
Report of Head of Housing Strategy and Solutions

To Executive Board

Date: December 8th

Subject: Care Ring Replacement Programme – Sheltered Housing

Capital Scheme Number 16240/000/000

Electoral Wards Affected:

All

Specific Implications For:

Equality and Diversity

Community Cohesion

Narrowing the Gap

Eligible for Call In

Not Eligible for Call In
(Details contained in the report)

Executive Summary

The Care Ring emergency alarm service plays a critical role in keeping older people safe and healthy and empowers them to continue to live independently. It therefore makes an important contribution to the Leeds Strategic Plan improvement priority relating to promoting the capacity of vulnerable people to live independently.

Existing alarm equipment is becoming increasingly obsolete and unstable. The British Telecom digitally based improvement programme will render existing equipment incompatible with the upgraded telephone communication systems.

The Council also incurs significant cost relating to repairing faulty equipment. Whilst the proposal to fund the replacement of emergency alarm equipment represents a significant investment commitment; it will generate significant 'spend to save' benefits for the Council. The cost of scheme replacement will swiftly be recovered through savings in ongoing maintenance and, more importantly, in the prevention of residential care placements.

At November 3rd Executive Board E&N injected £733,000 of HRA reserves into the capital programme and within this report EB are requested to authorise £733,000 to purchase and install care ring equipment located in sheltered housing schemes managed by the Leeds ALMOs/Belle Isle Tenant Management Organisation across the city.

1.0 Purpose of this Report

- 1.1** The purpose of this report is to seek approval for funding the replacement of emergency alarm equipment located in sheltered housing schemes managed by the Leeds ALMOs/Belle Isle Tenant Management Organisation across the city.

2.0 Background Information

- 2.1** There are 113 sheltered housing schemes managed by the Leeds ALMOs/BITMO where a warden is in place and where the equipment is in need of replacement. There are over 3,500 properties within these schemes. The equipment is used to raise the alarm to emergency situations by vulnerable tenants of these schemes. The calls are made to the Care Ring Response Centre on a 24 hour a day 365 days a year basis. The calls are routed via warden call equipment which is hard wired through each sheltered scheme. Calls are made using a unique UAC telephone number from each scheme to the response centre.

3.0 The Main Issues/ Scheme Description

- 3.1** The existing call equipment is rapidly becoming unsustainable. The majority of equipment in vulnerable tenants' homes is between 20 and 25 years old, making repairs and maintenance frequent and costly.
- 3.2** Additionally the equipment is increasingly obsolete and incompatible with modern alarm call systems. Modern systems rely on digital technology and are fully compatible with other telecare equipment. The sheltered housing schemes are presently hardwired on a 'loop' system within the scheme. This means that any fault from one property's equipment will result in scheme failure with all calls from that particular scheme failing to get through to the response centre. This places all the residents of the scheme at risk in some circumstances for several days. While in these circumstances a temporary dispersed alarm is fitted to ensure the safety of the most vulnerable tenants, clearly there is a risk to general safety while the system is out of service.
- 3.3** It is intended to replace the old equipment with dispersed equipment for all sheltered accommodation tenants. This will significantly reduce the occasions of whole schemes being out of service and will reduce increasingly costly maintenance bills.
- 3.4** Additionally, the new equipment will speed up the dialling time to the response centre ensuring a more efficient service for the tenants. The modern equipment will also enable vulnerable sheltered housing tenants to access the service more easily as they will have discreet pendants which are easier to operate.
- 3.5** In around half of the schemes where the equipment needs replacing, the warden equipment sits within the warden's tenancy. Historically the wardens were employees of the council and as such occupied service or tied tenancies.
- 3.6** However, following transfer of their employment to the Leeds ALMOs, they became full tenants with rights to remain in their accommodation following retirement or if they left their job for other reasons. This means that residence of a specific property is no longer a requirement of their employment.

- 3.7** In about half of the schemes included in this proposed programme of work equipment which is vital to the safe running of the whole system is located in properties which might be occupied by households no longer connected to the sheltered service. In the remaining schemes the equipment is already located in communal areas.
- 3.8** Looking ahead, there is a planned national program of updating telephone exchanges and lines to digital standards by British Telecom, referred to as the 21CN. Originally this national programme was due to commence during 2010 but at this stage BT have deferred implementation to an unspecified date no sooner than 2012. They have indicated, however, that after that date it is likely that the programme will be reinstated. The existing Care Ring equipment will not work once 21CN is implemented and therefore it is prudent to replace the equipment with compliant kit well ahead of any implementation.
- 3.9** The changeover to 21CN will affect other Local Authorities and the compatibility of their Care Ring equipment so it is expected that there will be a high demand for new equipment from suppliers. Therefore it would be beneficial to progress early to ensure that tenants in Leeds are unaffected by high demand for replacement equipment from other authorities.
- 3.10** The cost of this project will include initial purchase costs of the equipment, including dispersed Unit, pendant and smoke detector, and installation, making good and disposal of old equipment in accordance with the Environment Agency Waste Electronic and Electrical Equipment directive 2007 (WEEE).
- 3.11** The new equipment will be fully compatible with equipment provided by the Leeds Telecare Service and therefore compliment the capital investment in telecare equipment agreed by council earlier this year (report prepared by Adult Social Services and considered at Executive Board in May 2010).

4.0 Consultations

- 4.1** The Chief Executives of the Leeds ALMOs and BITMO have all been consulted on this proposal.

