



**Decision for Cabinet Member for  
Adult Social Care, Public Health  
and Leisure**

**Report from the Corporate Director,  
Community, Health and Wellbeing**

**APPROVAL TO WAIVE CONTRACT STANDING ORDERS TO EXEMPT  
THE REQUIREMENT FOR THE PROCUREMENT OF CARELINE  
SERVICES THEREBY PERMITTING A DIRECT AWARD**

<b>Wards Affected:</b>	All
<b>Key or Non-Key Decision:</b>	Non-Key Decision
<b>Open or Part/Fully Exempt:</b> <small>(If exempt, please highlight relevant paragraph of Part 1, Schedule 12A of 1972 Local Government Act)</small>	Open
<b>No. of Appendices:</b>	N/A
<b>Background Papers:</b>	N/A
<b>Contact Officer(s):</b> (Name, Title, Contact Details)	Edwin Mensah Team Manager, Community and Prevention Strategic Commissioning and Capacity Building Email: <a href="mailto:edwin.mensah@brent.gov.uk">edwin.mensah@brent.gov.uk</a>

## 1.0 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to update on the Council's Careline Services and seek member approval to waive Contract Standing Orders to enable a Direct Award of a contract for the provision of Careline Services ("the Contract") for the financial year 2025/26. The case for direct award, as opposed to a full tender process, is set out in the report below.

## 2.0 Recommendation(s)

That the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, Public Health and Leisure, having consulted with the Leader:

- 2.1 Approves an exemption pursuant to Contract Standing Order 84(a) of the requirement to tender a contract for the Careline Services for a period of 12

months from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2025 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2026 in accordance with paragraph 13 of Part 3 of the Constitution.

### **3.0 Detail**

- 3.1 Contribution to the Borough Plan Priorities and Strategic Context:** The report supports the Borough Plan “Moving Brent Forward Together”. The focus on supporting people to remain independent contributes to Strategic Priority 5 – A Healthier Brent, which says, “we will work with residents as partners in their own care and support, to live independent, safe, happy and fulfilling lives”. The Careline service enables people to stay within their own homes for longer, supports prompt and safe hospital discharge and also provides support for carers.
- 3.2 In 2016 Brent Council entered into an inter authority agreement with Harrow Council for the provision of a 24/7 specialist telephone helpline and contact centre (Harrow Helpline Services) (“Original Contract”). The Original Contract commenced on 1<sup>st</sup> May 2016 and the services have continued to be extended through a series of yearly direct awards to Harrow Council since the expiration of the aforementioned contract. The service has since been renamed Harrow Careline Services.
- 3.3 The service monitors individuals’ wellbeing in the home or outside in the community where assisted technologies such as tele-care alarms or GPS tracking systems are in place. The service also co-ordinates tele-care equipment supply and maintenance. At present the service supports approximately 3,700 Brent residents.
- 3.4 The telephone helpline & contact centre is part of a wider approach to increase the use of ‘at a distance’ support that allows vulnerable people to go about their daily activities with minimal intervention, while offering the right amount of support at the critical times it is needed, at any time of the day or night.
- 3.5 The Care Act 2014 places emphasis on prevention and independence as ways of achieving and exceeding the desired outcomes for service users and carers. The 24/7 telephone careline and contact centre fulfils these requirements for a group of vulnerable people with unpredictable, unexpected, emergency needs.
- 3.6 Adult Social Care has set up a Transformation Programme which includes a Technology Enabled Care (TEC) workstream, with the aim of developing a new offer and model of provision, informed by a future technology / digital strategy for adult social care. The services provided within this contract are within the scope of the workstream and will be reviewed and redesigned to align with broader strategy as this is shaped over the next year. For this reason, procuring a service which only meets the current specification does not make strategic or financial sense at this time.
- 3.7 The contract has been rolled over for the previous years since the Original Contract expired. The service continues to offer value for money and meet the

needs of those using it Until the transformation work reports back and establishes the future requirements of the service, this arrangement continues to be the most advantageous.

