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Tuesday, 4 October 2022

Dear Councillor

INDIVIDUAL CABINET MEMBER DECISIONS

Notice is hereby given that the following decisions made by a member of the cabinet will be made on Wednesday, 12 October 2022.

1. **ENDING LIBRARY FINES**

1 - 18

Yours sincerely,

Paul Matthews
Chief Executive

CABINET PORTFOLIOS

County Councillor	Area of Responsibility	Ward
Mary Ann Brocklesby	<p>Leader Lead Officer – Paul Matthews, Matthew Gatehouse</p> <p>Whole Authority Strategy and Direction Whole authority performance review and evaluation Cardiff City Region Joint Cabinet Regional working Government relations WLGA, LGA and Public Service Board</p>	Llanelly
Paul Griffiths	<p>Cabinet Member for a Sustainable Economy and Deputy Leader Lead Officer – Frances O'Brien</p> <p>Economic resilience and Sustainability focus towards foundational economy Local Development Plan and Strategic Development Plan Town Centre and neighbourhood investment and Stewardship Development Management and Building Control Skills and Employment including green jobs and apprenticeships Broadband connectivity Trading Standards, Environmental Health, Public Health, Licensing</p>	Chepstow Castle & Larkfield
Rachel Garrick	<p>Cabinet Member for Resources Lead Officers – Peter Davies, Frances O'Brien, Matthew Phillips, Jane Rodgers</p> <p>Finance Developing and proposing the budget to Council Digital and Information technology Human Resources, Payroll, Health and Safety Strategic Procurement – promoting localism Land and Buildings Property Maintenance and management Fleet Management Emergency Planning</p>	Caldicot Castle

Martyn Groucutt	<p>Cabinet Member for Education Lead Officers – Will McLean, Ian Saunders</p> <p>Early Years Education All age statutory education Additional learning needs / Inclusion Post 16 and adult education School Standards & Improvement Community learning 21st Century Schools Programme Youth service</p>	Lansdown
Sara Burch	<p>Cabinet Member for Inclusive and Active Communities Lead Officers – Frances O'Brien, Ian Saunders, Jane Rodgers, Matthew Gatehouse</p> <p>Affordable Housing Strategy Homelessness Community Safety Active Travel Leisure Centres Play and Sport Tourist Information, Museums, Theatres, Attractions</p>	Cantref
Tudor Thomas	<p>Cabinet Member for Social Care, Safeguarding and Accessible Health Services Lead Officer – Jane Rodgers</p> <p>Children's services Fostering & adoption Youth Offending Service Adult Services Whole authority safeguarding (children and adults) Disabilities Mental Health and wellbeing Relationships with health providers and access to health provision</p>	Park
Catrin Maby	<p>Cabinet Member for Climate Change and the Environment Lead Officer – Frances O'Brien, Matthew Gatehouse</p> <p>Decarbonisation Transport Planning Local Food production, consumption and procurement including agroforestry and local horticulture Traffic network planning Public Transport Highways including trunk roads Pavements and back lanes Flood alleviation, management and recovery, river quality</p>	Drybridge

	<p>Waste management Street care, litter and public spaces Countryside, Biodiversity and public rights of way including parks and open spaces Public conveniences</p>	
Catherine Fookes	<p>Cabinet Member for Equalities and Engagement</p> <p>Lead Officers – Frances O’Brien, Matt Phillips, Matthew Gatehouse</p> <p>Community inequality (health, income, nutrition, disadvantage, discrimination, isolation) Benefits Welsh language Democracy promotion and citizen engagement Community Hubs and Contact Centre Customer service and citizen experience Communications, public relations, marketing Working with voluntary organisations Registrars Service Electoral Services Constitution Review Ethics and Standards</p>	Town

Aims and Values of Monmouthshire County Council

Our purpose

Building Sustainable and Resilient Communities

Objectives we are working towards

- Giving people the best possible start in life
- A thriving and connected county
- Maximise the Potential of the natural and built environment
- Lifelong well-being
- A future focused council

Our Values

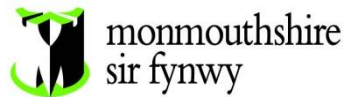
Openness. We are open and honest. People have the chance to get involved in decisions that affect them, tell us what matters and do things for themselves/their communities. If we cannot do something to help, we'll say so; if it will take a while to get the answer we'll explain why; if we can't answer immediately we'll try to connect you to the people who can help – building trust and engagement is a key foundation.

