

PART 1 - PUBLIC

Decision Maker: Executive & Resources PDS

Date: 4 February 2015

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

Title: REVENUES SERVICE MONITORING REPORT

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Chief Officer: Peter Turner, Director of Finance

Ward: All

1. REASON FOR REPORT

- 1.1 This report provides information regarding the performance of the Revenues Services provided by Liberata during the period April to December 2014. A letter from Charlie Bruin, Liberata's Executive Director, BPO Services provides an update on each individual service and is attached at **Appendix 1** with statistical data relating to the Revenues service shown in **Appendix 2** .

2. RECOMMENDATION (S)

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

Corporate Policy

1. Policy Status: Existing policy.
 2. BBB Priority: Excellent Council.
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Financial

1. Cost of proposal: N/A
 2. Ongoing costs: N/A.
 3. Budget head/performance centre: 400003
 4. Total current budget for this head: £3.49m
 5. Source of funding:
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Staff

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

1. Legal Requirement: Statutory requirement. The amount of legislation is too extensive to cite in full, below are detailed the major Acts and Regulations covering the services:

Local Government Finance Act 1988

The Council Tax (Administration and Enforcement) Regulations 1992

Local Government Finance Act 2012

Rating Law and Practice: England and Wales

LGPS Regulations 2013

2. Call-in: Call-in is applicable
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Customer Impact

1. Estimated number of users/beneficiaries (current and projected): The services covered in this report affect all Council Taxpayers, Business Ratepayers, Members and Pensioners, this could amount to an estimated 175,000 people.
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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 Revenues and Benefits 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. A summary of performance by the services is contained in **Appendix 2**.
- 3.2 To maintain the drive for improved service performance, monthly service review meetings are held with operational and senior Liberata management. Bromley's Heads of Service and Liberata's Contract Director meet regularly to deal with escalated issues, review policies and develop new ideas.

Council Tax

- 3.3 The in-year Council Tax collection rate as at the end of December 2014 was 85.57%; this was 0.03% higher than that being achieved at the same time in the last financial year (13/14). This positive variance is despite the increase in the minimum contribution required from working-age claimants of Council Tax Support.

The 2014/15 performance on collection of current year and arrears stood at 85.61% as at the 31/12/14, this compares to 85.58% as at the same time last year, a positive variance of 0.03%.

Business Rate

- 3.4 The in-year Business Rates collection as at the end of December 2014 was 83.86%; this compares to 87.78% as at the same time last financial year. This equates to a reduction of 3.9%; however from April 2014 businesses were able to opt for the payment over 12 months. Even after taking into account the effect of the extended payment period, collection rate remained disappointing. This was escalated to senior officers within Liberata and there has since been a marked improvement in collection. An update of the position will be provided at the meeting.

The current and arrears figure is also significantly down on the same time last year, with 83.18% being collected as at 31 December 2014 as opposed to 88.25% in 2013/14. Much of this reduction can also be attributed to the facility of 12 monthly instalments. A verbal update as to the current position will be provided at the meeting.

With effect from 1 April 2014 Retail Relief became available for certain categories of shops, restaurants, cafes and drinking establishments which had a rateable value of £50,000 or less. The relief entitled them to a reduction in their rates of up to £1000. An exercise was undertaken to identify establishments that could potentially meet the criteria and these were issued with information about the scheme together with an application form. A follow-up exercise has subsequently been undertaken, targeted at those from whom no response has been received.

Cashiers

- 3.5 The payment kiosk sited in the Civic Centre central reception continued to take high volume of payments. Exercises to convince callers to change to alternative methods of payment have continued. However, with the increased number of households required to pay Council Tax as a result of the introduction of Council Tax Support (some of which are relatively small amounts), the demand for this facility has remained high.

Payment kiosks are now available at the new Penge library. Usage is currently low; however the marketing of the provision is now being stepped up.

Payroll

- 3.6 The number of employees paid on the December 2014 payroll was 4709.
- 3.7 Considerable work continues to be undertaken in regard to schools converting to academies, further details are given in Liberata's letter attached as **Appendix 1**.

Pensions

- 3.8 Membership numbers recorded on the pensions administration system as at 31 December 2014 were 5637 actives, 5007 deferred and 4937 pensioners.
- 3.9 Introduction of the April 2014 changes to the Local Government Pension Scheme went smoothly, with new forms and processes being agreed in anticipation of the start date.
- 3.10 The transfer over to all Altair system is now complete with the system being fully operational.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The report refers to the significant income collection undertaken through the Exchequer Services contract with Liberata

Non-Applicable Sections:	[Policy, Legal and Personnel
Background Documents: (Access via Contact Officer)	