

COUNCIL - WEDNESDAY, 1 MARCH 2017

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE COUNCIL HELD IN COUNCIL CHAMBER, CIVIC OFFICES ANGEL STREET BRIDGEND CF31 4WB ON WEDNESDAY, 1 MARCH 2017 AT 2.00 PM

Present

Councillor RC Jones – Chairperson

S Aspey	N Clarke	HJ David	G Davies
GW Davies MBE	PA Davies	E Dodd	DK Edwards
N Farr	EP Foley	CA Green	M Gregory
EM Hughes	CJ James	P James	PN John
CL Jones	M Jones	DRW Lewis	JE Lewis
JR McCarthy	HE Morgan	LC Morgan	MEJ Nott OBE
AD Owen	D Patel	RL Penhale-Thomas	G Phillips
CL Reeves	M Reeves	CE Smith	JC Spanswick
G Thomas	M Thomas	JH Tildesley MBE	HJ Townsend
KJ Watts	C Westwood	DBF White	PJ White
HM Williams	R Williams	M Winter	RE Young

Apologies for Absence

RM James, RD Jenkins, B Jones, DG Owen, DR Pugh, D Sage and E Venables

Officers:

Susan Cooper	Corporate Director - Social Services & Wellbeing
Nicola Echanis	Head of Education & Family Support
Deborah Exton	Group Manager - Finance
Mark Galvin	Senior Democratic Services Officer - Committees
Randal Hemingway	Head of Finance & Section 151 Officer
Andrew Jolley	Corporate Director Operational & Partnership Services
Darren Mephram	Chief Executive
Mark Shephard	Corporate Director - Communities
Kevin Stephens	Democratic Services Assistant

713. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies of absence were received from the following Members:-

Councillor RD Jenkins (The Mayor)
Councillor D Sage
Councillor D Owen
Councillor B Jones
Councillor RM James
Councillor E Venables
Councillor D Pugh

714. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None

715. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of a meeting of Council dated 1 February 2017, be accepted as a true and accurate record.

716. TO RECEIVE ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM:

Mayor

The Deputy Mayor (in the Mayor's absence) confirmed that as Members were aware, Councillor Megan Butcher sadly passed away in February and her funeral was held last week. She took the opportunity to say a few words about Megan as she felt that she was an exceptional Councillor who over the years worked extremely hard for her community and numerous local charities.

Megan had the honour of being elected the first Mayor of Bridgend County Borough in 1996, and set a very high standard for subsequent Mayor's to live up to. Indeed the amount of money that she raised for her charities during her year has yet to be surpassed.

Megan was always generous with her time and had more energy than someone half her age, whenever anyone saw Megan she was rushing off to the next appointment of the day, whether it be as a Councillor or a proud mother and grandmother.

However, what struck the Deputy Mayor most about Megan was her positive "can do" attitude. She didn't wait for someone else to step in when she saw something that needed fixing, but rather she jumped in herself and everyone else was swept along with her! She was a true force of nature and will be sorely missed.

To honour Megan therefore, the Deputy Mayor asked that Members/Officers all rise in the Council Chamber to observe a minute's silence.

Cabinet Members

None.

Chief Executive

The Chief Executive advised, that in line with the Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act, the Public Services Board is carrying out a consultation intended to assess the state of well-being across Bridgend County Borough.

Information obtained through the consultation will be used in the production of the board's Well-Being Plan.

This plan will set out a series of objectives that identify priorities agreed by the board for the area, and must be published by next year.

The consultation is underway, and those present could find out more from the Council's web site website.

The Chief Executive advised that he would be submitting a report to Council on 28 March concerning the Welsh Government's White Paper on local government and will soon be contacting all group leaders as part of this.

717. TO RECEIVE THE REPORT OF THE LEADER

The Leader reported, that in response to the news about Bridgend Ford today the Council was urgently seeking to work closely alongside Welsh Government and its partners to support this company in maximising its potential for winning new work and enabling the plant's success to continue.

Together with our partners, the Authority would also be looking at how it can offer a range of help and support to employees, if any are affected by any potential redundancies.

Bridgend Ford has been fundamental to the local economy for 30 years, and the Council will be making every effort to ensure that this can continue he concluded.

