

Public Document Pack



COTSWOLD
DISTRICT COUNCIL

Friday, 22 September 2023

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CABINET

A meeting of the Cabinet will be held at Council Chamber - Trinity Road on **Monday, 2 October 2023 at 6.00 pm.**

Rob Weaver
Chief Executive

To: Members of the Cabinet
(Councillors Joe Harris, Mike Evemy, Claire Bloomer, Tony Dale, Paul Hodgkinson, Juliet Layton, Mike McKeown and Lisa Spivey)

Recording of Proceedings – The law allows the public proceedings of Council, Cabinet, and Committee Meetings to be recorded, which includes filming as well as audio-recording. Photography is also permitted.

As a matter of courtesy, if you intend to record any part of the proceedings please let the Committee Administrator know prior to the date of the meeting.

AGENDA

1. **Apologies**

2. **Declarations of Interest**

To receive any declarations of interest from Members and Officers, relating to items to be considered at the meeting.

3. **Minutes (Pages 5 - 12)**

To approve the minutes of the previous meeting.

4. **Leader's Announcements**

5. **Public Questions**

To deal with questions from the public within the open forum question and answer session of fifteen minutes in total. Questions from each member of the public should be no longer than one minute each and relate to issues under the Cabinet's remit. At any one meeting no person may submit more than two questions and no more than two such questions may be asked on behalf of one organisation.

The Leader will ask whether any members of the public present at the meeting wish to ask a question and will decide on the order of questioners.

The response may take the form of:

- a) a direct oral answer;
- b) where the desired information is in a publication of the Council or other published work, a reference to that publication; or
- c) where the reply cannot conveniently be given orally, a written answer circulated later to the questioner.

6. **Member Questions**

No Member Questions have been submitted prior to the publication of the agenda.

A Member of the Council may ask the Leader or a Cabinet Member a question on any matter in relation to which the Council has powers or duties or which affects the Cotswold District. A maximum period of fifteen minutes shall be allowed at any such meeting for Member questions.

A Member may only ask a question if:

- a) the question has been delivered in writing or by electronic mail to the Chief Executive no later than 5.00 p.m. on the working day before the day of the meeting; or
- b) the question relates to an urgent matter, they have the consent of the Leader to whom the question is to be put and the content of the question is given to the Chief Executive by 9.30 a.m. on the day of the meeting.

An answer may take the form of:

- a) a direct oral answer;
- b) where the desired information is in a publication of the Council or other published work, a reference to that publication; or

- c) where the reply cannot conveniently be given orally, a written answer circulated later to the questioner.

7. Channel Choice and Telephone Access (Pages 13 - 20)

Purpose

The purpose of this report, in light of a continuous decline in demand, is to propose reduced telephone access hours to the public. This will allow focus to shift to digital channels, where demand is increasing and make the Council more efficient.

Recommendations

That Cabinet resolves to:

- 1) Agree the reduced telephone access hours, on a trial basis, with effect from Monday 16th October 2023 for a period of six months, and
- 2) Receive a further report, detailing the findings and recommendations from the trial, to a Cabinet meeting early in May 2024.

8. Schedule of Decisions taken by the Leader of the Council and/or Individual Cabinet Members

At the time of publication, no decisions have been taken by the Leader of the Council and/or individual Cabinet Members since the last meeting.

9. Issue(s) Arising from Overview and Scrutiny and/or Audit and Governance

(END)

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Minutes of a meeting of Cabinet held on Tuesday, 12 September 2023.

Councillors present:

Joe Harris - Leader
Claire Bloomer
Tony Dale

Mike Evemy – Deputy Leader
Paul Hodgkinson
Juliet Layton

Mike McKeown
Lisa Spivey

Officers present:

Robert Weaver, Chief Executive
David Stanley, Deputy Chief Executive and
Chief Finance Officer
Angela Claridge, Director of Governance and
Development (Monitoring Officer)
Jan Britton, Managing Director - Publica
Caleb Harris, Senior Democratic Services
Officer

Ana Prelici, Democratic Services Officer
James Brain, Forward Planning Manager
Matthew Britton, Principal Planning Policy
Officer
Sophia Price, Heritage and Design Manager
Zoe Campbell, Assistant Director for
Organisational Effectiveness

Observers:

Councillors David Fowles, David Cunningham and Andy Parsons, Chief Executive – Cotswold National Landscape

160 Apologies

There were no apologies for absence.

