

2016/17 SAVINGS PROPOSALS WITH A SERVICE USER AND/OR PUBLIC IMPACT

1. Council Tax/NNDR – Increase in Court Fees (Public Impact: Low)

Proposed 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. 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 (subject to a £70 limit imposed by regulation).

At its meeting on the 7th December 2015, the Policy & Resources Scrutiny Committee considered a proposal to increase the fees payable by 4% (£2.30) from the 1st April 2016. The Scrutiny Committee was also asked to consider the potential for further incremental annual increases from 2017/18 (subject to a further report at a later date setting out detailed proposals).

Having considered the proposal and after noting that 16 Local Authorities in Wales are already charging the maximum £70, the Scrutiny Committee recommended to Cabinet that Caerphilly CBC's fee should be increased to £70 from the 1st April 2016. Based on the latest information available this will generate an additional contribution of £75k towards the actual costs incurred.

2. Customer Services – Further reduction in opening hours (Public Impact: Low)

A further reduction in the opening hours of Customer Service Centres to reflect the reducing public demand for this service will generate a saving of £52k, principally in staff-related costs. This proposal was supported by the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on the 7th December 2015.

3. Customer Services – Cease Mobile Customer First Centre (Public Impact: Low)

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 £70k per annum. This proposal was supported by the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on the 7th December 2015.

4. Disposal of surplus buildings (Public Impact: Low)

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 and a further £18k in 2017/18. This proposal was supported by the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on the 7th December 2015.

5. Market Place, Blackwood – Transfer of lease to HRA (Public Impact: Low)

The Customer First Centre in the Market Place, Blackwood has moved 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 Ty Pontllanfraith. This relocation realises a service saving of £16.3k.

6. Pre-planning advice income (Public Impact: Low)

Fees for pre-planning advice were introduced as part of MTFP savings for the 2014/15 financial year with an estimated target of £20k. An increase in applications in 2014/15 meant that this target was slightly exceeded with the changes delivering an income of £22.5k. As application numbers remain more buoyant, it is proposed that increasing the target by a further £5k is realistic. Moreover, in tandem with other Authorities it is proposed to levy a modest charge of £48 on householder applications (not chargeable at present).

Most Planning Authorities in Wales and the UK now charge for advice, including from householders. Since Caerphilly introduced charges for other categories in April 2014 there have been very few complaints. Indeed, the charges are fairly modest as a percentage of the overall cost of a development and developers and agents are aware that obtaining advice and guidance at the early stages of a development can often decrease uncertainties. This enables applicants to obtain planning permission at the first attempt, thus saving money in the long run. It is important to note that at time of writing, Welsh Government are consulting on pre-application advice charges with the aim of introducing fixed and uniform charges throughout Wales as part of their planning reforms. Should this go ahead, Caerphilly CBC's charges will require modification in due course. However, should the tariffs suggested by WG be introduced rather than our own locally set charges, the overall income to the Planning Authority should remain much the same.

This proposal was supported by the Regeneration & Environment Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on the 26th November 2015.

7. Housing – Withdrawal of Care & Repair funding (Public Impact: Low)

The proposed phased withdrawal of funding support for Care & Repair Caerphilly will generate a saving of £10k in 2016/17 and a further saving of £5k in 2017/18. Care & 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 & Repair Caerphilly, are independent agencies with their own management committees.

This Authority has supported Care & Repair Caerphilly since 1996. At that time they were based in private sector accommodation at Maesycwmmmer 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. Care & Repair Caerphilly have an annual budget of some £185k.

The savings proposal is to withdraw cash funding of £10k in 2016/17 and £5k in 2017/18, which is expected to have a low impact on the public. 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 & Repair Board of Management to determine.

The Care & Repair service nationally is currently undertaking a restructuring exercise which sees Care & Repair Caerphilly merging with Care & Repair 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.

This proposal was supported by the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on the 7th December 2015.

8. Housing – Withdrawal of funding for the Family Intervention Project (Public Impact: Low)

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.

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.

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.

This proposal was supported by the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on the 7th December 2015.

9. Schools – Introduction of charge for sandwich places (Public Impact: Low)

The Catering Service provides a school meals service in 75 primary schools and in doing so currently sets out and clears away places for those pupils eating their own sandwiches; even disposing of any subsequent waste at the expense of Catering. It is proposed that a charge is introduced for this service which is currently provided free of charge to schools. The Catering Service has to cover this cost amounting to 1 hour of staff time per day at each school which is approximately £2.3k per school each year.

It is proposed that the charge will be introduced from September 2016 and if all schools buy in to the service the annual income generated will be £174k. There will be a part-year saving in 2016/17 of £102k with the balance of £72k being delivered in the 2017/18 financial year.

There is no direct impact upon the public although there is a financial impact upon schools. This impact will be funded from the additional growth in the schools "pledge" of £1.3m. Schools may choose to make their own arrangements for setting out and clearing away sandwich places, in which case the Catering Service will be able to reduce staffing hours and still realise the saving identified.

This proposal was not supported by the Health, Social Care & Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on the 23rd November 2015. However, the proposal was supported by the Education for Life Scrutiny Committee on the 15th December 2015. It should be noted that by the 15th December it was apparent that schools would be receiving an additional £1.3m of cash growth due to the better Financial Settlement.

10. Schools - Breakfast Club staff reductions (Public Impact: High)

The Catering Service operates 68 Breakfast Clubs in our primary schools. This is a proposal to reduce the staffing hours by 1 hour per day in each Breakfast Club. The operating times of the

Breakfast Clubs would be unchanged, but the level of supervision of pupils throughout the Breakfast Club provision would reduce.

It is proposed that the staffing reductions will be implemented from September 2016 and this will generate an annual saving of £120k. There will be a part-year saving in 2016/17 of £70k with the balance of £50k being delivered in the 2017/18 financial year.

This proposal was not supported by the Health, Social Care & Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on the 23rd November 2015. However, the proposal was supported by the Education for Life Scrutiny Committee on the 15th December 2015.

11. Review of Community Centres (Public Impact: Medium)

At its meeting on the 20th January 2016, Cabinet considered a report on a Task & Finish Group review of community centres. Following consideration of the report Cabinet agreed the following proposed savings: -

- A cut in the budget for payment of water rates for community centres to achieve savings of £27k.
- A reduction in the Council's caretaking contribution from 12 hours per week to 11 hours per community centre with each centre being recharged one hour per week to achieve savings of £14k.
- A reduction in miscellaneous items of £5k.