

<b>Report to:</b>	Cabinet	12 March 2024
<b>Lead Cabinet Member:</b>	Councillor John Williams (Lead Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources)	
<b>Lead Officer:</b>	Anne Ainsworth, Chief Operating Officer	

## Update on the Four-Day week trial

### Executive Summary

1. The Council has been trialling a desk-based four-day week since January 2023. This included an initial three-month trial and in May 2023, following independent assessment of performance data, Cabinet extended the trial by 12 months, meaning it is due to finish at the end of March 2024.
2. A three-month trial for waste crews was approved in May 2023. This followed the initial desk-based trial due to the complexities of reorganising bin collection rounds for around 128,000 households across Greater Cambridge.
3. Under a four-day week, officers are expected to carry out 100% of their work, in 80% of the time, for 100% of the pay.
4. The Council undertook the trials because of the acute recruitment and retention issues it was facing, which is amplified in Greater Cambridge due to the high cost of housing. Similar trials are taking place across the UK, Ireland, and US, as outlined by the [4 Day Week Global Campaign](#).
5. During the trials, the Council has spent £434,000 less on agency staff covering roles that were previously identified as hard to fill. This covers the period from 2 September 2022, when the trial was announced, to 31 December 2023.
6. On 18 December 2023, the Government published a four-week consultation on the Local Government Finance Settlement, setting expectations around local authority funding in future years. The Government reiterated that they do not support a four-day week for local authorities and asked for views about the use of financial levers in future settlements to disincentivise the practice.
7. The Council had expected, subject to data showing performance had been maintained or improved and a member decision, to consult on a four-day week shortly after the end of the formal trial.
8. This report therefore sets out the position following the publication of the Government's Local Government Finance Settlement consultation in December 2023 and an assessment of the impact of this on the Council's ability to consult at this time.

### Key Decision

9. No

## Recommendations

10. It is recommended that:

- a) Cabinet agrees to continue with four-day week working arrangements for **desk-based colleagues** (pro rata for part time colleagues) until: (i) information is provided by the Government regarding potential future financial levers they might impose on Councils using this working practice, as announced in their Local Government Financial Settlement consultation in December 2023, and (ii) a subsequent consultation is carried out by the Council, analysed, and all trial data is presented to Full Council for a final decision.
- b) Cabinet agrees to continue with four-day week working arrangements for **the Waste service operational colleagues (the crews)** (pro rata for part time colleagues) until: (i) information is provided by the Government regarding potential future financial levers they might impose on Councils using this working practice, as announced in their Local Government Financial Settlement consultation in December 2023, and (ii) a subsequent consultation is carried out by the Council, analysed, and all trial data is presented to Full Council for a final decision, noting that with a seasonal service, ideally a full year's data is required.
- c) Cabinet agrees to undertake a **consultation** on the four-day week, once the financial implications of the Government's Local Government Financial Settlement consultation are confirmed and all implications of considering adoption of a four-day week permanently are understood.
- d) Cabinet approves that, for all colleagues working a four-day week (desk-based and waste operations), the **hours are harmonised** at 32 hours per week (pro rata for part time colleagues) at 86.5% of contracted hours from 1 April 2024.
- e) Cabinet notes that the proposal to approve a continuation of a four-day week (pro rata for part time) working model for waste and desk-based colleagues post the end of March 2024, will also be brought to the Strategy and Resources Committee at Cambridge City Council on 25 March 2024, and that both Councils are required to support the decision for the services which are shared (Waste and Planning).
- f) Cabinet agrees that an update report to Employment & Staffing Committee, Cabinet and Full Council and Cambridge City council committees, no later than the end of July 2024, will provide data on the trial periods (desk-based and waste), up until the end of March 2024, and information about the ongoing effectiveness, including recruitment and retention, costs and savings of a four-day week working model.

## Reasons for Recommendations

11. On 18 December, the Government published a four-week consultation on the Local Government Finance Settlement. The consultation sets out the expectations for local authorities on funding they will receive from Government in future years. In the consultation it said: "The government believes that local authorities, including combined authorities, should not be practising an arrangement where it has an overall policy (temporary or permanent) which allows its employees to reduce their contracted hours per week by a consequential amount, for example 20%, without a reduction in their pay and benefits."

