

Response to comments from members of the public

Comments submitted in writing	Response
<p>I am a teacher at a Barnet school and Capita do our salary/payslips. It has been my experience that Capita's insistence on no communication between the individual and themselves to be extremely cumbersome. Whilst I understand that they prefer to deal with an institution representative (finance officer) several serious errors added to unclear labeling on the payslip mean that I am unsure of my pay which has fluctuated seriously. This has had an effect on my tax rate and I am still unsure of the corrections made.</p>	<p>At the beginning of the contract, all payroll enquiries were channelled through designated officers. In order to improve the quality of the service a direct employee help-line was subsequently introduced. The number is 0208 328 7912 and has been widely publicised.</p>
<p>I have been acting on behalf of a friend who is 91 years old with major eyesight problems, in communication with the Benefits and Council Tax Departments, since December 2015. The Benefits Department agreed that significant rebates were owed to him in March 2016, including a Council Tax refund of nearly £1,000. It has taken a further four months to get the Council Tax Department to refund the money. Luckily, he was not financially embarrassed by this delay, but had I not been available to help, I dread to think when, and if, he would have received what was due to him. I regard this situation as pathetic and place the blame on the CSG. I can provide further details if required.</p>	<p>There have been issues with backlogs in the service, which were identified prior to the commencement of this Review and have been acknowledged as being one of the main challenges for the Service in the main report.</p> <p>Significant effort has been applied to reducing the backlog within the service, through the implementation of a recovery plan. This has dealt with the outstanding issues and monitoring arrangements, through a new performance indicator, have been put in place to ensure the situation is managed effectively going forward.</p>
<p>Initial contact by phone using 0208 359 2000. The automated voice welcomes the call but then asks for either the name of person or the issue you are calling about. This is not ideal considering this is "first contact" and therefore unlikely that the person is able to give a name. When trying to give details of issue I have been calling about - the system cannot help and in fact has lead me on "a wild goose chase". I do now know the trick. It is to not give a name and not say anything. After hanging on in silence we are then told to hold for an operator. Please can this message be amended. Residents need to be clearly given the option to hold for an operator at the beginning of the call. ie please hold for an operator or give the name of the person you wish to speak to or the issue.</p>	<p>The Interactive Voice Recognition (IVR) system on the council's switchboard number does not provide an option for connecting directly with an operator. This is because it uses voice recognition to direct customer calls, which is more efficient and saves the council money. If the voice recognition is not successful, customers are transferred to a member of staff. The IVR systems are constantly reviewed to ensure that they are directing calls appropriately and providing callers with the information they need.</p>

<p>I am a resident in Barnet. This is about my experience with the council tax. I am eligible for a single person discount. In my experience, Capita's attitude to the residents is totally unacceptable. They are bullying and threatening and treat us as guilty of cheating the council unless proved otherwise. I was asked to prove that I was deserving the discount for the previous 8 years, although it had all been approved by the council. As this was in the process of clarification, I discovered that they took thousands of pounds from my account. I never expected that an arrangement for direct debit would allow them to do this. Communication with them is poor. Calling is a waste of time, takes hours. They never reply to emails within 5 days. Their style is intimidating. I eventually paid hundreds of pounds unjustifiably in order to get rid of their intimidation as the stress was too much for me. We deserve better. I wish the council got rid of them.</p>	<p>The Service carries out an annual process of conducting detailed checking and validation on a sample of residences where Single Person Discount is claimed. It should be noted that, in 2015-16, this process resulted in an additional £860k of Council Tax being collected. However, it is acknowledged that this is a particularly sensitive area of activity that requires careful handling. To that end, training programmes are continually reviewed and updated as required. The CSG Quality Team is responsible for the advisor call monitoring and they also conduct risk monitoring, where particular behaviours are reacted to promptly. The service has a high customer satisfaction level, which is exceeding 80% for the telephony line, and does respond to individual customer feedback.</p>
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The following comments were made at the meeting held on 25th July 2016 and supported by a slide pack, which is attached.