Fairness. We provide fair chances, to help people and communities thrive. If something does not seem fair, we will listen and help explain why. We will always try to treat everyone fairly and consistently. We cannot always make everyone happy, but will commit to listening and explaining why we did what we did.

Flexibility. We will continue to change and be flexible to enable delivery of the most effective and efficient services. This means a genuine commitment to working with everyone to embrace new ways of working.

Teamwork. We will work with you and our partners to support and inspire everyone to get involved so we can achieve great things together. We don't see ourselves as the 'fixers' or problem-solvers, but we will make the best of the ideas, assets and resources available to make sure we do the things that most positively impact our people and places.

Kindness: We will show kindness to all those we work with putting the importance of relationships and the connections we have with one another at the heart of all interactions.



SUBJECT: ENDING LIBRARY FINES

MEETING: Individual Cabinet Member Decision – Cllr Catherine Fookes

DATE: 12 October 2022

DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED: All

1. PURPOSE:

- 1.1 To remove social and economic barriers to the use of public libraries through the removal of fines for overdue books.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That the practice of charging of library fines for overdue books is ended with immediate effect to ensure that money does not present a barrier to people being able to access this important service.

3. KEY POINTS:

- 3.1 Libraries provide everyone with the opportunity to access information, resources, activities and cultural opportunities. They are places of learning and enjoyment, enabling people to come together and encouraging them to be active, healthy and engaged. Like many of our most treasured public services they are free at the point of use.
- 3.2 Historically, library fines were applied to encourage the timely return of books with the money raised used to cover the costs of sending printed overdue reminders to customers.. Email and text alerts have replaced printed notices and customers are given the option to renew online, by telephone or in person at one of the libraries which reduces transaction costs.
- 3.3 There is a growing movement in the UK and globally to remove the use of fines. Research has highlighted that these can result in the loss of members and non-return of books where fines have built to a level where they impact some of the most vulnerable and economically disadvantaged citizens. At a time when so many are struggling with finances we need to remove the risk that this could be seen as a barrier to people accessing this valuable public service.
- 3.4 Fines have not yet been re-introduced following suspension in March 2020 during the pandemic. In addition to this any unpaid fines were removed from customer accounts and several “book amnesty” events have been promoted in hubs, this has resulted in the return of many books that were previously out of circulation. In doing this we have sent a strong message to our customers that their presence by far offers more value than the principle of fines and fines therefore are counter-productive. In turn this results in increased stock circulation and customer retention.

- 3.5 Evidence suggests that fines are a barrier to members returning items and often people who are financially vulnerable will be discouraged from visiting libraries. In Monmouthshire, where the service is part of community hubs, the gateway to help and advice, we must do all we can to remove barriers to accessing services. .

EQUALITY AND FUTURE GENERATIONS EVALUATION (INCLUDES SOCIAL JUSTICE, SAFEGUARDING AND CORPORATE PARENTING):

- 4.1 Library fines directly impact equality, since fines are more likely to fall upon citizens who are less digitally connected and therefore unable to pick up overdue SMS and email alerts. Those with ease of access to own technology will be likely to obtain frequent reminders and updates and so will in turn find it easier to renew issues and avoid fines.
- 4.2 Fines are also a significant barrier to library use for our citizens who are financially vulnerable with loss of opportunities to learning, literacy, well-being and social engagement.

5 OPTIONS APPRAISAL

- 5.1 The two clear options are either to continue with fines or not. The only inclusive and fair option is to stop fines. This option has no negative financial impact for the council and benefits our whole communities.

6 EVALUATION CRITERIA:

- 6.1 Evaluation is not required.

7 REASONS:

To ensure that Monmouthshire Libraries are inclusive learning and well-being spaces for all.

8 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

In the three years leading up to the Covid19 closure the income accrued from library fines in total amounted to £21,408,96. These were largely paid in cash and the administrative and security costs associated with banking and collection marginally exceeded the income.

