

## **Responsible Financial Officer report item 10**

### **10. Staff Mobiles – to receive and consider the options in the report**

The Town Council does not currently provide mobile phones for any members of staff. However, the Town Clerk currently receives an allowance of £10 per month in recognition that his personal mobile phone is required to pick up and respond to telephone calls, text messages and emails out of office working hours, or when he is away from the office, such as at meetings or attending training.

Several other staff use their personal mobile phones for Council business.

- Caretakers - Members of the facilities team who are on call for users of the Public Hall currently have their personal mobile phones numbers on display in the building. This has led to some hirers saving their numbers and contacting them when they are not on duty and this needs to be prevented. In addition, these staff are working at a number of sites, e.g. litter picking in the parks, playground inspections, maintenance at any of our facilities etc and often need to be contacted while away from the main building, need to be in contact for their own protection, or may be required to take photographs to report damage etc while they are out. A caretaker's email address has also been set up recently to send notifications about changes to bookings/hirers requirements at short notice, which is accessed by all caretakers using their mobile device.
- Lone workers – all workers who are required to work on their own remotely should have access to a mobile phone for their personal safety, such as the public convenience cleaner.
- Alarm call out – The alarm is currently set up with caretakers as the first two listed calls followed by the Town Clerk
- Management team – The management team currently all use their personal devices to receive telephone calls, text messages and emails out of work hours, or when away from the office/at remote locations, such as at meetings or attending training, to respond to emergencies, deal with essential business, receive notifications of staff sickness, checking for updated information or apologies ahead of committee meetings etc.
- Home working – this may be necessary for many staff during the current coronavirus crisis. All desk phones can be used at remote locations, to make and receive calls as if they were in the office. To do this they need to be plugged into the power and hardwired directly to an internet router. Our telephone system provider has also offered a free mobile phone app for all desk phones, which can be downloaded onto a personal mobile. This can then make and receive calls as if they were being made on the desk phone, if the user has an internet connection. The RFO & Deputy Town Clerk has trialled this successfully. This would also be useful in the future for unforeseen emergencies such as bad weather preventing staff getting to work.

### Option 1 – Our existing provider

They can offer a system which works via staff personal mobile phones. It gives a single telephone number which can be published for out of hours contact, with several users within the group. Individual users would install an app on their phone giving them an individual number for direct phone contact but will also ring when the out of hours number is called if the app is open on their phone. It would no longer be necessary for hirers to check the board for the caretaker on duty before calling, and notices to be regularly changed. It requires the user to have an internet connection/own data available. The numbers are owned and controlled by the Council and users can be deleted and reassigned if staff change. Staff would have 500 minutes per month available to make calls within the app. The cost would be £9.95 per user per month on a rolling 30-day contract which could be reviewed after a trial period and included in an overall review when the main contract expires in June 2021. With three caretakers using the system the total cost would be £29.85 per month. This can be set up in 24 hours.

Alternatively, they can provide handsets (smartphone Samsung Galaxy A20 or similar for camera/email facility) for staff with individual numbers, including unlimited minutes & texts and 2 GB data for £21 per month per contract (fixed for 24 months)

### Option 2 – Alternative provider

Provision of mobile handsets (smartphone Samsung A10)

- EE network – unlimited minutes and texts, 5 GB data £15 + VAT per user (24 month contract)
- PLAN.com (O2 network) – unlimited minutes and texts, 3 GB data £17.50 + VAT per user (24 month contract)

Service maps provided suggest O2 coverage is a little better in the area.

### Considerations

Where employers provide employees with one mobile phone/SIM and the contract is between the employer and the supplier, it is exempt from reporting to HMRC or deduction and payment of tax and National Insurance. There may be tax and National Insurance implications to paying flat rate allowances.

Various apps are available which provide lone worker protection which will be investigated to add to the solution chosen.

Staff are reluctant to carry a second mobile phone in addition to their personal phone but should not need to make their number available to the public. Staff generally have their own phone contracts which have enough data available for the small amount of work use required. Any use of personal mobiles is dependant on the staff member having their phone with them, charged and in working order.

**Recommendation: to agree to trial the system offered by our existing provider which offers a single number for caretakers using an app installed on personal phones**