

Record of individual Cabinet member decision

Local Government Act 2000 and the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012

Decision made by	Councillor Bethia Thomas
Key decision?	Yes – the value of the addition to our existing contract is above the £75,000 threshold
Date of decision (same as date form signed)	13 August 2024
Name and job title of officer requesting the decision	Sally Truman, Customer Service Manager
Officer contact details	Tel: 07717271893 Email: sally.truman@southandvale.gov.uk
Decision	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To approve the variation of the existing G-Cloud call-off contract with Netcall to provide an automated switchboard solution for the councils funded as follows: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (a) existing revenue funding of £12,550 per annum per council (b) one off implementation costs in year one of £9,475 (£4,738 per council) to be funded from the budget for the one-off costs associated with the exit and service transformation required when the Five Councils Partnership contract ends in September 2025. 2. To delegate authority to make the purchase as a variation of the existing G-Cloud call-off contract, to the Head of Corporate Services.
Reasons for decision	<p>In 2023 we purchased the Netcall Liberty Converse contact centre software to replace our 'end of life' Rostrvm telephony system. (ICMD decision notice dated 26 April 2023 refers)</p> <p>The Netcall solution overall offered increased functionality to support the councils' customer services function and our customer transformation goals.</p> <p>One aspect of this functionality was the ability to provide automated routing of 'phone calls and IVR (interactive voice response). IVR will</p>

	<p>support the councils' intention to bring the switchboard services that are currently provided by Capita back in-house.</p> <p>We have now agreed a change request with Capita with an indicative transfer date of early September 2024. We therefore need to progress the purchase of automated switchboard software as soon as possible to enable us to meet that timescale.</p> <p>The new software will enable us to route calls automatically without the need to be handled by an agent (by the customer speaking the name of the person they wish to speak to or the service they wish to discuss).</p> <p>As this software will be an integral part of our overall telephone answering system, the best solution would be to purchase this additional module from Netcall, and are seeking to do so as a variation to the existing contract.</p> <p>The original contract with Netcall allows for non-material variations and the changes outlined above are considered to fall within that definition. No changes are being made to the original terms and conditions of the contract. This being the case, the variation complies with the council's Procurement Rules.</p>
<p>Alternative options rejected</p>	<p>Not to purchase automated switchboard software – this option is rejected because without the automated switchboard module we would need to increase the number of customer service advisors to answer an expected increased volume of incoming switchboard calls. Early estimates would put this staffing increase at circa 4 FTE.</p> <p>An effective switchboard is also fundamental to achieving the aims of the customer transformation strategy and road map agreed by Cabinet in November 2021, to move towards a single point of contact for all services.</p>
<p>Legal implications</p>	<p>The procurement of the automated switchboard as a variation to the Netcall G-Cloud contract has been undertaken in accordance with the councils' Procurement Procedure Rules.</p> <p>This constitutes a variation of the existing contract under the G-Cloud13 framework (ref: ocds-pf7b7i-2000) G-Cloud-13 is an approved and compliant framework for purchasing cloud services, including licences for Software as a Service (SaaS) applications such as contact centre software, with standard terms and conditions for local authorities.</p> <p>There are always risks when the council enters into a contract and it cannot mitigate against all of them, especially when the council enters into a framework agreement whereby the contract has little scope for amendment. The terms of the call off contract have been reviewed by Legal prior to final contract award.</p>
<p>Financial implications</p>	<p>As part of the councils' budget setting for 2024/25 an increased revenue allocation was made for the additional automated switchboard software. The implementation (capital) costs will be covered from the allocations to</p>

cover the insourcing of services that currently sit with Capita.

The total expected costs for this project is shown in the table below.

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Total contract costs
Annual costs*				
ContactPortal with 3 speech bots	21,600	21,600	21,600	
Speech recognition and tuning subscription package	3,500	3,500	3,500	
Total annual costs	25,100	25,100	25,100	75,300
One-off costs** (capital)				
Project management, professional services and data cleansing	8,680			
Staff training	795			
Total one-off costs	9,475			9,475
Total contract costs				84,775
Cost per council	17,288	12,550	12,550	42,388

*to be funded from the agreed increase in Corporate Services budgets as approved as part of budget setting for 2024/25.

**one off implementation costs in year one of £9,475 (£4,738 per council) to be funded from the budget for the one-off costs associated with the exit and service transformation required when the Five Councils Partnership contract ends in September 2025.

Climate implications

The move to customer centred service provision through digital channels will support the councils' carbon reduction ambitions by reducing the reliance on paper and avoiding unnecessary journeys for specific service activities. Gains in this area will include a reduction in traditional communication methods as more customers are able to self-serve. It can also be used to engage with residents and businesses digitally to encourage positive climate change activities.

Equalities implications

None identified

Other implications

None

Background papers considered

None

Declarations/c onflict of interest? Declaration of other councillor/officer consulted by the Cabinet member?

