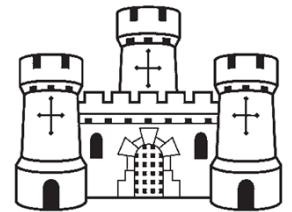


Public Document Pack

Date of meeting Wednesday, 19th July, 2017
Time 6.00 pm
Venue Committee Room 1, Civic Offices, Merrial Street, Newcastle-under-Lyme, Staffordshire, ST5 2AG
Contact Geoff Durham



**NEWCASTLE
UNDER LYME**
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Civic Offices
Merrial Street
Newcastle-under-Lyme
Staffordshire
ST5 2AG

Cabinet

AGENDA

PART 1 – OPEN AGENDA

- 1 APOLOGIES**
- 2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**
To receive declarations of interest from Members on items included in the agenda.
- 3 MINUTES** **(Pages 3 - 10)**
To consider the minutes of the previous meetings held on 7th and 27th June, 2017.
- 4 CUSTOMER PORTAL** **(Pages 11 - 20)**
- 5 OPTIONS FOR FUTURE DELIVERY OF DEBT ADVICE SERVICES IN THE BOROUGH 2017-2020** **(Pages 21 - 26)**
- 6 SPORTS PROVISION IN KIDSGROVE** **(Pages 27 - 36)**
- 7 LYME VALLEY PARKING** **(Pages 37 - 40)**
- 8 HYBRID MAIL** **(Pages 41 - 44)**
- 9 URGENT BUSINESS**
To consider any business which is urgent within the meaning of Section 100B(4) of the Local Government Act 1972.
- 10 ATTENDANCE AT CABINET MEETINGS**

Councillor attendance at Cabinet meetings:

- (1) The Chair or spokesperson of the Council's scrutiny committees and the mover of any motion referred to Cabinet shall be entitled to attend any formal public meeting of Cabinet to speak.
- (2) Other persons including non-executive members of the Council may speak at such meetings with the permission of the Chair of the Cabinet.

Public attendance at Cabinet meetings:

- (1) If a member of the public wishes to ask a question(s) at a meeting of Cabinet, they should serve two clear days' notice in writing of any such question(s) to the appropriate committee officer.
- (2) The Council Leader as Chair of Cabinet is given the discretion to waive the above deadline and assess the permissibility if the question(s). The Chair's decision will be final.
- (3) The maximum limit is three public questions at any one Cabinet meeting.
- (4) A maximum limit of three minutes is provided for each person to ask an initial question or make an initial statement to the Cabinet.
- (5) Any questions deemed to be repetitious or vexatious will be disallowed at the discretion of the Chair.

Members: Councillors Beech, Kearon, Turner (Vice-Chair), J Williams, Shenton (Chair), Rout and Robinson

PLEASE NOTE: The Council Chamber and Committee Room 1 are fitted with a loop system. In addition, there is a volume button on the base of the microphones. A portable loop system is available for all other rooms. Should you require this service, please contact Member Services during the afternoon prior to the meeting.

Members of the Council: If you identify any personal training/development requirements from any of the items included in this agenda or through issues raised during the meeting, please bring them to the attention of the Democratic Services Officer at the close of the meeting.

Meeting Quorums :- 16+= 5 Members; 10-15=4 Members; 5-9=3 Members; 5 or less = 2 Members.

FIELD_TITLE

Officers will be in attendance prior to the meeting for informal discussions on agenda items.

CABINET

Wednesday, 7th June, 2017
Time of Commencement: 6.00 pm

- Present:-** Councillor Elizabeth Shenton – in the Chair
- Councillors Beech, Kearon, Turner, J Williams, Rout and Robinson
- Officers Executive Director (Resources and Support Services) - Kelvin Turner, Executive Director (Operational Services) - David Adams, Executive Director (Regeneration and Development) - Neale Clifton, Geoff Durham, Chief Executive - John Sellgren and Janet Baddeley
- Apologies Councillor(s)

11. **DECLARATION OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest stated.

12. **VICTIMS OF TERROR ATTACKS AND ALDERMAN DYLIS CORNES**

A minute's silence was held in tribute to those who had lost their lives in the recent terror attacks and also Alderman Dylis Cornes who had recently passed away.

13. **MINUTES**

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held on 22 March, 2017 be agreed as a correct record.

14. **DOCUMENT MANAGEMENT RENEWAL**

A report was submitted to Cabinet seeking approval for the renewal of the Council's Electronic Document and Records Management System (EDRMS) maintenance contract with Northgate Public Sector for a further three year period.

- Resolved:**
- (i) That the Council renew its support and maintenance contract for its EDRMS with Northgate Public Sector for a further period of three years.
 - (ii) That the Council conduct a full re-procurement exercise for its EDRMS software to commence approximately one year before the renewed contract ends.
 - (iii) That the Council procures additional licences for the Northgate Office Connect product.

- (iv) That the Council waives its own standing orders regarding procurements over £50,000.

15. **FINANCIAL AND PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT REPORT TO END OF QUARTER FOUR (JANUARY-MARCH) 2017**

A report was submitted to Cabinet providing information on the performance of individual council services for the fourth quarter of 2016/17.

Members were informed that the end of year totals had come within budget, with a small surplus. The Portfolio Holder for Finance, IT and Customer asked the Executive Management Team to thank their teams in helping to achieve this.

The performance indicators shown at Appendix B of the agenda report were explained to Members

Resolved: (i) That the contents of the agenda report be noted and the recommendation that the Council continues to monitor performance alongside the latest financial information for the same period be agreed.

16. **SHARED LEGAL SERVICE WITH STOKE ON TRENT CITY COUNCIL**

A report was submitted to Cabinet seeking approval for the council to enter into a shared service agreement with Stoke on Trent City Council for the provision of legal services.

Members were informed of the three options available as outlined in paragraph four of the agenda report.

Resolved: That Option two, as outlined in the agenda report – to create a shared legal service with Stoke-on-Trent City Council be progressed.

17. **CRACKLEY LOCAL LETTINGS PLAN**

A report was submitted to Cabinet to consider implementing a Crackley Local Lettings plan in partnership with Aspire Housing to allocate properties on the proposed development at Birch House Road, Crackley.

Resolved: (i) That the disposal of the land at Birch House Road, Crackley to Aspire Housing for the development of affordable housing be progressed alongside further discussions with Aspire on the nominations process and possible Local Letting Plan.

- (ii) That the Executive Director for Regeneration and Development be authorised in conjunction with the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing to finalise the Local Lettings Plan and nominations process with Aspire Housing.

18. **IMPLEMENTATION OF NEW PROVISIONS UNDER THE PLANNING AND HOUSING ACT 2016**

A report was submitted to Cabinet advising of the opportunity to impose civil penalties for certain housing offences under the Housing and Planning Act, 2016 and seeking a decision on the charging scheme.

- Resolved:**
- (i) That civil penalties for housing offences in appropriate circumstances be adopted.
 - (ii) That the charging system set out in appendix A of the agenda report , which sets a civil penalty of £5000 for a first offence with multipliers of up to £30, 000 for serious offences and reductions for some special circumstances, be approved.
 - (iii) That the scheme of delegation be amended to “Power to authorise the institution / enforcement of civil proceedings under section 126 and Schedule 9 Housing and Planning Act 2016” to Head of Housing Regeneration and Assets and appropriately qualified housing officers.
 - (iv) That the updated Housing Enforcement Guidance 2017, set out in Appendix B of the agenda report, to include use of civil penalties and rent repayment orders also introduced by the Housing and Planning Act 2016, be approved.

19. CONFIRMATION OF DECISION TAKEN UNDER DELEGATION

Members were informed of a decision taken under delegated authority by the Leader / Portfolio Holder for Policy People and Partnerships.

Due to the timescales involved in printing the materials required for the parliamentary elections, it had been agreed to go with the provider who had done the county council elections materials in May.

Resolved: That the information be received.

20. URGENT BUSINESS

Kidsgrove Leisure Centre

A verbal update was given in relation to the above.

Resolved: That the information be noted and a further full report be brought to the Cabinet meeting to be held on 19 July, 2017.

COUNCILLOR ELIZABETH SHENTON
Chair

Meeting concluded at 7.10 pm

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CABINET

Tuesday, 27th June, 2017
Time of Commencement: 6.00 pm

Present:- Councillor Elizabeth Shenton – in the Chair

Councillors Beech, Kearon, Turner, J Williams, Rout and Robinson

Officers Executive Director (Operational Services) - David Adams, Executive Director (Regeneration and Development) - Neale Clifton, Geoff Durham, Chief Executive - John Sellgren and Janet Baddeley and Chris Hewitson

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Mr Kelvin Turner – Executive Director, Resources and Support Services.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest stated.

3. QUESTION TO CABINET

The meeting was moved into the Council Chamber to accommodate the large number of public who were in attendance.

The Chair welcomed people in the public gallery and explained that there was a procedure to follow to address the Cabinet. However, on this occasion the Chair ruled that the two day rule would be waived. A representative was invited into the Chamber to address Cabinet.

Mr Lee Hartshorne, representing the Kidsgrove Sports Centre Action Group, thanked the Chair for allowing him to speak. Mr Hartshorne addressed the Cabinet and handed over his contact details and a box containing opinions from the people of Kidsgrove which was received.

The Chair explained the current position with regard to the Sports Centre.

The Chair moved onto the next item of business but some members in the gallery exhibited disruptive behaviour which prevented the Chair from proceeding with the business of the meeting. Therefore the decision was taken by the Chair to suspend the meeting at 6.10pm whilst the gallery was cleared.

The meeting was reconvened at 7.05pm and was moved to Committee Room 1 which was the original advertised location for the meeting.

4. JOINT LOCAL PLAN STRATEGIC OPTIONS CONSULTATION DOCUMENT

A report was submitted to Cabinet advising Members on the current position in respect of the Joint Local Plan.

