Amenities Committee 27 August 2025 ITEM 8

Defibrillators in Highcliffe and Walkford

1. Purpose of the report

To consider whether the council wishes to purchase an additional defibrillator for the Parish.

2. Recommendation

It is recommended that:

a) Members consider if a further defibrillator is required in Walkford and if so;
b) To appoint a Member/Members to find a suitable location, report back to the Committee and then;
c) Recommend to Council that monies for this project be approved, and:
d) Ask Council to approve of a defibrillator policy, once a location has been agreed.

3. Background

Highcliffe and Walkford Parish is currently served with defibrillators in the following locations:

- St Mark's Church
- Highcliffe Bowling Club
- Highcliffe Castle
- Highcliffe School
- Highcliffe Methodist Church
- Tesco Stores Ltd
- Hoburne Park
- Highcliffe Community Association (Greystones)
- Hinton Admiral Train Station
- Mudeford Wood Community Centre

The above are all registered on The Circuit, the National Defibrillator Network, as required by the Ambulance Service. The Circuit connects defibrillators to NHS ambulance services across the UK so that in those crucial moments after a sudden cardiac arrest, they can be accessed quickly to help save lives.

The Parish Council are responsible for a further defibrillator which is located at Wingfield Recreation Ground. However, this is currently decommissioned and awaiting repair. Quotes are being sought in order to expedite the functional return of this machine to The Circuit. The cost is expected to be in the region of £250.

There are 2 further defibrillators in the area, one at the Highcliffe Medical Practice and the other at The Old School House. Neither of these are registered on The Circuit as they are only accessible when the buildings are open and in use.

There are no recorded defibrillators in Walkford.

4. Defibrillator Costs

To give it its proper name, an automated external defibrillator is used to help those experiencing sudden cardiac arrest (SCA). It's a sophisticated, yet easy-to-use medical device that analyses the heart's rhythm.

A fully automatic AED delivers an electrical shock – called a defibrillation – without human intervention to help the heart re-establish an effective rhythm. This is the most sophisticated and reliable method of achieving a successful intervention in a sudden cardiac arrest.

A fully automatic AED kept outdoors should be maintained at an ambient temperature and protected from weather. This means living in a suitable external cabinet with a heater.
The AED inside the cabinet should be accessible and visible in hours of darkness, which means a permanent ‘always on’ light inside the cabinet. The heater and light therefore require an electrical supply.

The costs for a defibrillator are as follows:

Defibrillator £850-£1400 depending on indoor/outdoor
Cabinet £90-£600 depending on indoor/outdoor
Replacement battery £50-£300 every 3-5 years
Replacement pads £35-£155 every 2-4 years and after every use
Signage £20

Weekly checks must be carried out and reported to The Circuit. However, if a defibrillator is purchased from the British Heart Foundation (BHF) that organisation undertakes the checks. They also offer packages to include the above from £1571.99 - £2153.99 depending on the type of defibrillator and cabinet required (based on fully automated defibrillator in an external heated cabinet).

5. Implications and Impact Assessment

Equalities
Positive and essential implications:

- Improved health equity: Access to a public defibrillator can reduce health inequalities by ensuring life-saving equipment is available regardless of income, social class, or background.
- Accessibility: Placement must consider access for people with disabilities (e.g. height, reach, visibility), including ensuring the cabinet is within accessible reach and not behind barriers.
- Inclusive provision: Councils should consider demographic needs (e.g. elderly populations, areas with known cardiac risks).

Legal basis: Under the Equality Act 2010, councils must consider their Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) to eliminate discrimination and advance equality of opportunity.

Environment

- Energy consumption: Automated External Defibrillators (AEDs) require a constant low-level power source (especially if housed in heated, lit cabinets), potentially contributing to a small increase in energy use and emissions if powered by non-renewable sources.

- Battery disposal: AEDs have lithium or other chemical batteries that require appropriate disposal or recycling in accordance with WEEE (Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment) regulations.

