

Report of Chief Officer Safer Leeds

Report to Director Environment and Housing

Date: 25th March 2015

Subject: Transfer of the Out of Hours Emergency Customer Contact Service, from the Environments & Housing Directorate to the Citizens and Communities Directorate

Are specific electoral Wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s):	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for Call-In?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number: Appendix number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

Summary of main issues

1. This report seeks approval from the Chief Officer of Safer Leeds, to transfer the Out of Hours Emergency Customer Contact Service from the Environments and Housing Directorate, Community Safety Service, to the Citizens and Communities Directorate.

Recommendations

2. The Chief Officer for Safer Leeds, is asked to approve the transfer of 4 Officers from the Environments and Housing Directorate to the Citizens and Communities Directorate, including the associated budget for 4 x B3 full time posts and provision for 4 x B1 part-time posts and appropriate overtime.

1.0 Purpose Of This Report

- 1.1 To seek approval for the transfer of 6FTEs posts (see appendix 1), 4 of which are currently filled (3 x B3 and 1 x B1 posts), and the budget for 4 part-time B1 posts that are currently vacant, from the Environments and Housing Directorate to the Citizens and Communities Directorate. The transfer will support the Out of Hours Emergencies Service by bringing them into a Contact Centre environment where they will be working alongside daytime and other Out of Hours teams.

2.0 Background Information

- 2.1 For some time, the Council's arrangements for handling out of hours contact have been dispersed over a number of areas and locations. In 2012 a project was initiated to bring together a number of out of hour's services, basing them all at the CCTV and Security Controlroom at Middleton. The Out of Hours Emergency Contact Service based at Westgate, was identified to be part of the project and began co-locating at Middleton in June 2012. In October 2013 the service was officially transferred to Environments and Housing and consultation commenced on a full service restructure.
- 2.2 Despite the best efforts of both Directorates, it has now been acknowledged that the project was not as successful as anticipated in improving the joining up of service delivery. In addition, changes to the way that the Contact Centre operates and the range of services that are now being delivered via Westgate have changed, providing an opportunity to develop a more efficient, joined up service, which benefits from the infrastructure that's currently available to those working in the Council's Corporate Contact Centre. It has therefore been agreed, that the best way to develop the Out of Hours service, is to transfer it back to the Citizens and Communities Corporate Contact Centre from the 1st April 2015.
- 2.3 The physical relocation of 4 FTE officers from the Environments and Housing Directorate, initially 4 Customer Services Officers, will improve the join-up with the daytime customer services operation and ensure that the service is delivered in line with current good practice and fully included in new service developments.
- 2.4 Furthermore, it will enable the out of hours service, to draw upon a bigger pool of customer service staff, to help deal with peak demands on the service, thereby providing the service with greater resilience and reducing the need for the service to routinely request staff to work overtime, which is not cost effective.
- 2.5 It is anticipated that further efficiencies may be gained from this move by the integration of some day time working, consolidating the job roles and considering

appropriate staffing schedules to effectively cover peaks and troughs in customer demand.

3.0 Main Issues

3.1 Out of Hours Emergency Team

3.1.1 Calls to the Contact Centre OOH Team are predominantly from Council Tenants requesting emergency repairs, with peak call volumes occurring between 6pm and 10pm mid-week and Saturday morning to early afternoon. The secondary calls relate to noise nuisance. The peak times for these calls are between 10pm to 3:30am particularly during the weekend when the service deals with high levels of Out of Hours Noise Nuisance calls. Outside these times call volumes are lower, leaving some staff capacity to undertake other work.

3.2 Service Challenges – Development, Training and Service Improvement

3.2.1 In December 2014, an initial discussion took place between Heads of Service from the Contact Centre and Environments and Housing. It was identified that the synergies identified in the previous report have not fully materialised, other than the transferring of the Noise Nuisance calls from the Leedswatch control desk to the OOH team. This has proved to be successful, as call answer rates for the Out of Hours Noise Nuisance service now run at around 94%, with average call waiting times of approx. 15 seconds. Complaints to the service about call waiting times have significantly reduced.

3.2.2 Furthermore, when the Out of Hours Team was originally transferred, there were issues relating to lone working, which the transfer sought to address. The Contact Centre now has other Out of Hours Teams (NHS Practitioner service plus others) now working at Westgate, so lone working is no longer a problem.

3.2.3 Staff consultation on the proposed transfer to Citizens and Communities commenced in January 2015. Discussion regarding changing the teams existing working patterns had already commenced as part of the Leedswatch restructure, however, when it was agreed that the Out of Hours service would fit better within the Contact Centre, and should transfer back to Citizens and Communities, the Team were deemed to be 'out of scope' for the Leedswatch restructure. At this

point consultation with staff on the transfer and changes to working arrangements commenced with Citizens and Communities.

