

## STROUD DISTRICT COUNCIL

AGENDA  
ITEM NO

## HOUSING COMMITTEE

**10**

10 SEPTEMBER 2019

<b>Report Title</b>	<b>SHELTERED HOUSING CALL MONITORING SERVICES</b>
<b>Purpose of Report</b>	To inform Committee of the need to change the current hard wired alarm system in all sheltered housing units and replace with an opt in/out Careline facility.
<b>Decisions</b>	<b>The Committee RESOLVES to:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1. Authorise officers to arrange for the decommissioning of the existing hard wired monitoring services.</b></li> <li><b>2. Authorise officers to arrange for the replacement of the current system with Careline.</b></li> </ol>
<b>Consultation and Feedback</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Individual scheme meetings with residents and Councillors</li> <li>Home visits for less mobile tenants</li> <li>Feedback invited by email to:  <a href="mailto:tenancy.consultation@stroud.gov.uk">tenancy.consultation@stroud.gov.uk</a></li> </ul>
<b>Financial Implications and Risk Assessment</b>	<p>The one off costs associated with this proposal are expected to be up to £181k (Appendix B), although it is hoped that not all of this work would be required. This cost could be funded from underspends in the HRA in 2019/20, predominantly from within Sheltered Housing.</p> <p>This would reduce the ongoing cost of Sheltered Housing (which is currently subsidised from HRA rents), allowing service charges to remain as low as possible when they are reviewed in line with the Older Persons Strategy move to Independent Living.</p> <p>Lucy Clothier, Interim Accountancy Manager  Tel: 01453 754343 Email: <a href="mailto:lucy.clothier@stroud.gov.uk">lucy.clothier@stroud.gov.uk</a></p>
<b>Legal Implications</b>	<p>There are no specific legal implications arising from this report, any equalities implications are set out in the body of the report.</p> <p>Patrick Arran, Interim Head of Legal Services  Tel: 01453 754369 Email: <a href="mailto:patrick.arran@stroud.gov.uk">patrick.arran@stroud.gov.uk</a></p>
<b>Report Author (s)</b>	Lynne Mansell, Principal Sheltered Housing Officer Tel: 01453 754173 Email: <a href="mailto:lynne.mansell@stroud.gov.uk">lynne.mansell@stroud.gov.uk</a>
<b>Options</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To upgrade the current hard wired system. This is more costly than Careline with ongoing contractual and maintenance costs.</li> <li>Not to upgrade, however, the current system will be obsolete in 5 years due to advances in technology and essential manufacturers upgrade.</li> </ul>
<b>Performance Management Follow Up</b>	Updated report to be presented to the Housing Committee on a 6 monthly basis.

<b>Background Papers / Appendices</b>	Appendix A	Consultation Meetings results
	Appendix B	Current Provision, One off costs and subscription fees
	Appendix C	Older Persons' Housing Strategy 2019 <a href="https://www.stroud.gov.uk/housing/housing-strategy">https://www.stroud.gov.uk/housing/housing-strategy</a>
	Appendix D	Forecast of Works

## 1.0. Background

1.1. Hard wire alarm systems were commonly introduced in the 1960's and 70's, and designed when few people had access to telephones and long before mobile phones and broadband technology. They provided a method for a "warden" or "scheme manager" to communicate with residents at a time when there were few alternatives. Currently all Sheltered Housing sites belonging to Stroud District Council have hard-wired alarm systems.

## 2.0. Introduction

2.1. **Tunstall and Hereford monitoring centre:** The hard-wired warden call systems have changed very little and there has been little innovation. The current hard wired system is coming to the end of its useful life and is difficult and expensive to maintain. These systems have not been manufactured for many years and, although we still have support, the cost of maintaining them is rising disproportionately. The costs to both source the necessary materials for repair, where still available, and maintain specialist Test Rigs in Service and Repair Centres are increasing rapidly; this involves testing equipment ahead of it being installed and diagnosis of equipment failure. As a result, renewal of service contracts for existing equipment have seen a price rise of 15% per annum and costs will only continue to rise.

2.2. As the current system approaches the end of its natural life, there are further challenges with individual need based equipment such as door sensors and falls monitors. As these devices are required to be programmed into the monitoring system there are increasingly more limitations due to advances in technology and incompatibility. The current contract with Tunstall ceases on 31 March 2020.

