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Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol Pen-y-bont ar Ogwr Bridgend County Borough Council

Swyddfeydd Dinesig, Stryd yr Angel, Pen-y-bont, CF31 4WB / Civic Offices, Angel Street, Bridgend, CF31 4WB



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Dyddiad/Date: Tuesday 6 January 2026

Dear Councillor,

CABINET

A meeting of the Cabinet will be held Hybrid in the Council Chamber - Civic Offices, Angel Street, Bridgend, CF31 4WB / remotely via Microsoft Teams on **Tuesday, 13 January 2026 at 14:30**.

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.

3 Approval of Minutes

5 - 12

To receive for approval the Minutes of 16/12/2025

4 Children's Residential Home

13 - 18

5 Annual Corporate Safeguarding Report 2024/2025

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6 School Modernisation Programme Replacement Heronsbridge School - Modification to school opening 53 - 60

7 Medium Term Financial Strategy 2026-27 to 2029-30 61 - 128

8 Urgent Items

To consider any items of business that by reason of special circumstances the chairperson is of the opinion should be considered at the meeting as a matter of urgency in accordance with paragraph 2.4 (e) of the Cabinet Procedure Rules within the Constitution.

9 Exclusion of the Public

The following item is not for publication as it contains exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 14 and 16 of Part 4 and Paragraph 21 of Part 5, Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) (Wales) Order 2007.

If following the application of the public interest test Cabinet resolves pursuant to the Act to consider this item in private, the public will be excluded from the meeting during such consideration.

10 Approval of Exempt Minutes

129 - 130

To receive for approval the exempt minutes of 16/12/2025

Note: This will be a Hybrid meeting and Members and Officers will be attending in the Council Chamber, Civic Offices, Angel Street Bridgend / Remotely via Microsoft Teams. 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 would like to view this meeting live, please contact cabinet_committee@bridgend.gov.uk or tel. 01656 643148 / 643694 / 643513 / 643159.

Yours faithfully
K Watson
Chief Officer, Legal and Regulatory Services, HR and Corporate Policy

Councillors:

E L P Caparros
G Haines
M J Evans
N Farr
J Gebbie
M Jones
JC Spanswick
HM Williams

CABINET - TUESDAY, 16 DECEMBER 2025MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CABINET HELD HYBRID IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER - CIVIC OFFICES, ANGEL STREET, BRIDGEND, CF31 4WB / REMOTELY VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS. ON TUESDAY, 16 DECEMBER 2025 AT 14:30Present

Councillor JC Spanswick – Chairperson

N Farr
G HainesJ Gebbie
M J EvansHM Williams
M Jones

E L P Caparros

Officers:

Jake Morgan
Nimi Chandrasena
Carys Lord
Claire Marchant
Janine Nightingale
Kelly Watson
Mark Galvin
Lindsay Harvey
Will Lane

Chief Executive
Democratic Services Officer - Support
Chief Officer - Finance, Housing & Change
Corporate Director - Social Services and Wellbeing
Corporate Director - Communities
Chief Officer - Legal & Regulatory Services, HR & Corporate Policy
Senior Democratic Services Officer - Committees
Corporate Director - Education, Early Years & Young People
Operational Manager Environmental Protection and Licensing

563. Apologies for Absence

Decision Made	<p>There were no apologies for absence.</p> <p>The Leader took the opportunity to advise that Councillor Paul Davies had decided to step down as Cabinet Member for Climate Change and the Environment due to other ongoing personal commitments. In view of this, this role would now be job-shared between Councillors Eugene Caparros and Gary Haines.</p>
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This document is available in Welsh / Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg

	Councillor Mel Evans would therefore take over the role of Cabinet Member Resources solely, this role previously having been shared between Councillor Caparros and herself. The Leader and fellow Cabinet Members thanked Councillor Davies for his support in the Cabinet Members role he had vacated for this last 18 or so months.
Date Decision Made	16 December 2025

564. Declarations of Interest

Decision Made	There were no declarations of interest.
Date Decision Made	16 December 2025

565. Approval of Minutes

Decision Made	<u>RESOLVED:</u> That the minutes of meetings of Cabinet dated 3/11/2025 and 13/11/2025, be approved as true and accurate records.
Date Decision Made	16 December 2025

566. Recommendations from the Scrutiny Budget Working Group

Decision Made	This item was presented by the Chairperson of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee (on behalf of that Committee). Councillor Williams presented Cabinet with Recommendations from the Scrutiny Budget Working Group for consideration during the development of the draft budget proposals and MTFS. These were attached at Appendix A of the report and the Chairperson of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee highlighted some of these for the benefit of Cabinet and the Corporate Management Board. Appendix B to the report detailed requests for additional information made by Members at the Scrutiny
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	<p>Budget Working Group on 4 November and Steering Group on 17 November 2025, some of which follow on from previous requests made by the Deep Dive Groups which received initial responses.</p> <p>Following consideration of the report, it was acknowledged that the Council was improving methods of engagement at both an early and all subsequent stages with regards to budget considerations, throughout the year with an increased number of Members through both COSC and the Scrutiny Budget Working Group.</p> <p><u>RESOLVED:</u></p> <p>That Cabinet agreed to consider and respond to the Recommendations of the Scrutiny Budget Working Group attached at Appendix A of the report (subject to any additions or amendments agreed by the COSC at their meeting of 11 December 2025 which will be presented verbally to Cabinet) and consider them during the development of the draft budget proposals and MTFS.</p>
Date Decision Made	16 December 2025

567. School Attendance Enforcement Policy

Decision Made	<p>The Cabinet Member – Education and Youth Services submitted a report, in order to seek Cabinet approval for the revisions to the Bridgend County Borough Council (BCBC) School Attendance Enforcement Policy 2025-2028 and the fixed penalty notice (FPN) code of conduct.</p> <p>These updates reflected changes in national guidance, Welsh Government expectations and local priorities for improving school attendance.</p> <p>Members asked a number of questions on the report, which were responded to by the Cabinet Member – Education and Youth Services and/or the Corporate Director – Education, Early Years and Young People, for example:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• How will the revised Policy be monitored and reviewed in order to establish if school attendance figures improve (or not, as the case may be);• How many Fixed Penalty Notices have been issued by the Police for continued unauthorised absence of pupils from schools in recent times?;
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How many Fixed Penalty Notices have the Education Authority issued in the last 12 months for school unauthorised absences;• How much are Court costs for the Council arising from taking parents of pupils to Court in respect of continued unauthorised school absences? <p><u>RESOLVED:</u> That Cabinet:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Approved the revised School Attendance Enforcement Policy.2. Approved the updated Fixed Penalty Notice Code of Conduct.
Date Decision Made	16 December 2025

568. Governance of the Collaborative Arrangements for Welsh (Local Authority) Adoption and Fostering Services - Quoracy of the National Joint Committee for the National Adoption Service for Wales and Foster Wales

Decision Made	<p>The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Social Services and Health and Wellbeing presented a report, that sought to obtain agreement to a 'Deed of Variation' to amend the quoracy required for the National Joint Committee meetings.</p> <p>She explained that agreeing this proposal, would enable the Joint Committee to meet and undertake its functions on behalf of Bridgend County Borough Council, thus enabling the oversight by it of the collaborative arrangements for adoption and fostering services.</p> <p>Approving the recommendations of the report, would assist future meetings in being quorate the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Social Services and Health and Wellbeing added.</p> <p><u>RESOLVED:</u> That Cabinet:-</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Agreed to reduce the quorum of the Joint Committee to 40%, with at least 3 regional areas represented.2. Authorised the entry into and sealing of the Deed of Variation to enable this to be implemented.
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Date Decision Made	16 December 2025
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569. A Review of the Statement of Licensing Policy

Decision Made	<p>The Cabinet Member – Finance and Performance presented a report, to provide Cabinet with a proposed draft Statement of Licensing Policy (SLP) at Appendix A of the report for consideration and noting before proceeding to Council for approval.</p> <p>A summary of the comments received during the consultation exercise undertaken on the policy, was detailed in Appendix B, along with officers' comments.</p> <p>The report advised that the Council as the licensing authority, is responsible for the regulation of premises which offer alcohol, regulated entertainment and the provision of late-night refreshment.</p> <p>The licensing authority must publish a Statement of Licensing Policy setting out how it intends to approach the granting of licences.</p> <p>He stated that a review of the Policy has been conducted following a consultation and amendments have been made to such Policy.</p> <p>The Policy had been agreed by the Licensing Committee at their meeting of 30 September 2025. The intention was for Cabinet to consider the policy, prior to it being submitted to Council for approval.</p> <p>A Member raised some concern, in that she felt that the provisions of the policy did not fully comply with the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Act) in relation to how health determinants are measured. She therefore asked how the licensing authority are taking into account our future generations, given that Bridgend has some of the worse health issues and measures in the UK.</p> <p>The Operational Manager Environmental Protection and Licensing advised that the Licensing Policy was based on Section 182 of the licensing guidance produced by Central Government, which specifically deals with the four statutory licensing objectives and considering these when licensing applications are submitted to the Authority. This is a legal process that Council's have to comply with and these objectives cut across some health issues as referenced in the above question. However, the promotion of public health per se, did not specifically sit within the Licensing Act regime.</p>
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	<p>A Member then asked for some clarity in terms of the relationship between the licensing and the planning process when it came to considering a licensing and planning application for a premises.</p> <p>The Operational Manager Environmental Protection and Licensing confirmed (as referenced above) that the licensing authority had to ensure when considering an application for example for a Premises licence, for a proprietor to sell alcohol, food and provide public entertainment, the impact granting such a licence would have on the four licensing objectives. The planning authority under the provisions of the Planning Act, had a wider remit when considering a planning application, ie the impact the premises would have on the Local Development Plan (LDP) which catered for specific land use in various County Borough locations, car parking, highway issues and visual amenity etc. Therefore, though licensing and planning communicated with each other on any applications that were submitted to the Council, both considered different matters under different pieces of legislation.</p> <p><u>RESOLVED:</u> That Cabinet noted the draft Statement of Licensing Policy and agreed to refer the Policy to Council for final approval.</p>
Date Decision Made	16 December 2025

570. Information Report for Noting

Decision Made	<p>The Monitoring Officer presented an Information report, that included details of the current policy under the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA) and the use of RIPA within the Authority.</p> <p>Paragraph 3.2 of the report confirmed that there had been no authorisations for RIPA in BCBC since April 2014.</p> <p>The RIPA Policy was attached at Appendix 1 of the covering report, had been reviewed to ensure it remains fit for purpose and in accordance with the Codes of Practice issued by the Home Office.</p> <p><u>RESOLVED:</u> That Cabinet acknowledged the publication of the report referred to in paragraph 3.1 of the report.</p>
Date Decision Made	16 December 2025

6.1. Urgent Items

Decision Made	There were no urgent items.
Date Decision Made	16 December 2025

572. Exclusion of the Public

Decision Made	<u>RESOLVED:</u>	<p>The following items were not for publication as they contained exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 14 and 16 of Part 4 and Paragraph 21 of Part 5, Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) (Wales) Order 2007.</p> <p>Following the application of the public interest test Cabinet resolved pursuant to the Act to consider these items in private, with the public being excluded from the meeting during such consideration.</p>
Date Decision Made	16 December 2025.	

573. Approval of Exempt Minutes

Decision Made	<u>RESOLVED:</u>	That the exempt minutes of Cabinet dated 3/11/2025, be approved as a true and accurate record.
Date Decision Made	16 December 2025	

**574. Porthcawl Grand Pavilion Project Update and Request for Approval to
Modify Main Works Contract**

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Decision Made	As the report relating to this item was exempt the minute is not available for public inspection.
Date Decision Made	16 December 2025

To observe further debate that took place on the above items please click this [link](#)

Agenda Item 4

Meeting of:	CABINET
Date of Meeting:	13 JANUARY 2026
Report Title:	CHILDREN'S RESIDENTIAL HOME
Report Owner: Responsible Chief Officer / Cabinet Member	JOINT REPORT CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE AND PERFORMANCE AND CHIEF OFFICER FINANCE, HOUSING AND CHANGE AND DEPUTY LEADER AND CABINET MEMBER FOR SOCIAL SERVICES, HEALTH AND WELLBEING AND CORPORATE DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL SERVICES AND WELLBEING
Responsible Officer:	JADE JONES – CHILDREN'S COMMISSIONING & SUFFICIENCY LEAD
Policy Framework and Procedure Rules:	There is no effect upon the policy framework or procedure rules.
Executive Summary:	This report seeks Cabinet approval to submit a report to Council requesting a capital budget for the acquisition and refurbishment of a residential property with the intention that it is developed and registered as a Children's Residential Home. The project would be included in the Capital Programme and initially funded from Bridgend County Borough Council resources, with the expectation that costs will be fully recovered from the Welsh Government Housing with Care Fund administered by the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Regional Partnership Board.

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek Cabinet agreement to present a report to Council seeking approval for the inclusion of a capital budget of £1,620,450 in the Capital Programme for the proposed acquisition and refurbishment of a residential home to be registered with Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) as a children's residential care home. Bridgend County Borough Council (BCBC)

will fund the scheme initially, but there is an assumption that some or all of the costs will be recovered from the Housing with Care Fund.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Health and Social Care (Wales) Act 2025 strengthens Welsh Government's commitment to eliminating profit from the care of looked after children. Its phased implementation will prevent new for-profit registrations from April 2026, restrict expansion of existing providers from April 2027, and prohibit new placements with for-profit providers from April 2030 (ministerial approval required). The Act will also strengthen local authorities' sufficiency duties, reinforcing the need to secure local, needs-led accommodation. This national direction places increased emphasis on developing in-house provision and reducing reliance on externally commissioned placements.
- 2.2 In 2022, a population needs assessment and market stability report informed local and regional planning, including the Children, Young People and Transition Commissioning Strategy, which identifies placement sufficiency as a key priority. The development of a Placements Commissioning Strategy builds on this work, setting out how the Council will meet its statutory duties through the development of additional residential provision for children with complex needs, reducing reliance on private and out-of-county placements, and supporting the Not-for-Profit agenda. Updated placement modelling undertaken with Practice Solutions and the Institute of Public Care confirms the need for a minimum of four internal residential homes providing at least ten additional in-house beds, with all scenarios supporting this investment as a priority.

3. Current situation / proposal

- 3.1 BCBC proposes to purchase a property on the open market and convert it into a children's residential home accommodating up to four children.
- 3.2 A capital bid to the value of £1,620,450 was endorsed by the Regional Capital Board on 19th December 2025 to allow consideration by Welsh Government Capital Scrutiny Panels in January 2026. Missing this deadline would have deferred the project until at least June 2026, risking the loss of the identified property.
- 3.3 The property's value is estimated at £995,000 and there will also be a requirement to pay Land Transaction Tax at £110,450. The cost of the property reflects the requirement for a larger, rural property specifically suited to the needs of these children. In addition to the acquisition cost, preliminary feasibility work is expected to be approximately £15,000. Refurbishment and furniture costs are anticipated to be in the region of £500,000. All figures are indicative and will be subject to further exploration, detailed design, and procurement. Final contractual arrangements will be subject to Council approval and legal processes. No binding commitment will be entered into until such approvals are in place.

- 3.4 While the usual Housing with Care Fund split is 35% Local Authority and 65% grant, the Welsh Government Capital Team has expressed full support for this project and confirmed they could fund up to 100% of the capital costs, subject to timely bid submission and approval.
- 3.5 If fully funded by the Housing with Care Fund, these combined costs would represent a long-term asset at no net capital cost to the Council, increasing placement sufficiency, reducing reliance on profit-making external providers, and supporting children to remain close to their local communities.
- 3.6 There is currently a significant projected underspend within the Regional Housing with Care Fund for 2025/26 and 2026/27. Officers remain confident that the capital bid already submitted will be supported by Welsh Government. Corporate Landlord colleagues are confident the purchase can be completed in this financial year (2025/2026). Welsh Government grant approval will need to be secured in advance of completion. Should completion occur after 31st March, the expenditure would fall into 2026/27; however, sufficient regional capital funds can be secured in 2026/2027 to address this if required and the risk is therefore considered low. This position will continue to be closely monitored.
- 3.7 To meet the planned timeline, the Council will need to proceed “at risk” with the acquisition while submitting a planning application in parallel. The property previously had planning permission for use as a care home, which provides some confidence, but a new application will be required for a children’s residential home.
- 3.8 Formal Welsh Government approval of the Housing with Care application will not be received until after the New Year, which would make it challenging to complete the acquisition by 31 March 2026 if the acquisition was dependent on its approval. The grant is profiled at £1,120,450 (acquisition) in 2025/26 and £500,000 (refurbishment) in 2026/27.
- 3.9 Cabinet approval is sought to present a report to Council seeking approval of a capital budget, funded from BCBC resources initially, ensuring the property can be secured within the required timescale (2025/2026). The capital budget would be funded from uncommitted capital resources, with the expectation that costs will be fully recovered from the Housing with Care Fund once Welsh Government approval is received. While the risk of non-approval is considered low, should this occur, the Council would be required to fully fund the capital costs of £1,620,450.

- 4. Equality implications (including Socio- economic Duty and Welsh Language)**

- 4.1 An initial Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) screening has identified that there would be no negative impact on those with one or more of the protected characteristics, on socio-economic disadvantage or the use of the Welsh

Language. It is therefore not necessary to carry out a full EIA on this policy or proposal at this stage.

5. Well-being of Future Generations implications and connection to Corporate Well-being Objectives

5.1 The proposed acquisition and refurbishment of a children's residential home contributes to the Council's well-being objectives by:

- **Supporting vulnerable children:** Providing additional in-house residential capacity ensures children can remain close to their families and local communities, promoting their safety, stability, and long-term well-being.
- **Reducing reliance on external providers:** Developing Council-owned provision supports the Not-for-Profit agenda and reduces dependence on profit-making providers, contributing to more sustainable and equitable local services.
- **Long-term asset and service sustainability:** The property will become a long-term Council asset, supporting future service delivery and increasing placement sufficiency, aligning with the corporate objective of providing quality, sustainable services.
- **Alignment with Well-being Goals:** The proposal supports the Welsh Government's Well-being of Future Generations Goals, including a healthier, more equal, and cohesive Wales, by ensuring that children's needs are met within their local communities.

6. Climate Change and Nature Implications

6.1 The proposed acquisition and refurbishment of the property has several climate-related considerations:

- **Energy efficiency:** Refurbishment works will incorporate energy-efficient measures wherever possible, including insulation, low-carbon heating systems, and energy-efficient lighting, in line with the Council's sustainability objectives.
- **Reduced travel emissions:** By providing local residential provision, the proposal may reduce the need for children to be placed in out-of-county homes, decreasing travel distances and associated carbon emissions.
- **Sustainable building standards:** The project will consider sustainable construction and refurbishment practices to minimise environmental impact and support the Council's commitment to reducing its carbon footprint.

6.2 Overall, while the primary purpose of the project is to meet children's care needs, opportunities to support the Council's climate change and sustainability objectives will be actively considered during refurbishment.

7. Safeguarding and Corporate Parent Implications

7.1 The proposed acquisition and refurbishment of a children's residential home directly supports the Council's responsibilities as a Corporate Parent:

- **Enhancing placement sufficiency:** By increasing in-house residential capacity, the Council can better meet the needs of children in care, ensuring placements are appropriate, stable, and close to their communities.
- **Promoting safeguarding:** Owning and managing the provision allows the Council to maintain robust safeguarding standards, monitoring, and oversight, reducing reliance on external providers and ensuring children's safety.
- **Supporting corporate parenting duties:** The project demonstrates the Council's commitment to fulfilling its statutory corporate parenting responsibilities by providing high-quality, locally based care for children with complex needs.

7.2 Overall, the proposal strengthens the Council's ability to safeguard vulnerable children and deliver on its corporate parenting obligations.

8. Financial Implications

8.1 Capital

The proposed acquisition and refurbishment of the children's residential home is expected to cost approximately £995,000 for the property acquisition and up to £500,000 for refurbishment and furniture. Additional costs include Land Transaction Tax of £110,450 and preliminary feasibility work of £15,000. Funding is anticipated to be fully covered by the Housing with Care Fund (HCF), in which case there would be no net capital cost to the Council.

	Estimated Cost (£)
Acquisition	£995,000
Land Transaction Tax	£110,450
Refurbishment & Furniture	£500,000
Feasibility	£15,000
Total	£1,620,450

8.2 Revenue - Comparing external costs against internal provision

The table below demonstrates that in comparing average external placement costs as at the 31st March 2025 with estimated internal costs that there will be anticipated revenue cost savings of £292,707 per annum.

Property	Estimated Internal Revenue cost		Average Annual External Residential Cost as at Mar-25	Annual Cost reduction/ cost avoidance
4 bed (multi occupancy)	Total costs Per annum if 4 children are placed	£820,169	£1,112,876	£292,707
	Annual cost Per child	£205,042	£278,219	£73,177
Annual cost reduction/ avoidance (based on 100% occupancy)				£292,707

8.3 The Medium Term Financial Strategy 2025/26 to 2028/29 approved by Council in February 2025 included a budget pressure of £885,000 to address gaps in the placement provision in Bridgend in relation to addressing the Health and Social Care Bill to reform the children's social care system. Running costs for Home 1 are £779,528 per annum, which leaves £105,472 from the budget pressure available towards the costs of this second home. A further budget pressure has been submitted as part of the Medium Term Financial Strategy process for 2026-27 to 2029-30, and officers will continue to work with colleagues in finance to review and manage the revenue budget.

9. Recommendation

It is recommended that Cabinet:

- 9.1 agrees that a report be presented to Council for approval of a capital budget of £1,620,450 be included in the Council's Capital Programme for the acquisition and refurbishment of a children's residential home to be initially funded from BCBC resources, on the assumption that some or all of the costs will be recovered via the Welsh Government Housing with Care Fund;
- 9.2 note the risks associated with Welsh Government approval and subject to Council approval, support proceeding "at risk" with the acquisition to meet the 2025/26 timeline, with refurbishment planned for 2026/27.

Background Documents

None

Agenda Item 5

Meeting of:	CABINET
Date of Meeting:	13 JANUARY 2026
Report Title:	ANNUAL CORPORATE SAFEGUARDING REPORT 2024/25
Report Owner: Responsible Chief Officer / Cabinet Member	CABINET MEMBER – SOCIAL SERVICES, HEALTH AND WELLBEING CORPORATE DIRECTOR SOCIAL SERVICES AND WELLBEING
Responsible Officer:	GROUP MANAGER SAFEGUARDING, MASH, IAA, IRO SERVICE
Policy Framework and Procedure Rules:	There is no effect upon the Policy Framework and Procedure Rules.
Executive Summary:	This report provides details of the corporate safeguarding activity undertaken for the year 2024-25 including data on the number of safeguarding referrals to both adults and children's services. It outlines the way in which Bridgend County Borough Council's (BCBC) Directorates have worked to safeguard its citizens along with information on future planned work.

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to present to Cabinet the Annual Corporate Safeguarding Report for 2024-25 for approval.
- 1.2 This report was presented to the Social Services Health and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 6th November 2025. The report was well received and some recommendations discussed for next year's report.

2. Background

- 2.1 Safeguarding means protecting people's health, wellbeing and human rights, and enabling them to live free from harm, abuse, and neglect. It is a corporate responsibility for BCBC to safeguard vulnerable individuals from harm, abuse, and neglect.

2.2 Under the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014, Section 7 refers to safeguarding and created legislation against which the Council is required to function regarding safeguarding. It provides the legal framework for improving the well-being of people who need care and support, carers who need support, and for transforming social services in Wales. The Annual Corporate Safeguarding Report attached as **Appendix 1** provides details as to how the Council has performed against those statutory duties.

3. Current situation/ proposal

3.1 The Annual Corporate Safeguarding Report includes details on:

- Adults Social Care
- Children and Family Services
- Education, Early Years and Young People
- Workforce
- Housing
- Partnership and Community Safety and Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (VAWDASV)
- Placement Sufficiency, Out of County Placements and Operating Without Registration (OWRs)
- Other areas of key focus

3.2 The report highlights the changes to both Adults and Children and Family Services operating models and restructures that have been completed. Referrals continue to be high across both services, however, this increased demand continues to be processed and managed successfully within compliance targets.

3.3 The report details information regarding the number of safeguarding referrals made to both adults and children's teams, including those where thresholds were not met. It provides information relating to the number of Adult Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS) that have been applied for.

3.4 Provided in the report is information as to how many children have been placed on the Child Protection Register (CPR) throughout this time period, as well as providing information relating to how Public Law Outline (PLO) and Care Proceedings (CP) have been processed and supported.

3.5 The report contains details relating to concerns held by the Education, Early Years and Youth Services Directorate relating to increasing rates of both Permanent and Fixed Term exclusions from schools, along with details of the number of children and young people that are Educated Other Than At School (EOTAS) and Electively Home Educated (EHE).

3.6 The report provides information relating to the new Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) process being followed in relation to DBS renewals and how Human Resources & Organisational Development (HR/OD) continue to provide workforce information to the Corporate Safeguarding Board, including data on training completion rates.

- 3.7 The report highlights the leveling off of numbers of people living in temporary accommodation, and where work has been completed to cross reference these individuals with the Social Services and Wellbeing Directorate.
- 3.8 The report contains information relating to work completed by the Community Safety Partnership, including anti-social behaviour (ASB) diversionary activities, such as the successful 'Tackle After Dark' and 'Caerau Kicks' with the Ospreys and Cardiff City football club respectively.
- 3.9 Details of placement sufficiency, out of county placements and placements operating without registration are contained and discussed within the report as well as details relating to the work undertaken to support reductions and interventions for child exploitation.