12. Question 10 in the consultation asked: "Do you have any views about the government using levers in future local government finance settlements (those occurring after 2024-25) to disincentivise the so-called '4 day working week'...?"
13. After the Government's consultation closed, they wrote to all local councils. This letter did not give any further information regarding potential future financial levers. See **Appendix A**.
14. Given that any future decision concerning the Council potentially becoming a permanent four-day week employer would be a significant change to the operations of the Council, the Council has committed publicly to consulting.
15. Until the Local Government Finance Settlement consultation was announced on 18 December, the expectation was that the consultation was likely to be carried out shortly after the end of the formal trial, subject to i) the data suggesting the new way of working was not impacting overall performance and ii) Cabinet approval. Some initial work to scope what a consultation might look like was carried out with the support of the Consultation Institute.
16. The Council must be able to demonstrate economy (spending less), efficiency (spending well) and effectiveness (spending wisely) as part of our Best Value duties. The Council would need to understand the full implications of any proposed changes to the working arrangements of the Council under the same headings to be able to consult. It will take some time beyond the end of March to analyse data from the four-day week trial period, but until a point is reached that all future financial implications are understood following the Government's Local Government Finance Settlement consultation, it is not feasible to communicate effectively all the information necessary to launch a consultation on a possible permanent change. Consulting earlier would mean consulting again once the financial information was available.
17. To minimise disruption to colleagues whilst this analysis is taking place, and the necessary information is provided by Government before a consultation can be carried out, it is recommended that four-day week working arrangements continue (pro rata for part time colleagues). This is not to pre-empt any decisions taken in the future by Council, but to ensure colleagues have some certainty over arrangements until such point as a decision is made.
18. Following the conclusion of the formal trial period another Health and Wellbeing survey of colleagues will be carried out to provide further information on the effectiveness of a four-day week working.
19. The three-month four-day week trial for waste collections has seen performance maintained and early feedback from colleagues through an in-house survey suggests it has been positive for their health and wellbeing. A longer period of working in this way will help establish whether the service can sustain the levels of improved operational effectiveness that have been achieved and if the early indications of a positive impact on recruitment and retention at the Depot continue.
20. If the current working arrangements for office-based colleagues do continue past the end of March 2024, it will be important to harmonise the working hours for all colleagues across the Council. To do otherwise would be contrary to good employment practices. The waste trial was always planned to begin later than the desk-based trial as it required

the reorganisation of collections for all homes in Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire. This is work the service must carry out on a regular basis. The changes for the trial were made at the same time as a regular review of collection rounds. The planning process for the waste trial showed that it was not feasible to trial waste collections at 30 hours for full time colleagues. Therefore, Waste Operatives have been working a 32 hour four-day week during their 3-month trial. The trial has shown that it is not possible to reduce this to 30 hours to align to office-based colleagues and therefore it is recommended that all colleagues harmonise at 32 hours per week (or pro rata for part time colleagues) from 1 April if this model of working continues beyond the end of March 2024.

21. Due to the four-day week working model, leave allowance for colleagues, which is calculated in hours, has been reduced to 80% during the extended trial. Leave will be adjusted to 86.5% of the full allowance if this model of working continues at a harmonised 32 hours per week.
22. The Shared Waste Service has been running staff recruitment and retention schemes for two years. The rationale for the schemes was to overcome the acute driver shortages due to a backlog of HGV driving tests (post Covid) and the much higher cost of living in and around Cambridge (which was unattractive to the few drivers that were in the market). We have now been able to attract drivers more readily and retain them, and this has enabled the service to cancel the schemes and start to realise savings from doing so.
23. The Council also regularly reviews colleague benefits and support and has introduced an employee assistance programme including counselling and 24-hour support, access to a health cash plan and wellbeing online portal. We also continue to review our policies for both hybrid and flexible work practice to support colleagues in their work life balance. However, these measures alone were not adequate in addressing the recruitment and retention challenges faced by the Council.
24. As the Waste and Planning Services are both shared services with Cambridge City Council, it is important that the information contained within this report is also shared with, and submitted to, Cambridge City Council for consideration and approval vis-à-vis these two services. This is scheduled for their Strategy and Resources Committee on 25 March.