718. CORPORATE PLAN 2016-20 - REVIEWED FOR 2017-18

The Chief Executive presented a report, seeking approval of the Council's reviewed Corporate Plan 2016-20 for 2017-18 that was attached to the report as an Appendix.

He advised that the Corporate Plan set out the Council's priorities for 2016-20 as well as defining the Council's commitments for 2017-18. It also sets the Council's well-being objectives under the Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, and outlines how the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) and other strategic plans will support the Council's core business/priorities.

The Chief Executive then gave a resume of the background of the Corporate Plan for the above period, and how this integrated with the above 2015 Act.

The Chief Executive then referred Members to the current Corporate Plan which had been reviewed for the 2017-18 period, with the review in the main, focusing on refreshing the Council's commitments and measures of success for the next financial year, and defining and integrating the Council's well-being objectives into the Plan.

The three corporate priorities of the Council were its improvement objectives under both the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009, and the Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

Areas of the document had been identified for review by the Wales Audit Office following them undertaking the Corporate Assessment, and these were contained in paragraph 4.4 of the report. The Council's Corporate Resources and Improvement O&SC considered the reviewed Corporate Plan in January 2017, and proposed a series of amendments which had also been incorporated into the Plan.

The Chief Executive advised Council that the reviewed Plan needed to be published by 31 March 2017 in order to meet statutory and regulatory requirements.

He then concluded his submission, by referring to page 30 of the Plan where it identified its main aims, which were:-

- To help local people develop skills and take advantage of opportunities to succeed and to extend that success to every community in the County Borough.
- To create conditions for growth and enterprise, and
- To create successful town centres

The key projects and programmes that would help the Authority achieve these aims over the life of the Corporate Plan, were the City Deal, Strategic Review of Post 16 Education and Training, a Successful Economy Programme, and alignment of Welsh Government Grants.

A Member referred to page 32 of the report, and welcomed the proposal to look to increase traineeships and apprenticeships within the Council which he felt were much needed.

A Member also referred to page 32 of the report, and noted that the Council was receiving significant resources from WAG both this and the next financial year. With this in mind, he asked what was BCBC's vision tackling poverty going forward, particularly in households where no one was working.

The Chief Executive advised that the Council did have a number of different grant funding initiatives in place for the next 12 months, though there had been a reduction in Communities First grant funding. He added that the Authority would need to be more creative with grants, including where there was flexibility to do so, in prioritising schemes that were subject to grant funding. These grants however covered a number of different areas of the Authority which included poverty experienced by families and deprived areas. The Chief Executive further added, that funding was overall declining, and allocation of this to different areas of the Council would be fully decided upon in the first quarter of the new financial year.

The Cabinet Member for Wellbeing and Future Generations, referred to page 40 of the report and the second measure relating to the percentage of care leavers who have experienced homelessness during the year. She felt that in the paragraph that immediately followed in respect of people sleeping on the streets or on friends' sofas/B&B's etc, the last line of this containing the words "some of which is a young person's choice" should be deleted.

Members supported this small change to the document, which the Chief Executive confirmed would be actioned.

RESOLVED: That Council approved and adopted the reviewed Corporate Plan 2016-2020 for 2017-18, subject to the small amendment to the document confirmed immediately above.

719. **MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2017-18 TO 2020-21 AND COUNCIL TAX 2017-18**

The Chief Executive and Section 151 Officer submitted a joint report, the purpose of which was to seek Council approval of the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2017-18 to 2020-21, which included a financial forecast for 2017-21, a detailed revenue budget for 2017-18 and a Capital Programme for 2017-18 to 2026-27.

The report also included the proposed Council Tax requirement for the County Borough Council for approval by Council, together with the requirements of the Police and Crime Commissioner for South Wales and Community/Town Councils.

The Chief Executive advised that the MTFS strategy enables the delivery of the Council's Corporate Plan which Members had just approved. The S151 Officer he confirmed would talk on the key points of the Financial Strategy and the implications for council tax setting, whilst he was going to give an overview of how the MTFS relates to the Corporate Plan as set out in paragraphs 3 of the report.

