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Date: 6th April 2016

Dear Sir/Madam,

A meeting of the **Cabinet** will be held in the **Sirhowy Room, Penallta House, Tredomen, Ystrad Mynach** on **Wednesday, 13th April, 2016** at **2.00 pm** to consider the matters contained in the following agenda.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Chris Burns'.

Chris Burns
INTERIM CHIEF EXECUTIVE

A G E N D A

	Pages
1 To receive apologies for absence.	
2 Declarations of Interest. Councillors and Officers are reminded of their personal responsibility to declare any personal and/or prejudicial interest(s) in respect of any item of business on the agenda in accordance with the Local Government Act 2000, the Council's Constitution and the Code of Conduct for both Councillors and Officers.	
To approve and sign the following minutes: -	
3 Cabinet held on 30th March 2016.	1 - 6

A greener place Man gwyrddach



To receive and consider the following reports on which executive decisions are required: -

- | | | |
|---|--|---------|
| 4 | Draft Customer Service Strategy 2016-2020. | 7 - 28 |
| 5 | Development of an Intensive Therapeutic Fostering Service for Looked After Children in Caerphilly. | 29 - 34 |

Circulation:

Councillors Mrs C. Forehead, N. George, D.T. Hardacre, K. James, Mrs B. A. Jones, R. Passmore, D.V. Poole, K.V. Reynolds, T.J. Williams and R. Woodyatt,

And Appropriate Officers.



CABINET

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, TREDOMEN ON WEDNESDAY 30TH MARCH 2016 AT 2.00 P.M.

PRESENT:

Councillor K. V. Reynolds – Chair

Councillors:

N. George (Community and Leisure Services), D.T. Hardacre (Performance and Asset Management), K. James (Regeneration, Planning and Sustainable Development), B. Jones (Corporate Services), R. Passmore (Education and Lifelong Learning), D. Poole (Housing), T.J. Williams (Highways, Transportation and Engineering) and R. Woodyatt (Social Services).

Together with:

C. Burns (Interim Chief Executive), N. Scammel (Acting Director of Corporate Services and Section 151) and D. Street (Corporate Director – Social Services).

Also in Attendance:

B. Hopkins (Assistant Director - Education), P. Davy (Head of Programmes), T. Shaw (Head of Engineering Services), C. Forbes – Thompson (Interim Head of Democratic Services) and C. Evans (Committee Services Officer).

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor C. Forehead and C. Harry.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor D.T. Hardacre declared an interest in item 4 (Education Achievement Service (EAS) Business Plan), as Chairman of the Board but as it was a personal and not prejudicial interest, he was advised that there was no requirement to declare an interest.

3. CABINET – 16TH MARCH 2016

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 16th March 2016 (minute nos. 1 - 8) be approved and signed as a correct record.

MATTERS ON WHICH EXECUTIVE DECISIONS WERE REQUIRED

4. EDUCATION ACHIEVEMENT SERVICE (EAS) BUSINESS PLAN 2016 - 2017

The report, which was deferred from the last Cabinet meeting for further information, provided Members with the South East Wales Education Achievement Service (EAS) Business Plan 2016-2019, which sets out the priorities, programmes and outcomes to be achieved by the EAS on behalf of the South East Wales Consortium (SEWC), along side an updated Caerphilly CBC specific annexe.

SEWC is required to submit to the Welsh Government a three-year Business Plan that will be updated annually, which is set out in the WG's National Model for Regional Working. This is the third iteration of the plan first submitted in 2013. The plan covers the period 2016-2019.

The report highlighted the revised Regional Key Stage targets for 2016-2019, which are the outcome of detailed work in each school and are based on robust analysis of pupil level data for each cohort. The report detailed the long term regional priorities and how they will be delivered within the framework of the national context and the detailed programmes required in order to deliver the priorities.

Members were asked to approve the recommendation to endorse the EAS Business Plan, along with the revised information, and in addition requested 6 monthly monitoring reports be presented to Cabinet, in order to monitor progress.

Following consideration and discussion, it was moved and seconded that subject to the receipt of 6-monthly monitoring reports, the recommendation in the report be approved. By a show of hands this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that for the reasons contained in the Officers report: -

- (i) the EAS Business Plan be agreed;
- (ii) the Business Plan and Caerphilly CBC Schools progress be monitored on a six monthly basis.

5. PROPOSED ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS 2017/2018

The report, which was considered by the Education for Life Scrutiny Committee on the 23rd February 2016, provided details of the consultation process on the Schools Admission Arrangements for the academic year 2017/2018, and sought approval of the proposed arrangements.

Members noted that annual consultation is conducted on the proposed Admission Arrangements, which included consultation with Members. Following consideration by the Education for Life Scrutiny Committee, it was noted that there were no proposed changes to the Admission Arrangements for 2017/18 as attached in Appendix 1 of the scrutiny report.

Members noted the extent of the consultation which included all Headteachers, all Chairs of Governors and all neighbouring local authorities as well as Caerphilly County Borough Council's Admission Forum.

Having considered the report Cabinet sought additional information on the number of out of county appeals received to date. Officers highlighted that it is currently too early to provide these details as the letters of acceptance/rejections have recently been sent out. However, it was noted that 28 applications have been rejected for a Secondary School, the majority of which were out of county applications. In addition, Members noted that there have been

some Primary School rejections, the majority of which were due to out of county applications or if the school has been over subscribed, which is an issue for some schools within the borough.

Following consideration and discussion, it was moved and seconded that the recommendation in the report be approved. By a show of hands this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that for the reasons contained in the Officers report, the Proposed Admission Arrangements for 2017/2018 be agreed.

6. EDUCATION CAPITAL 2016/17

The report, which was considered by the Education for Life Scrutiny Committee on the 23rd February 2016, updated Members on the proposals for the 2016/17 Education Capital Programme.

The report outlined proposals for the allocation of the Education Capital Budgets for the 2016/17 financial year in the context of the 3 year Capital Programme 2016/17 – 2018/19. Members were advised that a sum of £2m toward electrical rewiring works in schools had been allocated from the agreed programme amount and the detailed proposals from the available residual capital budget were noted.

Members noted the comments of the Scrutiny Committee as detailed in the report and referenced the revenue/capital 50/50 budget and whether all bids received under this allocation could be accommodated. Officers confirmed that the budget could sustain all the bids received (assuming the £50,000 is allocated from LMS contingency) and if approved by Cabinet, works would commence within the first few months of the new financial year, subject to consultation with the schools and their individual works plan.

Cabinet noted that in addition to the recommendations, Members are also requested to agree the utilisation of £50,000 of LMS contingency funds to support 50/50 schemes, if required, as referenced in paragraph 4.12 of the report.

Following consideration and discussion, it was moved and seconded that the recommendation in the report be approved. By a show of hands this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that for the reasons contained in the Officers report, the Education Capital Budget for 2016/17 be utilised, as detailed therein.

7. STREET LIGHTING ENERGY SAVING PROPOSALS 2016-17

The report provided Members with an explanation on the stages required to attain the projected Street Lighting Energy Savings (EN5) agreed at Cabinet (February 2015) as part of Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) 2015-16 and 2016-17, detailed the progress made so far and gave options for funding the savings from street lighting proposals 2016-17.

Caerphilly County Borough Council (CCBC) has a current lighting stock of approximately 27,500 units, which have been subject to a number of energy saving measures (inter-urban part-night lighting, replacement of conventional bulbs with low-energy alternatives, dimming etc).

The MTFP 2015-16 EN5 saving looked for an energy saving of £450k over 2015-16, 2016-17 with the combination of an investment of £980k in LED replacement technology and the equipment required to part-night light enough urban lighting units to achieve all of this saving.

