

## **DISPERSED ALARM SYSTEMS - CARELINES**

### **1 SUMMARY**

- 1.1 Members to consider future arrangements for the administration of Carelines in the District and options for units purchased by the Council.

### **2 INTRODUCTION**

- 2.1 Rochford Council has been acting as an agent for Carelines since 1991 when the scheme operated by Chelmsford Borough Council was extended to this area. Dispersed Alarm Systems are automated telephone devices with a remote activating pendant worn by the subscriber. The system is linked to a central control unit in Springfield, Chelmsford.
- 2.2 In the event of an emergency the subscriber contacts the central control and staff there will notify one of three people nominated by the client. If nominees are unavailable, or at the control centres discretion, the emergency services will be contacted.
- 2.3 The Council's role was threefold:-
- (a) Promotion of Carelines to those who might benefit from the service.
  - (b) Installation of equipment and training the user.
  - (c) Maintenance calls for battery replacements.

The Council has no involvement in the billing and collection of rental charges as this is carried out by Chelmsford Borough Council.

### **3. RAVS INVOLVEMENT**

- 3.1 A series of decisions were taken in 1998/99 for the Council to divest itself of non-statutory functions and Carelines was one of these. The Head of Service was asked to canvass voluntary organisations operating in the District to establish whether they could take over the administrative function of Carelines i.e. items (b) and (c) above with the Council retaining the publicity function.
- 3.2 The Rayleigh Association of Voluntary Services (RAVS) were the only organisation who showed an interest and negotiations concluded with a grant of £350.00 being given for set-up costs. This grant was utilised in setting up the administrative systems and although an initial hand-over

---

date of 1 October 1999 was agreed, the actual hand-over did not take place until 1 February 2000.

- 3.3 Unfortunately in April 2000 RAVS found that they did not have the resources to continue to provide the service and handed it back to the Council in May 2000.
- 3.4 The hand-back presented some problems to the Council in as much as no budget was now available to meet likely expenditure and staff resources had been diverted to the teams principle function of Housing Management. Additionally, the Council's trained installer left the Council's employ at the end of May 2000.
- 3.5 Chelmsford Borough Council were kept informed at all stages of the initial transfer and hand-back.

#### **4. FURTHER NEGOTIATIONS**

- 4.1 Despite attempts to involve other voluntary organisations in the management of Carelines negotiations have been unsuccessful. In view of this and following discussions with the Chairman of the Council and the Committee Chairman it was understood that the Council's intention was still to divest itself of this function and, accordingly, discussions were opened with Chelmsford Borough Council.
- 4.2 Officer level agreement has been reached for Chelmsford Borough Council to take back the administrative functions ((b) and (c) above) but they will need a one-off grant of £500 to cover, in the main, transport costs from Chelmsford.
- 4.3 The Head of Service wishes to stress that at no time have existing users been at risk as a result of transfer arrangements and that condition still subsists.
- 4.4 All that has happened is that callers who enquired about Carelines have been referred to three alternative agencies who provide identical services at a competitive cost.

They are:-

Springboard Housing Association  
Age Concern  
British Telecom

- 4.5 During the period from 1 May to 30 September 2000 enquiries numbered around 25-30. The Elderly Services Manager at Chelmsford states that she has received four direct calls from Rochford residents who were inconvenienced by not being able to join the scheme immediately.

---

**5 PURCHASED UNITS**

- 5.1 In March 1995 the Council agreed to purchase 20 Careline units, at its own expense, for distribution on a first come, first served basis to those persons in need, either through age or frailty, and who were in receipt of Housing Benefit or Income Support. The purchase of units is no longer an option of the scheme and apart from these units all others are rented from Chelmsford Borough Council. The ongoing cost to the Council for all 20 units is £1100 and this is the only Budget allocation for 2000/1.
- 5.2 Just recently four units have been returned to the Council as clients had either died or have no further need for the Careline. Of the remaining 16 clients it has been established that one is no longer in receipt of benefit and a further two live with their families.
- 5.3 If it is still the Council's intention to reduce and then remove its financial involvement in Carelines it would be appropriate to return all unused units to Chelmsford Borough Council for reissue and to give notice to those existing Careline recipients that they will be liable for the annual maintenance charge of £54.97 with effect from 1 April 2001.
- 5.4 Alternatively, the Council may wish to consider continued funding of the remaining units in service and then return them to Chelmsford Borough Council as and when they are no longer required. Members guidance is sought on this issue.

**6 PUBLICITY**

- 6.1 The Council has regular contact with frail and elderly people in the District and it would seem appropriate that we should remain involved in the publicity and availability of Carelines. A modest publicity budget can be incorporated in the Head of Services Client Account for 2001/2 and future years.

**7 FINANCE AND RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 As reported above, Chelmsford Borough Council are seeking a one-off grant of £500 to secure transfer of administration. The Council would then have no further resource commitment to Carelines. The transfer of responsibility for the annual maintenance cost of £55.00 from the Council to the users would further neutralise the burden to the Council and there would be no Budget allocation required in 2001/2.

**8 RECOMMENDATION**

8.1 It is proposed that the Committee **RESOLVES** to:

- (1) Transfer administration of Carelines to Chelmsford Borough Council.
- (2) Make a one-off grant of £500 towards transport costs.
- (3) Return unused units to Chelmsford Borough Council.
- (4) Determine its policy on the remaining units which are currently used by clients. (HRHM)

S J Clarkson

Head of Revenue and Housing Management

---

**Background Papers:**

Letters from RAVS and other voluntary organisations.  
Letters from Chelmsford Borough Council.

For further information please contact S J Clarkson on:-

Tel:- 01702 318005  
E-Mail:- [steve.clarkson@rochford.gov.uk](mailto:steve.clarkson@rochford.gov.uk)