## **Details**

25. In September 2022, Cabinet agreed to carry out an initial three-month trial of a four-day week for desk-based colleagues, with a commitment that a trial for waste colleagues and facilities would be carried out later due to the longer planning period required. Following independent assessment of data from the initial trial, Cabinet agreed in May 2023 to undertake a 12-month trial of a four-day working week and carry out a three-month trial in late summer/autumn for waste. The desk-based trial is due to finish at the end of March 2024.
26. The Council embarked on a four-day week trial – where officers are expected to carry out 100% of their work, in 80% of the time for 100% of the pay – to help attract and retain talented colleagues in an incredibly competitive local employment market. The Council was finding it could not compete on salary alone and colleagues, often in specialist roles such as Planning, were leaving for better pay and terms and conditions in the private sector.

27. Council services continued to be provided for the same hours as previously, except that the Customer Contact Centre extended its hours one evening a week, to enable customers to access the Council outside normal office hours.
28. Officers on their non-working day (or non-working hours for part time colleagues) due to a four-day week working practice are not allowed to take up other paid employment during this time.
29. Before the initial trial was announced in September 2022, the Council identified 22 roles that were being covered by agency staff. This was because the Council was not able to recruit to the roles permanently. The cost of agency workers covering them was around £2 million a year.
30. As things currently stand – of those 22 posts, 10 have been recruited to with permanent colleagues, two posts have been deleted and as part of our continued transformation work (which is expected to bring further savings of £2 million), a further 10 have been subsumed into other roles or are externally funded. We have judged it best to only include the 10 roles that were covered by agency, and have now been recruited to permanently, in the cost reduction calculation in this report.
31. During the trial, we have also identified other hard-to-fill roles that were filled by agency at the beginning of the trial and have been successfully filled permanently (such as two Business Analysts). However, because these were not on the original list of 22 roles, we have not included them in the savings. Appointing to these two posts permanently (on fixed term contracts) rather than employing agency staff resulted in an annual reduction of £32,000.
32. During the trial the Council was using projections for potential savings. However, the actual saving from employing the 10 colleagues permanently rather than using agency cover is £434,000 (period between 2 September 2022 to 31 December 2023).
33. As the 10 roles were filled at different points in time during the trial period, the cost reduction for each varies. The earlier the post is filled the greater the contribution over the trial period. If all 10 roles were filled with permanent colleagues for an entire year the cost reduction amounts to £483,000.
34. As the Council is the employing authority for shared waste and planning services, shared with Cambridge City Council, the figures quoted include both the South Cambridgeshire and Cambridge City elements.
35. It is important to note that the Council's agency spend still fluctuates due to the need to bring in agency workers to carry out short term programmes where permanent colleagues are not required. For example, this includes employing temporary staff to support the Council's commitments under the Homes for Ukraine scheme and time limited Planning work that is funded by a developer.
36. Quarterly performance reports have continued to be presented to Overview and Scrutiny Committee, and Cabinet, throughout the trial in the same way as before it commenced. This will continue as business as usual to monitor performance.
37. When announcing the trial, Cabinet said it could be stopped at any point if there was a concern over performance. At any point during the trial, or at any point during any continuation of a four-day week working practice, the Council's Chief Executive would

make Cabinet aware of any concern and a public performance report would be presented to councillors at the relevant committee.

38. Regular reports have been provided to Employment and Staffing Committee throughout the trial, and performance data is reported quarterly to Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny Committee where requested. The latest report was presented to Employment and Staffing Committee in November 2023.
39. On 3 November, the Council received a Best Value Notice from Government relating to the four-day week trial. The Notice required the Council to provide 5 years of annual historical data and weekly data returns to Government through a portal. A further request was received on 29 December for new data sets. All of the data submitted to the Government is published on the Council's [website](#).

