AGENDA MANAGEMENT SHEET

Report Title:	Improving the resilience of telephone contact at Rugby Borough Council
Name of Committee:	Cabinet
Date of Meeting:	8 November 2021
Report Director:	Chief Officer - Digital and Communications
Portfolio:	Communities, Homes, Digital and Communications
Ward Relevance:	All
Prior Consultation:	Leadership Team, internal consultation process, Members, representative number of suppliers, other councils of similar size/resident numbers.
Contact Officer:	Mike Connell, Chief Officer Digital and Communications 01788 533466 or mike.connell@rugby.gov.uk
Public or Private:	Public
Report Subject to Call-In:	Yes
Report En-Bloc:	No
Forward Plan:	Yes

Corporate Priorities:

(C) Climate
(E) Economy
(HC) Health and Communities
(O) Organisation

This report relates to the following priority(ies):

☒ Rugby is an environmentally sustainable place, where we work together to reduce and mitigate the effects of climate change. (C)

☒ Rugby has a diverse and resilient economy that benefits and enables opportunities for all residents. (E)

☒ Residents live healthy, independent lives, with the most vulnerable protected. (HC)

☒ Rugby Borough Council is a responsible, effective and efficient organisation. (O)

Corporate Strategy 2021-2024

☐ This report does not specifically relate to any Council priorities but

Summary: The Council's current telephone systems may have provided what was needed in 2013 but they are now unable to support the agile, efficient and effective methods of working needed. The Council

needs to be able to embrace digital opportunities and nurture the culture of innovation outlined in the Corporate Strategy as well as guaranteeing a more reliable and cost-effective customer experience.

Financial Implications: The estimated cost of the recommendation option is £0.076m over the three years of the contract. This includes an initial £0.010m of equipment costs and £0.066m for the maintenance agreement. The costs will be financed by generating efficiency savings in the Digital and Communications Service which includes utilising the £5,000 budget allocated for the existing system.

Risk Management Implications: Difficulty in managing expectations for both staff and residents with the inconsistent performance of existing telephone system(s). The inability to work from home for some staff, due to poor telephone system(s), can impact adversely on health and wellbeing. **Appendix 1** highlights the mitigating organisational risks/issues that arose due to poor telephony systems.

Environmental Implications: A telephone system that supports remote working reduces the need for travel to Council premises. This also sets a good example to other businesses and organisations if services are delivered remotely without compromise caused by poor telephone system(s).

Legal Implications: There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.

Equality and Diversity: The Council has a requirement under the Public Sector Equality Duty (s149 of the Equality Act 2010) to have due regard to (i) eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act, (ii) advance equality of opportunity between people from different groups, and (iii) foster good relations between people from different groups. In undertaking the Impact Assessment and considering its contents the Council has had 'due regard' in accordance with its statutory obligations.

Options:

1. Approve the procurement of a new Telephone System for the Contact Centre.

2.   Approve the procurement of a new
      Telephone System for the Contact
      Centre and two designated teams
      outside of the Contact Centre (Option 2
      as detailed in Section 8).

3.   To not approve the procurement of a new
      Telephone System for Rugby Borough
      Council.

Recommendation: IT BE RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL THAT -

1. a new telephone system be procured for the
    Council as detailed within the report; and

2. delegated authority be given to the Chief
    Officer for Finance and Performance to
    undertake a procurement process and enter
    into a contractual agreement with the
    successful supplier.

    .

Cabinet - 8 November 2021

Improving the resilience of telephone contact at Rugby Borough Council

Public Report of the Chief Officer - Digital and Communications

Recommendation
IT BE RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL THAT -   (1) a new telephone system be procured for the Council as detailed within the report; and (2) delegated authority be given to the Chief Officer for Finance and Performance to undertake a procurement process and enter into a contractual agreement with the successful supplier.

1.   Introduction

1.1   In view of the global pandemic, and Post COVID, customer behaviour has changed in terms of the channels being used to access services and how customers engage with the Council. Although there is an increased use of digital channels, and particularly self-service, the telephone still plays a key part in tackling digital exclusion and ensuring that the most vulnerable customers can contact the Council.

