



**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**CABINET**

**29<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 2022**

**SERVICE REVIEW OF THE COMMUNITY MEALS SERVICE**

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION AND INCLUSION SERVICES IN  
DISCUSSION WITH THE CABINET MEMBER FOR EDUCATION, YOUTH  
PARTICIPATION AND WELSH LANGUAGE, COUNCILLOR RHYS LEWIS**

**Author(s): Gaynor Davies, Director of Education and Inclusion Services  
Andrea Richards, Service Director of 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools and  
Transformation**

**1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to assess the Council's Community Meals Service and to seek permission to consult on the future of the service.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that Cabinet:

- 2.1 Consider the contents of this report.
- 2.2 Agree to initiate a consultation on Cabinet's preferred service change proposal of Option 3, in respect of the Community Meals Service, as outlined in section 5.4 of the report.
- 2.3 Subject to 2.2 above, It is considered that the proposal will have no direct impact on people who share this characteristic.

**3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 The Council is facing significant financial challenges into the medium term and is considering the remodelling of key service areas to contribute to addressing the shortfall in funding.
- 3.2 To set out a number of proposed service change proposals for consideration by Cabinet in respect of the Community Meals Service.

3.3 To ensure that the process for progressing any proposals is undertaken efficiently and effectively and in accordance with the Council's policies and procedures.

#### 4. **BACKGROUND**

4.1 The Community Meals Service has provided a subsidised service to adults in Rhondda Cynon Taf over many years, ensuring quality nutritional meals and daily contact with service users during weekdays.

4.2 The service provides wider benefits including social contact and support for vulnerable and isolated service users, who often live alone and could potentially be at risk of having a poor and unbalanced diet. The service can often reduce pressure on families/carers who might not be able to provide meals or support family members/neighbours due to work or other caring commitments. This service has been particularly appreciated by vulnerable service users and families at times of need, including during the pandemic and recent floods in our communities.

4.3 The Community Meals Service can offer a preventative service, which works alongside partners in adult social care and healthcare by supporting frailer adults to remain supported in their own home.

4.4 Service users can access the service in several ways, including via assessed Social Services' care and support packages, Health, family members, friends or self-referral to support the individual to remain independent in their own home.

4.5 The number of meals provided during the last three years is shown below in Table 1, which includes meals delivered to young adults and staff in day care based at Talbot Green Community Centre, Abercynon Day Centre, Wattstown Community Centre and Brynnar Jones Day Care Centre. Door to door delivery numbers have declined following the pandemic, due to several factors including sadly, elderly service users passing away, more choice of third sector providers, the availability of food delivery services and free transport to supermarkets. The number of meals delivered to Day Centres, including the Learning Curve, to service users and staff has increased following the service resuming back to normal after the pandemic.

<b>Table 1: Annual Meal Numbers</b>			
	<b>2020/21</b>	<b>2021/22</b>	<b>2022/23 (Projected)</b>
Door to Door Delivery	145,694	126,081	120,047
Day Centre Delivery	348	3,121	6,348
<b>Total</b>	<b>146,042</b>	<b>129,202</b>	<b>126,395</b>

4.6 The service user demographics are detailed in Table 2 and illustrate that the service, in the main, supports the older generation with 86% aged over 70 years. A proportion of these have some assessed care and support needs, with

11% of service users experiencing mobility issues, 11% displaying significant confusion and a further 3% displaying both mobility issues and memory loss, which as a Council we will need to continue to meet.

<b>Table 2: Service Users Age Profile</b>	
<b>Age Range in Years</b>	<b>Number of Service Users</b>
< 50	6
50-59	27
60-69	69
70-79	163
80-89	351
90-99	149
> 100	1

- 4.7 A summary of the budget for 2022/23 is set out below in Table 3 and the net cost of the service is £0.646M.