The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing, Councillor Kyle Robinson summarised the report, advising members that he sought Cabinet's approval to go out to consultation on the next stage. The results of the consultation would be brought back to a meeting of the Cabinet in Autumn 2017 as part of the next stage of the process.

The Council's Executive Director for Regeneration and Development, Mr Neale Clifton gave a presentation to Members which had previously been shown to Members of the Planning Committee on 22 June, 2017.

The presentation provided an update on the plan-making process for the Newcastle-under-Lyme and Stoke on Trent Joint Local Plan beginning with the Vision for the Plan along with its aims and objectives.

Members attention was drawn to the 'Growth Scenarios' and were advised that Option C was the most appropriate one based upon the evidence and that this level of growth would be considered as the Objectively Assessed Need (OAN) for the area.

It was then explained that six 'Broad Options' had been reviewed with the aim of achieving a level of growth to meet the OAN.

Members were informed that Stoke on Trent City Council's Planning Committee had considered the same documentation and supporting information as Newcastle on 26 June, 2017. The same recommendations had been approved and it was also agreed that it should be the subject of public consultation. In addition, it was confirmed that the City Council's Cabinet had approved the report and agreed the recommendations at its meeting held on 27 June, 2017.

The Vice-Chair of the Borough Council's Planning Committee, Councillor Chris Spence was in attendance and was invited to speak. He thanked the Council's Planning policy Manager, Ms Helen Beech and her team for the work that they had done in preparing the documents on such a complex subject matter and for Ms Beech's informative presentation to Planning Committee.

Councillor Robinson also thanked Ms Beech and her team as well as Mr Clifton for the amount of work that had been done and was still to do. Councillor Chris Spence was also thanked for his comments from the Planning Committee.

Councillor Turner also thanked Ms Beech and her team for their work and stated that the process needed to be done thoroughly in order to avoid problems later.

The Chair, Councillor Mrs Shenton asked about slippage of the timetable. In addition to the explanation provided in the report and by the officer at the meeting it was noted that a Joint Advisory Group had been established as an informal group who would track and monitor progress.

Councillor Turner stated that the chances of young people obtaining a mortgage in the future was questionable and therefore there needed to be an increase in social housing that was available. Mr Clifton confirmed that the 'affordable housing'

definition within the Plan did include social housing and that there was likely to be an increased requirement for provision in the future. .

- Resolved:**
- (i) That the representations set out in the Issues Consultation and Response Document and approve the document for publication be noted.
 - (ii) That, taking account of the resolutions of Planning Committee, Cabinet agreed to the publication of the Draft Strategic Options Consultation Document and accompanying Sustainability Appraisal Report for public consultation purposes, in line with the methods of consultation set out in the adopted Statement of Community Involvement.
 - (iii) That a report be submitted to a subsequent meeting of the Cabinet on the results of the Strategic Options public consultation exercise, as part of the next stage in the Joint Local Plan process – Preferred Options later in 2017.
 - (iv) That the revised timetable for the production of the Joint Local Plan and that this is published as an update to the Council's Local Development Scheme be agreed.
 - (v) That, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing, the Executive Director for Regeneration and Development be given delegated powers for the following:
 - The authority to finalise the public consultation arrangements and associated documentation for the Strategic Options stage.
 - The authority to respond to any issues and to make decisions which may arise from time to time (including any necessary revisions to the timetable) in order to ensure the satisfactory progress of the plan making process and also to ensure that collaboration with Stoke-on-Trent City Council is maintained throughout the process, including reference to the Joint Advisory Group.
 - To represent the Borough Council at all Duty to Co-operate meetings and to consider and respond (if necessary) to any matters raised at such meetings.

5. CONTRACT AWARD FOR THE SUPPLY OF TEMPORARY AGENCY WORKERS

A report was submitted to Cabinet informing Members of the outcome of the tendering process for the supply of temporary agency workers and to seek Cabinet's approval regarding the formation of the 'call-off' contract for the supply of temporary agency workers.

- Resolved:**
- (i) That Premier Placements become the preferred supplier for temporary agency workers, and that the other eleven tenderers should also be included on the 'call-off' framework.

6. URGENT BUSINESS

Cabinet - 27/06/17

There was no Urgent Business.

COUNCILLOR ELIZABETH SHENTON
Chair

Meeting concluded at 8.15 pm

NEWCASTLE-UNDER-LYME BOROUGH COUNCIL
EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT TEAM'S REPORT TO THE
CABINET

Date 19 July 2017

REPORT TITLE: Customer Portal for Accessing Council Services

Submitted by: Head of Communications

Portfolio: Finance, IT and Customer

Ward(s) affected: All

Purpose of the Report

To seek Cabinet approval for the procurement and introduction of an online customer portal for Newcastle under Lyme Borough Council according to the proposals outlined in the report.

Recommendations

- a) That Cabinet notes the issues outlined in the business case which is attached as an Appendix to this report.
- b) That Cabinet authorises officers to undertake a procurement process for a customer portal for accessing council services.
- c) That Cabinet delegates authority to award a contract to the Executive Director (Resources and Support Services) in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance, IT and Customer, following the completion of the procurement process.

Reasons

Digital technologies have the potential to improve the way the majority of council customers interact with local authority services whilst at the same time generating significant efficiency savings. A customer portal will help the Council make progress with both of these considerations.

1. Background

1.1. At its meeting in January 2017, Cabinet considered a report on the Digital Delivery of Services. Members resolved:

- a) That proposals to introduce a customer portal to further develop the way that residents can access council services be supported in principle.
- b) That officers be authorised to prepare a business case for the introduction of a customer portal including an assessment of the options available and identifying a preferred set of proposals to be reported back to Cabinet.
- c) That the Digital Strategy for the Council be endorsed.

1.2. Research from the Society of Information Technology Management (Socitm) suggests a face-to-face interaction with a customer can cost a council £10.53 and a basic phone query can cost £3. The organisation – which carries out a national analysis of public sector websites each year to provide benchmarking information and best practice – suggests an online transaction can cost a council just eight pence.

- 1.3. The development of self-serve options - which can be completed by customers using a digital channel which suits them at a time and location of their choosing – will enhance their customer experience with the Council.

2. **Issues**

- 2.1. Since the Cabinet decision in January, the Council's Digital Delivery Board has carried out a number of pieces of work to move this initiative forward.
- 2.2. They include:
 - a) Organising a Digital Showcase Day which involved inviting to the Civic Offices five leading companies which provide customer portals. They were asked to give a presentation on the functionality of current systems and to outline the benefits to the Council of their proposals.
 - b) Discussions with other councils and also the Staffordshire Connects Partnership on the potential for joint procurement and future joint working arrangements.
 - c) Liaison with a number of other councils from around the country over their experiences of introducing customer portals, lessons learned, issues and options.
 - d) Attending discussions overseen by the Staffordshire Connects Partnership on customer portals.
- 2.3. Officers believe that the business case which is attached to this report as an appendix outlines the benefits for the procurement of a customer portal. It is therefore recommended that this becomes the adopted position of the Council and officers be authorised to take part in a procurement process for a customer portal for accessing council services.

3. **Proposal**

- 3.1. The introduction of a customer portal and self-service tools for a basket of council services would be a major step forward in the digital delivery of services for residents in Newcastle-under-Lyme.
- 3.2. Following all of the work which has been done by the Digital Delivery Board, officers believe that the best way forward at this stage is a joint procurement with public sector partners.
- 3.3. Discussions with other local authorities in the surrounding area made it clear that a number were on a shared path as a result of wrestling with the dual issues of enhancing or maintaining customer service standards while coping with the need for efficiency savings. During these discussions the possibility of a joint procurement was formed.
- 3.4. Lichfield District Council and Tamworth Borough Council – supported by Staffordshire County Council and the Staffordshire Connects Partnership – are leading on this procurement which has been carried out through an established framework agreement called the Braintree Framework - part of the Essex Procurement Hub.
- 3.5. The Essex Procurement Hub was set up in 2006 after a review of procurement across a number of Essex authorities. The role of the Hub is to provide strategic and operational procurement support, advice and guidance that adds demonstrable value to the procurement process.
- 3.6. The Hub lets and manages a number of National Framework Agreements that are accessible to any public authority in the United Kingdom. The underlying ethos of the Hub is co-operation and collaboration.

- 3.7. At this stage the partnership landscape also involves Stoke-on-Trent City Council and South Staffordshire District Council.
- 3.8. Officers from the Borough Council have been involved in the procurement process and worked alongside the other councils in preparing all of the documents issued to potential providers. They have also been fully involved in the evaluation process.
- 3.9. Cabinet should note that whilst the Borough Council is playing an active role in the customer portal procurement and partners welcome and support our involvement, we are not the lead procurement organisation and at this stage are not legally obliged to any course of action.
- 3.10. Having said that, all of the work carried out so far indicates this is the best option available for the Borough Council and will yield the customer service and efficiency benefits we require in a timescale which substantially meets our needs.
- 3.11. The timescale being worked to is:
 - a) 26 May – procurement begins using Braintree Framework.
 - b) 18 June – deadline for submissions of proposals.
 - c) 21 June – evaluation and shortlisting.
 - d) 26 and 27 June – interviews of shortlisted organisations with demonstrations and reference site visits/webex.
 - e) 11 July – Lichfield/Tamworth decision to award contract.
 - f) 11-25 July – European Union standstill period.
 - g) 19 July – NULBC Cabinet decision on customer portal and business case.
 - h) 25 July – supplier mobilisation at Lichfield/Tamworth.
 - i) 16 October – garden waste part of their system handed over for user testing.
 - j) 1 December – garden waste booking and payments go live.
 - k) Spring/summer 2018 – NULBC introduces customer portal.