1.2   The telephone system has always been the 'backbone' communication channel for customers and will always play a significant role with communicating with the community but as we have experienced during the pandemic if the council provides a multi-channel digital approach for customers, they will use it.

1.3   Since March 2020, customer expectations of needing to contact the council in a timely and efficient way are higher than ever and, as a provider of services to the community, we strive to meet these expectations. The Contact Centre is now more than just a Call Centre but provides the entire customer experience as the first point of entry to the Council.

1.4   Customers who used to come to the Town Hall have been able to utilise other channels, like self-service which is ideal for transactions like the renewal of garden waste permits, but telephone contact will also have a place when residents need to discuss more complex issues.

1.5   To enable Council to continue to expand its omni channel approach it requires a telephony system that will future proof the community's expectations of an excellent service.

2.   Purpose of the Report

2.1   The purpose of this report is to outline why the current telephone systems are no longer fit for purpose and why a new Contact Centre system needs to be procured for the council.

3.   Background

3.1   In 2013 the current telephone system was introduced, and, at that time, the new telephone system allowed the Council to take advantage of technological advances such as diverting calls to mobile phones or logging into the Council's telephone system to take calls whilst working from home and, although this has been achieved to some extent during the pandemic, the synchronisation no longer works for all users due to the age and functionality of the system.

3.2   As the existing system was unable to provide all of the functionality needed by the Contact Centre, a separate application, was purchased to manage the queues in real time and the availability of the advisors as well as providing a suite of reporting tools. It was also implemented to enable skills-based routing which means that each call is answered by the person best able to deal with that query or service request.

3.3   Prior to the pandemic people were mostly office-based and hunt groups were used to allow customer access to the services they needed in an organised and efficient way. However, this wasn't possible during the pandemic as staff were advised to work from home limiting a number of initial contacts to email only. In addition to this, when customers contact the Council there is no single way to integrate telephony services from a 'directory' and 'availability' perspective.

3.4   The current combination does not allow for agile, efficient and effective methods of working nor does it enable the Council to embrace an omni channel approach and nurture a culture of innovation.

4.   Why move to a new telephone system?

4.1   A high standard of service can only be provided if the technology is reliable and, during the pandemic when staff were instructed to "work from home", a number of technical issues prevented some employees from doing some thus restricting the number of available advisors.

4.2   As the primary role of the Contact Centre is dealing with inbound telephone calls from customers, the technical issues had a major impact on the work and morale of the team.

4.3   Because of the aging systems the synchronisation function prevents advisors from being able to take calls whilst working from home.

4.4   There is also an intermittent issue with the automatic call distribution functionality. Calls are not presenting automatically to the advisors without manual intervention. This means that there can be calls in the queue and an equal number of advisors waiting, with either significant time delays or a manual intervention needed for the calls to be presented to the advisors.

4.5   Other calls may be presenting but then not connecting so they drop before the advisor is alerted and these show as 'missed' for the advisor and go to voicemail for the customer.

4.6   To provide some perspective on the impact of this issue, in Q4 Jan, Feb, Mar 2021, 32,000 calls were presented and 29,850 (93%) calls were answered, which means that 2,150 (7%) calls were missed which is, potentially, 8,600 a year and this is about the number of calls, on average, dealt with in a standard month.

4.7   Because of what happens, when some of the calls are presented, calls are missed and this skews the reporting, particularly at an individual level, and this can be demotivating. A separate report is then generated to rebalance each advisor's contribution to the team effort.

5.   Benefits of procuring a new telephone system

5.1   Providing a streamlined customer journey across all channels, the customer will be given both convenience and choice. Also, by adding channels such as video chat, customers will be able to access empathetic face-to-face advice, or be able to see what is being discussed as well as hearing what is being said without needing to visit the workplace.

5.2   Quality is an issue for both employees and customers and 85% of customers expect the same or a higher standard of quality from government services as they do from private companies. So, by positively transforming the customer experience, this will enable individuals to access the services they need in an efficient and timely manner.

