

Report No.
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London Borough of Bromley

Agenda
Item No.

PART 1 - PUBLIC

- Financial/business affairs of a person or body

Decision Maker: ENVIRONMENT AND COMMUNITY SERVICES POLICY
DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date: 21st June 2022

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

Title: ARBORICULTURE - GLENDALE - ANNUAL CONTRACT
PERFORMANCE MONITORING REPORT

Contact Officer: Hugh Chapman, Arboricultural Services Manager
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Chief Officer: Colin Brand – Director of Environment & Public Protection

Ward: (All Wards)

1. Reason for report

This annual report outlines the performance of the Arboricultural Services contract which delivers the day-to-day arboricultural operations across the Council's administrative area relating to financial year 2021/22.

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

2.1 The Environment and Community Services PDS Committee reviews and comments on the content of the report.

Corporate Policy

1. Policy Status: N/A.
 2. BBB Priority: Quality Environment .
-

Financial

1. Cost of proposal: N/A
 2. Ongoing costs: N/A.
 3. Budget head/performance centre: Tree Maintenance & Tree Planting & Maintenance
 4. Total current budget for this head: £727,820
 5. Source of funding: Existing controllable revenue budget for 2022/23
-

Staff

1. Number of staff (current and additional): 7 FTE's
 2. If from existing staff resources, number of staff hours: N/A
-

Legal

1. Legal Requirement: Statutory requirement.
 2. Call-in: Call-in is not applicable.
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Customer Impact

1. Estimated number of users/beneficiaries (current and projected): Borough wide impact on businesses, residents and service users.
-

Ward Councillor Views

1. Have Ward Councillors been asked for comments? N/A.
2. Summary of Ward Councillors comments: N/A

3. COMMENTARY

Aims of the Service – Arboricultural Services

3.1 The primary purpose of the Arboricultural Maintenance contract is to maintain the Council's tree stock across the borough, which includes street trees, park trees, trees in education sites, trees in woodlands and trees in conservation sites. The Council takes direct responsibility for inspecting trees to identify those requiring any remedial work, removal, or replacement under the requirements of contract resources. The borough has the largest number of street and park trees in London and is also home to two thirds of London's woodlands; this is particularly valued by Bromley's residents, visitors, and Council Members.

3.2 The existing contract, provided by Glendale Managed Services, supports the Council's arboricultural strategy, which sets out to ensure trees are planted, preserved, and managed in accordance with good arboricultural practice, regarding their contribution to amenity and the urban landscape, for both current and future generations.

3.3 A key aim of the service is to maintain a general presumption against the removal of trees, allowing felling only in accordance with good arboricultural practice, and to ensure that adequate and appropriate replacement planting takes place where planting is desirable, aesthetically necessary, and sustainable.

Tremendous establishment programme.

3.4 The Council launched its exciting and ambitious programme to establish 5000 new trees in the highways landscape in November 2021. Tree planting has been divided over four years with three years of young tree maintenance giving the project a total span of six years.

3.5 To achieve this the Council has from the ground-up redesigned its tree planting and young tree maintenance procedures and associated specifications. Procurement is underway to let this element of the contract however, due to tight timescales Glendale were able to provide the first year (between November 2021 and April 2022) of tree planting which upon completion has seen 1468 new trees planted on the public highway to a high standard. The procurement exercise will establish a contract for the planting of the remaining three years of the programme which will re-commence in November 2022.

Public Perception of Arboriculture in the borough

3.6 The extent of the area managed, the diverse range of sites (i.e. urban to rural), the challenges in managing the behaviours of users of the public areas and the rise of instant exception reporting, are consistent pressures that are managed to ensure that standards are maintained through the budgeted resources available.

3.7 Nationally, there have been recent examples of poor arboricultural management by local authorities at a strategic level which has drawn significant public attention to this service area. The Council aims to maintain and publicise high standards of arboricultural management via the implementation of the tree management strategy as available on the Council's website.