4. Equality implications (including Socio-economic Duty and Welsh Language)

- 4.1 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. An initial Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) screening has identified that there would be no negative impact on those with one or more of the protected characteristics, on socio-economic disadvantage or the use of the Welsh Language. It is therefore not necessary to carry out a full EIA on this policy or proposal.

5. Well-being of Future Generations implications and connection to Corporate Well-being Objectives

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

Involvement	In the formation of this report, relevant officers from the Corporate Safeguarding Board, which is formed of officers and representatives from across the Council's Directorates, have contributed to the final version.
Long term	This Annual Corporate Safeguarding Report provides an overview of the safeguarding activity from the previous year. This allows the Council to project what future safeguarding activity and requirements may be required of the Social Services and Wellbeing (SSWB) Directorate and thus provide additional safety to our most vulnerable individuals in Bridgend.
Prevention	The report highlights developments by the Directorate in line with the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014. These developments help the Council improve its safeguarding processes and responses to safeguarding matters and thus preventing the likelihood of additional harm coming to vulnerable individuals.

Integration	Safeguarding is a mandatory corporate training module for all to complete and to integrate the learning and understanding across the Council.
Collaboration	Work continues in collaboration with the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Regional Partnership Board (RPB) and the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Regional Safeguarding Board (CTMSB), as well as multi-agency working with South Wales Police, social landlords, health colleagues, and the third sector.

6. Climate Change Implications

6.1 There are no climate change implications as a result of this report.

7. Safeguarding and Corporate Parent Implications

7.1 Details provided within the Annual Report on how staff are supported and continue to improve and strengthen safeguarding arrangements is a key theme throughout the Annual Report and remains a key priority for 2024/25. Safeguarding is the responsibility of all Council Directorates. With a view to promoting awareness of this and raising the profile of Safeguarding across the whole of the Council.

8. Financial Implications

8.1 Whilst there are no direct financial implications from this report, the medium- and long-term sustainability of statutory services provided by the Council continue to present growing challenges on the Council to meet these responsibilities and deliver a balanced budget.

9. Recommendation

9.1 It is recommended that Cabinet approves the 2024/25 Annual Corporate Safeguarding Report.

Background documents

None

Annual Corporate Safeguarding Report

2024-2025

1. Introduction and Background:

The purpose of this report is to provide information relating to Bridgend County Borough Council's (the Council) performance regarding safeguarding vulnerable individuals across the services provided by the Council's Directorates. This report sets out how part of the Council has been performing in relation to corporate safeguarding:

- Adult Social Care
- Children and Family Services
- Education, Early Years and Young People
- Human resources and workforce
- Housing
- Partnership and Community Safety and Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (VAWDASV)
- Placement Sufficiency
- Shared Regulatory Services

Safeguarding is a key priority of all services provided by the Council with the focus being put on ensuring and protecting people's health, wellbeing and human rights, whilst enabling them to live free from harm, abuse and neglect.

Part 7 of the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 (SSWBA), set out responsibilities for local authorities and relevant partner agencies to work together to safeguard vulnerable individuals at risk. The Council forms a part of the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Safeguarding Board (CTMSB). For more details on the activity of CTMSB, its annual report can be found [here](#).

2. Adult Social Care:

The last 12 months has seen the strengths- based outcome focused practice model being further embedded into everyday practice within Adult Social Care.

Adult Social Care has a 3 tier operating model. Tier 1 includes an Early Intervention and Prevention Hub (EIPH) front door has been fully implemented and builds on the strengths of those we support, identifying the right support from the right person at an early stage.

Within the Adult Safeguarding team, a new consultation process has been implemented in order to identify and appropriately support Adult at Risk referrals into the team, and to provide advice and guidance in order to referrers to make the best and correct decision. Processes have been identified to support the team in dealing with email consultations, Adult at Risk reports, Professional Concerns, requests for checks to be completed, and telephone contacts for consultation appropriately.

The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 (SSWBA) places a duty on all to report an "adult at risk". Local Authorities must make enquiries where it has reasonable cause to suspect that a person within its area (whether or not ordinarily resident there) is an adult at risk. Where there is reasonable cause to suspect that an adult is at risk of abuse or neglect the Local Authority has a duty to undertake

safeguarding enquiries. These should be completed within seven days and enquiries should be made to determine what actions may be required to support the adult at risk and any ongoing protection planning that may be required.

These enquiries should be person centered and ensure that the adult is consulted and spoken with to determine their understanding of the situation, and any support needs they may have, as well as considering potential risks. These additional duties placed on the Local Authority have resulted in a significant increase in the number of safeguarding enquiries being undertaken. This has resulted in increased numbers of citizens coming to the attention of the department.

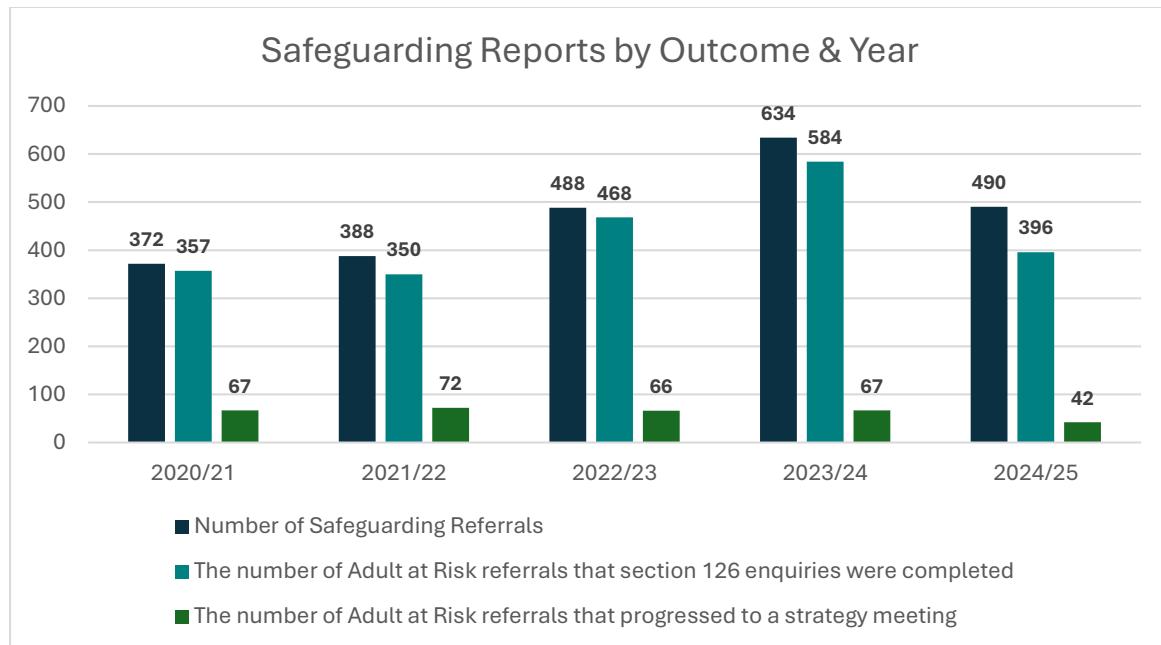
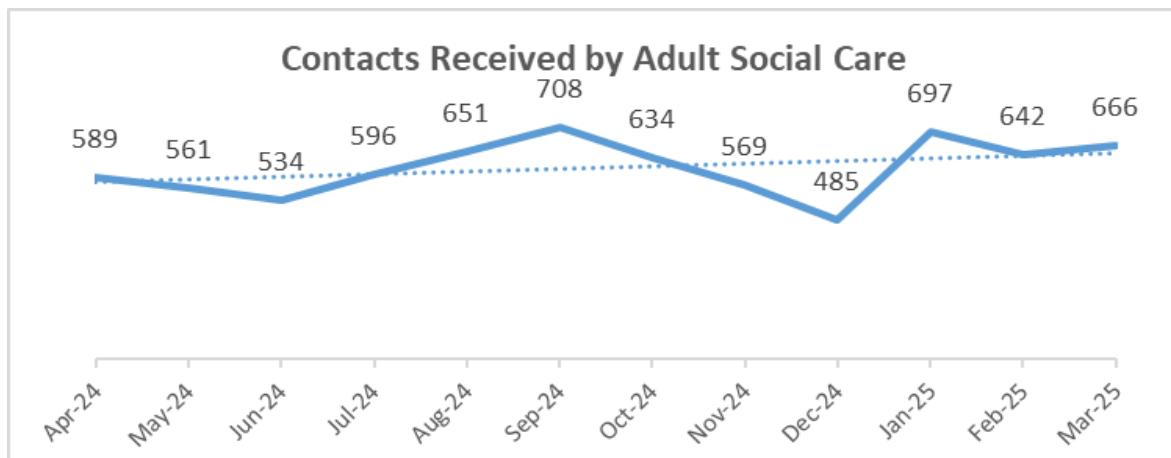


Table 1, above, shows comparative data from the previous 5 years of the number of safeguarding referrals received, as well as the number of referrals that have progressed through the relevant stages, demonstrating the reduction in numbers of contacts and subsequent enquiries that have been completed.

The total number of safeguarding referrals for adults shows that for the previous 4 years there was a consecutive increase in the number of referrals received, the past year saw a measurable decline. This follows the implementation of a new practice model and a focus on outcomes by the safeguarding team whilst addressing the safeguarding concerns. As noted above we have implemented a consultation process. Any consultation requests are considered, and the team aim to provide a response within the same day. Not only does this reduce inappropriate demand on our service, but it is more time efficient for service providers and prevents lengthy forms being completed/submitted when they are not needed. This also provides the opportunity for early advice and guidance.

With regards the contacts received into adult social care the services have remained at a consistent level across the year as can be seen from the below graph.



The following chart provides a breakdown of the category of abuse for adult safeguarding referrals by year, showing that neglect and physical abuse are consistently the highest categories for referral.

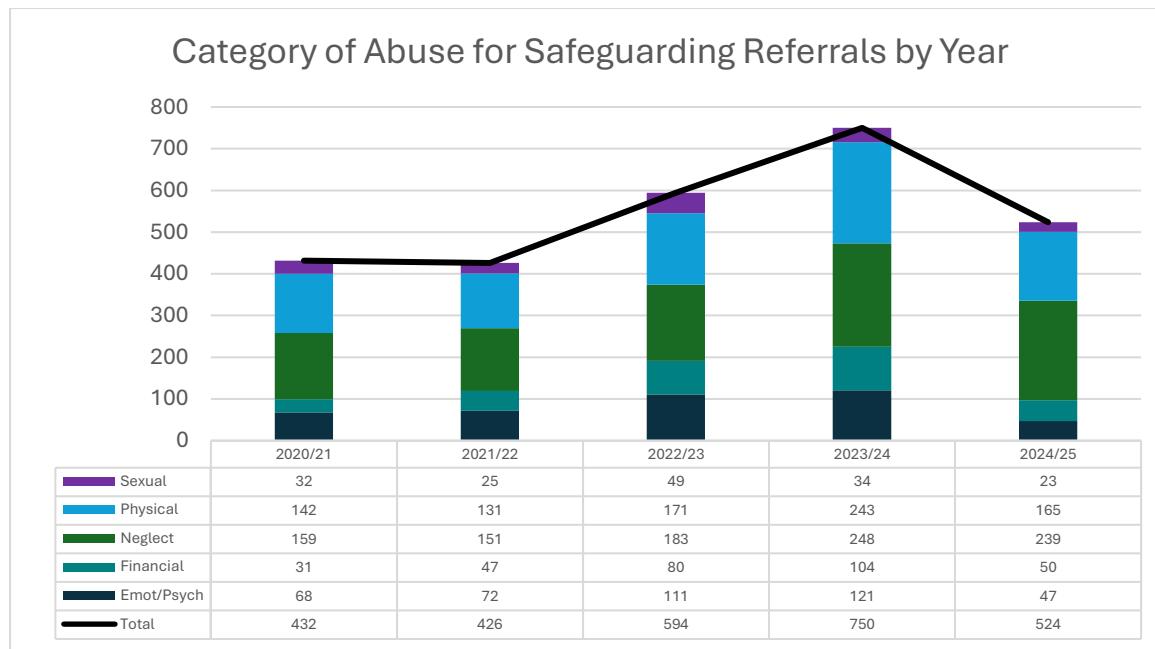
Advocacy

Advocacy Support for Adult Safeguarding is provided by the Advocacy Support Cymru (ASC) Service.

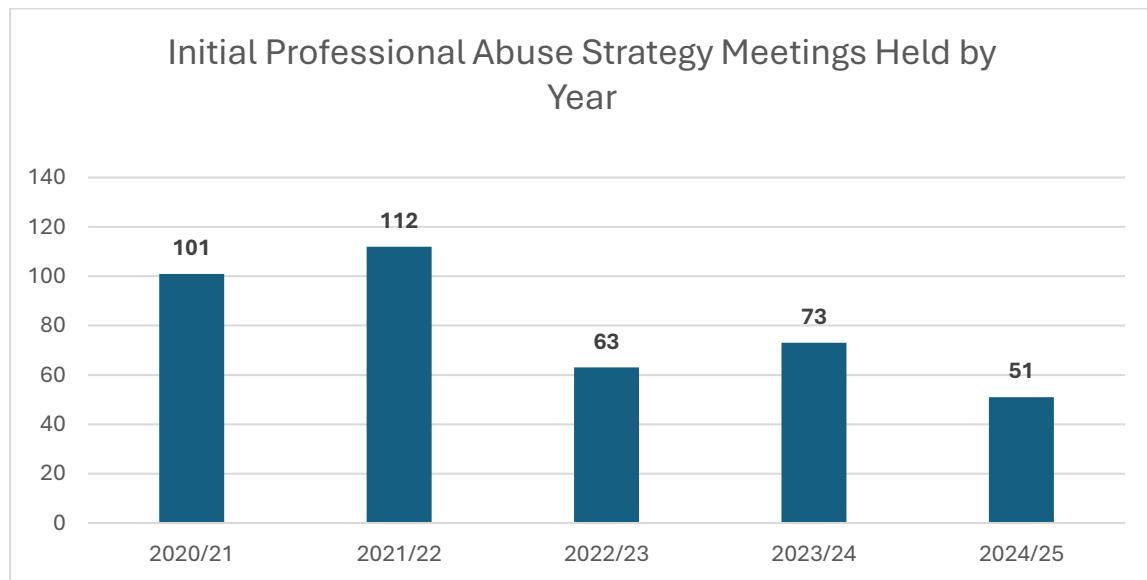
Advocacy Support Cymru (ASC) is a registered charity based in Wales, and is a charitable organisation that prides itself on its independence and effective delivery of advocacy to people who find themselves experiencing mental health issues. Advocacy referrals are offered as part of the safeguarding process.

Advocacy gives a voice to people to make themselves heard. It is an essential process of supporting and enabling people to:

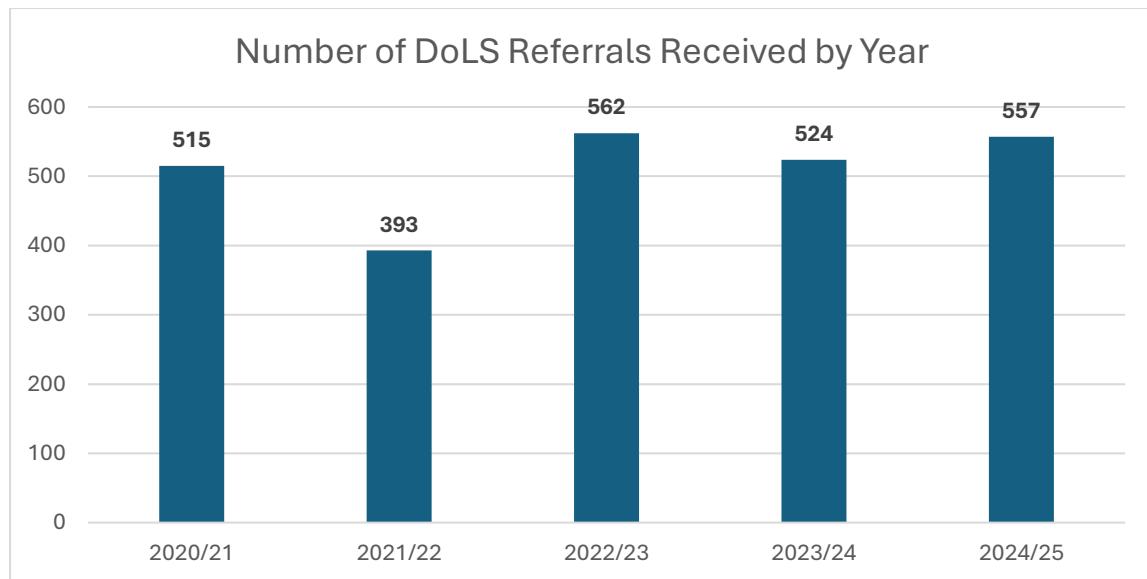
- Express their views and concerns.
- Access information and services.
- Understand and promote their rights and responsibilities.
- Explore choices and options



The number of initial professional abuse strategy meetings held in adult's services generally show a downward trend and reduction in numbers over the past 5 years as can be seen from the following graph. This is despite a slight increase in strategy meetings from 23/24. The highest referrer remains health. Over the last year 40% of allegations were substantiated, 13.3% were unsubstantiated and 26.7% are ongoing investigations.



Court of Protection Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS) referrals across Adults Services have remained at a relatively consistent level.



Adult Safeguarding case study

Situation: A referral was raised by the sister of a 36-year-old woman with a diagnosis of down syndrome, reporting poor home conditions, limited food, and neglect. The mother was the main carer and prevented professionals from accessing the home to consider the concerns. Further concerns were that the individual appeared withdrawn and unclean and was prevented from seeing her. The mother subsequently withdrew her daughter from day services, following the social worker meeting the women there without the mother's consent, increasing concerns of isolation and neglect.

Task: The Lead Coordinator's responsibility was to assess risk, ensure the individual's safety, and promote her rights and wellbeing in line with the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014, while managing significant barriers to engagement from the mother.

Action: Safeguarding enquiries were completed and multi-agency professionals' meetings with police, day services, and legal services convened, which included formal strategy meetings as it was determined the adult was at risk as we could not obtain her views and wishes. We attempted to encourage engagement through announced and unannounced visits utilising the lead practitioner, joint visits with partner agencies, and maintained clear communication across professionals. When access was repeatedly denied, legal advice was sought regarding an Adult Protection and Support Order (APSO) to ensure all options to establish safety were considered. Alternative approaches were also explored, including a change of Lead Practitioner and a referral to the Local Community Connector (LCC), on the recommendation of the Authorised Officer for the APSO, recognising that relationship-based practice was key to engagement as mother had noted a mistrust of professionals.

Result: Through sustained multi-agency collaboration and persistence, a further social worker and the LCC achieved some positive engagement. The engagement was not however sustained, interrupted through unexpected leave of the LCC. Whilst further consideration for an APSO was discussed at Strategy, using this tool

prematurely would further isolate the adult at risk and erode any possibility of developing a working relationship in the future. After initial attempts to re-engage failed, a final attempt with the Lead Coordinator making an unannounced visit was made. Whilst there was initial resistance from mum, the adult at risk was seen safe and well, expressed her wishes to remain at home but also to increase social contact and future opportunities. Advocacy and community supports were put in place to promote her voice and autonomy. The case was appropriately closed to safeguarding, with continued oversight from the Peoples First Advocacy Service and LCC teams to ensure ongoing wellbeing and engagement. The services were advised to contact safeguarding should disengagement from mother resurface as the adult's views and wishes had been obtained. This illustrates how the person has remained the centre of all decision making and the efforts that workers have gone to ensure her voice is heard and to enable a positive outcome.

HMP Parc

In April and May 2024 there was a cluster of deaths within the Secure Estate. A multi-agency response was provided to the escalating concerns which saw the Implementation of the working group. Its purpose was to have timely and effective involvement from agencies around any concerns within Parc Prison, to ensure robust support and monitoring through a safeguarding lens and within a multi-agency approach. More recently the group has expanded to consider the needs of the young offender's wing within Parc and whilst no concerns were identified it was felt that when considering safeguarding in parc, this should be approached holistically. The working group meeting will continue a quarterly basis and in addition to identifying any areas of concern it is also tracking the progress being made. It is noted that there have been no deaths from suicide or a result of substances since May 2024 highlighting the significant improvements that have been made. Safeguarding leads from all agencies in the prison form part of the working group and are committed to attendance. The working group chair and prison safeguarding manager provide regular updates are being received by the Regional Safeguarding board.

Within HMP PARC a Significant Attempts of Suicide and Self-Harm Prevention Rapid Response meeting has been developed and implemented. This considers the needs of those who have engaged in a significant attempt and had it not been for an intervention there would be the risk of death. The response to this has been positive and is again shown the good practice within the prison highlighting the quick responses from prison staff in ensuring the prisoners are safeguarded and risk management plans agreed. Appropriate referrals are being made, and this is ensuring a bespoke response is being provided to those considered within the forum. The meeting is led by the service manager with a focus on prisoner wellbeing. Whilst this is still in its early days, patterns and themes have already highlighted which has enabled a targeted response.

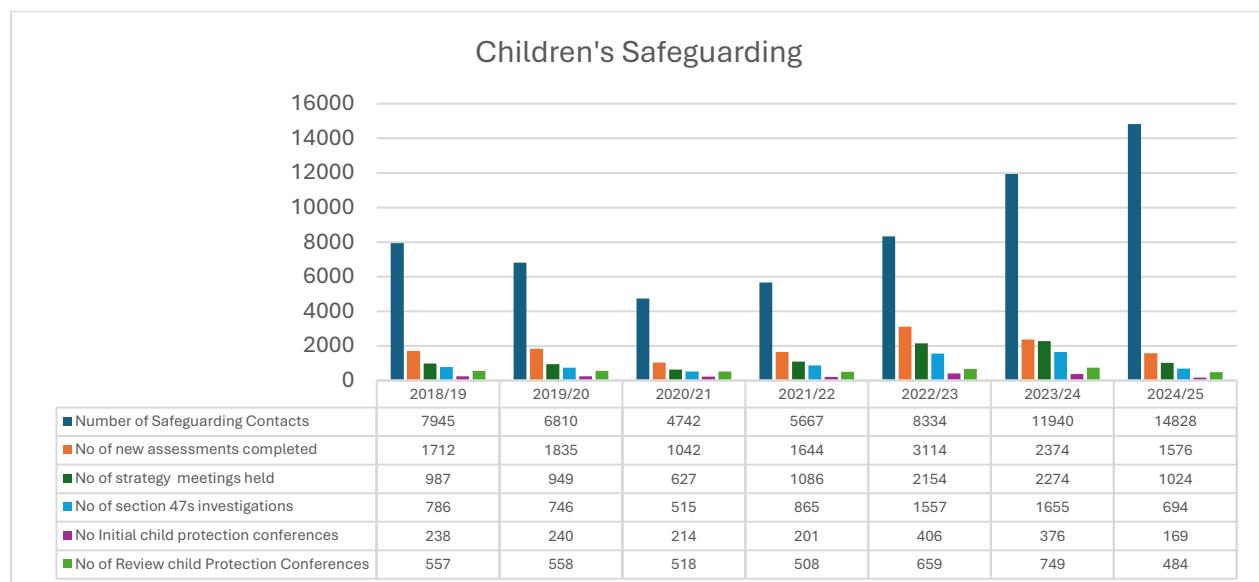
Adult Services continue to chair the community Significant Attempts of Suicide and Self-Harm Prevention Rapid Response meeting, this considers all incomplete suicides

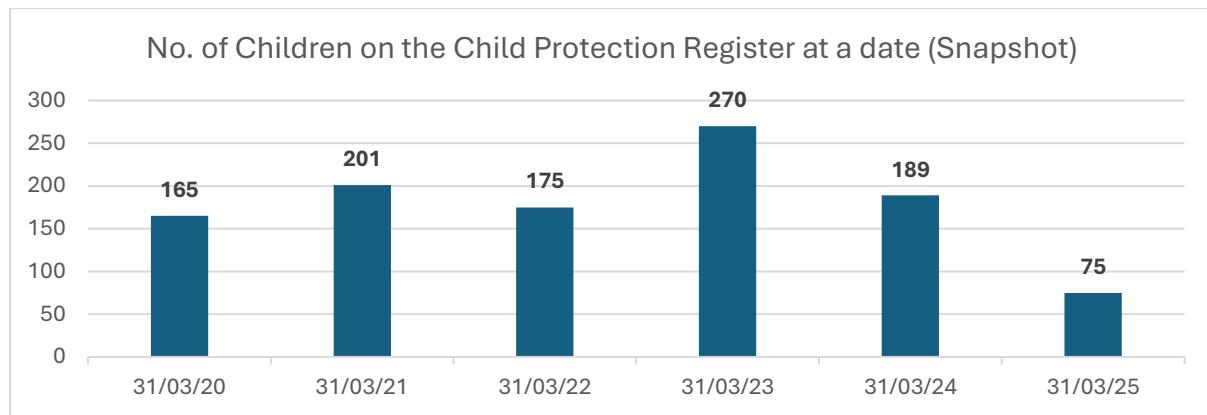
and seeks to share learning and prevent similar attempts in our community. Oth the community and prison forums will remain and key priority and focus going forward.

