

Report to: Cabinet



Date of Meeting 2 March 2022

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## **Home safeguard Contract with PPP (Night Owl) services for night cover – Update Report**

### **Report**

At the Cabinet meeting in September 2021 approval was granted for Home Safeguard to continue using PPP Night Owl to cover our overnight emergency, pendant and out of hours service for a 4 month period, and it was resolved that a further report be presented reviewing these arrangements in early 2022.

This update report will be brief as the recruitment challenge that led to us bringing PPP online has not altered. In fact it has worsened and we now have 6 overnight call handler posts vacant. Previous attempts to fill these have proven unsuccessful and recruitment agencies have similarly failed to provide us with appropriate staff. Following the need for us to use PPP, we intended to carry out further recruitment campaigns. However, it quickly became clear that we were unlikely to be able to successfully recruit in the current climate. A search of similar posts advertised online revealed that a number of Telecare providers were seeking night staff on a rolling basis, indicating that they too were struggling to recruit.

Furthermore, in December 2021, Exeter City Council advertised for a similar role, but at a higher grade than we would offer. This meant potentially that we stood little chance of recruiting in competition with this role given the difficulties that other companies were already experiencing.

In consultation with HR, we weighed the cost of advertising for these roles against the employment climate described above, and our experience of three previous campaigns and concluded that it would be inappropriate to advertise again, given the high chance of failure. It was the view of HR that it would be better to holistically review the entire rota, job role and employment package that would be offered. HR will support us to carry out this work and this will be provided through our designated Housing HR Business Partner. This view has been further strengthened following difficulties experienced in recruiting for other day shifts in the team in the last few months.

The issue appears to centre around the unsociable nature of working permanent nights and the impact this has on private lives. Through exit interviews of leaving employees we have tried to ascertain reasons for their departure. One person was able to find alternative work in a supermarket for the same wage, but without the responsibilities and more challenging working environment of the Home Safeguard service. For the others, Covid had presented an opportunity for them to change their working pattern. The move to home working had made it easier to manage childcare, without the need for parents to split shifts. I suspect that due to Covid people are re-evaluating what they want from their employment and it appears working nights is no longer an attractive option for many.

We have been using PPP since April 2021 and since the outset they have delivered a consistent, high quality and seamless service to our 1000's of service users. We are currently contracting with PPP on a rolling month by month basis and this is an inherently risky strategy, one that this report seeks to change, as the vast majority of that risk is sitting with EDDC. Putting it starkly, with our current contracting arrangements PPP could walk away in 4 weeks and we'd have no way of

delivering the service, so it would be forced to close leaving our largely vulnerable client group unsupported and at risk.

I know that members are concerned that the use of PPP to provide the delivery of the overnight element of Home Safeguard constitutes an 'outsourcing' of this much valued, reliable and respected service. I want to reassure members this is absolutely not the case, we are simply delivering the service in partnership and we gain significant operational benefits and service resilience by doing so. The arrangement also provides an additional layer of business continuity in the event of a local disaster or emergency situation which may see our ability to function compromised. It resonates and links closely with the events of the pandemic over the last 2 years where at times we had to consider options around what we would do in the event of the whole of the Home Safeguard team being unable to work ( due to catching the virus). This arrangement strengthens our ability to function moving forward.

Through this report our desire is to secure the continuation and resilience of our amazing '4<sup>th</sup> emergency service' Home Safeguard into the future, by cementing our current successful partnership with PPP via a longer term contract, thereby offering some much needed security to the service, our staff and service users.

I am proposing entering an arrangement with PPP (Night owl) for a year, to allow an opportunity to review operating arrangements and operator rotas and plan for service resilience. It also gives us the opportunity to link this issue in with the need to review the service on a commercial basis with the need to consider appetite for growth and expansion.

There is also a recommendation that we are exempted from standing orders in relation to our continued use of PPP Night Owl, on the basis that we have an existing, successful relationship, they already have access to our records and compatible systems that enable the service to be delivered on a seamless, partnership basis. These processes have worked well during the time that the existing contract has been in place and given the importance of the high quality operation of the Home Safe Guard Service it is preferable to remain with the existing supplier for now to avoid the risk of compromising the service to our vulnerable clients.

All costs associated with the continuation of PPP are included in the Home Safeguard budget for the coming year so there are no additional budget requirements. PPP's annual costs would be circa £48,000 which is relatively good value compared to direct delivery (as outlined in the September 2021 report).

**Is the proposed decision in accordance with:**

Budget Yes  No

Policy Framework Yes  No

**Recommendation:**

That Cabinet approve a 1 year contract be put in place between Home Safeguard and PPP Night Owl, to ensure the continued delivery of the vital overnight element of this 24 hour service.

That Cabinet recommends the approval of the Contract Standing Orders Exemption Report.

**Reason for recommendation:**

Home Safeguard provides a vital 24/7 monitoring / support service to many residents of East Devon, in both the private sector and within EDDCs sheltered housing stock. It provides support and guidance at point of need at all hours of the day and night to 1000s of people across the district

Due to our consistent inability to recruit to the night posts we need to secure a contract with PPP to ensure continuation of the service 24/7 with no disruption or delivery impact to service users.

Portfolio(s) (check which apply):

- Climate Action and Emergency Response
- Coast, Country and Environment
- Council and Corporate Co-ordination
- Democracy, Transparency and Communications
- Economy and Assets
- Finance
- Strategic Planning
- Sustainable Homes and Communities
- Tourism, Sports, Leisure and Culture

**Equalities impact** High Impact

Home Safeguard is East Devon's Emergency control centre providing cover 365 days per year. It provides monitoring services to pendant user for residents of East Devon in private or sheltered homes. The Service is also offered to a small number of corporate customers some local to East Devon but others outside our district.

Additionally the service provides out of hours cover for East Devon and has an out of hour's contract with Teignbridge District Council. It also monitors for both Authorities staff deemed as Lone Workers.

**Climate change** Low Impact

**Risk:** High Risk; service unable to provide a 24/7 delivery to customers and tenants

**Links to background information**

Link to [Council Plan](#)

Priorities (check which apply)

- Better homes and communities for all
- A greener East Devon
- A resilient economy

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**Financial implications:**

Financial details are contained within the report and sums detailed are within approved budgets.

**Legal implications:**

The legal position related to entering into the contract are covered in the report. With regard to the Exemption to Contract Standing Orders, the contract value falls below the threshold set out in the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 and therefore the EU procurement procedure (which is still currently relevant) does not apply and Cabinet has the power to authorise exemptions from the requirement to seek quotations or invite tenders pursuant to the Council's Contract Standing orders Rule 2.3. The reason for using the exemption in this case appears justified.