The Chief Executive confirmed that this year the Authority have added what is termed the budget narrative. This he advised was an attempt to include within the MTFS what the Councils Budget Strategy is. The MTFS was not a collection of budget cuts he emphasised. It more included changes or reductions to budgets, and naturally these get the headlines and greatest scrutiny, but the more important part of the Strategy was how the several hundred million pounds that we will be spending is directed, and what lies behind those choices.

He proceeded by stating that the section of the report headed Corporate Financial Overview, was an attempt to explain how the Council is funded and the difference between net revenue budget and what we actually spend. This part of the report also set out how the principles that Members had developed for the Corporate Plan influence the MTFS, such as operating as One Council, supporting communities and individuals to create their own solutions, focusing diminishing resources on those with the greatest need and ensuring all our resources, in this case financial, are used effectively and efficiently.

The subsequent sections of the report took in major service areas and set out the scale of the Council's expenditure in each of these areas, and the Deputy Leader intended to expand upon this, when he opened debate on the MTFS proposals.

The Chief Executive stated however, by way of example, within education there was a strong emphasis on increasing efficiency. Some changes that the report set out included:

- Raising money through increased efficiency and commerciality of the schools catering service
- Collaborating with other councils on the delivery of educational psychology services
- Continuing Phased implementation of the learner travel policy

Social Care and Wellbeing services already have a strong track record of efficiency, and the report noted that over the past 3 years this Council has delivered £9million of savings in Social Care, and that the Strategy for the next few years was to manage demand and introduce new ways of working. Ways that lessen dependency and enable people to maximise their independence.

Therefore changes in these services set out in the report included:

- Greater use of shared lives family based care and support scheme to reduce dependence on residential placements
- Investing in new extra care schemes
- Learning disability services being net within the community with less dependence on day services

The Chief Executive advised that the S151 Officer would concentrate more on the finer financial detail of the MTFS, but as Members would note, there are sections in paragraphs of the report that summarise the budget approach to each of the groups of Council services, such as Supporting the Economy, Public Realm, Housing, Regulatory Services and internal support functions such as Property, Legal and Human Resources, each of which have their own expressions of financial strategy that support the corporate plan.

In terms of the report financial context, the S151 Officer confirmed that in the immediate aftermath of the UK's decision to leave the European Union, the newly appointed

Chancellor of the Exchequer, Philip Hammond, announced that the government would abandon his predecessor's target of achieving a UK government budget surplus by 2019-20. While this indicatively suggests a higher level of public spending than previously expected, the Institute for Fiscal Studies reported on 8 November a worsening position of c. £25 billion by 2020 and warned of the potential requirement for further austerity measures. The UK government has therefore set new fiscal targets which aim for 2% underlying deficit and debt falling by 2020, and a balanced budget as soon as possible thereafter

He continued by reminding Members that last December local authorities received the Final Local Government Settlement, with an headline figure being an overall increase of 0.2%. However, whilst this took into account a number of transfers into the settlement it also included funding for a number of additional responsibilities. There was an actual cash increase in AEF from 2016-17 of £123k, however, Bridgend's funding on a like-for-like basis was a reduction of £0.6m, or -0.3%. Unlike previous years, the final settlement did not include funding to protect school budgets.

The S151 Officer advised that in terms of Settlement Implications in respect of years 2018-2021, there was currently no indication of any local government settlements for 2018-19 onwards.

Against a highly uncertain background of wider public sector finances, the MTFS "most likely" scenario assumptions of an annual reduction in AEF of -3.2% for 2018-21 have been maintained.

The S151 Officer then referred to paragraph 4.11 of the report and the Current Year Financial Performance, ie the in-year financial position as at 31 December 2016 as shown in Table 1 in this part of the report. After allowing for movements to and from reserves, the overall projected position at 31 December 2016 was a net under spend of £418k.

With regard to Scrutiny and Challenge, further efforts had been made this year to secure greater involvement of stakeholders in the development of the MTFS, including an eight week consultation during October and November 2016, to which there had been 2,533 responses, which equated to a 65% increase on the number of responses received last year.

He added that the majority of respondents agreed with the idea of protecting some services over others, with schools and social services being the most popular areas for protection. Equally the majority of respondents felt that schools should be expected to make efficiency savings too. Overall, 10 of the 11 budget reduction proposals put forward received majority support. A full list of these was shown in Table 2 on page 73 of the report.