3. Children and Family Services

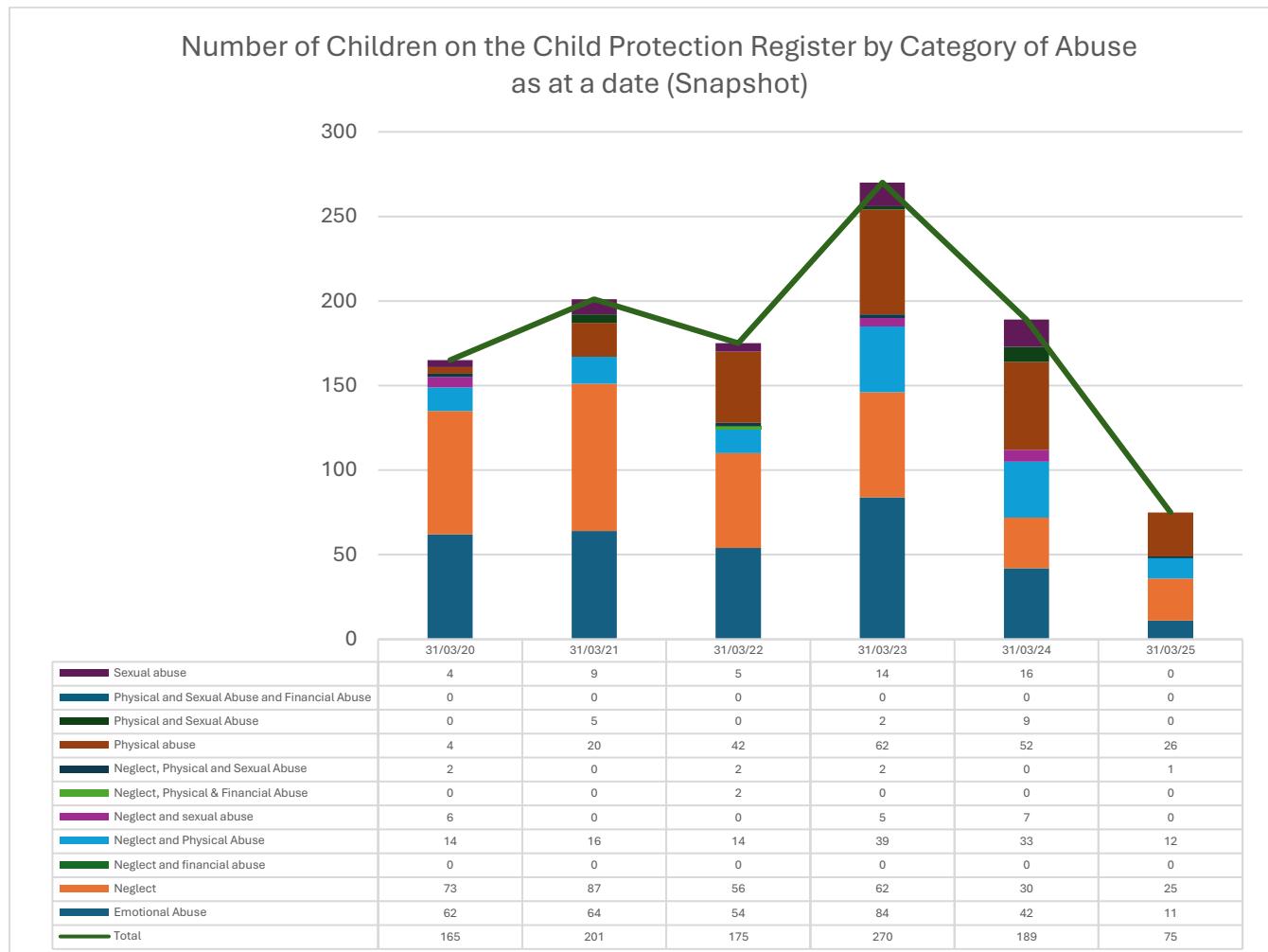
There has been an increase of 2888 referrals (24%) over the last 12 months, A proportion of these referrals are Early Help referrals which are now being included in the data. There has been a decrease in assessments which is largely as a result of our Signs of Safety screening tool and Signs of Safety mapping which is assisting in clearer decision making and also providing strengthened direction when further enquiries are being undertaken alongside our drive for early intervention via non statutory support for children and families.

A breakdown of the total contacts received by Children and Family Services can be seen in the table and graph below showing the comparative data from the past 5 years for the number of contacts received, assessments completed, strategy meetings held, section 47 safeguarding enquiries undertaken, number of initial child protection conferences and number of child protection review conferences held.





The following chart provides a breakdown of the reasons for registration on the Child Protection register by category, where across the past year physical abuse has been the primary reason for the registration with neglect and physical abuse the second most prevalent category.



The following table provides a breakdown of the numbers of children and young people registered on the Child Protection Register by age and by category of abuse.

Row Labels	Age Group					Total
	Under 1	1-4	5-9	10-15	16-18	
Emotional Abuse	2	1	3	5	0	11
Neglect	1	6	6	12	0	25
Neglect and Physical Abuse	2	4	4	2	0	12
Neglect, Physical and Sexual Abuse	0	0	0	1	0	1
Physical abuse	3	7	4	10	2	26
Total	8	18	17	30	2	75

Child Protection Registration – Progress and Impact

Historically, the Local Authority has recorded disproportionately high numbers of children subject to Child Protection Registration (CPR) when compared with other local authorities. Over the past period, we have achieved a targeted and sustained reduction in these numbers through strengthened processes, improved practice, stable workforce, better integration with early help and prevention and a more proportionate approach to safeguarding intervention.

Significant progress has been made with partners to ensure that only those children who require statutory intervention become subject to the CPR. Updated forms, enhanced training, stable workforce and strengthened decision-making processes within the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) have been instrumental in achieving this improvement. These measures have enabled more robust screening of referrals, ensuring that only cases requiring statutory intervention progress to a Care and Support Assessment or Strategy Discussion.

As a result, decision-making is now more informed and proportionate, reducing unnecessary Section 47 safeguarding enquiries and ensuring that resources are focused on children at highest risk. This approach prevents families from being escalated unnecessarily, thereby avoiding the emotional distress and practical disruption associated with child protection processes.

Further progress has been achieved through ‘What Matters’ conversations within MASH. These conversations explore families’ lived experiences and consider what support exists within their own networks and communities and preventative services to help them address challenges. By prioritising early help and community-based support, practitioners are able to provide proportionate responses rather than defaulting to statutory child protection pathways.

Where a Care and Support Assessment is required, practitioners are increasingly using tools such as mapping and family network meetings to ensure families and their wider support systems are actively involved in planning solutions. This inclusive approach promotes family ownership of change and reduces dependency on statutory services.

Strong and effective multi-agency partnership working continues to be a cornerstone of our approach. Improved coordination between partners ensures that support is holistic, reduces duplication, and allows children's needs to be met earlier. This has had a direct impact on CPR figures by preventing case drift and deterioration, reducing the need for children to become subject to child protection processes.

The Signs of Safety (SoS) practice framework underpins this transformation. It provides a strengths-based, solution-focused approach that helps practitioners and partners balance strengths, risks, and worries with clarity. This has enabled targeted and timely interventions, ensuring that safeguarding activity remains focused on what will make the most significant difference to child safety and wellbeing, while avoiding unnecessary registration.

There has also been a strong focus on workforce stability and professional development. Efforts to secure a permanent, experienced, and stable workforce have enhanced the quality and consistency of practice. Stable relationships between practitioners, children, and families foster greater trust and more sustainable progress. Experienced practitioners bring professional confidence to risk assessment and decision-making, while strengthened management oversight ensures consistency in thresholds, planning, and review activity.

Collectively, these improvements have created a more proportionate, family-focused, and strengths-based safeguarding system. The implementation of the Signs of Safety model has contributed significantly to the reduction in CPR figures by enabling children to be safeguarded effectively without over-reliance on registration.

Quality assurance and audit activity, including dip sampling, continue to monitor decision-making, identify learning themes, and promote good practice. These checks ensure that decisions remain safe, consistent, and reflective of best practice.

As a result of these combined efforts, the number of children subject to the CPR is now aligned with both regional and national (Welsh) averages. Ongoing audit and learning activity will continue to ensure that progress is sustained and that our safeguarding practice remains both effective and proportionate.

Advocacy:

We continue to work with Tros Gynnal who provide our advocacy service. In this period they have worked with 199 children/young people. This has included 66 children via the Active Offer of advocacy and 133 for Issue Based Advocacy.

There has been an increase in Active Offer referrals from 27% to 50% this year which highlights an increased awareness of the Advocacy service.

133 children and young people accessed the Issue based advocacy, presenting with 172 issues. The number has decreased slightly by 8% compared to the previous year, whereby 145 accessed the service.

81 supported children/young people were care experienced, 29 were subject to child protection procedures, 13 were open to the LA on a care and support basis and 10

were care leavers over the age of 18. The most prevalent issue the child/young person wanted support with was 'family time, previously referred to as 'contact' and issues relating to their foster placement.

An advocate attended 59 meetings in the period to support the voice of the child/young person.

TGP continues to visit our Residential Homes to reach out to children and young people and ensure the children are aware of their service, their rights and how to refer themselves.

Young Carers:

We continue to discharge our statutory responsibilities in regards to young carers. We are currently working with education partners and the Education and Engagement Team to promote our offer and to ensure partners are aware that even without the co-ordinator post we still assess and provide a service for young carers.

	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
No. of Young Carers Assessments Completed	111	94	96

This year 693 Young Carers in Bridgend have received a young carers ID card, the card offers recognition and wellbeing support opportunities to young carers. Many of these Young Carers have also received a Halo membership.

The Prevention and Well-Being Service continues to have a positive relationship with both primary and secondary schools, Bridgend College, Young Adult carers, 3rd sector organisations and also a partnership with Bridgend Young Carer Network.

There is a growing group of Young Carers ambassadors within each comprehensive school, who are the voice of other young carers. Ambassadors have monthly meetings, and their role is enabling them to create a platform for Young Carers in Bridgend.

Further support provided this year has included Young Carers days at Margam Park and Bridgend Young Carer Network Days.

Exploitation:

The Council remains committed to providing a coordinated, multi-agency response to children, young people and vulnerable adults who are currently at risk, or likely to be at risk of, Child Sexual Exploitation, Child Criminal Exploitation, County Lines activity and gang affiliation.

To progress the multi-agency management of exploitation a panel has been established. The panels have been in place since June 2023. The impact of the exploitation screening tools and multi-agency collaboration is already evident. The

safeguarding exploitation senior social worker has continued to raise awareness of exploitation and supports teams and agencies to complete safety mapping tasks as well as developing the relationships between the multi-agency partners and in particular the development of the missing protocol and continues to support frontline practitioners in completing the exploitation screening tools.

The Regional Exploitation Pathway has now been implemented, and this will be reported on in next year's report.

Since June 2023, there have been 85 cases discussed at the Exploitation Prevention Panels and the panels have taken place monthly, apart from January 2024, June 2024 and September 2024.

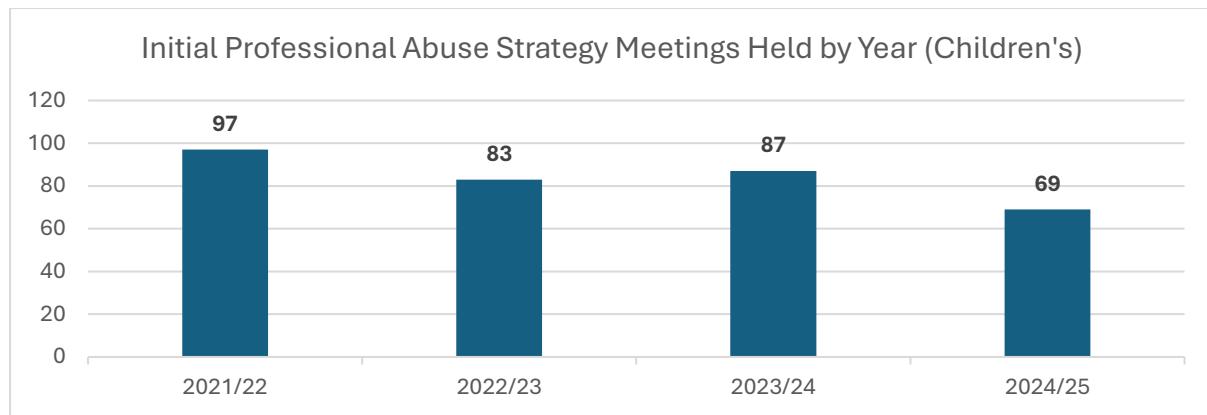
The multi-agency response panel consists of partnership agency attendees from:

- Police
- Youth Justice Service
- CAMHS
- Education Engagement Team
- Schools
- School Health Nurse
- Choices Programme
- Independent Child Trafficking Service
- BAROD
- Community Partnership Team
- Adult Services
- Health and Wellbeing Team
- Housing

Work continues to be completed to ensure and monitor the safety of vulnerable individuals to exploitation.

Professional Concerns:

Across the past year, there were 69 Professional Abuse Strategy meetings held as shown by the below graph, which is a slight reduction on the previous two years. However there remains no current identifiable pattern due to monthly referral fluctuations. Professionals across education remain the dominant profession to see referrals from.



Children's Case Study:

Rise is an Edge of Care service in Bridgend, Rise provides practical and emotional support, to women and their partners who have experienced the compulsory removal of a child from their care. Parents are supported for up to eighteen months and are given tailor-made help ranging from counselling to debt management.

Rise will give parents the chance to take control over their lives and break a destructive cycle that causes both them and their children deep trauma.

Below is written by two parents who were supported by Rise:

There are no bad changes all positive, like the well-being walks just nice to get out and go for a walk, especially with our Rise support worker. You can also clear your head, if you're having a bad day, you can just go for a walk somewhere and even the sessions where we just sit and do a little bit of colouring, have a chat, have a cuppa. She's (Rise practitioner) helped us understand the judgement that we were given so it helped us work through all of our problems and issues that were raised. If we have any problems she will sit there and listen to us rant she's wicked, she's brilliant.

We are more confident to talk about certain situations especially with the social, yeah it's easier to open up and we have a better understanding of what's happened and what's going on.

I don't feel as anxious going out now because before I refused to leave the flat now what don't mind it as much. Yeah, most definitely giving you that little boost. For me, it is just getting out being with other people socialising, I'm a people person.

It's helped us understand it a bit more it was easier to talk about yeah specially with people who understand. Cause you never know who's going for the exact same thing. It's nice to have someone who can relate and knows what you are going through, you don't have to explain your feelings. Rise listens and she doesn't judge, she's just there to support and not tell us what we're doing wrong. I mean even if it is something that we're not doing 100% (Rise Practitioner) has a nice way of putting it without making you feel bad, It's like you realise and you recognise oh yeah I could have done it that way, that would have been a bit better. In a less judgemental way. Thanks to Rise it's

helped us loads, it's helped with my mental health, it's helped us understand what's happened, why it's happened and obviously helped us with what we needed to do.

Having Rise with us, because with everything we've been through it's just nice to be able to laugh with some people. After so long with like everything that's gone on, there's been a lot of heartache, tears and sadness so it's just nice to have a change and have a bit of a laugh.

4. Education, Early Years and Youth Services:

The past school year has marked the highest number of permanent exclusions the directorate has ever recorded. The following table shows the trend of permanent exclusions across the past six years. Please note data is not available for 2019-2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

	2018-2019	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025	01/09/2025 to 22/10/2025
Primary	1	0	1	7	6	0
Secondary	7	9	13	23	26	7
Special	0	0	1	0	1	2
Total	8	9	15	30	33	9

This trend has continued into 2025-2026 school year, with nine permanent exclusions recorded to date. A review of permanent exclusions from the previous school year has been undertaken. Schools are increasingly managing complex situations both in number and severity. The Directorate's focus remains on supporting schools to address issues early, before they escalate.

The Directorate continues to undertake targeted work to understand the complexities of the situation, as well as to review and consider the systems implemented by other local authorities. The Directorate has implemented a Managed Move Panel held every fortnight. This process allows secondary schools to discuss and agree managed moves as well as consider 12-week revolving door provision at The Bridge. To date there have been a total of eight managed moves agreed. One has succeeded, two have failed and the remaining have not yet hit the six-week review to conclude. It is an aim for a directory of local authority approved providers to be created that schools can utilise as alternative provisions to assist.

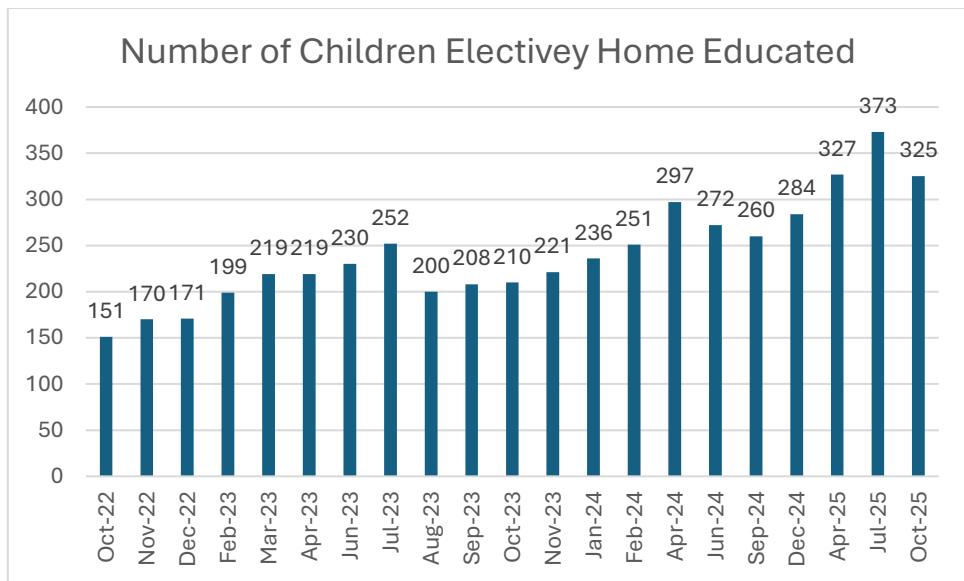
Moving forward, Cabinet have agreed a £1m non-recurring budget to support schools in reducing permanent exclusions. A proposal has been developed in partnership with schools and is due to be approved in November 2025.

Following a similar trend, the number of fixed-term exclusions has consistently continued to rise over the past few years as shown in the table below. However, the total number of days lost has decreased compared to 2022/23.

		2021-2022 School Year	2022-2023 School Year	2023-2024 School Year	2024-2025 School Year	01/09/2025 until 17/10/2025
Primary	Number of exclusions	166	248	280	262	53
	Number of days lost	351.5	441	553	427	76
Secondary	Number of exclusions	1224	1355	1309	1440	255
	Number of days lost	2395	2574.5	2400.5	2252.5	346.5
Special	Number of exclusions	74	67	97	141	18
	Number of days lost	124.5	152.5	204.5	191.5	44.5
Total	Number of exclusions	1464	1670	1686	1843	326
	Number of days lost	2871	3168	3158	2871	467

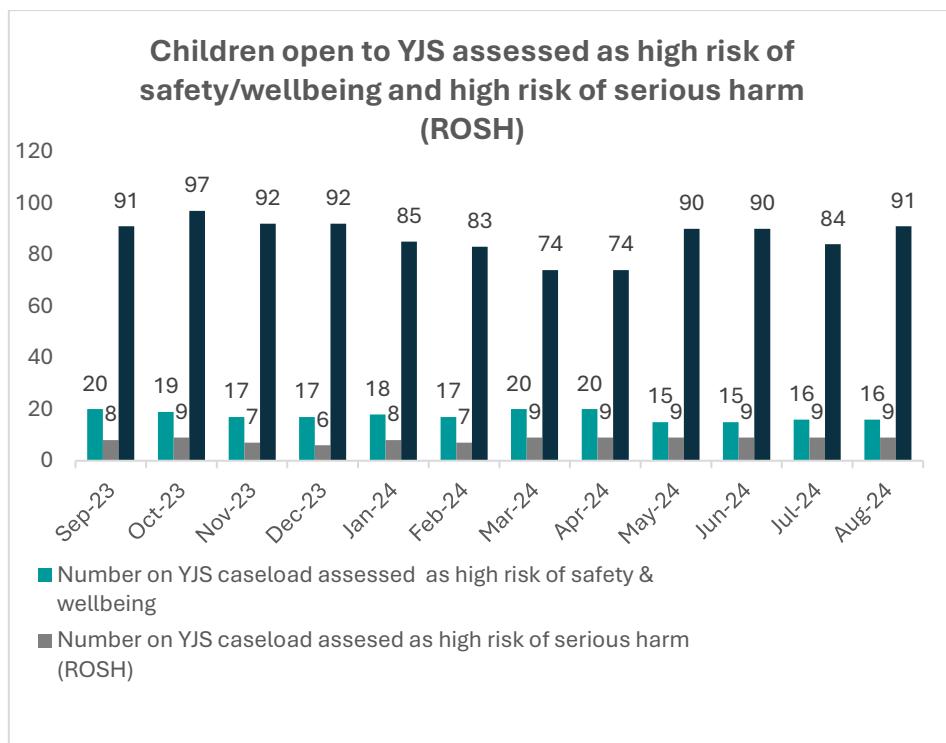
Having reviewed the last academic year this current academic year, emphasis will be placed on reviewing pastoral support plans and reduced timetables. This aims to ensure that reviews are conducted regularly, decisions are made in the best interests of the child, and safeguarding implications are appropriately considered when children are not in school. Attendance will remain a priority with specific initiatives and continual monitoring to improve persistent absenteeism figures across the Local Authority.

The number of children who are electively home educated has continued to increase with the current total standing as 325 as at 23rd October 2025. A seasonal decline is typically observed each June, corresponding to a number of learners reaching non statutory school age (on the last Friday in June). Allocated co-ordinators maintain ongoing efforts to meet with families annually to review the education provided, supplemented by coffee mornings and information sessions and attending workshops and events that our electively home educated learners are accessing. Nonetheless many families opt for online only engagement.

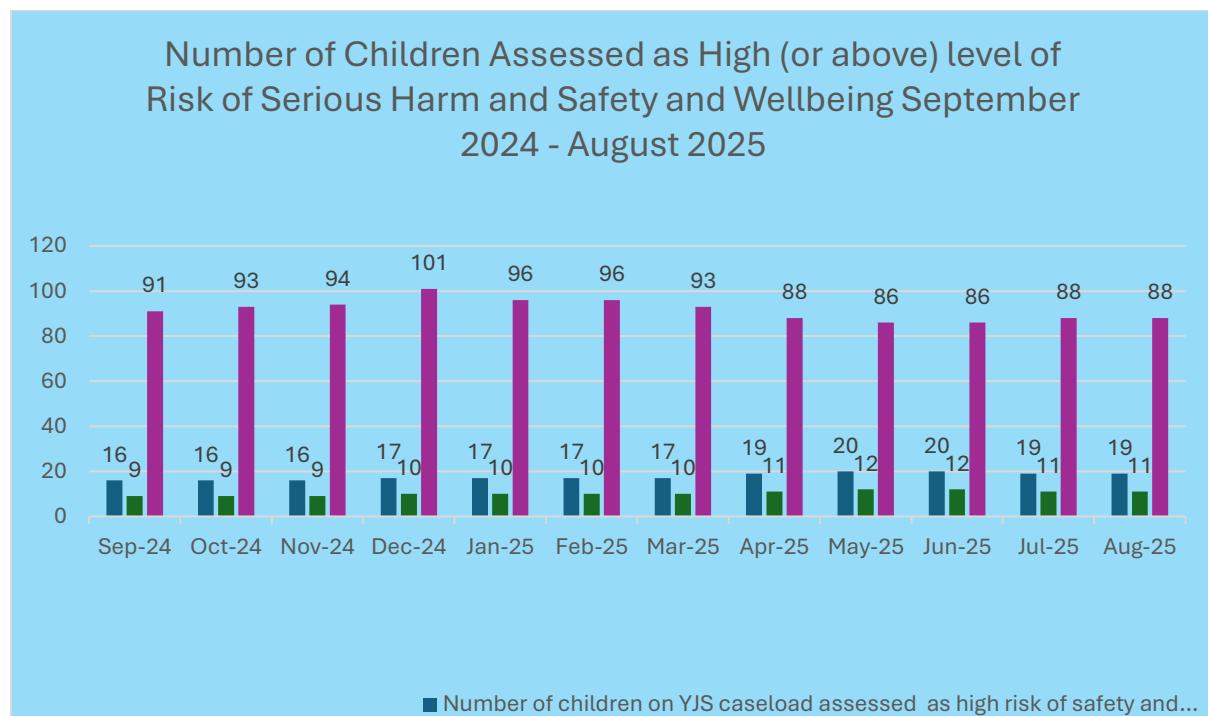


Findings from school safeguarding audits for the 2024-2025 school year highlight that 56 education settings have rated themselves as green and 4 education settings have rated themselves as amber. No school has rated itself as 'red' during the 2024-2025 school year. This represents an increase of two schools who are now rated as green having moved from amber. The school safeguarding audits have been completed in December 2025 for the 2025-2026 school year.

Across the year, the number of children and young people that have been open to the Bridgend Youth Justice Service (BYJS) has reduced. However, the numbers of children and young people on the BYJS caseload that are assessed as having a high risk to their safety and wellbeing, along with those assessed as being at a high risk of serious harm (ROSH) has increased.



Across the year, 2024 to 2025 the number of children and young people that have been open to the Bridgend Youth Justice Service (BYJS) has remained consistent to the previous year. The numbers of children and young people on the BYJS caseload that are assessed as having a high risk to their safety and wellbeing, along with those assessed as being at a high risk of serious harm (ROSH) has also remained consistent. With the highest percentage of children being high risk of serious harm as 23% of the caseload (20 children) and high risk of their safety and wellbeing being 14% of the caseload (12 children).



5. Workforce:

Human Resources & Organisational Development (HR/OD) provide workforce information to the Council's Corporate Safeguarding Board which meets monthly. The information includes a monthly update on the status of Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks and renewals as well as quarterly data relating to completion rates for safeguarding training.

An appropriate escalation process has been agreed by the Corporate Safeguarding Board to deal with non-completions and non-renewal of DBS applications. Escalation reports are provided to Heads of Service and Group Managers for action. In May 2024, the DBS Policy was updated to reflect the statutory requirement to undertake checks every three years for employees covered by the Care Standards Act 2000. Previously, the Council had adopted best practice and rechecked for all employees on a three yearly basis.

