

POLICY & FINANCE COMMITTEE

24 SEPTEMBER 2020

CARELINE – ANALOGUE TO DIGITAL UPGRADE

1.0 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To provide Members with information about the Council's Careline service and required improvements to ensure service continuity when the national analogue telephone infrastructure switches over to a digital network by 2025.
- 1.2 To request a capital programme budget to the value of £80,540 to upgrade the infrastructure to ensure readiness and service continuity at digital switchover.

2.0 Background Information

- 2.1 Careline provides social alarm response services, 24 hours a day, to the Council's supported housing properties, along with 76 customers living in our general needs housing and over 1,000 private sector customers. In addition Careline provides an out of hours service for Council tenants to report emergency repairs and any other emergency situations. Staff are based at Vale View and Gladstone House to deliver these services alongside face to face customer service provision to the Council's supported housing and extra care residents, and Nottinghamshire Community Housing Association tenants who live at Vale View.
- 2.2 All of Careline's general needs and private sector customers receive the service through a lifeline unit, plugged into their mains supply and landline. All supported housing properties originally operated through hardwired units and cabling connected the properties but as this infrastructure aged, often beyond repair, the majority of supported housing tenants who access the service also receive their service through lifeline units and telephone lines. However, some formal sheltered housing schemes remain hardwired and are identified in the table below.
- 2.3 BT have previously announced that the analogue national communication network will be switched over to a digital network with completion by the year 2025. Whilst the exact timetable for the transition is not yet known, social alarm response centres are preparing for the transition to ensure minimal disruption of services at transition. This will ensure systems remain operational and that they are future-proofed as much as possible.
- 2.4 Throughout 2019/20 Careline staff have been replacing older lifeline units with newer digital units that will continue to work after the digital switchover has been completed. Historically, not all supported housing tenants chose to access the service and so their properties do not have a lifeline unit currently installed. Lifeline units are installed into void supporting housing properties as standard and there is sufficient funding within 2020/21 budgets to promote and increase uptake for existing supported housing tenants.
- 2.5 In the more traditional 'sheltered housing' type schemes the infrastructure, the cabling, needs to be replaced to ensure continuity of service. Due to the age of these buildings the cabling is coming to the end of its life and would have needed to be replaced without the requirement to upgrade to a digital network.

- 2.6 As Gladstone House is much newer it has been built with this digital capability and will only require an additional module to the server at minimal cost.
- 2.7 The new extra care scheme at Boughton will be built to the most up to date specification at that time. There may be a requirement to upgrade this with an additional module as is the case with Gladstone House. This will be covered by existing budgets for the build.
- 2.8 Indicative costs to complete the required work have been obtained from the Council's current provider and are included in the table below.

Site Location and Requirements	Total Cost of upgrade
<p>VALE VIEW Upgrade cabling throughout the scheme and replace all existing hardwired units with digital Communicall Vision units (lifeline units)</p>	28,000
<p>GLADSTONE HOUSE Add in a module to the server.</p>	1,500
<p>THORESBY ROAD Large older scheme, hardwired units remain on the walls but no longer in operation. Dispersed alarms (Lifeline units) are currently in use. This work would remove the old hardwired units, blank off in each dwelling and upgrade the cabling for the door entry system that connects to the CareLine control room. The existing lifeline unit in the communal area will be replaced with a GSM unit as these have a roaming SIM which will ensure continuity of connection in a power outage. There is a revenue cost of £60 per year with GSM units but this cost will be covered within existing revenue budgets. Existing Capital budgets will be used to upgrade the telephone lines to the passenger lift.</p>	11,500
<p>DOREWOOD COURT / WOLFITT AVE Large older scheme, hardwired units remain on the walls but no longer in operation. Lifeline units are currently in use. This work would remove the old hardwired units, blank off in each dwelling and upgrade the cabling for the door entry system that connects to CareLine. The existing lifeline unit in the communal area will be replaced with a GSM unit as these have a roaming SIM which will ensure continuity of connection in a power outage. There is a revenue cost of £60 per year with GSM units but this cost will be covered within existing revenue budgets. Existing Capital budgets will be used to upgrade the telephone lines to the passenger lift.</p>	11,500

<p>COGHILL COURT Community Centre that currently has a lifeline unit in place. Replace door entry cabling and replace dispersed alarm with a GSM unit as these have a roaming SIM which will ensure continuity of connection in a power outage. There is a revenue cost of £60 per year with GSM units but this cost will be covered within existing revenue budgets.</p>	500
<p>BURGAGE COURT Community Centre that currently has a lifeline unit in place. Replace door entry cabling and replace lifeline unit with a GSM unit as these have a roaming SIM which will ensure continuity of connection in a power outage. There is a revenue cost of £60 per year with GSM units but this cost will be covered within existing revenue budgets.</p>	500
<p>DELACY COURT Hardwired units remain in flats and bungalows. Removing hardwired units and pulls cords, replace with Lifeline units and upgrade cabling for door entry system which calls to Careline.</p> <p>The existing lifeline unit in the communal area will be replaced with a GSM unit as these have a roaming SIM which will ensure continuity of connection in a power outage. There is a revenue cost of £60 per year with GSM units but this cost will be covered within existing revenue budgets.</p> <p>Existing Capital budgets will be used to upgrade the telephone lines to the passenger lift.</p> <p>Existing budgets will also be used to install heat detectors and keysafes at all properties in DeLacy alongside a fire awareness campaign to address residents' concerns around fire risk.</p> <p>This work will take place at the start of the program to address ongoing issues with faults in the cabling.</p>	15,500
<p>WELLGREEN HOUSE Community Centre that currently has lifeline unit in place. Replace door entry cabling and replace lifeline unit with a GSM unit as these have a roaming SIM which will ensure continuity of connection in a power outage. There is a revenue cost of £60 per year with GSM units but this will be covered in existing revenue budgets</p>	500
<p>HOWES COURT Community Centre that currently has lifeline unit in place. Replace door entry cabling and replace lifeline unit with a GSM unit as these have a roaming SIM which will ensure continuity of connection in a power outage. There is a revenue cost of £60 per year with GSM units but this will be covered in existing revenue budgets</p>	500
<p>WILLIAM BAILEY HOUSE Community Centre that currently has lifeline unit in place. Replace door entry cabling and replace lifeline unit with a GSM unit as these have a roaming SIM which will ensure continuity of connection in a power outage. There is a revenue cost of £60 per year with GSM units but this will be covered in existing revenue budgets</p>	500