3.8 Significant public and political attention has been drawn to the benefits of trees in recent years leading to the development of enhanced tree planting targets both at a local and national level. The Council takes a long term 'tree time' view on these targets. Planting a tree is of little value if the tree fails to establish. The approach taken to address this is through the implementation of the 'right tree for the right place' philosophy and through the commitment of the Council's Service Provider, Glendale, to maintain these young trees until established.

Service Performance

3.9 Contract performance is managed through a governance model set out in the contract documentation known as the Performance Management Framework (PMF), which comprises of a series of Key Performance Indicators set at contract commencement. These indicators are reviewed on a monthly, bi-annual, and annual basis to ensure they are fit-for-purpose, and any proposed changes are made through a Change Control Notice procedure.

3.10 In addition to the client's monitoring system and partnership inspections the Service Provider is also responsible for self-monitoring to ensure the standards set out in the contract specification are adhered to. Access to the Service Provider's contract management system (software system called Glendale Live) is provided to members of the client Arboriculture Team and the Performance Management and Business Support Team to view real-time data and access before and after date-stamped photographic evidence of completed works.

3.11 Throughout financial year 2021/22, the Council has continued working in partnership with both its ICT Service Provider, BT, and Glendale, on the integration of IT systems to facilitate the extraction of the data required under the contract to monitor the contractor's performance (e.g. PMF). This data is derived from the quantitative and qualitative monitoring being undertaken by the service. This information is reviewed and reported monthly by Performance Management and Business Support officers and Contract Management officers.

Ad-Hoc and Routine Works

3.12 These works constitute much of the service provided by the Service Provider, originating primarily from cyclical tree surveying, the species-specific management of basal growth, subsidence mitigation pruning and public enquiries. This information is represented in Figure 1 indicating a variation in the volume of works issued over the financial year 21/22. Seasonal variations are primarily caused by the need to crown lift/remove basal growth from trees and can be impacted by weather conditions (e.g. severe strong winds) and are the main contributory factor to the variations in work requests. Through the application of the Council's proactive tree management strategy officers endeavour to limit the volume of potential ad-hoc works and reduce potential risk to the Council associated to insurance claims.

Key Performance Indicator (KSO1) – Works completed within the agreed timescale

3.13 As shown in Figure 2, Glendale have sustained an annual average of 77.5% completion of works within the required timescale against the target of 75%. When viewed in a monthly format the data shows minor deviation both above and below the target percentage as is expected with seasonal volatilities in the contract.

3.14 This data has remained positive despite the accrual of a large backlog of works due to the inclusion of smaller, high volume works such as tree planting, basal growth removal and in-hours emergency call-outs (e.g fallen branches/tree's etc).

Key Performance Indicator (KSO2 & O3) – Omissions and Service Failures

3.15 Primarily resulting from contract monitoring, when on the ground issues are identified, this is the principal mechanism by which these are controlled and rectified. As shown in Figure 3 the volumes of these incidents have been low with one increase identified in November. This data is useful in identifying problems early at a base level allowing the Council and Glendale to quickly address issues of poor standards.

Key Performance Indicator (KSO4) – FixMyStreet (FMS) Response Times

3.16 The Service Provider will manage all referred service requests within SLA including providing customer updates as appropriate.

3.17 While the data in Figure 4 presents good performance under the KSO the quality of the updates were called into question. As a result, the Council temporarily managed the customer enquiry case from January 2022. Work is presently underway to enact a hand back in which the Council will work side by side with Glendale for a one-month period to ensure quality standards are met and maintained.

Emergency Call-Outs

3.18 This element of the service is fully managed by Glendale except for major storm events where the Council will step in to lead on coordination and delivery. The SLA's for this service are normal working time (08:30-17:30) attendance within one hour and any other time attendance within two hours. The total volume of Emergency Call-Out hours is represented in Figure 5.