2.3. Changes in telecoms infrastructure are necessitating reviews to explore alternative approaches to improve tenant satisfaction and create efficiencies at the same time.

2.4. To upgrade the current system across all 28 sheltered housing sites will cost in the region of £320,000.

2.5. **Ok Each Day** telephone system was introduced as a pilot in 2014; the provider is called Housing Proactive and is based in Windermere in the Lake District. The pilot was rolled out across all sheltered housing schemes with zero cost to the tenant providing a free telephone with a red button to be pressed daily to indicate tenant is OK that day. It also provides a free line to repairs at SDC and a free customer service line to Housing Proactive.

2.6. This service has an annual cost of £97,930.00 to the HRA with no costs to the user. There are currently 228 users of OK each Day – this is not a financially sustainable service and as such the recommendation is to withdraw the service as a free option

on 31 March 2019. Should tenants wish to subscribe to this service, all detail will be provided to set up an individual contract between user and provider. The current cost is set at £35.00 set up fee and £15.99 per month.

- 2.7. **Careline** has been selected as the preferred option as it is a standalone device that requires no hard wiring and no emergency pull cords to be fixed to the property providing a more tailored approach with choice for all tenants. There is no procurement required for Careline as the service is managed by Community Services.
- 2.8. Recommendations follow SDC's corporate approach; the service is managed by Community Services and utilised by many people across the district in all tenures and is not age critical. Careline plays a key role in helping vulnerable people and/or older people live independently and safely in their own homes. The service can provide vital reassurance to residents and their family and friends when they need it most.
- 2.9. Careline is a national provider that provide help and support, especially for those who live alone providing the users with a base unit and a pendant (multiple wearing options; neck, wrist or belt). The base unit is small and discreet and installed wherever the telephone socket is located. The base unit is the vocal communication between the user and the monitoring team which has a loud speaker and built in microphone. Battery backup is included which will boot-up should there be a power cut. The pendant is waterproof, uses frequency 869 MHz which will not interfere with any medical equipment in the home and has a large range of coverage within the garden and home of approximately 100 metres.
- 2.10. The Careline base unit can cater for up to fifteen external devices to be programmed in e.g. falls detectors, smoke detectors, movement sensors giving a tailored approach to the user. These means should the user fall or activate the smoke detector (if linked) it will send an automatic alert to the monitoring centre without the user having to press the pendant.
- 2.11. The monitoring centre for Careline is based at Hereford who we currently use in conjunction with Tunstall and are aware of our customer base.
- 2.12. Considerations
  1. Residents are not happy paying for an alarm service that they neither want nor use. Most prefer not to have red cords displayed throughout their homes and more often than not they are tied up, tucked away or cut off. Tenant consultation (see Appendix A) has evidenced that tenants consider Careline to be a suitable and better option/replacement than current hard wired system allowing choice.
  2. The cost of upgrading the hardwired monitoring service is approximately £320k. It would not enable residents a choice of whether they have it or not but the cost will be reflected in their service charge. There would be a substantial increase in service charge for (a) the upgrade and (b) the ongoing contractual and maintenance costs.

3. The start-up cost of installing Careline with a pendant per household is in the region of £60k with no on costs. This capital cost will be met by the HRA with no cost to the resident. There would be an expected minimum cost of installing telephone lines to those properties without a telephone line. A survey of all residents will be undertaken to ascertain how many telephone lines need to be installed. There are currently around 11% of tenants that do not have a telephone line into their home however, not all tenants without a telephone line may wish to subscribe to Careline.
4. Communal Fire Alarm panels, lifts and disabled W.C.'s which are currently linked to Tunstall and Hereford monitoring centre will be connected via a sim card dialler to repairs during 0845 – 1700hrs and to Civica out of hours service outside of working hours.
5. Careline will link into the smoke alarm in individual homes if there is a recognised vulnerability. Should tenants not require linked smoke detectors or not require Careline there will be a hard wired alarm but like all mainstream properties it will be an alarm that will sound but not be linked to a monitoring centre.
6. Door entry for tenants who share a main communal door entry will have the Tunstall speech module currently in situ replaced with a telephone handset to release the front door on notification of a visitor.

