

**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**CABINET**

**10<sup>th</sup> October 2014**

**MEDIUM TERM SERVICE PLANNING – SERVICE CHANGE PROPOSALS**

**REPORT OF THE CORPORATE MANAGEMENT TEAM**

**AUTHOR: Chris Lee, Group Director Corporate Services (01443 424026)**

**1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 This report will outline service change proposals required as part of the Council's Medium Term Service Planning arrangements, specifically in the context of the need to reduce spend and enable the Council to fulfil its statutory responsibility and set a balanced budget from 2015/16 onwards.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that the Cabinet agree:

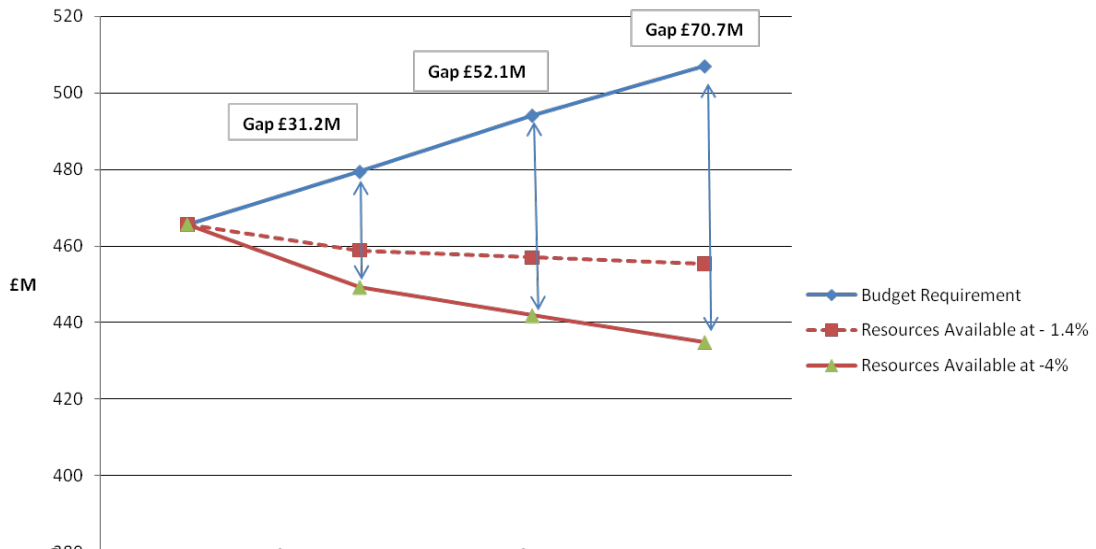
- 2.1 In respect of the **Parks and Countryside Service** proposals:
- 2.1.1 To implement the service reconfiguration elements of the proposal as detailed at paragraph 5;
- 2.1.2 To initiate a consultation with users of sports facilities on the proposed introduction of a charge and level of charges as detailed at paragraph 5.5; and
- 2.1.3 To receive a further report detailing the results and feedback from the consultation process, together with an equality impact assessment, in respect of the proposed introduction and level of charges proposed for Parks and Countryside Services, as detailed at paragraph 5.5, in order for it to determine whether and how it wishes to progress with this element of the proposal.

- 2.2 To implement the service reconfiguration and charging proposal in respect of the **Public Health and Protection Service** as detailed at paragraph 6;
- 2.3 To implement the service reconfiguration proposal in respect of **CCTV** as detailed at paragraph 7;
- 2.4 To introduce the **Fees and Charges** as detailed at paragraph 8 and 9;
- 2.5 To implement the service reconfiguration proposal in respect of the **Street Cleansing Service** as detailed at paragraph 10;
- 2.6 To implement the service change proposals in respect of **Civic Catering** as detailed at paragraph 11;
- 2.7 To implement the service change proposals in respect of **Customer Care** as detailed at paragraph 12;
- 2.8 To implement the service change proposals in respect of **Regeneration and Planning** as detailed at paragraph 13;
- 2.9 To implement the service change proposals in respect of **Events** as detailed at paragraph 14; and
- 2.10 To implement all proposals as soon as is practicable.

