

Title: Joint Waste Contract – Customer Services
 Lead Officer: Zoë Court, Neighbourhood Services Manager
 (01926 456314)
 Portfolio Holder: Councillor Roberts
 Wards of the District directly affected: All

Approvals required	Date	Name
Portfolio Holder	22/3/24	Cllr Will Roberts
Finance	22/3/24	Steven Leathley
Legal Services	22/3/24	Jan Cummings (WCC)
Chief Executive	22/3/24	Chris Elliot / Darren Knight
Director of Climate Change	22/3/24	Dave Barber
Head of Service(s)	22/3/24	Steve Partner
Section 151 Officer	22/3/24	Andrew Rollins
Monitoring Officer	22/3/24	Graham Leach
Leadership Co-ordination Group	25/3/24	
Final decision by this Committee or rec to another Cttee / Council?	Yes	
Contrary to Policy / Budget framework?	No	
Does this report contain exempt info/Confidential? If so, which paragraph(s)?	No	
Does this report relate to a key decision (referred to in the Cabinet Forward Plan)?	No	
Accessibility Checked?	Yes	

Summary

The Council has had a joint waste contract with Stratford-on-Avon District Council (SDC) which commenced in August 2022. The WDC customer service elements (calls, emails, webforms and associated payments) of the contract is provided by SDC contact centre. This decision was made as the two councils were due to be merged by the time the contract went live.

However, as the merger is no longer happening and considering the Council's recently approved Corporate Strategy, Change Programme – Case for Change and Medium-Term Financial Strategy, now is time to review this arrangement and return this service back to WDC control.

Recommendation(s)

1. That Cabinet gives authority to the Deputy Chief Executive to provide SDC notice to end this arrangement, as set out in the inter authority agreement.
2. That the Cabinet thank SDC for their work in supporting this service.
3. The customer service elements of the waste contract return to WDC by December 2024

1 Reasons for the Recommendation

- 1.1 In 2022 whilst the contract was being mobilised the Council did not have the resources to manage the high volume of enquiries that were anticipated and were received. However now the contract is stable, the volume of calls is lower, with more consistent levels of demand.(Appendix 2).
- 1.2 Cabinet recently approved investment in a new Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system for the Council, as part of the Change Programme. The services which can be developed on this platform will allow the Council to take control of its operations, making it easier for customers to contact the Council through different communication channels.
- 1.3 Our Medium-Term Financial Strategy sets out how the Council can continue to be financially sustainable, including making better use of existing resources. This proposal will see the waste calls/enquiries managed by WDC's Customer Service team, making use of an existing resource, to provide a centralised, resilient, and reliable service in line with the Change Programme aspirations.
- 1.4 The Council can plan for contact demands in early Spring when residents need to renew their Garden Waste Permits, which saw complaints in 2023 as customers struggled to get through to SDC, i.e. over 30% of calls relating to Garden Waste permits were abandoned in July 23 (Appendix 2)
- 1.5 There will be a significant annual financial saving as the Council pays SDC to provide customer services on our behalf (see 4.1 below). The Council has previously delivered excellent customer services in relation to waste services up until mid-2022 when these services were transferred to SDC.
- 1.6 The Council receives limited data from the SDC contact centre, which makes understanding service levels challenging. This also makes it difficult to use data to drive improvements and assess quality of service delivery.

- 1.7 Income from sales of waste containers, bulky waste collections and green waste permits is currently managed and received by SDC. Returning customer services to WDC, will allow the Council to directly manage this income. This will provide greater financial management of the income streams as income will be instantly recognised within our financial system rather than received in arrears from SDC.

2 Alternative Options

There were two options considered as part of this review

- 2.1 Leave the customer service arrangement with SDC. This was deemed not suitable for several reasons which have emerged through our work with SDC. It is not easy or quick to see how well the Customer Service operations are performing as SDC have not shared performance metrics on a regular basis. Whilst some information has been provided, this has been very intermittent and required significant officer time to acquire. At key periods our own Customer Services team also receive calls from customers who cannot reach the SDC team, which means there can be double handing. WDC's own Customer Services team, whilst entirely capable of addressing the concerns cannot do this as they do not have access to the tools used by SDC to run the customer contact operations.
- 2.2 Return the customer service back to WDC control. This is the preferred option, as it will allow the Council to improve the customer service delivery of the service and enable a more integrated approach at the first point of contact more rapidly. It will also mean the Council will have instant access to data and performance metrics. The waste service is one of the most important services to residents and with greater control will enable the Council to be more responsive to across its different communication channels – web, telephone, and face to face.