### 3.0. Risks

<b>Risk Description</b>	<b>Likelihood</b>	<b>Impact</b>	<b>Mitigation Measures</b>
The sheltered housing service is currently subsidised by the HRA which will continue to return a deficit if recommendations are not accepted.	Probable	High	The recommendation made in this report will prevent current telephone outage effect – should existing telephone line go down the whole scheme goes down. It will further reduce financial burden of the service on the HRA. This will also link into the de-pooling of rents/service charge project giving transparency and choice.
The safety and well-being of our residents is compromised by the removal of the hardwired monitoring systems	Unlikely	Low	The service will be tailored to suit the individual: Careline will be available to those who require/need it. Smoke/heat detectors will be hard wired to the property if there is a noted vulnerability. Careline can be programmed to a variety of different devices to include monitoring of detectors.

<b>Risk Description</b>	<b>Likelihood</b>	<b>Impact</b>	<b>Mitigation Measures</b>
Door entry system will not go through Tunstall so unexpected callers will be unable to gain entrance to scheme	Unlikely	Low	Resident's flats will have access to direct communication through telephone handsets installed into the property giving oral contact. Tradesmen will gain access through TRADE button with restricted hours.
There is a risk that residents who need an alarm will be unwilling to have on and pay for it	Unlikely	Low	Officers to carry out assessments as required. Regular communication with residents via attendance at social activities and implementation of Community Hubs on scheme.

#### **4.0. Costs and Savings**

- 4.1. Current contractual costs for monitoring services are £170,500 which would be eradicated with removal of services. The recommendations made in this paper will eliminate all future contractual and maintenance costs to sheltered housing as Community Services will procure and manage the contract.
- 4.2. Recommended change of service to Careline will raise a one off implementation cost of approximately £196.5k (Appendix B for breakdown of figures). This will be reduced significantly if existing wiring from door entry to individual dwellings can be used. It is impossible to give a possible likelihood on this at present however intensive investigations will be arranged should the recommendations be passed. Once investigations have been completed, works will be scheduled to commence leading up to 1 April 2020 (Appendix D).
- 4.3. There will be no ongoing monitoring costs or contractual agreements for the service as, once Careline is in situ, the resident can register to service as below:
- **Careline** – cost to resident for monitoring services and pendant at approximately £6.72 + vat per month (currently £1.68 + vat per week). HRA will subsidise the cost of the Careline units which will only apply to sheltered tenants. One pendant per subscription will be issued. Further pendants will be chargeable to user at £50 +VAT. Site Officers will be trained to address any faults with the equipment: this will be carried out on a responsive basis.
  - **OKEachDay** – daily wellbeing button press – cost £15.99 per month if tenant wishes to subscribe to this service.

## 5.0. Summary

5.1. This report recommends; current monitoring services are decommissioned and Careline is available to all sheltered accommodation.

### 5.2. Rationale for Recommendations

- Current monitoring systems do not allow for a tailored service to residents as each dwelling is hard wired to a monitoring centre with red pull cords in every room
- Provides tenants the option of not having an alarm and therefore not having to pay for a system unless they use it.
- Current monitoring systems have an annual contractual cost of £170,000
- Current system is outdated with parts becoming obsolete and repair times becoming longer escalating potential risk to business
- Current system operates from a single User Application Control (UAC) telephone line; one fault will knock out entire scheme cover.
- Careline operates from individual telephone line connections: a faulty line will only disable one connection rather than the whole scheme.
- No contract costs for service users to be reflected in Service Charge.
- Fewer false alarms creating a more efficient and effective service with less out of hours call outs for officers, in turn reducing staff costs.

5.3. Resident Benefits include:

- Removal of unwanted equipment in homes.
- Potential for lower service charges at the next review.
- Access an alarm system for those who want it rather than a 'one size fits all' alarm in all properties.
- No intrusions from monitoring centre when burning toast/cooking.

5.4. Council benefits for this include:

- Reduction in expenditure, servicing and maintenance costs
- Makes properties more attractive and less institutionalised
- Empowers residents by giving them more control and choice
- Better detects the changing needs and requirements of residents
- Deploy a service that works well in all properties including general needs

5.5. Careline is supplied and managed in-house by Stroud District Council's Community Services' Neighbourhood Wardens who are willing to train Site Officers to maintain and rectify faults on the system allowing there to be no external contract or financial outlay to tenant or council.