The LED technology element of this investment is currently being installed with between 8-9,000 lighting units converted to lower energy ratings by the planned end date of March 2016, realising £100k (in 2015-16) of the total £450k saving.

The target saving for the part-night lighting element of the MTFP 2015-16 EN5 (£450k) is £160k, this proposal has undergone an assessment process summarised in Section 5.3 of the report and detailed in Appendix B. The outcome being that it is achievable, but may have implementation issues as most are situated in urban areas. An alternative option to the £160k part-night lighting saving is to reduce the Lighting Maintenance Budget by this amount in 2016-17.

Following consideration and discussion, it was moved and seconded that the recommendations in the report be approved. By a show of hands this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that for the reasons contained in the Officers report: -

- (i) the preferred Street Lighting Saving, Option D – sourcing the whole saving from the Lighting Maintenance Budget (as outlined in Section 5.5 of the report) be agreed;
- (ii) part-night lighting be reviewed and considered as an option to form part of a future report to Cabinet on Investment Options for street lighting.

8. REVIEW OF COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT AND COMMUNITY SAFETY FUNDS - ADDENDUM

The original report, which was considered by the Caerphilly Homes Task Group (CHTG) on 18th February 2016, outlined the proposal to absorb the WHQS Community Fund and Community Safety Fund into the Environmental Programme budget. The majority of the CHTG supported the recommendation to merge the funds. The report was presented to the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee on 1st March 2016 together with the view of the CHTG. Although the recommendation for the merger of the funds was moved and seconded when the Committee voted there was a majority who did not support the recommendation.

Members noted that during the debate at Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee, questions had been asked about the extent to which the funds had been promoted. The Community Improvement Fund has operated as a grant scheme and was available to constituted community organisations to submit applications for support up to a maximum of £5,000 for projects that would demonstrate community benefit to the tenants of the Councils homes. The availability of the grant scheme has been promoted on a regular basis in the tenant newsletters, articles were featured in two issues of Newline and press releases were issued during 2013, 2014 and 2015. There has been a dedicated web page and publicity material has been distributed to promote the fund to community groups and partner agencies. The availability of the fund has been promoted at various events attended by Caerphilly Homes and through the corporate social media pages.

The Community Safety Fund has not operated as a grant scheme. This has been reliant on working across the Council organisation and with partner agencies to identify existing initiatives where there could be added value from a WHQS financial contribution.

The funds have operated over the last 3 financial years and given the low take up it is felt that a different approach is now warranted. It remains the Officers' view that the amalgamation of the separate budgets within the WHQS Environmental Programme will enable a greater impact to be achieved. This will enable a more strategic and cohesive approach to be undertaken by having one programme focussed on the environmental improvement of the Council's housing estates. This will also enable staff time to be better focussed on the main environmental programme rather than promoting and administering small separate budgets.

The original report stated that this change of approach would not preclude projects that might have been considered under the two separate funds. There will be the opportunity for project proposals to come forward through the consultation process with residents on specific housing estates as the environmental programme is developed and taken forward.

The two funds were established with a five year commitment. If the recommendation is agreed the main environmental budget would be increased by £200,000.

Notwithstanding that the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee did not support the recommendation Officers remain of the opinion that a more effective impact could be achieved by amalgamating the remaining financial commitment of the two separate funds (Community Improvement Fund and Community Safety Fund) within the main WHQS Environmental Programme budget.

Following consideration and discussion, it was moved and seconded that the recommendation in the report be approved. By a show of hands this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that for the reasons contained in the Officers report and notwithstanding that the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee did not support the recommendations, it be agreed that the remaining financial commitment of the two separate funds (Community Improvement Fund and Community Safety Fund) within the main WHQS Environmental Programme budget be amalgamated.

9. CABINET FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The report sought the approval and endorsement of Cabinet of the Forward Work Programme for the period April 2016 to June 2016.

The report outlined the proposed Forward Work Programme for future Cabinet reports, which is updated on a monthly basis to reflect any amendments that are made to it since it was first agreed. In addition, Members were asked to note the revised format of the Forward Work Programme, which provided a detailed summary of the reports, which has been provided as a result of a recommendation following the Scrutiny Review.

Following consideration and discussion, it was moved and seconded that the recommendation in the report be approved. By a show of hands this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that for the reasons contained in the Officers report, the Cabinet Forward Work Programme, in its revised format, be agreed.

10. GWENT FRAILTY PROGRAMME – REVISED SECTION 33 AGREEMENT

The report sought Cabinet endorsement of the proposed revisions to the Section 33 (Health Act 1999) partnership agreement between Aneurin Bevan University Health Board and the five local authorities of Blaenau Gwent, Caerphilly, Monmouthshire, Newport and Torfaen in respect of the Gwent Frailty Programme.

It was noted that the revised section 33 has to be agreed by all partners by the 31st March 2016. Unfortunately, the discussion to formulate the new Section 33 have taken a long time to conclude. The proposed changes do not significantly change the existing Agreement and given the fact that the new Agreement needs to be in place as soon as possible this report will not be presented formally to the Health, Social Care and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee.

The Gwent Frailty Programme (GFP) is a transformational programme between the five neighbouring local authorities in the former Gwent area and Aneurin Bevan University Health

Board (ABUHB). Its aim is to provide services to frail people across the area in a way that is person centred and focused on the needs of individuals, rather than organisations. It is regarded by the Welsh Government as one of Wales' iconic projects, and has been backed by repayable Invest to Save funding of £6.3 million from Welsh Government.

The GFP has been developed in recognition that many aspects of historic models of health and social care provision are unsustainable and that more effective whole system working is necessary to address increasing demand for services which meet frail individuals' needs.

The formula for the repayment of Invest to Save funding was in simple terms based on the anticipated savings each of the partners could receive from the investment in alternative models of care. For local authorities savings were expected to be in terms of reduced packages of care and care home beds. For ABUHB savings were expected from reductions in bed day usage.

By the end of the 2015/16 financial year it is anticipated that the Invest to Save funding will be exhausted and while an independent review of the GFP concluded that cost avoidance could be evidenced, cash releasing savings were unlikely due to demographic changes and increased demand for health and social care.

The conclusions from this independent review undertaken by Cordis Bright coupled with the unfavourable economic climate for public sector organisations has prompted partners to review their commitment to the GFP and reconsider how the programme should be funded moving forward. This in turn has necessitated a review of the Section 33 partnership agreement.

A proposed revised agreement has been agreed by the Gwent Frailty Joint Committee (GFJC) comprising of Cabinet/Executive Members for social services for each of the local authorities and an independent member of ABUHB and was attached as an Appendix to the report.

Members discussed the report and sought further information on Delayed Transfers of Care (DTOC). It was noted that these figures are increasing, and a difficult period has been evident since January, with no solution to the issue at present. A significant amount of staff time is being spent on the issue in order to consider a solution and the impact on services.

Following consideration and discussion, it was moved and seconded that the recommendation in the report be approved. By a show of hands this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that for the reasons contained in the Officers report, the revised Section 33 Agreement, as recommended by the Gwent Frailty Joint Committee be agreed.

The meeting closed at 2.47pm

Approved and signed as a correct record subject to any corrections made at the meeting held on 13th April 2016.

