



PORTFOLIO HOLDER DECISION NOTICE

INDIVIDUAL DECISION BY THE PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR FINANCE AND ESTATES

TOPIC - UPGRADE OF CENTRAL CONTROL SOFTWARE TO TUNSTALL PNC6.3

PROCEDURAL INFORMATION

The Access to Information Procedure Rules – Part 4, Section 22 of the Council's Constitution provides for a decision to be made by an individual member of Cabinet.

In accordance with the Procedure Rules, the Corporate Director (Governance), the Chief Executive and the Head of Finance are consulted together with Chairman and Vice Chairman of The Overview and Scrutiny Committee and any other relevant overview and scrutiny committee. In addition, all Members are notified.

If five or more Members from those informed so request, the Leader may require the matter to be referred to Cabinet for determination.

Contact Officers: Steve Tong (01962 848298) & Lynn Curtis (01962 848399)

Case Officer: Steve Tong

Committee Administrator: Nancy Graham (01962 848235)

SUMMARY

The Community Alarm Service operates a Tunstall Control Centre with Tunstall PNC5 software. There is a voice recorder linked to the equipment which allows conversations and transactions to be reviewed.

The existing voice recorder is obsolete and can no longer be repaired in the event of a breakdown.

The upgrade would offer a number of new features, including compatibility with other monitoring centres which would enable partnering arrangements, sharing responsibility for calls (e.g. at nights or during emergencies).

By obtaining this equipment from Tunstall, monitoring of the voice recorder will be possible from all existing terminals in the control room, whereas currently the Senior Control Operator has to sit in the basement with a pad and paper to transcribe calls. It is a requirement of the Telecare Services Association accreditation that sample calls are monitored, and we also rely on this feature to investigate issues in the event of complaints etc.

Although the price of the upgrade (£16,000) would normally require three quotes, we are restricted to working with Tunstall as the software needs to be compatible with our existing Tunstall monitoring station.

Maintenance and improvement of the Community Alarm Service contributes to the Council's Health and Wellbeing and Inclusive Society objectives.

DECISION

It is recommended that the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Estates make a direction under Contract Procedure Rule 2.4 (a) to waive the need for competitive quotes to be obtained and to approve the purchase of the upgrade to PNC6 software (including an integrated voice recorder) from Tunstall.

REASON FOR THE DECISION AND OTHER ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

The Community Alarm monitoring equipment was extensively upgraded to PNC5 early in 2009. Technology continues to advance rapidly in the social alarm sector and since the last upgrade the opportunity has been developed for our monitoring station at Hyde Lodge to share client data with other Tunstall alarm centres. The latest PNC6.3 solution is a relatively low cost option for a major upgrade to our existing functionality. It would also provide us with an integrated voice recorder to replace our existing obsolete model.

There are no other options to meet the need for an integrated voice recorder and to offer compatibility and the opportunity for partnership working with other Tunstall equipped control centres

RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

The proposed upgrade to the Tunstall PNC6.3 solution will require a one-off payment of £16,000 which will be met from the Central Control Budget within the Housing Revenue Account. There will be no additional ongoing running costs.

CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN ON THE DECISION

Councillor Tony Coates, Portfolio Holder for Strategic Housing & Landlord Services, has been consulted and supports the proposal.

FURTHER ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED FOLLOWING PUBLICATION OF THE DRAFT PORTFOLIO HOLDER DECISION NOTICE

The following queries were raised by Councillors Collin and Pearson during Member consultation.

Councillor Collin query relating to the allocation of the costs and he was advised that the Community Alarm Service was initially established as a support service for the benefit of tenants in the Council's own sheltered housing accommodation, and it therefore sits wholly within the Housing Revenue Account. By extending the service to private clients through the Lifeline service, the Council was able to defray some of the costs, and private clients contribute to the capital and revenue costs of the service through the charges they pay. The charges are reviewed every April to ensure that Lifeline customers make an appropriate contribution to the costs of the service.

Councillor Pearson raised concerns about whether tenants could opt out of the service. He was advised that the Community Alarm service aimed not to be intrusive but to provide reassurance to vulnerable people that help was available if they needed it. Any customers who consider their privacy may be compromised can elect not to use the service. Tenants who live in sheltered schemes with traditional 'hard-wired' alarm connections all have to pay for the service at present to recover the Council's capital outlay. However as the on-site equipment at the schemes was upgraded, the Council would have a more flexible solution which would allow some tenants to have the option to opt out of the charges. Where the alarm is provided via a personal 'Lifeline', the equipment can be removed to avoid a client being charged if they do not want to use the service.

DECLARATION OF INTERESTS BY THE DECISION MAKER OR A MEMBER OR OFFICER CONSULTED

N/A

DISPENSATION GRANTED BY THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE

N/A

Approved by: (signature)

Date of Decision: 04.05.12

Councillor Keith Wood – Portfolio Holder for Finance and Estates