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Date: 1st December 2015

Dear Sir/Madam,

A Special meeting of the **Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee** will be held in the **Sirhowy Room, Penallta House, Tredomen, Ystrad Mynach** on **Monday, 7th December, 2015** at **5.30 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 responsibility to declare any personal and/or prejudicial interest(s) in respect of any business on this agenda in accordance with the Local Government Act 2000, the Council's Constitution and the Code of Conduct for both Councillors and Officers.	
To receive and consider the following reports:-	
3 Updated Medium-Term Financial Plan and Draft Savings Proposals for 2016/17.	1 - 6

A greener place Man gwyrdach

Correspondence may be in any language or format | Gallwch ohebu mewn unrhyw iaith neu fformat



4	Savings Proposals for 2016/2017 - General Fund Housing.	7 - 20
5	MTFP 2016/17 – Property and Policy Services.	21 - 24
6	Savings Proposals for 2016 to 2017 – Customer Services.	25 - 40
7	Council Tax and Business Rates - Proposed Increase in Court Fees.	41 - 52

Circulation:

Councillors L.J. Binding, Mrs P. Cook, C.J. Cuss, H.W. David (Chair), Miss E. Forehead, J.E. Fussell, C. Hawker, Ms J.G. Jones, G. Kirby, A. Lewis, C.P. Mann, S. Morgan (Vice Chair), D. Rees, R. Saralis, J. Simmonds and J. Taylor

And Appropriate Officers



SPECIAL POLICY AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 7TH DECEMBER 2015

SUBJECT: UPDATED MEDIUM-TERM FINANCIAL PLAN AND DRAFT SAVINGS PROPOSALS FOR 2016/17

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

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To provide the Scrutiny Committee with an overview of the updated Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) and draft 2016/17 savings proposals that were presented to Cabinet on the 14th October 2015.
- 1.2 To summarise the 2016/17 savings proposals for the Directorate of Corporate Services.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 The report provides details of updated anticipated savings requirements for the period 2016/17 to 2018/19 along with a summary of the draft savings proposals for the 2016/17 financial year.

3. LINKS TO STRATEGY

- 3.1 The budget setting process encompasses all the resources used by the Council to deliver services and meet priorities.

4. THE REPORT

4.1 Financial Outlook

- 4.1.1 At its meeting on the 25th February 2015 Council was presented with a Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) that showed a potential savings requirement of £14.030m for the 2016/17 financial year and £12.105m for 2017/18. This position assumed a 3.4% cut for both years in the Aggregate External Finance (Revenue Support Grant (RSG) and Redistributed Non-Domestic Rates) funding received from the Welsh Government (WG).
- 4.1.2 Members will be aware that the UK Government has undertaken a Comprehensive Spending Review in recent months, the details of which were announced on the 25th November 2015. It is anticipated that the financial outlook for Local Government in Wales will inevitably worsen and this will be exacerbated by the likelihood of WG continuing to offer a degree of protection to the NHS.

- 4.1.3 The Spending Review has resulted in a delay in the announcement of the WG 2016/17 Provisional Local Government Financial Settlement and this is not expected until the 9th December 2015. However, cuts are likely to be deeper than originally anticipated so the MTFP has now been revised to reflect a reduction in the Aggregate External Finance (AEF) of 4.3% for 2016/17 and 2017/18. In financial terms this equates to a further cash reduction of £2.555m for 2016/17 and £2.360m for 2017/18 above the levels originally assumed (i.e. a total savings requirement of £31.050m).
- 4.1.4 The 2016/17 Draft Savings Proposals Report presented to Cabinet on the 14th October 2015 included an updated MTFP based on a number of assumptions and adjustments (some of which have reduced the overall savings requirement): -
- An assumed reduction in the AEF of 4.3% for 2016/17 and 2017/18, with a further reduction of 3% for 2018/19.
 - A proposed increase of 3.9% in Council Tax for 2016/17 along with an indicative increase of 3.9% for the following 2 years.
 - A 1% pay award in each of the three years.
 - An assumed annual increase of 20p per hour for the Living Wage.
 - Non-pay inflation at 0% for 2016/17 and 2017/18. Previous versions of the MTFP have assumed a 1.5% increase each year but the Consumer Prices Index (CPI) annual inflation rate is currently negative at -0.1%. This adjustment reduces the savings requirement by circa £1.7m per annum.
 - Non-Pay inflation reinstated at 1.5% for 2018/19 (subject to review at a later date).
 - A general 1.5% increase in Fees & Charges on an annual basis.
 - Following a review of Debt Charges the £150k per annum growth included in the MTFP presented to Council in February 2015 has now been removed.
 - A sum has been included each year to honour the schools “pledge” based on current WG guidance.
 - A contingency for Social Services cost pressures of £1.5m has been factored into the MTFP for 2016/17 along with £1m for 2017/18 and £1m for 2018/19.
 - A cost pressure of £1.815m is included in 2016/17 due to increased employer National Insurance contributions from April 2016. This arises as a consequence of the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) no longer being contracted-out of the Additional State Pension when the new Single-Tier State Pension is introduced.
 - The £100k per annum for Welfare Reform included in the MTFP presented to Council in February 2015 has been removed. The Authority will continue to work with partners to manage the impact of Welfare Reform within existing budgets.
 - The £300k per annum for Other Service Pressures included in the MTFP presented to Council in February 2015 has also been removed. Any emerging cost pressures will be considered on a case-by-case basis.
- 4.1.5 After all of the above adjustments have been factored into the updated MTFP the remaining projected savings requirement for the Authority is as summarised in Table 1: -

Table 1 – Updated Cash Savings Targets

Year	Annual Cash Savings Target £m	Cumulative Cash Savings Target £m
2016/17	14.321	14.321
2017/18	11.441	25.762
2018/19	9.423	35.185

4.2 Overview of 2016/17 Draft Savings Proposals

- 4.2.1 The budget strategy agreed by Council on the 25th February 2015 included the following principles that would be followed throughout the process of identifying savings proposals: -

- Protecting front-line services where we can and reducing expenditure on management and administrative costs.
- Increasing fees and charges where appropriate.
- Reducing, rather than removing services where possible.
- Focussing on priorities.
- Looking at alternative ways of delivering services (collaboration, partnerships, community trusts, etc.).

4.2.2 The work to identify savings proposals has followed these principles and has been led by the Corporate Management Team in consultation with appropriate Cabinet Members. Heads of Service have been heavily involved throughout the process with support from colleagues in Finance. Service Managers have also been included to ensure that all options that are deliverable for 2016/17 have been considered.

4.2.3 Some of the approved savings for the 2015/16 financial year only had a part-year impact with the full-year impact now being available to support the savings required for 2016/17. These are summarised in Table 2 below: -

Table 2 – 2016/17 Full-Year Impact of Approved 2015/16 Savings

Description	£m
Reduction in HMRC mileage rate (50p to 45p)	0.034
Project Gwyrdd	0.319
Customer First – Review of opening hours	0.109
Closure of Ty Pontllanfraith	0.600
Reduction in Street Cleansing budget	0.200
Public Libraries – Review of opening hours	0.067
Street Lighting – LED Panels etc.	0.350
Review of Passenger Transport services	0.126
Social Services – Cessation of Shopping Service	0.048
Social Services – Review of Day Care provision	0.127
TOTAL	1.980

4.2.4 Table 3 provides a high-level summary of the new proposed savings for the 2016/17 financial year by service area: -

Table 3 – Summary of Proposed 2016/17 Savings

	£m
Whole Authority “corporate nature”	2.696
Corporate Services (including Non-HRA Housing)	1.931
Social Services and Public Protection	4.017
Communities Directorate	1.824
Education & Lifelong Learning	1.964
TOTAL	12.432

4.2.5 The total proposed savings of £12.432m in Table 3 along with the £1.980m full-year impacts in Table 2 is £91k higher than the anticipated total savings requirement of £14.321m for the 2016/17 financial year. This provides a small buffer which can be used to reconsider some of the savings proposals at the conclusion of the ongoing consultation process or alternatively the £91k can be set-aside as savings in advance for the 2017/18 financial year.

4.3 2016/17 Draft Savings Proposals for the Corporate Services Directorate

4.3.1 The report presented to Cabinet on the 14th October 2015 identified savings proposals totalling £8.661m across all service areas that do not have a direct impact on service users or the public. These proposals were categorised into a single line for each service area in the

Appendices of the report. This is consistent with the approach adopted last year and the proposals consist in the main of vacancy management, structural reviews, budget realignment and minor changes to service provision.

