

AGENDA ITEM 8**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL****CABINET****12th FEBRUARY 2015****THE COUNCIL'S STAFF ADVISORY PANEL****REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR CABINET OFFICE AND PUBLIC RELATIONS****AUTHOR: James Vale (01443 424066)****1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1. This report provides Cabinet with details of the 'suggestions' received from Council staff and members of the public in response to the 'Budget Challenge' faced by the Council, and sets out a number of budget saving opportunities as recommended by the Staff Advisory Panel.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Cabinet:

- 2.1. Note the contributions of staff and members of the public in the form of the suggestions received to date i.e. between July and December 2014;
- 2.2. Note the work undertaken by the Staff Advisory Panel in assessing 'suggestions' and recommending budget saving opportunities;
- 2.3. Decide whether or not to progress with the following staff/public suggestions (as set out in more detail in Section 4):
- Mobile devices;
 - Provision of water coolers in Council buildings;
 - Cash collection arrangements;
 - Purchase of newspapers for use by the public.
- 2.4. Request the Group Director Corporate and Frontline Services to update the draft 2015/16 budget strategy to reflect the financial implications of the decision taken at paragraph 2.3 above, prior to Council on the 4th March 2015. As part of this update, if appropriate, any savings achievable in 2015/16 should be used to reduce the level of Transitional Funding (i.e. use of the Medium Term Financial Planning and Service Transformation Reserve) needed to deliver a balanced budget for that year.

3. **BACKGROUND**

- 3.1. In June 2014 the Leader of the Council invited Council staff to put forward cost saving and / or income generating suggestions which could potentially contribute to closing the budget gap over the medium term. Between July and December 2014, over 500 suggestions have been received.
- 3.2. This was followed up with an invitation for members of the public to also contribute their ideas and over 200 suggestions have been submitted between July and December 2014.
- 3.3. In parallel with this, the Leader of the Council created a Staff Advisory Panel in July 2014 to assess staff and public suggestions, and based on these assessments, make budget saving recommendations to the Cabinet. The Staff Advisory Panel is chaired by the Cabinet Member for 'Council Business and Corporate Affairs' and is made up of seven members of staff, three Trade Union representatives and one elected member representative. Its Terms of Reference are included at Appendix 1.

4. **STAFF ADVISORY PANEL RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CABINET'S CONSIDERATION**

- 4.1. Further to the Staff Advisory Panel assessing a number of suggestions, the following recommendations are set out for Cabinet's consideration with a view to those agreed being included in the Budget Strategy Report that the Cabinet will recommend to Council on the 4th March 2015.

Mobile devices

- 4.2. Council officers have undertaken a review of the external market in terms of cost and quality of 'mobile device' providers and are able to secure an improved tariff rate for the use of such devices. The total annual budget saving if this recommendation is agreed is **£0.095M**.
- 4.3. In parallel, a review has also been completed of the current estate of devices; this has identified opportunities to reduce the number required without compromising service delivery. The Staff Panel has recommended that further detail is provided around the reason(s) for the reduction in devices e.g. reasons for original allocation to post-holders and impact of removal of the devices. For information, based on the work undertaken to date, the proposed reduction in devices would realise a total annual budget saving of **£0.022M**.

Provision of water coolers in Council buildings

- 4.4 The Council has 148 water coolers situated in various buildings including offices, crematoria, leisure centres and day centres. Alternative sources of drinking water are available at these locations.
- 4.5 The following two options are set out for Cabinet's consideration:
- 4.5.1 Remove water coolers from all establishments (including front facing buildings e.g. Leisure Centres) – annual budget saving of **£0.019M**; OR
- 4.5.2 Remove water coolers from all back office locations (excluding front facing buildings) – annual budget saving of **£0.014M**.

Cash collection arrangements

- 4.6 A review of cash collection from specific Council establishments (One4aLL Centres) has identified opportunity to reduce the frequency of collections and at the same time ensuring security arrangements and insurance limits are not compromised. The annual budget saving if this recommendation is implemented is **£0.010M**.