3.19 Over the past year this service standard has been maintained to within 0.1 of a percent.

3.20 In February this year in the Southeast of England saw one of the worst storms for several years in Storm Eunice. Over a one-week period the Council received more than 400 emergency call-outs varying in scale from large trees blocking the carriageway to reports of suspect standing trees.

3.21 During this period Glendale performed to a high standard showing a clear ability to prioritise call-outs and report back with any follow-up works required.

3.22 Owing to the severity of the storm the Council through its emergency planning process decided to bring in additional resource in the form of two third party contractors which it retained for an extended period after the end of the storm to ensure the clearup operation was managed quickly and efficiently.

Current and Ongoing Issues

3.23 The contract experienced a steady build-up of overdue works throughout the last quarter of the year. There are several factors which have contributed toward this situation. Work continues in partnership between the Service Provider and the Council to resolve this issue.

3.25 Extreme weather events – High volumes of emergency call-outs and follow-up works have at times been a draw on contractor resource. Constant review and improvements in process is leading to increased efficiencies and reductions in associated impact.

Risks

3.26 The current risks associated to the service are associated to public safety and financial liability to the Council. In accordance with the Tree Management Strategy the Council only raise tree works to mitigate risk to persons or property or to meet the other statutory obligations. Therefore, it may be assumed that all works on the contract and their associated priorities are vitally important.

3.27 Future risks relating to the financial impact of Ash dieback disease are being quantified with a report being prepared which will outline the Council's strategy in a practical and financial sense.

Risk Mitigation

3.28 The Council continues to work in partnership with Glendale to assist in the completion of overdue works through reform of internal processes and the provision of systems integration. Further investigation is required regarding the issues surrounding the accrual of overdue works which the Council will undertake over the coming six-month period. Pending the results of this exercise and the contractor performance relating to the backlog of overdue works the Council will, taking all factors into consideration, if required present a credible suite of plans to Members to bring the service back into a satisfactory condition.

3.29 Additionally the Council has acted to take three small bundles of critically urgent works from the contract and award them to third party contractors to limit associated liability.

Management

3.30 The Service Provider management structure at a contract level has remained consistent over the financial year.

3.31 The Council identified issues impacting the management of public enquiries which was not being effectively managed by the Service Provider. To ensure the high public facing standards of the Council the Council has temporarily taken this element back 'in-house' and is set to implement a 'hand-back' in June 2022 where the Council will work in collaboration with the Service Provider until such time as they demonstrate that they are delivering the expected standards independently.

3.32 Issues have been identified regarding the distribution and completion of works based on priority. The Council has implemented a Priority list of works alongside working with the Service Provider to improve their internal processes. Systems integration is key to this aspect, to that end the Council are seeking to supply the Service Provider with access to the Council's contract management software, CONFIRM Work Zone, which will facilitate closer working between both parties.

Review of Contract Purpose

3.33 There has been no substantive change in statutory duties upon the Council therefore the requirement for this contract remains essential.

3.34 With an ever-expanding tree population and enhanced focus on environmental improvements this service and associated contract will only be subject to growth over the coming years.

4. SERVICE PROFILE / DATA ANALYSIS

4.1 This element of the report has been presented in section 3 with associated data sets in the Appendix.

5. PLANS FOR ONGOING IMPROVEMENTS IN PERFORMANCE

5.1 Through regular monitoring and contract meetings the Council and Glendale will continue in partnership to seek improvements in performance.

5.2 The wider work in relation to the backlog of works will likely be a factor in these considerations over the coming year.

6. PLANS FOR ONGOING IMPROVEMENTS IN VALUE FOR MONEY

6.1 As per the commentary in section 3 it is unlikely that the service can be delivered at a lower value. The focus of the Council is on increasing efficiency which will over time see incremental quality improvements resulting in the overall increase in value for money.

6.2 The Council will present to Members the outcome of these findings at a future Committee cycle pending significant advancement of this exercise.