5.0 Programme

- 5.1** The total cost of replacing the equipment as outlined above is £733,000 detailed in appendix 1 to this report. This covers both purchase and installation of the new equipment, and the removal and disposal of redundant kit. While this is a significant investment it does represent an invest to save opportunity for the council in comparison to alternative options such as residential care (the average annual cost of a placement in residential care for one adult is around £25,000 and for context the care ring alarm service in the schemes included in this report is provided to over 3500 tenants), and to the wider public purse in terms of increased hospitalisation of older people. There are also unquantifiable savings relating to promoting the general health and well-being of older people.
- 5.2** It is intended that the renewal programme for the replacement of equipment will take place in two phases. In the first phase, it is intended to replace the equipment in warden schemes where equipment is still located within former tied tenancies: where a current or retired warden is living and in void properties which are difficult to let while scheme equipment remains in situ. It is intended that this first phase should be completed by the end of March 2011. This first phase will cost £361,000.

- 5.3** It is proposed that the second phase, which will replace the remaining old equipment which is situated in communal rooms or office accommodation, will take place during 2011 with a completion date in December 2011. The cost of the second phase is £372,000.
- 5.4** Unlike the capital investment in telecare services which provided for expansion of that service across tenures¹, this programme will only apply to council property. All the properties involved are council tenancies, geographically spread across the city. The proposed programme will involve a total around 3600 properties spread across 113 sheltered housing schemes.
- 5.5** A Northern Housing Consortium (NHC) framework agreement is in place for the replacement of care ring equipment, set up by the NHS Purchasing and Supply Agency (PASSA). It is valid from 30/6/09 lasting four years for Telecare equipment, installation, maintenance, monitoring and response services. Leeds City Council are members of the NHC consortium which allows the use of Cirrus as supplier of equipment without the need to carry out further procurement exercises.

6.0 Implications for Council Policy and Governance

- 6.1** The Care Ring alarm scheme contributes significantly to the Health and Wellbeing strategic outcomes identified in the Leeds Strategic Plan. The service both improves the quality of life by promoting independence, dignity and respect and offers enhanced safety and support for vulnerable people. The service promotes independent living and prevents vulnerable people moving into residential care.

7.0 Scheme Design Estimate

Capital Funding and Cash Flow

Previous total Authority to Spend on this scheme	TOTAL £000's	O MARCH 2010 £000's			
			2010/11 £000's	2011/12 £000's	2012/13 £000's
LAND (1)	0.0				
CONSTRUCTION (3)	0.0				
FURN & EQPT (5)	0.0				
DESIGN FEES (6)	0.0				
OTHER COSTS (7)	0.0				
TOTALS	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

Authority to Spend required for this Approval	TOTAL £000's	O MARCH 2010 £000's			
			2010/11 £000's	2011/12 £000's	2012/13 £000's
LAND (1)	0.0				
CONSTRUCTION (3)	135.3		65.6	69.7	
FURN & EQPT (5)	597.5		295.2	302.3	
DESIGN FEES (6)	0.0				
OTHER COSTS (7)	0.0				
TOTALS	732.8	0.0	360.8	372.0	0.0

Total overall Funding (As per latest Capital Programme)	TOTAL £000's	O MARCH 2010 £000's			
			2010/11 £000's	2011/12 £000's	2012/13 £000's
HRA Revenue Reserves	732.8		360.8	372.0	
Total Funding	732.8	0.0	360.8	372.0	0.0

¹ Report attached for information

8.0 Revenue Effects

- 8.1** There are no new revenue effects arising from this programme. All revenue costs, such as maintenance of equipment, will be met by existing budgets.

9.0 Risk Assessments

- 9.1** Failure to replace the old and increasingly unreliable alarm call equipment presents a significant risk to the health, safety and well-being of vulnerable tenants.
- 9.2** Without the security of a modern, reliable alarm call system it is likely that older residents in sheltered schemes will not be able to remain living independently and therefore additional cost will be incurred by the council in terms of demand for residential care.
- 9.3** If the scheme replacement does not proceed, then wardens, retired wardens and other tenants will continue to have essential equipment located within their homes. Aside from objections to having equipment in the home, there is also a risk that tenants might choose to turn the equipment off. This would effectively take the entire sheltered scheme out of the system again leaving vulnerable tenants without protection.

10.0 Conclusions

- 10.1** The Care Ring alarm call service allows older, vulnerable tenants to remain living independently and safely in their own homes with a minimum of intervention. The service is popular with tenants and provides both them and their families with security and peace of mind.
- 10.2** However, the equipment used to support the scheme in the majority of Leeds City Council sheltered housing schemes is old and outdated and in need of replacement. It is increasingly difficult to repair and maintain and within the next few years will be obsolete.
- 10.3** Replacement of the old equipment with modern digitally compatible kit will enable greater compatibility with more intensive telecare interventions and will therefore contribute to savings in the cost of residential care and indeed hospital admissions.
- 10.4** Additionally the relocating of equipment out of the homes of wardens will enable the ALMOs/BITMO to fully modernise the sheltered warden service provided to their tenants and improve the day to day function of this key service.

11.0 Recommendations

- 11.1** Executive Board are requested to :-

11.2 Authorise expenditure of £733,000 on equipment and installations to 113 sheltered housing schemes across the city as detailed in Appendix 1 to this report.

Background Papers

Appendix 1 to this report.

Telecare Equipment for Leeds Telecare 2010/11 – EB May 19th May 2010.