161 Declarations of Interest

Councillor Hodgkinson and Councillor Layton declared a non-pecuniary interest in respect of Agenda item 7 as members of the Cotswold National Landscape Board.

There were no declarations of interest from Officers.

162 Minutes

The following amendments were suggested to the minutes for 17 July 2023:

- Minute 147 – Updated Procurement and Contract Management Strategy - it was noted that the seconder should be Councillor Joe Harris

- Minute 159 (Para.4) – to amend the wording so it reads that the ‘The Cabinet also noted that card readers were being introduced in addition to the existing cash payment to provide more payment options’.

The minutes were proposed by Councillor Evemy and seconded by Councillor Bloomer.

RESOLVED: Cabinet APPROVED the minutes of the meeting of Cabinet of 17 July 2023 as a correct record, subject to the amendments being made.

Record of Voting – For: 7, Against 0, Abstention 1, Absent: 0

163 Leader's Announcements

The Leader first spoke regarding the concern around the use of RAAC concrete. The Leader had asked officers to investigate whether it may be present in the buildings the Council owns such as the Council Offices. It was confirmed that no RAAC is present in these buildings. The Leader also noted that housing associations had been asked to report if any RAAC concrete is present in any social housing. It was highlighted that any updates would be provided to Members in the first instance.

It was also noted that the Tour of Britain cycle race had been a great event for local communities and the economy.

164 Public Questions

There were no public questions.

165 Member Questions

There were no member questions.

166 Employment and Health and Safety Policies

The Leader revised the order of business on the request of the Chief Executive to consider this item first.

The purpose of the report was to update the Cabinet relating to the refresh of all Human Resources and Health & Safety policies for CDC.

The Assistant Director for Organisational Effectiveness introduced the report and outlined the report as presented. It was also explained that three policies had been withdrawn from the document for technical reasons; the Expenses Policy, Flexi-time TOIL and Overtime Policy, and the Redundancy Policy.

It was noted that the updated 23 employment policies and the health and safety policy presented would help to ensure that the policies would mitigate any risk of challenge. This would be further strengthened by the delegation to the Chief Executive to ensure the policies remain legally compliant.

The Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Employment Policies Task and Finish Group, Councillor David Cunningham addressed Cabinet regarding the policies presented. It was

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noted that the policies withdrawn were additional policies being reviewed and were not part of the core policies being refreshed.

It was noted that the Task and Finish Group was satisfied with the policies presented, and believed that these policies would serve the council well.

In response to a question on the policies in relation to Publica, it was noted by Cabinet that the policies presented were for Cotswold District Council employees did not have any change to terms and conditions. However the processes would be the same to Publica employees to ensure their application is correct.

The Chief Executive commented that the policies would give a clear way forward for Cotswold District Council employees, and that the minor issues identified with the withdrawn could be dealt with under delegated authority.

In regards to questions around oversight to any changes, it was noted that the delegation to the Chief Executive would be overseen by Overview and Scrutiny Committee with an update report given once a year.

It was noted that the updated policies would be communicated through the relevant portals.

The recommendations were proposed by Councillor Harris and seconded by Councillor Every.

RESOLVED: That Cabinet

1) **AGREED** the twenty-three employment policies and the Health & Safety Policy for consideration in Annex A.

2) **DELEGATED** authority to the Chief Executive to approve subsequent amendments to any Cotswold District Council employment policies that may be necessary in line with legal changes and best practice to ensure the Council's policies remain legally compliant.

3) **DELEGATED** authority to the Chief Executive to approve subsequent employment policies that come forward for approval.

Record of Voting – For: 8, Against 0, Abstention 0, Absent: 0

167 Endorsement of the Cotswolds National Landscape Management Plan 2023 – 2025

The purpose of the report was to seek the Council's support for the Cotswolds National Landscape (Area Of Outstanding Natural Beauty - AONB) Management Plan 2023 – 2025.

