

CABINET

DATE – 19 NOVEMBER 2024

PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT

TITLE OF REPORT: EXTENSION OF PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT BETWEEN CARELINE AND HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

REPORT OF: SERVICE DIRECTOR CUSTOMERS

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR COMMUNITY AND PARTNERSHIPS

COUNCIL PRIORITY: THRIVING COMMUNITIES / ACCESSIBLE SERVICES / SUSTAINABILITY

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. This proposal seeks Cabinet approval to extend the partnership agreement between Herts Careline and Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) for a period of five years from 01 April 2026 to 31 March 2031. This will be via a continued delegation of services from HCC to NHC.
- 1.2. Careline has been providing Telecare Services to HCC since 2014 and is currently in a five-year agreement, due to end on 31 March 2026.
- 1.3. The current arrangement works well for both parties who work collaboratively to continually develop and enhance the service offerings to proactively promote independence and wellbeing for the residents of Hertfordshire.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That Cabinet approve the extension of the agreement between Herts Careline and HCC for a period of five years to run from 01 April 2026 to 31 March 2031. This contract will be delivered by way of delegation from HCC to NHC.
- 2.2 That the operational contractual arrangements and final sign off of the agreement are delegated to the Service Director Customers, in consultation with the Executive Member for Community and Partnerships.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 The existing partnership between Careline and HCC works very well. An extension of the contract will enable us to continue to build on the positive relationship to the benefit of service users across Hertfordshire.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

4.1 These are considered in the Part 2 report.

5. CONSULTATION WITH RELEVANT MEMBERS AND EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

5.1 The Executive Member for Community and Partnerships has been consulted and supports this approach.

5.2 A report was presented to the internal Political Liaison Board of the Executive and Leadership Team on 05 November 2024 and PLB supports the recommendations in this report.

5.3 Additionally, HCC has consulted widely on this proposal with internal stakeholders and the approach is very much supported. HCC's Cabinet considered this item at its meeting of 04 November and voted to extend the agreement for a five-year period.

6. FORWARD PLAN

6.1 This report contains a recommendation on a key executive decision that was first notified to the public in the Forward Plan on the 18 October 2024.

7. BACKGROUND

7.1 Herts Careline, operated by NHC, has been providing essential community alarm and telecare services since 1982. The service aims to support elderly and vulnerable residents, including people with disabilities, and those with complex health needs such as dementia and epilepsy, enabling them to live independently and safely in their own homes. The service operates 24/7, 365 days a year, and has grown significantly, supporting over 14,000 residents across the county. It handles approximately 1,500 calls per day, offering reassurance and a vital lifeline to those who need it most as well as dealing with life critical emergency calls. They make sure help is arranged depending on the nature of the call. They can alert family, The British Red Cross, Early Intervention Vehicles for falls, or the emergency services if required.

7.2 Careline celebrated reaching 40 years of service in 2022 and in the same year were awarded 'Control Room of the Year' in recognition of the valuable service Careline provides and the positive impact it has on the community. The judges stated "Herts Careline's Control Room team performs a vital role supporting thousands of people with medical conditions and vulnerabilities and delivers outstanding results for the organisation and the community it serves"

7.3 The recent excellent Customer Satisfaction Survey results shown below, highlight the positive impact the service has on its customers.



7.4 In September 2020 Cabinet considered and noted a report relating to the potential expansion of the Careline service at the time, in becoming HCCs sole provider. At that meeting Cabinet delegated authority to enter into the partnership agreement with HCC to the Service Director Customers in consultation with the Executive Member at the time. HCC Members previously agreed to this arrangement by way of a statutory delegation of certain Care Act functions permitted under The Care Act 2014 and The Local Authorities (Arrangements for the Discharge of Functions) (England) Regulations 2012.

7.5 In 2021 HCC reviewed the services provided by Careline and its other providers at the time and decided to make Careline their sole provider of Telecare and Assistive Technology services.

8. RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

8.1 Careline has been providing Telecare Services to HCC since 2014 and is currently in a five-year partnership agreement which is due to end on 31 March 2026. The arrangement works well for both parties who work collaboratively to continually develop and enhance the service offerings to proactively promote independence and wellbeing for the residents of Hertfordshire.