### **3. BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 Cabinet have continued to receive regular updates on the projections of the Council's revenue budget position for the period to 2017/18 (current financial year 2014/15 and a 3 year projection), as part of the Council's Medium Term Service Planning arrangements.
- 3.2 The latest assessment of these projections indicates an estimated budget gap over the 3 years from 2015/16 to 2017/18 of £70.7M with an initial 2015/16 gap totalling £31.2M. This assessment continues to reflect assumptions on likely settlement levels in light of recent correspondence received from Welsh Government. The provisional Local Government Settlement itself is due to be announced on the 8<sup>th</sup> October 2014. The current projection is illustrated in Figure 1 below:

**Figure 1: Medium Term Financial Planning Modelling Update (2015/16 to 2017/18)**



3.3 Given the size of the budget gap faced and the timescale requirements for any implementation of service changes, Cabinet agreed to receive reports on potential service change / cut proposals as soon as these become available, given the need to balance an estimated remaining gap of over £23M (after the implementation of Phase 2 proposals, the decision taken in respect of Leisure Services and the planned delivery of £4M of efficiencies) for 2015/16.

3.4 This report provides details of a series of further service change proposals.

**4 PRINCIPLES**

4.1 Notwithstanding the anticipated funding reductions, the Council remains committed to its promise to continue to deliver effective and efficient public services, stronger communities and social justice. Above all we want to make Rhondda Cynon Taf a safer, healthier and more prosperous place to live, work and learn.

4.2 The economic climate within which we find ourselves, however, means we must deliver our commitment within the context of reduced available funding and in order to assist us in ensuring our available resources and services are prioritised we will endeavour where possible to test any service change / service reduction or alternate service delivery proposals against the following guiding principles:

- I. Services are as equitable as possible across Rhondda Cynon Taf;
- II. Proposals will result in a reasonable level of service remaining in place;

- III. Services will remain sustainable over the medium term (3 to 5 years);
- IV. Services will, as far as possible, be generally better or as good as the rest of Wales;
- V. Services will continue to meet our statutory obligations.

## **PROPOSALS**

### **5 PARKS AND COUNTRYSIDE SERVICE**

#### **Area Parks**

- 5.1 The core function of the service is to provide and maintain parks, play areas and sports pitches plus to maintain countryside areas, highways verges and other green spaces throughout the county borough.
- 5.2 The facilities maintained by the service include 67 football pitches, 38 rugby pitches, 26 Bowling Greens and 15 Cricket Grounds.
- 5.3 The service has a budget of £4.308M.

#### **SERVICE CHANGE PROPOSAL**

- 5.4 It is proposed to reconfigure the service, specifically to:
  - Remove permanent attendants from all parks other than Darren Park and Aberdare Park;
  - Transfer static groundsmen from Rhondda Parks to a mobile service;
  - Reduce the cleansing / maintenance in parks;
  - Reduce the quality of the appearance of green spaces outside park borders due to reduced capacity for design and reduced frequency of grass cutting;
  - Reduce Council establishment grounds maintenance, e.g. day centres, offices;
  - Optimise the management arrangements across the service and other staffing efficiencies.
- 5.5 Currently no charge is made by the Council for the use of sports pitches across the County Borough. It is proposed to introduce charges for the use of Bowling Greens, Cricket Grounds and Rugby / Football pitches as follows:

Activity	Proposed RCT Annual Charge £	Proposed RCT weekly Charge £
----------	------------------------------------	------------------------------------

<b><u>Bowls (estimated 22 week season)</u></b>		
Adults	50.00	2.27
Concessionary	25.00	1.14
<b><u>Cricket (estimated 18 week season)</u></b>		
Adult Team	450.00	25.00
Concessionary Team	100.00	5.56
<b><u>Football / rugby (estimated 34 week season)</u></b>		
<b><u>Adults</u></b>		
First Team	600.00	17.65
Second Team	450.00	13.24
Third and subsequent teams	300.00	8.82
<b><u>Concessionary</u></b>		
First Team	100.00	2.94
Second Team	75.00	2.21
Third and subsequent teams	50.00	1.47

*(the proposed charges assume no changes are made to current operational management arrangements at any facility and the provision would remain significantly subsidised by the Council)*

- 5.6 It is proposed that Cabinet initiate a consultation with users of the sports facilities on the introduction and level of charges proposed (at para 5.5) and that the results of this consultation be reported back to Cabinet in order for it to determine whether and if so how it wishes to proceed with the proposal.
- 5.7 Implementation of these proposals would deliver savings for the Council of £0.692M (full year impact) of which £0.125M is from the proposed introduction of charges.