The below table shows the number of outstanding or overdue DBS applications at each quarter:

Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4
4	8	4	1

In relation to Safeguarding e-learning (including workbooks), this is monitored by the Learning & Development team and escalation reports are issued to managers for action on a quarterly basis, the completions are set out in the table below:

Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4
81.83%	81.51%	84.72%	85.77%

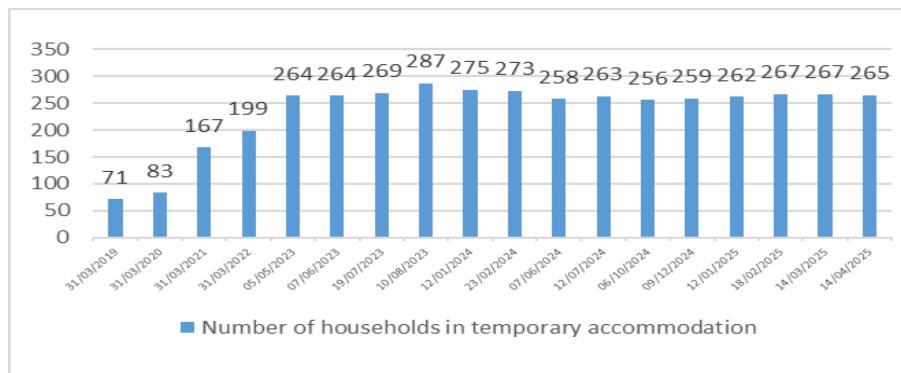
The Council also has a Recruitment and Selection Protocol and Guidelines to support managers when undertaking recruitment. It is expected that all managers who participate in recruitment complete the mandatory e-learning programme. Recruiting managers must also follow safe recruitment practices, such as obtaining professional references, ensuring the recruitment process is robust and checking previous employment history including gaps in employment, as well as a DBS check for new starters.

6. Housing:

The number of households in temporary accommodation has remained relatively stable over the year. Whilst numbers are consistent with recent years the pressure on this service represents a significant increase compared to pre Covid 19 pandemic levels. A number of measures are in place to both improve the suitability of and reduce the use of temporary accommodation.

In 2024-25, we saw a slight increase in care leavers experiencing homelessness, although the figure is still lower than 2022/23. A corporate working group is set up to ensure close joint working between housing, youth support services and social services. The council, to support care leavers agreed a motion to ensure care leavers and care-experienced children as a protected characteristic and therefore an attempt to help with some of the challenges faced by our care-experienced children.

Across the year, as demonstrated by the following graph, the number of individuals in temporary accommodation is stabilising, following a period of significant increase in recent years. Temporary accommodation numbers are a corporate concern with numbers and costs having gone up a lot in recent years. Whilst we have had a slight decrease in numbers, the overall picture is still very high compared to previous years.



Analysis of these individuals in temporary accommodation has been undertaken and will continue to be undertaken at quarterly intervals in order to understand the numbers of individuals that are open and known to Adults and Children's Services. Since the initial set of analysis has been completed, the number has halved. More work is needed to understand this further. The sharp increase in temporary accommodation placements in 2020/21 was largely due to emergency legislative guidance, from Welsh Government, leading to increased statutory duties to provide temporary accommodation. This legislative change is now permanent and as such still impacting on the number of placements, however wider issues such as the cost of living crisis and the particularly challenging private rent market are significant factors, causing both increase in demand and making it harder for households to move on from temporary accommodation.

The following table shows the percentage of care leavers experiencing homelessness during the year. This is an accumulative total across the year and so the current position shown is only anticipated to rise across the year.

	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
The Percentage of care leavers who experience homelessness during the year	8.23%	10.27%	7.17%	9.96%

7. Partnership and Community Safety and Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (VAWDASV)

Bridgend Community Safety Partnership (CSP) involves various agencies from the public, private and voluntary sector that work together to reduce crime, disorder and fear of crime locally, in order to improve the quality of life and to create a safer living and working environment.

Over the last few years there has been an increased level of regional working at a Cwm Taf Morgannwg level, i.e. Bridgend, Merthyr Tydfil and Rhondda Cynon Taf. There is one regional Public Services Board (PSB), and one strategic Community Safety Partnership which is aligned to the PSB. Both Boards have a regional strategy, but a local delivery model to meet the needs of our communities. Recent reviews of the governance structures have also taken place.

Local community safety structures remain in place, including town centre anti-social behaviour (ASB) management meetings for Bridgend and Maesteg. These groups are well attended from a diverse range of agencies and meet to resolve problems. Successes over the last twelve months include working to address anti-social behaviour concerns in Caerau, bringing partners together to address 'lock outs' affecting waste and emergency vehicles and community clear up events in Pyle and Maesteg, the latter involving Parc Young Offenders Institute. We continue to utilise our youth outreach team to attend hot spots for youth ASB and engage in diversionary activities, such as the successful 'Tackle After Dark' and 'Caerau Kicks' with the Ospreys and Cardiff City football club respectively.

Reports of ASB are generally reducing which is positive, but we continue to encourage communities and residents to report their concerns to the Police through online reporting and 101. Our activities are undertaken using ASB as an evidence base, so this reporting is vital for us understanding and addressing the challenges seen in our communities and supporting these communities to feel safe and inclusive. Mobile CCTV cameras are deployed throughout Bridgend County Borough to address ASB concerns.

'Trecco Watch' continues to address concerns in Porthcawl, and associated family fun days are well attended. Work on the 'Clear, Hold, Build' initiative in Wildmill continues and the second Crimestoppers zone has been launched in Brynmenyn.

Assia domestic abuse service has undergone a restructure resulting in a second team leader post and opportunity for development from within the team. The service continues to offer diverse range of bespoke support to meet the wide range of service users. This includes a male victim IDVA (Independent domestic violence advisor), and there has been an increasing number of male victims coming forward to receive support. A male victim service user group is working well. There is also a dedicated older persons independent domestic violence adviser (IDVA). The high quality of service provided has been recognised by Assia achieving 'Leading Lights' accreditation, making it the only council-led provision in Wales to hold the standard.

The following two graphs provide a current breakdown of the reasons for MARAC's being convened along with a breakdown of the age ranges of individuals involved, both victims and perpetrators.

Reported Circumstances	
Verbal	1
Ongoing Physical	4
Emotional	0
Sexual Assault	2
Strangulation	5
Assault/ABH	14
Stalking	8
Breach of Order	1
Criminal Damage	5
Harassment	5
Financial Abuse	0
Coercive Control	0
Threats	5

Note: Some PPNs record more than one offence for charging.

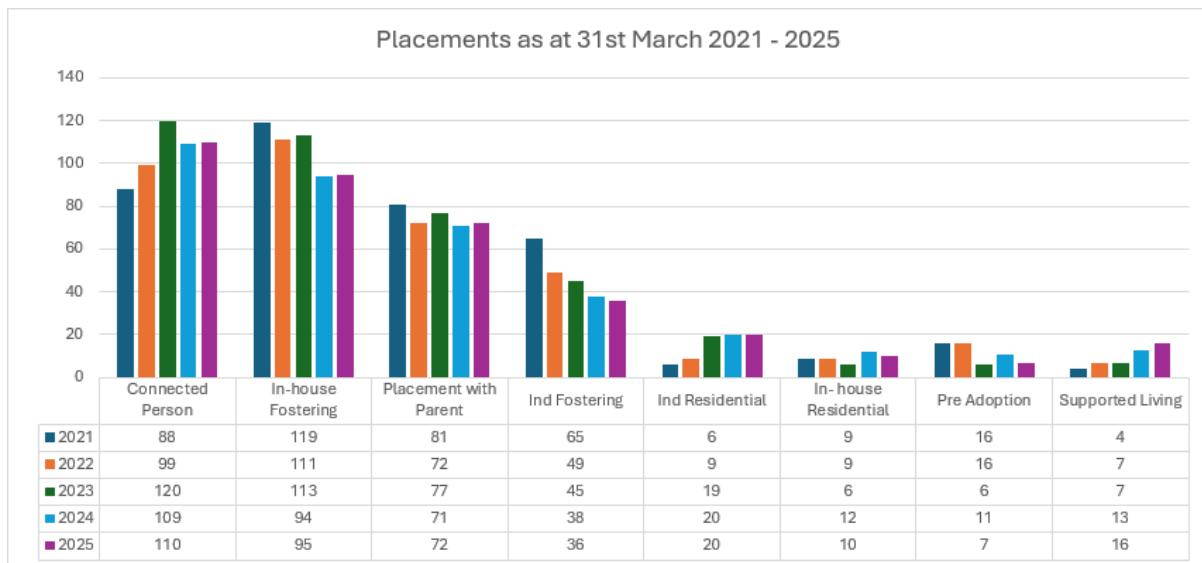
Age Range	Victim	Perp
0-18	4	4
19-25	8	8
26-30	9	9
31-40	11	10
41-50	3	4
51-60	3	4
61-70	4	2
71-80	2	0
81-90	1	1

8. Placement Sufficiency, Out of County Placements and Operating Without Registration (OWRs)

In 2022, Cwm Taf Morgannwg Regional Partnership Board undertook a Population Needs Assessment, and a Market Stability Report produced, to assess current and future needs which contributed to informing local and regional strategies. A Children, Young Person and Transition Commissioning Strategy 2023-2028 has been developed by the Council which outlines the plan on how Bridgend will address these challenges, with a key priority being placement sufficiency across fostering, residential and supported accommodation. In addition to this, the Council is required by Welsh Government to have a Placement Commissioning Strategy (PCS) which is also been drafted and pending cabinet approval. The PCS sets out how the Council will meet our sufficiency duty. It focuses on assessing the needs of care experienced children and the demand and supply of placements for our children who are care experienced or leaving care to ensure there is a clear vision which underpins our approach to commissioning. It is intended to:

- Shape our internal services to maximise the benefits of public sector provision in terms of quality and value for money.
- To work in collaboration with public sector partners across the regional footprint where this offers identifiable benefits.
- To increase placement choice supplemental to our sufficiency duty to enable good matching.
- To co-produce outcomes focused services acknowledging that there are a range of different methods for strategic commissioning with multiple partners who may be co-operatives, charities, not for profit agencies.
- Identify and engage with commercial providers who will collaborate / convert to not-for-profit provision.

The following graph shows the position and trend of different types of placements utilised across Children and Family services in Bridgend.



We have seen a reduction in children becoming care experienced and targeted work has been undertaken to return children to their families where safe and appropriate. However, for children that cannot remain in the care of their parent/s it is pleasing to see a continued increase in the number of children being placed within their own family network (connected person placements) as opposed to traditional fostering arrangements.

A degree of placement movement is healthy, indicating a progression in care and support plans in a timely manner which is in the best interests of a child as their placement needs change. This planned movement is most likely in the first 6 to 12 months of a child becoming care experienced as their permanence plans are determined. Where a child's plan for permanence is to remain care experienced, long term stability is evidenced to deliver best outcomes. Lack of sufficiency and placement choice can have dual impact on stability; a reduction in planned moves due to lack of appropriate match to move a child onto in their best interests, or an increase in unplanned and emergency moves where a child has been placed in an inappropriate match unable to meet their needs, resulting in disruption.

Placement sufficiency across the county borough remains an area of concern and will continue to be monitored and actioned. Further information relating to the ongoing work and plans to improve placement sufficiency can be found in the both Placement commissioning strategy (2025-2030) and Children, Young Person and Transition Commissioning Strategy 2023-2028.

	As at 31/03/24	As at 31/03/25
Placements out of Bridgend but in Wales	77	73
Placements outside of Wales	12	12

35 of the children placed out of county currently, are residing in Foster Wales Bridgend placements with General and Connected Persons carers.

15 of these children are placed with their parents. 16 are placed with independent fostering providers.

Across the past year there has been work undertaken looking at the number of placements for children and young people who are placed outside the boundaries of Bridgend County Borough. It is an unfortunate position that most local authorities find themselves in regarding requiring placements outside their local authority borders but this can be related to a number of factors and not just solely availability of suitable placements.

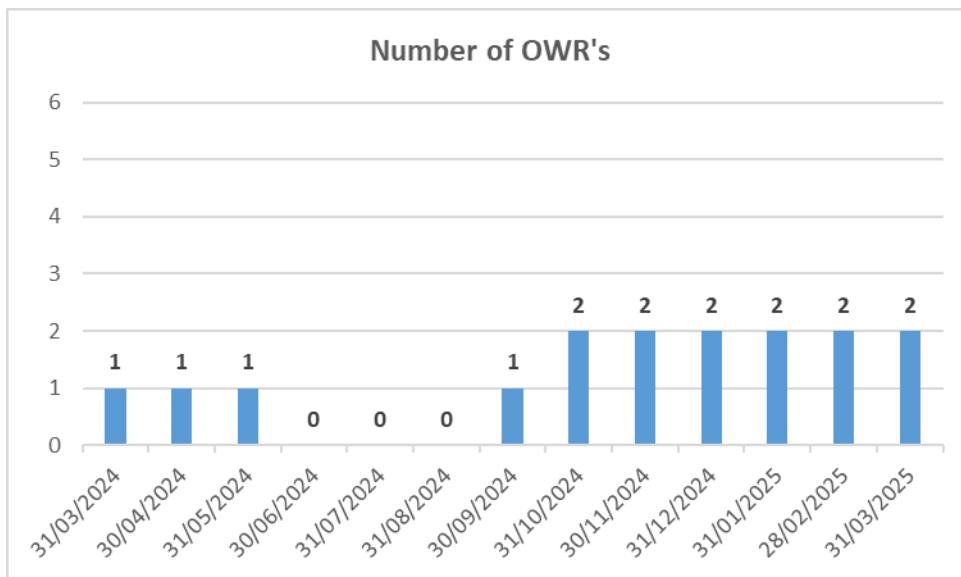
The needs of Children and Young People will dictate as to whether an Out of County Placement is required, this could be to manage and mitigate risks associated with the individual, or in order to access specialist support which is unavailable within the county borders. BCBC strives to provide and identify suitable placements for care experienced children and young people within its county borders, if individual children or young people do not meet the threshold for an out of county placement in order to mitigate risks or access specialist services, an out of county placement will only be used if there is no other possible placement available. As can be seen from the below graph, the number of Care Experienced Children and Young People placed outside of Bridgend but inside Wales, as well as those placed Outside Wales have reduced across the past year.

Operating Without Registration (OWR) placements are emergency placements made where the provider is not registered with Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) in accordance with legislation.

Local authorities place children within such arrangements when there is an overriding need for a placement and where there are no other options available. Such considerations are subject to the highest levels of scrutiny and can only be agreed by the Director of Social Services and Wellbeing or the Head of Children's Services in their absence. In all cases CIW are notified of the placement and regular updates provided evidencing the additional oversight in place to support and safeguard the child, and the continued search activity of the Placement Team to secure a registered provision. These arrangements can vary:

- In some cases, the local authority places children with a provider who is in the process of setting up a new residential home but has not secured registration at the point this is needed.
- A child may also be placed in a home that is rented by the local authority with the care and support team recruited from an agency who has experience of delivering residential care.

The following graph shows the trend of OWR placements from across the past year.



9. Shared Regulatory Services (SRS)

In delivering the Environmental Health, Trading Standards and Licensing functions, Shared Regulatory Services (SRS) contributes to the Council's wider Safeguarding responsibilities in several ways. 2024-25 saw another busy year regarding the Safeguarding of older and vulnerable adults. This work included:

Doorstep Crime and Scams

SRS responds to instances of doorstep crime and scams, supporting those affected and their families where possible. These crimes can have a devastating effect on the emotional as well as the financial wellbeing of residents, and the following gives an indication of the types of interventions undertaken over the course of the year. During 2024-25, the service dealt with some 175 scams and assisted 130 scams victims. The year also saw 168 doorstep crime cases being identified which represented an 11% increase on 2023-24. On 8 occasions, the SRS rapid response protocol was deployed, ensuring an immediate visit to the homes of residents affected by doorstep crime. There was a significant increase in the number of vulnerable civil cases dealt with by SRS, with 32 cases in 2024-25, compared with 20 in 2023-24 (an increase of 60%). Officers obtained a staggering £240,827 redress for residents during the year. This included £67,094 for one victim, £5,500 for another and £2,300 for a third, all through the efforts of officers making contact with the victim's banks, setting out the facts of the fraud under investigation in each case, and requesting reimbursement for the customer.

In another example, officers raised the case of an elderly lady pressured and misled into buying multiple lots of gold coins by instalments (rather than paying upfront as she had wished to). After an investigation by the business concerned, it was concluded that there had been a lack of clarity and professionalism from the account manager involved in this case, and as a result, changes to process

were made and staff were retrained. As a result of SRS taking up this resident's case, they received a £5,000 refund from the company.

Once again, Officers have investigated a number of significant rogue builder or doorstep crime cases. Sitting behind each of these cases is a story of residents, often vulnerable, being defrauded of large sums of money, sometimes their life savings. The cases show a pattern of little, or no, work being done, and where work has been carried out, it will have been to a very poor standard. During the year, four rogue builder / doorstep crime cases were prosecuted. The outcome of these cases was significant, with the four defendants receiving a total of 11 years and 9 months in immediate prison sentences, as well as in one case a 10-year Criminal Behaviour Order.

The following example illustrates the impact of this offending on residents of Bridgend County borough:

Bridgend Rogue Builder sentenced to imprisonment

The victims in this case suffered significant financial loss, amounting to over £200,000. The residents also endured months of distress as they fought to get their home improvement projects completed or to get their money refunded. The builder presented himself as a competent businessman, however the truth behind that image was quite different. The builder engaged in misleading and fraudulent trading practices in his dealings with customers, and using classic rogue trader practices, he 'robbed Peter to pay Paul' by continuing to take money from new clients in order to do at least some work for existing customers.

Using a string of trading names, he created a web of deceit, including starting a new company when one went into liquidation and later using a completely different trading name to distance himself from the growing number of poor Trustpilot reviews being left by customers. The witness statements in this case illustrate in detail the misery brought on the residents over many months, through for example jobs started and not finished, goods not ordered despite specific payments having been made for them, poor workmanship, and failure to obtain necessary Planning and Building Control consents. He relied on a façade of stock images and passed them off as examples of his previous work. The defendant finally pleaded guilty to 11 counts of fraud, 1 count of fraudulent trading and 1 count of unfair commercial practice. He was sentenced to 43 months in prison (3 years, 7 months).

Call blockers

These devices can put an end to nuisance or malicious calls. They can be installed at the homes of residents being repeatedly targeted by scams and once fitted, they prevent all calls coming through other than those from recognised friends and family numbers. Over the last 10 years, SRS has installed a total of 70 call blockers to protect older and vulnerable people and

each of these devices is estimated to block up to 5 nuisance or scam calls a day. By the end of 2024-25, 53,581 calls had been blocked and an estimated 86 scams prevented. The associated savings for residents as a result of these call blockers having been fitted now stands at an estimated £637,417.

The feedback received from residents using the call blockers, and their families, is particularly powerful, for example

- *“My mother no longer gets anxious and agitated. I cannot impress on you the positive impact this has made.”*
- *“This made a huge difference, and enables my mother to live in her own home for longer”, and*
- *“Thanks for making my phone my friend again”.*

Turning to the Safeguarding of young people, SRS contributed through its compliance and enforcement activities in 2024-25 as follows:

95 complaints or intelligence logs were received regarding the underage sale of alcohol, tobacco, vapes, fireworks and knives from across the three local authority areas. In response to these, and with the assistance of a young volunteers, Officers staged 73 attempts to purchase a range of age restricted products during the year. 9 of these attempts to purchase resulted in a sale (12%) of either alcohol, vapes or fireworks, and the circumstances of each of these sales were investigated and appropriate enforcement action taken.

While the Service will always recommend a stepped approach to enforcement, over the course of 2024-25, three cases concluding in court saw the successful prosecution of three businesses for underage sales of alcohol, vapes or fireworks.

Finally, Shared Regulatory Services has contributed to the wider Safeguarding of residents and visitors to the area through its licensing of taxi drivers in 2022-23. While the vast majority of drivers are reputable, and the journeys they provide take place without issue, there are occasions when the SRS and the Licensing Committee has to act to protect the public, particularly the vulnerable.

10. Priorities 2025/26

The level of demand continuing to be received into Children's Social Care continues to be exceptionally high. PPN's (Public protection notices) continue to be a main source of the high levels of demand. Meetings with South Wales Police have been held to look at how the demand can be best managed. Representations have been made to South Wales Police from Heads of Children Services in regards to the level of demand being created. A series of

meeting are being held with South Wales Police to develop a consistent approach across the South Wales Police footprint.

Early Intervention and Prevention will continue to be key for the council in coming months and years. All Directorates working together to maximise the resources available to support local communities developing their own resilience has to be a key approach the Council takes forward to improve outcomes for the residents of Bridgend.

There continues to be challenges related to children in independent residential placements. The Health and Social Care (Wales) Act 2025 has come into effect and consideration will need to be given in the coming years as to how the local authority can develop resources that can meet the needs of those children within Bridgend.

We continue to work with Tros Gynnal to further develop Parental Advocacy, we have seen increases in parental advocacy in the Child Protection arena, we will be extending this to parents/carers who work with us on a Care and Support basis.

Work has been undertaken this year to progress the Safeguarding Self-assessment toolkit, this will be utilised across the Council in the next financial year.

Our Digital system replacement remains a priority for next year. The Council is facing a number of challenges and risks in relation to a new system for its current safeguarding and case management IT System. A new system has been procured but there is a significant amount of work to be undertaken to move from the current WCCIS system to the new Mosaic system. This is an area of significant concern which will be closely monitored corporately through our corporate risk register throughout 2025-26. Implementing a new digital system which will modernise the way our workforce practice, whilst we support them to prepare for social care being at the fore of the Council's digital strategy. These are as follows:-

Supporting workforce wellbeing, retention and recruitment to continue to achieve a highly motivated, well supported skilled workforce.

Embedding our models of practice and using our quality assurance and learning and development programmes to address variation in quality.

Enhancing our prevention, early intervention and edge of care services to support more people to live independently and well and for children to live safely with their own families.

Embedding our operating models in adults, children and families and prevention and wellbeing which have early help and prevention at their core.

Hearing and acting upon the voice of the people we work with and alongside. Addressing deficits in the sufficiency of services, particularly children's not for

profit residential and fostering services and supported living, shared lives and extra care for adults.

Understanding better current and future needs and projections for social services and wellbeing services, including the impact of new legislation and demographics, to align service and financial plans which mean we are as best placed as possible to achieve sustainable social services at a cost affordable to the Council.

Investing in partnerships with other public services, the third sector and community groups to improve outcomes for individuals and families in the most effective and cost-effective way.

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Agenda Item 6

Meeting of:	CABINET
Date of Meeting:	13 JANUARY 2026
Report Title:	SCHOOL MODERNISATION PROGRAMME REPLACEMENT HERONSBIDGE SCHOOL - MODIFICATION TO SCHOOL OPENING
Report Owner / Responsible Chief Officer / Cabinet Member	CABINET MEMBER FOR EDUCATION AND YOUTH SERVICES CORPORATE DIRECTOR – EDUCATION, EARLY YEARS AND YOUNG PEOPLE
Responsible Officer:	GAYNOR THOMAS MANAGER, SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES FOR LEARNING
Policy Framework and Procedure Rules:	There is no effect upon policy framework or procedure rules.
Executive Summary:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Approval is sought to modify the opening date of the replacement Heronsbridge School.

1. Purpose of Report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek Cabinet approval to modify the opening date of the replacement Heronsbridge School to the beginning of the autumn term 2028.

2. Background

2.1 On 6 December 2017, the Welsh Government Department for Education gave 'approval in principle' for Bridgend's second wave of investment to support the School Modernisation Programme, which at that stage had an estimated cost envelope of £68.2m. Further costs were to be determined, and these would be associated with additional infrastructure capacity.

2.2 In January 2018, Council approved, in principle, the financial commitment required, subject to sufficient resources being identified and allocated to meet the match funding commitment.

- 2.3 In January 2020, Cabinet was presented with the outcome of the extensive options appraisal relating to each of the approved projects.
- 2.4 In December 2020, Cabinet/Corporate Management Board (CCMB) endorsed the preferred 'Do maximum' option for Heronsbridge School (that is, a new-build school for pupils with autistic spectrum disorder (ASD), severe learning difficulties and profound and multiple learning difficulties plus residential provision). The school would be sized to accommodate 300 pupils. This was reflected in the strategic outline business case, which was subsequently submitted to Welsh Government for consideration.
- 2.5 In December 2020, Council approval was received to include funding in the Capital Programme to deal with payments associated with securing land.
- 2.6 In March 2021, Ministerial approval was received in respect of the Strategic Outline Business Case for a replacement 300-place Heronsbridge School, plus residential provision.
- 2.7 Ministerial approval of the Welsh Government Outline Business Case was received in November 2021.
- 2.8 The outcome of the feasibility study to consider the development of the school on privately owned land at Island Farm, Bridgend was reported to Cabinet on 8 March 2022 and approval was received to commence a statutory consultation process to make regulated alterations to Heronsbridge School to increase the number of pupils for whom the school makes provision to 300 and to relocate the school from its current location at Ewenny Road, Bridgend to Island Farm, Bridgend.
- 2.9 In June 2022, Cabinet was informed of the outcome of the statutory consultation process and gave approval to publish the consultation report and statutory notice in respect of the proposal. The statutory notice was published on 30 June 2022 and no objections were received in respect of the proposal. On 18 October 2022, the outcome of the statutory process was reported to Cabinet, who determined to proceed and modify the proposal so that the school opens at the beginning of the spring term 2026, to allow time for meaningful stakeholder engagement to take place in respect of the design development.
- 2.10 On 18 October 2022, a subsequent report regarding the procurement strategy for the replacement school received Cabinet approval.
- 2.11 The Remodeling Children's Residential Services Project was formed in 2017-2018 as part of the Remodelling Children's Services Programme. The remit of the project was to review current residential provision (to include residential homes and out-of-county placements) and to develop a proposed new residential and accommodation model. As part of the remodelling programme, Harwood House was secured on the current Heronsbridge School site, and a refurbishment was completed to meet regulations and enable registration with Care Inspectorate Wales.
- 2.12 The service has delivered on the business case outcomes, which was to mitigate the need to place children out-of-county in what have traditionally been very high-cost placements. However, there are limitations in terms of the physical aspect of the

property, with it being unable to accommodate wheelchair users, which restricts the service accommodating children and young people with a physical disability.