List consultees		Name	Outcome	Date
	Ward councillors	n/a		
	Legal legal@southandvale.gov.uk	Pat Connell	agreed	31.7.24
	Finance Finance@southandvale.gov.uk	Maggie Xu	Budget checked and agreed	10/7/24
	Climate and biodiversity climateaction@southandvale.gov.uk	Jessie Fieth	No comments	10/7/24
	Diversity and equality equalities@southandvale.gov.uk	Lorne Grove	No equality implications identified – improvement to service	9/7/24
	Procurement Procurement@southandvale.gov.uk	Ben Watson	Agreed	18/7/24
	Human resources hadminandpayroll@southandvale.gov.uk	Jaydon Perrin	No comments	19/7/24
	Property property@southandvale.gov.uk	Christopher Mobbs	No comments	9/7/24
	Health and safety healthandsafety@southandvale.gov.uk	Andy Huckstep	No comments	9/7/24
	Risk and insurance risk@southandvale.gov.uk	Yvonne Cutler Greaves	No comments	15/7/24
	Communications communications@southandvale.gov.uk	V Nickless	Noted for comms	9/7/24
Confidential decision? If so, under which exempt category?	No			
Call-in waived by Scrutiny Committee chairman?	No			
Has this been discussed by Cabinet members?	Yes - as part of the exit from the Capita contract. The additional revenue allocation was part of budget-setting for 2024/25.			
Cabinet portfolio holder's signature To confirm the decision as set out in this notice.	<p>Signature _ Cllr Bethia Thomas _____</p> <p>Date 13 August 2024 _____</p>			

ONCE SIGNED, THIS FORM MUST BE HANDED TO DEMOCRATIC SERVICES IMMEDIATELY.

For Democratic Services office use only		
Form received	Date: 15 August 2024	Time: 2.03pm
Date published to all councillors	Date: 16 August 2024	
Call-in deadline	Date: 23 August 2024	Time: 5pm

Guidance notes

1. This form must be completed by the lead officer who becomes the contact officer. The lead officer is responsible for ensuring that the necessary internal consultees have signed it off, including the chief executive. The lead officer must then seek the Cabinet portfolio holder's agreement and signature.
2. Once satisfied with the decision, the Cabinet portfolio holder must hand-sign and date the form and return it to the lead officer who should send it to Democratic Services immediately to allow the call-in period to commence.
Tel. 01235 422520.
Email: democratic.services@southandvale.gov.uk
3. Democratic Services will then publish the decision to the website (unless it is confidential) and send it to all councillors to commence the call-in period (five clear working days) if it is a 'key' decision (see the definition of a 'key' decision below). A key decision cannot be implemented until the call-in period expires. The call-in procedure can be found in the council's constitution, part 4, under the Scrutiny Committee procedure rules.
4. Before implementing a key decision, the lead officer is responsible for checking with Democratic Services that the decision has not been called in.
5. If a key decision has been called in, Democratic Services will notify the lead officer and decision-maker. This call-in puts the decision on hold.
6. Democratic Services will liaise with the Scrutiny Committee chairman over the date of the call-in debate. The Cabinet portfolio holder will be requested to attend the Scrutiny Committee meeting to answer the committee's questions.
7. The Scrutiny Committee may:
 - refer the decision back to the Cabinet portfolio holder for reconsideration or
 - refer the matter to Council with an alternative set of proposals (where the final decision rests with full Council) or
 - accept the Cabinet portfolio holder's decision, in which case it can be implemented immediately.

Key decisions: assessing whether a decision should be classified as 'key'

The South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils' Constitutions now have the same definition of a key decision:

A key decision is a decision of the Cabinet, an individual Cabinet member, or an officer acting under delegated powers, which is likely:

- (a) to incur expenditure, make savings or to receive income (except government grant) of more than £75,000;**

- (b) to award a revenue or capital grant of over £25,000; or**
- (c) to agree an action that, in the view of the chief executive or relevant head of service, would be significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in an area comprising more than one ward in the area of the council.**

Key decisions are subject to the scrutiny call-in procedure; non-key decisions are not and can be implemented immediately.

In assessing whether a decision should be classified as 'key', you should consider:

- (a) Will the expenditure, savings or income total more than £75,000 across all financial years?
- (b) Will the grant award to one person or organisation be more than £25,000 across all financial years?
- (c) Does the decision impact on more than one district council ward? And if so, is the impact significant? If residents or property affected by the decision is in one ward but is close to the border of an adjacent ward, it may have a significant impact on that second ward, e.g. through additional traffic, noise, light pollution, odour. Examples of significant impacts on two or more wards are:
 - Decisions to spend Didcot Garden Town funds (significant impact on more than one ward)
 - Changes to the household waste collection policy (affects all households in the district)
 - Reviewing a housing strategy (could have a significant impact on residents in many wards)
 - Adopting a supplementary planning document for a redevelopment site (could significantly affect more than one ward) or a new design guide (affects all wards)
 - Decisions to build new or improve existing leisure facilities (used by residents of more than one ward)

The overriding principle is that before 'key' decisions are made, they must be published in the Cabinet Work Programme for 28 calendar days. Classifying a decision as non-key when it should be a key decision could expose the decision to challenge and delay its implementation.