

POLICY AND RESOURCES CABINET BOARD

15th JANUARY 2015

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF CORPORATE STRATEGY & DEMOCRATIC SERVICES – K. JONES

SECTION A – MATTER FOR DECISION

WARDS AFFECTED - ALL

BUDGET 2015/16 – CORPORATE STRATEGY & DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

1. Corporate Strategy and Democratic Services

- 1.1 Cabinet considered proposals on 10th September 2014 for achieving savings targets set for the department in 2015/16 of some £419,000. Those proposals were subsequently incorporated into the over-arching Budget Strategy Report that Cabinet considered on 1st October 2014 and upon which formal authority to consult was approved by Members of the Cabinet.
- 1.2 This report summarises the arrangements for scrutinising and consulting on the proposals for the Corporate Strategy and Democratic Services Department; the outcomes of those exercises; and puts forward final proposals, having taken into account feedback received following scrutiny and consultation.

2. Scrutiny

- 2.1 The departmental savings proposals were scrutinised by the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee on October 13th 2014. No objections were raised to the proposals for 2015/16. However, the Scrutiny Committee noted that outline proposals were also presented for the two subsequent financial years, principally in respect of the CCTV and access to services arrangements. The Scrutiny Committee noted that further detailed work was to be undertaken by officers in early 2015 and requested that proposals for 2016/17 and 2017/18 be submitted to the committee for scrutiny when the relevant detail was available.

3. Consultation

3.1 Workforce Consultation

3.1.1 All staff employed within the Corporate Strategy and Democratic Services Department were provided with written details of the proposed departmental savings for the period 2015/16 to 2017/18 on 2nd October 2014, following discussion with trade union representatives. Face to face meetings were held during September and October with each team to ensure there was a full understanding of the proposals and ways in which staff could contribute their feedback to the proposals. A deadline for receiving comments and alternative proposals was set of 15th December 2014.

3.1.2 Staff members are appreciative of the steps taken to inform them of the challenging financial situation facing the Council; how it impacts upon the department; and how it affects individual teams and team members. No objections to the proposals have been received during the consultation period and no alternative proposals have been put forward by staff. A commitment has been given to further consultation on proposals for 2016/17 and 2017/18.

3.1.3 In addition to the consultation initiated by the department, a corporate staff consultation programme has been conducted over the period September 2014 to December 2014. This has involved face to face meetings between the Chief Executive, e mail notifications to staff from the Chief Executive and articles within the Council's in-house newsletter "in the Loop". Additionally, a question and answer facility was set up on the intranet for staff to post questions and comments. There were a small number of staff comments and suggestions related to the number and remuneration of elected Members, the costs of the mayoralty; and the scope of the Council's Customer Services Department.

3.1.4 Responses have been provided to each suggestion/comment. However, the suggestions and comments received do not provide any additional opportunity to make savings as measures were: already included in the proposals; reflected areas where cost savings had already been achieved; or were not within the authority of the Council to effect.

3.2 Public Consultation

- 3.2.1 The departmental proposals for 2015/16 have limited public impact. Consequently, the department has relied on the corporate consultation exercise in terms of public consultation.
- 3.2.2 Three comments have been received as part of the over-arching corporate consultation exercise in respect of proposals for the financial year 2015/16. All of the comments relate to the cost of the mayoralty. Expenditure attached to the mayoralty has been the subject of focus in previous financial years. Staffing levels have already been reduced to a minimum; refreshments and civic hospitality budgets have been significantly reduced; financial support for twinning activities has been curtailed; and the type of engagements that are supported by the mayor during his/her term of office have been reviewed. Expenditure planned in 2015/16 is some 62% of that budgeted for in 2011/12 – the budget having reduced from £208,101 in 2011/12 to £128,358 in 2015/16. It is considered that there is no scope at this time to reduce expenditure further.
- 3.2.3 Additionally, the Partnership Event held on 8th September 2014 indicated broad support for making greater use of digital technology, in particular moving more services on-line. This area is a focus of the revised access to services strategy that will be presented to Members for scrutiny in early 2015 and which will then provide a framework for achieving some of the savings required in 2016/17 and 2017/18.

4. **Voluntary Redundancy Exercise**

- 4.1 Alongside the consultation exercises on the specific savings proposals put forward for the department in 2015/16, a corporate exercise to maximise the number of people leaving employment through voluntary redundancy has been carried out.
- 4.2 For the Corporate Strategy and Democratic Services Department, there were 31 expressions of interest received in voluntary redundancy. 7 of these staff members accepted voluntary redundancy following consideration of the financial packages available. As a consequence of the number of people opting to leave on grounds of voluntary redundancy, there has been a need to

make some further adjustments to the responsibilities of staff remaining in the Council's employment, however, these do not affect the delivery of the savings proposals for 2015/16. Details of the staffing structure that will operate from 1st April 2015 are being finalised and are subject to completing the necessary management of change procedures.

