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Bridgend County Borough Council



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Annwyl Cyngorydd,

Cyfarwyddiaeth y Prif Weithredwr / Chief Executive's Directorate

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Ein cyf / Our ref:

Eich cyf / Your ref:

Dyddiad/Date: Dydd Mercher, 26 Ionawr 2022

PWYLLGOR TROSOLWG A CHRAFFU CORFFORAETHOL

Cynhelir Cyfarfod Pwyllgor Trosolwg a Chraffu Corfforaethol o bell trwy Timau Microsoft ar **Dydd Mawrth, 1 Chwefror 2022 am 09:30.**

AGENDA

1. Ymddiheuriadau am absenoldeb
Derbyn ymddiheuriadau am absenoldeb gan Aelodau.
2. Datganiadau o fuddiant
Derbyn datganiadau o ddiddordeb personol a rhagfarnol (os o gwbl) gan Aelodau / Swyddogion yn unol â darpariaethau'r Cod Ymddygiad Aelodau a fabwysiadwyd gan y Cyngor o 1 Medi 2008.
3. Strategaeth Ariannol Tymor Canolig 2022-23 to 2025-26 a Posibiliadau Ymgynghori ar y Gyllideb Ddrafft 3 - 20
4. Materion Brys
I ystyried unrhyw eitemau o fusnes y, oherwydd amgylchiadau arbennig y cadeirydd o'r farn y dylid eu hystyried yn y cyfarfod fel mater o frys yn unol â Rhan 4 (pharagraff 4) o'r Rheolau Trefn y Cyngor yn y Cyfansoddiad.

Nodyn: Sylwch: Yn sgil yr angen i gadw pellter cymdeithasol, ni fydd y cyfarfod hwn yn cael ei gynnal yn ei leoliad arferol. Yn hytrach, bydd hwn yn gyfarfod rhithwir a bydd Aelodau a Swyddogion yn mynychu o bell. Bydd y cyfarfod yn cael ei recordio i'w ddarlledu ar wefan y Cyngor cyn gynted ag sy'n ymarferol ar ôl y cyfarfod. Os oes gennych unrhyw gwestiwn am hyn, cysylltwch â cabinet_committee@bridgend.gov.uk neu ffoniwch 01656 643147 / 643148.

Yn ddiffuant

K Watson

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BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO THE CORPORATE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

1 FEBRUARY 2022

REPORT OF THE CHIEF OFFICER - LEGAL AND REGULATORY SERVICES, HR AND CORPORATE POLICY

MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2022-23 TO 2025-26 AND DRAFT BUDGET CONSULTATION PROCESS

1. Purpose of report

1.1 The purpose of the report is to present the Committee with:

- a) the final report of the Budget Research and Evaluation Panel (BREP) attached at **Appendix A**;
- b) the responses from all the Subject Overview & Scrutiny Committees in relation to Cabinet's draft budget proposals, attached at **Appendix B**.

2. Connection to corporate well-being objectives / other corporate priorities

2.1 This report assists in the achievement of the following corporate well-being objective/objectives under the **Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015**:

1. **Supporting a successful sustainable economy** – taking steps to make the county borough a great place to do business, for people to live, work, study and visit, and to ensure that our schools are focussed on raising the skills, qualifications and ambitions for all people in the county borough.
2. **Helping people and communities to be more healthy and resilient** - taking steps to reduce or prevent people from becoming vulnerable or dependent on the Council and its services. Supporting individuals and communities to build resilience, and enable them to develop solutions to have active, healthy and independent lives.
3. **Smarter use of resources** – ensure that all resources (financial, physical, ecological, human and technological) are used as effectively and efficiently as possible and support the creation of resources throughout the community that can help to deliver the Council's well-being objectives.

3. Background

3.1 In considering the challenges associated with continued budget reductions, Members recognised the need for a 'whole Council' response to be adopted in managing anticipated cuts to services against a backdrop of increasing demand and the challenging financial outlook.