4. **Reasons for Preferred Solution**

- 4.1. Using an established framework ensures a guaranteed level of service provision as providers have to fulfil a variety of criteria to qualify for inclusion. Research has shown that all providers on the framework to be used can meet the Council's requirements.
- 4.2. There are significant benefits from working alongside partners and they include:
 - Shared procurement expertise.
 - Shared procurement resources – this is a very time-consuming and rigorous process.
 - Shared workload in review and assessment procedures.
 - Potential for reductions in costs as a result of several councils signing up.
 - Potential for shared future development processes because of a common system.
 - Partnership working fits alongside the Council's strategic co-operative aims.

The largest partner involved in the shared procurement process, Staffordshire County Council, are providing advice and expertise as well as resourcing for the procurement process.

- 4.3. Part of the specification documentation asks potential providers for details on the savings which could be expected if several partners join in with the initial procurement by Lichfield and Tamworth.
- 4.4. Working with a range of local public sector partners using the same customer portal could open up the opportunity for shared working and development as the project progresses. This could have a major positive effect as it may avoid development duplication; enable different

authorities to develop different portal strands which can then possibly be shared; allow councils to jointly develop which will improve the pace of implementation.

- 4.5. As mentioned earlier in this report, this is the preferred procurement route for all of the reasons identified above. However, it is not the Council's procurement process and at this stage there are no legal obligations on us. Officers will continue to work closely with partners to move this process forward but it must be stressed that other options will be available to the Council if it chooses to pursue them, such as a separate partnership arrangement using another framework or even an individual procurement if that secures us best value while at the same time meeting our customer portal requirements.

5. **Legal and Statutory Implications**

- 5.1. The Council will need to be mindful of the Disability Discrimination Act with regards to the provision of a customer portal and ensure accessibility meets all current standards and expectations.
- 5.2. The Council will also need to be mindful of the forthcoming General Data Protection Regulations with regards to the completion of privacy impact assessment, data processing statement and consent to process customer data for a specific, limited purpose.

6. **Equality Impact Assessment**

- 6.1. At its meeting in January, Cabinet considered a number of equality impact assessments and these are replicated below to ensure they continue to form a key part of decision making as the pace of implementation picks up.
- 6.2. There are four main kinds of challenge that people face to going online:-
- Access - the ability to actually go online and connect to the internet.
 - Skills - to be able to use the internet.
 - Motivation - knowing the reasons why using the internet is a good thing.
 - Trust - a fear of crime, or not knowing where to start to go online.
- 6.3. As the earlier report indicated, one of the actions which the Digital Delivery Board should include in its work programme is consideration as to how a network of "Digital Volunteers" can be put in place to support the development of the relevant digital skills across our communities. This has been done successfully elsewhere in the country and the Local Government Association's (LGA) Digital Experts Programme could be used as a frame of reference for our own work in this area. Contacts have already been made with the LGA on this matter.
- 6.4. Other equality issues which the Council needs to be mindful of are:
- a) Connectivity - and access to the internet. People need the right infrastructure but that is only the start.
 - b) Accessibility - services should be designed to meet all users' needs, including those dependent on assistive technology to access digital services. Accessibility is a barrier for many people, but digital inclusion is broader.

7. **Financial and Resource Implications**

- 7.1. Paragraph 1.2 of this report outlines the main financial benefits of introducing a customer portal.

- 7.2. The business case attached to this report as an appendix outlines the key elements of the rationale behind why the introduction of a customer portal for the Borough Council is a prudent use of resources which could yield significant financial efficiencies while at the same time improving the customer journey for significant numbers of people.
- 7.3. It is anticipated that savings will be made on staffing costs similar to those already seen in Revenues and Benefits where technology has enabled some flexible retirements as well as the non-replacement of some vacant posts.
- 7.4. It is also anticipated that an effective customer portal solution could have the potential to replace several of the Council's existing case management systems which would save up to £38,000 a year.
- 7.5. The initial investment of procuring the customer portal is estimated to be in the region of £80k. This can be financed from the balance that is left in the Revenue Investment Fund (RIF). As part of the budget setting process for 2017/18 full Council agreed to cease making contributions into the fund. However, a balance still exists from previous contributions made and the non-utilisation of funds for previously agreed initiatives. The investment in a customer portal meets the criteria that was originally set for the use of the RIF. This initial investment will be recovered very quickly from the savings that have been identified above.
- 7.6. A savings target of £100k from digital delivery initiatives was included in the current year's budget. This is at present on target to be achieved predominantly from the move away from accepting cash payments at the Council's Customer Service Centres together with further savings in Revenue and Benefits following the introduction of the Citizens Access and Landlords Portal.

8. **Major Risks**

- 8.1. Risks to consider are:
 - Public resistance to change in access methods -Public used to telephone and face-to face as main channels and don't trust that online requests will be dealt with.
 - Failure to achieve the channel shift percentages required to allow savings to be realised.
 - Skills and capacity to enable the required business process re-engineering (BPR) changes to take place to support the portal.
 - A lack of engagement from key council services to an online focus.
 - Failure to close down other channels to maximise efficiency savings.

9. **Key Decision Information**

- 9.1. The report raises issues affecting more than two wards so this is a key decision and has therefore been included on the Forward Plan.

10. **Earlier Cabinet/Committee Resolutions**

- 10.1. January 2017 Cabinet report.

11. **List of Appendices**

- 11.1. Appendix one – Business Case for a Customer Portal at the Borough Council

Appendix 1. Business case for a customer portal at Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council

Introduction

At Cabinet on 18 January 2017, it was agreed:

- That Cabinet supports in principle proposals to introduce a customer portal to further develop the way residents can access council services.
- That Cabinet authorises officers to prepare a business case for the introduction of a customer portal including an assessment of the options available and identifying a preferred set of proposals to be reported back to Cabinet.
- That Cabinet endorses the Digital Strategy for the Council which is attached to this report as an appendix.

Background

A customer portal is a single sign-on online self-service portal which will help the Council unlock the savings associated with channel shift whilst at the same time improving the service to our customers.

The portal will provide a common interface through which authenticated customers can access personalised services and information (integrating with any number of back-office systems) and a platform to create a seamless online experience.

A customer portal does not replace a council's website, it works seamlessly with it. The website provides the static content, directing customers to the online portal when customers want to transact with the Council.

Customers will be encouraged to manage their own accounts and interactions with the Council and to update records, make payments, report issues. Portals are designed so that customers can easily access services whilst staying online.

Savings

Research from the Society of Information Technology Management (Socitm) suggests a face-to-face interaction with a customer can cost a council £10.53 and a basic phone query can cost £3.

The organisation – which carries out a national analysis of public sector websites each year to provide benchmarking information and best practice – suggests an online transaction can cost a council just eight pence.

The table below illustrates the average monthly volumes of customers who use the three main communication channels with customers at the Council and clearly illustrates that we have to move away from face-to-face and phone contacts were possible and enable as many customers as we can to “self-serve” with improved functionality and service availability online.

Channel	Average monthly volume (Jan-Dec 2016)
Website	34,537
Face-to-face (Guildhall, Kidsgrove, Madeley)	4,466
Contact centres – corporate + Revenues and Benefits	17,824

However, the Council reiterates that every effort will be made to ensure customers who need to access services either face-to-face or over the telephone will still be able to do so.

One of the key areas which the Council can look at if a customer portal is introduced is the impact this will have on legacy software. At present it is anticipated that an effective customer portal solution could have the potential to replace several case management systems currently used at the Council including:

- The CRM system – currently circa £25,000 per year.
- The benefits e-claim form – currently circa £12,000 per year.
- The Customer Complaints Management software – currently circa £1,000 per year.

The customer portal system may also be flexible enough to ultimately allow other platforms to be phased out. Whilst the replacement of the above systems with a portal will not be immediate, it is anticipated this would happen within a 24-month period.

Integration

From around 2000, all local authorities had to produce an annual statement that set out how they would implement electronic government - known simply as the IEG statement.

Government funding was awarded to support developments outlined in these annual submissions which were made to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister.

During this era it was common for a service to be classified as “digital” if a simple form was presented on a council website. Almost universally, these forms did nothing more than e-mail the entered content to the back-office – where it was then manually re-keyed into a supporting system.

Unfortunately, this method of delivery is still commonly used at Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council.

Only three of the Council’s existing e-forms actually transfers the information sent in by the customer directly to back-office systems where it can ultimately be used. Everything else is still re-keyed from an e-mail.

This process involves considerable staff resources, adds time to the processing of requests for customers and is clearly an unsustainable method of working for a modern organisation.

In order for any new customer portal to be efficient and effective, the forms presented must transfer their data directly to the back-office systems where it can then be used cleanly, autonomously and without manual interventions.

There are several key service areas where efficiencies could be realised through this integration process and they are:-

- Waste management
- Revenues and benefits.
- Environmental services.
- Planning.
- Human Resources.
- Leisure services.

Our Workforce

Where the self-serve processes outlined above remove the need for re-keying or manual interventions, the Council will consider a number of factors such as redeployment of staff, consideration of flexible early retirements, and the non-filling of vacant posts to ensure quality services continue in corporate priority areas as well as the ongoing need for financial savings to help meet efficiencies outlined in the Medium Term Financial Strategy.

Postage

The Council currently spends approximately £97,000 per annum on postage costs.

A customer portal which included “self-serve” options for some of the Council’s “volume” services – such as planning, recycling and waste, revenues and benefits – would obviously lead to a reduction in postal costs.

Every 10 per cent reduction the Council makes would result in £9,700 being removed from the postal bill.

Non-cashable savings

In addition to the potential for achieving the “cashable” savings identified above, the Council could also make “non-cashable” efficiencies such as:-

- Maintaining a single customer record across all back office systems.
- Produce efficiencies by preventing data duplication in service silos.
- Save staff time by reducing unnecessary contacts.