### **Countryside**

- 5.8 The Countryside Service is responsible for green spaces and parks developments together with the maintenance of overgrowth, rights of way and play areas.
- 5.9 The service has a budget of £1.138M.

### **SERVICE CHANGE PROPOSAL**

- 5.10 The importance of the overgrowth teams as a responsive and reactive service is considered an important part of the service and whilst a review of the management arrangements is to be supported, there are no proposals at present being brought forward to reduce the front line capacity in this area.
- 5.11 It is however proposed that there be a reduction in the capacity to support environmental and education projects.
- 5.12 Implementation of these proposals would deliver savings for the Council of £0.084M (full year impact).

#### **Dare Valley Country Park**

- 5.13 Dare Valley Country Park comprises 500 acres of countryside offering a café, hotel accommodation, camping facilities and site for caravans / camper vans. Other facilities include an externally operated Combat Zone and more recently, a venue for weddings.
- 5.14 The Service has a net budget of £0.218M (Expenditure £0.584M, Income £0.366M).

#### **SERVICE CHANGE PROPOSAL**

- 5.15 It is proposed to retain Dare Valley Country Park but to seek to identify another provider to run the catering function, to cease to operate the hotel facility and to continue to provide camping facilities.
- 5.16 The implementation of the proposal would deliver savings for the Council of £0.154M (full year impact).

#### **Summary Parks and Countryside**

- 5.17 The combined implementation of the proposals to reconfigure the parks and countryside service would deliver savings for the Council of £0.930M (full year impact), of which £0.125M would be from the proposed introduction and implementation of charges as set out in paragraph 5.5 of the report.
- 5.18 It is proposed that the implementation of the proposals be implemented as soon as is practicable, except those in respect of the introduction of a charge and charge levels for the use of Bowling Greens, Cricket Grounds and Rugby / Football pitches, which would be determined following a consultation process with users of the sports facilities.

### **6. PUBLIC HEALTH AND PROTECTION**

6.1 The Public Health and Protection Service provides a range of services, broadly summarised as: -

- Environmental Health – including pollution control, food safety and health & safety, housing strategy, pest control and animal control.
- Trading Standards – including food standards, consumer and business services, community protection and enforcement and consumer advice.
- Licensing.
- Bereavement and Registration Services.
- Community Safety – including community safety, substance misuse and CCTV.

6.2 The cost of the current service is £5.755M.

**SERVICE CHANGE PROPOSAL**

6.3 Following a detailed review of the service, a number of changes are now proposed, the detail of which is provided in the table below:-

<b>Service Area</b>	<b>Proposed Service Change</b>	<b>Potential Saving £M</b>
Pest Control	Charge for all treatment services (£25 rats / mice / bed bugs - £45 other pests). It should be noted that some councils do not provide a treatment service at all and the majority of other councils charge for this service. The proposed charge would be lower than that currently charged by comparable private sector providers.	0.210
Animal Control	Collaboration on the use of kennels and standby service.	0.020
Bereavement and Registrars	Reconfiguration of the service including a review of registration services	0.084
Environmental Health	Reconfiguration of the service including reductions in service standards whilst continuing to meet our statutory obligations.	0.244
Trading Standards	As above	0.242
Licensing	As above	0.023
Central Support	Proportionate reduction based on service changes proposed across services.	0.032
<b>Total</b>		<b>0.855</b>

- 6.4 As indicated above, the implementation of these proposals would deliver savings for the Council of £0.855M (full year impact).

**7. RECONFIGURE THE CCTV SERVICE**

- 7.1 The current CCTV Service provides 24 hour staffed surveillance cover 7 days per week. It includes Pubwatch, Storennet and a static guarding service in addition to a Service Level Agreement (SLA) with RCT Homes. The Police are a key stakeholder relying heavily on the service but they make no contribution toward the cost of the service itself.
- 7.2 The current cost of the service is £0.502M.

