

REPORT ON CONSULTATION EXERCISES

Introduction

1. This report sets out the outcomes from the consultation exercises which ended on 1 November 2013. A summary is given below, but there are a number of annexes that give further information about the consultation exercises and the detail of the responses.
2. The annexes are:
 - Annex 1 - Consultation methods and timescales.
 - Annex 2 – Best value consultation.
 - Annex 3 – Equalities consultation.
 - Annex 4 – Summary of responses to the on-line consultation.
 - Annex 5 – Analysis of on-line responses by ward.
 - Annex 6 – Detailed comments received as part of the on-line consultation.
 - Annex 7 – Detailed responses to the paper version of the consultation.
 - Annex 8 – Responses received by other means.
 - Annex 9 – Results of survey undertaken in Gateway.

Summary Results

3. Equalities issues have been raised by respondents through all forms of response to the consultation and have been particularly highlighted by Spectrum Centre for Independent Living and at a meeting with the Southampton Learning Disability Partnership Board. Many of these had already been recognised in the consultation and in the mitigating actions included in the Equality and Safety Impact Assessment (ESIA).
4. The consultation did though highlight that there should be more consideration of some circumstances or groups of people and the ESIA has been amended to take account of these. They include:
 - People with literacy difficulties.
 - People with comparatively minor disabilities, such as arthritis, which make using a keyboard or a phone very difficult.
 - People who are homeless and those supporting them.
 - People with language difficulties.
 - The difficulty in identifying people who are vulnerable and so need to be seen without an appointment.
5. The consultation also highlighted some other aspects that people were concerned about, including:

- The potential additional cost of longer telephone calls.
 - The potential cost of additional journeys to Gateway in order to make and then attend an appointment.
 - The perceived inequality of some people having to make an appointment whilst others are seen without an appointment.
 - The difficulty of fitting appointment times around work commitments.
 - The number of “no-shows” as often customers’ lifestyles mean they do not have the ability to organise themselves to attend an appointment.
 - Access to computers in libraries has been restricted as library opening hours have reduced.
6. A common sentiment expressed was regret that the council was becoming “faceless” and would be seen as uncaring. The importance of personal contact to many people was stressed. There is support for increasing the services available online, which is seen as particularly helpful for those at work and who have the ability to use computers. However there is little support for compulsion or making alternative channels more difficult to access.
7. Many views were expressed about the extension to the Capita contract. A letter in favour was received from Business South who comment that “Capita is doing a good job for Southampton in partnership with Southampton City Council”. This view is echoed by a number of respondents, but the majority of views have been quite negative. Often the views expressed reflected an ideological stance, for example a belief that services are best provided by the public sector, but there are also criticisms of the service currently being provided. The need to demonstrate best value through a competitive process is also mentioned.
8. Overall the consultation results show that the majority of respondents are not in favour of the proposed changes. However many concerns expressed were because of a perceived compulsion to access services only online and the majority of the inequalities highlighted are addressed in the ESIA. It is also of course a largely self-selecting sample, with people supporting change being less likely to respond.

Consultation Methods and Timescales

Interest Groups	Methods	Timescales	Lead
All Stakeholders	Questionnaire available through the council's website.	10 July 2013	Paul Medland
Meetings with specific interest groups	Meeting with Spectrum Centre for Independent Living.	16 July 2013	Paul Medland
Southampton Connect, partners and external organisations	Email with link to consultation	8 August 2013	Carol Harwood
Specific groups such as community and voluntary sector organisations	Email to Anti-Poverty Network with link to consultation	7 August 2013	Sarah Crawford
	Meeting with Anti-Poverty Network	16 September 2013	Sara Crawford
	Southampton Inter-Generational Network	20 August 2013	Paul Medland
	Learning Disability Partnership Board	10 September 2013	Paul Medland
	Leaflets sent to welfare rights groups for customers	2 October 2013	Paul Medland
	Meeting with Block representatives (followed by leaflets sent to reps).	3 September 2013 24 September 2013	Paul Medland
Service users	Exit survey of Gateway users.	w/c 14 October 2013	Paul Medland
	Leaflet available in Gateway, Libraries and Local Housing Offices.	24 September 2013	Emma Howard
	E-alert	28 August 2013	Lucy Calvert

Consultation Methods and Timescales

Interest Groups	Methods	Timescales	Lead
Businesses	Letters to Business South, Chamber of Commerce, Business in the Community	30 July 2013	Paul Medland
Staff	Article in Weekly Bulletin	31 July 2013	Lucy Calvert

Best Value Consultation

The consultation described below concluded on the 1 November 2013. The findings from this, and the consultation on equalities, are included elsewhere in this report.

Strategic Services Partnership – Possible contract extension

Since October 2007 Southampton City Council has been in contract with Capita to provide a number of services. This arrangement is known as the Strategic Services Partnership (SSP). The services covered are:

- Customer Services - The front line contact with the council's customers through Gateway and the customer service centre, and internal post and document management.
- Human Resources & Payroll Services - Including recruitment, payroll, employee relations, health and safety, occupational health, learning and development, and strategy and reward.
- Property Services - Including professional consultancy, project management, valuations, managing investments, accommodation strategy, repair and maintenance, highways and bridges, regulatory services and property records.
- Procurement Services - Undertaking procurement projects to source appropriate suppliers able to meet the Council's needs on high value projects.
- Local Taxation & Benefits Services - Administering the collection of council tax, national non-domestic rates and the calculation and payment of housing and council tax benefits.
- IT Services - Grouped into four main areas; service delivery, technical infrastructure, applications development and support, and programme management.
- Print Services - Providing a one stop shop for all printing and printed related services, including a central photocopying service, finishing and any print related projects.

The council's contract with Capita currently runs until 30 September 2017, but the council is considering whether to extend it by five years to 30 September 2022 (this extension was allowed for in the original contract).

We would like your views about the possible extension of the contract with Capita. The main alternatives at the end of the contract term would be to bring the services back "in-house", so that they are provided directly by the council; to enter a partnership arrangement with another council; or to retender the contract in full or in part.

Why extend the Strategic Services Partnership?

The council and Capita have recently been discussing changes to the SSP that would benefit the council and reduce the cost as part of an extended contract.

There is no intention to extend the services outsourced or to transfer council staff to Capita as part of this proposal.

The main benefits are:

- Guaranteed financial savings totalling almost £24 million over the next nine years (compared with costs projected over that period on the basis of the current cost of the contract due to expire on 30th September 2013);
- Flexibility in pricing for future volume changes. The flexibility in pricing for volume changes will give opportunities for further savings if the council's staff shrinks and provides a sound framework for as yet unknown changes;

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- Capita will develop One Guildhall Square as a Southampton business centre, providing job opportunities for local people, guaranteeing that any job losses from the changes to the SSP will be offset by additional jobs from business with other Capita clients. In the past 12 months, Capita has brought 95 FTE worth of new jobs into the City.
- Capita will support the greater community by providing volunteering opportunities for Capita staff through their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programme.
- Capita will promote apprenticeships, internships and work experience opportunities in local Southampton schools, colleges, and universities and will itself commit until September 2022 to offer a minimum of:
 - 40 apprenticeships.
 - 100 summer internships and/or work experience placements.
- Capita will support the SME local business community with expertise and practical services, for example with free of charge local workshops for business on public sector procurement to enable them to bid effectively for local public sector opportunities.
- In Customer Services, Capita will invest in technology and process re-engineering to allow changes necessary for channel shift (moving more services online). These changes are subject to a separate consultation which can be found on the Council's website
- In the IT Services, there will be transformation activity including deployment of the latest technology strategies:-
 - cloud based hosting and server virtualisation, which will provide a robust yet flexible infrastructure;
 - a major project in 2013/14 to upgrade the council's Microsoft Windows, Office and Exchange desktop environment and the server software infrastructure;
 - a shared service model in which resources and service elements are provided from one or more of Capita's sites around the country.
- Both parties will work together to support the Council's change programme.
- The proposal will bring long-term clarity and assurance for Capita staff, improving morale and providing opportunities during this period of major change.
- Delaying from 2015/16 to 2020/21 the need to undertake a procurement exercise costing at least £2 million.

The consultation process

Consultation on these proposals runs until 1 November 2013. You may give your opinion on any aspect of the proposals by writing to the address below. Comments will be consolidated into a report which will be available to Members of the Council when they make a decision on the proposals. This is expected to be later in October 2013.

Please send your views to:

Paul Medland

Lower Ground Floor

Civic Centre

Southampton

SO14 7LY

Email: paul.medland@southampton.gov.uk

Equalities Consultation

The consultation described below concluded on the 1 November 2013. The findings from this, and the consultation on equalities, are included elsewhere in this report.

Have your say on how you access our services

We're making changes to the way you can contact us and access our services, but before we make any final decisions, we'd like your views on our proposals. In order to modernise our services and reduce the running costs, we need to enable and encourage online and automated phone access to services wherever possible.

We recognise that these changes may not suit everyone; therefore we're keen to find out how these changes may affect you and others you know, in order to keep any negative impacts to a minimum. Please help us make the right decisions by completing a short questionnaire (link below) about access to our services. The deadline for entries is 1 November 2013.

Our proposals

Wherever possible we want to ensure that any contact with you is via our online and self-service facilities that do not require you to speak to a member of staff face-to-face or over the phone.

Changes to our website

We will need to make some improvements to our website and plan to introduce more online forms so you can request a range of services including applications for housing benefit and council tax reduction over the internet. We will also develop mobile-friendly web pages so you can access our website easily using a smartphone.

Many of our services can already be accessed online and more are becoming available all the time. Our proposed changes will improve the current online arrangements and expand the services on offer with the aim of making the internet the preferred method of access to services for most people. To help reduce costs and improve efficiency, paper forms will be significantly reduced and will only be provided in exceptional circumstances.

It is now commonplace within many organisations to expect customers to use the internet to purchase and manage products and services. We also know that the number of people who are able to access the internet has increased substantially over the last few years and this trend seems set to continue. We're therefore bringing ourselves up-to-date with this trend and are confident our online services will be more convenient for many customers. This approach has been adopted successfully for a number of central government services (for example car road tax and HM Revenue & Customs self-assessments) and in future other major services such as Universal Credit will be dealt with online.

Changes to our call centre

In addition to our online improvements, we will be making changes to our call centre to enable you to self-serve over the phone. Our switchboard will be automated and simple transactions will be carried out without the need to talk to a member of staff. However, please be assured that if our extended self-service menu options do not meet your needs; you will be able to speak to someone at the call centre.

Changes to Gateway, One Guildhall Square

Changes will also be made to our 'one-stop-shop' for services at Gateway. You will be encouraged to use the self-service terminals which are going to be installed, and a

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member of staff will be on hand to help if you're having difficulty with the system. If you require a service which you cannot access using our automated or online facilities, you will be able to meet a member of Gateway staff on an appointment basis only.

The consultation process and questionnaire

You may give your opinion on any aspect of the proposals, but we have set out some questions which may help guide you in an online questionnaire available here:

Changes to our customer contact arrangements online survey

Alternatively, you can submit your response in writing to:

Paul Medland
Project Manager
Lower Ground Floor
Civic Centre
Southampton
SO14 7LY

Please note the deadline for feedback to this consultation is 1 November 2013.

Our customer services

These customer services are provided on behalf of the council by Capita as part of a Strategic Services Partnership. The council's contract with Capita runs until 30 September 2017 but, to bring in these changes, reduce costs and secure flexible pricing in the future, the council is considering extending it by five years to 30 September 2022 (this extension was allowed for in the original contract). This is subject to a separate 'best value' consultation which can be found on the council's website [here](#).

Other services provided by Capita under the same partnership arrangement are:

- Local Taxes and Benefits
- Procurement Services
- Human Resources
- IT Services
- Property Services
- Print Services

We would like your views on proposals to extend the contract with Capita. The main alternatives would be to bring the services back "in-house" so that they are provided directly by the council; to enter a partnership arrangement with another council; or to retender the contract in full or in part.

Summary of responses to the on-line survey.

A full listing of the comments received is given in annex 6.

Questions			
<p>1. Not everyone will have access to their own PC or smartphone. Public access PCs will be available in Gateway and libraries. A phone service through an automated switchboard will also be available.</p> <p>Do you feel providing these facilities meets the needs of people without access to the internet?</p> <p>Any comments?</p>	Replies	185	
	Yes	30	16%
	No	132	71%
	Not Sure	23	12%
<p><i>Comments highlight the difficulties that some people have using online and phone services, particularly some people with disabilities, including learning disabilities, people with language difficulties and the elderly. The fact that library hours have been reduced has been raised by a number of people and there is concern about capacity both in libraries and in Gateway. A preference to talk to a person rather than deal with a machine is expressed by a number of respondents.</i></p>			
<p>2. There will be people who will have difficulty using or are unable to use an online service including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ People with visual impairments ➤ People with learning difficulties ➤ Some elderly people <p>These people will still be able to use the phone service or can make an appointment to see someone face-to-face in Gateway.</p> <p>Do you feel this approach would meet their needs?</p> <p>3. Are there other groups of people who may have difficulty with online access?</p> <p>Any comments?</p>	Replies	187	
	Yes	63	34%
	No	75	40%
	Not Sure	49	26%
<p><i>Responses included:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People with physical disabilities who have difficulty using computer or phone keyboards. • People who are emotionally vulnerable. • People with poor literacy skills. • People with language difficulties. • Homeless people. <p><i>Comments tend to echo those to the first question. The cost to the caller of long calls to the council is also mentioned.</i></p>			
<p>4. There will be people who will have difficulty using or are unable to use the automated phone switchboard including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ People with hearing impairments ➤ People with learning difficulties ➤ People who have difficulty understanding spoken English 	Replies	181	
	Yes	52	29%
	No	90	50%
	Not Sure	39	22%

Summary of responses to the on-line survey.

<p>➤ Some elderly people</p> <p>These people will still be able to use the online service if they are able to do so, or can make an appointment at Gateway to see someone face-to-face (with an interpreter if necessary).</p> <p>Do you feel this approach would meet their needs?</p> <p>5. Are there other groups of people who may have difficulty with an automated phone service?</p> <p>Any comments?</p>			
<p><i>Responses included:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People with physical disabilities who have difficulty using computer or phone keyboards. • People who are emotionally vulnerable. • People with poor literacy skills. <p><i>There are many negative comments about automated phone services which are perceived as difficult to use, unfriendly and time consuming. Many respondents emphasised the desirability of interaction with a person. There is also concern that there would be additional pressure on Gateway from people visiting rather than using the phone service.</i></p>			
<p>6. Moving to an appointments system in Gateway will encourage drop-in callers to use the self-service terminals (with assistance from Gateway staff as needed). However some people will have to be seen immediately and it will not be appropriate that they wait for an appointment. Gateway staff will be trained to recognise where this is the case and an immediate interview will be available in these exceptional cases.</p> <p>Can you see any difficulties with this approach?</p> <p>Any comments?</p>	Replies	186	
	Yes	114	61%
	No	42	23%
	Not Sure	30	16%
<p><i>There are many negative comments about this approach. These include:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scepticism that vulnerable people will be recognised, particularly at busy times. • Training is unlikely to help. • That the service will be seen as “unfriendly and uncaring”. • There will be long waiting times, even for self-service. • Customers will be aggressive so that they are seen immediately. • It is unreasonable to expect people to call twice, once to make an appointment and once to attend. <p><i>Again the desirability of interaction with a person is emphasised.</i></p>			
<p>7. Other than online via the web and automated phone services, are there other approaches that the council should be considering when looking at customer contact?</p> <p>Please give your reasons for your answer.</p>	Replies	130	
<p><i>There is an emphasis on face-to-face contact, either maintaining the status-quo or expanding face-to-face to include more visits or training library/housing staff to be able to help with more queries. Other suggestions include mobile phone apps and greater use of email with more timely responses.</i></p>			
<p>8. Over time the council will move as many services as</p>	Replies	116	

Summary of responses to the on-line survey.

<p>possible to online and/or phone self-service.</p> <p>Are there any services that you feel should not be considered for this approach and why do you think they are not suitable?</p>			
<p><i>Responses include:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Adult and children's social services.</i> • <i>Safeguarding.</i> • <i>Any dealings with people with learning difficulties.</i> • <i>Homeless support</i> • <i>Financial problems</i> • <i>Cash office</i> 			
<p>9. To encourage people to use online forms the number of paper forms will be substantially reduced and they will not be widely distributed. There will always be a paper version if it is needed, but one will have to be requested. Can you see this causing any difficulties?</p> <p>10. Are there any council services where this approach is not appropriate?</p>	Replies	185	
	Yes	96	52%
	No	56	30%
	Not Sure	33	18%
<p><i>Knowing that a paper form can be requested is seen as an issue, as is queuing to get a form where one can just be picked up currently. The difficulty this would create for people being visited in their homes was raised – visiting officers take paper forms with them.</i></p>			
<p>11. The council is considering whether to extend its contract with Capita by five years beyond the current end date of 30 September 2017.</p> <p>Do you have any views on such a contract extension, or the alternatives that you would like the council to take into account?</p>	Replies	139	
<p><i>Mixed views, but with the majority being against an extension to the contract. Views expressed include:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Services should be provided by council staff.</i> • <i>There should be competition to ensure best value.</i> • <i>The contact is providing good value.</i> • <i>There are issues with the current service provision by Capita</i> • <i>The current arrangements are too restricting</i> • <i>The contract has moved work to council managers</i> 			
<p>15. Any further comments?</p>	Replies	70	
<p><i>There is some support here for modernising services and providing more on-line access, but the concerns over automated phones and reduced face-to-face access are repeated.</i></p> <p><i>There is some criticism that the consultation has not been publicised wider and that the paper forms have been delayed. Others thanked the council for the opportunity to comment.</i></p>			

NB. Questions 12 to 14 ask for sex, age range and postcode

Analysis of on-line responses by ward

	Question 1			Question 2			Question 4			Question 6			Question 9		
	Yes	No	Not sure	Yes	No	Not sure	Yes	No	Not sure	Yes	No	Not sure	Yes	No	Not sure
Bargate	2	8	1	3	6	3	4	6	2	7	4	1	6	4	2
Bassett	3	3	0	3	3	0	3	3	0	4	1	1	3	3	0
Bevois	1	7	0	1	5	2	1	4	3	7	0	1	7	0	1
Bitterne	0	4	0	0	2	2	0	2	1	3	0	1	2	0	2
Bitterne Park	1	7	1	3	4	2	1	6	2	3	1	5	4	2	3
Coxford	0	3	0	1	1	1	2	1	0	1	1	0	0	2	1
Freemantle	2	8	4	4	6	3	2	7	3	8	3	3	7	3	4
Harefield	1	5	1	3	2	2	2	3	1	4	3	0	3	3	0
Millbrook	3	4	1	5	0	3	4	3	1	4	3	1	1	4	3
Peartree	4	5	1	5	4	1	6	3	1	6	4	0	7	3	0
Portswood	2	10	2	4	5	5	4	6	4	9	3	2	6	5	3
Redbridge	0	5	0	2	1	2	1	3	1	3	0	2	3	1	1
Shirley	1	3	3	3	2	2	3	3	1	4	1	2	4	1	2
Sholing	1	2	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	3	0	0	3	0	0
Swaythling	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	1
Woolston	4	7	1	5	4	4	5	4	3	7	2	3	6	6	1
Not known	5	50	7	20	28	15	13	34	14	40	16	7	34	18	9
	30	132	23	63	75	49	52	90	39	114	42	30	96	56	33

NB – Where the ward is shown as not known this is because:

- The question wasn't answered, or
- The postcode given is not in the city, or
- The full postcode was not given.

Detailed comments received as part of the on-line consultation

Question 1 - *Not everyone will have access to their own PC or smartphone. Public access PCs will be available in Gateway and libraries. A phone service through an automated switchboard will also be available. Do you feel providing these facilities meets the needs of people without access to the internet? Any comments?*

Not everybody wants to use a computer - not every query fits nicely into a tick box survey.

Some of the people I visit on behalf of the council can not get out of the house, they do not have internet feel isolated without it already as every thing they read or watch tells them there is information on the web. If changing is going to make the phone call longer when they do try to phone in they will give up and could be at risk in the community with they feel no support. I myself is in my 50's and have internet connection in my home I would still rather speak to a human being when trying to sort things out, I would especially want a quick contact if I was going through a crisis.

Needs to cater to the older generation, people with visual impairment and without computer knowledge.

I believe people attending Gateway need at the very minimum the service that is currently being offered

Its all very well saying that libraries have Public Access PCs yet they've been hit hard with budget cuts and opening hours have been cut and will continue to be cut, not all of us can get into Gateway.

I am concerned that it will not always be possible for Customers to come into Gateway therefore their enquiry may not be dealt with.

For older or less mobile people who find it difficult to travel, it will be very difficult to regularly arrange an appointment and get to the library/gateway each time they need to use a service. These more vulnerable people may also find it harder to use an automated phone system, and be more used to talking to someone. If they have to wait a long time to get through to a 'real person' on the phone this will add to their phone bills too.

Because a number of people are still unable to use the internet and they will also feel 'time pressured' to complete items e.g. forms on-line if they are sat in Gateway with a large queue behind them

Pointing them in the direction of a free PC is not enough. There needs to be adequate support for people who have not used a PC before or do not use them regularly. I'm concerned about directing people to libraries. Whenever I go to the central library the computers are all in use. Library hours have been reduced. Will there be more library staff to help people?

It will be elderly people who will suffer from these proposals they don't all understand the internet and it would take them longer to get through to speak to someone if they understand all the options!!

Many of our clients do not have internet access and furthermore find it difficult to leave the house. Extended telephone menus can be extremely confusing and run up high phone bills for clients with little money to spare. An option to speak to an adviser should be offered on the first menu to avoid running up high bills and confusing clients who find it difficult to take in information.

There are a significant number of people in the city such as vulnerable adults living in supported housing and older vulnerable people living in their own homes who not only don't have access to the Internet but also have other problems, such as physical and mental ill health, that make it very difficult for them to leave their homes and access the Internet through public facilities.

A lot of people without Internet access have, in our experience, one of the following issues: Mobile phone only household - calls to call centres are expensive for mobile only households, particularly if they have to listen to lots of options and it takes a long time to speak to a human. Maybe look at 0300 numbers and 0303 numbers, though I'm not sure if these are free to the user or just low cost. This is important as across the board, people with the lowest incomes - often includes mobile only households, are the ones that pay the most to access services and pay bills. Not addressing this, would not be good from an equality impact point of view. Poor literacy - 1 in 5 of the U.K. population do not have functional literacy (includes ability to fill in forms) and this is higher amongst people who access a lot of council services. People with poor literacy struggle to use the Internet and fill in forms. Phone may work, but in many cases face-to-face is the only option. Need to make sure there are face-to-face options which are adequately staffed. Disabilities - again people with disabilities tend to be over represented in the lower socio economic groups, who tend to access council services more. Both physical and mental characteristics of illnesses can make the Internet or phone unviable options depending on the disability and extent. Need to ensure there is still a face-to-face options that is well staffed. Older people - whilst many older people do use the Internet, there are many who do not, especially amongst the frail elderly. In our experience older people often preferred a face-to-face service in order to ensure their understanding of what is happening. Need to ensure there is a face-to-face service that is well staffed, and that the needs of older people are well understood. Even for those with Internet access who can use it, it needs to be borne in mind that a lot of people do not have printers/ opportunity to print copies of forms they have filled in, which is of concern to some if it is all online, especially if it is something like Planning Permission. Also how will you confirm that the form has been received successfully and what to expect will happen next?

Not everyone is confident enough to use PC's

Detailed comments received as part of the on-line consultation

Question 1 - *Not everyone will have access to their own PC or smartphone. Public access PCs will be available in Gateway and libraries. A phone service through an automated switchboard will also be available. Do you feel providing these facilities meets the needs of people without access to the internet? Any comments?*

Will the telephone contact arrangements be free? Otherwise the more vulnerable/less well off may incur costs not incurred by others accessing services.

Not everyone can use PC's

Many of the most vulnerable customers will always need face to face support and advice. In addition people may be vulnerable at key times eg trauma, ill health or bereavement. I recently had to deal with DWP about a bereavement issue and they have a specialist section for face to face work for people in these circumstances. Pensions service do home visits for benefits take ups. From my knowledge of working in Southampton over many years I estimate about 30% of residents need more not less face to face help and ideally it should be nearer where they live as having to come into Gateway is a huge effort on public transport. Its also not always able to help people and the service can be expensive £1.25 for 1 A4 photocopy I would advise you to have a focus group for block reps and for tenants and residents associations

Not completely. will there be enough computers available to meet demand based on the amount of caller traffic into gateway currently? your brief also suggests that it may be time consuming for people using the remote phone service which again can lead to customer dissatisfaction.

we have already learnt from the new smart city card for the bridge that people do not want to use on line, this is the reason they still come in to housing offices as they want to speak to someone and its very frustrating when you ring the SCC for any thing all you get are a long list of options.

