

APPENDIX I

WAVERLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL

COMMUNITY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 10 NOVEMBER 2008 EXECUTIVE – 2 DECEMBER 2008

Title:

WAVERLEY'S COMMUNITY ALARM SERVICE REVIEW – CARELINE
[Portfolio Holder: Cllr Bryn Morgan]
[Wards Affected: All]

Summary and purpose:

This report, which was considered by the Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 10 November 2008, proposes changes to the Community Careline Service operated by Waverley Borough Council following a review undertaken during 2008. The service is currently split into two separate parts – one for housing tenants as part of the supporting people service and one for other customers. The recommendation is to merge the two parts into a single unit thereby reducing its operating overheads and implement other changes to ensure the service covers its costs without a subsidy from the General Fund or Housing Revenue Account. The service is well-regarded by its customers and offers a life enhancing and, when needed, life-saving service.

How this report relates to the Council's Corporate Priorities:

The Careline service is a key component in Improving Lives and helps meet LAA targets of helping people stay in their homes. Improved telecare services will increase these opportunities. The service also works in partnership with the health service with funded Careline units available for 12 weeks after someone is discharged from hospital. This report also sets out how value for money can be improved by reconfiguring the service.

Equality and Diversity Implications:

The service is available to everyone in the Borough irrespective of circumstances. Some additional support is available to people on low incomes through partnership with local groups such as the Cranleigh Lions.

Resource/Value for Money implications:

The proposals bring about a reconfigured service and will deliver improved outcomes. There will be a saving to the council under the new combined service of some £87,000.

Legal Implications:

The proposals in the report will lead to a changed way of working for staff and potential changes in some of the Council's contractual arrangements with some of the organisations with whom the council works in delivering the Careline Service. However, these are considered to be good business practice.

Background

1. Careline is the Council's community alarm service based on the provision of a piece of monitored emergency call equipment supported by a visiting service. The Careline equipment consists of a special base unit and a pendant trigger that can be worn discreetly around the neck of the user or on a wrist strap. In an emergency, the user presses the pendant and the base unit will call the Care Centre - 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. This enables the person to speak to trained operators without needing to get to the phone. Even if the person is unable to speak, the operator will know who is calling and send help. They act immediately to alert relatives, neighbours or emergency services as required. The service is highly valued by its users and includes a Careline visit during the year to check the alarm, update details, offer advice, support and assistance and make referrals to other agencies as needed.
2. Following the Council's restructuring in 2007, a detailed review of the Careline Service has been undertaken in response to changes in staffing levels in the team and the desire to bring about a more coherent, cost effective and well managed package of community-based support services. The review has included consultation with staff and visits to other local authority providers of similar services and comparisons of private sector providers.

Waverley's Careline service now

3. Since the late 1980s, the Borough and District Housing Services have been providing alarm call services in their sheltered housing accommodation and providing off site monitoring through a number of monitoring providers that were establishing at the time.
4. As technology developed and the infrastructure was in place to support the technology community alarms were provided to private (i.e. non-housing) customers to complement the sheltered housing provision and to offer a similar 24-hour call service to those in their own homes. This service supported other services being offered by local authorities including meals on wheels and day centres. On the whole the services have been able to break-even with a weekly charge that generally covered the cost of the service. Annexe 1 has a brief history of the service in Waverley.
5. There are currently two separate Careline services in Waverley, one for council tenants operating from bases in Farnham and Bramley, funded partly by the Supporting People (SP) funding and by the Housing Revenue Account, the other operating from its base in Haslemere, for private sector customers.
6. As at April 2008, there were 1086 Careline customers in the private sector service. During the year 307 left the service and 357 joined the service - a net growth of 50. In addition there were 152 Housing Association customers who received a service from the Careline team delivered at different levels as part of a contract with each Housing Association. These customers have individual alarms (also known as dispersed alarms).
7. In the housing part of the service, there were 354 customers in Council accommodation receiving a Careline service from the Supporting People team. Some of these (who meet a higher need criteria) also receive enhanced and more regular Supporting People visits. There are a further 644 Council tenants in group schemes under the Supporting People team. These

group schemes with hardwired equipment (which is becoming obsolete) are being upgraded to individual alarms over the next eighteen months.

8. Each private sector customer has a contract for the service they receive. The full charge is £4.20 per week. A subsidised rate of £2.30 a week is currently offered where equipment has been purchased by a charitable organisation. Charges to Housing Associations vary (currently from £1 to £4.20 per week) according to the level of service. Council tenants receiving Supporting People services do not pay separately for their Careline service (it is included in a funding agreement from Surrey County Council) and others in Council accommodation who are not in receipt of Supporting People services pay through their rent account. The weekly charge also includes the 24 hour emergency monitoring service which is provided under contract by Guildford Borough Council.