CHAIR



CABINET - 13TH APRIL 2016

SUBJECT: DRAFT CUSTOMER SERVICE STRATEGY 2016-2020

REPORT BY: ACTING DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE SERVICES AND SECTION 151 OFFICER

-
- 1.1 The attached report, which provided details of the draft Customer Service Strategy 2016-2020, was considered by the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee on 19th January 2016. The report sought the views of Members on the draft Strategy prior to its presentation to Cabinet.
 - 1.2 Members were advised that the Council's Customer Service Strategy has been in place since 2006 and has been partially updated on a number of occasions. However, the financial environment in which the Council operates has changed significantly in the last few years, as have the expectations of customers who are increasingly expecting services to be available on-line, and so there is a clear need to put a new Strategy in place.
 - 1.3 Officers outlined the main strategic outcomes of the Strategy which are: to improve the consistency of customer service across the organisation; to meet customer expectations that services will be available online which will also reduce the cost of customer contact; and to develop in-person customer service so that it is more focused on delivering complex services or dealing with more vulnerable or disadvantaged customers. A copy of the draft Strategy was appended to the report.
 - 1.4 Officers explained that once formally agreed, the Customer Service Strategy will be supported by a Delivery Plan that will be monitored by the Corporate IT Strategy Group (CITSG), of which the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Corporate Services is a member.
 - 1.5 A copy of an email detailing the Trade Unions response to the proposed Strategy was tabled at the meeting. Members noted the key comments contained therein, including a need to involve and consult with all service areas and wider stakeholders identified within the Strategy to deliver the programme, and the need for a measured, pragmatic and holistic approach in delivery to ensure that department reconfigurations are not focused within one specific service area.
 - 1.6 During the course of the ensuing debate, concerns were expressed regarding the personnel implications in respect of the proposals, particularly in relation to possible redundancies and a change in staffing hours. Further information was also sought on the financial savings that could be achieved as a result of the proposed Strategy. Officers explained that it was difficult to project savings at the present time but that the Strategy will support the aims of the Medium Term Financial Plan. However, there was an expectation that the need for customer-facing services could reduce in future years, leading to Customer Service opening hours being reduced in accordance with these principles. Members were advised that further reports on this matter would be brought to the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee accordingly.
 - 1.7 Members expressed the importance of maintaining customer-facing services, together with a need to retain a customer service presence in local communities and Officers explained that the Strategy was not proposing to remove face to face services. Discussion also took place

regarding departmental response times arising from initial customer services calls, together with customer engagement processes and the methodology used in monitoring customer feedback/satisfaction.

- 1.8 Queries were raised regarding the strategic direction and focus of the document, with Members expressing a need for customer-facing services to be maintained, including the retention of a customer service presence in local communities, and for it to be considered how the Strategy is fed back to customers. Officers confirmed that they would take into account the comments received at the meeting, and the Scrutiny Committee requested that their views on this matter be reported to Cabinet.
- 1.9 Following consideration of the report (and subject to the incorporation of the views received at the meeting) the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee unanimously recommended to Cabinet that for the reasons contained therein, the Customer Service Strategy as set out in the Appendix to the report be adopted.
- 1.10 Members are asked to consider the recommendation.

Author: R. Barrett, Committee Services Officer, Ext. 4245

Appendices:

Appendix 1 Report to Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee on 19th January 2016 – Agenda Item 14



POLICY AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 19TH JANUARY 2016

SUBJECT: DRAFT CUSTOMER SERVICE STRATEGY 2016-2020

**REPORT BY: ACTING DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE SERVICES AND SECTION 151
OFFICER**

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To provide members with details of the draft Customer Service Strategy 2016-2020.
- 1.2 To seek Members' views on the draft strategy prior to its consideration by Cabinet.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 The Council's Customer Service Strategy has been in place since 2006 and has been partially updated on a number of occasions. However, the financial environment in which we operate has changed significantly in the last few years, as have the expectations of our customers who are increasingly expecting services to be available on-line. There is therefore a clear need to put a new customer service strategy in place.
- 2.2 The main thrust of the strategy is to improve the consistency of customer service across the organisation; to meet customer expectations that services will be available online which will also reduce the cost of customer contact; and to develop in-person customer service so that it is more focused on delivering complex services or dealing with more vulnerable or disadvantaged customers.
- 2.3 The strategy, once formally agreed, will be supported by a Delivery Plan that will be monitored by the Corporate IT Strategy Group (CITSG), of which the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Corporate Services is a member.

3. LINKS TO STRATEGY

- 3.1 The Customer Service Strategy supports the Strategic Equality Plan with specific links to Strategic Equality Objectives 3 and 4, Physical Access and Communications Access, by helping make Council services accessible to everyone. It also links to Strategic Equality Objective 6, Diversity in the Workplace, by raising the awareness of Equalities and Welsh Language issues amongst staff dealing with customers.
- 3.2 The Customer Service Strategy also links to the Corporate Complaints Policy
- 3.3 The Customer Service Strategy supports four of the priorities in the Single Integrated Plan:
 - P2: Improve standards of housing and communities, giving appropriate access to services across the County Borough.

- P3: Provide support to enable local people to compete for all employment opportunities.
- S4: Ensure people are supported to live in their own homes and communities in safety.
- H5: Ensure people are supported to live in their own communities to lead safe, fulfilled and independent lives.

4. THE REPORT

4.1 In 2006 the Council agreed a Customer Service Strategy that would significantly change the way in which customers access our services. Since then the strategy has been reviewed and updated, and much of the original objectives have been met. The strategy was subjected to a Peer Review in 2008, a SOCITM Benchmarking Review in 2011 and a Welsh Audit Office Review in 2012. However, the financial environment in which we operate has changed significantly in the last few years, as have the expectations of our customers who are increasingly expecting services to be available on-line. Therefore there is a clear need to put a new customer service strategy in place.

4.2 In August 2013, the Welsh Audit Office published a review of Customer Services in Caerphilly County Borough Council conducted by Pricewaterhouse Coopers which concluded that:

“The Council provides citizens with a range of channels to access its services but its strategic approach to customer services is fragmented and in need of updating, and it does not effectively evaluate its customer services provision”

4.3 The report also made two proposals for improvement:

P1: *Develop a more co-ordinated strategic approach to customer services*

P2: *Strengthen the approach to evaluating and improving customer services in a proactive way*

The report also provides examples of good practice that Pricewaterhouse Coopers have drawn from their work across the UK.

4.4 Since the report was issued a number of actions have been taken that address these proposals, such as the reintroduction of the Viewpoint Panel. These actions have previously been reported to the Audit Committee. However, the most significant action will be the introduction of a new corporate strategy that sets out how Caerphilly CBC will develop its customer service over the next few years.

4.5 The main thrust of the strategy is to improve the consistency of customer service across the organisation; to meet customer expectations that services will be available online; to reduce the cost of customer contact; and to develop in-person customer service so that it is more focused on delivering complex services or dealing with more vulnerable or disadvantaged customers.

4.6 The main strategic outcomes of the strategy are to:

- Ensure that customers receive a consistent, positive experience across all access channels.
- Maintain a range of contact channels for each service to ensure that customers with protected characteristics and/or specific language requirements or who are vulnerable or disadvantaged, can access services in a way that is appropriate for them.
- Migrate customers to the most appropriate contact method for their enquiry to generate efficiencies and savings.

- Minimise the cost of each transaction, including the cost of the “end to end” process.
- Ensure that every contact adds value for the customer.
- Reduce the number of customer contacts by ensuring that the way we deliver services does not result in unnecessary contacts

4.7 The strategy, once formally agreed, will be supported by a Delivery Plan that will be monitored by the CITSG which will also be responsible for the approval and monitoring of projects arising from the strategy and ensuring that the strategy remains relevant. The CITSG includes the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Corporate Service, the Acting Director of Corporate Services and Section 151 Officer, the Acting Head of IT Services, the Monitoring Officer, the Corporate Customer Services Manager and Senior Managers representing each Directorate.

