



POLICY AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 25TH JANUARY 2011

SUBJECT: CUSTOMER SERVICES FUNCTIONS

REPORT BY: DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To seek Members' views on officers' recommendations for the future of Customer Services across the county borough.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 Members of Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee received reports on 5th October 2010, outlining proposals for the future provision of both Cash Office and Customer First facilities and were asked to comment as part of a consultative process.
- 2.2 It was clear a much wider consultative process was needed to engage all sectors involved in customer services. This was undertaken and this new report was developed as a result.

3. LINKS TO STRATEGY

- 3.1 This report sets out proposals for the future of our customer interface, taking consideration of the need to find efficiencies to meet the medium term financial challenges ahead of us, whilst also meeting the balance of the requirements of the Council's Town Centre Regeneration Strategy.

4. THE REPORT

- 4.1 The extensive consultation identified an overwhelming majority to retain a presence on our high street, and this in keeping with the Council's Regeneration Strategy for Town Centres. It is very pleasing indeed, to see the value members of the public have placed on our face-to-face contact with them.
- 4.2 The widening of choices available to the public, to pay was also warmly received. Post Offices were considered one of the most desirable alternatives.
- 4.3 The Council through its previously agreed strategies and as part of our Town Centre regeneration developments for Bargoed, Risca and Caerphilly have developed an exciting and innovative approach, embracing a concept of Library Resource centres. In each of the aforementioned town centres, this concept is becoming a reality although they are at varying stages of development, but will all be in place by no later than the summer of 2013.
- 4.4 We have revisited the previous proposals and now advocate the following:-
- Roll out Paypoint facility out to all Post Offices across the County Borough

- Retain Pontlottyn Customer Services
- Relocate the current Customer Services in Bargoed to the Library Resource Centre
- Retain Blackwood Customer Services but close the Cash Office at Pontllanfraith House
- Maintain the Cash Office at Newbridge and review when Newbridge Memorial Hall funding is in place.
- Relocate the Cash Office at Risca to the new Library Resource Centre
- Relocate the Cash Office facility in Caerphilly to the new Library Resource Centre
- Retain Customer Services at Penallta House

4.5 The demand on office accommodation particularly as we drive forward the concept of two main centres is placing significant pressure on Pontllanfraith House. Releasing the cash office space will allow the other services operating from this location an improved public interface area and reflect the town centre regeneration plan to encourage residents into the Blackwood town.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The funding for the Library Resource Centres at Bargoed, Risca and Caerphilly has already been factored into the Medium Term Financial Plan.

5.2 The revenue savings achieved is £50k per annum and this will be factored into the revised Medium Term Financial Plan as part of the 2011/12 budget process.

6. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 This service redesign will require further work to realign staffing in the Library/Customer First/Cashiers functions to achieve a better fit, as these services are developed.

6.2 The staff at Ty Pontllanfraith will be redeployed.

7. CONSULTATIONS

7.1 The background papers to this report provide evidence of communication with:

All Council Members
 Community/Town Councils
 Community Partnerships
 Voluntary Sector
 Community Council Liaison Sub-Committee
 Including local member's Petition

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 Members' views are sought on the following recommendations, designed to progress the proposals set out in this report:-

- a) The principle of introducing Paypoint facilities across the county borough via Post Offices only.
- b) Bargoed, Caerphilly and Risca Town Centres develop Library Resource Centres to provide a comprehensive range of customer services.

- c) The closure of Pontllanfraith House Cash office and transfer of all of its business to Blackwood Customer Services.

9. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 9.1 To remodel services to the public which maximises value for money and brings services closer to each community in the county borough.

10. STATUTORY POWER

- 10.1 Local Government Act 1972.

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Background Papers:
P & R Scrutiny Committee Reports – 5 October 2010 – Customer First / Cashiering Functions
Consultation Responses