

Birmingham City Council

Report to Cabinet/Cabinet Committee

14th November 2023



Subject:	VOICE AUTOMATION
Report of:	Director, Strategy Equality, Strategy & Partnerships Assistant Director, Customer Services
Relevant Cabinet Member:	Cllr Sharon Thompson - Deputy Leader
Relevant O &S Chair(s):	Councillor Sir Albert Bore – Co-ordinating Overview & Scrutiny
Report author:	Nikki Spencer Lead Delivery Manager Digital & Customer Services Nikki.Spencer@birmingham.gov.uk 07766 924234

Are specific wards affected?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No – All wards affected
If yes, name(s) of ward(s):		
Is this a key decision?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
If relevant, add Forward Plan Reference: 012064/2023		
Is the decision eligible for call-in?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
If relevant, state which appendix is exempt, and provide exempt information paragraph number or reason if confidential:		
Appendix A: Benefit VA Calculation (In commercial confidence)		
Appendix F: Market Assessment (In commercial confidence)		
The listed appendices contain sensitive information a business has shared with the Council in confidence, and we are therefore obligated to not disclose this information.		

1 Executive Summary

- 1.1 Voice automation is a technology that can understand, process and respond to human language - whether spoken or typed. It can release call handlers from mundane and repetitive tasks so that they can do the high-value and rewarding work that matters to most residents. Voice automation also enhances the experience for citizens through 24/7 availability, minimising call queue times and enabling citizens to fulfil their enquiry and/or transaction from end-to-end.
- 1.2 The discovery conducted in conjunction with Council's Existing Automation Partner, Price Waterhouse Coopers (hereinafter known as EAP), recognised the Council could access capacity release and learning more quickly by bringing forward voice automation deployment in the 6 identified services (inc. 4 services currently integrated into Jadu CXM). This will achieve a saving of c.£240k (gross, full year effect) prior to the end of 2023 - where the upper end of the range is reached by degrading the email channel (by 70%) to shift inbound demand to the telephone channel.
- 1.3 The purpose of this report seeks approval to invest to save, funding of £ 1.75m through the flexible use of capital receipts for full implementation of a voice automation solution, as per the recommended decision of the Council's Existing Automation Partner (EAP), in order to realise the significant efficiency opportunity the technology represents, with annualised capacity release in the region of c.£3.5m pa (gross) across the General Fund (GF) and Housing Revenue Account (HRA)*.

1.3.1 Table 1: High Level cost and benefit opportunity

Detail**	Option	Gross savings per annum	Consumption Costs	Net savings per annum	Implementation Budget
39 services (26 Contact Centre, 9 Satellite and 8 Hunt Groups) All funding sources, PwC-informed view of call types, using further Jadu / other integrations	Call automation	£2.90m	c.£710k	£2.20m	£1.5m
	Call automation and degrade email channel	£3.50m	c.£715k	£2.80m	

- 1.4 In addition, this report seeks approval of the EAP's recommended decision to draw down £ 250k of the £ 1.75m from flexible use of capital receipts, as approved by the Section 151 Officer, to fund an initial proof of concept pilot through the existing Automation Contract, to test the assumptions as outlined by the EAP in the Discovery report recommendations. The proof-of-concept pilot aims to demonstrate the value and benefits of a voice automation solution with a defined group of services within the corporate contact centre; and realise the potential 30% efficiency by switching from manual call handling to voice automation, reducing demand into the contact centre; whilst also equipping the Council to own, improve and extend the system in future to drive further efficiencies and improvements to customer service.

1.4.1 Table 2: Proof of Concept potential net benefit and implementation

Phase	Detail	Gross saving per annum	Consumption Costs	Net savings per annum	Implementation Budget
Initial Automation: Switchboard, Planning, Environmental Health, Highways, Waste Management, Garden Waste All funding sources, PwC-informed view of call types, using further Jadu / other integrations	PoC to show how savings from automation can be achieved as well as the full omni-channel and agent experiences (inc. degradation of email)	£241,441.6**	£41,117.88k	£200,323.72	c.£250k

1.5 Upon successful demonstration of proof-of-concept outcomes, further approval will be sought to draw down the remaining £1.5m funding to implement a full voice automation solution in compliance with Section 151, Cabinet and Planned Procurement spend and governance controls; to proceed to go to market for a wider procurement activity that includes voice automation as a requirement within the contact centre platform (Cirrus) replacement procurement process.

1.6 As outlined in the context of this report, this will be achieved by the:

1.6.1 Inclusion of voice automation as a requirement within the contact centre platform (Cirrus) replacement procurement process.

1.6.2 Service operations selected through the discovery work findings included as in scope for the voice automation proof of concept pilot (*Appendix A: Benefit Calculations*).

1.6.3 Adoption of voice automation across the current scope of the contact centre and selected other call queues (including email) to save c.£2.80m (net, pa).

1.6.4 Undertake the procurement of a new Voice Automation Platform to enable deployment of a voice automation solution within the contractual timeframe.

1.6.5 Deployment of an 'Initial Automation' proof of concept phase, to demonstrate the value and benefits of a voice automation solution with a defined group of services within the corporate contact centre. Thus, releasing benefits sooner and enabling the Council to be an informed buyer within the procurement process.

1.6.6 Upon completion and successful demonstration of proof-of-concept outcomes the plan is to go to market to conduct a wider procurement activity, that supports the full implementation of a voice automation channel, to secure a solution that includes voice automation as a requirement within the contact centre platform (Cirrus) replacement process.

1.6.7 As the current Cirrus contact centre platform contract ends in June 2024 but is not going totally out of support, the option of bringing forward the renewal of this existing contact centre platform was considered, however following the soft market testing conducted by the Council, the plan is to exploit the opportunity of utilising a +1-year extension to the existing platform contract to enable cutover in a safe and effective manner for the wider transition to a full

voice automation solution and to evidence the benefits realisation before scaling.

1.6.8 The benefits of the considered approach being:

- 1.6.8.1. The value of the proof-of-concept pilot is to refine both the requirements of a replacement contact centre platform system but also to enable the Council to be an intelligent client for that procurement process, which will require the +1-year contract extension for the existing platform; and will provide time for the vendor's new Cirrus release to be tested.
- 1.6.8.2. It is highly unlikely that the Council would be in a position to complete a full procurement exercise to replace the existing contact centre platform in the next 6 months (contract end June 2024). Therefore, rather than rush the procurement phase, this approach would enable the Council to be better informed by concluding the proof of concept which will inform the procurement of the platform/voice automation solution following the robust testing of a solution.
- 1.6.8.3. There will be no financial loss to the Council by testing the platform in the outlined approach but what it will do, is help to validate whether 30% efficiencies can be realised before committing to a more expensive system which incorporates voice automation.
- 1.6.8.4. Although the current contact centre platform vendor has indicated the solution has an available option for voice automation, this capability is in its infancy (having not long been developed) and as such there are other more advanced options available on the market. This assumption was strongly evidenced by the soft market testing conducted by the Council during the discovery phase; and is further supported by the 'Gartner Magic Quadrant for Contact Centre as a Service (CCaaS) 2023' which lists the leading vendors as:
 - Amazon Web Services
 - Genesys
 - NICE
 - Five9
- 1.6.8.5. Having considered the Council's current vendor, Cirrus and found that comparable voice automation capabilities were not available at the time of our work and were therefore untested, it was consequently discounted. (*Appendix F: Market Assessment*).
- 1.6.8.6. It is possible to run a voice automation solution alongside the existing contact centre platform system, but the Council's EAP, believes this will be operationally and financially sub-optimal (i.e. less than the highest standard or quality), which is further supported by the soft market testing conducted by the Council.
- 1.6.8.7. The Council really needs an advanced voice automation offer to ensure citizens and Councillors engage with the final product and buy-in to an automated way of progressing calls, which is financially more efficient.

