

Report to CABINET

Digital Switchover – Upgrade of Council Funded PSTN Lines

Portfolio Holder: TBC

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Reason for Decision

Funding is required to mitigate the risk of critical services, such as intruder and lift alarms, becoming disconnected because of the national digital switchover programme, leaving council buildings at risk of being unmonitored and occupants at risk.

Executive Summary

This report outlines the impact of the national Public Switched Telephone Network (PSTN) digital switchover on council-funded services and sets out a programme of work to mitigate associated risks. The analogue PSTN network is scheduled for withdrawal by January 2027, requiring all dependent services to migrate to digital alternatives.

The Council currently relies on PSTN lines to support critical services including intruder alarms, fire alarms, lift emergency telephones, and some legacy broadband and voice services. Failure to migrate these services ahead of the switch-off will result in loss of functionality, leaving buildings unprotected and potentially placing occupants at risk.

An audit identified over 400 PSTN lines, of which approximately 200 have already been ceased and 40 migrated. Around 200 lines remain that require action under this proposal. Existing investments in digital infrastructure, including the Council's 8x8 telephony platform and GM1/Oldham1 networks, provide a strong foundation to support migration.

A range of technical solutions has been identified and tested to replace PSTN-dependent services, including migration to 4G/5G-based communication devices for alarms and lift systems, and the use of IP-based telephony and network solutions for legacy services. These approaches are already being successfully deployed for new installations and service replacements.

The preferred approach is to proceed with the structured migration of all remaining PSTN services using these established solutions. A total capital investment of approximately **£403,000** is required to fund the migration programme, including a contingency provision. The proposal is expected to be broadly revenue neutral over time, with ongoing costs comparable to or lower than existing PSTN service costs.

In summary, the digital switchover presents a critical risk to essential Council services, but also an opportunity to modernise infrastructure and improve resilience. Approval of the recommended funding will ensure continuity of service, protect council assets and occupants, and enable a controlled transition ahead of the 2027 deadline.

Recommendations

- To **note** the potential impact on the Council, its buildings and staff because of the digital switchover. And proposed solutions to migrate the affected services and mitigate the risk.
- To **agree** with the recommended option within the report that IT capital funding should be utilised for the migration of services to new solutions that are compatible with the digital switchover, at a cost of circa £403K.

Digital Switchover – Upgrade of Council Funded PSTN Lines

1 Background

- 1.1** Over the last 10 to 15 years new modern networks based on fibre optic cables and Internet Protocol (IP) routers and switches have been rolled out by the major telecommunications companies to provide broadband internet connectivity and Voice over IP (VoIP) telephony services.
- 1.2** The telecoms industry including companies, such as; BT/Openreach, VirginMediaO2, Wavenet and Sky, now wish to migrate customers from their old legacy networks to their new digital services and are intending to withdraw the analogue telephone service by January 2027. This service is known as the Public Switched Telephone Network (PSTN) and is delivered over physical copper lines and central exchange-based switching equipment.
- 1.3** The Council has previously approved recommendations to mitigate the risk of Helpline & Response (Telecare) customers becoming disconnected from the service as a result of the national digital switchover programme. This initiative was successfully completed and therefore is no longer a risk to Telecare customers. The previous report also identified the wider consequences of the digital switchover to the Council which are now detailed in this report.
- 1.4** The remaining services affected are landlines supporting, intruder, fire and lift alarms, legacy analogue broadband services and in some cases simple voice calls.
- 1.5** All services currently provided over the PSTN will need to be upgraded to work over digital connections before the switch-off date of January 2027. If services are not migrated to new digital services, they will simply fail to work.
- 1.6** It is important to recognise that this situation is caused by the telecoms industry's modernisation programme, but that the impact and cost of migrating to new services is a burden for service users such as the Council.
- 1.7** This report, its recommendations and funding request covers PSTN lines that are currently funded by the Council and does not cover PSTN lines that are paid for by third party organisations, such as, schools, even where these lines are part of a service provide by the Council, e.g. School Intruder Alarms. See risk section 12.1

2 Impact

- 2.1** All services currently provided over the PSTN will need to be upgraded to work over digital connections before the switch-off date of January 2027. If services are not migrated to new digital services, they will simply fail to work. This will leave affected buildings disconnected from intruder and fire alarm monitoring services and passenger lifts without emergency telephone service.

