

Part I
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WELWYN HATFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL
CABINET – 6 DECEMBER 2022
REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR (RESIDENT AND NEIGHBOURHOOD)

REVIEW OF 24-HOUR CONTROL CENTRE

1 Executive Summary

- 1.1 The Council provide a 24/7 Control Centre to respond to emergency out of hours calls and alerts from the Emergency Alarm Service (Lifeline). The service has been reviewed as it is recognised there are current operational risks and the service does not deliver good value for money. This report sets out the outcome of a recent procurement to deliver the Lifeline service in partnership with a third party and the service options for the emergency out of hours calls.

2 Recommendation(s)

- 2.1 It is recommended that Cabinet agree:
- a) The award of contract to PPP Taking Care Limited (Company Number: 01488490) for a term of 3 years (with the option for an additional 1-year extension) to deliver the council's emergency alarm (Lifeline) services.
 - b) To note the proposals to deliver the Council's other out of hours' services.

3 Explanation

- 3.1 The Council provides a 24/7 Control Centre, which includes the following key services:
- Responding to emergency out of hours calls; and
 - Responding to alerts from the Emergency Alarm Service (Lifeline).
- 3.2 The service is delivered by a team of 7 permanent staff members on a rota basis, 24/7, 365 days of the year.
- 3.3 **Out of Hours**
- 3.4 Outside of normal working hours, residents can report emergencies to the Council using the Out of Hours service. Emergency situations might include:
- emergency repairs for tenants and leaseholders;
 - homelessness call outs;
 - an emergency requiring the involvement of the Emergency Planning team;
 - first point of contact from Orbis, the Council's lone worker system.
 - Public health enquiries, such as noise nuisance.

3.5 The Control Centre take the initial query and escalate to the relevant member of staff, as required.

3.6 **Emergency Alarm Service (Lifeline)**

3.7 The Council provides a local Emergency Alarm Service (Lifeline) in which residents can alert the Council to an emergency response. When an alarm is activated, the alert is received by the Council's Control Centre and an operator will respond to the call, actioning the appropriate response and any assistance required.

3.8 Any resident can access this service; however, most users are those living in sheltered schemes across the borough as highlighted in the table below.

Council Lifeline	138	Lifeline connections not within Council's Sheltered Housing properties
Private Lifeline	410	Non-Council Housing Service Users (i.e. private owners)
Sheltered Schemes	1,990	This includes individual residential properties and connections in lifts and connections to fire alarm panels
Scheme Office Lifelines	20	Used by ILS staff to sign on and off site and to raise an alert if needed
Telecare	32	Can be door sensors, fall monitors, etc.
TOTAL	2,590	

3.9 The Lifeline devices installed into residents' homes are currently undergoing a programme of replacement. This is in response to the expected change in BT phone signal from analog to digital. Whilst the existing system is still operating in analog, the new devices installed will be compatible with both analog and digital signals. A further upgrade of the whole system will be required to be fully compatible with digital.

3.10 **Service Review**

3.11 In July 2021, CHP agreed to undertake a high-level review of the service because it was recognised that:

- It is a highly operational service, attracting high service costs in the order of £397k each year.
- Staff experience disproportionate levels of work across a 24-hour period, which doesn't deliver good value for money.
- Management challenges are evident relating to operational and staff related risks, including ensuring resilience through shift patterns, whilst complying with the working time directive and the Council's lone working policies etc.
- Investment is required to upgrade the existing Lifeline IT system (Jontek) from an analog to digital platform.

3.12 As part of the May 2021 recommendation, it was agreed to explore options for outsourcing this service, moving to a full 24/7 emergency alarm monitoring service, which would also include cover for other council services covered by the existing Control Centre, as highlighted above.

3.13 **Procurement Update**

3.14 **Original tender**

3.15 A tender for the full 24- hour control services was issued early 2022; however, on receipt of the bids it was clear that all the bids were non-complaint, with no experience in both managing an Emergency Alarm Service and out of hours service.

3.16 Therefore, it was considered to tender the Lifeline service separately to make the tender more attractive to the market solely dealing with emergency alarm callouts.

3.17 **Procurement of Emergency Alarm Service (Lifeline) only**

3.18 Following an advert and release of tender documents, 4 bids were received to offer 24/7 Lifeline Services. These bids were evaluated 50% on price and 50% and quality.

