Report

Report to:	**Housing and Technical Resources Committee**
Date of Meeting:	**18 May 2011**
Report by:	**Executive Director (Housing and Technical Resources)**
	Executive Director (Social Work Resources)

| Subject: | **Community Alarm Service – Transfer of Lead Responsibility for the Community Alarm Service to Social Work Resources** |

1. Purpose of Report

1.1. The purpose of the report is to:-

♦ set out proposals for Social Work Resources to take the lead responsibility for the Community Alarm Service in South Lanarkshire from 1 July 2011.

2. Recommendation(s)

2.1. The Committee is asked to approve the following recommendation(s):-

(1) that from 1 July 2011, Social Work Resources assumes overall responsibility for the management and delivery of the Council's Community Alarm Service, including aspects of the service currently managed and delivered by Housing and Technical Resources

(2) that Housing and Technical Resources make an agreed budget transfer to meet the cost of those aspects of the service to be transferred to Social Work Resources

(3) that Housing and Technical Resources continue to have responsibility for the upkeep and renewal of alarm equipment within sheltered housing and combined door entry/alarm systems in multi storey blocks

(4) that the standard charge for the Community Alarm Service be introduced for Council tenants in Rutherglen/Cambuslang, who first receive the service on or after 1 July 2011, with protection being provided for tenants who were in receipt of the service before this date

(5) that further consideration be given to the future call handling arrangements for Alert calls as part of the current review of the Council's customer contact centres

(6) that the proposal for Social Work Resources to take lead responsibility for the Community Alarm Service be referred to the Executive Committee for formal approval

3 Background

3.1. The Community Alarm Service provides a 24-hour emergency call service for 7645 [1]older and vulnerable residents of South Lanarkshire. The majority of these are provided in dispersed mainstream properties across South Lanarkshire, with the

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[1] South Lanarkshire Council 24-hour Control Centre January 2011

Community Alarm Service also providing emergency out-of-hours cover for sheltered housing tenants.

3.2   Recent years have seen changes in the profile of alarm users. Early developments in alarm services were strongly associated with the social rented sector and sheltered housing. However, in line with the general tenure shift, there has been a significant increase in the number of owner occupiers, who have been provided with community alarms, to the extent that 56% (4281) of dispersed alarm users are now owner occupiers.

3.3   The Community Alarm Service also plays an increased role in the care and support arrangements for a range of care groups, for example adults with learning disabilities, who have been resettled into the community following hospital closure programmes. The Telecare initiative has provided funding for assistive technology 'add ons' which can be integrated with mainstream alarm provision.

3.4   The service is currently provided jointly by Housing and Technical Resources and Social Work Resources:-
♦ Social Work Resources is responsible for assessing service users' needs, routine testing of equipment, responding to calls and in Cambuslang and Rutherglen installing and removing dispersed alarm units
♦ Housing and Technical Resources has the responsibility for installation and removal of dispersed alarm units in all other areas of the Council, procurement and repair contracts, and answering and monitoring calls at the Council's 24-hour Control Centre

3.5.   Although some aspects of the service perform well, neither Resource has overall strategic lead for the service and the need for improvements has been identified, particularly in terms of consistency and integration across key operational functions.

3.6.   A small cross Resource working group was set up to review the Community Alarm Service with key findings and future proposals summarised in sections 4 and 5 below.

4.   Key findings of review
4.1   The review highlighted the following aspects of the service as performing well:-
♦ good access to the service, which is demand led and has no waiting list
♦ call handling performance at the Council's 24 hour control centre, which complies with the Telecare Services Association (TSA) industry standards
♦ progress in developing telecare services, with £435,000 funding being secured by the Council through the Scottish Government's telecare initiative between 2007 and 2010
♦ significant investment in upgrading alarm systems in sheltered housing, with the Community Alarm Service successfully supporting the move to 5 day on-site staff cover in sheltered housing
♦ efficiencies through an amalgamated repair contract for sheltered, group and dispersed alarm systems

