

Executive Summary – Wightcare Options

Background

Wightcare supports people to live independently at home. Wightcare is unique on the island in that it is the only service operating on the Island that install, maintains equipment, monitors calls 24/7 and provides a mobile response team. The service was launched some 35 years ago and is important as it prevents deployment of ambulances, hospital admissions, admissions to residential care and in addition to reducing social care packages of care. The service also provides statutory functions for the council in terms of its Out of Hours call handling service and the administration of the lone worker system. Currently the service has in the region of 2,000 service users.

We have a growing over 65's rate on the Island with approximately 1 in 4 people on the island currently over the age of 65 and this is expected to reach approx 1 in 3 people by 2028. By 2038 it is estimated that there will be a 57% increase in those over 65 needing support.

Although Cabinet agreed to a rise in Wightcare fees on 12 May 2022, the first since 2018, officers had initiated an independent review of the service to explore opportunities for future delivery and growth capabilities.

Service review approach

In recognition that:

- Residents & Councillors expressed concern regarding the affordability of services and the model used for setting fees and charges – raising fees alone is not a sustainable model
- As a discretionary service and with recurring financial pressures to the council, the need to operate and achieve financial sustainability, minimising subsidy and achieve growth
- Care Close to Home strategy seeks to retain and regain independence in the persons home
- The service provides added value to the health and care system that is not recharged currently but needs to be explored and reviewed if recovery of costs is appropriate and it supports broader health and care system
- The service needs to seek to operate in a more business like way and maximise marketing reach and potential growth of user base, and continue to be more innovative in services provided

The review sought to:

- review current provision with identification of any short term wins and recommendations for development of operational delivery and strategic growth drivers
- presentation of high-level options for future service delivery model and appraisal of each option

Wightcare services stocktake and challenges

A detailed review of the service is attached as an appendix. This highlighted the following key challenges:

- Affordability, continued fee increases alone may not resolve income needs without looking at the model used for setting charges and adding options
- Reviewing the financial model and how all costs are allocated, income sources and opportunities may be enhanced
- The service delivers 'added value' to health and care services not necessarily recharged or funded for, but should it be to reflect services provided under a commercial model and how tracked in terms of outcomes and cost avoidance to other budgets?
- How the services resources are deployed and operate in a more business like way to increase growth and minimise costs
- Maximising marketing and growth reach in achieving new service users and the packages offered
- Thinking Wightcare first – relationships with front line teams and partners awareness and access to services with robust referral process and ensuring the service is a first thought
- Technology Enabled Care (TEC) combining virtual and physical care to support customer needs capitalising on the digital shift and product development
- Full Responder service is resource intense over 24/7/365

Recommendation

That Cabinet agree to the Wightcare service remaining in-house, alongside the development of a robust development plan spanning two years, to enable the service to financially breakeven at the end of this period. This recommendation is supported by an independent review of the service by the industry body, the TSA.