4.8 The Corporate Customer Services Manager will be responsible for the Delivery Plan, reporting progress to CITSG and chairing a Customer Service Project Group consisting of relevant senior officers. The Corporate Customer Services Manager will also monitor customer service activity across the Council, including customer service performance standards and will report performance to CITSG.

5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The Customer Service Strategy supports the Strategic Equality Plan across the board, but specifically links with Strategic Equality Objectives 3, 4 and 6: Physical Access, Communications Access and Diversity in the Workplace.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are no ongoing financial implications arising directly from this strategy. However, the strategy will support the Medium Term Financial Plan. To ensure a consistent standard of customer service training across all services areas, Corporate Services Reserves of up to £30k will be utilised during 2016 and 2017 to engage an appropriate training provider.

7. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 There will be personnel implications arising from the adoption of this strategy as residents increasingly use digital online services rather than other contact channels.

8. CONSULTATIONS

8.1 The views of consultees are included within the report.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1 That members provide views in respect of this proposed strategy prior to its formal consideration by Cabinet.

10. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

10.1 To inform Members of the detail of the strategy and to allow them to comment on the draft strategy prior to its consideration by Cabinet.

11. STATUTORY POWER

11.1 Local Government Act 2000.

Author: David Titley, Corporate Customer Services Manager,
Davidtitley@caerphilly.gov.uk

Consultees: Cllr Barbara Jones, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Corporate Services
Nicole Scammell, Interim Director of Corporate Services and S151 Officer
Liz Lucas, Head of Procurement
Corporate Management Team
Gail Williams, Interim Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer

Appendices:
Appendix 1 - Draft Customer Service Strategy 2016 - 2020

Caerphilly County Borough Council

DRAFT CUSTOMER SERVICE STRATEGY 2016-2020



A greener place to live, work and visit
Man gwyrdach i fyw, gweithio ac ymweld

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1. Introduction

Caerphilly County Borough Council has a responsibility to provide a wide range of public services to the 178,000 residents of the County Borough as well as local businesses and visitors. Few organisations provide such a diverse range of services, so it is a real challenge to provide good customer service across all of them. This strategy defines the way in which we will provide access to these services for our customers in a way that supports the vision of the Single Integrated Plan – “To enhance the quality of life for all”, within the context of decreasing budgets and a society that is increasingly demanding access to digital services.

Strategic Outcomes

This strategy sets out how Caerphilly County Borough Council will develop the delivery of customer services across the Council from 2016 to 2020. It will show how we will retain a high quality customer experience whilst adding value for customers and delivering greater value for money.

The main strategic outcomes of the strategy are to:

- Ensure that customers receive a consistent, positive experience across all access channels.
- Maintain a range of contact channels for each service to ensure that customers with protected characteristics and/or specific language requirements or who are vulnerable or disadvantaged, can access services in a way that is appropriate for them.
- Migrate customers to the most appropriate contact method for their enquiry to generate efficiencies and savings.
- Minimise the cost of each transaction, including the cost of the “end to end” process.
- Ensure that every contact adds value for the customer.
- Reduce the number of customer contacts by ensuring that the way we deliver services does not result in unnecessary contacts.

2. Strategy Background

2.1. Customer Care Strategic Framework

In 2005 the Council agreed a Customer Care Strategic Framework that provided a firm foundation for the development of Customer Service Centres and other initiatives. Since then the strategy has been reviewed and updated, and much of the original objectives have been met. Over the last few years the financial environment in which we operate has changed significantly and customers are increasingly expecting services to be available online. As a result there is a clear need to update our approach to delivering customer services.

2.2. Single Integrated Plan

The Caerphilly Local Service Board's Single Integrated Plan, "Caerphilly Delivers", sets out a vision for improving the quality of life for communities in the County Borough. The Customer Service Strategy supports four of these priorities:

- P2: Improve standards of housing and communities, giving appropriate access to services across the County Borough
- P3: Provide support to enable local people to compete for all employment opportunities.
- S4: Ensure people are supported to live in their own homes and communities in safety.
- H5: Ensure people are supported to live in their own communities to lead safe, fulfilled and independent lives.



3. Context

3.1. Poverty, Welfare Reform and Digital Exclusion

Caerphilly County Borough has higher than average levels of deprivation, debt, illness and disability across a wide range of measures. The County Borough also experiences higher than average levels of digital and financial exclusion, dependence on welfare benefits, and poor basic skills. In some parts of the County Borough levels are much higher than average.

Many of our customers and communities are also being severely challenged by the current economic environment and the UK Government's Welfare Reform programme. Some residents will struggle with maintaining their benefits claims on-line and some will struggle with the move to monthly payment. This may lead to an increase in demand for complex services and customers presenting with a range of issues that they need assistance with.

What parts of the Anti-Poverty Strategy could be supported by good customer service?

Providing residents with information and advice to enable them to increase household income, reduce energy costs, develop skills to improve their financial capability and prepare for the introduction of Universal Credit.



3.2. Social care

The Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act has introduced a duty for local authorities to provide information, advice and assistance to help people understand how the care and support system works, what services are available locally, and how to access the services they need now and in the future. We will ensure that all customer contact points across all access channels will be able to provide appropriate information or advice about the services that residents may need and be able to signpost them to appropriate resources or advice.

3.3. Medium Term Financial Strategy

One of the most significant challenges facing the Council is the need to make savings each year until 2020. It is inevitable that this will result in lower staffing levels which will make it increasingly difficult to maintain service levels, or even to continue providing some services. The effects of these service reductions will be mitigated in part by reducing the overall cost of customer contact. This will be achieved by:

- “Pooling” of customer access points to establish a “single front door” approach to delivering customer service.
- Helping customers to use lower cost access channels and reducing the need for customers to contact us face to face unnecessarily.
- Reducing the need for customers to contact us by making our processes more effective and customer focused.



3.4. Equality and Welsh Language

The Council will continue to develop our customer contact provision across all access channels to ensure that no one is disadvantaged by a lack of access to services or face barriers to receiving an equal service, including the development of digital services that are essential to many customers with communication disabilities. Customers will be given choices in how they contact the Council, in terms of methods and formats of communication and in terms of their preferred language. Customer facing staff will have the appropriate skills and knowledge to support that choice.

The Customer Service Strategy supports the Strategic Equality Plan across the board, but specifically links with Strategic Equality Objectives 3 and 4, Physical Access and Communications Access, by helping make Council services accessible to everyone. It also links with Strategic Equality Objective 6, Diversity in the Workplace, which covers the training made available to Customer Services staff on raising their awareness of Equalities and Welsh Language issues, especially the latter in terms of the requirements of the new Welsh Language Standards from March 2016 onwards.

4. Current Customer Service Provision

4.1. Phone Calls

There are over 2,000 extensions on the corporate telephone system which received 1,930,000 calls during 2014, with additional calls being received at some smaller sites not connected to the corporate system. Of the 1.9 million calls received 82% were answered within our target time of 20 seconds. However, performance levels are inconsistent across service areas with the proportion of calls answered within 20 seconds varying from more than 90% to less than 70%.

A further 5% were answered in more than 20 seconds, 7% were unanswered and 6% did not get through because the extension was busy. Performance levels vary across service areas with more than 13% of calls being unanswered in some service areas.

4.2. Corporate Customer Services

We have established five community-based Customer Service Centres that provide a wide range of services in Caerphilly, Blackwood, Pontlloftyn, Bargoed, Risca and at the Corporate HQ in Ystrad Mynach. The Centres have been well received by customers with about 390,000 customer contacts, including 262,000 payments and 128,000 service requests, being dealt with during 2014. The Customer Contact Centre handles about 400,000 customer contacts per year including telephone calls and on-line customer contact (e-mail, web forms and fax) for a range of service areas including Waste Management, Environmental Health, Highways, Licensing, and Blue Badges, as well as providing a switchboard and general enquiries service for the whole authority.

