



Chard Town Council

Chard Town Council - Out of Hours Call-Out Policy

Chard Town Council owns land and property that, if an emergency happens, may require immediate action at any time of day or night. Currently there is no out of hours call-out support to ensure this can happen.

There are two instances which have occurred recently where this would have been beneficial:

- Fallen tree owned by the Council in Jocelyn Park dropping onto a neighbouring property.
- An unauthorised encampment in Upper Henson Park

Proposal

Whilst the Council offices are generally in operation Monday to Friday, excluding Bank Holidays, 9am – 5pm Monday to Thursday and 9am – 4pm on a Friday and the Guildhall is often open beyond these hours, sometimes 7 days a week, the main phone line is not monitored outside office hours.

It is therefore recommended that outside the core office hours the Council's phone system has an answerphone message on it which lists an emergency telephone number. To support this a dedicated mobile phone will need to be purchased and held, on a rotational basis, by an on-call member of staff. Initially this on-call rota will include the Town Clerk, Operations Manager and Senior Caretaker, who will be able to deal with the emergency either by attending in person or liaising with relevant internal/external parties.

What will this policy cost?

The Council will need to purchase a dedicated mobile phone at a current cost of £14 per month. If this policy is initiated by 1st October 2023, the phone cost will be £84 for 2023 / 2024, increasing to £168 per annum on-going from 2024 / 2025.

In addition, the on-call phone holder will be paid a call out sum equivalent to 2 hours at time and a half based on their normal hourly rate plus time and a half at their usual hourly rate for the duration of the time they needed to spend dealing with the emergency.

Necessary Expense

Should the on-call person be required to come to Chard / Guildhall to co-ordinate the situation then additional pay will be paid to cover travel to the Guildhall or appropriate site and any incidental expenses such as food / drink.

In dealing with the emergency there are likely to be issues of health and safety. The on-call person will be authorised to incur reasonable expense as per the Council's Financial Regulations in relation to initially resolving an emergency situation involving Chard Town Council's council property. For example, cordoning off an area where a tree has fallen.

Such expenses must be advised to the Town Clerk, if not the on-call person, and Councillors at the earliest possibility and ratified at the first available meeting of the Council following such actions, where necessary.

It is anticipated that there are funds available within the existing budget where virements can be made to cover the costs. Should the Council resolve to accept this policy then any necessary virements will be reported for agreement to the next Finance and Audit Committee due to be held on 24th October. In addition, there will be a minor adjustment to the Financial Regulations which will be made and reported back as part of the annual review to Full Council in November.