Customer Experience

The Council is looking to implement a new digital customer service platform with a favoured option involving the introduction of a “My Account” which aims to help services become more accessible in a self-serving and transparent way.

With a My Account – with user characteristics similar to online banking or Amazon - customers would be able to answer their own queries, view documents and check status updates from their mobile, tablet or PC at a time and a place which fits with their time-pressured lives.

The platform will aim to provide customers and businesses with a single login to multiple services allowing them to view documents and statements online, drill down to payments, liabilities, charges, instalment plans and other transactional information, exactly the type of transactions that the contact centre has to deal with in huge volumes.

The platform will be used to deliver a suite of online services to residents, landlords and businesses.

Our aim is to ensure customers can log in to view their interactions with the Council, for example, Council Tax information, benefit claims, business rates, benefit notification letters and landlord schedules, recycling and waste services, licence applications, electoral registration, parking fines and issues etc.

Once a customer is signed into the portal they should receive a better online experience. We are aiming to ensure forms automatically pre-populate fields from information drawn from a customer’s profile and customers can access their account 24/7 including seeking information about their accounts and reports which equates to a significant volume in customer demand.

Our goal will be to provide functionality which would allow customers to:

- a) Utilise and complete interactive online e-forms which are intelligent enough to personalise the navigation, assisting people through relevant questions based on what they say.
- b) Integrate in a seamless way e.g. taking payments via the Council’s payments portal and interaction with maps.
- c) Provide feedback and comments on services and functionality using a ratings’ system.
- d) Provide a single place to transact with the Council 24/7. This allows councils to validate customers and provide them with access to their account information.

The Process

The Council has already taken a number of steps on its digital journey.

During 2016/17, savings totalling £100,000 were generated following the introduction of Citizen Access and a Landlords' Portal in Revenues and Benefits.

This reduced customer contacts and enabled the Council to make staffing efficiencies which generated the savings outlined above.

In September 2015 a new website was launched and this has doubled the number of monthly unique users interacting with the Council via www.newcastle-staffs.gov.uk.

The Council supports the introduction of the MyStaffs app and hundreds of residents from the borough have signed up to get messages and alerts using the system.

During 2016/17 the Council was successful in a bid to the Local Government Association's "Productivity Expert" grant system for £6,000 to help with the development of digital services.

This money will bolster additional council resources which have been identified to help with online forms and integration into the back-office.

So, while some digital steps have already been taken (such as those in Revenues and Benefits) and others are under way (such as those related to online forms), more significant strides could be taken with the introduction of a customer portal.

Officers have done a significant amount of desktop research via discussions with the Local Government Association, other councils, Staffordshire Connects and providers.

To bring all of this together the Council's Digital Delivery Board staged a "showcase" event at the Civic Offices with several customer portal providers invited to make brief presentations on what is currently in the market place.

In addition, talks have taken place with potential partners including Staffordshire Connects and other district councils to consider the benefits of joint working.

The Council is currently working closely with Lichfield District Council who are working with Tamworth Borough Council on a joint procurement exercise supported by Staffordshire County Council and the Staffordshire Connects Partnership.

The Borough Council intends to move staff from the Civic Offices in Newcastle to Castle House – the public sector hub to be shared with Staffordshire County Council and Staffordshire Police – in the coming months and this will require a significant amount of ICT resource.

Once that process is complete, the aim would be to switch focus to implementation of the portal.

Finances and Resources

Buy in to the Digital Delivery agenda is required at all levels across the Council. This is a corporate initiative to realise improvements in accessing the Council's services to the customer together with the delivery of significant savings towards the financial gaps that exist in the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy.

A savings target of £100k was included in the current year's budget and this is at present on target to be achieved predominantly from other digital delivery initiatives that are already underway.

A number of support services will be key to driving the work forward – namely ICT, Communications, Customer Services and the Business Improvement Team.

What does success look like for this project?

- a) The introduction of a customer portal with end-to-end services.
- b) Redesign of back-office services to take advantage of a digital delivery model.
- c) A reduction in the volume of face-to-face contacts.
- d) A reduction in the volume of telephone contacts.
- e) A reduction in postal charges.
- f) An increase in overall levels of customer satisfaction.
- g) Annual quantifiable efficiency savings for the Council.
- h) A reduction in the cost of legacy back-office applications.
- i) The introduction of a “champion” network of volunteers to support the spread of online usage in our communities.

Phil Jones
Head of Communications
July 2017

NEWCASTLE-UNDER-LYME BOROUGH COUNCIL
Cabinet 19 July 2017

REPORT TITLE Options for future delivery of Debt Advice Services in the Borough 2017-2020

Submitted by: Executive Management Team

Portfolio: Policy, People & Partnerships

Ward(s) affected: All

Purpose of the Report

To advise Cabinet of the current situation with regard to review of continuing the delivery of a General Debt Advice Service in the borough and the potential impact of funding changes.

To seek approval for future delivery.

Recommendations

- (a) That members approve the proposal as set out in this report and authorise officers to engage, and develop a specification to deliver the commissioning of a Financial Well-Being & Debt Advice Service in the borough to support activities to prevent an increase in debt whilst maintaining a service for the most vulnerable.
- (b) That members support future changes to debt advice provision and alignment of partnership services by officers, to support a proactive and accessible approach by providers.
- (c) To authorise the Chief Executive in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Policy, People & Partnerships to finalise the Financial Well-Being & Debt Advice Service and commission the preferred service provider.

Reasons

Due to the withdrawal of funding by Staffordshire County Council after 2 March 2017, the Borough Council's Cabinet took a decision on 22 March 2017 to offer a six month interim funding to the Council's current incumbent service providers to ensure a continued service provision in the Borough, which will now end 30 September 2017.

After consideration, officers consider a Financial Well-Being & Debt Advice Service is still necessary, and a future service needs to ensure delivery of outcomes that clearly deliver benefits against the key priorities of the Council, and enhances partnership working, but most importantly offers an essential, effective and good quality service for users. A further consideration is a potential reduction in available funding for the future internally and the impact of funding reductions externally on future service delivery.

1. Background

1.1 In 2017, a position statement was produced which provided information on how delivery of Debt Advice services in the Borough were being impacted upon by the County Council's decision to withdraw funding from 2 March 2017. The borough had previously co-funded Debt, Benefit and Consumer Advice service with the County Council to be delivered by Staffordshire & Stoke-on-Trent Bureaux from the Wells Street bureau and the Kidsgrove Customer Service Centre, and AgeUK delivering from Merrial Street under a collaborative contract with the county council.

1.2 With the decision by the County Council to withdraw funding, the Borough Council considered several options which included ceasing to fund the local service when the county contract ended. However, Cabinet approval was sought and agreed in March 2017 for funding to be provided as an interim measure for the provision of General Debt Advice Services from Staffordshire & Stoke-on-Trent Bureaux and AgeUK for the period 1 April to 30 September 2017, with the amount of funding agreed at £47,850 and £7,150 respectively for the period, £55,000 in total.

2. Current delivery of General Debt Advice Services in the borough (April to September 2017)

2.1 The CAB bureau is currently delivering a face to face advice service of 21 hours per week , and a telephone advice service (Monday-Friday) will be organised as part of the national Citizens Adviceline. The agreement requires assistance to 450 people per quarter.

2.2 The AgeUK delivery from Merrial Street is providing 16.5 hours of service per week, supporting 205 `unique` clients a quarter face-to-face.

2.3 The Borough Council also currently supports a Specialist Debt Advice service for those threatened with Homelessness to the value of £12,000 per year.

2.4 Total annual funding from the Borough's Third Sector Commissioning Fund budget for these services in 2017-18 is £122,000. Cabinet agreed at its March meeting to fund the service for the first 6 months of the year at a cost of no greater than £55-60,000.

3. Issues to consider –Changing Environment

3.1 Impacts of Welfare Reform

Universal Credit was introduced in April 2015 and commenced roll out over a period of time and is due to be fully implemented by 2021. Universal Credit is one of the biggest changes made to the welfare system in recent times and is aimed at making work pay so that people are better off in work than claiming benefits. Some of the most significant changes may be seen by those in working households moving from tax credits to Universal Credit.

Under Universal Credit, local authorities have a key role in identifying, leading, facilitating and commissioning partnerships to:

- *Improve the quality of service and outcomes to the individuals and families and has a better chance of success in the long term to equip people to be independent and self-supporting,*
- *Reduces duplication, inefficiency, conflicting interventions that negate each other, overheads and public sector costs*

It is anticipated that there may be an increase in the number of people who find they have reduced income due to the changes in Housing Benefit. A likely impact of Welfare Reform for the council is a potential reduction in caseloads for internal staff in the Revenues and Benefits section over the coming years as the Welfare Reforms continue to take effect. However, there will also be a resulting increase in people presenting to the Revenues and Benefit section at the Council and other agencies which provide financial advice.

3.2 External impacts on commissioned projects

Third sector organisations continue to face reductions in funding opportunities generally and there is a recognised need for agencies to deliver services more efficiently and to look towards sustainability wherever possible by finding new funding streams. Ideas that have been promoted recently are an increase in collaborative working, the potential for forming consortia and a requirement to 'challenge the norm' in order to access funding streams previously not available, this may lead to back office efficiencies and shared resources, or by the delivery of services in new and different ways.

3.3 Increase in online usage and self-help applications

Under the previous co-funded Debt, Benefit and Consumer Advice service, three telephone contact centres were operated to deliver the service. With the introduction of the new service (post April 2014) the service providers were surprised how quickly clients adapted to the new telephone service and the use of online facilities once signposted. These changes did not show a reduction in service uptake. In addition, several users (including older people) are now using online services and smart phones daily, and in so doing allow resources to be freed to support the people who are more vulnerable and need face-to-face service provision.

3.4 Financial Implications

Third Sector Commissioning funding is allocated for advice services currently to the value of £110,000 per year for debt advice.