5.6. **Outcomes**: To ensure that the service we offer is efficient and effective, meeting the needs of the current and future residents of sheltered housing, linking into the Older Persons Strategy to include independent living.

- 5.7. Decommissioning current monitoring services would assist with financial sustainability of the service, enabling it to support itself more in the future. This will link into the current service charge project ensuring a fairer and accurate charging structure as there will be no cost for a hard wired service which is not used by all tenants.
- 5.8. Once the hard wired systems are wholly decommissioned there will be significant additional savings on the physical maintenance of the existing equipment as well.
- 5.9. Payments for Careline will be a direct arrangement with Community Services who will manage the contracts with no hidden on-costs to tenants.

## **6.0 Equality Implications**

Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 sets out the Public Sector Equality Duty ('PSED'). Consideration of equality matters is an integral part of a local authority's decision making. The PSED requires public authorities to have "due regard" to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations when carrying out activities.

- 6.1 In order to assess whether there were any equality implications, officers carried out an Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) which was completed on the 22 July 2019. The EIA concluded that there may be impacts on the basis of age and, potentially, disability.
- 6.2 The EIA identified actions that would mitigate against any potential negative impact with the protected characteristics of age and disability. These were:
  - Advice, support and assistance made available to tenants in relation to the Careline system.

### Tenant Consultation Meetings from June 17<sup>th</sup> – July 22<sup>nd</sup> 2019

Scheme	Tenants present	Home Visit	Councillors Present
Hazelwood Stonehouse	14		1 – Cllr M Ross
Malvern Gardens	11		1 – Cllr J Miles
Walter Preston Court	12		1 – Cllr J Miles
Grange View	11		0
Grove Park Road	9		0
Sherborne House	12	1	1 – Cllr M Ross
St Nicholas Court	16		0
Jenner Court	9		0
Hamfallow Court	14	4	0
Willow Road	6		0
Dryleaze House	40		0
Burdett House	8		1 – Cllr M Ross
The Beeches	6		1 – Cllr S-Kennedy
Ashcroft House	6		0
Concorde	10		0
Springfields Court	14		0
Chapel Lane	6		0
Archway Gardens	15		0
George Pearce House	17		0
Ashwell House	10		0
Draycott	13		0
Vizard Close	13		1 – Cllr D Cornell
The Corriett	17		0
Total Attendance S Housing	289	5	

With regard to tenant feedback, the consultation was met with interest and positivity. 289 out of 598 tenants attended the meetings in the communal lounges, 5 home visits were carried out and 6 telephone messages were left to give apologies but happy with removal of the red cords.

Consultation was centred around the equipment coming to the end of its natural life and how the entire system would be replaced with Careline receiver and one pendant on the tenant's request.

Throughout the meetings all attendees were engaged and very interested in the recommendations.

There were several questions and comments at every meeting for example, when it was mentioned about the red cords being removed tenants comments included "We would never fall where they are placed so it's a great idea", "the Careline looks much tidier than the red cords all over the flat", "happy to get rid of the cords, they make it look like an old people's home".

When discussing subscribing and the cost of Careline, comments included “£1.68 is not a lot to look after my Health & Wellbeing”, “what if I haven’t got a telephone line?” “No concerns as long as everyone have the option”, “what happens if somebody cannot afford it?”, “is it covered by Pension Credit” and “can I dip in and out of the service as I feel the need?”

With regard to the communal areas, tenants were informed the main fire panel will be fitted with a dialler through to repairs to raise alert if activated, the lift and disabled toilet will have the same device fitted and the communal front door will be operated by a handset within their homes. Independent smoke detectors in people’s homes would be hard wired from the electricity supply unless there is a vulnerability whereby a different smoke detector would be fitted which would activate the alarm without the user having to use the pendant. These devices are funded by Gloucestershire County Council and are allocated on assessment which would be identified by our current support team. There were several comments regarding this topic; for the smoke detector change - “I will be happy not to speak to someone every time I burn the toast”, “I find control a nuisance when burning toast or opening the oven”

With regard to the front door not going through the Tunstall system tenants commented “how will I let my visitors in”, “this makes it so much more personalised which is great”, “security should improve as it is up to us not to let people in if we don’t know who they are”.

