

**REPORT TO THE
RESOURCES AND SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

4 JUNE 2025

REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR - PLANNING AND COMMUNITY

A. CARELINE/HELPLINE TRANSFER: EMERGING TRANSITION PLAN AND HEADS OF TERMS

PART 1 – KEY INFORMATION

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

For the Resources and Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee to consider and comment on emerging proposals and potential recommendations to the Portfolio Holder for Partnerships in respect of the 'Transition Plan' for implementing the Cabinet's 21 February 2025 decision on the future of the Tendring Careline service, as well as the 'Heads of Terms' for the associated legal agreement with Colchester City Council and Colchester Helpline (Amphora). The overarching priority for the Transition Plan will be to maintain service quality and service continuity and to minimise disruption and inconvenience to service users, many of whom are older and vulnerable Tendring residents. Consideration of the Careline Transitional Arrangements forms part of the Committee's 2024/25 Work Programme.

The emerging Transition Plan and Heads of Terms have been the subject of negotiation with Colchester City Council and Amphora and have been informed by ongoing engagement with services across the Council, consultation with staff and professional legal advice. The proposals within this report have been discussed with the Portfolio Holder for Partnerships, Leader of the Council, Chief Executive and senior Officers from the Council's Management Team.

Following the consideration of any comments and advice from the Resources and Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee, it would be the intention to seek the Portfolio Holder for Partnerships' agreement to finalise the Transition Plan and formally enter into a legal agreement with Colchester City Council and Amphora in June/July 2025; and to then deliver the Careline/Helpline transfer in August 2025.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On 21 February 2025, as part of its decision on the future of the Careline service, the Cabinet resolved to delegate authority to the Portfolio Holder for Partnerships to progress and deliver, amongst other things, the preparation of a detailed Transition Plan in collaboration with Colchester City Council and Colchester Helpline (Amphora), including the associated legal agreement and specific tasks and timescales (see minute 135 - recommendation i), part 1) for

the achievement of (in summary):

- a combined and expanded telecare, response and lifting service for North East Essex achieved through an automatic transfer of existing Tendring Careline service-users and staff to the service provided by Colchester Helpline on existing terms and conditions and expansion of the service to ensure coverage across the whole Tendring District that maintains and improves on existing response times (recommendation d); and
- the transfer of the Council's Out-of-Hours, CCTV and monitoring of its own sheltered housing schemes to Colchester Helpline within the same timescales under an outsourcing arrangement (recommendation e).

The report to Cabinet on 21 February 2025 included a high-level indicative Transition Plan identifying some of the key tasks and matters to be addressed to achieve the transfer – with the overarching objective of maintaining service continuity and quality during the transition period and following the transfer to Colchester Helpline, and minimising disruption and inconvenience to our 1,500 existing service users. However, the smooth and timely transfer and merging of services is a complex matter that requires a more detailed plan that is mutually agreeable, workable and achievable for the parties involved and which seeks to minimise disruption to the service provided to residents and be as efficient as possible.

Much of the groundwork for progressing towards the transfer has already commenced or been carried out through the positive and constructive engagement of Officers across a number of departments within TDC and with respective colleagues at Amphora and Colchester City Council. This has included informal and formal consultation with affected staff; communications with service-users and other interested parties; the review and termination of remaining contracts and services with third-party organisations; scoping out and producing a specification for the Out of Hours, CCTV and Sheltered Housing requirements; exploring and understanding the technical and data-protection aspects of the transfer; and working up cost estimates for achieving different elements of the transfer.

The emerging 'Heads of Terms' that have been discussed and negotiated with Amphora and Colchester colleagues to date, and which will form the basis of the legal agreement, cover the key elements of the Careline/Helpline transfer as summarised as follows.

Transfer of Careline service-users to Colchester Helpline

The aim is to transfer Tendring Careline's 1,500 existing service-users to the expanded service provided by Colchester Helpline (Amphora) in August 2025 with their existing terms and conditions maintained. To achieve this, service-users' data will need to transfer from TDC's 'UMO' database and call-handling software system, to Amphora's 'JonTek' system as soon as is practicable in line with a data sharing agreement; and for service-users and their next of kin/other named contact to be formally notified of the transfer a number of weeks before the proposed transfer date, with the opportunity (if they so wish) to opt out.

It is anticipated that the vast majority of service-users will transfer automatically to the service provided by Helpline with no disruption to their service; but for those who choose to opt out, information, guidance and advice will be provided by our Careline staff, to signpost them to other alternative providers – but their service with Careline will come to an end on the date of the Careline/Helpline transfer.

Digitisation and upgrade to service-user devices

Approximately 1,100 of Careline's existing service-users have monitoring/alarm devices that work either on older analogue or 2G digital technology which are being phased out and will become obsolete over the next 18-months. It is proposed that a financial contribution from the agreed one-off implementation budget is paid to Amphora to fund the acquisition, installation and upgrade of devices following the transfer – a cost that would have needed to be borne by the Council in any event, even if it had decided to keep Careline running in its current form at Tendring.

Transfer of Careline Staff to Colchester Helpline

It is proposed that the 19 TDC staff working in Careline (at the time of writing) will transfer to the employment of Amphora under the provisions of the 'TUPE' legislation that protects employees' existing terms, conditions and employment rights. The timing of staff transfer to Amphora will coincide with the transfer of service-users to the expanded Helpline service in August 2025. The necessary consultation with staff and sharing of information between TDC, Colchester City Council and Amphora is well advanced in preparation for as smooth a transition as possible.

Interim staff resource measures

Careline is currently operating with a reducing number of staff and a halt on any new recruitment. In the weeks leading up to the transfer to the expanded Helpline service provided through Amphora, i.e. the remaining transition period, Careline will continue to require ongoing support from external providers to ensure service continuity to residents and other service-users. It is proposed, through the emerging Transition Plan, that arrangements for interim support from Helpline on response (and potentially call-handling) are included within the agreement with Colchester City Council and Amphora to supplement the third-party support already being received.

Services provided to third-parties

Following a decision of the Portfolio Holder for Partnerships in April 2025, it has been agreed to terminate the remaining contracts and services provided to third-party organisations with a view to them all coming to an end in mid to late August 2025. If, as proposed, the transfer of Careline service-users and staff to Helpline happens before those contracts and services come to an end, Helpline will be required to serve those contracts and services on TDC's behalf for

the remainder of their period. The emerging Transition Plan and Heads of Terms for the agreement with Colchester City Council and Amphora makes provision for that service continuity.

Provision of Out-of-Hours Service

It is proposed that Out-of-Hours calls to Tendring District Council will be handled, on the Council's behalf, by the expanded Helpline service under an outsourcing arrangement; and that the transfer of this service will coincide with the transfer of Careline service-users and staff in August 2025. A draft specification for the services to be covered by Helpline for the purpose of dealing with Out-of-Hours calls has been produced through engagement across multiple TDC services and this specification informed by discussion and negotiation on procedures to be followed and the cost to TDC of providing that service – which is proposed to be covered for the period to the end of March 2028 through a transitional service payment to Colchester City Council from the one-off implementation budget.

Provision of CCTV monitoring service

It is proposed that the monitoring of CCTV cameras that currently feed to the control centre at Barnes House transfers to the Helpline service for them to be monitored, alongside Colchester's CCTV cameras, from the control centre at Colchester Town Hall. This is to be achieved through the re-direction of the live CCTV signal via digital means funded through the proposed one-off digitisation contribution; and for the cameras to be monitored by the Helpline team with footage recorded to a digital server for accessing by the Police as necessary – paid for as part of the proposed transitional service payment.

