

		Executive – 23 July 2008	Agenda Item No.
Title		Proposed Change to Council Phone Numbers	
For further information about this report please contact		Andrew Jones	
Service Area		Revenues and Customer Services	
Wards of the District directly affected		All	
Is the report private and confidential and not for publication by virtue of a paragraph of schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, following the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006		No	
Date and meeting when issue was last considered and relevant minute number		N/A	
Background Papers		Executive 25 <sup>th</sup> , March 2008 Executive 10 <sup>th</sup> , December 2007	

Contrary to the policy framework:	Yes/No
Contrary to the budgetary framework:	Yes/No
Key Decision?	Yes/No
Included within the Forward Plan? (If yes include reference number)	Yes/No

<b>Officer/Councillor Approval</b>		
With regard to officer approval all reports <u>must</u> be approved by the report author's relevant director, Finance, Legal Services and the relevant Portfolio Holder(s).		
<b>Officer Approval</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Name</b>
Relevant Director	26/06/08	John Dubber
Chief Executive	26/06/08	Chris Elliott
CMT	26/06/08	All
Section 151 Officer	26/06/08	Mary Hawkins
Legal	25/06/08	Max Howarth
Finance	25/06/08	Gary Walker
Portfolio Holder(s)	30/06/08	Cllr Les Caborn
<b>Consultation Undertaken</b>		
Please insert details of any consultation undertaken with regard to this report.		
With County Council colleagues		
Final Decision?		Yes/No
<b>Suggested next steps (if not final decision please set out below)</b>		
Communication Strategy to be devised to inform all relevant stakeholders		

## 1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 The report recommends a change of phone number for the council's switchboard and Customer Service Centre (CSC) direct dial numbers to 0845 from the current local area 01926 number.

## 2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 Members agree to the council's Switchboard and CSC direct dial numbers changing from the current local area 01926 numbers to non-geographic 0845 numbers provided by NTL and charged at local rate (Option 1 in the attached report).

## 3. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 On 25<sup>th</sup>, March 2008 the Executive agreed to re-locating the council's CSC to Shire Hall, Warwick. The proposal would provide the customer with a more coherent approach to first and second tier council services and also allow a more efficient use of the council's property portfolio.
- 3.2 As the relocation project developed it became clear that the telephony requirements for the move were considerably more complex than originally anticipated and with that complexity the potential for significant costs. Consequently the project team tasked the Project Manager with developing options to address the telephony issue.
- 3.3 Appended to this report is a report from the Project Manager entitled *Summary of Telephony Options and Recommendations*. Three options are considered of which the proposal to change to a non-geographic 0845 number is the one which comes at no capital cost and has the potential for reduced ongoing revenue costs.
- 3.4 There are benefits to the customer in changing as the non-geographic number is charged at local rate, although it is recognised that given the myriad of call packages that are available from the suppliers not all customers will benefit.
- 3.5 Officers have also explored whether now is the appropriate time to change to a single number for all customer enquiries. However, the evidence from the call centre industry strongly suggests that this could only be achieved by the introduction of numerous menu options for the customer, thereby creating a reduction of the service offered.

## 4. ALTERNATIVE OPTION CONSIDERED

- 4.1 The report *Summary of Telephony Options and Recommendations* considers two further options.
- 4.2 Option 2 of the report – Fully integrated Voice over Internet Protocol Solution – would allow the council to maintain its current phone numbers but would create a system with more points of potential technical failure and also be extremely costly with £25,000+ required in capital.
- 4.3 Option 3 of the report – BT Diverts – would again allow the current numbers to be retained but would incur a significant ongoing revenue cost of over £24,000 per year.
- 4.4 Full details of how these options would operate are detailed in the attached report.

## **5. BUDGETARY FRAMEWORK**

### **5.1 Revenue**

- 5.11 Warwickshire County Council already has a contract in place for Special Rate Services (non-geographic numbers) and this can be extended to include Warwick District Council at no extra cost. The District Council's Legal Services team will ensure that the contractual arrangements meet the needs of the council.

### **5.2 Capital**

- 5.21 There are no capital set-up costs associated with the change to a non-geographic number as Warwick District Council would be joining the arrangement the County Council has with NTL.

## **6. POLICY FRAMEWORK**

- 6.1 The council has an objective of increasing the ease of access to services for customers. The integration of the District and County Council's CSC's will mean that the customer will not need to worry about which council deals with which service.

## **7. BACKGROUND**

- 7.1 Following the Executive's approval for the re-location of Warwick District Council's CSC, the Project Manager reviewed the options for transferring WDC switchboard and CSC direct dial calls to Shire Hall.
- 7.2 The Project Manager identifies three options for consideration, however, only one of these options comes at no cost and enhances business continuity when the system experiences technical difficulties.
- 7.3 The proposed option would require the council to renumber the main switchboard and CSC direct dial numbers to 0845 numbers. The new numbers would "point" directly to Shire Hall and the County Council telephony system would be configured to accept these numbers.
- 7.4 The introduction of the new numbers would be accompanied by a proactive campaign of communication to inform the local community of the changes. This will include call announcements on the existing numbers advising of the change and the new numbers. The actions necessary to communicate the change are included in the Project Manager's Action Plan for the project as a whole.