



AUDIT COMMITTEE REPORT

Report Title	Call Care Service update
---------------------	---------------------------------

AGENDA STATUS: PUBLIC

Audit Committee Meeting Date:	3 November 2015
Policy Document:	NO
Directorate:	Customer & Communities
Accountable Cabinet Member:	Cllr Markham

1. Purpose

- 1.1 To provide an update regarding the Call Care Service and progress with the marketing, promotion and review of the service

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 To note the progress made in relation to marketing the Call Care Service, the current financial position and to keep potential future options under review.

3. Issues and Choices

3.1 Report Background

The Council continues to keep the options available regarding its Call Care service under review to establish the future direction of the service and methods of delivery. The options include:

- Retain and seek to grow the Call Care service (current option)
- Retain the service but outsource the call monitoring and handling provision
- Cease provision of the service and “signpost” users to other providers

The Council’s Call Care service has around 5,000 customers including sheltered housing tenants, other Council tenants and other residents within and outside of Northampton. The service takes around 8,000 calls per month. The Council’s out-of-hours response service (predominantly housing repairs) is delivered through the

team taking approximately 700 calls a month.

Specific challenges for the service include trying to increase customers and therefore income through marketing and promoting the service and taking the opportunity to expand the service through active marketing and through development of other areas linked to Telecare and Telehealth.

In January 2013, the Council produced an initial appraisal of "Call Care Future Options" and a Marketing Plan. The appraisal examined a wider range of options looking at options for the future of the service. The appraisal recommended the retention and growth of the service; however more activity was required to actively market or grow the service so in January 2014, a further options appraisal was undertaken with a specific emphasis on how the service could be retained and grown.

Since January 2014 the service has been actively marketed and promoted through a wide range of activities.

3.2 Issues

- 3.2.1 The call care service has operated at a deficit against a budgeted surplus in recent financial years.
- 3.2.2 There had been no proactive marketing of the Call Care service in recent years and the work on marketing the service which has been undertaken over the last six months is the first in many years.
- 3.2.3 The County Council's Olympus care offering has taken some clients from Call Care and continues to do so with the close relationship they have with Social Care within NCC.
- 3.2.4 The current shift pattern and process for shift scheduling needed to be reviewed to enable maximum use of resources.
- 3.2.5 The current Call Care team needed to be trained for skills and expertise to run the service on a more commercial basis.
- 3.2.6 The service needs investment in new Lifelines to replace the existing Lifeline 400 units.
- 3.2.7 Resources, expertise and investment are all required to continue to effectively review and market an enhanced Call Care service. In the case of the other options still under review there would be redundancy, procurement and transition costs.
- 3.2.8 The service can be retained and grown and can move back into a breakeven or surplus position, provided that its structure and processes are transformed to make it fit for purpose and the service is actively marketed and promoted.
- 3.2.10 To compete effectively in this marketplace Call Care needs to offer the quality and range of services that the potential client base are expecting, to

deliver consistently high levels of service and to provide, maintain and improve the equipment and technology provided to clients and to proactively market their services.

3.2.11 Progress to date against the actions arising from the review are set out below:

Staffing operations

3.2.12 The staffing structure has been reviewed and the new structure reflects the lower level of connections which are now in existence. In addition the new structure has built in the requirements for operating a commercial business unit.

- Initial structure changes were made in September, further changes are in progress
- Revision to shift system - consultation with staff is in progress
- Increased multi-skilling of staff is in progress
- A review of on-call payments is in progress
- Improved utilisation of staff during overnight and other “quiet” periods has taken place. Closer working with the Facilities Management and Customer Service teams has seen an increase in the range of services now carried out by staff during quiet periods including handling large postal requests and dealing with repairs and other general emails.
- The inclusion of marketing and business development roles as part of existing Job roles has been completed.
- Commercial awareness and cultural change training for all staff is in progress.

Systems and Processes

3.2.13 A review of the systems and processes has been undertaken which has included:

- Responding to and processing sales enquiries in a timely and efficient manner
- Invoicing
- Credit control
- Accounting and reporting
- Signposting

Technology

The use and deployment of technology has been enhanced through:

- Sourcing replacement Lifelines (e.g. Lifeline Vi)
- Maximisation of PNC7 reporting potential (PNC 7 is the main call care ICT System)
- Improving permissions and access to PNC7 to support multi-skilling
- Investigation of other equipment and peripherals

Marketing

- A marketing plan has been produced which is valid for 14/15. It includes clear timetables and resources.
- An analysis of new customers and cancellations to identify reasons/ routes for accessing the service and any controllable reasons for cancellation has been undertaken.
- Relationship management with corporate clients has commenced
- A Unique Selling Point and branding exercise has been undertaken.
- A reviewing of the pricing structure has been undertaken.
- The Website has been re-developed and online access has been enabled.
- TSA Accreditation has been awarded which reflects the quality of the service
- The Call Care Team were awarded an “Extra Mile” Award during National Customer Service Week

3.3 Choices (Options)

- 3.31 Retain and seek to grow the Call Care service
- 3.3.2 Retain the service however outsource the call monitoring and handling provision
- 3.3.3 Cease provision of the service and “signpost” users to other providers

4. Implications (including financial implications)

4.1 Policy

- 4.1.1 There are no specific policy implications arising from this report.

4.2 Resources and Risk

- 4.2.1 Should the ongoing marketing of the service not achieve the income level necessary to move the call care service into at least a cost neutral position then the implementation of alternative service delivery options will need to be actively considered in order to secure a sustainable future for the service.
- 4.2.2 There would, of course, be risks involved in changing the way the service is delivered, particularly given the vulnerable nature of the client base of the service. There would also be significant costs associated with major service transition.
- 4.2.3 Given the risks and costs involved, the case for options such as closure or outsourcing is not sufficiently compelling at this stage.

- 4.2.4 Substantial progress has been made as a result of extensive marketing of the service, which has significantly increased income, putting the service on a far firmer footing. At this stage it is therefore considered that the option of retention and growth is the best way forward, subject to ongoing review.
- 4.2.5 To mitigate the financial position of recurring deficits, four posts were deleted, achieving savings of £100,000. The budget for 2014/15 included a one off increase of £150,000 to enable the service to continue its operation whilst a service review was undertaken. The service is currently projecting that a further £50k will be needed to fulfil the budget set for 14/15. Moving forward, further savings and/or increased income will be required to move the service to a break even position against its substantive budget.

4.3 Legal

- 4.3.1 There are no specific legal implications arising from this report

4.4 Equality

- 4.4.1 There are no specific equality implications arising from this report

4.5 Consultees (Internal and External)

- 4.5.1 Employees within the Call Care Team and users of the call care service.

4.6 Other Implications

- 4.6.1 Not applicable.

5. Background Papers

- 5.1 Call Care Annual Report – Appendix One
5.2 Call Care marketing activities August-September 2014 – Appendix Two

Marion Goodman
Head of Customer and Cultural Services
Ext. 7721