- 3.2 It was therefore recommended, in 2017, that a Budget Research and Evaluation Panel (BREP) be established to engage Members on budget proposals as well as to enable members to feed in community intelligence gained from their representative role and to engage in shaping future service provision.
- 3.3 The Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee (COSC) has the overall responsibility of scrutinising budget monitoring reports throughout the year. As such, it was agreed at a meeting of Council in September 2017 that it would continue this role and appoint BREP members from within the COSC membership.
- 3.4 The purpose of the Budget Research and Evaluation Panel was subsequently agreed as the following:
- To achieve consensus on the direction of the budget over the life of the medium term financial strategy;
 - To achieve a detailed overview and assessment of the budget proposals where the expertise and knowledge of each Committee contributes to a Corporate understanding and appreciation of the draft budget proposals;
 - To assist the Council to develop a budget for the forthcoming year that aims to meet the needs of the communities of Bridgend County Borough;
 - To facilitate firmer understanding of the budget setting process and the draft proposals in order to assist the Committees in making informed comments, constructive challenge or recommendations to Cabinet as part of the budget consultation process.
- 3.5 BREP Members would be presented with the budget reduction proposals and budget pressures and would have the opportunity to discuss these with the Chief Executive and Corporate Directors and were asked to consider the information contained in these reports to determine whether they wish to make comments or recommendations for consolidation and inclusion in the report to Cabinet, as part of the budget consultation process.

4. Current situation/proposal

- 4.1 The Panel met on seven occasions and were supported by the Senior Democratic Services Officer – Scrutiny, a Scrutiny Officer, Interim Chief Officer - Finance, Performance and Change and Section 151 Officer, Deputy Head of Finance and the Deputy Leader.
- 4.2 The meetings of BREP considered presentations from Corporate Directors and the Chief Executive on the impact that the budget plans and proposals would make to their Directorates. In addition, Members received updates upon the public consultation and Fees and Charges work.
- 4.3 The Corporate Overview & Scrutiny Committee is asked to consider the findings of the Budget Research and Evaluation Panel attached at **Appendix A** and determine whether the Recommendations should be forwarded to Cabinet along with the consolidated responses from all four Overview and Scrutiny Committees at **Appendix B** as part of the budget consultation process.

5. Effect upon policy framework and procedure rules

5.1 This item relates to the role of Overview & Scrutiny Committees as consultees in respect of the budget setting process.

6. Equality Act 2010 implications

6.1 The protected characteristics identified within the Equality Act, Socio-economic Duty and the impact on the use of the Welsh language have been considered in the preparation of this report. As a public body in Wales, the Council must consider the impact of strategic decisions, such as the development or the review of policies, strategies, services and functions. It is considered that there will be no significant or unacceptable equality impacts as a result of this report.

7. Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 implications

7.1 The Act provides the basis for driving a different kind of public service in Wales, with 5 ways of working to guide how public services should work to deliver for people. The following is a summary to show how the 5 ways of working to achieve the well-being goals have been used to formulate the recommendations within this report:

- Long-term - The consideration and approval of this report will assist in the budget setting process for both the short-term and in the long-term.
- Prevention - The consideration and approval of this report will assist in the budget setting process by approving and shaping preventative measures provided by Directorates to generate savings.
- Integration - The report supports all the wellbeing objectives
- Collaboration - The consideration and approval of this report will assist in the budget setting process by approving and shaping collaboration and integrated working to generate savings.
- Involvement - Publication of the report ensures that the public and stakeholders can review the work that has been undertaken by Scrutiny members.

8. Financial implications

8.1 The report relates to the budget setting process and the financial implications associated with that.

9. Recommendation

9.1 The Committee is asked to determine whether it wishes to submit the Recommendations in **Appendices A and B** to Cabinet on 8 February 2022 as part of the budget consultation process, subject to any modifications and amendments that the Committee decides are appropriate.