In going to the market and looking at how market vendors have developed their products will be fundamental to seeking an appropriately developed solution that is right for the Council, going forward.

- 1.6.8.8. There is most likely to be a more cost-effective solution available on the market that needs to be explored.

2 Recommendations

2.1 Recommendations to Cabinet: -

- 2.1.1 Note the findings and insights of the Customer Service Programme and EAP, from the Discovery phase as detailed in this report, to inform and validate the riskiest assumptions, specifically but not limited to, realisation of the potential 30% financial efficiency, which has been capped below the EAP's average 50-60% efficiency rate in order to validate the benefit realisation opportunities demonstrated by the initial automation proof of concept pilot, before committing to full implementation of a voice automation solution.
- 2.1.2 Note by bringing forward voice automation implementation, whilst the discovery work confirmed the technical operability of voice automation and the existing telephony platform (contract end June 2024), any procurement activities would need to ensure a requirement for voice automation forms part of the scope.
- 2.1.3 Approve the forecast implementation budget of £1.75m, as defined in this report, to invest to save the flexible use of capital receipts to deliver a full voice automation solution with potential to realise a saving of c.£240k (gross, full year effect) / 30% efficiency.
- 2.1.4 Approve the drawdown of £250k through flexible use of capital receipts as approved by the Section 151 Officer of the forecast £1.75m full implementation budget to deliver an initial voice automation proof of concept pilot phase with the defined group of services to demonstrate the value and benefits of the solution.
- 2.1.5 Delegates authority to the Director for Strategy Equality, Strategy & Partnerships, the Assistant Director Development and Commercial or their delegate in conjunction with the Chief Finance Officer or their delegate, and the City Solicitor or their delegate, to approve the procurement strategy and selection of successful bidder(s) following the conclusion of the tender process and to execute the necessary contractual documentation to effect this outcome.

3 Background

- 3.1 In order to generate savings as part of financial recovery requires capacity release from General Fund-funded activities. Therefore, the voice automation discovery phase scope covered all voice contact within the General Fund, however it has also quantified HRA-related opportunities.

- 3.2 In order to achieve savings from voice automation, the following are required:
- General Fund activities
 - Automatable call types
 - Read / write data integration.
- 3.3 During the discovery, refreshed data was obtained for the Contact Centre services, consisting of more recent call and email data (April 2022 - March 2023) and a refreshed list of 24 services, due to some lines being closed down. Call data for 18 satellite services, and 63 hunt groups was also obtained.
- 3.4 **Funding:** funding of the in-scope services was investigated to understand how / if savings could be realised from a General Fund perspective. All services were allocated into 3 different categories, based on source of funding:
- Funded via General Fund
 - Recharged (back to General Fund)
 - All other e.g. Recharged out to other fund / grant e.g. HRA, Children's Trust
- 3.5 **Systems and possibility for integration:** the goal of voice automation is to complete customer requests end-to-end. Typically, this requires reading and writing data from line of business systems that store data related to each customer interaction (e.g. status of their request, eligibility for service, etc). Therefore, the availability of this data to the voice automation platform, via integration, is a crucial enabler.
- 3.5.1 It has been confirmed that the council's existing CRM product, Jadu, can integrate into the EAP's recommended platform solution as a benchmark voice automation platform and therefore any line of business system data accessed through Jadu can be accessed by voice automation.
- 3.5.2 Data integration has been assessed in the following three categories:
- Now:** line of business systems that are already integrated to Jadu
- This represents 4 of 26 systems and 150,461 of 2,395,297 annual call minutes.
- Next:** line of business systems that could be integrated to Jadu or integrated to the benchmark voice automation platform directly
- This represents 21 of 26 systems and 2,228,671 of 2,395,297 annual call minutes.
- Never:** line of business systems that cannot be integrated to Jadu or integrated into the benchmark voice automation platform
- This represents 1 of 26 systems and 16,165 of 2,395,297 annual call minutes.

Note: due to pending information, assumptions have been made regarding the feasibility of integration for the in-scope business systems. (*Appendix B: Assumptions & Automation Solution Assumptions*)

Also, for 4 of the 26 in-scope business systems, it has been identified that there is the potential for decommission or migration of the application(s). This will need to be explored to understand specific timelines; however they have been kept in scope (i.e. not allocated as “Never”) in the interim.

- 3.5.3 **Call categorisation:** the total volume of calls has been split into the categories below. These vary in suitability for automation, with complex contact being eliminated from scope for automation due to the assumed specialist knowledge / sensitive nature involved.

3.5.3.1. **Avoidable contact:** calls which should either be transferred elsewhere, or information is provided which could be provided using another channel of access.

Assuming that **80%** of avoidable contact calls can be automated

- 3.5.3.2. **General enquiries:** Calls which result in general information being provided which is not specific to a transaction.

Assumed that **62%** of general contact calls can be automated.

- 3.5.3.3. **Transactional contact:** Calls where a citizen transacts with the Council through, for example, booking, paying for something, cancelling a service, or requesting a service. This is then fulfilled in the Line of Business system.

Assumed that **42%** of transactional contact calls can be automated.

- 3.5.3.4. **Complex contact:** Calls where initiative and specialist knowledge are used through human-to-human contact to guide a citizen towards an appropriate outcome. This is often of a sensitive nature.

Assumed that **0%** of complex contact calls can be automated.

- 3.5.4 It has been estimated that approximately 10% of email traffic is from Members. This report assumes that 70% of emails can be degraded - therefore leaving this portion of emails untouched.

- 3.5.5 Throughout this report, ranges have been added as addendums for some instances, however the numbers presented are calculations based on the above categorisation approach and the inclusion of email. (*Appendix C: Raw Data Tables and supporting benefit and costs*)

- 3.5.6 **Suitability for automation:** as part of the discovery phase, analysis of the full list of services was performed to ensure that the services being included as in-scope were suitable for voice automation, to ensure that not only was automation worthwhile from a cost/benefit perspective, but also to ensure that service quality was not negatively affected.

This analysis included looking at:

- **Analysis of call minutes per year:** services with less than 50,000 call minutes per year were identified and discarded from scope. This is because from the experience of the EAP, it potentially would not be worthwhile pursuing voice automation from a cost / benefit perspective as the volume is too low to materially impact savings. This eliminated 54 Hunt Group services, 8 Satellite services and 2 Contact Centre services.
- **Nature of the service:** once the above call minute analysis was performed, the remaining list of services was analysed to ensure no areas remained which were potentially unsuitable for voice automation, based on the nature of the service i.e. sensitive and more likely to require agent support for the vast majority of contact. This eliminated 1 Hunt Group service and 1 Satellite service from scope.

3.5.6.1. As noted above, it is imperative that quality of service is not negatively impacted by the rollout of voice automation across the Council, as the solution has vast potential to significantly improve the customer experience. Through scaling back traditional agent contact through not only voice but also email correspondence, this will ensure that customers are directed to channels where they can be better served (e.g. voice automation, website).

3.5.7 **Scope:** For the initial automation proof of concept pilot, the scope and requirements have been clearly defined as all voice, webchat and email contacts for the initial six listed services as detailed in the report. From the data analysis conducted during the Discovery phase, in addition to the in-scope proof of concept services identified, the Council also has a clear view of the 19 services in scope for the full implementation phase to deliver the benefit outcomes against the £ 1.5m spend to deliver an automated voice solution if the Council were to embark on the procurement of a replacement contact centre platform system.