3.5 Working in Castle House

With the move of the council and partners to Castle House, the council has an opportunity to further promote partnership working with the potential for partners to be co-located and to work co-operatively to support the changes and drive efficiencies. Officers will continue to liaise and work with current and new partner organisations to encourage interest and ensure optimum delivery locally.

3.6 South Staffordshire Activities

South Staffordshire District Council was one of the pilot authorities working alongside the Department of Works & Pensions (DWP) where it was realised that with the introduction of Universal Credit, people would need additional support, for example help with budgeting, IT and support with getting into work. Through partnership, resources were pooled with partners such as CAB, the housing association (ex-council stock), work clubs, Barclays Bank, the credit unions and voluntary organisations such as the South Staffordshire Community and Voluntary Action (SSCVA). This was implemented in 2014. A pilot ran for 12 months and was then continued with funding from the District Council and the European Social Fund (ESF). South Staffordshire District Council's Revenues and Benefits section ran a triage service giving benefit advice and budgeting support, and making referrals to the other partners.

After recent success in a bid for funding from the Big Lottery and the European Social Fund a consortium of partners in South Staffordshire have set up the Building Better Opportunities programme which commenced in January 2017.

4. Possible options considered

- (i) **Cease funding from October 2017** - Funding from the Borough Council for the delivery of debt advice services to residents is withdrawn after September 2017. This which would mean the current providers would be reliant on funding from other sources.

This option would provide a limited service in-house available from Revenues & Benefits and a saving of more than £200,000 for the council for the period October 2017 to March 2020. However the most vulnerable residents of the Borough may suffer as a consequence and the effect for local providers may be that they are unable to continue to deliver a service, unless they are able to obtain funding from elsewhere. This option was rejected by Cabinet when the existing contract was extended in March 2017.

- (ii) **Integrated Model** - The service is integrated by providing an in-house service developed with the current providers at the council offices, utilising the new Castle House to support a partnership approach with other agencies too. This could be achieved by bringing the currently delivered services in-house and would ensure the service benefits from the trained and experienced staff.

This option would allow for a planned exit strategy from the current provision and migration to the new service. However as TUPE would be likely to apply, there would be staffing and training costs to add. At this time there are no savings apparent from this option.

- (iii) **Evolutionary Model** – Develop the Borough Council's offer in-house and refer to partner services. This approach is similar to the work undertaken over the last few years at South Staffordshire District Council where changes to the service delivery have been developed over a period of time. The services necessary to provide an efficient delivery could be identified with clear referral processes agreed between relevant partners which would ensure effective delivery.

This option would allow for a planned exit strategy, however it would necessitate resourcing and funding by the council including possible TUPE costs. Alternatively the funding could be sought from elsewhere to provide savings to the council's budget in future years. Due to restricted funding sources it may be difficult to realise and to deliver this option in the current climate, and may be in counter to recent proposals by local agencies.

- (iv) **Competitive Tendering Taking into Account Partnership Working** - Continue to support and work with the local providers to develop and deliver local debt advice services by commissioning of a Financial Well-being & Debt Advice Service. The Staffordshire North & Stoke-on-Trent Citizens Advice Bureaux (SNSCAB) is proposing to deliver a Transforming Financial Exclusion project which involves working with partners including the Borough Council and other agencies to offer a holistic service. External third party support for their planned development is currently being sought. If the council continues to commission a debt advice project for the next 18 months with an option to extend for a further 12 months (March 2020), it is possible to deliver a service aimed to support the most vulnerable in the Borough and ensure optimum delivery and enhancement of local developments. At the same time the Council can seek to develop in-house advice services in line with the Transforming Financial Exclusion proposal development.

This is the recommended option that officers believe would address the issues highlighted and ensures that any available funding optimises value for money for the council and maximises benefits for service users.

5. Recommendation

The proposal is to commission a Financial Well-being & Debt Advice Service to be delivered in the Borough for an initial period October 2017 to March 2019, with an option to extend until March 2020 (subject to annual review, service delivery performance, developments of alternative debt advice provision and available funding). The intention is for the commissioned service to work with local partners to ensure a partnership approach to delivery of debt advice services in the Borough which reflects ongoing local developments.

Due to factors such as the increase in self-help, online usage and the development of effective referral mechanisms, the proposed commission would have an emphasis on a service which promotes client access to self-help online support. It would also provide earlier intervention to reach clients at a timely stage to prevent escalation of issues. Engagement with organisations and agencies to deliver budget awareness sessions would also be encouraged, with an agile process envisaged to also include a service to the most vulnerable clients with a limited number of home visits.

If the recommendation is approved the planned actions would be:

- Provide a commission/procurement timetable for delivery of a Financial Well-being & Debt Advice Service
- Award and commence service delivery with successful provider(s) by 1 October 2017.

In order to facilitate this officers have already commenced work to prepare a service outline and specification for the procurement process.

6. Outcomes Linked to Sustainable Community Strategy and Corporate Priorities

The delivery of the service is linked to, and positively contributes to the corporate priority of a 'Borough of Opportunity', by directly delivering significant benefit for residents and the local economy.

7. Legal and Statutory Implications

The current arrangement was for the period to 30 September 2017 with no options to extend and there are no statutory requirements.

8. Equality Impact Implications

The loss of funding could impact on protected groups which have been identified in the Equalities and Risk Assessments undertaken in the service review (which are available on request). The new service design would reflect their needs.

9. Financial and Resource Implications

The budget for the proposed service for October 2017 to March 2018 is included as part of the Third Sector Commissioning funding from the Borough for 2017-18. Future budgets will be subject to the annual budget setting process.

10. Major Risks

If funding is not approved, there will be no contracted service, which will impact locally on residents, some who are vulnerable, facing difficulties dealing with debt, financial and benefit problems. Added to this is the resulting impact on officers and partners, and a need to signpost to other agencies.

11. List of Appendices

None.

12. Background Papers

Working papers held by officers responsible for undertaking engagement with providers.

13. Earlier Cabinet/Committee Resolutions

Report seeking approval for the current funding and review for future service delivery presented to Cabinet 22 March 2017.

DRAFT

NEWCASTLE-UNDER-LYME BOROUGH COUNCIL

**EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT TEAM'S REPORT TO THE
CABINET**

Date 19th July 2017

<u>REPORT TITLE</u>	Sports Provision in Kidsgrove
<u>Submitted by:</u>	Executive Director Operational Services
<u>Portfolio:</u>	Leisure Culture and Localism
<u>Ward(s) affected:</u>	All

Purpose of the Report

To consider a range of issues relating to the provision of sporting activities in the Kidsgrove area.

Recommendations

- i. That Cabinet note that due to the age and condition of the building it is no longer a viable to operate a service from this facility.
- ii. That in accordance with the spirit and intent of the District Deal Agreement, Cabinet continue to work closely with Staffordshire County Council to safeguard and secure control of the land that the existing centre occupies to facilitate a replacement sports facility and a joint approach to securing the initial capital investment.
- iii. That the Cabinet prioritises the re-provision in the local area of interim dry-side activities and receives an update report.
- iv. That Cabinet notes the progress made with negotiations with neighbouring local authorities and at its J2 facility for interim swimming pool use and continues those negotiations.
- v. That Cabinet note the progress made with consulting service users and local residents in respect of re-provision of interim facilities
- vi. That subject to the agreement of Full Council to the principle of re-provision of a sports centre in the Kidsgrove area, resources be secured to commission project support that examines options available and produces a funded business case for an affordable replacement local facility.
- vii. That should a community trust be successful in acquiring an interest in the building from its owners, it is proposed that the Council engages with the group in a positive and supportive way.
- viii. That a Stakeholders Consultation Group be established to help shape the planning of replacement facilities in the local area.

Reasons

To ensure that the sport and leisure needs of residents in the Kidsgrove area are properly

considered and that a plan is put in place to provide options for future re-provision of facilities to meet the future needs of the local community.

1.0 Background

1.1 History of the Sports Centre

Kidsgrove Sports Centre was commissioned, constructed and opened by Staffordshire County Council in 1976 as part of the then Clough Hall Secondary School. Since opening, the Sports Centre has been managed through a joint use agreement between the Staffordshire County Council, Newcastle Borough Council and Clough Hall School. A part refurbishment was carried out in 1999 which was part funded by Sport England and Staffordshire County Council.

1.2 Over the last 8 years the facility has been managed through a fixed term Joint Use Agreement between Newcastle Borough Council, Staffordshire County Council and the Governing Body of Clough Hall Technology School as a dual use centre, with the primary purpose of meeting the school's curriculum needs and maximising the commercial use of the centre by the local community.

1.3 The most recent Joint Use Agreement was completed in 2009 with the termination date of the end of March 2016. Prior to the expiry of that fixed period the Borough Council sought and secured a 12 month extension to that Agreement on the same terms and upon the expiry of that extension period again sought and secured a further 3 months extension from the partners, terminating on Friday 30th June 2017. The Borough Council had no remit to operate the centre beyond that point once the partners withdrew their support, therefore the centre ceased to operate from that later date.

1.4 The District Deal Agreement

In May 2015, following discussions with Staffordshire County Council, a successor agreement to the 2012 District Deal for Newcastle under Lyme, was signed between the Borough and County Councils. The District Deal 2 for Newcastle under Lyme is a key inter-authority agreement that sets out how by working together, benefits could be achieved for Newcastle borough's communities around two key strands: Place and Themes. Under the Place strand, it was agreed to work together towards the provision of a new sports centre and pool in Kidsgrove.

1.5 The vision stated was for this to be accessible to, and used by, all the community and be a genuine public health asset, as well as being the facility of choice for all schools in the area. It also agreed a joint approach to securing the initial capital investment. The District Deal 2 also linked this to Health and Wellbeing, committing to work with partners in the health community to optimise the sustainability of community recreation and leisure services through commissioning of health improvement programmes.