The Cabinet Member for Planning and Regulatory Services, Councillor Juliet Layton, introduced the report.

It was noted that a re-published version of the report had an updated wording to the recommendation which was read out. However, it was highlighted that this did not fundamentally affect the Cabinet's position on the contents of the plan.

It was noted that the management plan which was subject to consultation with the Council, would be used as part of the evidence base for the partial review of the Local Plan. It was reaffirmed that the Local Plan would remain the primary planning policy document.

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It was highlighted that the Glover Review, which formed part of the previous management plan in promotion of National Park status, had not been endorsed by the Council. However, it was highlighted that this current management plan was in line with the corporate priorities on being 'green to the core' and tackling climate change.

The Chief Executive of Cotswold National Landscape, Andy Parsons, addressed Cabinet in regards to the management plan. It was noted that the plan was for two years as opposed to five years to ensure the plan remained relevant in line with upcoming changes from central government.

RESOLVED That Cabinet

1) **NOTED** the content and aspirations of the Cotswolds National Landscape Management Plan 2023–2025 and recognise its importance in supporting and informing the following:

- part of the evidence base for the review of the Local Plan;
- part of the evidence base for the preparation of Neighbourhood Development Plans;
- part of the evidence base for the preparation and implementation of relevant Council strategies, policies and projects;
- the determination of planning applications (where compatible with relevant Local Plan and national policy) by acting as a material consideration; and
- the development and delivery of the Council's services and activities.

168 Review of the Cotswold District Local Plan housing requirement

The purpose of the report was to recommend to Full Council to approve the Review of the Cotswold District Local Plan 2011-2031 Housing Requirement, which finds that the local housing need of the district has not changed significantly and that the minimum housing requirement provided by the Cotswold District Local Plan does not require updating.

The Cabinet Member for Planning and Regulatory Services, Councillor Juliet Layton introduced the report to Cabinet Members. It was noted that Cabinet was being asked to recommend to Council that the 2011-2031 Housing Requirement review be approved.

It was noted that it was very important to support this review to avoid a switch from the Local Plan residual requirement to the government's standard method

The Forward Planning Manager, James Brain was invited to address Cabinet in terms of the review which was undertaken alongside the wider work with the partial update Local Plan.

It was noted that the numbers of sites for housing have not changed significantly, and that the Council continues with a comfortable 5-year Land Supply, and that the adopted plan has remains with the full weight in law. However, it was noted that this would need to be monitored in line with changes such a national planning policy and case law.

It was highlighted that this work was key to shape the future provision of housing in the District that's in line with the priorities of residents.

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It was noted that this would form part of the delivery of housing which is affordable for rent, social housing or for ownership.

The recommendations were proposed by Councillor Layton and seconded by Councillor Harris.

RESOLVED That Cabinet

1) AGREED to recommend to Full Council to approve the review of the Cotswold District Local Plan 2011-2031 housing requirement.

Record of Voting – For: 8, Against 0, Abstention 0, Absent: 0

169 Council Priority and Service Performance Report - 2023-23 Quarter One

The purpose of this report was to provide an update on progress on the Council's priorities and service performance.

The Chief Executive introduced this report to Cabinet, and highlighted that revised format to demonstrate the service performance for different areas.

The following points were highlighted:

- The council entered into a partnership with Make My House Green which will encourage Solar PV installation with the private sector.
- Reducing sewage discharge is a priority for officers and councillors. Thames Water had been engaging with council and partner councils to tackle this concern.
- The work by the Active Cotswolds team in promoting activity and healthy lifestyles with 'Mr Motivator'.
- The changing places toilets facilities had been completed at Cotswold Farm, in Cirencester Abbey Ground and the Birdland country park would be delivered in early 2024.
- The development and implementation of an Asset Management Strategy is slightly behind schedule but would be presented to November Council.
- The work with Cirencester College on the T Levels Programme would be rolled out in January 2024.
- The collection of Council Tax had increased above target alongside the processing of change of circumstances.
- Customer satisfaction is above the target of 90% at 98%
- Processing of planning applications within the agreed timescales is 84% against a target of 80%
- The performance of leisure centres is above target in terms of memberships and overall visits.
- The processing time of Council Tax new claims is 29 days against a target of 20 days with a number of actions highlighted to improve this.
- The percentage of official land charge searches in 10 days is 86% against a target of 90%, and work is being done internally to prioritise this.