3.5.8 **Costs:** There are several different layers of cost that have been taken into consideration within this report, across both voice automation and the contact centre platform more widely:

3.5.8.1. **Vendor cost for tool usage:** To calculate an approximate cost for consumption on a platform capable of voice automation, the EAP's recommended platform solution has been used as the benchmark, with list prices obtained for core functionality and additional functionality.

Several additional pieces of functionality have been added as part of the benchmark solution created for this report (e.g. Wisdom), based on the requirements outlined in the soft market testing. (*Appendix B: Assumptions & Automation Solution Assumptions*)

3.5.9 Benefits methodology (reducing FTE through automation)

3.5.9.1. **Step 1 - cost to handle:** In order to calculate possible savings associated with implementing voice automation across the in-scope services, this was approached from a “bottom up” perspective. To do this, calculations began with the number of calls answered per service area, and calculated the following:

- **Average handling time (minutes)** - this was obtained from data sent by the Council for both Contact Centre and Satellite service areas, but for Hunt Group an average call length of 6 minutes (BCC data) was utilised as the call handler data was not available.
- **Calls per day** - this was calculated by dividing the number of calls answered by the number of open days in a year (BCC data).
- **Minutes per day** - this was calculated by multiplying the above two numbers (calls per day and average handling time)
- **Handling time in hours** - this was calculated by dividing the above (minutes per day) by 60.

3.5.9.1.1. This provided an FTE effort to handle these calls (by dividing 4) by the productive hours in the day), which enabled calculation of the yearly staff cost to handle these calls, by multiplying this by average salary and oncosts (BCC data). For all in-scope services, this totalled £ 6,853,293.05.

3.5.9.1.2. The same activity was then performed for email data, using BCC average time data, which provided a yearly staff cost to handle of £ 752,461.73.

3.5.9.2. **Step 2 - categorisation of contact:** Using a mix of BCC information and wider local government expertise of the EAP, the proportions of transferable contacts, general enquiries, transactions, and complex calls received in each service were estimated, and applied to the call data provided for 2022/23.

3.5.9.2.1. This enabled the total effort that would be replaced by voice automation across these services to be quantified, by multiplying the % of demand type (e.g avoidable) for that service, by the yearly staff cost to handle, and multiply this by the assumed % of channel reduction, based on Experian Mosaic data around demographics - using a reference example. This was done for all in-scope services. The same was then done for the services where the Council had performed our own categorisation of contact, to provide another view to feed into the scenarios.

3.5.9.2.2. For emails (only received for Contact Centre), it was assumed that all email contact was avoidable, by multiplying the % of demand type (avoidable) by the yearly staff cost to handle and multiply this

by the assumed % of channel reduction, based on Experian Mosaic data around demographics - using a reference example.

3.5.9.2.3. By adding up the total effort replaced by voice automation for each service, it provided a first cut of the potential savings across all areas for both calls and emails, based on the EAP or the Council categorisations (for those which it was done for).

3.5.9.3. **Step 3 - funding and system integration filters:** To facilitate the calculation of potential savings across different scenarios, filters were added that could be applied to the high-level savings numbers.

3.5.9.3.1. The first filter added was the system integration filter, to reflect the information obtained relating to the feasibility of integration for the systems of that service area. The services were filtered in to the 3 categories previously outlined:

- **Now** (Service areas are built on a system integrated to Jadu)
- **Next** (Service areas that are built on a CRM that can integrate with Jadu)
- **Never** (Service areas that are not built on Jadu or a CRM that can be integrated)

3.5.9.3.1.1. This was done using information provided by the Council, as well as assumptions made by the EAP due to delays in obtaining the requested information (refer to 'Information not received' and 'Assumptions' for further details of assumptions made).

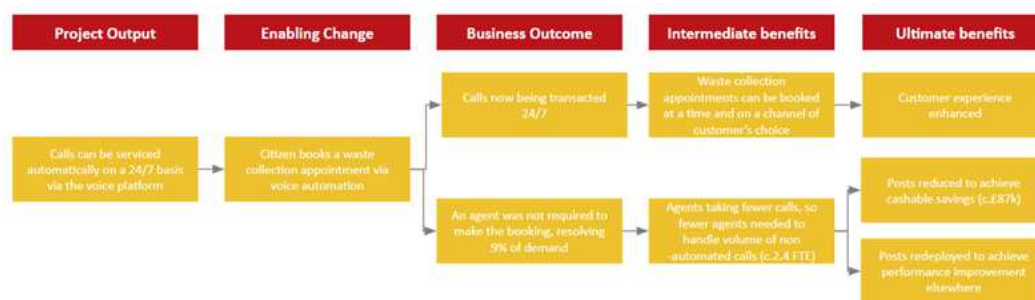
3.5.9.3.2. The second filter added was the funding / budget source filter, which filtered the services in to the 3 buckets previously mentioned:

- Funded via General Fund
- Recharged (back to General Fund)
- All other e.g. Recharged out to other fund / grant e.g. HRA, Children's Trust

3.5.9.3.2.1. This was done using information provided by the Council, as well as assumptions made by the EAP due to delays in obtaining the requested information (refer to 'Information not received' and 'Assumptions' for further details of assumptions made).

3.5.9.3.3. **Example dependency map:** To show how benefits would be realised, an example dependency map has been created for a specific journey within an in-scope service area (waste management), for booking a waste collection appointment.

Figure 1: Example Dependency Map



3.5.10 **Implementation cost of automations:** to provide an estimate of how much budget is required for the implementation of the proposed initial proof of concept pilot and full deployment phases, market insights and several assumptions around ROI have been used. For the purposes of costing it has been assumed that all implementation of the initial automation proof-of-concept pilot is done by a specialist implementation partner alongside an in-house team which is made up of Digital Technology leads and Customer Service team members so that we can build a sustainable inhouse provision for the future management of a voice automation solution without the reliance on delivery partners.

3.5.11 Within the £250k deployment costs outlined for the initial automation proof-of-concept pilot, the Council will conduct the procurement of a specialist implementation partner to undertake knowledge transfer and develop the capability, expertise, and capacity internally within the Council to build a sustainable structure to equip the Council with the knowledge and learning to undertake future deployment of a full voice automation solution for the wider council, should the identified outcomes be successfully achieved.

3.5.11.1. For the Initial Automation Proof of Concept pilot phase, it is estimated that BA and Development efforts are required over a period of 6 - 8 weeks, allowing a calculation of an estimated budget.

3.5.11.2. For the wider Full Implementation phase, an assessment of effort has been made to form a bottom-up view, and then this has been ratified against a top-down view, based on an approximate 5:1 ROI across 3 years to calculate an approximate budget.

3.5.11.3. If the decision is to approve the recommendation for Phase 1 (Initial Automation proof of concept pilot) deployment immediately, depending on the platform selected as part of the future procurement process, some of the effort (and cost of these efforts) from this initial pilot phase can be retained for later phases.

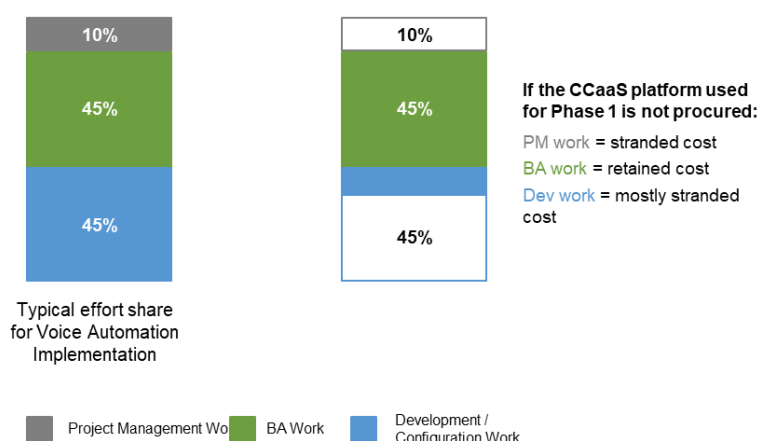
3.5.11.4. There are multiple different resources required for implementing voice automation within the Council:

- **Project Management** - to oversee and manage the project on a day-to-day basis, communicate with key stakeholders and maintain agreed governance.