It is therefore not financially viable to take fines as the cost to service outweighs the income accrued. In addition, the budget set by Council for 2022-23 reduced the pressure on community hubs to generate income meaning that the pressure to generate revenue from fines has been removed.

9 CONSULTEES:

Cabinet
Strategic Leadership Team

10 BACKGROUND PAPERS:

None

11 AUTHOR:

Cheryl Haskell, Strategic Head of Service Monmouthshire Libraries

12 CONTACT DETAILS:

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Integrated Impact Assessment document

(incorporating Equalities, Future Generations, Welsh Language and Socio Economic Duty)

<p>Name of the Officer: Cheryl Haskell</p> <p>Phone no: 077454 313890</p> <p>E-mail:</p>	<p>Please give a brief description of the aims of the proposal:</p> <p>To remove social and economic barriers to use of public libraries through the removal of fines for overdue books</p>
<p>Name of Service area: Monmouthshire Community Hubs & Library Service</p>	<p>Date: 12/10/2022</p>

4 Are your proposals going to affect any people or groups of people with protected characteristics? Please explain the impact, the evidence you have used and any action you are taking below.

Protected Characteristics	Describe any positive impacts your proposal has on the protected characteristic	Describe any negative impacts your proposal has on the protected characteristic	What has been/will be done to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
Age	With regards to notification of overdue books and fines are via text and email. It is likely that if fewer older people have less access to digital technology they may be disadvantaged in comparison to younger people in receiving notice of overdue books and fines. Children are unaffected.	We presently don't have data that would enable us to measure the impact of this.	Proposal to remove fines for overdue books will remove the risk of non notification and fines.

Protected Characteristics	Describe any positive impacts your proposal has on the protected characteristic	Describe any negative impacts your proposal has on the protected characteristic	What has been/will be done to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
Disability	Fines may negatively impact people with disability where fear may lead to them not coming into the service for advice and support with council enquiries that assist their wellbeing. This is in addition to free access to computers that allow access to benefits, work and learning opportunities.	We presently don't have data that would enable us to measure the impact of this.	Proposal to remove fines for overdue books will remove the risk of non notification and fines.
Gender reassignment	At this stage no positive or negative impact has been identified on this group	We presently don't have data that would enable us to measure the impact of this.	At this stage no positive or negative impact has been identified on this group.
Marriage or civil partnership	At this stage no positive or negative impact has been identified on this group	We presently don't have data that would enable us to measure the impact of this.	At this stage no positive or negative impact has been identified on this group.
Pregnancy or maternity	Libraries provide a space for women who are pregnant and young parents to meet, socialize and connect with other parents and children. Library fines could prevent pregnant mums to be and young parents from using the services where fines prove to be prohibitive.	We presently don't have data that would enable us to measure the impact of this.	Proposal to remove fines for overdue books will remove the risk of non notification and fines.
Race	.Fines may impact race where notifications for overdue books are not provided in a chosen language as this could inhibit reading and understanding.	We presently don't have data that would enable us to measure the impact of this.	Proposal to remove fines for overdue books will remove the risk of non notification and fines.

Protected Characteristics	Describe any positive impacts your proposal has on the protected characteristic	Describe any negative impacts your proposal has on the protected characteristic	What has been/will be done to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
Religion or Belief	At this stage no positive or negative impact has been identified on this group	We presently don't have data that would enable us to measure the impact of this.	At this stage no positive or negative impact has been identified on this group.
Sex	At this stage no positive or negative impact has been identified on this group	We presently don't have data that would enable us to measure the impact of this.	At this stage no positive or negative impact has been identified on this group.
Sexual Orientation	At this stage no positive or negative impact has been identified on this group	We presently don't have data that would enable us to measure the impact of this.	At this stage no positive or negative impact has been identified on this group.

The Socio-economic Duty and Social Justice

The Socio-economic Duty requires public bodies to have due regard to the need to reduce inequalities of outcome which result from socio-economic disadvantage when taking key decisions This duty aligns with our commitment as an authority to Social Justice.

	Describe any positive impacts your proposal has in respect of people suffering socio economic disadvantage	Describe any negative impacts your proposal has in respect of people suffering socio economic disadvantage.	What has been/will be done to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?

