

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF COMMUNITIES & NEIGHBOURHOODS

OUT OF HOURS SERVICE REVIEW

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The Purpose of this report is to recommend to members a new model of how the Council's 'Out of Hours' service should be delivered from 1 April 2015.**

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

- 2.1** The committee approve a new model of delivery with a new cost structure as detailed in Appendix A.
- 2.2** Delegated Authority is granted to the Head of Communities & Neighbourhoods in consultation with the Head of Communications to cease the current Fixed Term contract arrangements for staff who undertake the role as 'Out of Hours Officers'.
- 2.3** The new 'Out of Hours' Service be incorporated into the current Lifeline service contract with Harborough District Council and be reviewed by January 2016 with the aim of re-tendering the whole service competitively in line with current lifeline arrangements.

3.0 KEY ISSUES

- 3.1** The current out of hour's emergency service is managed using five Melton Borough Council members of staff, of which four staff have volunteered to be included in the service, and one member of staff who is contracted on a fixed term contract. The staff are on call on evenings, weekends and bank holidays to take emergency calls. Calls are received on a mobile phone and they have an information pack to refer to, to deal with queries and issues they receive.
- 3.2** The service performs reasonably well, however occasional problems occur with poor mobile signal coverage when officers are away from their homes and so may sometimes miss calls meaning a customer has to be called back or cannot get through.
- 3.3** Trained staff with specific customer service skills do not currently manage the service and the level of service experienced can sometimes differ, depending on the level of knowledge from the member of staff on call that particular week.
- 3.4** Melton Borough Council currently has a contract with Harborough District Council (HDC) to manage our sheltered housing life line calls service. Negotiations have taken place with HDC in relation to incorporating our out of hour's service into the current work they undertake for us. HDC have agreed to undertake the service should the committee make a decision to do this.
- 3.5** The advantages of HDC managing this service on our behalf will mean that a more consistent service can be delivered through a 24 hour call centre with experienced staff undertaking this work on a daily basis. HDC currently manage Rutland County Council's out of hour's service and Seven Locks Homes.
- 3.6** HDC managing the service will also mean that it will be easier to manage instances when staff cannot cover the service due to sickness. The new arrangements will also mean that

customers can expect a more consistent and improved service.

- 3.7 A new service will see cost savings in relation to the current service and we will only be charged for the actual amount of calls that are received to the HDC call centre.
- 3.8 An internal staff working group will be formed to agree methods and processes in which the Council can limit the need for our residents to contact us out of hours. For example this may mean that when we know that certain events are taking place we use social media and our internet to keep the public informed, so we can reduce contact to the call centre.
- 3.9 The service currently receives between 750 and 1000 calls in a year. Fluctuations tend to take place when we have instances of adverse weather or if a particular incident occurred. Taking these figures into account we should not exceed the upper threshold of calls as detailed in Appendix A.

Approximately 60% of calls are in relation to Melton Borough Council housing issues and 40% in relation to general inquiries. All calls are logged individually and this will continue but into a more robust electronic method.

4.0 POLICY AND CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 In making a decision to contract Harborough District Council to manage an out of hour's service for us we will be reducing the staffing implications and staff management time on the service. The new service will enhance our corporate objectives in relation to supporting vulnerable people and providing a good service to our residents.

5.0 FINANCIAL AND OTHER RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The new arrangements for the financial year 2015/16 will result in a saving of £11,360. The table in Appendix A clearly shows the cost of the service. Should we be able to reduce the amount of calls made to the new provider we would then reduce the amount that we have to pay as it is charged as per demand.

The saving will be split between 60% to the Housing Revenue Account (£6,820.00) and 40% to the General Fund (£4,540.00) as detailed in Appendix B.

Savings to the Council will be realised from 1st April 2015.

6.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There will need to be an addition made to the current lifeline contract to add this element into the agreement. There are no other legal implications.

7.0 COMMUNITY SAFETY

- 7.1 No specific implications arising from the report other than the service would deal effectively with any calls made that may be of a criminal or anti-social behaviour issue and the call centre would liaise direct with the Police out of hours.

8.0 EQUALITIES

- 8.1 There are no implications arising from this report.

9.0 RISKS

9.1 Probability



Very High A				
High B				
Significant C				
Low D		2		
Very Low E		1		
Almost Impossible F				
	IV Neg- ligible	III Marg- inal	II Critical	I Catast- rophic

Impact

Risk No.	Description
1	Calls exceed the upper threshold
2	Implementation of new service is problematic

10.0 CLIMATE CHANGE

10.1 There are no implications arising from this report.

11.0 CONSULTATION

11.1 Consultation has taken place with the Tenants' Forum Executive Committee, staff who currently help manage the service and Unions have been informed of the new proposals.

12.0 WARDS AFFECTED

12.1 All

Contact Officer: Ronan Browne, People & Place Manager
 Date: 15 January 2015

Appendices : Appendix A – Payment Scales for Call Demand
 Appendix B – Financial Calculation Comparison

Background Papers: None

Reference :