



CABINET – 18TH OCTOBER 2017

SUBJECT: THE DEVELOPMENT OF A COMBINED SENSORY AND COMMUNICATION SERVICE (SENCOM)

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

- 1.1 The report, which was presented to Education for Life Scrutiny Committee on 26 September 2017, provided Members with an update on the proposals to transfer the Gwent Visual Impairment Service, currently hosted and managed by Caerphilly County Borough Council (CCBC), on behalf of the five Local Authorities (LAs) in the South East Wales Consortium to Torfaen County Borough Council. Torfaen currently hosts and manages the Hearing Impairment (HI) Service and the Communication Intervention Teams (ComIT) on behalf of the region.
- 1.2 The report detailed all consultation outcomes undertaken between November 2016 and June 2017 in relation to the proposal. It was noted that feedback overall was positive with service staff identifying benefits such as greater flexibility, more efficient use of resources and combined budgets, however, some of the threats identified included the potential loss of IT systems, harmonising job descriptions and terms and conditions. On consultation with third sector colleagues, feedback was positive and it was felt that timescales were sufficient to ensure a smooth transition and continuation of service, providing minimal disruption to Service Users.
- 1.3 The Scrutiny Committee considered the report at length and raised queries in relation to the impact on Service Users and how concerns raised by staff would be addressed. Officers explained that there are currently 3 teams provided services across the boroughs, often services could be duplicated, as individual need isn't necessarily limited to one service. As a result, the combined service would reduce the duplication of service delivery and provide a more streamlined service to the users, whilst also reducing resource requirement and working more effectively. In reference to staff concerns, Officers explained that consultations have been conducted and work is underway to consider the variety of systems currently in place across the service areas, consideration would be given to streamlining this to the most effective systems and data transfers undertaken. In addition, Terms and Conditions of contracts need to be considered as these differ across Authorities.
- 1.4 Following consideration and discussion, it was moved and seconded that the recommendation in the report be approved. By a show of hands this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that for the reasons outlined in the Officers report:

- (i) the Scrutiny Committee noted the report; and
 - (ii) the transfer of the VI service to Torfaen CBC be supported and recommended to Cabinet for agreement.
- 1.5 Members are asked to consider the report and endorse the recommendations from Education for Life Scrutiny Committee.

Author: C. Evans, Committee Services Officer, Democratic Services
Ext. 4210

Appendix:
Report to Cabinet dated 7th June 2017.