5. Final Proposals

Following scrutiny and consultation there are no changes proposed to the savings schedule presented to Cabinet on 10th September 2014 for the Corporate Strategy and Democratic Services Department.

Savings proposals for the two financial years 2016/17 and 2017/18 will be subject of further, detailed examination and engagement with key stakeholders in early 2015. Consequently, those savings are shown as being "at risk" as they are proposals "in outline only" at this stage.

6. Equality Impact

A screening equality impact assessment has been carried out and that indicates no significant equality impacts associated with proposals that will be implemented in 2015/16. However, there are equality impacts from proposals to change the Council's access to services arrangements from 2016/17 onwards. A full equality impact assessment will be conducted when drawing up the detailed proposals in early 2015.

7. Crime and Disorder Impact

There will be some minor adjustments to the staffing arrangements within the CCTV service in 2015/16 to reflect the consequential impact of reducing the service agreed as part of last year's budget strategy (2014/15). These changes should mean that resilience is strengthened until the long term strategy for the service has been determined. Officers intend to bring a report to Members in early 2015 on the options available and to seek direction as to the options that officers should examine in detail. The crime and disorder impact of any proposed service change will be fully assessed as part of that work.

8. Recommendations

It is recommended that Members note the consultation that has taken place and authorise the Head of Corporate Strategy and Democratic Services to implement the savings proposals set out in this report.

9. Reason for Proposed Decision

To provide the formal authority for the savings proposals set for the Corporate Strategy and Democratic Services to be implemented.

Officer Contact

Mrs K Jones – Head of Corporate Strategy & Democratic Services
(Tel. 01639 763284 - email: k.jones3@neath-porttalbot.gov.uk)

Background Papers

- Cabinet Report, September 10th 2014
- Staff Consultation Paper, October 2014
- Equality Impact Assessment – Screening Assessment

COMPLIANCE STATEMENT

BUDGET 2015/16 – CORPORATE STRATEGY AND DEMOCRATIC SERVICES DEPARTMENT

(a) Implementation of Decision

The decision is proposed for implementation following the three day call in period.

(b) Sustainability Appraisal

Economic Prosperity	-	Negative
Education & Lifelong Learning	-	Neutral
Better Health & Wellbeing	-	Neutral
Environment & Transport	-	Neutral
Crime & Disorder	-	Neutral

Other Impacts

Welsh Language	-	Neutral
Sustainable Development	-	Neutral
Equalities	-	Neutral
Social Inclusion	-	Neutral

(c) Consultation

This item has been subject to external consultation as part of the wider budget proposals for the financial year 2015/16 and the outcome of that consultation is summarised in the body of the report.

Budget Saving Strategies

New Ref	Board	Description	Lead	Main Impacts	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	<i>est</i> staff
					£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	
CORP534	PRB	Electoral	K Jones	Income generated through introduction of individual electoral registration	20					
CORP538	PRB	Democratic Services	K Jones	Reduce stationery budget - streamlined committee administration and greater reliance on electronic methods of working for both officers and elected members	10					
CORP542	PRB	Democratic Services	K Jones	Stop courier service for members	10					
CORP571	PRB	Performance Audit Fees	K Jones	Reduced cost of WAO performance audit fees	26					
CORP572	PRB	Reduce Elections Team Staffing Resource	K Jones	Less resilience within elections team.	7					1.0
CORP573	PRB	Income Target for Division	K Jones	Seek out income opportunities, mainly grant funding, to reduce pressure on council revenue budget	15					
CORP574	PRB	Complete winding up of Change Management and Innovation Unit	K Jones	No dedicated corporate capacity to support the council's change agenda	170					5.0
CORP575	PRB	Reduce capacity in customer services	K Jones	Reduction in service performance	40					2.0
CORP576	PRB	Introduce revised access to service policy across council	K Jones	Move to a digital by default policy. This will mean minimising the public information printed with people expected to use downloadable information; increasing the number of service available on line and increasing public take up of those services; introducing new technologies in the corporate contact centre to minimise the number of call handling staff required there.		200	100			10.0
CORP577	PRB	Further review of CCTV operation to further reduce costs	K Jones	Options could include reducing the availability of the service further, recharging the cost to partners with a view to full cost recovery or transferring the service to another provider at no/minimal cost to the council		80	80			8.0
CORP578	PRB	Further streamlining of democratic and corporate support following completion of modernisation programme	K Jones	Efficiency savings from modernisation programme			50			1.0
CORP579	PRB	Use of 2014/15 underspend to meet savings target in 2015/16.	K Jones	The 2015/16 shortfall will be met in 2016/17.	121	-121				
CORP580	PRB	Strategies to be identified	K Jones			95	20			
					419	254	250	0	0	27.0