3.19 PPP Taking Care Limited have scored highest on both cost and quality. They are a specialist 24-hour monitoring service, with over 30 years' experience providing telecare and personal alarm services and work with a number of local authorities to deliver their emergency alarm services.

3.20 The system is compatible with both digital and the Council's current analog system; with the ability to monitor both systems simultaneously. This will significantly reduce the risk of unit failure across the service. Calls will be handled in line with certified standards in the telecare industry and have significant resilience in staffing numbers and call centres across multiple sites. The Council will have remote secure access to PPP Taking Care Limited's reporting platform and will work in partnership to look at service user patterns to identify where improvements could be made over the contract period.

3.21 In October 2022, the Service Director (Resident and Neighbourhood) awarded preferred bidder status to PPP Taking Care Limited and completed the mandatory standstill period.

3.22 Alongside this, a review of how the remaining services could be delivered was considered.

3.23 **Out of Hours Services**

3.24 There are a number of organisations that deliver out of hours call support to Councils. Officers have been in contact with possible providers, and it is proposed that a short-term agreement (between 6-12 months) is entered into with the most appropriate provider(s). Any agreement will be made in line with council's Contract Procedure Rules.

3.25 This will allow the Council to ascertain more accurate contact volumes, should the Council wish to enter into a long-term arrangement with a third party(ies).

Implications

4 Legal Implication(s)

4.1 Please refer to the Part II exempt report.

5 Financial Implication(s)

- 5.1 The current budget breakdown is highlighted in the table below, inclusive of both the Emergency Alarm Service and the out of hours service. This shows that the net cost to the Council to operate the service is just over £300k:

Annual Service-Related Costs	Budget 22/23 (£'000)
Staffing Costs	420
System Maintenance Costs	93
Income from Contracts	(197)
Total Costs	316

- 5.2 It is anticipated that some income will be lost from contracts with private, local housing associations and it is anticipated that they will make their own arrangements with a new provider.
- 5.3 It is also recommended to set aside a one-off budget of £15k for any telephone and website upgrades that might be required.
- 5.4 Further details are set out in the Part II exempt report.

6 Risk Management Implications

- 6.1 A full risk register will be maintained for the mobilisation of any new contract and a summary of the current operational risks are highlighted below:
- As the service continues as is, there will continue to be low resilience as highlighted in para 3.10. This may result in impacting the ability to deliver the service. Managers, with HR support will continue to work with the team and ensure shifts are covered, in particular, over the Christmas/New Year period. This will include looking to increase resource through use of overtime cover/agency staff.
 - There continues to be a risk that the Lifeline units will fail until a full system upgrade is made from analog to digital. This risk will be fully mitigated once PPP Taking Care deliver the service as they can monitor both systems simultaneously. This may also be mitigated through earlier mobilisation of the PPP Taking Care contract.
- 6.2 Further details are set out in the Part II exempt report.

7 Security and Terrorism Implication(s)

- 7.1 The council is a category 1 organisation for the purposes of the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 and therefore needs assurance that any proposed solution handling emergency planning calls outside of office hours is robust.

8 Procurement Implication(s)

- 8.1 The procurement of the Emergency Alarm Service (Lifeline) has been undertaken in line with the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 and the Contract Procedure Rules.
- 8.2 Any agreement with a third party to support the out of hours service will be made in line with the Contract Procedure Rules.

9 Climate Change Implication(s)

9.1 There are no climate change implications arising from the recommendations.

10 Human Resources Implication(s)

10.1 Please refer to the Part II exempt report.

11 Health and Wellbeing Implication(s)

11.1 The health and wellbeing of the service users (in particular Lifeline users) will remain a priority throughout the project as it is recognised that any perceived change in service may cause concern.

12 Communication and Engagement Implication(s)

12.1 An internal communications and engagement plan will be developed as the project progresses and after the staff and Trade Unions have been consulted.

12.2 There is no requirement to consult with users of Lifeline because there are no intended changes to service provision; however, they will be contacted to advise of the changes in provider and additional support information will be provided as necessary.

13 Link to Corporate Priorities

13.1 The subject of this report is linked to the Council's Corporate Priority to be a well-run Council which puts our customers first.

14 Equality and Diversity

14.1 An Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) has been carried out and no negative impact was identified on any of the protected groups under Equalities legislation.

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Date	26 October 2022