The S151 Officer stated that in addition to the public consultation, Cabinet and CMB had been working with the Budget Research & Evaluation Panel over the last 6 months to facilitate the budget planning process. The draft budget report approved by Cabinet in November had also been scrutinised by each of the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committees, resulting in a report from the Corporate Resources and Improvement Overview and Scrutiny (CRI) Committee. Cabinet had considered the Committee's recommendations on the MTFS, and a response to these was provided in Schedule A to the report.

Turning to paragraph 4.21 of the report, he went on to say that Cabinet and CMB have reflected on the responses received from the public consultation and the CRI Committee and has made a number of changes to its budget reduction proposals as a result. In

particular budget reductions impacting on the public realm have been significantly reduced. The proposal to cease proactive resurfacing has been removed (£215,000), gully cleaning frequency will not be reduced (£40,000), and weed spraying will be maintained at the current level (£15,000), as will management of rear lanes and footpaths overgrowth (£30,000). Furthermore, the budget includes a new fund to be targeted towards public realm improvements, with a recurrent budget of £400,000.

The S151 Officer then referred to paragraph 4.23 of the report and the MTFS Resource Envelope, and that the planning assumptions here were based on an annual reduction in AEF of -3.2%, and an increase in Council Tax of 4.2% for 2018-19, 4.5% for 2019-20 and 4.5% for 2020-21.

He confirmed that the budget always factors in external pressures and this year was no different. He highlighted to Members however, the sheer scale of external cost pressures BCBC like other local authorities faced. An example of these were the national living wage, apprenticeships levy, and the fact that inflation had risen significantly over recent months. In total he added, the Council has unavoidable pressures of \$7.230m in 2017-18.

Referring to paragraph 4.26 of the report, the S151 Officer advised that Table 5 therein (Budget Reduction Scenarios) showed the Council's potential net budget reduction requirement based on the forecast resource envelope. This Table reflected that there was a need for the Authority to achieve £5.8m in reductions to achieve a balanced budget.

Table 6 on page 77 of the report then outlined the Risk Status of Budget Reduction Proposals (RAG status), with a full list of these contained in Appendix B to the report.

Table 10 on page 80 of the report then confirmed the Net Budget Funding, and showed a Council Tax Income of £70,455.437. Therefore, taking into account the growth in Tax Base, it was proposed that there be a 2.9% increase in Council Tax for 2017-18 on an average Band D property.

The S151 Officer then gave a bit more detail regarding the rationale behind Schools' Budgets. Unlike previous years, the final settlement from Welsh Government did not include funding for Local Authorities to protect school budgets. The Council recognises that school funding accounts for around a third of net revenue expenditure, and that protection inevitably leads to increased pressure on other budgets. The 2017-18 budget includes both a 1% efficiency target for schools and allowances for inflationary and inescapable pressures to be met centrally. Taking the above into consideration, there was a small increase in overall school budgets.

The S 151 Officer then referred to Council Reserves and Balances Protocol attached at Appendix F to the report. He advised that principle 8 of the Council's MTFS sought to increase the Council Fund to 2.7% of Gross Revenue Expenditure GRE.

A review of the Council's reserves was undertaken at period 6 and 9 of 2016-17. Appendix F he added, also set out the forecast movement in the Council's Earmarked Reserves by the end of 2016-17 and 2017-18.

The S151 Officer then referred to the 10 year Capital Programme, and explained that Appendix G to the report sets out the proposed Capital Programme. The Welsh Government capital settlement provided the Council with £6.288m in 2017-18. No allocations had been provided for 2018-19, so for now it is assumed that this level of funding will remain constant for future years.

In respect to paragraph 4.56 of the report, the schemes set out in Table 14 were proposed to be included within the Capital Programme for 2017-18 onwards. There were also potentially large capital pressures for which funding has not currently been identified. These included significant highways schemes, 21st Century Schools band B and a permanent depot solution. He stressed that difficult decisions may be required in future years, around their prioritisation against a scarcity of funding.

He added then that the Capital Programme also contained a number of fixed annual allocations, and it was proposed that they remained at current levels for 2017-18, as shown in Table 15 on page 88 of the report.