- **Business Analyst** - to design processes / customer journeys to inform the development.
- **Development / Configuration Work** - to configure necessary integrations and implement voice automation, in alignment with the processes / customer journeys outlined by the BA work.

3.5.11.5. Assuming the same CCaaS platform is utilised as the solution for Voice Automation as well as the Contact Centre platform, all of this effort delivers value for the full implementation.

Figure 2: Stranded Platform Effort for Voice Automation and Contact Centre



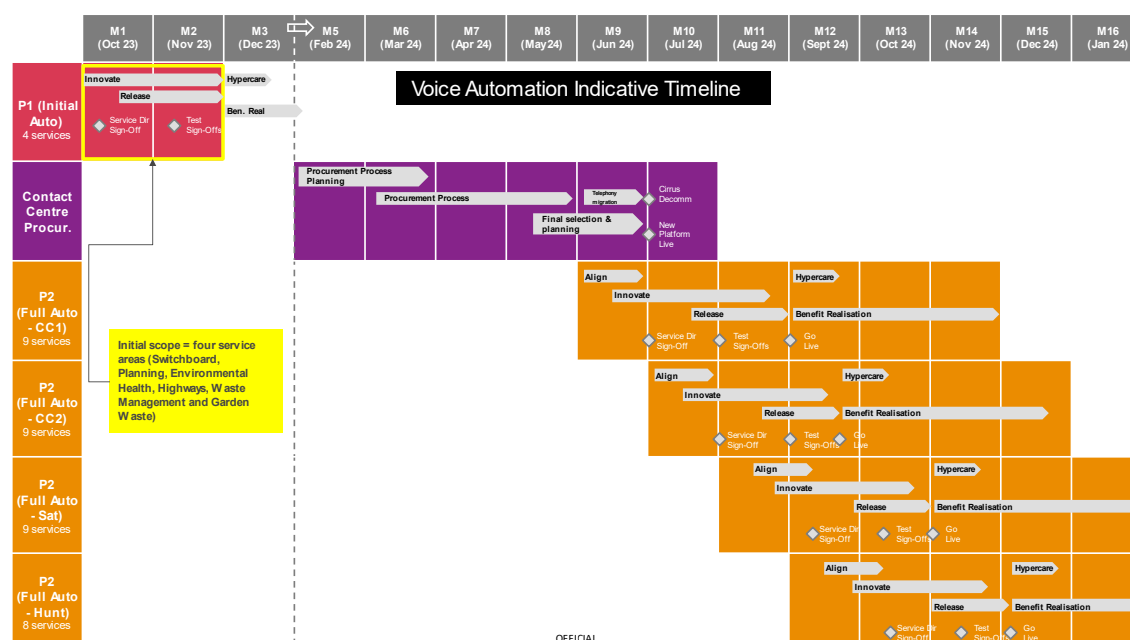
- 3.5.12 **Implementation:** an implementation plan has been created using the experience of voice automation deployments at other local authorities and beyond of the EAP, as well as analysis of the call volumes and services included as in-scope for automation.
- 3.5.13 Current contact centre platform (Cirrus) vendor costs, including Calabrio, are estimated at approximately £ 730k per annum. A 'like for like' swap demonstrates that a benchmark platform could cost less year on year for the same functionality (*Table 3: Example comparative platform costs*), but also has the option to provide more functionality if additional add-ons are included, which totals the £ 715k listed in this report.
- 3.5.14 Interfaces have not been costed because they have not been scoped. The Council knows that 34 of the 39 systems are capable of integration, and many of these are not expensive but a specific piece of work (either as part of the procurement of a new platform or separately) is needed to validate this assumption. However what has been included in the report is the comparative platform costs which is the known figure at this stage.

Table 3: Example comparative platform costs

Description	Contact Centre (No automation)
Current annual costs of the Contact Centre's use of Cirrus, with Calabrio	£730,000.00
Forecasted annual costs of the Contact Centre's use of Amazon Connect (like for like replacement), with Calabrio	£580,761.09

- 3.5.15 The EAP's recommended platform is priced on a consumption basis, with no licensing required. The longest commitment is one calendar month for some features such as forecasting and scheduling. Given the expected call volumes for the pilot, the EAP's recommended platform also has a significantly lower cost redundancy (i.e. paying for functionality that isn't required) than the other comparators.
- 3.5.16 The plan proposes that the services which have line of business systems that are currently integrated to Jadu are included in proof-of-concept pilot phase for voice automation as the complexity is reduced due to the existing integrations, making it "low hanging fruit" to automate, to release savings this year.
- 3.5.17 To establish which services should follow these, the following were looked at:
- The location of the services i.e. inside or outside the Contact Centre; and
 - The nature of any services, i.e. services which are potentially similar in nature have been grouped in the same delivery tranche, to support and possibly streamline the development of customer journeys.

Figure 3: Proposed Indicative Tranches



- 3.5.18 The proposed implementation plan and delivery method with key decision points is outlined below:

3.5.18.1. **Winter 2023:** Initial Automation phase / PoC (this takes 6-8 weeks to deploy, providing up to 6 months of benefit (depending on when automation is deployed) before a new platform is procured).

3.5.18.2. **Easter 2024:** procurement for the new Contact Centre platform must have started by this time, to ensure the select the right solution is selected ahead of the end of the existing contract with Cirrus (end of June 2024).

3.5.18.3. **Summer 2024:** the switch to newly procured platform occurs prior to the end of June, with telephony transferred over in a short, phased approach with training for staff. The subsequent roll out of the remaining phases of voice automation will take approximately 6 months. From a cost perspective, this means that the consumption costs ramp up almost immediately and the benefits are enabled over the first 6 months (recognising that it may take an extra 3 months for benefit realisation process relating to established posts, if needed). (*Appendix D: Proposed implementation plan and Delivery Method*)

3.5.19 The proposed procurement approach in compliance with spend and governance control decision points is outlined below:

3.5.20 Phase 1: Proof of concept Pilot Phase

3.5.20.1. The platform to be used during the Initial Voice Automation proof of concept pilot will be as per the recommendation of the Councils approved Transformation Partner, with such decision to engage in a pilot based on the Transformation Partners output from both a qualitative and value-added comparison conducted across the market for key voice automation systems. A key driving factor for the use of the EAP's recommended platform solution is detailed below at point 3.5.16; and benefits from solution being consumption based and therefore no long-term licence costs are required to be absorbed by the Council to test the wider benefits of voice automation, whilst also allowing for a considered closing out of the pilot.

3.5.20.2. An existing contractual arrangement for wider automation professional services will be utilised to deliver a time boxed proof of concept pilot that will assess the suitability of voice automation as a platform for efficient service delivery to the council.

3.5.20.3. The proof-of-concept pilot period is expected to run from January 2024 to June 2024. The platform opex costs will be provided free of charge to the council during this period and for a subsequent 3 months to allow for an "off ramping" period at the end of the pilot thus enabling services to be safely removed as and when required to maintain operational continuity and service levels.

