

BLACKWOOD TOWN CENTRE MANAGEMENT GROUP – 21ST OCTOBER 2010

**SUBJECT: PUBLIC SERVICES EFFICIENCY SAVINGS – PUBLIC CONVENIENCE
PROVISION**

REPORT BY: CHIEF EXECUTIVE

1. BACKGROUND TO THE REPORT

- 1.1 As you may appreciate last year was very difficult for the Authority finances and many service areas were charged with finding efficiency savings to bridge the shortfall between budgets available and the services previously provided.
- 1.2 Within the Public Services Division (Waste Strategy and Operations Group) savings totaling £450,000 were identified. This included charging for some services whilst re-engineering other services to achieve the budget reductions required. This included removal of attendants from public conveniences. A Report was prepared for Cabinet detailing the proposals (which was agreed) and then this formed part of the formal budget report presented to and accepted by Full Council.
- 1.3 The removal of full and part time staffing to all the Public Conveniences (after allowing for daily cleansing) was anticipated to save the Authority £130,000 per annum.

2. THE CLEANSING REGIME AT THE BLACKWOOD PUBLIC CONVENIENCE

- 2.1 The facility is open from 8am – 6pm Monday to Saturday and is cleansed on a daily basis. Daily cleansing has allowed the division to make the Efficiency Savings required while keeping all the Public Conveniences open. The majority of facilities now receive an end of day cleanse but in the case of Blackwood and Caerphilly TIC this has been increased to include an additional (mid-day) cleanse.
- 2.2 All Public Conveniences are cleansed after closing every evening (so they are fit for use when opened the following morning) although with Blackwood and Caerphilly this is supplemented (as a result of the representations made to the Authority and after agreement of the Cabinet member) by an additional cleanse around midday. This ensures the facilities are clean and consumables replenished prior to the lunchtime and in readiness for afternoon users.

3. VANDALISM ISSUES

- 3.1 There have been a limited number of incidents of vandalism (which are normally dealt with quite swiftly by the service Handyman) and inappropriate use of some of these facilities since the changes have been made but similar incidents also occurred even when they were staffed full time. Public services staff are working with the Police and the authority's Community Safety service to address these issues. There has been one incident where the facility was closed for several days (on police request) while investigations were carried out into a criminal incident. As stated above any other incidents such as blocked drainage systems have not normally resulted in the whole facility being closed and the issue has generally been resolved

the same day.

4. THE WAG GRANT SCHEME FOR BUSINESSES

- 4.1 When the service was aware that it would be changing Public Convenience provision across the county borough, businesses that were likely to have toilet provision already available were contacted to see if they were prepared to allow their facilities to be used by non-customers in exchange for an annual payment which could be funded by a WAG grant. Unfortunately this was not taken up by the properties contacted. Within Blackwood, after consultation with the Town Centre Manager, 6 businesses (mainly Cafes) were contacted as it was thought these would be the most suitable establishments. However this exercise did not prove successful as none of the businesses were interested in the offer.

5. FINANCIAL CONSEQUENCES

- 5.1 The financial savings far outweigh any cost of dealing with the vandalism incidents. Consequently the Public Services division is on target to achieve the Efficiency Savings identified.
- 5.2 Unfortunately in the current economic climate (and with the probability of the authority having to make further savings next year) then there is no budget available to reinstate the previous level of staffing in these facilities.
- 5.3 The only alternative, which would of course require Member approval, is for this facility to be transferred (under some form of lease agreement) to an interested organisation with the Authority providing a grant up to its current expenditure level and then leaving the organisation to raise any additional funding required to maintain the facility and staff on a full time basis.

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