<b>Table 3: Community Meals Budget 2022/23</b>	
<b>Expenditure Type</b>	<b>£'000</b>
Employees	764
Premises	61
Transport	23
Supplies and Services	314
<b>Total Costs</b>	<b>1,162</b>
<b>Income</b>	<b>-516</b>
<b>Net Cost of Service</b>	<b>646</b>

- 4.8 The service is highly subsidised by the Council. The current daily charge to service users for a delivered meal is £4.05 and the Council is currently providing a further subsidy of £5.71 per meal for the 2022/23 financial year (compared to a budgeted subsidy, set at the start of the 2022/23 financial year, of £5.07 per meal). Table 4 below shows how the subsidy per meal has increased over the last three years (including the current year, taking account of the 2022/23 pay award).

<b>Table 4: Subsidisation of Community Meals Service</b>				
	<b>2020/21 Actual</b>	<b>2021/22 Actual</b>	<b>2022/23 Budget</b>	<b>2022/23 Revised Outturn Position</b>
	<b>(£)</b>	<b>(£)</b>	<b>(£)</b>	<b>(£)</b>
Gross Cost of Service	1,200,472	1,127,411	1,162,426	1,233,519
No. of Paid Meals	146,042	129,202	127,527	126,395
Direct Cost per Meal	8.22	8.73	9.12	9.76
Charge per Meal	3.95	4.05	4.05	4.05
Subsidy per Meal	4.27	4.68	5.07	5.71

- 4.9 For the 2023/24 financial year, based on current pay and non-pay inflationary assumptions (including energy costs) built into the Council's latest medium term

financial plan and assuming paid meal numbers are in line with those projected for 2022/23, it is forecast that the gross cost of providing the service, before taking into account the charge per meal, would increase to £1.323M, which is £10.46 per meal. This is clearly not affordable with the current charge per meal of £4.05 only covering 41% of the projected 2022/23 full year cost. The Bank of England has forecast that high inflation rates will continue for the next few years, which will have a significant impact on food, staffing and energy costs, which makes the service unviable. Therefore, alternative approaches have to be considered to identify whether the costs of production and delivery of the Community Meals Service can be lowered and also set a reasonable and affordable charge to the service user for the meals.

- 4.10 The Community Meals Service is producing on average 461 meals per day for service users across the authority. As Table 5 below shows, average daily meal numbers have declined over the last two years and are projected to decline for the current year (2022/23). Meals are produced and packed by 12 kitchen staff. Meals consist of a main course and a dessert. Special dietary requirements are also catered for, including pureed meals and meals suitable for diabetic residents.

<b>Table 5: Average Daily Meal Numbers</b>			
	<b>2020/21</b>	<b>2021/22</b>	<b>2022/23 (Projected)</b>
Average Meals per Day	560	484	461

- 4.11 The meals are currently distributed to service users in their own homes by 28 delivery staff using 14 vehicles. The service also provides meals, approximately 18 per day, to vulnerable young adults and staff in the Learning Curve and Day Care Centres using one vehicle.
- 4.12 Meals are produced to the NACC (National Association of Care Caterers) nutritional standards and food safety is paramount.
- 4.13 A frozen meal service is offered to service users at the weekend. The meals are procured from an external supplier and a varied choice of meals is offered.
- 4.14 There is no statutory requirement for the Council to provide a Community Meals Service. However, there are a range of alternative options in the marketplace for service users to choose from, based on their own preference and needs.

## **5. OPTIONS FOR SERVICE CHANGE**

- 5.1 A review of the service has been undertaken and several options for the future of the service have been evaluated.

**Option 1:** to continue the service as it currently operates with increased service user charges thus reducing the subsidy per meal.

**Option 2:** to reorganise the existing internal service with increased service user charges thus reducing the subsidy per meal.

**Option 3:** to reorganise the existing internal service and provide a hot/frozen Community Meal home delivery service with increased service user charges thus reducing the subsidy per meal.

**Option 4:** to cease the current service and support service users to find alternative options.

The following paragraphs set out the four options in more detail.