6.   Determining the requirements

6.1   A project group has been established and a kick-off meeting was held on 30.03.21. Key responsibilities have been agreed and the estimated timescale for this project is 12 months, subject to securing the necessary funding to procure a viable solution.

6.2   Procuring a new telephone system is a key part of the Council's digital transformation as it will deliver an omni-channel approach that gives the customer choice, enhances the customer experience, and keeps pace with rising customer expectations.

6.3   The growth of the Borough is also within scope as more efficient communication channels will be needed to cope with the demand.

7.   Consultation

7.1   In order to provide more detail for the Contact Centre Specification and the Technical Requirements Matrix for both the Contact Centre and the rest of the Council, 5 demonstrations were scheduled as part of an initial data gathering exercise:

7.2   Several case studies were provided, and 2 other councils of similar size/resident numbers were consulted as well as 2 larger councils. A summary is detailed in **Appendix 2.**

7.3   Having spoken to different councils embarking on a similar transformation programme it was evident that they needed to replace an ageing telephone system that supported an omni channel approach to the customer and they also needed to ensure that they had a solution in place that could something to replace their face-to-face channel, particularly for the most vulnerable. For example, at Horsham District Council where video conferencing has replaced 'in person' visits particularly for health and well-being appointments with members of the public and at Thanet District Council where video conferencing has replaced 'in person' inspections, saving on travelling time and cost.

7.4   Another key point raised was the opportunity to integrate with Microsoft 'Teams' as a formal council-wide telephone system, thus capitalising on existing Microsoft 365 investment in licensing and products with the option to purchase the business voice licence which is the phone system licence that is a simple overlay onto the 365-tenant.

7.5   Since the start of the pandemic, Council staff have become confident users of 'Teams' which they use for collaborating, talking and organising meetings both internally and externally and this provides a single platform across the entire Council with Disaster Recovery and Business Continuity requirements covered.

7.6   For Rugby Borough Council, the agreement with the provider of the basic 'Teams' licence runs out at the end of the year so this is an opportune time to look at the licensing aspect of Teams and how it integrates with a new Contact Centre.

8.   Financing the new telephone system and next steps

8.1   Financing a new Council wide telephone system, with increased functionality for the Contact Centre, would require investment hence the need to understand the reason for this work to be done before committing to the spend.

8.2   The current annual cost of £5,000 was agreed 8 years ago when the telephone system was implemented. The annual cost covers us for the following:

- Support and maintenance to ensure the system continues to run, given its age and the fact that, in technology and infrastructure terms, this system would be due for replacement.
- Configuration changes.

    Any ad-hoc maintenance or improvements needed on the telephone system in future (if the project is not approved) will need to be funded through the new equipment budgets held within the ICT cost centres.

8.3 Whilst the quote below is used for indicative costs, the successful solution will be obtained following a Standing Orders and Financial Regulations compliant procurement process.

Initial Cost Structure (indicative/based on one supplier)

Option 1: Contact Centre Only
20 Advanced Licences (includes digital channels)

	2022/23 £m	2023/24 £m	2024/25 £m	Total 3 year cost
Implementation Costs	0.009	-	-	0.009
Running Costs	0.018	0.018	0.018	0.054
TOTAL	**0.027**	**0.018**	**0.018**	**0.063**

Option 2: Contact Centre plus designated teams
20 Advanced Licences + 50 back-office licences

	2022/23 £m	2023/24 £m	2024/25 £m	Total 3 year cost
Implementation Costs	0.010	-	-	0.010
Running Costs	0.022	0.022	0.022	0.066
TOTAL	**0.032**	**0.022**	**0.022**	**0.076**

**CAST and Revenues

8.7 It is recommended that Option 2 is opted for which is the Contact Centre plus 2 designated teams, Revenues and CAST, which would offer:

- a more joined up approach for customers,
- calls NOT going to personal mobiles, and
- other people, who have joined the Council more recently, being able to take calls from home.

8.8 The annual contract costs will be financed identifying savings from within the existing Digital and Communications budgets including the utilisation of the £5,000 budget allocated to the existing system and will be incorporated into the Medium Term Financial plan for the period. Therefore the system will not require any additional funding to implement.