Comments	Response
<p>Concerns were expressed about call answering times within particular service areas. Graphs were provided that suggested that the headline achievement of the target was masking poor performance within housing benefits, council tax and adults' social care, with high levels of calls being abandoned.</p>	<p>It is acknowledged that these services do have lower performance levels on call answering time than other services. This is primarily due to the longer call handling times that are associated with the more complex enquiries that are associated with these services. Staffing levels are generally flexed to reflect expected peaks and troughs in demand, but the complex nature of these services requires much more in-depth training than more straightforward services, so it is not always feasible to staff the operation to meet all of the peaks in demand. In order to maximise efficiency, Customer Services is considering a number of further developments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better utilisation of trained Revenue and Benefits officers in the Blackburn office during busier times;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upgrading technology to virtualise the council’s contact centres, i.e. enable calls to be directed to different physical locations. This will mean there would be more resilience and ability to multi-skill a wider pool of people; • Performance and operational improvements in Social Care Direct; and • Further implementation of digital solutions, so that customers can more easily resolve their query using the website, rather than needing to rely on the telephone. <p>At a previous meeting, the Working Group had acknowledged that answering calls within 60 seconds was not the most effective measure of performance, as the ability of the call handler to resolve the caller’s query was far more important to achieving customer satisfaction. The council measures customer satisfaction with call handling via the GovMetric measurement tool and associated KPI.</p>
<p>Links to audit committee - example this week’s audit committee has a poor review for parking permit administration which is administered by Capita. There is a real concern that under performance is batted between the two committees and dealt with by neither. There is also a concern around the tracking of underperformance and what follow up measures are taken not just at the next meeting but over a longer period to identify trends.</p>	<p>The two Committees have quite different roles, which are set out in the council’s Constitution. The main purpose of the Audit Committee is to provide independent assurance of the risk management framework and associated control environment. The purpose of the Performance and Contract Management Committee is to review the performance of the council’s services, whether they are delivered through in-house Delivery Units or through contracts with external providers. External providers are subject to the same internal audit requirements as in-house units, so it is entirely appropriate that any issues relating to risk and control mechanisms are referred to the Audit Committee.</p>
<p>Concerns were expressed about the level of actual spend with Capita, against the level of contracted spend and, in particular that project spend is paid at consultancy rates. How these variations are controlled was also questioned.</p>	<p>The Working Group has scrutinised the approach to managing project-related expenditure through the contract and noted the arrangements that are in place to control it. Since the contract commenced, dedicated project support teams have been put in place, payment for which is based on salaried rates, not day rates. The report sets out further recommendations for expanding this approach.</p>
<p>The following summary points were made at the meeting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure the contract is being adequately monitored and there 	<p>This Review will result in an Implementation Plan, progress against which will be reported to the Performance and Contract Management</p>

<p>are sufficient resources for this</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitoring and contract variations need to be communicated better to PCM • Need to ensure the council is getting what was promised by Capita, given redundancies from contract 	<p>Committee. It also sets out proposals to strengthen the reporting of progress against delivering the remaining contractual commitments.</p>
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The following questions were raised in respect of contractual commitments.

Question	Response
<p>To what extent has anyone checked against the 324 contractual commitments made</p>	<p>Monitoring of contractual commitments forms part of the regular monitoring undertaken by the Commercial team, in conjunction with the Senior Responsible Officer (SRO) for each service. Progress is recorded in a tracker spreadsheet.</p>
<p>•T2-6 Agile workspace – yet we are still in building 4 which I thought was due to be handed back T2-34 not met</p>	<p>LBB has exited Building 4. CSG continue to occupy part of Building 4 under a separate arrangement with the landlord. Implementation of the Agile Workplace Programme and management of space utilisation through cultural change management are ongoing and will continue throughout the life of the contract.</p>
<p>•T2-11 staff survey what were the results</p>	<p>This commitment was signed off by the SRO as completed in 2014. Capita conducts a company-wide Staff Satisfaction Survey on an annual basis. Employees are actively encouraged to partake. Results from the survey are shared with senior and middle management to ensure key feedback is heard and opportunities to enhance Capita's working ethos are explored. Employees have visibility of Capita's overall staff satisfaction results. Results are disseminated on a divisional, rather than contract/service level, to help with cross fertilisation of good initiatives that seem to motivate and highlight any negative trends so that all learn.</p>
<p>•T2-15 Access to Capita's Learning & Development academy</p>	<p>This commitment was signed off by the SRO as completed in 2014.</p>
<p>•T2-32 Leadership Panel who are they have they ever sat asked about them at the last meeting and you said the composition of the panel was being reviewed who has sat on it they don't publish minutes who are they</p>	<p>This commitment is classified as "not delivered" and will be addressed through the Partnership Development Strategy. The Leadership Panel does not have a fixed membership and is, in essence, about bringing together relevant people from different parts of Capita's business to advise on specific issues.</p>