3.5.20.4. The initial automation proof of concept pilot needs to demonstrate the EAP's recommended platform solution for voice automation works within the wider BCC technical ecosystem.

3.5.21 Phase 2: Platform Procurement & Full Implementation Phase

3.5.21.1. If the success criterion of voice automation is met, the project will enter the formal procurement phase of the project to select 1) a preferred VA platform and 2) a delivery partner for a wider corporate Contact Centre and voice automation solution.

3.5.21.2. Dependent on the outcome of the Voice Automation Proof of Concept Pilot phase, the procurement may separate out both the delivery partner and the platform.

3.5.21.3. With such procurement(s) being delivered via compliant Regional or National Framework Agreement(s).

3.5.22 This report uses the EAP's recommended platform solution as the benchmark platform from which to generate costs and benefits. The EAP's recommended platform solution has been used as the benchmark because it has a unique combination of the following:

- Is a Gartner and Forrester 'Leader' for Cloud Contact Centre as a Service solutions.
- It underpins the customer experience of Amazon.com and many other customer-facing brands, including amongst others Amazon.com, Fujitsu, Morrisons, Natwest, News Corp, Post Office, Siemens, Subway and Vodafone - and councils as diverse as London Borough of Hillingdon and Northumberland County Council.
- It has been successfully deployed in local government to enable capacity release from voice automation.
- It uses consumption-based pricing which provides the council with the greatest level of flexibility in terms of implementation and ongoing costs - and those costs are predictable, using a cost calculator.

3.5.23 With the EAP's recommended platform solution's components natively integrated within contact flows and chat, no coding is required to add Natural Language Understanding (NLU) powered chatbots and for the context of the conversations to be passed automatically when escalated to a human agent.

3.5.24 Outlined below is a proposed approach based on analysis and experience, using different levers to achieve maximum savings for the Council.

3.5.24.1. Financial benefits

The proposed approach has been devised based on the following four levers:

- **Source of funding / budget:** how is the service funded i.e. should only General Fund services be in scope?
- **Automation confidence:** how suitable for voice automation is the current contact for that service (categorisation of contact)?
- **Integration confidence:** is integration possible to facilitate the implementation of voice automation, and if so, how easy?
- **Email:** should emails be included in scope?

3.5.24.2. Potential savings vary depending on the above, with the source of funding being the most significant differentiator in the savings that can be achieved.

3.5.24.3. The breakdown of the potential annual gross savings across each area i.e. Contact Centre etc, as well as the split between whether the services are funded via the general fund (including those recharged to the general fund), as well as those with separate designated funding e.g. HRA, Children's Trust are detailed in Table 4.

Table 4: Breakdown of potential annual gross savings

	General Fund	HRA / Other	
Initial Automation			Total gross savings
Contact Centre	£240k	£0	£240k
Full Implementation			Total gross savings
Contact Centre (remaining)	£1.45m	£1.50m	£2.95m
Satellite	£140k	£80k	£220k
Hunt Groups	£95k	£20k	£115k
Total	£1.90m	£1.60m	£3.50m

3.5.24.4. This shows that a total gross savings of £3.5m per annum is possible for voice automation across all areas and funding source. This report proposes proceeding with all services regardless of funding, using PwC-informed view of call types, further Jadu / other integrations and removing email channel to maximise savings to be achieved by the Council.

3.5.24.5. If the decision is not to include email, the total gross savings are estimated £2.9m per annum.

3.5.24.6. The £240k total gross saving for the initial automation proof of concept is based on a channel shift of email of 70%. If email was to not be included (i.e. channel shift 0%), savings would decrease to

c.£140k (gross, pa). If channel shift was higher (90%), savings would increase to £270k (gross, pa).

3.5.25 The anticipated improvements and outcome measures to be derived from the implementation of the initial automation proof of concept pilot use of the product solution will need to be tailored depending on the service identified for automation, but it is expected these will be as detailed in Table 5: Outputs and Outcomes Measures below.

Table 5: Output and Outcome Measure

Benefit	Impact	Measure
Reduced calls, emails, and face-to-face contact through implementation of voice automation (avoidable contact)	Greater self-service online as voice automation facilitates customer requests rather than customers having to call the Contact Centre	70% reduction of avoidable calls % of calls handled by VA Improved channel shift to digital solutions
Reduction in number of telephone numbers making it easier for customers to contact the Council	Improved call routing and navigation increasing the likelihood of the customer speaking to the right team at the first time of trying	50% reduction of call enquiries % of calls transferred to agents Increased customer satisfaction
Reduce 151 email addresses making it easier for customer navigation	Channel shift to automation, which is more reliable and has 24/7 availability	35% reduction of transactional calls % of calls handled out of hours Increased customer satisfaction
Reduced demand for calls as services are automated, allowing agents to spend more time with those who need extra help	Customers who can access council services online, leaving agents with more time to handle complex enquiries	35% reduction of transactional calls Call volume reports

3.6 Equality Impacts

3.6.1 Voice contact is one of the primary means of communicating with the Council. Consequently, the Council must protect and meet the needs of those with vulnerabilities and/or any other consideration that might impinge on their ability to communicate using this channel.

3.6.2 For the purposes of this report and to support the business case for voice automation, the following 2021 Office for National Statistics (ONS) data was utilised as the baseline foundation:

- 84.3% of Birmingham residents speak English as their main language.
- Of the remainder, fewer than 30% (of that 15.7% - i.e. c5% of the total population) report not speaking English well.

(Source:

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/culturalidentity/language/bulletins/languageenglandandwales/census2021>)

- 3.6.3 The services selected for the pilot are universal in nature (Switchboard, Planning, Environmental Health, Highways, Waste Management, Garden Waste) and as such, expect that this Birmingham-wide distribution of language usage will apply to the calls taken by the proof-of-concept pilot deployment. Therefore, assumptions on the use of automated voice in place of human voice were capped at 80% for even the most straightforward interactions. The Council expects that even for the interactions most apt for automation, up to 20% of calls will still require a human agent to conduct that interaction. It is also anticipated that 60% of general enquiries and 40% of transactional interactions are suitable for voice automation.
- 3.6.4 Voice automations are used by other service providers that include Birmingham residents as customers. The discovery activity included two validation points, where voice automation was explained and demonstrated for the Customer Service Programme Customer Panel (detailed at section 3.7), and in a Corporate Contact Centre Staff Immersion event. In both cases, diverse accents were identified as potential concerns but were not considered to preclude the use of voice automations where handling of 'unsuccessful' interactions is planned. Nonetheless, selecting calls to be automated will take account of the language used by callers - both in terms of diversity of language proficiency and diversity of lexicon and accents. Calls will only be automated after call listening has identified these language considerations and suitable handling approaches have been created.
- 3.6.5 Once the proof-of-concept pilot is deployed, in the event that a caller is unable to make themselves understood to the automation solution, their call will be forwarded to an agent. By combining the actions of the agent and the call recordings of these calls, the Council will be able to:
- Improve the accuracy of speech recognition of domain-specific terminology by expanding and tailoring the vocabulary of the speech-to-text engine. Typically, this would involve amending the words spoken by the automation solution and/or increasing the range of words spoken by callers that would be recognised by the automation solution. This would apply in relation to, for example, idiomatic phrases, accents, or pronunciations.
 - Associate a caller's number with metadata that would result in future calls bypassing the automation solution and going straight to an agent. This would apply in relation to, for example, disability or proficiency of speaking English.
 - Continue offering natural-language voice calls, with the use of conversational AI, with the option of human support where needed.
- 3.6.6 The EAP's recommended platform solution, is able to 'speak' (text to speech) 39 languages and 'hear' (speech to text) 27 languages including Polish, Hindi and idioms and accents related to those - such as English spoken in the

Indian subcontinent. It is also able to translate between any two languages in real time.