K Watson
Chief Officer - Legal and Regulatory Services, HR and Corporate Policy
26 January 2022

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Background documents: None

Report of the Budget Research and Evaluation Panel in respect of the Medium Term Financial Strategy 2022-23 to 2025-26

- 1.1. The Budget Research and Evaluation Panel (BREP) has considered the draft budget proposals for the year 2022-23.
- 1.2. The Panel met on seven occasions and were supported by the Scrutiny Officer, Senior Democratic Officer – Scrutiny, Interim Chief Officer Finance, Performance and Change, Deputy Head of Finance and the Deputy Leader.
- 1.3. At the first meeting of BREP in July 2021, the Interim Chief Officer, Finance, Performance and Change presented some principles around the role and operation of the BREP following discussions with Cabinet and Corporate Management Board, to facilitate a discussion regarding reviewing the role of BREP. The Interim Chief Officer Finance, Performance and Change took Members through the suggestions, in terms of how BREP might revisit its purpose, its objectives and its workings for comment and for COSC to subsequently endorse.
- 1.4. The Interim Chief Officer Finance, Performance and Change also set out the financial position, including the Revenue Budget Outturn 2020-21 and appendices, which provided an update on the Council's revenue financial performance for the year ended 31 March 2021. The 2020-21 financial year had been a unique and complex year in managing the financial position of the Council primarily as a result of the pandemic. Significant changes had occurred throughout the year as circumstances altered and services were supported in different ways to deliver outcomes in the best way possible.
- 1.5. At the second meeting in August, BREP Members considered their Forward Work Programme and invited the Corporate Director Education & Family Support to the meetings in September and October, and Corporate Director Social Services & Wellbeing and the Corporate Director – Communities, to the meetings in October.
- 1.6. The Consultation Engagement and Equalities Manager took Members briefly through the Shaping Bridgend's Future consultation 2021 report, along with the timeline for the consultation.
- 1.7. At the third meeting in September, BREP Members considered the Fees and Charges Policy and heard from the Corporate Director - Education and Family Support who provided an overview of the budget in relation to Home to School Transport and School budgets. In addition, the Corporate Director – Education and Family Support attended the reconvened meeting in November in respect of Nursery Education.
- 1.8. The BREP recognised that a cut in the education budget would be unpalatable at the present time, particularly following the pandemic, but were concerned about schools that consistently underspend which provided a surplus balance and felt that governing bodies had a key role to play in terms of good financial management providing a consistent approach.

Recommendation 1

Cabinet to review how school budgets are being used and how does the local authority demonstrate value for money in how schools are funded, taking an evidenced base approach.

Recommendation 2

Cabinet to review Fees and Charges annually going forward.

- 1.9. The BREP recognised the difficulties for those outside of Bridgend Town Centre, who would be required to travel in order to attend the local college, particularly those from low-income families and how those young people would maintain an education, although it was acknowledged that this was discretionary Post 16 funding. The BREP recognised that the WG were exploring the option of a Post 16 travel pass.

Recommendation 3

Cabinet to seek clarification from Welsh Government in relation to Post 16 bus passes and who is paying for them, ensuring that any cut to Post 16 Transport would not disadvantage those learning in more than one environment, due to the availability of courses.

- 1.10. The BREP acknowledged there was a legal duty on the local authority to make sure the maintenance of nursery transport provision was safe and was able to accommodate the small number of young learners through the option of smaller vehicles however it was acknowledged that this was costly and ultimately nursery provision was non-statutory and there wasn't a statutory requirement to provide the education, hence there was no requirement to provide the transport.

Recommendation 4

Cabinet to consider the cost of Nursery transportation given the small numbers of children using the facility and the high costs per pupil.

Recommendation 5

Cabinet to review the cost of nursery provision.