7. USER / STAKEHOLDER SATISFACTION

7.1 The Council does not at present utilise any specific metric to determine customer satisfaction in relation to Arboricultural Services.

7.2 This is an element which officer's are seeking to develop in future years through the enhancement of the Tree Friends programme and initiatives such as the 'QR' code system being deployed on all newly planted trees which once developed will allow public interaction via the Bromley website.

7.3 Through the implementation of a group email mailbox the service has maintained good levels of communication at a customer and Member level throughout the year.

8. SUSTAINABILITY / IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

8.1 A core aim of tree management is to ensure that the tree population is resilient to the effects of the many pressures of the urban environment. This is achieved through the careful selection of the right tree in the right place followed up with a robust programme of aftercare and monitoring.

8.2 Working in association with colleagues in Public Health officer's are developing several metrics to determine the tangible benefits of targeted tree establishment within the borough from a human health perspective.

8.3 As a London Borough a significant proportion of Council owned and maintained land is on a London clay soil type which means properties located on this soil type are liable to vegetation related subsidence. The Council has a system in place wherein if we are notified of subsidence occurring in a property and one or more of the Council's trees are implicated, officer's will act to remove the causal factor allowing the soil to rehydrate stabilising the property.

8.4 Once an area has been identified as at a real risk of vegetation related subsidence the Council will act proactively to crown reduce all publicly owned trees within the vicinity effectively managing their water uptake through a reduction in leafing area.

8.5 Within the client team the Council has recently undertaken training to upskill officer's in this area better proving a wholistic application of this policy.

9. POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

9.1 The Council's renewed ambition is set out in [Making Bromley Even Better 2021 - 2031](#) and the Contracts Database (and Contract Registers) help in delivering the aims (especially in delivering Ambition Five – Resources & Efficiencies). For Ambition Five, this activity specifically helps by supporting 'robust and active contract management'.

9.2 Environment and Community Services Portfolio Plan (21/22).

9.3 London Borough of Bromley Tree Management Strategy.

10. COMMISSIONING & PROCUREMENT CONSIDERATIONS

10.1 The Contract was awarded in November 2018 (ES18077) for a eight year period commencing on 1st April 2019, with an option to extend the contract for a further two 4 year periods. Options for the future provision of these services, including a possible contract extension will be considered in 2024. Subject to satisfactory Contractor performance.

10.2 In line with 23.2 of the Council's Contract Procedure Rules, an annual report must be submitted to the Portfolio Holder for all contracts with a value higher than £500k.

11. FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

11.1 Payments to Glendale in the 12 months to 31st March 2022 met from Tree Maintenance budgets totalled £1.132m. As well as the existing tree maintenance and tree planting budgets, the Executive at its meeting of 15th July 2021 approved funding of £1.35m for the multi-year planting programme referred to in the report. This cost is being funded from the Healthy Bromley Earmarked Reserve with £232k drawdown in 2021/22. The Executive also agreed additional emergency funding for the Council's response to the storms in February 2022, with £175k drawdown from Central Contingency in the year. The remaining payments were a cost to the existing budget, however as reported in the Provisional Outturn report, there was an overall overspend for this service of £174k at the end of the year.

12. LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

12.1 This Committee is requested to note and comment on the information contained within this report as to the performance of the Arboricultural Services contract provided by Glendale for the period financial year 21/22.

12.2 The Council's Constitution, at Part 4 – Rules of Procedure, provides the terms of reference for the Environment and Community Services Policy Development and Scrutiny Committee as it relates to the Environment and Community Services Portfolio. Under these terms of reference, this Committee is responsible for receiving reports and making recommendations on performance monitoring of services falling within the remit of this portfolio.

