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

Date: Tuesday 16 January 2024

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 2023 to 30th November 2023.

A letter from Bola Odunsi Regional Director (London & The Southeast) for Liberata, provides his 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:

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

1. Cost of proposal: Not Applicable
 2. Ongoing costs: Not Applicable
 3. Budget head/performance centre: Customer Service Centre
 4. Total current budget for this head: £1.3m
 5. Source of funding: General Fund Revenue Budget 2023-24
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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: Procurement 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.
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Impact on the Local Economy

1. Summary of Local Economy Implications: Reception service is a town centre location therefore supports the local economy.
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Impact on Health and Wellbeing

1. Summary of Health and Wellbeing Implications: Reception service supports promotion of Health & Wellbeing initiatives by printed publicity and electronic display boards.
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Customer Impact

1. Estimated number of users or customers (*current and projected*): 2,000 visitors, 350,000 phone calls, 20,000 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** The contractor 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. North Block reception deals with Housing and Leaving Care Team customers. Liberata are responsible for managing the reception in North Block. Customers are seen by appointment only with exception for emergencies and those that are vulnerable where individual service procedures are in place.
- 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 days
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 5 occasions during the reporting period. Sickness in the team was the main reason, as well as some downtime in July for the Fix My Street reporting system.

Contact Centre Target – 50% within 60 secs	May 23	Jun 23	Jul 23	Aug 23	Sep 23	Oct 23	Nov 23
Answered	9,157	9,736	8,685	8,611	8,173	8,242	8,167
% of calls ans. in 60 secs	63.67%	62.05%	56.97%	73.50%	69.48%	83.35%	71.59%
Average wait time (mm:ss)	01:16	01:20	01:51	00:57	01:11	00:38	01:01
Number of day's service fell below 40%	1	0	3	0	0	1	0

A VoiceBot is being developed to encourage residents to utilise the range of online services available and answer basic enquiries. 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. This has been deployed for the Registration Service. This software is now managing some customer enquiries and providing signposting information. Many enquiries due to the subject and complexity will need to be handled by an advisor. A summary is in the table below of calls handled by the VoiceBot.

Calls offered to the VoiceBot (May - November 2023)	11,013
Number of calls completed by VoiceBot i.e not touched voice channel	2,461
Percentage of calls completed by VoiceBot i.e not touched voice channel	22.3%

This service is also live with Revenues, Benefits and Business Rates Services. The contractor is developing further VoiceBots for the other services within the contract which will go live during the next reporting period.

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 23	Jun 23	Jul 23	Aug 23	Sep 23	Oct 23	Nov 23
Answered	4,472	4,326	3,953	4,345	4,266	4,544	3,762
% of calls ans. in 60 secs	90%	87%	91%	93%	84%	95%	89%
Average wait time (mm:ss)	00:17	00:25	00:18	00:13	00:35	00:10	00:20

3.10 Reception: Reception is an appointment only service. Emergencies and vulnerable customers are seen without an appointment.

Main Reception	May 23	Jun 23	Jul 23	Aug 23	Sep 23	Oct 23	Nov 23
Number of customers seen	190	162	139	139	196	161	134
80% within 5 minutes	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
100% within 15 minutes	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

The contractor is also responsible for managing the reception in North Block, where Housing and the Leaving Care Team hold appointments.

North Block Reception	May 23	Jun 23	Jul 23	Aug 23	Sep 23	Oct 23	Nov 23
Number of customers seen	253	243	276	230	218	189	149

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

Emails Target – 80% within 1 day and 100% within 5 days	May 23	Jun 23	Jul 23	Aug 23	Sep 23	Oct 23	Nov 23
Number of emails received	2,810	2,888	2,603	2,453	2,323	2,130	1,944
% emails processed within 1 day	92%	96%	98%	99%	100%	99%	99%
% emails processed within 5 days	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

3.12 Out of Hours Emergency Call Centre: Following reported underperformance in previous reports, a performance improvement plan was created. Since then, performance has been within service level agreement for the last 10 months.

Out of Hours (Appello) Target – 80% within 30 secs	May 23	Jun 23	Jul 23	Aug 23	Sep 23	Oct 23	Nov 23
Answered	1,213	1,301	1,386	1,468	1,475	1,291	1,641
% of calls ans. in 30 secs	91.89%	88.77%	89.50%	84.24%	84.44%	82.51%	81.41%
Average wait time (mm:ss)	00:42	00:49	00:46	00:56	00:53	01:08	01:05

3.13 Web – Bromley Knowledge: The web team achieved 100% against all targets for updating web content as requested by services during this reporting period. The web team continue to run a rolling programme of content refresh and will engage services when their pages are due for review.

Web site – Target 100%	May 23	Jun 23	Jul 23	Aug 23	Sep 23	Oct 23	Nov 23
Critical updates within 1 working hour	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Urgent updates within 1 working day	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Important updates within 2 working days	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Regular updates within 5 working days	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

The Contractor has been developing proposals for further development of the corporate website and our digital customer experience. In particular how the ‘My Account’ technology could be utilised to provide a one touch digital access point for customers using on-line services.