(Sources: <https://docs.aws.amazon.com/polly/latest/dg/voicelist.html>,
<https://docs.aws.amazon.com/lexv2/latest/dg/how-languages.html>)

3.6.7 However, for the purposes of the proof-of-concept pilot, non-English language interactions will be conducted by human agents as is currently undertaken by the Corporate Contact Centre.

3.7 Impact on Citizens: The Customer Panel

3.7.1 Alongside generating savings, voice automation is valuable in building a greater customer experience for citizens of the Council. Therefore as part of this Discovery phase, insights were obtained to inform the delivery method and progression of implementing voice automation.

3.7.2 A citizen panel event, including panel members and wider volunteers from the community, was ran to enable attendees to experience voice automation and provide feedback, as well as obtain insights as to their 'hopes and fears' of the Council implementing voice automation.

3.7.3 There were several key concerns raised as part of discussions, including:

- Option to still talk to an agent - this was raised from the perspective of a vulnerable citizen, as well as those who may have impairments which may make it difficult to interact with voice automation.
- Option to repeat questions / information provided - this was raised by participants from the perspective of those who may be hard of hearing or have perhaps mis-heard part of the interaction.
- The confidentiality of information provided - this was raised by participants due to the sensitive nature of some of the contact they have with the Council.

3.7.4 Overall, participants were notably positive about the possible introduction of voice automation and its associated benefits. This was the case particularly in relation to:

- **24/7 availability** - this was raised by participants as they acknowledged often some queries can only be answered within the Contact Centre opening hours, whereas voice automation would provide an all-hours alternative.
- **Minimising waiting time** - this was raised by participants as they understood that for more simple enquiries currently, they often have to speak to an agent e.g. to obtain information, report something etc, however with voice automation they would not have to wait for an agent to become available to deal with their query.
- **The storage of information provided** - this was raised by participants in a positive manner, noting that it would be really useful

if the call handler had all of their information to hand whenever they called, so they did not have to repeat themselves etc.

- 3.7.5 Participants were keen to remain involved in the process, and happy to participate in further sessions to provide further insights as the initiative progresses.
- 3.7.6 In the engagement conducted with citizens, staff and Members to date, it has been helpful to demonstrate that voice automation technology is fully operational at Hillingdon Council and has achieved savings of more than the projected 30% as detailed in the report.
- 3.7.7 At Hillingdon Council the cost per call using the automated solution is just 5% of the call cost when handled by human operatives, and also provides the net equivalent capacity of up to 26 full-time employees. Hillingdon Council estimate that the voice automation solution will provide a 5:1 ROI ratio over three years, delivering a cost saving of £5 for every pound spent.

3.8 Customer Operating Model of the Future

- 3.8.1 The Council's customer service strategy sets out the characteristics of the future customer experience for residents. It describes how the council will maximise the quality of customer experience. At the same time, given the funding constraints that the council is under, it must also minimise the cost to serve where possible.
- 3.8.2 This report describes how voice automation releases staff from mundane and repetitive transactions so that they can focus their time on the challenging and rewarding activities that make a difference to customers. Voice automation releases capacity without degrading the quality of the voice channel - and, in fact, improves the offer with 24/7 availability, no call waiting times and end-to-end service fulfilment.
- 3.8.3 Omnichannel Contact Centre as a Service (CCaaS) solutions play a key role in delivering this strategy and so are crucial to the operating model of the future. For example, they will:
 - Enable the council to offer customer service through multiple customer-facing channels with a consistent customer experience across those channels.
 - Enable end-to-end customer journey completion via read and write data stored in line of business systems.
 - Allow the council to reuse the same automated interactions to automatically create and control multiple channels based on the business needs.
 - Make it easy for non-technical customers to design contact flows, manage agents, and track performance metrics.

- Enable the council to direct calls to agents on a skills-based basis and accurately forecast agent workforce rotas and development plans.

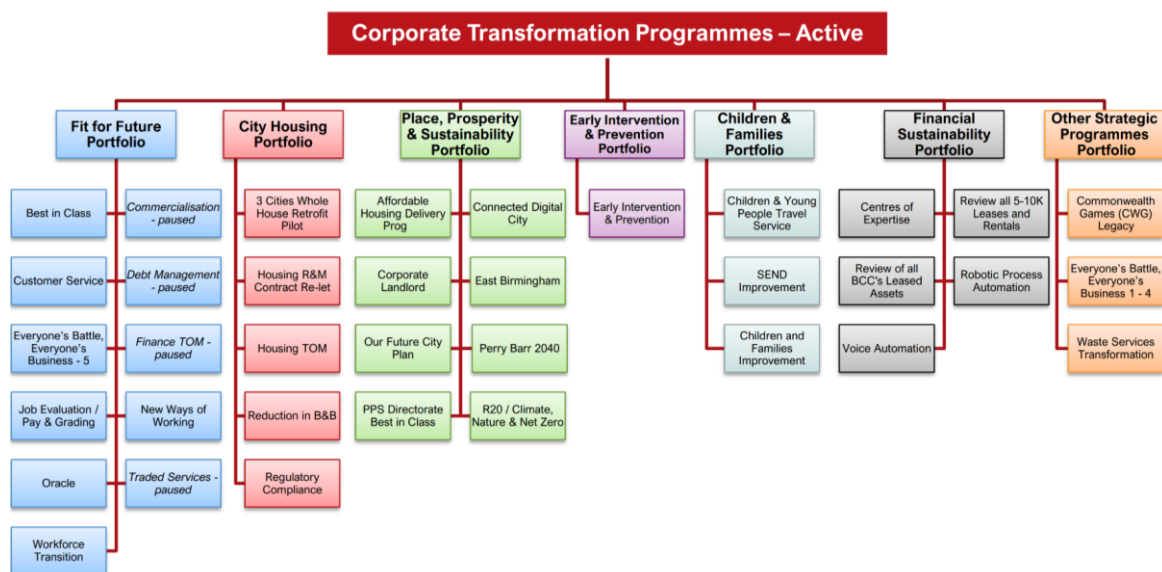
3.8.4 This also means that the council doesn't need to consolidate all contact-handling teams to achieve higher quality and lower cost. Use of a CCaaS platform (with consistent Standard Operating Procedures built in, workforce management and reporting) provides control and economies of scale without requiring lengthy restructuring and organisational redesign.

This, in turn, means that the council will be able to focus on the customer - as described by the strategy - and constantly iterate towards providing better customer outcomes.

3.9 Governance, Reporting and Controls

3.9.1 Organisationally the Initial Automation Proof of Concept Pilot is part of the Financial Sustainability Portfolio, one of the strategic portfolios of work that form part of the Birmingham City Councils Delivery Plan as detailed in Figure 3 below.

Figure 4: Corporate Transformation Programmes & Portfolio reporting structure



3.9.2 The accountable officer of the implementation costs and operational benefits and savings as outlined in this report is Wendy Griffiths, Assistant Director of Customer Services, Business Support & Digital Mail Centre, Digital and Customer Services, Council Management Directorate. The officers accountable for implementation and delivery of the initial automation proof of concept pilot phase is Sheraz Yaqub, Head of Customer Experience & Customer Service Programme, and Nikki Spencer, Lead Delivery Manager, Customer Service Programme.

3.9.3 Programme cadence will be established to monitor forecast costs and savings, risks, issues and dependencies to ensure the benefits continue to justify costs as detailed in table 6 below.