- 1.11. The BREP accepted that the costs of providing the Additional Learning Needs (ALN) service, were not yet known and how this was going to impact on schools and the local authority, especially with a wider range of learners. This was not just an early years' issue; this was going to impact on the local authority with the service providing pre-birth all the way up to 25. This has been a part of a considerable debate through the Association of Directors of Education in Wales (ADEW) with Welsh Government because it was felt that if the Bill was going to work going forward it had to be funded accordingly, although it was believed the nucleus of the Bill was a very positive one.

Recommendation 6

Cabinet lobbies Welsh Government, through the Welsh Local Government Association to ensure that additional legislation, in terms of the ALN bill, comes with the consequential funding.

- 1.12. The BREP identified that a piece of work needed to be done on the catchment areas when the local authority was putting in new 21st Century Schools, particularly on new estates, to ensure young people were not getting transport as a consequence of old catchment areas, e.g., part of Brackla, still in the catchment for Coity, when there were already 2 schools in Brackla, although it was recognised that this long-term solution.

Recommendation 7

Cabinet reviews the School catchment areas to ensure that recent housing developments are taken into consideration.

- 1.13. At the fourth meeting in October, BREP Members heard from the Corporate Director – Social Services & Wellbeing, and Officers, who provided an overview of the budget in relation to Commissioned Services v In-house.
- 1.14. The BREP identified that due to the ageing population and the impact of Covid and long Covid, social care costs were increasing and there would be a potential budget pressure and proposed budget savings would have to be found in other ways, by looking more strategically across the whole Council and to explore what could be streamlined and still fulfil statutory duties.

Recommendation 8

BREP acknowledges that due to ageing population and the impact of Covid and long Covid, social care costs are increasing and there will be a potential budget pressure and so proposed budget savings will have to be found in other ways, by looking more strategically across the whole Council and to explore what can be streamlined and still fulfil statutory duties.

Specifically, Cabinet is recommended to take a one-Council approach and look at areas of duplication of functions across the Council and scope for close integration to work smarter e.g., in back office administration, complaints, customer service, referrals and business support in Education and Social Services which was recommended last year.

- 1.15. The BREP acknowledged that in terms of sustained investment, most parts of the budget benefited from significant short-term funding which presented difficulties in terms of contractual arrangements or making significant shifts in the market and doing that sustainably, especially if money was only received for one financial year or halfway through a financial year. The need for sustained investment in order to make significant changes a reality, was really important, given the impact on the workforce, the ability to retain and recruit, in the sector.

Recommendation 9

Cabinet is requested to put forward a motion to Welsh Government and Westminster to fund wholesale reform of the social care system with the strategic aim to fund social care fit for the future.

- 1.16. The BREP heard from Social Services and Wellbeing in terms of the cost comparisons between commissioned adult social care services and services provided internally as a Council in respect of adult social care. The BREP acknowledged the growth pressure on the increased costs for Commissioned Services, and wanted to see a more balanced approach, with the need for fair treatment for all staff in all care sectors. Further BREP understood that WG was bringing in new legislation in relation to procurement in the next 12-18 months, which would put obligations on public sector employers to ensure that certain standards were met by commissioned employers.

Recommendation 10

Cabinet explores re-balancing the market between commissioned and in-house services in the future and how best that suits the needs of the county borough of Bridgend whilst considering Ethical procurement of services as well.

- 1.17. The BREP welcomed that the updated fees and charges policy would go to Cabinet and Directors and would come back with any fees and charges and what they intended to do with them for the MTFS for the next year. They would be expected to either put them up by inflation or explain why not, and there had to be a valid reason why they were not being put up, although legislation dictated many of the fees and charges, which were set by the Welsh Government or even Westminster.

Recommendation 11

Cabinet explores potential for increasing charges in Social Services.