As mentioned elsewhere, the website services over 8 million visitors each year, which is a sustained increase since the pandemic, as customer behaviours changed and confidence grew. In tandem, technologies have continued to develop and improve exponentially, and this has led to an expectation that these improvements are reflected in websites with excellent customer experience.

Other developments being considered are broadening the use of personalisation across services, to give customers the facility to opt into information relevant to them, their address or general interest. This could also include pre-filled forms, targeted reminders, geographical map based service information and council updates.

It is expected that the Contractor will finalise their proposals shortly and a full report to Members and Executive is planned for early Spring.

3.14 Blue Badge and Discretionary Freedom Pass: This area underperformed for both Blue Badges and Freedom Passes not achieving service level for 1 and 5 months respectively. This was due to a rise in applications received for Blue Badges averaging more than 50 a month compared with the previous reporting period. There also was an increase in the amount of administrative work which they have had to handle on behalf of the occupational therapists whose team had expanded to meet its own service. This was combined with a member of the team leaving. This meant there was a backlog of applications that built up and the period that applications were with the contractor went beyond agreed service level. Despite these delays the contractor has processes in place where if an urgent case was flagged by phone, these applications are prioritised.

The contractor and client have had regular meetings over the last few months to keep track of progress and plan to get back on track. The team have now secured additional resource to help clear the backlog and aim to get back and remain within service level over the next few months. The meetings will continue between the contractor and client until both are confident the service is running as it should and providing an efficient service for our residents.

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 23	Jun 23	Jul 23	Aug 23	Sep 23	Oct 23	Nov 23
Volume	547	411	539	530	519	492	491
% processed within 4 weeks	100%	100%	92%	84%	88%	79%	81%

Freedom Pass – Target 100% within 4 weeks	May 23	Jun 23	Jul 23	Aug 23	Sep 23	Oct 23	Nov 23
Volume	102	91	111	112	112	115	107
% processed within 4 weeks	100%	100%	95%	83%	85%	86%	95%

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 November 2023 the number of registrations had risen to 134,139.

MyBromley registrations	May 23	Jun 23	Jul 23	Aug 23	Sep 23	Oct 23	Nov 23
Volume	1,421	1,229	1,249	1,219	1,221	1,280	1,092
Cumulative Volume	126,981	128,173	129,415	130,607	131,787	133,056	134,139

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 in 3.8.

Customer Satisfaction Target – 90% Customer Satisfaction	May 23	Jun 23	Jul 23	Aug 23	Sep 23	Oct 23	Nov 23
Number of surveys sent	9,171	10,146	10,170	9,444	11,510	10,346	11,593
Number of responses	36	20	27	30	27	31	26
% Customer Satisfaction	100%	100%	100%	93%	97%	99%	100%

3.17 Compliments and Complaints: During this period, 3 customers made contact to thank the staff and the compliments were associated to the service by the Contact Centre team, and Web Team (Bromley Knowledge). Bromley Knowledge received appreciation for their hard work and support when Bromley colleagues had to submit a high number of urgent job requests. The contractor also received 11 complaints for this period. These were mostly associated to the Blue Badge and Freedom Pass service where residents were unhappy with delays and occasions where customers were not happy with the service provided by the Contact Centre team.

Compliments & Complaints	May 23	Jun 23	Jul 23	Aug 23	Sep 23	Oct 23	Nov 23
Complaints	2	1	0	2	3	1	2
Compliments	0	0	0	1	0	0	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 There are no direct financial implications resulting from this report, this report provides information on the performance of the Customer Services Contract and requests members to take note of the key KPIs.

6.2 For information the Customer Services contract budget for 2023-24 stands at £1.056m with actual spend to date as of November 2023 of £704k. The forecasted spend for the year is £1.056m, which is in line with the budget allocated with no variation.

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 2023 to 30th November 2023 and also the letter provided by Liberata detailed in Appendix 1 as attached.

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, the services provided by Liberata fall 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

9.1 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.

9.2 This report primarily concerns the performance of the Customer Service Contract provided by Liberata. Any procurement arising will be subject to the Council's Contract Procedure Rules and Public Contracts Regulations 2015.

9.3 The Corporate Procurement Team will be consulted on the specifics of any procurement arising.

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 7 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 46,177 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. IMPACT ON THE LOCAL ECONOMY

Reception service is a town centre location therefore supports the local economy.

13. IMPACT ON HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Reception service supports promotion of Health & Wellbeing initiatives by printed publicity and electronic display boards.

14. CUSTOMER IMPACT

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

15. WARD COUNCILLOR VIEWS

None

Non-Applicable Headings:	5, 7, 10, 15
Background Documents: (Access via Contact Officer)	Appendix 1 – Letter from Liberata (Corporate Customer Services - PDS Letter December 2023)