

**REPORT ON CONSULTATIONS**

Interim findings, consultation ends on 1 November 2013

**Consultation Methods and Timescales**

<b>Interest Groups</b>	<b>Methods</b>	<b>Timescales</b>	<b>Lead</b>
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
Businesses	Letters to Business South, Chamber of Commerce, Business in the Community	30 July 2013	Paul Medland

Interest Groups	Methods	Timescales	Lead
Staff	Article in Weekly Bulletin	31 July 2013	Lucy Calvert

### Summary of On-line Responses as at 2 October 2013

Questions			
<p><b>1.</b> 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	178	
	Yes	30	17%
	No	126	71%
	Not Sure	22	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><b>2.</b> 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"> <li>➤ People with visual impairments</li> <li>➤ People with learning difficulties</li> <li>➤ Some elderly people</li> </ul> <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><b>3.</b> Are there other groups of people who may have difficulty with online access?</p> <p>Any comments?</p>	Replies	180	
	Yes	63	35%
	No	72	40%
	Not Sure	45	25%
<p><i>Responses included:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People with physical disabilities who have difficulty using computer or phone keyboards.</li> <li>• People who are emotionally vulnerable.</li> <li>• People with poor literacy skills.</li> <li>• People with language difficulties.</li> <li>• Homeless people.</li> </ul> <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><b>4.</b> 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"> <li>➤ People with hearing impairments</li> <li>➤ People with learning difficulties</li> </ul>	Replies	174	
	Yes	51	29%
	No	86	49%
	Not Sure	37	21%

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ People who have difficulty understanding spoken English</li> <li>➤ Some elderly people</li> </ul> <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><b>5.</b> 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"> <li>• People with physical disabilities who have difficulty using computer or phone keyboards.</li> <li>• People who are emotionally vulnerable.</li> <li>• People with poor literacy skills.</li> </ul> <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><b>6.</b> 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	179	
	Yes	109	61%
	No	42	23%
	Not Sure	28	16%
<p><i>There are many negative comments about this approach. These include:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scepticism that vulnerable people will be recognised, particularly at busy times.</li> <li>• Training is unlikely to help.</li> <li>• That the service will be seen as “unfriendly and uncaring”.</li> <li>• There will be long waiting times, even for self-service.</li> <li>• Customers will be aggressive so that they are seen immediately.</li> <li>• It is unreasonable to expect people to call twice, once to make an appointment and once to attend.</li> </ul> <p><i>Again the desirability of interaction with a person is emphasised.</i></p>			
<p><b>7.</b> 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	123	
<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>			
<b>8.</b> Over time the council will move as many services as	Replies	111	

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?			
<p><i>Responses include:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Adult and children's social services.</i></li> <li>• <i>Safeguarding.</i></li> <li>• <i>Any dealings with people with learning difficulties.</i></li> <li>• <i>Homeless support</i></li> <li>• <i>Financial problems</i></li> <li>• <i>Cash office</i></li> </ul>			
<p><b>9.</b> 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.</p> <p>Can you see this causing any difficulties?</p>	Replies	178	
	Yes	92	52%
	No	55	31%
	Not Sure	31	17%
<b>10.</b> Are there any council services where this approach is not appropriate?			
<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><b>11.</b> 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	132	
<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"> <li>• <i>Services should be provided by council staff.</i></li> <li>• <i>There should be competition to ensure best value.</i></li> <li>• <i>The contact is providing good value.</i></li> <li>• <i>There are issues with the current service provision by Capita</i></li> <li>• <i>The current arrangements are too restricting</i></li> <li>• <i>The contract has moved work to council managers</i></li> </ul>			
<b>15.</b> Any further comments?	Replies	66	
<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.

### Responses Received Through Other Means

Emails have also been received in response to the consultation and these are reproduced below. At the time of writing few responses have been received from the

leaflet that has been distributed, these will be included in the final report to Cabinet and Council together with any other responses received on paper.

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?



Business South Limited  
Ocean Village Innovation Centre  
Ocean Village  
Southampton  
SO14 3JZ

**T** +44 (0)844 225 3130  
**F** +44 (0)844 225 3132  
**E** [info@businesssouth.org](mailto:info@businesssouth.org)  
**W** [www.businesssouth.org](http://www.businesssouth.org)

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 blue 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"

"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 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 there must be an opportunity for further management savings.

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 for 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 internet transactions such as topping up the Itchen Bridge Card - it takes a ridiculous amount of time.

Kind regards,

Peter Baillie

From Cllr Ivan White and copied to all Members

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.

Regards Ivan White

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.

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.

## Analysis of On-line Responses by Ward

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	7	1	3	5	3	4	5	2	6	4	1	5	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	3	4	5	3	2	6	3	7	3	3	6	3	4
Harefield	1	5	1	3	2	2	2	3	1	4	3	0	3	3	0
Millbrook	3	3	1	5	0	2	4	2	1	3	3	1	1	4	2
Peartree	4	5	1	5	4	1	6	3	1	6	4	0	7	3	0
Portswood	2	9	2	4	4	5	4	5	4	8	3	2	5	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	4	1	5	4	1	4	4	1	6	2	1	5	5	0
Not known	5	50	7	20	28	15	13	34	14	40	16	7	34	18	9
<b>Totals</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>126</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>109</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>31</b>

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.