Not if (like my parents) they have no knowledge of using a PC and avoid them like the plague. I think the two systems need to run parallel for a while yet.

As long as there are still enough customer support advisors available for a face to face service for those who do not have access or are not IT literate.

Yes if the libraries are open at times which are convenient for people who are working

People with disabilities will find it difficult to access libraries and Gateway for use public PCs. Automated switch board can be very confusing for hard of hearing, older people and those with learning difficulties.

People with low literacy and/or poor English will have difficulty using PC based services. They will also lack the confidence to use them and will be discouraged from sorting out problems at an early stage leading to complications which can take SCC staff longer to resolve.

If people cannot go out due to a physical disability or an anxiety issue they will not be able to access these.

the option to talk to a person must still be available as these are usually the most vulnerable

"meets the needs" - the answer is in the question. Every case is different, needing nuanced answers not available from a robot.

Many people do not have internet access at home and have to rely on library facilities, which have been significantly reduced lately

People feel that it is a way of cutting costs, and also increasing the costs of getting hold of people in the council for a variety of things. Plus the automated switchboards are not always the most clearest of things to understand as there will be times when they don't direct you to the place you want to go to.

There will be some people who do not have internet access

Not everyone is able to actively leave their home, everyone they want to contact you. What if the weather is bad or the nearest public internet access is far away. Not everyone can use a pc or what if they forget their details.

Opening hours of libraries is not enough. Is it possible for one pc in each library to be reserved for gateway use?

Yes, but only so long as the council can give a commitment to keep libraries open. To close libraries or shorten opening hours will discriminate against those members of the public without access to the internet.

Public services providing these PCs have reduced opening hours compared to a year ago, and the risk that they are gradually eroded further will mean that access to these resources and therefore the council's communication will be reduced too.

some older people get confused with automated phone services, there must be access to a person. Sheltered housing usually have a community room these could be accessed to help train the local older population in the use of the internet. Child services and domestic violence in the home should always stay staff orientated.

Detailed comments received as part of the on-line consultation

Question 1 - *Not everyone will have access to their own PC or smartphone. Public access PCs will be available in Gateway and libraries. A phone service through an automated switchboard will also be available. Do you feel providing these facilities meets the needs of people without access to the internet? Any comments?*

Although it may be off putting for the elderly

providing they are clear and easy to use

Depends on how many libraries survive cut backs and the hours they are open. People work shift patterns and people have more than one part time job so a 9-5 Monday to Friday opening of libraries and the Gateway would not be sufficient. Automated phone systems need to be professionally designed and should not be money making premium numbers. The number(s) provided should be included in the included number range in the common phone packages provided by mobile and fixed service providers.

Most people who do not have internet are too concerned or frightened to learn how to use it - then automated telephones are just as bad to them.

Elderly may find automated system daunting

Going to use a terminal somewhere is not always convenient and you only get a set time on the terminal in some settings

Older Persons need to talk to a human via a direct line not via 10 prompts to get to the right Dept. Older Persons do not have or want PC skills they want someone to talk to. Council should make arrangements for persons over 50 years of age to have paper forms....

Everyone knows that automated switchboards are universally disliked so while I support the introduction of more online services, why on earth would you introduce a service you know will be disliked by almost everyone.

Older people often need help and these are the very people who are unlikely to be able to use the internet. As people get older they are not as capable of doing things which they perhaps could have handled at a younger age.

Those without internet are more likely to be elderly. They may not even be able to get out and access any facility.

Whilst I am happy with this I have elderly relatives who would not use the internet so would be totally reliant on a phone service which you describe as slow and will take longer to get through to an operator

Unfortunately the people most likely to require assistance with services are those without access to the internet (via whatever medium. these people will be further alienated from participation in society.

a lot of elderly people will not use new technology

Need to speak to local people when you need to phone up. Haven't heard good things about Capita.

Some matters are better discussed face to face or perhaps given personal difficulties of communication /understanding or a personal issue being discussed a 2f meeting would be preferred by the customer

My answer is qualified with 'so long as there is enough funding for the extra PCs'.

No when ever I have gone to gateway, I have had to leave before seeing anyone because it takes too long and I run out of time. It's OK if you're not working but difficult for a working person to be able to wait around.

most people can make it to libraries

For the majority yes, but ensuring that those that are vulnerable won't be disadvantaged by these changes.

Not enough access points

People like to be dealt with face to face and there is nothing worse than automated response. This does not allow for people's questions.

You need to consider vulnerable clients. Some clients have never used PCs, or smartphones. Automated switchboard is not good for elderly clients

There are not enough staff to help those unsure/unable to use internet. also saying they are available in Libraries may be so but there is a cost to printing which isn't taken into account.

Unsuitable for some elderly people (eg my mum, who although still independent has early stages of Alzheimers) who cannot use computers and are confused by automated switchboards. They rely on letter writing or face-to-face contact

The fittest and most able will manage to make use of public internet provision and will benefit from learning to use this technology. I am concerned about the situation of older and vulnerable people.

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Many people especially those with mental health problems, older people with hearing difficulties have difficulty conducting phone conversations. In my experience the options offered are often phrased in such a way as not to seem relevant to the query or not include anything about the query. An example is Southern Water one of whose options is 'If you want to pay your bill' there is nothing that says 'If you want to amend your direct debit'. Is this paying a bill or something completely different and not included in their menu.

there will be a loss of privacy and that may give a worry about security too

It will not be appropriate for those who are not comfortable with technology and would prefer to speak to a real person.

Some people have no experience of computers and may not want to use them. They should not be made to use something they do not want to.

Older people may not use public PCs and unless the switchboard is very clearly and simply organised

please realise that not everyone has access to the internet. this applies mostly to the elderly who are most likely to need help or information

Concerned that phone calls will involve longer waits

Will not meet the needs of those with English as a second language or low education/levels of understanding.

Not everyone is computer literate and even those who are can often not negotiate their way around the system. Face to face contact is essential.

help for vulnerable consumers on a personal basis must also be available

It needs to be remembered that many libraries are being closed or reduced services, hours etc. If PC's are provided at Gateway, how are these managed, time allocated, queuing system etc. If someone has made a special visit to Gateway, surely they may as well speak to an Advisor in person?

Those most in need of information and help such as elderly may well not have access to on-line or mobile facilities

There is a risk that the most vulnerable will suffer. It is not clear how 'unable' will be differentiated from 'unwilling'.

Even if they have access they may not be able to use a computer or understand the site

Long waiting periods for both public and internal staff listening to public service announcements. Callers wrongly transferred by Contact Centre and not announce, failing to give recipients chance to respond by saying the call is not for our team, Phone just put down as soon as transferred so caller has to go through the whole explanation they have just given to contact centre operative again; very poor customer service. It seems the Contact Centre are not able or willing to go the extra mile to find out what a customer really wants, particularly if they have language difficulties, hearing or speech problems and seem to just transfer callers to get them off their line for someone else to sort out. Callers are therefore, very frustrated by the time they get put through to us. As for transferring back wrongly directed callers to the Contact Centre, even by calling internally we have to queue with the public and are subject to the same public announcements, sometimes taking as long as 15 - 20 minutes, by which time the caller we are trying to put back through who was wrongly transferred in the first place has hung up. Members of the public, particularly social care clients should not be expected to wait for such lengthy periods at cost to them, particularly as often their only form of contact is via a mobile phone so long waiting periods eat in to their credit, and may well learning difficulties or mental health problems which may be exacerbated by lengthy periods of waiting for an answer, on the telephone causing stress, frustration and anxiety. As for public access to PCs in Gateway, many social care clients, and indeed members of the public do not have these at home, nor the inclination or ability to use one. They are often frail and elderly, and unable to travel any distance to access one, and would not know how to anyway. As an employee of the council, I, myself do not find the council website user friendly and often find difficulty getting the information I need, and find that I often find outdated information which raises concern about reliability of what a search throws up. Extending the Capita Contract is definitely a bad idea for both Council staff and members of the public, particularly the social care client group and the elderly.

But it does not help those who need additional support by face to face contact with a person. People who have a disability or who are intimidated by computers / don't have the skills to use them.

I work in the Central Library where people without internet access are directed to use our public machines. The problem is that without a computer, many of them do not have IT skills to use the computers without a lot of staff help which we do not have now. It would be good if the city promoted IT skills in a big way. The learning centre in the Library does some courses for job seekers but more is needed.

Leaflets and brochures (especially guides to better care and support and residential care guide) are not ordered, or only provided in very limited numbers, this makes it difficult to give information to clients who do not have access to the internet.

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Because some people don't have internet for a reason, they don't want it! Some do not wish to travel or can't without support or assistance especially the elderly & it won't help people who do not speak or read English.

more free wireless internet access across the city would be good (in tower blocks and sheltered housing schemes)

Not everyone can get gateway and my understanding is that they are not prepared to help people when they do, other than point to the nearest pc. Not everyone is comfortable using a computer you know! Phone service? oh come on!

an automated phone service is always frustrating to use and hard to get ones head round if you are old or disabled, personally I struggle with them even though I am fit, technology literate and in my prime...

This will have specific implications for disabled/blind etc. No access to online facilities and/or 'phone contact costing/taking more time.

Does this work successfully in other councils?

Gateway access via PC will be limited to those who can use the machines. The crush in Gateway always puts me off, will there be enough machines? Phone service - will there be dozens of alternatives following press 1 for.. etc?

Still difficulties with people who have certain disabilities.

Will enough public access PCs be available?

Phone services tend to be 0845 or other premium rate numbers. Those who are unable to access on-line are often the poorest in society who cannot afford this type of phone service. These phone services also then often have a list of options and you never speak to anyone. There are very few pcs available in Libraries and most libraries have just experienced a cut in hours. If you have to come into Gateway to use a pc it will be easier to speak to some-one and more cost effective. PC and/or phone only often lead to second or thirds requests to get it right, when one meeting gives you the opportunity to ask and answer questions and get it right first time.

Too many libraries are no longer open as much as they used to be, if at all

Some people will need face to face contact and they will not have straightforward matters that can easily be resolved.

don't you feel that removing the human element in such a draconian way will endanger us to become an insular society. how will people with mental health issues cope if the online system isn't in a logical format that they might require. I consider myself of average intelligence and I find this compulsive need to replace people with machines extremely worrying. as for increasing Capita's contract, do you happen to know what they are known as? Bring on the profits!!!

a) there are not enough public access PCs in public libraries b) the regrettable cut in library opening hours means a corresponding difficulty in accessing these PCs c) what about those residents who do not have easy access to a library, through physical difficulties, lack of public transport etc? d) what about those who are unable for various reasons to use the internet etc?

Detailed comments received as part of the on-line consultation

Question 2 - *There will be people who will have difficulty using or are unable to use an online service including: people with visual impairments; people with learning difficulties; some elderly people. These people will still be able to use the phone service or can make an appointment to see someone face-to-face in Gateway. Do you feel this approach would meet their needs? Are there other groups of people who may have difficulty with online access? Comments?*

Elderly people and those with learning difficulties are not going to want to sift through a multitude of options on the automated phone service. How that system is setup is key to whether it's adequate.

Anybody who wants to talk to a human being.

contrary to believe there are a lot of people in the city that does not have internet connection. This is not just a young persons City.

There are still many people who are not able/comfortable with using computers. Also people usually prefer seeing someone face-to-face, so the appointment system is likely to be subject to high-demand.

face to face contact must be maintained

People who have to provide support to relatives will need to be able to drop into gateway to access services with the relative to provide assistance

As long as it does not take in excess of 2 Mins to get an answer to a telephone call which is not uncommon at present. Having to wait in excess of 3 mins is also not unheard of.

There are a considerable number of people out there that will not do things online as they don't want to or don't trust computers, fraud and the like and I have to say that I know at least 4 people in their 20s & 30s who refuse to use computers and self service anything

These 'customers' pay the wages of all the employees of the City Council and of Capita - is it too much to ask that a 'customer' speak to a real person and not have to run the gauntlet of automated services.

People who prefer to speak to a person

Difficult for those who have English as a second language, or those who do not have someone to assist them make an appointment or who cannot physically come into Gateway

Person report things online, but still phone to check it has been received. So repeat contact

People without experience in IT/computer skills. Could also be confusing for people for whom English is not their first language.

A number of these people will probably also have difficulty in working out which 'option' to select when using the automated phone system. As for face-to-face appointments, how long will people have to wait? How many appointments will be available, will there be evening and weekend appointments to suit everyone?

Some people who are physically disabled, whose impairment prevents them from using a PC.

Anyone who is long-term sick or disabled may have difficulty accessing online services. Our clients have mental health problems - many cannot afford broadband and are unable to use libraries or other public spaces due to anxiety and other issues. Furthermore it is not just the groups described above who may have difficulty learning to use the internet - again many of our clients struggle with basic tasks due to poor memory and concentration caused by their mental health conditions.

People without access or skills in IT

Adults with mental health problems and substance misuse problems, of which there are a large number in the city.

People with poor literacy, people with poor IT skills and people with disabilities affecting memory will struggle with online services. Many people who do not regularly use the Internet may need some hand holding the first couple of times - need to ensure this help is easily available. The phone can cause problems for people with learning difficulties - both mild and severe, and people with poor memory problems. People tend to say 'I think I said that on the phone and I'm not sure if that was right', or 'I can't remember what I said', and become concerned/ confused about what was said/ agreed. A drop in service face-to-face service should still be available, as many people will travel over especially, costing money.

Vulnerable people who have problems around drugs / alcohol addictions etc

Many clients I deal with who either have poor use of English language, mental health issues or poor confidence/ intellectual ability need help to even access any phone service with too many options and also need help to access appointments system

Many people prefer talking to a human being rather than a machine!

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People that cannot afford PC's

The cost of access at home is beyond many households budgets and an increasing number of people are on low incomes. Those who do have access via mobile phone often don't have a printer so can't fill in and check forms, prepare for meetings, take part in consultation etc. Access online via libraries is more difficult as libraries close branches and reduce opening hours. Demand for services when libraries are open is increasing as benefits have to be claimed on line and students need places to study. A significant number of people who need to contact the council do not have the literacy and technical skills to go on line. Phone services are expensive from mobiles. The council's switchboard is in my own experience slow and poor at connecting you to the correct section or individual. I think people should be seen closer to where they live. I suspect that many people will, like me, have made an appointment at Gateway and find that the information isn't available so the journey needs to be repeated. The proposed changes discriminate not just against those in your list above but against people on low incomes,

the most effective communications mechanism for difficult/complex or unpalatable messages is often face to face

Those over 65 who are the ones who mostly need the services often without computer facilities.

people whose first language is not English. also a lot of people still have poor I.T skills which may make it difficult for them to know 'how to' even if they know where.

Only if there is a one stop option to talk to an operative.

Those who are not IT literate or do not have access to online facilities.

Adults with poor literacy numeracy

English as a second language speakers might find it difficult too

People for whom English is not their first language and others will have limited reading and writing skills.

People with poor English or learning difficulties may struggle with a telephone service. An appointment-only service still requires them to use a PC or telephone to make the appointment in the first place!

Some people who suffer with mental health problems.

Deaf people as they do not always understand English as it is not their first language

I am not a member of this group

Physically getting to a terminal if you are at work all day or even on shift work.

People who do not have access to the net either at home or through a public access venue, and there will be some people who do not have a telephone but not many but a few.

People with learning difficulties

Foreigners, people without technology skills

Online services can be designed with people with visual impairments in mind

There are people who cannot afford to have internet access/buy a pc/smartphone

the homeless, victims of domestic violence

There will be some instances where an elderly person may struggle to get their request across so home visits may be required to fully understand the requirements for a council-requested job.

This could work if there were enough people to assist but I doubt if there would be. This would mean that the most vulnerable people would be left waiting and confused

people whose disability causes problems with using their hands eg. severe arthritis, parkinsons disease

some disabled people with limited hand mobility,

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My cousin is over 90 years old and his wife 87years old. They still pay their community payment in cash at he Gateway each month. It will confuse them if this method is changed.

Whilst online access to some services is welcomed for those who can or want to use it, it is not ideal for everyone and any situation. Anyone who is either not familiar with computers (whatever age) or not trusting them especially with sensitive information. Some people actually want to deal with a human rather than an automated service. You can't always get an answer from a computer. Making an appointment is also not ideal for everyone. Losing the ability to pop in when convenient would in my opinion be a big loss. People with for example mental health issues may not be able to judge in advance when they could make it down for an appointment.

If you can't use the online or phone service how will you make an appointment to see somebody? Attending the Gateway to make an appointment and then having to return another day is not acceptable. What help, if any, will be available to people who visit libraries to access online services? Will housing offices be able to help? Will Gateway staff have regular surgeries at libraries rather than sitting in their ivory tower?

If the phone service is easy to use yes, but invariably it will be press 1 then 6 then 5 then 4 with questions that do not fit purpose for the vulnerable.

Some people with physical difficulites

The over 50 years of age have no PC skills and do not want to use this type of system

Some people just do not want to use the internet as they are scared of change and may need extra education in its use.

there will always be people who are uncomfortable with computers, not able to afford a computer or would just rather deal direct with a real person.

there are many disabilities where people would find this difficult not just visual impairments and learning difficulties

Arthritic and similar conditions.

the young unemployed and other disadvantaged groups who are being more and more alienated by political dogma and bureaucratic B.S.

many elderly can not use online methods

Gateway is already a total shambles with exdisting Staff-long delays inevitable.Reduce or eliminate Staff and the service must deteriorate even further

Our most vulnerable should not have to make an appointment

People where english is not their first language. People with complex / detailed needs or requests especially in housing / homelessness situations
Complainants may wish to speak to someone f2f

Some groups of disabled people - any with problems affecting fingers/hands will also have problems as they can't always easily use keyboards or phones.

Those with no literacy skills - through my experience some people still cannot read People who do not speak/read English (their primary language isn't English)

There seems to be a big assumption that the younger generation are computer literate or intelligent enough to use on-line. Having worked in schools this is not accurate. This statement also applies to any person of any age, not necessarily whether elderly etc, that some people do not use computers at all. This is a personal choice.

Vulnerable Children and clients who can't read or write or speak English.

People need people!!!! Online forms and contact are not helpful to many, face to face is important. Phone services are poor for people with hearing disabilities and even making an appointment to see someone face-to-face sounds as if it would be made on the phone or online. MANY do not have easy computer access or knowledge.

you say if they ring it will take longer to actually get through to a person or the right department! how frustrating is that? Not acceptable and not a service.

Homeless

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Any person who is not IT literate will have a problem. It is not always older people or people with learning difficulties.

Speakers of languages other than English. This is likely to affect a high percentage of middle-aged women from Muslim families.

Making an appointment to meet someone is preferable. People with Mental Health problems may have difficulties accessing a phone service but may also forget appointment times. They often do things spontaneously. Many people do not have a landline therefore how much will the phone call cost from a mobile phone? Will this be too expensive for those on a low income How will people whose first language is not English cope? What system will be in place for those who are deaf and do not have a computer

People with no knowledge of computer technology??, how easy will it be to book an appointment?

some elderly people and some people with learning difficulties will not be comfortable using an automated phone service, they need to be able to get through to a real person with a minimum number of selection options

different languages

Why always the need to make an appointment?

Will depend on quality and speed of phone service

Illiterate people and those with English as a foreign language

Please keep the human interface.

Nearly everyone needs to be able to have face to face contact just to ask simple questions and be pointed in the right direction. Even if you have to wait a while at the moment you know how will see someone that day to explain things. The fact you can call to make an appointment will only add to worry time and stress levels. Too many organisations have gone this route and it means nothing but trouble.

There are still many people who are unable to navigate through the internet who do not have learning difficulties but not high achievers at school. There are still many adults who are unable to read properly, how are they going to manage?

People with English as a second language

People for whom English is not their first language may find contact more difficult. If those with other difficulties are faced with more menu options and / or a longer wait for contact, they may give up or put more pressure on other agencies, such as Social Services, to help them.

People who are computer illiterate

People from other ethnic backgrounds how's first language is not English.

Providing there are enough staff to cover the appointments on a daily basis and an appointment can be made within a number of hours as opposed to days.

A phone service in its current form would not meet the requirements of the above because of the long delay in getting a reply and the apparent lack of understanding/experience of some of the operatives as described previously. This could be very frustrating and stressful for people with psychological and mental health problems (not covered in the list above, who often see this as an obstacle to getting to where they want to be. I myself have had incidents where people have complained to me about the inept abilities of the Contact Centre. As I said previously, for people with severe physical disability or for those who are very frail, even getting out of the house is a challenge, let alone making their way in to the city centre to access the free PC or face to face contact.

See previous rant.

People with medical conditions or mental health problems. Because listening to the annoying automated messages again and again will give you mental health issues if you don't already have them. What about people with speech impairments who cannot talk properly over the phone & cannot travel without assistance? How long will they have to wait to resolve a problem.

Sit for hours trying to phone a real person. People will just love that. Nothing like press 1 then 2 then 3 then 4.... getting the picture?

people with hearing impairments

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People who are not used to using computers - because they do not have them at home, nor internet access. So although terminals are to be provided, these people will feel at a disadvantage, and may avoid coming for advice because they don't want to stand out. This is not silly, but a common human reaction when people feel they lack skills they are expected to have.

Previous comment refers

Staff without PC access. Even if PC made available, additional lost time incurred by managers helping them to complete forms

People with limited means. To get into town requires bus fare to phone requires money. Often multiple visits are required. Cant facilities be made available more locally. Also there are many people in the City who do not fall into these groups and are not conversant with technology and they will be the ones who require the service. people who work in offices and use computers all the time will be fine.

See previous answer and some people dislike the 'coldness' of computer access, preferring to speak to a pleasant human being who can understand subtlety in the way a pedantic computer cannot.

Mental health. Promoting good mental health means COMMUNICATION.

The call staff will need to be very helpful to these people as it is sometimes extremely confusing, even for us being sent through a series of alternative. Sometimes I have even been returned to the start. Other information relayed whilst waiting can only add to this confusion.

Please see previous answer. Your own stats show that only 70% of the population of Southampton interact on-line with you. As Southampton has high levels of poverty, a majority of people will not be able to afford a pc, printer and the telephone connections. This will put additional pressure on the inevitable reduced staffing in Gateway. People will give up.

There are those who choose not to use the internet following bad experiences (such as our less than reliable online payments system) and bad press. Not all issues are related to Revs and Bens!

Homeless Non English reading

people with low literacy levels / people who have trouble reading and comprehending written information

As before, for those with more complex problems a face to face contact is better

Most people prefer to be dealt with by a person. Go into Asda at any given time and the only ones using the self service check outs are students and people in a rush. I ring the call centre regularly to get through to my local library and it is so frustrating as I have to go through the whole gammat of questions before they finally agree that I need to be put through. as for making an appointment to see someone at Gateway, is this going to end up like a Gps where you have to wait 2 weeks to get an appt yet only have 1 days in which to pay the council tax bill!!!!

homeless, less organised and disengaged people who tend only to use drop in services. Illiterate people. In other words, people with serious needs.

What about those with mobility difficulties?

Detailed comments received as part of the on-line consultation

Questions 4 and 5 - *There will be people who will have difficulty using or are unable to use the automated phone switchboard including: people with hearing impairments; people with learning difficulties; people who have difficulty understanding spoken English; some elderly people. These people will still be able to use the online service if they are able to do so, or can make an appointment at Gateway to see someone face-to-face (with an interpreter if necessary). Do you feel this approach would meet their needs? Are there other groups of people who may have difficulty with an automated phone service? Any comments?*

Anybody who suffers from even a mild form of stress disorder. Automated switchboards are great for everybody except the users.

Please do not automatically assume people with disabilities are unable to use technology - many if not most are more than capable. Add translation features to the website

If you have say arthritis, and are unable to mobilise outside they are unable to get to Gateway. Also if we are asking them to try to do this will there be someone there that is able to answer any of these concerns whether it be for housing, care needs, benefits ECT. If it is felt they can then be sign posted and have chronic depression or Dementia they will not be able to follow the advice

Members of the public and professional customers often find automated phone systems very frustrating-especially if they are ringing with complaints or concerns.

Automated phone services do not meet anyone's needs and the vast majority of people dislike them intensely and have nothing but trouble from them. In fact I believe many companies are moving away from them and using this fact as a positive marketing exercise to attract more customers. You have not mentioned above people on limited incomes who make up the vast majority of Gateway Customers, once the phone is answered by the machine the charges start to rack up, by the time you've pressed 1 for this and 2 for that you are then held in a queue and could be on the phone for 30 minutes before you speak to a human. Are you going to make these calls free from landlines and mobiles? If not this idea should be dismissed out of hand!