The Cabinet noted the format change to show comparisons with other Publica partner councils is helpful.

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Whilst the improvement of Council Tax collection rates was welcome, there was some concern around the rate of non-domestic rate collection. It was also noted that this was behind other rural councils in the rankings presented.

Following queries raised, a response to the concerns regarding the low ranking for the collection of non-domestic rates would be compiled by the Deputy Chief Executive and the Managing Director of Publica to provide reassurance.

It was also noted that the processing time for Housing Benefit change of circumstances needed to be examined.

It was also noted by Cabinet that Building Control satisfaction was 100% following changes made.

It was highlighted that this report was a Q1 report and therefore only shows a limited picture in terms of provision.

RESOLVED: That Cabinet

- I) NOTED overall progress on the Council priorities and service performance for 2022-23 Q4 and the post reporting period events.

170 Financial Performance Report Quarter One - 2023/24

This report sets out the latest budget monitoring position for the 2023/24 financial year.

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for the finance outlined the report and the recommendations within the report.

The following points were highlighted:

- It was noted that the forecasted financial position at ES1 and ES2 was £450,000 worse than budgeted for. This was due to a shortfall in fees and charges in various areas which include land charges.
- The increase in demand for waste and recycling containers. It was also noted that there was a lack of charging to developers on the provision of waste and recycling containers.
- There was also a £66,000 provision due to the closure of the West Bromwich store which Wilko was occupying before entering administration.
- There's also some uncertainty and risk in regards to the ongoing pay offer of 3.8% which was rejected by trade unions.
- There was also a £100,000 provision for Ubico if it is unable to make the £250,000 of savings also requested from Publica.
- On ES2, there was an underspend of £42,000 by Ubico.
- There was also an increased income from the rise in interest rates.
- There was also an underspend projected in the spending on ICT by the council.

It was noted that the Cabinet Member was working to ensure that the deficit figure can be eliminated. This was particularly important in light of the recent announcement of the S.114 notice by Birmingham City Council.

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It was reaffirmed that getting the revenue budget balanced which was imperative to continue providing services to residents locally.

The Leader commented that it was important to have an early focus to the financial position and how the future service provision may need to change in light of the challenges faced by all local authorities.

It was noted that retaining the current gap was not seen as option that could be taken.

It was also noted in debate that car parking was ahead of budget which was welcomed.

The recommendations were proposed by the Councillor Every, and seconded by Councillor Harris.

RESOLVED: That Cabinet

- 1) REVIEWED and NOTED the financial position set out in this report
- 2) ENDORSED the recommendation in paragraph 8.3 that the Cabinet Transformation Working Group review in-year opportunities with Publica and Ubico and provide Cabinet with an update in November on options to mitigate the forecast financial position.

Record of Voting – For: 8, Against 0, Abstention 0, Absent: 0

171 Schedule of Decisions taken by the Leader of the Council and/or Individual Cabinet Members

The Cabinet NOTED the decisions taken.

172 Issue(s) Arising from Overview and Scrutiny and/or Audit and Governance

There no issues arising from Overview and Scrutiny Committee or the Audit and Governance Committee.

The Meeting commenced at 5.02 pm and closed at 6.30 pm

Chair

(END)