Socio-economic Duty and Social Justice	Proposal to remove fines will improve outcomes financially for people who are otherwise disadvantaged socially and economically as it negates the impact of them having to pay for overdue books. In turn people in this group are more likely to require support to access services that support their well-being and therefore if they do not feel threatened by library debt would not be afraid to return for support.	We do not presently hold data that would demonstrate positive or negative impact in this group.	Proposal report to remove fines
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3. Policy making and the Welsh language.

How does your proposal impact on the following aspects of the Council's Welsh Language Standards:	Describe the positive impacts of this proposal	Describe the negative impacts of this proposal	What has been/will be done to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts
<p>Policy Making</p> <p>Effects on the use of the Welsh language,</p> <p>Promoting Welsh language</p> <p>Treating the Welsh language no less favourably</p>	<p>As this proposal reaches out to all of our communities, it is hoped that it will encourage Welsh speakers to return where they had otherwise allowed membership to lapse as a result of fines. Of late there has been a conscious effort to increase and improve Welsh language reading materials in our hubs and this it is hoped will also prove to be positively welcomed by Welsh speakers.</p>	<p>We do not presently hold data that would demonstrate positive or negative impact in this group.</p>	<p>Increase in purchase of Welsh language reading resources across all age groups.</p>
<p>Operational</p> <p>Recruitment & Training of workforce</p>	<p>We always endeavour to recruit a proportion of Welsh speakers to our teams and to date have Welsh speakers or learners in all hubs. This is done with a view to being able to provide equal access for Welsh and English speakers, readers and learners.</p>	<p>We do not presently hold data that would demonstrate positive or negative impact in this group.</p>	<p>All vacant posts welcome applications from Welsh speakers.</p>
<p>Service delivery</p> <p>Use of Welsh language in service delivery</p> <p>Promoting use of the language</p>	<p>We always endeavour to recruit a proportion of Welsh speakers to our teams and to date have Welsh speakers or learners in all hubs. This is done with a view to being able to provide equal access for Welsh and English speakers, readers and learners.</p>	<p>We do not presently hold data that would demonstrate positive or negative impact in this group.</p>	<p>All vacant posts welcome applications from Welsh speakers.</p>



4. Does your proposal deliver any of the well-being goals below? Please explain the impact (positive and negative) you expect, together with suggestions of how to mitigate negative impacts or better contribute to the goal. There's no need to put something in every box if it is not relevant!




Well Being Goal	Does the proposal contribute to this goal? Describe the positive and negative impacts.	What actions have been/will be taken to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
<p>A prosperous Wales Efficient use of resources, skilled, educated people, generates wealth, provides jobs</p>	<p>Individuals often seek support through libraries to help with access to education and employment through use of books to study and free computers. The removal of fines will remove barriers where people are fearful of returning after accruing large fines.</p>	<p>Proposal to remove fines for overdue books will remove the risk of people not returning.</p>
<p>A resilient Wales Maintain and enhance biodiversity and ecosystems that support resilience and can adapt to change (e.g. climate change)</p>	<p>We do not presently hold data that would demonstrate positive or negative impact in this group.</p>	<p>We do not presently hold data that would demonstrate positive or negative impact in this group.</p>
<p>A healthier Wales People's physical and mental wellbeing is maximized and health impacts are understood</p>	<p>Individuals often seek support through libraries to improve wellbeing through befriending, group activities, use of books to study and free computers. Our community hub approach goes beyond this by supporting access to a whole range of services such as benefits, housing, Foodbanks and work with partner agencies to provide holistic support. In addition Community Learning classes aim to enhance skills and knowledge that support access to work and education. Our spaces are much more than simply libraries. The removal of fines will remove barriers where people are fearful of returning after accruing large fines.</p>	<p>Proposal to remove fines for overdue books will remove the risk of people not returning.</p>
<p>A Wales of cohesive communities Communities are attractive, viable, safe and well connected</p>	<p>Libraries provide a common vision and a sense of belonging for all communities. Library fines go against this principle and so this impacts the</p>	<p>Proposal to remove fines for overdue books will remove the risk of people not returning.</p>

