

Item for Portfolio Holders Briefing – 16 May 2022

Title of item – Carephones Digital Switch-over

1. Purpose

This report is to secure agreement to release capital funding already provisionally allocated in the Capital Plan to upgrade all Carephone equipment to digital in a planned way, so that as more local exchanges upgrade to fully fibre, Carephone users will already have the right equipment in place. It is anticipated that this work will take 18 months to complete and will take place from June 2022 to December 2023. This proposal seeks approval to replace existing analogue Carephone technology in the homes of approximately 3,500 vulnerable Kirklees citizens.

2. Decision required

- Approve the proposed capital investment of £1.381m, conditionally agreed by Cabinet on 01 February 2022 and set aside in the Capital Plan, to be funded from within the Adults Service existing capital programme, to enable the timely delivery of the digital switchover by December 2023
- Delegate authority to the Strategic Director for Adults and Health to enter into and execute a contract with the chosen suppliers of the digital replacement of analogue Carephones.

The capital spending requires approval by cabinet on 14th June 2022.

3. Background

Openreach, the UK's digital network delivery provider, is working through its plan to retire the UK analogue telephone network by the end of 2025. The Carephone Home Safety Service is the Kirklees Council in-house telecare provider that supports approximately 7,000 vulnerable citizens to stay independent for longer in their own homes through a range of assistive technology. 3,500 of these citizens have analogue units which will be affected by the digital switchover.

The moves by Openreach to complete the digital switchover by the end of 2025 are now gathering pace and work is already taking place locally to upgrade exchanges to a fully fibre digital network. In the Kirklees district the Flockton and Kirkburton exchanges ceased on 25th January 2022.

As the number of local exchange upgrades increases so will the number of Carephone users who will need their analogue telecare devices replacing with digital so that they can continue to receive a service.

The existing Carephone call handling platform is already configured for incoming and outgoing calls across both analogue and digital networks and will not therefore require an upgrade as it is digital ready.

To facilitate the implementation of the replacement programme, additional staffing capacity will be required to install the digital equipment and provide dedicated resources to check the connectivity of the new devices in the Carephone control centre as there is insufficient capacity within the existing staffing resources to deliver this project. It is proposed that the additional staffing and equipment costs would be capitalised. The associated transport and software licences will be met through existing budgets.

On 01 February 2022 Cabinet approved an Adult Social Care bid for capital funding for 2022/2023 and 2023/24. £1,381m of which was conditionally agreed for the Carephones Digital Switchover.

4. Key issues

- There is a risk that service users experience an interruption to service provision because of a digital upgrade to the local network that the Carephone Service was unaware of and hence had not planned for or addressed in a timely way. The proposals in this paper seek to mitigate these.
- Failure to upgrade analogue connections before the digital switchover will result in service users no longer having the ability to receive a service.
- The service has held discussions with the framework suppliers and have agreed a plan to use a mixture of suppliers to ensure the project can deliver on time, factoring in the global component parts shortages and lead in times to purchase equipment.
- An examination of the Carephones charging policy is being conducted and in the interim increased revenue costs will need to be met from within the baseline budget pending the outcome of the review.
- There is also a longer-term financial implication of the switch to digital that is outside the immediate scope of this proposal in that the digital telecare units are based upon Global System for Mobiles (GSM) technology that contains an integral roaming SIM card. The SIM cards attract a monthly fee from the supplier of £4 per month per device which once all the remaining analogue telecare devices are replaced by digital will amount to between £270K - £360K per year.

5. Implications for the Council

5.1 Working with People

This proposal has been developed in conjunction with the senior management team in Adult Services.

Staff, Unions and Carephones users and their carers will be kept fully informed throughout and the service is developing a robust communications strategy as part of this proposal, including input from citizens and communities to work co-productively on the changes.

5.2 Working with Partners

The service will work in conjunction with Openreach to ensure all Carephones users are switched to digital in line with local exchange switchover times.

The Carephone Service is engaging with TEC Services Association, the industry and advisory body for technology enabled care, as part of its work to understand the impact on service delivery as the UK's telecoms infrastructure is upgraded to digital connectivity.

5.3 Place Based Working

As stated above, the switchover will be managed in conjunction with Openreach across Kirklees districts in line with local exchange switchover times.

5.4 Climate Change and Air Quality

No Implications

6. Financial, HR, Communications issues (including value for money)

On 01 February 2022 Cabinet approved an Adult Social Care bid for capital funding for 2022/2023 and 2023/24. £1,381m of which was conditionally agreed for the Carephones Digital Switchover.

Capital Investment Required

| | 2022/23 | 2023/24 | 2024/25 |
|--------------|------------|------------|----------|
| | £000's | £000's | £000's |
| Land | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Building | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Equipment | 785 | 368 | 0 |
| Transport | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Licenses | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Salaries | 152 | 76 | 0 |
| Total | 937 | 444 | 0 |

Revenue Implications

| | 2022/23 | 2023/24 | 2024/25 | 2025/26 |
|---------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| | £000's | £000's | £000's | £000's |
| Revenue Expenditure | 195 | 360 | 360 | 360 |
| Revenue Income | | | | |
| Total | 195 | 360 | 360 | 360 |

An examination of the Carephones charging policy is being conducted and in the interim increased revenue costs will be met from within the baseline budget pending the outcome of the review.

7. Timescale

7.1 Following approval of the proposal, an implementation plan and delivery timetable will be agreed with equipment exchanges commencing in June 2022. The plan will also include provision for:

- Recruiting 3 Carephone installers on an 18-month fixed term contract.
- Recruiting 3 Business Support Officers on an 18-month fixed term contract.
- Purchase of additional five call handling licences for 2 years

7.2 A phased approach to rolling out of replacement digital telecare devices will be on a locality basis linked to Openreach upgrade of local exchanges from June 2022 to December 2023.

7.3 A full communications strategy is being developed to ensure all relevant stakeholders are kept fully informed throughout.

8. Recommendations

That ET approve the proposed approach
That ET approve the decision required.

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| Report Sponsor: Richard Parry Strategic Director for Adults and Health | Contact Officer: Scott Clews Service Manager, Adult Social Care Operations |
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