Barnes House responder outpost

It is proposed that accommodation within Barnes House (from which Tendring Careline currently operates) is made available to Helpline under a licence agreement until March 2026 on commercial terms, with the option to extend by one or two years as necessary, to provide an outpost within the Tendring area for Helpline responders – to ensure full district coverage and maintain and where possible improve response times.

The financial implications of the proposals in the emerging Transition Plan are considered in this report and demonstrate the potential to achieve the implementation of the transfer comfortably within the agreed 2025/26 service budget and the agreed one-off implementation budget by moving quickly and smoothly towards achieving the Careline/Helpline transfer in August 2025.

The comments of the Resources and Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee on these emerging proposals will be reported to Portfolio Holder for Partnerships and will be taken into consideration by the Corporate Director (Planning and Community) in making final recommendations to the Portfolio Holder for agreeing the Transition Plan and Heads of Terms and completing the Careline/Helpline transfer.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

It is recommended that:

- a) the Resource and Services and Overview Scrutiny Committee considers and comments on the content of this report including the emerging Transition Plan and Heads of Terms for the proposed Careline/Helpline transfer – which include measures aimed at ensuring quality and continuity of service and minimising disruption and inconvenience to service-users; and
- b) that the Committee's comments are reported to the Portfolio Holder for Partnerships.

REASON(S) FOR THE RECOMMENDATION(S)

On 21 February 2025, the Cabinet considered a report entitled 'Tendring Careline: Decision on the Future of the Service' seeking its decision on the future of the Careline service – following a 12-month review of the service and a subsequent stakeholder consultation exercise.

At that meeting, the Cabinet resolved to agree a preferred option; i.e. for the creation of a combined and expanded telecare, response and lifting service for North East Essex that aligns with the aims and objectives of the North East Essex Health and Wellbeing Alliance for an integrated health-system approach. This will be achieved through the automatic transfer of all remaining Tendring Careline service-users to the service provided by Colchester Helpline (provided through Colchester City Council's arms-length trading company, Amphora) on their existing terms of conditions and with no ongoing financial liability to Tendring District Council following that transfer.

The Cabinet's resolution also included the agreement in principle that the Council's Out-of-Hours, CCTV services and monitoring for the Council's own sheltered housing schemes will also transfer to Colchester Helpline under an outsourcing arrangement within the same timescales.

Recommendation i) within the Cabinet's February 2025 resolution authorises the Portfolio Holder for Partnerships, in consultation with the Leader of the Council & Portfolio Holder for Finance and Governance; the Director for Planning and Community [now Corporate Director – Planning and Community]; the Monitoring Officer [now Corporate Director – Law and Governance]; the Section 151 Officer [now Corporate Director – Finance & IT]; and the Head of People [now Assistant Director – People] to progress and deliver, amongst other things: the preparation of a detailed transition plan in collaboration with Colchester City Council and Colchester Helpline, including the associated legal agreement and specific tasks and timescales for the achievement of the proposals under resolutions d) and e), having regard to the broad Indicative Transition Plan outlined within that February Cabinet report.

The purpose of the Transition Plan and the Heads of Terms for a formal agreement with Colchester City Council and Colchester Helpline (Amphora) is to ensure a coordinated approach to facilitating the transfer of these services in a smooth and timely manner, recognising the complexities of the service; with the overarching priority of maintaining and quality of service to service-users throughout the transition period and minimising disruption and inconvenience.

Given the potential implications of the transition on our service-users, residents, staff and the Council's budgetary position and resources; the consideration and comments of the Resource and Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the emerging Transition Plan and related proposals are welcomed, for consideration by the Portfolio Holder for Partnerships and the Corporate Director – Planning and Community ahead of future decision making and finalisation of the arrangements for implementation.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

To seek to achieve the Careline/Helpline transition without a plan or associated legal agreement puts at risk the Council's ability to achieve a smooth and timely transfer, gives rise to potential problems, unforeseen legal risks and abortive costs. As the overarching priority is to ensure service continuity and quality whilst minimising disruption and inconvenience to service-users, proceeding without a plan increases the risk that this will not be achieved.

The Transition Plan and Heads of Terms could potentially include different timescales for different tasks that achieve the transition in a different way; however the tasks and measures identified in this report are considered by Officers, in negotiation with Colchester City Council and Amphora, to represent a positive direction of travel that recognise practical complexities, financial and other considerations – on which the Resources and Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee's comments are welcomed. The Committee's consideration and comments will help inform the consideration of alternative approaches and suggestions if necessary.

PART 2 – IMPLICATIONS OF THE DECISION

DELIVERING PRIORITIES

The implementation of the 21 February 2025 decision in respect of the future of Tendring Careline within the 2025/26 financial year is a Cabinet priority. The emerging proposals in this report relate to tasks that have been delegated, by the Cabinet, to the Portfolio Holder for Partnerships, in consultation with others, and that will bring about the achievement of the Cabinet's resolution. The overarching priority is to achieve a transition that maintains service quality and continuity to service-users and minimises disruption and inconvenience.

OUTCOME OF CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT (including with the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee and other stakeholders where the item concerns proposals relating to the Budget and Policy Framework)

The emerging proposals set out within this report have been informed by discussions across Council services, discussion and negotiation with colleagues from Colchester City Council and Amphora, consultation and engagement with affected staff as well as discussion with the Portfolio Holder for Partnerships, Leader of the Council, Chief Executive and senior Officers on the Council's Management Team.

Officers have taken relevant legal advice in respect of different aspects of the proposals and will continue to do so, as necessary. These discussions and engagement have been, and will continue to be, key in ensuring the tasks, timescales and associated costs are mutually agreeable, workable and achievable.

LEGAL REQUIREMENTS (including legislation & constitutional powers)

Is the recommendation a Key Decision (see the criteria stated here)	NO	If Yes, indicate which by which criteria it is a Key Decision	<input type="checkbox"/> Significant effect on two or more wards <input type="checkbox"/> Involves £100,000 expenditure/income <input type="checkbox"/> Is otherwise significant for the service budget
		And when was the proposed decision published in the Notice of forthcoming decisions for the Council (must be 28 days at the latest prior to the meeting date)	N/a. The proposals within this report relate to the implementation of a key decision already taken by the Cabinet and associated tasks that have been delegated to the Portfolio Holder for Partnerships for progressing.

The report to Cabinet on 21 February 2025 provided full commentary on the legal considerations in relation to the proposed transfer of service-users and staff from Careline to Helpline – including the legal status of the service itself, application of the TUPE legislation and the contractual relationship with third-party organisations.

The Transition Plan is mainly concerned with the practical implementation of the Cabinet's February decision which will still require compliance with certain legislation and/or regulatory requirements. These include the legislation around data sharing and data protection, the formal process around TUPE and honouring any remaining contractual obligations under either customer or supplier contracts.

In line with Cabinet's February 2025 resolution, it is proposed that the Transition Plan and associated heads of terms will be formalised through a legal agreement between Tendring District Council, Colchester City Council and Colchester Helpline (Amphora), for which external legal advice and assistance is being called upon utilising funds within the agreed

implementation/transition budget.

FINANCE AND OTHER RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

On 21 February 2025 it was agreed by the Cabinet that the provision of the Tendring Careline service would be funded for the whole of the 2025/26 financial year at a projected net cost to the Council of £287,000 with an additional one-off implementation budget of £0.746m to address specific costs associated with achieving the proposed transfer.

