

Southend-on-Sea Borough Council

Agenda
Item No.

Report of Deputy Chief Executive (People)

to
Cabinet

on

7th November 2017

Report prepared by: Tracy Harris, Commissioner for Older
People and Carers

Careline Service

People Scrutiny Committee

Executive Councillors: Cllr Lesley Salter and Cllr Mark Flewitt

A Part 1 (Public Agenda Item)

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 This report seeks Cabinet's approval to cease funding the Careline service in the Council's sheltered housing schemes with effect from 31 March 2018.

2. Recommendations

Cabinet is asked to:

- 2.1 Note the historical, current and future proposed arrangements in relation to the funding of the Careline service.
- 2.2 Agree to commence formal consultation to cease funding to Careline with effect from 31 March 2018.

3. Background

Historical provision

- 3.1 At a national level the Supporting People (SP) grant from 2003 provided ring-fenced funding for Housing Related Support (HRS) for the purpose of developing people's capacity to live independently in accommodation or sustaining their capacity to do so. This funding was introduced following changes to Housing Benefit which had previously funded some such services.
- 3.2 By 2011, funding for SP was incorporated into the Formula Grant paid to local authorities; the ring-fence having been removed two years prior. At this time government funding to local authorities was being reduced as part of wider fiscal cuts.

- 3.3 As part of a wider reduction in funding, Essex County Council ceased funding of their Community Alarm service when the Cabinet approved on 21 February 2017 that they would not re-procure the contract expiring on 31 March 2017.
- 3.4 Since April 2003 the Southend SP grant has funded South Essex Homes (SEH), the Arm's Length Management Organisation for the Council, with 47 sheltered schemes across the Borough, to deliver Careline (a dispersed or hard-wired Community Alarm service) at a cost of £60,000 per annum.

Present provision

- 3.5 SP currently funds the provision for the subsidy of Careline for Council tenants regardless of their need for this service.
- 3.6 In Council owned Part 1 (Low dependency) schemes existing and new tenants are offered the choice of a dispersed alarm. In Council owned Part 2 (Higher dependency) schemes all tenants receive Careline as a condition of their tenancy as this is hardwired into the buildings. (See appendix 2 – Classification of Sheltered Schemes).
- 3.7 The hardwired alarm is a part of the furniture of the accommodation and therefore part of the package that residents are made aware of and sign up to as a service when they take on the tenancy in SEH part 2 schemes.
- 3.8 The current charge for a dispersed alarm in a Council owned sheltered scheme is £1.38. The charge for a hardwired alarm is £1.33
- 3.8 There are currently 1,148 Sheltered Housing tenants in receipt of the Careline service. 283 tenants pay directly for the service as "self-funders". 865 tenants are benefiting from the SP subsidy for Careline, given that they are also in receipt of housing benefit, which totals a grant of £60,000 per annum. The table below shows the mix of Careline recipients.

	Sheltered Part 1	Sheltered Part 2	Total
Tenants with SP funded Careline	104	761	865
Self-funders	31	252	283
No. of tenants with Careline	135	1,013	1,148
Weekly Charge (sheltered tenants)(2017/18 prices)	£1.38	£1.33	
Total	£9,687.60	£70,059.08	£79,746.68

Future provision

- 3.12 The Council is not required to provide Housing Related Support (HRS) services, but there is a recognition that they help to fulfil the Council's duties under the Care Act 2014 to prevent care needs from arising which will have cost implications

elsewhere in the public economy. However following the previous withdrawal of SP support to other housing providers, the Councils own sheltered schemes are the only recipient of SP grant for Community Alarm services.