General comments and questions at the end of the session included “what about communal areas?”, “will support still be available to me if I do not subscribe to Careline?”.

There was also a web address [tenant.consultation@stroud.gov.uk](mailto:tenant.consultation@stroud.gov.uk) for tenants to make any comments, suggestions and concerns; 8 emails were received and put into the following categories:

<b>Scheme</b>	<b>Comment</b>	<b>Response</b>
Burdett House	Is this privatisation?	Clarity and understanding provided following scheme meeting
Burdett House	Would like privatisation addressed before end of consultation period	As above – tenant has total understanding of recommendation and feels it is a good idea for sustainability.
Sherborne House	Thinks Careline is very good as a family member outside of sheltered has it. Enquiring of cost and installation.	Telephoned tenant with answers to enquiry
Sherborne House	Family Member – mother cannot hear well, will there be notes from the meeting?	Home visit

Dryleaze Court	<p>I think it is an excellent idea to get rid of the archaic Monitoring system in the sheltered housing properties.</p> <p>They do look as if you are living in a care home. Very unattractive specially the ugly 'box' on the wall, with a bright red button on it, and long red cords hanging down.</p> <p>A system of personal pendants for tenants at risk is a much better idea ,as the cords obviously are not always exactly where needed at all times.</p> <p>Much better to pay for it only if you use it too,</p>	Thank you for your comments
Hamfallow Court	I do not intend to use Careline but how will the door entry system work.	Full information given – each flat will have a handset to release the front door when alerted
Vizard Close	I am happy to live independently without Careline until I need it	Thank you for your comments
Vizard Close	<p>Concerns about the communal areas not having an alarm system.</p> <p>Voice over wi-fi and video calling should be available in the communal lounge</p>	<p>The Communal Lounge is a social space, in case of emergency advice would be to use mobile phone.</p> <p>Digital technology includes open wi-fi in communal areas which can be used for voice over wi-fi and videos calls on users private devices.</p>

## Appendix B

<b>Current Provision</b>	<b>Detail</b>	<b>Cost</b>
Tunstall and Hereford	Full hard wired service across 28 sheltered housing schemes	£72,647
OK Each Day	Telephone with OK Each Day, pressed once per day to signify tenant OK	£97,903

<b>One Off works</b>	<b>Detail</b>	<b>Cost – financial year</b>
Decommission Tunstall and Hereford contracts	Install Careline into each property – 600 units	£59,400 - 2019/20 financial year
Mechanical & Electrical	Rewire door entries to hand set system, fit diallers in lifts, communal fire panels and disabled w.c's	£112k (approximately, will be substantially lower if existing wiring can be utilised) – 2020/21 financial year
B.T. Telephone	Installation of telephone lines – approximately 11% of stock	£9.5k – 2029/20 financial year.

<b>Annual Savings</b>		
	Removal of Tunstall and Hereford Services	£72,647
	Withdrawal of OK Each Day Services	£97,903
	<b>Total annual savings</b>	<b>170,550</b>

## Appendix D

<b>Action</b>	<b>Detail</b>	<b>Date</b>
Careline Order and Installation	<p>Order 598 Units</p> <p>Contact all tenants to establish Careline subscriptions.</p> <p>Logistics – telephone lines/plug sockets in users home. Order BT lines as required.</p> <p>Installation of Careline base units ready for use</p>	<p>Mid-Sept 2019</p> <p>Mid-Sep to Mid Oct 2019</p> <p>Mid-Sep to Mid Oct 2109</p> <p>Jan – Mar 2020</p>
Mechanical and Electrical	<p>Investigate wiring for door entry system, diallers for lifts, fire panels and w.c's</p> <p>Commence removal of Tunstall speech modules and fit door entry handsets in users home</p> <p>Commence installation of diallers</p>	<p>Sept/Oct 2019</p> <p>Tbc – up to 31 Mar 2020</p> <p>Tbc - up to 31 Mar 2020</p>
Tunstall Equipment	Removal of Tunstall speech modules in communal areas and replace with white blanking plate	w/c 1 April 20020
Sheltered Officers	<p>Collection of all OKEachDay telephone systems</p> <p>Remove red pull cords from all properties and communal areas.</p>	<p>w/c 1 April 2020</p> <p>w/c 1 April 2020</p>