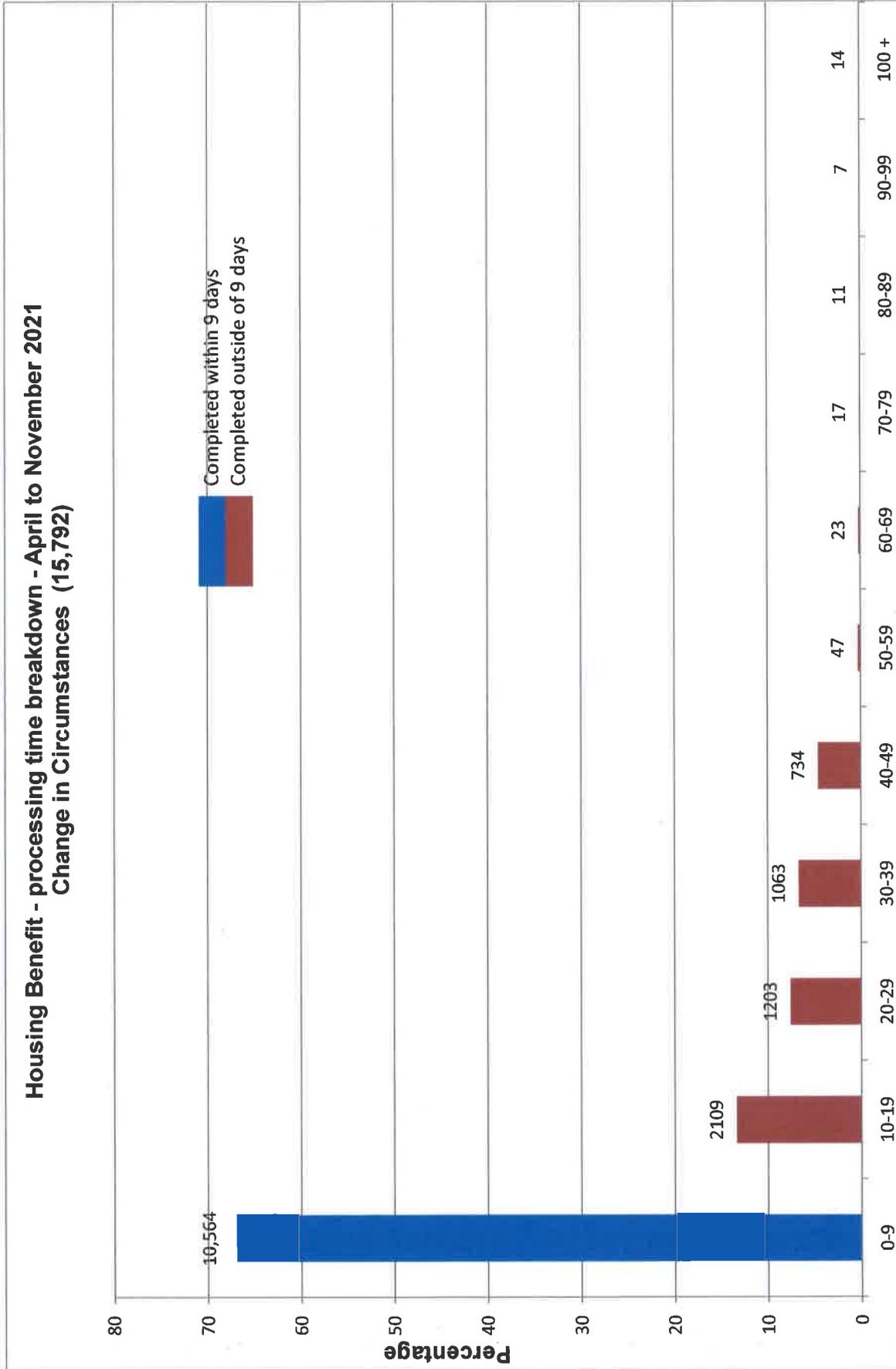


Right Time Indicator - April 2019 to November 2021
Target - 13 days

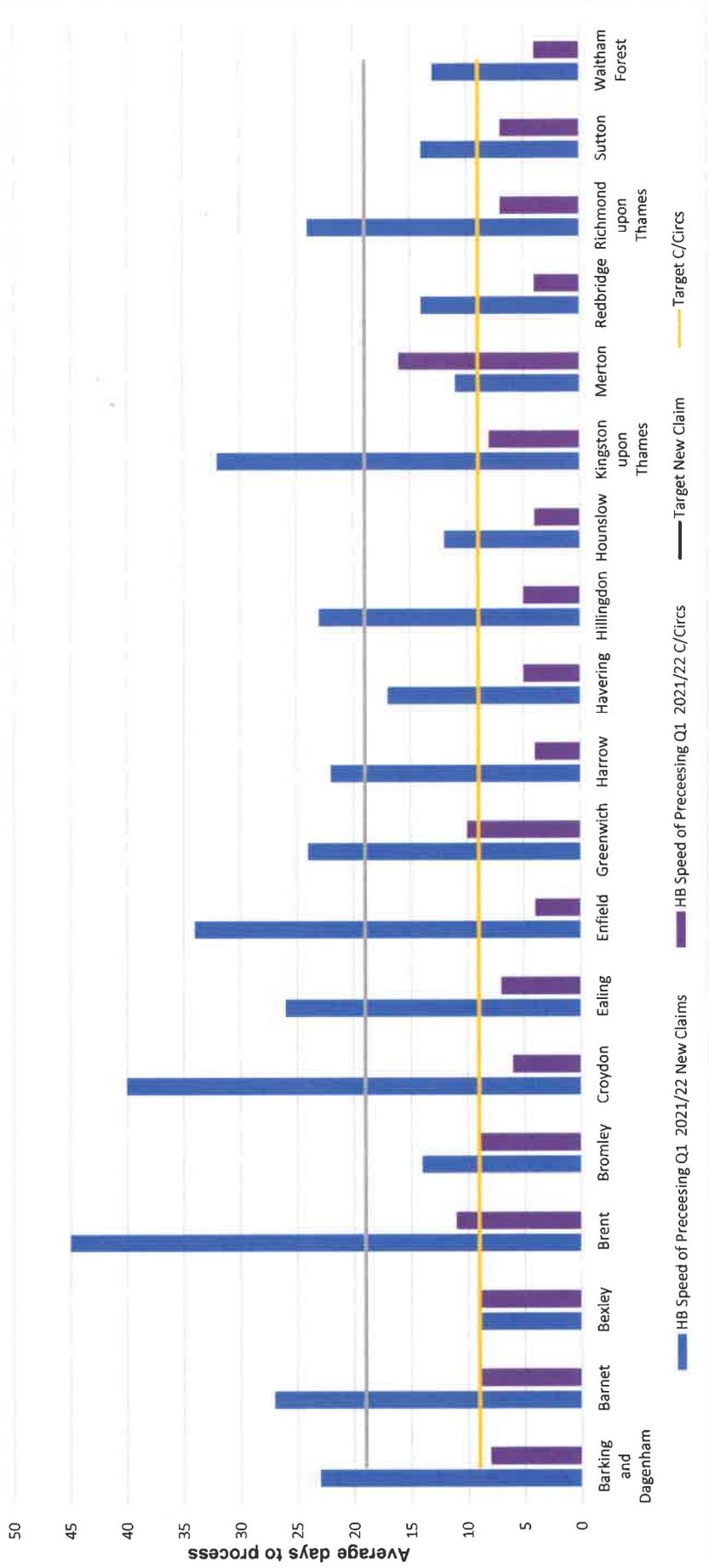


Housing Benefit - processing time breakdown April to November 2021
 New Claims (1113 cases)

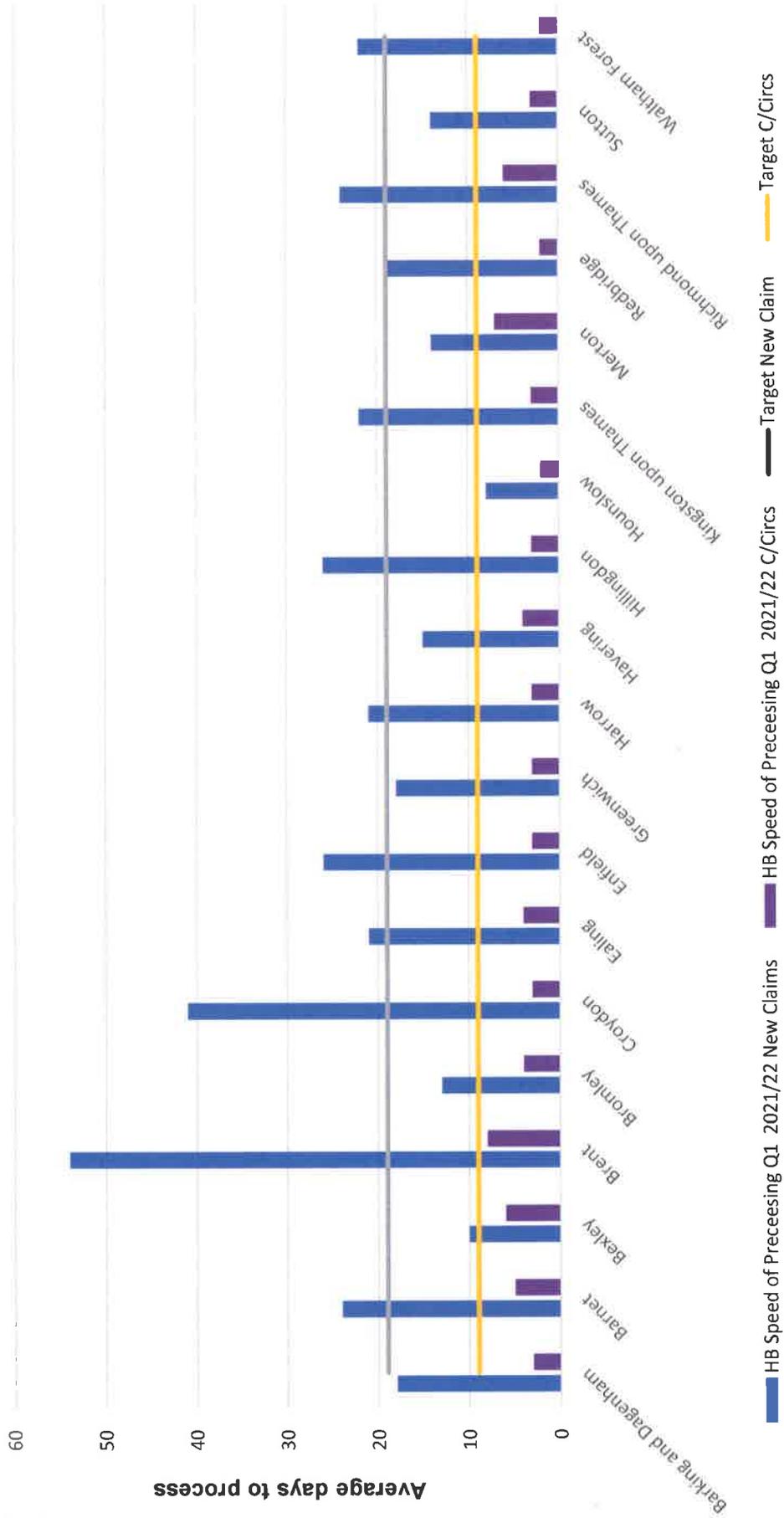




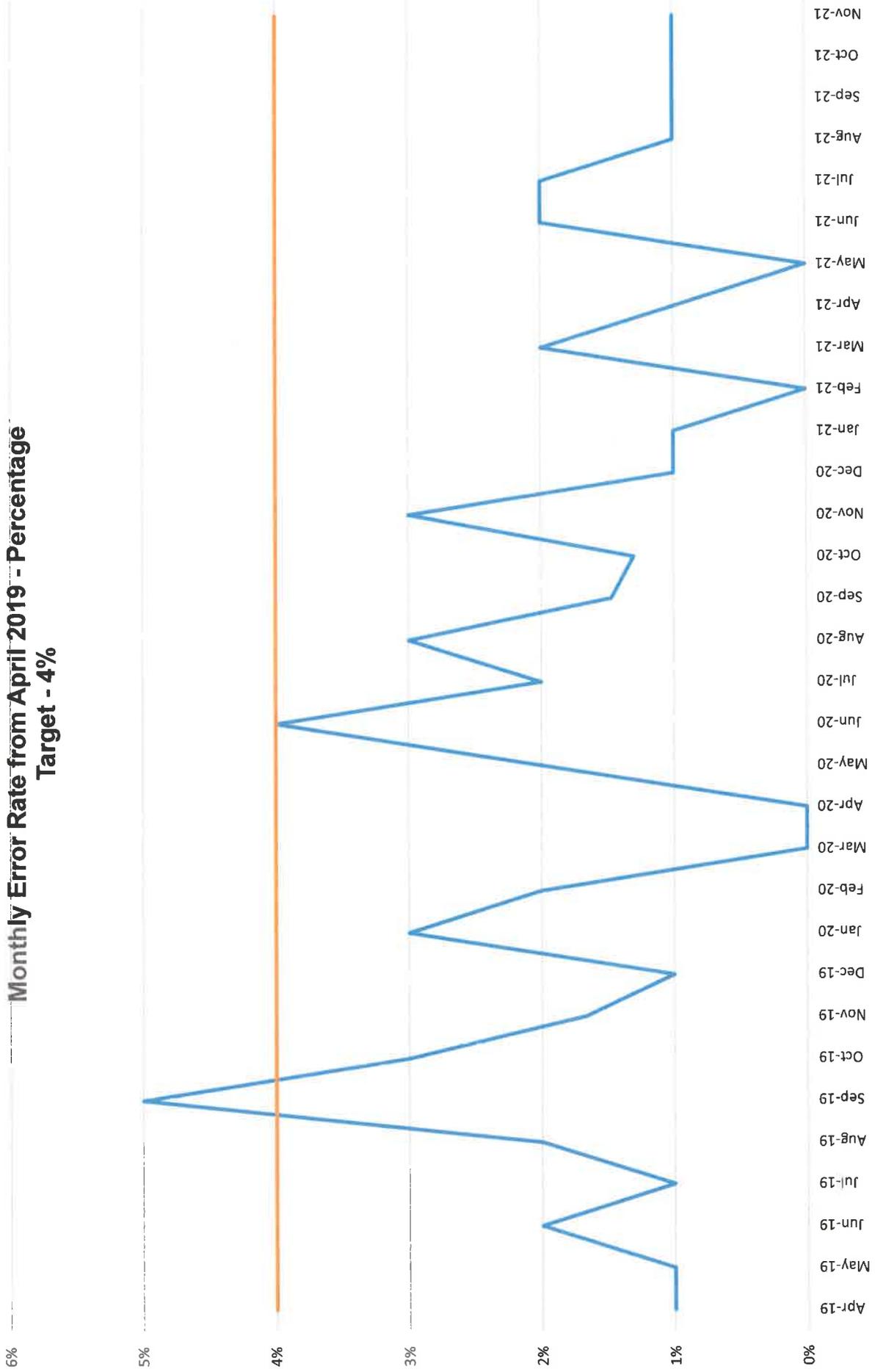
Housing Benefit Speed of Processing Q1 2021/22 - Outer London Authorities