- 3.13 To address the disparate charges to Southend residents and ensure that Community Alarm services are provided more equitably across Southend to all residents in need regardless of their tenure, there is a need to cease Southend-on-Sea Borough Council funding for Careline. It is therefore proposed to cease funding to Careline from 1 April 2018, following a required programme of consultation of 8 weeks with all affected Council tenants.
- 3.14 The proposed cessation of funding would require all SBC sheltered scheme tenants to pay for the Community Alarm service, regardless of whether they are in receipt of Housing Benefit or not. Housing Benefit cannot fund Careline, so the charge will fall to the tenant to pay. Those tenants who are already self-funders will not be affected by this change.
- 3.15 This means for sheltered part 1 tenants they can opt to continue to receive the community alarm system and, based on current prices, would need to pay the weekly charge of £1.38. Alternatively they could choose to opt out of the service and no charge would be due. For sheltered part 2 tenants they would have no option but to continue to receive the community alarm system and be required to pay a weekly charge of £1.33.
- 3.16 Vulnerable residents who can demonstrate they are unable to pay for Careline would not be left in hardship and without the needed support; SEH will work with the Council to support these residents on a case by case basis and ensure that where needed social care assessments and access to other funds to pay the charge will be available.

4. Other Options

- 4.1 To continue paying the supporting people grant for each Council sheltered housing tenant in receipt of housing benefit, at a cost of £60,000 per annum. This means that Supporting People would not be able to meet their 2017/18 saving target of £60,000.

5. Reasons for Recommendations

- 5.1 To address the disparate charges to Southend residents and ensure that Community Alarm services are provided more equitably across Southend to all residents in need regardless of their tenure there is a need to cease Southend-on-Sea Borough Council funding for Careline.
- 5.2 To achieve the SP savings target of £60,000

6. Corporate Implications

- 6.1 Contribution to Council's Vision & Corporate Priorities

Healthy:

Improve the life chances of our residents, especially our vulnerable children and adults, by working to reduce inequalities and social deprivation across our communities. Work with the public and private rented sectors to provide good quality housing

Safe:

Look after and safeguard our children and vulnerable adults.

6.2 Financial Implications

Decommissioning the supporting people contract for the Council's sheltered schemes will enable the 2017/18 efficiency saving to be delivered. All things being equal, there will be no financial impact the HRA as the loss of the grant will be offset by additional income from residents. However there is a risk that some residents will choose to opt-out of the careline scheme and therefore HRA income will be lower than the grant lost.

If the decision to de-commission the SP sheltered contracts is not approved then it will not be possible to deliver the SP efficiency savings by March 2018.

6.3 Legal Implications

The Council is not required to provide Housing Related Support (HRS) services and therefore there should be no grounds for legal challenge. The driver for this recommendation is for the equitable delivery of this service to Southend residents.

6.4 People Implications

The 104 residents in Part 1 schemes, where Careline operates using a dispersed alarm system will have the option, currently receive the service free of charge through the supporting people grant being paid for those on housing benefit. Under these recommendations they will have £71.76 (2017/18 prices) added to their yearly service charge (£1.38 per week). Alternatively they will be able to opt out of the service

The 761 residents in Part 2 schemes, eligible for supporting people grant, where Careline is hardwired will not be able to opt out of the service as others with dispersed alarms will and therefore may experience financial hardship. There will be an additional yearly sum of £69.16 (2017/18 prices) added to their service charge (£1.33 per week).

6.5 Property Implications

None

6.6 Consultation

Residents

It is proposed that Officers of SBC work closely with SEH to ensure tenants are appropriately consulted with, and supported to understand the new provision.

Consultation will take place with affected residents regarding the additional cost they will have to pay, the impact of this and whether the impact can be mitigated in any way. It is proposed that the Consultation programme will commence with a meeting with the Sheltered Housing Group and a meeting with the SEH Sheltered Housing Officers. Meetings with residents at all sheltered schemes will follow together with written communications detailing all questions and answers from the meetings. It is proposed that consultation is carried out over an 8 week programme between November and December 2017.

6.7 Equalities and Diversity Implications

All older people living in Southend on Sea should have equality of access to a Community Alarm service.

6.8 Risk Assessment

There will be a communications plan together with consultation and engagement with residents in order to mitigate this risk.

6.9 Value for Money

For there to be equitable provision of the Careline service across Southend on Sea to all residents regardless of their tenure.

6.10 Community Safety Implications

None

6.11 Environmental Impact

None

7. **Background Papers**

None

8. **Appendices**



Appendix 1-
Sheltered Housing Cla