Well Being Goal	Does the proposal contribute to this goal? Describe the positive and negative impacts.	What actions have been/will be taken to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
	diversity of people's different backgrounds and circumstances and how this is appreciated and positively valued. Fine free libraries aim to provide inclusive and safe spaces those from different backgrounds with a view to supporting opportunities and positive outcomes in our communities. They are places where strong and positive relationships are developed between people from different backgrounds and communities. Removing fines can only positively benefit this outcome.	
<p>A globally responsible Wales Taking account of impact on global well-being when considering local social, economic and environmental wellbeing</p>	Individuals often seek support through libraries to help with access to education and employment through use of books to study and free computers. In turn this improves chances for access to education and employment and this supports the local economy. Strong local economies have a wider national and sometimes global advantage. Therefore fine free libraries can only have a positive impact in visitor numbers and memberships that support wider agendas. Fine free will remove barriers where people are fearful of returning after accruing large fines.	Proposal to remove fines for overdue books will remove the risk of people not returning.
<p>A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language Culture, heritage and Welsh language are promoted and protected. People are encouraged to do sport, art and recreation</p>	Our ibraries provide spaces and resources that aim to spark curiosity, imagination and fun. Libraries enable people to develop new creative skills that support users to flourish and enriches the lives of children and adults by providing arts and cultural experiences in local settings.	Proposal to remove fines for overdue books will provide wholly inclusive spaces for all.

Well Being Goal	Does the proposal contribute to this goal? Describe the positive and negative impacts.	What actions have been/will be taken to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
	The offer celebrates diversity, promotes inclusivity, values identity and contributes to an active local cultural economy.	
<p>A more equal Wales People can fulfil their potential no matter what their background or circumstances</p>	<p>Libraries are one of the only public spaces we can spend time in without being expected to spend any money at all. They incur no monthly membership fees and they do not charge for entry or length of time members spend in them. The only negative impact on this to now has been the policy of library fines for overdue books. This as already stated mainly impacts those on lower incomes and who are experiencing additional health issues. Our aim is to provide spaces that welcome all, regardless of characteristics. Libraries, unlike profit-seeking companies, are designed to serve whole communities. They are multifunctional spaces which offer not only a wealth of intellectual resources, but also practical services like low-cost printing, free WiFi, and computer use. They are also centres for community-building (something which is needed today more than ever), hosting activities and workshops ranging from summer reading schemes to educational courses for job-seekers.</p>	<p>Proposal to remove fines for overdue books will provide wholly inclusive spaces for all.</p>

5. How has your proposal embedded and prioritised the sustainable governance principles in its development?

Sustainable Development Principle	Does your proposal demonstrate you have met this principle? If yes, describe how. If not explain why.	Are there any additional actions to be taken to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
 <p>Long Term</p> <p>Balancing short term need with long term and planning for the future</p>	<p>It is anticipated that the removal of fines will encourage people to return who previously had moved away from the service through fear of financial penalties being accrued. This goes toward the principle of maintaining lifelong members who are able once again to feel at ease with accessing the range of services on offer.</p>	<p>No negative impact arising in this area.</p>
 <p>Collaboration</p> <p>Working together with other partners to deliver objectives</p>	<p>Community Hubs have always worked alongside a range of partner agencies to provide holistic support that aims to maintain or improve wellbeing outcomes in our communities, and libraries sit at the heart of this. Or ability to link people to supportive services is likely to reduce the need for access to complex care and support. In addition Monmouthshire libraries hold strong links with all libraries across Wales to achieve common national as well as local goals.</p>	<p>Removing fines should remove access and barriers to other services provided.</p>