The recommendations and proposals in this report have financial implications for the Council in the short term throughout Quarters 1 and 2 of 2025/26 – particularly in respect of the anticipated one-off costs of both implementing specific elements of the transfer and making financial contributions to Colchester Helpline towards digitisation and the upgrading of equipment; as well as additional revenue costs that will be incurred in paying for external support through the transition period to maintain continuity of service against the backdrop of reducing numbers of staff.

Income to the Council from service-users and from third-party contracts and services will continue through Q1 and into Q2, although that income along with staffing costs will transfer to Colchester Helpline at the point of transfer ahead of Q3 which, on the basis of emerging proposals, could be August 2025. Broad estimates of income and costs have been identified (see Appendix 5) which will be refined through further discussion and negotiation ahead of any formal decisions and there being a clearer position on the agreed date of transfer. It is however projected, that income for the period 1 April to 1 August 2025 would be in the region of £223,000. Some income from the license agreement for accommodation at Barnes House for use by Helpline is also anticipated post-transfer, subject to separate negotiation and governance processes.

The revenue cost of continuing to run the Careline service in its current form up to an anticipated transfer date in August 2025 is projected to be around £378,000, which includes an allowance for certain payments to suppliers under which the Council's contractual obligations are expected to continue beyond the date of transfer; but not into the next financial year.

A projected net position of circa £155,000 cost is comfortably within the agreed 2025/26 budget. If however there were delays to the transfer date into Q3 or Q4 of 2025/26, the cost to the Council would be greater in maintaining the service over a longer period – but would likely remain within the agreed budget, given reductions in staff numbers and the costs involved in serving third-party contracts that are expected to come to an end in August.

From Quarter 3 of 2025/26, ongoing costs to the Council would have related mainly to fee payments to Colchester Helpline for provision of the Out of Hours, CCTV and Sheltered Housing monitoring services. However, rather than paying an annual fee under contract to Amphora, it is proposed that this is addressed through a single one-off payment, in the form of a 'transitional service payment' to Colchester City Council paid from the

implementation/transition budget to be administered by the City Council (under certain conditions set out within the legal agreement) in paying Amphora to provide the service to Tendring to the end of March 2028 – i.e. over two years and around 9 months to the anticipated vesting date for the formation of the new Unitary authority. It is currently estimated that this one-off payment will be in the region of £490,000 as opposed to what would be an ongoing annual budgetary cost of around £178,000, which is subject to further discussion and negotiation.

Other one-off costs include the proposed financial contribution to Colchester Helpline to cover a proportion of the cost of upgrading service-user equipment to 4G enabled digital devices; standardising systems across the Council's sheltered housing schemes to achieve compatibility with Amphora's platforms; and a disturbance allowance for 2025/26 to assist relevant TDC staff with travel costs following the transfer. A contribution in the region of £210,000, subject to detailed negotiation is estimated at this point in time. Lesser one-off costs are also identified in relation to the technical transfer of service-user data between Careline and Helpline's database and call-handling systems.

Together the projected one-off costs are within the £0.746m implementation/transition budget; and when offset against the projected underspend against the service budget for 2025/26 the projected total net costs for 2025/26 are expected to be met comfortably within the available budget. A breakdown of the projected income and costs related to the emerging proposals is set out in Appendix 5 to this report – which also include projections for 2026/27 and 2027/28.

USE OF RESOURCES AND VALUE FOR MONEY

The following are submitted in respect of the indicated use of resources and value for money indicators:

A) Financial sustainability: how the body plans and manages its resources to ensure it can continue to deliver its services;	The Cabinet's decision on 21 February 2025, to which the emerging proposals in this report relate, was informed by thorough analysis of the financial implications of different options for the future of the Careline service. The further analysis in this report suggests that the implementation of the Cabinet's decision is likely to be achievable within the available service and the one-off implementation/transition budget within 2025/26 – with an early transfer date giving a better net position than a later one.
B) Governance: how the body ensures that it makes informed decisions and properly manages its risks, including; and	The authority to agree the final Transition Plan, Heads of Terms and associated legal agreement has been delegated by the Cabinet to the Portfolio Holder for Partnerships in consultation with the Leader of the Council and certain senior Officers. This report to the Resources and Services Overview and Scrutiny

	Committee ahead of a Portfolio Holder decision gives the opportunity to consider and comment upon emerging work, ideas and proposals.
C) Improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness: how the body uses information about its costs and performance to improve the way it manages and delivers its services.	The Cabinet's decision on 21 February 2025, to which the emerging proposals within this report relate, was informed by thorough analysis of the financial implications of different options for the future of the Careline service. The further analysis in this report suggests that the implementation of the Cabinet's decision is likely to be achievable within the available service and the one-off implementation/transition budget within 2025/26 – with an early transfer date giving a better net position than a later one.

MILESTONES AND DELIVERY

The Resources and Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee's comments on the emerging proposals within this report will be recorded and reported to the Portfolio Holder for Partnerships and will be taken into account by the Corporate Director (Planning and Community) in making final recommendations to the Portfolio Holder for agreement of the Transition Plan and Heads of Terms.

Agreement from the Portfolio Holder for Partnerships to Transition Plan and Heads of Terms, completion of the associated legal agreement with Colchester Council and Amphora and completion of the formal staff consultation by the end of June 2025 allows for the potential transfer of service-users and staff from Careline to Helpline in August 2025; at which point the obligations identified within the Heads of Terms will transfer to Colchester Helpline (Amphora), utilising its expanded workforce along with the transitional service payment and one-off digitisation contribution identified in this report.

Specific milestones and delivery of the Careline/Helpline transfer itself are set out in detail within the proposed transition plan at Appendix 2 to this report.

ASSOCIATED RISKS AND MITIGATION

Negotiating and agreeing terms with Colchester City Council and Amphora

There is a risk that Tendring District Council, Colchester City Council and Amphora are unable to enter into a formal legal agreement on the terms outlined in this report, or that the agreement is delayed and impacts upon the timing of the proposed transfer. Failure to agree the way forward, or a delay in reaching agreement would have financial implications for the Council in having to subsidise a service over a prolonged period, and increases the risk highlighted above around staff shortage and service continuity through an extended transition

period.

To minimise and mitigate this risk, Officers from TDC, CCC and Amphora have been working together positively and constructively since the February 2025 Cabinet resolution to work through and understand the practical, legal and technical implications of the transfer and to work towards a Transition Plan that is agreeable, workable and achievable.

Officers have sought external legal support to write up the detailed agreement on the basis of the emerging Transition Plan and Heads of Terms set out within this report; so that if and when the Portfolio Holder for Partnerships is able to agree the proposals, Officers can progress as quickly as possible to put the formal legal agreement in place and implement the transfer.

Staff shortages/service continuity

The most notable risks relate to maintaining continuity of service to Careline service-users over the period of transition, ensuring adequate staff resources are in place in the weeks leading to the transfer to Colchester Helpline to cover necessary shifts on both call-handling and physical response. Since the beginning of the 12-month Careline Service in 2023, there has been a hold on new recruitment and the number of staff has reduced to a level by which certain shifts require support from external bodies to cover. The need for this external support has increased considerably in recent weeks. The emerging Transition Plan described in this report therefore includes provision for continued interim staffing resource from external providers and interim support from our colleagues at Colchester Helpline.

Delays in the transfer of service-user data

The transfer of service-users and staff from Tendring District Council's Careline service to the expanded Helpline service provided by Amphora is dependent on being able to transfer the data on service-users and their next of kin or other named contact from the database and call-handling software system used by TDC (UMO) and the similar system operated by Helpline (JonTek). Whilst the two systems are very similar in their purpose and are owned by the same overarching parent company, there are subtle differences in the way the data is held and recorded – which presents a technical challenge that needs to be addressed in carrying out the data transfer.