12.3 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

Non-Applicable Sections:	Customer Profile, Market Considerations, Personnel
Background Documents: (Access via Contact Officer)	

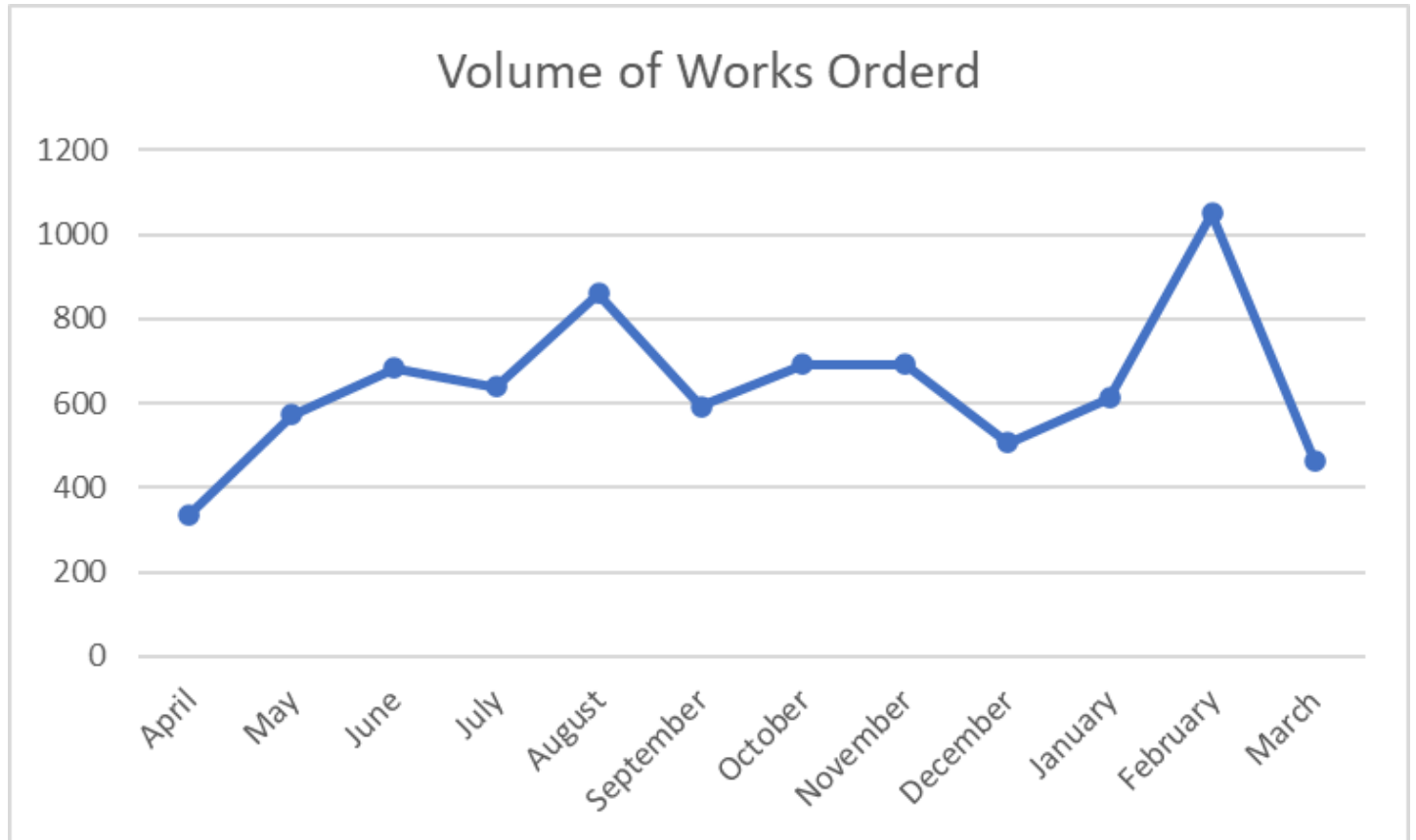
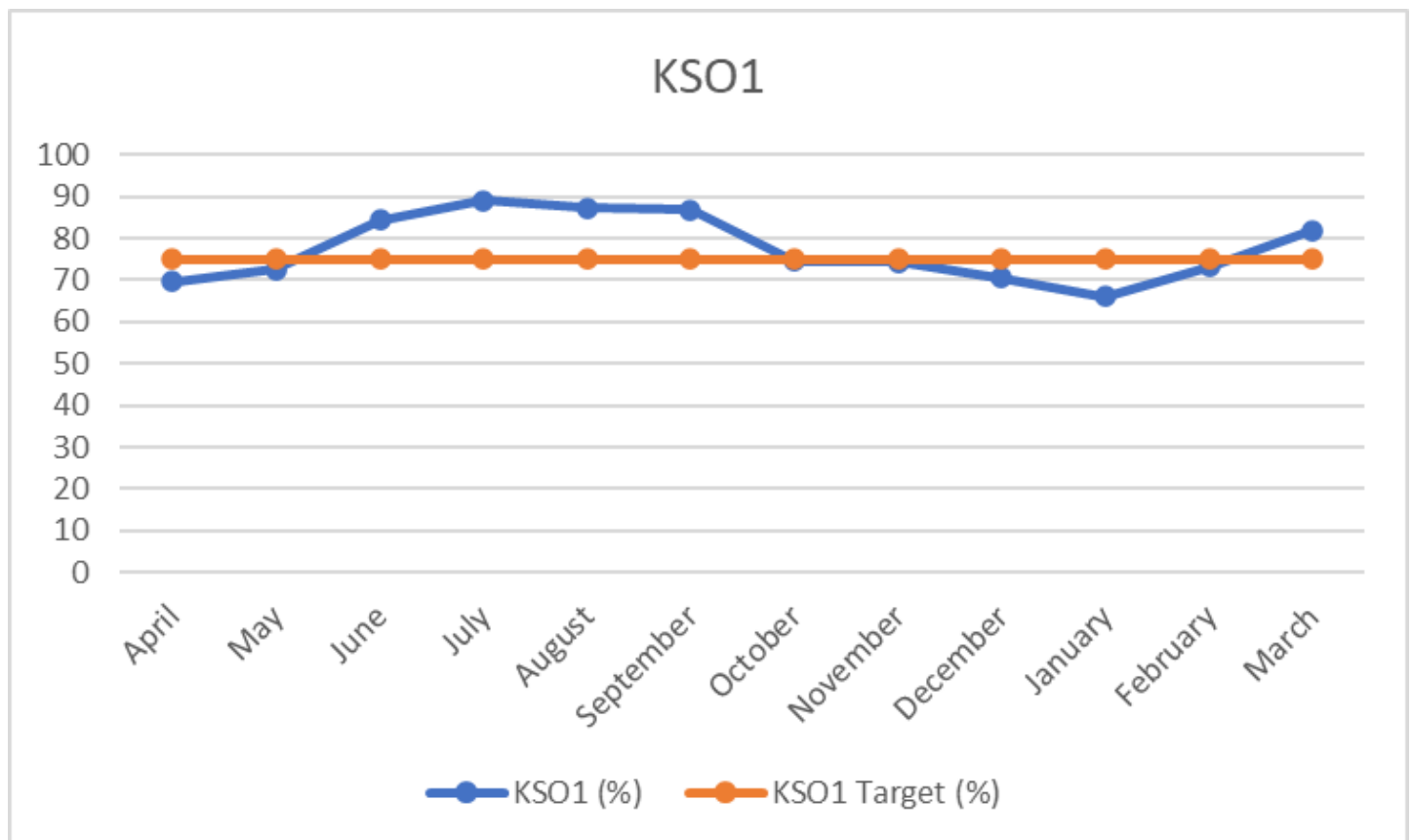
Appendices:**Figure 1****Figure 2**

