

Taunton Deane Borough Council

Full Council – 3 October 2017

Deane Helpline Funding - Change to the Capital Programme

This matter is the responsibility of Councillor Terry Beale

Report Author: Chris Hall

1 Executive Summary

This report seeks approval to alter the Capital Programme to support the purchase of replacement lifeline equipment required following BT infrastructure upgrades.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 It is recommended that Members approve a supplementary estimate of £94,347 to the Capital Programme.
- 2.2 That Members approve the transfer of £94,347 from the capital financing reserve/revenue underspend identified in 2017/2018 to fund this work.

3 Risk Assessment

Risk Matrix

Description	Likelihood	Impact	Overall
Customer being unable to contact the Deane Helpline in an emergency	3	5	15
<i>Equipment notifies the customer if it has failed, equipment replacement</i>	1	5	5
Loss of customer and their income if equipment is not replaced	5	5	25
<i>The mitigation of this is to replace the equipment as a prevention</i>	1	5	5
Reputational damage if we fail to act quickly	3	3	9
This report is brought before Full Council on the earlier scheduled meeting	3	3	9
Loss of customers who may be concerned about reliability of equipment	3	3	9
Act quickly to resolve the equipment issues and inform customers	2	3	6

Risk that a customer or their family may take action against TDBC if an emergency call does not connect in the event of a life changing or life threatening incident in the home.	4	5	20
Equipment replacement to be undertaken in order of priority and reported failures to be treated as emergencies	2	5	10

4 Background

- 4.1 Deane Helpline customers are reliant upon lifeline equipment to support the monitoring and response service from Taunton Deane's Control Centre based at Kilkenny Court.
- 4.2 The service has around 1800 customers, lifelines are supplied by the Council and loaned to the customer whilst they have a contract with us, and returned upon completion of that contract.
- 4.3 Over the past few years the replacement of these lifelines has been considered and a schedule of replacing the units, starting with the older generation units first, has been implemented. However, due to the rate the units are failing, this is now becoming unmanageable within the current budget.
- 4.4 BT have recently started infrastructure upgrades across the area and this has created problems with the reliability of the older lifeline models
- 4.5 Over the past months Control Room Operators at the Deane Helpline have recognised that there has been an increasing amount of faults being reported by customers of particular machines. The machines in question are Lifeline 400's, Lifeline Connect and Lifeline Connect +, all developed by Tunstall, between 2000-2012 and subsequently made obsolete in 2012.
- 4.6 The issues that have been reported to the Deane Helpline in relation to these machines are as follows:-
- Jamming main BT line into the property;
 - Potential for alarm call not to go through to the Control Centre;
 - Microphone in machine not working; and
 - Customer's landline not working.
- 4.7 With the exception of the issue with the microphone in the units, all the other issues are in direct relation to the upgrading of the telephone lines by BT. Due to the machines' age they are no longer compatible with the new generation of telephone wiring and are beginning to fail at a rapid rate, meaning replacement is needed with new units as repair/upgrade is not possible due to the discontinuation of the machines.
- 4.8 As yet we have not had an emergency call fail to connect to the contact centre but without reliable equipment we cannot have certainly that this would not happen.
- 4.9 In order for Deane Helpline to continue to offer the best possible service to its customers and guarantee their safety we urgently need to replace 953 units that are failing.

- 4.10 Equipment changeover will be managed through Lifeline Officers swapping over equipment as it becomes faulty, and through the planned contact visits with service users. During a failure the equipment gives off an audible and visible warning in the clients home so they are aware there is an issue and have been making contact. The accreditation of the service requires that the equipment is exchanged within 48 hours. As a service we recognise that this is a critical failure and would be dealt with as an emergency, it would never go beyond the 48 hour period.

5 Links to Corporate Aims / Priorities

- 5.1 Approval of the supplementary budget will continue to support vulnerable people living in their own homes.

6 Finance / S151 comments

- 6.1 Deane Helpline is a service with a turnover of £1,030,000 and produced a profit before support services and capital charges of £22,000 in 2016/2017.
- 6.2 The current method of charging for the service is through a subscription model with the customer paying for the lease of the equipment, monitoring, and emergency response based on a weekly cost.
- 6.3 Without lifelines customers are no longer covered by the service and we will no longer have the income that those customers generate. The loss of 953 customers would mean an annual income loss of £290,398 pa.
- 6.4 The replacement lifeline units cost £99 each (zero rated vat) and the current charge for the service is £5.86 per week. A simple calculation of one against the other would neglect to take account of the other costs of monitoring and emergency response but the impact of the loss of those customers would be catastrophic for the business.
- 6.5 The funding has been identified from the capital financing reserve/revenue underspend identified in 2017/2018. Deane Helpline's revenue budget carries the cost of the capital depreciation, this will be an additional pressure of £18,870 over five years.

7 Legal Implications

- 7.1 We are currently aware of an issue with the reliability of the lifeline equipment, we may therefore be presenting a risk to this authority that our emergency arrangements for these customers are not sufficient.
- 7.2 In the event of a failure in an emergency situation we may be open to a civil claim if we have been aware of an issue and failed to act appropriately in that customer or family's view.

8 Environmental Impact Implications

- 8.1 There are no implications of this report.

9 Safeguarding and/or Community Safety Implications

- 9.1 Although a choice based service customers are often vulnerable and depend upon this provision to allow them to continue to live independent lives.
- 9.2 Failure of the equipment undermines this independence and may place additional pressure on supported housing services.

10 The Equality and Diversity Implications

- 10.1 There are no identified implications if Members support the recommendations of this report. It would however be the more vulnerable members of our community that would be impacted if this equipment is not replaced.

11 Social Value Implications

- 11.1 There are no identified implications as a result of this report.

12 Partnership Implications

- 12.1 There are no identified implications as a result of this report.

13 Health and Wellbeing Implications

- 13.1 There are no identified implications as a result of this report.

14 Asset Management Implications

- 14.1 There are no identified implications as a result of this report.

15 Consultation Implications

- 15.1 There are no identified implications as a result of this report.

Democratic Path:

- **Full Council – Yes**

Reporting Frequency : **Once only**

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