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Bridgend County Borough Council



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**Cyfarwyddiaeth y Prif Weithredwr / Chief
Executive's Directorate**

Deialu uniongyrchol / Direct line /: 01656 643148 /
643147 / 643694

Gofynnwch am / Ask for: Democratic Services

Ein cyf / Our ref:

Eich cyf / Your ref:

Dyddiad/Date: Thursday, 24 February 2022

Dear Councillor,

CORPORATE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

A meeting of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee will be held remotely - via Microsoft Teams on **Wednesday, 2 March 2022 at 09:30**.

AGENDA

1. Apologies for Absence
To receive apologies for absence from Members.
2. Declarations of Interest
To receive declarations of personal and prejudicial interest (if any) from Members/Officers in accordance with the provisions of the Members Code of Conduct adopted by Council from 1 September 2008 (including whipping declarations)
3. Approval of Minutes 3 - 12
To receive for approval the minutes of 19 01 2022 and 01 02 2022
4. Budget Monitoring 2021-22 - Quarter 3 Revenue Forecast 13 - 44

Invitees:

Councillor Huw David - Leader
Councillor Hywel Williams - Deputy Leader
Councillor Stuart Baldwin - Cabinet Member for Communities
Councillor Jane Gebbie - Cabinet Member for Social Services and Early Help
Councillor Dhanisha Patel - Cabinet Member for Future Generations and Wellbeing
Councillor Charles Smith - Cabinet Member for Education & Regeneration

Mark Shephard - Chief Executive
Lindsay Harvey - Corporate Director - Education and Family Support
Carys Lord - Chief Officer Finance, Performance and Change
Claire Marchant - Corporate Director - Social Services and Wellbeing
Janine Nightingale - Corporate Director - Communities

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Kelly Watson - Chief Officer Legal and Regulatory Services, HR & Corporate Policy

5. Employee Wellbeing

45 - 54

Invitees:

Councillor Hywel Williams - Deputy Leader

Mark Shephard - Chief Executive

Kelly Watson - Chief Officer Legal and Regulatory Services, HR & Corporate Policy

Debra Beeke - Group Manager - Human Resources and Organisational Development

Angela Farrow – HR Business Development Manager

Ann Stewart – Health and Wellbeing Officer

6. Urgent Items

To consider any item(s) of business in respect of which notice has been given in accordance with Part 4 (paragraph 4) of the Council Procedure Rules and which the person presiding at the meeting is of the opinion should by reason of special circumstances be transacted at the meeting as a matter of urgency.

Note: Please note: Due to the current requirement for social distancing this meeting will not be held at its usual location. This will be a virtual meeting and Members and Officers will be attending remotely. The meeting will be recorded for subsequent transmission via the Council's internet site which will be available as soon as practicable after the meeting. If you have any queries regarding this, please contact cabinet_committee@bridgend.gov.uk or tel. 01656 643147 / 643148.

Yours faithfully

K Watson

Chief Officer, Legal and Regulatory Services, HR and Corporate Policy

Councillors:

JPD Blundell

NA Burnett

DG Howells

M Jones

Councillors

RL Penhale-Thomas

KL Rowlands

RMI Shaw

JC Spanswick

Councillors

T Thomas

MC Voisey

A Williams

AJ Williams

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CORPORATE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
HELD REMOTELY - VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS ON WEDNESDAY, 19 JANUARY 2022 AT
09:30

Present

Councillor KL Rowlands – Chairperson

JPD Blundell
JC Spanswick

M Jones
A Williams

RL Penhale-Thomas
AJ Williams

RMI Shaw

Apologies for Absence

Cllr Huw David (Leader), Cllrs Tim Thomas and G Thomas

Officers:

Lucy Beard	Scrutiny Officer
Julie Ellams	Democratic Services Officer - Committees
Mark Galvin	Interim Democratic Services Manager
Meryl Lawrence	Senior Democratic Services Officer - Scrutiny
Carys Lord	Chief Officer - Finance, Performance & Change
Martin Morgans	Head of Performance and Partnership Services
Janine Nightingale	Corporate Director - Communities
Michael Pitman	Democratic Services Officer - Committees
Kelly Watson	Chief Officer Legal, HR and Regulatory Services

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr R Shaw declared a personal interest in the Medium Term Financial Strategy 2022-23 to 2025-26. In appendix 1 to the report there was a reference to an increase in the Fire Service Precept and Cllr Shaw had been appointed by the Local Authority to the Fire and Rescue Authority.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of a meeting of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee dated 7 October 2021 be approved as a true and accurate record subject to the inclusion of Cllr Jon-Paul Blundell as being in attendance.

3. MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2022-23 TO 2025-26

The Chief Officer – Finance, Performance and Change presented a summary of the report, the purpose of which was to present the Committee with the draft Medium Term Financial Strategy 2022-23 to 2025-26, which set out the spending priorities of the Council, key investment objectives and budget areas targeted for necessary savings. The strategy included a financial forecast for 2022-2026 and a detailed draft revenue budget for 2022-23.

The Chair thanked the Chief Officer Finance, Performance and Change and Members asked the following questions:

A Member referred to the anticipated saving of £300,000 from transferring responsibility for the management of assets to Town and Community Councils, clubs and groups. He requested more information on how the £300,000 had been calculated.

The Chief Officer – Finance Performance and Change explained that she did not have that information to hand and that she could provide a written response for the committee. Another Member added that he would raise the CAT process in the SOSOC3 meeting that would take place the following week and that a definitive breakdown could be provided at that meeting. A Member not on SOSOC3 asked that information be provided at that meeting on the grants that were being provided for the maintenance of buildings etc and the pot the grants came from.

A Member referred to the series of budget pressures from the legislative changes made by Welsh Government relating to the environment, climate change, additional learning needs, Test Trace and Protect, the use of PPE, the public vaccine programme, and the end of the Covid-19 Hardship Fund. He said that there should be consequential funding from Central Government, and these should not have to be implemented from existing budgets. He wanted to know if the Leader and Deputy Leader had been lobbying Welsh Government to ensure that the consequential funding was there. He then referred to the legislative changes that would have an impact on the budget including the teacher's pay settlement, National Insurance (NI) contributions and the living wage. He asked for confirmation that the three totalled £1.2 million out of a settlement of £19.6million. He also asked if the legislative changes were ongoing pressures as this was not clearly stated in the report.

The Chief Officer – Finance Performance and Change replied that it was increasingly the case that new legislative requirements came with no new funding. There was some additional funding for climate change, but the detail was not clear. In relation to PPE and vaccination centres these were currently being funded from the Hardship Fund. There would be funding for these, but it would be included in the general settlement, and it was for the local authorities to estimate how much they allocated toward these costs. She added that there had been lobbying via the WLGA over the last year with regard to both Covid and the increases in demand on services. The Chief Officer – Finance Performance and Change explained that with regard to the teacher's pay settlement, National Insurance (NI) contributions and the Living Wage, there were funds within the settlement however details had not been quantified and were still to be confirmed. The Deputy Head of Finance confirmed the current position and that in terms of teacher's pay, they did not know what the position would be from September 2022 because it had not yet been agreed. In terms of NI contributions, the bottom line figure was £2.1 million for Local Authority staff but there were also staff for the commissioned services. The Guidance was not yet available for the Real Living Wage but up to £2.5 million had been set aside based on indicative work. Within those three areas alone there was a potential pressure of £5.5 million.

The Chief Executive added that there was still an enormous amount of uncertainty with regard to the budget. On the one hand, there was a more generous settlement, but it did not specify how much of the settlement was allocated to the additional burdens. During Covid there had been an increase in demand for all services. The Hardship Fund would now be coming to an end, and it was difficult to estimate what demand would be moving forward.

A member asked about the financial liability to the independent sector for NI contributions. He asked if it would be written into the contract that the local authority would be liable for this type of increase. He also asked if it was time to revisit the MTFS process in light of the volatility of uplifts ranging from 3 and 4% to 9%. He suggested that they lobby Welsh Government for a 3 year strategy so that they could budget effectively.

The Chief Executive replied that Chief Executives and Directors had been lobbying Welsh Government that it would be better to have a long term settlement. An indicative settlement had been provided for all local authorities over the next 2 years but there was no indication what the individual allocation would be. They had speculated that it would be lower than the current 9.2% and closer to what it had been in previous years. He agreed that it would be better in terms of long- term planning but recognised that with the elections in May there could be changes to political parties and priorities. He added that they had to be prudent moving forward and had to prioritise.

The Chief Officer – Finance Performance and Change agreed that they had been lobbying for a considerable time and the 3 year indicative settlement would help. With regard to NI liability, their contractors would not have been aware of this and therefore would not have planned for it. If the Authority did not support certain areas such as social care where the majority of money paid out was for staff costs, then they would have to cover it themselves and that Halo and Awen also needed support.

A Member referred to a number of new Acts that had recently or were about to be introduced, all of which were additional financial responsibility for authorities. There was discussion regarding whether through the Chair a letter should be written to the Minister for Finance regarding these additional pressures on local authorities, however this was later superseded by the proposal of Recommendation 4 below: “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, ...etc.”

Another member fully endorsed the comments made regarding volatility of funding and sympathised with the Chief Officer – Finance Performance and Change for the very late settlement. The Member asked for further information regarding the AEF figures.

The Deputy Head of Finance explained that the indicative figures for the next 2 years were a lot lower than the figures they had just received, and it was not clear where Bridgend fell within the 22 authorities. This year Bridgend was lower than the average. Also, often the settlement contained funding for new responsibilities and when this element was taken out, the funding was a lot lower. Assuming there would be additional costs then the real increase was likely to be more like 1%.

A Member referred to the Council Tax threshold and the freeze for the forthcoming year. He asked exactly what a cut of 1% and an increase of 1% would look like in terms of figures, in light of a potential shortfall of 4.2% going forward.

The Chief Executive replied that every 1% of Council Tax brought in £¾ million to the local authority so an increase of 4% would equal £3 million. The generous settlement provided a one off possibility of freezing Council Tax which was the best way to help residents this year.

The Member explained that he was trying to understand what other alternatives were considered during the budget setting process.

The Chief Executive explained that the settlement was quite late and did not leave much time to consider alternatives. They had considered a range of scenarios and how the budget would balance. In view of the cost of living crisis, a Council Tax freeze was considered a better priority for this year than spending on other things. If Scrutiny Committees disagreed with this, they could suggest other options.

A Member asked if there would be an opportunity to ask the Leader / Deputy questions before the Council Tax was set by Council. The Senior Democratic Services Officer-Scrutiny explained that all 4 Scrutiny committees would consider the report within their individual remits over the next few days and the Leader and Deputy Leader had been invited to attend them all. The Recommendations from all Scrutiny Committees would be reported to COSC on 1st February along with the BREP Recommendations and Cabinet would consider those before meeting again later in February, before the meeting of Council to set the Council Tax.

A Member reiterated that at the Cabinet meeting the day before, the Leader and Cabinet members had stressed that their position had not been pre- determined and that they would be taking into account the comments made by Scrutiny and the public consultation. It would be too late at Council to debate these issues.

The Cabinet Member for Wellbeing and Future Generations advised that there would be an opportunity to ask questions of the Leader and Deputy Leader in the further three Subject Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings being held over the next three working days. She added that she had been attending as a listening Cabinet Member.

The Deputy Leader apologised for his late arrival and explained that there had been an incident which he had had to deal with before attending.

A Member asked what other considerations Cabinet made when setting the Council Tax for the forthcoming year. The Deputy Leader replied that the Council Tax level was always the final part of the calculation. They looked at what pressures they could fund from the settlement and the balancing figure was the Council Tax.

A Member stated that at a recent meeting, she had asked how much the Authority was saving by staff working from home. She had been advised that savings had been offset by the cost of providing everyone with equipment and she questioned why the photocopying bill was so high if everyone had their own equipment.

The Deputy Head of Finance explained that the budget pressure was in respect of postage as occasionally staff needed documents or a paper copy and this was sent to their home address. This was offset by the saving of staff no longer being in the office and printing things that they might be able to manage without. There was an issue with leased printers in the offices and the lease cost payable on them. There was a shortfall in the ICT printing budget, and they had to determine the future delivery model and printing facilities and to look at the leases to see whether they could end some. There were potential savings but not at that moment.