## 5.2 **Option 1: Current Status Quo Service with Increased Service User Charges**

5.2.1 The first option for consideration is to continue the service as it currently operates. The current service provides a prime cooked hot meal and dessert, five days a week, with an option of a frozen meal for the weekend delivered on a Friday, as part of the regular daily delivery service.

5.2.2 Based on 2022/23 projected costs and paid meal numbers, consideration could be given to increasing service user charges for the price of a meal, as detailed in Table 6.

<b>Table 6: Price Increase</b>						
<b>% Increase</b>	<b>2022/23 Estimated Meals</b>	<b>Price Increase per meal (£)</b>	<b>Revised Meal Price (£)</b>	<b>Estimated Additional Income (£)</b>	<b>Current Budgeted Subsidy Per Meal (£)</b>	<b>Revised Subsidy Per Meal (£)</b>
12	126,395	0.50	4.55	63,198	5.07	4.65
25	126,395	1.00	5.05	126,395	5.07	4.15
37	126,395	1.50	5.55	189,593	5.07	3.65

5.2.3 The following neighbouring local authorities provide a similar Community Meals Service to RCTCBC, whereby a prime cooked meal is prepared and delivered, and their charges range from £3.43 to £6.00, as detailed in following Table 7.

<b>Table 7: Neighbouring Local Authority Meal Service – Prime Cooked</b>			
<b>Local Authority</b>	<b>Meal</b>	<b>Frequency of Delivery</b>	<b>Cost per Meal (£)</b>
Bridgend County Borough Council	2 courses	Every day except Christmas Day (2 meals delivered on Christmas Eve)  1 delivery person per van	6.00
Caerphilly County Borough Council	2 courses	Deliver Monday to Friday and can provide a frozen meal for the weekend (delivered on a Friday)  2 delivery persons per van	3.43 Subsidised 5.78 Non-subsidised

5.2.4 There are benefits of continuing the current level of service, however, there are also risks associated with increasing charges and the impact on service users need to be considered in the current financial climate.

Benefits	Risks
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintains daily welfare contact with service users on weekdays.</li> <li>• Social interaction and reduced loneliness and isolation for those who do not have regular social contact.</li> <li>• No disruption to service users and continuity in offer.</li> <li>• No impact on staff.</li> <li>• Potential increase in income, therefore, reducing the subsidy per meal.</li> <li>• Promotes independence and rehabilitation following direct contact through Health.</li> <li>• Continuation of service will provide an easily accessible service for adults with an assessed social care need.</li> <li>• Estimated increased full year income of between £0.063M-£0.190M (based on price increases of £0.50/£1.00/£1.50).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Possibly some service users may be unable to afford increased charges, especially those who are accessing other Council services.</li> <li>• Potential loss of service users due to resistance to price increase.</li> <li>• High level of service subsidisation and continued affordability to the Council. This risk will be mitigated through increased income.</li> <li>• Whilst it is recognised that additional income will be received from increased meal charges this will be partly negated by rising food and energy costs due to the instability of the current economy.</li> <li>• Potential increase in adult social care costs if risks are realised and capacity issues to assess additional need within existing resources. This risk can be mitigated by allocating additional resources.</li> </ul>

5.3 **Option 2: Reorganised Service Delivery with Increased Service User Charges**

5.3.1 The second option, in addition to the potential price increases detailed in 5.2.2, considers the possibility to reorganise the service and generate savings by reducing our staffing ratio with a reduction of delivery persons, and also undertaking a review of the delivery rounds, to ensure the most efficient delivery stops and routes are put in place to reflect the potential demand for hot delivered meals. This will reduce the number of staff and vehicles required and could possibly offer extended hours to the remaining delivery staff.

5.3.2 The current Community Meals Service consists of a prime cooked meal, prepared from scratch and delivered five days a week, with a frozen meal option offered for the weekend. Meals are prepared on site at one central meal kitchen in Ynyshir.