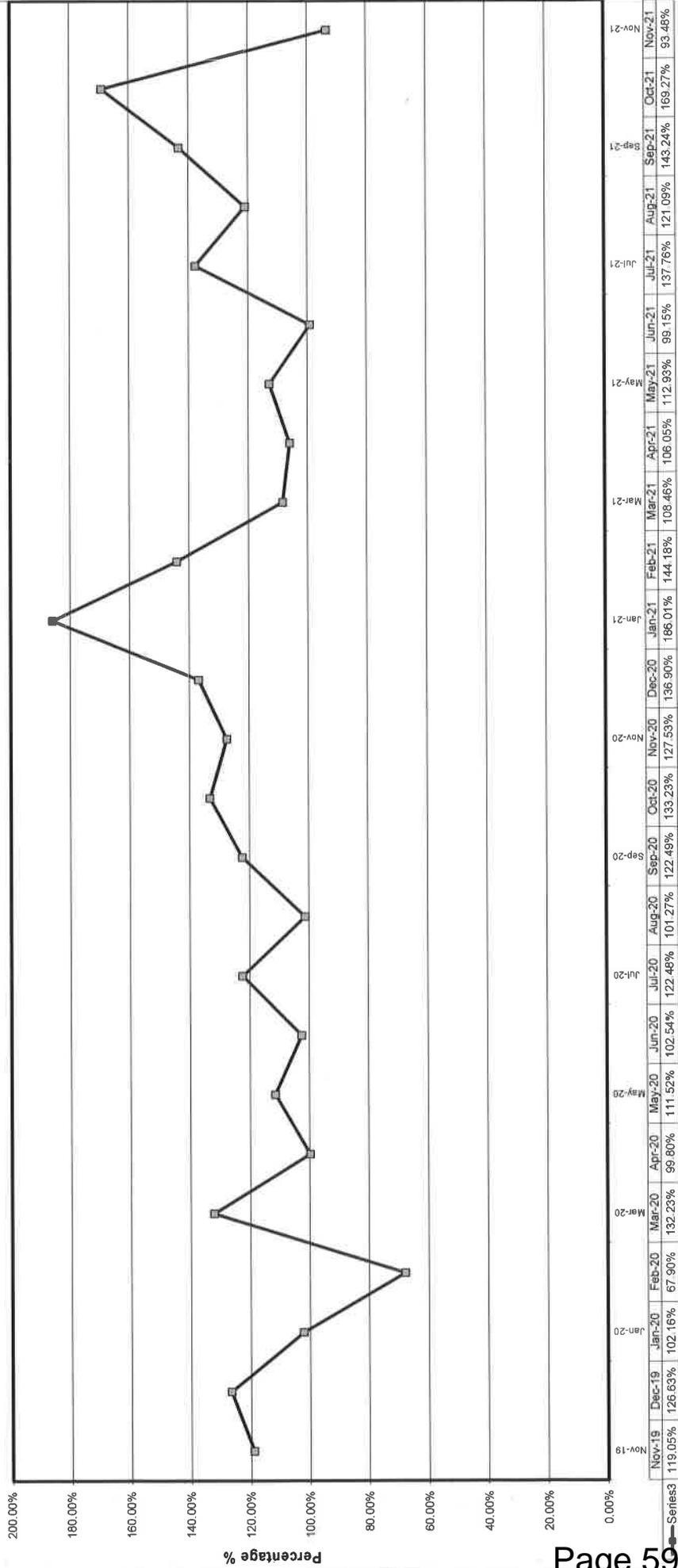
Housing Benefit Speed of Processing Q4 2020/21 - Outer London Authorities



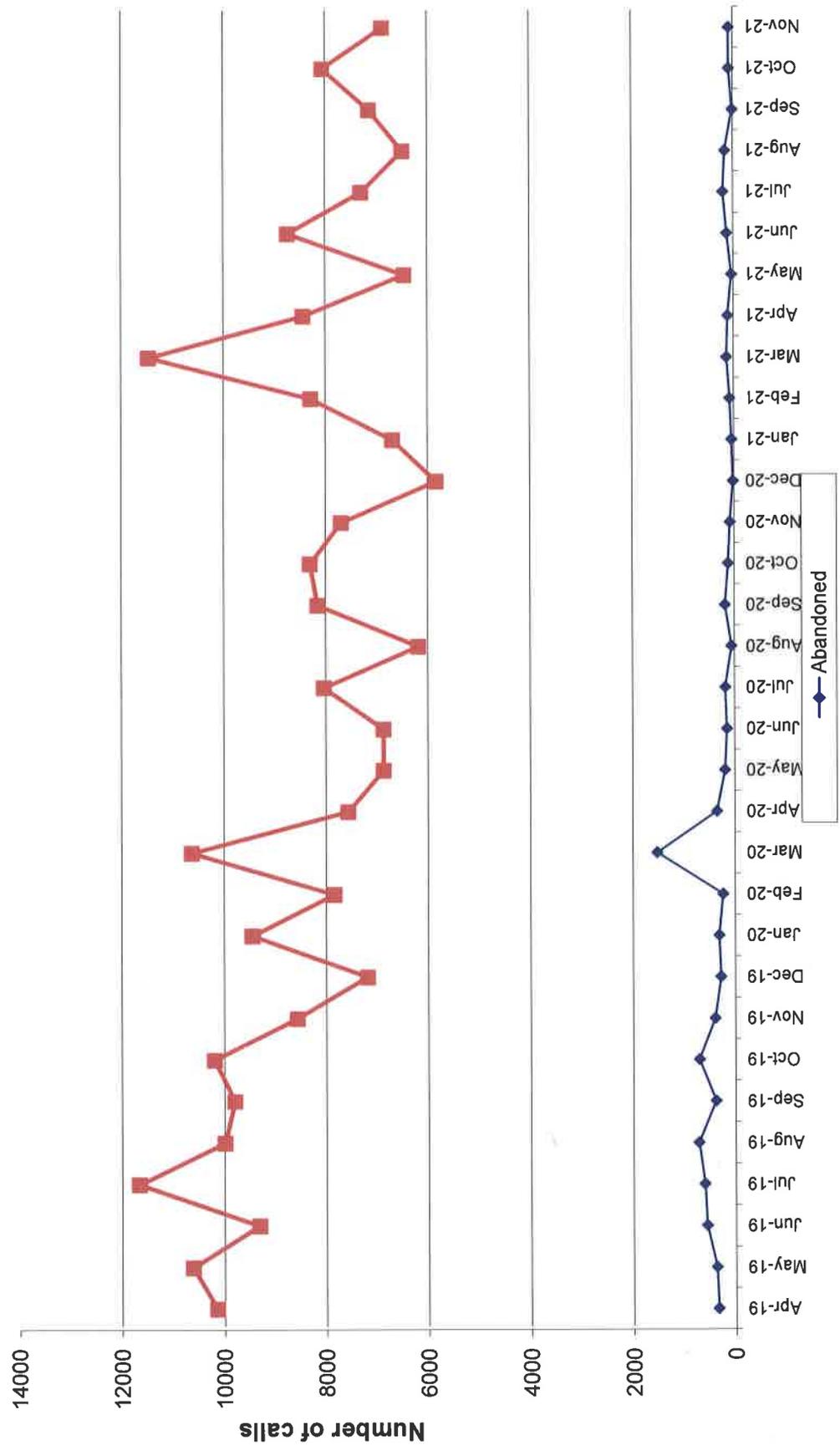
Monthly Error Rate from April 2019 - Percentage
Target - 4%

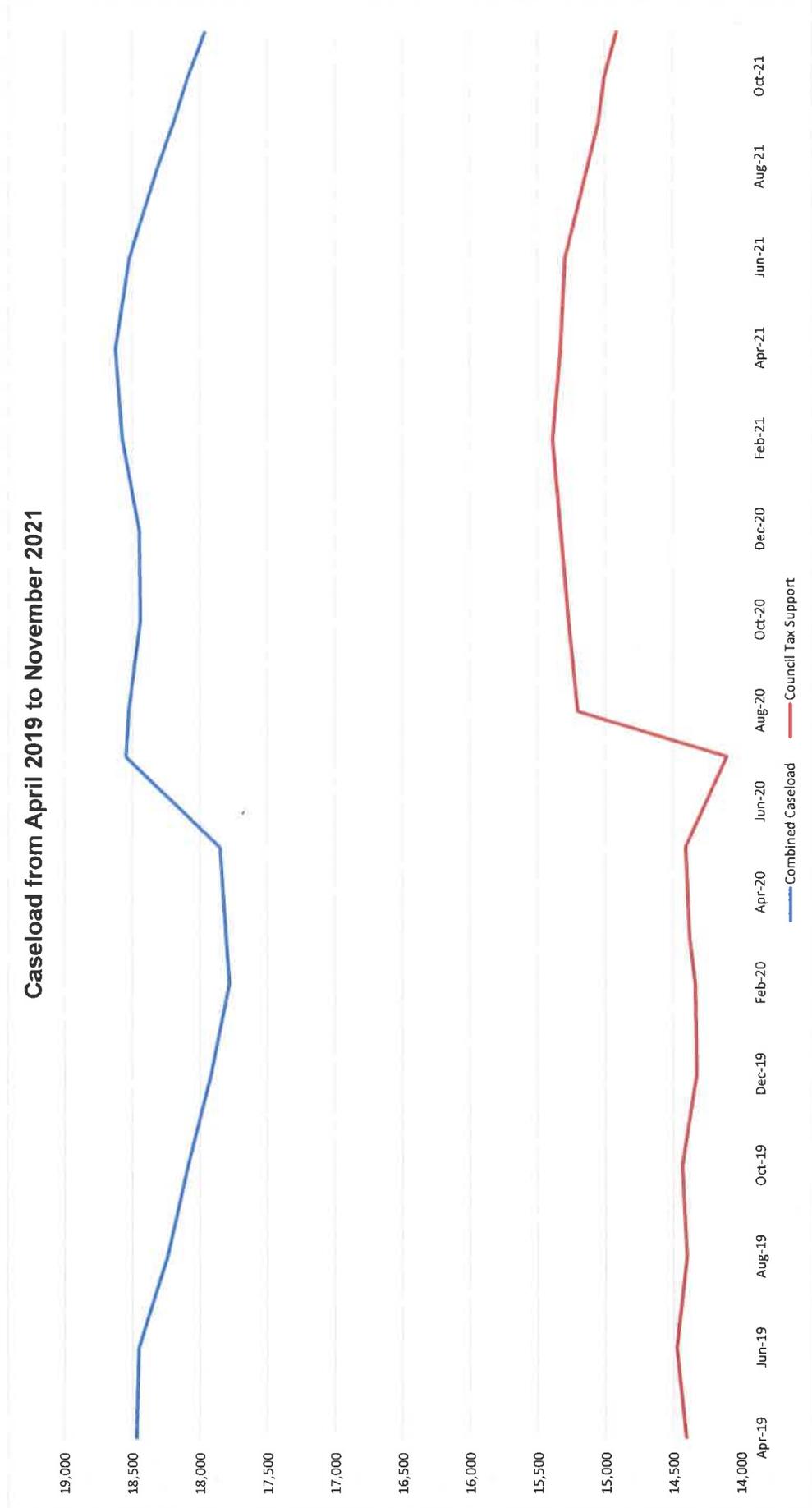


Monthly Overpayment % recovered against that created since November 2019



Revenues and Benefits Call Centre - number of telephone calls received and abandoned from April 2019 to November 2021





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Report No.
FSD22003

London Borough of Bromley

PART ONE - PUBLIC

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

Date: Wednesday 5 January 2022

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

Title: REVENUES SERVICE MONITORING REPORT

Contact Officer: Jayne Carpenter, Revenues and Benefits Manager
Tel: 020 8461 7996 E-mail: Jayne.Carpenter@bromley.gov.uk

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 period 1 April to 30 November 2021. A letter from Amanda Inwood-Field, Liberata's London Regional Contract Director, provides an update on each of the individual services and is attached Appendix 1 with statistical data relating to the Revenues Service attached at Appendix 2.
-

2. **RECOMMENDATION(S)**

The PDS is requested to:

- to note the information contained within the report and the letter provided by Liberata detailed in Appendices 1 & 2

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: £2.99m
 5. Source of funding: Existing Revenue Budget for 2021/22
-

Personnel

1. Number of staff (current and additional): 2 plus Liberata staff
 2. If from existing staff resources, number of staff hours: Existing Revenue budget for 2021/22
-

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 Services contract
-

Customer Impact

1. Estimated number of users/beneficiaries (current and projected): The Services covered in this report affect all the Council Tax payers, Business Rates 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

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.

