

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

Date: Monday 16 January 2023

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

Title: CUSTOMER SERVICES CONTRACT MONITORING REPORT

Contact Officer: Duncan Bridgewater, Assistant Director - Customer Services
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Chief Officer: Director of Human Resources and Customer Services and Public Affairs

Ward: (All Wards);

1. Reason for decision/report and options

This report provides information on the performance of the Customer Service Contract provided by Liberata for the period 1st May 2022 to 31st October 2022.

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 Services 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.
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Transformation Policy

1. Policy Status: Existing Policy
2. Making Bromley Even Better Priority (delete as appropriate):

(5) To manage our resources well, providing value for money, and efficient and effective services for Bromley's residents.

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: £945k
 5. Source of funding: Existing Revenue Budget
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Personnel

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

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

1. Summary of Procurement Implications: Procurements comments are included in section 9 of this report.
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Property

1. Summary of Property Implications: None
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Carbon Reduction and Social Value

1. Summary of Carbon Reduction/Sustainability Implications: The contractor's initiatives are detailed in section 11 of this report.

Customer Impact

1. Estimated number of users or customers (current and projected): 2,000 visitors, 400,000 phone calls, 19,000 e-mails and 8 million web visits annually
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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 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.
- 3.2 Reception deals with face to face enquiries from main reception, for most areas of the Council with the exception of Registrars and Children Services, who manage their own reception points. In November 2022, the North Block reception reopened for Housing and Leaving Care Team customers. This was closed since the start of the Covid-19 Pandemic. Customers are seen by appointment only with exception for emergencies and those that are vulnerable where individual service procedures are in place. Liberata are responsible for managing the reception in North Block.
- 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, as well as working on the recent software upgrade. 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 occurrences 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 asked 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 increased compared to pre-covid volumes. Contractor performance is reviewed at monthly meetings.
- 3.5 Call Monitoring is completed every month. The contractor provides a sample of call recordings and feedback is given to the contractor at monthly review meetings. Spot checking is also done on a random sample of Blue Badge applications and Bromley Knowledge job requests to ensure they are completed within their key performance indicators.
- 3.6 Reception is an appointment only service, except for emergencies and vulnerable customers. Demand has been stable over the reporting period.
- 3.7 The top Key Performance Indicators for this contract are listed in the table below; 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.

	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%

3.8 **Customer Services – Contact Centre:** This area performed well in terms of the monthly service level agreement. The monthly service level target answering 50% of calls within 60 seconds was met for all of the months in the reporting period.

The contact centre fell below the minimum daily service level of 40% on 6 occasions during the reporting period. This was due to network issues which affected the telephony platform and sickness within the team which impacted on service delivery. Call volumes were 25% less than the same period of 2021.

Contact Centre Target – 50% within 60 secs	May 22	Jun 22	Jul 22	Aug 22	Sep 22	Oct 22
Answered	9829	8556	8204	8757	7720	7401
% of calls ans. in 60 secs	59%	64%	70%	64%	62%	66%
Average wait time (mins)	01:28	01:19	01:05	01:30	01:32	01:18
Number of day's service fell below 40%.	1	2	0	1	1	1

The contractor has been developing a proof of concept (POC) VoiceBot, which will initially be deployed to the Registration Service helpline for a trial period. The VoiceBot will provide

assistance and information to customers of the service over the phone, and will signpost to online content and services where appropriate. Customers can request an SMS message to be sent to their mobile phone which provides a direct link to the relevant information on the website. This will make it quicker and easier for customers to locate the information or on-line process they require. It is planned that further services will be developed once the POC VoiceBot trial has been completed. The future development will cover the current Corporate services that are delivered in the Corporate Contact Centre along with the Revenues & Benefits services, and will contribute to the savings already identified in the contract.

The VoiceBots are being developed to encourage residents to utilise the range of online services available. The contractor will maintain support to our non-digital and vulnerable residents through the existing channels via the contact centre and face to face reception. The next monitoring report will outline the VoiceBot's performance and detail a wider deployment plan.

3.9 Switchboard: Performance was within service level. The majority of calls received through the switchboard are handled via automated technology and the table below shows the volumes requiring manual transfer.

Switchboard Target – 50% within 60 secs	May 22	Jun 22	Jul 22	Aug 22	Sep 22	Oct 22
Answered	6128	6462	5164	5594	5609	4592
% of calls ans. in 60 secs	92%	92%	85%	89%	89%	87%
Average wait time (mins)	00:18	00:18	00:28	00:19	00:20	00:24

3.10 Reception: Reception is an appointment only service. Emergencies and vulnerable customers are seen without an appointment. Performance figures will be provided in the next monitoring report for customers visiting North Block Reception. Volumes are increased compared with the same period the previous year as the pandemic restrictions were lifted.

Reception	May 22	Jun 22	Jul 22	Aug 22	Sep 22	Oct 22
Number of customers seen	208	235	164	214	187	165
80% within 5 minutes	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
100% within 15 minutes	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

3.11 E-mail: E-mail handling targets were met for the reporting period. Email volumes are down on the same period in the previous year as customers have switched to other digital service options.

Emails Target – 80% within 1 day and 100% within 5 days	May 22	Jun 22	Jul 22	Aug 22	Sep 22	Oct 22
Number of emails received	1627	1346	1663	1592	1125	1574
% emails processed within 1 day	96%	95%	95%	92%	94%	99%
% emails processed within 5 days	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

3.12 Out of Hours Emergency Call Centre: Performance was within service level for only 1 of the 6 months in the reporting period. The Out of Hours service was affected by significant service challenges within this reporting period. Delays were mainly associated to the upgrade of the call handling platform combined with an increase in average handling times due to agents adjusting to the new processes and system. At certain periods within the reporting period the team also experienced higher levels of sickness also contributing to the underperformance against service level agreement. The contractor has requested the Out of Hours Service to provide a performance improvement plan.

