

<b>REPORT TO:</b>	<b>HOUSING AND COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE</b>	<b>AGENDA ITEM: 11</b>
<b>DATE OF MEETING:</b>	<b>19<sup>th</sup> NOVEMBER 2020</b>	<b>CATEGORY: (See Notes)</b>
<b>REPORT FROM:</b>	<b>STRATEGIC DIRECTOR SERVICE DELIVERY</b>	<b>OPEN</b>
<b>MEMBERS' CONTACT POINT:</b>	<b>PAUL WHITTINGHAM</b> <a href="mailto:Paul.whittingham@southderbyshire.gov.uk">Paul.whittingham@southderbyshire.gov.uk</a>	<b>DOC:</b>
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>HOMELESS OUT OF HOURS SERVICES</b>	
<b>WARD(S) AFFECTED:</b>	<b>ALL</b>	<b>TERMS OF REFERENCE: (See Notes)</b>

## **1.0 Recommendations**

- 1.1 That the Committee approves the Council serving the required six-months' notice on the other Districts in Derbyshire and Staffordshire to terminate the agreement for the provision of out-of-hours homelessness services by this Council on their behalf.
- 1.2 That the Council's own processes and procedures for dealing with out-of-hours homeless applicants are reviewed and enhanced by improving risk assessment and data sharing arrangements.

## **2.0 Purpose of the Report**

- 2.1 To outline the current provision of out-of-hours homelessness services by the Council for other Districts in Derbyshire and Staffordshire.
- 2.2 To seek approval for serving the required six-months' notice to bring the service to an end.

## **3.0 Executive Summary**

- 3.1 The Council has provided an out-of-hours homelessness service for other Districts in Derbyshire and Staffordshire since October 2011 under a Service Level Agreement. This service is provided for a fee of £550 per annum per partner plus additional quarterly billing of £4.00 per call. This agreement can be terminated by the Council serving six months' notice on the other partners.

- 3.2 Currently, the Head of Customer Services is conducting a review of all Council out-of-hours Services whilst the Derbyshire Homeless Officers Group (DHOG) is conducting a review of the Homelessness out-of -hours service.
- 3.3 The review of the Council's out-of-hours services and also the recent Careline report from T-Cubed, the subject of a separate report on this agenda, has identified that whilst the service for Careline Customers and other out-of-hours services is delivered by one staff member there is a risk that at any time the response to an emergency could be compromised.
- 3.4 The review by DHOG has been prompted by the increase in demand for out-of-hours Homelessness services during the COVID-19 pandemic coupled with the increasingly complex nature of applicants' personal circumstances which pose an extra burden on Careline staff outside office hours.
- 3.5 Whilst there are always risks attached to providing services to homeless applicants during office hours, these are magnified outside office hours and multiplied further when providing this service to several other Districts.
- 3.6 These risks have recently been highlighted by a claim against the Council from a member of staff at a hotel who was assaulted by an applicant placed there by the Homeless out-of-hours Service on behalf of another Council.

#### **4.0 Detail**

- 4.1 The Code of Guidance to the Homeless Reduction Act 2017 requires that "Housing authorities will therefore need to provide access to advice and assistance at all times during normal office hours, and have arrangements in place for 24 hour emergency cover, e.g. by enabling telephone access to an appropriate duty officer. The police and other relevant services should be provided with details of how to access the service outside normal office hours"
- 4.2 The Council's Careline Service provides a twenty-four hour-response service for Careline customers, emergency Council housing repairs and emergency homeless services. A report outlining the Council's entire out-of-hours service provision is being prepared by the Head of Customer Services.
- 4.3 A response service for out-of-hours homeless applicants is also provided on behalf of other Districts in Derbyshire and Staffordshire under the terms of a Service Level Agreement which commenced in 2011.
- 4.4 Calls are received by Careline after being initially received and screened by the Derbyshire County Council Call Derbyshire Out-of-hours Service.
- 4.5 On receiving calls some further information is requested from applicants and if there is any possible duty to either rehouse or make further enquiries into an applicant's circumstances, they are placed in one of a number of hotels across the County. These arrangements are informal with each booking being treated as an individual booking or contract.
- 4.6 Hotels and Bed and Breakfast establishments are used in the absence of 24-hour accessible accommodation in the County.

- 4.7 The Council must still provide out-of-hours homelessness services under the legislation described above. There is, however, no legal requirement for the Council to provide this on behalf of other Districts in the County.
- 4.8 Whilst the risks posed by South Derbyshire applicants can be mitigated further through enhanced processes, procedures and data sharing arrangements with other services, the Council is not in a position to in effect contract this risk from other providers without being unduly exposed.

## **5.0 Financial Implications**

- 5.1 Terminating the agreement would result in a loss of income to the Council of around £11000 per year.

## **6.0 Corporate Implications**

### **Employment Implications**

- 6.1 There are no direct employment implications contained within this report, although not providing the out-of hours service to other Councils will mean the burden on Careline and other Housing Service staff will be reduced .

### **Legal Implications**

- 6.2 There are legal implications within this report regarding the sharing of information regarding homeless applicants which are in the process of being resolved.

### **Corporate Plan Implications**

- 6.3 The contents of this report ensure that the Council continues to provide services that meet the Corporate Plan aim to: Support and Safeguard the Most vulnerable.

### **Risk Impact**

- 6.4 The contents of this report assist in mitigating any risk to the Council posed by managing homeless cases on behalf of other Districts

## **7.0 Community Impact**

### **Consultation**

- 7.1 The contents of this report will be discussed with other District Councils in Derbyshire.

### **Equality and Diversity Impact**

- 7.2 There are no Equality and Diversity impacts within this report.

### **Social Value Impact**

- 7.3 There is no direct Social Value impact within this report.

### **Environmental Sustainability**

7.4 There is no direct Environmental Sustainability Impact within this report

## 8.0 **Conclusions**

- 8.1 The Council's systems and procedures for managing out-of-hours homeless applicants need to be reviewed and enhanced to mitigate the risks of dealing with potentially difficult clients.
- 8.2 These risks may be multiplied when providing this service for other Districts which are not mitigated within the current Service Level Agreement.
- 8.3 Given these issues, the current review of Council Out-of-hours Services and the fact that DHOG is already reviewing Out-of-hours Provision, serving notice to bring the Agreement to an end is the only way to protect the Council's interests and the well-being of its Careline and other customers

## 9.0 Background Papers

None