

Report to the Cabinet

Report reference: C-037-2023-24

Date of meeting: 15 January 2024



**Epping Forest
District Council**

Portfolio: Housing and Property (Cllr Holly Whitbread)

Subject: Emergency Alarm Upgrade – Update

Responsible Officer: Surjit Balu - Interim Director for Housing & Property

**Democratic Services: Vivienne Messenger:
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Recommendations/Decisions Required:

Recommendation 1 - To note that the Council are working with TSA (Telecare Services Association) the representative body for technology enabled care (TEC) services to procure a new emergency alarm system for the Council's independent living schemes and, designated dwellings for older people in the community following the termination of the contract with Doro & Everon in January 2023

Recommendation 2 -To note the alarm monitoring contract with Tunstall Response is due for renewal in 2025, and a tender exercise is underway to procure new emergency alarm systems and alarm monitoring service for the Council's independent living schemes and designated dwellings for older people in the community, to ensure work is completed in readiness for the digital switchover in 2025.

Report

1. Aim of Report

1.1 To inform Cabinet of a revised plan to meet the requirements of the switchover for emergency alarm equipment, in independent living schemes and designated dwellings from existing analogue to digital signal.

2. Background

2.1 The Council must upgrade the emergency alarm system in their independent living schemes due to analogue telephone lines being discontinued by November 2025. At present the emergency alarm system in our schemes operates on the public switched telephone network (PSTN) which is analogue. This network is being discontinued as we move to a digital IP network. This will also impact older people living in the community who we currently provide a dispersed alarm to. In addition, the current emergency alarm monitoring contract with Tunstall Response is due to expire in 2025. This means that we must also procure a new monitoring provider for our emergency alarm systems.

2.2 During a Cabinet meeting on 25th In January 2022, Members agreed to appoint Doro & Everon via a Framework agreement to upgrade the emergency alarm system in our

independent living schemes. We entered into a contract with Doro & Everon in March 2022 with work on the emergency alarm upgrade due to commence in May 2022. Despite our best efforts, no emergency alarm equipment was installed. Various reasons were given including Covid and difficulty sourcing components. At the beginning of November 2022 action was taken to bring the contract with Doro & Everon to an end, following various meetings, the contract was terminated in January 2023.

- 2.3 The alarm equipment in our independent living schemes 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. (Analogue to digital).
- 2.4 The current emergency alarm equipment in our schemes is around 20 years old, although it still provides a reliable service it has limitations in that we can only link pendants and smoke detectors to the system. To ensure the alarm systems continue to provide a reliable service and meet the needs of our residents now and in the future, we need to upgrade to digital systems. Furthermore, our emergency alarm contract with Tunstall Response comes to an end in 2025 so it makes sense to procure a new provider for both the emergency alarm system and emergency alarm monitoring service at the same time. This is so that as each scheme/dispersed alarm is upgraded it can be linked to the new provider.
- 2.5 Following the termination of the contract with Doro & Everon, we approached TSA (Telecare Services Association). TSA is the representative body for technology enabled care (TEC) services of which we are members, to seek their assistance and draw on their knowledge in procuring new emergency alarm systems and alarm monitoring provider.
- 2.6 TSA undertook a stock condition survey of our existing alarm equipment and produced a comprehensive report which includes recommendations for upgrading along with average costings for the various options available. (See resource implications).
- 2.7 To ensure value for money and equipment that is fit for purpose TSA have recommended hard wired alarm upgrades for our independent living schemes of which there are seven in total and dispersed alarm units for our grouped independent living schemes of which there are also seven in total and dispersed alarms for properties in the community of which there are around 160. Hard wired alarm systems require a degree of cabling to be run throughout the building and have a life expectancy of around 15 – 20 years, whereas a dispersed alarm requires no cabling, works on a sim card, and is plugged into an electric socket within the property, the life expectancy of a dispersed alarm is around 8 – 10 years. Peripherals can be programmed to both hard wired and dispersed alarm systems, allowing residents to remain independent for as long as possible. Some examples of peripherals include fall detector, medication reminder, flood detector, property exit sensors.
- 2.8 Five alarm providers were invited to undertake a presentation and demonstrate their alarm equipment at a supplier event being held on 25th October 2023 at Leonard Davis House, our independent living scheme in North Weald. The purpose of this event is to get a good cross section of suppliers in attendance to help us obtain a better understanding of the market and assist us in drawing up a specification for tender.
- 2.9 We undertook consultation with residents in September 2023 in the form of emergency alarm surgeries, around 38 residents from our independent living schemes had expressed an interest in attending the supplier event on 25th October.
- 2.10 Following the supplier event, work will commence on drawing up specifications for the emergency alarm upgrades and the procurement of a new emergency alarm monitoring provider, with a tender exercise taking place through a Framework agreement around

December 2023 with a view to the emergency alarm upgrades commencing May 2024 to ensure completion before November 2025.

3. Options considered and rejected:

- 3.1 The option to make modifications to the existing alarm system in our independent living schemes was considered but rejected due to the limitations of the existing system and the need to move from analogue to digital. We also need to ensure we have a digital solution that enables our residents to live independently for as long as possible.
- 3.2 The dispersed alarms currently installed in council properties in the community are analogue therefore these must also be upgraded to digital.
- 3.3 The monitoring contract with Tunstall will end in 2025, therefore we have no option but to undertake a procurement exercise to secure a monitoring provider so if residents activate their alarm, the call will be answered, and the appropriate action taken.

4. Resource Implications:

- 4.1 Capital funding is required for this project. £360,000 has already been allocated for the upgrade for 2023/24. This will be carried forward to next financial year. A further £36,000 has been allocated for 2024/25. In addition, there is also £50,000 2024/5 budget provision for the alarm monitoring contract.
- 4.2 It's important to note the final cost will be dependent on whether we opt for a hard-wired emergency alarm system, dispersed alarm, or a mix of both. TSA have given us average costs along with their recommendations. See table below:

Independent Living Scheme	TSA Recommendation	Average Cost
Buckhurst Court	Hard Wired	48,200.00
Frank Bretton House	Hard Wired	25,445.00
Hyde Mead House	Hard Wired	25,445.00
Jubilee Court	Hard Wired	34,626.00
Leonard Davis House	Hard Wired	36,115.00
Chapel Road	Hard Wired & Dispersed Units	39,368.00
Grove Court	Dispersed Alarms	5,000
Pelly Court	Dispersed Alarms	32,225.00
Rochford Ave/Roundhills	Dispersed Alarms	18,750.00
Hedgers Close	Dispersed Alarms	4,000
Jessopp Court	Hard Wired	30,035.00
Parsonage Court	Hard Wired	35,450.00
The Spinney	Dispersed Alarms	6,000
Watermans Way	Dispersed Alarms	7,000
160 Properties in the community	Dispersed Alarms	40,000
		£387,659 (Total)

5. Legal and Governance Implications:

- 5.1 This proposal meets all current requirements.

6. Safer, Cleaner and Greener Implications:

6.1 None

7. Consultation Undertaken:

7.1 Consultation with residents at our independent living schemes took place on 26th, 27th and 28th September. Officers visited all schemes and held alarm upgrade surgeries giving resident's the opportunity to gain some understanding of the emergency alarm upgrade and the opportunity to ask questions.

8. Background Papers:

8.1 None

9. Risk Management:

9.1 We are working with TSA to reduce risk and ensure the appropriate alarm systems are procured. In addition, projects of this nature are developed and managed under a project management system which includes risk management.

10. Equality

10.1 An equality assessment has been completed.