Out of Hours (Appello) Target – 80% within 30 secs	May 22	Jun 22	Jul 22	Aug 22	Sep 22	Oct 22
Answered	1281	1365	1535	1335	1643	1205
% of calls ans. in 30 secs	82%	76%	74%	62%	60%	78%
Average wait time (secs)	29.04	54.84	33.36	106.97	125.38	107.74

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

Web site – Target 100%	May 22	Jun 22	Jul 22	Aug 22	Sep 22	Oct 22
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 corporate website was successfully upgraded in June. The new software and hosting service provides customers with enhanced features and functionality, as well as being a more robust, reliable, and accessible platform. With improved and modernised templates, the new site has already improved our accessibility ratings over the old site. The contractor will continue to work at improving this and update the site accessibility statement accordingly.

The Council's branding is better reflected across the new site, and all site content was reviewed by service area specialists before go live, to ensure customers had access to the most relevant and up to date information.

Customers now have a range of options to find information, which includes site search features, a full range of 'simple to recognise' service buttons, top tasks services links, and a comprehensive A – Z. The website currently receives an average of over 600,000 visits each month, with 53% of visitors arriving at the website from search engines, usually directly to the page that interests them via internet search services.

Over the next reporting period the contractor will be utilising the search tool and reviewing other optimisation activities, continuing to improve the search functionality and reviewing site content as part of the twice yearly review. The project team will also be undertaking a scoping exercise to understand what other potential functionality could be utilised, deployed or improved on the Bromley website, with further feedback on this exercise being reported back to Members via the usual channels.

3.14 Blue Badge and Discretionary Freedom Pass:

This area performed well and within service level. Technical developments continue to enable the contractor to deploy Robotic Process Automation (RPA) to be used within the assessment process. It is expected that this will save processing time.

The Council aims to process applications 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 not included in this calculation.

Blue Badges – target 80% within 4 weeks	May 22	Jun 22	Jul 22	Aug 22	Sep 22	Oct 22
Volume	396	417	403	565	556	534
% processed within 4 weeks	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Freedom Pass – Target 100% within 4 weeks	May 22	Jun 22	Jul 22	Aug 22	Sep 22	Oct 22
Volume	98	74	99	78	83	95
% processed within 4 weeks	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

- 3.15 **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 October 2022 the number of registrations had risen to 116,171.

MyBromley registrations	May 22	Jun 22	Jul 22	Aug 22	Sep 22	Oct 22
Volume	1760	1726	1426	1027	1347	1604
Cumulative Volume	109,333	111,016	112,424	113,395	114,683	116,171

- 3.16 **Customer Satisfaction:** The number of customers surveyed, and responses are outlined below, satisfaction is above target for this service. To increase survey response, the contractor is looking at options to utilise the VoiceBot technology outlined earlier once trials are complete. It is hoped this will increase responses.

Customer Satisfaction Target – 90% Customer Satisfaction	May 22	Jun 22	Jul 22	Aug 22	Sep 22	Oct 22
Number of surveys sent	13561	7799	9690	11317	9690	8943
Number of responses	26	21	29	50	52	39
% Customer Satisfaction	97%	95%	94%	96%	94%	95%

- 3.17 **Compliments and Complaints:** During this period, seven customers made contact to thank the staff regarding the service that was provided by Customer Services. The contractor also received ten complaints for this period which were all associated to the professional assessment processes for Blue Badges.

Compliments & Complaints	May 22	Jun 22	Jul 22	Aug 22	Sep 22	Oct 22
Complaints	0	0	2	4	1	3
Compliments	1	2	1	0	1	2

4 IMPACT ON VULNERABLE ADULTS AND CHILDREN

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 TRANSFORMATION/POLICY IMPLICATIONS

None

6 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 It is currently projected the contract expenditure in 2022/23 will be to budget at £945k.

6.2 For information, the actual spend for the contract in 2021/22 was £906k.

7 PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

None

8 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

8.1 This Committee is requested to note and comment on the information contained within this report as to the performance of the Customer Service Contract provided by Liberata for the period 1st May 2022 to 31st October 2022 and also the letter provided by Liberata detailed in Appendix 1.

8.2 The Council's Constitution, at Part 4 – Rules of Procedure, 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. Under these terms of reference, this Committee services falling within the remit of this portfolio.

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

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.

10 PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

None

11 CARBON REDUCTION/SOCIAL VALUE IMPLICATIONS

Liberata exclusively uses Ark data centres which are committed to the European Green Deal, achieving the ambitious greenhouse gas reductions of the climate law, and leveraging technology and digitalisation to achieve the goal of making Europe climate neutral by 2050. For the last 6 years, all Ark facilities have been powered by 100% renewable energy. To improve sustainability further Ark has developed innovative direct air evaporative cooling capability that dramatically lowers energy consumption and cost, capable of providing compressor free cooling for 100% of every year.

The My Bromley account software supports 7559 subscribers to e-billing, reducing paper production and postal service reliance. Officers continue to work with Liberata on projects to increase back-office automation and further reduce paper volumes.

Liberata also supports staff to volunteer for local organisations, such as Age Concern befriending scheme.

12 CUSTOMER IMPACT

Customers Services potentially impacts all residents and visitors in the borough.

13 WARD COUNCILLOR VIEWS

None

Non-Applicable Headings:	5, 7,10,13
Background Documents: (Access via Contact Officer)	Appendix 1 – Letter from Liberata