4.3. Housing

The Housing Division received a significant number of calls during 2014 with the Upper Rhymney Valley Office receiving 67,000 calls, the Eastern Valley Housing Office 42,000 calls and Housing Rents 44,000 calls. The reporting of council house repairs has been centralised with the establishment of a central repairs team which received 55,000 calls during 2014 and processed 26,000 repair requests.

4.4. Social Services

The only service area, apart from Corporate Customer Services, to have adopted a contact centre approach are the Adult Services Duty Information Team (ASDIT) in Adult Social Services which received 29,000 calls during 2014, logging 19,000 contacts during 2014/15.

ASDIT has recently merged with the Children's Services Contact and Referral Team which received 12,000 contacts, to form the Information, Advice and Assistance service to comply with the Social Services and Wellbeing Act.

4.5. Library Service

A key part of our Customer Services Strategic Framework in 2005 was the development of customer service centres in our larger towns to make it easier for residents to deal with the council in person. This has now been achieved through the development of award winning integrated Libraries and Customer Service Centres in Caerphilly, Risca and Bargoed. These new facilities also provide residents with access to a range of service partners such as the Citizens Advice Bureau, Shelter Cymru, Gwent Police, and Credit Unions. This development programme has resulted in the Welsh Government acknowledging us as a leading authority in the co-location of service provision in libraries. The Blackwood Customer Service Centre, which was developed as a “proof of concept”, was relocated to Blackwood Library in December 2015. Footfall in libraries has increased significantly during this development programme, with 985,000 visits being made to our 18 libraries during 2014/15.

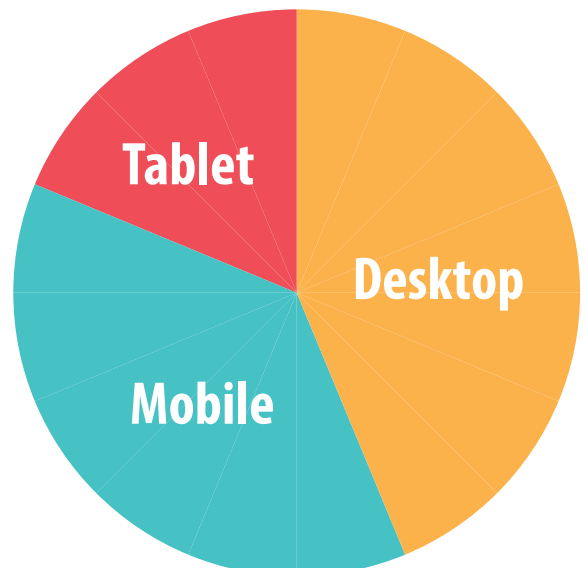
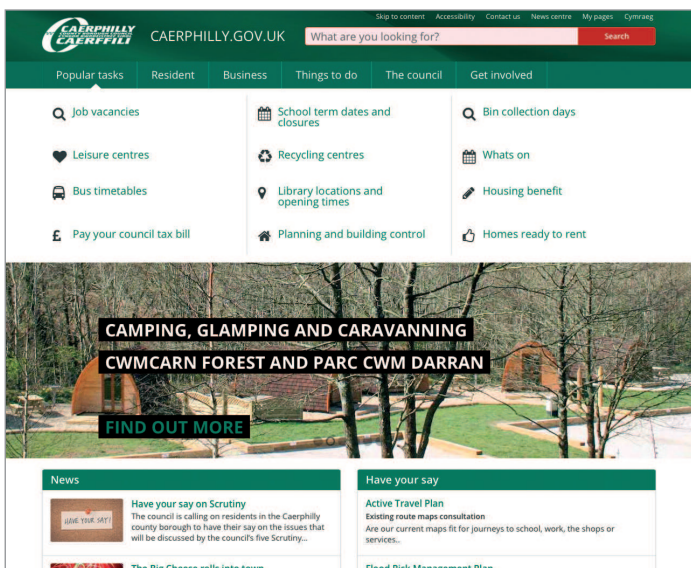
4.6. Council Tax, Benefits and NNDR

The Council Tax, National Non-Domestic Rates (Business Rates) and Benefits Teams received 196,000 calls during 2014.

4.7. Website

In recent years more and more customers are choosing to use the internet as a method of contacting us, with increasing numbers of contacts now arriving via the web, e-mail and social media. During 2014 there were 8.6 million hits on our web site which represents about 690,000 individual customer visits, with customers viewing an average of 12 pages per visit. This is an increase in visits of about 40% compared with 2011.

In UK wide benchmarking of local government websites by SOCITM, our web site has been in the top 10 for customer satisfaction for the last 5 years. The benchmarking survey also found that 80% of customers using the site found the service or information that they required, making the CCBC website the 4th best in the UK. In the 2015 SOCITM ‘Better Connected’ survey, the CCBC website was rated as ‘Three Stars’ and one of the top five council websites in Wales.



Over the last few years there has been a significant increase in the use of smartphones and tablet devices to access the internet. Monitoring of the types of devices being used to access our website has shown that in early 2014 about 48% of visits to the website were made using smartphones and tablets. However, customers using Desktops/Laptops viewed more than three times as many pages per visit than customers using smartphones and tablets. This increase in the usage of smartphones and tablets was one of the key factors in deciding to redevelop the Corporate CCBC website so that it was easier to use on Smartphones and Tablets.

In addition to the main CCBC web site we provide websites to serve specific purposes, such as the marketing of tourism venues or improving the uptake of school meals. The 10 most popular of our specialist websites received 2.7 Million hits during 2014. The most used website was the Leisure Lifestyle Website which received 1.2 million hits.