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Agenda Item 7



COTSWOLD
DISTRICT COUNCIL

| | |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Council name | COTSWOLD DISTRICT COUNCIL |
| Name and date of Committee | CABINET – 2 OCTOBER 2023 |
| Subject | TELEPHONE CHANNEL ACCESS - TRIAL |
| Wards affected | All |
| Accountable member | <p>Cllr Tony Dale – Cabinet Member for the Economy and Council Transformation</p> <p>Email: tony.dale@cotswold.gov.uk</p> |
| Accountable officer | <p>Jon Dearing – Assistant Director for Resident Services</p> <p>Email: jon.dearing@cotswold.gov.uk</p> |
| Report Author | <p>Michelle Clifford – Business Manager for Customer Experience</p> <p>Email: michelle.clifford@cotswold.gov.uk</p> |
| Summary/Purpose | The purpose of this report, in light of a continuous decline in demand, is to propose reduced telephone access hours to the public. This will allow focus to shift to digital channels, where demand is increasing and make the Council more efficient. |
| Annexes | None |
| Recommendation(s) | <p>That Cabinet resolves to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>a) Agree the reduced telephone access hours, on a trial basis, with effect from Monday 16th October 2023 for a period of six months, and</i> <i>b) Receive a further report, detailing the findings and recommendations from the trial, to a Cabinet meeting early in May 2024.</i> |
| Corporate priorities | Delivering our services to the highest standard of service |
| Key Decision | NO, as the recommendations are in relation to a trial period. |
| Exempt | NO |
| Consultees/ Consultation | All Internal Departments including agreeing bespoke arrangements for Housing, Dangerous Structures and Elections.. |



COTSWOLD
DISTRICT COUNCIL

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|--|-----------------------------------|
| | Members Customer Services Team |
|--|-----------------------------------|



1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1** Over the last few years the Council has been introducing new digital channels and improving those that already existed. This activity coincided with the Covid pandemic, where people accepted the use of to use alternative service access channels as a result of national restrictions. The result is that a significant percentage of service requests continue to come through digital channels and this present as opportunity for the council to trial a reduction in the hours of opening for the customer contact centre.
- 1.2** This report makes proposals to better reflect the changing needs of customers and how they prefer to access Services; whilst still retaining telephone access for those that are less able to use digital services.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1** In 2021 Resident Services restructured at the Business Manager level. One of the objectives of this change was allow for a Business Manager dedicated to improving the customer experience. The resultant post of Business Manager for Customer Experience is responsible for leading the Customer Service Teams, improving digital access, making processes customer focussed and improving performance.
- 2.2** This has led to the formation of a multi-skilled 'Channel Choice Team'. This Team has been working to implement/improve access to digital services. The Team have created and improved digital access around many processes with very high take up rates. Examples include Green Waste sign-up, Bulky Waste, Licensing Applications, Fly Tipping and Abandoned Vehicle reporting, Planning Validation and implementation of the 'Open Portal' where customers can self-serve in relation to Housing Benefit and Council Tax services. CDC now has almost 7,000 households signed up to the 'Open Portal'. This figure increases weekly and that take up will be accelerated as we introduce 'auto sign-up', creating a Portal account when other forms of digital enquiries are made. Digital renewal for Green Waste licences continue to increase year on year. 2023 renewal has a 90% digital take up.
- 2.3** Over the last three years the provision of more and improved digital customer access to services, coupled with the impact of the pandemic, has led to customers changing their service access habits.
- 2.4** The volume of calls (CDC and WODC combined) reduced by over 37058 between 2021 and 2022. During this period the volume of web forms utilised by customers has tripled to over 98000 across the three sites (CDC volume = over 33000). This shift of contact method continues into 2023 when, for the first time, digital access volumes exceed telephone access volumes in the first half of the year.



- 2.5** This report, therefore, recommends that the Council's resources are realigned to reflect the change in customer behaviour.
- 2.6** It is important to note that, due to system configuration, any changes to telephone access would need to be mirror across the two Councils (Cotswold District Council and West Oxfordshire District Council).

3. MAIN POINTS

- 3.1** As a result of the changing customer needs and the resultant shift from telephone contact to digital contact, the Customer Services Management Team have undertaken extensive analysis of the telephone data. As well as the significant call volume reductions, the data shows, on average:
- a) Telephone lines are busiest earlier in the day, with the busiest period being between 9am and 10am,
 - b) Based on the most recent data, call volumes reduce steadily throughout the day; with the last hour of the day volumes being only 45% of the first hour of the day,
 - c) Mondays and Tuesdays are the busiest days with Wednesdays seeing the least volume of calls throughout the average week, and
 - d) Wait times increase between 12pm and 2pm, as almost 50% of the workforce are taking a lunch break throughout that period.