3.2 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.

3.3 **Council Tax**

Collection

The in-year Council Tax collection rate for the year to 30 November 2021 was 74.67% which was a 0.14% reduction on that achieved in the previous year and is 1.69% down against collection at the 30 November 2019.

Whilst we continue to take part in “virtual” court hearings the collection figure has been adversely affected by the Courts restriction on the number of summonses we were allowed to issue for each hearing.

The summons restriction has reduced the number of liability orders we are able to obtain. Without a liability order we are unable instruct Enforcement Agents to recover the debt. To proactively increase collection, we have issued additional reminder letters. SMS messages have also been sent encouraging residents to contact us to make payment arrangements.

In order to improve collection, the Assistant Director wrote to HMCTS asking for an increase in the amount of summons that can be issued for both Council Tax and Business Rates. An increase has been approved which will take effect in January 2022.

The collection rate on current year and arrears was 74.40% which was a 0.22% adverse variance when compared to the last financial year and 2.05% down against the same time in 2019.

There is no published benchmarking data available on collection figures until the end of the financial year.

Number of properties on the Council Tax register

At the end of November 2021, the number of properties registered for Council Tax was 142,119. The table below shows the number of properties by Council Tax “band” and the number in receipt of Single Person Discount (SPD):

Band	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	Total
Number of properties	2,015	10,388	30,134	36,283	29,484	18,323	13,830	1,662	142,119
Number of properties with SPD	1,165	6,175	13,632	11,144	6,729	3,434	1,981	137	44,397

In comparison to last year, the number of registered properties has increased by 225 and the number receiving SPD has increased by 790.

Single Person Discount review

The accounts in receipt of SPD are reviewed annually and is being done in partnership with a credit reference agency using a “residency checker service” that allows us to undertake a data matching exercise on our live SPD accounts. This year’s review has commenced, and 5756 accounts have been identified for review.

Direct Debit

Council Tax can be paid by direct debit on either 1st or 15th of the month and over 10 or 12 months. On average 69.9% of the accounts where there is liability to pay are paid by this method compared to 68.08% in 2020/21. The increase is attributed to the on-going direct debit campaign.

Empty Homes Premium

The Executive at their meeting of the 27 November 2019 approved the introduction of the Empty Homes Premium (EHP) from the 1 April 2020. For properties empty longer than two years a 50% premium was to be levied, increasing to 100% once the property had been empty for five years.

At the 1 April 2021, 323 properties had an EHP applied to them.

At the 30 November 2021 an EHP was applied to 303 properties. The table below shows the long-term empty properties by Council Tax band and by the number of years they have been empty for:

Band	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	Total
Number of properties to which an EHP is being applied	20	35	105	82	22	18	17	4	303
Number of properties Empty between 2 and 5 years (50% premium)	16	26	82	56	10	14	15	3	222
Number of properties Empty between 5 and 10 years (100% premium)	4	8	16	16	8	1	2	0	55
Number of properties empty over 10 years (100% premium)	0	1	7	10	4	3	0	1	26

The small reduction has been attributed to reinstatement of the housing market after the pandemic.

A report to the 13 January 2021 meeting of the Executive proposed the increase of the EHP from the 1 April 2021 to 100% being levied for properties empty over 2 years, increasing to 200% after 5 years and 300% after 10 years.

The Executive decided to defer the decision for one year in recognition of the ongoing impact of the pandemic. A report will be presented to the Executive later in the year recommending that the increased EHP is applied from 1 April 2023.

3.4 **Business Rates**

The in-year Business Rates collection rate for the period ending 30 November 2021 was 62.39% which was down by 6.56% on the previous year and down 10.60% on 2019. Like Council Tax, collection was adversely affected by the suspension of Court hearings and unlike Council Tax was only resumed in September 2021 with the number of summons being restricted to 25 per hearing. This was increased to 50 per hearing from November 2021 and will be increased to 250 from January 2022.

The collection rate for current years and arrears was 58.88%, which was a 5.34% decrease compared to the previous financial year and 12.58% down at the same time in 2019.

There is no published benchmarking data available on collection figures until the end of the financial year.

As at the 30 November 2021 there were 7,457 properties registered for Business Rates this a reduction of 50 on the figure as at the 30 November 2020.

The table below shows the number of premises by their current rateable value:

Business size based on rateable value	Number of properties
Less than £15k (small)	4507
Between £15k and £49,999 (medium)	1965
Over £50,000 (large)	985
Total	7457

3.5 **Cashiers**

The number of payments received, including amounts received via either of the payment kiosks, or by post, was lower than in previous years. This was due to the closure of the Civic Centre and the Penge Library where the kiosks are situated. As a result, for the period April to November 2021, payments equating to £5,087,675 (6,641 transactions) were taken compared to £4,358,692.60 (5,854 transactions) for the period last year.

3.6 **Payroll**

The number of payments made in November 2021 was as follows:

LBB General/Schools	2,642
Pensions	5,464

For the period April to November 2021, Liberata achieved 99.96% accuracy.

3.7 **Pensions**

Membership numbers recorded on the pension administration system as at 30 November 2021 were 6,182 actives, 6,955 deferred and 5746 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 This report refers to significant income collection undertaken through the Exchequer Service contract with Liberata. For 2021/22 the key financial elements of the Revenues Service are:

- £247.6m - annual Council Tax raised
- £75.7m – annual Business Rates raised
- £47.9m – gross amount paid in staff salaries (inclusive of Schools but excluding Academies) for the period 1 April 2020 to 30 November 2021
- £20.4m – gross amount paid in Pensions for the period 1 April to 30 November 2021
- £5.09m - revenue on 6,641 transactions for the period 1 April to 30 November 2021 (including kiosks)

5. **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 One of the “Making Bromley Even Better” ambitions is to manage our resources well, providing value for money, efficient and effective services for Bromley’s residents. To achieve this, we will ensure robust contract management with a focus on efficiency and innovation to improve services for Bromley residents.

6. **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

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

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



Claudine Douglas-Brown
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United Kingdom

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www.liberata.com

10 December 2021

Our Ref: AIF/RJ

Dear Claudine,

As we approach the January 2022 Executive, Resources and Contracts Policy Development and Scrutiny Committee 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 eight month period ended 30th November 2021.

Council Tax

The in-year collection for the period was 74.67% which was equivalent to £174.32m of cash collected. The collection rate was 0.14% lower than the previous year and was 1.69% lower than the last pre-pandemic period end of November 2019. Our in year collection has been hampered by the knock on effects of the suspension of all court activity during 2020 which was as a result of the Coronavirus. These new 'virtual' court hearings only recommenced during 2021 which meant that there was a backlog of older out of year debt cases that needed to be cleared. In addition the courts imposed strict caps on the number cases that we could have at each hearing which further hampered the speed with which we could obtain liability orders for in year debtors.

In Year Collection

	30/11/2021	30/11/2020	Variance
In Year	£m	£m	£m
Net collectable Debt	£233.46	£217.93	£15.53
Amount collected	-£174.32	-£163.03	£11.29
Debt remaining	£59.14	£54.90	
Collection Rate	74.67%	74.81%	-0.14%

The all-years collection figure achieved was 74.40% which was a decrease of 0.22% compared to the previous year.

All Years Collection

	30/11/2021	30/11/2020	Variance
All Years	£m	£m	£m
Net collectable Debt	£238.67	£221.10	£17.57
Amount collected	-£177.58	-£164.99	£12.59
Debt remaining	£61.09	£56.11	
Collection Rate	74.40%	74.62%	-0.22%

We have continued to see an increase in the number of residents signing up for an online MyBromley Account in order to access online services. During the eight month period over 13,000 residents registered for an account bringing the total number of accounts held to over 98,000. This growth reflects both the increasing popularity by residents to interact with the Council in this way as well as the increasing variety of tasks that can now be undertaken using a MyBromley Account. In July the Discounts and Exemptions module went live meaning that residents can now apply for Single Persons Discounts, as well as other exemptions, online.

Business Rates

The in-year collection rate to 30th November was 62.39% which was down by 6.56% compared to the previous year's figure and was down by 10.60% compared to the same period in 2019. As detailed in the Council Tax comments above our collections here were also impacted by court suspensions and the restrictions on case numbers once the hearings had recommenced. In addition 2021 saw the introduction of a new Retail and Nursery Relief which offered additional business rates support for eligible retail, hospitality, leisure, and nursery businesses. This gave 100% rates relief to eligible businesses for the period 1st April 2021 to 30th June 2021 with the relief falling to 66% for the period 1st July 2021 to 31st March 2022, then. Due to the timing of the announcement of this relief the Academy system was unable to cope with issuing one bill during the annual billing process that would correctly show the amount due by the businesses for the 2021/22 year. Instead we agreed to issue bills showing the 100% relief for the year to all of the affected businesses, with an insert explaining that the relief would automatically be adjusted with a new bill being

issued to show the revised payments due from 1st July 2021. As a result an extra £24.09m was added to the Net Collectable Debt (NCD) figure in July which increased it by 46% from £52.19m to £76.28m. The repayments for this additional £24.09m were then spread over the remainder of the year from August 2021 to February or March 2022, depending on the businesses normal instalment profile.

In Year Collection:

	30/11/2021	30/11/2020	Variance
In Year	£m	£m	£m
Net collectable Debt	£75.75	£41.00	£34.75
Amount collected	-£47.26	-£28.27	£18.99
Debt remaining	£28.49	£12.73	
Collection Rate	62.39%	68.95%	-6.56%

The all year's collection rate for the period was 58.88%, which is a fall of 5.34% on the previous year.

All Years Collection Rate:

	30/11/2021	30/11/2020	Variance
All Years	£m	£m	£m
Net collectable Debt	£81.17	£41.50	£39.67
Amount collected	-£47.79	-£26.65	£21.14
Debt remaining	£33.38	£14.85	
Collection Rate	58.88%	64.22%	-5.34%

In consultation with Council Officers a debt recovery plan was implemented during this period which covered both Council Tax and Business Rates. The aim was to clear the backlog of historic debt cases caused by Coronavirus and increase the in year collection rates to pre-pandemic levels. The tasks undertaken included the issuing of additional 'soft reminder' letters and 'pay up' SMS reminders to residents where we were unable to issue Final Reminder letters and then a Court Summons. We also liaised with a firm of Solicitors to issue letters to debtors where liability orders had previously been obtained but the debts were still outstanding. In these cases the letters threatened further recovery action including bankruptcy, attaching charging orders to property and potentially forcing sale of the property unless the debts were cleared. This was to encourage either payment of outstanding balances or the setting up or payment plans. In addition we started a Direct Debit promotional campaign in September in order to encourage its usage by residents. We have also been working with the Council to lobby the courts to increase the number of cases

we can bring to each hearing. These currently stand at 1,500 for Council tax and 50 for Business Rates.

Cashiers

We collected £5.09m during the year which covered 6,641 transactions and included amounts taken via the kiosks, post and central income. Although the amounts are an increase on last year they are still down on pre-pandemic levels which saw £7.21m taken in six months to the end of September 2019 which covered 15,752 transactions. This is further evidence of residents moving to online methods of payments.

Pensions and Payroll

The Pension Team achieved an average of 96.47% service level compliance over the year to 30th November 2021. The Payroll Team also continued to provide a valued service with an average accuracy rate of 99.96% across the Council's Corporate, Schools and Pensions payrolls.

Impact of the Coronavirus

As detailed above the Coronavirus has continued to impact our debt recovery service. In addition we also continued to support the Council in administering various business support grants. Although the majority of these have now closed we are still assisting on one of the Additional Restrictions Grant schemes. This is aimed at assisting new businesses that started during the pandemic. We are also awaiting further information on the Material Change in Circumstance Relief which will offer assistance to businesses affected by the Coronavirus but which are outside of the retail, hospitality and leisure sectors and so did not benefit from retail relief. Once more details on this relief are known we will see how we can assist the Council with its implementation and administration. One of the effects of the Coronavirus has been the increase in the numbers of residents interacting with the Council online. This can be seen by the increase in the number of MyBromley accounts, which now represents over 70% of households on the borough. As such we will be looking to increase this interaction by launching a Channel Shift Programme for our Revenues and Benefits service in early 2022. The aim will be to double the number of digitally received documents from residents and businesses from the current level of 30% to 60% by June 2022. This will help drive a reduction in processing times by allowing us to introduce more automation.

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 (2021/22 figures):

- **£247.67 million** – Annual amount of Council Tax raised
- **£75.70 million** – Annual amount of Business Rates raised
- **£14.31 million** – Annual payment of Council Tax Support
- **£90 million** - Annual payment of Housing Benefit – estimated
- **£47.96 million** – Gross payment of staff salaries (through the LBB payroll service, including schools, excluding Academies) for the period from 1st April 2021 to 30th November 2021
- **£20.4 million** – Payment of Pensions from 1st April 2021 to 30th November 2021
- **£5.09 million** – 1st April 2021 to 30th November 2021 revenue on 6,641 transactions, this includes Kiosk (577 Loomis cash collections during the eight months to 30th November 2021)

Council Tax Data:

In year collection performance by Liberata is shown below:

Best Value PI's	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	Actual 20/21	Actual 01/04/21 to 30/11/21
BV9:CTAX Collected	97.65%	97.76%	97.50%	97.70%	97.79%	97.93%	98.04%	98.00%	97.86%	96.51%	74.67%

Actual 30th November 2021 – 74.67%

The amount of collectable debt raised for the year 2021/22 was **£247,67m** in respect of **141,912** properties.