The S151 Officer confirmed that there was also a need to amend the budget for two of the schemes currently within the programme, namely Brynmenyn Primary School and Digital Transformation and ICT. The background and reasons for this were contained in paragraph 4.68 of the report, and briefly explained by the S151 Officer for the benefit of Members. Consequently, the amount of funding held within the Capital Programme would be reduced by £1.5m to £1m.

In respect of Council Tax for 2017-18, the S 151 Officer advised that the net requirement for the Council for this period was £258.093m, and the amount to be funded from Council Tax was £70,455,437. This equated to a Council Tax of £1,335.42 on a Band D property, which as was stated earlier on in debate, amounted to an increase of 2.9%.

The Police and Crime Commissioner precept will rise to £11,514,348, which equates to a Council Tax of £218.24 on a Band D property, a 5% increase. The average Council Tax for the County Borough for 2017-18 was shown in Table 18 on page 94 of the report.

In relation to paragraph 4.82 of the report, the Council was also required to approve the Council Tax charges for Band properties for each of the community areas, and these were detailed in Table 20 on page 96 of the report.

The S151 Officer then referred to the section of the report entitled Equality Impact Assessment, and advised Members that a high level EIA had been undertaken and details of this was contained in Appendix I of the report.

He proceeded by confirming that he was required to report annually on the robustness of the level of reserves, and advised that these were sufficient to protect the Council in light of unknown demands or emergencies and current funding levels. He was also required he added, to report to Council if he does not believe that he has sufficient resource to discharge his role as required by S114 of the Local Government Act 1988. He concluded that Members should note that there was sufficient resource to discharge this role.

The Deputy Leader began by thanking the S151 Officer and his team, the Chief Officers, elected Members and the 2,533 members of the general public who all helped to shape what was before Members this afternoon. The report demonstrated that at Bridgend County Borough Council we "Work Together To Improve Lives ". Since taking up the role of lead Member for finance, he stated that his aim has been to unwind the perception held by many, that the only thing the Council actually does is collect the bins. However, it begins with blocks on the wall to represent service areas, and he thanked all Members for re-shaping the budget before them today.

The Deputy Leader stated that he wanted to try and re-focus attention on what we intend to do over the MTFs period looking forward, so we can improve efficiency and improve outcomes for the residents we serve.

When it comes to setting a balanced budget, the Council needed to use the net figure of about £258m and it was a statutory duty to set a balanced budget. However the gross budget is closer to £400m.

We receive specific grants of about £106m and these come with set criteria he added, such as housing benefit, supporting people and protecting the environment.

Fees and charges raise about £30m and Welsh Government funding comes to about £188m.

This means that Council tax will need to be set at just over £70m. That was an average increase of 72p a week, for a Band D household.

So what do the Authority spend £400m on?

The early part of the report refers to the budget narrative, the figures used there are net and link to Table 9 in the report, however, the total spend on each service was much more.

The Council will spend £145m on Education and Family Support. There were 59 schools educating about 20,000 pupils. Beyond this it has committed £24.7m to our 21st century schools programme, this is match funded by Welsh Government.

Between 2016 and 2019 we were investing almost £50m to bring our schools in to the 21st century and equip them to deliver the best possible education for future generations.

The Council had also invested over £2.5 m in 7 Flying start units which have given more than 1,000 pre-school children a flying start to their education.

This year we asked schools to find a 1% efficiency saving, which underlines our "One Council" approach.

However, we recognise that schools like other services, face financial pressures which they cannot avoid and were outside their control. We shall provide additional central funding, to meet nationally agreed pay awards and price inflation. This extra cash mean that schools will see an increase in funding this year. This demonstrated BCBC's commitment to protect the schools delegated budget from cuts and this approach was well received at a recent schools budget forum.

The Council have increased schools funding year on year from £80.8m 5 years ago to over £86.9m today, an increase of more than £6m over the life time of the Labour administration.

After Education the next big spend is Social Care and Wellbeing. The Authority will spend almost £75m caring for about 3,500 Adults and about 1,400 children. In addition £5.9m would be committed to sport, play and active wellbeing which includes £1.3m to Halo to run our leisure centres and swimming pools, a partnership that has brought many benefits to the County Borough.

He was pleased to say that the Council has committed up to £3m, to build not one but two Extra Care homes, one for the Valleys Gateway, and one for Maesteg. Even in these times of imposed austerity from the Westminster government, the Council were committed to protect those who are in greatest need.