Automated phone services are slow, clumsy and increase customer frustration. A menu system that is complex or has too many choices makes service worse instead of better

Blind etc

Anyone that has had a brain injury as they won't necessarily be able to compute what's being asked of them. Will Automated phone services allow for a carer to help?

Anyone already irritated by the endless options, repeated (usually inappropriate) automated messages which seem to have replaced human contact and actual service

Costly if too long on automated service,

Persons get fed up with press this option for this and this for that. It will be as bad as ringing the bank

See my previous comments

People who are unable to use online services and also unable to use the phone system, for example an elderly person with a hearing impairment. Will they still be able to walk into Gateway and be seen?

It depends on how easy the phone system elderly people find it confusing now!!

As previously, our clients with mental health needs may struggle with an automated service. Extended menu options can be confusing particularly for those with concentration and memory problems. Furthermore there is the issue of increased phone bills due to having to go through multiple menus.

Very elderly people with vision impairments who simply can't react quickly enough to automated instructions.

I suspect lots of people will drop in, as if they struggle with understanding and contacting organisations, in some cases they are unlikely to be able to call to arrange an appointment. Need to ensure there is still a drop in face-to-face service that is well staffed. People with conditions affecting their memory recall will struggle - includes lots of conditions including learning disabilities, dyslexia, people who have had stroke, head injuries, mental illness, substance misuse, people on certain medications, Alzheimers/ dementia etc.

In course of work with people who have debts I come across many whose lack of confidence / mental issues and lack of experience with technology conspire against them using automated systems

People that only use mobiles as the prices will be expensive

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Phone services are expensive from Mobiles The long list of options costs money and is very confusing and hard for people to remember . Many people do not read or write well The council's switchboard is in my own experience slow and poor at connecting you to the correct section or individual The automated system is useless for most people

those with limited understanding of what the right questions are to ask, telling their own story is not going to be possible through this system?

As before

there are a lot of people who lack the confidence to contact official departments by phone - not knowing what to say or who to ask for. these people are often represented by support agencies who may not always have the time to deal with urgent issues.

Success will be dependent on how obstructive we are to facilitate face to face appointments. (If we are measuring success in terms of customer satisfaction).

They still need to use a phone or PC to make an appointment. If it is a simple problem it can waste advisers' time reserving a whole appointment slot for something that can be dealt with in a few minutes. People may not think it worth making an appointment until the problem has got out of control and has become more complex to resolve.

If you feel excluded, you don't ask. It is far too humiliating. What you are doing is reducing the level of service so that only those who can cope with it, use it and then you can say how the number of queries has gone down. What will the cost be of the automated service? Experience has shown that you spend a significant amount of time holding on for a reply and it is always on a premium rate.

Depends on how quick it is to get through and the cost of the call.

Disabled people who probably have a special phone service which will be incompatible with yours.

There are text comm facilities for hearing impaired people

If an elderly person has difficulty using an automated phone, it is likely that they will also have difficulty accessing transport to get into town/arranging an appointment

the homeless

Again would there be sufficient staff to meet the needs of vulnerable people

Automated switchboards are very impersonal and can be confusing with too many options and levels. If it was limited to 2 levels with not too many options this would be more manageable.

My 90 year cousin can't use the phone very well. So how will he cope?

Anyone who actually wants to speak to someone when they ring. An extended automated service is all very well for those that want to use the service but for people who purely want to speak to someone it is a great irritation to have to navigate through numerous options before getting the opportunity to speak to someone. It may prove too stressful for those that already find phone calls difficult. A simple option at the beginning of the call for either self service or a human would be preferred.

Having to attend the Gateway to make an appointment is not acceptable if you cannot use the phone or online services. Help should be available at any council office including schools anywhere in the community for these people to be helped to make appointments and Gateway staff should venture out to regular surgeries.

Even educated and IT savvy people like me regularly get confused by the variety of options and the continual messages that just add time plus more confusion.

Over 50's do not want a prompt press No 5 for whatever service you require then press No 6 for.....what/who ever (Answer the phone with a real person!

As I said in my previous comment automated phone services are disliked by almost everyone and they would much rather speak to an operator. This proposal has no positive points so must just be a cost cutting exercise

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People want personal contact at the first point of contact

said it yourself, deaf or hard of hearing people

people are already fed up with the endless list of possibilities when they try to phone

In all these cases you have already said in your proposals that it will take longer to answer people's queries when they phone. There are bound to be situations that do not fit neatly into the boxes "on line" and they too will be inconvenienced

People who cannot afford to pay to phone a computer

people with mental health issues

Arithic and similar conditions.

The general public who are increasingly fed up with automated phone lines. press 1 for this, 2 for that, 3 for something else. what is wrong with talking to a person straight off.

some people will not use new technology as they are frightened of it

our most vulnerable should not have to make an appointment

As above; those with physical disabilities preventing them from doing so.

How will those who become or are homeless access services?

Same as before - automated responses do not allow for questions to be asked - unless they fall in the categories provided. Its also extremely time wasting, having spent time myself trying to get through to a government dept with automated response.

Its so frustrating listening to automated machine, it takes 5 minutes to listen to automated services. It might be easier for us, However elderly clients do not have patience to listen and stand for that long.

Calls cost money and to have to wait and go through the long process these automated systems put you through cost the already vulnerable and poor.

People without phones or ability to pay for a phone call

Visiting Gateway to make an appointmen and then returning for the appointment could be quite expensive in terms of bus fare.

how will they make the appointment to see someone face-to-face, and what if they are unable to get there?

community support might be needed for less mobile

encourage those who live in this country to learn or have access to speak our language

Will depend on ease of getting a convenient Gateway appointment. People with speech problems have difficulty in responding to automated phone systems, e.g. I have had my voice box removed and speak through a voice prosthesis

We need to keep the option of a human interface as the First Priority. The websites are very good but should not supercede an active and prompt "first port of call" managed by real people!

It depends on the system, many automated systems take ages to get through, you keep having to press option x, and then get further choices. This costs money unless it is a freephone number which is being provided.

Many people find automated phone services difficult to navigate due to the number of unclear options that need to be chosen

People with visual impairments and how will they be able to make an appointment. Some poeple will get frustrated if they turn up and are told that they can't be seen until they make an apointment

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Same comments as before. Staff at Gateway would have to be very patient, trained to a high level and be able to spend sometimes a considerable time in order to understand and correctly deal with caller. People with psychological or mental health problems might find an automated phone service challenging and frustrating.

People will feel very lost and will miss the personal approach. For libraries it is a social opportunity for some.

How will they be able to make an appointment to meet someone face to face in gateway if they are unable to use the automated phone service.

Yes people with mental health, they do exist!

Automated ... meet needs. You really have no idea do you? Can you make an appointment without an automated service? Can you?

anyone who is not an auditory kind of person and finds it hard to process information delivered to them acoustically, that does not have to be a disabled person, in the normal course of events not everybody can relate to this method of communicating

I am a member of my GP practice consultation group, and one of the main complaints the surgery gets is against the automated phone service, especially from older clients.

Not everyone can get to Gateway. I have hearing issues and have difficulty in dealing with automated services. It cost a lot more to, because i have to keep going back to understand what options are available.

I assume this does not apply to staff wishing to contact Capita.

Maybe see previous answer. I personally dislike Gateway with the queuing and crush

Everyone in the whole universe HATES automated phone services, FACT. Don't become like everyone else and lose your customers voice, and staff for that matter.

some people with mental health issues find it very difficult to communicate using the phone and may not have access to internet facilities at home. Still a lot of people with poor IT skills in community.

Telephone operators will need to be extremely helpful especially for these groups of people. Trawling through alternatives can become very frustrating and confusing. At times I have been returned to the start without any reason. Also information relayed whilst waiting can be frustrating any, at times irritating. It must also be remembered that prolonged telephone calls cost money and time.

If you can't use the phone, how do you make an appointment. As the service provider's aim is to reduce costs, there will be an automated service in order to make an appointment with the aim being to deter appointments. It will be a humiliating process. Automated phone services are expensive and those who are on low incomes whether through work or benefits will be unable to afford the service.

An automated phone service is reknown for putting callers off making contact this way, which means we loose a payment opportunity.

Again making an appointment for help?!! please, that is just unbelievable service.

Less confident people. People whose names are not recognised by some systems. People who cannot make appointments. Not everyone has a phone.

See previous comment re those with mobility problems

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The public will not like being turned away by staff; they'll end up quickly feeling devalued by the council. (I've never had need to use Gateway, personally)

LONGER WAITING TIMES AND POORER CUSTOMER SERVICE

what happens to the people that are house bound will Capita have a service to go out and visit to find out what the person needs.

There is an expectation that people can drop-in and have their queries dealt with off-spec and so this change would need to be carefully communicated. Also, the self-serve terminals would need proper staff support to assist people with any technology issues. It is also important to note, that system failures can really undermine the service. Overall, I think this creates an impersonal and unfriendly impression of the Council.

An appointment based system is good in theory but people that drop in need to be seen also and will not take kindly to people jumping the queue - it will give the appearance of Gateway pandering to the people that shout the loudest getting the service - this should not be the way a professional organisation such as the council should run

The aim of the changes are to reduce SCC costs, however the number of staff required to service gateway will remain the same for a considerable time or as part of a proving period to see if the solution works.

Capita use a lot of staff with limited knowledge and experience. While the theory is good the staff are routinely not up to the job.

exceptional cases?? just because a member of staff has been trained doesnt mean that they necessarily understand whats exceptional to any given customer - judging on this is going to be incredibly difficult and deemed as unfair to others waiting.

Your 'customers' deserve the right to speak to your servers and have their queries answered without having to book an appointment or to use the hugely impersonal online facility. For a 'people' organisation the face to face contact should be paramount.

This feels like a 'you don't really matter to us strategy' maximum inconvenience to the public

As long as there are enough staff to help the Customers as they will not want to have to wait to use the computers or wait.

Would need more staff at busy times of the day, and consequently more appointments should be available. Some people will not want to admit that they cannot use self service terminals.

Not the amount of staff on hand as there is now and persons escalating what there issue is to be seen sooner

It could be difficult to distinguish which cases are seen as needing immediate attention - individuals may have travelled in especially and feel their need is urgent only to be turned away. While many things are straightforward and could be done through self service, it is all the more complex individual issues that will present a problem.

Spotting people in desperate need of assistance may not actually be that easy. Sometimes those people most in need make the least fuss. Also offering help with self-service terminals could take up a lot of staff member time, you only need to take a look at self-service tills in supermarkets!

will there be enough staff to cope with this? because i can imagine a lot of people will want to speak to someone personally

In my experience Gateway staff do not have a good track record for recognising those in distress or those who need immediate attention, and indeed I have had to complain to Gateway formally about treatment of clients with mental health issues and serious housing problems in the past. I would not be confident that staff would recognise these situations nor deal with them appropriately.

I think this will encourage people to make a scene in order to be seen quickly which will only result in irritating people who initially were prepared to wait.

The staff would have to be well trained to decide where an immediate appointment is required as many people's opinions will be different.

The biggest concern, in my experience, is the potential loss of the drop-in service. My concerns would be: 1) that staff will not be good at recognising who does/ does not need to use this service - for example we worked with a lady with severe dyslexia who looked perfectly normal but this caused significant memory recall difficulties as well as poor literacy. This individual would need instant support (would not recall appointment time otherwise), but could well be missed. I am concerned about how staff will decide who needs help and how they will be able to pick up on people with vulnerabilities, which are often hidden. 2) I suspect, from our experience, that these cases will not be exceptional and I am concerned that good staffing levels will not be in place to meet this demand. Not having sufficient staffing will likely lead to a number of problems, including: a) people

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not paying their bills on time etc - concerned that action will be taken against them or that the council will not get the revenue in it expects b) stress caused to residents, especially vulnerable residents

Many people feel they need to be seen and heard immediately, so could cause some disagreements IF staff are not available as you state they will be

The disadvantaged groups mentioned already will be unable to use self service terminals. If the 'meet and greet person is able to give people time to explain their problem and always offers face to face option if CLJET sees it as urgent. Asking to come back for appointment will incur another lot of bus fare - very unfair to many on low income

A perception may be created whereby you can simply turn up - possibly complain and be seen immediately. This could encourage others not to bother with the appointments system

self service terminals need people to staff them . When I have been in gateway people have been struggling to access information and even when an agency has accompanied someone they still find it difficult Training staff to recognise vulnerable people is unlikely to be successful .Check the work done by secret shoppers many years ago. via choices advocacy .

Computers do not explain people do.

customer understanding.unfortunately people do not always appreciate the needs of others may be greater than their own. some people could construe this approach as queue jumping and could potentially lead to difficult to manage situations for staff and possibility of a danger to the public

Managing the volume of enquiries if only a small staff team available. Managing the expectations of the general public who may want to speak to someone in person.

I do not believe that this ad hoc approach - to "recognise" the need is good enough. People find it difficult to resolve the issues now; the mistakes are made all the time....

Possible lack of staff

See answers to the previous questions. Anything that discourages people from sorting out simple problems straight away leads to them becoming large, complex problems that are more difficult to resolve.

The ticket system at the moment seems to work well.

For deaf people they will need to speak with someone who signs or need an interpreter present straight away

Stand by the self service checkouts in supermarkets and note how often staff are needed to sort out problems & how many self service checkouts there are in relation to staffed tills. This is simple scanning of barcodes. Dealing with a myriad of human issues is far more complex.

Everyone should be entitled to a face to face adviser. It is what we pay our Council Tax for.

Not having enough trained staff available to deal with people coming in that need an immediate interview.

Some people have trouble with travel arrangements

Not always obvious who needs help and who doesn't. Also unless staff member is trained and supported by management and on a permanent contract they won't stay long.

how will the queuing system work

Although I agree with the idea in principal, the council should make clear in which incidences immediate interviews will be required visually and to take a strong stance with people who abuse the situation.

As long as staff are well trained to recognise this need

What about original documents (that may be valuable/sensitive)that need to be copied that people don't want to leave in a post box? Parking permits etc, will you need to make an appointment for things like that?

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Who defines what 'exceptional cases' are and what appeal process will there be? The danger is that those who make a scene will be given an immediate appointment while those in real need will just walk away.

I hope the training offered is much better than presently given !

With public transport access so poor it will be very difficult for people to commit to a set appointment without wasting a lot of time.

I think people with problems generally need a personal contact. Life is far too 'automated' as it is.

People are worried about feeding info into a Terminal.....The over 50's

As long as there enough staff on duty to see people straight away and still keep to appointment times.

A drop in service is always more accessible and approachable. Maybe s blend of appointments only and drop in availability at different times.

You are providers of a public service and you should aim to provide as much public contact 'on demand' as possible. The only appointment I have made was with a person who freely admitted she was not a person who could answer the questions outlined prior to the appointment.

staff are never trained well enough to deal with difficult situations

Why can staff just not answer the query?

Again some people will find this embarrassing and difficult, even using self service terminals is difficult for a lot of people

Not enough staff and to many people at once. Should this happen.

yes technology in all its guises is notorious for not working when required. so much so that you would have to employ a person to stand by it to assist. why not just employ the two people and save the cost of the technology.

not all staff are tolerant f elderly people and can be quite rude to them

Requires the provision of committed, interested and efficient Staff-Can this be provided from the existing base?

if a member of the public has an emergency situation then this should also be dealt with

Sometimes people may not present clear or overt signs that their need is urgent or immediate or know that the system allows them to jump the queue. Also once people realise this will some people try to use the system to jump the queue? How will staff be checking for signs or is there a triage system in place?

Obviously some people will feel that others are getting preferential treatment. The Gateway staff will need to be trained to deal with those customers.

Having the correct number of staff to deal with with this system will be challenging. Will the Gateway be centrally based, if it is an appointment system could not the appointments be more local for residents in alterative venues eg libraries

it may be astruggle toget her for some residents, and may be difficult toget back again without assistance. elderly people in particular will have difficulties

This will only work if there is enough staff available

You can only ever see the obvious people but there are many people who will become quietly distressed by this and will cause anxiety and illness and they will then possibly ignore bills as they are too frightened of the system.

Not everyone can travel which means we are saving money, vulnerable clients will have to pay for transport.

Disabilities are not always obvious. Sufferers of conditions such as M.E. have difficulty waiting and certainly with standing, but often don't use aids. How is one to 'recognise' this? This is only one example.

Will there be enough staff to help those using the automated systems?

Depends on level of training provided which should include dealing with people with learning difficulties or early dementia

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There may be a higher proportion than expected on some occasions. It is difficult to see how Gateway staff will be able to manage high demand and I am afraid that the criteria may be altered when this is the case.

I would like to be optimistic and hope that anyone who needs an immediate appointment will get one, but my concern is the training staff will get to recognise those in need and identify those who may not be included in the categories they have been trained in. Not everyone fits into a neat box

This may cause resentment with people who are queuing..

This sounds like a move to quite a faceless and unapproachable organisation. A lot of queries may be resolved quickly by technology. Why does someone who simply wants to discuss something face to face have to be viewed as an exception?

Need to be very well trained

I feel people would still prefer direct contact whatever the issue.

every case is different and i find it hard to believe there will be enough staff to meet this need. I believe you want to save money.

Border line cases will be difficult to decide on without causing upset to some

Treat people as valued customers and see them in person in a minimum time frame.

I am not sure it's always easy to spot those who need help, but time and experience will help

As long as there are sufficient resources to manage this.

Much the same as previous comments

There will be a long bedding in time while people get used to the new arrangements and the transient population will need to be supported each time. The system is likely to put a lot more pressure on those Gateway staff who remain on the front line.

It is short-sighted to believe that staff can determine what needs to be dealt with immediately and what does not. What would the criteria to make decisions consistent

some people have problem communicating and may be accepting of being told to book an appointment when the matter could be very urgent

How are staff trained?

It will create confusion and also disruption for people who are already stressed in some cases.

Success will depend on the quality of the training and the staff.

Having used Gateway myself I found the system confusing, I was given a differently numbered ticket than the number they called out for me (luckily I went first thing in the morning and was the only one waiting) staff were rude and obstructive and unhelpful. It was the first time I had used Gateway and I hope, based on this experience, I never have to again. If I had any type of difficulty or was agitated in any way I would not feel confident in staff's ability to manage effectively or prioritise.

What about when there isn't staff available?

Trained! trained, is customer service? As they now? haaaa! ohh! haaaa!

Gateway is busy now. This will only increase waiting times and frustrate customers further. Customers usually come in when the problem has got really bad so they expect to see someone on the same day not to be told they have to make an appointment for another day. Service will be poorer.

Not clear what are the signs that the Gateway staff will be trained to recognise. The general 'feel' of this proposal is that it will put people off approaching the Council due to shyness or shame. Having someone to talk to immediately, who might then do a sort of 'triage' might be a better way of deciding who needs what

Cannot see any benefit in encouraging people to visit gateway, just to go online to make an appointment, when staff will be available anyway?

Busy sessions may mean staff do not see the problem

The waiting time at Gateway is already long how will you ensure that it does not rise further?

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I don't see how Gateway staff can recognise this. Last time I was there I joined a long queue to hand in a letter as I was not sure if the drop box was appropriate. I waited as explanations of others were listened to and help given (the lady was very good at this)but nevertheless I didn't feel I could jump the queue. I handed in a letter destined for Marlands House where the porter refuses to accept it telling me to go to Gateway (and giving me further to walk when I was tired and had a hurting leg)

Why would you want to dissociate from your client base, embrace your public instead of pushing them into isolation.

A lot will depend on the IT equipment installed in order to be able to assist individuals with their enquiries and how many units are installed.

The aim of the service provider is to reduce costs. This they already do by ensuring that the Gateway service already does not have enough staff and by ensuring that most probationary staff in their call centre never meet the standard to move onto anything above the minimum wage. There will be less staff and I have no faith in the service provider ensuring that staff have the necessary training.

Gateway staff do not have the scope of knowledge required to handle all queries and there is a continuing risk of inappropriate advice/direction being given

you'll need more staff at the Gateway, it would be nice to have these appointments held more locally instead of making people travel into town

if the service is very 'short staffed' how will staff be able to manage this?

I know some people don't keep their appointments and have an expectation that they can just turn up and see someone - there needs to be that culture shift really on the part of the public

Think if I'm sat there with a big problem in my eyes yet a member of your team has said no you need to make an appointment and someone else comes in and is deemed as urgent that a lot of ill feeling will persist. Not very well thought of but then again this is the council that closed their visitors centre and put in a self service machine in its place!!

It would depend on how exceptional these cases are. Speaking to a person makes one feel positive towards a service. Compulsory on-line and automatic call centres make me and most people I know feel extremely hostile. If there is waiting time, one pays from the start.

This system is too reliant upon the ability of one member of staff to spot problems which may not be easily seen by other than trained professionals e.g. in mental health

Detailed comments received as part of the on-line consultation

Question 7 - *Other than online via the web and automated phone services, are there other approaches that the council should be considering when looking at customer contact? Please give your reasons for your answer.*

Being able to talk to someone face to face.

Provided your staff are trained to help people who need urgent advice / services and provided you have a range of options, I see no reason why a move to online and phone should be a problem. You may want to look at facilitating community outreach 'surgeries' eg in libraries to widen access routes

There will be people who need face to face advice in their own homes. There will be people who need interpreters. For some people one call or visit will not be enough assistance to get things back on the right track with problems they have

Yes! Continuing to run Gateway to serve the public rather than putting a cheap money saving plan into place that pays lip service to the customers but supplies them with a unsuitable service.

Use libraries for sharing services A local library could be used for housing staff, social services staff and for gateway staff. Better use of physical council assets, more local service for city residents.

face to face contact

Any telephone number that is rang should be a free phone number so if the delays that currently take place continue then the public will not have to pay for being kept waiting.

Face to Face - stop making everything computerised or automated, by the time 'Crapita' finishes their contract people will have forgotten how to communicate with each other.

The Council should be considering not considering the impersonal and socially isolating use of computers and automated, not local, phone systems.

Real human beings to deal with real human situations. The recent introduction of the 'green bins' in our area shows that no one, not even IT savvy neighbours actually looks at the council website- why would they? Consequently large numbers continued to put out green bags for several weeks totally unaware of the new charging service. Green bags are minor stuff compared to some of the issues dealt with at the Gateway

Having staff fully trained in all aspects that they are to cover. If mistakes are made in the first contact that a customer has, it can take months to remedy which causes grief to the customer. Not to mention the complaints or MP enquiries which may result from the initial error and the extra work for the department involved.

For each service area have at least one customer service contact with a direct phone number, so that if people aren't sure of where to go or have more specific questions they can speak to someone. Offer of arranging appointments to come and see people in their own homes or a more local venue for those who find travelling in to town difficult.

Keep Gateway as it is

Many people still prefer face to face contact. Although it is more expensive, cutting off access to staff makes the council feel inaccessible. If the council wants to put customers first, as stated in the newly refreshed Council Plan, it needs face to face contact.

Personal contact has got to be the best way customers can be reassured immediately

It should be easy to contact the council by letter and simple to find the relevant addresses to write to for the appropriate departments - this is helpful for agencies such as ourselves who provide support to users of council services as it can be quicker and simpler than telephoning. There are also difficulties with online/automated only access when we are not with a client so there need to be other options such as speaking to a member of staff.

I think there is a danger in moving towards these type of automated systems, that can in general work quite well, as there are groups of people who will simply not be able to have their questions or concerns responded to because they can't manage automated systems, have no Internet access and can't afford to have Internet access or because of health issues end up being isolated from their community and from the local authority which has a duty to ensure that local people get the services they pay taxes for.

There always needs to be a back up if people do not want /like using automated services, as long as there is still a facility to speak to a person if required it should be ok.

Drop in and appointment service is vital. Mobile phone reminders? Resourcing community organisations to help people complete forms/ provide Internet access

There probably are, I need to think about it!

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Face to face contact is always better - there is nothing more frustrating when you have an automated phone system and cannot get through to anyone re a problem and many people - old people just don't have access to the web - if it is anything like the call centres for example BT or Sky etc - it most definitely will not work - you just cannot get through to anybody and there is no way that you can leave a message for them to call you back

Really still need some form of immediate face to face contact for the vulnerable groups mentioned - eg highly trained triage person to greet personal callers at Gateway. Especially as there are now very few advice agencies to assist with online/ automated contact.

There should always be the option of talking to or meeting with a human rather than dealing with machines.

Visiting people that cannot leave their homes & do not have any family or friends that may help

making the contact more meaningful first time, giving the customer the right amount of time to get to understand their issue/need and then give the right level of information to enable them to act themselves.. Put another way we need to give more time for initial contacts and balance this with restricting time for persistent enquiries that add nothing to the resolution of an issue for a customer.