### **Desk-based trial next steps**

40. The performance data collected during the trial will need to be analysed and assessed post-March 2024. This will be presented to Council no later than in July.
41. The Bennett Institute for Public Policy at the University of Cambridge independently reviewed the Council's data from the initial 3-month trial. They approached the Council to offer their expertise in this area for free. They looked at data from 18 different key areas, covering performance in Planning, Housing, Transformation, Human Resources and Corporate Services and Finance.
42. The Bennett Institute said that nine out of the 16 areas monitored showed substantial improvement when comparing the trial period from January to March to the same period in 2022. The remaining seven areas monitored either remained at similar levels compared to the same period the previous year or saw a slight decline. They noted however that not a single area of performance fell to a concerning level during the trial.
43. The latest data will be analysed by Professor Brendan Burchell, Professor in the Social Sciences from the University of Cambridge, and his team.
44. Alongside the analysis of the performance data, the Council will also undertake a further Health and Wellbeing survey of colleagues. Two surveys have already taken place, one in August 2022 which provided a baseline before the trial was announced, and the second in April 2023, which showed an improvement in colleagues' health and wellbeing. A summary dashboard of the survey of all colleagues can be found in **Appendix B**.
45. The Council will undertake a consultation, in line with the Best Value Duty for Local Authorities. For this consultation to be transparent and comprehensive, it will be important for all implications of any longer-term changes to the working practices of the Council to be understood. This includes any aspects of service delivery, financial and staffing matters.
46. We do not have a timescale for when the Government will provide the information regarding potential financial levers they have consulted on. However, the Government's consultation stated any financial measures could be from 2025-26 onward. As this is the case, the Council would expect, at the latest, to be provided with information regarding the Local Government Financial Settlement for 2025-26 before the end of 2024. However, information regarding the outcome of the Government's consultation could be provided earlier.

## **Aligning working hours**

47. As mentioned above, in September 2022 Cabinet authorised a three-month trial of a four-day week for most desk-based colleagues, whereby people were expected to complete 100% of their current work, in 80% of the time, for 100% of the pay. In May 2023 Cabinet further authorised an extended trial which is currently ongoing to the end of March 2024.
48. Full time colleagues taking part in this office-based trial are generally contracted to work for 37 hours. This means that, under the four-day week trial arrangements, their normal working hours are 80% of this or 29.6 hours (sometimes rounded up to 30 hours in reports). For colleagues who were working part time before the trial, their working hours for the trial are also 80% of their contracted hours.
49. In May 2023, as well as agreeing to an extended trial for office-based colleagues, Cabinet also agreed that an initial three-month trial of a four-day working week be undertaken by the waste service. Analysis of work demands undertaken before this trial identified that the service could likely be delivered effectively within 4 days if waste colleagues worked 32 hours a week, (86.5% of contracted hours) and the trial was approved on that basis.
50. It has always been the intention and expectation that once the initial waste trial was completed - and the required working hours in the waste service confirmed – then hours between waste and office-based colleagues would be harmonised. The initial 3-month waste trial is now complete, and management of the waste service has confirmed that the 32-hour model (86.5% of contracted hours) is needed for the service to operate effectively. It is therefore recommended that from 1 April 2024, the office-based trial adopts the 32-hour model of the four-day week and all colleagues across the Council have working hours that are 86.5% of their contracted hours, until such time as any further decision is taken by Council.
51. This proposal not only ensures that the trials are operating in a fair and equitable way, but also recognises that some colleagues in the desk-based trial are already working slightly more than the expected 29.6 hours. This was referenced in the wellbeing survey reported to Cabinet in May 2023 where 28% of colleagues responding to the survey indicated that they worked additional hours per week. Of those working more than the expected 29.6 hours per week, 53% worked an extra 2-3 hours, roughly the same as the 32 hours now being proposed. Adopting the same approach to hours for all colleagues also ensures that the Council is operating in a legal and safe manner.
52. Before the trial began many colleagues were working more than the 37 hours expected to ensure tasks were completed as required. Most colleagues recouped this time using the flexitime system, but the People Team were aware of some colleagues unable to recoup the hours as they had exceeded the 37 hours that scheme allowed to be accumulated. Under a four-day week model, time is not recorded in this way and colleagues work with their manager to ensure early morning, evening or weekend working time can be recouped at another time.

## **The Waste Trial**

53. Due to growth in the number of households served, collection rounds have expanded at a significant rate since they were last reviewed in 2017/2018 and are forecast to increase further, resulting in the need to review and optimise routes. Local Land Property Gazetteer data shows that between December 2022 and September 2023 alone,

approximately 2,500 new Council Tax properties came online, i.e., a significant proportion of the circa 4,000 new properties expected for the period 2023/24 and 2024/25.