8.9 It is recommended that the estimated cost of Option 2 over the 3 year period is included in the Medium Term Financial Plan for 2022/23 to be offset by identified revenue savings, and approved as part of the 2022/23 draft budget.

8.10 During the consultation process, and specifically the discussions held with other councils, a number of cost savings and efficiencies were identified as being relevant to RBC, and these are detailed in Appendix 3.

9. Equality Impact Assessment

9.1 The Equality Impact Assessment (**Appendix 4** to this report) shows no negative impacts on any of the people who share a protected characteristic.

9.2 Through the provision of a new Contact centre telephone system, this can only have a positive impact on those people who share a protected characteristic.

10. Conclusions

10.1.1 The existing systems are no longer fit for purpose.

10.1.2 Reporting is increasingly piecemeal and overly complicated.

10.1.3 There are increasing concerns about resilience and the level of service that could be provided by the Contact Centre.

10.1.5 Issues around call distribution and connectivity continue to have a detrimental impact on the work of the Contact Centre and the customers they serve.

10.1.6 There is no single way to integrate Council-wide telephony services from a 'directory' and 'availability' perspective.

10.1.7 The existing combination does not allow for the agile, efficient and effective methods of working nor does it enable the Council to embrace digital opportunities and nurture the culture of innovation outlined in the Corporate Strategy.

Name of Meeting: Cabinet

Date of Meeting: 8 November 2021

Subject Matter: Improving the resilience of telephone contact at Rugby
Borough Council

Originating Department: Digital and Communications

DO ANY BACKGROUND PAPERS APPLY ☐ **YES** ☒ **NO**

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

Doc No	Title of Document and Hyperlink

The background papers relating to reports on planning applications and which are open to public inspection under Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972, consist of the planning applications, referred to in the reports, and all written responses to consultations made by the Local Planning Authority, in connection with those applications.

☒ Exempt information is contained in the following documents:

Doc No	Relevant Paragraph of Schedule 12A

Mitigating organisational risks/issues that arose due to poor telephony systems

	LOW RISK	HIGH RISK
Adapting to change	• Management information on the skills available to respond to citizen and local business needs for both remote and office workers • Team access to 'whisper coaching' from peer and management support when on the phone during blended working	• Unable to tell the skills available to be presented with calls during blended working • Staff/agents unable to know and access the support available during blended working
Managing uncertainty	• A robust information system to address queueing, agent availability and resource allocation	• Inability to deal with uncertain service demands and resource allocation in the live environment
Compliance	• Ability to deploy a multi-channel approach to increase reach for all citizens including the vulnerable and digitally excluded • Be pro-active in identifying user needs and directing the right services towards users	• Over reliant on email for communication – this excludes some citizens • Increased risks in the misdirection of users due to unknown availability of service agents
Decision support	• Quick reassignment of skills availability to deal with developing issues • Insight and overview on queries from many sources (calls, emails, social media etc)	• Surprises and 'fire-fighting' due to lack of information on developing issues • Multiple and disparate tools to manage calls

LOW RISK
New Telephony

HIGH RISK
Today

RUGBY

Implementing a new Council wide telephone system: Efficiencies, Benefits and Savings identified by other Councils

Council/Supplier	Efficiencies/Benefits	Savings
Mayo County Council/Enghouse	Pulling together front, middle and back office teams through integration with 'Microsoft Teams' and adding the contact centre solution.	Telephony services are integrated from a 'directory' and 'availability' perspective and this means that Agents don't need to spend **time** trying different numbers until they find someone who can help the customer.
Brent Council/8x8	Cloud solution hosted and managed by 8x8 so the Council no longer needs to invest in expensive infrastructure or hire technical staff to deal with this. First time call resolution.	No ICT savings as administrators administer all systems and not just the telephony systems.
Sefton Council /8x8	Chat & email are part of the telephone system enabling cross-channel communication with complete visibility and tracking of the customer experience.	Saves **time** as not switching between systems.
Aylesbury Vale/8x8	Enhanced Customer Experience and Increased Customer Satisfaction as previous system was unstable, costly and complex.	Channel Shift: 25% reduction in the number of in-bound calls
Horsham District Council/Ring Central	Video conferencing has replaced 'in person' visits particularly for health and well-being appointments with members of the public. Works over browser. Don't have to download the App. Analytics are amazing – can give things like missed call rates to all services in the Council (not just the Contact Centre) and this led to meaningful conversations about Council wide efficiencies.	**Reduction in overhead costs** as fewer people need to be accommodated in Council buildings. Didn't need to buy handsets as they had headsets and access via their PC.

