

## Decision by Portfolio Holder



**Report reference: HAC-006-2022/23**  
**Date of report: 24 November 2022**

**Epping Forest  
District Council**

**Portfolio: Housing & Community (Cllr Holly Whitbread)**

**Author: Denise Pegler, (01992 564372) Democratic Services: J Leither**  
**Team Manager, Older Peoples Services**

**Subject: Emergency Alarm Upgrade – Update Paper**

### Decision:

- (1) To note that due to non-service delivery and compatibility issues with our monitoring provider Tunstall Response, the emergency alarm upgrade contract with Doro & Everon has been terminated
- (2) That given the alarm monitoring contract is due for renewal in 2024, approval is being sought to undertake a tender exercise in 2023 to procure a new alarm system and monitoring service from one provider for the Council's sheltered housing schemes

<b>ADVISORY NOTICE:</b> <i>A Portfolio Holder may not take a decision on a matter on which he/she has declared a Pecuniary interest. A Portfolio Holder with a non-pecuniary interest must declare that interest when exercising delegated powers.</i>	
I have read and approve/ <del>do not approve</del> (delete as appropriate) the above decision:	
Comments/further action required: None	
Signed: Cllr H Whitbread	Date: 1 <sup>st</sup> December 2022
<i>Non-pecuniary interest declared by Portfolio Holder/ conflict of non-pecuniary interest declared by any other consulted Cabinet Member:</i> <p style="text-align: center;">None</p>	<i>Dispensation granted by Standards Committee: Yes/No or N/A</i>
<b>Office use only:</b> Call-in period begins: 1 <sup>st</sup> December 2022	Expiry of Call-in period: 8 <sup>th</sup> December 2022

**After completion, one copy of this pro forma should be returned to  
Democratic Services IMMEDIATELY**

### Reason for decision:

There is a requirement to upgrade the alarm system due to the analogue signal being discontinued in 2025 and the alarm monitoring contract coming to an end in November 2024.

**Initialed as original copy by  
Portfolio Holder:**

## **Options considered and rejected:**

The monitoring contract with Tunstall will end in 2024, therefore we have no option but to undertake a procurement exercise to secure a monitoring provider so that if a resident activates their alarm the call will be answered. and the appropriate action taken.

The option was considered not to upgrade the alarm system but was rejected due to the need to move from analogue to digital by December 2025 and the need to ensure we have a digital solution that enables our residents to live independently for as long as possible.

## **Background Report:**

Our sheltered housing schemes currently have an analogue telephone system. This means that it operates on the public switched telephone network (PSTN). There is a national program of work for telecommunication providers to move to an IP network by November 2025. This means that we are moving from analogue to digital.

The current emergency alarm equipment is around 16 years old, although it still provides a reliable service it has limitations in that we can only link pendants and smoke detectors to the existing system.

Technology has moved on and so have emergency alarm systems. To ensure the alarm systems in our sheltered housing schemes continue to provide a reliable service and meet the needs of our residents now and in the future, we need to upgrade to a digital system.

At the beginning of this year, Members agreed to appoint Doro & Everdon via a Framework agreement to upgrade the emergency alarm system in our sheltered housing schemes using their Lyra alarm unit.

The contract was signed in March 2022 with work due to commence in May 2022. A program of work (version 1) was produced in readiness but unfortunately work did not commence as planned. By October 2022 we had received version 14 of a program of work, still no equipment had been installed.

Various reasons were given including Covid and sourcing components for the alarm units. We were also made aware of compatibility issues with our alarm monitoring provider Tunstall Response. We were already concerned about lack of progress with the installation of the new alarm system, but this gave us even more concern as Doro & Everon were made aware from the outset that Tunstall were our alarm receiving centre (ARC) and we were assured their alarm was compatible with Tunstalls PNC (this is the name given to the equipment that allows the ARC to receive calls from alarm units).

Discussions with Tunstall highlighted that when testing the Everon alarm there were concerns around the operability of the unit in that it shuts itself down after 2 minutes unless the operator presses a button on the PNC, this is not standard practice and could be very dangerous especially if dealing with a domestic violence case where the alarm call is kept open until the Police arrive.

We also discovered that the Tunstall operator needed to dial into the alarm when it reached the ARC to open up the speech channel, again this is not standard practice, usually when the alarm call is selected the speech channel opens automatically to allow you to talk to the client to ascertain the nature of the call. It was felt that given the volume of calls to the ARC of which 0.5% are from EFDC residents this could lead to errors and impact the safety of our residents.

Doro & Everon assured us these issues could be overcome but there would be further delays in the installation process. With residents' safety our priority we felt concerned about these issues to the point we sought advice from our Legal & Contracts Team with a view to terminating the contract.

Our Contracts Team liaised with Northern Housing Consortium with regard the Framework agreement and there is a clause in the contract which states either party can terminate the contract by giving 3 months-notice, so this is the route we have taken.

We also had two meetings with Telecare Services Association (**TSA**). TSA is the representative body for technology enabled care (TEC) services, asking them to look into the non-standard practice issues with the Lyra alarm unit. The outcome of these meetings highlighted that the alarm does have lots of potential but further testing and modifications are required in order for the alarm unit to be compatible with all UK ARCs.

At present both our alarm system and monitoring provider are Tunstall Healthcare Ltd. This provides peace of mind because should there be a problem regardless of whether it lies with the equipment or ARC, the fault/issue gets rectified.

With the monitoring contract due for renewal, it is felt that undertaking one procurement exercise through a framework agreement and having one provider for both the alarm system and alarm monitoring service will ensure end to end compatibility. We will also be able to involve our residents in the decision-making process which we were unable to do when we procured the Lyra alarm due to Covid restrictions.

**Resource Implications:**

Capital funding is required for this project.

£355,531,00 has already been allocated for the upgrade of the alarm system in our sheltered schemes. This will be carried forward to 2023/4.

In addition, there is also £25,000 per annum budget provision for the alarm monitoring contract and £35,000 per annum budget provision for maintenance.

The final cost will be dependent on whether we opt for dispersed alarms in our sheltered schemes which have a 10-year life or feel a hard-wired system which is considerably more expensive but better value for money given its longer life expectancy of 15 – 20 years.

From figures obtained in 2021/22, we have a rough idea of costs. A hard-wired system would cost around £1,300 per property, whereas a dispersed unit is around £800.

**Legal and Governance Implications:**

This proposal meets with all current requirements

**Safer, Cleaner and Greener Implications:**

None

**Consultation Undertaken:**

None

**Background Papers:**

Cabinet Report 25.1.2022

**Impact Assessments:**

**Risk Management:**

Projects of this nature are developed and managed under a project management system which includes risk management

**Key Decision Reference (Y/N):**

No

**Equality Analysis:**

The Equality Act 2010 requires that the Public Sector Equality Duty is actively applied in decision-making. This means that the equality information provided to accompany this report is essential reading for all members involved in the consideration of this report. The equality information is provided as an appendix to the report.