- 1.18. At the fourth meeting in October, BREP Members also heard from the Corporate Director – Communities who provided an overview which covered Strategic Context to the Directorate, Communities MTFS Position, Potential Savings 2021 onwards and Service Area Budget Pressures.
- 1.19. The BREP welcomed the removal of biodegradable food waste bags and acknowledged that the process meant the bags were removed separately from the process but felt that going back to plastic whilst acknowledging that this would be an efficiency saving, felt like a backward step to the way society was going towards 2030, and therefore acknowledged that there was a need to remove food waste bags completely.

Recommendation 12

Cabinet consider the removal of food waste bags completely.

- 1.20. The BREP noted that one area that had been consulted on previously was in relation to closing the Bus Station but acknowledged that this was not palatable given the local authority was trying to encourage the use of public transport and delivering a new Metro Link in Porthcawl. If the local authority was looking to have an integrated transport hub at the railway station, then perhaps it should explore having a transport hub there, which would integrate both bus and rail transport, linking the two together.

Recommendation 13

Cabinet explores the opportunity of merging Bridgend Bus Station with Bridgend Railway Station into a transport hub, fit for the County as a whole.

- 1.21. Whilst Members were minded not to charge Blue Badge holders for parking it was felt that the authority could explore the option of charging for the processing and administration of blue badges, in relation to the issuing and the potential reissuing of blue badges, if they are lost.

Recommendation 14

Cabinet to explore the potential for charging in relation to the administration fee for the issuing and reissuing of Blue Badges.

- 1.22. The BREP recognised that Covid-19 had changed the way people lived, worked, travelled and socialised. Many people have worked away from the office during lockdown and WG want to work with organisations to support a long-term shift to more people working remotely, which could mean the footprint of the Council could reduce to one major building, although it was recognised that this would be in the long term.

Recommendation 15

Cabinet explore the options with regards to the future of Ravens Court.

- 1.23. The BREP recognised that some Town and Community Councils (TCCs) provided additional services, perhaps having their own gardeners, who removed weeds or providing grass cutting, which may also be sprayed or cut by the Council and was therefore a duplication of work. Although it was recognised that not all TCC's would have the budget to provide these services, it was felt that a link was needed, in terms of a dedicated Officer to work with TCC's, providing appropriate PR to gain support and to better understand what they do in each area and what they would be able to do.

Recommendation 16

Cabinet to explore options for a dedicated Officer, with flexible hours, to liaise with Town and Community Council's (TCC's) to check if there is any duplication between work done by the local authority and TCC's to see if there are savings in relation to weed spraying, additional grass cutting, etc.

- 1.24. The BREP acknowledged that parks bins and bins on highways currently had separate regimes but felt that greater co-ordination was needed in terms of collections and looking at the number of times they are emptied. The BREP was pleased to hear about the electronic compression compacting bins, being trialled in Porthcawl, that composted the waste and could take much more volume. In terms of the bin emptying regimes this would be more efficient and be better for the environment although BREP recognised there wouldn't be huge savings from this.

Recommendation 17

Cabinet to explore the use of compacting bins in parks and review the frequency of collection and duplication of services e.g., Park and Street Scene both collecting bins and Highways and Parks both cutting grass.

- 1.25. The BREP noted that Cabinet and Corporate Management Board (CCMB) had agreed to establish a £1 million Covid-19 Recovery Fund in 2020-21 to provide funding for decisions aimed at boosting recovery that were unlikely to be paid for by WG. However, it was recognised that the Authority was now expected to be recovering and income levels back up to pre-Covid levels by March 2022, and any local decisions taken on subsidising anything, e.g., car parking, would be an impact on the budget, although it was recognised that it was unlikely the footfall would return by March. It was further noted that car park next to Wilkinson's wasn't free but was nearly always full, so there was an appetite for car parking in Bridgend, but only two car parks affected by free car parking.

Recommendation 18

Cabinet to review and simplify the charging structure for car parking and taper the free parking facility.

- 1.26. The BREP were concerned about the amount of black plastic that went directly into bins and noted that there were companies out there that would buy black plastic and so there was a potential to make money on black plastic recycling.