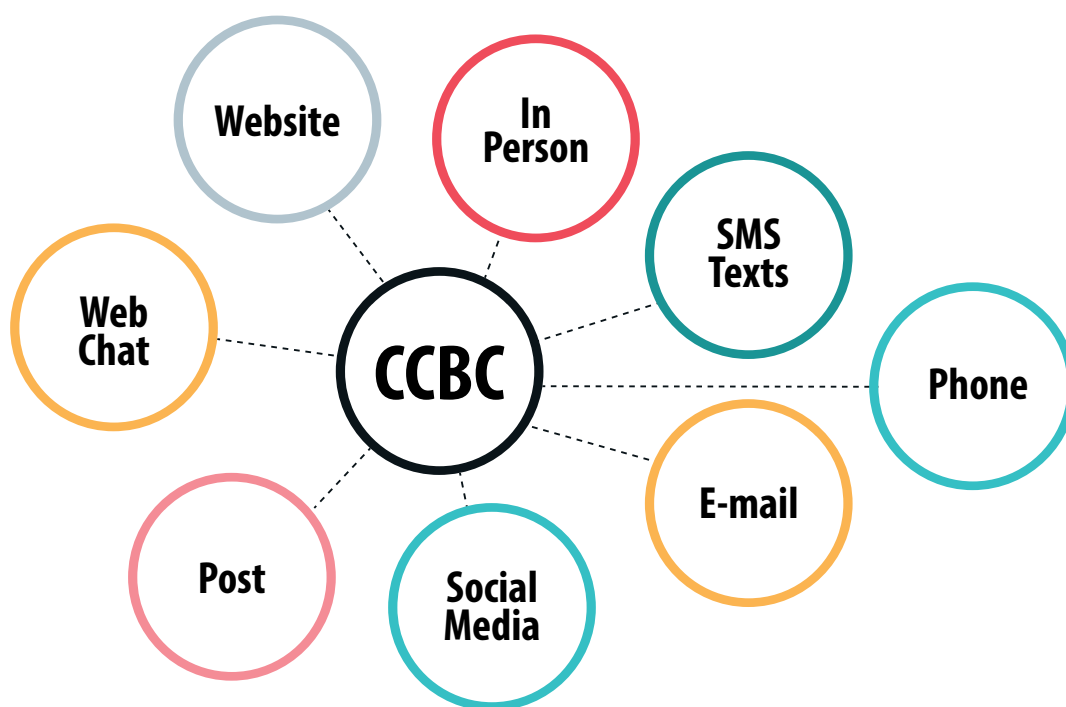
5. The Customer Service Strategy

5.1. Overview

This strategy sets out how Caerphilly County Borough Council will develop the delivery of customer service to residents and businesses across the county borough, to users of council services, visitors to the county borough and anyone who has to conduct business with the council. The strategy applies to all services of the Council from 2016 to 2020. It will show how we will retain a good customer experience across council services whilst adding value for customers and delivering greater value for money. The strategy will be supported by a Delivery Plan that will be monitored by the Corporate IT Strategy Group which will also be responsible for the approval and monitoring of projects arising from the strategy and ensuring that the strategy remains relevant.

The main strategic outcomes of the strategy are to:

- Ensure that customers receive a consistent, positive experience across all access channels
- Maintain a range of contact channels for each service to ensure that customers with protected characteristics and/or specific language requirements or who are vulnerable or disadvantaged, can access services in a way that is appropriate for them.
- Migrate customers to the most appropriate contact method for their enquiry to generate efficiencies and savings.
- Minimise the cost of each transaction, including the cost of the “end to end” process.
- Ensure that every contact adds value for the customer.
- Reduce the number of customer contacts by ensuring that the way we deliver services does not result in unnecessary contacts.



5.2. In-Person Services

The cost per contact for in-person services is higher than all other contact channels. Because of this they need to be about “high value” work rather than simple transactional contacts and we must do this in line with our current duties under Equalities and Welsh language legislation.

We will develop the role of “the front desk” to offer a wider range of services in one place to provide a more joined-up service to residents and to comply with our responsibilities under the Equalities Act and the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act.

We will provide a better signposting and referral service, with customer facing staff being more proactive in ensuring residents can access these services.

We will improve the way we deal with more complex or specialist issues at customer access points cross the county borough by developing appointments systems to better manage waiting times and improve access to specialist services and advice.

We will also build on our links with LSB partners, including the third sector, to offer a wider range of services and information to meet our obligations under the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act, and outcomes P2, P3, S4 and H5 of “Caerphilly Delivers”.

Mrs R is beside herself.

She has popped into the local office because she has had a letter telling her that she has Council Tax arrears. She has worked for 50 years and has never owed a penny.

She leaves the office much happier. The staff in the office have arranged a repayment plan for her Council Tax and have provided her with leaflets on how to reduce her water rates and save money on her gas and electric. They have told her about a group in the library that can help her learn how to use the tablet computer that her son bought her so that she can Video Call her grandson in New Zealand.

She also has an appointment with a social worker to help her with the care needs of a sister that she looks after and a Blue Badge is in the post.

We will develop the role of the 'front desk', whilst controlling the cost of delivering "in-person" services, we will reduce the number of simple transactional activities that are completed "in-person", such as receiving payments, providing information, and non-complex service requests. In general terms this may involve.

- Encouraging customers to make payments via Direct Debit, Online payment, automated payment line or phone payment
- Redesigning processes so that they take less time or are easier to provide via self-service and are more efficient.
- Encourage the use of other channels, particularly digital services, by those who are able to do so. This will ensure that expensive in-person services are targeted at disadvantaged or vulnerable customers who are unable to use lower cost channels.
- Providing supported on-line services in Libraries and other venues, where customers can use the internet but with support available to help them use the technology.

5.3. Telephone Services

We will build on the success of the Corporate Contact Centre by transferring, where appropriate, further customer contact from service areas to Corporate Customer Services, redesigning processes to reduce customer demand, encourage customers to use self-service and reducing the end-to-end cost. It may not always be appropriate to transfer contact handling to Corporate Customer Services, in which case improvements will be made by sharing technology and expertise.

We will reduce the range of numbers that we advertise to make it easier for customers to access the service that they need, to control call handling costs and to simplify our service marketing. We will retain a switchboard service, embedded in the Corporate Contact Centre, utilising a single switchboard number for the authority.

As part of this strategy we will update our Customer Service Standard for dealing with customers on the phone. Corporate IT Strategy Group will monitor performance against this standard across the Authority at service and corporate levels and include it in a corporate scorecard of Customer Service Performance Indicators. This monitoring will include analysis of system data, "mystery shopping", and customer feedback. In high volume areas we will introduce call coaching programmes to monitor the quality of call handling by staff on an individual basis and as part of the Customer Service Training Programme.

5.4. Demand Management

Many of the contacts we receive are as a result of things that we have not done or have done poorly, such as sending letters that could not be understood. By analysing this "Unneeded Demand" we can identify opportunities to change processes that will improve the customer experience and reduce the costs of service delivery. As part of the Delivery Plan the Customer Service Project Group will develop a programme of work to measure Unneeded Demand across the organisation at service and corporate levels, identifying key opportunities for improvement. Identifying key opportunities for improvement will be monitored at a corporate level by CITSG.

6. Self-Service, Digital Services and Channel Migration

6.1. caerphilly.gov.uk

Over the last few years people have increasingly used Smartphones and Tablet Devices to access the internet. As a result we have redeveloped our web site so that it works as well on Smartphones and Tablet Devices as on PC's and Laptops. We have also taken the opportunity to refresh the web site with a greater focus on providing services. We have re-evaluated all content on the site with much of it being rewritten to make it more usable, removing superfluous graphics, and making the most popular on-line services much more obvious.

To encourage customers to use the website we will continue to develop it to maximise its usefulness to customers and to make it as easy as possible to use. We will monitor use of the web site and regularly review how it is used and perceived by customers to guide ongoing development. We will add functionality to the site, such as web chat, location based services, and personalised content to increase its actual and perceived usefulness to customers. We will also pro-actively raise awareness of the website and encourage customers to use it.

6.2. Digital Services

Self-service, especially online service, is significantly cheaper to support than either telephone or in-person services, providing an opportunity to reduce the overall cost of delivering services. For many customers, Digital Services can often be more convenient due to their 24/7 availability and are essential for some customers with communication disabilities. When we review or redesign a process we will ensure that whenever possible they are optimised for self-service and focus on moving those customers who are able to self-serve to these Digital Services.

Some service requests are complex and the cost of developing them for the web may significantly outweigh any savings. For these services a phone call or a face-to-face interaction may be more cost effective when considering the total cost of delivering the service. For some customers Digital Services are not accessible, so we will ensure that processes include options for these customers to receive the service in a way that is suitable for them.

6.3. Multi-channel integration

Not all interactions are completed in a single channel transaction with customers often switching across channels to complete various parts of the transaction. Research has shown that most on-line transactions are to either gather information or to complete basic tasks such as completing simple forms. If any degree of problem solving is required, or if the customer is unsure about the information available, many will gather information online but then make a phone call, or visit an office to complete the transaction.