The transfer of the data will need to be completed within June/July 2025 for the transfer of service-users and staff to realistically take place in August. Therefore any delay or technical issue with the data transfer runs the risk of delaying the overall transfer and heightening the staffing, service continuity and financial risks identified above.

To mitigate this risk, Officers from Careline, Colchester and Amphora have already had exploratory meetings and discussions with UMO and JonTek and have given them notice to begin work on the process of extracting data from one system and preparing the platform for importing the data to the other – for which there will be a cost, to be met through the agreed

one-off implementation and transition budget.

High numbers of service-users looking to opt out of the transfer

In notifying Careline's 1,500 service users of the intention to transfer, they will be given the opportunity to 'opt out' of an automatic transfer if, for whatever reason, they do not wish to proceed to transfer their service to the expanded Helpline service. Given the feedback from the 2024 consultation exercise (where many respondents called for continuity and stability as reported to the Cabinet in November 2024) and the very limited feedback from service-users to subsequent communications in relation to the proposed Careline/Helpline merger, Officers would anticipate the majority of service-users being content with proceeding with the transfer.

If however there is an unexpectedly high level of service-users or next of kin other named contact requesting an opt out of the Careline/Helpline transfer, there could be a greater resource implication for providing advice and support to those service-users in signposting them to alternative providers; and potentially some negative feedback and complaints in respect of their Careline service coming to an end on the proposed transfer date.

To mitigate this risk, Officers have provided regular communication to service-users and next of kin or other named contact at all key stages of the decision-making process in respect of the review of Careline and proposals to work with Colchester and Amphora to transfer the service to the expanded Helpline service.

It is also proposed that time is built into the Transition Plan between the date that service-users can indicate their wish to opt out of the transfer, and the date of transfer itself so that existing Careline staff can provide some support and advice to those individuals before the staff themselves transfer to the employment of Helpline (Amphora).

Low numbers of Careline staff agreeing to transfer to Helpline under TUPE provisions

Under the proposed TUPE transfer of Careline staff to the employment of Helpline (Amphora), staff will transfer with their terms, conditions and employment rights protected. However, if any colleagues do not wish to be part of the transfer, their employment with Tendring District Council will come to an end and they will not be entitled to redundancy. The Council's HR Team, with support from the Trade Union representative, have been carrying out both informal and formal consultation with, and support to, affected staff; and through the consultation will determine how many, if any, staff are not going to be part of the transfer.

If the number of staff not wishing to transfer turns out to be a higher proportion than anticipated, it could have implications for our partners at Colchester Helpline having the right number of staff available from the date of transfer to provide serve to the increased number of service-users resulting from the merging of the services.

To minimise and mitigate this risk, TDC's HR Team are in regular contact with Colchester City Council and Amphora to update them on progress on the staff consultation and engagement

efforts and to provide as early an indication as possible of the likely number of staff looking to transfer over to the employment of Helpline. Therefore, if the number of staff transferring to Helpline looks like it could be lower than Amphora might require, they can begin efforts to directly recruit additional staff as necessary in the run up to the transfer.

Higher than anticipated transition/implementation costs

The emerging proposals set out in this report indicate an expectation of achieving the Careline/Helpline transition within the agreed service budget for 2025/26 and the agreed one-off implementation/transition budget. If however, circumstances prevail that might indicate costs could rise to levels higher than anticipated, or above the agreed budget amounts, they are most likely to arise from either significant delays in achieving the transfer; discovery of technical/technological issues that require higher than anticipated one-off cost to resolve; or other unanticipated or unpredictable issues. If such issues do arise, Officers will report these to Cabinet as early as possible to determine whether new decisions on timescales or funding are required.

EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

The report to Cabinet on 21 February 2025 included an Equality Impact Assessment of all the options under consideration for the future of the Careline Service. The emerging proposals set out in this report are concerned with the implementation of that decision and the arrangements for a smooth and timely transition.

SOCIAL VALUE CONSIDERATIONS

Social value considerations were key to the decision taken by the Cabinet on 21 February 2024 in respect of the future of the Careline Service. The emerging proposals set out in this report are concerned with the implementation of that decision and the arrangements for a smooth and timely transition.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S AIM TO BE NET ZERO BY 2030

No specific implications to report.

OTHER RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS OR IMPLICATIONS

Consideration has been given to the implications of the proposed decision in respect of the following and any significant issues are set out below.

Crime and Disorder

No specific identified implications.

Health Inequalities

Health inequalities were a key consideration in the Cabinet's 21 February 2025 decision in respect of the future of Careline. The resolution is to create a combined telecare and response

	service for the whole of the North East Essex Area, aligning with the aims and objectives of the North East Essex Health and Wellbeing Alliance. The emerging proposals described within this report relate to the implementation of that decision.
Subsidy Control (the requirements of the Subsidy Control Act 2022 and the related Statutory Guidance)	Issues around subsidy control were addressed in the Cabinet's 21 February 2025 report which related mainly to the servicing of third-party contracts which are in the process of being terminated.
Area or Ward affected	All wards – in that this decision relates to the future of the Tendring's Careline service and the decision already taken by the Cabinet in February 2025.

PART 3 – SUPPORTING INFORMATION

BACKGROUND

On 21 February 2025, the Cabinet made a final decision on the future of the Tendring Careline service to support the proposal from Colchester City Council and its Helpline Service (provided through its arms-length company Amphora) for the creation of a combined and expanded telecare, response and lifting service for North East Essex; and to agree heads of terms on the following principle conditions:

- i) it is achieved through the automatic transfer of all remaining Tendring Careline service-users to the service provided by Colchester Helpline on their existing terms of conditions and with no ongoing financial liability to Tendring District Council following that transfer;
- ii) that Colchester Helpline undertakes to guarantee service coverage to residents across all parts of the Tendring District so as to ensure that no part of the District is left without access for residents to a paid-for telecare, response and lifting service;
- iii) that Colchester Helpline's existing average response times are maintained and where possible improved upon in providing coverage to residents in all parts of Tendring – with measures put in place, as necessary, for one or more outposts in locations providing accessibility for all parts of Tendring – and at no ongoing cost or liability to Tendring District Council; and
- iv) that Tendring Careline's existing staff will transfer to employment within the expanded Colchester Helpline, respecting existing terms and conditions and with no ongoing financial liability to Tendring District Council resulting from that

transfer.

The Cabinet also resolved to agree, in principle, that the Council's Out-of-Hours, CCTV services and monitoring for the Council's own sheltered housing schemes transfer to Colchester Helpline under an outsourcing arrangement within the same timescales.

As part of the Cabinet's decision, delegated authority was given to the Portfolio Holder for Partnerships (in consultation with the Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Finance and Governance; Director for Planning and Community; Monitoring Officer; s151 Officer; and Head of People) to progress a number of matters, including (minute 135, resolution i), part 1): the preparation of a detailed transition plan in collaboration with Colchester City Council and Colchester Helpline, including the associated legal agreement and specific tasks and timescales for the above.

This report sets out, for consideration and comment by the Resource and Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee, progress on formulating the transition plan, general activity since the Cabinet's resolution and some of the measures that might potentially form recommendations to the Portfolio Holder for Partnerships in discharging elements of the Cabinet's February 2025 resolution.