5.3.3 Currently there are two members of staff in each of the 14 vehicles, which are used to deliver meals. Following a review of the Community Meals Service

since the pandemic, practices have been robustly challenged and risk assessments undertaken and there are opportunities to continue to deliver the service in line with one person per vehicle as successfully introduced during the pandemic. This would generate an estimated saving, in a full year, of £0.298M.

5.3.4 The estimated reduction in staffing numbers required would be 14 and the Council would seek to ensure that compulsory redundancies are avoided by exploring opportunities for redeployment (in particular, in our school kitchens to assist with the roll-out of Universal Primary Free School Meals) and utilising the Council's Enhanced Voluntary Early Retirement/Voluntary Redundancy Scheme for eligible staff as part of on-going workforce planning arrangements.

5.3.5 The service currently has 17 vehicles and through reorganising service delivery, the number of vehicles required would be able to be reduced. This would enable the Council to generate a capital receipt; realise a revenue budget saving of £0.001M per year in respect of fuel/damage/replacement tyres; and would reduce our carbon emissions, thereby, supporting the Council's ambition of being Carbon Neutral by 2030.

5.3.6 If the staff and vehicle revenue savings identified in this option were implemented, the effect on the subsidy per meal is detailed below in Table 8.

<b>Table 8: Price Increase and Service Reorganisation</b>							
<b>% Increase</b>	<b>2022/23 Est. Meals</b>	<b>Price Increase per meal (£)</b>	<b>Revised Meal Price (£)</b>	<b>Estimated Additional Income (£)</b>	<b>Estimated Revenue Savings (£)</b>	<b>Current Budgeted Subsidy Per Meal (£)</b>	<b>Revised Subsidy Per Meal (£)</b>
12	126,395	0.50	4.55	63,198	298,616	5.07	2.28
25	126,395	1.00	5.05	126,395	298,616	5.07	1.78
37	126,395	1.50	5.55	189,593	298,616	5.07	1.28

5.3.7 There are benefits of this restructured service option, which would allow the Council to continue the current level of a prime hot cooked service, however, there are also risks associated with increasing charges in this financial climate which are detailed below.

<b>Benefits</b>	<b>Risks</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintains daily welfare contact with service users during weekdays.</li> <li>• Social interaction and reduced loneliness and isolation for those who have limited social contact.</li> <li>• No disruption to service users and continuity in service delivery.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Possibly some service users may be unable to afford increased charges, especially those accessing other Council services.</li> <li>• Potential loss of service users due to resistance to price increase.</li> <li>• High level of service subsidisation and continued affordability to the Council. This risk will be mitigated</li> </ul>

Benefits	Risks
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promotes independence and rehabilitation following direct contact through Health.</li> <li>• Potential increase in income and reduced expenditure on staffing, therefore, reducing the subsidy per meal.</li> <li>• Estimated increased full year income of between £0.063M-£0.190M (based on price increases of £0.50/£1.00/£1.50).</li> <li>• Estimated full year savings of £0.299M.</li> </ul>	<p>through increased income and reduced staffing levels.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Whilst it is recognised that additional income will be received from increased meal charges this will be partly negated by rising food and energy costs due to the instability of the current economy.</li> <li>• Potential increase in adult social care costs if risks are realised and capacity issues to assess additional need within existing resources. This risk can be mitigated by allocating additional resources.</li> <li>• Impact on staff. This risk can be mitigated through opportunities for redeployment and utilising the Council's Enhanced Voluntary Early Retirement/Voluntary Redundancy Scheme for eligible staff.</li> </ul>

#### 5.4 **Option 3: Hot/Frozen Community Meal Delivery Service with Increased Service User Charges**

5.4.1 The third option would consist of providing service users with a choice of either a hot or frozen meal delivery service, which service users could order through a central point of contact within the Council. The frozen meals would be purchased by the Council through a third-party supplier and stored at the central meal kitchen.

5.4.2 Part of this option would also entail a proposed price increase of £0.50 to service users, which would increase the price of the meal from £4.05 to £4.55. This would generate potential additional full year income of £0.063M.