191 Cheque refunds and **4,687** BACs refunds totalling **£1,814,225.57** have been issued from 1st April 2021 to 30th November 2021.

The following Council Tax recovery notices were issued:

	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	31/03/21	Actual 01/04/21 to 30/11/21
Reminders	51,920	45,816	56,256	54,745	52,125	55,553	78,657	63,387	57,196	54,201	51,183
Summonses	16,436	16,168	19,267	13,158	9,543	14,052	10,755	9,375	9,561	0	7,597
Liability Orders	9,396	10,868	9,999	8,645	8,337	10,338	9,115	8,105	8,606	0	4,602
14 day letters – Enforcement Agent warning	11,757	12,518	15,816	10,103	12,214	8,247	8,647	10,074	9,129	0	5,800

The suspension of court hearings in March 2020, which was in response to the national lockdown, meant that no Summonses, Liability Orders or 14 day letters were issued during the 2020/21 year.

The 2020/21 debt carried forward at the 1st April 2021 was £7,607,043.18

Council Tax - Summoned Debt	
Summonses / costs	
Arrangement	£696,420.97
Bailiff /14 DAY	
Attachment	
Bankruptcy	
Liability	
Un-summoused Debt	
Finals	
Un-summoused	£6,910,622.21
Total	£7,607,043.18

The breakdown analysis of the total 2020/21 debt outstanding at the 1st April 2021 of £7,607,043.18 is shown above.

The balance of the total 2020/21 debt outstanding as at the 30th November 2021 is £5,132,186.89 a reduction of £2,474,856.29.

As mentioned on the previous page, all court hearings were suspended during 2020/21 as a result no summonses could be issued and so no liability orders were granted. Instead recovery work was focussed on obtaining arrangements from debtors to pay their outstanding balances. The amount shown above of £696,420.97 is 95% higher than the previous year's figure.

Council Tax Arrears Breakdown as at 30th November 2021

	Arrears B/F 31.03.2021	Arrears carried forward	Net reduction	Actual % collection
1997	£61.37	£52.04	£9.33	
1998	111.92	£0.00	£111.92	
2000	£2,826.81	£2,516.54	£310.27	
2001	£7,040.76	£6,616.80	£423.96	
2002	£15,476.74	£14,363.00	£1,113.74	
2003	£26,424.33	£25,646.96	£777.37	
2004	£34,329.95	£31,157.25	£3,172.70	
2005	£50,990.74	£47,719.25	£3,271.49	
2006	£79,114.41	£71,997.06	£7,117.35	
2007	£109,187.78	£102,178.63	£7,009.15	
2008	£135,208.85	£123,766.03	£11,442.82	
TOTAL	£460,773.66	£426,013.56	£34,760.10	7.54%
2009	£160,718.94	£151,679.19	£9,039.75	5.62%
2010	£198,976.56	£184,552.10	£14,424.46	7.25%
2011	£254,618.00	£242,024.97	£12,593.03	4.95%
2012	£339,000.21	£326,046.51	£12,953.70	3.82%
2013	£534,638.88	£504,983.32	£29,655.56	5.55%
2014	£686,555.34	£644,805.03	£41,750.31	6.08%
2015	£883,524.41	£841,195.58	£42,328.83	4.79%
2016	£1,158,181.02	£1,100,615.50	£57,565.52	4.97%
2017	£1,563,950.44	£1,477,718.52	£86,231.92	5.51%
2018	£2,289,063.60	£2,133,642.60	£155,421.00	6.79%
2019	£3,637,344.21	£3,206,769.19	£430,575.02	11.84%
2020	£7,607,043.18	£5,132,186.89	£2,474,856.29	32.53%
TOTAL	£19,774,388.45	£16,372,232.96	£3,402,155.49	

Business Rates Data:

In year collection performance by Liberata is shown below:

Best Value PI's	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	Actual 20/21	Actual 01/04/21 to 30/11/21
BV10: Rates Collected	98.81%	98.72%	98.70%	98.80%	99.05%	98.87%	98.53%	98.53%	98.03%	91.89%	62.39%

The amount of collectable debt raised for the year 2021/22 is **£75.70 million** in respect of 7,527 properties.

There have been 489 refunds actioned from the 1st April 2021 to the 30th November 2021 amounting to **£2,275,339.97** in respect of vacation and rateable value reductions.

The following recovery notices were issued -

	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	31/03/21	Actual 01/04/21 to 30/11/21
Reminders Issued	2,536	4,023	3,545	4,445	4,263	4,288	3,525	3,245	3,447	1,803	4,504
Final Notices Issued	1,741	2,014	2,472	2,353	1,560	1,960	1,985	1,312	2,201	0	791
Summonses Issued	1,156	987	1,091	1,053	535	1,123	768	601	429	0	70
Liability Orders	749	683	771	734	411	525	522	550	438	0	26
7 day letters issued	471	501	No longer used								
Accounts passed to Enforcement Agent	537	645	650	444	283	184	159	203	369	0	84

The suspension of court hearings in March 2020, which was in response to the national lockdown, meant that no Summonses, Liability Orders or 14 day letters were issued during the 2020/21 year.

The **2020/21** debt carried forward at 1st April 2021 was **£3,241,994.14**

NDR recovery stage	Amount
Un-summonsed	£940,853.04
Arrangement	£216,567.17
Enforcement Agent	
Final	
Liability	
Reminders	2,084,573.93
Summonsed	
Total	£3,241,994.14

Movement in arrears for reporting period –

Arrears total 2001 - 2020/21 as at **01/04/21** **£6,101,864.16**

Arrears total 2001 - 2020/21 as at **30/11/21** **£4,642,219.48**

Reduction in Overall arrears **£1,459,644.68**

Business Rates Arrears breakdown as at 30th November 2021

	Arrears B/F 31.03.2021	Arrears carried forward	Net reduction	Actual % collection
2001	£137.94	£137.94	£0.00	
2008	£1,143.35	£1,143.35	£0.00	
2009	£938.03	£938.04	-£0.01	
2010	£7,659.01	£8,919.26	-£1,260.25	-16.45%
2011	£8,688.92	£6,399.62	£2,289.30	26.35%
2012	£28,475.03	£32,301.95	-£3,826.92	-13.44%
2013	£40,003.31	£44,117.37	-£4,114.06	-10.28%
2014	£71,719.80	£77,169.50	-£5,449.70	-7.60%
2015	£80,005.44	£72,309.88	£7,695.56	9.62%
2016	£161,495.10	£141,952.72	£19,542.38	12.10%
2017	£397,476.67	£394,734.74	£2,741.93	0.69%
2018	£573,791.39	£558,560.22	£15,231.17	2.65%
2019	£1,488,336.03	£1,255,810.49	£232,525.54	15.62%
2020	£3,241,994.14	£2,047,724.40	£1,194,269.74	36.84%
	£6,101,864.16	£4,642,219.48	£1,459,644.68	

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 2021 to 30th November 2021:

Civic Centre Total	Transactions including Kiosk
£5,087,675	6,641

Payroll Data:

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

	Monthly	Annually
Non-Teaching/Teaching	2,635	31,620
Pensions	5,419	65,028

Appendix 2

Complaints Data:

Service	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	Actual 01/04/21 to 30/11/21
Council Tax	277 (210 unfounded)	372 (292 unfounded)	540 (446 unfounded)	427 (378 unfounded)	348 (274 unfounded)	373 (309 unfounded)	344 (299 unfounded)	337 (260 unfounded)	170 (114 unfounded)	178 (131 unfounded)
NNDR	7 (7 unfounded)	4 (4 unfounded)	21 (7 unfounded)	10 (9 unfounded)	6 (3 unfounded)	3 (2 unfounded)	4 (3 unfounded)	3 (1 unfounded)	4 (0 unfounded)	1 (1 unfounded)
Pensions	3 (2 unfounded)	4 (2 unfounded)	4 (1 unfounded)	2	4 (2 unfounded)	2 (1 unfounded)	4 (2 unfounded)	8 (5 unfounded)	9 (4 unfounded)	5 (3 unfounded)
Payroll	9 (2 unfounded)	5 (2 unfounded)	9 (7 unfounded)	4 (2 unfounded)	1 (1 unfounded)	0	3 (2 unfounded)	3 (3 unfounded)	0	0
Cashiers	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Report No.
FSD22005

London Borough of Bromley

PART ONE - PUBLIC

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

Date: Wednesday 5 January 2022

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

- 1.1 This report provides information regarding Liberata's performance in the provision of Exchequer Services for the period 1st April 2021 to 30th September 2021 with an updated position as at 30th November 2021.
- 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. MBEB: Managing Our Resources Well
-

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: £1.91m
 5. Source of funding: Existing budget 2021/22
-

Personnel

1. Number of staff (current and additional): 4fte 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 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 2021 to 30th September 2021 with an updated position as at 30th November 2021.
- 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

SERVICE PROFILE/DATA ANALYSIS

- 3.5 Sundry Debtors, Mortgages & Corporate Debt
- 3.5.1 The Sundry Debts performance is measured on the amounts recovered at the end of each reporting period. At the 30th September 2021, there were 4,922 invoices outstanding totalling £16.56m. Of the total amount, £4.48m (27.03%) had been outstanding for less than 30 days.
- 3.5.2 As at 30th September 2021, the amount recovered in respect of invoices raised between 1st April 2021 and 30th September 2021 was £21.63m or 70.72%. This increased to 78.90% as at 30th November 2021.
- 3.5.3 The table below the debts where Liberata were unable to pursue recovery action. In addition invoices totalling £3.09m, were raised within the last 14 days of the month which means recovery action would not have taken place yet. These factors adversely affected in-year collection and are shown in Table 1 below.

Description	No. of Invoices	Value of Invoices
Invoices raised during the last 14 days of the month	628	£3,087,814.30
Community Infrastructure Level (CIL) invoices due after the 30th September 2021	9	£97,358.42
Disputed and Escalated debts	148	£1,277,050.81
Debts placed on hold by LBB Departments	11	£279,211.65
Debts secured by Charging Order	3	£63,404.96
Debts referred for Write Off	6	£6,072.50
Total	805	£4,810,912.64

3.5.4 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 83.92% at 30th September 2021 and 84.38% at 30th November 2021.

Table 2

	As at 30/09/19	As at 30/09/20	As at 30/09/21	As at 30/11/21
Unadjusted Collection Rate	83.57%	53.42%	70.72%	78.90%
Adjusted Collection Rate	93.66%	59.55%	83.92%	84.38%

3.5.5 The suspension of enforcement action during the pandemic in addition to the increase in customers struggling financially affected the level of income collected as can be seen in the performance as at 30th September 2020. However, with the easing of restrictions earlier in the year and the implementation of an income recovery plan, the collection performance has increased significantly when compared to the performance at the same time last year.

3.5.6 **Appendix 2** shows the comparison between the levels of outstanding debt for each month from April to March for the years 2016-17 through to year to date for 2021-22. This shows that the level of outstanding debt continues to reduce and remains lower than the same time last year.

3.5.7 **Appendix 3** shows the comparison between the numbers of invoices outstanding each month from April to March for the years 2016-17 through to year to date for 2021-22.

Aged Debt as at 30th November 2021

3.5.8 The out-of-year collection rate across all financial years was 98.93% with £16.9m collected up to the end of September with this increasing to 99.03% and £18m by the 30th November 2021. The factors which continue to affect out-of-year collection are shown below.

Table 3

Description	Value of Invoices
Disputed and Escalated debts	£3,143,207.14
Debts referred for Write Off & awaiting cancellation	£1,189,980.67
Debts placed on hold by LBB Departments	£132,674.25
Debts with LBB's Legal Team	£80,407.98
Debts secured by Charging Order	£318,654.92
Total	£4,864,924.96

3.5.9 Table 4 shows the movement in the out-of-year debt for the year 1st October 2020 to 30th September 2021 along with the overall percentage reduction.

Table 4

Reporting point	30-Sep-20	30-Sep-21	Reduction since 30/09/20
Fin Year	£,000	£,000	%
Pre 2016	1,038	1,001	4%
2016/17	394	377	4%
2017/18	741	709	4%
2018/19	809	584	28%
2019/20	4,102	1,165	72%
2020/21	13,002	1,256	90%
Total	20,086	5,092	75%

3.5.10 **Appendix 4** shows the overall recovery position of debts in each financial year up to 30th September 2021. The total debt outstanding is £3.5m less than it was at the 30th September 2021 however the debts in dispute or on hold at the request of the service department continues to remain high. We are working with Liberata and the service departments to resolve queries and disputes as quickly as possible so that recovery action can continue.

3.5.12 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

3.5.13 The total debt outstanding for Utilities was £264k as at 30th September 2021, which was £174k higher than the previous year. The increase was driven by the Utility companies taking longer to pay their invoices. For the period up to 30th September 2021 Liberata issued 249 invoices which was comparable to the amount issued the previous year however this year the number of invoices that remained outstanding at the end of the reporting period was over 100% more. Liberata are continuing to pursue payment and are liaising with the service department in respect of the disputed invoices.

3.5.14 **Appendix 5** shows a summary of Utility debts as at 30th September 2021.

Income

- 3.5.15 The Income Team raised 5,633 sundry invoices (excluding the Trade Refuse service) with a value of £31.52m from 1st April 2021 to 30th September 2021.
- 3.5.16 During the same period, 705 invoices relating to all financial years with a total value of £4.4m were subsequently cancelled. This includes invoices for charges raised in advance where the service was subsequently cancelled.
- 3.5.17 **Appendix 6** shows the value of invoices raised month by month for the period from 1st April 2021 to 30th November 2021 compared to the same periods in the previous four financial years.
- 3.5.18 **Appendix 7** shows the number of invoices raised month by month for the period from 1st April 2021 to 30th November 2021 compared to the same periods in the previous four financial years.
- 3.5.19 The outstanding debt for Trade Waste was £627k as at 30th September 2021. The debt has since decreased to £411k as at 30th November 2021. Table 5 provides an analysis of the outstanding debt which has increased by £10k when compared to the same time last year. This is mainly due to the disputed debt which is being followed up by the service department.