TRANSFER OF SERVICE-USERS FROM CARELINE TO HELPLINE

At the time of writing, Tendring Careline serves just under 1,500 individual service users; i.e. residents who pay a monthly fee to receive a 24/7 telecare, response and lifting service. Since the beginning of the year-long review of the Careline service, Careline has not taken on any new service users; but following the Cabinet's February 2025 resolution, it has been signposting prospective new customers to Colchester Helpline (minute 135, resolution g).

In accordance with the Cabinet's February 2025 resolution, it is intended that the service provided to all of Careline's existing service users will transfer to Colchester Helpline and that this is achieved through an automatic transfer with no change in service-users' terms and conditions (including subscription fee levels) and no notable disruption to their service (minute 135, resolution d).

There are four main practical aspects to be addressed as part of the service-user transfer. These are:

1. the formal notification to service-users and their next of kin or other named contact of the proposed date of transfer, and the option to 'opt out' of that transfer;
2. the transfer of the service-users' data from Tendring Careline's 'UMO' database and call-handling software system to Colchester Helpline's similar 'JonTek' system in readiness for the transfer;
3. alteration of standing order/direct debit arrangements so that subscription fees are paid to Colchester Helpline (and not Tendring Careline) from the date of transfer; and

4. having systems and staff in place in readiness for the transfer date.

Throughout the review of the Careline service, stakeholder consultation and subsequent decisions about the service's future, the Council has been communicating with service-users and their next of kin or other named contact. Both before and after the Cabinet's resolution on 21 February 2025, service-users and next of kin/named contacts were made aware of the Council's intention to transfer the service to Colchester Helpline and there has been no feedback indicating any disagreement or concern about this course of action.

The next communication to go out to service-users and their next of kin or named contact will be formal notification of the intention to transfer along with the proposed transfer date and details about the opportunity to opt out of the transfer (Task 1). A letter has been drafted in readiness and is attached at Appendix 3. It has been agreed with the Directors of Colchester Helpline that this will be a joint letter between Tendring District Council and Amphora.

It is proposed that the letter be sent to service-users and next of kin or named contact around six-weeks before the intended date of transfer if possible – which is heavily dependent on the practical timing for achieving the transfer of service-user data from Tendring's UMO system to Colchester Helpline's JonTek system. TDC Officers and the Directors of Helpline have entered into a formal data sharing agreement to ensure service-user data is protected and carefully managed in accordance with relevant legislation through the process of transfer.

There are subtle differences in the way data is captured within TDC's UMO system compared to that of Colchester's JonTek system which make the data transfer a complex task that will require the cooperation of the two companies in question, at a cost to the Council and its agreed implementation budget, to test the process for transfer and to complete the task in a timely manner. The two companies have already been given notice to begin trialling the data transfer, which has the potential to be determinative in identifying the proposed transfer date. The potential transfer dates, on current estimates, could be in August 2025.

Task 3 is the alteration of service-users' standing order/direct debit arrangements so that subscription fees are paid to Colchester Helpline (and not Tendring Careline) from the date of transfer. At the time of writing, the Finance teams from TDC and Helpline are discussing the smoothest route for achieving this, which is likely to be post-transfer. Officers are conscious that many Careline service-users are older and vulnerable people who are often particularly vulnerable to scams – and therefore this task will require careful management and safeguards.

For service-users who notify the Council of their wish to opt out of the transfer to Helpline (who are expected to be in the minority), Officers will provide advice and information about other third-party providers who may be able to offer alternative provision – but for them, the service with Careline will come to an end on the final agreed transfer date and their data will be removed from the Helpline JonTek system. Their data, along with that of all current Careline service-users and next-of-kin will however be retained by Tendring District Council

for a period of two years in accordance with the data-protection legislation and which could be called upon, if required, in the event of any complaints or investigations. For that, there is a further cost to the Council's implementation budget for holding the data on the UMO system for two years.

DIGITISATION AND UPGRADE TO SERVICE-USER DEVICES

In February 2027, it is expected that analogue phonelines and telecommunication signals will be retired through the Public Switched Telephone Network (PSTN) [UK transition from analogue to digital landlines - GOV.UK](#) – requiring all telecommunication equipment to be digital. This has implications for Tendring Careline's service-users who have devices within their home, or on their person, for raising an alarm and seeking assistance.

Colchester Helpline has already transferred its service-users from analogue to digital devices and Tendring Careline is part-way through the process. Of Careline's 1,500 existing service-users, around 1,100 remain either with old-style analogue devices or digital devices with only 2G capability (which offer a poorer strength of signal to 4G and are likely to become obsolete within the PSTN period).

It is therefore expected that around 1,100 service-users will need to be provided with new 4G enabled digital devices at an approximate cost of between £200 and £250 per unit. The total cost is therefore expected to fall within the range of £220,000 and £300,000 which is consistent with the £253,350 digital switchover and £33,600 sim upgrade cost estimates set out within the financial analysis forming part of the 21 February 2025 Cabinet report. TDC has a small number digital devices in stock but would have needed to acquire and install many more if it had been decided to continue running the service within Tendring District Council beyond January 2027 and up until local government reorganisation in 2028.

In transferring service-users from Tendring Careline to Colchester Helpline within the timescales envisaged through the Transition Plan, it will not be practical for Tendring District Council to roll out the replacement or upgrade of devices to those 1,100 affected service-users before the anticipated date of transfer – particularly given the current limited staff resources. It is therefore proposed, as agreed by the Cabinet in its resolution of 21 February 2025 (minute 135, resolution i) part 5), that a financial contribution is paid to Colchester Helpline towards meeting the cost of the necessary digital/4G upgrading from the agreed £0.746m implementation/transition budget. This will then enable Colchester Helpline to purchase the necessary devices and utilise its expanded workforce to roll out any remaining upgrades, either before or post the date of transfer.

It is proposed that Tendring District Council makes a 50% contribution towards this circa £320,000 upgrade (i.e in the order of £160,000) through payments to Colchester Helpline to assist in a smooth transition from analogue to digital before January 2027. This partial contribution is to forward fund the acquisition of devices and their roll out in a timely manner, acknowledging that under Careline service-users' existing terms and conditions, their monthly subscription will increase from £23.82 to £30.55 on the upgrade from analogue to digital

devices. With existing terms and conditions being honoured on transfer from Careline to Helpline, it will be Colchester Helpline that secures the additional revenue from the fee-income increase – which is designed to recoup the capital expenditure over a three-year period, and by which time local government reorganisation will have taken place. The partial contribution also takes into account the fact that for those service-users with 2G enabled digital equipment requiring upgrading to 4G, they are already paying the higher subscription level.

It should be noted that the draft letter to service-users and their next of kin or named contact (notifying them of the intended transfer date) includes reference to the need for upgrading some service users from analogue to digital equipment and that an increase in subscription fee is part of their current terms and conditions. It is important to point out that fees increasing from £23.82 to £30.55 is not coming about as a result of the transfer of Careline to Helpline, but as a consequence of PSTN and would have been necessary even if Careline were to continue as part of Tendring District Council.

As well as the 1,500 individual service-users, Careline serves the Council's own sheltered housing schemes – some of which also run on telecommunication systems that are likely to become obsolete or are otherwise not compatible with the systems operated by Colchester helpline and which will therefore require upgrading or replacing. The technical and IT teams at TDC and Amphora are currently working together to establish what systems are in place, which need to be upgraded and replaced and the likely cost – which will form the basis of an additional financial contribution to Colchester Helpline, from the agreed implementation budget, to carry out the upgrade; which might (on current estimates) take the total contribution to over £200,000.

It proposed that the payment to Colchester Helpline is made on the date of service-user transfer potentially in August 2025 and that provision within the legal agreement is made for this.