5.4.3 The meals would be regenerated on-site with a reduced number of staff and hours in the kitchen, five kitchen staff instead of 12, and 14 delivery persons. The meals would be delivered according to service users preferred option; hot or frozen. If a hot meal is chosen, they will be delivered between 11.30am and 2.00pm, directly to a service users' home, utilising existing Community Meals vehicles. The service would also undertake a delivery round review to ensure the delivery routes were the most efficient and consider the opportunity to deliver frozen meals outside the standard hot meal delivery times of 11.30am and 2.00pm, as the frozen meals could also be delivered in advance for a few days or the week ahead. Community Meals staff will continue to offer a welfare check to service users and support them with plating a meal if required. This would generate an estimated full year saving of £0.364M.



- 5.4.4 This option would allow the Council to continue to provide a hot meal service to the most vulnerable users and offer a frozen meal service to those that can heat their own food, whilst maintaining that important contact with service users. Minor adaptations to remodel the kitchen would be required, to provide additional freezer capacity, but the cost would be minimal to remove the redundant equipment and it could be reused in schools. The cost of the additional freezers would be funded by the Kitchen Replacement Programme in the Education and Inclusion Capital Programme.
- 5.4.5 The estimated reduction in staffing numbers required would be 21 and the Council would seek to ensure that compulsory redundancies are avoided by exploring opportunities for redeployment (in particular, in our school kitchens to assist with the roll-out of Universal Primary Free School Meals) and utilising the Council's Enhanced Voluntary Early Retirement/Voluntary Redundancy Scheme for eligible staff as part of on-going workforce planning arrangements.
- 5.4.6 This option would remove the need to prime cook meals, which would provide savings in food production, staffing and reduce our carbon and energy consumption.
- 5.4.7 If the additional income and revenue savings identified in this option were implemented, the effect on the subsidy per meal is detailed below in Table 9.

<b>Table 9: Hot/Frozen Meal Delivery Service with Increased Service User Charges</b>	
	<b>Estimated Budget Requirement (£)</b>
Estimated Gross Cost of Service	793,698
No. of Meals	126,395
Direct Cost per Meal	6.28
Charge per Meal	4.55
Subsidy per Meal	1.73

- 5.4.8 Four local authorities provide a similar Community Meals Service to that proposed in option 3, whereby meals are bought in and regenerated, and the price per meal (2 courses) ranges from £4.50 to £5.15. In addition, a further 15 local authorities do not provide a Community Meals Service, and in some instances, service users are signposted to an external provider who provide a frozen meal delivery service only; a typical price per meal (2 courses) is more than £5.00.
- 5.4.9 There are benefits of this restructured service option and to provide a hot/frozen Community Meal home delivery service, however, there are also risks associated with increasing charges and service users not choosing a frozen option, rather than a freshly cooked option, due to choice.

Benefits	Risks
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintains daily welfare contact with service users during weekdays, supporting social care for the most vulnerable using the service.</li> <li>• Social interaction and reduced loneliness and isolation for those who have limited social contact.</li> <li>• No disruption to service users and continuity in service delivery in the provision of an option of a hot meal or frozen meal.</li> <li>• Promotes independence and rehabilitation following direct contact through Health.</li> <li>• Potential increase in income and reduced expenditure, therefore, reducing the subsidy per meal.</li> <li>• Estimated increased full year income of £0.063M (based on price increase of £0.50).</li> <li>• Estimated full year savings of £0.364M.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Possibly some service users may be unable to afford increased charges, especially those accessing other Council services.</li> <li>• Potential loss of service users due to resistance to price increase and removal of prime cooked meal. To mitigate this risk a high-quality, nutritional frozen meal will be offered with regular quality checks.</li> <li>• Level of service subsidisation and continued affordability for the Council. This risk will be mitigated through increased income, reduced staffing levels and removal of food production costs.</li> <li>• Potential increase in adult social care costs if risks are realised and capacity issues to assess additional need with existing resources. This risk can be mitigated by allocating additional resources.</li> <li>• Impact on staff. This risk can be mitigated through opportunities for redeployment and utilising the Council's Enhanced Voluntary Early Retirement/Voluntary Redundancy Scheme for eligible staff.</li> </ul>

## 5.5 **Option 4: Cease to Deliver an In-House Service**

5.5.1 The fourth option for consideration would be to cease the Council run Community Meals Service entirely and support service users to find alternative options.