Recommendation 19

Cabinet to explore the option for recycling black plastic and other products not currently recycled.

- 1.27. At the fifth meeting in November, BREP Members heard from the Head of Partnership Services, and Officers, in relation to the homelessness position in Bridgend.
- 1.28. The BREP felt that the local authority was shouldering a lot of the burden, in relation to homelessness, with what the pandemic had presented. There was a need to work closely with more Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) to avoid as focussing on a single larger one. There was a need to address renegotiation of the 25% housing stock that should be brought into mainstream to be available to Housing Officers to allocate.

Recommendation 20

Cabinet to revisit the relationships with Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) across the county borough to broaden the scope of partnerships with the local authority to be able to fit different models and provide different solutions with multiple RSLs.

Recommendation 21

Cabinet to revisit the relationship with V2C and renegotiate access to the 25% housing stock that is not currently available for allocation by the local authority housing officers, who manage the common housing register.

- 1.29. The BREP felt it was frustrated by the local authority's inability to build any housing, rather than only allocating through Registered Social Landlords (RSLs), that Housing Officers had little control over and perhaps it was time to review the way forward for the next 20 years, with BCBC building their own economic model of some social housing and having direct control of it.

Recommendation 22

Cabinet to consider future social housing being provided by the local authority including the options for the next 20 years and exploring a new model.

- 1.30. The BREP acknowledged that for many organisations that applied for grant funding, it was something that took time and effort. The BREP felt that the local authority would benefit from doing a cost analysis of time spent on grant funding, as the Authority was responsible for administering grants worth £80m and this would cost the Authority in administering these, over and above normal staffing running costs.

Recommendation 23

Cabinet to press the Welsh Government to transfer money currently provided on a grant basis directly into the RSG, to save on the significant time/costs of administering, monitoring, and reporting upon grants and the lack of ability to plan ahead for schemes from short term grant funding.

- 1.31. In terms of staffing, the BREP noted that the service was working to try and expand, but there were significant issues, not just in housing, but across all sectors of the Authority. Getting skilled people in and growing their own, was going to take time. There had been successes with apprenticeships across other areas of the authority in terms of business administration and ICT and that was something that could be considered.

Recommendation 24

Consideration be given to the training / recruitment of apprentices in the Housing service and the use of the market supplement to retain staff.

- 1.32. The BREP noted that the pandemic had identified the significant issue of homelessness and lack of suitable housing across the county borough, and felt it was time to go back to the corporate plan, look at the priorities and review the role of housing, as part of the Chief Executives Directorate within that plan.

Recommendation 25

Cabinet to look at the priorities within the corporate plan with a view to Housing within the Chief Executive's Directorate being included as a priority in the Plan, due to the significant increase in homelessness and the lack of resources.

- 1.33. At the sixth meeting in November, BREP Members also heard from the Consultation Engagement and Equalities Manager, who provided an update to the Members of BREP on the Budget Consultation.
- 1.34. The BREP noted that the budget consultation had received a total of 1,115 interactions from a combination of survey completions, engagement at various meetings, social media engagement and via the authority's Citizens' Panel although this represented a decrease of 39% on previous year's overall interactions and felt it was therefore time to take stock of the whole consultation process as perhaps the public felt there were too many separate consultations and the challenge was to attract the public interest.

Recommendation 26

Cabinet to renew where the local authority is in terms of the consultation process and whether there are opportunities to improve public engagement, taking into consideration experiences from other local authorities or the public and private sectors.

- 1.36 At the final meeting of BREP held on 17 December 2021 BREP Members received updates on the Budget Consultation following its closure and the Fees and Charges work undertaken, following which the Panel reviewed and agreed the draft recommendations made to date, subject to the following amendments to draft recommendations 20 and 22, as underlined below:

Recommendation 20

Cabinet to revisit the relationships with Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) across the county borough to broaden the scope of partnerships and improve the consistency of the operation seen by the public, with the local authority to be able to fit different models and provide different solutions with multiple RSLs.

