


**Presentation to Overview and Scrutiny Board
Telephony Issues – October 2012**

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www.bromsgrove.gov.uk

Telephony Issues – October 2012

- **Diary of events**
 - **Thursday 18th October**
 - **9:00**
 - Problem still on line.
 - Staff continue to provide personal message to each caller.
 - Message went out to all managers and staff and also alerts on web and Twitter
 - **12:48**
 - With no solution in sight HOCS advised Leader, Portfolio Holder and Leader of Opposition
 - **17:00**
 - No resolution and no closer to identifying the problem despite the involvement of WCC, BT, BDC and Vodaphone

Telephony Issues – October 2012


- **What was the problem?**
 - At approximately 16:50 on Wednesday 17th October a fault occurred on the phone lines into the BDC Customer Service Centre.
 - Customers could hear the CSA but the CSA could not hear the customer.
 - The matter was reported to IT and the staff gave information to each caller to alert them to the problem and asking them to call back



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- **Friday 19th October**
 - **9:00**
 - No resolution despite work until late the previous night
 - HOCS and IT manager start exploring options to enable the provision of limited service
 - As some direct dial lines are working at this time CSA's start giving out DD numbers to customers – who can still hear us at this time.
 - Further communications to customers, and updates to Managers, staff and key Members



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Telephony Issues – October 2012

– Friday 19th October

- 9:47
 - HOCS takes decision to instigate the Business Continuity Plan as there appears to be no sign of a resolution and at this stage the technical teams were no closer to identifying the fault
 - Business Continuity Plan is for the system to be switched over to another CSC in the County to enable the taking of calls and provide a limited service.
 - Request made to WGC to switch to RBC
 - Staff mobilised to relocate



Telephony Issues – October 2012

– Monday 22nd October

- BDC CSA's working at RBC Town Hall.
- All calls for both RBC and BDC going through to 64252.
- Extra switchboards opened up to cope with demand.
- Calls taken by operator, establish Council required then transfer call to relevant CSA team.
- RBC calls dealt with as normal.
- BDC calls dealt with if possible, or call back details taken, or call transferred to back office phone line.
- All BDC Members advised.
- All RBC Members advised.



Telephony Issues – October 2012

– Friday 19th October

- 15:00
 - Establish that the switchover won't work. BT agree to transfer lines.
 - Update Managers and key Members that we will be offering a service from RBC from Monday morning latest.
 - Advise RBC Leader, Portfolio Holder and Leader of Opposition that the BDC Business Continuity Plan has been instigated and provide information about how this will affect RBC customers.
- 16:17
 - Lines transferred and we start taking calls for BDC at RBC, using BDC staff but access to only limited systems

Telephony Issues – October 2012

– Monday 22nd October....

- Extremely high demand due to BDC lines being down for 2 days
- Plans put in place to remove upfront Hub messages from system to reduce customer confusion and improve speed of answering
- Total of 1,078 calls handled for RBC and BDC on 64252 line. Compares to average of 766, total for both authorities (40% increase in call traffic).
- 354 calls abandoned
- Average wait time 77 seconds
- 3 calls waited between 10 and 20 minutes to be answered.
- Majority of abandoned calls between 30 seconds and 1 minute wait.
- Customer complaints – 1



Telephony Issues – October 2012

- Tuesday 23rd October
 - Call volumes still high – 36% above average
 - 1,046 calls handled
 - 197 abandoned
 - 60% of calls answered in less than 30 seconds
 - Average speed of answering 44 seconds
 - 2 calls waited between 10 and 20 minutes to be answered.
 - Majority of abandoned calls between 30 seconds and 1 minute wait.
 - Customer complaints – 0
 - Still unable to identify fault



Telephony Issues – October 2012

- Thursday 25th October
 - Benefits of a shared team starting to show in calls handling statistics
 - Implemented changes to routing of calls to improve call handling and reduce transfers
 - Call numbers stabilise from here on
 - 740 calls handled
 - 13 abandoned calls
 - Average wait time 6 seconds
 - 95% of calls answered in less than 30 seconds
 - 2 calls waited between 2 and 3 minutes to be answered