Automated phone services are dire. Cut back overpaid management and combine with other Councils. Front line should be the last to be replaced. So many people do not have on line or fancy phones. Think again think customer.

customers always prefer to deal with people face to face as it is easy to feel 'fobbed off' on the end of a phone. remote contact can be very frustrating - you cannot ask a computer questions. there could also likely be a lot of follow up/multiple contacts until customers feel their query has been fully dealt with. 1-2-1 appointments will be in demand - perhaps there needs to be additional personal services - LA surgeries for example to make up some of the shortfall.

keeping face to face approach and local housing offices / gate way open full time.

We know customers like to talk to a person rather than a machine with a script that doesn't extend beyond a limited "drop-down menu" of limited options. A reduction in the service we offer to our customers could only be justified if the savings are perceived to be solely advantageous directly to SCC rather than just improving the profitability of Capita.

Explore phone apps. Ensure that the system can deal with all web users. I cant top up my Itchen Bridge account on line as the system cannot do this from an Apple IMac. The IT system needs to be fit for purpose and allow as many users easy access

Personal contact is still needed and one of the best

Staff at libraries, local housing offices (for instance) trained to give some advice

The range of online services needs to be far larger than at present. For example, the only way I can find out if a person's housing benefit is in payment is by telephone, frequently with a long wait. I can send information *to* the council easily, but there is very little information on individual cases that can be obtained *from* the council online. e.g. current rent balance, council tax balance, progress on applications such as school admissions, housing repairs or licence applications, place in school admission waiting list and so on. Look at ways to simplify the language and clarify the layout of online services. Deploy staff to train and encourage people to use online services when they arrive at Gateway. Offer structured training in using online services at libraries. But, above all, retain a drop-in advice service for the few people that are not able to cope with online or phone services.

twitter - fast, immediate, personal. Big companies do it all the time now.

Face to face always works best. The advisers could be placed in local libraries across the cities or local housing offices.

I'm sure there will be occasions when a face to face contact is required but your proposals appear to cover this.

No. Having enough staff for face-to-face contact is best.

I think that there should be someone on hand for immediate consultation without having to make an appointment

Promote the email address and encourage people to use it.

not sure

There MUST always be the option to speak to someone by phone or in person. Even the most computer literate person sometimes feels that an on-line system fails to meet their requirements.

Detailed comments received as part of the on-line consultation

Question 7 - *Other than online via the web and automated phone services, are there other approaches that the council should be considering when looking at customer contact? Please give your reasons for your answer.*

As stated in the alternatives in your introduction, an in house system could be reintroduced - Capita are notorious for giving poor service for money, especially when the key priority of the customer is to obtain a reduction in charges/cost as seems to be the case here, rather than providing good service

I feel that there must always be a member of staff available on the phone system and at Gateway

There should be a place in the centre of town (e.g. desk in West Quay shopping centre) where residents could go to for certain forms (e.g. council tax reduction/bulky waste etc).

Someone to be at Gateway to see people when they come in a bit like the triage system at a hospital, to give them advice on what to do next.

I am sure that as the services develop it will become apparent who needs extra assistance

as long as consideration is given to the elderly and non-tech people then online works. automated phones are not ideal as there never seems to be the question that you are wanting to ask. so provided there is back up to an operator if necessary then that would work.

I would like to see weekend openings for those that are usually at work during the council's "office" hours. Can be very difficult to get face to face with council staff if the only time the offices are open require you to take time off work.

The council should be making better use of local voluntary community organisations, such as the Southampton Cycling Campaign.

Continue with notices in the local press or the local radio. Not everyone has access to the internet or have smart phones. Lots of our neighbours are elderly and want things easily accessible, no automated phone calls or press button 1 for this, that or the other.

Speaking to a live person is always best..

Some people still like to write by letter, it is cheaper. Not everyone is on line or wants to use computers.

I know many elderly folk who do not use computers and are equally unhappy using automated phone services. Please do not cut their ability to speak to someone. I am sceptical that 'training' will not help. Many younger people simply do not understand how worrying these changes can be for the elderly.

Providing the option to receive regular contact from the council online by logging into an account (property based or individual) or by email. Council tax bills and supporting documents sent by email are an obvious cost saving.

Employ more front line staff who are able to answer a much higher proportion of queries rather than having to pass them onwards. More staff at the front-end agreed, but less in the back offices

Yes, staying as it is.

Access via a manned phone line (Switchboard) who can connect you with the correct Dept/Person that's what's called "Customer Service" the Human!...not the machine! The Older Group within the City DO NOT WANT THIS TYPE OF AUTO SERVICE

Mobile officers, possibly setting up in various local libraries to be used as a drop-in centre

Hopefully online via the web will include email contact as I find this the easiest form of contact.

People need contact quickly and not to have to fill in a form

It's crucial to always have the opportunity to speak to a human being where the customer feels this is preferable. This should still be made possible.

Yes - personal contact because it was the public (your tax payers) want

a human is needed for those who have difficulty with phone buttons, waiting in a queue on an automated service is unacceptable, people who need to use text phone, how will they be dealt with?

when I have trouble with rubbish collection I am able to phone and talk to a real person. These people are helpful and polite the same goes for the rates department. This is the way I like it, I don't want to talk to a robot. My rates went up this year by the rate set for everybody and the loss of OAP discount so I think I pay enough to talk to a real person.

Post. This may be a better solution for those without IT skills or access (eg the by using the report a pot-hole cards etc.)

Increase staff hrs by 20% to bring them into line with the rest of the city, then you would not need to adopt these measures.

Detailed comments received as part of the on-line consultation

Question 7 - *Other than online via the web and automated phone services, are there other approaches that the council should be considering when looking at customer contact? Please give your reasons for your answer.*

Where the elderly are concerned could something be offered through a doctor's surgery. It is still confusing what exactly is available and a detailed list would give some guide.

Personally I would be very happy to use online services and see it as an enhancement of council services, I'm just not sure it's the approach for all.

Visiting people who are unable to get out.

customer contact is what it says contact with the customer TECHNOLOGY tends to move away from this and the personal touch is lost and we end up speaking to computers.

Yes, face to face contact will still be needed for complex cases and for those people who are unable to use online or phone services.

need to cut costs, so proposals make sense

I think if SCC is moving to an on-line system for either enquiries or reporting, if there isn't an immediate answer, residents should be able to track their enquiry. This would enable the resident (such as me) to see what is happening to my enquiry therefore assisting with the communication feedback - without SCC needing to get back to me on the status of the enquiry until it is resolved, or I as the resident need to contact someone if it's not happening as it should. I think this would be good for residents and the council.

depending on the service enquiry it may be appropriate to speak to a member of staff for some personal or delicate matters.

Could use local housing or other council owned properties if there are any left. this offers local assistance to residents without the need to come into central, bearing in mind council does not like motorists, and for some public transport is difficult

Mobile phone app that will allow customers to quickly access SCC resources rather than having to navigate around the website.

People - face to face polite people - who can respond to a question directly because they know their job - which is what they are paid to do. They can help alleviate concerns and hopefully if they know their job can provide help and suggestions at that time. Its called good customer care.

Phones should be answered after 2 rings, customers should be given the answer straight away rather than passing it on to other departments. There should be no adverts on the phone i.e Capita have fostering care on their phones , elderly clients do not want to listen to this. Its so frustrating for them, especially if you have dementia you will forget what you have phoned for? We need customer care not business centres.

Gateway face-to-face is important.

Yes customer service the old fashioned way, people want to speak to a person not a machine.

We all know how annoying an automated phone service is and how wonderful when you phone up and speak to a real person.

It is important that the Council encourages residents to ask for help from their local councillors. A lot of residents approach the MPs' offices on problems which are local, rather than national. It would help if Gateway produced a simple Guide directing people on which kinds of problems they should ask their councillors about - and a reminder of which issues - e.g. Immigration - they should go to the MPs about. I am a City Councillor for Bitterne ward and am thoroughly aware of this problem.

We should always have the option of face to face contact. Even those that have access to a computer do not necessarily want to use it in all circumstances. The Council should be accessible to all and the citizens of Southampton should not be forced to access services in ways they don't wish to use. The current automated phone service to pay council tax doesn't work. I have been unable to use the service on a number of occasions.

I cannot think of any except that Local Housing Offices, Libraries etc were good sources of information and help. This of course has been reduced with cut backs.

people still prefer to talk to an assistant, it is easier to ask questions "on the fly" than through the web

real people by phone, for the reasons already stated

may need to be flexible and have some outreach

Home visits may be appropriate in some circumstances.

We should not be reducing face to face contact to almost nothing, this will probably result in a rise in complaints as people hate automated contact if they don't get to a real person.

Detailed comments received as part of the on-line consultation

Question 7 - *Other than online via the web and automated phone services, are there other approaches that the council should be considering when looking at customer contact? Please give your reasons for your answer.*

That good old personal contact. Automated phone services are not the way forward

Letters by post or by hand

An easy to understand paper handout mailed to each address showing the different ways people can get help. Posters in libraries, police stations, and other public places. A full page in the phone directories.

Yes face to face in person and by telephone and (would you believe it) by letter.

Yes. Must retain easy personal contact.

I think it would be a good idea to have libraries a place where members of the public could go for help with issues concerning rent rates benefits etc. They could have certain days set aside where Gateway staff would be available maybe via a video skype type link. This would still be automated to a fashion but also give the face to face contact so needed. Members of library staff would be on hand to assist if required.

Postal

Face to face appointments must still be available as in some cases, information is very personal and people may not be able to explain their true circumstances on line or over an automated phone service which undoubtedly will not have the correct option to every case.

Face to face and personal contact. What is being provided with these proposals is "service" in name only.

Possibly better information 'at source', for example through the Housing Offices, Job Centre etc. (I am not familiar with the whole system as it currently stands).

SCC must ensure that staff adopt a sympathetic and understanding attitude to all types of enquiries, which I find sadly lacking with Capita when using the Action-Line service.

Older people and those with either learning and mental health problems can be confused and or frightened by technology and cope much better when dealing with a person face to face.

Is customer contact not one to one? Surely web & phones take away 'customer contact'.

I am sure customers would still like to be able to write to the Council in a conventional way. The Council could also offer a mail service at Gateway. Some customers might feel more comfortable writing down an inquiry, particularly if it is of a personal nature, and wait for a written or telephone response, particularly in the categories I have mentioned. You could supply paper head with spaces for name, address telephone no. for response and give space for description of request and provide an internal post box at Gateway. I am aware all Councils would like to get away from paper trails, but this does not suit all clients, particularly those areas I have mentioned.

Online services can be very effective, however a strong phone service back up is also important, particularly for complicated queries.

Face to face is far more personal and person centered way of doing things. It would give better customer service.

Emails, texts, apps. All cheaper than face to face

The main switchboard for the council is ineffective, calls are not directed to the appropriate place, callers are bounced around to teams that are not working with them and then have to have the same conversation with a person in the wrong team who ends up having to contact the switchboard themselves taking time away from their actual work. Many of the switchboard operators are unhelpful and quite rude, with the opinion they are right and you are wrong. I have rarely had a straightforward conversation with a member of the switchboard and I work for SCC and understand how the system works. Names are not always given to callers and calls are often put through blind. I have had calls for children's services workers (I work in adults) and have had to deal with exceptionally irate people who have been bounced around several people initially, this caller knew the name of the person he wanted to speak to and I found them with no issue in the global address book - why the person who answered the phone on the switchboard couldn't do this is beyond me. Often if the caller asks for a specific person this will be taken on face value without checking the details on the PARIS system, this then results in angry callers. I once had a phonecall from a member of the public, who had been put through blind from the switchboard who wanted to speak to someone in another team and they were told we would be able to provide the number. Surely this is the switchboard's job. I believe that the switchboard creates more problems than it solves. I believe extending the contract would be a mistake based on the current level of performance from the switchboard I deal with.

What happened to a letter in the post with clear reference numbers and contact details for customers to reply to?

Detailed comments received as part of the on-line consultation

Question 7 - *Other than online via the web and automated phone services, are there other approaches that the council should be considering when looking at customer contact? Please give your reasons for your answer.*

Web services and automated phone services make the assumption that the customer knows what Council service they require. From my own experience of dealing with out of hours emergencies it is not always easy to establish what service is required. Complex and or unusual issues may not be resolved by web/automated services and could put residents of the city at risk

Let the people who know their job speak to the customers. That might work. Simple but effective. Or alternatively continue to pay a private company thousands of pounds, who would not know good customer service if it bite them on the nose, continue as they are? Umm what do you think? Huh?

I think it would be beneficial to have a mobile "Gateway drop in surgery" that comes to different parts of town on different days like a library bus, where people who are not comfortable using phone or internet, and who may not be able to travel into town, can benefit from the triage reception system and supported self-service terminal access you described. This would mean that older people who prefer to a speak to a person but cannot get into town don't have to feel so isolated and cut off from services they need.

providing a reception service, where people can come in and speak to a real person when they need someone to help them.

There's actually nothing to beat real live people! OK, so they're expensive. But if there were some well-trained people available at the entry point, who could then 'field' potential clients towards the right service - and most importantly towards the people who could help them use them most quickly and effectively, this might be better than providing automated responses first, and then trying to spot those in difficulties afterwards.

Face to face is what our customers want and expect

For the benefit of disabled etc, their should be an enquiry line, which would go straight through to a "person", who could fill in online forms etc on their behalf. Some people find the internet very daunting & using computers rather a scary prospect. This proposal will just isolate those who really need assistance.

Ensuring all linked computer systems will work with any changes made. (Eg lagan, Clarence, Confirm etc.)

There is nothing wrong with online but you need to be able to get to a computer or tablet or phone and then you need to have an email then you have to register, then you can do what you need to do. Will Gateway staff be training people how to use computers. Why not reduce Gateway and rent it out to another cafe, utilise existing premises like libraries and train up and use staff in locations where people can learn to use a computer and get support from trained staff. Also why invest in expensive kiosks at £10k a pop? Make sure that the information and payment interface is good on Web pages (not like the current payments pages) and offer the payments at places across the City where they already take money like libraries from simple PCs and touch screen PCs

CUSTOMER CONTACT Literally. All these measures you are considering only isolate you from having contact. People are becoming socially invisible.

Ensure e-mail in boxes are checked regularly and responses provided in a timely manner.

email

It is not always possible for clients to visit Gateway, ie elderly and infirm. Will the Council have in place means of officers to visit in exceptional circumstances?

The citizens of Southampton deserve a first class service. That we want a service where we can come in and speak to someone is shown by the fact that Gateway is always full of people. We could use our local housing offices if the Council opened them all day everyday and allowed us to make rent payments in them; staff and train them properly and we could ask our questions there.

If we are to direct as many calleres/contacts thourgh automated service we must ensure that they are reliable, cover all types of service - not just Revs&Bens and Housing and that the relevant support is in place. Online Payments are a case in point. I am fed up with the frequent reports that this system is not working and the subsequent efforts required to secure a payment off the back of this poor service.

reopen housing offices, 6 days a week all day,

I think it is important that all staff who have direct customer contact need to be trained to listen to what is being asked before redirecting the query.

Social Media presence

Home visits? But this is more time consuming so not practical

I thought Gateway worked very well when I've used it. If you got rid of those people that sit in their ivory towers making decisions then you'd save a lot of money that could be used to pay for this customer service rather than pay Capita profit money.

Detailed comments received as part of the on-line consultation

Question 7 - *Other than online via the web and automated phone services, are there other approaches that the council should be considering when looking at customer contact? Please give your reasons for your answer.*

The present system works. I understand that the council has huge financial problems but am reluctant to see people put out of work to solve them. A continued, and perhaps extended and certainly improved, use of unautomated services. Of course, there are financial implications but this is an important proposed change which will further disadvantage those already disadvantaged.

Detailed comments received as part of the on-line consultation

Question 8 - *Over time the council will move as many services as possible to online and/or phone self-service. Are there any services that you feel should not be considered for this approach and why do you think they are not suitable?*

Not so much services that should never be considered, but there are problems in certain systems where currently only a paper form process will do. e.g. Those that require customer signatures, or evidence (such as copies of birth certificates and passports) to be sent in to the council for processing. While it would be good to be able to do all of that online, I'm not sure we're in a space where that's possible.

Do we not care about Customer service any more????? I know there are cutbacks but this is ridiculous!

None - it isn't rocket science

I feel that this is not a good move, a computer or phone self service can not hear any inference in the voice of someone that is in urgent need of assistance from the council. There are some that will not stay engaged waiting for the write number to press. These could well be the most vulnerable people in the city. Also the longer it takes for some people to speak to a human can make the final call for the recipient difficult as they are by this time rightfully frustrated, maybe in tears or very angry

Services in particular which deal with vulnerable groups of people

Yes, I feel all customer facing services should be maintained and none should be replaced by automated phone lines, as I mentioned before Private Companies are already moving away from this form of customer contact. All services should be put on the internet but these services should run alongside the traditional face to face services, not replace them!

the needs of the most vulnerable people must be taken in to account before moving services completely to online

Most of Social Services.

Children's and Adults services - its bad enough having to call a contact centre to ask for help, please don't take the human element out of this service

The Council should not be considering automating the switchboard or phone access nor making automating changes to Gateway or other front facing customer services - where most organisations are reconsidering the automated and online systems SCC/Capita are hurtling towards creating a totally automated, personnel limited, impersonal system which will be socially excluding hundreds of your citizens and tax payers.

Adult and Children Services

Services for the elderly - they may need more time and would appreciate a face to face approach. they are less likely to have access to a computer and may find phone self service daunting

Housing repairs, online reporting of urgent issues delays matters being resolved. The service itself is still under going streamlining and this has been going on for years and is still not what could be delivered under the private sector.

I think it is good for as many things to be available to do online, as long as these are not the only options, and as long as the online system is efficient and easy to use.

Whilst I understand the need to save money I feel that by moving away from face-to-face we will be in danger of cutting off people across the city who most need our assistance.

It's not about whether the service is suitable it's about the customers who use it. Some customers will be happy to access everything online or by phone whereas others will struggle.

Social Services would need to be contacted personally

All services involved in safeguarding eg social services, local housing offices. All services should still have the option of speaking to an advisor. For example, complex issues regarding housing benefit could not be dealt with using an automated system.

Dementia services

I'm not sure that there are any that should not be but I think there will be people, and from my knowledge of the demographics of the city quite a lot of people, who won't be able to access the support they need because the circumstances of their day to day living will exclude them.

None I can think of

Having worked in the community I know that a lot of people struggle to access Internet and call centre services for a variety of reasons, and whilst I feel it is a good idea to encourage people who can use the Internet to do so, I think it important that there is no discrimination against people who cannot. I believe that continuing to provide a drop in face-to-face service is vital for such customers.

Detailed comments received as part of the on-line consultation

Question 8 - *Over time the council will move as many services as possible to online and/or phone self-service. Are there any services that you feel should not be considered for this approach and why do you think they are not suitable?*

No

social services ie vulnerable people, safeguarding issues, benefit queries

Housing benefit / those in severe financial need (no longer dealt with by DWP)

This approach should not be adopted because it's yet another step towards isolation, dehumanisation and erosion of community

Adults Social Care Queries

All of them the solution is impersonal. Stop the waste get up to private sector staffing and service and speed. Get private sector management experience. Look at what other Councils and organisations do.

refer back to previous comments

all front line services need to be face to face

Wide publicity should encourage the use of online services by the electorate, and the various methods should run parallel rather than being imposed if customer service is important to SCC. If cuts are unavoidable, better trust could be engendered if this message is straight and honest rather than spun with deceptive language as spin is always transparent and is always treated with disdain..

All areas of Social Services. Each contact needs to be dealt with considerately and on an individual and confidential basis.

Referrals to Childrens Social Care, CYPIS etc

I do not want to have my personal details on-line; so i should not be forced to do something i do not want to do it.

It is not so much the services, it is ensuring that all services still have a system in place to help people in person.

Social services and children's services

Services involving confidential information - account numbers, personal circumstances, debt etc.

Filling in a form never conveys all of the circumstances and often leads to having to do the same job twice. The cost of having to have on-line access and/or the cost of having to travel to use an on-line service makes it prohibitive for those who need the services the most.

There could be many. What about if I want to complain that my bins have not been emptied?

I don't know.

not sure

None that I can think of at present.

child services, asb unit, domestic violence. any chance of physical or mental harm must be dealt with immediately.

no

Action Line has to date not really worked for me with email. No one confirms action, always have to ring in to get a response from a person.

Planning control I think is an area which often has critical time scales behind it especially for those seek retrospective planning approval for house sales etc.

No

immediate homelessness, other than that everything should be ok

Making cash payments.

It depends on how you are going to deal with proofs? People may prefer personal documents that are valuable/sensitive be dropped into Gateway for copying rather than posted, scanned uploaded to web. Maybe maintaining a quick drop off copying service would be beneficial.

Yes, I believe a lot of elderly folk will have problems trying to access the benefit services in particular.

ALL services should retain other access methods so as not to disenfranchise those who are unable (in reality or by fear) to use the online or self service and for those who feel they are not getting any answer - or too long a delay before getting an answer - from auto services

Detailed comments received as part of the on-line consultation

Question 8 - *Over time the council will move as many services as possible to online and/or phone self-service. Are there any services that you feel should not be considered for this approach and why do you think they are not suitable?*

Any services likely to need access by the elderly or disabled.

I DON't think you should be doing this with ANY of it

I can not really answer this question

Services that require a lot of form filling and providing personal information this will not fly with the over 50's....Draw a line that everyone over 50 can select to have Real Service with a Human or if PC Skilled opt into the new system....All forms should be paper format for over 50's.....you are becoming Big Brother...give the elderly the service they should have

I cannot think of any service that should not be considered but I think there must be an option for face to face appointments for any problem that cannot be resolved to the customers satisfaction by these other means.

Emergencies

All services should have personal one-to-one contact with the public on first call.

if you have ever tried to deal with the Inland Revenue then you will know how frustrating and expensive it is, computer systems never work well when they are first set up. The road tax system was a nightmare to start with, it is brilliant now but it has taken a few years. Self assessment is a nightmare still to figure out how the system works. We dont need any more to deal with.

All of them. Your staff just need to work harder

All of them I'm a person not a punter you are there to provide a service which meets my needs not change the whole system to cut Capita overheads

nothing specific comes to mind

All council services. get people to help people. Not just to make profits for doubtful companies. Look at what happen to Bournemouth.

action line is point of contact and you can explain to the staff exactly what is wrong. do you not think it is a cost cutting exercise which will most probably go wrong at the cost of people jobs.

Some services for people with learning disabilities due to the need to ensure clarity and understanding of the service needs on both sides

No, I'm fully in favour of self-service as it means I can use council services outside office hours.

All

I think all should be considered but the decisions should be based on the type of service and the customers/residents they interact with. I am sure there will be a few that would not be suitable.

some complaints including grounds maintainance

financial and contractual problems and where paperwork is involved will be much esier and user friendly with a face to face approach.

as mentioned before they are not suitable for anyone. You need to speak to a person and not to a automated phone service.

No service should be totally automated all your doing is making it more difficult for the elderly, less educated and vulnerable people to access help. Your also taking away peoples jobs

Homeless Support

Online should be offered alongside phone self service with the option to speak to someone.

Those dealing with personal or sensitive issues eg bereavement

Sorry - I can't comment on this.

As stated before, all services should be available face to face. It should be for the citizens of Southampton to choose and not to be dictated to.

I am not fully cognicance of all the services provided but I a sure that there will be a need for better information regarding bus passes etc so there must be ways of giving out this information in an appropriate way.

Reception duties. people should be able to talk to a human being.

Detailed comments received as part of the on-line consultation

Question 8 - *Over time the council will move as many services as possible to online and/or phone self-service. Are there any services that you feel should not be considered for this approach and why do you think they are not suitable?*

social services . . . when ringing for help in an already stressed state , you don't need the added strain of trying to negotiate automated services
no - but any systems will need to pick up the vulnerable and have facilities to deal with them more appropriately - less personal contact may make this harder

I really do not know.

Anything that involves personal troubles financial etc an automated phone service in that case is as much use as a chocolate teapot and that is being polite!!!

No but I only experience a few services

All services. At some times, all people will have problems with phone and internet access, such as when moving home or having had a problem such as identity theft.

We need an approach which combines the exciting technologies available now and in the future, but we should also not forget and embrace the tried and tested ways of providing a personal service. This is best achieved by maintaining a first class level of personal customer service which means human contact and not automated self service options.

why not just sub contract the whole lot to a call centre? Honestly where is the public service going here? I'm sure we have all had very bad experiences with holding for ever not getting help even when phone is answered.

Legal, Licensing and HR.

No, as long as there are always options available for people in special circumstances.

Urgent queries and those involving social services

All. See previous comments

Probably, but I am not sufficiently familiar with the range of services to comment.

People with 24/7 care needs should have their lives made easier and kept on a personal basis. I do not think the new system will achieve this.

