

CANNOCK CHASE COUNCIL

BRIEFING NOTE

HEALTH AND WELLBEING POLICY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

8 OCTOBER 2012

HEAD OF HOUSING

COMMUNITY ALARM SERVICE – SUPPORTING PEOPLE CONTRACTS

1. Purpose of Briefing Note

- 1.1 To advise the Health and Wellbeing Policy Development Committee of the current position and forthcoming changes, regarding the Council's Community Alarm Service Supporting People Contracts with Staffordshire County Council.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That the extension of the Council's current contracts with Staffordshire County Council to provide fixed and dispersed community alarm services until 31 July 2013 is noted.
- 2.2 That the Health and Wellbeing Policy Development Committee are updated throughout the year on the County Council's proposals for the future provision of fixed and dispersed community alarm services.

3. Summary

- 3.1 The Council have two contracts with Staffordshire County Council to deliver fixed and dispersed community alarms to some 2,170 households in the Cannock Chase area.
- 3.2 The two contracts are based on annual amount of fixed subsidy based upon the County Council meeting the support charge for tenants who receive Housing Benefit or meet their "fairer charging criteria". Tenants who do not meet either of these requirements pay their own support charge.
- 3.3 Details of the two contracts are set out below:-

<u>Contract</u>	<u>Expiry Date</u>	<u>Contract Value</u>
Fixed Alarms	Expired 31 July 2012	£192,999 (per annum)
Dispersed Alarms	Expired 31 July 2012	£20,070 (per annum)

- 3.4 Whilst the two contracts were initially funded through the National Supporting People Programme, supporting people monies now form part of the County Council's Revenue Support Grant. As a consequence, the contracts have from 1 April 2011 been directly funded by the County Council.

- 3.5 As a result of this change to the funding regime the future position with regard to the two contracts is uncertain. Cabinet on 3 February 2011 were informed (as part of the 2011-12 Housing Revenue Account Budget Report) that the County Council were reviewing all their Supporting People Contracts and that it was considered that the amount of funding to the Council and other “support providers” would be reduced.
- 3.6 The Health and Wellbeing Policy Development Committee on 6 August 2012 discussed the funding situation for the Council’s community alarm service, when formulating their work programme for the current municipal year. As a result of the uncertainty regarding future funding it was agreed that should be a priority issue for further consideration as part of the agreed 2012-13 Work Programme.
- 3.7 This briefing note presents the current position regarding funding for the community alarm service and outlines the current “understanding” in respect of Staffordshire County Council’s future intentions for community alarm contracts.

4. Key Issues and Implications

- 4.1 Whilst Cabinet on 15 December 2011 were advised that the County Council were to commence a fundamental review of community alarm services, this has not progressed.
- 4.2 Following expiry of the current contracts, the County Council have provided an update on their proposals for future community alarm services. Whilst the County Council had initially intended to “invite tenders for a new revised contract earlier this year”, the Council has now been advised that “it is only now that the County Council’s Older People and Prevention Team are about to begin the consultation period to inform and support the redesign of what we will commission so that a new service can then be procured”.
- 4.3 The County Council have subsequently requested information about the current users of community alarm services. This information will be used to “seek feedback from current users of services” as part of the proposed consultation exercise, which also cover “the wider population and key agencies”.
- 4.4 As a result of this delay, the County Council have extended the Council’s current fixed and dispersed community alarm contracts “in the first instance” until 31 July 2013 and have stated that “next year when we have a clearer idea of our timescales, we will be able to inform you further”.
- 4.5 This contract extension has been agreed (on behalf of the Council) by the Head of Housing following consultation with the Health and Wellbeing Portfolio Leader and confirmation of action will be sought from Cabinet on 18 October 2012.
- 4.6 The County Council’s intentions regarding the “redesign” of community alarm services are currently unclear. It is, however, expected that any future funding will be based on a household’s need for an alarm service rather than being provided in respect of all properties which have an alarm facility, provided that the tenant receives Housing Benefit or meets their “fairer charging criteria”. Such a change would significantly reduce the amount of funding which is received by the Council.

4.7 It is therefore proposed that both the Health and Wellbeing Policy Development Committee and Cabinet are updated as the Council's "redesign" of a "new" community alarm service is progressed.

5. **Briefing Note Author**

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