

## **RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

### **CABINET**

**25<sup>th</sup> JANUARY 2018**

#### **OPERATIONAL CHANGES TO THE COMMUNITY MEALS SERVICE AND PROPOSAL TO CLOSE ST GEORGE'S DAY CENTRE AND TRANSFER THE OPEN ACCESS DAY CENTRE PROVISION TO GILFACH GOCH DAY CENTRE**

#### **REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE IN DISCUSSIONS WITH THE RELEVANT PORTFOLIO HOLDERS, COUNCILLORS J ROSSER AND G HOPKINS**

**Authors:** Chris Bradshaw, Chief Executive (01443 424026); Andrea Richards, Head of 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools (01443 744001)

#### **1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

1.1 The purpose of the report is to set out a proposal to:

- Maintain the existing Community Meals Service but change the operational arrangements to improve the efficiency of this service; and
- Initiate a consultation to close St. George's Day Centre, Tonyrefail and transfer open access day services to Gilfach Goch Day Centre.

#### **2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that the Cabinet:-

- 2.1 Consider the contents of this report;
- 2.2 Agree to maintain the existing levels of service provided by the Community Meals Service;
- 2.3 Agree to change the method of preserving weekend meals from a "blast chilled" method to a "frozen" method;
- 2.4 Agree to reduce the number of Community Meals production kitchens from three to one (retaining the Ynyshir kitchen), and to reconfigure the staffing and delivery rounds, saving £258,000 per annum, for a one-off capital cost of £180,000, the capital funding for which will be secured from existing resources;

- 2.5 Agree that the Council undertakes an eight week public consultation in respect of the proposal to close St George’s Day Centre, Tonyrefail, and transfer the open access day service to Gilfach Goch Day Centre; and
- 2.6 Subject to 2.5 above, agrees to receive a further report summarising the results and feedback from the consultation process prior to any decision being made in relation to the proposal to close St George’s Day Centre.

**3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 Increasing financial cutbacks nationally are leading to pressures locally but despite that, the Council is determined to deliver the best services and opportunities for everyone in the County Borough. This proposal seeks to continue to offer a community based service that is efficient and effective and represents good value for money.

**4. BACKGROUND**

- 4.1 The Community Meals Service has provided a good service to adults in Rhondda Cynon Taf over many years, not only providing a good quality meal but also ensuring that the clients of the service have daily contact with others.
- 4.2 Clients can access the Service in a number of ways, the majority of whom are referred from social services or health professionals, the client’s relative or friend or a self referral to support the individual to remain independent in their own home. The age profile of clients of the service illustrates that the Service is focused on those that most probably require some support to live independently as they age, with nearly two thirds of the clients at least of 80 years of age.

<b>Age Range</b>	<b>% of Total Clients</b>
40 – 49	1.0%
50 – 59	2.9%
60 – 69	8.8%
70 – 79	21.7%
80 – 89	44.4%
90 – 99	20.7%
> 100	0.5%

- 4.3 Whilst, the Service has a role to play in the community, the demand for the Service has fallen. This is due to a number of factors that include more choice from a range of providers, and the availability of supermarkets free delivery service. The table below illustrated that the weekday service has reduced its numbers by 29% and weekend service by 66% during the last 5 years.

<b>Annual Meal Numbers</b>	<b>2013/14</b>	<b>2014/15</b>	<b>2015/16</b>	<b>2016/17</b>	<b>2017/18 Estimated</b>
Weekdays	214,837	191,814	172,750	161,336	152,234
Sat/Sun	69,507	49,921	32,948	26,960	23,731
<b>Total</b>	<b>284,344</b>	<b>241,735</b>	<b>205,698</b>	<b>188,296</b>	<b>175,965</b>

4.4 The Service was subject to review in January 2014 and Cabinet approved the reduction of 6 production kitchens to 3 and to convert the weekend service to a chilled meal (blast chilled) provision (to be delivered on a Friday). It delivers meals to 725 clients across the County Borough using 18 delivery vehicles.

4.5 Despite the changes in 2014, the Service has high production costs, overheads, staff costs, packaging and delivery costs. Whilst the current daily fee to the clients for a delivered meal is £3.45, the Council has to provide a further subsidy to cover the food and staffing costs of the Service. The levels of subsidy per meal per kitchen are set out below:

<b>Community Meal Subsidy per Meal</b>	<b>2015/16</b>	<b>2016/17</b>	<b>2017/18 Estimated</b>
<b>Community Meal – Kitchen</b>	<b>£'s</b>	<b>£'s</b>	<b>£'s</b>
St Mair's	3.15	4.14	5.02
St George's	2.45	3.58	4.23
Ynyshir	2.73	4.67	4.94

4.6 The increase in the level of subsidy is due to the introduction of the National Living Wage, the increase in food prices and rising energy costs.