Telephony Issues – October 2012

- Wednesday 24th October
 - Number of calls returning to nearer normal
 - 915 calls handled
 - 112 abandoned
 - Average wait time 29 seconds
 - 69% of calls answered in less than 30 seconds
 - 11 calls waited between 5 and 10 minutes to be answered.
 - No further customer complaints
 - Updates provided to all Members, managers/staff and press.
 - Reviewed routing of calls to further improve call handling and reduce transfers
 - 4pm – DD lines into BDC re-instated. CSC lines routing to Redditch Town Hall



Telephony Issues – October 2012

- Friday 26th October
 - With fault not identified so no solution in sight HOCS agrees two part plan with IT Manager
 - 1. Re-create contact centre service at Council House
 - 2. Bring forward implementation of Shoretel Contact Centre solution (scheduled for early 2013)
 - Call statistics stable
 - No access to BDC systems so some calls being passed to services to deal with



Telephony Issues – October 2012

- Tuesday 30th October
 - Work carried out to enable switch back to Council House
 - All Members advised of the plan and expected timescales
- Wednesday 31st October
 - Calls switched to Council House at 12:21.
 - Near normal service provided
- Tuesday 6th November
 - Fault on original lines resolved and all calls switched back to CSC

Telephony Issues – October 2012

- What are we doing to avoid it happening again?
 - Implement simpler solution.
 - Already planned but this has proven another driver
 - New system will be part of Bromsgrove's own Shoretel system and although will link to WCC will not be reliant on their system.
 - Can't guarantee that nothing will ever go wrong – because technology does go wrong and the reality is we are all dependent on it.
 - But we will have greater control when things do go wrong.
 - Less reliant on external providers.
 - Even better business continuity.



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- So... what was the problem and why was it so difficult to resolve?
 - Over complex and ageing solution.
 - Call Centre solution is WCC and links to our systems.
 - Fault could be in any number of places in the configuration of those links and was not readily apparent through all the testing.
 - Some pieces of equipment are also used to do multiple tasks, not just telephones, and tracking the problem required resource from Bromsgrove & Redditch ICT, British Telecom, County ICT team and their 3rd party telephone support team, and a company that specialise in Cisco Voice over IP (the type of telephone system used).
 - Having so many different people involved in the solution = very time consuming and difficult to fault find
 - Required multiple devices to be restarted and at the same time, a configuration change to one of these devices.

Telephony Issues – October 2012

Questions?



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Overview & Scrutiny Essential Living Fund 26th March 2013

David Taylor
Benefits Manager

Welfare Reform Act 2012

- Replaced Community Care Grants & Crisis Loans
- Non Ringfenced Grant to County Council (reduction in funding)
- Approval to provide through District Council
- Effective from 1st April 2013

Benefits of a Local Scheme Provision – Essential Living Fund

- Officers have local knowledge
- Access to local arrangements (local charities etc)
- Local decision making
- Flexible use of resources

Activity within Bromsgrove 2011/12

- Crisis Loans
 - 540 Successful applications
£31k
- Community Care Grants
 - 180 Successful applications
£83k

Funding for 2013/14 £101k + £18k for
administration of scheme

Activity within Bromsgrove

Items most commonly requested under Crisis Loans:

- Rent in advance – moving home (families security relevant) and leaving
- care.
- Lost or stolen giro
- Capital not realisable
- Reconnection of fuel supply
- Benefit spent
- Benefits disallowed or sanctioned (to remain with DWP as hardship awards)
- Disaster

Activity within Bromsgrove

Items most commonly requested under Community Care Grants:

- Beds and bedding 38%
- Clothing 14%
- Kitchen/dining utensils 13%
- Carpets/Curtains 8%
- Other 8%
- Cookers 8%
- Seating 5%
- Washing Machines 3%
- Fridges 2%
- Removal Expenses 1%

Overall Principles of Scheme

- Clear
- Responsive
- Minimise Cash where possible
- Target most vulnerable
- Work with partners

Essential Living Fund – Delivery

- Face to face delivery
- Benefits officers used to ensure that income can be maximised
- Only available to residents of Bromsgrove
- All other options for funding available to be considered
- Working with charities eg NewStarts