

**EXECUTIVE  
COMMITTEE**

13th December 2016

**PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY WORKING GROUP - PROPOSALS**

Chair of Scrutiny Group	Councillor Tom Baker-Price
Relevant Head of Service	Judith Willis, Head of Community Services
Ward(s) Affected	No specific ward relevance.
Non-Key Decision	

**1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS**

- 1.1 Performance scrutiny is a key responsibility of the Overview and Scrutiny process and represents national best practice. The introduction of the Council's dashboard, which provides data in respect of the local authority's strategic and operational service measures, has provided Members with an opportunity to revisit performance scrutiny in more detail. In this context the Performance Scrutiny Working Group was established by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at the start of the 2016/17 municipal year to scrutinise the content of the dashboard and the implications for service performance.
- 1.2 The Performance Scrutiny Working Group will review a range of matters which may vary between meetings. Where recommendations are made at a meeting about a particular subject these will be recorded in a report and presented for Members' consideration at the earliest opportunity.
- 1.3 This report details a recommendation made at the latest meeting of the Performance Scrutiny Working Group concerning the Council's Lifeline Service.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

**The Committee is asked to RECOMMEND to the Executive Committee that**

**the Communications Team, working with the Lifeline Team, should develop a plan to better market the Lifeline Service to new customers and in order to develop new business opportunities. This plan should be developed and reported back to the Executive committee in the next six months;**

**and to RESOLVE that**

**the report be noted.**

**3. KEY ISSUES**

**Background**

- 3.1 The Performance Scrutiny Working Group became interested in the Lifeline Service during consideration of a measure on the dashboard; '#Lifeline Users'. This appeared to indicate that there had been a decline in the number of customers

using the service since 2013, when the data for this measure started to be monitored. Based on this information the group invited Officers to attend a meeting on 23rd September 2016 to discuss the matter further.

- 3.2 Members learned during this meeting that a key contributory factor for the decline in the number of customers had been the withdrawal of Worcestershire County Council's Supporting People funding. This funding had been provided to the Lifeline Service to support Council tenants including residents living in sheltered accommodation free of charge. When the funding had been removed all affected customers had been contacted directly about whether they wished to continue to receive the service and in some cases residents had decided that they no longer needed support from Lifeline.
- 3.3 During meetings with customers affected by these funding changes it became apparent to staff that some of the equipment that was being used was relatively old. A decision was therefore taken to upgrade the equipment provided to existing customers. In some cases when these existing customers were approached they decided to cease to receive the service.
- 3.4 By the date of the Performance Scrutiny Working Group meeting when Members interviewed Officers about the service the number of customers for the service in Redditch was 1,781. A similar number of customers used the service in Bromsgrove and there were additional customers in surrounding areas such as Studley.
- 3.5 Despite this decline in the number of customers there had been some increases in demand within particular groups. For example, private sector housing customers had increased by 300 customers between April 2015 and August 2016. In a national context where renting in the private sector is increasingly the primary housing choice available to many residents there may be further opportunities in the future to increase the number of customers in this sector. In addition Officers advised that there were many new telehealth pieces of equipment on the market that the Lifeline service could potentially offer to residents to support their independent living. Examples included monitoring of vital signs, such as blood pressure, to the monitoring centre or equipment to monitor the movement of dementia sufferers.
- 3.6 The service continues to receive referrals from the Council's Housing team. The service is considered to be mandatory for tenants classified as 'Category A' residents. Category A residents are those living in Older Persons' Housing in communal accommodation suitable for a person aged 65 or older with an assessed support need.
- 3.7 The Council also has contracts with some external organisations to provide a Lifeline Service on their behalf. This includes some social housing providers and another local authority. Members believe that there is the possibility that there may be further interest amongst other organisations.

- 3.8 Officers have advised the group that they are aware that there may be further business opportunities available to the Lifeline Service. However, at present a key barrier preventing the team from promoting the service to potential customers is resource and expertise to proactively market the service. For this reason the group is proposing that the Head of Community Services should produce a plan to better market the service to new customers and in order to develop new business opportunities. Members agree that the Council's Communications Team should be in a position to assist with this by utilising their communications expertise.