We are also aware that many concerns raised by the public and members relate to the Public Realm. The County Borough covers a land area of 28,500 Ha with 142,000 residents living in 63,549 homes. We have over 1348 Km (837 miles) of highways to maintain, which supports over 45,118,096m motor vehicle movements per year.

Investment in the Public Realm has inevitably taken a hit to enable continued investment in Education and Social Care, which is largely demand led.

£45 m will be spent on Community related services.

Much of this was grant money, where there is very little room for discretion.

Collection and disposal of waste is likely to be about £11m this year, which equates to about £173 per household.

Another £6m is spent on Highway maintenance. These are much smaller figures in comparison for very visible services.

A major challenge for the Council is how we manage public expectation and therefore it had listened to Members and the public through our consultation, and recognised their concerns. Therefore, it would establish a new recurrent fund of £400,000 to protect and invest in the Public Realm. The Council also hoped to work with Town and Community Councils to maximise the impact this new fund will have on things that matter locally.

Supporting the economy is a Corporate Priority and is seen as essential in raising economic prosperity for all.

The Authority recognised the importance of our main towns as meeting places, so in partnership with others we are seeking to invest around £20m, to make Bridgend, Maesteg and Porthcawl even more inviting for people to live, work and visit.

The City Deal will provide a once in a life time chance to make a positive impact on the County Borough.

Over the next 20 years the UK Government, Welsh Government and 10 Local Authorities across S.E. Wales will invest £1.2 billion in our region, which was expected to attract an additional £4 billion of private sector investment. This investment will deliver a single ticket fully integrated Metro system and 25,000 new jobs, just in time for when our youngest community residents leave education and enter the work place. BCBC's price tag for this is about £20 m over the life of the deal.

There are services that only the Council can provide like Public Protection. Public protection Officers make sure that takeaway food and that the air we breathe are not harmful, and also that noise nuisance issues are dealt with appropriately.

The Council also provided Registrars, to record Births, Deaths and Marriages. It still had a housing service, with a statutory duty to address housing need, and combat homelessness.

In terms of Council tax and benefits, it would collect over £70m in Council tax, and hand out £50m in housing benefit, which can generate over 100,000 letters when people move into or around the County Borough.

There were a number of things the Council does to support the delivery of services.

Property and building maintenance, manage the Council's many assets, and our enhanced disposals programme helps support the investment in Schools, Extra Care and Highways. This year the Council hoped to generate around £1.75m from sales of surplus assets to add to the £14.3m received over the last few years.

Legal Services kept the Authority on the right side of the law and one third of this service is focussed on child protection cases.

Finance followed the money to ensure transparency and accountability of the public purse. The team work incredibly hard, improving the transparency of the system helping him and others understand what can be a very complex network of activity.

Capital financing costs the Council around £13.6m and the team ensure we get best value in an acceptable risk.

HR oversees the needs of our 6,000 employees and has recently had to deal with the introduction of the Welsh Language Standards.

We also now live in a Digital Age the Deputy Leader added. ICT and Digital play a vital role in delivering services. Around £8m would be invested to ensure we are flexible and convenient to our customers. The transformation will be organic taking staff and customers along at a pace that is comfortable for all.

These other services cost the Council around £25m.

Finally, Democratic services cost to the public of 54 democratically elected members including support is ¼% of gross budget.

To help Councillors to respond to very local issues in their ward and become even more accountable to their electorate, the Council will introduce a Community Action Fund, and this fund will allow Members to invest up to £5,000 in a number of projects that benefit the wellbeing of their local area. Neighbouring wards can pool funds and Town and Community Councils are encouraged to also get involved.

The Deputy Leader thought this was an innovative approach, and possibly the first of its kind in Wales. It was hoped that this will stimulate grass root decision making and support the Council's objective to help people to be more self-reliant.

A Member referred to page 170 of the report where it detailed outcomes of the consultation on the MTFs, and she was totally in agreement with the view made that certain services such as Schools and Social Services should be protected over others. In relation to this, she asked if there was any planned redundancies in either of these Departments.