54. Reduction, reuse, and recycling are the top priority choices in UK Government policy for waste. The Government has published a recycling target of 64% by 2035 in its Resources and Waste Strategy. This presents a challenge to Waste Collection Authorities due to the stagnation of recycling rates and increased pressure because of impending legislation designed to increase recycling. It is therefore essential that collection services are as efficient as possible, prior to implementing these national changes.
55. In October 2023, the UK government announced the “Simpler Recycling” scheme which now mandates local authorities to collect food waste separately on a weekly basis with effect from April 2026; and requires businesses / non-municipal premises to arrange for the separate collection of recyclables and food waste from April 2025. These two policies alone will require a significant level of additional waste collection resource input and operational enhancements by Greater Cambridge Shared Waste Service (GCSWS).
56. Consolidating routes prior to the introduction of national legislation to eliminate avoidable waste and increase recycling rates will improve operational effectiveness and productivity by re-balancing existing collection rounds. It will enable the service to better accommodate past growth and future-proof waste collections to accommodate new growth.
57. The trial, and current ongoing collection arrangements, have ceased Monday waste collections. This is expected to contribute to an increase in recycling rates due to less confusion for residents when collections coincide with bank holidays, many of these take place on Mondays. A reduction in overtime incurred by bank holiday catch-up work will result in fewer commutes to work and shorter vehicle journeys.
58. Muscular-skeletal injuries are more common for waste operatives than desk-based colleagues due to the physical nature of the work. A four-day collection service increases rest days and continuing this working pattern will also more fully test whether this increases wellbeing and reduces sickness levels and injuries by consolidating the number of days colleagues commute and work. It should also increase recruitment and retention rates and reduce the reliance on agency staff to operate the service.
59. Noting these challenges, Cabinet endorsed a three-month trial in May 2023 to assess whether a four-day week would be operationally effective for the service. The trial itself was not expected to address recruitment and retention issues (as the time frame was too short) but was designed to see whether performance could be maintained and whether health and wellbeing improved. If both outcomes were positive, this would indicate that a longer period of working in this way could be considered viable, at which point recruitment and retention could be properly measured.
60. The route optimisation exercise conducted showed that GCSWS could deliver the service based on operational crews working 32 hours over four days (with drivers working an additional two hours, to inspect their vehicles and fuel up etc before / after rounds). This working pattern was deemed to be the most appropriate to balance the wellbeing of crews and resource requirements of moving towards a four-day week. Vehicles were not required for the initial trial, but should the working pattern become permanent two additional vehicles would be required. The trial began for domestic waste collections on 18 September. To date there has not been any negative impact on service delivery or



performance. A more detailed summary of performance during the trial can be found in **Appendices C, D, E, and F.**

## **Options**

61. Cabinet could decide to continue four-day week working practices until information is provided by the Government regarding potential future financial levers they might impose on councils using this working practice, as announced in their Local Government Financial Settlement consultation in December 2023, and a subsequent consultation is carried out, analysed, and formal decision made. Given the positive data reported around performance, and health and wellbeing to date, this is the recommended option.
62. Cabinet could decide that the Council should revert back to five-day working weeks for all colleagues while the results of the desk-based and waste trials are being analysed and information is being provided by Government regarding potential financial levers. This is not recommended due to the amount of disruption to residents and colleagues, and the additional costs this would incur to reorganise bin collection rounds. Members should also note that there is a significant lead in time needed for collection round changes to be planned and implemented.
63. Cabinet could decide to continue with the waste four-day week trial but revert to a five-day working pattern for desk-based colleagues. Although not the recommended option, this has fewer operational challenges than including waste.
64. Cabinet could decide on an alternative option to address the recruitment and retention challenges for the Council; however, this is not recommended due to the potential for disruption and loss of benefits identified in this report.
65. Cabinet could decide not to align the working hours for desk-based and waste colleagues, if a four-day week working model was to continue. This is not recommended as it would create longer-term inequalities in working practices within the Council.
66. Cabinet could decide to hold a consultation before all the implications of becoming a four-day week employer were known (the financial implications arising from the Government's Local Government Financial Settlement consultation as a key implication). However, this would risk having to consult for a second time once all the implications were understood.
67. Members could decide on an alternative option not identified above.
68. In the writing of this report, taking into account financial, legal, staffing, risk, equality and diversity, climate change, and any other key issues, the following implications have been considered:-

## Financial

69. The four-day week trial has made savings from recruiting to permanent posts which were previously filled by agency staff, and has incurred some additional costs. The table below shows **known full year costs** for each area:

-	<b>Savings £</b>	<b>Costs £</b>
Reduced agency expenditure	483,000	-
Waste service revenue related to extra rounds*	-	132,000
Discontinuation of recruitment and retention incentives Waste Service	53,000	-
Revenue contribution to two extra vehicles	-	75,000
Additional cleaning staff	-	13,000
<b>Total saving/cost</b>	<b>536,000</b>	<b>220,000</b>
<b>Net saving</b>	<b>316,000</b>	-

\* Includes staffing and maintenance for two vehicles and two hours flat pay per week for drivers.

