

ITEM 8 – OUTCOME OUT OF HOURS SERVICE REVIEW

1 ISSUES IMPACTING ALTERNATIVE SERVICE OPTIONS

1.1 Out of Hours Service and contact centre overlap.

There is currently an unnecessary overlap of 4 hours every weekday in service between the Rochdale contact centre and the Out of Hours service. This overlap needs to be eliminated to cut unnecessary spend. For over 30 years the Out of Hours service has opened on weekdays at 5pm and closed at 9am. Since the council's contact centre first came in to operation its opening hours and days have varied in order to balance customer demand. The contact centre now opens at 3am and closes at 8pm. In order to resolve this (originally unforeseen) situation the opening times of the out of hours service would need to be shortened, and the out of hours emergency calls from 5pm to 8pm diverted to the contact centre. This will result in a complete mobilisation of the out of hours service within the contact centre.

It is considered uneconomic to undertake the work to mobilise the out of hours service in the contact centre for 4 hours a day and then commission a separate provider to undertake the out of hours service from 8pm onwards. In effect this would result in the mobilisation of 2 new services. It is also considered uneconomic and totally contrary to the council's Customer Transformation Strategy to commission a separate provider to undertake the service from 5pm, which would continue the duplication of council contact services.

1.2 Customer transformation programme

The Channel Migration Group is focused on developing and implementing a strategy to maximise the use of common access channels, to shift customers from expensive to cheaper service access and payment channels and to increase the breadth and depth of services that are provided to fulfil a full customer management function for services.

This approach has clear implications for the Out of Hours service. The maximisation of common access channels involves a specific focus on migration of initial customer contact to the Rochdale contact centre. This is because since the contact centre development only a limited number of services have migrated across and call volumes have since dropped by 60%, continued migration of services to the contact centre is key to ensure the most effective use of the contact centre resource and its associated investment. The Rochdale contact centre also provides the infrastructure to increase the breadth and depth of service offered by the Out of Hours Service.

1.3 Economic Issues

Due to the very small nature of the Out of Hours service in relation to other council out of hours operations it is considered unlikely that the current service would be an attractive proposition as part of any formal market testing. Also, due to the availability of a competitively tendered framework contract for a pan-London Out of Hours service, the existing market is considered small.

The costs associated with a tendering exercise are highly unlikely to outweigh the associated benefits, especially considering pan-London framework for Out of Hours services has been developed as a tailored shared service model and has been designed to offer the best value the market has to offer London Boroughs,

1.4 Technical Issues

The Council has invested over £1m in the development of the Customer Relationship management system (LAGAN CRM) which is being used across council services and contains a wealth of contact information in relation to resident enquiries and issues. In addition, significant further investment has been made in the integration of IT and telephony systems especially in relation to the councils contact centre. The ability to directly interrogate the council's I World property system is crucial to ensuring a robust system is in place to enable customer service operators the ability to challenge residents who may already have a repairs appointment, that try to push repairs through as night time emergencies. A transfer of the service to another provider could result in having to change part of the IT infrastructure and will involve the development of expensive IT integration options making a market testing exercise not economically viable.