1.6 Successor Agreement

In early October 2016, in advance of the March 2017 Joint Agreement termination date, discussions commenced with SCC in respect of the future operation of the sports centre. The basis for this was to establish a new agreement, with SCC as the building owners for the continued operation of the centre on a shared cost and risk basis whilst further works on identifying a potential funding source for a replacement centre continued. This led to a formal request from the Borough Council to SCC for support with running costs post March 2017 being made in mid-December 2016.

- 1.7 To aid this process, the Council requested that SCC undertook a building survey to determine potential future liabilities. At this time, a request was also made by the Borough Council to SCC for support with essential expenditure where identified in the building survey, as well as previously requested running costs.

2.0 Issues

- 2.1 The building survey identified very significant repair and replacement liabilities due to the age and condition of the building.

The table below identifies the estimated costs of essential work (not refurbishment) to keep the centre open for up to 10 years as well as other essential and desirable works identified by your officers that improve the efficiency of the building and ensure its compliance with equalities standards:

Year Required	Building Condition	Building Efficiency/ FM Issues	Equalities Compliance	Total
2017/18	£404,911	£350,000	£50,000	£804,911
2018/19 and 2019/20	£286,615	£200,000	£50,000	£536,615
2020/21 to 2022/23	£357,587	£150,000		£507,587
2023/24 to 2026/27	£1,345,155			£1,345,155
Total	£2,389,268	£700,000	£100,000	£3,194,268

- 2.2 Following receipt of this information, the Council advised SCC that whilst it had some limited ability to meet limited repair costs, under any new cost sharing agreement, the Council could not afford to be left with all the maintenance liabilities for the centre on its own.
- 2.3 SCC subsequently advised the Council that they had no funding to support the existing facilities when the existing Agreement ran out after 31st March 2017 and made an offer of a 2 year lease on 'full repairing' basis or sale.

The effect of the latter would be that all building liabilities, risks and costs would transfer to the Council on its own. At this point the Council requested the partners to agree a further extension to the Agreement and this resulted in a further 3 month extension to Agreement to 30th June 2017.

2.4 Building Closure Announcement

On 19th May 2017 it was announced that the building condition survey revealed at least £2.4 million would need spending on the ageing centre over the next seven years and of that over £400,000 would need spending on the centre in the next year alone to repair and maintain it.

In view of the above and that the new Kings School building had opened complete with new sports hall and related sports facilities, making the Kidsgrove Leisure Centre building no longer required to fulfil their curriculum obligations, it was announced that all of these considerations had led to the decision to close the building.

- 2.5 In that announcement, Staffordshire County Council confirmed that this had not been an easy decision, but the age and condition of the building meant it is no longer a viable option.

Although an SCC investment of £220,000 was put into the building over four years ago, it was clear that there needed to be considerable investment to bring it up to standard. Given that the school no longer needed it and the County Council is not responsible for providing leisure facilities, SCC could not justify the investment.

2.6 Consultation on the Closure

The Council was unable to consult on the closure of the centre because the Council's occupation of the premises came to an end automatically at the end of the term set out in the joint use agreement between the County Council, Borough Council and School.

Attempts were made to secure a new agreement on a shared cost and risk basis that would have allowed for the continued operation of the centre.

Unfortunately, this became unfeasible as given that the school no longer needed the building, and the County Council is not responsible for providing leisure services, the County Council could not justify further investment in the building and the closure of the facility was announced. That being the case, at that point in time, there were no options for the Borough Council to consult on.

2.7 Petition

On 22nd June 2017 a petition was hand delivered to the Council. Under the Council's petition scheme, verification revealed that some but not all of the criteria were met.

Under the Council's Petitions Scheme, for a petition to be debated by the Full Council, when affecting more than two wards it needs to contain 1500 signatures. In this case there were 1189 names, 566 of which did not have a signature and a further 107 queries.

- 2.8 At the Cabinet meeting of 27th June 2017, where members of the public were present in respect to the impending closure of the centre, under questions to Cabinet, the Chair ruled that the two day rule would be waived and a representative was invited into the Chamber to address Cabinet.

Mr Lee Hartshorne, representing the Kidsgrove Sports Centre Action Group, addressed the Cabinet and handed over his contact details and a box containing views and comments from residents and service users which was received.

The Chair explained the current position with regard to the Sports Centre.

2.9 The Council's Capital Programme.

The Council has only been able to commit £500,000 capital expenditure in total for 2017/18 and had to defer £3.4m of additional pressures, which includes for example essential repairs to Council owned buildings, community centres, repairs to parks and open spaces.

- 2.10 Up to 2021/22 there is a forecast capital requirement of £12.9m, for which funding has not yet been identified which includes requirements under the following thematic headings:

- Improving housing £2.8m
- Investing in Community Facilities £3.8m
- Community Centres £0.6m

- Safeguarding Heritage £0.6m
- Investing for the future £2.7m
- Vehicles and Plant £2.4m

2.11 Funding for Kidsgrove Sports Centre is not included in the above amounts and therefore the cost of its replacement or refurbishment would be in addition to these sums.

In view of the above and the very significant future financial liabilities arising from the building condition survey in 2.1 above, at a time when the council's very limited capital resources are fully committed, the Council's position is one of being unable to fund the works required itself either in the short or medium term and therefore not being able to consider a lease or acquisition of the building on the terms offered.

2.12 Interim re-provision of Facilities

Following the announcement that the centre would close on 30th June 2017, a number of actions commenced as a matter of urgency to establish interim provision for sports activities for users of the centre, both for 'wet-side' swimming activities and 'dry-side' activities. Progress to date on this is as follows:

Memberships have been transferred over to Jubilee2 or members can opt to cancel without penalty. Many have also been signposted to other local facilities.

In the meantime a number of interim measures have been put in place, in particular the relocation of sports clubs, and others are still being explored. Specifically in relation to swimming the local swimming club and sub aqua club have re-located to New Horizons and Alsager Pool is being used to deliver curriculum swimming for schools from September 2017. Both these pools along with the one at Chesterton have enrolled children from Kidsgrove Sports Centre on swimming lessons in addition to the Council's Jubilee2.

The new sports facilities at Kings School are also being used. The school's Dance Studio is now host to The Performance Studios dance company, which hitherto met at the sports centre and the Governors have now drawn up a new Lettings policy and are making the school sports hall available to a variety of activities displaced from the Leisure Centre.

Swimming lessons have where possible been rescheduled at Jubilee2 or people have enrolled at other local swimming pools for lessons, with a proportion having the balance of their fees refunded. All regular sports club users have been relocated to other local facilities.

In a desire to maintain a local fitness offer in Kidsgrove several other local facilities have been considered, following this evaluation a proposal has been submitted to a local school for the dual use (community and education) of their sports facilities.

A consultation on interim facilities has been launched on 17th July and this will run for four weeks.

This will involve:-

- A survey will be available on the Council's website.
- Hard copies of the survey will be distributed to key points in Kidsgrove.
- Local councillors will be asked to help circulate hard copies of the survey.
- Interested parties such as former members of Kidsgrove sports centre, user groups etc. will be contacted directly and asked to complete the survey.
- The Council's social media channels will be used to promote this consultation.
- Posters with QR codes will be put in place at locations in Kidsgrove.

2.13 Longer Term re-provision of Local Sports Facilities

Significant progress has been made in this respect with the Leaders of Newcastle under Lyme and Staffordshire County Councils having met to reaffirm the commitment of the two authorities to work together to achieve replacement facilities in the spirit of the District Deal Agreement. A key achievement in this respect has been an agreement to make the land that the centre occupies available for the site of a replacement facility.

2.14 It is proposed to commission project support to identify the options available to the Council in re-providing an affordable local sports facility and prepare a funded delivery plan to achieve this. Subject to consultation with local residents, and service users, there is an aspiration to provide a 6 lane 25m pool, with associated gym and studio space. This project will include an evaluation of options for an efficient operating model for the future, including working with the private or charitable sectors

2.15 Your Officers are also aware that a community group has formed with the intention of a community trust being set up to re-open and manage the sports centre. As a first step, the group have submitted an application to the Council for the building to be placed on the register for Assets of Community Value. If the asset is admitted onto the Register, this will provide a period within which the group could explore the feasibility of purchasing and running the centre. Subsequently, if the group then acquire an interest from the owners of the building, it is proposed that the Council engage with the group in a positive and supportive way.

2.16 Consultation on Future Provision

The importance of consulting residents and users groups on available options moving forward is recognised both in respect of interim replacement facilities and when options for the longer term replacement of the sports centre are being developed.

2.17 A further consultation will also be carried out when options for longer term replacement sports facilities are being developed. The outcome of this consultation will be evaluated and used to help shape the future sports provision that is being considered.

3.0 Options

3.1 In Terms of Interim re-provision of Facilities:

1. Option 1 – Take no action

This option would not secure interim alternative sports and active lifestyles opportunities for the local community. This option is not recommended.

2. Option 2 - Prioritise the re-provision in the local area, on an interim basis, of the dry-side activities and that Cabinet notes the progress made with neighbouring local authorities and at its J2 facility for interim swimming pool use and continues those negotiations. This option is recommended.

3.2 In Terms of Future re-provision of Locally Based Facilities:

1. Option 1 – Take no action.

This option would not secure long term alternative sports and active lifestyles opportunities for the local community. This option is therefore not recommended.

2. Option 2 – Continue with the interim re-provision arrangements

This option would not secure long term alternative sports and active lifestyles opportunities for the local community. This option is therefore not recommended.

3. Option 3 - Commission a project to identify the options available to the Council in re-providing an affordable local sports facility and prepare a funded delivery plan to achieve this. Subject to consultation with local residents and service users, there is an aspiration to provide a 6 lane 25m pool, with associated gym and studio space.