- 4.3.2 The 2016/17 savings proposals for the Corporate Services Directorate amount to £1.931m, which represents 8.31% of the Directorate's 2015/16 total net budget.
- 4.3.3 £1.700m of the savings proposals will have no direct impact on service users or the public. The remaining proposals totalling £0.231m will have an impact on service users and/or the public and these are summarised in Table 4 below: -

Table 4 – Summary of Corporate Services Directorate 2016/17 Savings Proposals with an Impact on Service Users and/or the Public

Proposed Savings	2016/17 Saving £m
General Fund Housing – Cease funding of the Family Intervention Project (FIP)	0.015
General Fund Housing – Phased withdrawal of funding for Care & Repair Caerphilly	0.010
Policy Unit – Reduction in Voluntary Sector budget	0.030
Property – Disposal of Council owned buildings that are surplus to requirements	0.015
Property – Transfer of lease for Market Place, Blackwood to HRA	0.016
Customer Services – Further reduction in Customer Services opening hours	0.052
Customer Services – Discontinue Mobile Customer Service Centre	0.070
Council Tax – Increase in Court Fees	0.023
TOTAL	0.231

- 4.3.4 Detailed reports on the savings proposals in Table 4 are included separately on this evening's agenda and Members of the Scrutiny Committee are asked to consider and comment upon the content of the reports.

5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 An equalities impact assessment will be completed for all of the 2016/17 savings proposals that will have an impact on service users and/or the public. This is to ensure that decisions that affect different individuals and groups are assessed at an appropriate and relevant level and at the correct stage in the process.
- 5.2 Consultation with residents, when done in accordance with the Council's Public Engagement Strategy and the Equalities Consultation and Monitoring Guidance, also ensures that every resident, regardless of circumstances, has the opportunity to have their views heard and considered in the Council's decision-making process.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 As detailed throughout the report.

7. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The 2016/17 draft savings proposals totalling £1.931m for the Directorate of Corporate Services will result in the loss of up to 32 posts. To date, five months prior to the start of the

next financial year, 13 of these posts are currently vacant. The remaining 19 posts will be removed through voluntary severance/early retirements and redeployment. However, there is a chance that there may be some compulsory redundancies, albeit that every effort will be made to avoid this situation.

8. CONSULTATIONS

8.1 An extensive consultation process on the 2016/17 draft savings proposals commenced on the 19th October 2015 and will end on the 8th January 2016. This process consists of the following: -

- Online and paper consultation.
- Articles in Newslines.
- Use of Social Media.
- Drop-In Sessions at locations across the County Borough.
- Meetings with the Viewpoint Panel, 50+ Forum, Youth Forum etc.
- Engagement with employees and the Trade Unions.
- Consultation with Town and Community Councils.
- Consultation with the Voluntary Sector.
- Posters at affected establishments.

8.2 The views of the Scrutiny Committee will also form an important part of the consultation process.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1 Members of the Scrutiny Committee are asked to: -

- Note the updated Medium-Term Financial Plan and anticipated savings requirements.
- Consider and comment upon the range of specific savings proposals covered in the individual reports included elsewhere on this evening's agenda.

10. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

10.1 To ensure that the views of the Scrutiny Committee are considered prior to final savings proposals being presented to Cabinet in February 2016.

11. STATUTORY POWER

11.1 The Local Government Acts 1998 and 2003.

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Consultees: - Nicole Scammell, Acting Director of Corporate Services & S151 Officer
Cllr Barbara Jones, Deputy Leader & Cabinet Member for Corporate Services

Background Papers: -

Please contact Stephen Harris: -

E-mail: harrisr@caerphilly.gov.uk

Tel: 01443 863022

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SPECIAL POLICY AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 7TH DECEMBER 2015

SUBJECT: SAVINGS PROPOSALS FOR 2016/2017 – GENERAL FUND HOUSING

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

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To advise Members of proposed savings within General Fund Housing that are required to meet the Medium Term Financial Plan objectives as proposed by Cabinet on 14 October 2015. The total savings proposed for the General Fund Housing budget in 2016/17 are £141k which includes savings which have no impact on the public.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 To address the reduced settlement expected from WG, draft savings proposals in the form of a Medium term Financial Plan (MTFP) for 2016/17 was presented to Cabinet on the 14th October 2015. The MTFP has been revised to reflect an assumed reduction in the Aggregate External Finance (AEF) of 4.3% for 2016/17 and 2017/18. The assumptions are pending the outcome of the Comprehensive Spending review that is due to be completed in late November 2015. Depending on the outcome of the Spending Review a further report may need to be submitted. The MTFP includes proposed savings for General Fund Housing (excluding HRA) of £141k for 2016/17.
- 2.2 The General Fund Housing proposed savings which may have an impact on the public are:-
- Removal of funding for the Family Intervention Project (FIP) - £15k (low impact on the public)
 - Phased withdrawal of funding for the contribution to the operational running costs of Caerphilly Care and Repair - £10k (low impact on the public)
- 2.3 This report seeks the views of the Scrutiny Committee on those savings outlined above which will have a potentially low impact on the public.

3. LINKS TO STRATEGY

- 3.1 The council's Medium Term Financial Plan has identified the above as potential savings for 2016/17.

4. THE REPORT

Savings Proposals which will have a low impact on the public:

4.4 Family Intervention Project

4.5 The proposed withdrawal of funding for the Family Intervention Project (FIP) has already been considered by the Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Committee on 10th September 2015 and will generate a saving of £15k. The project was funded jointly by Housing (Homelessness Prevention Funding) and the Youth Crime Prevention Fund. The initiative has however, only ever supported a small number of cases and for 2014/15 no referrals were received. Other benefactors from the service are not supporting the project financially.

4.6 The Authority does, however, continue to support the Valleys Inclusion Project (VIP) which is considered to be a very similar service to the FIP. This project is one which works with any vulnerable household and is thought to be far more cost effective than the FIP.

4.7 It is considered that this savings proposal will have a minimal effect on its service users as alternative support can be provided by both the Valleys Inclusion Project and by directly employed staff within the Council's Housing Advice Team as part of their homelessness prevention duties, which are now substantially greater as a result of the recent introduction of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014.

4.8 Care and Repair, Caerphilly

4.9 The phased withdrawal of funding support for Care and Repair Caerphilly will generate a saving of £10k in 2016/17. Care and Repair is a third sector organisation with agencies in every Local Authority in Wales whose main source of funding comes from the Welsh Government. Some agencies are located within Housing Associations, whilst others, as with Care and Repair Caerphilly are independent agencies with their own management committees.

4.10 This Authority has supported Care & Repair Caerphilly since 1996. At that time they were based in private sector accommodation at Maesycwmmer and the Authority's support was via an annual cash contribution of around £50k. Some years later, however, Members took the decision to relocate the agency into Ty Pontllanfraith and provide imputed support in relation to accommodation and day to day office costs of around £5k together with an annual cash contribution which currently stands at approximately £15k per annum.

4.11 The savings proposal is to withdraw funding of £10k per annum over two financial years which is expected to have a low impact on the public.

4.12 Care & Repair Caerphilly have an annual budget of some £185k of which the Authority's contribution is £30k (cash £20k and imputed £10k). Care & Repair provide a variety of services, one of which is a handyperson scheme. The Agency Director has indicated that it is this service which may be under threat as a result of the withdrawal of the Authority's funding. However the decision on which areas of the service to review will be a matter for the Care and Repair Board of Management to determine.

4.13 The Care & Repair service nationally is currently undertaking a restructuring exercise which sees C&R Caerphilly merging with C&R Blaenau Gwent. Merger discussions have already commenced, a Shadow Board is in place and it is hoped that advance warning of the savings proposals can be addressed as part of their merger process with a view to a reshaped service being provided.

5 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 As part of the MTFP, an equalities impact assessment has been completed in order to ensure that the final decision has taken into account the potential impact on different individuals and groups. The EIA is attached as Appendix 1.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The overall savings proposals identified at para 4 above will generate savings of £25k towards the MTFP for 2016/17.

7. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There are no personnel implications for the Authority in relation to the savings proposals outlined in this report.

8. CONSULTATIONS

- 8.1 The views of the consultees listed at the end of this report have been included within the report. Consultation has also been undertaken with Care and Repair, Caerphilly and the managers of the Family Intervention Project in respect of the potential effect of the savings proposals.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 9.1 Scrutiny Committee is asked to note the information in this report and provide feedback for consideration by Cabinet.

10. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 10.1 To advise decisions as outlined in the DRAFT Medium Term Financial Plan 2016/17.