3 Legal Implications

SDC and WDC have a Inter Authority Agreement (Appendix 1), which states; "Dealing with all initial 123+ telephone calls and email queries via the SDC contact centre" is an SDC responsibility". Therefore, a written variation removing the contact centre as an SDC responsibility in Schedule 2 of the IAA and clarifying each authority takes their own calls, and varying Schedule 1 to take those costs out from the date of the variation will need to be mutually agreed between SDC and WDC. The Neighbourhood Services Manager will work with WCC legal services and officers at SDC to agree this variation.

4 Financial Services

- 4.1 The table below is a summary of costs for SDC providing this service the Council has paid so far:

	Annual cost	
2022/23	£290,000	This included 'one off' set up costs; ICT and contact centre agency staff during the mobilisation period
2023/24	£155,000	

2024/25 (proposed)	£125,000	
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- 4.2 The anticipated 'one off' costs associated with moving the calls will be in the region of £10k to allow for the ICT integration work between the CRM and Biffa.
- 4.3 If the calls return in December 2024, there will be a saving of approximately £30k for 2024/25 and then annual savings in the region of £100k from 2025/26 onwards. At this stage we do not believe we need additional resources within customer services.
- 4.4 Income received from sales of waste containers, bulky waste collections and garden waste permits will not be delayed as this is currently received on a monthly and quarterly basis. The Council is also recharged for banking surcharges associated with these payments.

5 Corporate Strategy

- 5.1 Warwick District Council has adopted a Corporate Strategy which sets three strategic aims for the organisation. Each proposed decision within this report demonstrates how the Council will the delivery of these strategic aims.
- 5.2 Delivering valued, sustainable services (Strategic Priority 1) – This report will contribute to how the Council achieves this priority.
- 5.3 Continue to ensure the Council's finances remain on a firm and sustainable footing. (Goal 1.2) Through our Change Programme the Council has committed to reviewing how Council services are delivered – These proposals will help ensure the Council can achieve this goal.
- 5.4 The Council will measure performance and develop how we use data, benchmarking, and customer insight to ensure we continuously learn and improve how services are delivered. These proposals will help ensure the Council can achieve this goal.

6 Environmental/Climate Change Implications

- 6.1 There are no environmental or climate change implications identified because of this report.

7 Analysis of the effects on Equality

- 7.1 There are no equality implications identified because of this report.

8 Data Protection

- 8.1 Our own CRM development will also need a Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) to be completed, but these can be done as part of the development process.
- 8.2 There is a reduced risk of potential data protection breaches, as our resident's data will be retained and managed directly by the Council.

- 8.3 The transfer of data back from SDC - we will be changing the data processing notifications so that SDC will no longer legitimately need to have access to our customer data. They will need to provide an extract of the existing records and in due course proof that they have removed these from their systems and all dependent systems - as they export the data from their CRM to another application.

9 Health and Wellbeing

- 9.1 There are no health and wellbeing implications identified because of this report.

10 Risk Assessment

- 10.1 The Council has a multi-disciplinary project team (specialisms covering waste, customer service, HR, ICT, communications, and transformation) that would plan, coordinate, and manage the return of this service. This will include assessment and management of implementation risks.
- 10.2 The main risk of returning this service was that the Council did not have a corporate CRM and digital platform to manage in and outbound customer contact and workflow. With the recent decision to approve the implementation of CRM, now means the Council will have the system infrastructure in place to support this service.
- 10.3 There may be TUPE implications, which will be managed as part of the project team's scope of implementation.
- 10.4 SDC could challenge this decision.

11 Consultation

- 11.1 The Council's Corporate Strategy and Change Programme – Case for Change, sets out the basis for how customer service delivery needs to be delivered moving forward and the benefits this will bring.

Background Papers:

- Corporate Strategy - [Corporate strategy - Warwick District Council \(warwickdc.gov.uk\)](http://warwickdc.gov.uk)
- Change Programme - Case for Change: [Document.ashx \(warwickdc.gov.uk\)](#)
- Customer Relationship Management - [Document.ashx \(warwickdc.gov.uk\)](#)