Continue to work closely with Staffordshire County Council to safeguard the land that the existing centre occupies for a replacement facility in accordance with the District Deal Agreement and towards the provision of new facilities in Kidsgrove.

As this option has the potential to require significant expenditure it is proposed to seek the view of Full Council on whether it is minded to support in principle the re-provision of a sports centre in the Kidsgrove area.

This option ensures that the local community views are taken into account in the planning for future locally based re-provision of sports facilities and aspires to local people having access to a new sports centre which is accessible to and used by all the community as a genuine health asset and becomes the facility of choice for local schools in the area. This option is recommended.

4.0 Proposals

It is proposed that:

- a. That Cabinet note that due to the age and condition of the building it is no longer a viable to operate a service from this facility.
- b. That in accordance with the spirit and intent of the District Deal Agreement, Cabinet continue to work closely with Staffordshire County Council to safeguard and secure control of the land that the existing centre occupies to facilitate a replacement sports facility and a joint approach to securing the initial capital investment.
- c. That the Cabinet prioritises the re-provision in the local area of interim dry-side activities and receives an update report.
- d. That Cabinet notes the progress made with negotiations with neighbouring local authorities and at its J2 facility for interim swimming pool use and continues those negotiations.
- e. That Cabinet note the progress made with consulting service users and local residents in respect of re-provision of interim facilities
- f. That subject to the agreement of Full Council to the principle of re-provision of a sports centre in the Kidsgrove area, resources be secured to commission project support that examines options available and produces a funded business case for an affordable replacement local facility.
- g. That should a community trust be successful in acquiring an interest in the building from its owners, it is proposed that the Council engages with the group in a positive and supportive way.
- h. That a Stakeholders Consultation Group be established to help shape the planning of replacement facilities in the local area.

5.0 Reasons for Preferred Solution

5.1 To ensure that the sport and leisure needs of residents in the Kidsgrove area are properly considered and that a plan is put in place to provide options for future re-provision of facilities.

6.0 Links to Sustainable Community Strategy and Corporate Priorities

6.1 The recommendations contained in this report seek to achieve positive and sustainable health and wellbeing outcomes for the local community.

7.0 Legal and Statutory Implications

7.1 There is no statutory duty on the Council to provide sport and leisure facilities; however it has the power to and also the power of community leadership, introduced by the Local Government Act 2000, to lead, influence and support partner organisations to work to common goals to meet the needs and aspirations of their communities.

8.0 Equality Impact Assessment

8.1 An Equality Impact Assessment on the proposals set out in this report has been undertaken and is available on request. The Assessment shows a range of impacts associated with the closure and re-provision proposals that affect current and future service users.

9.0 Financial and Resource Implications

9.1 In 2016/17 Kidsgrove Sports Centre had a budget revenue requirement of £291,430 (including support service costs) however it under achieved against its budget by a further £179,222 (it should be noted that over the previous five financial years the average income shortfall was £170,000 per annum) and the school made a contribution of £90k which the Council had made provision for in 2017/18 to take the centre beyond the end of the joint use agreement. This equates to an additional £269,222 a year direct operational subsidy and has the effect of pushing the subsidy per visit to above £8.53 and annual revenue costs of over £500,000.

9.2 The costs to the Council of operating the centre over the last 5 years are as follows. Total expenditure (subsidy) by the Council, net of income, has therefore been **£2,266,128** over the past 5 financial years (this includes recharges and excludes expenditure from the joint reserve previously held with the school):

Financial Year	Actual Expenditure (Net of income)	Expenditure from Equipment Replacement Fund
2012/13	£454,775	£5,781
2013/14	£473,377	Nil
2014/15	£402,416	£4,790
2015/16	£433,356	£15,681
2016/17	£471,152	£4,800
Total	£2,235,076	£31,052

9.3 The options for interim re-provision of both swimming and dry-side facilities are currently being developed and the costs associated which flow from that work.

The options for future re-provision of a replacement facility will need to be assessed as part of detailed business case development. It will be necessary to commission a project to identify the options available to the Council in re-providing an affordable local sports facility and prepare a funded delivery plan to achieve this. Subject to consultation with local residents, and service users, there is an aspiration to provide a 6 lane 25m pool, with associated gym and studio space.

10.0 Major Risks

10.1 This approach seeks to manage the risks for the Council, public, stakeholders and potential funders of future facilities in the local area.

There are a number of key risks associated with the proposals contained within this report as follows:

- Risk of not securing interim sports facilities suitable to meet demand due to unavailability of suitable premises
- Risk of delays in providing replacement facilities
- Risk of not achieving positive engagement with residents and service users on service design
- Risk of not securing funding for replacement facilities.

10.2 A risk assessment has also been undertaken which considered the risks that the Council would have been exposed to if it were to continue to operate the building in isolation of the previous partners after the end of June 2017. The assessment identified significant risks for the Council if it were to take over sole responsibility for the building. Cabinet are advised that without significant resources it is not possible to adequately mitigate these risks. A copy of this is available on request.

The risks fall into three broad categories:

- Health and Safety
- Equality
- Financial

11.0 Key Decision Information

11.1 This matter is a key decision and as such has been included on the Councils Forward Plan.

12.0 Earlier Cabinet Resolutions

- 12.1 14th November 2012
- 12.2 23rd July 2014
- 12.3 10th December 2014

13.0 List of Appendices

13.1 Draft Terms of Reference for the Kidsgrove Sports Centre Working Group.

14.0 Background Papers

14.1 Risk Assessment for the proposals contained in this report

- 14.2 Risk Assessment for the potential risks of sole operation.
- 14.3 Equalities Impact Assessment
- 14.4 Joint Use Agreement for the joint use of the leisure centre located at Clough Hall Technology School in the County of Staffordshire.

15.0 Management Sign-Off

Each of the designated boxes need to be signed off and dated before going to Executive Director/Corporate Service Manager for sign off.

	Signed	Dated
Financial Implications Discussed and Agreed		
Risk Implications Discussed and Agreed		
Legal Implications Discussed and Agreed		
Equalities Implications Discussed and Agreed		
H.R. Implications Discussed and Agreed		
ICT Implications Discussed and Agreed		
Report Agreed by: Executive Director/ Head of Service		

NEWCASTLE-UNDER-LYME BOROUGH COUNCIL

EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT TEAM'S REPORT TO CABINET

Date 19th July 2017

1. **HEADING** Lyme Valley car parking
- Submitted by:** Engineering Manager
- Portfolio:** Town Centres, Property and Business
- Ward(s) affected:** Town

Purpose of the Report

To outline the proposals to improve car parking at the Lyme Valley, A34 car park.

Recommendations

- (a) To approve the proposals to commence consultation on the Traffic Regulation Order to introduce parking management on the Lyme Valley car park situated off the A34, both in the Borough's and Stoke City Council's administrative areas and any associated agreements.
- (b) To authorise the Executive Director for Regeneration and Development in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Town Centres Property and Business to consider the consultation responses and adopt the Traffic Regulation Order and implement the enforcement arising.

Reasons

The Council receives regular and increasing numbers of complaints about the parking problems at the Lyme Valley Car parks as recreational users of the Lyme Valley are unable to park due to lack of spaces and cars blocking the access to the car park on the A34. It is therefore appropriate that the Council considers introducing car park management through pay and display parking and enforcement of the double yellow lines on the access road to the car park on A34.

1. **Background**

- 1.1 The Council has to operate car parks within the legislative framework provided by the Traffic Management Act. Traffic Regulation Orders can be made to define the operating requirements of each car park. This enables the Council to set operating times and charges if required. The Council is then bound to manage the car park in line with the Traffic Management Act.
- 1.2 The Council owns three public car parks on the Lyme Valley. These are primarily used for members of the public to access the leisure opportunities at Lyme Valley. The sites have not however had any restrictions placed upon them and therefore due to its close proximity to the town centre and in particular the hospital, cars are being parked for the majority of the day both in the car parks and on the access at the car park off the A34.
- 1.3 Whilst the car parks are owned by the Council the car park off the A34 is within Stoke-on-Trent's administrative boundary therefore the Traffic Regulation Order would have to be made by Stoke-on-Trent City Council. The access to the car park is however within the Borough Council's administrative boundary and therefore the Borough Council would be

required to have a separate Traffic Regulation Order for the access restrictions. Clearly it is beneficial that the Traffic Regulation Orders for both the car park and access route be produced to take into account of the key issues.

2. **Issues**

- 2.1 The key issue is to consider the purpose of the Council's car parking provision at Lyme Valley (the A34 car park) and to review the mechanisms in place to influence its use. In summary Members are asked to decide whether it should encourage short stays (thereby targeting leisure users) or to enable people to park all day and then walk into the town centre or hospital (both of which are nearby).
- 2.2 One of the Council's key priorities is to support a healthy and active community and therefore access to the outdoor recreational area of Lyme Valley is important. To support usage by Lyme Valley users it would be beneficial to encourage short stay and therefore a turnover of cars using the spaces. This is especially important with the car park off the A34 where both the access road and the car park area are full with cars causing a nuisance and a hazard to users. This could be done through a charging policy which could limit stays to, say 2 hours and under.
- 2.3 In addition to the above comments it is considered reasonable to expect that both the town centre and hospital sites are adequately provided for in terms of car parking provision for their respective users.