4.7 With the reduction in the volume of meals being produced there is significant capacity in all three kitchens, which increases the costs of producing the meals. Furthermore, St George's, Tonyrefail is a former chapel that is in a poor condition, and has outstanding backlog and essential maintenance of approximately £578,000.

4.8 In September 2017, Cabinet also considered a proposal from Age Connect to transfer St Mair's Day Centre to the voluntary organisation, subject to National Lottery Funding, as part of an asset transfer. A decision on this funding application is due shortly.

4.9 The Community Meals Service also provides the meals in the day centres at:

- St Mair's – Aberdare;
- St George's – Tonyrefail; and
- Mountain Ash.

4.10 The other 5 day centres catering staff are managed by Community Services.

4.11 A summary of the budget for 2017/18 is set out below:

<b>Budget</b>	<b>£'000</b>
Employees	1,153
Supplies & services	354
Premises	35
Transport	33
Capital Financing	71
<b>Total costs</b>	<b>1,646</b>
<b>Income</b>	<b>(913)</b>
<b>Net cost of the Service</b>	<b>733</b>

## **5. PROPOSED WAY FORWARD**

5.1 The Community Meals Management Team has reviewed the Service and there are opportunities to remodel the operational delivery of the Service, whilst still providing the same service levels to the Community Meals clients and reduce the cost of delivering the Service by £258,000 per annum.

5.2 The proposal is to:

- Continue to deliver freshly cooked meals on weekdays;
- Deliver frozen meals on the weekend rather than blast chilled meals;
- Reduce the number of production kitchens from 3 to 1;
- Have one production kitchen, in Ynyshir;
- Retain the open access service to clients;
- Transfer the management of St Mair's and Mountain Ash Day Centres to Community Services;
- Close St George's Day Centre and transfer the open access day service to Gilfach Goch Day Centre.

5.3 This proposal if approved would result in a reduction in the number of staff within the Service. However a number of staff have previously expressed an interest in retiring early, and of the staffing compliment, 21 staff are aged over 55 so could retire and have access to their pensions where appropriate. Furthermore, there are also a number of kitchen staff in schools that would like to take early retirement, and so any staff displaced from the Community Meals Service could find redeployment in another part of the Council.

5.4 Producing blast chilled food for the weekend has proved to be difficult in the kitchens and has resulted in a high reject rate in order to maintain food hygiene. On a number of weekends, frozen meals have had to be delivered and the Service has had no complaints from clients. The Food Safety Team within Public Health and Protection consider that the frozen production approach is significantly safer than blast chilled production and they

recommend that we consider this option to ensure we minimise any potential food safety issues.

- 5.5 With some improvements and relocating equipment from existing kitchens at a cost of £180,000, the Service is confident that there is sufficient space and capacity in Ynyshir Kitchen to manage the production of Community Meals for the whole of the County Borough. Using the computerised routing system used by the Waste Service, the Service is confident that meals can be delivered to a high standard and at the right temperature across the County to all communities. Of the three kitchens officers consider Ynyshir is best placed to serve the County Borough.
- 5.6 In the event of a power cut or some other emergency at Ynyshir Kitchen, or a significant snow fall etc, contingency plans, using other kitchens and a stock of frozen meals, are already in place to ensure a meal will continue to be delivered to those that require one.
- 5.7 If the Cabinet decide to proceed with the changes to the operational arrangements of the Community Meals Service, it should also consider the long term future of St George's Day Centre, Tonyrefail, which will no longer house the Community Meals kitchen and its catering staff.
- 5.8 St George's Day Centre is one of the poorest quality buildings in the Council's property portfolio with a maintenance backlog of £578,000. Whilst the kitchen is in a good condition, the remainder of the building that houses the restaurant area and the meeting rooms is very poor with structural defects crumbling plaster due to the water ingress and damp. A maintenance and structural survey has recently been undertaken and £553k of essential works has been identified, together with an additional £25k for further intrusive surveys and statutory costs. It is a former chapel and the building has few alternative uses.
- 5.9 Furthermore, the number of meals sold by the Day Centre average less than 15 per day, and many of the users of the Day Centre travel to St George's by car. Gilfach Goch Day Centre is a very popular centre at lunchtime and is only 3 miles away. Feedback received suggests a significant number of the users of Gilfach Goch Day Centre live in Tonyrefail but prefer to travel to Gilfach for the better environment and greater opportunities to undertake social activities.
- 5.10 Currently, St George's Day Centre is staffed and run by the Community Meals kitchen staff. If the decision is made by Cabinet to centralise the kitchen arrangements of the Community Meals Service, additional catering and staffing arrangements would have to be introduced at St George's Day Centre to maintain the day service, which would be at an additional cost to the Service.

