

THE VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL

CABINET: 4TH DECEMBER, 2017

REFERENCE FROM COMMUNITY LIAISON COMMITTEE: 18TH OCTOBER, 2017

“403 INFORMATION ON CARE FIRST FOR TOWN AND COMMUNITY COUNCILS –

The Corporate Health and Safety Officer, in commencing the presentation, advised that the new employee assistance programme had been introduced on 1st June, 2016 and that counselling was available to all employees 24 hours per day, 365 days a year. The cost to the Council was £1.54 per employee per annum, with the contact telephone number being 0800 174319. Care First provided a number of services including telephone counselling, face to face counselling, information services, lifestyle and Zest applications, etc. There were over 5,600 employees in the Vale and the total cost of the service was £8,500 for the year.

With specific reference to telephone counselling, Committee was informed that trained counsellors were on hand and the facility could be offered in Welsh and was accessed via a free phone number. For face-to-face counselling, following an assessment up to six sessions were available. Information services provided advice, support and information on any real life crisis including finances, health and family etc.

For further information, Members were advised to contact Andrea Davies or Nicky Johns at the following e-mail addresses ardavies@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk and njohns@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk and telephone number 01446 709361.

Following the presentation, Members queried as a number of Town and Community Councils had only a small amount of staff working for them, whether employees could be identified. In response, the Corporate Health and Safety Officer advised that having looked at the reports that she had received to date she had no idea who the people receiving counselling were, the information only detailed the number of new clients per month and how many had registered (for Lifestyle/Zest). However, a number of Members considered that due to the very small numbers in Community Councils, it would not be difficult to narrow down the information and identify the member of staff and therefore sought assurance on the matter from the organisation. The Corporate Health and Safety Officer confirmed that the report identified numbers per Directorate and that Town and Community Councils would be included as another ‘Directorate’. If all Town and Community Councils opted in it would be difficult for individuals to be identified.

With regard to face-to-face consultation and whether staff had to travel the Committee was advised that counsellors could go to the home of the person or an independent venue could be arranged within around 20 minutes of where they lived.

The representative from Barry Town Council advised that his Council was interested in exploring the service and requested that Ms. Davies contact Emily Forbes, the Clerk.

Following a query as to whether there was a proposal to extend the service to Councillors as well as employees, the Corporate Health and Safety Officer agreed to report back to the Committee with more detailed information. She also advised that she would be providing the information to all Town and Community Councils, with the Chair urging all Councils to be involved in the process so that they were all aware of the scheme and could take advantage of the service for their employees when appropriate.

Following a query as to the level of uptake, Committee was informed that for the last quarter 20 new clients had registered and there had been 30 face-to-face sessions that had taken place. Although the uptake had not been a massive increase compared with the previous year it had increased significantly.

A number of Members, considering that it was a very important service, suggested that it would be more appropriate for an opt-in policy to be established.

Having fully considered the report and the comments made by Members of the Committee, it was subsequently unanimously

AGREED –

- (1) T H A T the service be rolled out to all Town and Community Councils with an opt-in approach being established.
- (2) T H A T the recommendation be referred to Cabinet for approval.

Reason for recommendations

(1&2) Following agreement at the meeting and to seek Cabinet approval.”