8.2 The Herts Careline’s service is designed to meet the growing needs of Hertfordshire’s ageing population, enabling older adults to live independently and securely within their homes. The service provides a comprehensive suite of support offerings, including round-the-clock emergency response, pro-active intervention, and personalised monitoring tailored to each user’s specific needs. These services not only offer immediate assistance during emergencies, but also provide peace of mind to both users and their families, fostering a sense of security and wellbeing.

- 8.3 As demand increases, Herts Careline will continue to enhance its service delivery to accommodate more residents, offering proactive support that reduces isolation, improves health outcomes, and decreases reliance on emergency healthcare services. Through preventative care and consistent support, Herts Careline contributes to the broader goal of promoting independent living among Hertfordshire's elderly population, helping to ease the strain on local healthcare and social services.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1. Cabinets Terms of Reference in the Constitution state that it may by resolution exercise the following functions set out at 5.7.15 'To oversee the provision of all the Council's services other than those functions reserved to the Council', and at 5.7.24 'To promote and develop external partnerships to meet strategic objectives.
- 9.2 The partnership agreement has been established by way of a statutory delegation of certain Care Act functions permitted under The Care Act 2014 and The Local Authorities (Arrangements for the Discharge of Functions) (England) Regulations 2012.
- 9.3 Section 9EA of the Local Government Act 2000 and the Local Authorities (Arrangements for the Discharge of Functions) (England) Regulations 2012 permits a local authority to arrange for the discharge of any of the local authority's executive functions by (inter alia) another local authority. As Section 9EA is a delegation of powers between two local authorities, there is no requirement to go through a formal procurement exercise.
- 9.4 There are no other legal implications arising from this report.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 These are considered in the Part 2 report.

11. RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1. Good Risk Management supports and enhances the decision-making process, increasing the likelihood of the Council meeting its objectives and enabling it to respond quickly and effectively to change. When taking decisions, risks and opportunities must be considered.

12. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 12.1. In line with the Public Sector Equality Duty, public bodies must, in the exercise of their functions, give due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation, to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- 12.2. An Equalities Impact Assessment has previously been carried out by HCC and is Attached as Appendix A.

13. SOCIAL VALUE IMPLICATIONS

13.1 In accordance with the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 and the council's Contract Procurement Rules, this contract delivers considerable social, economic, and environmental benefits to Hertfordshire.

- **Social Impact:** Herts Careline provides essential telecare services to over 14,000 vulnerable residents, promoting independence, safety, and well-being. By offering 24/7 emergency support, the service reduces healthcare pressures and mitigates social isolation, aligning with the council's focus on early intervention and preventative care.
- **Economic Contributions:** The service fosters local economic growth by employing Hertfordshire residents and prioritising local suppliers, in line with the council's "Go Local" policy. Fair payment practices and investment in workforce training further support economic resilience and regional stability.
- **Environmental Responsibility:** Utilising an electric vehicle fleet and adhering to responsible recycling practices, Herts Careline minimises carbon emissions and electronic waste. These efforts contribute to the council's environmental sustainability goals and demonstrate a commitment to reducing ecological impact.
- **Community Engagement:** The service's active collaboration with local suppliers and stakeholders ensures that procurement activities directly benefit the community, strengthening local infrastructure and promoting economic inclusivity.
- **Transparency and Accountability:** The contract's Social Value commitments are regularly monitored, with performance evaluated against social, economic, and environmental benchmarks. This ensures continuous improvement and aligns with the council's commitment to transparency and responsible resource use.

13.2 By embedding these principles, Herts Careline not only delivers vital services but also enhances community well-being, economic growth, and environmental sustainability, maximising the value of public investment.

14. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

14.1 An Environmental Impact Assessment has been undertaken and is attached as Appendix B.

15. HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

15.1 North Herts currently employs over 60 team members as part of the Herts Careline service. Extending the partnership agreement with Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) as recommended, will secure employment for all those employed and allow the management to continue to develop their teams and build on existing skills and experience.

16. APPENDICES

16.1 Appendix A – Equalities Impact Assessment

16.2 Appendix B – Environmental Impact Assessment

17. CONTACT OFFICERS

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18. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 18.1 None.