11. STATUTORY POWER

- 11.1 The Local Government Acts 1998 and 2003

Author: Shaun Couzens – Chief Housing Officer
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Consultees: Cllr Dave Poole - Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Housing
Christina Harray – Corporate Director - Communities.
Nicole Scammell - Interim Director of Corporate Services and S151 Officer.
Stephen Harris - Interim Head of Corporate Finance.
Lynne Donovan - Interim Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development.
Gail Williams - Interim Head of Legal Services.
David A. Thomas - Senior Policy Officer (Equalities and Welsh Language).
Kenyon Williams - Private Sector Housing Manager

Appendices:-
Appendix 1 – Equalities Impact Assessment

Background Papers:
Report to Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Committee, 10th September 2015 entitled "Family Intervention Project & Valleys Inclusion Project."

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT FORM

December 2014

THE COUNCIL'S EQUALITIES STATEMENT

This Council recognises that people have different needs, requirements and goals and we will work actively against all forms of discrimination by promoting good relations and mutual respect within and between our communities, residents, elected members, job applicants and workforce.

We will also work to create equal access for everyone to our services, irrespective of ethnic origin, sex, age, marital status, sexual orientation, disability, gender reassignment, religious beliefs or non-belief, use of Welsh language, BSL or other languages, nationality, responsibility for any dependents or any other reason which cannot be shown to be justified.

NAME OF NEW OR REVISED PROPOSAL*	Medium Term Financial Plan savings proposals - General Fund Housing
DIRECTORATE	Corporate Services
SERVICE AREA	Private Sector Housing
CONTACT OFFICER	Kenyon Williams
DATE FOR NEXT REVIEW OR REVISION	N/A

***Throughout this Equalities Impact Assessment Form, 'proposal' is used to refer to what is being assessed, and therefore includes policies, strategies, functions, procedures, practices, initiatives, projects and savings proposals.**

INTRODUCTION

The aim of an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) is to ensure that Equalities issues have been consciously considered throughout the decision making processes of the work undertaken by every service area in the Council and work done at a corporate level.

The form should be used if you have identified a need for a full EIA following the screening process covered in the Equalities Implications in Committee Reports Guidance document (available on the Equalities and Welsh Language Portal on the intranet).

The EIA should highlight any areas of risk and maximise the benefits of proposals in terms of Equalities. It therefore helps to ensure that the Council has considered everyone who might be affected by the proposal.

It also helps the Council to meet its legal responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011 and the Welsh Language Measure 2011. There is also a requirement under Human Rights legislation for Local Authorities to consider Human Rights in developing proposals.

The Council's work across Equalities, Welsh Language and Human Rights is covered in more detail through the Strategic Equalities Objectives and Action Plan 2012.

This approach strengthens work to promote Equalities by helping to identify and address any potential discriminatory effects before introducing something new or changing working practices, and reduces the risk of potential legal challenges.

When carrying out an EIA you should consider both the positive and negative consequences of your proposals. If a project is designed for a specific group e.g. disabled people, you also need to think about what potential effects it could have on other areas e.g. young people with a disability, BME people with a disability.

There are a number of supporting guidance documents available on the Equalities and Welsh Language Portal (the Committee report guidance mentioned above, the Consultation and Monitoring guidance) and the Council's Equalities and Welsh Language team can offer support as the EIA is being developed - the contact email is equalities@caerphilly.gov.uk.

PURPOSE OF THE PROPOSAL

1	<p>What is the proposal intended to achieve? <i>(Please give a brief description of the purpose of the new or updated proposal by way of introduction.)</i></p> <p>The proposal is intended to achieve financial savings within the General Fund Housing budget in line with the Authority's overall Medium Term Financial Plan.</p>
2	<p>Who are the service users affected by the proposal? <i>(Who will be affected by the delivery of this proposal? e.g. staff members, the public generally, or specific sections of the public i.e. youth groups, carers, road users, people using country parks, people on benefits etc.)</i></p> <p>The proposed savings have the potential to affect 2 areas:</p> <p><u>Family Intervention Project</u></p> <p>This project was a rehabilitation scheme for the most challenging of families who were at risk of losing their home as a result of anti social behaviour.</p> <p><u>Care and Repair, Caerphilly</u></p> <p>It is difficult to predict which of Care and Repair's service users will be affected by the withdrawal of funding. The Authority's funding represents only 5.5% of Care and Repair's overall budget. The Agency Director has indicated, however, that the funding withdrawal may affect their ability to deliver their Handyperson service. If this were to be the case then persons over 60, living in owner occupied accommodation, who can currently access the service for a fee of £15/hour may no longer be able to do so.</p>

IMPACT ON THE PUBLIC AND STAFF

<p>3</p>	<p>Does the proposal ensure that everyone has an equal access to all the services available or proposed, or benefits equally from the proposed changes, or does not lose out in greater or more severe ways due to the proposals?</p> <p><i>(What has been done to examine whether or not these groups have equal access to the service, or whether they need to receive the service in a different way from other people?)</i></p> <p>See 2 above in terms of the public/service users.</p> <p>There is no impact on CCBC staff as noted in section 7 of the Policy and Resources Committee Report.</p>
	<p><u>Actions required</u></p> <p>None</p>

<p>4</p>	<p>What are the consequences of the above for specific groups?</p> <p><i>(Has the service delivery been examined to assess if there is any indirect affect on any groups? Could the consequences of the policy or savings proposal differ dependent upon people's disability, race, gender, sexuality, age, language, religion/belief?)</i></p> <p><u>Family Intervention Project</u></p> <p>The withdrawal of funding for this project was considered by the Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 10th September 2015 at which time it was reported that the scheme had received only 9 referrals over the past 5 years and no referrals whatsoever for 2014/15. The Shelter Cymru Valleys Inclusion Project provides a similar, more cost effective service and can deal with any cases that were previously dealt with via the FIP.</p> <p><u>Care and Repair, Caerphilly</u></p> <p>Should the Agency Director decide to react to the Authority's withdrawal of funding by restricting the Handyperson service then owner occupiers over 60 may no longer have access to the service.</p>
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	<p><u>Actions required</u></p> <p>As far as Care and Repair are concerned the impact on owner occupiers over 60 may result in complaints/comments and this would have to be monitored. This user group may then need to be signposted by CCBC and/or the Care and Repair Agency to other services that could possibly fill the gap in service provision.</p>
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INFORMATION COLLECTION

5	<p>Is full information and analysis of users of the service available? <i>(Is this service effectively engaging with all its potential users or is there higher or lower participation of uptake by one or more groups? If so, what has been done to address any difference in take up of the service? Does any savings proposals include an analysis of those affected?)</i></p> <p><u>Family Intervention Project</u></p> <p>Full information and analysis of previous service users is available and it is felt that the Shelter Valleys Inclusion Project is a suitable alternative in the absence of FIP.</p> <p><u>Care and Repair, Caerphilly</u></p> <p>Full information and analysis of service users would be available to Care and Repair.</p>
	<p><u>Actions required</u></p> <p>The Shelter Valleys Inclusion Project will need to monitor users in terms of protected characteristics.</p>

CONSULTATION

<p>6</p>	<p>What consultation has taken place? <i>(What steps have been taken to ensure that people from various groups have been consulted during the development of this proposal? Have the Council's Equalities staff been consulted? Have you referred to the Equalities Consultation and Monitoring Guidance?)</i></p> <p>Care and Repair Caerphilly were made aware of this proposal some months ago.</p>
	<p><u>Actions required</u></p> <p>All potential savings form part of the public consultation on the Council's future budget proposals.</p>

MONITORING AND REVIEW

<p>7</p>	<p>How will the proposal be monitored? <i>(What monitoring process has been set up to assess the extent that the service is being used by all sections of the community, or that the savings proposals are achieving the intended outcomes with no adverse impact? Are comments or complaints systems set up to record issues by Equalities category to be able analyse responses from particular groups?)</i></p> <p>These services potentially affected by the withdrawal of funding are not CCBC services. Monitoring , therefore, will predominantly fall to the respective third party organisations concerned. As far as Care and Repair are concerned the impact on owner occupiers over 60 may result in complaints/comments. This user group may then need to be signposted by CCBC and/or the Care and Repair Agency to other services that could possibly fill the gap in service provision.</p>
	<p><u>Actions required</u></p> <p>Appropriate signposting where necessary</p>

<p>8</p>	<p>How will the above be evaluated?</p>
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	<p><i>(What methods will be used to ensure that the needs of all sections of the community are being met?)</i></p> <p>As the services concerned are not CCBC services evaluation of monitoring outcomes will fall to the respective third party organisations.</p>
	<p><u>Actions required</u></p> <p>None by CCBC</p>
9	<p>Have any support / guidance / training requirements been identified? <i>(Has the EIA or consultation process shown a need for awareness raising amongst staff, or identified the need for Equality training of some sort?)</i></p> <p>As the services potentially affected are third party services, the primary responsibility for support/guidance/training will fall to the relevant third party. CCBC Private Sector Housing Staff will, however, be made aware of the potential for comment or complaint in respect of the Care and Repair Handyman Service and will be trained in dealing with such complaints via signposting if possible</p>
	<p><u>Actions required</u></p> <p>Training/awareness raising amongst relevant CCBC Private Sector Housing staff.</p>