4.2   However, the review also identified a lack of a consistent and integrated approach to service delivery in terms of:-
♦ split responsibilities between Housing and Technical Resources and Social Work Resources for key operational functions, including assessment, installation and routine testing of equipment

♦ inconsistencies in local arrangements for the installation and removal of equipment with a range of Housing staff undertaking these tasks, in addition to the main responsibilities of their substantive posts

♦ need for clearer service standards and improved performance monitoring

♦ cost to Housing and Technical Resources of providing the service to an increasing number of owner occupiers

♦ anomalies in charging arrangements, where service users pay a non-means tested home care charge of £1.54 for the Community Alarm Response Service, except in Rutherglen and Cambuslang, where due to practices inherited from the former Glasgow District Council, tenants do not currently pay for the alarm service.

4.3   Current shared operational responsibilities between Social Work and Housing and Technical Resources do not provide a basis for the expansion and development of the Community Alarm Service. It is generally agreed, with the increased numbers of older people living independently and wishing to stay in their own homes, that both community alarms and telecare will play an increasingly important role. Social Work Resources clearly recognises the central importance of the Community Alarm Service in the delivery of community care outcomes and takes the lead role in the development of telecare services.

5.   Future Proposals
5.1   It is proposed that Social Work Resources takes the lead responsibility for the development and management of the community alarm service and would be responsible for:-

♦ assessment of applications for community alarm services

♦ installation and upkeep of equipment in people's homes, including bi-annual checks of community alarms. The integration of these equipment related functions will assist in providing a more efficient and streamlined service by rationalising the personnel involved and reducing administration between both Resources

♦ integrating telecare within the alarm service and achieving maximum service efficiencies through the contractual arrangements for procurement, repair, installation and removal of equipment

♦ Service development, for example working jointly with Strathclyde Fire and Rescue Service, Home Safety Officer, etc

♦ reviewing the current access arrangements for the service, including the potential to introduce self-assessment

♦ developing service standards and monitoring arrangements, including developing the performance management and reporting potential offered by the new Tunstall call monitoring database installed at Pollock Avenue

5.2.   Housing and Technical Resources will continue to have responsibility for the maintenance, and renewal of warden call systems for the Council's sheltered housing and combined door entry/community alarm systems in its multi-storey blocks.

5.3   In the interim, Housing and Technical Resources will also continue to be responsible for the community alarm call handling through the Pollock Avenue Control Centre, which will be given further consideration as part of the current review of the Council's customer contact centres. A service agreement with Social Work Resources will determine appropriate service standards.

5.4 It is proposed that the standard charge of £1.54 per week, which currently applies across South Lanarkshire, is introduced for all new Council tenants who take up a tenancy in Cambuslang and Rutherglen from 1 July 2011.

6. Employee Implications

6.1. As highlighted at paragraph 4.2 above, there are no dedicated employees within Housing and Technical Resources with exclusive responsibility for alarm related duties, therefore, it is not proposed that any specific posts would transfer.

7. Financial Implications

7.1 The Resource transfer arrangements are required to take account of the disparate arrangements that exist locally, i.e. no specific posts that could be transferred (see 6.1 above).

7.2 A budget of £167,528 will be transferred to Social Work Resources to cover current expenditure by Housing and Technical Resources.

8. Other Implications

8.1 There are no other implications for sustainability or risk in terms of the information contained within this report.

9. Equalities Impact Assessment and Consultation

9.1 This report does not introduce a new policy, function or strategy or recommend a change to an existing policy, function or strategy and, therefore, no impact assessment is required.

9.2 Social Work Resources has started a process of consultation with employees and trades unions regarding the proposed developments and the timetable for implementation. Employees and trades unions will continue to be involved in the implementation plan in the run up to 1 July 2011.

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21 April 2011

Link(s) to Council Objectives/Improvement Themes/Values
♦ Accountable, effective and efficient
♦ People focussed

Previous References
♦ None

List of Background Papers
♦ None

Contact for Further Information
If you would like to inspect the background papers or want further information, please contact:-
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