



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