3. **Proposal and Reasons for Preferred Solution**

- 3.1 It is proposed that the current situation with cars parking all day for free including blocking the access road is not acceptable in the long term. It is proposed therefore to introduce charging, this will provide a turnover of cars and some space availability for drivers arriving on the car park. To enforce this the Council will need to have a mechanism for recording the length of time for which a car has been parked and appropriate enforcement through Civil Enforcement Officers. As outlined above the enforcement would need to be in line with a Traffic Regulation Order made by Stoke-on-Trent City Council It therefore makes sense to consider using Stoke-on-Trent's Civil Enforcement Officers to undertaking the enforcement role.
- 3.3 Subject to Cabinet views it would be proposed to enter into an agreement with Stoke-on-Trent City Council, draft the Traffic Regulations Orders, undertake the statutory public consultation of 21 days and subject to the consultation responses make the order. It is proposed that this is done though delegated approval, however, if significant objections were raised then a further report would be submitted to Cabinet.
- 3.4 Time limited free parking period would require additional enforcement visits. To enable effective management of the A34-Lyme valley car park it would require a ticket machine to be installed. In order to optimise use by recreational users' the tariffs would be free for up to 2 hours and £6.00 up to 12 hours.
- 3.5 Due to potential displacement it is proposed that the usage of the other two car parks in the Lyme Valley area (i.e. adjacent to the stadium and to the rear of Homebase) be monitored.

4. **Outcomes Linked to Sustainable Community Strategy and Corporate Priorities**

4.1 Providing access to healthy and active lifestyles is key priority for the Council.

5. **Legal and Statutory Implications**

5.1 The Council would be required to operate the car park in accordance with the Traffic Management Act.

6. **Equality Impact Assessment**

6.1 Charging will not affect the protected equality groups as registered disabled users will still be eligible for free parking in line with the overall Council car park fees and charges.

7. **Financial and Resource Implications**

7.1 For the management to be effective enforcement would need to be every day. The cost for Stoke-on-Trent Council to undertake this on our behalf would be about £6,240 per annum. It would be proposed to have a 2 week warning period whereby warning notices are placed on car windscreens to warn drivers that the new time restrictions are in place.

7.2 There would need to be cash collections from the machines, this will cost £30 per week and then 40p cash handling for every £100 collected.

7.3 Three new parking machines would need to be purchased at an approximate cost of £4,000 each including installation and a maintenance cost of £350 per year. Neither of these costs have been budgeted for and would require capital and revenue funding. Therefore it is proposed that [the £12k will be funded via the first £12k of income that the Council receives from the implementation of the new charges.](#)

7.4 The income from the car parks would be dependent on the level of charges proposed, taking account of the fact that the Council is attempting to promote the short term nature of the leisure users compared to all day parking. It is proposed to provide for a nil charge for stays up to 2 hours and £6.00 up to 12 hours. Parking would be free to Blue Badge Holders subject to a maximum stay of 3 hours.

7.5 Should a Penalty Charge Notice be issued the charge is £50, if paid within 14 days this is reduced to £25

8. **Major Risks**

8.1 There main risk is reputational should no changes be made to the car parking restrictions as local users are likely to make more complaints about the situation. There are approximately 6 complaints per month. It should also be noted that the cars blocking the access road is also affecting the access to the neighbouring commercial business. There is a risk that the Council will not achieve at least a break-even financial position.

9. **Key Decision Information**

9.1 This is not a key decision.

10. **Earlier Cabinet/Committee Resolutions**

10.1 None.

11. **List of Appendices**

11.1 None.

12. **Background Papers**

12.1 None.

NEWCASTLE-UNDER-LYME BOROUGH COUNCIL
EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT TEAM'S REPORT TO THE
CABINET

Date 19th July 2017

REPORT TITLE: Introduction of Hybrid Mail for Postal Services

Submitted by: Executive Director - Resources & Support Services

Portfolio: Finance, IT and Customer

Ward(s) affected: Non specific

Purpose of the Report

To seek Cabinet approval to enter into a four year contract with PSL Print Management Ltd, based on the collaborative procurement process undertaken by Stoke on Trent City Council for the delivery of 'hybrid mail' services following a pilot to determine the viability of a "hybrid mail" solution for postal items to support the move to Castle House.

Recommendation

That the Council enter into a four year contract with PSL Print Management Ltd for the delivery of 'hybrid mail' services.

Reasons

- (a) The introduction of a 'hybrid mail' solution supports the Council's Digital Delivery and Agile working programmes;
- (b) The pilot has proved successful in all areas involved, and the solution offers significant benefits in terms of resource and savings, whilst providing the opportunity to introduce modern and more efficient ways of working.

1. Background

- 1.1. The Council has utilised UK Mail for the collection, transport and delivery of all its outbound mail since 2013, with an annual expenditure in the region of £97,000 per annum on postal services. This expenditure is spread across three main areas within the Council: Central Mail Services (Customer Services), Revenues & Benefits, Elections and Licensing.

2. Business Requirements

- 2.1 Hybrid mail is mail that is delivered using a combination of electronic and physical delivery. In effect this means posting letters directly from a personal computer. This digital data is then transformed into physical letter items at a distribution print centre at a central location by the provider. Hybrid Mail does not completely replace a corporate postal service, as there is still a requirement for parcel deliveries from time to time.

2.2 The key drivers for 'hybrid mail' are:-

- Supports the Council's agile working programme, with officers being able to release mail from a home working environment without the need to print;
- Supports the EDRM (Electronic Document Records Management) programme by increasing the managed electronic storage whilst reducing paper output;
- Increased security and reduced risk, given the reduction in paper handling;
- Potential for a reduction / elimination of equipment e.g. mail folder inserter (envelope stuffers); ageing high volume printers (Revenues & Benefits); HV digital print machines, franking machine;
- Supports the changing function and processes of the post room at Castle House;
- Potential reduction in the production of pre-printed stationery.

2.3 The benefits of 'hybrid mail' have been investigated by undertaking a pilot (proof of concept) of 'hybrid mail' in identified service areas; and to assess the options available to support the procurement and full implementation of a solution should suitable benefits and savings be identified from the pilot. Having reviewed a number of offers of support, i-Mail (part of the UK Mail Group) was the 'hybrid mail' solution chosen.

3. Outcome of the Pilot / Proof of Concept

3.1 The pilot was undertaken to ensure that the solution had no adverse impact on any of the software and hardware currently being used by the officers in Environmental Services, Revenues and Benefits and Customer Services. During the initial pilot, 93 users were given access and a total of 7,882 items of mail were sent via 'hybrid mail'. However, the pilot timeline was extended as it was considered important to prove that 'hybrid mail' could manage the annual Council Tax billing exercise.

3.2 The Council's major software systems were thoroughly tested for suitability and compatibility with the pilot solution. The solution has proved successful in all areas tested. Importantly, officers utilised 'hybrid mail' for the issuing and despatch of annual Council Tax bills successfully handling over 54,000 bills.

3.3 The solution provided a greater level of information security given the decrease in paper handling.

3.4 The only postal items identified by officers as part of the pilot which cannot be sent via Hybrid Mail are parcels.

4 Procurement Contract Options Considered

4.1. Officers have reviewed the following procurement options available:

- 1) Open Market Tender – (OJEU);
- 2) Wider Collaboration – with neighbouring District Councils; however, this is driven by the pace of other partners;
- 3) Identification of a suitable framework and run a further competition (Crown Commercial Service framework RM1063) – Lot 3 offers a 'hybrid mail' offsite solution containing 20 potential service providers);
- 4) The option to join the Birmingham City Council 'hybrid mail' service contract. This contract is in its infancy and there is little evidence shown of delivery;
- 5) Direct award under the Stoke-on-Trent City Council Contract (the Borough Council having been named in the OJEU notice has the option to award a contract to the successful provider; PSL Management Print LTD).

4.2. Officers have reviewed the procurement options available - including the associated costs - obtained references from local users, undertaken site visits and worked closely with the Council's Procurement Officer throughout the process.

4.3 It is recommended that Cabinet approve option 5 – that is the establishment of a four (4) year contract with PSL Print Management Ltd, based on the collaborative procurement process undertaken by Stoke-on-Trent City Council.

5. Reasons for the Preferred Option

5.1 The ability to contract directly with PSL Print Management Ltd without the need for a procurement process as the Borough Council were named on the Stoke-on-Trent City Council contract and contract award notice.

5.2 From a cost perspective and in comparison with other “hybrid mail” providers, PSL Print Management Ltd offer a significant saving to the Council.

5.3 Neighbouring authorities are utilising this option with Staffordshire Moorlands District Council having recently used PSL for their annual council tax billing. Both Stoke-on-Trent City Council and Staffordshire Moorlands have given extremely positive reports concerning PSL's performance.

6. Outcomes Linked to Corporate Priorities

6.1 The outcome supports becoming a cooperative council delivering high quality community driven services, through providing a postal solution that maintains and supports sustainable communications with our community on behalf of the Authority.

7. Legal and Statutory Implications

7.1 The recommendation is made in accordance with the Council's internal rules set out in the Constitution and with the European Procurement Rules and the UK regulations.

8. Equality Impact Assessment

8.1 An equalities impact assessment was undertaken in 2013, prior to the original award of the contract with UK Mail. There have been no significant changes since then, however a review will be undertaken.

9. Financial and Resource Implications

9.1 There will be significant savings from the introduction of “hybrid mail” both from a reduction in actual postal costs estimated to be a minimum of £15,000 per annum and also the freeing up of officer time to focus on other areas of work. There will also be savings in paper, printing and envelopes. Utilising Stoke-on-Trent City Council's procurement process has also resulted in savings in officer time due to not having to go through a full open market tender.

10. Major Risks

- 10.1 There is always the risk that the appointed service provider for the Mail Collection and Delivery (Outbound Physical Mail), contract could make a mistake in the delivery of the service provision but this will be mitigated by having robust procedures and contractual provisions in place.
- 10.2 The appointed service provider for the Mail Collection and Delivery (Outbound Physical Mail) as identified in the preferred option will also still have to hand over the Council's post to Royal Mail to deliver the "final mile", and from this point onwards post is difficult to track.
- 11. **Key Decision Information**
- 11.1 Due to the annual cost of the service this is a key decision and was included in the Cabinet's Forward Plan for the period in which the meeting is to take place.