All services can and should be online or over the phone BUT they should still be available at a physical location where clients/service users can talk face to face and not soem should not be by appointment only.

No

Social Care should have optional ways of contact as I have described earlier, because of the complex nature of many of our customers social skills and needs.

Libraries / Gateway - it was always set up as a one stop shop.

No

Safeguarding issues

Think really hard about what you are planning here. Is it really working now? Really? Is it? Sad thing is that you really have to ask.

I am not familiar enough with the different services offered, but I can see a risk that benefit fraud could increase if people claim in a de-personalized way via the internet, without ever having to look a gateway consultant in the eye as they discuss their claim and situation. I heard this happens a lot in Norway, where benefits are generous and generally claimed online and personal contact with service staff is minimal due to the limited staffing. A person can simply fill in an online questionnaire stating they are still too depressed, sociophobic, agoraphobic or whatever to go to work without ever having a chat with a suitably trained counsellor to verify their state or provide guidance on and prompts to use treatment options available...

we can encourage people to use online but i think there will be a significant number who will be unable or unwilling to use online. My concern is that our arrangements to cover for these people may not be adequate.

Certain advice services need privacy, especially those where people have to plead special circumstances (an example might be 'bedroom tax' issues; other housing issues; things where people have to discuss their family circumstances or financial problems...).

Many of our customers of all ages and cultures dont have a pc and cant afford internet services, they just prefer to speak to someone on a one to one basis.

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Question 8 - *Over time the council will move as many services as possible to online and/or phone self-service. Are there any services that you feel should not be considered for this approach and why do you think they are not suitable?*

Actionline/repairs service, complaints/compliments etc etc.

I do not think this is a good approach to use for HR since although it may save time for Capita, it creates extra work for managers with large groups of weekly paid staff

All of your services should be face to face contact, promoting staff relationships with their clientele. Communicating with people and validating them is critical to anyone's well-being. Pressing option buttons and doing things yourself does nothing but frustrate, cause stress and remove self-esteem. How is anyone supposed to feel motivated and positive and want to support something that ultimately is saying, no-one's here, get on with it yourself!

No but providing there is always the possibility of talking to a 'real' person without too much hassle.

As a Council Tax payer, and someone who can use a laptop on occasions, the full range of services should be offered via the full range of council offices. Often, when trying to find out where you need to go within the Council or what is needed to address your issue, this only comes after questioning. In the longrun, the personal visit is quicker and cheaper as the whole range of issues is addressed rather than just ticking a few boxes or buttons on a phone. People are complex, with difficult and multiple issues.

If this decision is off the back of a customer survey, then please ignore. If it is to make savings then I think we need to understand that this is not what many of our customers will want and complaints are expensive to deal with!

Will someone reporting an incident get fed up with an automated system? Yes I think they will, they will want to speak directly with someone

Not sure - I think that when you complain about something on-line i.e via Actionline and you don't get a response, you think the issue is not really being dealt with. If everything moves to virtual service you still need to know your issue is being followed up by an email confirmation of action taken.

I have only experience of people with housing related problems and some cases are complex and need face to face contact and there are several issues that needs to be resolved.

Over time the council will move as many services as possible to online and/or phone self-service. WHY? more people out of a job, more people inconvenienced, more anger and frustration when we get put through to a call centre, will they be trained in the answer to everything??? again why are you removing human contact - its a sad state of affairs. shame on you all.

Social services.

As my earlier comments indicate, I can see very few services which would benefit from these changes

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As I responded in the previous question, those forms where we need customer signatures or further evidence to be supplied. Currently we do in-year school admissions via paper form only (although I have looked at turning that into an online process and didn't see too many issues, it was just a case of how that's then linked up with Capita One and the rest of the school admissions information), but the most problematic process that I've come into contact with is that for applying for a child employment/performance license.

Not everyone is online - phonecalls cost for those on low incomes. People want to speak to someone and know that their issues have been picked up!

No

There are people who do not have internet access. They will miss a lot of needed information. This may well save some council finances now but will build up a higher level of social need in the future. This year it was only when reading our weekly bulletin I found I could print out my rubbish collection dates. The information did not get posted through my door till much later when I can only assume people had been asked for this info.

People need to know what is available for them. They cannot request something if they are not aware of its existence - I feel the Council vastly over-estimates the number of their customers that are internet savvy

Benefits claims (Housing etc) would have to be taken into account if a person had to wait for a paper form to be sent to them when recording the date that the claim was submitted. If there were delays in sending forms this could become a big problem for some service users.

It's hard enough finding your way around SCC website without having to rely on finding the correct online form rather than having paper versions to fill in.

Any of the front facing services. Digital default is a bullying and bullish approach which serves only to save money for the organisation and takes away local jobs at primary and secondary levels.

More hurdles for vulnerable people, adding to the impression that the council is out to make things deliberately difficult for people - and they'd be right!

Those with English as a second language would find this difficult. Housing

Not everyone has a printer, and forms can be many pages long. Even if using public services such as library for printing it costs. Forms should be readily available at housing offices and gateway to just pick up thus reduce postal costs.

This seems to be dependant on people being pro-active in requesting it themselves - some people may be unsure of what forms they need and who to contact in order to request it.

See previous comments

As long as the information about how people can request the paper form is not just online, else the people who need the paper form won't know about it.

I think wherever members of the public come into council buildings they will ask for a copy of whichever form they need

As workers we require paper forms to take out to clients as we are not always able to access online forms whilst with a client in their home.

How will people know when they need to ask for a paper version of a form?

They should be available to pick up in Gateway still and in organisations in the city who help with form filling such as SARC etc

I don't think so.

A paper copy is tangible proof, things can go missing online

Not everyone has access to web or is able to download forms

Would be ok if forms can be collected from the local housing offices or Gateway. The expense of printing out of forms is transferred to individuals / charities who are even more unable to afford.

The need for alternative systems for those without access to PCs is hard to gauge and needs to be planned for transition from one system to another. In hard times the cost of internet services is a luxury for more people and the demand may be an increasing one.

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Not sure

People will not know how/where to request a copy.

There are a number of forms that are only available on request at present, for example Housing Benefit additional needs and Housing Benefit nil income statement. If telephone services are reduced it will take even longer to get through on the phone to request them.

People may not know how to use the technology to print their own forms, may not have money to spend paying to print forms and also may not be able to get to a public computer.

but it must be clear that they can be requested - not hidden away in small print

not sure - but please look hard at .gov.uk who have been praised for the ease of use of their system for straightforward things like passports and car tax renewals.

It is very difficult to complete anything on-line.

Not having paper versions of forms available cuts down the number of applications that you will receive which has knock on effects all the way around.

Not for me.

this is not appropriate for any service. The new method of access must be better than the existing service, rather than driving people online by making existing methods of access worse

Often people do not know what form they need, or even that they need a form at all - how are they then supposed to request the correct one?

paper forms should be available at gateway or by post

As long as there are sufficient phone lines for people to request the paper form.

No as long as there is a fall back position

Not everyone can or wants to use computers.

What do you mean by the 'number of paper forms will be substantially reduced'? Does this mean you will not be printing stocks of paper forms and they will be printed at the Gateway or other locations with customer contact (housing offices, libraries, schools etc.) as required? How will people be able to request forms? Concerns raised in previous questions apply here as well. Will you carry out a full review of all forms and if they are needed? If people have online accounts with the council will there be the option for stored information to pre-populate the form?

Provided they are easily accessible and not the confusing bunch of papers in the Gateway today

Make it PAPER FORMAT for the over 50's unless they elect to go on line....I would think 80% of the over 50's in the City would wish to have a traditional paper format

Not that I can think of

blind people

most of them

How will people know there is a form to cover their specific query if they do not have internet access?

All of them. Your IT is rubbish

people with mental health issues and the elderly

How will we know what forms are actually available.

Yes more Duplicitous Bureaucratic B.S.

Most areas

I don't think so, but perhaps a printable version of forms should be available for people to print themselves.

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All

You will have to queue to get a form to then wait again

If you are going to use on line forms there MUST be the facility for the completed on line form to be sent to the residents/customers e mail address (the government departments mentioned in your consultation always sent a receipt (or offer one) to the customer). If using smartphones to complete on line forms you won't be able to print one off, but will need evidence that you did complete one.

See my previous comments

I often request (from other companies etc) printed copies of forms. This can be a lengthy telephone request which for someone hard of hearing (as I am) is not easy.

Most

Dustbin collection cards are very useful to have to hand. It would be very annoying for customers to have to check online if they forget whether the re-cycling bin is due for collection.

Planning issues.

How will people who do not have access/ cannot use a computer know 1.that they have to apply for a paper form 2.where to get a form 3.how to fill it in correctly

I think this approach could actively discourage some users

As long as it is always clear paper is available online can cause soem people great stress and timing out on online because you are struggling happens to even the IT literate any automatic saving system would be good

Any changes cause difficulties!!!

Any service that needs to be obtained at short notice where waiting for a paper form would not be acceptable.

If a paper copy is not the first point of communication then a large number of people may miss important news.

Its just more hurdles to get through.

No, as long as the paper option is retained if required.

You are making life more difficult for those who already have problems.

See previous comment.

need to make sure the forms are easy to understand and complete, have helped older clients complete forms online in the past and some have been very difficult and have need printing off to make sure that they could be completed correctly. Option to save partly completed form, so that they can log in at a later date to finish. They should also allow easy movement back and forwards to allow for changes to be made without having to retype sections completely.

Vulnerable & elderly customers

On line forms for all would not be appropriate for all as described earlier. Access to forms by the public would need to be easier. Appreciating that clients would still have the option of requesting a paper form, can I suggest that current up to date forms are all dated as to the date when they were last revised, and the intranet cleaned up as there still appears to be a lot of old, out-of-date information floating around.

People get stressed about having to ask for forms, they forget and it will increase the amount of human error such as forgetting to complete a form.

Council, Crapita or Gateway are not good at informing the public with the details of where you can go or call to request forms, leaflets etc

I see it now! it makes me all warm and fuzzy inside ... really it does Not!

Libraries

All council services when computers break down - they often do, even in the best run organisations!

Not everyone will be aware that they can request paper copy

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I have had to print on line forms for our weekly paid staff to complete, and they do not work because the drop down options are not displayed on a print out.

Many services are already doing this and it causes issues in libraries for example The Housing form is over 20 pages long. If someone wants to fill this in by hand at a library do they pay £2.00 for the form to be printed out or does the library take a hit and effectively pay for someone elses printing savings by printing out for free?

Surely they will have to print out anything they have done in order to prove it was done. Constantly putting personal information online also heightens the risk of fraud surely. Is it likely that so many people have access to online facilities, how are people able to afford broadband if they are unemployed and needing help. A diverse customer base means catering to all, not favouring the capable.

Personal and/or sensitive issues. I've had to use your on-line planning service and the only way I could get what I wanted was to come on to Gateway and speak to your staff. This would have been quicker and cheaper. People do not trust technology. What happens if halfway through the system goes down? Frequently your pc service in libraries is not available. You are putting a great deal of emphasis on public access to a public service which does not exist in reality.

Paper copies should be available in Housing Offices/Reception etc.

if the on line systems go down

Can't think of any

do you have any idea as to how many people have mental health problems, or have lower intelligence. I have filled in my fair share of forms and they are a nightmare, you cannot understand them, they read like foreign novels and the worrying thing is that people wont ask for help from a machine, however they would probably step forward if there was a person with a smile to ask.

How will people know there is a form if they have to request it?

All important services: those I have identified above would be seriously disadvantaged

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Personally I'd like to see certain flexibilities given back to SCC when it comes to website development. The Capita ITS web systems developers are already overloaded with requests, so lifting certain restrictions would make SCC more efficient. For example, currently any web shortcuts from southampton.gov.uk have to be set up by Capita. I requested one on Wednesday, and it was finally actioned the following Monday. I don't see any reason why the SCC web publishers don't have access to do this themselves - it's not a hard task. We CAN do that on the intranet, so why not on Southampton Online too? It would then take minutes, rather than days. I have no real problem with a contract extension, but the amount of time that services can be left waiting for a response from the Capita team is not acceptable. There is currently an 8-week lead in time for any web development work to start - if we're trying to progress channel shift, how is long lead-in a good thing?

Has Capita saved us money? For some things they are cheaper but any extras they cost the earth with no option of going elsewhere.

In current environment and government cutbacks would suggest contract extension or sharing services with other councils are only ways forward

I have not seen an improvement in the services provided. Allowing this contract may save money but does this make us an effective council. Within my job I feel it costs more to our division due to us having to pick up things that are not quickly dealt with in the Adult Contact Centre.

There should be greater emphasis on front of house teams run by Capita being more specialist to back office teams, so that they develop more expertise in service areas, build a rapport with regular customers and so help to take the pressure off back office teams. Also, it should be easier for customers to get straight through to the team they need, if they know who they need to speak to. The time taken to answer calls should also be shorter. The pre-Capita standard of answering phones within 3 rings was less frustrating for members of the public.

I do not agree with the contract should be extended. I believe that Council Services should be run by the Council - if a third party, such as Capita are involved it is because they can make money out of the contract. If the council were running their own services that money made by Capita could be put back into the services to improve them - not cut them further - meaning that at least Gateway could continue to see customers and offer a service to be proud of!

don't

The current standard of service provided under the contract has decreased a lot in the last few years. Capita also produce on line forms that are hard to find and are not always appropriate. This has added to the time that SCC staff have to spend sorting out problems or getting through to get advice from Capita. The initial KPI's were not written in a way that was tight enough or are not met by Capita at present, but nothing seems to improve only go in reverse. This adds unaccounted costs to the SCC staff which are not taken into account.

Return to inhouse, I have nothing positive to say about the company and I'm sure you are aware of their nickname throughout the city.

Capita is, primarily, a profit making organisation which has no place in an organisation which should be run for and by the people it serves. I have no doubt that they are too powerful in Southampton to now easily be sacked although I believe they should be. If no one is able to show the strength not to re-new the contract my only hope is that the renegotiation is undertaken by people who have both enough knowledge and ethics to work out a more equitable deal than was done before.

Keep the Capita staff and get rid of Capita

Should it not go out to tender again?

As a contact centre focus is on dealing with the customer as quickly as possible, there is no emphasis on repeat contact by the customer. Some services would be better linked back to SCC to be with the back office section.

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I'm unsure, but feel that a summary of how successful the past contract has been - whether it has actually saved the council money and improved services, and if so how, would be helpful in deciding.

Has the Council looked at other providers other than Capita? What have been the successes of the contract so far and what has failed?

My personal feelings, as a council employee, are the contract has not delivered what we were told it would before it was agreed, and why would reward this with an extension and more money? For example, we were told it would lead to investment in IT, but we have not seen evidence of this (it may be in the background, but we're using outdated software that is only now being upgraded because Microsoft are making it obsolete). As a local resident, I have found the customer contact centre difficult to use and quite unhelpful. I didn't use it when it was still within SCC so cannot say if this is because it is run by a third party.

I think Capita will probably save the Council money but the level of service will drop considerably and i expect the Council will extend the Contract because its all about saving money!!

Don't - the council should deliver directly and not give money to capita.

I fully believe that local services, including local authority finances, should be managed in-house and not by large external contractors.

No

If Capita are to continue providing the service, I think the following changes are important: 1) Named staff - name and surname, so that the caller/ visitor knows who they are dealing with and can be contacted again. We got cut off due to poor mobile phone signal when half way through a specialist transaction, and it took ages for council staff to track down who had been dealing with it. 2) Clear information on what has been done, what has been agreed and what to expect next - no jargon. If legal stuff has to be provided/ included in wording then a simple covering letter explaining the above needs to be included. 3) If a ring back option is included that this is done, and done in a short timeframe 4) Staff adequately trained to deal with queries and to know where to refer people on where needed 5) Forms as simple as possible - accessible to people with lower literacy levels 6) Free phone number for residents (mobile and landline) if at all possible to access services. This is important if there may be a lot of options and a lot of waiting - don't want residents not being able to pay rent/ heating charges etc because they have used up a lot of money phoning the council.

No other views

no

I personally don't think it should be extended - vast amounts of money have been spent to date on a number of issues - we are paying exorbitant amounts of money for IT issues, moving offices and nearly all of the systems/services being contracted out to Capita

The contract must be structured to enable the flexibility to change without any penalty during times of massive change in local government. Clear customer focussed performance measures need to be incorporated that are meaningful and not simply easy to collect. Incentivisation to improve services and reduce costs is essential with some form of savings sharing.

I'm against spending public money on private enterprise and the way, in this case, council services have become more like a factory production line than a personal service to human customers. This contract certainly has had detrimental effects on my section of the Council so please don't extend it!

The fact that the general public still think that all these services are dealt with by SCC & we are the people that look bad because the services are bad!!

Too expensive. Should be renegotiated.

none

I would like to see the SCC take it over

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Re-tender. The cost may or may not have given a saving, but the services run by Capita have definitely been reduced compared to in-house provision. At the very least it will send a message to Capita not to up their game. At best we could get a more professional contractor.

The support provided by Capita appears to have improved in recent years.

The contract needs to be fit for purpose. I am not convinced it provides value for money when you consider what support services are provided eg HR, IT. If it is extended then SCC need to be explaining fully to staff about what they can expect from these support services in the future.

Fully costed alternatives to be considered. Sharing services with other councils, Costings from other private providers and bringing the service in house for example.

Why would you extend a contract with Capita and pay more for less? For instance - your "IT" would have cost SCC less if it stayed in the house! To lock SCC in the contract with Capita until 2022 is not very wise! Why this thought that everything could be delivered better if it is delivered by private/external companies?

no.

as a citizen I feel badly placed to comment. I do know Capita have a very poor reputation in many areas in which they operate so am cynical that the City will be the winner (or even a balanced partner) in this deal.

All services should be provided by directly employed council employees; this is by far the cheapest option in terms of direct and indirect pay; it ensures control over the aims and objectives of the workforce; it ensures that the services are provided for the benefit of the service users and not for the profit of the shareholders; it ensures that local residents remain the owners of the services and can have a direct say on service provision through the election of local councillors and maintain accountability.

Yes don't extend the contract and bring all the staff back under the control of the council, so the council has full control of things and are not relying on an outside agency to supply services.

I would have thought the change over could be achieved quicker than 5 years

Should consider bring service back in house.

Not sure what services Capita offers you.

Contract extension can only be made if the incumbent has met or exceeded current service levels

Think it is a good idea as it will save time and money commissioning alternative provider.

No problems so long as there are suitable penalties if Capita fail to achieve set levels of service.

I think that this would be a mistake and overlooks the possibility of providing services in house to ensure that the service delivered is the right one for the area and the people, rather than Capita's current standards

I believe that there should be a tender, if Capita come in cheaper as they are already set up then o.k. if not they lose the contract, or they reduce their price by the tender costs.

I feel that it would be important for the council to re-negotiate the contract with Capita to reflect changes since the initial contract was signed. However, I do not have any issues with regards to the services that Capita provide.

I would like to see some of the other tenders for services. Will it go out to tender?

Hard to say without any information on performance, but one would want transparency on performance and value for money on investment. If there is no in house staff with skills, then I see very little option other than contracting out

Not in a position to comment on how fast the changes can be implemented however another 5 years seems a bit excessive - perhaps 3 years?

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If less people are required because of the new system does it need to be extended as is, or will there be less agency staff?

No Problem.

Before the Contract is extended I think you should wait to see if it is necessary to make changes. Don't be too hasty.

Has the true cost of the contract been audited? In my personal experience of outsourcing many anticipated savings are not realised because the contract did not cover the full scope of work carried out by staff and all 'exceptions' to the contract were chargeable. Technology changes very rapidly. If the contract is extended will future cost reductions in services that we cannot for see today remain with Capita or pass to the council tax payer? I would like the council to look at cost savings achievable by joining together with other local authorities to share services or negotiate contracts as well as look at savings possible bt bringing the work in house rather than outsourcing.

Do much more research with "real people" rather than just the IT Savvy ones - and that is said by someone who has been an IT Consultant for more than 30 years !!!!!

No

NO EXTENSION...Out to Bid.....min of 3 quotes....table of comparisonmake it sealed bid ...open in Public THE CORRECT FAIR WAY TO TENDER FOR ANYTHING

Most contracts of this type usually mean services to the public are reduced as there are less staff due to redundancy and cost cutting and using less qualified and cheaper contractors . How can we know that the contract with Capita has bought any benefits to the Southampton public.

Emergencies

no

I dont agree with outside agencies dealing with these things, they never work well and usually end up costing more money.

As a council employee, I am against continuing the extension.

the council should keep all services in house and not contract out there services

If the majority vote favours it, then carry on

How on earth can profits for a company be better value than employing your own people and the council keep all the profits for more services.

the council should be going back to basics and treating their customers as humans.

No Views

I think this would be a good decision as Capita have provided value for money and good quality service

I've not heard good things about Capita. For instance, they've let down the Nursery my daughter attends.

Need to be clear on the value for money that the contract offers. The world has moved on dramatically in the last 10 years and the contract must be so obsolete it might be more beneficial to start again. There must be more providers available than there were 10 years ago too. Would there be merit in considering bringing back in house and/or merging some of these generic operations with other councils in Hampshire or with other public sector organisations in the city?

The council should put the contract back out to tender. There may be better options than Capita in the market. There may also be services that were previously outsourced that are more cost effectively or better delivered in-house; asking council employees who have to interact with Capita daily is probably better than asking me though, and from what I gather they think the company deserves it's nickname in Private Eye.

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don't know

As the Government if reducing funding to Local Authorities, SCC needs to ensure it is getting true VFM from the contract. The contract was written some considerable time ago, I would think the contract would need to be reviewed to ensure it is still fit for purpose with the changes that have happened and those in the foreseeable future.

some difficulties with budgets taken over by capita have meant that some work on building maintenance has suffered due to the priority of capita and not always considering the service area priorities

don't agree that it should be extended

Contact centre staff is supposedly trained to be able to answer the majority of questions for all council services. The reality is that they have no in-depth knowledge of most of the services. This may be a cheap way to operate a contact centre, however, the real work is very often left for the back office to sort out. When my department used to take the calls, we could immediately advise the customer, make a decision and resolve the problem. Now I have to look into Lagan, very often ring the customer back to find out more information. We also receive more emails as contact centre staff fails to resolve the issue satisfactorily.

The Council should bring this back in house. The cost may appear cheaper initially, but anything that was out of scope when the contract was signed would cost the Council a lot more than it would if this was back in house.

To not have Capita at all. I have asked them to confirm annual leave giving a start and end date and they have got that wrong. I was also told that it would be a 3 day response for this. I have had a relative who took redundancy/early retirement last year who went through several months of paperwork beforehand ascertaining benefits/money etc and then after she left was advised that was incorrect and had to pay money back. Not exactly a small thing to get wrong and could have made a difference to whether they had accepted or not.

Capita do not have time, they rush everything to save their money and do not deliver good customer care. We have complaints everyday from clients re Capita. Evidence can be provided on request.

I am strongly in favour of in-house provision.

No their useless, most staff with knowledge have gone and when you ring Capita HR etc for help it takes too long for a response and usually it's wrong. The service needs to go back to in-house as I understand other authorities that have used Capita wish they hadn't

I would like to see SCC employing directly rather than sub-contracting these functions

I am concerned that Capita carry out all recruitment but only complete part of the process and the remainder is left to SCC. Capita send the packs but they could easily be printed off by SCC because they still have to be made up.

The Capita contract has lots of loopholes so that currently Capita can introduce new services or alter existing ones, and levy a charge for these which has not been foreseen. A revised contract which prevented such practices would be preferable. Many services seem to have been outsourced which were run perfectly well in-house. To let outside companies perform these duties, and make a profit, indicates that there has to be a drop in quality.

We shall be considering this carefully between now and 2017.

I would like to see all such contracts ended and all services provided by the Council direct.

I have no thoughts on the contract but would like consideration be given to the end user the client our customers who have to use this system to obtain help

Is the Council investigating the feasibility of sharing services with other Councils. The extension of the contract will undoubtedly cost the Council more than an in-house or shared service, over the 5 year life cycle of the project.

I cannot admit to being convinced of the quality of Capita work here and in education where I "suffered" with them for 8 years.

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I have seen other colleagues having to deal with issues we were under the impression would be dealt with by Capita and certain orders on Agresso appear to be produced twice - once by Capita and then are input to Agresso by SCC staff - the workload appears to increase rather than decrease

Capita do not have a good reputation, will they just use this extension as an excuse for supplying systems late?

I cannot comment as I do not have sufficient information.

I don't see we have much choice but that doesn't mean it is right for the Council, they are making money out of everything!

Why do you pay a private company to run our services? a private company means shareholders and they like to be paid!!! Surely the council running these services would be cheaper.

Totally unnecessary for the Council with four years to go, but a wonderful gift for Capita! Review in 2-3 years. Any extension must be performance related with get out clauses for Council and significant penalties for Capita if they perform poorly.

