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

Date: Monday 08 July 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 December 2023 to 31st March 2024.

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: £1.06m
 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, 300,000 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. 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 4 of the months in the reporting period and the minimum daily service level never fell below 40%.

Remain Position In Queue (RPIQ) software was introduced across the Corporate telephony lines after success with Revenue and Benefits. RPIQ gives the customer the option when it is busy to be called back rather than waiting on the phone. Since going live in February when it's been busy enough to be activated and the customer has decided to take it up, it has saved in total 6.5 hours of their time rather than waiting on the phone.

The contractor has developed a process where when a customer interacts with our contact centre over the telephone, they can be sent a Short Message Service (SMS) text to the customer's mobile phone if they opt in. This will then provide them a link to a short Survey to complete on their experience with the call advisor. Once tested and agreed, this is planned to be deployed from August 2024.

Contact Centre Target – 50% within 60 secs	Dec 23	Jan 24	Feb 24	Mar 24
Answered	5,905	8,622	7,279	7,028
% of calls ans. in 60 secs	71.02%	62.49%	69.46%	81.62%
Average wait time (mins:secs)	01:03	01:24	01:08	00:41
Number of day's service fell below 40%.	0	0	0	0

VoiceBot software is now managing some basic customer enquiries and providing signposting information. The VoiceBot learns from how customers ask questions in new and different ways for information or a service and can then be aware in the future if asked again. When the VoiceBot doesn't understand and is not able to help, these calls are reviewed by the contractor to look for possible improvements. Many enquiries due to the subject and complexity are still handled by an advisor. A summary is in the table below of calls handled by the VoiceBot.

Calls offered to the VoiceBot (Dec 23 – Mar 24)	21,973
Number of calls completed by VoiceBot i.e. not touched voice channel	2,886
Percentage of calls completed by VoiceBot i.e. not touched voice channel	13.13%

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	Dec 23	Jan 24	Feb 24	Mar 24
Answered	3,126	4,455	3,970	4,935
% of calls ans. in 60 secs	94%	91%	85%	90%
Average wait time (min:secs)	00:12	00:17	00:30	00:21

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

Main Reception	Dec 23	Jan 24	Feb 24	Mar 24
Number of customers seen	51	189	183	216
80% within 5 minutes	100%	100%	100%	100%
100% within 15 minutes	100%	100%	100%	100%

The table below outlines the number of customers who were assisted by reception staff and directed to self-serve by digital channels for January through March 2024.

Service	No. of Customers
Benefits	279
Blue Badges	62
Business Rates	6
Concessionary Travel	15
Council Tax	293
Education	35
Electoral Services	13
Green Spaces	2
Housing	47
Parking	21
Planning / Building Control	12
Public Protection	18
Registrars	40
Street Services	3
Waste Services	19
Grand Total	865

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

North Block Reception	Dec 23	Jan 24	Feb 24	Mar 24
Number of customers seen	159	212	177	179

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	Dec 23	Jan 24	Feb 24	Mar 24
Number of emails received	1,816	2,581	2,350	4,166
% emails processed within 1 day	95%	99%	100%	99%
% emails processed within 5 days	100%	100%	100%	100%

3.12 Out of Hours Emergency Call Centre: Performance was within service level for 3 of 4 of the reporting months. December was just under due to an increased volume of calls in a short period for services required due to Storm Gerrit.

Out of Hours (Appello) Target – 80% within 30 secs	Dec 23	Jan 24	Feb 24	Mar 24
Answered	1,440	2,225	1,543	1,987
% of calls ans. in 30 secs	79.29%	80.33%	84.41%	80.95%
Average wait time (mins:secs)	01:12	01:18	00:55	01:08

The below table shows the breakdown of services that customers contact the Out of Hours phone line for during the reporting period.

Contact Type	Total
Social Services	39.7%
Staff	16.2%
Noise	14.4%
Homelessness	13.9%
General Council	5.5%
Street Services	4.0%
Environmental	4.0%
Other	1.3%
Parking	0.7%
Parks Patrol	0.2%
Education	0.1%

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. The website was assessed against the plain English campaign standards, and has achieved the internet crystal mark accreditation. This allows the Plain English approval logo to be displayed on the site. The contractor is developing a Web Bot with a proof-of-concept Bot available for testing planned for October 2024.

Web site – Target 100%	Dec 23	Jan 24	Feb 24	Mar 24
Volume of job requests	125	109	108	140
Critical updates within 1 working hour	100%	100%	100%	100%
Urgent updates within 1 working day	100%	100%	100%	100%
Important updates within 2 working days	100%	100%	100%	100%
Regular updates within 5 working days	100%	100%	100%	100%

3.14 Blue Badge and Discretionary Freedom Pass: This area underperformed for both Blue Badges and Freedom Passes not achieving service level for 3 and all 4 months respectively. As previously reported, additional temporary resource was deployed to address under-performance. It was anticipated that this would assist in bringing both the Blue Badge and Freedom Pass services back into compliance, but since the last reporting period there has been a further increase in incoming volumes in both areas. Blue Badge applications have increased by 17.5% since the end of November and remain at these new levels into the new year, whilst Freedom Pass applications more than doubled in volume from November 2023, largely due to a peak in renewal applications, but even now weekly volumes are still 33% higher than the previous reporting period.

A volume variation has recently been agreed with the contractor in respect of ongoing increased applications and renewals in this area. This is based on a pro-rata charge increase, based on overall percentage increases, and will be reviewed at the start of each financial year. Response to this will be reported in more detail in the next report. The increased volumes, coupled with the conversion to a new Liberata document management system are currently making it extremely challenging to meet the contractual targets. Proposed process improvements are planned, and the volume variation outlined above should allow the contractor to meet expectations.

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	Dec 23	Jan 24	Feb 24	Mar 24
Volume	337	600	599	612
% processed within 4 weeks	82%	79%	70%	79%

Freedom Pass – Target 100% within 4 weeks	Dec 23	Jan 24	Feb 24	Mar 24
Volume	269	325	264	301
% processed within 4 weeks	88%	95%	88%	91%

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 March 2024 the number of registrations had risen to 139,556.

MyBromley Registrations	Dec 23	Jan 24	Feb 24	Mar 24
Volume	924	1,362	1,161	2,076
Cumulative Volume	135,045	136,386	137,524	139,556

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	Dec 23	Jan 24	Feb 24	Mar 24
Number of surveys sent	8,686	11,511	9,945	12,339
Number of responses	34	31	45	65
% Customer Satisfaction	95.00%	94.00%	98.00%	97.00%

3.17 Compliments and Complaints: During this period, 6 customers made contact to thank the staff and the compliments were associated to the service by the Contact Centre team, and

reception staff. The contractor also received 4 complaints for this period that were upheld. These were mostly associated to call handling issues where residents were unhappy with the service provided by the Contact Centre team.

Compliments & Complaints	Dec 23	Jan 24	Feb 24	Mar 24
Complaints	1	0	0	3
Compliments	5	1	0	0

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 Contact Centre Liberata budget for 2023-24 stands at £1.06m with actual spend as at March 2024 of £1.06m.

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 December 2023 to 31st March 2024 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 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 - 7 May 2024)