

Bridging the Gap Theme		Maximising Income								
Bridging the Gap Proposal:		Income Recovery						Ref:		
Executive Portfolio Sponsor:		Councillor Nigel Daniels, Leader of the Council								
Officer Proposal Sponsor:		Rhian Hayden, Chief Officer Resources								
Impact on other Portfolios:		Crosscutting proposals across various income budgets								
Delivery in:	2020/21		2021/22		2022/23		2023/24		2024/25	
Values (low – high)	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
	50	100								
Strategic Business Review:										
<p>The scope of the review is to review current income recovery activities to ensure best / efficient practices are in place to ensure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Income is maximised • Recovery policies are appropriate & include early intervention actions • Customers have easy access to a variety of payment methods including direct debit & other electronic means • Payment in advance of service delivery (where appropriate) to minimise administration costs of issuing invoices and subsequent recovery costs • Use of technology is maximised • Costs of collection is reduced <p>For Council Tax, Housing Benefits & Sundry Accounts current levels of debt, historic write off of debts and debtor profiles have been analysed (against ACORN classifications) to identify potential measures that could be implemented to minimise debt. This analysis has identified a strong correlation between those households with Council debt with those geographical areas classified as having moderate means, striving families & struggling estates.</p> <p>Discussions with external stakeholders has also highlighted an increased number of BG residents approaching them for money management & debt advice – suggesting that some families are struggling to pay their bills.</p> <p>Current systems and operating policies are also being reviewed to measure their appropriateness and what changes can be implemented to improve efficiency of the activity.</p> <p>Visits to other LA's have taken place – by and large collection practices are very similar.</p> <p>Some process / procedural differences have been identified which may improve the efficiency of collection activity.</p>										
<p>Opportunities identified:</p> <p>Potential opportunities identified that give indicative figures referenced above</p>										
<p>To support residents it is proposed that working with partners the Council:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • take a proactive approach to enable Blaenau Gwent residents to maximize their income, by advising them of potential entitlements e.g. Universal Credit, Pension Credit, Council Tax Reduction Scheme • encourage struggling individuals to seek advice and support <p>To identify and test the most suitable method of engagement / support with residents a pilot scheme is to be implemented within the Flying Start Hub in Cefn Golau</p> <p>Colleagues within Flying Start, Housing Benefit & Revenues will develop the potential approaches and test their effectiveness prior to roll out further.</p>										
<p>This could increase in year council tax collection rate (potential one year cash flow benefit).</p>										

<p>Develop Corporate Income Recovery Policy Review CTRS policy and backdating arrangements Improve efficiency of collection processes to 1)Reduce levels of write off 2) Reduce administration costs. Areas already identified are:-</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing payment in advance of service delivery (where appropriate) • implementing an online self-serve module for customers • encourage greater take up of direct debits or other electronic payment methods • Allocate Council Tax payments to current debt rather than past debt 	
<p>The above changes should enable resource efficiencies to be made.</p>	
<p>Challenges and risks What needs to happen to realise the opportunities and stretch the impact to deliver phases 5 - 8? Challenges : The Income Recovery Strategic Business Review is closely linked to the Fees & Charges Strategic Business Review. Householders to be supported to help them manage & meet their liabilities – this may involve signposting to other organisations or identifying potential entitlements such as CTRS etc. Review of CTRS policy to ensure backdating arrangements are appropriate. Increased use of digital means to correspond / interact with customers.</p> <p>Risks: Increased entitlement to CTRS may result in a cost pressure for that budget.</p>	
<p>Invest to save options: What additional capacity /investment would further mitigate the risks and maximise the opportunities? How would this investment be set off by additional savings or cost avoidance? None identified currently.</p>	
<p>Actions: What will happen during phases 6 – 8 including, involvement of Executive sponsor. Continued review of Council Tax Collection Activities (with CIPFA) CTRS Policy to reviewed / revised Corporate Income recovery Policy to be developed Resident support pilot to be implemented</p>	
Executive decisions:	Revised / New policies to be introduced
Scrutiny Route:	Corporate Overview Scrutiny – Autumn 2019
Consultation:	Revised / New Policy development
EqIA:	To be undertaken during policy revision / development