

STROUD DISTRICT COUNCIL

HOUSING COMMITTEE

5 JULY 2022

Report Title	FINAL REPORT OUT OF HOURS (OOH) ACTION PLAN DELIVERY			
Purpose of Report	To inform Housing Committee of the corrective action undertaken to strengthen operational procedures in the management of the Out of Hours Service provision and to provide an update on subsequent service delivery.			
Decision(s)	The Committee RESOLVES to note the corrective actions already implemented.			
Consultation and Feedback	Consultation consisted of:- <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Briefings with the Chair and Vice-Chair of Housing Committee• Strategic Director of Communities• Service leads			
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Options	N/A			
Background Papers	N/A			
Appendices	Appendix A – Corrective Action Plan Appendix B – Procedures Manual Appendix C – Risk Register Appendix C (i) – Risk Register Probability Guidance Appendix C (ii) – Risk Register Impact Guidance Appendix D – KPI Performance Metrics Integrated into Procedures Manual			
Implications (further details at the end of the report)	Financial	Legal	Equality	Environmental
	No	No	No	No

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Following reports of service failures over the 2020/21 Christmas and New Year holiday period, an investigation into the performance of Civica, the Out of Hours (OOH) call handling service provider and MD Group the OOH oncall contractor was undertaken. A report (OOH Failure Report) was produced, which identified corrective measures which were agreed with Civica and MD Group.
- 1.2 The investigation into performance over the Christmas and New Year period 2020/21 did not show that there was systemic failure in service provision. It did however acknowledge that service provision could be improved in spite of the complaints compared to call volume being low in number (98% of calls were dealt with over the Christmas and New Year period). Following this investigation, the processes and service failures changes identified were implemented immediately.

- 1.3 Following an Internal Audit report (September 2021), a comprehensive action plan was developed in response which sought to address the issues highlighted.
- 1.4 The report “*Corrective Action to Strengthen the Council’s OOH Call out Provision*” Decision “b” stated that “*That the Lead officer shall provide an update on progress at the April 2022 Committee meeting*”, however members requested that a formal report should be submitted to provide a greater degree of transparency as set out within the body of the report.
- 1.5 This report sets out the actions taken, and being taken to ensure procured services meet the expectations of the Council.

2. Corrective Action Plan arising from the Internal Audit report

2.1 The corrective action plan *appendix A* outlined 30 corrective actions covering the following topics:

- Working Procedures – Actions (207;211-216;219;220;223-228;230;231)
- Contract and Risk Management (208-210;221;222;226;232;233-236)
- Insourcing (217;218)
- Performance and Reporting (229)

2.1.1 Working Procedures including Roles and Responsibilities

- The internal audit report outlined the need for a procedures manual to bring the various procedures and flow charts into one version controlled document. A summary of the contents of the manual is provided in *appendix B*
- This manual has now been created and the procedures, including flow charts have been updated and collated to ensure that the communication between Stroud District Council and the external call centre is robust and effective.
- As part of the creation of the procedures manual, roles and responsibilities were refreshed and updated to ensure a consistent approach across the council and ensure that all roles, responsibilities and obligations are formally documented.

2.1.2 Contract and Risk Management

- A risk register, as detailed in *appendix C*, has been created and documented in the procedures manual.
- Excelsis has been updated to reflect any high-level risks arising from the contract.
- The contract framework, which includes extensions to existing contracts has been reviewed at a both corporate level and service level.
- At a service level, contracts are reviewed at a minimum on an annual basis to ensure that service is maintained. This is documented via minutes within the contract review process, and this is being incorporated into an automated process.

2.1.3 Insourcing

- The service is currently using a contractor to conduct emergency works out of hours. The service is working to complete the insourcing of the out of hours emergency works function so that can be delivered directly by our in-house Property Care operatives.

- The actions identified in the audit report relate to an acceleration of the insourcing of the heating function. This was completed by providing a specific escalation point within Stroud District Council for gas heating enquiries which cannot be dealt with by the contractor and where temporary heaters are not available.
- Property Care operatives directly provide cover for the OOH service
- Service provision will be supported by specialist support contractors to ensure resilience and capacity is maintained.
- Monitoring and review of the arrangement will continue to be developed to ensure there is continual learning, ensuring best practice is adopted throughout the life of the contract.

2.1.4 Performance and Reporting

- The KPI performance metrics have been reviewed for the new call handling contractor to ensure that a challenging but achievable performance level is set. This has also been integrated into the procedures manual and in *appendix D*.
- The process for the performance management of the contractor has now been added into the procedures manual to ensure consistency and transparency.
- KPI's for the emergency works contractor have also been reviewed and integrated into the procedure manual. This will ensure consistency and continuity of service as we transition towards an inhouse provision.

2.2 The above summarises all the service attributable actions set out with the Action Plan, which are now complete.

2.3 Monitoring and review of the arrangement will continue to be developed through the monthly meetings and annual review to ensure there is continual learning, ensuring best practice is adopted throughout the life of the contract.

3. Governance, Management, and Scrutiny

3.1 The OOH service provision is used principally within the Council's Landlord Services and Environmental Health Service. However, the new service retains capacity should Stroud wish to extend it to incorporate additional service areas.

3.2 As the contractual arrangements mature, we will look at the long-term positioning and oversight of the contract within the corporate structure.

3.3 We will ensure where relevant feedback from performance reporting, and tenant engagement is considered and incorporated to inform learning outcomes.

4. Contract Delivery Partner

4.1 Following production of the Action Plan, the incumbent service provider (Civica) tendered their notice to terminate the contract. A new contract was procured where Orbis Group

who provide similar call handling services to other parts of the Council were chosen as the preferred new service provider.

- 4.2 We have strengthened the way in which the new service is delivered, managed, and monitored, however as previously stated there can be no 100% guarantee with any service provision whether provided by third parties or the Council directly.
- 4.3 It is well documented that an unprecedented set of circumstances impacted the resilience of the service provider. It is hoped the new management and escalation processes will mitigate some of those issues experienced at the time.
- 4.4 Regular meetings to monitor progress and delivery of the service against the set KPI's are scheduled.

5. **AUDIT FINDINGS REFERRED TO ONE LEGAL**

Advice was sought by Internal Audit in relation to:

Recommendation 14(H)] – Rejected in Full

Recommendation 14(H) – “The original contract did not expressly provide for an extension.

The advice provided to the Monitoring Officer in relation to the above said:

“No evidence was presented to us that the actions were in breach of the Public Contract Regulations 2015”.

6. **CURRENT PERFORMANCE**

- 6.1 The current performance on call handling can be found under *appendix D*.

7. **CONCLUSION**

- 7.1 We have strengthened the way in which the new service is delivered, managed and monitored, however as previously stated there can be no one hundred percent guarantee with any service provision whether provided third parties or the Council directly.
- 7.2 It is well documented that an unprecedented set of circumstances impacted the resilience of the service provider. It is hoped the new management and escalation processes will mitigated some of those issues experienced at the time.

8. **IMPLICATIONS**

8.1 Financial Implications

- 8.1.1 There are no financial implications from the decision to note the actions taken.

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8.2 Legal Implications

8.2.1 There are no legal implications arising directly from the matters discussed in this report.

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8.3 Equality Implications

8.3.1 An Equality Impact assessment is not required as the report is for information only

8.4 Environmental Implications

8.4.1 There are no environmental implications to be considered as part of the report