For some service requests it is more efficient to have a conversation with the customer and in some cases the customer has to visit an office, for example to produce documents. Many of these interactions will start with a visit to our website for information. To ensure that we provide the best possible service to these customers whilst reducing costs, we will design services where the onward process is integrated across channels and that as much as possible of the process is completed on-line. For example, customers will be encouraged to book an appointment online or to fill out an online form so that essential information is gathered in advance of the appointment.

Mr E wants a badge
Mr E wants a Blue Badge for his mother to make it easier to park when he takes her shopping. He visits our website and applies on-line. He finds that she needs to visit an office to be assessed so makes an appointment online. He receives an e-mail confirming the appointment at her local office along with information about the documents he needs to bring and how to get there. Because Mr E has already filled in most of the application form online the assessment doesn't take long and his mother receives her Blue Badge in the post a few days later.

6.4. E-mail

Free-format e-mail is as expensive to deal with as a phone call and on occasions significantly more expensive, often due to missing information. There is a place for free format e-mail, but for large volume services we need to move away from free format to encourage the use of web forms. To do this we will rationalise the number of e-mail addresses that we advertise and whenever possible respond to e-mailed service requests by sending the customer a link to a web form to complete.

E-mail is a useful tool to encourage customers to choose online services. Whenever possible customers will be asked for their e-mail address at each contact. To encourage them to make future contacts with us via online services we will send them a confirmation e-mail as soon as possible with options to opt-in to e-mail notification messages about services or subjects of interest to them. They will then receive targeted e-mails relating to the subjects that they have subscribed to, such as planned roadworks or library events. E-mails will include links to the online service they are interested in along with information to raise awareness of other online services.

6.5. Social media

The way in which we communicate over the web is evolving rapidly and we have successfully embraced a number of social media platforms over recent years as an integral part of a drive to deliver and develop new channels for communication and engagement. This has given us significant opportunities in terms of reputation enhancement, engaging with residents and businesses, encouraging greater two-way dialogue. We will actively develop communications through these new and developing channels, especially where it encourages customers to move to self-service, or it supports the needs of customers who would otherwise be disadvantaged, or it improves citizen engagement. Whenever possible we will integrate these new communications channels into our Digital Services and other access channels, ensuring that they are cost effective and deliver the Customer Service Strategic Outcomes.

6.6. Moving contact on-line and Digital Inclusion

The proportion of people in the UK using the Internet continues to grow, with growth in the last 2 years largely being driven by growth in the use of tablet devices, particularly by older people. However, for some people in Wales there are still significant barriers to accessing on-line services with Welsh Government research estimating that 19% of Welsh adults did not use the internet. However, 35% of those aged 50 and over, 31% of social housing tenants and 38% of Disabled People did not use the internet, groups that are disproportionately represented in the population of Caerphilly county borough.

Being able to access the internet is only one part of the picture, with many people able to access the internet but lacking the skills, enthusiasm or confidence to use digital services. The National Survey for Wales 2014/15 found that amongst adults in Wales who use the internet at least once a week, only 62% had visited a Welsh Public Service website in the previous 12 months with less than 41% completing any sort of transaction such as booking an appointment or paying a bill

For a large percentage of our residents, the barriers to using CCBC on-line digital services are much lower. To increase uptake amongst these residents we will implement a marketing strategy, including the active promotion of on-line services during customer contacts using other access channels and regularly communicating with customers via e-mail and new media. We will monitor how customers use and perceive our Online Services to identify barriers to their use and develop these services to remove those barriers.



7. Customer Service Standards

Our customer service standards are in need of review in light of recent changes in policy, legislation, priority, customer expectations and new technologies. We will review these standards as we move towards greater use of digital services to ensure our standards are fit for purpose. The revised standards will be monitored by the Corporate IT Strategy Group.

8. Customer Service Skills and Competencies

8.1. Customer Service Competencies

Customer Service is now one of the nine core competencies that defines every job in the Council and is defined at 5 different levels. This has meant that over the last few years standardised customer service competencies have been included in all new or updated Job Descriptions and should also be a key part of the Performance Development Review and on-going performance discussions. To support staff in meeting the Customer Service competencies and ensure that they apply common standards and values, understand their role and provide a consistently good customer experience across the organisation we will implement a corporate customer services development programme.

8.2. Customer Service Training

A key part of ensuring that customers receive a consistently good customer service is ensuring that staff who deal with customers are properly trained and informed. To achieve this we will implement, over the next two years, a centrally organised Customer Service Training Programme consisting of short courses for customer facing staff, supported by a variety of on-line and off-line resources.

9. Information Management & Technology

IT solutions will continue to be developed or revised to support the further provision of streamlined digital services to customers as part of a defined programme of work. This development plan will be approved by the Corporate IT Strategy Group (CITSG) and underpinned by redesign of business processes and use of consistent software development principles based upon innovative, reliable, cost-effective software and hardware technologies thereby maximising the business benefit derived from the available resources. Each project within the plan will be subject to the approval of a viable Business Plan by CITSG.

In order to achieve such business benefits, new technologies and approaches will be researched and adopted where appropriate. Examples of such enhancements considered for future deployment are the enhanced use of map-based location data and enriched citizen "self-service" facilities.

Monitoring customer service performance is recognised as a key principle of this strategy. To support this process, the management and performance information requirements of each development will be assessed and the currently available facilities will be supplemented or revised as the development of digital services progresses to build a consistent experience across the key customer service systems.

The development of each digital service will incorporate business process and information requirement reviews to ensure that the data collected is limited to that required to deliver an efficient and effective service. The results of each information requirement review will inform the Authority's records management function and facilitate effective retrieval, retention and disposal of information collected.



CABINET - 13TH APRIL 2016

SUBJECT: DEVELOPMENT OF AN INTENSIVE THERAPEUTIC FOSTERING SERVICE FOR LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN IN CAERPHILLY

REPORT BY: ACTING DIRECTOR CORPORATE SERVICES AND SECTION 151 OFFICER

-
- 1.1 The attached report was considered by the Health Social Care and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee on 22nd March 2016. The report sets out a proposal to develop a multi-disciplinary intensive therapeutic fostering service for Looked After Children and young people in Caerphilly.
 - 1.2 Members were advised that Looked After Children and young people with the most complex needs tend to experience multiple foster care placement breakdowns. Their risk taking behaviours and significant emotional needs often exceed the resources of Local Authority Foster Carers and due to the frequent placement moves, their needs are often unable to be addressed by core Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS). Consequently, many of these most troubled young people are placed in residential care out of area, with poor clinical outcomes and at great expense.
 - 1.3 It was explained that the Council's 'standard practice' approach is not sustainable and a different approach is needed to better meet the needs of this troubled group of Looked After Children and young people.
 - 1.4 Members were advised of the therapeutic fostering services called MIST (Multi-disciplinary Intervention Service Torfaen) which has been commissioned by Torfaen County Borough Council and has been running for 12 years. MIST provides intensive support to a small number of specially recruited and trained therapeutic foster carers to repatriate young people placed in out of area residential care and to prevent young people who may be at risk of residential care from moving out of area. It is proposed that a MIST type service is developed to meet the needs of Caerphilly children and young people.
 - 1.5 Reference was made to the financial implications and it was proposed that Directorate budget reserves be utilised to fund the establishment of this service, the aim being for the service to cover its own costs within 18 months of being established. Over time it is anticipated that savings will grow as increasing numbers of young people are supported to remain in Caerphilly.
 - 1.6 Whilst budget reserves will be used to fund the establishment of the service and it is anticipated that the service will cover its cost within 18 months of being established, Members sought assurances that this will be the case going forward. They requested that a further recommendation be included to allow a report on the provision to be brought back to the Committee following the 18 month period.
 - 1.7 Subject to the forgoing, and having considered the report, the Health, Social Care and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee unanimously recommended to Cabinet that:-

- (i) the content of the report be noted;
- (ii) the proposed service development as detailed in the report be approved;
- (iii) the proposal to utilise Directorate budget reserves to establish the service be supported;
- (iv) a further report on the provision be presented to the Health, Social Care and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee 18 months following its establishment.

