



Report to Cabinet

Subject **Single Non Emergency Number**

Date **7 September 2006**

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1. Purpose of the Report

To inform members about the single Non Emergency Number (SNEN) and the implications for the Council and residents.

2. Background

The Government commenced the roll out of SNEN last year with 5 wave 1 pilots. SNEN is intended to be a single national number on a low cost tariff for non-emergencies. It will operate 24/7 with multi-language features as well as multi-media access. The service is to be provided by the police and local authorities working in partnership. Each partnership receives an initial £100,000 to help formulate the required bid submission to the Government SNEN team. This funding reflects the very short timescales available to the partnerships to prepare their bid. Subsequent funding is provided until 2010 based on call volumes dealt with. After this period it is likely that local authorities will have to finance the service. In addition there is no funding available to meet any additional service costs arising from increased volumes or improved service standards.

There are an estimated 10 million 999 calls to the police each year, of which 70% are not emergencies. The basic SNEN concept is to divert as many of those non-emergency calls away from 999 as possible as well as improve access to the relevant services. The aims of the initiative are:

- To improve citizens' access to a range of services related to community safety
- To provide high quality targeted advice and information
- To achieve a high degree of active cooperation between agencies involved in delivering the SNEN service

- To harmonise non-emergency call handling processes across police and local authorities
- To provide a management framework for national standards of handling non-emergency calls
- To make the 999 system more efficient and effective

The 'core' service covers:

- vandalism, graffiti and other deliberate damage to property
- noisy neighbours
- intimidation and harassment
- abandoned vehicles
- rubbish and litter, including fly tipping;
- people being drunk or rowdy in public spaces;
- drug-related anti-social behaviour
- street lighting.

A public information campaign will support the 101 launch in the first-wave areas, telling people about the new service and when to use it. By 2008, this will have grown into a national communications programme, with the aim of making 101 as recognised and easy to use as the 999 emergency service.

3. Information

Nottinghamshire County Council, acting on behalf of the Nottinghamshire local authorities applied for inclusion in the Wave 2 SNEN programme and was successful. A significant reason for submitting an expression of interest for inclusion in wave 2 is that funding to help prepare the bid is available. It appears all future implementation waves will be mandatory and will not receive funding to support the bid submission.

An officer-working group has been established to take forward the SNEN initiative in Nottinghamshire. The SNEN has significant implications for all the Nottinghamshire local authorities in terms of its operation and impact upon council services. The overall timetable is that the bid has to be submitted to by 6 October 2006 and full implementation of the proposal be achieved by June 2007.

The core services covered by SNEN primarily relate to the work of the districts in the county area with street lighting being the main county function. There is also potential for considerable overlap with the police and in reality the service will consolidate the role of councils in tackling anti-social behaviour and low-level crime, a role that has steadily been growing within local authorities.

Metrics from the call centres will also enable hot spot analysis as well as information on what are the main issues affecting residents. This may help with service planning and delivery.

Essentially each contact centre will use Customer Relationship Management software (CRM) to both identify callers and their location (so that the relevant service standards are applied), track progress and provide operational metrics. This requires that each participating council identify its service standards for the relevant service areas as well as a contact point. In addition it will be necessary to provide information back to the contact centre so that service completion metrics can be collated. Those authorities with their own CRM systems may find this easier as it may be possible to automate significant elements of reporting and collecting relevant data. Gedling does not have a CRM system although work is due to commence shortly to assess our own requirements.

Each local authority can have different service standards reflecting local priorities. As such it is not necessary to agree countywide standards for service delivery, which will help minimise any potential budgetary implications. However, for those local authorities that already have call/contact centres there will be some degree of duplication with a countywide contact centre.

Indeed, although Wave 1 and 2 are based on County or metropolitan areas the Government's long term aim is to have national provision based on regional coverage. This may be achieved through each county contact centre forming part of a distributed network. It also seems that the Government's intent is to widen the areas covered, the outcome of which may be to develop regional contact centres for all local authorities.

Where possible the contact centre will deal with the enquiry fully, but if this is not possible it will be referred to the relevant local authority or to the police (or both). Each authority will then have to respond to the service request as if it had received the request itself. Any emergency calls will be transferred to the 999 contact centre.

At present it appears the most likely delivery method will be through a county provided contact centre. The County Council is in the process of building a contact centre, based at Sherwood Park in Ashfield and in theory this could provide the basis for the SNEN contact centre. Gedling does not have its own contact centre although a small pilot will be trialled shortly as an extension to the First Stop Shop.

There is a considerable amount of work to be undertaken by the Nottinghamshire authorities in preparing and implementing any successful bid. This will primarily relate to finalising service standards and reporting mechanisms, including where appropriate and feasible, integration into back office functions.

5. Resource Implications

A small internal officer-working group has been established to assist with the SNEN bid preparation and to determine how this authority deals with SNEN

service requests. The Deputy Chief Executive is attending the countywide SNEN working group.

This is essentially an opportunity cost that will be met from existing budgets. At present there are no indications of any additional costs that may arise through the SNEN programme. These would primarily relate to increased service requests and any standardisation of service levels across the county.

Call volumes will be difficult to predict but an increase can be anticipated given the marketing of the service that will take place. Officers do not, at this stage, propose to rationalise service standards across the county. This is not a requirement of SNEN and that this should help mitigate any additional costs to the authority.

In theory, the operating costs of the SNEN centre should be met from Home Office funding until 2010, after which all of the county authorities will need to meet the operating cost. A funding agreement is to be drawn up in October of this year that should set out the main principles. This will be reported to members for decision at that time along with an assessment of any resource implications arising from it in the short to medium term.

6. Recommendation

Members are asked to note this report. Further updates will be provided as work on SNEN progresses. Given the short timescale available to prepare and submit the bid it may be necessary for the Leader to agree that bid using his executive powers.