5.5.2 The Council will need to re-assess the needs of the most vulnerable service user groups to establish their social care needs and to ensure that risks are mitigated. In the short term, this will potentially be a significant issue for Adult Social Care and additional resources will be required to undertake assessments. Employing additional staff on a short-term basis is difficult and relocating existing staff away from current work will increase already high waiting lists. The longer-term impact on ongoing care and support for most service users with assessed needs, will be challenging if Option 4 is implemented.

5.5.3 The Community Meals Service currently has 803 active service users (as at the end of October 2022) receiving meals. 205 of these individuals access Adult Services, as detailed in Table 10 below. Therefore, the removal of the Community Meals Service will potentially require further support from other services.

<b>Table 10: Service Users in Receipt of Adult Social Care Services</b>	
<b>Service</b>	<b>No. of Community Meals Service Users in Receipt of Adult Social Care Services</b>
Domiciliary Care and Direct Payments	191
Day Care	14

5.5.4 The Community Meals Service has provided back-up support to the Council's Homes for the Elderly when required. A contingency plan can be put in operation utilising existing secondary school kitchens to assist as and when required. Support will also be required for those Day Care service users and staff who commission a meal from the Community Meals Service to find alternative options. On average 90 meals are provided per week to service users and staff in the 4 settings.

5.5.5 The current Community Meals Service structure is detailed in Table 11 below. 40 employees (estimated) would be made redundant (28 delivery persons and 12 kitchen staff), however, the Council would seek to ensure that compulsory redundancies are avoided by exploring opportunities for redeployment (in particular, in our school kitchens to assist with the roll-out of Universal Primary Free School Meals) and utilising the Council's Enhanced Voluntary Early Retirement/Voluntary Redundancy Scheme for eligible staff, as part of on-going workforce planning arrangements.

<b>Table 11: Community Meals Service Structure</b>			
<b>Post</b>	<b>Post Title</b>	<b>2022/23 Budgeted Hours</b>	<b>Grade</b>
Service Manager	Service Manager	37	Grade 7
Kitchen Staff	Cook	37	Grade 5
	Assistant Cook	35	Grade 3
	General Kitchen Assistant x 9	264	Grade 2
Delivery Staff	Delivery Person x 30	660	Grade 3
<b>Total</b>		<b>1,033</b>	

5.5.6 The option of discontinuing the service would generate savings, in a full year, of £0.646M. As part of this, there would be additional short-term costs to re-assess service users and support transitional arrangements, such as assisting service users to source alternative meal choices, amounting to £0.100M, and would equate to a net overall budget saving of £0.546M. In addition, it is anticipated that there may be additional costs of care provision to ensure those service users with an assessed need continue to receive appropriate support. Based on an assumed 15-minute visit per day (5 days per week) for all service

users that are currently in receipt of domiciliary care and direct payments or day care, the potential estimated additional annual cost would be approximately £0.250M. Consideration should also be given to potential assessment cost of service users social care needs.

5.5.7 In addition to the budget savings, there will be positive environmental factors to consider such as a reduction in energy costs, carbon, waste management and vehicle emissions. There will also be an opportunity to recycle the existing catering equipment to replace older, less energy efficient equipment in school kitchens.

5.5.8 The consequences and risks of discontinuing the Community Meals Service need to be balanced against assessing the service users social care needs for the future.