- 2.13 In December 2020, CCMB endorsed the option for relocating Heronsbridge School onto a new site where, due to service and financial benefits, it was agreed for Harwood House to continue to be co-located with the school, and to be included in future design and build plans.
- 2.14 A tender process to procure the services of a multi-disciplinary design team via the South East Wales Technical and Professional Services Framework to develop the design of the school through to the end of Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) Stage 2 has been undertaken. The appointed team, AECOM, has undertaken the necessary consultation, brief development, and design development under a Professional Services Contract (PSC), which has resulted in a RIBA Stage 2 design and cost plan.
- 2.15 In March 2024, CCMB endorsed a proposal to submit a revised Outline Business Case (OBC) to Welsh Government to include a revised 'do maximum' option to include a swimming pool to be delivered as part of the project, and to detail the increased cost of the scheme (based on the RIBA Stage 2 design and increased market rates). CCMB also supported the continued development of the scheme to tender stage.
- 2.16 On 25 September 2024, the Cabinet Secretary for Education approved the revised OBC and gave approval to proceed to Full Business Case (FBC) stage.
- 2.17 The increased cost of the scheme has resulted in additional Bridgend County Borough Council (BCBC) funding being required to meet the local authority's 25% contribution for the replacement school. This matter was reported to Council in November 2024, and the additional funding was approved for inclusion in the capital programme.
- 2.18 In January 2025, Cabinet approval was received to tender the scheme, (including the specialist children's residential provision (that is, Harwood House)) to appoint a design and build contractor (that is, a two stage contract) via the South East and Mid Wales Collaborative Construction Framework (SEWSCAP4) as a mini competition of Lot 9 of the framework.
- 2.19 The outcome of the above tender process was reported to Cabinet in June 2025, and approval was received to appoint Kier Construction to undertake the Stage 1 pre-construction services and enter into a Professional Services Contract with the company to continue the design development process.
- 2.20 Also June 2025, Cabinet was reminded that there had been delays in delivering this scheme (that is, due to the increased funding required to deliver the scheme, as a result of cost increases experienced by the construction industry which had impacted on appointing a design and build contractor), and consequently, the planned opening date of January 2026 would no longer be achievable. Cabinet was advised that a future report in this regard would be presented once the contractor had been appointed and had input into the programme.

3. Current situation

3.1 Following their appointment, Kier Construction has made good progress in respect of the design development. The company has reviewed the Royal Institute of British Architects Stage 2 design and are progressing the scheme through the next stage of development. The company has undertaken extensive engagement with key stakeholders including the school and technical officers of the local authority.

3.2 As part of their work, Kier Construction has developed the programme to completion, with review and input from AECOM and officers. Consideration has been given to all the activities and the necessary approvals required to deliver the scheme, including:

- time to conclude the design development process;
- a requirement for ground investigation work and potential remediation of the site;
- a requirement to obtain SAB (SuDs (Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems) Approval Body) and planning approvals;
- the Council's processes to enter a construction contract;
- the timescales associated with Welsh Government's FBC process and obtaining the necessary approvals; and
- the timing of next year's Senedd elections, and the restrictions around decision-making in the pre-election period.

3.3 Having considered the above, it is proposed to modify the school opening date to the beginning of the autumn term, 2028. Any slippage beyond this date would also require the Council to recommence the statutory consultation process.

3.4 There are risks associated with the timing of the approvals, decisions and potential ground remediation as detailed in paragraph 3.2, which could impact on the programme. However, the project team will work with Kier Construction and AECOM to identify opportunities to mitigate those risks so that they do not impact on the proposed opening date (for example, undertake enabling works, progress certain activities concurrently).

3.5 The local authority has consulted with the Headteacher and the Chair of Heronsbridge School's Governing Body regarding the proposed modification and there is no objection to the proposed revised date. They have confirmed that it is in line with their expectation and allows time for the Governing Body to ensure a smooth transition into the new school. They have also indicated that they appreciate all the work that officers, AECOM and Kier Construction are undertaking in respect of the design development. Welsh Government officials have also been consulted regarding this matter and confirmed that the proposed revised date complies with the requirements of the School Organisation Code, 2018.

4. Equality implications (including Socio-economic Duty and Welsh Language)

4.1 An initial Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) screening has identified that there would be no negative impact on those with one or more of the protected characteristics, on socio-economic disadvantage or the use of the Welsh language. It is therefore not necessary to conduct a full EIA on this policy or proposal. There have been positive impacts identified, including disability and gender.

5. Well-being of Future Generations implications and connection to Corporate Well-being Objectives

5.1 The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 Assessment provides a comprehensive summary of the outcomes expected from the implementation of the service.

Long-term	The scheme fulfils the Council's statutory duty to provide sufficient pupil places and will allow teaching and learning to take place in a building and site which is suited to the needs of the pupils and staff.
Prevention	The Council has a statutory duty to ensure there are a sufficient supply of school places, and this scheme will safeguard the Council's position in terms of any potential legal challenge in this regard.
Integration	Providing sufficient places at Heronsbridge School, ensures that the curriculum can be delivered and meets the social, environmental, and cultural objectives of pupils and the community it will serve. This scheme will promote inclusion. Community use of facilities is being explored and, where appropriate, is being incorporated into the design. Construction has been competitively tendered, via a mini competition through the SEWSCAP4 Framework. This provides opportunities for local companies to engage with the main contractor for inclusion in their supply chain, via 'Meet the Buyer' events. This would support economic activity in the area. Social value will be maximised.
Collaboration	The Council will work effectively with the school, Estyn, health, town and community councils and many internal and external partners to ensure that the building meets the short-term and future needs of the users and the community which it will serve. Officers will continue to work with the external designers in developing the scheme to ensure that the building design is sustainable and energy efficient and delivers on the decarbonisation agenda.
Involvement	This scheme was subject to a long list of education and site options. These were systematically evaluated and have been reduced from a long list to a short list to confirm the preferred option. Further work involved the engagement of all potential stakeholders including Cabinet, members, governors, staff, pupils, community, internal and external partners during the consultation exercise. A public consultation process has been undertaken, according to the Welsh Government School Organisation Code 2018. Further stakeholder engagement will continue to take place, informing the design of the replacement school.

As a result of the assessment, it is considered that there will be a positive impact upon the achievement of well-being goals/objectives.

6. Climate Change and Nature Implications

6.1 In recognition of the importance of decarbonisation to help protect and sustain the environment over the long term and in line with our climate change ambitions the replacement Heronsbridge School will be Net Zero Carbon.

7. Safeguarding and Corporate Parent Implications

7.1 The replacement Heronsbridge School will be developed with a recognition that there is a duty which is reflected under BCBC Safeguarding Policy to safeguard and promote the wellbeing of children, young people, and adults at risk of abuse or neglect and to ensure that effective practices are in place throughout the Council and its commissioned services.

8. Financial Implications

8.1 In 2021, Welsh Government approved the OBC for the replacement Heronsbridge School scheme, in which the Council committed to funding £7.884m of the overall £34.504m cost. However, since that time the construction industry has seen costs escalate due to COVID-19, the war in Ukraine, costs of incorporating decarbonisation measures and energy price increases, which has resulted in the projected cost of the scheme significantly increasing to £59.985m.

8.2 In November 2024, Council approved additional BCBC funding of £6.182m to deliver the scheme, and the scheme is now being progressed to FBC stage.

8.3 Once the FBC is submitted, Welsh Government should approve the additional grant match funding of £19.299m to ensure there is sufficient funding overall to meet the estimated scheme costs, which will be added to the capital programme once approved.

8.4 A ground investigation of the Island Farm site will commence in January 2026. Depending on the outcome of this work, the cost of the scheme could change. However, potential remediation costs cannot be confirmed at this stage.

8.5 Any revenue implications resulting because of moving sites, including increases to the school's delegated budget to cover a larger premises areas, and any potential increases in school transport costs, will not be known until the scheme is developed further. These will need to be considered as part of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy going forward.

8.6 Cabinet will be presented with a future report prior to awarding the main construction contract which sets out the position regarding costs and budget in relation to the replacement Heronsbridge School scheme and Harwood House. Construction contract/s will not be awarded until the necessary funding approvals are in place.

9. Recommendations

9.1 It is recommended that Cabinet approval is given to modify the opening date of the replacement Heronsbridge School to the beginning of the autumn term 2028.

Background documents

None

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Agenda Item 7

Meeting of:	CABINET
Date of Meeting:	13 JANUARY 2026
Report Title:	MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2026-27 TO 2029-30
Report Owner: Responsible Chief Officer / Cabinet Member	CHIEF OFFICER – FINANCE, HOUSING AND CHANGE CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE AND PERFORMANCE
Responsible Officer:	DEBORAH EXTON DEPUTY HEAD OF FINANCE
Policy Framework and Procedure Rules:	The budget setting process is outlined within the Council's Constitution and Financial Procedure Rules.
Executive Summary:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The draft Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) sets out the spending priorities for the Council for the next 4 years alongside a detailed budget for 2026-27. The report outlines the financial, legislative and policy context within which the draft budget has been prepared alongside more detailed information on the services to be provided by the Council over the period of the MTFS. The proposed MTFS is driven by the Council's 13 MTFS principles and has been developed by Cabinet and Corporate Management Board. Welsh Government announced its draft budget on 3 November 2025 before the announcement of the provisional local government settlement on 24 November 2025. In terms of the provisional local government settlement, the all-Wales increase in Aggregate External Funding (AEF) was 2.7%. The increase for Bridgend was 2.8%. No information was provided on future years' funding although indications are it will still be extremely challenging. There were a number of transfers of funding into the settlement. Based on the provisional local government settlement the proposed net revenue budget for 2026-27 is £403.337 million, and this includes pay and price pressures of

	<p>£11.529 million, service budget pressures of £9.194 million (Appendix A), budget reductions of £2.416 million (Appendix B) and a council tax increase of 4.95%. The breakdown of the draft budget for 2026-27 is set out in Table 5.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welsh Government has announced that local authorities will receive additional funding in the final settlement, so the position between draft and final budget will change. • Based on the provisional settlement the MTFS sets out a most likely savings target of £32.771 million over the next 4 financial years. • The Council's general capital funding increased by £259,000 to £8.841 million. • The Section 151 officer has a statutory duty to set a balanced and robust budget. • If approved by Cabinet the draft MTFS will be submitted for consultation with the Council's Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee before a final version is presented to Council for approval on 25 February 2026. • On 9 December 2025 Welsh Government announced they had made a budget deal with Plaid Cymru which will result in local authorities receiving a 4.5% increase overall, and all authorities receiving at least 4.1% in the final settlement. Once the details are confirmed in January 2026 these will be factored into the final MTFS.
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1. Purpose of Report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to present Cabinet with the draft Medium Term Financial Strategy 2026-27 to 2029-30, 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 2026-2030 and a detailed draft revenue budget for 2026-27. Definitions of the key financial terms can be found in the glossary at **Appendix D**.

2. Background

Corporate Plan - Policy Context

2.1 The Council's well-being objectives under the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 are currently:

- A prosperous place with thriving communities
- Creating modern, seamless public services
- Enabling people to meet their potential
- Supporting our most vulnerable

2.2 This draft Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) has been significantly guided by these objectives. Although previous year-on-year changes in Aggregate External Finance (AEF) have necessitated substantial budget reductions across different service areas (£96.7 million since austerity began in 2010 - of which schools have contributed £9.45 million), the Council still plays a very prominent role in the local economy of Bridgend County Borough and in 2025-26 is responsible for annual gross expenditure of over £530 million. The Council is also the largest employer in the county borough. The Council's Corporate Plan is aligned to the Medium Term Financial Strategy, enabling the reader to make explicit links between the Council's well-being objectives and the resources directed to support them. However, it is clear that the challenging financial situation that the Council faces and the level of budget and service cuts that need to be made will inevitably severely impact on and restrict some of the objectives set out in the Corporate Plan for at least 2026-27, but maybe also beyond that, but the Council will remain ambitious in providing the maximum levels of service possible for all residents of the County Borough, within available resources.

2.3 The Welsh Government announced its Final Local Government Settlement for 2025-26 on 20 February 2025. The increase in AEF across Wales was 4.5%, with Bridgend receiving an increase of 3.8%. Due to the number of underlying budget pressures continuing from 2025-26 and new pressures emerging going forward, along with anticipated pay and price increases, this level of funding was not sufficient to meet all demands, leading to the need for a 4.5% council tax increase and £8.379 million of budget reductions.

2.4 The quarterly reports to Cabinet on the revenue position for 2025-26 have outlined in detail the ongoing difficulty in managing and monitoring the budget, in view of challenging and continuing pressures from 2024-25, which include increasing demand in some service areas, such as social services and homelessness. Whilst provisions were made in the 2025-26 budget to mitigate some of these costs, and whilst service models are in place to meet needs early to prevent an escalation of need, there was not sufficient funding to meet all, and the demand has continued to increase.

2.5 Budget planning for the financial year 2026-27 continues to be more uncertain and challenging than usual, with a number of existing and new cost pressures presenting themselves and making a demand on the Council's limited resources. In addition, there continue to be high expectations on the Council to address homelessness more robustly, and on a longer- term sustainable basis, and additionally to meet the needs of a growing and ageing population for social care, which results in increased demand and costs as well as more complex cases in both adult and children's services. In addition, providers of social care – both inside the Council and commissioned services – experience significant inflationary pressures due to wage inflation, including above inflation uplifts to the Real Living Wage, increases to national insurance and energy costs. There is new legislation in the form of the Health and Social Care (Wales) Act (2025) and the transitional revenue and capital costs associated with this legislation require significant investment. We also continue to see increased budgetary pressures in services for pupils with additional learning needs, due to increasing demand and complexity of needs. The Council is having to reduce spend and services in a climate that requires more support for our older and more vulnerable members of society with substantial increased demand for many services.

3. Current situation / proposal

3.1 Budget Narrative

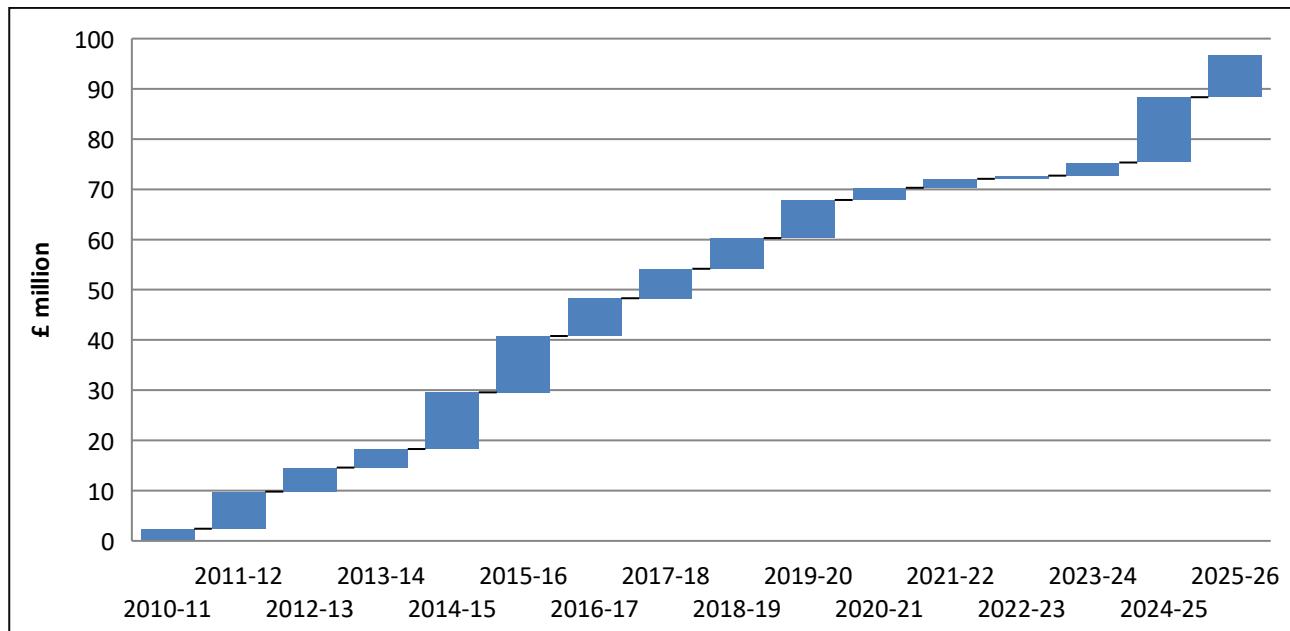
3.1.1 Through the MTFS the Council aspires to improve understanding of its financial strategy, to clarify the link between its corporate well-being objectives and the financial planning processes, and to explain the Council's goal of delivering sustainable services in line with the overarching ambition of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. The following budget narrative aims to articulate the continued and significant investment in public services that the Council will make. It sets out how the Council aims to change particular areas of service delivery, and the financial consequences of this. Cabinet has requested that the following principles should continue to underpin the development of the budget for the coming financial year:

- The Council will seek to safeguard and protect the most vulnerable people in our communities;
- The Council will encourage residents and communities to support themselves and provide advice to enable this to happen;
- The Council will seek to limit service growth in the coming financial year;
- All Directorates will be required to contribute to the overall savings required in the coming years;
- The Council must have an efficient but effective, "back office" service that supports service delivery and transformation;
- In setting the budget, the Council will be mindful of the predicted financial austerity across the public sector in the coming years and plan to ensure the financial viability of the Council, and;
- The Council will seek to recover the cost of services via fees and charges where it is able to do so.

3.1.2 Corporate Financial Overview

Since austerity began in 2010 the Council has made almost £96.7 million (nominal value) of budget reductions, as shown below, towards which school delegated budgets have contributed £9.45 million. These reductions represent around 25% of the Council's current net budget, however the percentage of savings and cuts has not been equal across all Council services, with relative protection given in past years to some areas, such as social services.

Bridgend County Borough Council (BCBC) Budget Reductions 2010 to 2025



While the Council's net revenue budget is planned at £403.337 million for 2026-27, its overall expenditure far exceeds this. Taking into account expenditure and services which are funded by specific grants or fees and charges, the Council's gross budget will be around £550 million in 2026-27. The Council's annual revenue budget covers the day-to-day running costs of the Council (including staff salaries, building maintenance, pensions, operational costs etc.). Around £240 million of the gross budget is spent on the Council's own staff including teachers and school support staff. Much of the cost of the services provided by external organisations is also wage related – these include for example waste collection operatives, social care workers, leisure staff and foster carers.

The Council gets the majority of its revenue funding (52%) from Welsh Government through the Revenue Support Grant and a share of non-domestic rates. Non-domestic rates are a charge on business properties, the rate for which is set by Welsh Government. The Council supplements this through council tax collection (20%), other grants (19%) and fees and charges (9%). Council tax is a charge that local authorities charge to help to pay for their services. The amount that council tax payers pay is made up of 3 elements:

- Bridgend County Borough Council charge
- Town or Community Council charge
- Police and Crime Commissioner for South Wales charge

In terms of council tax, the proportion of council tax required to balance the Council's budget has steadily increased over recent years and it currently funds around 28% of the net revenue budget. This means that for every £1 spent on services provided by the Council, only around 28 pence is funded by local council tax payers.

As well as having less real income to fund services, there are other pressures that squeeze resources. Amongst these are:

- Legislative changes in social care, including the Health and Social Care (Wales) Act 2025, which reflects Welsh Government's commitment to move towards the eradication of profit from children's social care, adult protection safeguarding requirements including deprivation of liberty safeguards, changes to the Public Law Outline for children and the statutory requirement for local authorities to reflect the Real Living Wage for care workers in commissioning arrangements. These legislative changes are not fully funded by Welsh Government and the removal of profit particularly has significant revenue and capital implications. Grant funding which has been made to support the transitional phase is due to end in 2027-28 which will increase cost pressures.
- Other legislative changes e.g. 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 Welsh Language and Education (Wales) Act 2025 and the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018.
- An increase in need in children's social care - an ongoing exponential increase in contacts has been evident in the last year. Whilst the integration of early help services and the strengthening of permanent recruitment in children's social work teams has improved strength-based practice and resulted in a reduction in child protection registrations and the number of care experienced children, those children who are care experienced have the highest level and most complex needs, requiring foster care and residential accommodation, care and support. The last year has seen significant challenges around sufficiency of accommodation, care and support for care experienced children, an issue which all local authorities in Wales are facing. There has been a consistent number of high-cost independent residential placements and on occasion 'operating without registration' placements for children and young people. To meet this need the budgetary position has worsened as the number of high cost placements continues to exceed budget. There has also been a reduction in the number of in-house foster carers which has exacerbated the need for residential care. This area will be a priority for an invest-to-save initiative with an aim of significantly preventing and de-escalating these high-cost placements whilst continuing to reduce the total number of looked after children.
- Demographic changes – the size of the population is increasing as people living longer with complex health conditions. This means the number of people living in Bridgend with health and social care needs is also increasing with age related illness and disability. An ageing population can bring a range of health and social care needs which require care and support. The Cwm Taf Morgannwg Population Needs Assessment (2022-27) identified poorer physical and mental health and well-being and greater need for support from all parts of the population with many people living with multiple health conditions and in complex health situations. The cost of living crisis also places more pressure on families and informal care arrangements. Needs have been exacerbated by delays in access to NHS treatment. At a time when there has been an increase in contacts within adult social care and increased complexity of issues, there has been less financial support from Welsh Government through targeted grants to address whole system pressures around the

interface between hospital and community. There is significant pressure in the areas of learning disabilities and mental health as well as older people's services. In addition, the complexities and challenges for carers supporting individuals - children or adults – with significant disabilities are evident. Changing the model of support for adults with a learning disability and mental health is a priority. This will reduce the costly use of residential care for some.

- An increase in free school meals entitlement, separate from and additional to the Welsh Government's Universal Free School Meal entitlement, which brings additional funding pressures, as this increases the amount of funding that is needed to be provided to schools through their delegated budgets.
- More recently, a reduction in the council tax collection rate, due to the difficult economic circumstances that people find themselves in. This is coupled with a potential increase in council tax support as more people find themselves on low incomes or claiming benefits during the cost of living crisis.

The Council's Corporate Plan sets out the approaches that it will take to manage these pressures whilst continuing to ensure that, as far as possible, services can be provided that meet the needs of the citizens and communities in Bridgend. These approaches are:

- Though a large and complex organisation, the Council will make every effort to work as one single organisation. That means avoiding duplication and double handling of data through sharing of systems and processes. This is not always as easy as it sounds because often different rules or opportunities apply to different services. Nevertheless, acting as 'One Council working together to improve lives' is enshrined in the Council's vision.
- The Council will support communities and people to become more resilient by creating their own solutions and reducing dependency on the Council. It is not sustainable for the Council to continue to aspire to meet each and every need that arises and there is capacity, talent and ideas within the community that can be encouraged to play an active and effective role in sustaining and often enhancing local services. The Council has a role in encouraging, enabling and leading this approach and has adopted this as one of its underlying principles.
- The Council has agreed a principle of focusing diminishing resources on communities and individuals with the greatest need. Parts of our community have long standing problems of poverty and disadvantage. The solutions to this are not all in the direct control of the Council (for example the effects of changes to the welfare system) but where possible the Council has agreed that it wants to both alleviate problems in these areas and develop longer term sustainable solutions. The socio-economic duty on public bodies, which came into force on 31 March 2021, reflects these aims.
- The Council currently has four well-being objectives that reflect these and other principles. After more than a decade of austerity, with more and more of our residents struggling, we will also continue to improve efficiency and make better use of the resources we have. This means we will 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. The effective and efficient use of resources will continue to inform our principles and

ways of working in the Corporate Plan, as well as being tested through the corporate self-assessment process.

In seeking to continue to meet the Council's identified priorities and protect its investment in education and early intervention, social services and well-being, and prioritise the most vulnerable in our society, as far as possible, we are proposing the following changes in the 2026-27 budget.

Additional Income

Whilst recognising the ongoing economic challenges that local people and businesses will face next year, the Council will seek to raise additional income. For all services, the Council has a policy to recover service costs and will seek to do this where possible.

Alternative Delivery Models

We will continue to seek alternative ways of delivering services if that can ensure greater sustainability and efficiency. Work is ongoing to "re-set" the relationship between this Council and Town and Community Councils to ensure better coordination and liaison between us. The intention is that Town and Community Councils (TCCs) will be better able to take on additional responsibility for some local services when appropriate. This work has been enhanced this year with the appointment of a Town and Community Council Liaison Officer, whose role is to act as the main point of contact between the Council and TCCs, providing support, guidance and communication, developing and maintaining strong working relationships. The current review and consultation on local service delivery and the size and nature of town and community councils will also inform the way forward.