10	<p>Where you have identified mitigating factors in previous answers that lessen the impact on any particular group in the community, or have identified any elsewhere, please summarise them here.</p> <p><u>Family Intervention Project</u></p> <p>Alternative Service provision is available as noted above.</p> <p><u>Care and Repair, Caerphilly</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The decision as to how the withdrawal of funding is managed by Care and Repair is for the Care and Repair Board of Management to consider. There is the option of retaining the Handyman service and dealing with the reduction in funding in another area of the business. 2. Care and Repair Caerphilly are in the
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	<p>process of merging with Care and Repair Blaenau Gwent. An awareness of the funding cuts prior to the merger process commencing affords the opportunity to reshape services in line with available resources.</p>
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11	<p>What wider use will you make of this Equality Impact Assessment? <i>(What use will you make of this document i.e. as a consultation response, appendix to approval reports, publicity etc. in addition to the mandatory action shown below?)</i></p> <p>The EIA will be attached as an appendix to the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee Report as a supporting document.</p>
	<p><u>Actions required</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> EIA, when completed, to be returned to equalities@caerphilly.gov.uk for publishing on the Council's website.

Completed By:	Kenyon Williams
Date:	23 rd November 2015
Position:	Private Sector Housing Manager
Name of Head of Service:	Shaun Couzens

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SPECIAL POLICY AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 7TH DECEMBER 2015

SUBJECT: MTFP 2016/17 – PROPERTY AND POLICY SERVICES

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

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To provide Scrutiny with detailed information in respect of proposed Property and Policy Services' 2016/17 revenue budget savings that are considered to have some impact on the public, prior to a formal decision being made by Council.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 In response to actual and forecasted budget settlement reductions the council has identified the development of a programme of savings that includes:
- Reduce the council's annual budget for supporting voluntary organisations in 2016/17 by £30k
 - Where appropriate dispose of council owned buildings identified as surplus to requirements releasing service savings of £15k
 - Effect lease savings from the Market Place Blackwood by re-negotiating and transferring the lease costs to the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) releasing service savings of £16.3k.
- 2.2 The Council has identified potential savings requirements of £14.321m for 2016/17 and £11.441m for 2017/18.
- 2.3 This report seeks the views of Scrutiny Committee on the particular savings detailed in paragraph 2.1 and in the main report prior to consideration by Cabinet/Council.

3. LINKS TO STRATEGY

- 3.1 The council's Medium Term Financial Plan has identified the above as potential savings for 2016/17.

4. THE REPORT

- 4.1 The following savings for 2016/17 are proposed:

Reduce the council's annual budget for supporting voluntary organisations in 2016/17 by £30k.

The annual budget for this support is currently £365,118k and is distributed amongst Voluntary Organisations as shown below:

Groundwork Wales £43,860
Caerphilly and Blaenau Gwent Citizen Advice Bureau (CAB) £164,244
Gwent Association of Voluntary Organisation (GAVO) £42,466
Promoting the Work of the Voluntary Sector £15,000
CCBC officer costs for supporting the voluntary sector £51,827
Community Plan £18,221

The overall budget also includes sums for CAB premises totalling £29,500 which concluded in September 2014 with the exercising of a lease break clause by CCBC. The budget has been retained because there is a risk of future disputed expenses from the Landlord and their management agent for service charges and works conducted on site in April 2014.

The Voluntary Sector budget has been protected thus far but the council's budget pressures are such that it is difficult to maintain this position. A proposed total saving of £30k for 2016/17 represents 8.2% of the overall budget.

It is proposed to reduce the Community Plan budget by £2,000 from £18,221 and the Promoting the Work of the Voluntary Sector budget by £8,000 from £15,000 and spread the remaining required saving of £20,000 proportionately across the Groundwork/CAB/GAVO budget headings above. This would mean the following budget reductions to those organisations:

Groundwork Wales: **£3,500 (8.0%)** – When this budget was established it was for Groundwork Caerphilly, the organisation has since changed and operates across Wales and is no longer specific to Caerphilly.

CAB: **£13,110 (8.0%)** – The council's funding of CAB is amongst the highest in Wales

GAVO: **£3,390 (8.0%)** – GAVO has recently transferred its offices out of the county borough and relocated to Newport. In so doing the focus of their work has changed and is more South East Wales based.

Voluntary Sector Promotion: It is recognised that Promoting the work of voluntary sector organisations is important but this budget has traditionally been underspent over the years. A reduction in the budget will mean the council having to be perhaps more selective in how it manages the budget in future.

The C.C.B.C officer costs for supporting the voluntary sector (£51,827) has been retained as it contributes significantly to the special partnership relationship this council has developed with the voluntary sector over many years.

Where appropriate dispose of council owned buildings identified as surplus to requirements

Property Services contributes to the running costs/maintenance costs of some of the council buildings. The following buildings have been declared surplus and either have been or will be disposed of in accordance with the Council's Disposal Protocol:

Caerphilly Day Centre
Risca Cash Office – Under Offer
Trigfan, Rhymney - Sold
The Chapel, Rhymney - Sold
Caerphilly Retirement Project – Lease expired

The disposal of the above properties will realise a service saving of £15k in 2016/17.

Effect lease savings from the Market Place Blackwood by re-negotiating and transferring the lease costs to the Housing Revenue Account (HRA).

The Customer First Centre in the Market Place, Blackwood will be moving to Blackwood Library. Their place in the Market Place will be occupied by the Area Housing Team as part of the proposals to maintain a council presence in Blackwood Town Centre following the closure of Pontllanfraith Offices.

This relocation will realise a service saving of £16.3k.

5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 An EIA has been prepared for the relocation of the Customer First Centre into Blackwood Library.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The proposal will realise service revenue savings totalling £61.3k in 2016/17 and are made up as follows:

Grant to Voluntary Organisations £30k
Disposal of Various Properties £15k
Termination of Lease at the Market Place, Blackwood £16.3k

7. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There are no known Personnel Implications associated with this report. Officers will be relocated to Blackwood Library from the Market place, Blackwood but the change in distance is negligible.

8. CONSULTATIONS

- 8.1 MTFP saving proposals undergoes extensive consultation with the residents of the county borough.
- 8.2 Consultation will take place with the Voluntary Sector Liaison Committee at their meeting on 2nd December 2015. The Head of Performance & Property will feed back the results of that consultation verbally to Scrutiny Committee at its 7th December meeting.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 9.1 Scrutiny Committee is asked to note the information in this report and provide feedback for consideration by Cabinet.

10. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 10.1 To advise decisions on the DRAFT Medium Term Financial Plan 2016/17.

11. STATUTORY POWER

- 11.1 Local Government Act 1998 and 2003.

Author: Colin Jones: Head of Performance & Property Services
Consultees: Corporate Management Team
S. Harris: Acting Head of Corporate Finance
G. Williams: Acting Head of Legal Services
R. Hartshorn: Head of Public Protection
Cllr D. Hardacre: Cabinet Member for Performance, Property and Asset Management



SPECIAL POLICY AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 7TH DECEMBER 2015

SUBJECT: SAVINGS PROPOSALS FOR 2016 TO 2017 - CUSTOMER SERVICES

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

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To advise Members of proposed service changes within Customer Services that are required to achieve the Budget Savings for 2016/17 of £122 k as proposed by Cabinet on 14 October 2015.
- 1.2 To seek Members' views on these proposals.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 As part of the Medium Term Financial Plan, a further budget saving of £122,000 has been proposed for the Customer Services budget for 2016/17.
- 2.2 The Mobile Customer Service Centre has had very limited uptake by residents. It is therefore proposed that this service is discontinued which will generate a saving of £70,000. A further reduction in the opening hours of Customer Service Centres and projects to encourage customers to use lower cost contact channels such as the Contact Centre, on-line digital services and kiosks will generate a saving of £52,000, principally in staff related costs.
- 2.3 These proposed reductions will lead to the need to reduce staff numbers by 4.3 full time equivalents (FTE).

3. LINKS TO STRATEGY

- 3.1 The work of Customer Services, in particular the Customer Service Centres, contributes to strategic objectives 3 and 4, Physical Access and Communications Access.
- 3.2 Members are advised that the Customer Service Strategy is currently in the process of being updated in the light of the need to encourage more customers to use lower cost access channels, such as the CCBC website. This draft Strategy will be presented to P & R Scrutiny Committee in January 2016.