3 Current Position

- 3.1** Over the last 12 months we have identified the PSTN services currently being used and paid for by the Council, which at the start of the audit was in excess of 400 lines. In this period, we have been able to cease 200 lines, and a further 40 lines have been migrated to new digital services. There are several lines that will be ceased on final exit from Civic Centre for which no migration action will be required, leaving 200 lines that are the subject of actions in this proposal.
- 3.2** Previous actions taken by the Council, specifically, the provision of an IP based digital telephone system (8x8) and the investment in the Greater Manchester One (GM1) and Oldham One (O1) have mitigated some of the risks of the Digital Switchover and provide underlying digital infrastructure that will support the migration of services provided by the current PSTN lines.
- 3.3** Specifically, looking at the requirements for intruder alarms and lift emergency telephones new digital solutions have been identified and tested, and these solutions have now been adopted for any new installations or where restoration of faulty service is required. It is proposed in this report to use these new solutions for the migration of services ahead of the digital switchover.

4 Options

- 4.1** Option 1 – Do Nothing – this is untenable as the services will fail at the point BT or Wavenet cease the PSTN service, and while both carriers have forced migration options, in many of the Council's cases these will not support the existing equipment and services.
- 4.2** Option 2 – Proceed with the migration solutions identified in this section
- 4.3** Due to the varied nature of the services supported by the Council's PSTN lines there is no single solution to migrating these services. To overcome this, we have put common services into groups and identified a suitable migration approach for each group. In most cases the recommended approach is based on the already adopted approach for new installations. These groupings and solutions are described briefly below:
- 4.4 Conventional Intruder and Fire Alarms** – Migrate from PSTN lines to 4G/5G mobile airtime devices. This solution has already been adopted for new installations, and the receiving equipment is already in place in the Response Services control room, although this will need to be enhanced to support additional capacity.
- 4.5 Legacy Sonitrol Intruder and Fire Alarms** – Migrate from PSTN lines to the Council's 8x8 telephone platform using analogue terminal adapters (ATA). This is a new solution which has been installed at one location and has been in service without interruption for 12 months. The solution takes advantage of the digital telephony platform already in place but will require additional licenses and ATA devices. Work will also be required at the Response Service control room to enhance the 8x8 service to support the addition of ATAs.
- 4.6 Lift Emergency Telephones** – Migrate from PSTN lines to 4G/5G mobile airtime devices. This solution has already been adopted for new installations. Call receiving lines in the Response Services control room have already been migrated to digital services as part of the 8x8 telephone system project.
- 4.7 Miscellaneous Analogue Broadband & PSTN Lines** – Migrate services supported by these lines to either the GM1 or O1 networks.

5 Preferred Option

5.1 The preferred option is to proceed with the solutions identified in section 4 of this report.

6 Consultation

- 6.1 To reach this position and fully understand the impact and solutions available meetings have been held with:
- Assistant Director Customer Experience
 - Managing Director Miocare – coordination with telecare digital switchover and significant user of legacy analogue broadband lines
 - IT Networks – responsible for support of the Council's PSTN lines
 - Response Services – as the service responsible for monitoring intruder alarms and lift emergency calls
 - Property – as the service responsible for provision and maintenance of alarms and lifts
 - Central Procurement
 - Assistant Director Education and Early Years

7 Financial Implications

7.1 The costs contained within the report are currently best estimates based on discussions between Property, Response Services, IT colleagues and potential vendors. We have also been able to use current costs of the hardware and licenses where the proposed solutions have already been adopted. We do not expect the costs to exceed those stated in this report.

