

	<b>Cabinet</b> 7 April 2026
	<b>Report from the Corporate Director,          Service Reform and Strategy</b>
	<b>Lead Member - Cabinet for Adult          Social Care, Public Health and          Leisure          (Councillor Neil Nerva)</b>
<b>Approval to establish an inter authority agreement with Harrow Council for the provision of telecare services for vulnerable people and their carers</b>	

<b>Wards Affected:</b>	All
<b>Key or Non-Key Decision:</b>	Key
<b>Open or Part/Fully Exempt:</b> (If exempt, please highlight relevant paragraph of Part 1, Schedule 12A of 1972 Local Government Act)	Open
<b>No. of Appendices:</b>	None
<b>Background Papers<sup>1</sup>:</b>	None
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## 1.0 Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report sets out proposals for working with the London Borough of Harrow (“Harrow Council”) for the provision of telecare services for vulnerable people and their carers. It seeks Cabinet approval to enter into an Inter Authority Agreement (Partnership) with Harrow Council, and to allow Officers to enter into discussions with Harrow Council with the aim of agreeing appropriate service terms that will result in the signing of an Inter Authority Agreement (“the IAA”).

## **2.0 Recommendation(s)**

That Cabinet:

- 2.1 Approves an exemption from the usual tendering requirements set in the Contract Standing Orders 84 for good operational and financial reasons.
- 2.2 Approves the creation of an Inter Authority Agreement (“the IAA”) that implements co-operation for the provision of telecare for vulnerable people and their carers for three years with an option to extend for a further 1+1 years with Harrow Council.
- 2.3 Delegates authority to the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, Public Health and Leisure and the Corporate Director, Service Reform and Strategy to agree and finalise the terms of the IAA in consultation with the Director of Law and the Corporate Director Finance and Resources.

## **3.0 Detail**

### **3.1 Cabinet Member Foreword**

- 3.1.1 The proposals within this report support a number of key Council priorities asset out in the Borough Plan “Moving Brent Forward Together”. With an aging population and greater demand for services from this with more complex needs, the rapid developments being made in the technology sector can increasingly be considered as complementary options for vulnerable people. Residents often prefer to stay in their own homes, near neighbours and Support networks and the use of technology enabled care can support this.
- 3.1.2 In terms of the contribution to the Borough Plan and wider strategic priorities Strategic Priority 5 – A Healthier Brent says, we will “strengthen our commissioning approach to prevention and wellbeing”. By working with neighbouring boroughs through the West London Alliance, and specifically with Harrow on this agreement, benefit can be gained from shared approaches and learning as well as the potential for economies of scale for purchasing.
- 3.1.3 Strategic Priority 5 says “we will work with residents as partners in their own care and support, to live independent, safe, happy and fulfilling lives”. It also sets out that the intention is “continuing to support people to be cared for closer to home, by developing health and social care community services to help people. Telecare is a key service is supporting this aim.

### **3.2 Background**

- 3.2.1 Brent’s digital strategy 2022-2026 [Brent digital-strategy-2022-2026](#) recognises the role that technology can and will have in the lives and care of people supported by Adult Social Care. Building on that, Adult Social Care (ASC) is seeking to

identify, develop and design a range of digital and assistive technology solutions that will have a benefit across ASC in our work with residents, staff, wider partners and providers. Our ambition is to develop a sustainable and affordable approach to technology that reflects what good looks like in ASC and makes best use of available and emerging solutions and funding.

3.2.2 Brent currently has in place a telecare and community alarms offer for approximately 2,300 people with the majority having telecare with a monitored alarm. The service was provided through a previous Inter-Authority Agreement between Brent and Harrow Council (Harrow Careline), but both the demands and the technology have changed during the lifetime of that agreement, and a new one is needed to ensure the offer is fit for purpose for the future. The original agreement covered:

- Alarm monitoring
- Emergency Duty response
- Mobile Meals “no response” calls
- Processing of orders for telecare equipment with a third party

3.2.3 More recently (August 2025) the agreement with Harrow was varied to add in the provision, installation and repairs of telecare equipment. This was in response to the equipment provider at that time, Nottingham Rehabilitation Services (NRS), going into liquidation. Harrow Careline, which delivers a similar service to other Local Authorities in the North London area, was able to mobilise quickly, alongside a number of other providers, to ensure a minimal interruption to services.

3.2.4 Whilst the current alarm provision works well, the technological developments within the social care arena mean there are now greater opportunities available to support people flexibly and with more minimal intervention, to remain safely in their own homes. It is critical that the council positions itself to take best advantage of the full range of opportunities, taking a test and learn approach to ensure that we adopt the best digital solutions to meeting the needs of residents within Brent. This will require changes to kit/hardware and also changes to processes and approach within Adult Social Care and within provider organisations such as home care, where providers can support the developments.

