

## **COUNCIL – 26 February 2025**

### **NOTICES OF MOTION**

#### **Submitted to Council in Accordance with the Council Procedural Rules**

#### **1 From Exceptional Weather Events to Securing Telecare Services: Meeting the Challenges presented by the Analogue to Digital Upgrade by 2027**

##### **Proposed by Councillor J Clowes and Seconded by Councillor A Kolker**

At December's Full Council Meeting, a question was raised regarding the loss of power and digital communications for significant periods during Storm Darragh on the 6th – 9th December 2024.

Whilst many areas experienced power outages, they were most extreme in more rural and remote areas of the borough.

It highlighted that analogue landlines that had already been converted to digital systems failed as soon as the power failed. Mobile phone batteries failed a short time into the power outages which in some cases lasted 2 – 3 days.

These areas are also more vulnerable to intermittent power outages caused by aging and vulnerable power infrastructure, by digital "black spots", poor reception and slower broadband speeds.

Nonetheless, the national digital upgrade continues apace and is due to be completed during 2027.

Whilst the Council Leader and Chairs of relevant committees acknowledged these problems at the December Council Meeting and identified potential strategies to address them, a more formal, multi-agency approach is urgently required, to bring these forward in the limited time-frame available.

The Government has now recognised this issue in relation to telecare services. *"...old landlines are still vital lifelines for very many people, including users of telecare, and it is crucial that we take people through the digital phone switchover safely. Upwards of 2 million people in the UK use telecare - the most common example being personal alarm pendants or buttons that many of us have seen family members use - and most of these telecare devices have historically relied on the analogue landline network".*

*"Telecare users have been identified as being at risk during the digital phone switchover, with past serious incidents underscoring the importance of safeguarding these individuals".* (DHSC: 11.02.2025)

Working collaboratively and closely with stakeholders from across the telecommunications and adult social care sectors, a new Telecare National Action Plan was launched on 11th February 2025.

*“Helping people to stay independent in their own homes, joining up services and improving the quality of care is essential to the future of Social Care. Technology enabled care (TEC) plays an important part in achieving this. The action plan sets out our vision for how to transition telecare provision into a modern, digital and resilient part of adult social care. The migration to digital telephone networks will lay the foundations for a next generation of telecare services so that care is personalised and preventative.” (DHSC: 11.02.2025)*

This approach is not just a national requirement but is a necessity for Cheshire East Council, if it is to take control of social care expenditure and bring spiralling care costs under control.

It is therefore proposed that this Council moves:

1. To implement the National Telecare Action Plan and its outcomes as follows:
  - no telecare user will be migrated to digital landline services without the communication provider, the customer or the telecare service provider confirming that the user has a compatible and functioning telecare solution in place
  - use of analogue telecare devices is phased out to ensure that only digital devices are being used
  - telecare users, their support networks and their service providers understand what actions they need to take
  - stakeholders collaborate to safeguard telecare users through the digital phone switchover
2. That the data acquired through implementation of the Telecare Action Plan is recognised as the baseline for further work with other vulnerable residents:
  - to identify those communities with no/poor digital access (black spots).
  - to identify other vulnerable residents (eg older residents, residents still dependent on analogue phones, residents dependent of 2G and 3G that are also being phased out) and expand the data base.
3. To design and distribute a Residents' Safety Toolkit – providing advice, guidance and practical support, to enable residents to better prepare for periods of power or signal outages.
4. To lobby Government to further invest in those areas that have little or no digital access, in particular to ensure that residents in rural or otherwise isolated areas are not excluded from accessing effective digital services that would enable them to stay in their own homes for longer.
5. Work with NALC, CHALC, Town and Parish Councils to develop their own Local Resilience Plans, utilising local knowledge and skills to further mitigate the impacts of extreme weather events or other local, critical incidents.

## REFERENCES

DHSC February 2025

[Telecare National Action Plan: protecting telecare users through the digital phone switchover - GOV.UK](#)

BT September 2023

<https://newsroom.bt.com/bt-announces-regional-rollout-schedule-for-digital-voice/>

[We're switching from analogue to digital landlines - About BT | BT Plc](#)

GOV.UK: Vulnerable Customers

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/uk-transition-from-analogue-to-digital-landlines>

Ofcom: Calls in Power Cuts

<https://www.ofcom.org.uk/phones-and-broadband/landline-phones/future-of-landline-calls>

Commons Library (2020/21: Impact of storms and extended power cuts).

<https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-9471/>

Cllr Concerns in Norfolk November 2023

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-norfolk-67706670>

May 2024: Charities Concerns (2025 deadline extended to 2027)

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c5119g5z4q5o>