- 3.2.4 Further Staff consultations have taken place during February, involving staff at the Contact Centre, Environments and Housing and the appropriate Union representative.
- 3.2.5 The co-location of the Out of Hours Customer Services team to the Contact Centre is to commence in April 2015.
- 3.2.6 The timing of 1st April 2015 has been proposed as a date for the transfer as this fits in with changes to the Contact Centres' current working hours; from 8am to 9am start and; from 6pm to a 5pm finish.
- 3.2.7 Due to the logistics of where the OOH service is currently situated, the training team have visited the Middleton office to provide support when there has been an upgrade to the systems. IT issues have also proved to be an issue as the systems are exceptionally slow at the Middleton office.
- 3.2.8 Moving forward, the reintegration of the OOH team in to the Contact Centre will ensure that appropriate training and support is given to the Out of Hours team, as part of the overall approach to developing and delivering the Corporate Out of Hours service, including the roll out of CCP and also improved technology at Westgate.
- 3.2.9 Other areas of integration in relation to call handling, have been identified as it is proposed that the OOH team scheduled hours will overlap with daytime working. This will provide and improve flexibility with resourcing and covering 'peaks and troughs' to meet customer demand.
- 3.2.10 It is also proposed that the 2 FTE OOH staff who are leaving on ELI be replaced with 4 part time B1s who will also be trained on daytime processes. This will provide the Contact Centre with additional resources that are needed to ensure adequate cover is available for leave and absence on both the OOH and Housing Teams.

3.2.11 The integration of day and night working and part time staff will provide additional resources which will reduce the costly overtime expenditure which amounted to approx. £50K for the period of 2013/2014.

3.2.12 Recently, a PO2 Service Manager post has been recruited from the talent pool, to provide support and manage the performance of the team. The Service Manager will be available to the team during their time on shift, to provide support and advice, which will greatly improve morale and staff performance. This post is being funded by the Contact Centre.

3. 4.0 Corporate Consideration

4.1 Consultation and Engagement

4.1.2 All staff affected by the proposed transfer have been consulted and feedback from them suggests that the majority of those who will transfer back are happy to do so.

4.1.3 Existing day time staff have been notified that the Out of Hours service will be returning to Citizens and Communities, and no objections have been raised.

4.1.4 Meetings with the appropriate Union representative from Unite have taken place.

4.1.5 The Head of Community Safety Partnerships and Localities, and the Head of the Contact Centre are fully supportive of the transfer.

4.2 Equality and Diversity/Cohesion and Integration

4.2.1 The attached EIA screening document identifies that there are no implications for Equality and Diversity, or Cohesion and Integration.

4.3 Council policies and City Priorities

4.3.1 The creation of a Centre of Excellence for Out of Hours Services, supports the Councils ambition to be the best City, delivering the best services in the UK.

4.4 Resources and Value for Money

4.4.1 Based on a revised shift pattern, it has been agreed that £212,722 will transfer from Neighbourhoods and Housing, to Citizens and Communities to fund the new Out of Hours service. Within this figure is provision for 4FTE x B3 Customer Service Officers and 4PT X B1 Customer Service Officer, plus an overtime budget of £12k per annum.

4.5 Legal And Resource Implications

4.5.1 The Chief Officer for Safer Leeds has the appropriate sub-delegation scheme authority to take this decision.

4.6 Risk Management

4.6.1 There is no immediate risk associated with the transfer of the Out of Hours Team to the Contact Centre. The Housing and OOH team being in the same location will promote improvements through closing working.

4.6.2 Furthermore, the LeedsWatch service have offered to continue to provide 'overflow' support to the Out of Hours Team, in the event of unprecedented demand or should the service find that it needs some additional support on an adhoc basis.

5.0 Conclusions

5.1 The relocation of the OOH team into the Contact Centre will improve the service delivered to its customers and provide greater resilience. The cross skilling of the teams and the creation of a pool of part time staff, will provide greater call handling capacity as the individual services current peak call times take place at different times of the evening/night and at weekends. Thus the additional resource will provide a much enhanced service whilst offering the potential for reducing overall costs from 2015/16 onwards.

6.0 Recommendations

6.1 The proposals contained in this report are designed to achieve a Centre of Excellence for Out of Hours services by:

- The re-location of the OOH team to the Contact Centre based at Westgate.

- The transfer of 4 posts from the Environments and Housing Directorate to the Citizens and Communities Directorate and the budget associated with a further 4 part-time posts and an allocation for overtime payments.

7.0 Background Papers

7.1 None

¹ The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the Council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.