Figure 3

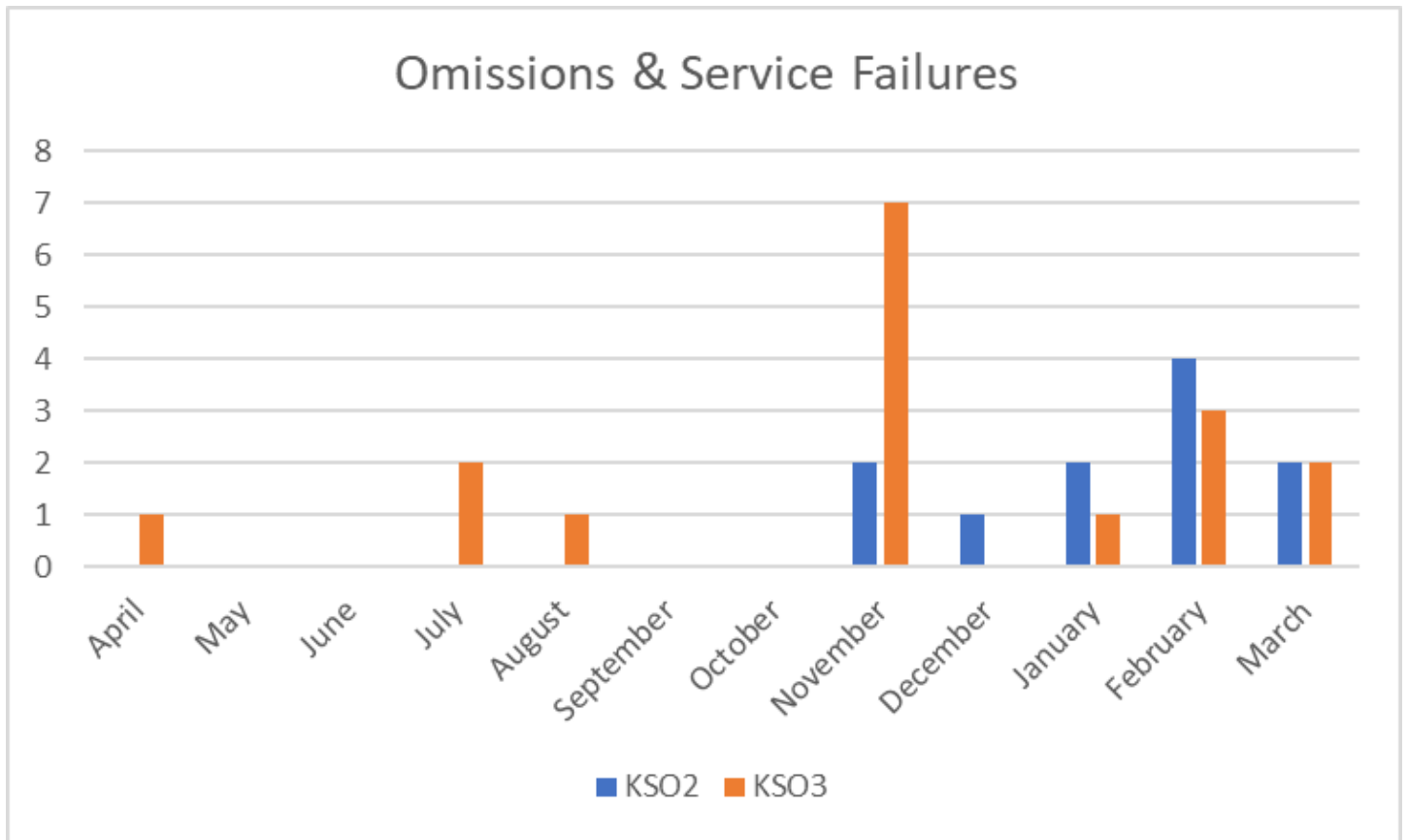


Figure 4