Council/Supplier	Efficiencies/Benefits	Savings
Thanet District Council/Ring Central	Increased reliability of telephony described as the 'backbone' customer service channel especially when there are problems and people need to talk. Video conferencing has replaced 'in person' inspections. Replaced ageing Avaya system that 'kind of' worked outside the office. Ties into 'Teams' and 'Active Directory'. Pushed people on-line where appropriate. Did some research with homeless people and found that most people had mobile phones and could access the website or call if they needed to. Moved to chrome books/no windows devices. 60% of applications in the cloud. Rolled out in 3 months. Analytics excellent.	**Reduction in overhead costs** 22 out of 400 staff in the office. **Time:** don't need to travel to properties to carry out inspections.
Liverpool City Council/8x8	Replaced ageing Avaya system that didn't support homeworking. 2 external and 2 internal centres: Customer Access (Contact Centre), Care Line (Social Services), ICT Service Desk, HR & Payroll. Video conferencing is being trialled to replace 'in person' appointments particularly for social care type discussions with members of the public. Calls can be converted into video conferencing at the point of contact.	**Reduction in overhead costs** as fewer people need to be accommodated in Council buildings. Didn't need to buy handsets as they had headsets and access via their PC. Concurrent License use / telephone license much cheaper.

Implementing a new Council-wide telephone system: Efficiencies and Savings

Enhanced Functionality	Efficiencies/Savings	Outcome
Works from anywhere.	Reduction in overhead costs as fewer people need to be accommodated in Council buildings. Can use headsets/access via PC so don't need to buy handsets.	Agile working transformation.
Pulling together front, middle and back office teams through integration with 'Microsoft Teams' and adding the contact centre solution.	Telephony services are integrated from a 'directory' and 'availability' perspective and this means that Advisors **save time** because they don't need to keep trying different numbers until they find someone who can help them to help the customer.	Seamless/end to end customer journey. Enhanced Customer Experience. Increased Customer Satisfaction.
Increased reliability of telephony which is the 'backbone' customer service channel especially when there are problems and people need to talk.	**£5,500** 179 hours per year spent dealing with issues created by the unstable Avaya/Chronicall system(s), such as time delays and manual interventions when calls don't connect automatically, plus Team Leader time to cover reports to the ICT Service Desk and chasing when malfunctions arise.	Enhanced Customer Experience. Increased Customer Satisfaction.
Video conferencing can replace 'in person' appointments particularly for customers with health, well-being and financial vulnerabilities. Calls can be converted into video conferencing at the point of contact.	Reduction in transaction costs as F2F is the most expensive channel: According to **SOCITM**, a face-to-face visit can **cost** an estimated £8.62 and telephone communication can **cost** £2.83 **per** interaction. 21 Dec 2018	Flexible communication options tailored to the needs of the customer/circumstances. Cross-channel communication with complete visibility and tracking of the customer experience.
Video conferencing can replace 'in person' inspections.	Saves time/travel costs**:** don't need to travel to properties to carry out inspections.	Better use of resources.
Able to provide analytics, like missed call rates, to all services in the Council (not just the Contact Centre).	Able to address any adverse impact this is having on the customer experience.	Can manage customer contact via established 'availability' times as better to have some telephone availability rather than none or 'email only'.

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT (EqIA)

Context

1. The Public Sector Equality Duty as set out under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 requires Rugby Borough Council when making decisions to have due regard to the following:
   - eliminating unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation, and other conduct prohibited by the Act,
   - advancing equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not,
   - fostering good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not, including tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.