During 2025-26 the Council underwent a Panel Performance Assessment. The headline findings from the assessment were very positive. However, despite these positives it describes the Council as now being at '*a crossroads in terms of its development and now is the time to act at pace. By making the necessary changes now, the council can make sure it can sustain services and continues to deliver for its communities for years to come.*' To address the issues raised, the Council is now developing a transformation plan which will set out a clear, long-term vision for Bridgend in 2040, and some broad themes / work streams for how we will achieve that vision. Additional strategic capacity has been put into the authority to increase our resilience and enhance the capacity for change. Specifically, it is anticipated that an acceleration of the Council's digital programme will deliver long term efficiency savings. In addition, the council will better embed programme and project management with additional investment to deliver change and sustainability. Wherever possible, staff restructuring will be done sympathetically, and we will also continue to support home and agile working and digital technology to ensure the Council is fit for the future.

Efficiency Savings

The best kind of budget savings, of course, remain ones where there is little or no direct impact on residents or staff. After more than a decade of substantial budget

savings, opportunities for large scale savings of this sort are now very scarce, but where they emerge, they remain an important component of the MTFS.

Over recent years savings have been made by rationalising the number of operational depots and releasing three of the Council's major staff offices at Sunnyside, Sunnyside House and Ravens Court. We intend to close the Innovation Centre to release savings from associated running costs, and potentially sell it to generate a capital receipt. The ongoing investment in installing energy efficiency measures in the Council's buildings, including schools, will also continue to offer savings. The Council will continue to seek to apply for and secure grants where they can lead to revenue savings and greater sustainability of important services. Other potential savings are being considered in relation to the remodelling of social services provision.

Changes to Service Provision

Unfortunately, despite the settlement we will receive for 2026-27 being an increase overall, it is still not sufficient to cover all of the things that we need to fund, and due to the number of unavoidable pressures we are facing it is not possible for us to balance the budget without also making consequential changes to the level of services that we can provide and prioritising those services that are deemed most important in terms of meeting the Council's agreed priorities. In particular it is important that where the Council runs a service that also benefits other organisations and partners that appropriate contributions are made, where possible, to complement the Council's investment.

3.1.3 Education, Early Years and Young People

The Council is proposing to spend £163 million on services delivered by the Education, Early Years and Young People Directorate in 2026-27, prior to the allocation of additional funding for pay and price increases. Around £130 million of this money will be spent directly by Bridgend's 59 schools and one pupil referral unit.

In addition to the £130 million proposed budget to be initially delegated to schools in 2026-27, which mostly pays for the salaries of teaching and other school staff and the running costs of the facilities (ongoing revenue expenditure), the Council has already spent £21.6 million in building and refurbishing schools as part of our 21st Century School Modernisation Band A Programme and has provisionally committed to a further £42 million as part of the Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme, £15 million more than was committed last year. This comprises one-off capital expenditure across several years, with substantial match funding from Welsh Government. Welsh Government has provided approval in principle in respect of the strategic outline programme, strategic outline cases, and outline business cases (that is, in respect of capital schemes) submitted by the Council around our aspirations for Band B funding. Welsh Government approval has been received in respect of the full business case for the Bridgend West primaries scheme, and the remaining Band B full business cases will be submitted to Welsh Government once tender processes have concluded. However, we are aware that there are significant cost pressures on this programme due to the impact of high inflation on tender prices being submitted and how this is affecting current costings for this programme.

The concepts proposed are based around forecast demand for primary school places, our support to promote the growth in Welsh-medium education and our desire to create additional capacity to meet the needs of children with additional learning needs in Heronsbridge School. Assessing the full year revenue impact of this is detailed work that is underway. It is likely that this will represent the biggest area of capital expenditure for the Council in future years.

The Council has a longer-term goal to make the overall schools' system more efficient (for example, through making sure we have the right number of school places available in the right parts of the county (including ensuring enough capacity for anticipated future increases in the school age population)).

School budgets make up one-third of the Council's overall net budget, so it is challenging to find the level of budget reductions that the Council has to meet without impacting on schools. However, for 2026-27, schools have not been tasked with finding any budget reductions from their delegated budgets, and there are currently no proposed budget reductions for schools for 2027-28. In addition, they will receive additional funding for a range of pay and price increases that could total around £5 million. The current net budget for schools is £126.309 million, compared to an overall Council net budget of £383.226 million, so it is difficult to make significant levels of budget reductions without any impact at all on schools, either directly or via central services that support schools.

The forecast pressure on Council budgets for future years is such that further efficiency savings may be unavoidable for schools going forwards, and so it will be necessary for headteachers and governing bodies to plan ahead.

There is a growing trend of students being referred for support and specialised services. Over the past three years, several younger students have faced the threat of permanent exclusion due to a lack of resources for specialised intervention. Where space is not available to support pupils in specialist provisions, additional learning provision must be provided within a mainstream setting and funding for additional staff is required. One-to-one staffing is often provided, along with adaptations and specialist equipment not readily available in mainstream classrooms.

Additional specialist provisions are essential to ensure that all pupils are placed in environments best suited to their needs at the earliest time. This will reduce the risk of challenge from parents or carers. Establishing additional specialist classes represents a cost-effective investment, as it would reduce reliance on ancillary support or out-of-county placements, which have been necessary for some students to maintain full-time education and mitigate the risk of further exclusions. Additional funding is being proposed for the education service to address some of these pressures. Bridgend has amongst the highest number of special school places and demand is growing. Equipping schools better to manage the needs of children in mainstream settings will be a priority to contain and even reduce the budget to sustainable levels.

Poor pupil behaviour in Bridgend schools escalated following the Covid-19 pandemic. The true impact on school attendance following the pandemic is now evident. Pupil exclusions have increased year on year for three years. In addition to

the need to improve general pupil attendance levels, the following key challenges have been identified:

- closing the gap between our highest and lowest performing primary and secondary schools;
- reducing persistent absenteeism;
- improving the attendance of pupils in vulnerable groups with a particular focus on closing the gap between those pupils eligible for free school meals (eFSM) and those not eligible for free school meals; and
- monitoring the number of pupils on reduced timetables e.g. those with additional learning needs or emotional, social and behavioural difficulties who experience challenges with a full timetable.

In June 2022, Bridgend Youth Justice Service was inspected by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation. At that time, the service was deemed as requiring improvement. The main challenges faced by this service included increased numbers of children open to the service, the management of an increase in the number of first-time entrants into the criminal justice system and a reduction in grant funding. Since then, significant improvements have been made. His Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation (HMIP) most recently inspected Bridgend Youth Justice Service in November 2025. While we await formal (published) feedback from HMIP, initial feedback in respect of the work of Bridgend Youth Justice Service has been extremely positive and the service has managed well dealing with increased demand.

In seeking to protect our investment in education, early years provision and support for young people, and to provide as much support as possible to learners, the Council is aiming to make minimal changes to the services delivered at this time. However, we will continue to seek efficiencies in the application of the Council's Home-to-School Transport Policy.

3.1.4 Social Services and Well-being

After Education and schools, the largest area of Council spend is social care. This includes social work and social care for children and for adults with care and support needs. Within the Directorate there is a focus on strengthening practice, improving the 'whole system,' targeted preventative services and supporting our workforce. For many years it has been understood that working in this way can result in less dependency on social care services for many individuals and more effective and cost-effective use of statutory services. Also, it has been evidenced in budget monitoring and outturn reports that social services' financial performance has been highly dependent on short term grant funding which is offsetting deficits in core budgets to meet the needs of the vulnerable population. Whilst the Directorate continues to develop new approaches to service delivery, and this includes better support and outcomes through prevention, early intervention and well-being services, this is more challenging than ever before with increasing need. 3 year strategic plans are being implemented for children and families and adults and carers which are resulting in increased workforce stability and improved integration of preventative services which reduce statutory demand. Practice is focused on strengths and what people can do, rather than a deficit model. However, the population of Bridgend is growing quickly, the third fastest growth of any Welsh Local Authority, and this means the number of people with care and support needs

is also increasing. Not all care and support needs can be prevented and those with eligible needs will have a range of co-morbidities and complexities requiring greater levels of support. In addition, there is considerable challenge on the 'supply side' of social care in respect of the impact of rising pay, including above inflation increases to the Real Living Wage and employer national insurances costs, and non-pay costs, including energy costs, to provide the quantity and quality of care required. The Council has undertaken a detailed analysis to understand the fair cost of care which has informed a care home fee setting strategy and is reflected in commissioned services. This is important in stabilising the care market and providing more certainty to the Council's financial planning. Consideration of expanding our in house offer will also be a priority as the market increasingly adjust prices with top-ups as supply is lower than demand.

The Council approved a 3 year sustainability plan for children and families in September 2023. Good progress has been made in progressing the actions set out in the plan, with a significant reduction in the numbers of agency workforce, the embedding of Signs of Safety as the model of social work practice and resulting sustainable reductions in the number of children subject to child protection registration and care experienced children numbers. Challenges remain: contacts to children's social care have continued to increase significantly in this last year and the needs of the children who are care experienced are more complex and require higher levels of care and support. There has also been a reduction in the number of in-house foster carers and a deficit in sufficiency of residential care resulting in some children being accommodated for some time in settings operating without registration (i.e. not registered with Care Inspectorate Wales). These placement challenges result in significant cost pressures for the Council, as they are usually at a higher cost than registered providers and therefore result in higher spend for the Council – the number of independent residential placements over the last 3 years has been steady at around 20 and whilst the Council is investing in its own residential provision the revenue costs of operating Council care homes also need to be provided for. A placement commissioning strategy which has been developed at the request of Welsh Government, identifies both capital and revenue investment gaps for the Council to develop sufficient not for profit provision to ensure sufficiency to comply with the new legislative requirements to eliminate profit from children's social care.

A further area of pressure is the volume and complexity of need for statutory social care services from the vulnerable population of the county borough. A 3 year strategic plan, 'Building On Strengths, Improving Lives - A Three - Year Plan For Sustainable Care And Support For Adults In Bridgend County Borough Council', has been developed, and was approved by Cabinet in November 2024, which sets out the operating model, workforce plan, practice model and prevention and wellbeing approach to supporting vulnerable people to live well as independently as possible. Practice continues to be strength-based and eligibility criteria rigorously applied in adult services. This plan seeks to manage and mitigate as far as is possible, the service and financial pressures within the service. Pressures are particularly evident in learning disability services, mental health services and services for older people. A learning disability transformation plan has been developed and actions are being progressed through a programme to right-size and right-price care packages and transform day-time occupation. Work has progressed to reset reablement services and significantly reduce the number of people who progress to a long term package of care and support at home without having the opportunity to maximise their

independence and for the care package to be right-sized, prior to commencing a long term service.

The supply side costs for commissioned care providers (domiciliary, residential and nursing) linked to inflation (food and fuel are particularly impactful), the need to increase the pay of staff to comply with Welsh Government's commitment to pay all care workers the Real Living Wage, and the increased reliance on agency staff (particularly registrant nurses), have meant that some councils have reported having to look at applying across the board increases in their fees during the past year. Across the UK, with rising prices over recent years and this year's increase in employer national insurance contributions, a small number of providers are facing financial difficulties and there is market exit probability in both adult and children's services which will place more pressure on Council budgets as the Council will always be a safety net provider in such circumstances.

The strategy for the coming years is to intervene early and preventatively, embed strength-based practice and support individuals and families to live their best lives, remodelling the way we work in order to deliver outcome focused services and approaches which enable people to maximise their independence and families to stay together with targeted support where needed, whilst progressing commissioning strategies and workforce plans which ensure the right person provides the right intervention and support in the most timely and preventative way. The Signs of Safety model of practice in children's social care, and strength based, outcome focused practice in adult social care, provide the basis for 'doing the right thing' which is invariably the most cost effective course of action. The increases in need and complexity from both children and vulnerable adults needs to be understood and reflected in service transformation and aligned financial planning expressed through sustainability plans.

In addition to children and family services and adult social care, the Social Services and Wellbeing directorate also has responsibility for prevention and wellbeing, including the healthy living partnership with Halo and the cultural partnership with Awen. These partnerships also experience the impact of inflationary pressures, particularly the Awen partnership which has very limited ability to raise income.

3.1.5 Housing and Homelessness

Housing as a determinant of physical and mental health is widely recognised and this link is reinforced by the range of activities and services provided by the Housing Team. The Housing (Wales) Act 2014 introduced the need to move to a more preventative approach to homelessness and this is a core principle of the work undertaken. The service has responded to the ongoing challenges of Covid-19 and new guidance introduced by Welsh Government in relation to homelessness presentations and has already recognised these as budget pressures for the Council, with the aim of providing temporary accommodation to people in need, in order to reduce the number of street homeless people. The Council does not have any housing stock of its own but retains a number of statutory functions relating to addressing housing need and combatting homelessness.

The service also administers the Housing Support Grant from Welsh Government (£9.599 million allocation for 2025-26). The support activities funded via this funding are both broad and diverse. This is done through a range of corporate joint working

and contract arrangements with third sector organisations, delivering specific projects for people who are vulnerable with complex needs. These projects include services for people suffering domestic abuse, mental health and substance misuse issues, learning disabilities, accommodation for young people, people with mental health support needs and other housing related support for people who need help to access or maintain accommodation successfully.

There are a number of key challenges facing the Council in delivering housing and homelessness services. Applications for temporary accommodation due to homelessness are consistently higher than in previous years. At the end of 2019-20 the Council was providing temporary accommodation to 83 households. At the end of October 2025 this had increased to 276 households. Individuals accommodated in temporary accommodation often have significant support needs, in relation to addressing their housing need or maintaining accommodation. It is estimated that around 47% of households in temporary accommodation require some level of support, and of these 60% of individuals require support in more than one area and 45% require support in more than two areas.

The increase in temporary accommodation placements has led to a significant cost pressure to the Council. In 2019-20 the net spend on temporary accommodation from core budget was £135,260. At the end of 2024-25 the net spend from core budget was £2,909,503.

The wider demand for social housing from those in housing need has also increased. At the end of 2019-20 there were 816 households registered on Bridgend's Common Housing Register. At the end of October 2024 this number had increased to 3,709 households. There is a particular challenge around single person accommodation, larger family units and accessible accommodation.

Housing will continue to adopt a strategic approach to homelessness prevention and provision by working with Welsh Government and partner organisations. Work with Registered Social Landlords is on-going to support new housing developments and housing will continue to use the Social Housing Grant effectively to increase the supply of social housing. We are currently in the process of purchasing a number of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) to reduce our dependency on the holiday let sector and provide better accommodation to those in need.

Capacity to work with and commission Housing Associations is limited as is the capacity to manage and develop services for such a high level of need. This will be considered carefully in 2026.

3.1.6 **Public Realm**

Most of the Council's net budget is spent on education and social care – these are very valued services but are naturally aimed at certain groups within our community. However, the Council's work on the public realm has a direct and visible impact on everybody. This includes our work to maintain highways, parks and open spaces, clean our streets, and collect and dispose of our waste.

In 2026-27 the Council is likely to receive around £3.5 million of direct Welsh Government grant for public realm services. This includes waste services, public transport, rights of way and road safety.

The overall net budget that the Council proposes to spend on public realm services is around £27 million. The fact that schools and social services have had a high degree of financial protection in previous years has meant that the Council's other services have been under considerable pressure to make savings and, in many cases, we have had to reduce levels of service. However, the services in the Communities Directorate have also been subject to service changes that have resulted in alternative delivery models that have increased productivity, as well as collaborative approaches that have increased both efficiency and service resilience. Investment in this area is proposed to continue into 2026-27.

The Council is now in the process of bringing its waste services back in-house from July 2027. Bridgend has been named as the top performing waste authority in Wales, with recycling rates at over 73% in 2023-24. There has been a significant reduction in the volume of our residual waste, which is expected to benefit the Council financially over time, subject to contractual conditions with our disposal arrangements. However, all Councils have seen higher overall domestic waste due to the high number of people continuing to work from home following the pandemic. New operating arrangements at a lower cost were negotiated at the Materials Recovery and Energy Centre (MREC) in 2019-20 and an agreement with Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council has been made for waste disposal going forward until 2030 or until a regional facility comes online. We expect to spend in the region of £11 million on the collection and disposal of waste in 2026-27.

A major challenge for the Council is how to continue to meet public expectations for many highly visible and tangible services when the reduction in the available overall Council budget inevitably means the Council will be less able to deliver these services to the same level and frequency. These services are often the ones the public identify with their council tax payments. Increasingly the Council will seek to enable and facilitate partnerships to help to deliver some services, including more meaningful engagement with local residents regarding the role they can play in working effectively with us. It will be a priority to increase capacity in these areas.

The Council's strategy is to retain and maintain the most important public services in this area whilst driving ever greater efficiency, making some service reductions where we think it will have the least impact across Council services, recognising that this still may be considerable in some areas. We will also develop alternative ways of delivering and sustaining services including greater and more effective collaboration and encouraging others to work with us or assume direct responsibility for services in some cases. The most significant proposed change in this respect is the move of responsibility for the management and maintenance of sports fields and pavilions from the Council to user clubs and groups or local town and community councils. The Council has adopted a flexible approach to community asset transfer (CAT), utilising a streamlined CAT process, and ensuring that appropriate advice and capital investment (from the CAT fund in the capital programme), and previously revenue support (from the former sports club support fund), are made available. The Council has achieved considerable savings in recent years from transferring these assets and hopes to continue this direction of travel going forward.

Reductions in spend in this area will allow us to protect our investment in the Council's priorities and in areas where we have far less ability to exercise control.

3.1.7 Supporting the Economy

Whilst this is a Council priority, services such as regeneration and economic development as discretionary services have had to make considerable reductions to their budgets over recent years. The Council has delivered this by employing fewer but more highly skilled staff and focusing activity more narrowly on priority areas to maximise impact. Going forward, we will continue to collaborate on a regional basis with the nine other Councils that make up the South East Wales Corporate Joint Committee (CJC), known as Cardiff Capital Region City Deal. The CJC has responsibility for regional development and in particular the areas of strategic transport, regional economic development and strategic planning. The Council will continue to work with colleagues regionally and the CJC to understand how responsibilities will be shared between the region and local authorities to ensure the most effective outcomes overall. The City Deal created a £1.2 billion fund for investment in the region for 20 years. This will include long-term investments focusing on raising economic prosperity, increasing job prospects and improving digital and transport connectivity. In order to play an effective part in the Corporate Joint Committee, the Council will maintain as far as possible existing investment in its transport planning, spatial planning and regeneration teams to reflect this direction of travel. The Council will be spending in the region of £2.5 million a year running these services. These teams will ensure successful delivery of high-profile regeneration projects, including the numerous regeneration projects in Porthcawl and the redevelopment of Ewenny Road in Maesteg for both housing and employment uses, where the remediation of the site is underway and being funded by a £3.5 million Housing Viability Grant from the CCR. The completion of the £10 million redevelopment and refurbishment of the Maesteg Town Hall, in November 2024, has brought state of the art community, music, performance and library facilities to the heart of the Llynfi valley, and will safeguard this 144 year old listed building for future generations.

The Council also adopted the Replacement Local Development Plan (RLDP) in March 2024. We are the first local authority in Wales to have an approved RLDP, a major strategic planning document, since the pandemic. An important part of our budget planning is making sure that it is resourced appropriately to ensure our plan is properly researched and evidenced and sets out the development planning proposals for the County Borough which will shape its future, including housing growth. There is some £116 million of Section 106 contributions that will be forthcoming from our new RLDP and these are essential for delivering high quality new infrastructure, such as roads, new schools, housing and play facilities in development areas within the Borough.

More specifically, the Council has made and continues to make good progress in pursuit of the development of our main towns. These include the regeneration of the waterfront at Porthcawl, including the Salt Lake site, and investment in initiatives to improve the town centre in Bridgend. This includes the development of a new £80 million Bridgend College Campus on the former police station site at Cheapside, in the town centre. The construction commenced in May 2024 with a completed college building anticipated by Autumn 2026.

The Council will endeavour to continue to operate a number of grant-funded programmes of work to support our most vulnerable groups and those furthest away from employment, including training and skills and work support programmes under

the Employability Bridgend programme. The Council was awarded over £20 million from the Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) to undertake various programmes with partners across the County, including training and new business start-up grants. The SPF was extended for a transition year in 2025-26, ahead of wider local growth funding reforms. However, this was at a level that is around 40% lower than the previous year's budget. Further information is still awaited on the SPF replacement, the Local Growth Fund. In addition, the £18 million funding bid to the UK Government's Levelling Up Fund (LUF) for the complete refurbishment and restoration of the Grand Pavilion in Porthcawl was successful. Planning Permission has been granted, an enabling contract to strip out the building has been completed, the tender for the main construction works was awarded and the construction contract has commenced.

3.1.8 Regulatory and Corporate Services

The Council operates a number of other services which it recognises fulfil specific and important roles. In many cases these are statutory though the precise level of service to be provided is not defined in law. The main areas are as follows:

Shared Regulatory Services

This is a combined service with the Vale of Glamorgan and Cardiff City Councils, for which Bridgend will contribute around £1.8 million towards a group of services that includes Trading Standards, Environmental Health, Animal Health and Licensing (alcohol, gambling, safety at sports grounds, taxis etc.). These services all ensure, in different ways, that the public is protected.

As well as allowing for financial savings, the collaboration delivers greater resilience in the service and stronger public protection across all three Council areas.

Registrars

The Council operates a Registrar service that deals primarily with the registration of Births, Deaths and Marriages. The service also undertakes Civil Partnership and Citizenship ceremonies and provides a replacement certificate facility.

Council Tax and Benefits

The taxation service aims to collect over £120 million in council tax from over 66,000 households across the county borough, on behalf of the Council, South Wales Police and our Town and Community Councils. Our collection rates have been impacted in recent years, most recently due to the cost of living crisis. We are determined to regain the pre-2020 high levels of collection, but it is an uphill struggle. From 1 April 2026 Welsh Government are introducing changes to the recovery process to give council tax payers longer to pay before losing the right to pay by instalments which will result in a delay in income being received, increased postage costs and less income from court costs.

We are seizing the opportunity to reduce the cost of operating the service, by offering online services. We now offer a range of secure council tax functions online, allowing residents to self-serve at a time and location convenient to them. This will allow us to reduce the cost of running the service.

In line with many other Welsh Local Authorities the Council has reviewed its position with regards to council tax premiums. A council tax premium on long-term empty properties was introduced and took effect on 1 April 2023, whilst a council tax premium on second homes took effect on 1 April 2024. For the first 24 months the premium charge is set at 200% of the annual charge, increasing to 300% thereafter.

A number of benefits, including Housing Benefit and Universal Credit, are funded by the central UK government, but the administration of Housing Benefit applications falls to the Council. The Benefits Service also administers applications on behalf of the Council for Council Tax Reduction, Discretionary Housing Payments, Free school meals, Special Guardianship allowances, Adoption allowances and Disabled Facilities Grants.

3.1.9 **Other Council Wide Services**

There are a number of things that the Council does that support the delivery of services but which themselves are not visible to the public. We need to maintain these services with sufficient capacity to support our services whilst making them as efficient and effective as possible. In many cases we operate such services by sharing with other organisations. Opportunities for further collaboration or sharing in these service areas has been and will continue to be explored. There are a number of proposed budget cuts against these services for 2026-27 onwards, all of which will compromise their ability to support frontline services and may, in some circumstances, be potentially counter-productive, for example, in terms of enabling the collection of additional income, or by inadvertently increasing costs in other service areas.

Property and building maintenance

The Council continues to review its commercial property portfolio, identifying asset management opportunities and the mechanisms required to deliver a sustainable increase in income. Alongside this, the Council is continuing to dispose of assets it no longer requires in order to deliver its services, such as Ravens Court, in order to provide further investment in our capital programme.

The Council has brought together its asset management and building maintenance functions, and has centralised all premises repairs, maintenance and energy budgets into a single 'corporate landlord' service within the Communities Directorate. This enables us to better manage compliance, embed 'whole life costing' approaches into decision-making, manage the quality of work undertaken by contractors, and thereby deliver efficiencies in the management of our estate. This focus on reducing our assets and energy efficiency will be essential if the Council is to meet Welsh Government's target for all public sectors bodies to achieve net zero by 2030.

The service will continue to review its processes in 2026-27 including seeking further operational efficiencies and streamlined business processes, from ICT investment, improved procurement and contract management.

Legal services

The Council needs to maintain effective legal support for all of its services. Any changes to services as part of the transformation agenda will need to be undertaken lawfully. Direct support to services such as Education and Social Services is delivered by a combination of permanent internal staff and external expertise when necessary. Almost half of our in-house legal team is specifically focused on child protection cases. These cases continue to increase in number and complexity.

The service is very lean and will have to prioritise caseloads on a risk assessed basis.

Finance

The Council has a central team that manages all of the financial management of the Council. This includes high level strategic advice, the Council's accounts, monitoring of financial performance and supporting the oversight and management of the Council's finances. The service fulfils certain legal requirements that ensures transparency and accountability in the way that public money is used – for example in producing accounts which are then audited and in delivering value for money in service delivery.

The Finance Section will be looking to further improve and enhance business processes to improve efficiency and also meet legislative changes. Considerable progress has been made in automating payments and the Council will continue to develop and extend this to a wider range of suppliers.

Human Resources (HR) and Organisational Development (OD)

With over 6,000 employees including schools, the Council needs a dedicated human resources service. The primary role of the service is to provide professional advice, guidance and support to managers and staff on a wide range of HR and OD issues as well as provide HR services for the payment of salaries, pension, contracts and absence administration. Other services include training and development, recruitment and retention, developing employee skills and 'growing our own,' through our Graduate and Apprenticeship schemes. Proposals will be developed to enhance these areas in response to the Panel Performance Assessment recommendations.

Working closely with our recognised trade unions, we maintain positive and transparent employee relations arrangements.