**SERVICE CHANGE PROPOSAL**

- 7.3 It is proposed that the control room is reconfigured to reduce the number of operators required to be in place to maintain the staffed surveillance coverage (from 3 to 2 per shift). A small investment would be required to facilitate this. It is also proposed that the staffed surveillance times be targeted to the times of greatest incident profiles. During non-staffed periods, surveillance would be recorded.
- 7.4 The implementation of these proposals would deliver savings for the Council of £0.181M (full year impact).

**8. CHARGING FOR NEW / REPLACEMENT WHEELIE BINS**

- 8.1 The Council issued 3,741 wheelie bins during financial year 2012/13, with 5,840 being issued during 2013/14. There is currently no charge.

**SERVICE CHANGE PROPOSAL**

- 8.2 It is proposed that a charge be introduced at £25 per bin. This charge would cover the cost to the Council of acquiring and delivering a bin.
- 8.3 At 2012/13 demand levels (it is likely that 2013/14 demand was inflated by the changes to the Council collection arrangements introduced in June 2013) this proposal would generate income (or alternatively, reduce demand) for the Council, saving £0.094M.

**9. CREDIT CARD CHARGES**



- 9.1 The Council received payments made by Credit Cards amounting to £2.467M during 2013/14. The Council pays charges in respect of these transactions which amounted to £49k during 2013/14.

**SERVICE CHANGE PROPOSAL**

- 9.2 It is proposed to pass on the cost of credit card payments to customers through a surcharge (admin charge) at 2% of the value of payments.
- 9.3 The implementation of this proposal would deliver a saving of £0.049M (full year impact).

**10. STREET CLEANSING**

- 10.1 The current street cleansing service is configured to cleanse Zone 1 areas (town centres) daily and Zone 2 & 3 areas (Residential areas, suburban transport routes and industrial estates) weekly, with Zone 2 & 3 “hot spots” cleansed twice a week.
- 10.2 The cost of the current service is £3.531M per year.

**SERVICE CHANGE PROPOSAL**

- 10.3 Following a review of the service, it is proposed to reconfigure the provision. The proposal would maintain the daily cleansing of all Zone 1 areas, with Zone 2 & 3 areas being targeted in response to the service inspection regime (plus customer feedback); Zone 2 & 3 “hot spots” will be cleansed on a fortnightly basis.
- 10.4 The implementation of these proposals would deliver savings for the Council of £0.664M (full year impact).

**11. CIVIC CATERING**

- 11.1 The Council currently operate (through its internal Catering Direct service) canteens at its offices at Clydach Vale, Ty Elai and Ty Trevithick. It also operates a baguette van and provides buffets on a commercial / chargeable basis.
- 11.2 The current cost of the service (subsidy) is £0.080M.

**SERVICE CHANGE PROPOSAL**

- 11.3 It is proposed to close all canteens and provide either vending machines or review options for sub-letting to a private provider at no cost to the Council. It is also proposed to remove the baguette van service and cease the provision of internal buffets (other than in circumstances explicitly authorised by a Group Director) and on a full cost recovery basis where provided to external customers.
- 11.4 The implementation of these proposals would deliver savings to the Council of £0.080M (full year impact).

## **12. CUSTOMER CARE**

- 12.1 Customer Care services are currently delivered face to face through the Council's One4all centres, via telephone through a dedicated Contact Centre and via website customer access channels.
- 12.2 The current cost of the service is £2.472M.

### **SERVICE CHANGE PROPOSAL**

- 12.3 It is proposed to reconfigure the services provided at the Contact Centre. As part of this change, the service standard for call answering will be lowered to an average of 90 seconds. Analysis undertaken has shown that where calls are currently taking 90 seconds to answer, over 85% of customers do not abandon the call. This is considered a reasonable standard for enquiries and customers will continue to be directed to alternative channels (for example use of the Council's website). This would save £0.128M in a full year.
- 12.4 Through the contact centre, the Council also has external contractual arrangements for the provision of Customer Care Related Services. One such contract ends on the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2015 and it is proposed that it should only be retendered for on the basis of full cost recovery. This will save the Council £0.047M in a full year.
- 12.5 Finally, the changes made in the Contact Centre would include the opportunity to reduce management and other operational costs by £0.146M.
- 12.6 The implementation of these proposals would deliver savings for the Council of £0.321M (full year impact).