Table 6: Financial Benefits Realisation Controls

Stage	Strategy
Define Financial Benefits	Start with high-level savings opportunities. Agree general direction and opportunities with senior stakeholders. Define based on available metrics in the discovery and design. Use benchmark data where metrics are not available. Set SMART targets to identify savings that are specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and time framed.
Develop	Develop OBC based on available data or use benchmark data were not available. Develop series of one-page business cases Design and discovery team review the opportunity and create a to be service design with the business leads and enabling service experts where appropriate
Validate	Validate savings from the co-produced service design-with Services and Finance leads and CPMO
Manage	Finance lead assigned to the programme to record benefits at post implementation review. Manage benefits at all Programme Boards Communicate savings to CPMO and regular challenge sessions
Control	Use benefits tracker for daily, weekly, monthly monitoring. Use risk log to manage risks that could impact benefits. Stop activities that will not deliver savings, prioritise activities that deliver maximum value

3.9.4 The Council's Corporate Programme Management Office (CPMO) sets, maintains and ensures standards for project and programme management across the organisation by:

- Driving best practice
- Providing visibility, assurance and status
- Enabling key stakeholders to provide direction and make informed decisions.

3.9.5 The Corporate Programme Management Office implements and oversees the governance, reporting, escalation and project management that is necessary for the Council to have confidence that major change programmes are delivered as intended, to budget, and on time. The CPMO provides assurance that delivery programmes are strategically aligned, properly funded, and operate within appropriate professional project management frameworks.

3.9.6 CPMO Responsibilities

- A value adding, proactive, challenging contributor to strategic delivery pipeline management.
- Provides an independent assessment of programme delivery to give oversight of emerging requirements, the strategic portfolio pipeline, and

activity and purpose across programmes to avoid duplication and highlight any common risks.

- Monitors and reports on programmes within the Transformation Programme.
- Provides relevant, timely and accurate programme information to senior leadership in order to enable them to make key decisions.
- Provides guidance and oversight of programme management and methodologies including providing programme/project management tools and templates and supporting local PMOs.
- Ensures the correct programme/project management processes and gateways are adhered to.
- Has oversight of programme resources.
- Supports the monthly reporting of Capital Projects.

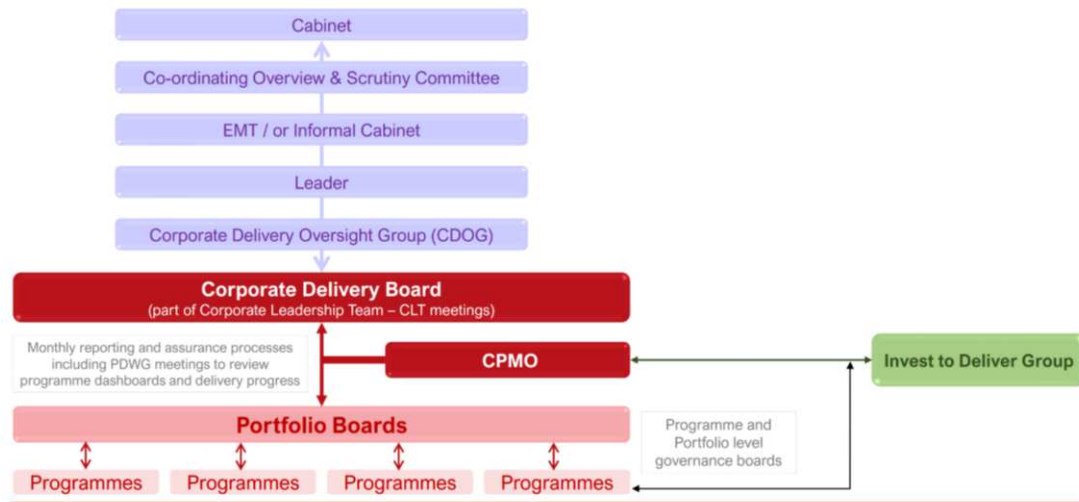
3.9.7 The baselining and monitoring of the benefit realisation to validate achievement of the savings identified in this report will be reported through the Financial Sustainability Portfolio to comply with Corporate Transformation Programme Governance structure and controls as detailed at Figure 4 below.

3.9.8 The visual below provides a high-level summary of how this activity relates to our parent portfolio and other strategic transformation initiatives across the Council. The Initial Automation Proof of Concept Pilot is an integral part of the Financial Sustainability Portfolio, which comprises of the following investment objectives to:

- Improve the experience our customers receive when contacting the Council (effectiveness).
- Ensure we have the performance data to understand customer interactions and continually improve (efficiency and economy).
- Fund the improvements in the customer and business processes in a range of services (economy, efficiency, and effectiveness).
- Reduce the number of contact points and interactions customers need to navigate when contacting the council (efficiency).
- Provide the Council with financial savings (economy).
- Ensure there is a continuous cycle of customer improvements in the future.

Figure 5: Transformation Programme Governance Model

Transformation Programme Governance



4 Options considered and Recommended Proposal

4.1 The EAP recently completed a discovery exercise in collaboration with the Customer Service Programme relating to opportunities for improving the experience and cost in the handling of voice contact. This resulted in a business case for voice automation, focussed on exploring the feasibility of voice automation within the Contact Centre; and created, as outlined in this report, a case for change that would enable:

- Improved resident experience, through more seamless and immediate fulfilment of need and ‘always available’ hours of operation.
- Significantly reduced costs, through automated call handling which releases human capacity from transactional and routine contact.

4.2 In order to produce a meaningful business case that is based on the Council’s requirements (and aligned to the previous soft market test for a contact centre platform) and representative technology, this report uses a benchmark solution. The solution used as the benchmark is summarised below - and the components within it drive the automation and costing data used throughout this report.

4.3 The EAP’s recommended platform benchmark solution is identified as the primary platform and includes specific third-party ISV solutions (which seamlessly integrate with other services) to cover all of the council’s requirements as a unified technical solution.

4.4 The option of not implementing voice automation has been considered and discounted as this would have significant customers and organisation impact for the following key reasons:

4.4.1 Ability to realise the identified savings and benefits as outlined in this report.

4.4.2 Satisfaction with Council Services would not improve and our reputation for providing services would continue to worsen.

4.4.3 Ability to develop and grow in-house voice automation capability and reuse this knowledge across all council services will be severely impacted and are required for the modern relationship with customers and implementation of the Customer Service Strategy.

5 Consultation

5.1 The Deputy Leader, Cabinet Members for Digital, Culture, Heritage & Tourism, and Finance and Resources, and Chair of Overview & Scrutiny Committee have been consulted.

5.2 Voice Automation was informed by consultations and engagements with stakeholders across the Council including, but not limited to:

- Council Leadership Team, ECLT and Directorate Management Teams
- Customer Service Programme Governance Board and Steering Committee
- Overview & Scrutiny Committee Chairs
- Section 151 Officer, Lead Commissioners, Officer Consultation regarding Finance, Legal, Procurement, HR, Communications
- Councillors/Member Briefings
- Customer Service Programme Customer Panel.

6 Risk Management

6.1 The risks will be managed during the deployment of the voice automation proof of concept as outlined in the table below:

Table 7: High-level risk management

Risk	Owner	Risk type	RAG ¹	Mitigation	RAG ²
Costs may increase in line with inflation and the rising cost of living, weakening the benefit case over time.	Programme Manager	Financial		The Programme Manager will share forecast costs & risks with the wider transformation governance, enabling this to be monitored and if needed decisions taken about whether benefits justify costs.	
FTE not realised after voice automation has been implemented.	Project Manager	Financial/Operational		Engagement with services during and post-implementation to identify and remove FTE.	