Recommendation 22

Cabinet to consider future social housing being provided by the local authority including the options for the next 20 years and exploring a new model, and where developers are granted permission the social housing element is prioritised.

- 1.37 The Panel endorsed its Recommendations 1 to 26, subject to the above two amendments and made the following further two Recommendations below:

Recommendation 27

Cabinet and the Corporate Management Board reinforce the "One Council" approach and go further to develop a "One Bridgend" approach when working with key partners to deliver community based services. Key partners that can be identified to include but not exclusive to the Police, Health, Social Landlords, Awen, Halo, and Kier.

Recommendation 28:

Cabinet and the Corporate Management Board consider a review of the corporate communication strategy to highlight the specific responsibilities that Bridgend County Borough Council has for the delivery of public services. This may well improve the public's knowledge and understanding of the Council's responsibilities and provide clarity for key stakeholders intrinsically linked to community based services.

- 1.38 This BREP final report is to be reported to the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 1 February 2022 for consideration as part of the Medium Term Financial Strategy consultation process, for onward reporting to Cabinet on 8 February 2022.
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Overview and Scrutiny Committees' comments and Recommendations on the Medium Term Financial Strategy 2022-23 to 2025-26

Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee - 19 January 2022

Chief Executive's Directorate and Council Wide:

Recommendations:

1. The Committee recommended that the Medium Term Financial Strategy and the Corporate Plan be reviewed and adjusted based upon the volatility of the funding, the difficulties of financial planning on a 3 to 5 year cycle and the need to be prudent moving forward.
2. The Committee recommended a corporate overview of procurement and tendering process be undertaken and looks at added liabilities to the Authority for staffing costs, which would include National Insurance contributions, national pay / wage increases, etc.
3. The Committee requested clarification whether the requirement for the Authority to meet increased National Insurance contributions for staff in commissioned services is from employment law or from within the terms of the contracts.
4. The Committee recommended that the Authority lobbies Welsh Government and UK Government for consequential funding for the additional requirements placed upon Local Authorities from legislative and regulatory pressures, including those relating to: the Additional Learning Needs Act, the Environmental (Wales) Act 2016, the Welsh Government's commitment to eradicate homelessness, local authorities' responsibilities in respect of responding to climate change and meeting net zero carbon targets, the implications of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021, etc. and asks Welsh Government to identify what within core funding covers these additional responsibilities. The Committee also requested an itemised breakdown of how much the additional legislative / regulatory commitments such as Teachers' Pay, NI Contributions, Real Living Wage, etc, take out of the £19.6 Million uplift in funding, in order to receive an accurate indication of the remainder of the 9.2% budget settlement increase.
5. The Committee recommended that Cabinet write to Welsh Government urging them to set a multi year Medium Term financial Strategy budget settlement cycle of 3 or 5 years.
6. In respect of budget pressure CEX1, the Committee recommended consideration be given to continuing to reduce the cost of postage centrally due to the increase in digital service provision, and requested the savings being made by individual Directorates be identified.

7. In respect of budget pressure CW1, the Committee recommended that the Cabinet requests clarity on the outcome of the consultation undertaken upon Fire and Rescue Service precept / funding.
8. In respect of budget pressure CW3, the Committee expressed concern about whether the £1M would be sufficient to meet the range of potential services it may need to support, given the extent of previous claims from the Welsh Government Hardship Fund by such services e.g., schools, homelessness, etc. and requested itemisation of what the pressure is to support following the ending of the Welsh Government hardship fund.