7.2 The capital requested in this proposal is £403k, which includes a 10% contingency, and is detailed below:

Service	Solution	Budget
Conventional Alarms	Migrate to Bold 4G/5G Communicator	£ 58,000.00
Sonitrol PSTN Monitored Alarms	Migrate to 8x8 ATAs	£ 60,000.00
Response Services - SRPH	Uplift in Bold 4G/5G Communicators ATAs for Sonitrol PSTN Alarms Migrate	£ 40,000.00
Lift Telephones	Migrate to 4G/5G Communicator	£ 18,000.00
Miscellaneous Analogue Broadband & PSTN Lines	Migrate to GM1 / O1	£ 100,000.00
TDS Internal Resource	Includes solution development	£ 70,000.00
Property Internal Resource		£ 21,000.00
sub total		£ 367,000.00
Contingency		£ 36,000.00
Total		£ 403,000.00

7.3 Finance Capital Implications

The proposal is to incorporate the request within the Council's IT Capital programme. The proposed capital scheme of £403,000 represents capital expenditure and will be a charge against the Information Technology (IT) capital programme. Provision exists within the capital programme against which this scheme will be a charge. The scheme is anticipated to be wholly defrayed in 2026/27.

7.4 Finance Revenue Implications

The revenue costs associated with migrating from PSTN lines to the preferred solutions outlined in Option 2 are broadly cost-neutral. The current annual cost of the PSTN lines identified for migration is approximately £15,000, compared to an estimated £21,000 per annum under the proposed solution. This figure includes a £10,000 contingency provision, reflecting the likelihood that, during the first year of migration, the Council may incur dual running costs while notice periods and contractual transitions are completed.

Funding for the proposed additional costs has already been incorporated into ICT's Medium-Term Schedule of Works (MTSW) and is therefore fully budgeted.

Matthew Kearns (Finance Manager)

8 Legal Implications

- 8.1** I agree the proposal is lawful and complies with the Contract Procedure Rules provided the process set out by Procurement is followed. I note that if the Council does not take the proposed measures, it is likely to fail to comply with its statutory duties.

Bryan Boese – solicitor 5 June 2026

9 Procurement Implications

- 9.1** Commercial Procurement Unit (CPU) supports IT recommendations and, following approval of this report, Procurement will work closely with IT colleagues to ensure all requirements are met and that any third-party contracts are procured in full compliance with PA23 Regulations and the Council's Contract Procedure Rules. Where CPU recommends the use of an approved Framework, the associated buying guidelines must be strictly adhered to.
- 9.2** Additionally, all potential suppliers will be required to complete the IT Non-Functional, Technical, and Security questionnaire. Responses will be thoroughly evaluated and, must, receive formal approval from ICT colleagues before any contract can be awarded.
- 9.3** Where IT are recommending migrate to 8x8 UK LTD, Commercial procurement Unit request approval to modify current contractual arrangements to increase the X1 licence count. The current contract value for 8x8 UK LTD is £363,000 given then uplift in licence qty & annual costs is within the modification threshold value of 10%, as per the Councils Contract Procedure Rules Subject to Rule 17.2 b (i) the Modification is for additional Supplies, Works and Services by the original Contractor that have become necessary and were not included in the initial procurement or commissioning exercise, where a change of Contractor: (i) (ii) cannot be made for economic or technical reasons such as requirements of interchangeability or interoperability with existing equipment, services or installations procured under the initial procurement
Senga Henstock, ICT Senior Buyer, 4th June 2026.

10 Property Implications

- 10.1** As referenced within the body of this report, the Council currently relies on PSTN lines to support critical services to its property portfolio and functions including intruder alarms, fire alarms and lift emergency telephones. Failure to migrate these

services ahead of the switch-off will result in loss of functionality, leaving buildings unprotected and potentially placing occupants at risk.

- 10.2** Property Services are aligned and supportive of the report and the recommendation of Option 2.

John Winterbottom, Divisional Manager – Technical Delivery, 12th May 2026

11 Equality Impact, including implications for Children and Young People

- 11.1** None

12 Risks

- 12.1** In addition to the PSTN lines paid for by the Council it is anticipated there are approximately 80 lines being paid for by schools where these lines support intruder alarms that are either supported or monitored by the Council's property and response services teams. While the cost of migrating these lines along with any future rental costs should be the responsibility of the school, the Council has already been asked by some schools if it can assist with identifying alternate solutions. This proposal does not include actions or costs to resolve this issue. However, the solutions identified in this proposal will be appropriate for consideration. The likely cost impact if picked up by the Council is **£172,000**

13 Key Decision

- 13.1** Yes

14 Key Decision Reference

- 14.1** FCR-17-26

15 Background Papers

- 15.1** None

16 Appendices

- 16.1** n/a