- 5.11 Given the current condition of the building and extent of the maintenance backlog together with low usage of the facility it is considered by officers that the financial viability of the Day Centre should be questioned. It is therefore recommended that Cabinet initiates an eight week consultation with the local community that has access to St George's Day Centre and other relevant stakeholders, on the closure of St George's Day Centre and the transfer of the open access Day Centre provision to Gilfach Goch Day Centre.
- 5.12 Should Cabinet initiate such a consultation it is recommended that Cabinet agrees to receive a further report summarising the results and feedback from the consultation process prior to any decision being made in relation to the proposal.

## **6. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 Cabinet Members will be fully aware and mindful of the general equality duty introduced by the Equality Act 2010 and the specific public sector equality duties applicable to the Council as a local Council in Wales.
- 6.2 Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 (Public Sector Single Equality Duty) requires public authorities to demonstrate in decision making that they have paid 'due regard' to the need to:
- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation;
  - advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it;
  - foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not;
  - The relevant protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex and sexual orientation.
- 6.3 The Council must have due regard to the impact of any of the proposals on those with a protected characteristic. The Council has a specific duty to publish information to demonstrate how it has paid due regard to the aims above as part of its decision making. Undertaking an Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) screening exercise (and if necessary full EqIA) would be evidence that the Council has considered its legal obligations in making the decision on the recommendations in this report.
- 6.4 In respect of the proposed changes to the Community Meals Service an EqIA Screening Form has been prepared for the purposes of this report. The screening has not identified any negative or adverse impact on vulnerable groups, as there is no change to the Service provided. The screening form can be accessed by contacting the author of the report or the Cabinet Business officer.

- 6.5 An EqIA Screening Form has been prepared in respect of the proposed transfer of open access day centre provision from St George's Day Centre to Gilfach Goch Day Centre. The screening has identified a potential adverse impact on some vulnerable groups with protected characteristics (specifically older people) due to the proposal. Consequently a full EqIA would be undertaken to be informed by the consultation feedback and included in a subsequent report to Cabinet prior to any decision being made on the proposal. The screening form can be accessed by contacting the author of the report or the Cabinet Business Officer.

## **7. CONSULTATION**

- 7.1 It is proposed the changes to the Community Meals Service not be subject to a public consultation as they are deemed to be operational changes which would maintain existing service levels. Appropriate consultation would however be undertaken with all staff (and their trade union representatives) potentially impacted by the proposal in accordance with the Council's Managing Change Policy should Cabinet agree the proposals.
- 7.2 It is proposed the closure of St George's Day Centre and the transfer of open access day centre provision to Gilfach Goch Day Centre be subject to an eight week consultation with the local community and other relevant stakeholders.

## **8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)**

- 8.1 It has been calculated that the proposed changes to the Community Meals Service would reduce the cost of providing the Service by £258,000 per annum, with the cost of relocating the production kitchen equipment to Ynyshir of £180,000. It is proposed that the capital costs will be met from within existing resources.

## **9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 Whilst there is no statutory duty on the Council to consult on the proposal to close St George's Day Centre and transfer the open access day centre provision to Gilfach Goch Day Centre, it is recommended that a consultation be initiated prior to any decision being made, given the impact of the decision and expectation of service users/stakeholders.
- 9.2 Where consultation is undertaken it should be done when proposals are at a formative stage; give sufficient reasons for any proposal to permit intelligent consideration and allow adequate time for consideration and response. Cabinet would then be required to give conscientious consideration to the outcome of the consultation process prior to any decision(s) being made on the proposal.

## **10. LINKS TO THE COUNCILS CORPORATE PLAN & OTHER CORPORATE PRIORITIES**

The Report is focused on the delivery of the Community Plan, and in particular the objective of “promoting independence and positive lives for everyone”.

**Other Information:-**

***Relevant Scrutiny Committee*** – Health & Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee

***Background Papers*** - None

***Contact Officers*** - Chris Bradshaw 01443 424026 & Andrea Richards 01443 744001



**LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

**AS AMENDED BY**

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

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**Item: OPERATIONAL CHANGES TO THE COMMUNITY MEALS SERVICE AND  
PROPOSAL TO CLOSE ST GEORGE'S DAY CENTRE AND TRANSFER THE  
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**Background Papers**

None

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