TRANSFER OF STAFF FROM CARELINE TO HELPLINE

At the time of writing, 19 members of Tendring District Council staff are employed on permanent contracts to deliver the Tendring Careline service across a number of call-handling, physical response and supervisory roles with support from 7 casual staff that can be called upon as required. Staffing numbers have reduced considerably since the beginning of the year-long review of Careline from which there has been a hold on any new recruitment.

In accordance with the Cabinet's February 2025 resolution (minute 135, resolution d), it is intended that staff will transfer from the employment of Tendring District Council to Colchester Helpline (Amphora) and that this is achieved under a Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations or 'TUPE' transfer under which employees' terms, conditions and employment rights are protected.

It is important that the timing of the staff transfer aligns with the service-user transfer and there are three main practical aspects needing to be addressed. These are:

1. informal consultation and engagement with staff (carried out in February and March 2025);
2. establishing the applicability of the TUPE legislation and protection of employees' terms, conditions and employment rights (already established);
3. formal consultation and engagement with staff (12-weeks consultation commenced 1 April 2025 and due to end 24 June 2025);
4. confirmation of which employees will transfer to Colchester Helpline; and
5. transfer, induction and training of the transferring staff.

Following the Cabinet's decision on 21 February 2025, informal consultation with affected staff was carried out by the Council's Human Resources team with support from the Corporate Director – Planning and Community, Assistant Director for People, Human Resources Manager and Trade Union representative including all staff briefings and one-to-one meetings. This has been followed by a 12-week formal consultation (still under way at the time of writing) which has included further all-staff meetings, one-to-one meetings and meetings with the Directors and Managers of Amphora; with further meetings to be held.

Following the formal consultation period, the Human Resources Team will be in a position to confirm which staff will be transferring to the employment of Colchester Helpline under the requirements of the TUPE legislation. Any staff that choose not to transfer are, in effect, choosing to resign for their positions without any entitlement to redundancy. As a consequence, there will be no compulsory redundancies for any positions where it has been determined that the provisions of TUPE apply.

It has already been determined that for the majority of Careline staff, TUPE provisions do apply and the Council will look to transfer their employment to that of Helpline (Amphora) from the proposed transfer date in August 2025 (dependent on the achievement of the service-user data transfer as described elsewhere in this report and completion of the 12-week formal consultation with staff). The only exception has been staff in administrative support roles, for whom the Council has been looking for opportunities to redeploy to new roles within the organisation.

Whilst the work of Colchester Helpline is substantially identical to that of Tendring Careline and thus the provisions of TUPE apply in the transfer of staff, there are naturally some differences in working practices that TDC staff will be required to adapt to in transferring from one employer to another – even though terms, conditions and employment rights will remain intact. For instance, there is an expectation for some staff to work from Helpline's control centre at Colchester Town Hall with no provision for home-working; which, for some, will

require additional travel. There are also different systems to be trained on and get used to; with encouragement over time for staff to 'dual train' to be able to operate both on call-handling and on physical response.

These differences in working practices and future training expectations do not affect the application of TUPE and the transfer of staff from one employer to another with terms, conditions and employment rights protected, however it has been the matter of discussion with staff through the informal and formal consultation processes and, for some staff, may determine whether or not they agree to transfer over to Helpline or decide to opt out.

However, there is some recognition that an increase in travel time, distance and cost for some staff does represent a level of disturbance for which it is reasonable for the Council to consider measures that will assist a smooth transition. In line with the Council's Disturbance Travel Allowance policy it is therefore proposed that a further financial contribution from the agreed implementation budget is made to Colchester Helpline to fund a small travel allowance for the remainder of the 2025/26 financial year for affected staff.

INTERIM STAFF RESOURCE MEASURES

With staff numbers reducing significantly since the start of the year long Careline review and a hold on new recruitment, it has been necessary for the Council to call upon external support during times of staff shortage to ensure continuity of service for individual service-users and the continued provision of Out of Hours, CCTV and Sheltered Housing monitoring. The termination of the third-party 'YourStride' contract (which came to an end on 20 February 2025) was critical in reducing the pressure on staff resources, but it remains the case with staff numbers continuing to fall, that external support will be required during the remainder of the period of transition.

As part of the Cabinet's 21 February 2025 resolution (minute 135, resolution h), it was agreed to extend an exemption from Procurement Procedure Rules to allow the use of the company 'Carium' for the ongoing provision of casual call-handling support over the period of transition. However, the reduction in staff numbers has also required Careline to review shift-patterns and source additional external support for physical response (which Carium does not provide) and for call-handling (for shifts that Carium is unable to assist with).

For physical response, Officers have reached an agreement with Colchester Helpline that its responders can be called upon to assist if necessary on shifts, or in instances, where Careline finds itself with limited cover. In some rare cases, it may be necessary to call the emergency services where neither Careline or Helpline responders are well placed to assist. The cost to Helpline can be reimbursed on a monthly basis during the period of transition.

For call-handling, Stockport Homes have been contracted for additional support as they use the same UMO system as Careline and which is able to assist on a casual basis for a fee. Officers are also exploring with Helpline, the possibility of call-handling support from staff in Colchester's control centre if provided with UMO-enabled equipment to assist during the

period of transition. As necessary, agreement from the Portfolio Holder for Partnerships will be sought to enter into contracts with one or more suitable third-party providers in accordance with the Cabinet's 21 February 2025 resolution (minute 135, resolution i), part 3).

It is anticipated that the cost of employing the assistance of Carium, Helpline and Stockport Homes during the transition period will be met through underspend against the 2025/26 budget on staff resource, noting the ongoing hold on any new recruitment.

SERVICES PROVIDED TO THIRD PARTIES

As well as serving the needs of 1,500 individual service users, Tendring Careline provides services to a number of third-party organisations related mainly to call-handling, alarm monitoring and maintenance. In line with the Cabinet's resolution on 21st February 2025 (minute 135, resolution i), part 2), the Portfolio Holder for Partnerships on 17 April 2025 authorised the termination of contracts/services to eleven third-party organisations. It is proposed that notice will have been served on all eleven organisations in April and May 2025 and that their contracts and services will come to an end in August 2025. Details are set out within the report accompanying the Portfolio Holder's decision.

It is notable however that if Careline and Helpline achieve a service-user and staff transfer in August 2025, Tendring District Council could still have a contractual obligation to provide a service to those eleven third-party organisations for a number of days or weeks following the transfer of its staff to another employer. Therefore, the Transition Plan makes provision for the Council to pay Colchester Helpline to provide service to those third-parties on TDC's behalf for the number of days required, post transfer, from the income that would normally be received under those contracts/services.

It is worth noting, as explained in more detail within the report to the Portfolio Holder for Partnerships, that Colchester Helpline has already been in discussion with some of those third-party organisations about establishing new contracts and providing services to them going forward.

PROVISION OF OUT OF HOURS SERVICE

At present, staff in Tendring Careline deal with the Council's Out of Hours enquiries, the monitoring of its CCTV cameras (providing recordings to the Police as requested) and responding to issues at the Council's own Sheltered Housing schemes across the district. As part of the Cabinet's 21 February 2025 resolution (minute 135, resolution e), it agreed in principle that the Council's Out-of-Hours, CCTV services and monitoring for the Council's own sheltered housing schemes should also transfer to Colchester Helpline within the same timescales for transferring the telecare, response and lifting service.