4. THE REPORT

- 4.1 To support the Medium Term Financial Plan, savings within Customer Services of £122,000 were proposed by Cabinet on 14 October 2015.

- 4.2 A 2.3 FTE reduction in the number of Customer Service Advisors will be achieved by a further reduction in the opening hours of the Customer Service Centres and reducing demand for in-person payments due to customers switching to other access channels such as the phone and on-line digital services. This reduction will generate a saving of £52,000. The reductions in opening hours will be as follows:

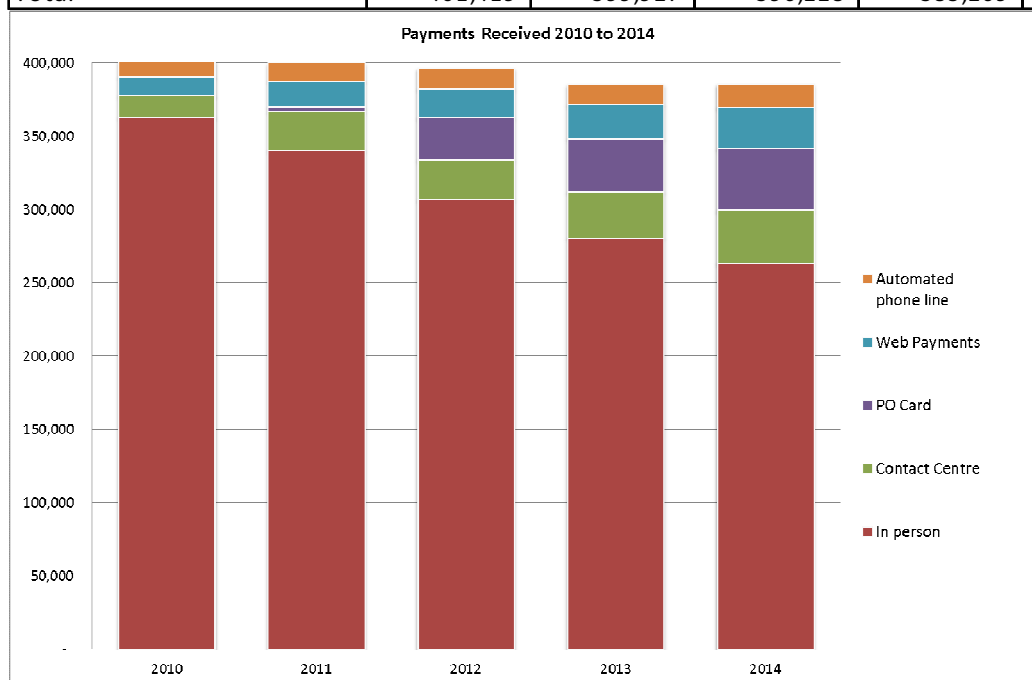
Blackwood	Close Wednesday morning (site is already closed on Wednesday afternoons)
Caerphilly	Close Wednesday morning (site is already closed on Wednesday afternoons)
Risca Palace	Close Thursday morning (site is already closed on Thursday afternoons)
Hanbury Chapel, Bargoed	Close Thursday morning (site is already closed on Thursday afternoons)
Pontlottyn	Close Wednesday morning (site is already closed on Wednesday afternoons)

The current and proposed opening hours for all sites can be found in Appendix 1.

- 4.3 Closures on Mondays, Tuesdays and Fridays have been avoided as these are the busiest days of the week. Saturday morning opening at Caerphilly, Risca, Hanbury Chapel and Blackwood have been retained to ensure that customers who cannot visit centres during the week, for example those who work full time during the week, are not disadvantaged.
- 4.4 The only sites that are closed one afternoon a week are Caerphilly and Blackwood. Rather than close on a second afternoon these sites will close all day on Wednesday as this is the quietest day of the week, it simplifies the opening times and provides less of an operational challenge in terms of staffing levels and communication to customers.
- 4.5 Risca Palace and Hanbury Chapel, Bargoed are closed on Wednesday and Thursday afternoons. To ensure that there are some town centre sites open on Wednesdays, these sites will close on Thursdays. Pontlottyn Customer Service Centre will close for a full day on Wednesdays as the nearest other customer service centre (Hanbury Chapel) will be closed on Thursday's.
- 4.6 Members will note from the table below that the number of payments made in person at offices has dropped by 27% since 2010 and that there has been significant growth in the number of payments made via the Contact Centre and Web. Overall there has been a 6% drop in payments which is likely to be due to increasing uptake of Direct Debit payments for Rent and Council Tax. During the same period, face to face contact for other matters has remained relatively stable apart from the opening of the Customer Service Centre in Caerphilly in 2013 and the introduction of Civic Amenity site van permits.

Number of payments received

Channel	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
In person	363,046	340,303	306,894	280,698	263,380
Contact Centre	14,671	26,679	27,023	31,463	36,165
PO Card		3,141	28,704	36,179	42,044
Web Payments	13,205	17,583	19,821	23,308	28,070
Automated phone line	10,497	12,221	13,786	13,621	15,797
Total	401,419	399,927	396,228	385,269	385,456



- 4.7 The Mobile Customer Service Centre (MCSC) has had very limited uptake by residents. Between April 2015 and July 2015, approximately 100 customers a month used the service, mainly to make payments. As a result of this low footfall the average staff cost to deal with each customer contact is approximately £39 per contact. By comparison, the average staff cost of contacts dealt with in the Customer Service Centres or Contact Centre is less than £5. The cost of taking payments in the Customer Service Centres is less than £1 per payment.
- 4.8 Originally the MCSC was introduced to help mitigate the impact of Welfare Reform changes. These changes specifically related to a 10% reduction in Council Tax benefit and the introduction of under occupancy charge i.e. the Bedroom Tax. The shortfall in respect of the 10% reduction in Council Tax Benefit has been funded by Welsh Government to date, hence there has been no impact on residents of the borough. This reduction could have affected up to 20,000 households in the borough. The under occupancy charge has been dealt with by a range of changes to service provision, particularly the establishment of a number of Tenant Liaison Officer posts (funded by the Housing Revenue Account) that have engaged with over 2,000 tenants. Hence the lower than expected usage is a reflection of the success of other initiatives instigated by the Local Authority and the success of channel shift to date. It is therefore proposed that the service is discontinued which will generate a saving of £70 k, which includes the deletion of 2FTE posts and the running costs of the vehicle. The capital cost of purchasing the vehicle was £150 k.
- 4.9 The sale of the vehicle will not recoup the original purchase price as the vehicle will have depreciated since its purchase and has been adapted. Current market value of the vehicle without the adaptations is likely to range from £30k to £40k. This will produce a capital receipt. In the first instance, the vehicle will be offered to other services in the Authority.

- 4.10 Any proposed changes in opening hours will be implemented by July 2016 at the latest. This will allow sufficient time to notify customers of the changes and to allow time to realign staff working patterns.

5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 A full impact assessment has been undertaken attached at Appendix 2.
- 5.2 Consultation on these proposals with service users, ensuring that elderly and/or disabled people are specifically included, will ensure that any final decision taken has been done robustly, and if challenged on the grounds of failure to take due regard of the Public Sector Equality Duty in Wales, can be fully and properly evidenced.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 These proposals will generate savings of £122,000 as part of the MTFP for 2016/17. However, due to the nature of the reductions it will not be possible to achieve all of these savings in full during 2016/17. It is estimated that £23,00 of the savings will not be achieved until 2017/18. This shortfall can be funded from Corporate Services reserves for 2016/17.

7. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 These proposals will reduce staff numbers by 4.3 FTEs. The service currently has 2 FTE vacant posts. Hence there is a need to reduce by 2.3 staff.
- 7.2 Every effort will be made to avoid compulsory redundancies and full use will be made of personnel policies to achieve this if redeployment of the staff is not achievable in the first instance.
- 7.3 The staff and the Trade Unions have been advised of the potential reduction in staff numbers.

8. CONSULTATIONS

- 8.1 The views of consultees are included within the report.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 9.1 That the new arrangements highlighted in the report are endorsed for further public and user consultation.

10. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 10.1 To inform Members of proposed changes within Customer Services to deliver savings requirements identified in the Cabinet Report of 14 October 2015.

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.
Stephen Harris, Interim Head of Corporate Finance.
Lynne Donovan, Interim Head of Human Resources and Organisational
Development.
Shaun Couzens, Chief Housing Officer
Angharad Price, Interim Deputy Monitoring Officer.
David A. Thomas, Senior Policy Officer (Equalities and Welsh Language).