ICT

We are continuing to invest in the automation and digitisation of services in line with our Digital Strategy, where it is appropriate to do so. Work will continue as part of the corporate Transformation Programme which will help achieve savings in future years, through the development and digitising of information-intensive processes, freeing up capacity and making efficiencies. The use of data needs improvement and the capacity to implement new systems has been limited. We will also be exploring the use of Artificial Intelligence, e.g. in social care, to secure service

efficiency, where it is appropriate to do so. Bridgend is currently behind where we wish us to be and this will be a priority for investment.

The ICT service is supporting changes across a range of services that in turn allow savings or improvements through more flexible working or new ways to access services. The Council spends around £4.4 million on its ICT services provision to support main Council activities and schools. The ICT service has focused on developing staff through the apprenticeship programme in conjunction with HR, developing skills and enabling in-house career progression.

Procurement

The Council has a central team that provides procurement support across the range of services that we provide. Effective procurement is essential to ensuring good value for money across the Council. The central team work with services to implement corporate wide efficiencies where appropriate. The Council is developing an updated Corporate Procurement Strategy which will support a number of corporate priorities.

Democratic Services

The Council is a democratic organisation with 51 elected members (Councillors) who make decisions, set policy direction and oversee the general performance of the Council. The number of elected members in each authority is set independently. Their remuneration is also determined by an independent panel. The Democratic Services team support all Members and ensure the appropriate arrangements are in place to comply with legislative requirements.

Internal Audit

Our Regional Internal Audit Service is provided by a joint service that we share with the Vale of Glamorgan and Merthyr Councils. The service carries out routine checks and investigations to ensure that the Council maintains good governance – especially as it relates to the proper accountability of money and other resources. The level of service to be provided by the joint service in 2026-27 has been reviewed.

3.2 The Financial Context

3.2.1 The Council's MTFS is set within the context of UK economic and public expenditure plans, together with Welsh Government's priorities and legislative programme. The MTFS articulates how the Council plans to use its resources to support the achievement of its corporate priorities and statutory duties, including the management of financial pressures and risks over the next four years. It helps the Council to work more effectively with partners in other sectors and provides a strategy for the use of balances to meet changes in resources or demands from year to year without impacting unduly on services or council tax payers.

3.2.2 The MTFS includes:

- The principles that will govern the strategy and a four year financial forecast, comprising detailed proposals for 2026-27 and outline proposals for 2027-28 to 2029-30.
- The capital programme for 2025-26 to 2035-36, linked to priority areas for capital investment and the Capital Strategy, which will be presented for approval by Council in February 2026, along with the Treasury Management Strategy 2026-27.
- The Corporate Risk Assessment, which will be updated and included in the final MTFS in February 2026.

3.2.3 When Welsh Government announced the Final Local Government Settlement for 2025-26 in February 2025, they did not provide any indicative allocations for future years, but planning was on the basis of a cash flat (0% change to AEF) settlement for 2026-27 and future years. However, since the MTFS was agreed by Council in February, in July this year Welsh Government announced its approach to the budget for 2026-27. The Finance Secretary indicated that a one-year budget would be published in October which would increase departmental budgets by inflation. No indication was provided on what the level of inflation would be, but as a consequence of the announcement we updated our assumptions to be a most likely scenario of 2% increase in aggregate external funding.

3.2.4 On 1 July 2025 the Finance Secretary set out the Welsh Government's approach to the 2026-27 budget. He indicated that it would be a one-year only budget, due to the forthcoming Senedd elections, that it would not introduce major new spending commitments, and would focus once again on a healthier Wales, green jobs and growth, connecting communities and opportunity for every family.

3.2.5 Welsh Government announced their outline draft budget on 14 October 2025, which set out their high level strategic fiscal proposals for expenditure and financing. The Welsh Government Finance Secretary stated that it provided a stable platform on which public services can plan in the run-up to the Senedd election, and that government departments would have at least the same amount of funding, in real terms, as they had this year. He also said that Welsh Government were determined to recognise the particular circumstances of local government as they work together on a settlement which will protect jobs and frontline services, understanding the strict rules it has to comply with when making its budgets.

3.2.6 Following this, Welsh Government outlined their detailed draft budget on 3 November 2025. The Welsh Government Draft Budget sets out updated revenue and general capital spending plans for 2026-27. The Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Welsh Language stated that these were initial spending plans, to enable public services to begin their own planning for the next financial year. He stated that the Draft Budget allocates 98.6% of all the funding available for 2026-27 which means that more can – and will – be done to invest in the 'vital needs of Wales', by the time of the Final Budget in January 2026. He stated that 2025-26 allocations have been rolled over and departmental allocations increased by around 2% at this stage of the draft budget. He indicated that there is currently around £380 million of unallocated funding, a combination of revenue and capital.

3.2.7 In respect of local authorities the Cabinet Secretary reiterated that additional funding allocated during 2025-26 for the public sector to meet the UK Government's increased employers' National Insurance costs, and to meet pay awards for teachers and local authority staff has been included in the baseline funding for 2026-27. There is also an uplift of 2% for general inflation and 2.2% for pay inflation. Additional funding was also included to ensure no individual local authority receives an increase of less than 2.3%.

3.2.8 The provisional local government settlement was announced on 24 November 2025. The Cabinet Secretary for Housing and Local Government indicated that this provisional settlement provided £6.4 billion from the Welsh Government Revenue Support Grant (RSG) and Non-Domestic Rates (NDR) to spend on delivering key services. The final budget and final local government settlement is due to be announced on 20 January 2026, so any changes between the provisional and final settlement will be reflected in the final Medium Term Financial Strategy presented to Council in February 2026. The Cabinet Secretary has indicated that there should be little or no change between the provisional and final settlements because of updates to the tax base, as the ones used in the provisional settlement are the most up to date. However, she could not guarantee that there will be no other changes between the provisional and final settlements, but she did not intend making any significant changes to the methodology or the data underpinning the distribution of the settlement.

3.2.9 Following the announcement of the provisional local government settlement, the Chancellor of the Exchequer presented the Autumn Budget 2025 to Parliament on 26 November 2025. The Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) released a full economic and fiscal forecast on the same day.

3.2.10 In the Autumn Budget the Chancellor said that the budget would maintain their investment in the economy and the National Health Service, it would cut the cost of living and bring down inflation, providing immediate relief for families. The Chancellor said that there would be an extra £505 million added to the Welsh Government's budget between now and 2028 as a result of new spending commitments in England, and as part of the budget, changes have been announced to the way that Wales is funded which the UK Government says will lead to £425 million extra "spending power" for the Welsh Government.

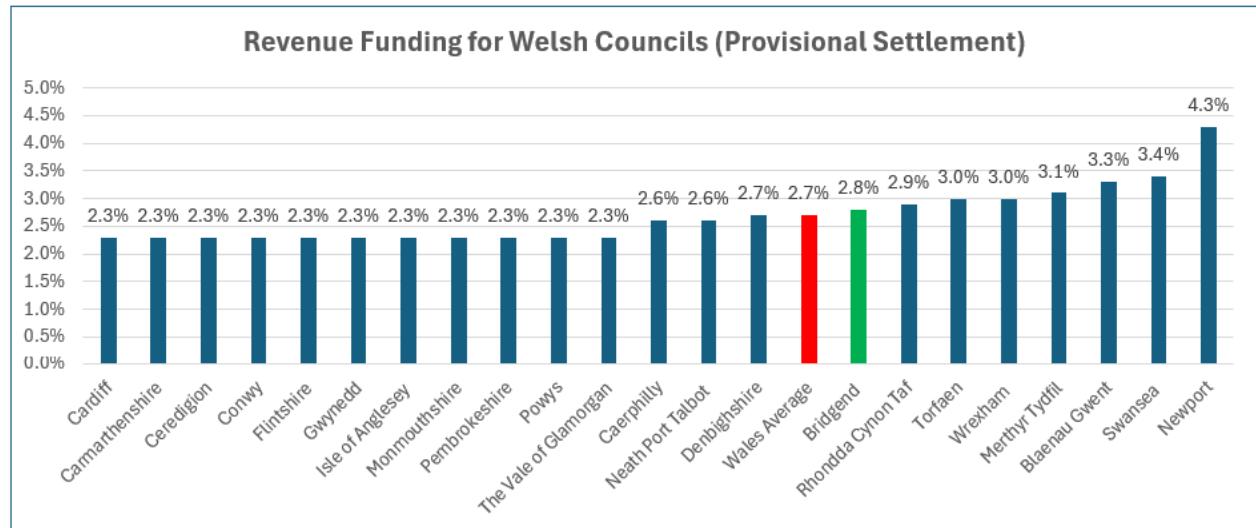
3.2.11 In response to the Autumn Budget the Welsh Government First Minister said, "*This is a Budget which will help people right across Wales. It will mean more money in the pocket of people who need it the most, support for energy bills, a raise in the minimum wage and good news for pensioners.*" She also said, "*We called on the UK Government to continue to support us with more money for hard pressed public services and they have delivered with an extra £500m, building on the £5 billion of extra funding they have already confirmed*".

3.3 Welsh Government Provisional Local Government Settlement 2026-27

3.3.1 As mentioned above, Councils received their provisional settlements from Welsh Government on 24 November 2025. The headline figure is an overall increase of 2.7% across Wales and, for Bridgend, a reported increase of 2.8% in Aggregate External Finance (AEF), after a number of transfers into the settlement in respect of

pay and national insurance, which were funded through specific grants in 2025-26. No local authority received less than a 2.3% increase in funding. In terms of cash increases, this represents a £7.9 million increase in funding, after the specific transfers into the settlement.

This increase for Bridgend was the eighth highest increase across all Welsh Local Authorities as illustrated in the chart below.



Source: WG Provisional LGF Settlement 2026-27

3.3.2 The Cabinet Secretary for Housing and Local Government stated '*The provisional settlement provides £6.4bn from the Welsh Government Revenue Support Grant (RSG) and Non-Domestic Rates (NDR) to spend on delivering key services. This is an average increase of 2.7% on a like-for-like basis and includes an additional £5.5m (on top of the £8.6m allocated at draft budget) to ensure no authority receives an increase of less than 2.3%.*

3.3.3 The Cabinet Secretary also stated '*We have been listening to local government, and we fully recognise the challenges that they face. This provisional settlement is the beginning of the budget process. Our priority has been to provide councils with the stability they need to set budgets which protect and deliver core frontline services. We will continue to work closely with the Welsh Local Government Association and council leaders to see where we can provide additional flexibility when managing their budgets.*'

3.3.4 In a letter to Chief Executives and Directors of Finance in Wales the Cabinet Secretary stated that the provisional settlement included a baseline of £91.5m, added in previous years, to reflect their ongoing commitment to the real living wage in social care and that she expected this funding to be used for its intended purpose to support the provision of the real living wage of £13.45 for social care workers in line with their shared commitment to this vital workforce. This is included as a budget pressure in **Appendix A**.

3.3.5 In terms of capital funding the Cabinet Secretary stated that as part of their approach to uplift budgets in line with inflation, the general capital funding for local authorities has increased from £200 million to £204 million across Wales. In addition, funding for the Low Carbon Heat Grant for 2026-2027 will be almost £31 million, continuing

their work with local government to respond to the joint priority of improving the local government estate, by providing low carbon heating contributing to the Net Zero Wales plan.

3.3.6 On 9 December 2025 Welsh Government announced that they had reached a budget agreement with Plaid Cymru that secured almost £300 million of additional investment in Wales' public services in 2026-27, and that the agreement would secure the passage of the Final Budget for 2026-27 in January 2026. As part of the agreement there would be additional funding of £112.8 million for local government in 2026-27, which would provide an overall 4.5% increase to the local government settlement. The leader of Plaid Cymru said "Our aim in negotiating with Welsh Government was to look after public services, protect jobs and keep council tax bills as low as possible". The announcement said that all Councils would receive increases above 4%, with an overall increase to local government of 4.5%. Bridgend has been notified that provisionally our increase could be 4.6%, an additional £5 million compared to the provisional settlement. Whether there are any conditions or expectations around this funding will be known when we receive the final local government settlement in January. However, this could provide the opportunity to either reduce or remove proposed budget reductions, fund additional growth pressures or reduce the council tax increase in the final MTFS. This change is not reflected in this draft budget.

3.4 Settlement Implications for 2026 to 2030

3.4.1 Welsh Government has stated that, due to the Senedd Elections in May 2026, this is a one-year local government settlement only. However, given recent announcements from both Welsh and UK Governments it is likely that the financial position in the next few years will be no less challenging than it is for 2026-27.

3.5 Transfers into the 2026-27 Revenue Settlement

3.5.1 The provisional settlement includes a number of transfers into the local government settlement. These are listed below alongside the figures for Bridgend:

Teachers' Pay	£818,343
Additional Learning Needs Coordinators (ALNCo) Pay	£184,274
Public Sector Pay	£665,984
Fire Pay	£12,660
Employer National Insurance Contributions	£4,351,321

3.5.2 There may be additional transfers into the final settlement as Welsh Government continues to review and rationalise the number of grants that the local authority has to administer.

3.6 Specific Grants

3.6.1 As part of the Welsh Government's Programme for Government, the Welsh Ministers have committed to reducing the administrative burden on local authorities, to allow them to focus on their vitally important work delivering services. At the heart of this work is their desire to ensure that local authorities are not hampered by unnecessary bureaucracy. Welsh Government has indicated that work has been completed or is underway in other grant areas to streamline the amount of

monitoring of grants, to ensure Welsh Government is only collecting the information which it, with local authorities, needs to understand the impact and outcomes of grant programmes. This has included reducing the frequency of monitoring returns, simplifying grant application forms and having stepped criteria for business cases dependent on the size and risk of programmes or projects.

3.6.2 The picture on changes to specific grants is available at an all-Wales level for most grants, but not yet at an individual authority level. However, from the information provided, and Welsh Government's announcements, it is clear that Welsh Government has provided a 2% inflationary uplift for most grants for 2026-27.

3.6.3 The biggest change in grant funding will be to the United Kingdom Shared Prosperity Fund which will cease at the end of 2025-26 and be replaced by the Local Growth Fund, for a three year period. Welsh Government is currently consulting on how that money could be spent. Currently Bridgend receives £5.601 million of revenue funding and £2.149 million of capital funding from the Shared Prosperity Fund. It has been reported that, going forward, the majority of the Local Growth Fund will consist of capital funding, with a smaller amount of revenue funding available, and this could have implications for services currently provided through the grant.

3.7 Current Year (2025-26) Financial Performance

3.7.1 The in-year financial position as at 30 September 2025 is shown below.

Table 1- Comparison of budget against projected outturn at 30 September 2025

Directorate/Budget Area	Original Budget 2025-26 £'000	Revised Budget 2025-26 £'000	Projected Outturn Q2 2025-26 £'000	Projected Over / (Under) Spend 2025-26 £'000
Directorate				
Education, Early Years and Young People	154,862	157,073	156,784	(289)
Social Services and Wellbeing	115,909	119,451	119,334	(117)
Communities	33,754	34,429	34,506	77
Chief Executive's	24,815	25,762	26,544	782
Total Directorate Budgets	329,340	336,715	337,168	453
Council Wide Budgets				
Capital Financing	5,958	5,907	4,680	(1,227)
Levies	10,209	10,209	10,209	0
Apprenticeship Levy	750	869	869	0
Council Tax Reduction Scheme	17,054	17,054	17,268	214
Insurance Premiums	1,363	1,363	1,375	12
Repairs & Maintenance	670	670	670	0
Pension Related Costs	430	430	462	32
Other Council Wide Budgets	17,452	10,009	4,628	(5,381)
Total Council Wide Budgets	53,886	46,511	40,161	-6,350
Total	383,226	383,226	377,329	(5,897)

3.7.2 The overall projected position at 30 September 2025, as reported to Cabinet on 21 October 2025, is a net under spend of £5.897 million comprising £453,000 net over spend on directorates and a net under spend of £6.350 million on Council wide

budgets. During quarter 2, pay awards for 2025-26 were agreed for Joint Negotiating Committee (JNC) Chief Officers, National Joint Council (NJC) employees, along with Teachers' pay awards from September 2025. The agreed pay awards for JNC and NJC staff were lower than budgeted for and the projected under spend on this budget has been recognised under other Council wide budgets. The ongoing uncertainty over future pay awards means that it is likely that the provision set aside in the MTFS for 2026-27 will need to be supplemented by any funding not committed from the central pay budget during 2025-26.

3.8 Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2026-27 to 2029-30

- 3.8.1 This section of the report sets out the proposed MTFS for the Council for the next four financial years, based on the latest information available from Welsh Government. It does not include fixed funding, expenditure or activity projections, but sets best, worst and most likely scenarios for the resources that will be available. The MTFS is reviewed regularly and amended as additional information becomes available, with the detail for future years being developed over the period of the strategy.
- 3.8.2 The development of the MTFS 2026-27 to 2029-30 is led by Cabinet and Corporate Management Board (CMB) and takes into account auditors' views, the recommendations of the Scrutiny Budget Working Group (SBWG), views of scrutiny committees and issues arising during 2025-26, underpinned by the ongoing aim to embed a culture of medium term financial planning closely aligned with corporate planning.
- 3.8.3 Implementation of the MTFS will continue to be led by Cabinet and CMB, supported by financial and performance data. Cabinet and CMB will seek to ensure that it is widely understood by internal stakeholders (Members, employees and Unions) and external stakeholders (citizens, businesses and partners).

3.9 MTFS Principles

- 3.9.1 As well as consideration of future income and expenditure scenarios, the MTFS provides a set of clear principles which drive the budget and spending decisions over 2026-2030 and which Members and others can examine and judge the Council's financial performance against. The thirteen MTFS principles are:
 1. There will be a "One-Council" approach to the Medium Term Financial Strategy with a view on long term, sustainable savings proposals that are focused on ensuring that the Council remains financially viable over the full period of the MTFS.
 2. All budget related decisions will align with the principles of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.
 3. The Council will continue to meet its statutory obligations and demonstrate how it directs resources to meet the Council's corporate priorities. Other resource strategies (including the Treasury Management Strategy and Capital Strategy) are kept under review to maintain alignment with the MTFS and the Corporate Plan.

4. The financial control system is sufficiently robust to support the delivery of financial plans and mitigate corporate risks, with adequate provision being made to meet outstanding and reasonably foreseen liabilities.
5. All services will seek to provide value for money and contribute to public value, and will continuously review budgets to identify efficiency savings.
6. Financial plans will provide an optimum balance between income and expenditure for both capital and revenue, with opportunities for generating additional income taken in line with the Council's Income Generation and Charging Policy.
7. Savings proposals are 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.
8. Balances are not used to fund recurrent budget pressures or to keep down Council Tax rises unless an equivalent budget reduction or increase in Council Tax is made in the following year in recognition that balances are a one-off resource.
9. The Council Fund balance should be set at a prudent but not excessive level. This will normally be maintained at a level of 5% of the Council's net budget, excluding schools.
10. Capital investment decisions are in alignment with the Council's Capital Strategy, and mitigate any statutory risks taking account of return on investment and sound option appraisals.
11. Prudential borrowing is only used to support the capital programme where it is affordable and sustainable within the Council's overall borrowing limits and the revenue budget over the long term.
12. Decisions on the treatment of surplus assets are based on an assessment of the potential contribution to the revenue budget and the capital programme.
13. Resources are allocated to deliver transformational projects based on clear strategic plans that are kept under review by Corporate Directors to maintain alignment with the MTFS.

3.9.2 The MTFS Budget Reduction Contingency Reserve referenced in Principle 7 enables the Council to manage delays or unforeseen obstacles to the delivery of significant MTFS budget reduction proposals. No allocations have been made to date in 2025-26 from this reserve. The level of this reserve will be kept under review by the Section 151 officer in light of forecast difficulties in delivering specific future budget reduction proposals.

3.10 Council Tax

3.10.1 The 2026-27 draft Revenue Budget, shown in Table 5 below, assumes a 4.95% increase in council tax for 2026-27, which is required to enable the Council to meet

the considerable financial challenges that it faces both currently and going forward, not least the ongoing pay and price pressures, along with the unprecedented number of unavoidable service pressures facing the Council as it tries to support its most vulnerable residents. This level of increase will be reviewed again following the consultation process before the final budget is agreed. Going forward an assumed annual increase of 4.5% has also been included for 2027-2030.

3.11 MTFS Resource Envelope

3.11.1 The published provisional 2026-27 Aggregate External Finance (AEF) figure is an increase of 2.8% for Bridgend. In the MTFS 2025-26 to 2028-29, it was stated that the Council would continue to work towards a most likely scenario in its planning assumptions for 2026-27 of an annual 0% change in AEF and an assumed increase in council tax of 4.5% for 2026-27, with anticipated 0% changes to AEF for future years, recognising the ongoing uncertainty around our funding in future years. However, despite the better than anticipated settlement, as stated above, as a result of the unprecedented challenges facing the Council, and in trying to keep the level of budget reductions to a minimum, it is proposed to increase council tax by 4.95% for 2026-27.

3.11.2 The MTFS is regularly reviewed against service performance and external economic and fiscal information to ensure that early action can be taken as necessary to keep it and the Corporate Plan on track. This is particularly important given the current economic uncertainties, particularly in respect of fluctuating levels of inflation, in the coming months and years. In view of these uncertainties, the MTFS has been developed taking into account possible resource envelope scenarios based on percentage changes in AEF shown in Table 2.

3.11.3 Welsh Government has not given any information on likely levels of funding for 2027-28 onwards, due to the Senedd Elections in May 2026. However, it is anticipated that the financial position will be no less challenging and that Councils should plan accordingly. Therefore, for 2027-28 onwards, given the level of funding uncertainty in future years, as well as unknown pay and price increases, we will continue to assume 0% change to AEF and an estimated council tax increase of 4.5%. However, they will continue to be monitored and will be amended as further fiscal and economic information is made known.

Table 2 – MTFS Scenarios: % Change in AEF

	2026-27 % Change	2027-28 % Change	2028-29 % Change	2029-30 % Change
Best Scenario	+2.8%	+1.0%	+1.0%	+1.0%
Most Likely Scenario	+2.8%	0%	0%	0%
Worst Scenario	+2.8%	-1.0%	-1.0%	-1.0%

3.11.4 Table 3 shows the Council's potential net budget reduction requirement based on the forecast resource envelope, inescapable spending assumptions and assumed Council Tax increases.

Table 3: MTFS Potential Net Budget Reductions Requirement

	2026-27 £'000	2027-28 £'000	2028-29 £'000	2029-30 £'000	Total £'000
Best Scenario	2,416	7,438	7,182	6,915	23,951
Most Likely Scenario	2,416	10,349	10,122	9,884	32,771
Worst Scenario	2,416	13,260	13,004	12,737	41,417

3.12 Managing within the MTFS Resource Envelope

3.12.1 Given the slightly better than anticipated settlement, and the positive impact of the actuarial valuation on employers' pension contributions, explained in more detail in paragraph 3.18.5, the amount of budget reductions required for 2026-27 is lower than in previous years. Over the period of the MTFS the financial forecast for 2026-2030 is currently predicated on £32.771 million of budget reductions being met from Directorate and Corporate budgets. However, the assumptions beneath them can change quickly and with an uncertain, but no less challenging, financial settlement likely going forward, this level of reductions could change going forward. Directors have already been tasked with identifying future years' budget reductions, to ensure they are realisable at the earliest opportunities. The budget reduction targets are predicated on a number of spending assumptions, including:

- Projections for demographic changes, including an ageing population and an increasing number of young people with complex disabilities living into adulthood and adding progressively to the demand for care.
- Inflationary uplifts to support specific contractual commitments, which is difficult to predict going forward following the higher levels of inflation over recent years. The consumer price index (CPI) rate has remained under 5% since October 2023, went as low as 1.7% in September 2024 but has remained above 3% since April 2025, and was 3.6% for October 2025. This still compares favourably with the higher 8% - 11% increases experienced during 2022 and 2023 but it is much higher than the Bank of England's target of 2% - which the Bank considers a stable pace of increase.
- The future impact of national policies and new legislation which may not be accompanied by commensurate funding, such as the Welsh Government's commitment to eradicate homelessness, local authorities' responsibilities in respect of responding to climate change and meeting net zero carbon targets, potential additional responsibilities arising from UK government's Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Act 2025, and the implications of the Health and Social Care (Wales) Act 2025.
- Complying with the budget principle of full cost recovery, where possible. Consequently fees and charges will increase by the statutory minimum or at least CPI, unless determined otherwise.
- Increases in staffing costs, including a confirmed 6.7% increase in the Real Living Wage (from £12.60 to £13.45 per hour), a 4.1% increase in the national living wage from April 2026 (from £12.21 to £12.71), along with the

impact of staff pay increases in both 2025-26 and 2026-27. These include the full year effect of the teachers' pay increase of September 2025 (4% increase), the unknown teachers' pay increase in September 2026 and increases for non-teachers for 2026-27, which are still to be determined.

With regard to pay claims for 2026-27 the NJC Pay Claim has been submitted by Unison, Unite and GMB Unions, requesting an increase of:

- at least £3,000, or 10% (whichever is greater) for all staff, as well as a minimum hourly rate of £15.
- an extra day of annual leave for all staff,
- a reduction in the working week by two hours, with no loss of pay,
- the ability for school staff to take (at least) one day of their annual leave during term time, with no loss of pay.

A pay increase of £3,000 alone, which is significantly above inflation, would add around 10% to the Council's pay bill if ultimately agreed. With so much uncertainty it is difficult to determine what the pay pressure will be in 2025-26, but with a staff budget of around £240 million, every additional 1% increase will add at least a further £2.4 million pressure to the Council's pay budget. Funding has already been allocated in the schools' and central education budget for the full year effect (April to August 2025) of the teachers' September 2025 pay award. No information has been received to date on the potential teachers' pay award for September 2026.