This service is to be provided by Helpline (Amphora) to Tendring District Council for an annual fee, for the remainder of the 2025/26 financial year and until local government reorganisation, on current timelines, is expected to bring about the creation of new Unitary

authorities in 2028; at which time Amphora could be providing such services for the expanded authority which owns it. Amphora already provides similar services to Colchester City Council and Colchester Borough Homes.

Officers across the Council's services have worked together to scope out the full range of areas for which Out-of-Hours coverage will be required under an outsourcing arrangement with Helpline – and a draft specification (attached as Appendix 4) is under discussion and negotiation. It sets out TDC expectations for Out-of-Hours coverage in respect of the following areas:

- Engineering services;
- Homelessness;
- Car Parks, play areas and toilets;
- Sheltered housing schemes;
- Horticultural/Public Realm;
- Crematorium and cemetery;
- Sunspot (Jaywick);
- Environmental and Veolia;
- Leisure Centre rota;
- Council Buildings/Facilities Management;
- Antisocial Behaviour patrol officers;
- Unauthorised encampments;
- Asylum seekers;
- Pumping stations and Sewage;
- Dog wardens;
- Housing (Council Houses);
- Emergency Planning;
- Seafront matters;
- Media and communications;
- Pest control;
- Pollution; and
- Customer Contact Centre.

At the time of writing, it is also proposed to include monitoring for the new Spendels House homelessness facility within the scope and detailed procedure notes are being prepared for each of the listed areas to enable Colchester Helpline to offer an accurate fee quotation for the provision of these services.

From the latest discussions between TDC Officers and the Directors of Amphora, the cost of annual fee requirements (which includes provision for CCTV monitoring, see below) is expected to be in the order of £178,000 per annum and is proposed that it could be funded, in its entirety, from the date of transfer to 31 March 2028 (i.e. the remainder of Tendring District Council and Colchester City Council's existence as separate authorities before the anticipated vesting of the new Unitary authority in April 2028) in the form a 'transitional service payment' to Colchester City Council from the agreed implementation/transition budget with terms within the legal agreement for the City Council to administer and pay Amphora for the service on TDC's behalf and for certain performance and reporting expectations to be met.

It is proposed that the final specification for Out of Hours services (which will include more detail around precise procedures) and the transitional service payment level be agreed by the Portfolio Holder for Partnerships alongside the decision to agree the overall Transition Plan. A provisional sum of £490,000 has been identified from the implementation budget.

PROVISION OF CCTV SERVICE

CCTV cameras across the Tendring District feed into the Careline control centre and monitoring screens at Barnes House. Although the cameras and screens are switched on 24 hours a day and footage is recorded, they are not actively monitored on a live basis by TDC Careline staff and are not accessible to staff working remotely or from home. They are however accessible to the Police as and when required, and footage can be requested by the Police and downloaded to DVD by TDC Officers on request.

By contrast, Colchester Helpline both actively monitors and records footage from cameras across the Colchester area from its control centre at Colchester Town Hall. With a 24-hour presence of staff within the control centre (and no remote/home working) Helpline is able to carry out live monitoring of CCTV with live and direct communication with the Police and footage being instantly downloadable for sending to the Police digitally, rather than having to create a physical DVD..

It is proposed, as part of the Careline/Helpline transfer, that the CCTV signal from Tendring's cameras is directed through digital means to the Colchester Town Hall control centre and, through the transitional service payment, Helpline (Amphora) will expand its service to cover CCTV in Tendring over the period to the end of March 2028. There have been constructive discussions between technical and IT staff at Colchester and Tendring that have identified the means by which this can be achieved. Further discussions about the level of service to be provided by Helpline under the transitional service payment are ongoing

BARNES HOUSE RESPONDER OUTPOST

Two of the principle conditions of the Careline/Helpline transfer, as set out in the Cabinet's 21 February 2025 resolution (minute 135, resolution d) parts ii) iii)) are that Colchester Helpline undertakes to guarantee service coverage to residents across all parts of the Tendring District; and that its existing average response times are maintained and where possible improved. The latter requires that measure be put in place, as necessary, for one or more outposts in locations providing accessibility for all parts of Tendring.

Related to this, the Cabinet's resolution also included delegated authority to the Portfolio Holder for Partnerships (minute 135, resolution i) part iii) for the entering an agreement with Colchester Helpline for the use of accommodation at Barnes House, on a short-term lease and on commercial terms, for use as a temporary outpost for the provision of the expanded North East Essex service while a permanent location is sought.

The accommodation required by Helpline will be the ground floor room used by Careline responders and associated kitchen and toilet facilities. They will not require access to the control room because all calls will be handled from the Helpline control room at Colchester Town Hall. Detailed security arrangements will need to be put in place to allow Helpline staff access relevant parts of the Barnes House building.

It is proposed that a licence agreement (as opposed to a lease) for the remainder of the 2025/26 financial year is entered into – for which the total rental/fee income level will depend on whether the transfer completes in August 2025. The rental/fee value will be subject to negotiation and separate governance processes.

It is proposed that the licence agreement allows for a one or two year extension into 2026/27 and 2027/28 to enable coverage up to the point of the formation of the new Unitary authority – but with the expectation that Amphora may look to establish an outpost, or even new headquarters in an alternative and accessible location(s) in the coming years.

PREVIOUS RELEVANT DECISIONS

26 July 2024: Cabinet: Report of the Partnerships Portfolio Holder - A.8 - Tendring's Careline Service Review Decision: RESOLVED that Cabinet –

(a) notes the outcome of the review of the service as set out in the Portfolio Holder's report (A.8) and its appendices and agrees the decision, in principle, to adopt Option 2, that is to cease the telecare and lifting/response provision of the Careline Service, in its entirety, including service delivery under third-party contracts and that the remaining service provision will solely relate to the Council's Out-of-Hours and CCTV service;

(b) approves the necessary consultation to be undertaken with customers, residents and key stakeholders. This consultation to be based upon balancing best value principles with the needs of the Council's existing customers, who now have a wider range of options available on the open market, at more comparable rates than the Council can continue to supply the service for;

(c) delegates the format and design of the consultation to the Leader of the Council and the Portfolio Holder for Partnerships, in consultation with the Assistant Director (Partnerships) and the Assistant Director (Governance);

(d) agrees the Communication and Engagement Plan with an overriding objective to encourage and support active engagement with services users to understand the principles of Option 2 and the alternative providers available, as well as understanding why Option 2 is the preferred option;

(e) requests that the outcome of the consultation be reported back to the Cabinet in either October or November 2024, for a decision as to the future provision of Careline Services (telecare/lifting/response service), which will include a detailed transition plan as necessary;

and

(f) subject to the associated funding being agreed as part of report item A.9 elsewhere on the agenda, sets aside a total budget of £0.746m to meet the potential implementation costs.