In respect of Social Services, the Corporate Director Social Services and Wellbeing confirmed that the service was currently being modernised and transformed in order to change and re-shape services so that they are delivered in a different and more efficient way so as to realise savings required under the MTFs. She added that there had been a few redundancies that had to be made last year due to the above, though nothing was planned along these lines in the immediate future.

The Leader added that the Authority looked at making redundancies where staff were in post as a last resort. However, restructures of Directorates had to be made from time to time, particularly during the period of austerity, and therefore this did sometimes result in staff being moved to different roles within their Directorate. If they did not have or were

able to match the skills required for an alternative role within the Authority, then unfortunately on occasions this did result in infrequent cases of staff redundancy.

A Member pointed out that any cuts to school budgets resulted to a degree in job redundancies, since 70% of schools budgets are spent on staffing. He stated that for many years the annual Council budget had been approved as a result of general consensus by Members of all parties at Council. He confirmed that such consensus was as a result of the Cabinet responding positively wherever practicable, to recommendations from the various Overview and Scrutiny Committees and Budget and Research Evaluation Panel (BREP). He proceeded by stating that this year, sadly consensus on the MTFs proposals were fractured as both the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the BREP, recommended that school budgets should not be cut. In light of this, and given the warning from Head Teachers to the above Overview and Scrutiny Committee, he urged all Members to reconsider their support for a budget which he felt would be of detriment to the life chances of young people. He felt that Members should listen to the educational professionals rather than Accountants, who were already managing tight finances on a day to day basis, and vote against the MTFs proposals due to the cuts imposed upon schools. He added that no other Welsh local authority had proposed this for the up and coming financial year, apart from a small cut by Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council. He concluded by stating that if Members supported the MTFs before them, then they would probably be committing the Authority to 4 years of savings amounting to over £3m, at the expense of Bridgend County Borough schools and the future wellbeing of young people. He therefore moved an amendment that was duly seconded, that the recommendations of the report be not supported.

The Deputy Leader referred to page 79 of the report and Table 9, where it was evidenced that the Council was not intending to cut school budgets. The MTFs proposals had been discussed with the School Budget Forum in Porthcawl, where the proposals in respect of schools had been warmly welcomed.

A Member whilst appreciating the report for its style and layout, also expressed her disappointment in the budget cuts for schools. In England schools were protected by Central Government, and as she was a school governor of two schools, she felt that she could not support the recommendations of the report due to this proposed cut, which amounted to £869k. Some school governors were also concerned with this proposed reduction as well as the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee and BREP, who as part of the MTFs, had asked Cabinet to find the cut elsewhere in the Authority.

A Member was pleased to see that the Communities Directorate were set for a balanced budget, though he was once more concerned of the continued cuts in respect of services provided by this Directorate year on year, as these were public facing and subject to a considerable number of complaints from constituents. He was pleased however, to note that not all of the cuts originally proposed for service areas of this Directorate for 2017-18 had been recommended for next year by Cabinet who had changed some of these, after considering certain recommendations made through both the overview and scrutiny process and by BREP.

The Leader advised that the School Budget Forum was a statutory body, and it was incumbent upon the local authority to consult with them on the MTFs. The Cabinet met with the Forum after receiving all the recommendations that came through BREP, and discussed the MTFs proposals with them and they welcomed the proposals as they were expecting a 1% cut and were not aware that this would be partly offset by the adjustments to the schools' delegated budgets as explained in paragraph 4.42 of the report.

The Leader added that no one wished to see a reduction in schools budgets, however, £30m had to be found under the MTFS in future years, and therefore savings had to be made in all areas of local authority services. Cabinet had listened to and acted upon some recommendations of BREP on the budget, but not all of these could be taken on board as if they were, it would neither be balanced or sustainable.

A Member voiced some concern that the budget cuts imposed upon schools would result in increased difficulty in attempts to positively tackle child poverty. Pupils qualifying for free school meals was increasing in Maesteg schools, and possibly also in other deprived areas of the County Borough, and the proposals for schools would not help this.

A Member further added, that he was concerned that the cuts proposed for schools would affect performance of secondary age pupils obtaining 3 A star and 3 A grades in core level subjects, resulting the Council falling further behind the all Wales average.