Subject Overview and Scrutiny Committee 1 – 20 January 2022

Education and Family Support Directorate and Schools:

Recommendations:

1. The Committee supported the COSC recommendation made on 19 January 2022 for a robust review of the Medium Term Financial Strategy and the Corporate Plan to be undertaken, as they were planned prior to the pandemic. The Committee requested that Cabinet be mindful of the consequences of the pandemic impact including learning catch up, the mental health of children and safeguarding issues when looking at this review, and the impact of potential future reductions on schools and teaching.
2. In relation to the indicative Budget Reduction SCH1 of 1% for 2023-24 to 2025-26, the Committee recommended that the Cabinet lobby Welsh Government regarding the detrimental effect Covid has had on children and their learning and the need to start examining and discussing funding for schools looking ahead, as Wales has the lowest funding per pupil in the UK and Bridgend is lower than some other Welsh Authorities, and the need to try to protect children's learning from future savings that could potentially impact on the effectiveness of teaching.
3. The Committee recognised the need to be able to plan ahead for future years in the MTFs and supported the recommendation proposed by COSC on 19 January 2022, that Cabinet write to Welsh Government urging them to set a multi year Medium Term financial Strategy budget settlement cycle of 3 or 5 years
4. The Committee recommended that consideration be given to the cost of living crisis to try to keep any future Council Tax increase to as minimal as possible
5. In relation to budget pressure EFS6, the Committee recommended that the Authority continue to lobby Welsh Government for the awaited WG review of learner transport, in order to progress the outcome relating to this pressure for home to school transport.

Subject Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2 – 21 January 2022

Social Services and Wellbeing Directorate:

Recommendations:

1. In relation to budget pressure SSW5, the Committee recommended that consideration be given to lobbying Welsh government to set a Welsh national salary, terms and conditions for social workers to alleviate Childrens social worker recruitment and retention pressures for Local Authorities, similarly to the national arrangements for teachers, police and nurses.
2. In addition to the above, the Committee expressed concern at the significant reliance and potential cost of agency staff in Children’s Services and requested assurance that the situation is kept under review and all that can be done to reduce it considered.
3. In relation to budget reduction proposal SSW1, the Committee recommended consideration is given to ensure that service users are not excluded by the use of technology / digital service delivery.
4. In relation to budget reduction proposal SSW2, the Committee requested assurance that consideration of new ways of working includes options for face-to-face service e.g., for those who are unable to engage in other ways e.g., via telephone completion of forms, etc.
5. In relation to budget reduction proposal SSW3, the Committee suggested that the use of the term service remodelling had negative perceptions which could have adverse impact on staff and service users and did not make clear the extensive advocacy and consultation undertaken to listen to the wishes of service users, and recommended consideration be given to more positive terminology and explanation of the budget line, such as tailoring or ongoing continuous improvement, etc.
6. In relation to general comments relating to budget pressure CW3, the Committee recommended that consideration be given to reviewing the £1M pressure, as due to the extent of the significant reliance on the former Welsh Government hardship fund by a number of services including those within Social Services and Wellbeing, there was concern that the figure may be insufficient and a reduction in service delivery could ensue.

Subject Overview and Scrutiny Committee 3 – 24 January 2022

Communities Directorate:

Recommendations:

1. The Committee requested a written breakdown of the list of Community Asset Transfers that had taken place to date with the maintenance costs per site to identify the savings.
 2. The Committee welcomed that a report would be prepared to Cabinet upon the Community Asset Transfers, including an update upon those community facilities clubs had not expressed an interest in transferring.
 3. The Committee welcomed the 9.2% uplift in the settlement from Welsh Government but is disheartened that savings are still proposed to the Communities Directorate particularly the Strategic Regeneration Fund, because of its importance for future generations. The Committee recommends that any reductions in the Communities Directorate are the last resort and that the Strategic Regeneration Fund budget particularly is protected as much as possible from reduction, as a priority from the list of Communities Directorate proposed reductions. (Budget reduction proposals, particularly COM1)
 4. In relation to budget pressure COM1, COM2 and COM3, the Committee requested information be provided regarding increased tonnages for kitchen waste, blue bag waste and street litter and the percentage increases in respect of each.
 5. The Committee recommended that Cabinet examine all discretionary services to ensure they are all achieving value for money for the local authority.
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