Appendices:

Appendix 1 – Current and Proposed Opening Hours of Customer First Centres

Appendix 2 – Equality Impact Assessment

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Appendix 1

Proposed opening hours

	Current Opening Hours				Proposed Opening Hours		
Caerphilly							
Mon	09:30	to	16:00		09:30	to	16:00
Tues	09:30	to	16:00		09:30	to	16:00
Wed	09:30	to	13:00			Closed	
Thu	09:30	to	16:00		09:30	to	16:00
Fri	09:30	to	16:00		09:30	to	16:00
Sat	09:30	to	13:00		09:30	to	13:00
Hanbury Chapel							
Mon	09:30	to	15:30	<i>Closed 1 till 2</i>	09:30	to	15:30
Tues	09:30	to	15:30	<i>Closed 1 till 2</i>	09:30	to	15:30
Wed	09:30	to	13:00		09:30	to	13:00
Thu	09:30	to	13:00			Closed	
Fri	09:30	to	15:30	<i>Closed 1 till 2</i>	09:30	to	15:30
Sat	09:30	to	13:00		09:30	to	13:00
Risca Palace							
Mon	09:30	to	15:30		09:30	to	15:30
Tues	09:30	to	15:30		09:30	to	15:30
Wed	09:30	to	13:00		09:30	to	13:00
Thu	09:30	to	13:00			Closed	
Fri	09:30	to	15:30		09:30	to	15:30
Sat	09:30	to	13:00		09:30	to	13:00
Blackwood							
Mon	09:30	to	16:00		09:30	to	16:00
Tues	09:30	to	16:00		09:30	to	16:00
Wed	09:30	to	13:00			Closed	
Thu	09:30	to	16:00		09:30	to	16:00
Fri	09:30	to	16:00		09:30	to	16:00
Sat	09:30	to	13:00		09:30	to	13:00
Ty Penallta							
Mon	09:00	to	17:00		09:00	to	17:00
Tues	09:00	to	16:00		09:00	to	17:00
Wed	09:00	to	16:00		09:00	to	17:00
Thu	09:00	to	16:00		09:00	to	17:00
Fri	09:00	to	16:00		09:00	to	17:00
Sat	Closed				Closed		
Pontlottyn							
Mon	09:30	to	15:30		09:30	to	15:30
Tues	09:30	to	13:00		09:30	to	13:00
Wed	09:30	to	13:00			Closed	
Thu	09:30	to	13:00		09:30	to	13:00
Fri	09:30	to	15:30		09:30	to	15:30
Sat	Closed				Closed		

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EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT FORM

November 2015

THE COUNCIL'S EQUALITIES STATEMENT

This Council recognises that people have different needs, requirements and goals and we will work actively against all forms of discrimination by promoting good relations and mutual respect within and between our communities, residents, elected members, job applicants and workforce.

We will also work to create equal access for everyone to our services, irrespective of ethnic origin, sex, age, marital status, sexual orientation, disability, gender reassignment, religious beliefs or non-belief, use of Welsh language, BSL or other languages, nationality, responsibility for any dependents or any other reason which cannot be shown to be justified.

NAME OF NEW OR REVISED PROPOSAL*	Review of opening hours of Customer Service Centres
DIRECTORATE	Corporate Services
SERVICE AREA	Customer Services
CONTACT OFFICER	David Titley
DATE FOR NEXT REVIEW OR REVISION	After council has made a decision on whether to implement or change the proposals

***Throughout this Equalities Impact Assessment Form, 'proposal' is used to refer to what is being assessed, and therefore includes policies, strategies, functions, procedures, practices, initiatives, projects and savings proposals.**

INTRODUCTION

The aim of an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) is to ensure that Equalities issues have been consciously considered throughout the decision making processes of the work undertaken by every service area in the Council and work done at a corporate level.

The form should be used if you have identified a need for a full EIA following the screening process covered in the Equalities Implications in Committee Reports Guidance document (available on the Equalities and Welsh Language Portal on the intranet).

The EIA should highlight any areas of risk and maximise the benefits of proposals in terms of Equalities. It therefore helps to ensure that the Council has considered everyone who might be affected by the proposal.

It also helps the Council to meet its legal responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011 and the Welsh Language Measure 2011. There is also a requirement under Human Rights legislation for Local Authorities to consider Human Rights in developing proposals.

The Council's work across Equalities, Welsh Language and Human Rights is covered in more detail through the Strategic Equalities Objectives and Action Plan 2012.

This approach strengthens work to promote Equalities by helping to identify and address any potential discriminatory effects before introducing something new or changing working practices, and reduces the risk of potential legal challenges.

When carrying out an EIA you should consider both the positive and negative consequences of your proposals. If a project is designed for a specific group e.g. disabled people, you also need to think about what potential effects it could have on other areas e.g. young people with a disability, BME people with a disability.

There are a number of supporting guidance documents available on the Equalities and Welsh Language Portal (the Committee report guidance mentioned above, the Consultation and Monitoring guidance) and the Council's Equalities and Welsh Language team can offer support as the EIA is being developed - the contact email is equalities@caerphilly.gov.uk.

PURPOSE OF THE PROPOSAL

1	<p>What is the proposal intended to achieve?</p> <p>The proposal is to reduce the opening hours of the Customer Services Centres and discontinue the Mobile Customer Service Centre as part of a package of measures to reduce costs. The proposals would also standardise opening hours across sites and harmonize them with co-located Libraries.</p> <p>All sites apart from Penallta House will close 1 full day each week. Newbridge Cash Desk is currently closed 2 days each week and is not affected by these changes.</p> <p>To minimise the impact on customers at least 3 centres will be open every weekday morning and all centres will remain open for full days on Monday's, Tuesday's and Fridays as these are the busiest days of the week</p> <p>Saturday morning opening at Caerphilly, Risca, Hanbury Chapel and Blackwood have been retained to ensure that customers who cannot visit centres during the week, for example those who rely for transport on a relative who works full time during the week, are not disadvantaged.</p>
2	<p>Who are the service users affected by the proposal?</p> <p>The Centres are for the use of the general public to access council services or to pay for council services or bills. Surveys and research has shown that customers with the following characteristics are more likely to use the Centre's than the population as a whole.</p> <p>People with a disability or long-term health problem Older People People claiming welfare benefits</p>

IMPACT ON THE PUBLIC AND STAFF

3	<p>Does the proposal ensure that everyone has an equal access to all the services available or proposed, or benefits equally from the proposed changes, or does not lose out in greater or more severe ways due to the proposals?</p> <p>There will be no change to the accessibility of the service apart from the changes in opening hours. All customers will be affected. However, the customers most affected by these changes will be those who have limited choice in the times that they are able to visit centres due to time constraints such as work or other commitments. Customers who have a disability or long term health problem, or are older, or receive welfare benefits are less likely to be in full time employment than the population average.</p>
	<p><u>Actions required</u></p> <p>Ensure that customers are aware that Penallta House is fully open throughout the working week (09:00 to 17:00) and that Caerphilly, Bargoed, Blackwood and Risca Centres are open on Saturday mornings.</p> <p>When centres are closed on weekdays customers are signposted to the nearest centre that is open.</p> <p>Ensure that customers are aware of other access channels (principally phone, web and other self-service processes) and are supported in accessing them. Ensure that customers are aware of other ways of making payments, e.g. Post office, Phone, Direct Debit, Web Site.</p>
4	<p>What are the consequences of the above for specific groups?</p> <p>The group most affected by change will be customers who would have difficulty in visiting centres during certain days in the week rather than any groups with protected characteristics.</p>
	<p><u>Actions required</u></p> <p>Use of the centres by customers with protected characteristics will be monitored after/if the changes have been made.</p>

INFORMATION COLLECTION

<p>5</p>	<p>Is full information and analysis of users of the service available?</p> <p>The Centres are for the use of the general public to access council services or to pay for council services or bills. Surveys and research has shown that customers with the following characteristics are more likely to use the Centre's than the population as a whole.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People with a disability or long-term health problem • Older People • People claiming welfare benefits <p>This disproportionate use of the service by customers with these characteristics is consistent with the range of services offered and the access channel used, i.e. face to face.</p>
	<p><u>Actions required</u></p> <p>Use of the centres by customers with protected characteristics will be monitored after/if the changes have been made.</p>

CONSULTATION

<p>6</p>	<p>What consultation has taken place?</p> <p>A consultation programme is in place to gather the views of customers. Survey forms and related committee reports are available at all sites and there are posters in the centres to ensure that customers are aware of the forms. Postal questionnaires are being sent to a random sample of customers to gain their views on opening hours, waiting times and waiting areas.</p>
	<p><u>Actions required</u></p> <p>The results of the surveys will require analysis. After any changes have been made (if agreed) customer satisfaction and opinion will be monitored through the use of randomised post-contact surveys, exit polls and exit surveys</p>