A Member asked why documents were not being scanned and emailed rather than sending paper copies. The Head of Partnerships explained that there was a 3 year term on the printers and people printing in the office would offset the cost. They did scan a significant amount, but this was predominantly post being sent out. They had minimised printing massively and incorporated far more scanning.

A Member asked if Officers were able to come to the offices to collect post. The Head of Partnerships replied that Officers used a digitised system where papers were scanned and forwarded electronically. This pressure predominantly referred to where documents were posted to residents, and this would have been covered under a different budget previously.

A Member asked for more information regarding the business support review. The Chief Executive explained that this was slightly misleading as it looked like a £405,000 increase when in reality it was part of the response to better resourcing front line

services such as children's services and the early help service. They had tried to adopt different practices to free up front line staff to cope with the increase in demand. Phase 2 of the review of business support would still be carried out but this would create a holding position to address demand at that moment.

A member referred to CW1, the Fire Service precept and asked if there had been any movement on their budget and if the Fire Authority should be like the Police and precept themselves.

The Chief Officer – Finance Performance and Change replied that she was not aware of any update and that the Fire Authority would meet in early February to finalise their budget. They were not anticipating any changes. There had been discussion around funding so that they would become more like the Police, and this had been out for consultation.

A Member asked about the Hardship Fund that the schools had relied upon. Welsh Government had set guidelines regarding Covid including setting bubbles, hand sanitising and advanced cleaning and she asked if the schools would still be expected to do the extra work and if this would be funded by the Council or if the schools would be expected to meet the cost. The Member was not on the Scrutiny Committee that covered education so would be unable to ask the question at the relevant time. It was agreed that the question could be raised on her behalf at the meeting of SOSC 1 the following day.

The Chief Executive advised that the narrative around the £1 million was that it would be allocated where it was needed. They were not asking schools to pick up the 1% savings, however it was expected that the £1 million would not cover everything. There was the potential to allocate money moving forward.

A Member asked if there were any indicative figures regarding the ongoing pressure for homelessness.

The Chief Officer – Finance Performance and Change explained that there was already a provision within the base budget to support homelessness services going forward and this would be monitored carefully.

A Member referred to the Real Living Wage and said that it was really welcome. He asked for clarity that the narrative referred to care workers and all outsourced contractors such as Halo and Awen.

The Deputy Leader replied that they were aiming to cover all external commissioned services.

The Chief Officer Legal, Regulatory and Human Resources and Monitoring Officer confirmed that this was the direction of travel and was included in the action plan put forward to the Real Living Wage Foundation for accreditation. They were in contracts with the partners and agencies so there was a process they had to go through, and it would be included when awarding new contracts.

The Deputy Head of Finance added that this budget pressure was only to support the care workers' real living wage increase both internal and external. They were waiting for Guidance on how it would be applied.

A Member asked why the Real Living Wage and NI contributions were dealt with differently within the contracts. The Chief Officer Legal, Regulatory and Human Resources and Monitoring Officer replied that NI contributions were mandatory and

there was no discretion whereas with the Real Living Wage, the Authority had applied to become accredited, and they were under no obligation to pay it at this stage. This was ongoing and would continue going forward and as contracts were renewed, it would be included in the procurement process.

The Chairperson advised that Members of the Committee who wanted to ask questions had all spoken, so as there were no further questions for the invitees, she thanked them for their attendance and they left the meeting.

Following consideration of the report and appendices, the Committee made the following Recommendations for consolidation and inclusion in the report to Cabinet on the draft MTFS, including the proposed budget pressures and budget reduction proposals within the remit of this Scrutiny Committee, as part of the budget consultation process:
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.

4. **URGENT ITEMS**

None.

The meeting closed at 11:55

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MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CORPORATE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
HELD REMOTELY - VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS ON TUESDAY, 1 FEBRUARY 2022 AT 09:30

Present

Councillor KL Rowlands – Chairperson

JPD Blundell
RMI Shaw
AJ Williams

DG Howells
JC Spanswick

M Jones
MC Voisey

RL Penhale-Thomas
A Williams

Officers:

Lucy Beard Scrutiny Officer

Meryl Lawrence Senior Democratic Services Officer - Scrutiny

Kelly Watson Chief Officer Legal, HR and Regulatory Services

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None

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

The Senior Democratic Services Officer – Scrutiny presented the report to the Committee and referred to Appendix A, the final report of the Budget Research and Evaluation Panel (BREP) and Appendix B, the response from all Overview and Scrutiny Committees to Cabinet’s draft Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) including the proposed budget pressures and draft budget proposals. She advised that in paragraph 9 of the report the Committee was asked to determine whether it wished 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 decided were appropriate.

The Chairperson asked if any Members had any questions or comments on the recommendations in Appendix A or B.

Following discussions regarding the BREP Final Report in Appendix A, the Committee strengthened the wording of BREP Recommendations 3, 7, 11, 12 and 22, by agreeing the addition of the words in bold and italics below:

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.

BREP also asks what the Authority has done to explore cost benefit options and arrangements for alternative routes, whilst awaiting the clarification.

Recommendation 7:

Cabinet ***urgently*** reviews school catchment areas to ensure that recent housing developments are taken into consideration, ***in order to also help identify financial, carbon and environmental savings on transport, so at the end they are taken into consideration to also identify financial savings on transport costs.***

Recommendation 11:

Cabinet explores potential for increasing charges in Social Services, ***and provides BREP with a breakdown of the cost and quantum of support to local residents of the community.***

Recommendation 12:

Cabinet ***investigates all new forms*** of food waste bags, ***having regard to the environmental impact and to lower the financial cost to the Authority.***

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.

BREP further asks what exploration the Authority has undertaken on providing local authority housing.

The Committee endorsed the BREP Recommendations 1 to 28 in Appendix A, subject to the strengthening of the above Recommendations and the addition of the following further two Recommendations numbered 29 and 30 below:

Recommendation 29:

BREP requests clarity upon how its Recommendations have been incorporated into the draft Medium Term Financial Strategy, and these particular budget proposals and for the medium term, what Corporate Directors have done to take account of BREP Recommendations, and any that have been rejected, to enable a transparent debate on the recommendations put forward, and that future BREP recommendations ought to inform the budget process from an earlier stage and a written response to each of its Recommendations be provided earlier to enable those considerations to be built into its final Recommendations to Cabinet.

Recommendation 30:

BREP is looking ahead to the next Council term and the next five years, given the likelihood that the settlement for the next financial year is a one-off and there are likely to be significant cuts needed in the next Council Term, BREP requests a breakdown of which services in each Directorate are discretionary and clear differentiation between statutory services, to provide clarity to BREP Members.

The Committee endorsed the Scrutiny Committees' Recommendations on the Medium Term Financial Strategy 2022-23 to 2025-26 contained in Appendix B.

RESOLVED:

The Committee determined that it wished to submit the Recommendations outlined in Appendices A and B to Cabinet on 8 February 2022 as part of the budget consultation process, subject to the inclusion of the above amendments and additional Recommendations agreed by the Committee.

3. **URGENT ITEMS**

None.

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BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO THE CORPORATE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

2 MARCH 2022

REPORT OF THE CHIEF OFFICER – FINANCE, PERFORMANCE AND CHANGE

BUDGET MONITORING 2021-22 – QUARTER 3 REVENUE FORECAST

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide the Committee with an update on the Council's revenue financial position as at 31st December 2021.

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

- 2.1 This report assists in the achievement of the following corporate well-being 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 focused on raising the skills, qualifications and ambitions of 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** – ensuring 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.
- 2.2 The allocation of budget determines the extent to which the Council's well-being objectives can be delivered.

3. Background

- 3.1 On 24th February 2021, Council approved a net revenue budget of £298.956 million for 2021-22. As part of the Performance Management Framework, budget projections are reviewed regularly and reported to Cabinet on a quarterly basis. The delivery of agreed budget reductions is also kept under review and reported to Cabinet as part of this process.

4. Current situation/proposal

4.1 Summary financial position at 31st December 2021

4.1.1 The Council's net revenue budget and projected outturn for 2021-22 is shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1 - Comparison of budget against projected outturn at 31st December 2021

Directorate/Budget Area	Original Budget 2021-22 £'000	Revised Budget 2021-22 £'000	Projected Outturn Q3 2021-22 £'000	Projected Over / (Under) Spend 2021-22 £'000	Projected Over / (Under) Spend Qtr 2 2021-22 £'000
Directorate					
Education and Family Support	127,055	127,580	128,599	1,019	1,089
Social Services and Wellbeing Communities	74,043	74,536	73,443	(1,093)	471
Chief Executive's	28,137	28,317	28,407	90	(313)
	21,304	21,520	19,432	(2,088)	(1,417)
Total Directorate Budgets	250,539	251,953	249,881	(2,072)	(170)
Council Wide Budgets					
Capital Financing	7,329	7,329	8,329	1,000	1,000
Levies	7,783	7,797	7,775	(22)	(22)
Apprenticeship Levy	650	650	673	23	17
Council Tax Reduction Scheme	15,654	15,654	15,504	(150)	0
Insurance Premiums	1,363	1,363	1,425	62	67
Repairs & Maintenance	670	670	520	(150)	(100)
Pension Related Costs	430	430	430	0	2
Other Corporate Budgets	14,538	13,110	4,890	(8,220)	(6,882)
Total Council Wide Budgets	48,417	47,003	39,546	(7,457)	(5,918)
Appropriations to Earmarked Reserves			7,004	7,004	4,004
Total	298,956	298,956	296,431	(2,525)	(2,084)

4.1.2 The overall projected position at 31st December 2021 is a net under spend of £2.525 million comprising a £2.072 million net under spend on directorates and a £7.457 million net under spend on council wide budgets, offset by a net appropriation to earmarked reserves of £7.004 million. The projected position is based on:-

- Inclusion of reimbursed expenditure/loss of income to date on areas impacted by Covid-19 received from Welsh Government (WG).
- Exclusion of Covid-19 expenditure/loss of income claims that are currently on hold with WG at the time of writing this report where reimbursement is not certain.
- Exclusion of Covid-19 expenditure/loss of income claims that have not yet been submitted as they relate to quarter 4 of 2021-22.

- 4.1.3 The projected under spend on the Council budget at quarter 3 significantly masks the underlying budget pressures in some service areas that were reported in 2020-21 and still persist in 2021-22, for the reasons outlined below. The main financial pressures are in Home to School Transport, Social Services and Wellbeing, Homelessness and Waste.
- 4.1.4 The Home to School Transport budget has been supported in 2021-22 by a one-off MTFFS Budget Pressure of £1.210 million that was approved by Council in February 2021. The quarter 3 projections indicate further pressure of £755,000 on this budget, with additional procurement exercises due to conclude shortly for taxis and minibuses which could put further pressure on the budget going into 2022-23, increasing the budget pressure to over £2 million.
- 4.1.5 It is forecast that the long-term impact of Covid-19, alongside the already known pressures of an ageing population, increasing dementia rates and more complex and challenging needs is going to result in increasing demands on already pressurised services in the Social Services and Wellbeing Directorate. The underlying pressure on the budget at quarter 3 is masked by grant funding of £2.916 million from the Social Care Recovery Fund, along with under spends on staffing budgets due to difficulties in recruitment, which subsequently impacts on the ability to meet demands for packages of care.
- 4.1.6 Whilst budget growth of £2.192 million was approved by Council as part of the Medium Term Financial Strategy budget setting process in February 2021, to continue the commitment to focus support for homeless individuals, the Council has seen a significant increase in the provision of temporary accommodation. Secondly, further to the budget being approved for 2021-22, Welsh Government confirmed that the Covid Hardship Fund was to be extended into 2021-22, including support for temporary accommodation. Given the increase in provision, and as the Hardship Fund will not be in place beyond 31st March 2022, the budget growth might be insufficient to meet the increase in demand going into 2022-23.
- 4.1.7 Waste tonnages increased in 2020-21, primarily due to lockdowns and more residents working from home in general, and this trend is continuing into 2021-22. Support was received in 2020-21 and in the first half of 2021-22 from the WG Hardship Fund towards these increased costs. Support is continuing for the second half of 2021-22, albeit that funding is reduced to 50% of the increased costs. As the Hardship Fund will not be in place beyond the 31st March 2022, the underlying budget pressure is likely to continue into 2022-23.
- 4.1.8 As a consequence of the projected one-off under spends, we have been able to create in-year earmarked reserves to support the capital programme and investment in our communities at this unprecedented time. Detailed movements in earmarked reserves can be found in section 4.4, and quarter 3 has seen a new £3 million addition to the unallocated capital reserve to be utilised against projected capital pressures.
- 4.1.9 In addition, given the significant funding required to meet pay and price costs in 2022-23, and potential pressures on Council Tax collection (see 4.1.20) and increase in eligibility for council tax support through the Council Tax Reduction Scheme (see 4.1.21), any uncommitted funding from other council wide budgets

in 2021-22 will be carried forward to meet those pressures in the new financial year.