3.2.5 Our focus now is developing a range of digital and assistive technology solutions that support people to live independently at home, while delivering significant benefits back to the Council, principally through being able to change the way care and support is delivered, based on data, intelligence and insight. These developments will support the wider Health and Social Care environment, with referrals from health practitioners helping to prevent hospital admissions and avoiding delayed discharges.

- 3.2.7 ASC has begun to explore a range of options in the market, including a test and learn project which is currently underway, supported by an external development partner, to see how technology can support customers who would benefit from virtual support within their home. The initial cohort is people with a learning disability who receive more than one visit per day. Working with home care providers, the pilot will aim to see whether the use of voice activated devices can support people where prompts rather than physical support is required. Purchasing and installation of equipment is only one part of the pilot, with the greatest learning coming from understanding the support required for practitioners to understand the available technologies, identify suitable clients and then monitor and review the impact of the technology.
- 3.2.8 A key element of the work with the design partner is to identify where assistive technology can be used more effectively to support residents, enhance independence, and improve the overall user experience. This insight will shape our thinking about how technology can complement care rather than replace it, and where digital tools can create greater efficiency and confidence for both residents and practitioners. The developments will be used to support those who are eligible for Adult Social Care, but people living in Brent who are not eligible for Adult Social Care will have access to these technologies by being signposted directly to Harrow Careline for advice and provision of tech solutions, this will be at no cost to the council.
- 3.2.9 It is anticipated that the council will continue this test and learn approach across the service before new approaches are fully implemented and scaled up. The work in all cases, will need to explore the culture and process changes required (and financial impact of that) as well as the impact and costs of the hardware itself. This could for example mean staff analysing data from devices, more responsive reviews and changes to arrangements with contracted providers who may be required to programme devices or respond to alerts.
- 3.2.10 The new home care contracts also provide an opportunity to build this capability into the requirements and therefore these will continue to develop during the coming years, broadening the range and flexibility of the Inter Authority Agreement will allow us to accommodate the potential requirements as needed.

### **Overview of the Proposed Approach**

- 3.2.11 The proposed approach is to establish a new agreement with Harrow Careline which will cover the current requirements (monitoring, equipment, installation, repairs and the out of hours cover) but build in flexibility for any future requirements. Harrow Careline already provides services for Ealing and Hammersmith and Fulham and is involved in supporting the development of the use of technology within their Councils, increasing the flexibility of the agreement for Brent would give us the opportunity to take a similar approach in areas where this is seen as best route to market.

- 3.2.12 Whilst the test and learn work is in its infancy, the intention is to build flexibility for development into the agreement, with Harrow Careline supporting future innovation. Brent will utilise the expertise of Harrow to make use of the most effective technologies and to support the implementation of those new pathways and processes.
- 3.2.13 This approach will still allow the Council to purchase equipment from other contracted providers should that be required (where Harrow is unable to source items or the rate is uncompetitive).
- 3.2.14 Working in partnership with Harrow, Adult Social Care can benefit from learning already gained through their service offer within their own borough and the work they do for other boroughs. Working with a strategic provider who has oversight of customers, and the end-to-end service will enable better tracking of equipment, supporting timely recycling of equipment and re-use of Sim cards. A provider who already works with a number of other authorities will also provide economies of scale in terms of purchasing potential for the kit element of the service.
- 3.2.15 Harrow is already leading the work to support Brent to safely migrate customers to new digital equipment solutions which will ensure they have service continuity when the national analogue switch off occurs. This “switchover” work, in partnership with officers at Brent, has enabled customers to receive updated equipment, or where accounts are dormant (where someone has moved and not notified the provider or the Council for example), cease the account. In doing so, the utilisation (and associated contract value) has reduced during the last year. Once finalised the records will accurately reflect the utilisation within the borough. This has been difficult to achieve previously due to referrals from Health colleagues as well as Adult Social Care and customers not routinely notifying when the alarm ceases to be used. New recording processes will resolve this going forward.

### **Alternative Options considered**

- 3.2.17 Current “as is” model. Whilst the current agreement has served the Council well, it does not allow for the future developments required in this area.
- 3.2.18 Procuring an end-to-end telecare service. This would enable the market to respond to the requirements, which could result in innovative solutions and competitive pricing. The nature of the work requires a flexible partner that can adapt and at times, lead the way, in terms of advising what is required. Given this is a rapidly evolving area, there is a risk that the specification cannot be both flexible enough and prescriptive enough to achieve the outcomes needed as the contract proceeded. It would also risk the market response could be too broad or unfocused, making evaluation and mobilisation harder.

3.2.19 Procuring separate elements of a telecare offer. This would provide a flexible option in terms of having a variety of contracts that could meet different requirements, for example an alarm monitoring service, an equipment service, and a development/advisory partner. This would require a significant procurement effort and potentially introduce a number of hand offs and new processes to be negotiated. Having one partner enables the service to operate seamlessly and more efficiently but by taking the approach outlined, does not preclude the council from working with other providers and technology providers on particular solutions where this would better meet the ambitions of the ASC Digital Strategy.