The conclusions drawn from the increase in digital contact, provide an opportunity to trial a revision to the way the services are provided, namely:

- (a) Telephone access reductions should be in the afternoons when call volumes reduce, and
 - (b) Increasing and improving digital access is where resources should be focussed in the future.
- 3.2** What the data does not show is what the reaction of the customers will be. Based on the experiences of other organisations (public and private sector) it is anticipated that a reduction in telephone access times will result in a further shift to digital channels. In order to test this assumption it is recommended that we enter into the new arrangements as a trial and collect data on demand, waiting times, channel shift, customer satisfaction and customer complaints. This data will then inform a further report around whether the new telephone opening hours should be made permanent.
- 3.3** The data indicates demand falls after 2pm and the recommendation is therefore to close front and back office (i.e. All non-direct dial lines) telephone lines at 2pm every day. This uniform approach will make messaging more straightforward and should improve recruitment opportunities; making posts more attractive to those that need to work around school hours. It will also mean resources can be maximised during the (12pm to 2pm) lunch period.



3.4 The intention is that the Out of Hours Service will not change and still commence at 5pm every day. The cost of providing an external Out of Hours service from 2pm every day would outweigh the financial savings and therefore hamper our ability to deliver on our customers' digital access needs. However, there are three services that will need 2pm to 5pm cover. They are:

- Reporting of dangerous structures (and other life threatening events). These are very rare but do need cover,
- Assisting those who are presenting as homeless or are under the threat of homelessness, and
- Support for residents in the lead-up to an election.

The first two of these are year-round requirements and will be resolved by introducing an in-house emergency line between 2pm and 5pm. The use of this line will be closely managed to ensure that non-urgent contacts do not take up this resource.

The election issue will be addressed by a separate (temporary) telephone line that will only be available and resourced in the lead-up to an election (Precise timings to be agreed with the Returning Officer and Elections Services Manager). The Customer Service Managers will meet with Elections Teams to draw up a plan specific to each election but resources can be sourced at very short notice for this task, or any emergency event, and the mechanism for this is explained in 3.6 below.

When customers attempt to telephone after 2pm they will be advised of the new opening hours and given information on how to access services on-line. They will also be given information on what to do in an emergency. For non-emergency matters other channels, such as face to face, email and the wide range of digital services will be available as normal.

3.5 The implementation of these changes will clearly require a reduction in working hours for some of the Customer Service Officers (some Officers will continue full time as Managers, Reception, Front Office and some technical Officers will be required all day). There has been a commitment to effect this change without any mandatory redundancies and there are three key ways in which this will be achieved:

- i. Where an officer wishes to voluntarily reduce their hours, this will be agreed,
- ii. Where a vacancy occurs, recruitment to the post will be made for 9am to 2pm, and
- iii. When future 'back office' vacancies arise, opportunities will be considered to assess how these roles could be filled by customer services staff (where appropriate) with the 2pm to 5pm Customer Service Officer resource. The approach described in bullet point iii (above) has several advantages:
 - Minimises risk of the need to make any redundancies,
 - There will be improved customer focus in the back office,
 - The Customer Service officers will improve their technical knowledge, and



- Customer Service resources can be seconded (full-time) back in the Telephone Service should they be required. This would mean a temporary reduction in back office capacity but as the back office Services will have gained some capacity from reducing direct telephone access 2pm-5pm, this should more than balance that capacity issue.