Who is Capita?

Not a good idea. Look for robust viable alternatives or bring the necessary portfolio in-house.

All it's been so far is more cuts worse service and unhappy staff the public. Give it back to the council.

Services currently provided by Capita should be returned in-house as per the majority of all other Local Authorities to retain more control, provide a better service and enable easier internal interaction and dispute resolution.

As long as a review period is incorporated within the 5 year period to ensure the service and standards are being retained and an option to opt is available if the service or standard is not acceptable.

Providing these services in-house gives the council more flexibility in the future and is likely to lead to a higher quality service.

The contract with a supplier preferably other than Capita (with whom I have had previous dealings, none with any satisfaction).

I am not impressed with Capita and SCC must ensure that they deliver the services to the highest standard before any contract extension is signed with a clause terminating the agreement if it is not maintained.

Some changes need to be made and I don't think this is a good idea as the level of service we had from our own staff was far superior to that currently delivered by Capita, if you try to get the same level of service from Capita you incur charges. As for the Repair service it has been a nightmare at times, when they are busy someone else takes the call asks basic details and says that someone will call you back and or report. Have had numerous occasions where I've not received a call back and have had to phone again to report or the repair has not been logged or logged to the wrong property or scheme. I have even had incidents where I as a member of the scheme staff have logged a repair and then find a Neighbourhood Warden turn up to get more details or to even check to see if the repair is as urgent as I have requested it be.

What are the results of previous years partnership between SCC & Capita? Has that made a difference? Obviously there are penalties for Capita not meeting targets/standards but individual SCC departments do not get told this information, which is relevant to their section. Not sure if good idea to extend with Capita.

Extending the contract is definitely not a good move based on the poor services experienced so far as detailed before. Our team frequently has mis-directed calls, callers put through unannounced and callers who are very upset and annoyed at the time they have been waiting on the queueing system and are surprised that they and their issue have not been announced and they have to go through it all again. It is also very wasteful of staff time to have to queue up with members of the public to redirect callers sometimes for as long as 20 minutes, blocking incoming calls as our practice is to wait for a response and introduce the caller and the nature of the inquiry. If decision should be made to extend contract. Can we please have a dedicated direct internal line to reduce the waiting time for staff?

I'm not familiar with the work currently carried out by Capita

Detailed comments received as part of the on-line consultation

Question 11 - *The council is considering whether to extend its contract with Capita by five years beyond the current end date of 30 September 2017. Do you have any views on such a contract extension, or the alternatives that you would like the council to take into account?*

I would like to see that the council look to see if there is another option available and maybe even change the contract to another provider?

If the contract is based on revised terms, improved services and better value for money then extend it. Capita are a private company with HQ staff earning 6 figure bonuses. How the council gets value for money whilst lining the pockets of a private company is a difficult one for me to understand.

It would appear that Capita can change its side of the contract as the switchboard is no longer manned in the evenings and Saturdays when the Library is open. Because of the cuts, we have less staff and this is causing problems

The switchboard have no idea how the teams operate, adequate training would be beneficial. At the current time I feel extending the contract with Capita would be an error and, despite the savings, would cost more in the long run with lost time for staff having to fix multiple mistakes and spending time dealing with angry callers who did not start off that way, and wouldn't be if they were dealt with accurately during the first call.

Part of the proposals is to have customers contacting via on line, what about all the people who do not have the internet at home & do not want to travel to gain access to the internet especially the elderly? What about people who do not speak or read English? There have been many problems with Capita and them not being capable of transferring a call to the right team external or internal, where you can be on hold listening to the annoying automated issues to the point where you find people have hung up. Then all the problems with HR which gets to the point of being ridiculous, I personally feel my team and I could do our job & work on Capita's switchboard & HR department and do a better job. The council's website is not user friendly or updated as frequently as it should be, especially contact telephone numbers. The contract till 2017 is not good and extending it another 5 years to 2022 is just a really bad idea.

I think the specification of services should be reviewed to tie up on areas where a good service is not being currently provided. More quality KPI measures to be put in place. Over the years Council services have increasingly had to take over tasks that fall outside of the Capita contract, and this should be taken into account when the contract is evaluated to see if SCC are still receiving value for money. An example of this is the way that managers are encouraged to do DIY HR. Not necessarily a bad thing, but the cost of additional duties being placed on managers should be taken into account. Do we receive value for money from the Capita Contract? I don't know the answer to this, but I think the market should be explored to see if SCC is receiving value for money. I have no objection to strategic partnerships so long as they are true partnerships, but I do get the feeling that Capita seem to have been the only organisation to benefit from the existing strategic partnership (it is not a partnership, it is a contract)

Haaa, haaa, oh my tummy hurts. Stop it, oh please stop! Extend it??? Waaaah.. haaa... oh my! I hurt, I really do.

Not sure what the current contract is about, but I heard about an exclusive road maintenance contract in place with Balfour Beatty, by which the contractor can decide which roads need maintenance and to what standard and then "pay themselves". That kind of system is madness, as it opens the door for contractors to help themselves to council money without the council having a say as to how the money gets spent and what repairs to prioritise. I think this approach is dangerous and one should be wary of it. Personally I want my council to be in control of these local issues, not some contractor who benefits from the decision to go ahead with something or other!

Do not extend the contract but reemploy workers in house and work with other councils closely to save costs

Capita has not worked for us all the time, I would not extend the contract.

This is an 'empty' question - it smacks of Council seeking to tick a 'consultation' box without giving the public it asks to respond any information as to the efficiency/efficacy of the service offered by Capita so far.

would prefer to see the council moving away from private sector

No comment either for or against

Detailed comments received as part of the on-line consultation

Question 11 - *The council is considering whether to extend its contract with Capita by five years beyond the current end date of 30 September 2017. Do you have any views on such a contract extension, or the alternatives that you would like the council to take into account?*

While Capita may mean to provide a good service and employ some excellent staff, I have not always seen positive results in my area. Occupational Health problems - not resolved. Lagan/Total mobile problems - not resolved. HR issues - too many passed to managers. Procurement - lumbered with Wolseley which has caused a huge amount of work for staff as their invoices are rarely correct. Solution? 1) Proof of savings from Capita for eg procurement 2) retain Capita for corporate HR issues, but return budget for local HR to service areas.

The issues are not with the services offered by the contract but by the restrictions of the contract. For example network lines - when the Council closes a service and there are still a number of years left on a line, the Council pays - there is no incentive for Capita to reuse that line or improve infrastructure. If the Council wants to use that line elsewhere the Council pays. Newer services run on ADSL lines - these are purchased and paid for by the Council not Capita. Effectively the costs are taken by the individual business units as an extra cost.

they are rubbish

No views

Why wouldn't you use your own highly trained capable staff. It's a real shame.

Capita are a waste of space. Please consider other options

Capita will have to be sure of the quality of their call staff. So far I have found them very unhelpful, unfriendly and unsympathetic

Capita's only interest is in making profit for its shareholders. It is quite clear from the dealings I have had with them that they have no interest in providing local services to meet local needs; they make it difficult to access services so that they can report to the provider that the service is not required and they can delete it. This is the reason why they want to move everything on-line so that those in need, who cause them the most cost, are deterred from accessing the services to which they are entitled. This is not the fault of the staff who do a wonderful job in very difficult circumstances. All council services should be provided by directly employed by Council staff with the ethos is a first class service for the citizens of Southampton rather than profit for the shareholders of Capita. If this contract is extended, I will be appalled.

From my point of view the Contract with Capita has increased my personal workload considerably. Electronic forms/requests have to be chased/checked, I am expected to be able to interpret answers to questions I do not fully understand, I have to email HR for permission to take formal Attendance management proceedings, you rarely get the same person twice and rarely the same advice either. I agree the situation was not ideal before, but now for me it is worse.

There is a disconnect between someone dealing with an issue, and someone taking the details and poor advice given or incorrect details taken

Our service area has received poor service, particularly from HR and O/Health, ever since the contract started. and consequently, I am not in favour of extending the contract with Capita.

In house provision of all services provided by Capita would be better, it would make the council responsible for the service it provides, instead of blaming the contractor when things go wrong. I think you should take into account the views of people who have to deal with Capita first, to see what the quality of service people think they provide

I think the Council needs to look carefully at the quality of customer service provided. It should not be all about Capita for example dealing with phone calls within so many seconds when clearly they have not listened to the question the caller is asking & therefore putting the call through to the wrong section/dept

I think it would be cheaper in the long run for the council to run services inhouse.

Some Capita services are in the process of potentially being cut back, and there are already Council work commitments they have set in place at significant cost. I am concerned that these cutbacks will worsen the service provided by Capita staff, particularly in Valuation and Construction, due to fewer staff being available to do the work and therefore Council projects suffering as a result. I

Detailed comments received as part of the on-line consultation

Question 11 - *The council is considering whether to extend its contract with Capita by five years beyond the current end date of 30 September 2017. Do you have any views on such a contract extension, or the alternatives that you would like the council to take into account?*

don't think the business model has been carefully planned, nor that the COuncil's best interests are being served. That said I do think that Capita staff who do the day-to-day work with SCC staff are largely committed to providing a good service.

Please dont. From what little I know whenever they have been involved in a council scheme, business plan or anything of the ilk they have always messed up. it is embarrassing telling outside organisations that things have been delayed and in the most cases it is down to incompetance on Capita's behalf.

I can't answer this without figures on what savings Capita might have made as opposed to in-house Council provision.

It should in no way renew its contract with Capita which has a proven track record of incompetence and waste in many areas! I am not an expert in outsourcing so can not suggest alternatives

Detailed comments received as part of the on-line consultation**Question 15 - Any further comments?**

It will be a very dark day if this goes through.

Please read above.

I realise that in the current financial situation the Council needs to save money and make cuts - what better way to do this than to save the money they are paying to third parties, who profit out of these contracts and bring the services back into Council hands. There by the cuts would come from third party profits and not from services offered to city's disadvantaged residents

I completely understand that savings are required but I do think you are looking in all the wrong places - to remove human contact from so many areas is sending us into such a poor world. I have witnessed several examples of this over the years and it does make for a much sadder environment, no-one talks anymore. Supermarkets, Libraries [I miss discussing what i've read with the librarians] Drs surgery's where you check yourself in [ours is always breaking with queues out the door as the receptionists are locked away in the back room makes for a much colder, impersonal and sadder place to live.

No

If this is a cost cutting exercise, which it clearly is you must be upfront about this and publicise how much you'll save widely , not just on the website or in coucil minutes. Otherwise it just looks like a load of council jobsworths making life easy for themselves

Please note I work for mental health/floating support services within the Southampton area.

Getting people who can complete forms online is a good move, but please ensure that there is no discrimination against people who cannot, by continuing to provide a drop in face-to-face service that is well staffed.

Don't agree with extending Capita contract

how do those customers without IT access know about this consultation and how can they respond?

none

My loss of broadband connection during the completion of this form almost led me to abort my contribution. I think this could also be a point when considering customers trying to fill in forms using an unfamiliar format? We could see a few less enquiries as a good thing, but is it an obvious a step backwards from the high standard of customer care we have been encouraged to cultivate up to this point?

Reductions in face-to-face and telephone services should only be made after online services have been significantly improved, enlarged and fully tested.

Whilst in theory to save money/time putting everything online, it is just not practical for a large percentage of the cities population. I also strongly disagree with benefits moving to this in the future also. Gateway works well at the moment, having a hub for all services that you can drop into. Even on a busy day you do not have to wait that long to see staff. Also telephone automated is frustrating for people.

I think it is the right way to go but please make sure your call centre operates quickly and at reasonable cost.

I am happy about the online services changes

None

Need to put reminder card about council website through residents letter boxes. Or maybe a sticker put on each residents bin?

This questionnaire is biased as it is being completed online by members of the public with access to a computer. To get an accurate response you must also make this questionnaire available in paper form.

no

none

This survey has no asked whether measures should be introduced to reduce the demand on the Council's services.

I hope decisions have not already been taken and minds already made up without waiting for the responses of the citizens of Southampton.

Detailed comments received as part of the on-line consultation**Question 15 - Any further comments?**

Your website needs revamping to make it more attractive and user friendly to promote online access. I use the current website with reluctance rather the first point of call it should be to find out about basic things like dustbin collections etc. The website does not always display properly in Firefox.

Don't fall into the traps of the utilities etc of using automation as an excuse to reduce actual service quality. We may not be "customers" but we still hold the Council accountable and can vote with our feet !

Many elderly people have a fear of, or lack of access to computers, and because of hearing problems are nervous on the phone. A friendly caring operator at the end of the phone line is essential for them. I know this from experience with my 95 year old parents who still endeavour to be as independent as possible.

No

Offer a real Service to your Customers....it will take another 20+ years before the total population will be PC skilled.....have a cut-off point of over 50's on traditional service unless they select for PC mode....work with them don't frighten them with this leap into the future that the know nothing about

Do not underestimate the need for the council to present a human face to the public, it would be "inhuman" not to

No automated switchboard please, publish the DDI phone number of the department so that they can be called directly by the public.

Change is not always for the better and usually ends up offering a worse system than the one it replaces. You cannot substitute experience for machines which break down.

Your rubbish IT setup has taken me 30 minutes to complete this survey. You need to sack the person who runs it and fix it before these changes are implemented

No

Than for the chance to participate.

People appreciate human contact.

No.

<http://www.newstatesman.com/uk-politics/2013/08/nine-spectacular-council-outsourcing-failures>

I hope that during the move to on-line services the relevant services are engaging with interested residents to ensure what SCC think and residents think are one of the same!

a council is a public service, and whilst it needs to be mindful of using public money and how it is used, it needs also to fulfill the needs of its residents. making it more difficult for some sections may decrease their independence and increase their isolation.

Automating processes is certainly the right way, however, there will always be a number of applications that will fail due to technical problems or because the customer does not fit 100% into the preset arrangement. There will need to be very alert back office.

The Council along with Capita have made good progress in moving forward with Web technology etc. But I think it is now time to bring IT back in with Southampton CC.

Save some money by reducing the amount of team managers and higher paid staff that we never seem to have a problem with having openings for. Look closer at the people doing the jobs and ask them whats wrong with the systems instead of paying high paid consultants, over and over again - who regurgitate the same ideas. Reduce the amount of travelling costs within SCC by incorporating dept in same building. Look at those who dont use car for job anymore and take away their perks of parking, as people change jobs but dont seem to lose their perks. Stop paying out huge amounts of money for laptops and laptop trolleys etc to people who then dont actually use them for the job it is provided for (re City care). Stop paying out huge amounts to staff for changing their contracts (again City care) who cost us thousands. Look at why team managers seem to go off on long term sick for months and then seem to come back into another role. If thats the lower paid end of scale we dont get away with it. Flexible working: if there is a shortage of staff why are some people still allowed to do flexible working (working 9 longer days instead of 10) which means they are not available to respond to queries, answer phone or cover whilst others are out and when they are not in others have to take up their queries. Also those who go early before 4 (again flexible working) though this seems to be again for only

Detailed comments received as part of the on-line consultation**Question 15 - Any further comments?**

some levels of staff who claim it through childcare even though their children are over 14. Again then they are not in someone else has to pick up their phone calls/work. Surely their contract hours should be reduced if the position is supposed to be a full time one.

Sorry but I do not think Capita has been very good for us , charging us for everything where we are capable of doing i.e. IT, phones etc.

I feel the contract needs to be very carefully looked at, especially the IT. The charges that the Council have to pay for some IT equipment/services is substantial. The Council Tax should not used to make a profit by some Companies. It should be used for the good of the City.

No

Personally I am happy to do everything on line, but I'm concerned that it may not suit the most vulnerable people in the city

A move to increased technological access is a positive move but not at the expense of staff. Face to face contact or an understanding voice on the end of the phone can often stop a problem becoming a complaint. Think about how reliable these systems need to be - what will happen when the self service kiosks 'go down' (and they will). Also - did you ever hear anyone praise the excellent customer service they received from a machine?

No. Thanks for the opportunity to comment. Hope it goes well for the Council and all its service users. No need to wish the same for Capita, they are well used to looking after themselves on a national basis. We are small beer to them.

The need to embrace new technologies is important but should not be introduced to the detriment of tried and tested existing systems. I am fortunate to be able to use all the latest communication systems but also I am aware of many people who do not have access to the Internet & e:mail etc so a human point of contact at all times is crucial.

Basically its a stupid idea that will just loose jobs and leave more confused people unable to get help when they most need it. If it aint broke dont fix it.

We pay Council Tax for a CONTRACT with the authority. It seems to me to be a one sided contract with the authority providing a poorer and more unsatisfactory service as time goes on at an ever increasing cost to consumers who have no choice over whom they use to provide the service.

don't think you want any more!!!

What will happen to the existing staff @ Gateway??

I am not impressed with the contract delivery so far.

I think we should take pride in the way we work with residents of Southampton and I really believe the more face to face services we can offer people makes people feel valued and supported. Surlely this is what good customer service is?

Don't be put off by the usual moaners. This is the 21st century. The vast majority are now used to doing business online (utilities, insurance, car tax etc). Provide relevant support for the elderly and infirm but don't pander to the lazy and those who will always resist change. Even though they are usually the ones with the loudest voices, they don't represent the majority

I have had many issues with the switchboard which have been raised through internal channels but no resolution is ever forthcoming and the issues remain and often worsen. Extending the contract given their current level of service would, in my and many of my colleagues opinions, be a huge mistake.

Extending the contract to 2022 is the worst idea, isn't it bad enough some 'genius' agreed to Capita's contract in the first place!

Listen to your customers and listen to your staff. No I mean it. Listen, really listen and take note. You may learn something.. Although on second thoughts... I doubt if you could be bothered.

Thanks for consulting the population of Southampton on these issues, makes me feel that democracy is still worth something in this country, even though not always reflected in the arcane British electoral system... :-)

My attention was drawn to this consultation by a friend. Could you find some way of publicising more fully that you have such a consultation on the go? I understand that only about 20% of the population of Southampton has access to computers (information via GP patient consultation group considering the same issues as you are). This is partly because Southampton has some pockets

Detailed comments received as part of the on-line consultation**Question 15 - Any further comments?**

of real poverty, so may not be as appropriate a site as some other towns/cities in the South East for the kind of automated treatments you envisage here. Same goes for smart phones - lots of people have mobiles, but smart ones are expensive...

I suggest you extend the consultation time once you have ensure that as many people in Southampton are aware of this consultation/proposal. It has not been widely advertised enough. You need to engage a larger cross section. I am aware of the fact that the leaflets concerning this matter are still being produced....not good enough. It smacks of a foregone conclusion.

Your website is very unattractive and often counter-intuitive and has been so for long enough. The Planning pages are especially awkward to navigate through.

I feel it is a sad reflection on society that people are processed and their voices diminished in favour of a finger press option and a keyboard. Vocal chords will become extinct and our cognitive skills repressed. Make the person count as an individual, not as a statistic.

Regarding access, recently my bus service was withdrawn under the "improvements" offered by First Bus following your decision to cut their subsidy. Effectively, this means I have great difficulty in getting to work. Yet, I note that there are a huge number of buses going up and down Shirley High Street going into town. Evening and weekend buses are really poor, another reason why getting to Libraries to use a pc is even more difficult.

Thank you for asking - it makes a change.

Most people prefer dealing with a real person rather than a machine. Self Service machines still have to be 'staffed'.

I think its indicative of today's society to remove human beings from certain elements; a couple of weeks ago there was a huge outcry in the news about the thousands of elderly that didnt see anyone to talk to!!??? too many changes are being made too quickly due to monetary problems and this country as a collective is suffering as a result. the vulnerable, elderly, disabled etc are being picked on with benefits, removing human contact, cutting that face to face contact, you go into Asda and are directed to a self service terminal, I used to go in to my local library and discuss what I had read with the librarian, who would then pass my recommendation on to another reader and vice versa, now we are faced with machines that beep at us. where will this end, if so much can be made 'people free' then perhaps it is time to remove, MPs, Councillors and senior members of staff and replace them with machines, we would probably have a much fairer soc iety. I am very concerned about the future, I dont mind change but not the wrong kind of change.

This has been a well designed questionnaire. Many of the forms I get from different sources, energy, airlines etc., etc., are not. Possibly the latter have influenced my view, but I do think that fewer people would want to lose the human touch than enthusiasts for new technology believe.

It should be clear that I consider the proposal misguided and will only be suitable for a certain sector of Southampton's population

Detailed responses to the paper version of the consultation

Question 1	Question 2	Question 3	Question 4	Question 5	Question 6	Question 7
<p>Not everyone will have access to their own PC or smartphone. Public access PCs will be available in Gateway and libraries. The phone self-service facility will also be available. Do you feel providing these facilities meets the needs of people without access to the internet at home?</p>	<p>There will be people who have difficulty using (or who are unable to use) an online service including: people with visual impairments; people with learning difficulties; some elderly people. These people will still be able to use the phone service or can make an appointment to see someone face-to-face in Gateway. Do you feel this approach would meet their needs? Are there other groups of people who may have difficulty accessing services online?</p>	<p>There will be people who have difficulty using (or who are unable to use) phone self-service facilities including: people with hearing impairments; people with learning difficulties; people who have difficulty understanding spoken English; some elderly people. These people will still be able to use the online service if they are able to do so, or can make an appointment to see someone face-to-face in Gateway (with an interpreter if necessary). Do you feel this approach would meet their needs? Are there other groups of people who may have difficulty using our phone self-service facilities?</p>	<p>Moving to an appointments system in Gateway will encourage people to use the self-service terminals (with assistance from Gateway staff if required). However some people will need to be seen immediately and it will not be appropriate for them to wait for an appointment. Gateway staff will be trained to recognise these urgent needs and an immediate interview will be arranged in these exceptional cases. Can you see any difficulties with this approach?</p>	<p>Other than online and automated phone services, are there any other approaches that the council should be considering when looking at ways to improve customer contact? Please give reasons for your answer.</p>	<p>Over time the council will move as many services as possible to online and/or phone self-service facilities. Are there any services that you feel should not be considered for this approach? Why do you think they are not suitable?</p>	<p>To encourage people to use online forms the number of paper forms will be substantially reduced and they will not be widely distributed. There will always be a paper version available if required, but these may only be provided on request. Can you see this causing any difficulties? Are there any council services where this approach is not appropriate?</p>
<p>What about people with leaning or sensory problems (e.g. developing blindness). The elderly may not use any of the technology confidently.</p>	<p>How will they know about this option if they can't see/read etc. People need people.</p>	<p>As above. You need to access the technology to access the service. Some people have mixed disability e.g. people with learning diffs may have visual and auditory problems - haven't mentioned mental health issues</p>	<p>Yes. I have no trust in 'staff will be trained to recognise exceptional cases.'</p>	<p>People. They can go off script, react to multiple needs, read facial expressions.</p>	<p>Since you haven't enumerated the ones you are hoping to change it is impossible to comment.</p>	<p>How do you know you can request paper forms if you are unable to access the information in the first place. @If you can't read this here is the information on what you should do.'</p>
<p>No. Many older people and people with learning difficulties or blind will be unable to use this system. Menu-based phone systems can cause similar problems, both in terms of using them and accessing the information they need to supply.</p>	<p>No. see comments above.</p>		<p>I have experience of systems where insufficient capital was put into the equipment, software and, most importantly, staff training. It wastes staff time and can result in costing more.</p>			
<p>Yes.</p>	<p>People who are not competent in using a P.C., who do not know how to get started in finding the right 'buttons to press.'</p>	<p>People who have hearing difficulties.</p>	<p>No.</p>		<p>Can't think of any at this moment.</p>	<p>Depends if requesting is made easy by phone, face to face?</p>
<p>Yes.</p>	<p>Yes.</p>	<p>Yes.</p>	<p>No.</p>	<p>I don't know any other way.</p>	<p>Don't think police calls.</p>	<p>I don't think so.</p>

Detailed responses to the paper version of the consultation

Question 1	Question 2	Question 3	Question 4	Question 5	Question 6	Question 7
No. Disabled and elderly find P.C.s and smart phones frustrating.	No. These people can't get out and about easily.	Just elderly , disabled, poor hearing and poor vision getting frustrated.	Staff	Keep paper as reading is easier specially if you need advice.	Old people find difficulty with both.	Problem with computers. I am aged 91. Life is hard.
Yes - if they can get to library-cost of transport/availability of transport / access to transport. No -if peripheral neuropathy - walking to bus stop and to appointment is not possible.	People with physical impairments i.e. tremors / shakes and early memory problems and peripheral neuropathy / appointments out of home.	As in 2 above - tremors.	Yes - it would be costly or physically difficult / impossible to get to appointments,	Automated services are not good for people - they need to speak to someone particularly if slow cos of tremors.	Fine but must automatically transfer to a person if client can't provide info for whatever purpose.	Ensure one can print out a form to prepare slowly ready for input as one finger typing is frustrating.
No. I am deaf disabled and have a learning disability. I will find it not possible.	I am deaf. Will you have a BSL interpreter?	Deaf people. Old people.	Yes.	Letter. Deaf people and old people will have to get help from cares and family.	Housing. Wheelchair services. Care.	Lots of older people do not have internet. Too difficult for them alone. People with learning disability.
Because I use a mobile phone only I'm not sure you meet my needs	I do not what about people who are housebound.	A reliance on computers is limiting. There will always be people who do not or do not wish to use computers to do all online.	I can as some people will need an amount of time that will perhaps be longer than you can allocate.	Perhaps you need to think what would work for your customers rather than what makes your life easier.	Some people will always need a face to face service. It would seem that you are moving away from this interaction.	See all above. This may be your preferred choice but it's not just about you. Remember your customers please!
No. People without access at home probably do not know how to use it or have chosen not to. There is no viable alternative for elderly, those with learning difficulties and those without Keyboard / computer skills.	We have Power of Attorney for a relative with learning difficulties. Every time his housing benefit changes it is wrong and we have to go to Gateway and explain the problem. We do not 'do' online and our charge is unable. Why should we make an appointment to put council mistakes right?	No - you are taking away the instant face to face facility which enables people to interact in a natural manner and be 'connected' and responsible for the service. Dealing with an automated service gives no 'follow through, with the same individual.	Yes. 'Emergencies' will mean appointments running late. If assistance to use the terminals is anything like that offered in supermarkets at self-service check outs it will be rushed, confusing and uninformative and not inspire confidence for future use.	If you are looking to reduce benefit fraud - going online or phone is not the way to do it - how do you know who is at the other end. Also - automation relies on the right questions being asked and options given and they never are in my experience!	1) The elderly services, care, health, pensions etc. A very large percentage of those not happy with technology are the elderly and those needing face to face help. 2) Those with learning difficulties often cannot think or respond quickly enough to questions. there should always be an option.	Yes. The government said some years ago that no-one should ever be disadvantaged through not being online. This is no longer true. An alternative paper form / personal help should <u>always</u> be available and equally advertised.
Yes, as long as they are helped to use them as not everyone is P.C. friendly. Machines cannot answer everything.	People with hearing loss - their needs also need to be met. At times issues arise that need help instantly or the same day - online is not always good.	There are people who are not familiar or able to use the phones.	Not always easy to spot people. Some people are shy and would not like to make a fuss and would slip through the system. Leaving a lot to chance!	Always have people available to do face to face contact - not automated everything. Reasons are obvious.	Because this does not suit everyone. Too many illnesses / disabilities - special needs to make this really workable.	I know many people who will not like this and will never do online as too confusing.