<p>TRENT HOUSE Community Centre that currently has lifeline unit in place. Replace door entry cabling and replace lifeline unit with a GSM unit as these have a roaming SIM which will ensure continuity of connection in a power outage. There is a revenue cost of £60 per year with GSM units but this will be covered in existing revenue budgets</p>	500
<p>KINGS COURT Community Centre that currently has lifeline unit in place. Replace door entry cabling and replace lifeline unit with a GSM unit as these have a roaming SIM which will ensure continuity of connection in a power outage. There is a revenue cost of £60 per year with GSM units but this will be covered in existing revenue budgets</p>	500
<p>COMMUNITY CENTRES There are a further 26 community centres within the district that currently have lifeline units fitted. These will be replaced with GSM units at each site which would ensure continuity of connection in a power outage. There is a revenue cost of £60 per year with GSM units but this will be covered in existing revenue budgets</p>	5,200

3.0 Proposals

- 3.1 The total indicative cost for this work is £76,700. It is prudent to allow a 5% contingency to a project of this size and so the total budget request for this capital programme is £80,540.
- 3.2 As noted throughout the table, there are additional works that will be completed within this project such as upgrading telephone lines to passenger lifts and installation of heat detectors and key safes at DeLacy Court for which funding already exists within the Capital programme budget.
- 3.3 Upon completion of the upgrade project there will be additional revenue costs to cover the SIM cards within GSM units at a cost of £2,160 per year. This cost can be covered within existing budgets for Careline operations.

4.0 Equalities Implications

- 4.1 Careline provides a valuable service to some of our most vulnerable residents, both tenants and within private sector housing stock, which enables them to live in their own homes for longer if they choose to and provides support and reassurance for their families.

5.0 Financial Implications (FIN20-21/8825)

- 5.1 The budget of £80,540 will need to be added to the Capital Programme in 20/21 and modelled into the HRA Business Plan to determine the recommended financing.
- 5.2 The current hardwired units are 14 years old as per the asset register and therefore have passed their useful life, along with the fact that the technology has moved and the Council equipment needs to be ready for the digital switchover. There has previously been a budget in the ICT Replacement Programme for this replacement, in 2016/17 but it was based on hardwired units. It was therefore later removed until the move to digital had been fully investigated.

- 5.3 The new proposed units would have a recommended useful life of 10 years and a future budget for replacement would be picked up from the asset register annual review.
- 5.4 The table mentions existing Capital Budgets and the costs (which are not included above) are to be picked up within the HRA Property Investment Programme budgets for 20/21 as part of their planned investment in Council Properties.
- 5.5 There is no additional revenue budget implications for the £2,160 cost for SIM cards as detailed at paragraph 3.3, as there is sufficient provision within the service area budgets.

6.0 Community Plan – Alignment to Objectives

- 6.1 Improve the health and wellbeing of local residents, with a particular focus on narrowing the gap in healthy life expectancy and other health outcomes – The Careline service enables older people and those with disabilities to remain living in their own homes, where they choose to thereby supporting independent living. The service also links into countywide health objectives of around ‘falls’ to decrease hospital admissions and to support hospital discharge.
- 6.2 Generate more income, improve value for money and increase residents’ satisfaction with the Council – the Careline service provides an opportunity for income generation while providing a tenure neutral support service across the district.

7.0 Comments of Director – Housing, Health & Wellbeing

- 7.1 This is an essential upgrade to enable the Council to continue to support our most vulnerable residents.
- 7.2 This upgrade will also provide future expansion opportunities to meet the needs of the District in the future and particularly when we have challenges to general health and wellbeing through the outbreak and recovery from Coronavirus.

8.0 Homes & Communities Committee

- 8.1 This report was not presented to the Homes & Communities Committee at their meeting held on 14 September 2020 given the large number of items on that agenda. However, consultation was undertaken with the Chairman, Vice-Chairman and Opposition Spokesperson of the Committee who indicated their support for the proposals and the approval of the capital programme budget, which in any event had to be approved by the Policy & Finance Committee in accordance with the Council’s Constitution.

9.0 RECOMMENDATION

That a capital programme budget to the value of £80,540 to upgrade the infrastructure to ensure readiness and service continuity at digital switchover be approved.

Reason for Recommendation

To upgrade the infrastructure and ensure no disruption of service for those vulnerable residents who currently receive this support service in supported housing, general needs tenancies and in the private sector.

Background Papers

Nil.

For further information please contact Suzanne Shead on Ext 5520.

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