Purchase of newspaper for use by the public

- 4.7 Newspapers are purchased by certain Council Day Centres and Homes for the Elderly, and are placed in communal areas for service users to read. The number of newspapers purchased varies across these establishments: between 1 and 3 daily newspapers and usually 1 weekly local newspaper per establishment. Possible options for Cabinet's consideration are:
- Stop the purchase of all newspapers at Day Centres and Homes for the Elderly – annual saving of **£0.007M**; OR
 - Reduce to 1 daily national newspaper, 1 daily local newspaper and 1 weekly local newspaper – annual saving of **£0.003M**¹; OR
 - Reduce to 1 daily national newspaper and 1 weekly local newspaper – annual saving of **£0.005M**. This is the Staff Panel's recommended option along with the need to review user feedback following implementation.
- 4.8 In addition, newspapers and magazines are also purchased and made available at each of the Council's libraries for users. The provision of such material supports the Council in meeting its statutory duty under the Public

¹ Newspapers – where establishments currently purchase less than set out in the proposal, this arrangement to continue

Libraries and Museums Act 1964. Should Cabinet consider that this area be reviewed to identify potential budget savings, it is recommended that the Library Service consults with service users in terms of opportunities to revise the coverage of newspapers and magazines provided.

5. CONCLUSION

- 5.1. Over 700 suggestions have been received by staff and members of the public in respect of potential options to reduce costs and / or generate income.
- 5.2. The Staff Advisory Panel has performed a key role to date in assessing specific suggestions and making a number of budget saving recommendations for Cabinet's consideration.
- 5.3. The work of the Staff Advisory Panel is on-going and further recommendations will be reported to Cabinet over the coming months as assessment work is completed.

APPENDIX 1

Staff Panel

Terms of Reference

The staff panel comprises:

Chair	Cabinet Member for Council Business and Corporate Affairs, Councillor Maureen Webber
Staff Representatives	
Mair Miskell	Ty Elai – Customer Care
Julie Waites	Ty Glantaf – Fleet
Geraint Roberts	Sardis House – Transportation
Marc Jones	Ty Trevithick – Governor Support
Dilys Jouvenat	Clydach Vale – Equality and Diversity
Nicola Bacchetta	Bronwydd – Finance
Emma Morgan	Leisure Services – Leisure
Trade Union Representatives	
Peter Crews	Unison
Craig Jones	GMB
Lesley Davies	Unite
Councillor Paul Griffiths	Pontyclun

All the above Panel members shall have equal voting rights, the Chair shall have no vote.

Council Officers to support the panel (no voting rights) will be :

James Vale – Panel Co-ordination and administration
Barrie Davies (or Paul Griffiths) – Finance
Other as and when required

Purpose

The Council Leader is keen to engage with staff across all service areas to take into account the knowledge, experiences and ideas of staff when making the unavoidable and difficult decisions required to close the budget gap the Council faces over the coming years.

The staff panel will play a pivotal role in assessing staff suggestions received, in developing them and where appropriate recommending their implementation directly to the Leader and Cabinet.

APPENDIX 1**The role of the Panel will include :**

1. To receive and review all staff suggestions as submitted;
2. To assess and prioritise suggestions submitted, including requesting appropriate officer advice on the viability of suggestions;
3. To prioritise those which require more in depth work and to instruct officers as appropriate to carry out the necessary work in order for a fully informed view to be taken by the panel;
4. To prepare a quarterly report to the Leader and Cabinet on the work of the Panel including those suggestions which are recommended for implementation;

Assessment of Suggestions

The role of the panel will clearly evolve over time and should not at this stage be hamstrung by narrow terms of reference. In general terms, nothing should be off limits.

However, this paper attempts to set out some principles which the panel may wish to consider in terms of starting to conduct its business of assessing suggestions submitted.

Process

1. All suggestions submitted circulated to panel members;
2. Initial high level prioritisation of suggestions by Staff Panel :

Colour	Criteria
Green	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suggestion is substantially complete (i.e. no clarification is required from staff member who submitted); • Appears to be capable of implementation (i.e. no apparent substantial barriers to implementation); • Relatively quick win (immediate or within 6 months); • Cash releasing saving to the Council

APPENDIX 1

Colour	Criteria
Amber	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further clarity needed on the suggestion; • May take some time to implement (greater than six months); • May be something in it but not a high priority right now;
Red	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial Assessment is that this suggestion would not be of a financial (cash releasing) benefit to the Council; • Aware that this work is already underway as part of an existing review; • Suggestion cannot be progressed due to legal/statutory constraints

3. Dependent upon numbers falling into each colour category, greens are then prioritised (say the top 10) for more in depth work, which will consider a review by the relevant service manager (Service Director) as to the deliverability and financial benefit of the suggestion.

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