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

4.1 The proposal covers the whole of Brent and there are no ward specific issues. The agreement covers continuation of an existing service offer, for which the provider undertakes customer satisfaction surveys. However, as a future offer develops, there is scope for working with individuals and relevant groups to ensure a new or enhanced offer meets the needs of residents.

#### **5.0 Financial Considerations**

5.1 The estimated value of the Contract is £0.65m per annum, with an expected one-off cost of £0.2m. For a 3+1+1 year contract length, the cost of this contract is estimated to be £3.45m. Contract spend will need to be closely monitored. Any uplifts to the rates payable will need to be factored into MTFS planning for future years.

5.2 The estimated cost is based on assumptions about demand which are difficult to accurately forecast. At present there is a reduction in utilisation (and associated cost) for alarms, due to joint inter agency work being undertaken to contact customers, switch to digital equipment or cease dormant accounts.

5.3 It is possible that during the life of the agreement, demand may increase for other types of equipment which can provide a different type of virtual support and assist in assessing customers' needs more accurately.

5.4 The cost of the Contract will be funded from existing budgets within Service Reform and Strategy.

#### **6.0 Legal Considerations**

6.1 The recommendation in this report to enter into an Inter Authority Agreement to establish and/or implement co-operation between Harrow Council and Brent Council for the provision of the services falls outside the scope of the Procurement Act 2023 (the "PA 23").

6.2 According to Schedule 2, Paragraph 3 of the PA 23, contracts established between two or more contracting authorities fall outside the scope of the PA 23

if they fulfil the following conditions:

- the contract establishes joint co-operation in the performance of public services with a view to achieving mutual objectives; and
- the implementation of the co-operation is governed only by the public interest; and
- the participating authorities perform no more than 20 per cent of the activities contemplated by the arrangement other than for the purposes of the authorities' public functions.

6.3 Officers from both Harrow Council and Brent discussed and concluded that the criteria set out in paragraph 6.2 will be met and have indicated an intention to establish a partnership fulfilling the requirements of a "Horizontal Arrangement", as defined by Schedule 2, Paragraph 3 (2) of the PA 23.

6.4 The procurement is subject to the Council's own Standing Orders and Financial Regulations in respect of High Value Contracts given the services are valued at £3.45m. The estimated value of the Contract is therefore above the threshold for Goods and Services under the PA 23.

6.5 Contract Standing Order 95(a) provides that for contracts with an estimated value in excess of the Threshold specified for Goods and Services under the PA 23, tenders shall generally be invited in accordance with Procurement Legislation using the relevant procurement procedure by publishing the appropriate notice on the Central Digital Platform in accordance with Procurement Legislation and no later than any other advertisement placed in any other publication. However, as the contract between the two Authorities will be classified as a "Horizontal Arrangement" under the PA 23, Cabinet is empowered to rely on Contract Standing Order 84 (a), which specifies that subject to compliance with Procurement Legislation, Cabinet may agree an exemption from the requirement to procure in accordance with Contract Standing Orders where there are "good operational and/or financial reasons".

6.6 For the reasons detailed in paragraphs 6.2 and 6.3 it is not considered there is a breach of Procurement Legislation as Schedule 2, Paragraph 3 of the PA 23 permits the two authorities to enter into a Horizontal Arrangement. Moreover, Officers consider that there are good operational and financial reasons, as set out in section 3.2 of this report, for negotiating and awarding the proposed Inter Authority Agreement directly to Harrow Council rather than carrying out a formal tendering process.

## **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 Officers believe that there are no adverse implications of this proposal in respect of equality implications.

7.6 The introduction of this agreement replaces a similar arrangement and will enable continued provision of telecare which supports people with disabilities to live independently, supports older people in reducing the feelings of isolation, provides affordable support and enables people to retain their networks and social inclusion.

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

8.1 Officers are encouraged to ensure that the provision of telecare equipment – namely its installation, repair and collection is conducted wherever possible in the most environmentally sustainably way possible. This should factor in circular economy principles around repair and re-use rather than buying new, minimising energy use where possible, and utilising sustainable modes of travel, if transport is required, as part of the upkeep of equipment. Beyond this, there are minimal environmental sustainability implications for the proposal within this report.

## **9.0 Human Resources/Property Implications (if appropriate)**



9.1 This service is currently provided by an external contractor and there are no implications for Council staff arising from retendering the Contract.

## **10.0 Communication Considerations**

10.1 Internal communications will be reviewed to ensure that prescribers (social work staff) know that Harrow Careline is the provider and that the contact points and ordering process remain. Externally, customers should not be impacted as there will be no interruption or change to their service. In future, if there are pilot projects, or new developments, these will be notified directly to those involved.

**Report sign off:**

***Rachel Crossley***

Corporate Director, Service Reform  
and Strategy.