**Financial Implications**

- 3.9 The basic Lifeline Service is currently provided to customers at a charge of £3.70 per week. Customers can pay up to an extra £1.20 per week for additional equipment such as fall detectors and heat sensors. The group has been advised that this compares to an average fee across the country of £4.50 per week for Lifeline Services, though Members are asked to note that in some parts of the country the service is provided free of charge.
- 3.10 Customers also pay a one off charge of £35 for the installation of equipment when newly signed to the service. This fee was increased from £22.15 in 2015/16, representing a 58 per cent increase. The fee is still 20 per cent lower than the installation charge levied by many other Lifeline Service providers. The charge is also less than the £50 which officers estimate it costs the Council to install the equipment based on a detailed investigation of available data completed in recent years.
- 3.11 The group has been advised that the cost to Redditch Borough Council involved in running the Lifeline Service is £327,000. This includes £255,000 in staffing costs, £50,000 in equipment costs and a further £15,000 in miscellaneous costs. When considering these costs Members have been advised to note that it is difficult to assess these without also taking into account the costs of the CCTV service; both services use the 24 hour monitoring centre. CCTV and Lifeline Services are performed by the same staff at the same time and requires a multi-tasking approach to work throughout the day.
- 3.12 The decision by Worcestershire County Council to end Supporting People Funding led to the removal of £201,000 from the Lifeline service from April 2013. To some extent this loss in funding has been offset by additional income from former Supporting People customers now paying for the service and new customers..
- 3.13 The income for the Lifeline Service in Redditch in 2015/16 was £371,544. Taking all of these factors into account the working group has been advised that the Lifeline Service currently operates on a cost neutral basis.
- 3.14 Further contracts with external organisations and more effective promotion of the service to potential new customers could lead to an increase in income from the Lifeline Service. Officers have advised that there is potentially capacity within the

service to support an extra 2,000 customers. The group has been informed that this would offset further costs within the same team to ensure that the Council does not make a profit.

**Legal Implications**

- 3.15 No specific legal implications have been identified.

**Service / Operational Implications**

- 3.16 Lifeline is part of the Council's 24 hour service covering Telecare, Lifeline, CCTV and the Out of Hours' Service. The service is available for the use of residents living in Redditch Borough, Bromsgrove District and a number of surrounding areas. Customers with the service are provided with a pendant which can be pressed in the event of a fall, triggering an immediate response from the Lifeline team.
- 3.17 Lifeline is a Shared Service with Bromsgrove District Council. There would be a need to consult with Bromsgrove District Council if the Executive Committee is inclined to endorse this proposal from the working group.
- 3.18 Despite the decline in the number of customers for the service since 2013 there has not been a corresponding decrease in the number of staff for the service. The group has therefore been advised that there would be capacity within the Monitoring Team to meet the demand of at least 2,000 new customers, whether local residents or external organisations.
- 3.19 The group is proposing that the proposed plan should be completed within six months and reported for the consideration of the Executive Committee. This will ensure transparency in the process and that the work is completed in a timely manner.

**Customer / Equalities and Diversity Implications**

- 3.20 Many of the Lifeline Service's customers are vulnerable and require consistent support. Officers would need to ensure that any business opportunities identified through the proposed review does not compromise the service received by these existing customers.
- 3.21 The Lifeline Service regularly receives customer satisfaction ratings of between 95 and 100 per cent. The group would be keen for this level of customer satisfaction to be maintained.
- 3.22 At present the majority of Lifeline customers are referred to the service for support, sometimes by other Council services or by relevant partner agencies such as Worcestershire County Council. Customers can also self-refer. There tends to be a relatively high turnover of customers due to the nature of the service. Some

customers will cease to use the service when they move into a care home whilst others unfortunately pass away.

**4. RISK MANAGEMENT**

No specific risks have been identified.

**5. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

Fees and Charges Report 2016/17 (considered by the Executive Committee on 15th December 2015).

**AUTHOR OF REPORT**

Name: Jess Bayley, Democratic Services Officer  
Email: [jess.bayley@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk](mailto:jess.bayley@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk)  
Tel.: (01527) 64252 Ext: 3268