Detailed responses to the paper version of the consultation

Question 1	Question 2	Question 3	Question 4	Question 5	Question 6	Question 7
No. The only internet facility I have used is that provided by you in your libraries and this is so complex to access <u>without any printed guidelines</u> , that I <u>always</u> have to ask staff to help on the rare occasions I use it.	No. It is intolerable that one should have to make an appointment - I can't believe that you are so short of staff - it is like a doctor's surgery where you have to be 'ill by appointment.' And I suppose we have to use the internet to even make the appointment!	You don't say whether the phone service, which is bound to have an interminable wait and a long menu of options within options, will be an 0800 no. or whether council tax payers will have to PAY to use it.	Yes - having traipsed from the outlying suburbs one is then sent / turned away and told to come another day - 2 days, a week, a month hence. What price 'one stop shop' now?	People want to speak to human beings, have a dialogue not to be constrained within the (?) menu of pre-determined options of pushing buttons. Adverts by other more sensitive organisations now BOAST that customers always speak to a human being at their call centres.	This is far too vague and open-ended a question. Any query that demands more than an automated system can provide by way of answer - there must be many - will not be satisfactorily answered , if at all.	Merely substituting online forms for paper forms seems to be a half-hearted way - what about ABOLISHING unnecessary forms?
For people who have an easy understanding of this it will be OK. However the majority of older people and those with special needs will find this difficult - I hope there will be enough members of staff to help with this.	Not really as they may not be aware and if they receive a confusing letter they may wish to see someone straight away as they may be upset.	Again I don't think this will be suitable as people like to have someone face to face to talk. If deaf maybe lip read!	How will you know who is important. We should all be important.	I do think the council should make an appointment.	Benefits - unless you will make the letters easier to understand.	You have already taken away housing apps which are hard to get hold of as people don't have printers as they are very expensive. I don't think that we would be claiming benefits if we could afford a printer or computers.
NO. What about elderly, poor mobility, deaf. Again no consideration for aged!!	See above!!	NO!	YES!	Bring back old style rent office. Sorely missed at Thornhill.	All.	Yes. All services.
Yes	Yes.	Yes I suppose. I believe there are some people who have difficulty using our phone self service facilities.	Yes and no. There will be appointments but it may take forever to get one.	Its fine but it would be nice if there's an actual person they can contact or talk to as well.	I think it's fine.	It is OK as long as these will be available in paper versions for the people who might need it.
No. Libraries are spread thinly throughout the city and are some distance in certain areas - Mansbridge, Townhill Park - no library. Who will want to go to Gateway to make an appointment for another time. If they troubled to get there they will want an answer or advice.	No	No. Having to make an appointment causes a delay.	If this is going to happen why change the system.		Bereavement.	It will cost the customer to get a hard copy of the forms if using a library.
No. Most certainly not.	Vulnerable people will be more confused than ever. Having to make an appointment would mean delay.	Online services are not always easy and can be frustrating, especially for elderly and hard of hearing.	Very much so - judging by the complete indifference and attitude of some members of Gateway staff.	Perhaps more <u>training</u> of staff to be more tolerant and a little more understanding of elderly or vulnerable people.		Once again cost before consideration of public citizens.

Detailed responses to the paper version of the consultation

Question 1	Question 2	Question 3	Question 4	Question 5	Question 6	Question 7
If people do not have computers at home they will not know how to use office ones. Library staff DO NOT help and you will need staff on hand all the time. There are more elderly in this country so phone self-services will not be understood.	Yes. Continue ordinary phone service or face to face interviews. I especially need to lip read and hear, especially listening to poor English speech, so phone service not of use to myself.	Yes there will. Elderly will not understand the process. Myself, I need hearing and lip reading face to face.	If people turn up at Gateway expecting to speak to someone they may not want to return or can not return. You will end up with more urgent need interviews. Appointments to be made by phone would be better.	Continue ordinary phone line. Automated are not always helpful or meet needs. Elderly do not understand 'automated.'	Online or phone self service not suitable. There are too many elderly , disabled or foreign citizens who will not understand these services and how to obtain information / answers.	I can envisage just as much paper work needed, online forms are not always clear / easy to use. THIS HAS NOT BEEN THOUGHT THROUGH!
No - library is full to bursting and may be more cuts. Vulnerable people need face to face contact. Complicated cases need face to face. Job centre already like this and people are suffering as a result.	Some elderly people - hmm - underestimation - BIG TIME!! Why don't you ask them and listen to them too. I feel you may keep people more isolated and worried. Some may well die alone in winter. Don't believe this government cares a jot!	Any human being who prefers human contact - like me. And please clean the phones from time to time for those who are to use them. Usually greasy and dirty.	<u>Self-service terminals</u> - Jesus Christ! It is my vision of hell. Why not just herd everyone in and tag them. Maybe have a bus out the back for the work camps. Where is the humanity.	1) Consider whether this government's punitive reforms should be carried out willy nilly. 2) Consider how you would expect to be treated yourselves. 3) Consider whether future generations will see this as the best humanity could offer.	All of them. Unless you are happy with a further breakdown of society. The Council is shooting itself in the foot by breaking itself up at the Gov't's behest. What level of civic involvement will people have left?	People will have fewer options for consultation. Consultation will involve a walk to the library. Poor and vulnerable people will once again be disenfranchised. Local govt. will become less relevant to our lives. Society will suffer.
Many people are elderly and not computer literate at all. You still need to keep a phone number where people can ring for an appointment.	Disabled people. Keeping the phone line will help but many elderly people do not have patience with menus and will want to speak to real person.	As long as it is possible to speak to someone on the phone without having to jump through too many hoops / push too many buttons,	Having enough trained staff to be able to cope! I hope you have enough toilets and comfortable seating. I am particularly concerned about the elderly.	Keeping the personal approach possible for people who cannot manage online or automated services.	Adult Services. Children's Services. All forms of social work and services. These need humans to communicate with people.	As above. We all need human contact when in distress of any kind.
No. People may have computers at home but may not be able to use them. NOT everyone can use the phone or even have one. There are approx. 20% of Southampton that will have trouble getting in touch.	All the above would have trouble using phone or computer. Who thought up these silly questions.	I think all members of groups should be trained to help others. There will always be persons that miss out. Contact is needed.	Yes. What if when they sit down they are unable to use the computer and need help - who is going to do that.	Post. Posted in papers, local across S'oton, doctors, and health centres, social workers groups ??, church, tenant link.	Need face to face. Always have always will. Person will find this is all too much effort and not bother.	No as long as person are told paper version is available i.e. paper etc. and of course groups again. PS If it was not for R Bailey I would not have known about this. Thank God for Block Reps.
No it does not - it's a discrimination against people who cannot be part of the digital age for whatever reason Disability -physical, mental, learning or even social or financial. Its given ever less to the poor. Keeping the poor and in their place.	No. The service is optimal. Only helpful to some and not everyone and to make a happy working city we need to support everyone.	People with mental health problems (depression) who are unable to communicate on a day to day basis.	You are asking customers to do the job they are already paying for. It's outrageous. Someone making double money.	Pop up shops. Pop up council pods - expand into libraries - lend a book, pay your rent - all in one to one (?).	Core packages. It's a lazy and non-people focus approach that will only bring misery. The council's across the country should be going back to the core of public sector - People.	Computers go down. Too much focus on non-approachable way of providing a service. It's profit aimed and not people aimed, This is not the public sector it's a profit sector. The ethos is dead.

Detailed responses to the paper version of the consultation

Question 1	Question 2	Question 3	Question 4	Question 5	Question 6	Question 7
Most definitely not. What about disabled / immobile people? What about people who have difficulty using the phone. What about people who cannot afford to use the phone. BTs 0800 numbers are not free for every user.	Of course it won't. (And you know it). Not everyone is a confident / able user of the phone. Make an appointment? How? On the phone? How many layers of 'filtration' before an appointment is offered? Home appointment available? What about house-bound people?	I'm sure a disabled, house-bound person will really appreciate trying to make an appointment on the phone. Those who lived through WW2 will be delighted that translation service is available (at what cost??) for foreign born people.	Gateway staff will be trained to identify urgent needs? Trained by whom and to what standards? Trained to sign post (buck pass) to other agencies for them to sort out. All too common 'revolving door' syndrome which absolutely disadvantages vulnerable people.	This is a cost cutting exercise. Maximise income by employing talented, experienced, conscientious staff - not the half-witted 'jobsworths' we are used to. Try appropriate rationalisation. Get rid of the dead wood. Stop wasting tax payer's money i.e. watering the grass in the parks.	Online or self service facilities should supplement not replace face to face contact. Over time this half-cooked idea will be proven to be an expensive and potentially dangerous attempts at saving money. You know as well as I do where the money is being thrown down the pan.	Dear God do you really need assistance from the public to work this out. As previously mentioned get rid of the dead wood (start with the plank who thought this survey was a good idea) and learn basic budgeting. Infant school housekeeping. BTW - decisions have already been made, so why this charade? Happy analysing. Don't treat us all like plebs.
NO. PAPERWORK SHOULD STILL BE AVAILABLE. I'm 61 years old (following a mental breakdown I have memory problems. I'm too unwell to learn how to use a computer). I think people of 60 plus should have paper work if needed.	People with mental health problems who have lost their concentration. It is a good idea to be able to have an appt., face to face - or usual paper work.	Yes people with memory problems and people over 60 years who never grew up with computers. People with mental illness as this can affect memory and concentration.		Yes. Please can a live person always be available on the phone, not just a machine, and can paper work still be available (perhaps people could have a choice of this if over 60 years or disabled).	Yes, repairs services - as it is easier to explain what is wrong over the phone or local housing office. Council tax should have the choice of forms and paper work.	It is a good idea for paper work versions to be available on request (Council tax especially as some people have difficulty with maths and housing benefit maths).
Automated services are intimidating and frustrating, especially to someone experiencing their own crisis - ensure automated services are short and transfer promptly to a <u>person!!</u>	Appointment system booking needs to be easy NOT automated, regular open times advertised and where. If possible a free phone number to book an appointment - WIDELY ADVERTISED HOW TO!!	As long as this information is clear and advertised - pictorially and simple and clear!	No as long as staff are trained on dealing with individuals crisis / urgent needs - Staff need to be PATIENT!	Review the closure of local housing offices and times - so many people (elderly / L+D) appreciated being able to pop in to pay rent and share their concerns.	Improve action line response times and general attitude of staff. Do not close more local housing offices.	Yes if you don't inform staff in the area's that they work!!
No. Library not open some days. Partially deaf.	Yes. My son-in-law is Pakistani and can speak little English.	Yes. The questions all seem the same.	Yes. Everyone will want to be served first. Everyone thinks they are the most important.	Home visits. Some people can't get out of the house.	Could the phone service let you know how long you will be in the queue, what position you are.	I hope people will be advised how to get paper and its availability. 25% of people don't possess a computer. I don't have a mobile phone. There are still people without television! Most of my family do not have a computer.
Yes provided every effort is made to keep libraries open and accessible. This requires adequate resources, staff and equipment.	Hearing impaired people.		Much will depend on the availability of training and support given to Gateway staff.	?	?	?

Detailed responses to the paper version of the consultation

Question 1	Question 2	Question 3	Question 4	Question 5	Question 6	Question 7
						Just to say that a lot of people, maybe as you specify, hate using the internet. I am 72 and go out of my way to have face to face contact as I struggle to use the phone (hard of hearing) and find the internet extremely frustrating. No doubt the plan will go ahead anyway.
Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Braille facility for blind access.	No	No.
Yes. Much needed access will improve people's situation as everything nowadays is online. A photocopier would be helpful to my son in Thornhill H/O for homework.	Yes it would. To speak to someone face to face is reassuring.	Yes	Only ignorant impatient people thinking they have pushed in.	It's hard to please everyone! Time and money can be an issue.		Most people have internet access at home but don't have a printer.
No. Fine if you do not work, but access to PCs in libraries can be difficult. I have never found one available. Housebound people cannot get to libraries etc. Evening and weekend PC access would be required. Phone self-service would need either freephone or geographic phone in - i.e. 02380 not 0845 / 0844 - too expensive.	I have an elderly relative who is terrified of 'new-fangled technology' and refuses to use any telephone service that uses the 'press one' type of service - she will not be alone.	How will they make an appointment to speak to someone on Gateway? By phoning a self-service facility to make an appointment or having to make a second journey to Gateway?		Extended opening hours - i.e. evenings and Saturdays. People work! Many of us are unable to make personal phone calls during working hours and work some distance away from Gateway. I have no intention of purchasing a computer.		How will you find out what forms are available?
No	No	No	Yes. People want to see a staff member right away and not wait for an appointment.	Leave as it is because it works. It is not all about money!!	See answers above.	All. Please leave well alone.
Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	No
More than 3 PCs need to be available in Thornhill library.	Just because you are old you shouldn't have to go to Gateway. Local housing services should diversify to meet the needs of elderly.		Yes as not everyone can afford to access Gateway.	Increased services available in the locality such as LHO (people cannot always access PC. Gateway).		No line is the cheapest option. Why not be honest about this when compiling questionnaires like this.
Yes	Yes		NO	None		None
Yes	Yes		No		NO	No
Don't use	Yes	Yes	No	Don't know	Don't know	Yes

Detailed responses to the paper version of the consultation

Question 1	Question 2	Question 3	Question 4	Question 5	Question 6	Question 7
Yes	Gateway in my opinion was no help to me at all but my local housing office (Thornhill) bent over backwards to help.	You never get through to the right people.	Sorry but I found the staff very blunt and unfeeling not like Thornhill housing staff.	Customer care would help.	No	As long as there is someone to help them.
Yes	No	No	Yes	It takes too long and people get fed up waiting		Yes I can.
They are of no help whatsoever as the phone costs a fortune and you can never get a computer in the library.	There are many thousands of people who won't get any service at all, as the cut in numbers of people you can see means no appointments.	Of course it would meet no-one's needs as you will never get to speak or see anyone.	Immediately you will get a queue of people who need to be seen and won't.	Cut the spending on useless statues and expensive objects and building projects for financial gain. There will be more money for staff.	Council offices i.e. housing, housing, NHS, local doctors, ambulance, fire-fighters are a necessity to speak to someone not a machine. Where next Africa, India, China answer machines.	Most services will cause difficulties as people will be deprived of information they know nothing about (what's new).
Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No
Action line is fairly good depending on the action of the officer (they do vary). Phone self-service could be tedious, i.e. waiting in a queue - faster to write a letter.	Not clear as to HOW one makes an appointment without PC or telephone or lack of English.	Yes. There are many who need 'personal' help. The computer literate and business- minded would be catered for self-service.	Already a 'viewing' of planning application, drawings etc. is out of the reach of the 'ordinary' enquire, since the plans are 'reduced' and unreadable. No.4 seems to be very excluding.	Other authorities use the method similar to SCC (I've been served by Swindon and Newcastle). I cannot make any suggestion for customer satisfaction.	No current problems.	Provided on request seems a good scheme but only if the customer is given the correct form(s). Errors in distribution could be very worrying and cause extra work for customer and staff.
Self service is ridiculous - for issues you should always be able to sit down and speak to someone rather than relying on a computer.			You can't beat speaking to someone.		You can't beat speaking to someone.	
I am still baffled and irritated by the non-availability of computer terminals at Challis Court which is sheltered accommodation. Looks like a waste of resources. (See OUR PROPOSALS p!. 1) outside 3 hours on Monday morning.	No views but see (1) above.	No views.	No views.	Making payments to SCC can be done from a bank branch using Account Managers Machines or their HSBC equivalent. I have done so for almost 2 years sans agro. This route is the cousin of direct debit and is paperless. SCC still seems unconvinced.	I am not sure that ACTIONLINE works too well by e-mail. The now defunct cards seemed infallible but ACTIONLINE may have an on-line form which I have not seen.	(a) Yes at first but old dogs learn new tricks eventually. (b) Probably not.
Many elderly people (my husband included) have no grasp of the skills necessary to use the internet and have no PC at home.	For those having difficulty walking getting to Gateway is a problem. Nearest bus stop still not close enough.	People with hearing impairment prefer visual information prefer the printed word. They can then read and get help if necessary.	Still have to get there first.		Will exclude many of the elderly or / and those with physical, visual or hearing impairment, so services affecting these people need further thought.	See above comment.

Detailed responses to the paper version of the consultation

Question 1	Question 2	Question 3	Question 4	Question 5	Question 6	Question 7
I have read all the questions on this form and they are misleading to suit your own ends. The people of Southampton will not be best served by these changes. The current service will be worse. If you telephone now it is a poor service and you have to go into Gateway to get help. This is a stupid idea. Please do not change Gateway.						
No not really as it will take longer as some customers cannot use technology and will not understand. It is NICER to talk to a HUMAN, when handing over documents especially.	No not really, as not all use technology. It will take longer to sort problems and people won't report them if they think it's going to be complicated then things get out of hand!! And money might be wrongly done.	There will be more people making appointments. It is a complicated system anyway. This will just complicate it more and no I do not think it would work for all concerned.	Most people do not make appointments let alone keep them! How will you know how long each individual needs. What happens when you run late. Will you let people know.	More staff on the front line as they can often help quickly, rather than lengthy appointment times, and first come first served is a fairer way to deal with problems.	Documents as how do you know if they are originals or not! There are so many fakes these days. I think this just encourages them to produce more as how are you going to know!	Forms are fine online but documents no. Also this is a way to cut staff also so there will be more people out of work and more people claiming!
No	No	No. What happens if you jusy want to see a person not the internet or an annoying automated voice.	No	See answer one above.	Most of them.	Yes. At least you have a paper trail you can double check.
No. Most vulnerable people don't know how to use computers.	I am deaf and this would not help my needs. I also have learning difficulties.	No. We need to keep the service we already have.	I don't always meet appts so drop in service is needed.	Keep the service the same as people with different needs need this support.	The council just wants to save money to give big pay rises and bonuses to the managers.	There are always problems with computers and people loose information.

Responses received through other means

Emails and a letter have also been received in response to the consultation and these are reproduced below.

I have a general concern regarding your proposals in that the less human contact there is with the council the wider the gap becomes between the council and the public. Individuals feel less understood, less listened too. That they are just an account number, not a person. A result of this loss of connection would be that some will report changes of circumstances more slowly or not at all. There is no doubt in my mind that many will find the ability to do more over the internet very convenient, especially those in work who have little time to visit or phone the Gateway.

But I am concerned that waiting times on the phone may increase. One of the most common moans we get from clients is from those that have run out of credit on their mobile phones trying to call a benefit centre. Hence we have many clients coming in to use our phone. Of course we will allow them to use our internet if that is the way things are going, but if the query is at all complicated queries are not easily answered online. Plus I have been finding that when I email council tax or benefit services queries are responded to within 2 to 3 weeks, the same as letters, hence with more urgent matters we have to phone. With the new online services will there be a similar delay in responding? If so people/agencies will have to phone in or drop in at gateway with the more urgent queries. Below are a few suggestions:

1. Can there be a dedicated line for advice/support agencies, like tax credits have. As advice agencies have more understanding than the average person of how the system works we will only call you if we really need to. I have found it very useful being able to talk directly to the council tax enforcement section (please let them know that)
2. If phoning up to check progress of a new claim could there be an automated response that says how long it is currently taking to process new claims and therefore give a date that we should phone no earlier than if not heard anything. (but claims should be processed within 2 weeks anyway)
3. I can't emphasise enough the value of customers being able to go through a HB claim form with someone at the Gateway. I believe a lot of claims are delayed or not made at all because people struggle with the forms. Having the forms online won't help much with this problem. People need someone to go through it with them.

We are really missing not having a housing office in Swaythling. Just recently had a client who I helped make a claim for housing benefit but because there is no longer a local housing office in which claim forms can be handed in, she sent it in the post, and consequently the form got lost in the post.

This last point is not directly relevant to your proposals but I think it is important: Non council tenants need free ways of paying council tax locally. Council tenants have a payment card, but everyone else has to use payment slips that charge. There is no local branch of the Coop in Swaythling so can't pay directly into your bank account. For those who only have a post office account or are overdrawn on their bank account, direct debits, standing orders and card payments over the phone are out of the question. In these days where everyone under pension age has to pay some council tax you need to make it as easy as possible for people to pay. Some debt collectors send out payment cards or payslips that are free to use, so why can't the council?

Responses received through other means

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September 30 2013

Dear Sir

Consultation on extending the Council's Strategic Services Partnership with Capita

Having read through the consultation document and reading through the information online, Business South would like to contribute the following input.

We are in full support of the extension of the contract and we believe Capita is doing a good job for Southampton in partnership with Southampton City Council.

Yours Faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sally Lynskey".

Sally Lynskey
CEO Business South

We had the following responses from the Ladies Self advocacy group when I told them about the proposed changes to Council and Gateway services:

Proposed changes to services at Southampton Gateway (to online services and telephone based)

The Chatterboxes responses:

"Some people might not be able to use the computer or understand it, like blind people"

Responses received through other means

"I can't use computers. I find them really difficult to understand them. But I rely on services at gateway such as getting a bus pass"

"What about people who can't speak, how are they supposed to use a telephone?"

"I can't talk. It would be so difficult for me to use that service."

"Its better to talk face to face to someone."

I wasn't sure if you were collating responses to send in together, but I hope this is of use. All the ladies thought the proposed changes were a terrible idea!

I am keen to have my voice heard in the current consultation on communication with the council. I have real concerns about the buying in of services from other organisations such as Capita and the running down of human relationships with the public in preference for virtual ones. I would like to give a few examples:

1. the civic buildings as we know them are a shadow of their former selves. once we could walk through them, feel we were able to talk to a human being about a particular issue and feel we were part of something - this city. Now, the building has been carved up, as a council tenant I have to queue in that building with the stinky carpet (where Gateway is situated) and there is no sense that the civic building is ours. The reception looks sad and unloved and the poor staff spend ages trying to put us through to people who don't seem to want to talk to us much. I was there on Friday afternoon with a couple of other residents, waiting to hang on the phone to someone who was clearly arguing with reception staff about taking calls at all and didnt know how to deal with us.