2. The characteristics protected by the Equality Act are:
   - age
   - disability
   - gender reassignment
   - marriage/civil partnership
   - pregnancy/maternity
   - race
   - religion/belief
   - sex/gender
   - sexual orientation

3. In addition to the above-protected characteristics, you should consider the crosscutting elements of the proposed policy, such as impact on social inequalities and impact on carers who look after older people or people with disabilities as part of this assessment.

4. The Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) document is a tool that enables RBC to test and analyse the nature and impact of what it is currently doing or is planning to do in the future. It can be used flexibly for reviewing existing arrangements but in particular should enable identification where further consultation, engagement and data is required.

5. The questions will enable you to record your findings.

6. Where the EqIA relates to a continuing project, it must be reviewed and updated at each stage of the decision.

7. Once completed and signed off the EqIA will be published online.

8. An EqIA must accompany all **Key Decisions** and **Cabinet Reports**.

9. For further information, refer to the EqIA guidance for staff.

10. For advice and support, contact:
    Minakshee Patel
    Corporate Equality & Diversity Advisor
    minakshee.patel@rugby.gov.uk
    Tel: 01788 533509

Equality Impact Assessment

Service Area	Digital & Communications
Policy/Service being assessed	Council-wide telephony services
Is this is a new or existing policy/service?	Existing service needing replacement.
If existing policy/service please state date of last assessment	2013
EqIA Review team – List of members	Debbie McCarthy
Date of this assessment	01.07.21
Signature of responsible officer (to be signed after the EqIA has been completed)	

A copy of this Equality Impact Assessment report, including relevant data and information to be forwarded to the Corporate Equality & Diversity Advisor.

If you require help, advice and support to complete the forms, please contact Minakshee Patel, Corporate Equality & Diversity Advisor via email: minakshee.patel@rugby.gov.uk or 01788 533509

Details of Strategy/ Service/ Policy to be analysed

Stage 1 – Scoping and Defining	
(1) Describe the main aims, objectives and purpose of the Strategy/Service/Policy (or decision)?	A new Council-wide telephone system is needed to support the agile, efficient and effective methods of working needed in the future. "Work from home if you can" has forced a change in customer behaviour as people have been unable to attend Council offices as it has been unsafe to do so. The Council must, therefore ensure, that services are accessible to all Rugby citizens.
(2) How does it fit with Rugby Borough Council's Corporate priorities and your service area priorities?	The Council needs to be able to embrace digital opportunities and nurture the culture of innovation outlined in the Corporate Strategy as well as guaranteeing a more reliable and cost-effective customer experience. *"Residents live healthy, independent lives, with the most vulnerable protected"*
(3) What are the expected outcomes you are hoping to achieve?	- Customers can access the services they need via the telephone channel. For the more vulnerable people or people with low digital engagement, it can be the only link they have to opportunities, services and the support that they need to live well. - Customer enquiries are dealt with promptly, accurately and in accordance with their varied needs and requirements. - Customer enquiries are fully resolved to the customer's satisfaction, with the help of a Rugby Borough Council staff member. - All customers benefit.
(4) Does or will the policy or decision affect: - Customers - Employees - Wider community or groups	The telephone channel is vital to maintain effective communication for customers, employees and wider community groups. Although there is an increased use of digital channels, and particularly self-service, the telephone still plays a key part in tackling digital exclusion and ensuring that the most vulnerable customers can contact the Council. This is particularly important if face-to-face service provision is going to be kept to the absolute minimum.