4.1.10 The Council received its provisional local government settlement for 2021-22 from Welsh Government on 21st December 2021. A report is being presented to Cabinet on 18th January 2022 on the draft Medium Term Financial Strategy 2022-23 to 2025-26 which sets out the spending priorities of the Council, key investment objectives and budget areas targeted for necessary savings. The strategy includes a financial forecast for 2022-26 and a detailed draft revenue budget for 2022-23. It is clear from the report that there will be difficult choices to make and pressures to meet going forward. In addition, there is still one quarter of the financial year remaining and there are a number of volatile budgets which could impact upon this position as well as the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, particularly during the winter months.

4.1.11 A detailed analysis of the more significant projected under and over spends is set out in section 4.3. The position on directorate budgets has improved since quarter 2, with the projected under spend increasing by £1.9 million. This is primarily due to additional income relating to Homelessness accommodation costs from the Covid-19 Hardship Fund, with £1.313 being successfully claimed during quarter 3. Covid-19 Hardship claims will continue to be made to WG for the remainder of the 2021-22 financial year and, if successful, will further improve the financial position by the year end. In addition, WG awarded an additional £3,132,108 to the Local Authority Education Grant 2021-22 for Bridgend on the 21st December 2021. We are currently reviewing the allocation to determine if there is any impact on service budgets or school balance projections.

Covid-19

4.1.12 The UK was put into lockdown on 23rd March 2020 in an unprecedented step to attempt to limit the spread of coronavirus. A Covid-19 Hardship Fund was set up at an early stage by the Welsh Government to the value of £188.5 million which the Council was able to draw on for financial support. Bridgend successfully claimed over £15 million in expenditure claims and over £5.5 million in loss of income claims in 2020-21.

4.1.13 The Welsh Government allocated £206.6 million in its budget to the Hardship Fund to support local government for the first six months of 2021-22. In addition, £23.3 million was allocated to support free school meals during the school holidays. WG subsequently confirmed a further allocation of £97.5 million for the remainder of the 2021-22 financial year with revised principles for claims and tapering of support for social care uplifts and void payments. Three new allocations have been added to the Hardship Fund in quarter 3 - £38 million for winter fuel support, £600,000 for community hubs and £2 million for homelessness support. It is anticipated that the Hardship Fund will not be in place beyond 31st March 2022.

4.1.14 The Authority will continue to claim from the Hardship Fund against the eligible criteria and directorates will continue to capture costs incurred as a result of the ongoing impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.

4.1.15 Cabinet and Corporate Management Board (CCMB) agreed to establish a £1 million Covid-19 Recovery Fund in 2020-21 to provide funding for conscious and proactive decisions aimed at boosting recovery that were unlikely to be paid for by WG. The balance on this fund has been carried into 2021-22 and CCMB have approved the use of this fund to support the free car parking offer for town centres to the end of January, a phased rental income increase for Bridgend County Borough Council (BCBC) owned premises and the waiver of sports fees for the remainder of the 2020-21 season. These have been built into the quarter 3 projections.

Estimated costs of the Council's response to the Covid-19 pandemic

4.1.16 Welsh Government has provided specific eligibility criteria for each of its funding streams, and all directorates have been made aware of them, and are capturing costs accordingly. Any Covid-19 costs which are not identified and claimed will need to be funded from the normal service budgets or established earmarked reserves. Claims submitted to date to Welsh Government, and the outcome of these claims, are shown in Table 2.

Table 2 – Covid-19 expenditure claims up to end of November 2021

Specific Hardship Fund	Claimed £'000	Paid £'000	On hold/ pending review £'000	Disallowed £'000
General	511	472	29	10
Homelessness	2,616	2,586	30	0
Free School Meals	814	0	814	0
Schools	823	746	76	1
Adult Social Services	3,606	3,201	405	0
Visitor Economy	84	84	0	0
Self Isolation Payments (SIP)/ Statutory Sick Pay Enhancements (SSP)	858	671	187	0
Total	9,313	7,760	1,542	11

4.1.17 The disallowed expenditure relates primarily to reimbursement of costs incurred by the Council in relation to ongoing home working arrangements and the provision of temporary outdoor structures at schools. Whilst the WG Hardship panel agreed that these costs may be additional and not within the Council's financial plans, they also felt that having such assets in place provides longer term benefits to local authorities. A contribution of 50% has therefore been agreed across Wales toward these costs for the first six months of 2021-22. WG have confirmed that these are no longer eligible to be claimed for the remainder of the 2021-22 financial year. The claims not paid to date of £1.542 million relate mostly to those pending review by the Free School Meal Panel (£814,000) and the latest submitted claim which is not due to be reviewed by WG until early in the New Year (£724,000). As there is no certainty at the time of writing this report in relation to the outcome of the items placed on hold (excluding FSM claims which have been fully funded by WG since the introduction of the Hardship grant), the reimbursement of costs has not been assumed in the quarter 3 projections and these are covered in detail in section 4.3 of the report.

4.1.18 The Council has also submitted a claim for loss of income to the Welsh Government for the first two quarters of 2021-22 totalling £1.154 million as shown in Table 3.

Table 3 – Covid-19 loss of income to Quarter 2 2021-22

Directorate	Claimed (covers to end of Qtr 2)	Paid	On hold	Main areas
	£'000	£'000	£'000	
Education and Family Support Directorate	48	48	0	£48k - School meal income
Schools	110	110	0	£65K - school meal income, £45K - loss of income from hire of school premises
Social Services & Wellbeing Directorate	655	655	0	£628k – contribution to Council’s leisure service provider, £27k – dual use sites where facilities are managed for community use outside of school hours
Communities Directorate	159	159	0	£74k - Car Park Income, £45k pitch and pavilion hire, £27k – civil enforcement income
Chief Executive's Directorate	183	183	0	£48K – court cost income £103k – registrars, taxi licensing and licensing income,
Total	1,154	1,154	0	

4.1.19 All of the claims for the first half of 2021-22 have been approved and paid by WG. Future claims will be submitted to cover the loss of income for the second half of the financial year, the outcome of which will be reported in the outturn report to Cabinet.

4.1.20 In addition to lost income from service provision, the Council is also likely to see a reduction in council tax income over the 2021-22 financial year as more people have suffered financial hardship through the pandemic along with the furlough scheme ending. Bridgend received £1.261 million from WG in 2020-21 in recognition of the reduced collection rates experienced by councils as a consequence of the Covid-19 pandemic and reduced court time for debt recovery. Recognising that recovery may be slow the Council reduced its own budgeted collection rate by 0.5% when it approved the council tax base in November 2020. A 1% reduction in the council tax income collection rate could result in an additional pressure to the Council of around £1 million. It is too early to provide a realistic indication of projected council tax for this financial year, and whilst no funding has been identified by WG for reduced council tax income, WG are monitoring this across all Welsh Local Authorities.

4.1.21 Alongside the impact on Council Tax, the ending of the furlough scheme and the potential for new restrictions to address the Omicron variant could both manifest itself in an increase in eligibility for council tax support. Support of £325,469 from WG was provided in 2020-21 towards the increased demand on the council tax reduction scheme due to the impact of Covid-19 on personal financial

circumstances, however, no additional funding has yet been identified by Welsh Government for increased council tax support.

Budget virements/technical adjustments

4.1.22 There have been a number of budget virements and technical adjustments between budgets since the quarter 2 Revenue Forecast was presented to Cabinet in October. The budget position is reported on the assumption that these virements will be approved. The main virements and technical adjustments in quarter 3 are outlined below:

Budget Virements

Service vired from / to	Amount
Transfer of funding from Directorate Print budgets to ICT to reflect reduced print activity due to staff working from home and ICT being unable to recover the fixed costs of printers and photocopiers through the re-charge to service departments.	£150,000

Technical Adjustments

Service vired from / to	Amount
Transfer of inflationary uplifts not confirmed when the MTFS is agreed that are held centrally until evidence of the uplift is provided by the service areas	£563,047
Allocation of funding retained centrally in respect of teachers' pay award 2021-22, net of grant received	£463,260

Pay/Price Inflation

4.1.23 When the budget for 2021-22 was set, directorates were provided with funding for known pay and price inflation. The remaining provision was retained centrally within Council wide budgets, to be allocated as further information was known about specific contractual price increases. The technical adjustments table above presents further release of these budgets as and when evidence is provided by the service areas.

4.1.24 Inflationary pressures include those arising from specific contractual commitments and significant increases in staffing costs arising not only from the above inflation increases in the national living wage, the agreed pay award of 1.75% for Teachers, but also the ongoing discussions regarding the pay claim for National Joint Council (NJC) workers.

4.1.25 Inflation rates have fluctuated since the budget was set - CPI was 0.7% in February 2021, had increased to 3.2% in August and has further increased to 5.1% in November. With the uncertainty around Brexit and Covid-19 and the possible economic fallout arising from these, along with the projected and rising energy costs, it is likely that the provision set aside in the MTFS for 2022-23 will need to be supplemented by any funding not committed from the council wide budgets this financial year.

Budget Reduction Proposals

- 4.1.26 The net budget for the financial year has been set assuming full implementation of the current year budget reduction requirements across the Council's budget, which amount to £1.760 million. Where proposals to meet this requirement have been delayed or are not achievable directorates have been tasked with identifying alternative proposals to meet their requirements such as vacancy management or bringing forward alternative budget reduction proposals.
- 4.1.27 The draft Medium Term Financial Strategy for 2022-23 to 2025-26 which is being presented to Cabinet on 18th January 2022 includes a number of pressures facing Bridgend County Borough Council over the life of the MTFs. The report reiterates the need to develop recurrent budget reduction proposals, based on the most likely scenario, amounting to £21.029 million over the next four years. Against that background it is essential that expenditure is kept within the overall approved budget and that longer term proposals continue to be developed so that the Council has as much flexibility as possible to meet the challenges which lie ahead.
- 4.1.28 At year end consideration will be given to requests from directors to carry forward any planned directorate under spends for specific purposes, as earmarked reserves, into the following year, in line with the Council's Reserves and Balances Protocol, as long as these can be met from within the Council's cash limited budget for 2021-22. This is in line with the reports to Cabinet and Council on the MTFs, and the Council's Financial Procedure Rules. Similarly, consideration will be given to any budget over spends to determine whether these should be carried forward as a first call on the directorate budget for the following year. If over spends are due to budget reduction proposals not being achieved, Directors will be asked to identify if any of these proposals are still not likely to be achieved in full during the 2022-23 financial year, and to identify mitigating actions that will be undertaken to achieve them. However, a decision will not be made until towards the end of the financial year when the overall outturn position is more definite.

4.2 Monitoring of Budget Reduction Proposals

Prior Year Budget Reductions

- 4.2.1 A report was presented to Cabinet on 22nd June 2021 on the Revenue Budget Outturn 2020-21. In the report it was highlighted that, for 2017-18 to 2019-20, there were £2.501 million of budget reduction proposals that were not met in full, with a total outstanding balance to be met of £709,000. In addition, of the 2020-21 budget reduction proposals of £2.413 million, it was reported that there was a total outstanding balance to be met of £342,000. Directors have been asked to identify if any of these proposals are still not likely to be achieved in full during the 2021-22 financial year, and to identify mitigating actions that will be undertaken to achieve them. All remaining outstanding prior year budget reductions are summarised in **Appendix 1** with a summary per directorate provided in Table 4.