Adequate frameworks for sign off are not in place, slowing pace of automation and benefits realisation.	SRO	Governance		Governance and ownership to be determined during deployment and maintained after implementation.	
Vulnerable residents may be unable to interact with the Voice Automation bot successfully, furthering digital exclusion.	SRO	Operational		Develop prioritised pathways for those who prefer to speak to agents over the phone, those who have speech limitations etc, that are user friendly and tested with vulnerable residents.	
Residents not being able to speak to an agent i.e. no direct line to agent available	SRO	Operational		As well as the above for vulnerable residents, develop the option (after going through voice automation questions etc.) for residents to speak to an agent if required.	
Residents not understanding questions asked / instructions given by Voice Automation	SRO	Operational		Develop the ability for the questions / instructions to be repeated if asked or if receive no response. Also develop the automation such that the speech is slow and clear, to ensure it is easy to understand.	
Scale of proposed initial automation benefits falls short of stakeholder expectations	Programme Manager	Financial		If required, the Switchboard service can also be included in the Initial Automation phase to derive an additional c.£300k in gross savings for minimal additional costs	

¹RAG pre-mitigation ²RAG post-mitigation

7 Compliance Issues:

7.1 How are the recommended decisions consistent with the City Council's priorities, plans and strategies?

7.1.1 The recommended decisions are consistent with the Council's priorities, plans and strategies, supporting the Council's stated commitments to ensure we are a truly customer centric organisation.

7.2 Legal Implications

- 7.2.1 The Council is under a duty under Section 3 of the Local Government Act 1999 to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency, and effectiveness.
- 7.2.2 The City Council will carry out this work under the General Powers of Competence Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011.

7.3 Financial Implications

- 7.3.1 The Council is under a duty under Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972 and as such requires local authorities to make arrangements for the proper administration of their financial affairs and appoint a S151 Officer.
- 7.3.2 S.151 spend control approval has been sought and obtained at both Directorate and Corporate level in accordance with controls to safeguard the robustness of budget calculations as outlined in this report.
- 7.3.3 This will be funded from the Flexible Use of Capital Receipts. A budget of £2.055m was approved for this purpose in the Financial Plan 2023+ in February 2023. This project meets the criteria as it is expected to deliver on-going revenue savings to the Council as outlined in this report. The project could be ceased after proof-of-concept stage if it is not delivering savings as expected.
- 7.3.4 The full implementation is expected to be £1.75m, which includes the proof-of-concept phase of £0.250m. This will be funded by capital receipts already received. However use of this one-off resource represents an opportunity cost for the financing of the rest of the capital programme as the Council borrows for part of its capital programme. The use of £1.75m represents an opportunity cost of £0.145m of annual financing costs (Minimum Revenue Provision and interest payments) over an average 20-year period. The whole capital programme is being reviewed to identify offsetting savings. In addition, the service will need to make every effort to maximise revenue savings. The full implantation should only go ahead after a successful proof of concept phase.

7.4 Procurement Implications (if required)

- 7.4.1 The procurement will be conducted in two phases to support the wider structure of the programme in line with the programme plan in section 3.5.13.
- 7.4.2 As noted previously, the EAP's recommended platform solution has been used as the benchmark for these costings, with list prices obtained from the marketplace. It is possible for vendors to offer mitigations for consumption costs; however these have not been included in any costings in this report. (*Appendix E: Automation Solution EAP's recommended platform solution Pricing*).

7.4.3 Table 8: Breakdown for estimations of costs.

	General Fund	HRA / Other			
Initial Automation			Total gross savings	Consumption Costs	Net savings per annum
Contact Centre	£240k	£0	£240k	c.£40k	£200k
Full Implementation			Total gross savings	Consumption Costs	Net savings per annum
Contact Centre (remaining)	£1.45m	£1.50m	£2.95m	c.£520k	£2.45m
Satellite	£140k	£80k	£220k	c.£85k	£140k
Hunt Groups	£95k	£20k	£115k	c.£75k	£40k
Total	£1.90m	£1.60m	£3.50m	£715k	£2.80m

7.4.4 To provide the Council with an estimate of how much budget is required for the implementation of these proposed phases, market insights and several assumptions around ROI have been used. The assumption also is that all implementation is done by an implementation partner, and this knowledge should be transferred back to BCC prior to the partner's departure, enabling the growth of in-house capabilities to accelerate and reuse voice automation across all council services.

7.4.5 The Council's existing contact centre platform (Cirrus) is going to be replaced by June 2024. The Council are yet to make a decision on what solution will replace Cirrus. Current Cirrus costs (including Calabrio) are estimated at approximately £730k per annum. A 'like for like' swap demonstrates that a benchmark platform could cost less year on year for the same functionality (*Appendix F: Market Assessment*), but also has the option to provide more functionality if additional add-ons are included, which totals the £715k listed in this report (above).

7.4.6 The procurement options for consideration are:

7.4.6.1. **Option 1** - Do nothing: - The option of not implementing voice automation has been considered and discounted as this would have significant customer and organisation impact and not enable the ability to realise the identified savings and benefits as outlined in this report as detailed at 4.4, therefore doing nothing is not an option.

7.4.6.2. **Option 2** – Direct Award via a Compliant Regional or National Framework Agreement.

Procuring services directly via a compliant National or Regional Framework Agreement (in respect of the availability of the FA and the resource effort required to facilitate that direct award) would not deliver any greater value to the Council in respect of the desired outcome, in particular to an already existing contract with the incumbent provider as a Delivery Partner to the Council for Automation Services – Therefore this is not an intuitive nor a pragmatic option in the strategic circumstances (and output) of this report.

7.4.7 Option 3 – Contract Variation to the existing Contract for the Councils Delivery Partner in respect of Automation Services

There is a current contract in place within the Council in respect of a Delivery Partner for Automation Services, with such contract scoping the discovery works to enable a contact centre within the language of the contract, without representing a material change, as such a compliant variation can be executed under the financial and contractual terms of PCR2015 Regulation 72 “Modification of contracts during their term”, Therefore this is the preferred, pragmatic and compliant option.

7.5 Human Resources Implications (if required)

7.5.1 Any required changes to current job roles or current operating model will be done so in line with Birmingham City Councils Policies and Procedures, incorporating a full engagement/consultation process with Trade Unions and employees. All new roles will be recruited to in accordance with Birmingham City Councils Recruitment and Selection Policy and Procedure, supporting Birmingham City Councils commitment to mitigate against compulsory redundancy where possible, any new roles will be prioritised to employees at risk of redundancy.

7.6 Public Sector Equality Duty

7.6.1 An Equality Impact Analysis EQUA1201 has been completed (Appendix G: EQUA1201).

7.6.2 Voice contact is one of the primary means of communicating with the Council and the mitigation of adverse impacts is detailed in sections 3.6 and 3.7.

7.7 Environmental and Sustainability Implications

7.7.1 There are no environmental and sustainability implications of the recommended decisions for Voice Automation as defined in this report.

8 Appendices

- 8.1 Appendix A: Benefit Calculations (confidential)
- 8.2 Appendix B: Assumptions & Automation Solution Assumptions
- 8.3 Appendix C: Raw Data Tables and supporting benefit and costs
- 8.4 Appendix D: Proposed implementation plan and Delivery Method
- 8.5 Appendix E: Automation Solution EAP's Recommended Platform solution pricing
- 8.6 Appendix F: Market Assessment (Commercial in confidence)
- 8.7 Appendix G: Equality Impact Analysis EQUA1201

9 Background Documents

- 9.1 Customer Service Programme Phase 1 Report to Cabinet dated 14th December 2021 – “Customer Service Strategy Enhanced Business Case and Delivery