- 3.8 Officers therefore seek an exemption pursuant to Contract Standing Order 84(a) of the requirement to tender a contract for the above services.
- 3.9 During that time to the Council also plans to undertake a consultation on the potential to charge Careline customers. The intended outcome is that any future service would be cost neutral to the Council and further improve value for money to the Council. The consultation process will also give more detailed insights into the needs of the current customers and inform what a future service could offer the people of Brent, as well as informing the development of our overall technology / digital strategy for adult social care and supporting the prevention agenda within the borough.
- 3.10 We will also continue to work with the current service provider (Harrow Careline) to identify enhancements that can reasonably be made within the next 12 months to continue the provision of a good quality service to its users. One such area, will be looking at website enhancements to make accessibility of the service offer clearer.
- 3.11 Working closely with the current provider and undertaking wider market engagement, the intention is to produce a new careline service specification which will be procured the following year. This will form part of the transformational work, moving the department closer to the longer-term position it is aiming for. However, this will not be the entirety of the transformational work, which will have a wider scope and report separately. The new careline service will align with Council's corporate digital strategy and the future technology / digital strategy for adult social care.

#### **4.0 Stakeholder and ward member consultation and engagement**

- 4.1 There has been no consultation with ward members on this proposal, given the contract is of benefit for the whole of Brent.

#### **5.0 Financial Considerations**

- 5.1 The cost for the 12 month contract is forecast not to exceed £475,000, funded within existing ASC budgets. Costs are dependent on the number of connections and therefore the exact value cannot be stated. However, this figure is based on the outturn for 2024/25.

#### **6.0 Legal Considerations**

- 6.1 In accordance with paragraph 13 of Part 3 of Brent's Constitution, the Leader has delegated certain functions to Cabinet members to be exercised within their portfolio area in consultation with the Leader. This delegation includes agreement of waivers of Contract Standing Orders for Medium and High Value Contracts.

- 6.2 The services Officers are proposing to procure are valued at £475k over the contract term and the proposed contract is thus classified as a Medium Value Contract under Contract Standing Orders. Contract Standing Orders provide that a Medium Value Contract should be procured by way of a tender process but for the reasons detailed in the body of the report in particular paragraphs 3.5 – 3.9, Officers do not consider it is appropriate to procure the contract by way of a tender process.
- 6.3 Given that the proposed contract is below the threshold for services under Schedule 3 of the Public Contract Regulations 2015, the Cabinet member, in consultation with the Leader, is entitled to agree to waive the Contract Standing Order requirement to seek tenders. In reaching any decision to waive Contract Standing Orders, the Cabinet Member in consultation with the Leader should have regard to the reasons Officers have set out in Section 3 of the report.

## **7.0 Equity, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) Considerations**

- 7.1 Pursuant to s149 Equality Act 2010 (the “Public Sector Equality Duty”), the Council must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:
- (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited under the Act
  - (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; and
  - (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it,
- 7.2 The Public Sector Equality Duty covers the following nine protected characteristics: age, disability, marriage and civil partnership, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.
- 7.3 Having due regard involves the need to enquire into whether and how a proposed decision disproportionately affects people with a protected characteristic and the need to consider taking steps to meet the needs of persons who share a protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it. This includes removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by persons who share a protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic.
- 7.4 There is no prescribed manner in which the council must exercise its public sector equality duty but having an adequate evidence base for its decision is necessary.
- 7.5 The proposals in this report have been subject to screening and officers believe that there are no adverse implications in respect of EDI.

## **8.0 Climate Change and Environmental Considerations**

8.1 There are no Climate Change and Environmental Considerations arising from the proposed Direct Award of the Contract.

**9.0 Human Resources/Property Considerations (if appropriate)**

9.1 There are currently a number of staff at Harrow Council that may be subject to the protection from the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 2006 in the event Harrow Council ceases to provide the current services.

**10.0 Communication Considerations**

10.1 There are no Communication Considerations arising from the proposed Direct Award of the Contract.

**Report sign off:**

**RACHEL CROSSLEY**  
Corporate Director, Community, Health and Wellbeing