Table 4 – Outstanding Prior Year Budget Reductions

	Total Budget Reductions Required	Total Budget Reductions Likely to be Achieved	Shortfall
DIRECTORATE /BUDGET REDUCTION AREA	£'000	£'000	£'000
Education and Family Support	344	344	0
Social Services and Wellbeing	185	185	0
Communities	1,847	1,726	121
TOTAL	2,376	2,255	121

4.2.2 Table 4 shows that of the £2.376 million outstanding reductions, £2.255 million is likely to be achieved by 2021-22 leaving a shortfall of £121,000. The main proposal still not likely to be achieved is:

- COM19 – Streetworks review (£100,000) – the business case was submitted to WG in quarter 3 and the service area are awaiting final comments back for approval before steps can be taken towards implementation. The Highways network budget area is committed to stay within budget through the implementation phase.

Budget Reductions 2021-22

4.2.3 The budget approved for 2021-22 included budget reduction proposals totalling £1.760 million, which is broken down in **Appendix 2** and summarised in Table 5 below. The current position is a projected shortfall on the savings target of £65,000, or 3.7% of the overall reduction target.

Table 5 – Monitoring of Budget Reductions 2021-22

	Total Budget Reductions Required	Total Budget Reductions Likely to be Achieved	Shortfall
DIRECTORATE /BUDGET REDUCTION AREA	£'000	£'000	£'000
Education and Family Support	116	116	0
Schools	0	0	0
Social Services and Wellbeing	315	315	0
Communities	823	758	65
Chief Executive's	130	130	0
Council Wide Budgets	376	376	0
TOTAL	1,760	1,695	65

- 4.2.4 The main budget reduction proposal unlikely to be achieved in full is COM 2 – Relocation of Community Recycling Centre from Tythegston to Pyle resulting in cessation of lease payments at existing site (£60,000). The new site in Pyle is anticipated to open in the final quarter of 2021-22, with both sites being maintained until the new site is fully operational, therefore the saving will not be achieved in full until 2022-23.
- 4.2.5 **Appendix 2** identifies the projected amount of savings against these proposals in detail and action to be taken by the directorate to mitigate the shortfall. Directors continue to work with their staff to deliver their proposals or alternatives and this is reflected in the forecast outturn for the year.
- 4.2.6 As outlined in the MTFS reports to Cabinet and Council, MTFS Principle 7 states that *“Savings proposals are fully developed and include realistic delivery timescales prior to inclusion in the annual budget. An MTFS Budget Reduction Contingency Reserve will be maintained to mitigate against unforeseen delays”*. An MTFS Budget Reduction Contingency reserve was established in 2016-17. This reserve has been used to meet specific budget reduction proposals in previous years on a one-off basis pending alternative measures. During the financial year, the Section 151 Officer considers applications from Directorates to the MTFS Budget Reduction Contingency reserve to mitigate some of the shortfalls, however it is unlikely any applications will be made in the 2021-22 financial year.
- 4.2.7 In the longer term, these proposals must be realised or must be met through alternative budget reduction proposals in order to deliver a balanced budget position. These will continue to be closely monitored and draw down from the MTFS Budget Reduction Contingency reserve will be made as part of the overall review of earmarked reserves during quarter 4 if required, however it is unlikely to be utilised in the 2021-22 financial year.

4.3 Commentary on the financial position at 31st December 2021

Financial position at 31st December 2021

A summary of the financial position for each main service area is attached as **Appendix 3** to this report and comments on the most significant variances are provided below.

4.3.1 Education and Family Support Directorate

The net budget for the Directorate for 2021-22 is £127.580 million. Current projections indicate an over spend of £1.019 million. WG awarded an additional £3,132,108 to the Local Authority Education Grant 2021-22 for Bridgend on the 21st December. The majority of the funding is additional Recruit, Recover, Raise Standards funding for schools and non-maintained settings (£1.535 million), with the other main categories being an ALN Covid recovery grant and new system funding (£706,000), Attendance support and community schools funding (£335,000), Winter of Wellbeing (£253,000) and PDG Access extension funding (£158,000). We are currently reviewing the allocation to determine if there is any impact on service budgets or school balance projections and will provide further updates in the outturn report.

The main variances at quarter 3 are:

EDUCATION & FAMILY SUPPORT DIRECTORATE	Net Budget	Projected Outturn	Projected Variance Over/(under) budget	% Variance	Over/ (under) specifically Covid-19 related
	£'000	£'000	£'000		
Support for Learners with Additional Learning Needs	2,578	3,140	562	21.8%	
Home to School Transport	6,737	7,492	755	11.2%	
Health and Safety	384	278	(106)	-27.7%	

Schools' Delegated Budgets

Total funding delegated to schools in 2021-22 is £104.012 million.

The schools' delegated budget is reported as balanced as any under or over spend is automatically carried forward into the new financial year before being considered by the Corporate Director - Education and Family Support in line with the 'Guidance and Procedures on Managing Surplus School Balances'.

At the start of 2021-22, projections indicated an overall surplus balance for school delegated budgets of £5.241 million at year end. At quarter 3 this has reduced to a projected surplus of £3.93 million due primarily to schools utilising the grant funding awarded at the end of last financial year, in line with the terms and conditions of the grant to be spent by the end of the 2021-22 academic year. There are 8 primary schools (13.6% of all schools) projecting a deficit balance at year end.

Central Education and Family Support Budgets

Support for Learners with Additional Learning Needs

- There is a projected over spend of £562,000 which primarily relates to the shortfall in recoupment income for other Local Authority (LA) placements at Heronsbridge School and Ysgol Bryn Castell. A budget pressure of £500,000 was agreed by Council as part of the MTFs in February 2021, but there has been a further reduction in the number of other LA pupils in Bridgend schools. Whilst there were 20 pupils at the end of 2020-21 this has reduced to 13 due to increased demand from BCBC pupils.

Home to School Transport

- There is a projected over spend of £755,000 for Home to School Transport (HTST). This is on top of the underlying pressure on the HTST budget which has been supported by a one-off MTFs Budget Pressure of £1.210 million that was approved by Council in February 2021 to support the increased costs of HTST and the increased provision of taxis and minibuses for those pupils with additional learning needs.
- In addition to the historic pressures, Cabinet and Corporate Management Board also determined in 2020-21 that in order to ensure the safety of nursery pupils on school transport vehicles, those previously transported on big buses should

be transported in either dedicated minibuses or taxis or in existing taxis and minibuses. This is an additional requirement for the 2021-22 school year onwards and has increased costs annually by an estimated £170,000.

- School transport operators have been significantly impacted by the pandemic and have passed many of the risks associated with continuing to operate including, for example, driver retention, relatively low paid jobs and ongoing insecurity in the market, on to the local authority. For example, the cost of drivers and escorts has increased significantly.
- A retendering exercise has also been completed on home to school transport contracts, principally big buses and minibuses, with an annual increase of £752,000.
- A further procurement exercise has been undertaken for special taxis, taxis, and minibus contracts which could put further pressure on the HTST budget going into 2022-23.

Health and Safety

- There is a projected under spend of £106,000 within the corporate Health and Safety service which is due to staff vacancy management. The service are actively recruiting to fill the vacant posts.

4.3.2 Social Services and Wellbeing Directorate

The Directorate's net budget for 2021-22 is £74.536 million. Current projections indicate an under spend of £1.093 million at year end. Covid-19 expenditure and loss of income included in this projection amount to £197,000 – if these were to be successfully claimed from WG, the projection would improve to an under spend of £1.290 million.

As noted in the quarter 2 budget monitoring report, the directorate had been notified of £1.777 million in grant funding from the WG Social Care Recovery Fund. A further allocation of £1.139 million has been received since quarter 2, increasing the overall 2021-22 Social Care Recovery Fund to £2.916 million. A spend plan for this funding has been finalised and any impact on service budgets has been included in the quarter 3 projections. A significant amount of the grant is planned to be used on staffing to provide additional support in key areas throughout the directorate, for example, Front Door, Network teams, Fostering and Behavioural Therapy. Due to difficulties in recruitment currently being experienced, the allocation of the grant is constantly under review and will continue to be maximised in the final quarter of 2021-22.

The directorate has submitted a bid for Winter Pressures funding via the local Health Board. The Directorate received £522,000 in 2020-21. The outcome of the bid is not known at the time of writing this report therefore the impact on the service budgets has not been built into the quarter 3 projections.

The main variances at quarter 3 are:

SOCIAL SERVICES AND WELLBEING DIRECTORATE	Net Budget	Projected Outturn	Projected Variance Over/(under) budget	% Variance	Over/ (under) specifically COVID-19 related
	£'000	£'000	£'000		£'000
Adult Social Care	49,903	48,418	(1,485)	-3.0%	145
Prevention & Wellbeing	5,229	5,116	(113)	-2.2%	
Childrens Social Care	19,404	19,909	505	2.6%	52

Adult Social Care

There is projected net under spend of £1.485 million on the Adult Social Care budget. This has improved from the quarter 2 projected under spend of £101,000. The main reasons for the movement are:-

- Reimbursement of direct payments - £530,000. The local authority undertook a procurement exercise during 2021-22 which resulted in a change of provider for payroll/managed accounts services and advisor support as part of the Direct Payments service. Managed direct payment accounts are constantly under review and reimbursements actioned periodically in line with contract requirements where accounts are under spent due, for example, to under-utilisation of hours or no cover arrangements being required. These circumstances have been more prevalent during the pandemic, due primarily to social distancing requirements. During quarter 3 a one-off transfer of reimbursements was actioned upon the cessation of the contract with the previous provider.
- Reduction in staffing costs due to drawing on the Recovery Fund to support additional posts and also due to continued difficulty in recruitment being experienced - £128,000.
- Reduced placements – £242,000. Independent Domiciliary Care is encountering capacity issues in terms of staffing shortages and inability to recruit, impacting on the ability to meet demands for packages of care. Short break placements have been reduced due to the impact of the social distancing guidance.

The most significant variances contributing to the £1.485 million projected under spend are:-

ADULT SOCIAL CARE	Projected Variance Over/(under) budget
	£'000
Residential Care for Older People	(320)
Homecare	168
Direct Payments	(424)
Residential Care – Physical Disability/Sensory Impairment	(115)
Supported and Other Accommodation – Mental Health	(175)
Assessment and Care Management	(432)

- Residential Care for Older People – the projected under spend of £320,000 is mainly due to reduced residential/nursing placements (£180,000) and an increase in personal contributions (£62,000). While residential/nursing are recovering from their lowest vacancy rate of around 19% earlier in the pandemic (currently around 12%), increases are still at a slow rate. Nursing placements have limited capacity due to nursing staff shortages.
- Homecare – the projected over spend of £168,000 within the homecare service in Adult Social Care is mainly due to an increase in the number of people receiving domiciliary care within a home setting or supported accommodation within Learning Disabilities and an increasing number of placements requiring complex packages of support within Mental Health Services.
- Direct Payments – the projected under spend of £424,000 within the direct payments service in Adult Social Care is mainly due to the one-off reimbursement received from the previous provider as previously noted.
- Residential Care – Physical Disability/Sensory Impairment – the projected under spend of £115,000 is mainly due to a reduction in placements compared to those budgeted for. This budget area will be closely monitored with a view to determining whether the under spend is recurring, with potential re-alignment to other budgets facing projected over spends within Physical Disability/Sensory Impairment service areas
- Supported and Other Accommodation – Mental Health – the projected under spend of £175,000 is primarily due to maximisation of grant funding available.
- Assessment and Care Management – there is a projected under spend of £432,000 across all service areas due to a continuing challenging recruitment environment for qualified social workers. Various recruitment activities have been actioned in order to fill vacant posts.

Prevention and Wellbeing

- The projected under spend of £113,000 has improved from the £40,000 projected under spend at quarter 2 due primarily to successful claims from the WG Loss of Income grant (£27,000) and an improvement in hire charge income as groups start to use facilities again (£39,000). The projection does not include any estimate for a contribution to the Council's leisure provider for the gross net loss of running the leisure services in 2021-22 due to Covid-19. Successful claims of £628,000 have made for quarter 1 and quarter 2 through the WG Hardship loss of income fund (see Table 3) and claims will continue to be made for the remainder of 2021-22.

Childrens' Social Care

- There is projected net over spend of £505,000 on the Children's Social Care budget, an improvement on the quarter 2 projection of £612,000.
- The main reason relates to a projected over spend on the Care Experienced Children budget of £362,000 which has improved from the quarter 2 projected over spend of £442,000. It is important to note that decisions on the accommodation, care and support needed for a child is always made in their best interest and that, overall, the number of residential placements made by BCBC remains low when benchmarked with other comparable authorities. As noted in the quarter 2 budget monitoring report, this budget area can be volatile and small changes in demand can result in relatively high costs being incurred.
- The Care Experienced population at the end of 2020-21 was 390. Movements in year has resulted in there being 385 at quarter 1, 388 at quarter 2 and 377 at quarter 3.