These costs do not include round reorganisation in the Waste Service as this task needs to be completed every few years to ensure collections remain efficient and rounds balanced as the area grows. This was due to be carried out separate to the four-day week trial.

At the time the Council's budget was being prepared it was not known whether four-day week working would continue beyond the end of March 2024. To ensure any costs, such as from waste services, were factored into the Council's budget these have already been allowed for as a prudent measure.

There are also savings expected to be realised through reduced sickness absence due to the health and wellbeing benefits to staff from a four-day week model of working. These benefits are particularly expected in roles that are more physical – such as amongst waste crews where musculoskeletal injuries can be more commonplace than in desk-based roles. A reduced overall fuel cost for Greater Cambridge Shared Waste, owing to the route re-optimisation programme and four-day week collection pattern, is also anticipated to deliver savings to the councils.

70. The route optimisation exercise conducted showed that GCSWS could deliver the service based on operational crews working 32 hours over four days (with drivers working an additional two hours – paid at flat rate, to inspect their vehicles and fuel up etc before /

after rounds). This working pattern was deemed to be the most appropriate to balance the wellbeing of crews and resource requirements of moving towards a four-day week.

71. There have not been any capital costs for the three-month trial in Waste as the service has retained existing vehicles due for replacement.
72. Costs for the Waste trial so far have been funded from the service's operational budget underspends for the 2023/24 financial year.
73. The Best Value Notice from Government has required a data lead to be retained to ensure the data requested on a weekly basis could be provided.
74. Costs would be incurred for consultation if this point is reached. While these are not confirmed they are likely to be in the region of £40,000.

## **Legal**

75. The trial, or the proposed extended period of four-day week working, do not require any changes to employee terms and conditions as participation is on a voluntary basis. However, it is recommended that working hours for desk-based and waste colleagues are aligned.
76. The Monitoring Officer has reviewed the Council's responsibilities to consult in line with the Best Value Duty for local authorities and recommends that no consultation is undertaken at this stage owing to the lack of information from Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities on the implications of any potential future financial penalties. In the absence of information on the potential future financial penalties, the Council is unable to provide sufficient information for a consultation to be meaningful.

## **Staffing**

77. Two health and wellbeing surveys carried out to date have shown a positive impact the trial has had on employees. There is more detail in the appendices.
78. The results of the future health and wellbeing survey will be presented to members as data from the full trial period is assessed.
79. Colleagues were concerned early in the trial period that the time to carry out training and development would be impacted by a four-day working week. The People team at SCDC has run fewer sessions in 2023 compared to 2022 but average attendance per session was broadly comparable. E-learning course completions went up significantly from 875 in 2022 to 1288 in 2023. This indicates that colleagues are making time for training and development.
80. There is now a need to align hours following the formal trial periods if four-day week working is to continue.

## **Risks/Opportunities**

81. The four-day week trial is referred to in the Council's Strategic Risk Register in three places:

- a. It is listed as a control measure for the Council's Strategic Risk SR03 – Recruitment and Retention - due to the potential for a successful trial to assist with attracting new colleagues to the Council, and to contribute to the wellbeing and satisfaction of existing colleagues, thereby reducing turnover
- b. It is listed as Risk SR30 – that the trial may be stopped prematurely by the government.
- c. It is listed as Risk SR31 – that the trial may be unsuccessful in achieving its aims of solving the recruitment and retention challenge.

82. Operationally, the following risks exist:

- a. there is a risk of continuing a four-day week working model without aligning hours being worked by waste crews and desk-based colleagues. This risk would be eliminated should Cabinet approve the recommendation to align working hours set out above.
- b. There is a risk that people might perceive continuing four-day week working practices without consulting now may mean a final decision has been taken and communications would need to be clear on this point, noting that until the outcome of the Local Government Finance Settlement consultation is published, the consultation is recommended to be delayed.
- c. The longer a four-day week working practice is in place, the more challenging it would be to return to a 5-day working pattern without loss of morale, or a big impact on recruitment and retention.