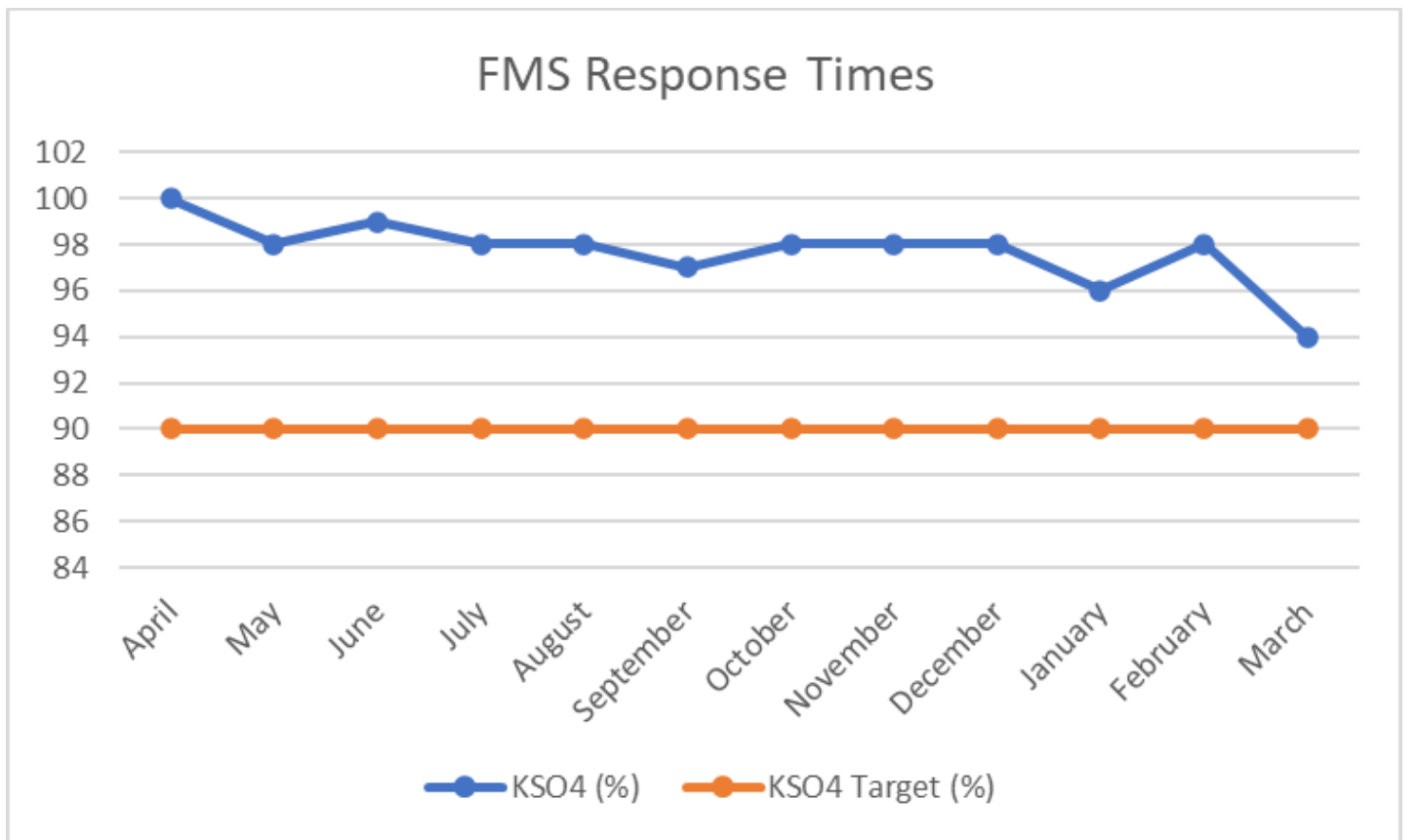


Figure 5

Emergency Call Out Hours