Telecare and the Preventative Technologies Grant (PTG)

9. Careline services throughout Britain are becoming more advanced as new technologies are developed and a range of situations can be monitored proactively rather than relying on the customer to make a reactive emergency call. For example, equipment linked through Careline can monitor smoke, floods, inappropriate movement, falls and vital signs such as blood pressure. The possibilities are enormous and telecare is high on the Government's agenda for keeping people at home for longer.
10. Telecare projects such as these have been variably implemented in Surrey, mostly because the technology is still new and underdeveloped and sometimes unreliable, and also because of limited support from health and social care staff. During 2006/07, Guildford and Waverley received £151,205 to provide a range of telecare services. A further £113,138 has been granted for 2007/08/09 to continue to develop services.
11. The Community Alarm Technology (CAT) scheme has been the simplest and most successful initiative within PTG across Surrey. This scheme enables patients being discharged from hospital to receive the basic Careline service at no cost for 12 weeks, and has brought an additional 68 customers to the Careline service. Take-up of the service after the 12 weeks has been high with approximately 70% continuing the service.

Other providers

12. As part of the review, comparisons have been made with other Councils with fact-finding visits to Elmbridge, Surrey Heath, Guildford, Mole Valley, Chichester and with the private sector including Help the Aged, Age Concern England, Age Matters, SAGA.
13. All local authorities visited provide a 5 day a week core service with 24 hour monitoring (either directly or through a third party) and some form of out-of-hours service for faulty equipment.
14. Community Alarm equipment is also available from several private sector providers, however the services often have a relatively high up front payment and are less personal. With all the private schemes the alarm is posted to the recipient for them to install themselves, or an installation charge is levied. In these cases the signposting to other services/organisations giving financial

advice and support, which is provided by the local authority Careline schemes, is not available.

15. A Summary of the key findings from the visits and private sector comparisons is attached at Annexe 2.

Why is change needed

16. Staff levels for the Careline service have reduced in recent years while the number of customers has increased; as a result there have been changes in the way the service has been delivered. Routine visits have reduced to two per year per customer, and out of hours cover has been reduced partly as a result of reduced numbers of calls as technology improves. Office duties have been pre-occupying Careline staff and often impacting on the visiting role and many of the office systems need updating. During the review, a vacant post has been kept vacant pending proposals on the best way forward.
17. The current split of the service into two units creates a fragmentation of the service, a duplication of record keeping activities and confusion amongst staff and prospective customers and referrers. As the hard-wired group schemes are changed over to individual equipment for each tenant, the Careline service to council tenants will evolve and grow over the next eighteen months by up to 600 customers. In addition, with an increasing elderly population and with families often living away, there are opportunities to promote and develop the service as it meet the needs of people wanting confidence to remain in their own homes or of their families who need the backup in case of emergency or ill-health.

Out of hours

18. TSA (Telecare Services Association) standards call for a response to faulty alarms by “the next working day”. Waverley currently provides a 7 day a week response, up to 9pm each evening with the four Careline staff operating a rota. In the last 12 months there were approximately 52 calls out of hours regarding faulty equipment, although just four of these were in fact for faulty equipment.
19. There is no Waverley staff response for emergency calls made on the equipment as these go to the customer’s relatives, carers, neighbours or friends or where necessary the emergency services.
20. It is felt that a disproportionate amount of time, effort and funding is invested in covering out-of-hours using resources that could be redirected to provide a more robust core level of service. As a result, and recognising the fact that Careline equipment is now much more reliable, it is proposed that the existing out of hours rota is replaced by a ‘next working day’ service which will operate from 8am to 6pm Monday to Friday and 9am to 12pm on Saturday.

Options for the future

21. In looking to the future, the review has looked in detail at five options for the two parts of the Careline service:
 - Option A Make no changes and keep the Status Quo

- Option B Create two distinct business units. (i) The Careline Service and (ii) The Supporting People (SP) service. All community alarms/Careline activity to be provided under a single Careline service to both tenants and private customers whilst the Supporting People service focusses on the enhanced service funded by SCC Supporting People funding for those in higher need.
- Option C The Careline and Supporting People (SP) services to be combined into a single business unit.
- Option D Outsource the service to another authority.
- Option E Stop the service and pass the business to the private sector.

Preferred option

22. Having considered the detailed implications of each option, the review group has identified Option B as the preferred way forward, based on the evidence found, the service to customers, the value for money for Waverley and the prospects for the future. The current and proposed staffing structures are set out in Annexe 3.
23. Based on the research undertaken and financial modelling of the proposed structure, the changes should deliver an immediate saving in 2009/10 after merging the two existing staff teams and deleting one post. There is also the opportunity to take advantage of increased opportunities from telecare or promotional activity. This option would also see a core service provided over a longer day and on a Saturday morning to meet the needs of customers and their families. Ideally, the service which has been based in Haslemere for over twenty years would be co-located within the Council's main offices and the opportunities for this are being investigated further.

