

**Meeting:** Cabinet  
**Date:** 4<sup>th</sup> March 2024  
**Classification:** Part 1  
**Key Decision:** Yes  
**Title of Report:** **Telecare Charging Consultation**

**Executive Director:** Mark Harvey  
**Report Author:** Nicola Mickleburgh  
**Executive Councillor:**

## **1. Executive Summary**

- 1.1. To inform Cabinet of the outcomes of the consultation which was undertaken and to recommend that the telecare monitoring service within adult social care becomes a chargeable service.
- 1.2. A total of 96 consultation responses were received. The overall consensus from all those who responded was that they understood why the Council were proposing the charges but felt the cost-of-living crisis, would have an impact on them being able to access the telecare service in the future, which could impact their quality of life and the security of staying in their own home.
- 1.3. It is important to note that all individuals receiving social care services will be offered a financial assessment and will only contribute to the cost of their care in line with what they are assessed as being able to afford.

## **2. Recommendations**

### **It is recommended that Cabinet:**

- 2.1 Notes the outcome of the public consultation on the proposed changes to the Authority's recommendation for the introduction of a contributory charge; and
- 2.2 Agrees to implement the recommended changes to the charging arrangements for the Telecare Monitoring Service.
- 2.3 Following the cabinet meeting the results of the consultation will be published on the website and those affected by the charge will be notified by letter.

### **3. Background**

- 3.1. Telecare can be used throughout the home to support people, and their carers, to remain living as independently as possible and for longer.. It is usually supported by a base unit connected to a telephone line and automatically raises an alert when support is required. Examples of some of telecare equipment are bed/chair occupancy sensors, falls detectors, property exit sensors and smoke /carbon monoxide detectors.
- 3.2. The Telecare service contributes towards maintaining the independence and safety of people who need support, such as older people, people with learning disabilities, people with cognitive impairment, people with physical or sensory disabilities and people with long term chronic conditions. It can also provide reassurance for relatives and carers and is a key service in terms of prevention.
- 3.3. South Essex Homes is the Council's community alarm and telecare provider. It provides a range of additional preventative services to a variety of people, many of whom are older people, and many receive a known social care service. The community alarm and telecare service are non-statutory but is a key element in assisting people to live independently in their own home.
- 3.4. Both the community alarm and telecare equipment operate 24 hours a day, seven days a week and are either installed in individual homes that use the person's telephone line or connected to hard wired systems in sheltered accommodations. The community alarm and telecare equipment are connected to a monitoring centre.
- 3.5. The recommendation also allows us to bring parity of approach and charging for Telecare Services to all resident of the city who may wish to access the option.
- 3.6. Historically, people who go through the Council's adult social care service, are issued community alarm equipment and a 24/7 monitoring service which has been at no charge to the person. Through this process, the monitoring service which is delivered by South Essex Homes costs the council in the region of £110k per year plus the cost of the equipment itself.
- 3.7. There are currently 300 households who are receiving this service at no charge and a further 2600 clients who receive a service direct to South Essex Homes who are charged.

### **4. Reasons for Decisions**

- 4.1. A consultation was commenced on 19th December 2023 and ended on 26th January 2024 regarding the proposal to:
  - (i) Charge those customers who come through Adult Social Care services at Southend-on-Sea City Council for the telecare monitoring service (subject to a financial assessment).

- (ii) Refer customers without a wider social care package for which the telecare monitoring service is part of to South Essex Homes, where a charge will be payable.
- 4.2. Individuals who currently pay a contribution towards the cost of their social care services and are directly affected by the proposed changes were contacted individually by letter. It contained details of the proposal and a link to the survey along with providing a paper survey (see appendix 1) and a pre-paid envelope.
  - 4.3. An email address and contact number were also available in the letters sent out and on the consultation portal Your Say Southend for any questions or queries relating to this consultation.
  - 4.4. The consultation was promoted across social media and was available on the Councils interactive consultation portal <https://yoursay.southend.gov.uk/> it was also made available in a hard copy format if requested. We also provided hardcopy questionnaires in all libraries across the city.
  - 4.5. In addition, representative groups and local organisations including the Southend Association Voluntary Services and Age Concern were informed by email and there was an opportunity for people to take part via the online questionnaire.
  - 4.6. In total 564 people accessed the campaign, however there were a total overall number of 96 responses. 85% of these said they currently received the Telecare Monitoring service for free. 14 people responded online and 82 people completed a paper document. The remaining 468 of people were aware of this consultation but chose not to comment.
  - 4.7. The 96 people who responded, included 65% who were someone who receives care services from the council, those individuals (10%) who chose the option for “someone else” commented that it was a service they were looking to use for family members or themselves in the future. The remaining 25% were a carer or family member who receives care services from the council. A summary of the responses is included as appendix 2.
  - 4.8. 52% of those responded stated they would continue using the Telecare Service if a charge was introduced. Of these people, 80% specified they had “no choice, they needed the service” and that “it helped them stay safe and gives them peace of mind” collectively, with 3% indicating it was a fair price.
  - 4.9. Of those individuals who said they would no longer use the Telecare Service, 54% confirmed they would be unable to afford the proposed charges with the cost of living crisis, 18% confirmed they no longer require the service, and 8% maintained it was a fair price.

## **5. Reason for Decision**

- 5.1. The Telecare Monitoring Service has been identified as a service which would benefit from revisiting its charging structure which at present is free for customers who go through the Council's adult social care service.
- 5.2. The responses from those who have taken part in this consultation have been carefully considered including the clear message over how valued Assistive Technology is. Nonetheless, it is deemed not unusual that some people would object to paying for a service in the future that they have had for free, even if this concession is not offered by other Councils.
- 5.3. Consultation responses have indicated that the majority of existing customers feel they would continue to use this service if charges are imposed. However, we are aware that there are some customers who have affordability concerns. A financial assessment will be offered, and they will only contribute to the cost of their care in line with what they are assessed as being able to afford.
- 5.4. To provide an equitable service for all Southend residents.
- 5.5. To ensure that Cabinet has awareness of the changes to these arrangements and how the impact of them is being managed for Telecare users.

## **6. Financial Implications**

- 6.1. The proposals will deliver some savings, and this has been reflected in the budget setting process for 2024/25 onwards.

## **7. Legal Implications**

- 7.1. Although service users receiving Adult Social Care support from the Authority, be it home care, residential/nursing care or day care will be affected by the proposed changes set out in the report, the proposed changes are in accordance with the Care Act 2014 and its accompanying Statutory Guidance as regards charging for such care.

## **8. Policy Context**

8.1

## **9. Carbon Impact**

9.1. NA

## **10. Equalities**

10.1. NA

## **11. Consultation**

11.1. Analysis contained in Appendix 2

## 12. Appendices

### 12.1. Appendix 1:



Paper survey pack  
Telecare FINAL.pdf

### 12.2. Appendix 2



Telecare  
Consultation Analys

## 13. Report Authorisation

This report has been approved for publication by:		
	Name:	Date:
S151 Officer	Joe Chesterton	13/02/24
Monitoring Officer	Kim Sawyer	13/02/24
Executive Director(s)	Mark Harvey	9/02/24
Relevant Cabinet Member(s)	Cllr James Moyies	9/02/24