The Cabinet Member Education and Regeneration advised that there was a process that needed to be followed when setting a balanced budget, and unfortunately there were times when statutory as well as non-statutory services are subject to this. He reiterated what had been said earlier in debate, which was that cuts being faced by schools would to a degree be negated due to the transfer out of the Revenue Support Grant of £46k, formerly provided in respect of teacher registration fee subsidies, together with a reduction in the cost of business rates following the 2017 business rates re-evaluation. He added that support was also continuing to be given by the Council to private agencies that supported young children, such as nursery age groups.

The Cabinet Member Social Services and Early Help, confirmed that he felt some of the comments made during debate had been a little unfair in terms of the Council's commitment to Family Education and Social Services. He added that it was unfair year on year cutting other areas of the budget to continually supplement the areas of Education and Family Support and Social Services. He felt that the MTFS proposals more reflected the Authority's mission of adopting a One Council approach, and to make savings fairly and proportionally, but at the same time to continue providing excellent services to constituents and other members of the public.

A Member stated that he had concerns over the terminology of 'efficiency savings', suggesting that this form of wording probably would be taken different ways by different people. He accepted that the environment in which pupils are taught can have an effect on attainment, which is why he had positively supported the Authority's 21st Century schools programme through this Council term, but ultimately, he felt it was a numbers game in so much as having the appropriate number of staff in each school to be able to provide the resources that underpin high quality education. This was a quality he considered, that each and every child in the County Borough expected and deserved. He felt that if the MTFS was approved today, Members who were school governors would be summoned to a governing body meeting in the not too distant future, and asked to identify areas for cutting which will could mean staff, as there are so few other areas that could be cut. He felt that the elements of the Corporate Plan that referred to standards and targets in Education were hugely undermined by the 1% proposed cut. The most recent inspections at two of the BCB's three comprehensive schools found the deficit in budgets to be a problem, and highlighted it as an issue that needed addressing going forward. There were many other schools across Bridgend facing similar budget dilemmas, and that was before the 1% cut. To that end, he felt Members should be mindful of firstly the highly-praised Estyn inspections at some of our schools recently, not least that of Bryntirion Comprehensive and Ysgol Cynwyd Sant in Maesteg, but certainly the fact that there were schools in the County that require significant additional support, as demonstrated by adequate or even unsatisfactory Estyn inspections. He

COUNCIL - WEDNESDAY, 1 MARCH 2017

advised that Members would also recollect that at a recent meeting of Council, BCBC proceeded with the City Deal, as it appeared the risk of not doing so was too great. He believed that the risk of proceeding with a 1% cut to schools was just too great, which is why he felt unable to support the budget before him today.

As this concluded debate on the MTFs, it was moved and seconded that an electronic vote be taken on whether or not to have a recorded vote on the recommendations of the report, in view of the fact that some Members were opposed to the proposal to cut schools budgets, which was unanimously carried.

A recorded vote was then conducted, the result of which was as follows:-

For (the report's recommendations)

Cllr CL Jones
Cllr G Thomas
Cllr CJ James
Cllr MEJ Nott
Cllr M Thomas
Cllr N Farr
Cllr D Patel
Cllr RE Young
Cllr A Owen
Cllr R Williams
Cllr J McCarthy
Cllr D Lewis
Cllr JE Lewis
Cllr P James
Cllr DBF White
Cllr G Phillips
Cllr PA Davies
Cllr M Jones
Cllr M Reeves
Cllr M Gregory
Cllr JC Spanswick
Cllr CL Jones
Cllr LC Morgan
Cllr PJ White
Cllr HJ Townsend
Cllr HJ David
Cllr HM Williams
Cllr CE Smith
Cllr C Reeves

Total 29

Did not vote

Cllr RC Jones

Against

Cllr HE Morgan
Cllr EM Hughes
Cllr GW Davies
Cllr PJ John
Cllr DK Edwards
Cllr R Penhale-Thomas
Cllr C Westwood
Cllr EP Foley
Cllr E Dodd
Cllr S Aspey
Cllr G Davies
Cllr JH Tildesley
Cllr M Winter
Cllr N Clarke
Cllr CA Green
Cllr KJ Watts

Total 16

720. URGENT ITEMS

None.

COUNCIL - WEDNESDAY, 1 MARCH 2017

The meeting closed at 3.42 pm