Table 5

Age Analysis of Trade Balance	As at 30th September 2020	As at 30th September 2021	Variance	
	£	£	£	%
Under 30 days old	12,468	7,107	-5,361	
Invoices 31-365 days old	511,993	523,452	11,459	
Invoices over 1 year old	92,605	96,164	3,559	
Total	617,066	626,723	9,658	1.57%
Recovery Status of Trade Balance				
Payment arrangements/Direct Debits	436,870	419,020	-17,849	
Invoices in dispute	35,583	65,582	29,999	
Awaiting cancellation	0	10,287	10,287	
Awaiting write off	47,600	37,823	-9,778	
Active Recovery	97,013	94,011	-3,001	
Total	617,066	626,723	9,658	1.57%

Nightly Paid Accommodation Charges

- 3.5.20 The outstanding debt for Nightly Paid Accommodation charges as at 30th September 2021 was £8.5m for current and former occupiers. Table 6 gives a breakdown of the outstanding debt as at 30th September 2020 and 30th September 2021 which shows an increase of £1.48m.
- 3.5.21 The number of clients moving into Temporary Accommodation has increased throughout the pandemic. There number of Current Tenants increased from 932 in September 2020 to 1,160 in September 2021, a 24.5% increase. Consequently, the collectable rent also increased by a similar percentage. Although Housing Benefit payments increased in the same period by £1.1m (39.17%), the cash collected decreased by £45k (5.37%).

Table 6

	As at 30 September 2020	As at 30 September 2021	Variance
	£	£	%
Charges raised for current year and arrears brought forward for previous years	10,774,682	13,442,607	24.76%
Payments received from debtors	-829,013	-784,481	-5.37%
Housing Benefit awards	-2,902,307	-4,039,142	39.17%
Sub total	7,043,361	8,618,984	22.37%
Less combined total debts written on/off	-3,755	-102,991	2642.70%
Total	7,039,606	8,515,993	20.97%

- 3.5.22 The Coronavirus Act 2020 introduced on 26th March 2020 adversely affected the collection of rent charges with the prevention of any eviction proceedings. This meant that non-paying tenants were permitted to remain in temporary accommodation whilst continuing to accrue debt. Although the restrictions were lifted in August 2020, arrears levels had to reach the value of a minimum of 6 months' rent before notice could be given on grounds of non-payment.
- 3.5.23 Payment arrangements agreed with current and former tenants are frequently for very small instalments over long periods of time as tenants often have issues with affordability and do not possess the assets needed for successful enforcement of legal action. Where payment arrangements are offered, it is preferable to accept low repayments rather than submitting the debt for write off.
- 3.5.24 Liberata participated in the implementation of the Orchard Housing system along with Housing Officers and phase one went live on 18th December 2019. Liberata have been working with the Council to improve the functionality of this system. As a result, the issuing of SMS reminders and the ability to produce automated bulk statements and reminder letters have recently been introduced. The ability for tenants to make online payments is expected to be introduced within the next few months. Future projects will include the introduction of direct debit facilities and a customer portal. These measures should help to improve collection in this area.
- 3.5.25 Regular meetings are held with senior officers in Finance and Housing to ensure any issues affecting collections are resolved quickly and are escalated with the system provider where required.

3.6 Accounts Payable

- 3.6.1 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.
- 3.6.2 A summary covering the period from 1st April 2021 to 30th September 2021 is shown below. This shows that the percentage of undisputed invoices that were paid within 30 days was 99%, against a target of 99%. This has reduced by 1% in November to 98% due to the transition to the new Care Management system and associated finance modules however this is being monitored and action is being taken to clear outstanding invoices as quickly as possible.

Table 7

Target: 99%	Invoices Over 30	Invoices Under 30	Total	%	Invoices Over 20	Invoices Under 20	Total	%
Manuals	33	6,066	6,099	99%	66	6,033	6,099	99%
I-Proc	154	5,489	5,643	97%	244	5,399	5,643	96%
Carefirst	72	5,542	5,614	99%	121	5,493	5,614	98%
Adults	3	198	201	99%	13	188	201	94%
Cumulative YTD Total	262	17,295	17,557	99%	444	17,113	17,557	97%

3.6.3 Table 8 below shows the percentage split in the method of payments to suppliers. The percentage of suppliers paid by BACS from 1st April 2021 to 30th November 2021 was 96%. This is an increase in BACS payments of 1% compared to last year.

3.6.4 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	2020/21				2021/22			
	BACS		Cheque		BACS		Cheque	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
April	2,917	97%	93	3%	2,454	96%	94	4%
May	2,531	95%	134	5%	2,522	95%	123	5%
June	2,566	95%	140	5%	2,874	96%	123	4%
July	2,688	95%	140	5%	2,516	96%	105	4%
Aug	2,220	95%	154	5%	2,242	96%	83	4%
Sept	2,739	94%	161	6%	2,953	97%	99	3%
Nov	2,702	95%	151	5%	2,315	95%	126	5%
	18,363	95%	973	5%	17,876	96%	753	4%

3.7 Financial Assessment and Charging

3.7.1 The Key Performance Indicator figures for the team covering the period from 1st April 2021 to 30th September 2021 are shown in table 9 below. The performance as at 30th November remained at 100% for producing the charging file however the November performance for completing financial assessments is not yet available due to the implementation of the new system.

Table 9

Indicator	Target	Actual 2016/17	Actual 2017/18	Actual 2018/19	Actual 2019/20	Actual 2019/21	Apr – Sep 21
Complete Financial Assessments within 10 working days	100%	92%	95%	80%	65%	89%	93%
Produce the charging file from CareFirst weekly	100%	100%	97%	100%	100%	100%	100%

- 3.7.2 Performance has improved significantly since April due to the implementation of an automated Workflow Manager on the Information@Work Document Management System (DMS). This enabled visibility and management scrutiny of documents which were about to fall outside of the SLA. As a result, this supported Liberata's ability to achieve the KPI month on month. However, the implementation of ContrOCC, the new Financial Assessment system in November has resulted in several technical issues leading to processing delays. These issues are being addressed and the expectation is that the performance will improve in quarter four.
- 3.7.3 Liberata have implemented benchmarks for the various activities undertaken by the team, which each team member is managed against. These benchmarks feed into Liberata's performance management framework and have played a key role in improving service performance.
- 3.7.4 Liberata's Quality and Appeals (QA) team continues to independently carry out quality checking of the assessments undertaken by the Financial Assessment team. Additional focus is targeted on new starters and upskilled employees to ensure that the training has been effective, with errors identified allowing managers to address any ongoing training needs. Liberata store all quality check outcomes on their central Quality Tool, with an output report provided to the Team Leader each month.
- 3.7.5 Liberata have created a new 'online smart' form for social care clients which will be able to make real time decisions based on the information provided by the client. This is ready to be implemented once ContrOCC has bedded in. Liberata are also currently investigating whether Robotic Process Automation (RPA) can assist with the assessment process, which will result in reduced processing days.

3.8 Appointee and Deputyship

- 3.8.1 The Key Performance Indicator figures for the team, covering 1st April to 30th November 2021, are shown in table 10 below which shows the service continues to perform well.

Indicator	Target	Actual 2016/17	Actual 2017/18	Actual 2018/19	Actual 2019/20	Actual 2020/21	Apr – Sep 21	Nov 21
Referral of applications to the Panel within 14 working days	100%	97%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Raise invoices within 2 months of the anniversary of the court order	100%	100%	100%	99%	100%	100%	100%	100%

USER/STAKEHOLDER SATISFACTION

- 3.9 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.
- 3.10 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 numbers of complaints are relatively low.

Table 11

	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	Apr-Sept 21
Sundry Debtors/Income						
Justified	7	2	6	4	6	2
Unjustified	4	2	8	3	2	-
Total	11	4	14	7	8	2
Accounts Payable						
Justified	-	-	-	-	-	-
Unjustified	1	1	-	-	-	-
Total	1	1	-	-	-	-
Financial Assessment & Management						
Justified	14	20	6	13	7	7
Unjustified	12	5	2	5	6	6
Total	26	25	8	18	13	13
Appointee & Deputyship						
Justified	-	1	-	-	-	-
Unjustified	1	-	-	-	-	-
Total	1	1	-	-	-	-

4. IMPACT ON VULNERABLE ADULTS AND CHILDREN

- 4.1 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.
- 4.2 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.

- 4.3 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.

5 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 One of the “Making Bromley Even Better” ambitions is to manage our resources well, providing value for money, efficient and effective services for Bromley’s residents. To achieve this, we will ensure robust contract management with a focus on efficiency and innovation to improve services for Bromley residents.
- 5.2 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.

6 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 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
- 6.2 The contract is expected to be within the revenue budget for 2021/22 of £1.907m.

7 PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

None

8 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 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.

9 PROCUREMENT IMPLICATIONS

None

Non-Applicable Sections:	7 and 9
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

Appendix 1

10 December 2021

Our Ref: AIF/RJ

Dear Claudine,

As we approach the January 2022 Executive, Resources and Contracts Policy Development and Scrutiny Committee 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 6 months to 30th September 2021.

Debtors and Income

The Sundry Debts unadjusted in-year collection figure for the year was 70.72% which represented cash of £21.63m. Although this was below the target of 78% there were a number of debts where we were unable to take any further recovery action. If adjusted our rate to exclude these debts then the revised collection rate would be 83.92% which was 5.92% above the target. The adjustment to the collection rate is necessary in order to obtain a true picture on the team's performance. Details of the debts excluded from the adjusted rate are listed below:

- £3.09m of invoices were raised during the last 14 days of the year. Active recovery action can only commence on these debts after 21 days
- Debts totalling £1.56m were placed on hold either as a result of a dispute or because we were awaiting further instructions from the Council
- £97k of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) invoices were raised during the period but were not due for payment until after 30th September.

- Debts totalling £63k had been secured by Charging Orders on properties whereby payment will be made only once the property is sold

In Year Collection	1/4/20 - 30/9/20	1/4/21 - 30/9/21	Variance
	£m	£m	£m
Net Collectable Debt	£25.85	£30.59	£4.74
Amount Collected	£12.86	£21.63	£8.77
Unadjusted Collection Rate	49.70%	70.72%	21.02%
Adjustments to Net Collectable Debt:			
- CIL Debts	-£0.07	-£0.10	
- Disputed Debts	-£0.91	-£1.28	
- With LBB	-£0.14	-£0.28	
- Charging Orders	-£0.11	-£0.06	
- Deferred Commercial Rents	-£0.56	£0.00	
- Invoices less than 14 days old	-£2.48	-£3.09	
Adjusted Net Collectable Debt	£21.58	£25.78	£4.20
Adjusted Collection Rate	59.55%	83.92%	24.37%

The total amount of out of year debt collected was £16.9m which equated to a collection rate of 98.93% across all financial years. Included in the outstanding balance are debts where, similar to the in year position, we were unable to take any further recovery action. These debts were valued at £4.86m and were made up as follows:

- £3.36m of debt was either in dispute or was on hold pending instructions from the Council.
- £1.19m of debt had been either recommended for, or was awaiting, write off.
- £319k of debt had been secured by Charging Orders.

The impact of the Coronavirus has continued to impact our recovery work as the previous year's lockdowns and suspension of Court sessions, Eviction actions and Enforcement Agents activities all resulted in an increase in our out of year debt figures and associated work volumes. Following the easing of restrictions earlier this year we agreed with the Council to implement a recovery plan which sought to clear historic debts and ensure that our in year recovery achieved pre-pandemic levels. Measures being adopted include the use of SMS messaging to send reminders and to chase up broken arrangements. Increasing the content on the Council website to make it easier for debtors to make a payment online or contact the team if they have a query. Issuing of monthly statements to Temporary Accommodation tenants. Using a partner organisation to help with the tracing of former Temporary Accommodation tenants who have moved. We hope to commence work with the Council to see if a direct debit facility can be established for Temporary Accommodation clients.

Accounts Payable

As the majority of the Accounts Payable team, Council workers and suppliers have continued to work remotely, we have had to continue with the additional checking processes which were first introduced in 2020. However, the percentage of undisputed invoices paid within 30 days for the 6 months to 30th September 2021 increased by 1% from last year to 99%. The percentage of invoices paid within 20 days was 97% which was also 1% higher than last year. The percentage of suppliers paid by BACS during the year was 96% which was 1% higher than the previous years' figure.

Financial Assessment and Management Team

Our client base, as at 30th September 2021, comprised of 766 clients receiving residential care and 3,530 clients receiving non-residential care. Liberata have successfully implemented significant service improvements, which include introducing performance benchmarks for employees, online application forms, and implementation of both the performance management and quality tool kits. We continue to focus on our channel shift strategy which will migrate customers to digital channels which will positively impact processing times of a financial assessment being carried out.

A more intuitive online smart form has also been created which is ready to implement once the new social care system has been fully implemented. This form will be able to make real time decisions whilst a customer keys information in. Pop up messages will appear to request that specific information is uploaded via our Evidence Upload Facility. Liberata will also use Robotic Process Automation (RPA) to upload submitted applications directly into our Document Management System. This process takes place on the day the application is submitted and removes the requirement for the manual indexing of the application form from one system to another.

Liberata has further built on the resilience created for both the residential and non-residential assessment services. This plays a pivotal role in ensuring that workload peaks are being effectively managed and KPIs are not being negatively impacted. Liberata's focus remains firmly on quality and accurate assessments being undertaken. New employees and upskilled employees undergo in depth training on Financial Assessment processing from our Training and Policy team with significant quality checking of their work being carried out to ensure that errors are minimised.