Discarded options

24. Careful comparison of the other options were considered:
- a. Option A is not viable as the service needs to change and is not covering its costs. The service is in a period of transition and the way it is currently configured - delivering the service to tenants and private customers separately - is complicated, cumbersome and not sustainable.
 - b. Option C, whilst having some advantages, would probably mean that the service would need to be reviewed again in 2 years time when the Supporting People contract comes to an end. The costs and savings would be similar to option B but staff may be diverted to concentrate on the more demanding elements of the enhanced supporting people service and the full benefits would not be realised.
 - c. Option D would see staff transfer under TUPE with income and relevant costs being passed on but with a significant proportion of corporate costs remaining within the general fund.
 - d. Option E would result in redundancy or redeployment of staff and a lower level of service for clients (since most private sector options do not include supported service visits) and a significant proportion of corporate costs remaining within the general fund.

Resource implications

25. The proposals to reconfigure the service by:
- bringing together all Careline activity into a single unit;
 - creating consistency and transparency in the costs and income for the service;
 - changing the out-of-hours response to better meet current need;
 - creating a dedicated administrative resource for appointments and record keeping; and
 - operating on a more commercial model to raise the profile and promote the service

will create synergy and free up additional resource to deliver a higher level of service from within the existing staffing establishment. A remodelling of the Careline budget based on the proposed arrangements and with existing staffing levels (separating HRA costs from General Fund costs and showing income from Supporting People and for all individual council tenant customers and private sector customers) shows that the service would deliver immediate savings for the council and deliver a surplus for the General Fund in 2009/10.

Annexe 4 sets out the detail of the changes assuming modest increases in the charges for the service. The costs for customers paying the standard rate would increase from £4.20 per week to £4.30 and the costs for customers who have their capital equipment purchased by someone else would increase from £2.30 to £2.50 per week. Charges for customers funded by the Supporting People service would be at the maximum funded contribution of £3.50 per week.

Summary of Savings as a result of the review

	£
Savings to General Fund	29,672
Savings to HRA/Supporting people	57,697
Total Savings from Review	£87,369

2009/10 Budget Position regarding savings

	£
Post deleted from draft 2009/10 HRA budget	30,000
Further savings identified (HRA draft 2009/10 budget)	27,000
Further savings identified (General Fund draft 2009/10 budget)	30,000
Total ongoing budget savings	£87,000

Other issues

26. The review highlighted other activity that will be pursued following the Council's decision on the future of the service including:
- the need to renegotiate contracts for Housing Associations to ensure charging recovered costs of the service provided;
 - the need to market and promote the service to ensure opportunities for sustaining independent living are optimised;

- a review of the accommodation needs of the Careline service with a view to consolidating use of premises and co-locating services if possible;
- clarifying the subsidised schemes (i.e. the costs for those receiving the supporting people service or those receiving housing benefit) and discussing with local charities and partners who currently help those on the subsidised rates on how better to support those who find it hard to afford the full cost of the service;
- Ensuring the charges for tenants and private customers are consistent and equitable;
- Considering alternative models of charging using good examples from other providers. (e.g. charging an installation fee and lower weekly cost; providing a purchase option etc); and
- Maintaining a close watch on charges incurred by the service e.g. emergency monitoring, equipment maintenance and invoicing costs.

Conclusion

27. The Review has highlighted that Waverley is in the unusual position of providing two Careline services, one for council tenants, linked to Supporting People services, the other for private customers. There is now the opportunity of creating synergy and generating more value out of the Careline Service by reconfiguring the way the service works, alongside changes in the fee structure. These changes would ensure that the Careline service would offer better value for money for both customers and Waverley and would be self supporting with ongoing savings for both the General Fund and the Housing Revenue Account.

Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee

28. The Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee were concerned that the proposal to change the out-of-hours response would leave elderly residents vulnerable. Officers confirmed that this referred to faulty equipment only and that emergency calls would continue to be answered 24 hours a day. Improved technology meant that the units were not susceptible to faults and some problems were automatically recorded at the call centre.
29. Following comprehensive discussion the Committee agreed the officers recommendation as below with the addition of a third recommendation to receive an update report in 12 months time.

Recommendation

It is recommended that:

1. the two Careline services be combined into a single Careline Service as set out in Option B of the Careline Review;
 2. officers take forward the other recommendations as set out in the report including those listed at paragraphs 25 and 26; and
 3. officers bring a further report to the Committee in 12 months to review what effect the changes to the Careline service have had and any future developments of the service.
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Background Papers (DCS)

There are no background papers (as defined by Section 100D(5) of the Local Government Act 1972) relating to this report.

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