Appendix B

<p>•T2 -39 Innovation partners</p>	<p>This is an annual activity throughout the life of the contract and is, therefore, “ongoing”.</p>
<p>•T2-64 Employee discount scheme</p>	<p>Implementation of this has been delayed by LBB to November 2016 in order to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) secure a better scheme than the original offer; and b) link it to the overall Unified Reward package.
<p>•T3-8 Local Supply Chain Champion & T3-10 Opportunity matching for SME’s</p>	<p>This was delivered in 2014.</p>
<p>•T3-31 How many staff have achieved Institute of Customer Service professional accreditation – Linked to £904k investment in transferring staff has that happened</p>	<p>This has been signed off as delivered. All staff within the Contact Centre that required training received it, but through NVQ rather than ICS qualifications. New staff continue to be trained to the same level. The investment quoted related to all transferring staff, not just those in the Contact Centre.</p>
<p>T3-43 conflict between what that says and the contract variation published on 18 July but relating to a DPR decision taken in October 2015 to:</p> <p>The Council wish to procure through Capita a service provided by Inform CPI Ltd using their Analyse Local software to identify missing or undervalued NNDR properties and for forecasting the impact of rateable value (RV) appeals. The service provided by Inform CPI Ltd has been used on a London contract administered by Capita and has to date been successful in increasing the tax base and is a service that Capita can recommend.</p>	<p>This contractual commitment is classified as “in progress”, as it has been partly delivered. The commitment related to the use of tools to assess “propensity to pay”, some of which have proved to be unsuitable for that purpose. The DPR relates to a tool which is to be used for a different purpose.</p>
<p>•T3-103 payroll accuracy problems still seem to be occurring</p>	<p>This commitment duplicates the KPI relating to payroll accuracy and the latter takes precedence. Performance against the KPI is reported in the “Service Outcomes – HR” section of this report.</p> <p>When Barnet set up the contract with Capita they negotiated a KPI that is set at a very high threshold and therefore only a few errors will trigger a fail. CSG largely performs very well on a month by month basis. There have been a few instances where the payroll has been affected by a software update issue and controls have been put in place to make sure that this cannot be repeated.</p>
<p>•T3-105 absence and sickness failed in the data provided at the last PCM committee how often is it failing</p>	<p>This commitment relates to the provision of reports to LBB management, which is where the responsibility for managing absence sits. The commitment is classified as “ongoing”.</p>

	<p>Barnet's absence levels have been averaging at about 8-9 days for a number of years and we have a desire to achieve a target of 6 days. As part of Unified Reward we have now introduced tighter and more robust sickness triggers from the 1st October 2016, which means that we can intervene earlier. These are linked to financial penalties, implementation of which has been deferred for 12 months as part of the negotiations with trade unions. If sickness does not reduce as a result of the more stringent triggers, then we will implement the financial penalties as a deterrent. Barnet will remain a supportive employer where sickness is genuine but taking a much more robust approach in all other circumstances. HR Business Partners are supporting managers with occupational health referrals, individual return to work plans (which may include phased returns), with the focus being on supporting the individual back to work as soon as possible, or exiting the long term sick who are unable to return. We expect to see these measures have an impact and see sickness levels start to fall during 2017.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •T3-184 Reduction in gas electricity & water 	<p>This commitment relates to a reduction in usage that is built into the contract price, so LBB benefits from the cost reduction regardless of whether CSG achieves it or not. However, monitoring information indicates that the reduction in usage is being achieved.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •I note that in a recent DPR http://barnet.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s33627/Monthly%20Table%20List%20of%20Actions%20Taken%20Under%20Summary%20DPRs-%20June%202016.pdf one contract monitoring post has been converted to a quality in care advisor – authorised by James Mass. Given the complexity of the contract I cannot see how reducing the number of contract monitoring staff at this time makes any sense. 	<p>This DPR relates to posts deployed within Adult services to monitor contracts with care providers and has no involvement with the CSG contract. This is monitored by the Commercial Team, the capacity in which has been strengthened since the contract commenced.</p>