Benefits	Risks
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Estimated net budget savings in a full year of £0.546M.</li> <li>• Potential reduced impact on the environment due to reduced energy costs, carbon, waste management and vehicle emissions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No service user contact from the Community Meals Service, which would increase demand on other Council services, i.e., home care, which would include an already stretched capacity issue and highly likely a higher unit cost per hour. This risk can be mitigated with a re-assessment of need and by putting in place appropriate care packages or an alternative service offer than the home care sector such as private enterprises.</li> <li>• Service users could potentially be unable to contact alternative providers due to health issues such as confusion, dementia, visual/hearing impairment, disability or no family/carers to assist. This risk can be mitigated through re-assessment of need and by putting in place appropriate care packages or an alternative service offer than the home care sector such as private enterprises.</li> <li>• Potential increase in adult social care costs if risks are realised and capacity issues to assess additional need with existing resources. This risk can be mitigated by allocating additional resources.</li> </ul>

Benefits	Risks
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Impact on staff. This risk can be mitigated through opportunities for redeployment and utilising the Council's Enhanced Voluntary Early Retirement/Voluntary Redundancy Scheme for eligible staff.</li> </ul>

5.5.9 Following consideration of each proposal, the preferred option is Option 3: Hot/frozen Community Meal delivery service with increased service user charges. This option provides service users with a choice of a hot or frozen meal on a daily basis (Monday to Friday) and frozen meals on the weekend, delivered on a Friday; continuation of daily weekday contact with service users; and delivery of cost reductions that enable the Council to reduce the current high level of subsidisation.

## **6. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS/SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY**

6.1 The Council must satisfy its public sector duties under the Equalities Act 2010 (including specific Welsh public sector duties). Pursuant to these legal duties Councils must in making decisions, have due regard to the need to (1) eliminate unlawful discrimination, (2) advance equality of opportunity and (3) foster good relations based on protected characteristics.

6.2 An Equality Impact Assessment has been prepared and is attached in Appendix A. The Assessment will be published on the Council's website, together with a consultation document that outlines the proposal in further detail and in accordance with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011 and Socio-economic Duty – Sections 1 to 3 of the Equality Act 2010.

6.3 There are 8 negative and 9 neutral equality and diversity implications associated with this report. These risks will be mitigated by a range of actions as detailed in the impact assessment.

6.4 Subject to Cabinet agreeing to initiate a consultation on the preferred service change, the impact assessment will be reviewed and updated to include any further mitigated risks following the consultation process.

## **7. WELSH LANGUAGE IMPLICATIONS**

7.1 A Welsh Language Impact Assessment has been prepared and is attached in Appendix B. This will be published on the Council's website together with a consultation document that outlines the proposal in further detail and in accordance with the requirements of the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011.

7.2 There are no negative or adverse Welsh Language implications associated with this report.

## **8. CONSULTATION**

8.1 Subject to the agreement of the recommendation in Section 2.2 above, there is a duty on the Council to consult with service users, carers, providers and stakeholders, that are likely to be affected by the proposal. The consultation must take place whilst the proposals are at their formative stage.

8.2 The Council must provide the consultees with sufficient information to enable them properly to understand the proposal being consulted upon and to express a view in relation to it. The information must be accurate clear and concise.

8.3 The consultees must be given adequate time to consider the proposal and to respond. It is proposed that consultation will be undertaken for a period of 4 weeks (this excludes the Christmas holiday period) with current users of the service, their family/carers and other stakeholders. Subject to Cabinet approval, it will commence on 5<sup>th</sup> December 2022 and end on 9<sup>th</sup> of January 2023. Consultation methods will include face to face interviews, meetings and online questionnaires.

8.4 The present recipients of the Community Meals Service will need to be informed in writing of the Council's preferred option.

8.5 In addition, appropriate consultation will also be undertaken with all staff (and their Trade Union representatives) potentially impacted by the proposal, in accordance with the Council's Managing Change Policy, if this report is approved.

## **9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 The 2022/23 budget for providing the current Community Meals Service is £1.162M. The budgeted total income from service users is £0.516M, therefore, the net cost and subsidisation to the Council is £0.646M. The 2023/24 budget forecast, based on the predicted food, staff and energy price increases, is that the gross cost of the service before the income received from service users will increase by 14% to £1.323M.