- At the end of quarter 2 there were 10 children in independent residential placements (in and out of authority) and 2 in BCBC 39 week local authority education provision. At the end of quarter 3 the numbers have increased to 11 children in independent residential placements and 3 in BCBC local authority education provision. However, as one high cost placement has now ended, despite the increase in numbers there has been a slight reduction in the overall projected over spend for Children's Social Care.

4.3.3 Communities Directorate

The net budget for the Directorate for 2021-22 is £28.317 million. The current projection is an anticipated over spend of £90,000. Covid-19 expenditure included in this projection amounts to £80,000 – if this were to be successfully claimed from WG, the projection would improve to an over spend of £10,000.

The main variances are:

COMMUNITIES DIRECTORATE	Net Budget	Projected Outturn	Projected Variance Over/(under) budget	% Variance	Over/ (under) specifically COVID-19 related
	£'000	£'000	£'000		£'000
Development Control	-231	-16	215	-93.1%	
Waste Disposal & Collection	9,002	9,389	387	4.3%	80
Street Lighting	1,616	1,379	(237)	-14.7%	
Highways Services (DSO)	2,936	2,855	(81)	-2.8%	
Parking Services	-295	-436	(141)	47.8%	
Engineering Services	81	-52	(133)	-164.2%	
Parks, Playing Fields and Open Spaces	2,004	1,886	(118)	-5.9%	
Corporate Landlord	2,684	2,792	108	4.0%	

Development Control

- The projected over spend in Development of £215,000 is primarily due to a forecast downturn in planning application income based on income to date and comparison with the 2020-21 outturn. Fee income is subject to considerable fluctuations between years, depending on number and types of applications and will require close monitoring for the remainder of the 2021-22 financial year.

Waste Disposal and Collection

- There is a projected over spend of £387,000 on the Waste Disposal and Collection budget. £60,000 of this is due to the delay in the achievement of COM 2 - Re-location of Community Recycling Centre from Tythegston to Pyle resulting in cessation of lease payments at the existing site. The new site in Pyle is anticipated to open in the final quarter of 2021-22, with both sites being maintained until the new site is fully operational, therefore the saving will not be achieved in full until 2022-23.
- The balance of the over spend is due to continued increased tonnages of residual waste being experienced by the service. Tonnages increased in 2020-21, primarily due to lockdowns and more residents working from home in general and this trend is continuing into 2021-22. We have successfully claimed £211,828 from the WG Hardship fund to date and WG have indicated continuing support for increased tonnage as a result of homeworking, albeit that

funding will be reduced to 50% of the increased costs for the second half of 2021-22. Claims will continue to be submitted, and if successful could improve the projections by up to £80,000.

Street Lighting

- There is a projected under spend of £237,000 on Street Lighting. Due to a change in energy providers in 2021-22, the kilowatt per hour charge decreased by 7% which, based specifically on the energy budget for street lighting, would lead to a reduction in costs of circa £63,000. £73,000 of the projected under spend is one-off due to financial profiling of the annual loan repayments. Finally, the LED replacement programme has generated the balance of the saving due to reduced energy consumption. This budget area will be closely monitored with a view to determining the element of under spend that is recurring, with potential re-alignment to other budgets facing projected over spends within the Communities Directorate as part of the 2022-23 budget setting process. The project demonstrates a successful outcome of an invest to save programme within the Council.

Highways Services

- The projected under spend of £81,000 within Highways Services is primarily due to members of staff working on, and hence charging their time to, the SALIX capital scheme to enable the replacement of street lighting with new energy efficient LED units. This is not a recurring saving and is a reduced projection from the 2020-21 outturn of £244,000 as the SALIX Scheme completed in quarter 2 of 2021-22.

Parking Services

- The projected under spend of £141,000 on Parking Services is primarily due to a fortuitous upturn in car park income experienced during quarter 2 as a direct result of the popularity of the 'staycation' and a significant improvement on the income received in quarter 2 in 2020-21 when the country was in lockdown. The current under spend masks a pressure on the service area of £180,000 due to the current shortfall in staff car pass income due to the ongoing working from home principle. There is a potential for this to be a long term budget pressure for the service area.

Engineering Services

- The projected under spend of £133,000 within Engineering Services is primarily due to an increase in the level of fee earning jobs (grant funded/non grant funded projects) and the differing chargeable rates allowed on the schemes.

Parks, Playing Fields and Bereavement Services

- The projected under spend of £118,000 is primarily due to a projected increase in income within Bereavement Services compared with pre-pandemic income and budgeted income levels. 2020-21 saw an increase in burials of 34% and whilst it was anticipated that income levels would have returned to normal levels in 2021-22, this has not materialised.

Corporate Landlord

- There is a projected over spend on the Corporate Landlord budget of £108,000. This partly relates to shortfalls in income generated from properties run by the Council that are not necessarily Covid-19 related but relate to occupancy

shortfalls – e.g. Bridgend Market, Innovation Centre. The balance of the shortfall is primarily due to a reduction in productivity levels in the Facilities Management team due to social distancing requirements in the workplace.

4.3.4 Chief Executive's

The net budget for the Directorate for 2021-22 is £21.520 million. Current projections anticipate an under spend against this budget of £2.088 million. The projections have improved since the quarter 2 projected under spend of £1.417 million due primarily to additional income relating to Homelessness Accommodation costs from the Covid-19 Hardship Fund. £1.273 million had been approved as at quarter 2 which has increased to £2.586 million at quarter 3 (Table 2), an increase of £1.313 million.

The projections do not include loss of income claims that WG will be considering in the final quarters of 2021-22 which are estimated to be in the region of £132,000. There are further anticipated housing costs to be reclaimed from the Covid-19 Hardship fund of £58,000. If all these claims are approved, the projections could further improve to an under spend position of £2.278 million.

The main variances are:

CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S	Net Budget £'000	Projected Outturn £'000	Projected Variance Over/(under) budget £'000	% Variance	Over/ (under) specifically COVID-19 related £'000
Finance	3,683	3,565	(118)	-3.2%	96
HR and Organisational Development	1,911	1,813	(98)	-5.1%	
Partnerships	2,045	1,985	(60)	-2.9%	
Legal, Democratic & Regulatory	4,919	5,208	289	5.9%	33
ICT	3,928	4,068	140	3.6%	
Housing & Homelessness	3,354	1,060	(2,294)	-68.4%	61

Finance

- Whilst there is a projected under spend of £118,000 in Finance, included in this projection is a shortfall in income levels of £96,000, the largest of which is for court cost income (£78,000). Claims will continue to be made to WG for the remainder of the financial year to support the identified shortfall in income. The shortfall has been offset by staffing vacancies across Finance and Housing Benefits as the service is currently going through a restructure. The structure is anticipated to be populated in the final quarter of the 2021-22 financial year.

HR and Organisational Development

- There is a projected under spend of £98,000. This primarily relates to staffing and apprenticeship vacancies, however HR are actively recruiting to fill, or have already filled these vacancies.

Partnerships

- This service areas includes Transformation, Partnerships and Customer Services & Engagement. The projected under spend of £60,000 is primarily due to staff vacancies. Various recruitment activities have been actioned in order to fill vacant posts, but appointments have been affected by Covid-19.

Legal, Democratic & Regulatory

- There is a projected over spend of £289,000 within Legal, Democratic and Regulatory services. This is primarily due to the projected over spend of £448,000 on Childcare Legal costs. There has been an unprecedented increase in public and private law childcare cases. The volume has increased considerably since the start of the pandemic, along with an increase in volume of complex cases that have required Senior Counsel.
- The projections also include a rebate of £102,000 relating to Shared Regulatory Services as anticipated service level delivery has been impacted by the pandemic resulting in an under spend.
- Included in the projections are successful claims of £120,000 from the WG Loss of Income fund to support lower levels of income being experienced for registrars, land charges, licencing fees and public health fees. A further £33,000 is anticipated to be claimed from WG relating to the final two quarters of 2021-22, therefore the projections could improve by the year end if the future claims prove to be successful.

ICT

- There is a projected net over spend of £140,000 across ICT budgets. Due to reduced printing activity ICT have been unable to recover the fixed costs of printers and photocopiers through the recharge to service departments. Consequently, reduced spend has been incurred on printing budgets across the service departments. Given the continuing working from home principle for the remainder of the 2021-22 financial year, an exercise was undertaken in quarter 3 to re-align budgets and the position in ICT reflects a £150,000 realignment from service area budgets as referred to in 4.1.22. The remaining over spend is due to increased postage costs due to staff working from home and an increased spend on IT infrastructure.

Housing & Homelessness

- Budget growth of £2.192 million was approved by Council as part of the MTFs budget setting process in February 2021 to continue the commitment to focus support for homeless individuals, providing them with accommodation. The budget was approved prior to confirmation from WG that the Covid Hardship Fund was to be extended for the first six months of 2021-22. Table 2 sets out that successful claims of £2.586 million have been made to the WG Hardship Fund and these claims are the major contributor to the projected under spend within Housing and Homelessness.
- The Council has seen a significant increase in the provision of temporary accommodation. At quarter 3, the service are providing temporary accommodation for 348 people from 204 households, compared with 74 households in temporary accommodation in March 2020. As the Hardship Fund will not be in place beyond 31st March 2022, and given the significant increase in provision of temporary accommodation, the budget growth will be needed in full in 2022-23 to continue to provide support for homeless individuals, providing them with accommodation.

4.3.5 Council Wide budgets

This section includes budgets, provisions and services which are council wide, and not managed by an individual directorate. The budget for 2021-22 is £47.003 million. The projected outturn is £39.546 million, resulting in a projected under spend of £7.457 million.

The main variances are detailed below:

COUNCIL WIDE BUDGETS	Net Budget	Projected Outturn	Projected Variance Over/(under) budget	% Variance
	£'000	£'000	£'000	
Capital Financing	7,329	8,329	1,000	13.6%
Other Council wide Budgets	13,110	4,890	(8,220)	-62.7%

Capital Financing

- The projected over spend on capital financing costs is due to utilising the budget in 2021-22 to pay off historic prudential borrowing costs, where feasible, which will have a long term revenue cost saving benefit for the Council.

Other Council wide Budgets

- Other Council wide budgets includes funding for pay, price and pension increases along with funding to deal with unexpected costs unforeseen when the budget was set.
- When the MTFs was approved in February 2021, the pay increases for NJC employees and teachers had not been finalised. Provision was made in the budget with an element of contingency built in. As noted in 4.1.24 the Teachers' pay award has been agreed at 1.75%. As WG have provided a grant to contribute to this increase, this has been built into the projected under spend for 2021-22.
- There are ongoing discussions regarding the pay claim for National Joint Council (NJC) workers. Even a variance of 1% on the pay settlement of NJC staff alone can result in a swing of required funding of over £1 million per annum.
- Inflation rates have fluctuated since the budget was set - CPI was 0.7% in February 2021, had increased to 3.2% in August and has further increased to 5.1% in November. The majority of the budget estimated for price inflation is retained centrally within Council wide budgets and allocated to directorates/schools as further information is known about specific contractual price increases e.g. for energy. Part of the under spend relates to projected reductions in requirements to allocate price budgets to service areas in-year as the Council has not seen the estimated increases in CPI impact on contractual arrangements to date in 2021-22. However, given the uncertainty around Brexit and Covid-19 and the possible economic fallout arising from these, along with the projected and rising energy costs, this will require close monitoring for the remainder of the financial year.
- The Covid-19 pandemic has also impacted on projected spend on other Council wide budgets, for example, there has been reduced spend on feasibility as projects have been delayed and reduced corporate support required to enable

restructures to be undertaken as these have also been delayed by the pandemic.

Council Tax Reduction Scheme

- There is currently a projected under spend of £150,000 on the Council Tax Reduction Scheme based on spend to date, however this is a demand led budget and take-up is difficult to predict. As noted in paragraph 4.1.20, the ending of the furlough scheme could also manifest itself in an increase in eligibility for council tax support, although this has not been evidenced to date. The final additional cost of this is difficult to predict as we have yet to see the impact of the end of the furlough scheme/newly unemployed and a likely increase in the number of benefit claimants.