1.8 Members are asked to consider the recommendations.

Author: Amy Dredge, Committee Services Officer

Appendix 1 The Health, Social Care and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee Report dated 22nd March 2016.



HEALTH, SOCIAL CARE AND WELLBEING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 22ND MARCH 2016

**SUBJECT: DEVELOPMENT OF AN INTENSIVE THERAPEUTIC FOSTERING
SERVICE FOR LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN IN CAERPHILLY**

REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR, SOCIAL SERVICES

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To apprise Scrutiny Committee Members of a proposal to develop a multi-disciplinary intensive therapeutic fostering service for Looked After Children and young people and to seek Committee's endorsement of the proposed service and funding stream, prior to a report being forwarded to Cabinet.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 Looked After Children and young people with the most complex needs tend to experience multiple foster care placement breakdowns. Their risk taking behaviours and significant emotional needs often exceed the resources of Local Authority Foster Carers and due to the frequent placement moves, their needs are often unable to be addressed by core Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS). Consequently, many of these most troubled young people are placed in residential care out of area, with poor clinical outcomes and at great expense.
- 2.2 There are currently 13 young people placed in out of area residential care. 6 of these young people have complex disabilities or additional learning needs requiring specialist support that cannot currently be provided locally. However, the remaining 7 young people are troubled teenagers who have broken down multiple foster care and residential placements. The full year cost of these 7 placements is £1.28 million.
- 2.3 In addition to the high cost, the outcomes for young people in these placements are not always positive. Contact with family can be challenging because of the distance, their relationships with their peers and communities are severed and the standards of education provision are often poor or unable to be evidenced.
- 2.4 It is recognised that our 'standard practice' approach is not sustainable and a different approach is needed if we want to better meet the needs of this troubled group of Looked After Children and young people.
- 2.5 Torfaen County Borough Council commission a therapeutic fostering service called MIST (Multi-disciplinary Intervention Service Torfaen) which has been running for 12 years. MIST provides intensive support to a small number of specially recruited and trained therapeutic foster carers to repatriate young people placed in out of area residential care and to prevent young people who may be at risk of residential care from moving out of area.

- 2.6 It is proposed that a MIST type service is developed to meet the needs of Caerphilly children and young people.

3. LINKS TO STRATEGY

- 3.1 Social Services and Well Being (Wales) Act 2014.
3.2 Children's Services Commissioning Strategy 2015-2020.

4. THE REPORT

Clinical Approach:

- 4.1 MIST's clinical approach is rooted in Bronfenbrenner's ecological model of child development and is in line with the Welsh Government strategy 'Together for Mental Health'. It is multi systemic; providing a variety of different types and styles of intervention simultaneously at many different points in the young persons' system. The approach places particular emphasis on four psychological models; attachment, family systems, person-centred and social learning approaches.
- 4.2 Equally important is MIST's approach to working with risk which recognises the necessity both of safeguarding and of tolerating well understood and managed risks, which are both inevitable and provide essential opportunity for young people to build resilience and trust and to learn new skills. The service benefits from a well-developed model, knowledge base and practical experience of working in this way and has published a peer reviewed journal on the issue (Hill, 2011).
- 4.3 The model effectively creates a team around the young person, where the staff members have good relationships, communicate well, hold a shared understanding, act consistently and provide mutual support. The team works with well understood and managed risks to keep young people safe whilst building their skills and resilience which, over time, leads to a reduction in their risk taking behaviours.
- 4.4 The team around the young person can provide a buffer against the disruption caused by changes in professional personnel and can hold in mind the young person's life story and make sense of the present in light of this. This helps to counter the problems of disruption that often prevent progress in the care of looked after young people.

Staff Team:

- 4.5 The MIST Team consists of:
- Service Manager – Registered Mental Health Practitioner
 - Consultant Child Psychologist
 - Therapeutic Practitioners – from a range of disciplines including CAMHS, Social Work, Teaching and Youth Work.
 - Therapeutic Foster Carers – jointly recruited, trained and supervised by the Local Authority Fostering Service.

Benefits:

- 4.6 The MIST service in Torfaen has been independently evaluated twice; in 2008 and 2011. Both evaluation reports were positive. The 2011 evaluation was a 'Social Return on Investment Study' which concluded that for every £1 spent on MIST, a saving of £5.20 is made across statutory services.

4.7 For the Local Authority the benefits have been:

- Residential placements have reduced from an average of 15 at any time to being consistently below 5, despite a rise in the overall number of LAC
- Significant financial savings as a result
- Placement stability averages at 93% for MIST young people
- 85% of MIST young people are engaged in education or training
- Shared learning and benefits for foster care recruitment and training
- Provision of clinical advice and consultation to wider staff groups.

Proposed Caerphilly development:

4.8 It is proposed that the service will be commissioned from the third sector and a draft service specification is being developed to inform the procurement process if approved.

4.9 It is anticipated that following the awarding of a contract, the recruitment to posts will take at least three months. During and following recruitment, key strategic and operational relationships will need to be established including with partner agencies and attendance at Resource and Permanency Panels. Strong links will need to be established with the Fostering Team to support the recruitment and assessment of therapeutic foster carers.

4.10 From 3 to 12 months, the service will commence working with individual cases as staffing levels allow, with the aim of being fully operational within 12 months. From 12 months on, the service will be expected to work with 15 placements in the intensive element of the service. Their work will include supporting the return of young people from out of area placements to Caerphilly, working with existing in-house placements to prevent the need for out of area placements and working with families to support rehabilitation home.

5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The development of the service outlined in this report is aimed at enhancing and improving services for Looked After Children and young people and as a result there are no foreseen equalities implications.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 As outlined earlier, the full year cost for the existing 7 young people placed in out of area residential care is £1.28 million which gives an average unit cost of £182,865 per placement.

6.2 The estimated full year cost for a MIST type service in Caerphilly is £583k. This includes staffing, accommodation and running costs for the team (£400k) and the estimated fees and allowances for the therapeutic foster carers (£112k fees and £71k allowances). Whilst the team costs are able to be predicted, the costs associated with the foster care placements will be determined by the numbers able to be recruited.

6.3 If the total cost of the service when fully operational is estimated to be £583k per annum and the average out of area placement cost is £182k per annum, then by reducing or preventing out of area placements by four will ensure the service covers its own costs leaving the small surplus to off-set any pressures within the placement budget.

6.4 The aim would be for the service to cover its own costs within 18 months of being established. Over time the savings can be anticipated to grow as increasing numbers of young people are supported to remain in Caerphilly.

6.5 It is proposed that Directorate budget reserves are utilised to fund the establishment of this service in Caerphilly.

7. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 It is proposed that the service is commissioned from the third sector and as a result there will be no direct personnel or Human Resources implications for the Council.

8. CONSULTATIONS

- 8.1 The views of the consultees listed below have been incorporated into this report.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 9.1 That Scrutiny Committee:

- Note the content of this report;
- Confirm support of the proposed service development and proposal to utilise Directorate budget reserves to establish the service and;
- Agree that this report is presented to Cabinet for approval.

10. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 10.1 To ensure Elected Members are aware of the proposal and support the development of the new service.

11. STATUTORY POWER

- 11.1 To ensure the Council's statutory functions in relation to children and young people Looked After are met in accordance with the relevant legislation and statutory guidance.

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