9.2 Continuing the Community Meals Service as it currently operates, with increased service user charges, could generate estimated additional income in a full year of between £0.063M and £0.190M, dependent upon the level of price increase per meal.

9.3 Reorganising the existing Community Meals Service, in addition to increasing service user charges, as detailed in 9.2, could generate a combined total estimated revenue savings in a full year of between £0.362M and £0.489M.

- 9.4 Reorganising the existing Community Meals Service to provide a hot/frozen meal home delivery service with increased service user charges could generate a combined total estimated revenue savings in a full year of £0.427M.
- 9.5 Ceasing to operate the service would generate estimated revenue savings in a full year of £0.546M (and noting that as part of consultation arrangements, a review of service users with an assessed need would be undertaken to ensure they continue to receive appropriate support and to establish any on-going additional budget implications for the Council).
- 9.6 A summary of the estimated financial implications of each option is set out in Table 12.

<b>Table 12: Financial Implications of Service Review Options</b>			
<b>Option</b>	<b>Estimated Total Annual Revenue Savings (£'000)</b>	<b>2022/23 Budgeted Subsidy Per Meal (£)</b>	<b>Estimated Subsidy Per Meal (£)</b>
1. Current Status Quo Level of Service with Increased Service User Charges	63 – 190	5.07	4.65 – 3.65
2. Reorganised Service Delivery with Increased Service User Charges	362 – 489	5.07	2.28 – 1.28
3. Hot/Frozen Community Meal Delivery Service with Increased Service User Charges	427	5.07	1.73
4. Cease to Deliver an In-House Service	546	5.07	0

- 9.7 In addition, redundancy costs will need to be met by the Council.

## **10. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED**

- 10.1 There is no legislative requirement to deliver a Community Meals Service. However, in considering this report the Council needs to ensure that it meets the requirements of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014. The Act and accompanying Part 4 Code of Practice sets out where a local authority has carried out an assessment, which has revealed that the person has care and support needs then the local authority must decide if those needs meet the eligibility criteria and, if they do, it must offer access to services that meet those needs.
- 10.2 Any employment issues that arise will need to be considered in conjunction with Human Resources, and in accordance with any relevant policies and legislative provisions.

**11. LINKS TO THE COUNCIL'S CORPORATE AND NATIONAL PRIORITIES AND THE WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS ACT**

11.1 This proposal is aligned to the Council's Corporate Plan 'Making a Difference 2020-2024' and the priority 'Ensuring people: *are independent, healthy and successful*'.

11.2 In addition, the report considers one of the Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 wellbeing goal of: A Healthier Wales and a society in which people's physical and mental well-being is maximised.

**12. STRATEGIC OR RELEVANT TO ELECTORAL WARDS**

12.1 This applies to all electoral wards.

**13. CONCLUSION**

13.1 The report provides options for consideration of alternative ways of meeting the nutritional needs of our most vulnerable residents in RCT and how we ensure that we provide the appropriate support for the future. The recommendation to initiate a consultation on Option 3 would be required to furnish Cabinet with the outcome in order for Members to best consider how the needs of current service users would be best met in the future.

**Other Information:-**

***Relevant Scrutiny Committee-***

Children and Young People Scrutiny

***Contact Officer:***

Andrea Richards, Service Director of 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools and Transformation



**LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

**AS AMENDED BY**

**THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985**

**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**CABINET**

**29<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 2022**

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION AND INCLUSION SERVICES IN  
DISCUSSION WITH THE CABINET MEMBER FOR EDUCATION, YOUTH  
PARTICIPATION AND WELSH LANGUAGE, COUNCILLOR RHYS LEWIS**

**Item: SERVICE REVIEW OF THE COMMUNITY MEALS SERVICE**

**Background Papers**

None

**Officer to contact:**

Andrea Richards, Service Director of 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools and Transformation