4.4 Review of Earmarked Reserves

4.4.1 The Council is required to maintain adequate financial reserves to meet the needs of the organisation. The MTFs includes the Council's Reserves and Balances Protocol which sets out how the Council will determine and review the level of its Council Fund balance and earmarked reserves. At quarter 3 a review of the particular pressures that were to be covered by earmarked reserves was undertaken and Directorates have drawn down funding. The review also examined:-

- Commitments against existing reserves and whether these were still valid;
- Earmarked reserve requests from directorates as a result of emerging issues, and;
- Emerging risks for the Council as a whole.

4.4.2 Table 6 below details the creation of new earmarked reserves, increases to existing earmarked reserves and amounts that have been unwound from reserves since the beginning of the financial year. There have been net additions of £7.498 million, the cumulative draw down by directorates is £2.872 million and £494,000 has been unwound.

Table 6 – Usable Earmarked Reserves (Excluding Council Fund) – Quarter 3

Opening Balance 01 Apr 21	Reserve	Movement as at Quarter 3			Closing Balance 31 Dec 21
		Net Additions/ Reclassification	Unwound	Draw-down	
£'000		£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
	Corporate Reserves:				
34,118	Capital Programme Contribution	7,295	(18)	-	41,396
6,103	Asset Management Reserves	157	(118)	(550)	5,591
7,556	Major Claims & Insurance Reserves	4	-	-	7,559
4,993	Service Reconfiguration	-	-	-	4,993
3,050	Change Management/Digital Transformation	-	(163)	(249)	2,638
2,000	Economic and Future Resilience Fund	-	-	-	2,000
57,819	Total Corporate Reserves	7,456	(299)	(799)	64,176
	Directorate Reserves:				
502	Education & Family Support	-	(12)	(18)	472
3,349	Social Services & Wellbeing	-	(42)	(92)	3,215
3,657	Communities	-	(141)	(89)	3,427
2,716	Chief Executives	42	-	(176)	2,582
10,224	Total Directorate Reserves	42	(195)	(375)	9,696
	Equalisation & Grant Reserves:				
1,961	Education & Family Support	(68)	-	(775)	1,118
594	Social Services & Wellbeing	(243)	-	-	350
2,532	Communities	-	-	(185)	2,347
1,228	Chief Executives	(544)	-	(170)	513
-	Cross Directorate	856	-	(567)	289
6,315	Equalisation & Grant Reserves:	-	-	(1,698)	4,617
8,490	School Balances	-	-	-	8,490
82,848	TOTAL RESERVES	7,498	(494)	(2,872)	86,979

4.4.3 The net appropriation to earmarked reserves as at quarter 3 is £7.004 million (£7.498 million additions offset by £0.494 million that have been unwound). This net addition has been funded from the projected under spend on non-Directorate budgets at the end of quarter 3 as shown in Table 1.

4.4.4 The main addition in quarter 3 was a £3 million addition to the Capital Programme Contribution reserve which was established to avoid the Council needing to borrow, which would result in consequential borrowing costs on the revenue budget, and will be used to fund schemes within the capital programme, both current and future capital pressures. No further reserves have been unwound in quarter 3.

4.4.5 The capital programme contribution reserve supplements the funding we receive from WG and via capital receipts to fund our capital programme. Currently we have a balance of £41 million of funding in this reserve which constitutes 47% of our

overall earmarked reserves balance. This will be used to fund a wide range of schemes in the capital programme.

- 4.4.6 The School balances reserve increased significantly to £8.490 million at the end of 2020-21 due to additional school grant funding announced late in 2020-21. As noted in paragraph 4.3.1 the quarter 3 projections indicate a projected overall surplus balance for school delegated budgets of £3.93 million at year end as this grant funding gets utilised in-year. This will reduce this reserve accordingly by year end.

5. Effect upon policy framework and procedure rules

- 5.1 As required by section 3 (budgetary control) of the Financial Procedure Rules; Chief Officers in consultation with the appropriate Cabinet Member are expected to manage their services within the approved cash limited budget and to provide the Chief Finance Officer with such information as is required to facilitate and monitor budgetary control.

6. Equality Act 2010 implications

- 6.1 The protected characteristics identified within the Equality Act 2010, 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 well-being goals identified in the Act were considered in the preparation of this report. As the report is for information it is considered that there will be no significant or unacceptable impacts upon the achievement of well-being goals/objectives as a result of this report.

8. Financial implications

- 8.1 These are reflected in the body of the report.

9. Recommendation

- 9.1 The Committee is recommended to consider the report upon the projected revenue position for 2021-22.

Carys Lord
Chief Officer – Finance, Performance and Change
February 2022

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Background documents: Individual Directorate Monitoring Reports

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PRIOR YEAR BUDGET REDUCTIONS CARRIED FORWARD INTO 2021-22

Ref.	Budget Reduction Proposal		Original Reduction and RAG £000	Revised RAG £000	Total amount of saving likely to be achieved by 21-22 £000	Reason why not achievable	Proposed Action in 2021-22 to achieve
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RAG STATUS KEY	
RED	Not likely to be achieved at all in this financial year or less than 25%.
AMBER	Reduction not likely to be achieved in full in financial year but greater than 25%
GREEN	Reduction likely to be achieved in full

EDUCATION & FAMILY SUPPORT

EFS1 (2017-18)	Phased implementation of Learner Transport Policy regarding statutory distances for free travel.		20		20	Cabinet deferred the decision to amend the Local Authority's Learning Travel Policy until after the review of the current statutory distances by Welsh Government. In the meantime, a Budget Pressure was approved by Council as part of the Medium Term Financial Strategy 2021-22 to 2024-25 in February 2021 to support the increased costs of Home to School Transport and the increased provision of taxis and minibuses for those pupils with additional learning needs.	A review is being undertaken by Welsh Government of the current statutory distances. Whilst we await the outcome of the review it is unlikely that any change to the statutory distances by WG will follow until 2022 at the earliest. The service area have developed an updated budget pressure to include historic and emerging pressures on the HTST budget for consideration as part of the MTFS 2022-23 budget setting process.
EFS2 (2017-18)	School transport route efficiencies.		40		40	Cabinet deferred the decision to amend the Local Authority's Learning Travel Policy until after the review of the current statutory distances by Welsh Government. In the meantime, a Budget Pressure was approved by Council as part of the Medium Term Financial Strategy 2021-22 to 2024-25 in February 2021 to support the increased costs of Home to School Transport and the increased provision of taxis and minibuses for those pupils with additional learning needs.	A review is being undertaken by Welsh Government of the current statutory distances. Whilst we await the outcome of the review it is unlikely that any change to the statutory distances by WG will follow until 2022 at the earliest. The service area have developed an updated budget pressure to include historic and emerging pressures on the HTST budget for consideration as part of the MTFS 2022-23 budget setting process.
EFS1 (2018-19)	Phased implementation of Learner Transport Policy regarding statutory distances for free travel.		67		67	Cabinet deferred the decision to amend the Local Authority's Learning Travel Policy until after the review of the current statutory distances by Welsh Government. In the meantime, a Budget Pressure was approved by Council as part of the Medium Term Financial Strategy 2021-22 to 2024-25 in February 2021 to support the increased costs of Home to School Transport and the increased provision of taxis and minibuses for those pupils with additional learning needs.	A review is being undertaken by Welsh Government of the current statutory distances. Whilst we await the outcome of the review it is unlikely that any change to the statutory distances by WG will follow until 2022 at the earliest. The service area have developed an updated budget pressure to include historic and emerging pressures on the HTST budget for consideration as part of the MTFS 2022-23 budget setting process.
EFS27 (2018-19)	Review arrangements for Special Schools Home to School Transport with a view to achieving efficiency savings		75		75	A Budget Pressure was approved by Council as part of the Medium Term Financial Strategy 2021-22 to 2024-25 in February 2021 to support the increased costs of Home to School Transport and the increased provision of taxis and minibuses for those pupils with additional learning needs.	The service area have developed an updated budget pressure to include historic and emerging pressures on the HTST budget for consideration as part of the MTFS 2022-23 budget setting process.
EFS 1 (2019-20)	Phased implementation of Learner Transport Policy regarding statutory distances for free travel.		67		67	Cabinet deferred the decision to amend the Local Authority's Learning Travel Policy until after the review of the current statutory distances by Welsh Government. In the meantime, a Budget Pressure was approved by Council as part of the Medium Term Financial Strategy 2021-22 to 2024-25 in February 2021 to support the increased costs of Home to School Transport and the increased provision of taxis and minibuses for those pupils with additional learning needs.	A review is being undertaken by Welsh Government of the current statutory distances. Whilst we await the outcome of the review it is unlikely that any change to the statutory distances by WG will follow until 2022 at the earliest. The service area have developed an updated budget pressure to include historic and emerging pressures on the HTST budget for consideration as part of the MTFS 2022-23 budget setting process.
EFS 1 (2020-21)	Phased implementation of Learner Transport Policy regarding statutory distances for free travel.		75		75	Cabinet deferred the decision to amend the Local Authority's Learning Travel Policy until after the review of the current statutory distances by Welsh Government. In the meantime, a Budget Pressure was approved by Council as part of the Medium Term Financial Strategy 2021-22 to 2024-25 in February 2021 to support the increased costs of Home to School Transport and the increased provision of taxis and minibuses for those pupils with additional learning needs.	A review is being undertaken by Welsh Government of the current statutory distances. Whilst we await the outcome of the review it is unlikely that any change to the statutory distances by WG will follow until 2022 at the earliest. The service area have developed an updated budget pressure to include historic and emerging pressures on the HTST budget for consideration as part of the MTFS 2022-23 budget setting process.
Total Education & Family Support Directorate			344		344		

Ref.	Budget Reduction Proposal		Original Reduction and RAG £000	Revised RAG £000	Total amount of saving likely to be achieved by 21-22 £000	Reason why not achievable	Proposed Action in 2021-22 to achieve
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SOCIAL SERVICES & WELLBEING

SSW19	Further review of HALO partnership contract, including the Council taking over the management and payment of utility bills currently incurred by HALO. This will result in VAT efficiencies for HALO and contribute towards the reduction in the management fee		40		40	Detailed discussions and advice received from VAT consultants resulted in this budget reduction proposal not being able to be progressed.	Alternative savings have been found from changes to utility contracts – full savings should be achieved in 2021-22.
SSW20	Identify further savings from library and cultural facilities and related services including reviewing the numbers of facilities (libraries, community centres) and also reductions in services or opening hours.		70		70	Covid-19 has impacted on the delivery of this saving.	Realignment of the management fee with AWEN has been achieved based on agreed reductions to services and buildings.
SSW27	Increase income generation from mobile response and telecare charging		75		75	Income levels have sufficiently increased to meet budget reduction proposal	No action required
Total Social Services & Wellbeing Directorate			185		185		

COMMUNITIES

COM19 (2017-18)	Permitting Scheme road works net of existing income of £95,000		100		0	The Streetworks Review (Stage 3) was submitted to WG during quarter 3 for their final comments for approval before steps can be taken towards implementation.	The Highways network budget area is committed to stay within budget through the implementation phase with full savings anticipated in 2022-23.
COM 4 (2019-20)	Review of School Crossing Patrol service in line with GB standards		10		10	Budget re-alignment actioned within Traffic & Transport budgets in 2021-22.	No action required. Budget re-alignment actioned in 2021-22.
COM 26 (2019-20)	Investigate the introduction of charging to users of the Shopmobility facility in Bridgend Town Centre to reduce/remove the current level of subsidy		5		5	Saving achieved in full in 2021-22	No action required.
COM 52 (2019-20)	Reductions to the budget for the Materials Recovery and Energy Centre (MREC) to be achieved through the current procurement being undertaken with Neath Port Talbot CBC for the provision of new operator arrangements for the MREC facility at Crumlyn Burrows		1,300		1,300	A Budget Pressure of £300,000 representing the shortfall for this Budget Reduction proposal was approved by Council as part of the Medium Term Financial Strategy 2021-22 to 2024-25 in February 2021.	None required - historic shortfall in savings target addressed through a Council approved budget pressure
COM 55 (2019-20)	Increase charge for Green Waste Service from £28.30 per household to £38.30		25		25	Saving achieved in full in 2021-22	No action required.
COM 26 (2020-21)	Investigate the introduction of charging to users of the Shopmobility facility in Bridgend Town Centre to reduce/remove the current level of subsidy		18		18	Saving achieved in full in 2021-22	No action required.
COM51	The savings will be delivered in a number of ways including operational efficiencies, streamlined business processes, IT investment, improved procurement and contract management, and some deletions of vacant posts.		350		329	Level of savings identified as at 31 December 2021.	Service area to identify efficiencies to meet the shortfall in 2021-22 with budget re-alignment to take place as part of the budget setting process for 2022-23
COM 55 (2020-21)	Increase charge for Green Waste Service from £28.30 per household to £38.30		25		25	Saving achieved in full in 2021-22	No action required.
COM96	WG National AHP Waste Programme - capital contribution from WG towards 7.5 tonne vehicle to collect AHP recycling		14		14	Saving achieved in full in 2021-22	No action required.
Total Communities Directorate			1,847		1,726		