2. you are far more incompetent - I have been trying to raise the issue of a potentially dangerous road crossing between Houndwell and Hoglands Parks, where I have seen a few near misses in the last weeks, as numbers swell in the new playground and drivers keep forgetting to stop at the zebra crossing. In the past I would have walked to the civic centre and spoken to someone or phoned. This time I phoned action line and was told roads would ring back. The roads man (now Balfour Beatty) said he would do his best to research the road problem but now his work is farmed out to BB they don't liaise with parks and gardens any more, so to call parks and gardens. I then phoned actionline again and the woman really didn't want to deal with my query. Eventually I managed to persuade her to leave a message for the parks people, but she told me that I would have to call the police separately to deal with the speeding cars issue. I cannot believe that you seriously expect people to call 3 or 4 different people about a safety issue like this. If a child dies on that crossing because one hand no longer talks to the other it will not be worth the saving you have made, will it? I worry that you are also preventing us from taking civic responsibility by making it so hard to contact you.

3. Capita don't seem that great to me. As an employee on a casual basis I have been paid late on countless occasions. I miss pay at Christmas - they just shut down and don't bother - and it seems they offer pretty dodgy advice on employment rights. I have just discovered that I have some after 4 years of working for the council.

I understand the council needs to save a few bob, but I fear you are participating in your own demise by letting these jokers in. After all, the government doesn't really care whether local government sinks or swims. In fact I think they would be happy if you quietly imploded. At this rate you look as if you are doing their work for them.

I would like to give my views as a local citizen and as a member of the Labour Party.

I do not agree with outsourcing, I cant beleive there are any savings to be had.

It must cost more to provide the services through Capita than to provide them through the council or through reularly retendered contracts or through government sources.

Capita after all have to make a profit on their services which must be around 20% therefore that money could be saved straight away.

You mention savings of £24 million over the next nine years but that is meaningless; how much extra is the contract costing overall? Its like when shops discount things by 80% in a sale but they atificially raised the price just before hand.

Capita may have brought 95 new FTE's into the city but how many people have lost jobs? I dont expect that 95 is in addition to the total jobs transferred to Capita in the first place. What is the real increase from staff

Responses received through other means

that transferred in 2007?

Capita would never have flexibility on pricing; these sorts of companies make their money on the "extras". Look at the NHS and the private financing.

Corporate Social responsibility? They pay their staff less and pile on the pressure, anyone I have spoken to that works for Capita say they are unhappy. Capita are keen to support apprenticeships because they want to pay peanuts for their staff. They swap skilled people out for monkeys, there is no development or training. As for developments in IT? I have relations who work at the council and they say the IT Service is the worst its ever been. All the systems are out of date and not fit for purpose. Capita were brought in because they were going to invest and keep IT systems current but in reality there has been no change or investment in IT since 2007.

Its impossible for both parties to work together, Capita are out to make money not do the Council any favours. Anyone who thinks these things are partnerships are deluded.

Morale, opporunities and clarity for Capita staff are words and actions they dont experience staff turnover is very high.

It may cost £2m to re-tender or bring back in house but how much would you save in the long run in real money, improved staff morale and accountability for the services delivered.

In my view I would terminate the contract with Capita in 2017 and re-tender parts of the contract for shorter terms and bring parts back in house.

Anyone who understands business knows that is the way forward. Even the Tory government recommends not signing long term contracts. You lose flexibility and the ability to drive down costs and get rid of them is the service is less that extected.

Listen to Council staff, Capia staff and the citizens of Southampton and get rid of them. No-one wins.

Email was forward onto our team as we have had so many different problems with Capita especially with the switchboard & transferring calls which have left customers on hold for too long & put through to the wrong departments again & again. This is not just external calls but extends to internal calls too where we are on hold and when we finally get through after being annoyed to the point of wanting to hang up with the automated messages, the customer have hung up themselves.

Then all the problems with HR which gets to the point of being ridiculous, I personally feel my team and I could do our job & work on Capita's switchboard & HR department and do a better job.

Part of the proposals is to have customers contacting via on line, what about all the people who do not have the internet at home & do not want to travel to gain access to the internet especially the elderly? What about people who do not speak or read English?

The council's website is not user friendly or updated as frequently as it should be, especially contact telephone numbers.

The contract till 2017 is not good and extending it another 5 years to 2022 is just a really bad idea.

Regards, H

My comment on the extension of the contract arrangement is as follows.

It is difficult to understand that an extension of the contract arrangement with Capita can achieve best value for the Council. Providing the City Council engages a sound management system focussed on efficiencies and effectiveness than it must be able to achieve better value for two reasons.

- Capita is a 'for profit' company – those profits should be set against overall council savings requirements.
- With the service provider (Capita) and the client (SCC) requiring their own management arrangements for their aspects of IT, Procurement and HR service functions, to enable the two parties to talk each other, if these services were reintegrated their must be an opportunity for further management savings.

Responses received through other means

From Cllr McEwing and copied to all Members

Dear all,

Working in a call centre environment, I fully understand the difficulties our elderly and vulnerable will experience when we go automated. Many of our vulnerable and elderly residents are not computer literate or have limited comprehension of technologies and we need our staff to be cognisant of this. Having extended waiting times due to not enough agents available will increase levels of frustrations for both parties, possible abandonment of calls and residents getting into financial difficulties through not having technological capacity and getting frustrated on long phone calls. This needs to be as smooth a transition as possible for the elderly and vulnerable of our city.

Not happy we are moving to more technological systems as I'm concerned we are abandoning those who are not technologically aware amongst our elderly and vulnerable.

Regards

Cllr Catherine McEwing

From Cllr Brian Parnell and copied to all Members

I agree wholeheartedly with Cllr McEwing.

Cllr Brian E Parnell.

From Cllr Les Harris and copied to all Members

Regarding the use of telephone call centres, whilst this is going to be the way forward for many matters, I have some serious concerns over security and fraud.

Where applicants use the internet, firstly there is the problem of ensuring proper identification. There needs to be a security system in place fir this

We need to ensure the applicant is real, and actually resides at the given address. With the internet it is quite possible for someone who lives abroad, to access the system and make out they live in this city, especially where such things such as welfare payments of various types are made.. For example if a person has lived here (having perhaps come from a European country) and claimed a payment of some sort, they could continue to say they here even though they have moved back to their home country, accessing our system using the internet.

Some government schemes work well such as Road tax, but of course they have access to your insurance details and MOT records etc, and they are receiving money not paying it out.

I also think, as mentioned by Cath McEwing, that a lot of people will have difficulty accessing a computer or being able to use it for these purposes.

Consideration should be given to having various centres where the public can go for a training session in how to use the system, and where necessary help to fill out the forms etc for the first few times.

Regards

Les Harris

Cllr Bassett Ward

From Cllr Peter Baillie and copied to all Members

Cllrs McEwing and Harris make good points & this is a consultation. A substantial body of people are still not happy at using the internet to solve problems and they should not be penalised. A body of people are not able to use the internet. A robust, personal service should still exist for those who wish to use it - and that should include 'drop in' rather than having to make an appointment. What should be improved is the simple

Responses received through other means

<p>internet transactions such as topping up the Itchen Bridge Card - it takes a ridiculous amount of time.</p> <p>Kind regards,</p> <p>Peter Baillie</p>
<p>From Cllr Ivan White and copied to all Members</p> <p>I think most points have been covered but on a practical point many people, particularly the old, are very hard of hearing and complex and long discussions on the telephone will be very difficult could prove problematic leading to errors/mistakes.</p> <p>Regards Ivan White</p>
<p>My comment on the extension of the contract arrangement is as follows.</p> <p>It is difficult to understand that an extension of the contract arrangement with Capita can achieve best value for the Council. Providing the City Council engages a sound management system focussed on efficiencies and effectiveness than it must be able to achieve better value for two reasons.</p> <p>Capita is a 'for profit' company – those profits should be set against overall council savings requirements.</p> <p>With the service provider (Capita) and the client (SCC) requiring their own management arrangements for their aspects of IT, Procurement and HR service functions, to enable the two parties to talk each other, if these services were reintegrated their must be an opportunity for further management savings.</p>
<p>I work at the Daycentre in Southampton and I do understand the need to streamline and make cuts . My experience is that most of our clients which represent this cities most vulnerable and chaotic within society cannot cope with this impersonal and automated approach to service. It leads to feelings of frustration , anger and hopelessness. The D.W.P have to some extent tried to adopt this approach and we pick up the devastation thats left in its wake. I think long term its a false economy that causes long term even more problems.</p>

Responses received through other means

Dear Councillor Kaur,

Re: Proposed removal of face-to-face interviews with staff and extension of Capita contract.

I was dismayed to read your proposal to remove many of the opportunities available to interact with Council / Capita staff and replace them with on-line access. I saw an statement report that only some 7% of the population interact with the Council via the on-line service. In my view, once the ability to interact face to face starts to be removed it will gradually also be removed all time from the disabled and the elderly too. Capita will be able to argue that the service is not required because those who need it will be unable to get into Gateway to use it. Many people do not have internet access at home. I earn a living wage but I cannot afford the cost of the equipment. I retire in my local history club queues for those wanting to use a pc to fulfil their JSA requirements; yet history opening times have been reduced. The recent changes to bus services have led to a reduction in buses to get to libraries and in my case, my 'service' has been withdrawn completely. I am sure I am not alone.

An on-line service inevitably becomes a tick-box service and eventually leads to increased costs as there is trying+fring as questions arise which cannot often be answered in one interview. The queues at Gateway show how much the face-to-face service is needed. Instead of cutting costs, Capita should be ensuring that they have enough staff to meet demand. They should be reminded that they receive Council tax

payers' money to provide a first class service, not the third rate service the currently provide and which they propose to reduce even further.

I am strongly opposed to any move which would extend the contract with Capita. All Council services should be provided by directly employed Council employees whose mission is to serve the public not to provide a cheap service so that the shareholders' dividends increase.

Whilst you are in discussion with Capita, you may wish to raise the issue of their probationary staff who receive less pay and never seem able to pass the probationary period so they can receive the correct wage for the job. This is just another undervalued way of maximising profits whilst splashing employees.

Responses received through other means**Notes from a meeting with Jeff Downing, Spectrum Centre for Independent Living.****Proposals for changes to Customer Contact Arrangements and Capita Contract Extension****16th July 2013.**

I explained to Jeff the main proposals for changes to customer contact as set out in the consultation.

Gateway

Jeff outlined some of the problems that people with disabilities can face when using Gateway. Generally, good support is given to individuals who make contact with a member of staff, but strangers could just stand inside Gateway and not know what to do (especially if they have problems with vision or learning difficulties). No-one is likely to approach them in these circumstances.

The “chicane” to see someone on the reception desk is difficult for some people. Guide dogs do not understand these queuing arrangements.

The cash office screens present a real difficulty for people with hearing or vision impairments.

Reducing or removing human contact could be a problem for many people. The floorwalker system (before the move to One Guildhall Square) was better as there was someone there to meet people entering Gateway. I explained that floorwalkers may return under this proposal as they would be assisting people with the self-service terminals. Jeff commented that they must be easily identifiable.

Jeff asked about screen reading software on the self-service terminals. He said it is not easy to use for a lot of people and so still creates a barrier.

Jeff suggested that there should be an easily identifiable area (perhaps highlighted by being a different colour to the rest of Gateway and which can be identified tactilely) where people can go and stand if they need assistance. He said airports and stations often had facilities like this. I promised to enquire about that possibility.

Jeff suggested that self service terminals should have large screens and that the display should have large text as a default. Hearing loops would be required for the screen reading software. He suggested that the design should include good colour contrast for buttons – e.g. “press red button to pay”. Terminals will have to be at a range of heights to allow for individuals’ needs.

Jeff mentioned that he had been involved in the original design for Gateway (when in the Civic Centre) through the Southampton Access group and thought this led to a good result.

Responses received through other means

Switchboard

I outlined how the automated switchboard would work. Jeff feels this would be a barrier for many people. People are generally ok with menu systems (“press 1 for ...”) but many people find interactive systems difficult – particularly if they have a speech impediment. He would want a way to bypass the speech recognition, so that people having difficulty can press a key to talk to an operator.

Capita contract extension

Jeff has strong feelings that this is undesirable as he believes too much public work is undertaken by the private sector. He believes this leads to a lower standard of customer service.

Paul Medland
Project Manager

Subsequent email from Jeff Downing

Thanks for this and on the whole it is fine.

However my concerns about Capita are a little more complex.

1 I believe that for local authorities to take up a cheap option with any provider that is based on a profit system, is a fundamental mistake and will result in the community having to pick up the bill in the end. As in my opinion they will reduce the service to maintain profit, until it is no longer a profitable option and then hand it back to the local authority.

2. Local authority services should be the primary responsibility of the local authority and NOT shared with an organization that was not elected and the community have no say in whom a contract is awarded too.

3. In my experience as a Disabled Person, I find the standard of customer care provided by all aspects of the local authority in general to be far superior than, what is offered by Capita.

4. There is already evidence that these Capitalist ventures will cost us dearly and provide a sub-standard service. G4S for example,

5. Please ensure my total opposition to this plan is made known to the individual responsible.

Jeff .

Responses received through other means

Extract from minutes of Southampton Learning Disability Partnership Board, 10th September 2013.

5. Gateway and the Call Centre Changes

Paul Medland came to talk to us about changes to Gateway.

A lot more is going to be done on the Internet. This will make it easier to access services and fill in forms at all times. However, this may not be better for everyone and the Council wants to make sure it does not make things more difficult for some people.

The call centre switchboard would be answered by a machine which will put the caller through to the department they want.

We were worried about how the machine telephone service would work for people with certain disabilities. For example, the machine might not understand people with speech difficulties.

The telephone service will be voice activated, but if the machine gets it wrong after two tries it will go through to a person.

Simon offered to put Paul in contact with someone who has helped the police with their enhanced line for vulnerable people. This is a special number that people give information to so the person answering the call knows about them.

Gateway drop-in is also changing. There are going to be more computers in Gateway with someone to help people use them.

People can still ask to speak to a member of staff but they will need to book an appointment. They should be able to make the appointment for the next day. This would mean they would have to come back

We had concerns about safety at Gateway. Paul said there will always be someone there.

Matt asked about renewing bus passes because proof of ID is required. Paul said that people may be able to renew their bus passes online at a later stage. When they have a way of making this possible

Matt also pointed out that some people may only have their support worker to help them on certain days. This would make it difficult to make an appointment. Paul said the Council needs to think about this.

There is a survey to find out what people think. There is a leaflet and the survey can also be done online but it is not in Easy Read. The survey needs to be done by 1st November.

Responses received through other means

Brian asked if these changes are a political decision. Paul confirmed that it will be a Cabinet and Council decision.

Paul is going to send Hilary the leaflet when it comes back from the printers so she can send it on.

Results of survey undertaken in Gateway

1. Why did you come into Gateway	2. Would you have preferred to deal with it on the phone or online? Why/why not		3. The Council is trying to do more online in the future, will you find that helpful? Why/why not		4. We are thinking of having a larger self service area with computers that you can use. Would you use them		4b. If there was someone there to help you, would you consider using them? Why/ why not		5. What stops you doing more online?	6. We are considering making Gateway appointment only. This means you would not be able to just drop in. What do you think of that approach?		7. If you did have to make an appointment do you think it would make you more likely to do things online or on the phone rather than come in?		8. Are you happy to use automated phone services? If no why		9. Do you ever call into Gateway just to pick up a form?
Housing	No	Easier to do face to face	Yes		Yes		Yes		I am homeless	Harder	No		Yes		No	
Housing	No	I don't use computers, haven't got the money to waste on phone calls	No	I don't use computers	No	Better this way hands on.	No		Haven't got a computer, old fashioned	Not sure, its better like this.	No		No	Spend ages on hold, you get put through to incorrect departments or cut off, it costs me money	Yes	
Council Tax	No	It is easier face to face. I got told lots on information I didn't know	No	Same reasons as question 2	Yes		Yes		Prefer to see someone	Crap service	No		No	Prefer face to face	Yes	
Parking	Yes	I would use the phone but hate online	No	See question 2	Yes	But only if someone was there to help me	Yes		You cant ask questions, not always as quick	I would rather do what happens now	Don't know	I would prefer phone as you can't ask questions online.	No	Because you cannot ask questions	No	
Housing bens	No	I prefer face to face, you get more information	Don't know		Don't know	Depends on what I needed to do	Yes		I haven't got the internet, information is not always up to date or very helpful	Don't agree, I work and have a child so it is difficult to make an appointment. I would rather pop in when I am free.	Don't know	Depends what it is I would be happy to make a payment on line but not to provide proof documents	No	It is a real pain you wait ages then get cut off	Yes	
Benefits and Blue badge	No	Face to face is clearer	No	I am registered blind	No	I don't like doing stuff online, like face to face	No		Registered blind	Depends on waiting time i.e. same day or four week wait like doctors	Yes	Not online as I am registered blind but over the phone would be ok	Yes	I have done	Yes	
Benefits	No	I needed to come in as I am awaiting an urgent cheque payment	No	I like the one to one service	Yes		Yes		No reason to	It might work save queues	No	I would still make an appointment	Yes		No	
Housing bens	No	I prefer face to face	No	I prefer face to face	No	No	Yes		Don't know	I thinks its fine	No		No	Endless options	Yes	
Benefit	No	I needed to provide proofs	Yes		No	No	Yes		Nothing	Just easier to walk in, I never know when I am free	No		No	You never get the answer you want and end up on a loop.	Yes	

Results of survey undertaken in Gateway

Benefit	No	I am a large landlord. I work closely with street prevention who call me and I meet tenants in Gateway to fill in forms	No	I need to come in meet tenants and fill in forms at Gateway. I house vulnerable people who no one else will house.	No	I fill in these forms regularly but I still make mistakes which the Gateway staff pick up on and correct prior to them going up stairs this helps prevent delays in benefit claims.	No	Because they wouldn't check the forms and pick up errors like they do now	Not good with computers	Never work a disaster, The nature of my clients as they are referrals from street prevention	No		No	I don't like waiting and it takes to long.	No
Council Tax	Don't know	I prefer face to face	Yes		No		No		Not here for six months of the year	Yes it would be ok.	Yes		No	Not if you have to pay a premium, it takes to long, repeats details, costs money and provides no better customer service.	No
Council Tax and pay rent	No	When you talk on the phone you cannot always get your point across its better face to face	No	Not good with computers, no patience	Yes	But only if there was no other choice	Yes		No, not good with computers, no patience. My internet at home is rubbish and I have a really old computer	Awful to busy to make an appointment. We have always had a service we can pop into.	No		No	Takes ages and costs too much	Yes
Council Tax	No	I don't like using phones, security issue	Yes		Yes		Yes		Confidence using computers	I think it would be ok.	No		No	Takes too long and costs money	No
Benefits	No	I have a hearing aid and using the phone I get feedback. I like face to face its personal, good knowledge on the phone there is no	No	See question 2	No	I would need constant help	No	I would need constant help	Cognitive difficulties, I have trouble remembering things	this would not work for me as I would need to ring to make an appointment I cannot use the phones as they do not support my hearing aids	No		No	Please refer to other questions	Yes
Council Tax and benefits	No	I needed to hand in proofs	No	Old fashioned	No	No although it is the future	Yes		I suffer from dyspraxia and find it difficult	I don't like this idea I like face to face contact.	Yes		No	I like direct human contact and find it costs to much to ring although I would be happy to use it if it was a free phone	Yes

Results of survey undertaken in Gateway

Benefits	No	I like one to one and staff check paperwork its more personal	No	Online systems do not talk to each other and it has gone wrong and I am being held responsible	Yes		Yes		lack of communication , you get a different type of service face to face one to one i.e. eye contact.	It would be ok as long as you could see someone within 48hrs and you didn't have to wait a month	No	Depends on nature of my query	Yes	The councils are good	No
Housing	No	Its easier to explain it face to face	No	See question 2	Yes	But only if someone was there to help me	Yes		I have more confidence face to face, feedback with staff is instant. They provide reassurance and I know my query is dealt with.	It depends on waiting time	No		No	English is not my first language	No
Parking	Yes		Yes		Yes				Do most things online, but Itchen Bridge top-up doesn't work with some browsers	There would be a lot of wasted appointments. Will make people angry. Like it the way it is.	Yes		Yes	Some are better than others	No
Council Tax and Benefits	No	Want answer right away. Online chat would be ok. Emails get lost.	Yes	Already do quite a bit online. Just moved - so no telephone line for 2	Yes				Nothing, except I don't get an immediate answer. Online chat would be good	Not good. Life is too busy. Perhaps half and half is an option?	Yes		No	They don't understand accents	No
Benefits	No	Like coming in	No	Can ask questions	Yes				Need translation	Not good as sometimes in a hurry	No		Yes		No
Waste	No	Waste calendar should be delivered	No	Don't have a computer, don't want to use libraries	No		No	Want to talk to someone, don't do stuff online	Don't feel I should have to	Don't like it, but don't often come in	No		No		No
Pay a bill	No	Like to come in when there is enough in bank account to meet bill	No	Can't read or write and no computer	No		No	Can't read or write	Can't read or write. People in Gateway very helpful	Wouldn't like it. Would find it hard to make an appointment	No		No	Don't like them	No
Buss pass	No	Learning difficulties (was accompanied)	No	Learning difficulties	No		Yes		Understanding it. Have a computer but just for You Tube etc.	Sometimes need to drop in - can't plan.	No		No	Cost and difficulty understanding	Yes
Benefit	Yes	Would have been easier	Yes	Because I work	Yes				Nothing	Don't like it - find it hard to get appointments that will fit in with work	Yes		No	Prefer to talk to a person, not a computer	No

Results of survey undertaken in Gateway

Housing	No	Prefer face to face	No	No computer	Yes				No computer, but does use libraries. There is normally a computer free	Would prefer that	Yes		No	They never have the option I'm looking for	No
Benefits	Yes	Would rather not have to come in	Yes		No		No	Can do it at home	Nothing, except what can be done online. Like getting a receipt in Gateway	Don't like it - when working it is difficult to fit appointments in.	Yes		No	Would rather speak to a person	No
Benefits	No	Prefer to see someone. Work in town, so can go straight from	No	Only just bought a tablet	Yes				New to it	Would like that	No		Yes		No
Benefits	No	Tried on phone, but couldn't get it sorted. Phone staff not helpful	No	Don't understand online access	No		Yes		Not always guaranteed to get an answer. In Gateway can ask questions to clarify and you get a receipt.	If you're worried you just want to get it sorted, don't want to wait.	No		No	Don't like being in a queue with messages. Costs money.	No
Homeless	No	Prefer to see someone.	Yes		Yes				Nothing	Not a good idea. People going through rough times need to be seen.	Yes		Yes		No
Benefits	Yes	I have children	Yes		Yes				Better to be sure the council have received the info - get a receipt	Good, less time waiting	No		Yes		Yes
Bus Pass	No	Not computer literate and no access	No	Prefer to see someone personally	No		Yes	Need help. Would still rather see someone.	No computer and no access	Prefer to be able to drop in	No		No	Don't have a phone	Yes
Housing	No	Like to get out of the house - noisy neighbours	No	Same reason	Yes				My neighbours	OK	No		Yes		No
Bus Pass	Yes		Yes	Work with clients with health difficulties	Yes				Not much is available. Would be good to cut out paper	It would be difficult. Work doesn't allow for appointments - it isn't that type of work.	Yes		No	Rather talk to a person	Yes
Benefits	Yes		Yes		Yes				Time, it is easier to call in sometimes	Prefer dropping in, easier than making an appointment	No		No	Difficulty understanding accent. Prefer to drop in	Yes
Parking	Yes		Yes		Yes				Nothing	Easier to drop in	Yes		Yes		Yes

Results of survey undertaken in Gateway

Parking	No	Wanted to come into town anyway	No	Like to see people	No		Yes	Like the personal touch	Making a mistake. Don't want to do things online unless have to.	Appointments too difficult with travel times. Nice to be able to just walk in.	No		Yes		No
Bridge card	No	Don't like paying online	Yes		Yes				My son using the computer	Good, it will avoid queues. Will get more privacy and be less rushed.	No		Yes		No
Benefits	Yes	Phone is quicker	No	Would rather phone	Yes				Nothing	Don't like it . Not people friendly	No		No	They're rubbish	Yes
Housing	No	Not good at English	No	Language. Have computer, but not very good on it.	No		Yes		Language	Makes it more difficult, especially if short of time	No		No	Difficult to use with language difficulties	Yes
Benefits	No	Because my English isn't good. I prefer to see someone face-to-face	No	Prefer to come in	No		Yes		Hate using computers - get frustrated	No view	No		No	Don't use them	No
Yes	23%		35%		55%		69%				28%		33%		43%
No	75%		63%		43%		31%				68%		68%		58%
Don't know	3%		3%		3%		0%				5%		0%		0%