

Lone Worker Safety and Site Security Review

Committee: Finance & General Purposes

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1. Purpose of Report

To present safety concerns raised in relation to lone working at parish community facilities, highlight current risks, and provide options and associated costs for improving personal safety through the introduction of personal panic alarms at identified high-risk sites.

2. Background

Following an incident at Pinetrees Community Centre on 14 October 2025, concerns have been raised regarding the safety of lone workers and staff operating during evening hours.

Many of our community facilities operate until late, often with single staff members on site. A number of these locations are situated in areas with elevated levels of antisocial behaviour, and some buildings have multiple public access points, increasing vulnerability.

The incident at Pinetrees also highlighted gaps in the out of hours response process, reinforcing the need for clearer escalation protocols and stronger lone worker support. A review of this event and subsequent discussions have identified the need to strengthen both procedural and physical safety measures for staff working alone.

3. Identified Risks

- Lone staff, particularly during evening hours, may face verbal abuse, intimidation, or threatening behaviour from members of the public.
- Current safety measures (locked doors, mobile phones) do not provide immediate assistance in the event of an escalating situation.
- Out of hours response procedures require review to ensure timely support and clarity of responsibilities.
- Some sites, such as Parkside Hub, currently lack intruder alarm or panic systems, leaving staff without an emergency alert option.
- The Chapel Street Toilets have been identified as an antisocial behaviour hotspot, where staff occasionally work in isolation during opening, closing, and cleaning tasks.

4. Policy and Risk Review

A review of the existing Lone Working Policy and Risk Assessment is now required to ensure it accurately reflects operational risks and includes:

- Updated procedures for evening and out-of-hours working.
- Clear escalation routes for assistance (including on call attendance and police contact).
- Provision for personal panic alarms or integrated emergency alert systems at isolated or high risk sites, including Chapel Street Toilets.
- Training for staff on de escalation, emergency response, and use of equipment.

The review will also explore alternative low-cost mitigation measures if system installation is not immediately affordable.

5. Duty of Care and Compliance Considerations

As an employer and service provider, the Parish Council has a legal and moral duty of care to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety, and welfare of all employees, volunteers, and contractors while at work.

This includes:

- Providing safe systems of work, safe premises, and adequate supervision and training (Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974).
- Ensuring that risk assessments are regularly reviewed and control measures implemented, as required by the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999.
- Fulfilling safeguarding duties under the Care Act 2014 and Working Together to Safeguard Adults (2023) guidance, where staff or service users may encounter vulnerable adults during incidents.
- Considering equality and discrimination implications under the Equality Act 2010, ensuring staff working alone are not exposed to undue risk based on their role, time of shift, or working environment.

Failure to adequately manage lone working risks could expose the Council to liability under health and safety law and undermine staff confidence. Proactive measures such as improved procedures, communication, and alarm systems are essential to demonstrate compliance and fulfil the Council's moral duty of care.

6. Proposed Safety Improvements

Following a site survey, OSE Security Systems Ltd have provided quotations for the installation of radio based personal alarm systems linked to the existing intruder alarm infrastructure. These systems would enable staff to trigger an alert via pendant transmitters, signalling directly to the monitoring station and, where configured, the police.

Summary of Quotations (ex VAT)

Site	Description	Cost of Installation	Annual Maintenance	Notes
Pinetrees Community Centre	Install dual transmitter system, link to existing intruder alarm, 2x pendants	£1,124	-	Direct police response (£56.60 URN fee)
Parkside Hub	Full alarm system installation + panic alarm setup (no current alarm)	£1,712	£450	Direct police response (£56.60 URN fee)
Moredon Library	Single transmitter setup + pendants	£946	-	Direct police response (£56.60 URN fee)
John Moulton Hall	Dual transmitter system + pendants	£1,124	-	Direct police response (£56.60 URN fee)

Total installation cost: £4,906 + VAT

Annual maintenance: £450 + VAT (Parkside only)

Police response URNs (4 sites): £226.40 + VAT

OSE advise that due to the nature of radio frequency transmission, additional transmitters may be required to achieve full building coverage at some sites, potentially incurring supplementary cost.

A further assessment will be undertaken for Chapel Street Toilets to explore the feasibility of either a fixed or portable panic alarm system, given its identification as a recurring antisocial behaviour hotspot.

7. Financial Implications

There is currently no budget available within existing allocations to fund these installations.

Options for consideration include:

- Seeking grant or community safety funding (e.g. Police and Crime Commissioner).
- Implementing a phased installation approach.
- Phased installation over two financial years.
- Budget within 26/27 FY to undertake.

Given current budget constraints, officers will explore grant opportunities through the Police and Crime Commissioner's Safer Communities Fund, the local authority's Community Safety

budget, or possible cost-sharing with tenants. Indicative implementation options will be brought back for consideration once funding routes are confirmed.

8. Next Steps

- Conduct a full review of lone worker risk assessments across all parish sites.
- Engage with PCSOs to review police response coverage and safety awareness.
- Obtain costings for Chapel Street Toilets and portable alarm alternatives.
- Arrange refresher training for staff on de-escalation and emergency procedures.
- Develop a phased implementation plan prioritising the highest risk sites first.
- Report back to the Committee with updated risk and cost data.

9. Recommendations

The Committee is asked to:

1. Note the increased risk to lone workers and recent incidents at parish facilities.
2. Approve a review of the Lone Working Policy and associated risk assessment.
3. Support in principle the introduction of personal panic alarm systems at key sites, with a specific review of Chapel Street Toilets.
4. Endorse a phased approach to implementation, prioritising high risk sites first and subject to available funding.
5. Request officers to identify potential funding sources and bring a costed implementation plan to the next meeting.