15 November 2024: Cabinet: Report of the Partnerships Portfolio Holder – A.11. Tendring District Council's Careline Service Review: Results of consultation and next steps Decision: RESOLVED that Cabinet –

(a) notes the outcome of, and feedback from, the recent customer, resident and stakeholder consultation on the future of Tendring Careline – that was based upon balancing best value principles with the needs of our existing customers, who now have a wider range of options available on the open market, at more comparable rates than the Council can continue supplying the service for;

(b) notes the decision to terminate the third-party contract with AE Partners Ltd (YourStride) which, irrespective of the Cabinet's resolution in respect of (d) below, will reduce the pressure on the capacity of Tendring Careline – which, for some months, has been dealing with a growing and increasingly unmanageable volume of calls from residents outside of Tendring; and bring about a cost saving to the Council;

(c) authorises the Director of Planning and Communities, in consultation with the Leader of the Council and the Portfolio Holder for Partnerships, to review and if necessary, vary or terminate other third-party contracts at suitable timely junctures as part of the move towards the fulfilment of any final preferred approach;

(d) confirms that, having considered the contents of this report, it still wishes to continue, in principle, with the preferred option (Option 2) of ceasing the telecare and lifting/response provision of the Careline Service, in its entirety, including service delivery under third-party contracts with remaining service provision solely relating to the Council's Out-of-Hours and CCTV service – albeit subject to (e) below;

(e) authorises the Director of Planning and Community, in consultation with the Leader of the Council and the Portfolio Holder for Partnerships, to explore further the third-party proposals that were submitted to the Council through the consultation;

(f) subject to (e) above, requests that third parties be invited to put forward a formal detailed proposal for further exploration within one month of this decision (i.e. by close of business on Monday 16th December 2024) as the starting point for Tendring District Council's consideration;

(g) requests that the Portfolio Holder for Partnerships reports to Cabinet in February 2025 to provide an update on the opportunity explored in line with (e) above in respect of the third-party proposals, as well as an updated recommendation for a final Cabinet decision on the future of Careline informed by updated financial analysis and with a detailed transition plan;

(h) subject to (g) above, acknowledges that there may be additional costs arising from the change in timescales set out in this report, and requests that the financial impact is included within the report to Cabinet in February 2025; and

(i) authorises the Director of Planning and Community in consultation with the Leader of the Council and the Portfolio Holder for Partnerships, to assess different options for the continued provision of the Out-of-Hours and CCTV service and to implement any necessary changes, as necessary, following the Cabinet's final decision on the future of Careline.

21 February 2025: Cabinet: Report of the Partnerships Portfolio Holder – A.11. Tendring District Council's Careline Service Review: Results of consultation and next steps Decision: RESOLVED that Cabinet –

a) notes the content of the Portfolio Holder's report (A.8), including the updated financial information relating to alternative options for the future of Tendring Careline, updated information on numbers of service-users and staff, the latest position in relation to third-party contracts and the consideration of third-party proposals for taking on all or part of the Careline service;

b) notes also the latest position in respect of proposals for local government reorganisation across Essex, including the likely replacement of County and District Councils with unitary authorities, and the potential practical implications for services such as Careline in the future;

c) in light of the information noted as per resolutions a) and b), supports the proposal from Colchester City Council and its Helpline Service (provided through its arms-length company Amphora), based on the outcome of the evaluation set out within the Portfolio Holder's report (A.8);

d) agrees to the creation of a combined and expanded telecare, response and lifting service for North East Essex that aligns with the aims and objectives of the North East Essex Health and Wellbeing Alliance for an integrated health-system approach; and agrees heads of terms on the following principle conditions:

i) it is achieved through the automatic transfer of all remaining Tendring Careline service-users to the service provided by Colchester Helpline on their existing terms of conditions and with no ongoing financial liability to Tendring District Council following that transfer;

ii) that Colchester Helpline undertakes to guarantee service coverage to residents across all parts of the Tendring District so as to ensure that no part of the District is left without access for residents to a paid-for telecare, response and lifting service;

iii) that Colchester Helpline's existing average response times are maintained and where possible improved upon in providing coverage to residents in all parts of Tendring – with

measures put in place, as necessary, for one or more outposts in locations providing accessibility for all parts of Tendring – and at no ongoing cost or liability to Tendring District Council; and

iv) that Tendring Careline's existing staff will transfer to employment within the expanded Colchester Helpline, respecting existing terms and conditions and with no ongoing financial liability to Tendring District Council resulting from that transfer.

e) agrees in principle that the Council's Out-of-Hours, CCTV services and monitoring for the Council's own sheltered housing schemes will also transfer to Colchester Helpline under an outsourcing arrangement within the same timescales for achieving the proposal under resolution d), which will be considered as part of the associated negotiation and subject to separate decision(s) as necessary;

f) that the transfer be facilitated, as early and as smoothly as possible within the 2025/26 financial year;

g) agrees that, from the date of this decision, any new prospective Careline customers are to be signposted to Colchester Helpline as the Council's preferred alternative trusted provider, in light of the proposal under d) above;

h) agrees an extension to the exemption of Procurement Procedure Rules to allow the use of the company Careium for the ongoing provision of casual call-handling support over the period of transition, as required, to ensure continuity of service to remaining service-users during times of staff shortage;

i) authorises the Portfolio Holder for Partnerships, in consultation with the Leader of the Council & Portfolio Holder for Finance and Governance; the Director for Planning and Community; the Monitoring Officer; the Section 151 Officer; and the Head of People, to progress and deliver the following:

- 1) the preparation of a detailed transition plan in collaboration with Colchester City Council and Colchester Helpline, including the associated legal agreement and specific tasks and timescales for the achievement of the proposals under resolutions d) and e), having regard to the broad Indicative Transition Plan outlined within this report;

- 2) the termination of any remaining third-party customer and supplier contracts with Tendring Careline;

- 3) the entering into contracts with one or more suitable third-party providers of telecare, response and/or lifting services to call upon additional staffing resource during the period of transition to ensure continuity of service to remaining service-users and to provide additional resources as required;

4) the agreement with Colchester Helpline for the use of accommodation at Barnes House, on a short-term lease and on commercial terms, for use as a temporary outpost for the provision of the expanded North East Essex service while a permanent location is sought;

5) the agreement to any financial contribution towards the upgrading of all existing Tendring Careline service users to digital equipment either before or after the transfer to Colchester Helpline – utilising a proportion of the agreed implementation budget; and

6) the utilisation of the remainder of the implementation budget, as appropriate, for purposes relating to the achievement of the proposals under resolutions d) and e).

j) confirms that all efforts will be put in place to work constructively with Helpline to support service users through a smooth and timely transfer to the expanded North East Essex service and that for any service users that wish to 'opt out' of an automatic transfer, support will be provided in signposting them to other alternative providers;

k) confirms that the Council will continue to support affected staff through the transition to the expanded North East Essex Helpline service; and

l) agrees that the costs associated with these resolutions is met from within existing budgets, including the one-off implementation budget amount of £0.746m, and that the use of these budgets is delegated to the Director (Planning and Community), in consultation with the Leader of the Council & Portfolio Holder for Finance and Governance and the Portfolio Holder for Partnerships.

17 April 2025: Decision of Portfolio Holder for Partnerships: Report of the Corporate Director – Planning and Community. Termination of Careline contracts with third parties: contracts: Agreed the following:

a) agrees and authorises the Corporate Director – Planning and Community to serve notice of termination on the following organisations in respect of services provided to them by Tendring Careline:

- Acticheck Ltd;
- Compass Property Management;
- Colne Housing (Eastlight Community Homes);
- Disabilities Trust;
- Lee Valley Regional Park Authority;
- Methodist Homes (MHA);
- New Frinton Grand RTM Company Limited;
- Peabody Trust;
- Regency Lodge;

- St Mary Magdalene Almshouse Charity; and
- Winnocks and Kendalls Almshouse Charity.

b) that all letters giving notice of termination are sent in April or May 2025 with the intention that contracts and services with all of the above-listed parties will come to an end before the end of August 2025.

BACKGROUND PAPERS AND PUBLISHED REFERENCE MATERIAL

None

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Draft Heads of Terms for Careline/Helpline transfer

Appendix 2: Draft Transition Plan timetable

Appendix 3: Draft letter to service-users and next of kin/other contacts

Appendix 4: Draft specification for provision of Out of Hours services

Appendix 5: Breakdown of projected budgetary implications

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