GRAND TOTAL OUTSTANDING REDUCTIONS			2,376		2,255		
REDUCTIONS SHORTFALL					121		

MONITORING OF 2021-22 BUDGET REDUCTIONS

Ref.	Budget Reduction Proposal	Impact, including on 5 Ways of Working as set out in the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act	Budget Reductions 2021-22 £'000	Value Likely to be Achieved 2021-22 £'000	Reason why not likely to be achievable
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EDUCATION & FAMILY SUPPORT
CENTRAL EDUCATION & FAMILY SUPPORT

EFS2	Removal of a vacant post within Cognition and Learning Team	Potential reduction in support for a vulnerable group, however it is anticipated that this has been mitigated by a change in working practices by the team as a result of the ALN reform	61	61	Full saving achieved in 2021-22
EFS3	Reconfiguration of the team providing support to Gypsy, Roma and Traveller learners to create a more efficient service	Whilst the impact is more on the management and leadership of the team, this may result in some slight reduction in the service offered to this vulnerable group but there will still be a service offering support	50	50	Full saving achieved in 2021-22
EFS4	Reduction in Central South Consortium (CSC) Budget of 1%	Reduction is achievable within the overall CSC budget and will be mainly achieved through efficiency savings	5	5	Full saving achieved in 2021-22
Total Education and Family Support			116	116	

SOCIAL SERVICES & WELLBEING

SSW1	Remodelling day service provision for older people and learning disability services	Full review of services which could mean alternative methods of service delivery	90	90	Full saving achieved in 2021-22
SSW2	Across Adults and Children's services embed and consolidate outcome focussed practice and commissioning for all service areas	This will support people to live their lives and will require our systems to be adapted to support the changes in practice. There will be a shift to embed outcome focussed practice which will have a focus on targeted prevention initiatives and by developing collaborative, long term relationships with providers as well as maximising the opportunities of the use of technology. this will be underpinned by planning accommodation, care and support together and listening to people who are experts in their own lives and acting upon what will make a difference.	225	225	Full saving achieved in 2021-22
Total Social Services & Wellbeing Directorate			315	315	

MONITORING OF 2021-22 BUDGET REDUCTIONS

Ref.	Budget Reduction Proposal	Impact, including on 5 Ways of Working as set out in the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act	Budget Reductions 2021-22 £'000	Value Likely to be Achieved 2021-22 £'000	Reason why not likely to be achievable
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COMMUNITIES

COM1	Transfer of pitches/pavilions through Community Asset Transfer. Increased charges for end-users to achieve full cost recovery for pitches/pavilions that do not transfer. Reduction of grass cut areas and areas within maintained parkland.	The savings identified will see the removal of the remaining seasonal operatives' budget with corresponding cuts to plant, equipment and materials. Where asset transfers occur the respective club (rugby, football, bowls and cricket etc) will be expected to fully fund the ongoing maintenance of the asset. The remaining parks budget will be used to maintain the Council's main parks, including children's play areas, highway grass cutting which is safety related, and to secure the ongoing site management and safety of the sites that will remain in Council ownership. the level of funding will also dictate the standard of open space maintenance and may result in a further reduction of grass cut areas if the proposed savings are not forthcoming through the asset transfer process.	300	300	The full saving in 2021-22 has been achieved as the seasonal operative budget has been capped at a level to ensure the Parks and Playing Fields expenditure does not exceed available budget. Successful CAT transfers have taken place to date, and will continue to be progressed by the CAT Officer.
COM2	Re-location of Community Recycling Centre from Tythegston to Pyle resulting in cessation of lease payments at existing site	Construction of the new site will mean that this saving will not be effective until 2021/22	60	0	The new site in Pyle is anticipated to open in the final quarter of 2021-22, with both sites being maintained until the new site is fully operational, therefore the saving will not be achieved in full until 2022-23.
COM5	The lease for Sunnyside House expires on 31/03/21 - savings will be made from this date.	No impact on service provision	309	309	Full saving achieved in 2021-22
COM6	One off capital payment for the fire suppression system required at Tondu. Revenue cost of system is included in the annual contract price with Kier.	Minimal impact. The fire system will be provided and if paid from the Capital Asset Management Fund as opposed to the revenue budget, the £60K per annum can be saved.	60	60	Full saving achieved in 2021-22
COM7	WG National AHP Waste Programme - capital contribution from WG towards 7.5 tonne vehicle to collect AHP recycling	A Contract Variation will be progressed with Kier to achieve the saving levels proposed based on a reduction in costs in relation to the current AHP vehicle that is leased.	19	14	New vehicle purchased part-way through 2021-22 therefore only partial saving achieved.
COM8	Reduction to energy budget for Street Lighting - savings due to replacement with more efficient LED	Reduction will have limited impact	75	75	Full saving achieved in 2021-22
Total Communities Directorate			823	758	

MONITORING OF 2021-22 BUDGET REDUCTIONS

Ref.	Budget Reduction Proposal	Impact, including on 5 Ways of Working as set out in the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act	Budget Reductions 2021-22 £'000	Value Likely to be Achieved 2021-22 £'000	Reason why not likely to be achievable
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CHIEF EXECUTIVES

CEX1	Reduction of the ICT Telephony Budget	No impact on the communications infrastructure and maintenance	41	41	Full saving achieved in 2021-22
CEX2	Reduction of HR Staffing Budget	Reduction of a post and increased workload. Where possible savings will be made from vacant posts.	24	24	Full saving achieved in 2021-22
CEX3	Reduction of Finance staffing budgets	Reduction in capacity across the finance service following proposed restructure, which could impact on time taken to undertake functions. Will endeavour to make savings from vacant posts where possible	65	65	Full saving achieved in 2021-22
Total Chief Executive's Directorate			130	130	

CORPORATE / COUNCIL WIDE

CWD1	Reduction in insurance budget through on-going efficiencies in managing the insurance contract.	No impact as favourable insurance contract renewals have been achieved, however no mitigation available for potential increases to premiums in future years.	75	75	Full saving achieved in 2021-22
CWD2	Savings on building maintenance prudential borrowing budget	No impact - capital financing budget was utilised in 2019-20 to pay off prudential borrowing associated with Minor Works with a long term cost saving benefit for the Council.	120	120	Full saving achieved in 2021-22
CWD3	Reduce provision made for pay and prices following Chancellor's announcement of pay freeze, and lower than anticipated current inflation rate.	Impact will need to be kept under review, and may be risk depending on final pay awards agreed and inflation increases during the year.	181	181	Full saving achieved in 2021-22
Total Corporate / Council Wide			376	376	

GRAND TOTAL REDUCTIONS		1,760	1,695
TOTAL BUDGET REDUCTION REQUIREMENT		1,760	1,760
REDUCTION SHORTFALL		0	65

740	1,681
795	19
225	60
1,760	1,760

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BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL	Budget 2021-22			Projected Outturn	Projected Variance Over/(under) budget	% Variance
	Expenditure Budget	Income Budget	Net Budget			
	£000	£000	£000			
EDUCATION AND FAMILY SUPPORT						
School Delegated Budgets	125,314	(21,302)	104,012	104,012	-	0.0%
Learning	9,922	(2,398)	7,524	8,059	535	7.1%
Strategic Partnerships & Comm	25,799	(10,139)	15,660	16,250	590	3.8%
Health and Safety	386	(2)	384	278	(106)	-27.5%
TOTAL EDUCATION AND FAMILY SUPPORT	161,421	(33,841)	127,580	128,599	1,019	0.8%
SOCIAL SERVICES AND WELLBEING						
Adult Social Care	69,003	(19,100)	49,903	48,418	(1,485)	-3.0%
Prevention and Wellbeing	6,059	(830)	5,229	5,116	(113)	-2.2%
Childrens Social Care	20,488	(1,084)	19,404	19,909	505	2.6%
TOTAL SOCIAL SERVICES AND WELLBEING	95,550	(21,014)	74,536	73,443	(1,093)	-1.5%
COMMUNITIES DIRECTORATE						
Planning & Development Services	2,066	(1,523)	543	785	242	44.6%
Strategic Regeneration	2,274	(597)	1,677	1,677	-	0.0%
Economy, Natural Resources and Sustainability	8,108	(6,894)	1,214	1,205	(9)	-0.7%
Cleaner Streets and Waste Management	12,467	(1,585)	10,882	11,210	328	3.0%
Highways and Green Spaces	23,266	(12,217)	11,049	10,462	(587)	-5.3%
Director and Head of Operations - Communities	268	-	268	276	8	3.0%
Corporate Landlord	14,774	(12,090)	2,684	2,792	108	4.0%
TOTAL COMMUNITIES	63,223	(34,906)	28,317	28,407	90	0.3%
CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S						
Chief Executive Unit	583	-	583	527	(56)	-9.6%
Finance	46,655	(42,972)	3,683	3,565	(118)	-3.2%
HR/OD	2,247	(336)	1,911	1,813	(98)	-5.1%
Partnerships	2,891	(846)	2,045	1,985	(60)	-2.9%
Legal, Democratic & Regulatory	5,897	(978)	4,919	5,208	289	5.9%
Elections	153	(49)	104	179	75	72.1%
ICT	5,055	(1,127)	3,928	4,068	140	3.6%
Housing & Homelessness	10,773	(7,419)	3,354	1,060	(2,294)	-68.4%
Business Support	1,104	(111)	993	1,027	34	3.4%
TOTAL CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S	75,358	(53,838)	21,520	19,432	(2,088)	-9.7%
TOTAL DIRECTORATE BUDGETS						
	395,552	(143,599)	251,953	249,881	(2,072)	-0.8%
Council Wide Budgets	47,973	(970)	47,003	39,546	(7,457)	-15.9%
Appropriations to Earmarked Reserves				7,004	7,004	0.0%
NET BRIDGEND CBC	443,525	(144,569)	298,956	296,431	(2,525)	-0.8%

NB: Differences due to rounding of £000's

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BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO THE CORPORATE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

2 MARCH 2022

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

EMPLOYEE WELLBEING

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Committee with an update on the measures in place to support employee wellbeing.

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 under the **Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015**:

- **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 At its meeting on 14 April 2021, the Committee received information about absences related to mental illness and mental wellbeing. The report also focussed on the resources available for employees to assist them to effectively manage their wellbeing.
- 3.2 At that time it was acknowledged that given the desire to place a greater focus on employee wellbeing and the ongoing pandemic, that there was a continued need to strengthen and, where possible, enhance the wellbeing support on offer by the council, so that employees receive the right level of support and especially at times of need.
- 3.3 In doing so, it was noted that future priority actions would focus on taking forward the wellbeing action plan and exploring the therapeutic provision to meet the demand of more complex cases, and interventions that target groups of employees. An earmarked reserve was established as part of the 2020-21-year end accounts process to progress these initiatives.

4. Current situation/proposal

Health and Wellbeing Role and Working Group

- 4.1 The new Health and Wellbeing Officer took up employment on a part time basis in August 2021, creating capacity to support council wide wellbeing initiatives, as outlined in the wellbeing action plan, and actively engage employees in this work.

This supplements the contributions made by HR Business Partners and managers in promoting employee wellbeing.