- 3.6** During the trial period the excess hours within the Customer Service Team will be used to help other Services reduce their outstanding workloads; in particular Revenues and Benefits and the Housing Service where demand is high as a result of the Cost of Living Crisis. This will reduce the need for customers to make repeat calls and therefore, further, reduce telephone call volumes.
- 3.7** This change is intended to meet the changing needs of our customers. No change to other access channels (including Face to Face) are being proposed. The Trinity Road and Moreton Area Centre receptions will be open 9am to 5pm as normal.
- 3.8** The recommendations propose that a further report be made in May 2024 with details of the outcomes the data collection exercise that will have taken place during the trial. This is the point at which the decision will be made as to whether the change is made permanent or not.
- 3.9** A Communications plan is being developed, so that customers are aware of the changes and the reasoning. This will include amendments to Web pages, documents and signage.
- 3.10** Based on the experiences of other organisations (public and private sector) a reduction in telephone access times is likely to result in a further shift to digital channels. In order to test this assumption the recommendation is to trial the new arrangements and during the trial collect data on elements such as demand, waiting times, continued uptake of channel choice to web based services customer satisfaction and customer complaints. This data will then inform a further report to assist in informing whether the new telephone opening hours should be made permanent.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1** Excluding the Managers and Face to Face Officers (mentioned above) each of the 30 Customer Service Officers across CDC and WODC (24.93 fte) will have a reduction in hours of 0.32 fte. This reduction across the 30 Officers equates to a total reduction of 7.98 fte. This makes the total efficiency saving £238,100 to be shared equally between CDC and WODC. So the total **saving to CDC is £119,050** per annum.
- 4.2** The first £50,000 per annum of this will be delivered in 2023/24 and the remainder (£69,050 per annum) in 2024/25.
- 4.3** The Service has already started to fill vacancies on reduced hours and is holding some vacancies. This will allow the 2023/24 target to be met during the trial period.
- 4.4** As there will be no redundancies, the cost of implementation will be support service resources and will therefore fall within existing budgets.



5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1** There are no Legal implications associated with the recommendations.

6. RISK ASSESSMENT

- 6.1** There is a risk in not agreeing the recommendations, in that the Council would miss an opportunity to make services more efficient.
- 6.2** The reduction in telephone access opening hours could bring a reputational risk. However, the Council would be maintaining all forms of access and better meeting the changing needs of its customers.

7. EQUALITIES IMPACT

- 7.1** No services or service access channels are being taken away, so the impact is minimal. An Equalities Impact Assessment has been completed and shared with the Council's Director of Governance and Development (Monitoring Officer).
- 7.2** Encouraging a further shift to digital and self-serve channels will create more capacity for Teams to provide support to those customers in the greatest need.

8. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1** The recommendation does not have any climate change implications.

9. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 9.1** The Council could decide not to reduce the telephone opening hours. However, this would fail to recognise the customer shift to digital access channels and would miss an opportunity to evolve to reflect changing patterns of behaviour as well as generate savings.

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 10.1** None.

(END)

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Proposed Cabinet response to recommendations from Overview and Scrutiny on Channel Choice and Telephone Access

Recommendation arising from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting on 26 September 2023.

| Recommendation | Agree (Y / N) | Comment | Responsible Cabinet Member | Lead Officer |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. That the trial set out in the report is approved (the outcome of the trial will be reported back to Overview and Scrutiny before a final decision on the service is made by Cabinet), with consideration of when the report should come forward; | Y | It was agreed that the outcome of the trial would come back to Cabinet as soon as we have reliable data to suggest that it has been successful (or not) and that the follow up report would go to O&S before going back to Cabinet. | Councillor Tony Dale, Cabinet Member for Economy and Transformation | Jon Dearing, Assistant Director for Resident Services |
| 2. That Cabinet Members receive data regarding call volumes for Cotswold District Council and not just the combined figures with West Oxfordshire, and graphs to show trends; | Y | We agreed that I would relay the telephone data at the Cabinet meeting on 2/10/2023, to show the percentage split between CDC and WODC. | Councillor Tony Dale, Cabinet Member for Economy and Transformation | Jon Dearing, Assistant Director for Resident Services |
| 3. That the report that will be received after the six month trial includes an Equalities Impact Assessment; | In part (N + Y) | We said that a report would come in 6 months at the latest but may be earlier if we can demonstrate, earlier, that it has been successful. The EIA has already been agreed by the Monitoring Officer but a follow up EIA will be presented with the follow up report. | Councillor Tony Dale, Cabinet Member for Economy and Transformation | Jon Dearing, Assistant Director for Resident Services |



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| 4. That Cabinet Members consider concerns raised by committee members regarding consultation with affected staff, and whether savings can be realised without redundancies. | N | I thought we addressed this at the O&S meeting. I confirmed that officers have been consulted throughout and assured that there will be no redundancies. | Councillor Tony Dale, Cabinet Member for Economy and Transformation | Jon Dearing, Assistant Director for Resident Services |
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