Appointee & Deputyship Team

As at 30th September 2021, the team had 288 clients of which 241 were for Appointeeship and 47 were for Deputyship. We are currently investigating the use of Robotic Process Automation (RPA) for the banking reconciliation work undertaken

by the team. This would improve the efficiency of the existing process and reduce the time taken to undertake this task.

A benchmarking exercise is currently underway on the team to establish how long it takes for specific tasks to be completed by team members. Once finalised, Liberata will implement the new benchmarks which employees will be managed against as part of our performance management framework.

Council Led Projects

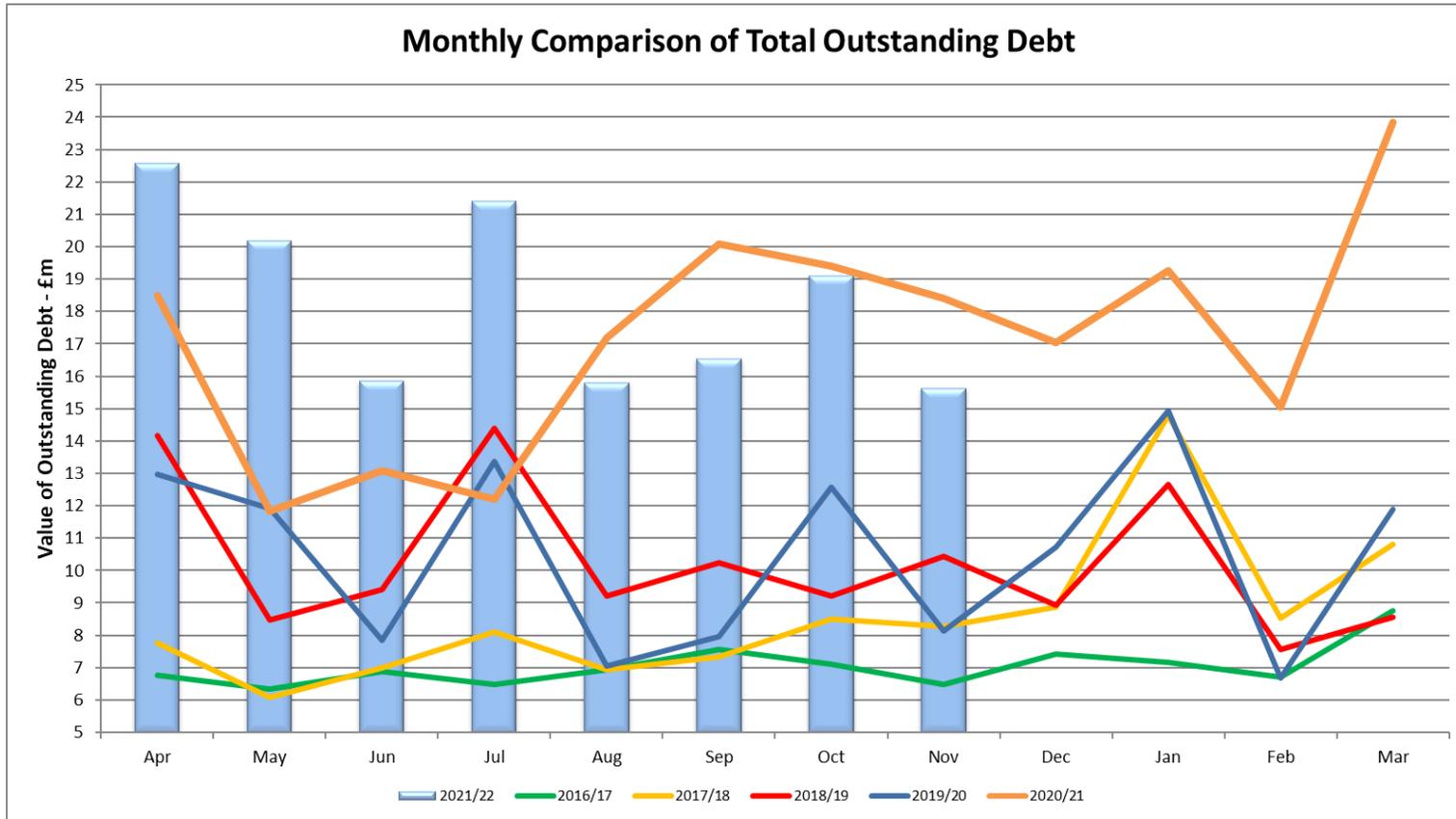
During this period Liberata has participated in the Councils project to migrate their finance system onto the new Fusion platform. This is expected to go live in Quarter 1 of 2022 and should bring increased automation to the Accounts Payable and Debtors and Income services.

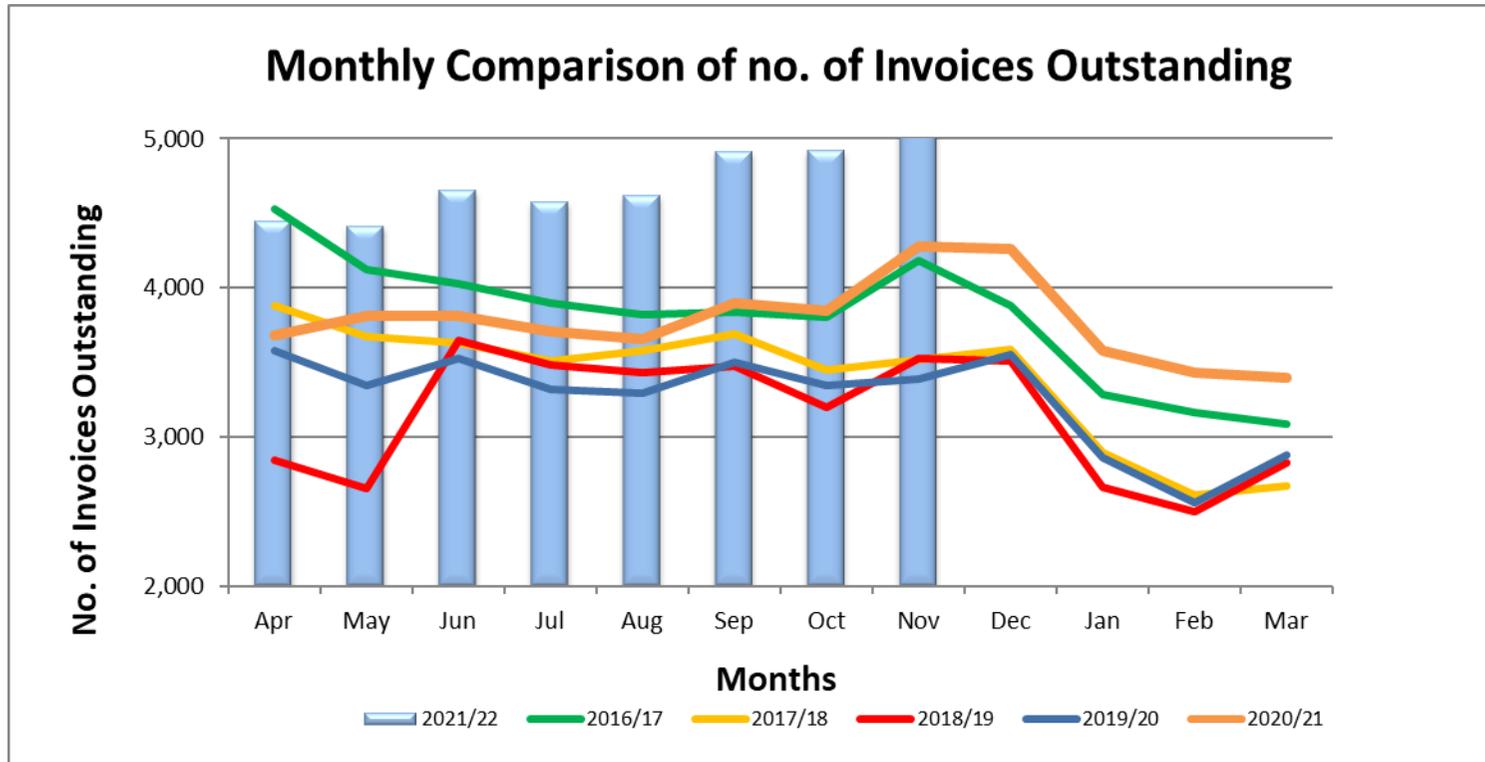
The Council also implemented new systems for the Children's and Adult Care services which are used by a number of Liberata services who are required to generate payments, raise invoices and complete financial assessments. Unfortunately, problems with the systems implementation resulted in issues arising which affected the performance of the Liberata services. However, Liberata are continuing to work closely with the Council representatives with the aim of resolving these issues and minimising their impact on performance.

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





Overall Recovery position of Debts raised in the financial years as at 30th September 2021

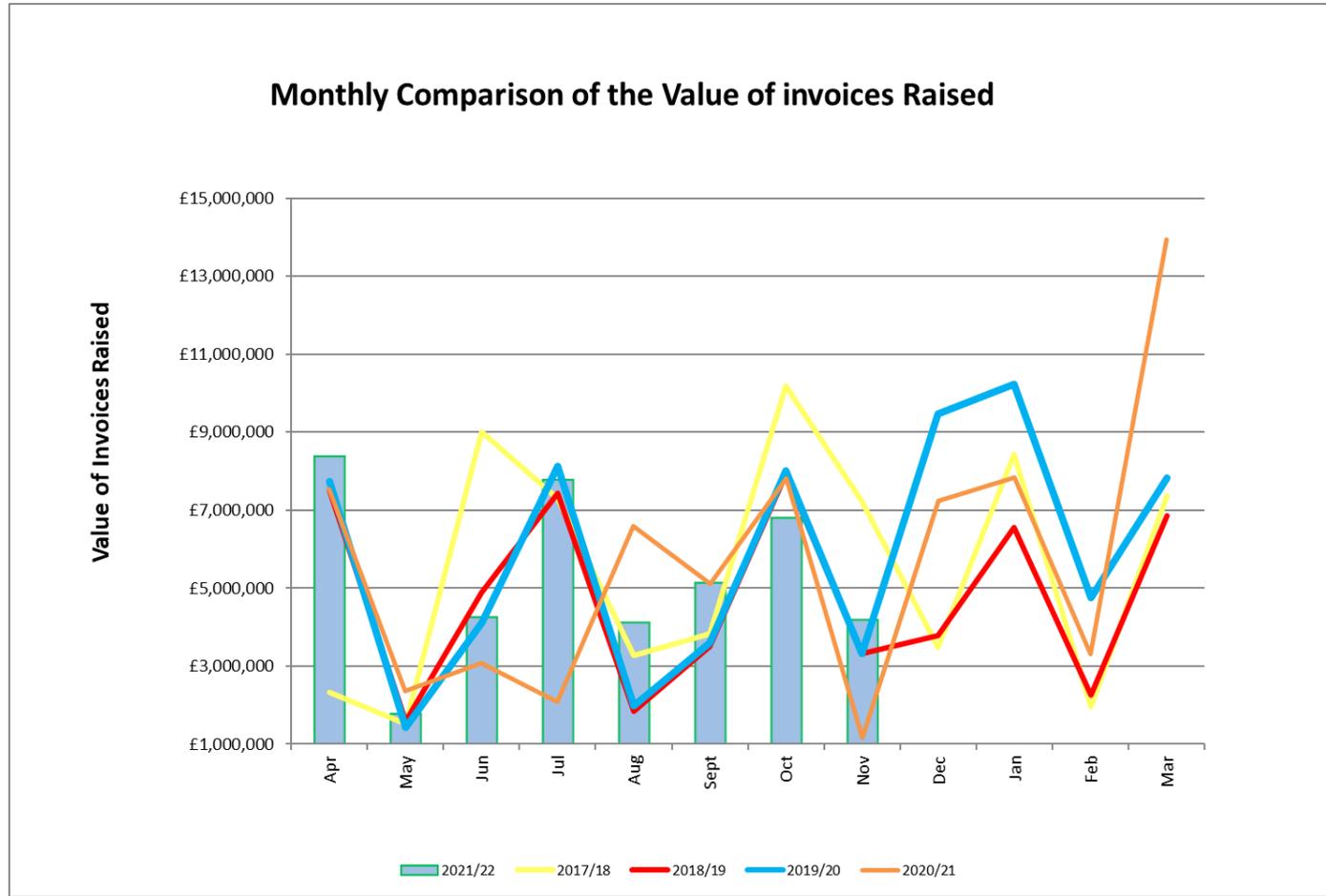
Outstanding balance and Recovery position of debts raised in the years below							
Fin Year in which the original debt was raised	Pre 2017	17-18	18-19	19-20	20-21	21-22	Grand Total
	£,000	£,000	£,000	£,000	£,000	£,000	£,000
In reminder letter cycles (no pro-active recovery)						5,716	5,716
Recovery being actively pursued	12	5	11	54	808	1,024	1,915
In Recovery, paid by instalments	56	6	8	14	102	234	421
Appointee & Deputyship in place	5	3		11	114	64	196
Deceased Accounts		1	6	50	214	92	363
Searching for probate		4	23	2	93	48	170
Probate granted (in recovery)		1	5	22	8		36
With LBB for Instructions			13	15	105	279	412
Pre Debt Collector checks	9	7	8	17	46		88
With Debt Collector	30	21	21	60	23		156
Returned from Debt Collector	7	3	2	2			14
Court Action (pre-legal action review & application)	188	65	71	311	126	6	766
Judgement obtained - Enforcement options in review	22						22
Judgement obtained - Charging Order	136	13	92	11	67	63	382
Judgement obtained - Post CCJ Payment Arrangement	9						9
Judgement obtained - High Court Enforcement	20	1		1			22
Judgement obtained - Bankruptcy			13				13
With LBB Legal Dept for instructions	14	2		4	61		80
Awaiting cancellation	2			1	61	22	87
Recommended for Write Off	726	151	74	143	30	6	1,132
In dispute/under query with LBB Service Departments	143	424	238	445	1,894	1,347	4,490
Covid-19 Grant Clawback					10	41	51
Premises Licences				4	12	2	18
Grand Total	1,378	709	584	1,165	3,776	8,946	16,558