- End-of-life equipment: Units eventually need replacement, and the disposal must align with environmental regulations for electronic waste.

Crime and Disorder

Potential concerns:

- Vandalism/theft: Publicly accessible defibrillators may be vulnerable to damage or theft, especially in remote or poorly lit areas.
- Misuse: Though AEDs are designed for ease of use, misuse or hoax use may tie up emergency services or damage equipment.

Preventative actions:

- Install in visible, well-lit areas or near CCTV if available.
- Use tamper-proof but accessible cabinets (e.g. PIN-protected via 999 call).
- Engage community in awareness and stewardship to deter vandalism.
- Liaise with local police/PCSOs on hotspot risk areas.

Financial

- There is currently no budget set aside, within the 2025/26 financial year, for an additional defibrillator and allocation of funds for such would need approval from Council, as either a virement or allocation from earmarked reserves.

Resources

- The Clerk is responsible for any defibrillator owned by the Council and has to ensure weekly checks are carried out and reported to The Circuit unless the machine has been purchased from BHF.

Legal

- The Parish Council is the owner of an AED, cabinet and all equipment held inside. The AED must be listed on the Parish Council Asset Register as required for insurance purposes and maintained by the Clerk to the Council.

- The Parish Council has to agree to provide funding for the maintenance of the AED, including the replacement of batteries, electrode pads and leads and other AED accessories as and when required.

- The Clerk to the Parish Council must register any owned AEDs with The Circuit, the National Defibrillator Network, as required by the Ambulance Service. It is the responsibility of the Parish Council to ensure each AED is properly maintained and available for use. A record of weekly status checks must be kept for those purposes and kept updated by the Clerk on The Circuit as ‘Primary Guardian’ of the three AEDs. The Council must also have a defibrillator policy.

- The Parish Council can minimise any prospect of legal action by maintaining its AEDs according to the manufacturer's instruction and handbook and by promoting the steps for CPR set out by BHF and the Resuscitation Council UK.

- Negligence Risk:
  If a council installs a defibrillator but fails to maintain it properly, and someone suffers harm due to equipment failure, there is a potential risk of legal action for negligence. Maintenance must follow manufacturer guidelines, and logs should be kept of regular checks.

- Public Liability Insurance: Councils should inform their insurers and ensure their policy covers: Third-party injury resulting from AED use or malfunction and, damage to, or theft of the unit.

- While not a workplace AED, certain Health and Safety principles apply:
  The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 places general duties on employers and public bodies to ensure the safety of the public, which may extend to the safe provision of public equipment. Cabinets must be securely installed, not create trip hazards, and be safe to access. Electricity at Work Regulations 1989 may apply if the cabinet is heated or mains-powered — qualified electricians should carry out installation.

- Parish councils have legal authority to purchase and maintain defibrillators: Local Government Act 1972, s.137 (or s.19 in some cases): Allows councils to incur expenditure for the benefit of the community where no specific power exists.

Risk Management
Key risks and mitigation strategies:

- Liability: Parish councils may be concerned about liability if the device is used incorrectly or fails. However, UK law protects bystanders and organisations offering emergency aid through the Social Action, Responsibility and Heroism Act 2015.

- Maintenance responsibility:
  - Batteries and pads require regular replacement.
  - Routine checks are essential (weekly/monthly) to ensure functionality.
  - Councils must have clear processes and responsibilities for checks and record-keeping.

- Training: Although AEDs are designed for untrained use, offering optional training to residents can reduce misuse risk and increase confidence.

- Insurance: Councils should check their public liability insurance covers ownership and public use of AEDs.

- Data protection (if applicable): If the cabinet uses a keypad requiring users to call 999 and be logged, this may involve processing minimal personal data, which should be considered under GDPR compliance.

6. Conclusion

Walkford does not have a defibrillator. There has been no location yet identified for a defibrillator. The cost of a defibrillator is circa £2,000 and there is currently no budget set aside. There are substantial financial and legal implications to owning and maintaining a defibrillator.