4.2 As part of their induction, the officer has been able to meet with a number of teams, groups, and individuals to gain an overall understanding of the arrangements in place for staff wellbeing as well as other related council procedures, thus providing a fresh look at the approaches being taken and making some early improvements. Examples are as follows:

- Communicating more positive and varied health and wellbeing information and initiatives via staff Bridgenders staff messages and producing leaflets for notice boards
- Delivering HR surgeries with HR Business Partners, and guidance for managers on welfare meetings with staff, focussing on good practice
- Promoting health and wellbeing in all aspects of work, e.g., greater focus in induction and other management arrangements
- Revising the stress risk assessment to make it more user-friendly with appropriate guidance for managers and staff
- Introducing and promoting a health and wellbeing checklist for those specifically working from home
- Engaging with managers of front-line services to understand specific needs of employees

4.3 A key priority has been to establish a corporate health and wellbeing group. The Health and Wellbeing Officer has engaged with key groups to help shape this, including the Heads of Service group. Discussions have also taken place with trade union representatives, who will contribute and join the group, alongside Directorate employees who have expressed an interest.

4.4 The inaugural meeting is planned, where the aims and objectives of the group will be reviewed by the participants:

Health & Wellbeing Group Aims

- To communicate and encourage health and wellbeing within BCBC
- To showcase that physical and mental health are equally important and one can support the other
- To highlight initiatives that empower people to improve their health & wellbeing
- To use as many types of communication as possible to reach as many people as we can

Health & Wellbeing Group Objectives

- To promote change in lifestyle to gain an improved work life balance
- To encourage even one person to make a change with their physical or mental health and promote positivity
- To use healthy competition to encourage healthy options
- To highlight lifestyle activities that people might not know much about but might be encouraged to try

Employee Engagement

- 4.5 The working group will consider communication and engagement and feedback from employees. Of relevance is the 2021/2022 staff survey which was launched in June 2021 and the [feedback report](#) and accompanying [infographic](#) was made available in the Autumn edition of the staff magazine.
- 4.6 The survey covered a range of topics including staff wellbeing and the responses told us that:
- 60% of staff rated the quality of the counselling service as very good
 - 63% of staff rated the quality of the lifestyle service as very good or good
 - 50% of staff rated the quality of the Zest service as very good or good
 - 69% of staff strongly agreed or agreed that they were comfortable with the work demands placed upon them in their role
 - 59% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed that they were able to meet the demands of their job within working hours
 - 68% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed that they felt supported to manage personal wellbeing whilst in work
 - 82% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed that they were aware of the mental wellbeing resources and support available to staff
 - 59% of staff stated that they would not be interested in getting involved in a staff network group, whereas 14% stated that they would be interested in getting involved in a staff network group. The most popular responses were for a mental health network group followed by a menopause network group and then Carers network group.

Learning and Development

- 4.7 At the meeting on 14 April 2021, the Committee were advised of the training in place to support mental wellbeing and further proposals to enhance this for 2021/2022. These workshops have been delivered throughout this training calendar year and are summarised at **Appendix 1**, with extracts of employee evaluations.
- 4.8 Of these, ten sessions have been commissioned through joint working with trade unions via the Wales Union Learning Fund (WULF), whilst the new courses introduced were delivered by the Learning and Development Advisor in HR/OD.

Employee Assistance Programme

- 4.9 The Council's Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) provider continues to be Care First, and the components of the programme are regularly and widely communicated. They offer a range of information and emotional support for employees, with telephone or online counselling available, 24/7. Given the restrictions, face to face sessions have been restricted.
- 4.10 The EAP also includes: access to Information Specialists offering advice on practical issues; weekly publicity calendars comprising daily webinars, which have now been running for over 100 weeks; and a new version of its Zest platform, offering a wide range of wellbeing tools, which includes a new wellbeing assessment and improved functions to allow employees to connect with others.
- 4.11 A new Mental Health App was introduced in June 2021 which includes a range of interactive tools, helpful tips and visual and mental exercises using cognitive

behavioural therapy. The app is free to use and features meditation, mindfulness and breathing exercises as well as toolkits to identify behaviours and monitor progress, mood trackers.

- 4.12 **Appendix 2** provides a summary of EAP usage between April 2021 – December 2021. During this period there have been 210 contacts to Care First which is an increase of 68 from the same period in 2020/21. 129 of those contacts have been via the 24/7 counselling line and this continues to be the most preferred method. Employees continue to access the service, mainly through self-referral, which demonstrates that they are looking after their own welfare. The number of employees accessing the Lifestyle website (the practical support and information platform) continues to be high with 232 registered users during this period.
- 4.13 Whilst Care First provide details of numbers of those who access their services from the council, these services are of course confidential, and no feedback is available on customer satisfaction. However, feedback via the staff survey has helped to gain some views about awareness and quality of these services.

Additional Emotional Support

- 4.14 Additional counselling support has been made available, which has been beneficial for those employees who are considered at risk of not being able to attend work or those returning to work following an absence and employees who may have been affected by a critical incident. This is a confidential service and referrals have been made direct but, in many cases, these have been made following discussions with managers or support provided by the HR Business Partners.
- 4.15 Some 45 employees have accessed this service since April 2021 and there have been some positive outcomes, where employees have either remained in work or returned to work following this support. Consideration is being given to how emotional support can be provided for employees, as part of our Occupational Health contract.

Physical Wellbeing

- 4.16 The health and wellbeing group aims to consider both physical and emotional wellbeing, which are considered equally important. The council already promotes discounted leisure membership which gives unlimited access to gyms, swimming pools, health suites, group exercise classes and racket sports at leisure centres across the borough. The working group will be asked to consider other physical wellbeing initiatives as an early priority, including piloting the Halo @ Home app.

Trade Union Perspective

- 4.17 There are positive and healthy working relationships with trade union colleagues, regular and open dialogue exists on matters such as employee health and wellbeing, and particularly during the pandemic. Positive feedback has been received in response to this report and the developments being made, with areas of good practice considered as:

- the continued support to employees who are required to work from home and the flexible working arrangements in place; support for employees who have found working at home difficult, albeit a later development.
- the services via Care First including webinars on topics such as, stress, mindfulness, mental health awareness, managing pressure, relaxation, coping therapies has also been recognised, with an increased in the take up of the Care first Lifestyle and Zest.
- the appointment of a Health and Wellbeing Officer is a positive move, in being able to offer a more tailored service which meets the needs of the authority and its employees.

4.18 Trade union colleagues emphasise that all employees must have the opportunity to access these support mechanisms and wider council communications and they are actively involved in progressing this via their membership on the Digital Transformation Board and the Communications sub group.

Future Wellbeing Work Programme

4.19 Priorities include the need to engage with front line groups of employees who do not have access to technology in their role to ensure they are aware of wellbeing resources and are able to access the corporate training programme. So, for example, work is underway to deliver targeted toolbox talks on staff wellbeing and support at depots and bite size training sessions which is also been explored in social care.

4.20 For other groups of employees, whilst the benefits of home/agile working have been significant this has driven the need for different strategies to ensure a sense of connection, maintain health and wellbeing and to avoid isolation.

4.21 This is a broad agenda, and different and innovative approaches will be required to respond to specific challenges and circumstances. Our ability to attract and retain employees will also depend on how we respond to the changing expectations in relation to work.

5. Effect upon policy framework and procedure rules

5.1 As this is an information report, there is no effect upon the policy framework and procedure rules.

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. This is an information report; therefore, it is not necessary to carry out an EIA in the production of this report. 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 well-being goals identified in the Act were considered in the preparation of this information report.

Long Term – The wellbeing of the council’s workforce is a high priority and longer term it is vital that the council is regarded as a good and fair employer where employee health and wellbeing is a priority. Over time this should also positively impact upon recruitment and retention.

Prevention – The work being undertaken is relevant to our workforce and in the in prevention of poor wellbeing and potential absences and poor morale.

Integration – This information report supports the well-being objective of Smarter Use of Resources and ensures integration of all employees.

Collaboration – The work being undertaken is done in collaboration with employees, their trade union representatives, and services and where possible PSB partners.

Involvement – All employees will be encouraged to benefit from this work and volunteers will be actively involved in the health and wellbeing group and its initiatives in the future.

8. Financial implications

- 8.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report as it is an information report.

9. Recommendation

- 9.1 That the Committee notes the work being undertaken in relation to employee wellbeing across the council.

Kelly Watson

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February 2022

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Background documents: None

Workshops delivered during April 2021 – January 2022 (WULF)

Course	No of workshops delivered	Evaluation on course content	Evaluation on course content	Employee Feedback
Confidence in the workplace	3	Excellent – 25% Good – 75%	Excellent – 38% Good – 62%	<p>“It was interesting learning about how verbal and non-verbal communication impacts on confidence.”</p> <p>“It was informative and there were certainly some useful strategies taught on how to be more assertive to carry forward.”</p>
Communication in the online workplace	3	Excellent – 25% Good – 75%	Excellent – 38% Good – 62%	<p>“I felt that the course was a good reminder of what we should be putting in place when communicating both on the telephone, online and on Teams.”</p> <p>“The course was full of advice and support, the trainer was interactive and encouraging. This course was very useful for people who would be arranging meetings and have a team of staff to manage. It supported you with tools of how to include all members of your team, deal with online meetings and how to prepare.</p>
Resilience Training	3	Excellent – 67% Good – 33%	Excellent – 56% Good – 44%	<p>“The facilitator had a good understanding of the topic and was able to share his knowledge in an interesting and informative way.”</p> <p>“This course gave me a good understanding of how to recognise and manage stress, not only professionally but in my personal life as well.”</p>
Resilience Training – Social Care	1	Excellent – 100%	Excellent – 67% Good – 33%	<p>“I felt that the course has given me a better understanding of how others and myself cope with the pressures in the work place. The trainer was extremely engaging.”</p> <p>“The course was interesting and gave me tips to take away and use when back in the workplace.”</p>

New Courses introduced between April 2021 – January 2022

Course	No of workshops delivered	Evaluation on course content	Evaluation on course content	Employee Feedback
Mental Health Awareness for employees	4	Excellent – 83% Good – 17%	Excellent – 83% Good – 17%	<p>“It was a very good overview to being aware of mental health within the workplace and the importance of reducing the stigma associated with mental health difficulties.”</p> <p>“The course unpicked what mental health is and the factors that take care of wellbeing which I found helpful.”</p>
Mental Health Awareness for managers	7	Excellent – 62% Good – 38%	Excellent – 55% Good – 41%	<p>“Good to break out into virtual rooms to discuss with other members of staff. It is often the practical solutions used by others that you take away to implement from courses.”</p> <p>“It was good to have the awareness and suggested strategies to support people going through difficult times.”</p>
Managing Stress	4	Excellent – 53% Good – 42% Adequate – 5%	Excellent – 58% Good – 37% Adequate – 5%	<p>“I found the session very interactive and was able to clearly identify the common factors that result to one being stressed/overwhelmed with everyday life occurrences.”</p> <p>“The knowledge and experience of the trainer was excellent. She had an excellent understanding of stress, its factors, and how to combat these.”</p>
Introduction to Anxiety Disorders	4	Excellent – 75% Good – 25%	Excellent – 69% Good – 31%	<p>“I felt that the trainers approach towards mental health and anxiety disorders was informative and incredibly knowledgeable; her delivery was non-judgemental and she kept me engaged throughout the session.”</p> <p>“The course was very well structured, it wasn't too long to conflict with other work priorities or overload you with information, yet the amount of content covered in the 2 hour session was excellent. It was a good balance of information provided by the trainer who is obviously very knowledgeable, and contribution of ideas and experiences from the attendees in breakout areas.”</p>

<p>Depression Awareness and how to take care of yourself and others</p>	<p>5</p>	<p>Excellent – 78% Good – 22%</p>	<p>Excellent – 67% Good – 33%</p>	<p>“Good level of open discussion. Good engagement throughout the course and covered useful strategies and techniques which I thought were useful for all attending.”</p> <p>“The course was extremely good - I felt that the pace of the course was good and the information given was relevant to the post that I am doing. Covid has been hard for the staff and individuals who attend our service and this will assist me to help them if required.”</p>
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Summary Use of the Employee Assistance Programme, Care First:

The information below captures Care First usage between April 2021 and December 2021.

	Care First Report Apr - June 2021	Care First Report July - December 21	
	Q1	Q2	Q3
Face to Face Sessions	22	18	15
Telephone Counselling	38	49	42
Telephone Information Service	6	3	7
Online Counselling	2	2	6
New Clients	22	19	28
Unique Page Views on Care First Lifestyle Website	313	80	73