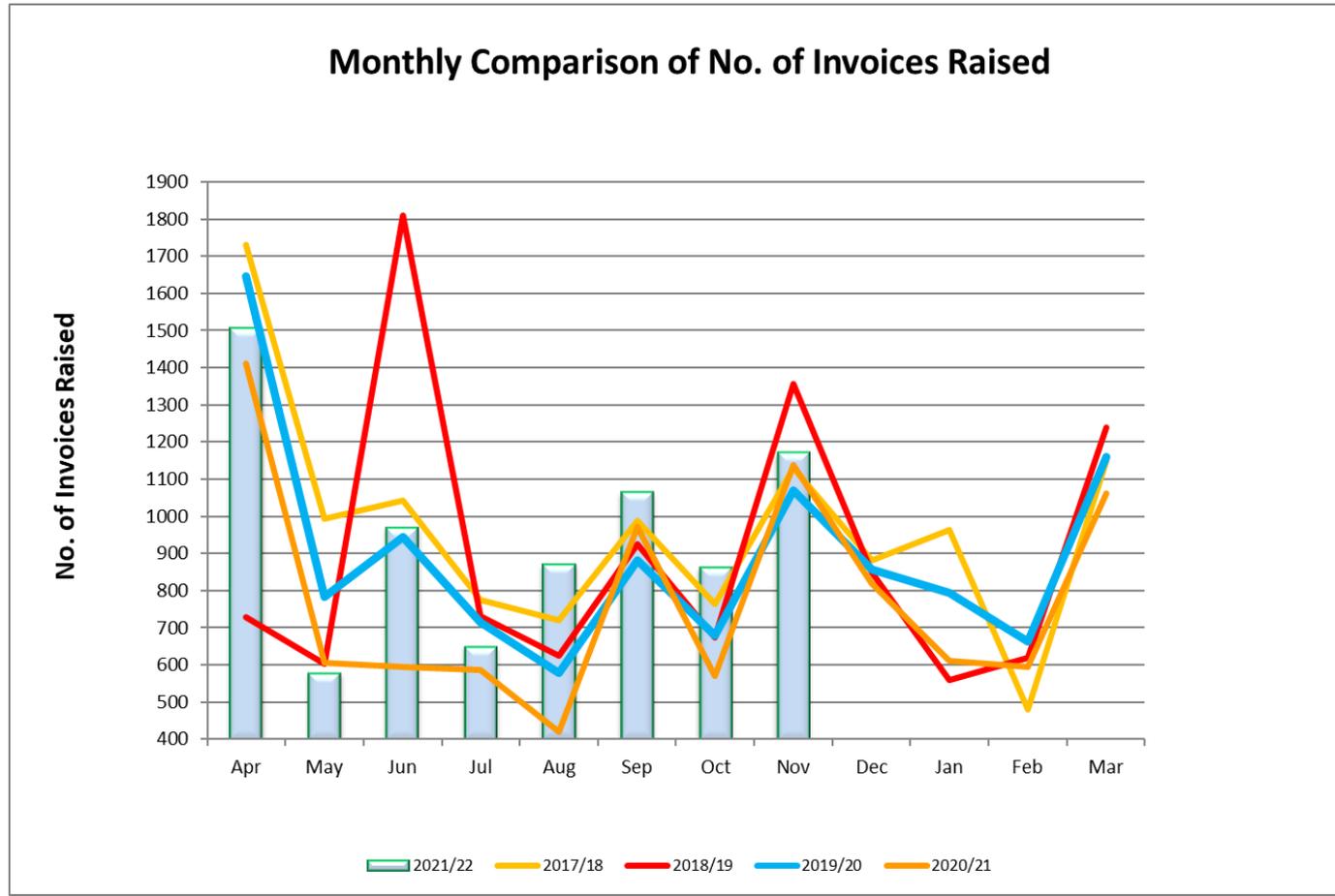
Age Profile of outstanding Utility Debts as at 30th September 2021

Utility	Pre 2017	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	TOTAL BALANCE
Virgin Media	£0	£0	£0	£570	£0	£24,927	£25,497
British Telecom	£9,738	£0	£0	£2,375	£0	£16,271	£28,384
EDF	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0
UK Power Networks Ltd	£2,413	£0	£0	£0	£0	£4,104	£6,517
SGN PLC	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£42,023	£42,023
Thames Water	£0	£0	£0	£583	£29,434	£23,138	£53,154
Other Utilities	£9,147	£2,250	£0	£2,455	£37,818	£57,215	£108,884
TOTAL	£21,297	£2,250	£0	£5,983	£67,251	£167,677	£264,458

Overall Recovery Position of outstanding Utility Debts as at 30th September 2021

Utility	Total under 30 days old	Total over 30 days old	Total outstanding	No. of invoices in dispute	Value of invoices in dispute	Value marked for write off
Virgin Media	£13,665	£11,832	£25,497	1	£380	£0
British Telecom	£16,271	£12,113	£28,384	0	£0	£9,738
EDF	£0	£0	£0	0	£0	£0
UK Power Networks Ltd	£3,918	£2,599	£6,517	0	£0	£2,413
SGN PLC	£10,755	£31,268	£42,023	0	£0	£0
Thames Water	£23,138	£30,016	£53,154	3	£30,016	£0
Other Utilities	£34,480	£74,404	£108,884	13	£10,856	£2,388
TOTAL	£102,226	£162,232	£264,458	17	£41,252	£14,538





Report No.
CSD 22002

London Borough of Bromley

PART ONE - PUBLIC

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

Date: Wednesday 5 January 2022

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, Customer Services and Public Affairs

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 June 2021 to 30th November 2021.

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: Not Applicable
 2. Ongoing costs: Not Applicable
 3. Budget head/performance centre: Customer Services Contract
 4. Total current budget for this head: £909k 2021/2022
 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: 3,200 visitors, 535,000 phone calls, 25,000 e-mails and 10 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 four 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 from main reception and north block, for most areas of the council with the exception of registrars and children services, who manage their own reception points.
- 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 as provided by service experts. 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 as a result of the normal seasonal changes. Since the pandemic began there has been a consistent demand in customer contact via the website as customers were advised to use online services instead of traditional contact channels. Many web transactional services remain high over the reporting period with overall traffic to the website remaining at around double its normal rate compared to pre-covid volumes.
- 3.5 Reception remains an appointment only service, except for emergencies and vulnerable customers. Opening times are limited to allow for cleaning and to control volumes. Demand has been steady over the reporting period. Customers have reported they prefer the appointment based service, as it avoids crowding.
- 3.6 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. 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	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 generally within service level. The monthly service level target answering 50% of calls within 60 seconds was met for all months in the reporting period. There were 3 occurrences of the daily minimum level of 40% of calls being answered within 60 seconds not being met. The minimum daily level was not met for 1 day in June due to staff sickness and 2 days in August was due to staff sickness and an influx of electoral queries.

Contact Centre Target – 50% within 60 secs	Jun 21	Jul 21	Aug 21	Sep 21	Oct 21	Nov 21
Answered	11,346	11,654	10,689	10,473	7773	7206
% of calls ans. in 60 secs	61.0%	52.1%	50.60%	66.50%	81.90%	85.10%
Average wait time (secs)	00:01:23	00:01:57	00:02:20	00:01:30	00:00:36	00:00:32
Number of day's service fell below 40%.	1	0	2	0	0	0

3.8 **Switchboard:** Performance and volumes for this area were as expected and within service level.

Switchboard Target – 50% within 60 secs	Jun 21	Jul 21	Aug 21	Sep 21	Oct 21	Nov 21
Answered	7080	7640	6326	5849	5448	6043
% of calls ans. in 60 secs	95%	88%	86%	91%	98%	97%
Average wait time (secs)	00:00:13	00:00:24	00:00:27	00:00:18	00:00:08	00:00:08
Number of day's service fell below 40%.	0	0	0	0	0	0

3.9 **Reception:** Reception remains an appointment only service, with limited opening times to allow for additional cleaning. Emergencies and vulnerable customers are seen without an appointment. Demand has been consistent throughout the reporting period.

Reception	Jun 21	Jul 21	Aug 21	Sep 21	Oct 21	Nov 21
Number of customers seen	142	138	122	100	108	112
80% within 5 minutes	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
100% within 15 minutes	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

3.10 **E-mail:** E-mail handling targets were met for the reporting period.

Emails Target – 80% within 1 day and 100% within 5 days	Jun 21	Jul 21	Aug 21	Sep 21	Oct 21	Nov 21
Number of emails received	2534	2924	2063	2215	1630	1574
% emails processed within 1 day	97%	87%	89%	89%	98%	98%
% emails processed within 5 days	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

3.11 **Out of Hours Emergency Call Centre:** Performance was within service level for 3 of the 6 months. The out of hours service was affected by resource issues and increased call volumes associated to weather conditions during this reporting period which impacted on the monthly service levels being achieved. An action plan was provided by the Out of Hours team to increase the performance going forward and the service recovered in November with closer monitoring of this ongoing.

Out of Hours (Appello) Target – 80% within 30 secs	Jun 21	Jul 21	Aug 21	Sep 21	Oct 21	Nov 21
Answered	1542	1590	1419	1309	1229	1098
% of calls ans. in 30 secs	78.99%	77.66%	83.57%	87.00%	78.60%	80.91%
Average wait time (secs)	00:00:29	00:00:27	00:00:19	00:00:13	00:00:23	00:00:26

3.12 **Web – Bromley Knowledge:** The web team achieved 100% against all targets during this reporting period.

Web site – Target 100%	Jun 21	Jul 21	Aug 21	Sep 21	Oct 21	Nov 21
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	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

The website upgrade project is progressing well. The contractor now has access to the new software environment and web content has already begun to be transferred across, this is after it has been through the internal review process to ensure it is fully up to date and compliant with the required standards.

The contractor is working hard to ensure this process proceeds as seamlessly as possible, whilst ensuring content on the main live site remains accurate. The contractor will continue to ensure business critical updates are applied, which will ensure our customers continue to have access to the latest service information. Any content on subsites, such as Modern Gov and Planning Portal is unaffected by this project. Customers should not experience any degradation of service during the project to transfer to the new systems.

Services have been asked to hold back any non-essential updates to main site content, wherever possible, so these can be incorporated in the internal content review process, which will enable these to be implemented quickly in the new site.

Testing of the new site, content and transactional elements within them, will be undertaken throughout this transitional period, ahead of the go live, which is planned in May.

- 3.13 **Blue Badge and Discretionary Freedom Pass:** This area performed well and within service level. Applications should be processed within 6-8 weeks of receipt of all requested information. The KPI and contractor performance is measured against the time taken for the activities required of the contractor. Time taken for any face to face assessments or further information requirements are excluded from this calculation.

Liberata’s transformation programme in respect of this area is on track. For Freedom Pass applications, Robotic Process Automation (RPA) now plays a key role in automatically indexing the new online application directly into the Data Management System. This reduces the processing of applications by an average of 2 days and improves the overall customer experience.

For Blue Badge applications, Liberata is currently in discussion with the Blue Badge software provider to acquire an “Application Programming Interface” (API) which will enable RPA to be used within this assessment process. Once this has been implemented early next year this will also reduce processing times of Blue Badge applications by an average of 2 days.

Blue Badges – target 80% within 4 weeks	Jun 21	Jul 21	Aug 21	Sep 21	Oct 21	Nov 21
Volume	441	386	439	459	463	469
% processed within 4 weeks	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Freedom Pass – Target 100% within 4 weeks	Jun 21	Jul 21	Aug 21	Sep 21	Oct 21	Nov 21
Volume	38	36	34	55	18	30
% processed within 4 weeks	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

- 3.14 **MyBromley Account:** The table below outlines the volume usage for the services currently available to registered users, and volume of customers registering in this monitoring period. MyBromley Account continues to grow and as of the end of November 2021 the number of registrations had risen to 99,129. The number of accounts continues to increase despite the successful adoption of the inactive account procedure. During September 2021 e-mails and reminders were sent to account holders who were recorded as inactive for more than 48 months, this resulted in approximately 2,000 deletions. Around 10,000 accounts were contacted holders in October 2021 who have not used their account in the last 36 months, this generated large volumes of password resets and enquiries. Once resolved, we shall delete all those accounts that remain unused over 36 months.

MyBromley registrations	Jun 21	Jul 21	Aug 21	Sep 21	Oct 21	Nov 21
Volume	1933	1670	1783	1934	1731	1365
Cumulative Volume	95,318	96,988	98,771	100,705	98,045	99,129

- 3.15 **Customer Satisfaction:** The number of customers surveyed, and responses are outlined below, satisfaction is above target for this period.

Customer Satisfaction Target – 90% Customer Satisfaction	Jun 21	Jul 21	Aug 21	Sep 21	Oct 21	Nov 21
Number of surveys sent	14,120	12,203	9986	11,608	9662	10,084
Number of responses	81	40	25	36	17	26
% Customer Satisfaction	96%	95%	96%	94%	94%	98%

- 3.16 **Compliments and Complaints:** During this period, eleven customers made contact to thank the staff regarding the service that was provided by the Customer Service Centre advisors. The contractor also received six complaints during this reporting period which were associated to Blue Badges and the expected delivery timescales.

Compliments & Complaints	Jun 21	Jul 21	Aug 21	Sep 21	Oct 21	Nov 21
Complaints	3	0	1	0	1	1
Compliments	1	1	3	4	0	2

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 projected the contract expenditure in 2021/22 will be to budget at £909k.
6.2 For information, the actual spend for the contract in 2020/21 was £900k.