MONITORING AND REVIEW

7	<p>How will the proposal be monitored?</p> <p>After any changes have been made (if agreed) customer satisfaction and opinion will be monitored through the use of randomised post-contact surveys, exit polls and exit surveys.</p> <p>Use of the centres by customers with protected characteristics will be monitored after any changes are made.</p>
	<p><u>Actions required</u></p> <p>Implement surveys, exit polls, etc</p>
8	<p>How will the above be evaluated?</p> <p>After any changes have been made (if agreed) customer satisfaction and opinion will be monitored through the use of randomised post-contact surveys, exit polls and exit surveys.</p> <p>Use of the centres by customers with protected characteristics will be monitored after any changes are made.</p>
	<p><u>Actions required</u></p> <p>Implement surveys, exit polls, etc.</p>
9	<p>Have any support / guidance / training requirements been identified?</p> <p>No</p>
	<p><u>Actions required</u></p> <p>None</p>

10	<p>Where you have identified mitigating factors in previous answers that lessen the impact on any particular group in the community, or have identified any elsewhere, please summarise them here.</p> <p>Ensure customers are aware of :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Longer opening hours at Penallta House Saturday opening Self-service options Other access channels Other payment methods <p>Support customers in accessing services via other access channels</p>
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11	<p>What wider use will you make of this Equality Impact Assessment?</p> <p>The report may be used as part of the decision making process and will form part of our customer insight activities.</p>
	<p><u>Actions required</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EIA, when completed, to be returned to equalities@caerphilly.gov.uk for publishing on the Council's website.

Completed By:	David Titley
Date:	10 November 2015
Position:	Corporate Customer Services Manager
Name of Head of Service:	Lynton Jones

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SPECIAL POLICY AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 7TH DECEMBER 2015

SUBJECT: COUNCIL TAX AND BUSINESS RATES – PROPOSED INCREASE IN COURT FEES

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

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To present the Scrutiny Committee with details of a proposed increase in the court fees payable in relation to the process for obtaining liability orders for unpaid council tax and National Non-Domestic Rates (also known as business rates).

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 This report provides details of a proposal to increase the fees charged by the Council to council tax payers and business rate payers when serving a magistrates' court summons and obtaining a liability order.
- 2.2 The proposed increase was included in the 'Draft Savings Proposals for 2016/17' report that was presented to Cabinet on the 14th October 2015.

3. LINKS TO STRATEGY

- 3.1 Council tax and business rates provide significant resources which assist the Council in achieving a balanced financial plan.

4. THE REPORT

4.1 Background

- 4.1.1 The Council issues approximately 78,800 council tax bills and 4,750 business rate bills every year. Whilst the majority of householders and businesses pay their bill on time, there are circumstances when the Council has to take steps to recover unpaid council tax/business rates. This is a statutory process which eventually leads to the serving of a court summons with a view to obtaining a liability order. A liability order is a court order that enables the Council to enforce the collection of unpaid council tax or business rates. During the 2014/15 financial year 6,388 court summonses were issued and 5,637 liability orders were obtained.
- 4.1.2 As a billing/rating authority, the Council is permitted under council tax and non-domestic rating regulations to recover the costs incurred in carrying out the actions necessary to obtain a liability order in the magistrates' court.

4.1.3 In Wales the fees chargeable by a billing/rating authority in respect of a summons action and a liability order application for council tax and business rates arrears are currently limited by regulation to a maximum of £70.00 in each case. Included within the £70.00 fee limit per case, there is a statutory £3.00 fee payable to the magistrates' court for issuing each summons.

4.1.4 For Caerphilly CBC, the total fee payable in each case for the 2015/16 financial year is £57.30 (this includes the £3.00 fee payable to the court).

4.2 Details of the Proposal to Increase the Court Fees

4.2.1 The costs incurred by the Authority in carrying out the actions required to secure a court summons and liability order are made up of a number of elements as listed below: -

- Staff time.
- Information Technology (hardware, software systems and support).
- Central Services (mail sorting and courier service).
- Customer First (face-to-face enquiries).
- Office accommodation.
- External and Internal Audit.
- Various other internal support services e.g. Cashiers, Human Resources, Payroll and Accountancy.
- Serving summonses and liability order notices.
- Attending court hearings.

4.2.2 A review of costs has recently been undertaken and this reveals that the costs incurred by Caerphilly CBC are £68.06 per case (this amount excludes the statutory £3.00 fee payable to the magistrates' court). Given that the fee charged per case is currently £57.30, there is a clear need to consider increasing the fees in order to recoup the actual costs incurred.

4.2.3 It is considered reasonable to adopt an incremental approach to increasing the level of fees until they match the actual costs incurred (subject to the £70.00 limit imposed by regulation). Members are therefore asked to consider and comment upon the following: -

- A proposed increase of 4% with effect from 1st April 2016. This results in an increase of £2.30 per case i.e. from the current level of £57.30 to £59.60.
- The potential for further incremental annual increases from 2017/18 (subject to a further report at a later date setting out detailed proposals).

4.2.4 Officers have contacted all Welsh Local Authorities to determine what court fees are being charged across Wales. 20 responses were received, which revealed the following: -

- 16 Local Authorities are charging the maximum £70.00
- 1 is charging £66.00
- 1 is charging £64.00
- 1 is charging £62.00
- 1 is charging £45.00

5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The proposed 4% increase for 2016/17 has been subject to an equality impact assessment and this is attached as Appendix 1 of this report.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The summons and liability order fees are payable by the council tax or business rate payer against whom the action needs to be taken. Subject to the regulatory limit, the Authority is entitled to recoup the costs incurred in applying for a liability order.
- 6.2 The proposed 4% increase for 2016/17 will generate an additional contribution of £23k towards the actual costs incurred.

7. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There are no direct personnel implications arising from this report.

8. CONSULTATIONS

- 8.1 There are no consultation responses which have not been reflected in this report.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 9.1 It is recommended that Members consider and comment upon the proposed 4% increase in the court fee for the 2016/17 financial year.

10. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 10.1 To ensure that the views of the Scrutiny Committee are considered prior to final 2016/17 budget proposals being presented to Cabinet and Council in February 2016.

11. STATUTORY POWER

- 11.1 The Council Tax (Administration and Enforcement) Regulations 1992 as amended and The Non-Domestic Rating (Collection and Enforcement) (Local Lists) Regulations 1989 as amended.

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Consultees: Cllr Barbara Jones, Deputy Leader & Cabinet Member for Corporate Services
Nicole Scammell, Acting Director of Corporate Services & Section 151 Officer
Stephen Harris, Interim Head of Corporate Finance

Background Papers:
Please contact John Carpenter (Tel: 01443 863421)

Appendices:
Appendix 1 - Equality Impact Assessment Form

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EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT FORM

December 2014

THE COUNCIL'S EQUALITIES STATEMENT

This Council recognises that people have different needs, requirements and goals and we will work actively against all forms of discrimination by promoting good relations and mutual respect within and between our communities, residents, elected members, job applicants and workforce.

We will also work to create equal access for everyone to our services, irrespective of ethnic origin, sex, age, marital status, sexual orientation, disability, gender reassignment, religious beliefs or non-belief, use of Welsh language, BSL or other languages, nationality, responsibility for any dependents or any other reason which cannot be shown to be justified.

NAME OF NEW OR REVISED PROPOSAL*	Council Tax and Business Rate: Increase in Court Fees
DIRECTORATE	Corporate Services
SERVICE AREA	Corporate Finance – Council Tax and Business Rates
CONTACT OFFICER	John Carpenter, Council Tax and NNDR Manager
DATE FOR NEXT REVIEW OR REVISION	This proposal, if ratified, will take effect from 1 st April 2016 and will be reviewed later that year.

***Throughout this Equalities Impact Assessment Form, 'proposal' is used to refer to what is being assessed, and therefore includes policies, strategies, functions, procedures, practices, initiatives, projects and savings proposals.**

INTRODUCTION

The aim of an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) is to ensure that Equalities issues have been consciously considered throughout the decision making processes of the work undertaken by every service area in the Council and work done at a corporate level.

The form should be used if you have identified a need for a full EIA following the screening process covered in the Equalities Implications in Committee Reports Guidance document (available on the Equalities and Welsh Language Portal on the intranet).

The EIA should highlight any areas of risk and maximise the benefits of proposals in terms of Equalities. It therefore helps to ensure that the Council has considered everyone who might be affected by the proposal.