83. There was a risk associated with launching new bin collection routes. Collections can suffer as crews adapt and the changes bed in. This risk was not realised, and the transition was successful.

### **Equality and Diversity**

84. An Equality Impact Assessment was carried out for the desk-based and waste trials to ensure all impacts were properly captured. The Equality Impact Assessments support the need to align hours if a four-day week working practice was to continue and has not identified any other negative impacts.

### **Climate Change**

85. Evidence from the [Henley Business School](#) suggests that 67% of employees would drive their car less if they were to work a four-day week. Given that the Council already offers significant home-working this approach has already reduced commuting for desk-based colleagues. Depot colleagues under a four-day week model commute to the depot one day less per week.

86. The Council has set targets to reduce the organisation's carbon emissions by 45% by 2025 and by 75% by 2030 and reach net zero carbon reduction by 2050. The route optimisation exercise has resulted in consolidation of journeys and improved grouping of properties for bin collection to reduce mileage and this could make a modest positive impact to the Council's direct / Scope 1 emissions for diesel / fuel usage. The carbon emissions associated with commuting to work have decreased with a four-day week pattern, however commute mileage is not currently monitored within the Council's Scope 3 indirect emissions. This is considered displacement of emissions to non-work-related personal travel rather than a full reduction. It should also be noted that provision of additional non-working time can lead to more sustainable lifestyle choices and reduction on convenience consumption choices which are more carbon intensive.

## Health and wellbeing

87. Two Health and Wellbeing surveys have been undertaken by Robertson Cooper, an industry leader in collecting and analysing comprehensive data about employee experiences and comparing an organisation's employees against benchmarked data from 90,000 employees in other organisations (in the public and private sectors). The first survey was conducted pre-trial and included all colleagues, and the second was conducted during the trial and included only colleagues involved in the trial. The results showed there had been a positive impact on wellbeing following the introduction of the four-day week trial.
88. A comparison of the survey results can be found in **Appendix B**.
89. Following the 3 month four-day week trial within the shared waste service, we conducted an in-house health and wellbeing survey to assess the impact of the trial. The results of this survey also suggested the trial had had a positive impact on colleagues' health and wellbeing. A summary of the results can be found in **Appendix C**.

## Consultation responses

90. A consultation has been committed to as part of a full assessment of the trial. The planning period in advance of the first trial successfully engaged colleagues and the unions to make changes in the way teams work to deliver this working practice.
91. The work with local Trade Unions for waste services have helped to transition to a four-day week and the smooth introduction of new routes.
92. Further colleague engagement will take place in waste now the new rounds have embedded. This will enable the service to ensure rounds are fully balanced and that colleagues are content with the changes.

## Alignment with Council Priority Areas

### A modern and caring Council

93. The trials for desk-based colleagues and waste have demonstrated data to show that it is possible to provide services under a four-day week working practice, without jeopardising performance and service delivery. However, a full assessment and analysis is required before any final conclusions can be made.

## Background Papers

- [Cabinet meeting on Monday 12 September 2022](#) – Cabinet Members agreed to proceed with an initial three-month trial.
- [Cabinet meeting on Monday 15 May 2023](#) – Cabinet Members agreed to extend the trial for 12 months. At that Cabinet meeting, Members also agreed for waste crews to take part in a 3-month trial. Data from the three-month waste trial will be discussed by Councillors once that three-month trial is completed.

- [Four-day week update to Employment and Staffing Committee, November 2023](#)  
– latest data on performance and update on recruitment and retention.

## **Appendices**

Appendix A: Letter received from Government following Local Government Finance Settlement consultation

Appendix B: Robertson Cooper Health and Wellbeing surveys summary

Appendix C: Greater Cambridge Shared Waste Service Health and Wellbeing survey

Appendix D: Performance data on Greater Cambridge Shared Waste Service trial

Appendix E: Greater Cambridge Shared Waste Service customer service data - 18 September to 10 November 2023

Appendix F: Greater Cambridge Shared Waste Service official complaints and compliments data - 18 September to 15 December 2023

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