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 23.3 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 23.2 provides that for all Contracts with a value higher than £500,000, or which are High Risk, an annual report must be submitted to the Portfolio Holder 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

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

Date: 10th December 2021

Dear Duncan,

As we approach the January 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 June to 30th November 2021.

Customer Services Performance

The Corporate Contact Centre delivered an overall service level of calls being answered within 60 seconds of 63% against a target of 50%. There were 3 days when the service level dipped below 40%. In total 94% of calls were answered.

Call volumes were 63,000, a reduction of 20% in comparison to the same 6 month period of 2020.

During the period, the team answered 97% of all Switchboard calls with an average speed to answer of 17 seconds. The overall service level for the period was 92% against the target of 50% answered within 60 seconds. Call volumes totalled 38,924, an increase of 3% in comparison to the same 6 month period of 2020.

The out of hours service was affected by resource issues and increased call volumes associated to weather conditions during this reporting period which impacted on the monthly service levels being achieved, the service saw call volumes increase by 8%.

The Customer Services front facing team continued to operate mainly an appointment only service, but vulnerable customers who presented without an appointment were seen. During this reporting period, the team saw just 714 customers compared to 5,625 during the same period in 2019. This large reduction does not appear to have been to the detriment of customers being able to transact with the Council, and there have been no complaints about the appointment only service.

Website June 2021- November 2021

The performance of the website continues to remain strong and the team have managed to achieve 100% for all 4 of their main KPI's. These include;

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Registered Office: 1st Floor, 100 Wood Street, London EC2V 7AN. Liberata UK Limited is a subsidiary of Outsourcing UK Limited (Registered in England and Wales - No 10280945). Registered Office: 12b, Beehive 3 Lingfield Point, Darlington, Durham, United Kingdom, DL1 1YN.

- Critical updates completed within 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 (100%)

On average the Bromley Knowledge team complete over 110 updates per month, including working with service areas to develop and design content for the website and issuing tweets via the Council Twitter Account.

This high level of performance was achieved despite the massive increase in time-critical urgent content needing updating and publishing relating to the coronavirus pandemic. In addition to many crucial content changes, the team have had to urgently create a further 12 online forms relating to the pandemic, to deal with things like test kit ordering, contact tracing and applying for various Government support grants.

Over the last 6 months the Bromley Knowledge team have been working with council officers, Jadu and BT on a project to totally re-design the corporate website. This has included helping to author Liberata's original vision document and to undertake and manage the migration of information from the current site onto the new. This massive task requires the re-creation of somewhere in the region of 11,000 web pages, downloads and online forms. This has to be done in parallel with running the live site. The migration process started at the end of November and the new website is planned to go live in May 2022.

In response to the requirements of recent national accessibility regulations (Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No. 2) Accessibility Regulations 2018), the Bromley Knowledge team have worked extensively with Jadu and other 3rd party online suppliers to move towards compliance. Certain areas of the website and some satellite sites still remain partially non-compliant, but would require high costs to fix. Bromley Knowledge have compiled a case to the Cabinet for these areas to be exempt until the redesigned website is launched on account of the disproportionate burden of cost of doing the work twice.

Since the start of the pandemic with lock downs and office closures, the number of visitors to the website has doubled to around 900k visits per months with visitors accessing over 2.2 million pages per month and is the single largest channel for customer information and access to services.

MyBromley Account Developments

MyBromley Account continues to grow and as of the end of November 2021 the number of registrations had risen to over 99,000 which equates to over 70% of households in Bromley. New functionality was introduced to remove any obsolete accounts in order to comply with GDPR. A notification email is now sent to any account holder who has not used their account for two years advising that it will be deleted unless they access it within a specified time period.

Activity in the portal continues to grow and currently there have been over 175,000 page visits and transactions carried out within the portal relating to Revenues and Benefits between November 2020 and October 2021. New online forms were added to the portal during the summer which means that residents can now apply for council tax discounts and exemptions, housing benefits or advise of a change in circumstance using these new forms.

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The online evidence upload facility has been used over 34,000 times by customers who were able to provide information without needing to visit the civic centre.

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

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Appendix 2 – Key Performance Indicators

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	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

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Appendix 3 – Benchmarking Data

R&B Contact Centre	Bromley R&B Contact Centre		Council 1 R&B Contact Centre		Council 2 R&B Contact Centre	
	Call Volumes	Performance (KPI = 5% abandoned)	Call Volumes	Performance (KPI = 7% abandoned)	Call Volumes	Performance (KPI = 15% abandoned)
Jun 21	8,744	2%	8,881	2%	12,083	6%
Jul 21	7,301	3%	8,194	4%	12,690	8%
Aug 21	6,485	3%	8,305	5%	13,137	13%
Sep 21	7,144	0%	8,315	3%	10,525	15%
Oct 21	8,057	1%	8,535	3%	11,275	10%
Nov 21	6,887	1%	8,223	6%	10,259	9%

R&B F2F	Bromley R&B F2F		Council 1 R&B F2F	
	Footfall	Performance (KPI = 85% in 15 mins.)	Footfall	Performance (KPI = 95% in 15 mins.)
Jun 21	138	100%	0	N/A
Jul 21	122	100%	0	N/A
Aug 21	135	100%	0	N/A
Sep 21	138	100%	0	N/A
Oct 21	147	100%	0	N/A
Nov 21	130	100%	0	N/A

Corporate Contact Centre	Bromley Corporate Contact Centre		Corporate F2F	Bromley Corporate F2F		
	Current Year (Actual)	Performance (KPI = 50% in 1 mins.)		Current Year (Actual)	Performance (KPI = 80% in 5 mins.)	Performance (KPI = 100% in 15 mins.)
Jun 21	11,924	61%	Jun 21	142	100%	100%
Jul 21	12,619	50%	Jul 21	130	100%	100%
Aug 21	12,052	51%	Aug 21	122	100%	100%
Sep 21	11,107	67%	Sep 21	100	100%	100%
Oct 21	7,961	82%	Oct 21	108	100%	100%
Nov 21	7,337	84%	Nov 21	112	100%	100%

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Report No.
Please obtain
a report
number

London Borough of Bromley

PART ONE - PUBLIC

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

Date: Wednesday 5th January 2022

Decision Type: Non-Urgent Executive Non-Key

Title: COST OF AGENCY WORKERS

Contact Officer: Emma Downie, Head of HR Business, Systems & Reward
E-mail: emma.downie@bromley.gov.uk

Chief Officer: Charles Obazuaye, Director of HR & Customer Services
Email: charles.obazuaye@bromley.gov.uk

Ward: All Wards

1. Reason for report

1.1 The Chairman of the ER&C PDS requested a report for information on the use and cost of agency workers across the Council and the ten highest paid agency workers. This information is being provided for Members taking into account our duty of care for affected individuals and the requirements of the DPA/GDPR Regulations 2018.

2. **RECOMMENDATION(S)**

2.1 The Executive, Resources & Contracts PDS committee are invited to:

- (i) Note and comment on the contents of the report;
- (ii) Refer any queries back to the appropriate Chief Officer for comment and action

Impact on Vulnerable Adults and Children

1. Summary of Impact: Summarised in Report
-

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: Services' employee budgets
 4. Total current budget for this head: c£83m
 5. Source of funding: Existing revenue budgets 2021/22
-

Personnel

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

Legal

1. Legal Requirement: None
 2. Call-in: Not Applicable
-

Procurement

1. Summary of Procurement Implications: Not Applicable
-

Customer Impact

1. Estimated number of users/beneficiaries (current and projected): Not Applicable
-

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 summarises the costs of agency workers across the Council. Whilst it is appropriate that budgetary spend is monitored it is equally important to consider this not in isolation but in a climate of national recruitment shortages and to recognise the steps that have already been taken to reduce the Council's reliance on agency workers.
- 3.2 There will always be a requirement for the use of agency workers and in particular across our social care functions where statutory provision applies however the recruitment of permanent staff remains a key aim of the Department's Recruitment and Retention strategy.

BROMLEY CONTEXT

- 3.3 From April 2021, the Council moved to a neutral vendor arrangement with Matrix SCM Ltd via the ESPO MStar3 Framework. Prior to this, Adecco had been the Council's Managed Service Provider (MSP) for the provision of agency workers since 2013.
- 3.4 The use of agency staff requires a business case to be considered and approved by the relevant DMT/Director and the Director of HR, Customer Services and Public Affairs.
- 3.5 We currently have 259 active agency assignments of which 65% are in Children and Adult's Services, the majority of which are qualified Social Care posts.
- 3.6 As the Council progresses with its Transformation agenda there will be a need to ensure staffing structures remain sufficiently flexible to support business need and service requirements. The continued use of agency staff in the short term may therefore need to be considered in certain instances as structures realign. In addition, the volatility of the Social Care recruitment market means that agency workers will continue to need to be procured to ensure that the Council meets its statutory responsibilities. However, the perm to agency ratio is currently an average of 84% permanent to 16% agency across qualified Social Care roles.
- 3.7 The agency contract is instrumental in managing the agency recruitment staffing needs of the Council. The contract helps to fill critical posts urgently and the cap on rates, via the London Councils' Memorandum of Understanding, is attempting to stabilise the social care market although this continues to be problematic due to the high levels of demand and insufficient levels of supply.
- 3.8 Agency workers are funded directly from individual department's staffing budgets, with the bulk of the total spend relating to direct payment of workers. Table 1 below gives details of the overall spend over the past three years, which can be seen to be an average of £11.6m.

Table 1

	Total Excl VAT
2018/19	14.1m
2019/20	11.1m
2020/21	9.6m
Grand Total	34.8m

- 3.9 During 20/21, the median spend on agency workers across the London Boroughs was £21.7m with Bromley showing the 5th lowest spend.
- 3.10 Based on the average spend so far this year, it is anticipated that the level of spend for 2021/22 could be in the region of £10.5m although demand does fluctuate from year to year.

- 3.11 Details of the top agency earners can be found in part 2 but members should note that 68% of these are in Children and Adult Services, consistent with the spread with agency workers across the Council.
- 3.12 Recruiting to roles on a permanent basis is a priority in order to create a stable workforce particularly across the Children's and Adult's service functions.
- 3.13 The Recruitment and Retention Board was established in January 2017, chaired by the Director of HR & Customer Services. A work plan has been established to address current issues of staffing and consider initiatives to attract staff to Bromley. As well as recruitment and retention initiatives the board looks at workforce development issues to ensure staff receive the best training and development and have opportunities to progress in different roles across the service. Targets have also been set for the recruitment of qualified permanent staff.
- 3.14 The introduction and use of LinkedIn to aid permanent recruitment, which was introduced in September 2020, allows for a more pro-active approach to recruitment as well as advertising roles to a wider audience. The performance of this will be monitored but it's too early to report on at this stage.
- 3.15 Our Exit Survey platform and our new "On Boarder" survey will hopefully provide better data/information which will enable us to understand the drivers for staff turnover and help us to identify measures to reduce/mitigate the loss of staff. We are also looking at a number of other initiatives to help retain staff and these have been formulated into an action plan monitored by the Recruitment and retention Board.
- 3.16 The spend on agency workers is monitored and proportionate in a climate of national shortage. Much work continues to be undertaken by the Council to reduce the reliance and ultimate spend on agency staff in the future.

4. IMPACT ON VULNERABLE ADULTS AND CHILDREN

- 4.1 The use of agency workers, mainly as a stop gap pending permanent recruitment of qualified/experienced staff, in children's and adult's services is key to the work of the department and the Council's ambition for children and young people in the borough. The Recruitment and Retention board, chaired by the Director of HR & Customer Services, continues to monitor the balance between perm and agency qualified staff which stands at approximately 84% permanent compared to 16% agency.

5. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 As the Council continues with its Transforming Bromley agenda, the need for flexibility in staffing resources will continue to be a key driver.
- 5.2 The Covid-19 crisis has further shown the need for flexibility to help with additional and fluctuating workloads.
- 5.3 It is hoped that the reliance of agency staff for both Children's and Adult's Social Care will diminish over time as the workforce becomes more stabilised. The Council's Apprenticeship Scheme is also anticipated to reduce the need to engage agency workers through Matrix particularly for Administrative type roles where these are deemed necessary to fill.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The main financial considerations are contained within the body of the report and the part 2 addendum to this report.

6.2 The cost of agency staff set out above and in Part 2 is funded from within services' existing employee revenue budgets.

7. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 There are no direct personnel implications arising from the report mainly because the Council, irrespective of how agency workers are procured, is not the employer of agency staff. However in some landmark employment law cases individual agency staff have successfully argued employment status due to their working relationship with the end user client.

7.2 The Agency Workers' Regulations 2010 (AWR) impose significant duties and obligations on hirers (end users) of agency staff as well as the employment agencies. In a nutshell, the aim of the AWR is to ensure that agency workers receive equal treatment in respect of some aspects of employment. The regulations were effective from 1 October 2011.

7.3 There are two main rights available to agency staff, namely

a) Day one rights giving agency staff the right to communal facilities e.g. canteen, car parking facilities, etc. and the right to vacancy information;

b) Week 12 rights i.e. the right to the same basic pay and terms and conditions of service as directly employed staff.

7.4 Consequently hirers turn to recruitment agencies and in particular Neural Vendor or Managed Service providers to provide the solution to work within the AWR, as an alternative to dealing directly with employment agencies – thus minimising all the risks associated with hiring agency staff.

7.5 This arrangement complements the current Special Recruitment Measures agreed by Chief Officers to ensure that employment opportunities are ring fenced to redundant/displaced staff first before agency staff, in line with the Council's legal obligation to minimise compulsorily redundancies and will also mitigate the employment risks associated with engagement of non-standardised workers.

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

8.1 There are no specific legal implications arising from the report.

Non-Applicable Sections:	Procurement Implications
Background Documents: (Access via Contact Officer)	[Title of document and date]

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By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
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