It also helps the Council to meet its legal responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011 and the Welsh Language Measure 2011. There is also a requirement under Human Rights legislation for Local Authorities to consider Human Rights in developing proposals.

The Council's work across Equalities, Welsh Language and Human Rights is covered in more detail through the Strategic Equalities Objectives and Action Plan 2012.

This approach strengthens work to promote Equalities by helping to identify and address any potential discriminatory effects before introducing something new or changing working practices, and reduces the risk of potential legal challenges.

When carrying out an EIA you should consider both the positive and negative consequences of your proposals. If a project is designed for a specific group e.g. disabled people, you also need to think about what potential effects it could have on other areas e.g. young people with a disability, BME people with a disability.

There are a number of supporting guidance documents available on the Equalities and Welsh Language Portal (the Committee report guidance mentioned above, the Consultation and Monitoring guidance) and the Council's Equalities and Welsh Language team can offer support as the EIA is being developed - the contact email is equalities@caerphilly.gov.uk.

PURPOSE OF THE PROPOSAL

1	<p>What is the proposal intended to achieve? <i>(Please give a brief description of the purpose of the new or updated proposal by way of introduction.)</i></p> <p>The Council charges fees to those council tax payers and business rate payers who are subject to magistrates' court legal proceedings in respect of unpaid council tax and business rates. The fees relate to the costs incurred by the Council in carrying out the actions required prior to and including serving a magistrates' court summons on behalf of the court, and the subsequent application for a liability order which gives the Council certain powers to recover the unpaid taxes.</p> <p>The proposal to increase the fees by 4% in 2016/17 is an incremental step towards the aim of ensuring that the fees charged reflect the actual costs incurred by the Council, subject to the maximum imposed by Welsh Assembly regulations (currently £70 per case). This proposal forms part of the Medium-Term Financial Plan for 2016/17.</p>
2	<p>Who are the service users affected by the proposal? <i>(Who will be affected by the delivery of this proposal? e.g. staff members, the public generally, or specific sections of the public i.e. youth groups, carers, road users, people using country parks, people on benefits etc.)</i></p> <p>Council Tax is a local tax payable by any adult regarded as being a 'liable person' for a dwelling. The most financially disadvantaged council tax payers may benefit from the Council Tax Reduction Scheme which can help cover up to 100% of the Council Tax for eligible tax payers. There are also a range of discounts and exemptions that apply in certain circumstances. In addition, there are categories of certain persons that are to be disregarded when calculating the amount of tax payable, for example a person with severe mental impairment.</p> <p>Business rate is a local tax which is payable by any person/organisation which is entitled to possession of a non-domestic property. There are several different types of rate relief and exemptions that can reduce the amount payable in certain circumstances.</p> <p>Most council tax and business rate payers make their payments as required by the demand notice (bill) issued to them by the Council.</p>

<p>However, there are a minority of individuals/organisations that do not make payment as required and find themselves subject to legal proceedings which results in the Council incurring additional costs. In 2014/15 there were around 6,400 cases which equated to 7.5% of the total households/businesses liable to pay these taxes.</p>

IMPACT ON THE PUBLIC AND STAFF

3	<p>Does the proposal ensure that everyone has an equal access to all the services available or proposed, or benefits equally from the proposed changes, or does not lose out in greater or more severe ways due to the proposals? <i>(What has been done to examine whether or not these groups have equal access to the service, or whether they need to receive the service in a different way from other people?)</i></p> <p>If council tax or business rate is not paid on time, the Council must follow certain recovery procedures involving the issuing of one or more statutory reminder notices and, if necessary, a final notice which removes the right to pay in instalments and explains that legal action may commence if payment is not received as required. Continued non-payment will lead to a magistrates’ court summons being served by the Council informing the defaulting tax payer that an application will be made for a liability order. A liability order is a court order that enables the Council to enforce the collection of unpaid council tax or business rate.</p> <p>All tax payers are treated equally in terms of this recovery process and all tax payers being served with a court summons are liable to pay the same amount of court fees.</p>
	<p><u>Actions required</u></p> <p>None</p>

4	<p>What are the consequences of the above for specific groups? <i>(Has the service delivery been examined to assess if there is any indirect affect on any groups? Could the consequences of the policy or savings proposal differ dependent upon people’s disability, race, gender, sexuality, age, language, religion/belief?)</i></p>
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	No evidence has been identified to suggest that this proposal would have a differential impact on any particular group. As all tax payers are treated equally in terms of the recovery process and the amount of court fees payable, the consequences of the proposal being implemented will not differ depending upon disability, race, gender, sexuality, age, language, religion/belief.
	<p><u>Actions required</u></p> <p>None</p>

INFORMATION COLLECTION

5	<p>Is full information and analysis of users of the service available? <i>(Is this service effectively engaging with all its potential users or is there higher or lower participation of uptake by one or more groups? If so, what has been done to address any difference in take up of the service? Do any savings proposals include an analysis of those affected?)</i></p> <p>All tax payers are treated equally in terms of the recovery process and the amount of court fees payable. Furthermore, those affected will entirely depend upon whether payment is received as required, and this can vary from year to year. Council tax and business rate staff are trained to signpost tax payers facing difficulty in meeting their payments to various agencies such as CAB, Supporting People, Families First and are aware of the help and support that these agencies and others, such as Age Cymru, can give. For these reasons an analysis of those affected has not been undertaken.</p>
	<p><u>Actions required</u></p> <p>None</p>

CONSULTATION

6	<p>What consultation has taken place? <i>(What steps have been taken to ensure that people from various groups have been consulted during the development of this proposal? Have the</i></p>
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	<p><i>Council's Equalities staff been consulted? Have you referred to the Equalities Consultation and Monitoring Guidance?)</i></p> <p>The proposal went to Cabinet on 14th October as part of the draft savings proposals for 2016/17 and is due to go to Policy & Resources Scrutiny on 7th December 2015. It forms part of the ongoing public consultation meetings that are being held and any views expressed will be incorporated into the reports to Cabinet and full Council in February 2016.</p> <p>[The Council's Equalities staff have been consulted and the Equalities Consultation and Monitoring Guidance has been considered]</p>
	<p><u>Actions required</u></p> <p>Comments from the public consultation exercises may reveal unforeseen (By the Council) issues which may need to be addressed.</p>

MONITORING AND REVIEW

<p>7</p>	<p>How will the proposal be monitored? <i>(What monitoring process has been set up to assess the extent that the service is being used by all sections of the community, or that the savings proposals are achieving the intended outcomes with no adverse impact? Are comments or complaints systems set up to record issues by Equalities category to be able analyse responses from particular groups?)</i></p> <p>All tax payers are treated equally in terms of the recovery process and the amount of court fees payable, hence the impact will not depend upon people's disability, race, gender, sexuality, age, language, religion/belief.</p> <p>Towards the end of 2016/17, it should be possible to analyse those council tax and business rate accounts that have been the subject of legal proceedings during 2016/17.</p>
	<p><u>Actions required</u></p> <p>If the proposal is ratified, it may be helpful to analyse those council tax and business rate accounts that have been the subject of legal proceedings, however, as many factors determine a tax payer's ability to pay council tax and/or business rate, the usefulness of any analysis would probably be limited.</p>

8	<p>How will the above be evaluated? <i>(What methods will be used to ensure that the needs of all sections of the community are being met?)</i></p> <p>This proposal treats all tax payers who will incur the increased court fees equally. No evidence has been identified to suggest that this proposal would have a differential impact on any particular group. As above, the usefulness of any analysis would probably be limited.</p>
	<p><u>Actions required</u></p> <p>None</p>
9	<p>Have any support / guidance / training requirements been identified? <i>(Has the EIA or consultation process shown a need for awareness raising amongst staff, or identified the need for Equality training of some sort?)</i></p> <p>No</p>
	<p><u>Actions required</u></p> <p>None</p>
10	<p>Where you have identified mitigating factors in previous answers that lessen the impact on any particular group in the community, or have identified any elsewhere, please summarise them here.</p> <p>None</p>
11	<p>What wider use will you make of this Equality Impact Assessment? <i>(What use will you make of this document i.e. as a consultation response, appendix to approval reports, publicity etc. in addition to the mandatory action shown below?)</i></p> <p>It will be added as an appendix to a report to Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee on 7th December 2015 and used to support the proposal before Cabinet on 3rd February 2016 and before the Special Council Meeting on 24th February 2016.</p>

	<p><u>Actions required</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> EIA, when completed, to be returned to equalities@caerphilly.gov.uk for publishing on the Council's website.

Completed By:	John Carpenter
Date:	November 2015
Position:	Council Tax and NNDR Manager
Name of Head of Service:	Stephen Harris