Stage 2 - Information Gathering	As a minimum you must consider what is known about the population likely to be affected which will support your understanding of the impact of the policy, e.g. service uptake/usage, customer satisfaction surveys, staffing data, performance data, research information (national, regional and local data sources). The primary channel is **telephone** with 84% of all contact via the Contact Centre being received this way: for 2019/20 this was 111,357 people and 2020/21 it was 104,980 people.
(1) What does the information tell you about those groups identified?	Some customers will only be able to access the services they need via the telephone because they do not have a device or broadband connection that enables them to use online services. Affordability could also be an issue if unable to work due to a disability or retirement.
(2) Have you consulted or involved those groups that are likely to be affected by the strategy/ service/policy you want to implement? If yes, what were their views and how have their views influenced your decision?	A telephone survey was conducted, between 09.03.21 and 09.04.21. It was a small survey with 87 responses from 85 customers. Customers were asked how they usually contact the Council to access the services they need, and the results are shown in Table 1 below: Table 1 <table><tr><td>**Channel used to access services**</td><td>**Percentage of customers**</td></tr><tr><td>Phone</td><td>63%</td></tr><tr><td>Online</td><td>25%</td></tr><tr><td>Face to Face</td><td>12%</td></tr></table> They were also asked whether this had changed since the pandemic and 18 said 'Yes'. There are some conclusions that can be drawn from what customers said during the survey, for example, "no I don't use that internet stuff, I don't know how so I don't bother', which could imply that they either lack the confidence, motivation or digital skills. Other reasons for customers not accessing services online, are not having the internet, not having a suitable device and cost.

(3) If you have not consulted or engaged with communities that are likely to be affected by the policy or decision, give details about when you intend to carry out consultation or provide reasons for why you feel this is not necessary.	n/a

Stage 3 – Analysis of impact	There may be an age-related or disability-related impact as well as an impact in relation to language for individuals whose first language is not English.		
(1) <u>Protected Characteristics</u> From your data and consultations is there any positive, adverse or negative impact identified for any particular group, which could amount to discrimination? If yes, identify the groups and how they are affected.	**RACE** No	**DISABILITY** Yes	**GENDER** No
	MARRIAGE/CIVIL PARTNERSHIP No	**AGE** Yes	**GENDER REASSIGNMENT** No
	RELIGION/BELIEF No	**PREGNANCY MATERNITY** No	**SEXUAL ORIENTATION** No
<u>(2) Cross cutting themes</u> (a) Are your proposals likely to impact on social inequalities e.g. child poverty, geographically disadvantaged communities? If yes, please explain how? (b) Are your proposals likely to impact on a carer who looks after older people or people with disabilities? If yes, please explain how?	By providing a streamlined customer journey across all channels, the customer will be given both convenience and choice. Also, by adding channels such as video chat, customers will be able to access empathetic face-to-face advice, or be able to see what is being discussed as well as hearing what is being said without needing to visit the workplace.		
(3) If there is an adverse impact, can this be justified?	No.		

(3) What actions are going to be taken to reduce or eliminate negative or adverse impact? (this should form part of your action plan under Stage 4.)	Customer Access is being considered as part of the wider strategy development in Digital & Communications.
(5) How does the strategy/service/policy contribute to the promotion of equality? If not, what can be done?	The telephone still plays a key part in tackling digital exclusion and ensuring that the most vulnerable customers can contact the Council. This is particularly important if face-to-face service provision is going to be kept to the absolute minimum.
(6) How does the strategy/service/policy promote good relations between groups? If not, what can be done?	There will be a single way to integrate Council-wide telephony services from a 'directory' and 'availability' perspective and this will enhance communication both internally and externally.
(7) Are there any obvious barriers to accessing the service? If yes how can they be overcome?	A new Council-wide telephone system will support enhanced communication.

Stage 4 – Action Planning, Review & Monitoring	
If No Further Action is required, then go to – Review & Monitoring (1) Action Planning – Specify any changes or improvements that can be made to the service or policy to mitigate or eradicate negative or adverse impact on specific groups, including resource implications.	EqIA Action Plan _see table below_
(2) Review and Monitoring State how and when you will monitor policy and Action Plan	Regular meetings will be held with the Digital & Communication Managers and the Chief Officer.

Action	Lead Officer	Date for completion	Resource requirements	Comments
Customer Access is being considered as part of the wider strategy development	Digital & Communication Managers and the Corporate Equality & Diversity Advisor	31.08.21	Digital & Communications team to work with stakeholders across RBC	None.

Please annotate your policy with the following statement:
'An Equality Impact Assessment on this policy was undertaken on 01.07.21 and will be reviewed on 30.06.24.'

RUGBY BOROUGH COUNCIL