Sustainable Development Principle	Does your proposal demonstrate you have met this principle? If yes, describe how. If not explain why.	Are there any additional actions to be taken to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
 <p data-bbox="349 325 517 507">Involving those with an interest and seeking their views</p> <p data-bbox="141 549 297 576">Involvement</p>	<p data-bbox="544 261 1317 639">There is a growing movement across Wales and wider that supports the principle of removing fines to increase confidence and visitor numbers in libraries, the reasons for this are already outlined in this report. Whilst there continues to be scope for growth in this area, Monmouthshire would be amongst those libraries leading the way in this area. This has reputational advantage but most of all is beneficial to the needs of our communities, where it is clear that libraries have never before played a more important role than they do at this time.</p>	<p data-bbox="1350 256 2051 320">Removing fines should remove access and barriers to other services provided.</p>
 <p data-bbox="342 655 510 954">Putting resources into preventing problems occurring or getting worse</p> <p data-bbox="152 895 293 922">Prevention</p>	<p data-bbox="544 655 1317 874">Research in this area suggests that where the risk of fines is eliminated there is a greater chance that people are more likely to return and also return books. This approach therefore would result in the return of books that have previously disappeared from circulation through the fear of returning to the library.</p>	<p data-bbox="1350 655 2051 719">Removing fines should remove access and barriers to other services provided.</p>
 <p data-bbox="349 994 517 1257">Considering impact on all wellbeing goals together and on other bodies</p> <p data-bbox="159 1241 300 1268">Integration</p>	<p data-bbox="544 994 1279 1102">As illustrated in the previous points listed above, this proposal can only positively impact most, if not all, of the well being goals.</p>	<p data-bbox="1350 994 2051 1058">Removing fines should remove access and barriers to other services provided.</p>

6. Council has agreed the need to consider the impact its decisions has on the following important responsibilities: Corporate Parenting and Safeguarding. Are your proposals going to affect any of these responsibilities?

	Describe any positive impacts your proposal has	Describe any negative impacts your proposal has	What will you do/ have you done to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
Safeguarding	Our libraries become trusted and familiar places for people who use them in our communities. All of our colleagues have safeguarding training and follow local and national safeguarding protocols. They may be considered to be the eyes and ears within our services, and they identify situations where they feel someone may be at risk or require further support. Therefore libraries and hubs are at the heart of ensuring safe communities. Fine free libraries can only underpin the importance of this whereby it is hoped people will return without fear of financial threats.	.No negative impacts identified in this area	NA
Corporate Parenting	This proposal does not impact children and young people.	NA	NA

7. What evidence and data has informed the development of your proposal?

[Library fine survey: results and summary report revealed | Libraries Connected](#)
[Libraries: Powys becomes latest council in Wales to drop fines - BBC News](#)
[Fine free libraries | Fine Free Libraries](#)

Throughout the pandemic and into Covid recovery there has been extensive research into the benefits of fine free libraries, and this continues to be a growing movement, Wales is no exception to this trend. It is widely considered that fines act as an inhibitor to library membership, and that the principle of fines affect those who are on the lowest incomes and also people who have health difficulties. As we move towards what appears to be a very difficult few years for our citizens who are most economically and socially disadvantaged by the cost of living crisis, we are clear that libraries and hubs have never played a more important role than they do at this time. We remain committed that our libraries and hubs should be safe spaces that are accessible to all members of our communities, and we should remove all possible barriers, fines are at the forefront of this.

We recognize there will be a need to market and promote the changes to ensure that these changes, if agreed, reach out to all members of the community. To that end we will work alongside partner agencies in asking them to help us communicate this to those people who may not have access to information through social media and technological channels. This could include organisations such as CAB, local places of worship, Foodbanks, housing and mental health organisations, whilst recognizing this is not exclusive and other organisations may also be approached.

8. SUMMARY: As a result of completing this form, what are the main positive and negative impacts of your proposal, how have they informed/changed the development of the proposal so far and what will you be doing in future?

This proposal seeks to request that we immediately remove social and economic barriers to the use of public libraries through the removal of fines for overdue books.

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9. ACTIONS: As a result of completing this form are there any further actions you will be undertaking? Please detail them below, if applicable.

What are you going to do	When are you going to do it?	Who is responsible
Reach out to partner agencies to help us market and promote this proposal.	Immediately upon approval	Cheryl Haskell

10. VERSION CONTROL: The Equality and Future Generations Evaluation should be used at the earliest stage, such as informally within your service, and then further developed throughout the decision making process. It is important to keep a record of this

process to demonstrate how you have considered and built in equality and future generations considerations wherever possible.

Version No.	Decision making stage	Date considered	Brief description of any amendments made following consideration
	<i>e.g. budget mandate, DMT, SLT, Scrutiny, Cabinetetc</i>		

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