## **13. REGENERATION AND PLANNING**

13.1 Regeneration and Planning Services currently include a range of statutory and non statutory functions including for example, Development Control, Building Control, Regeneration Support and Implementation, and Town Centre Partnership Services.

13.2 The current cost of the Service is £2.810M.

### **SERVICE CHANGE PROPOSAL**

13.3 It is proposed that a wholesale service restructure is undertaken resulting in a more targeted and focused service that would link more closely to strategic outcomes at both Council and partnership levels.

13.4 Services would be re-designed and new teams created as identified below:

- ***Funding and Implementation Team*** - supporting the development of external projects, particularly those connected to physical regeneration opportunities.
- ***Enterprise Team*** - supporting both business and community enterprise capacity, through advice, joint working and grants or loan support where available. This team would also support the development of a self sustaining Business Club.
- ***Town Centre Team*** - supporting key Town Centres and engaging local traders including the development of sustainable Business Improvement Districts run / funded by business.
- ***Development Management Teams*** – providing a focus on planning applications and delivering a Building Control Service.
- ***Spatial Policy Team*** - undertaking Local Development Plan monitoring and associated development requirements.

13.5 The implementation of this proposal would deliver savings of £0.802M (full year impact).

## **14. EVENTS**

14.1 The current Events budget totals £0.307M and covers three areas:

- Mayoral Events
- Special Events
- Ponty's Big Weekend

### **SERVICE CHANGE PROPOSAL**

- 14.2 In respect of Mayoral Events, it is proposed that the current base budget of £0.051M is reduced to £0.032M in the current financial year (2014/15) and reduced further to £0.025M in 2015/16.
- 14.3 In respect of Special Events, it is proposed that the current base budget of £0.156M is reduced by £0.027M in 2015/16. This would see the removal of the Christmas Events budget for 2015/16 (£0.025M) and a reduction of £0.002M in the budget allocation to Nos Galan (from £0.017M to £0.015M).
- 14.4 In respect of Ponty's Big Weekend, it is proposed to remove the base budget for this event in 2015/16 totalling £0.100M.
- 14.5 The implementation of these proposals would deliver savings in 2015/16 of £0.153M (full year impact).

### **15. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

- 15.1 A full Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) has been prepared for these proposals (save for the proposed introduction of a charge in respect of the use of sports pitches within the County Borough) and has demonstrated that on equality and diversity grounds, there are no reasons for these proposals not to be implemented. An EIA will be prepared in relation to the proposed introduction of a charge for the use of sports pitches should Cabinet decide to initiate a consultation on this proposal.

### **16. STAFFING**

- 16.1 A number of the proposals would necessitate a review of staffing levels across the relevant services. These reviews would be carried out in accordance with the Council's statutory obligations and Managing Change policy. Staff and trade unions would be fully consulted at the appropriate time.

### **17. CONSULTATION**

- 17.1 Whilst the Council is under no statutory duty to consult in relation to any of these service change proposals and does not consider there is a common law duty to consult as regards the same nevertheless the Council has taken the view that it would consult with relevant stakeholders on the introduction of charges for the use of Bowling

Greens, Cricket Grounds and Rugby / Football pitches should Cabinet decide to do so. This is because the product of that consultation may be particularly significant and it would assist the Council when undertaking an EIA.

**18. CONCLUSION**

- 18.1 The Council is facing an unprecedented financial challenge over the next 3 years and all services and their delivery must be assessed.
- 18.2 The proposals in this report provide the Cabinet with a number of further options to contribute towards bridging the budget gap faced by the Council.
- 18.3 If implemented, the proposals contained in this report would deliver £4.004M of full year savings for the Council (excluding the proposed charges in Parks and Countryside which would be subject to consultation and subsequent decision). Whilst clearly a positive step towards addressing some of the budget gap going forward, the magnitude of the estimated gap will necessitate further options being brought forward in the near future. Indeed, if we consider that for 2015/16, as per paragraph 3.3 above, a budget gap in excess of £23M remains after recent Cabinet decisions made and efficiency actions already planned for next year. Implementation of the proposals detailed in this report would still mean a budget gap of approximately £19M remains and this would have to be addressed for 2015/16.

\*\*\*\*\*