3.13 Net Budget Reduction Requirement

3.13.1 Table 4 shows the current position in respect of addressing the most likely forecast budget reduction requirement of £32.771 million. It shows that £2.826 million of budget reduction proposals have already been identified over the period of the MTFS, including the full £2.416 million required for 2026-27. The table shows that the Council still needs to develop proposals to the value of £29.945 million. This will require some difficult decisions to be made on the range and level of services that the Council provides going forward.

Table 4 - Risk Status of Budget Reduction Proposals 2026-27 to 2029-30

Year	GREEN: Proposal developed and deliverable	AMBER: Proposal in development but includes delivery risk	RED: Proposals not fully developed and include high delivery risk	Budget reductions Identified so far	Budget reductions not yet developed	Total Required
	£'000	£'000	£'000			
2026-27	832	1,106	478	2,416	0	2,416
2027-28	0	0	410	410	9,939	10,349
2028-29	0	0	0	0	10,122	10,122
2029-30	0	0	0	0	9,884	9,884
Total	832	1,106	888	2,826	29,945	32,771
Percentage of total required	3%	3%	3%	9%	91%	100%

3.13.2 Table 4 illustrates the difficult position that the Council finds itself in financially over the life of the MTFS. For 2026-30 only 9% of savings have been identified, which leaves the Council at risk of not balancing the budget. This will depend on the level of settlement that the Council receives and the total budget reductions required to balance the budget. Indications from Welsh Government are that financial settlements in future years will still be challenging and the Council will continue to face high pay and price pressures. Consequently we will continue to identify options to close the gap during the remainder of the financial year and into 2026-27, whilst at the same time seeking additional funding from Welsh Government, particularly for new responsibilities.

3.13.3 All of the proposals have implications for the Council workforce given that around two thirds of the Council's net revenue budget funds pay costs. It follows that annual real terms' reductions in Council budgets over the next four years will lead to a reduced workforce over the MTFS period. The intention is to manage such a reduction through the continuation of strong vacancy management, redeployment, early retirements and voluntary redundancies, but some compulsory redundancies will continue to be considered and could be necessary.

3.14 Scrutiny and Challenge

3.14.1 We will be undertaking our annual budget consultation prior to the final budget being presented to Cabinet and Council at the end of February. The aim of the consultation will be to seek views on the priority areas for residents, in order to enable us to review and set a balanced budget. It is recognised that budget planning for 2026-27 continues to be challenging, and that the Council is still facing a significant level of cost pressures.

3.14.2 In advance of the budget consultation, in October 2025 the Council introduced a 'Time to Talk Budget' campaign. This included infographics, social media posts and

dedicated webpages, outlining the current budget and how it is funded in order to enhance residents' understanding of how the budget is compiled, what contribution council tax makes to the Council's budget, any restrictions on the budget, and responses to frequently asked questions.

3.14.3 The results of the budget consultation will be collated and considered by Cabinet in order to further inform final decisions on the MTFS in February 2026.

3.15 2026-27 Draft Revenue Budget

3.15.1 Table 5 shows the draft revenue budget for 2026-27. Any unallocated funding from the provisional settlement is currently held within the central budgets and will be re-allocated when the final budget is determined. In addition, following Welsh Government's announcement on 9 December 2025, any additional funding received through the final local government settlement will be allocated in line with any conditions or expectations attached to it, or taking into consideration the outcome of the budget consultation.

Table 5 – Draft Revenue Budget 2026-27

	Revised Budget 2025-26 £000	Specific Transfers from WG incl pay and NI £000	Inter-Directorate Transfers £000	Employers' Pensions Contributions £000	Pay / Prices £000	Budget Pressures £000	Budget Reduction Proposals £000	Opening Revenue Budget 2026-27 £000	Potential In-Year Allocations for Pay and Prices * £000	Potential Final Budget 2026-27 £000
Service Directorate Budgets:										
Central Education, Early Years and Young People Schools	32,246 126,309	332 3,072		-285 -968	229 1,707	1,322 29	-717 0	33,127 130,149	1,010 3,086	34,137 133,235
Education, Early Years and Young People	158,555	3,404	0	-1,253	1,936	1,351	-717	163,276	4,096	167,372
Social Services & Wellbeing	119,218	1,121		-1,663	69	6,345	-1,041	124,049	3,186	127,235
Communities	34,429	401		-668	238	415	-408	34,407	1,302	35,709
Chief Executives	25,755	428	20	-645	21	1,083	-250	26,412	844	27,256
Total Directorate Budgets	337,957	5,354	20	-4,229	2,264	9,194	-2,416	348,144	9,428	357,572
Council Wide Budgets:										
Capital Financing	5,907							5,907		5,907
Levies	10,210		13					10,223		10,223
Repairs and Maintenance	670							670		670
Council Tax Reduction Scheme	17,054				750			17,804		17,804
Apprenticeship Levy	869							869		869
Pension Related Costs	430							430		430
Insurance Premiums	1,363							1,363		1,363
Other Council Wide Budgets	8,766	666	-20		8,515	0	0	17,927	-9,428	8,499
Total Council Wide Budgets	45,269	679	-20	0	9,265	0	0	55,193	-9,428	45,765
Net Budget Requirement	383,226	6,033	0	-4,229	11,529	9,194	-2,416	403,337	0	403,337

* Actual amounts will depend upon final agreed pay awards and inflationary increases / contractual increases

** Updated Council structure, as approved by Council on 19 November 2025, will be reflected in quarterly monitoring reports 2026-27

*** £3m Real Living Wage for commissioned services in social care included in Social Services & Wellbeing budget pressure

3.15.2 The proposed net budget for 2026-27 will be funded by:

Table 6 – Net Budget Funding

	£	%
Revenue Support Grant	236,621,155	58.67
Non Domestic Rates	54,468,272	13.50
Council Tax Income	112,247,891	27.83
Total	403,337,318	100%

3.16 Council Tax Implications

- 3.16.1 Based on the proposed budget of £403.337 million, there is a proposed 4.95% increase in council tax for 2026-27. This is required due to a combination of increasing demand for services and significant cost pressures, both pay and price increases. This level of increase is needed to enable the Council to set a balanced budget. This proposed increase will be kept under review and confirmed when the final budget is submitted for approval in February, once the consultation process has ended and the final settlement has been received.
- 3.16.2 As mentioned above, council tax currently only provides around 28% of the Council's funding. The majority of funding comes from Welsh Government, via the Revenue Support Grant and the Council's share of non-domestic rates. An increase in council tax of 1% therefore only provides around £1 million of additional funding.

3.17 Inter-Directorate Transfers

- 3.17.1 There is only one small inter-directorate transfer included in the draft budget, in respect of the Joint National Council senior management structure approved by Council in November 2025.

3.18 Pay, Prices, Pensions and Demographics

- 3.18.1 Pay awards for teachers, National Joint Council (NJC) and Joint Negotiating Committee (JNC) staff for 2025-26 have been agreed. They included an increase of 4% on all teachers' pay scales and allowances, an increase of 3.2% on all NJC pay points, and an increase of 3.2% for JNC Chief Officers and Chief Executive pay points. No information on pay claims for 2026-27 is available at this time. With so much uncertainty it is difficult to determine what the pay pressure will be in 2026-27 but with a staff budget of over £240 million, every additional 1% increase will add at least a further £2.4 million pressure to the Council's pay budget. Funding has been allocated in the budget for the full year effect (April to August 2026) of the teachers' September 2025 pay award.
- 3.18.2 In March 2022 Bridgend County Borough Council was officially recognised as a Real Living Wage accredited employer by the Living Wage Foundation, and all BCBC-employed staff, including social care staff, were paid at the level of the Real Living Wage. In October 2025 it was announced by the Real Living Wage Foundation that the Real Living Wage would increase by 6.7%, from £12.60 to £13.45 per hour. The rate was to be implemented as soon as possible, but by 1 May 2026 at the latest. For in-house staff this will be paid from 1 April 2026, and funding for this is reflected in the directorate pay and price allocations, along with consequential adjustments to the NJC pay scales.
- 3.18.3 Funding for price inflation in 2026-27 has been retained centrally to meet provision for increases in energy costs, rents, allowances and contractual commitments, which are still largely unknown. A further review of allocations will be undertaken before the final budget is agreed and any necessary amendments made. In respect of non-domestic rates Welsh Government has announced that further information on these arrangements will be determined as part of the preparations for their Final Budget.

- 3.18.4 Following approval of the final budget, the remaining inflationary provision will be retained centrally and allocated during the year as any unknown or unforeseen contract price inflation is agreed, in particular where the index is set after the Council's budget is approved.
- 3.18.5 The Council has received the provisional results of the triennial actuarial valuation of the Local Government Pension Fund as at 31 March 2025. The valuation shows that, based on the performance of the fund at that time, the employer's contributions required by the authority from April 2026 for the next three years is a potential reduction from the current 19.4% to a proposed 15.2%. This is based on high asset performance in the fund, specifically gains on investments, changes to membership and financial assumptions, since the last valuation. The impact of this is a potential reduced cost of employer's contributions of £4.229 million per annum, the budget for which has been top sliced from directorate budgets and centralised, to be used to fund some of the unavoidable budget pressures that the Council is facing. The confirmed contribution rate will be confirmed in the final MTFS.
- 3.18.6 In terms of demographics, there is evidence of an increase in the older persons' population. Wales, as a whole, has an ageing population. In Bridgend, between the 2011 census and the 2021 census there was an increase of 21.5% in people aged 65 years and over, resulting in increased pressure on a number of service areas, including residential care, home care and the assessment and care management teams.

3.19 Employers' National Insurance Contributions

- 3.19.1 In the Autumn Budget 2024 the Chancellor of the Exchequer increased the rate of employers' national insurance contributions from 13.8% to 15%, and reduced the threshold on which this would apply to workers' earnings, from £9,100 to £5,000, from April 2025. The cost to the Council of implementing this for BCBC staff, and for the Fire and Rescue Authority, which the Council contributes to, is £4.828 million. The UK Government indicated it would provide additional funding to help to cover the costs of the increase for public sector workers. In addition there have been pressures from the Council's commissioned services, who also faced additional costs, for the Council to contribute to this cost, which were estimated to be as high as £1.5 million. In the MTFS 2025-2029 Council therefore approved a budget pressure of £1.5 million to help to mitigate these costs. In October 2025 we received a grant offer letter of £4,351,321 from Welsh Government towards additional employers' national insurance costs. Additional grant funding of £96,082 was also received towards the costs for post-16 provision in schools, resulting in total grant funding for the Council of £4.447 million. The Welsh Government Finance Secretary indicated that this grant funding would only cover around 80% of the costs of public sector employees, so the local authority has had to fund this shortfall of around £380,000, in addition to the cost of commissioned services. This grant funding has now been transferred into the settlement on a recurrent basis.

3.20 School Delegated Budgets

- 3.20.1 Given the difficult financial position that the Council found itself in, a 1% efficiency in school budgets (£1.186 million) was included in the MTFS for 2025-26, given that school budgets account for around a third of net revenue expenditure. For 2026-27 the overall provisional settlement for the Council is slightly less challenging than

anticipated, therefore schools have not been asked to find any savings in 2026-27 or beyond at this stage.

3.20.2 There are still a significant number of pressures on school delegated budgets for 2026-27 and beyond, not least the full year cost of the September 2025 teachers' pay award for April to August 2026 (4% increase), the new pay award for teachers from September 2026, and the non-teachers' pay award from April 2026. Additional funding will be provided to them during 2026-27 to offset these additional pay and price pressures, which could reach £5 million based on current estimates. It is also understood that a number of school grants will be increasing in 2026-27 which will also help to support schools.

3.21 Budget Pressures

3.21.1 During 2025-26 a number of unavoidable service budget pressures have arisen for 2026-27 and future years, and those proposed to be funded are detailed in **Appendix A**. They are split into recurrent base budget pressures and emerging directorate pressures. The total of the budget pressures identified for 2026-27 is £9.194 million and this covers those pressures deemed to be unavoidable or statutory, and tries to mitigate some of the more significant budget pressures arising in 2025-26. The recurrent base budget pressures are based on the quarter 2 revenue monitoring position, but will be reviewed again before the final budget, using the quarter 3 information, and amended as necessary. It should be noted that budget pressure bids amounting to over £20 million were originally submitted, but these have had to be prioritised due to the limited funding available. The funding allocated is partly to enable time for transformation of services to take place and will be subject to robust ongoing financial monitoring during 2026-27. There may be additional pressures arising over the coming months and as stated previously, additional funding received via the final local government settlement. Consequently the total pressures requirement may change between draft and final budget.

3.21.2 Some of the more significant pressures facing the Authority include:

- Costs associated with supporting and protecting our most vulnerable residents, especially children.
- Support for children with additional learning needs.
- Increased costs of commissioned services in the social care sector following the 6.7% increase in the Real Living Wage, and in general following the 4.1% increase in the National Living Wage from announced by the UK government. Of the £6.345 million of budget pressures in Social Services and Wellbeing, £3 million is in respect of the Real Living Wage for commissioned services.

3.21.3 The UK's Packaging Extended Producer Responsibility (pEPR) scheme is a reform that shifts the full financial cost of managing household packaging waste from taxpayers (local authorities) to the businesses that place it on the UK market. Payments to local authorities are being made from November 2025 to cover their costs for managing household packaging waste. These payments, funded by producers of packaging, are calculated based on the net efficient disposal costs for each material type, and for Bridgend CBC in 2025-26 equates to £3.922 million. Similar amounts are anticipated in future years until businesses reduce their packaging waste. The pressures shown in **Appendix A** therefore do not include many budget pressures in the communities' directorate as the pEPR funding will

enable the directorate to support pressures in their service areas from the waste budget funding it releases. This will include mitigating pressures in respect of fleet management, planning, additional waste collection and disposal requirements, both capital and revenue, and in respect of the circular economy. However, it is worth noting that some of the recurrent pressures may need reviewing in future years if the pEPR funding reduces significantly.

3.22 Budget Reduction Proposals

3.22.1 Budget reduction proposals of £2.416 million for 2026-27 have been identified from service budgets to achieve a balanced budget, and these are detailed in **Appendix B**. This year it has again been extremely challenging to identify reductions in service budgets in order to balance the budget. Given the level of savings made by the Council in recent years, additional budget reductions are not easy to achieve and going forward will require transformational change, often including up-front investment, to reconfigure services and processes. Currently there are four emerging invest to save proposals under consideration – in adults' and children's social care, the provision of secondary nurture classes to reduce exclusions, and in respect of reducing the unit cost of placements in non-maintained / out of county settings. These budget reduction proposals will have a significant impact on staff and residents alike, but are necessary in order to set a balanced budget, or council tax would have to increase by an even higher rate.

3.22.2 Some of these proposals were approved by Council in the MTFS 2025-2029 and they are outlined in Table 7 below:

Table 7 – Budget Reductions already Approved

Ref	Proposal	£'000	Approval Date
EEYYP2	Review of Home to School Transport	417	£1.092m saving across 2025-26 to 2026-27. Policy change approved by Cabinet on 23 July 2024 with revised Policy approved on 10 September 2024 and implementation from September 2025.
SSW2	Redevelop the indoor bowls arena space	10	Approved in MTFS 2025-2029
SSW12	Business efficiencies in social services support services	129	Approved in MTFS 2025-2029
COM2	Review of cleaning specifications and frequencies on BCBC Operational assets	35	Approved in MTFS 2025-2029
COM3	Further review of cyclical servicing and maintenance contracts	40	Approved in MTFS 2025-2029
COM4	Increase income across the commercial property portfolio	15	Approved in MTFS 2025-2029

CEX6	Review provision of the CCTV service	250	Approved in MTFS 2025-2029. Original value was £444k but this has been reduced.
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3.23 Partnership Working

3.23.1 As part of the MTFS process, and in view of the challenging financial circumstances the Council faces, we also review each of our main strategic partnerships to identify any potential cost savings. The Council's main strategic partners are:

- The Shared Regulatory Service (SRS), which is operated in partnership with Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan Councils, was asked by the partner organisations to put forward savings for 2026-27. Those proposals will be considered by the SRS Joint Committee in January 2026 and their recommendation will feed into the budget setting process.
- The partnerships with Halo Leisure and Awen Cultural Trust to run our leisure facilities and library and cultural facilities respectively, were also thoroughly reviewed. These key partners are delivering services at considerably less cost than when the Council provided leisure, culture and library services internally and have added considerable social value to communities in Bridgend. In recent years both partners have increasingly focussed on supporting the most vulnerable and provide a highly effective preventative offer. There will be a need to ensure that these partnerships continue to innovate whilst also recognising that these partners as providers also experience the same inflationary pressures – pay and non-pay - as other Council suppliers.
- Following Welsh Government's review of the school improvement system in Wales (the "Middle Tier Review"), from September 2025 several changes were made in respect of school improvement arrangements across Wales. The main change for Bridgend schools is that support for school improvement is now delivered directly by the local authority. Central South Consortium stills plays a key role in supporting schools across Bridgend, Merthyr Tydfil, Cardiff, the Vale of Glamorgan and Rhondda Cynon Taff, by providing a wide-ranging, professional learning offer.
- The South East Wales Corporate Joint Committee, which came into operation in April 2024, is made up of the ten local authorities named in The South East Wales Corporate Joint Committee Regulations 2021 plus the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority. Since April 2024 it has had responsibility for regional transport and strategic planning and for doing whatever is deemed necessary to enhance or promote the economic well-being of the area. It is known as the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal. For 2026-27 it is anticipated that the local authority contribution will remain at or around the same overall level as 2025-26.

3.24 Council Wide Budgets

3.24.1 Council Wide budgets include funding for the Council Tax Reduction Scheme, costs of financing capital expenditure, levies, including that for the South Wales Fire and Rescue Authority, centrally held pay and prices provisions, insurance budgets,

discretionary rate relief and centrally held building related costs. A number of these budgets are fixed and unavoidable, and therefore cannot be reduced without putting the Council at risk. The higher than anticipated pay awards in recent years, soaring inflation, and unprecedented amount of budget pressures has put also additional pressure on these budgets.

3.24.2 The South Wales Fire and Rescue Authority covers 10 South Wales Council areas including Bridgend County. It is funded by raising a levy on its constituent Councils, based on population. The current levy on Bridgend for 2025-26 is £9,532,347. For 2026-27 the Council has received a transfer of £12,660 into the provisional settlement from Welsh Government in respect of Fire and Rescue Authority (FRA) pay increases in 2025-26. This will be passported to the FRA as part of the annual levy in 2026-27. The FRA are currently consulting on a proposed increase of 2.99% across all its constituent local authorities for 2026-27, which, after population changes, would equate to an increase in Levy of £285,048 for Bridgend. Following the consultation process a final decision will be made at the FRA Board meeting in February 2026. The agreed budget increase for the Council will be included as a budget pressure in the final MTFS report.

3.25 Business Rates (Non-Domestic Rates)

3.25.1 The Local Government Finance (Wales) Act 2024 provided the Welsh Government with the ability to introduce differential multipliers for Wales. They include the introduction of:

- a lower multiplier for small to medium sized retailers
- a higher multiplier for high value properties

The levels of all multipliers have been determined as part of the Welsh Government's budget setting for 2026 to 2027. The lower multiplier has been set at £0.35, the higher multiplier at £0.515 and the standard multiplier has been set at £0.502 (£0.568 in 2025-26).

3.25.2 The next non-domestic rating list will also take effect on 1 April 2026, following revaluation. The Welsh Government will provide transitional relief to all ratepayers whose liabilities will increase by more than £300 following the revaluation. Any such increases will be phased in over two years. The impact on the business rates bills for the Council's buildings is currently being assessed and any amendments required to budgets will be picked up in the final MTFS.

3.26 Fees and Charges

3.26.1 In general, fees and charges are increased by CPI, subject to rounding, or in line with statutory or service requirements, except where a clear decision is taken not to do so. Schedules of fees and charges will be reported separately, as usual, under Delegated Powers and Directorates will apply the requirements outlined in the Council's Fees and Charges Policy, which was updated and approved by Cabinet in May 2024. As a key principle, where a decision has been taken to charge for a service, the Council will aim for full cost recovery, except where there is a conscious decision which is consistent with Council priorities, recognising that the service would then be subsidised by council tax payers.

3.26.2 A full list of all fees and charges for 2026-27 will be published on the Council's webpages once the budget has been approved for 2026-27.

3.27 Council Reserves

3.27.1 In line with the MTFS principle 8, the Council will endeavour, where possible, to maintain the Council Fund at a level of 5% of the Council's net budget, excluding schools. This is currently £10.008 million, or 3.9% of the Council's net budget excluding schools, slightly lower than the target of 5% due to the need to draw down from it in recent years to balance the accounts at year end.

3.27.2 Details of the Council's total earmarked reserves position at 31 October 2025 are shown in Table 8. These continue to be reviewed during 2025-26 and where they are no longer required they will be unwound. A more detailed position statement will be included in the Final MTFS report to Council on 25 February 2026.

Table 8 – Earmarked Reserves

Opening Balance 01 Apr 25	Reserve	Net Additions/ Reclassification	Draw-down	Unwound	Closing Balance 31 Oct 2025
£'000		£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
	Corporate Reserves:				
46,038	Capital Programme Contribution	45	-	-	46,083
2,290	Asset Management Reserves	-	(209)	-	2,081
1,830	Major Claims & Insurance Reserves	-	-	-	1,830
1,892	Service Reconfiguration	-	-	-	1,892
2,294	Change Management/Digital Transformation	-	(184)	-	2,110
500	Economic and Future Resilience Fund	-	-	-	500
3,179	Other Corporate Reserves	-	-	-	3,179
58,023	Total Corporate Reserves	45	(393)	-	57,675
	Directorate Reserves:				
1,919	Education & Family Support	-	(38)	-	1,881
1,856	Social Services & Wellbeing	-	(265)	-	1,591
1,835	Communities	-	(182)	(1)	1,652
1,966	Chief Executives	83	(123)	-	1,926
7,576	Total Directorate Reserves	83	(608)	(1)	7,050
	Equalisation & Grant Reserves:				
316	Education & Family Support	-	-	-	316
47	Social Services & Wellbeing	-	-	-	47
2,478	Communities	(355)	(81)	-	2,042
47	Chief Executives	310	-	-	357
-	Cross Directorate	-	-	-	-
2,888	Equalisation & Grant Reserves:	(45)	(81)	-	2,762
(619)	School Balances	-	-	-	(619)
67,868	TOTAL RESERVES	83	(1,082)	(1)	66,868

3.28 Capital Programme and Capital Financing Strategy

3.28.1 This section of the report deals with the proposed Capital Programme for 2025-26 to 2035-36, which forms part of, but extends beyond the MTFS. It has been

developed in line with the MTFS principles and reflects the Welsh Government draft capital settlement for 2026-27, which provides General Capital Funding (GCF) for 2026-27 of £204 million across Wales and of £8.841 million for BCBC for 2026-27, of which £3.849 million is un-hypothesized supported borrowing, with the remaining £4.992 million provided through general capital grant. This is £259,000 more than we received in 2025-26.

3.28.2 The original Capital Programme budget approved by Council on 26 February 2025 has been further revised and approved by Council during the year to incorporate budgets brought forward from 2024-25, slippage into 2026-27 and any new schemes and grant approvals. A review has also been undertaken of the capital resources available to the Council, along with the capital pressures that it faces. The Council only receives around £8 million per year from Welsh Government and has limited opportunities now to generate additional capital receipts or increase capital earmarked reserves. Due to the very limited capital resource available, following a number of years of significant investment in the Council's infrastructure, service managers were asked to only submit bids for unavoidable capital pressures for scrutiny by the Capital Programme Board, which will be considered for the final MTFS. Given limited capital resources and increasing costs of contracts, the Council will need to make difficult decisions about which capital schemes it can afford to progress, which will involve prioritising existing and future schemes, as not all will be affordable. The programme will require constant review, of not just new, but also existing approved schemes, since the figures included for schemes may change following tender processes.

3.28.3 In addition to limited levels of funding, there are also other financial pressures arising as a result of ongoing economic circumstances, which are being seen in existing tender prices, and will continue to do so for some time going forward, placing pressure on the capital programme overall, including:

- Increased prices of materials, as a result of higher inflation rates, sometimes up to 25% higher than previously estimated;
- Supply chain difficulties leading to higher prices and delays in schemes being completed;
- Inability to recruit to key posts, both within the Council and companies we contract with, resulting in higher wages and overall contract costs;
- Additional requirements on schemes to achieve Welsh Government's Net Zero commitments, which includes an aim of collectively achieving net zero across the Welsh public sector by 2030. This will lead to changes in the way we design and manage our assets, which will likely result in increased costs.

These pressures mean that the Council has limited resources available to fund capital projects in the coming few years therefore all decisions regarding changes to the programme will have to be carefully considered.

3.28.4 Following approval by Council of the Capital Strategy in February/March each year, and the subsequent quarterly monitoring reports to Cabinet and Council, any amendments to the capital programme are usually dealt with during the year rather than just as part of the MTFS. The latest capital programme was approved by Council in November 2025 and any further changes will be included in the updated capital programme presented to Council for approval on 4 February 2026 or the

capital programme to be included in the final MTFS to be approved by Council on 25 February 2026.

3.28.5 The capital programme contains a number of annual allocations that are met from the total general capital funding for the Council. The proposed allocations for 2026-27 are shown in Table 9 below.

Table 9 – 2026-27 Proposed Annual Allocations of Capital Funding

	Proposed 2026-27 £'000
Highways Structural Works	340
Carriageway Capital Works	250
Disabled Facilities Grants	2,450
Housing Renewal / Empty Property Schemes	100
Minor Capital Works	1,130
Community Projects (match funding)	50
Street lighting / Bridge infrastructure replacement	400
ICT equipment replacement	400
2030 Decarbonisation	150
Total	5,270

3.29 Capital Receipts

3.29.1 The disposals strategy for the period to 2030 is still in the process of being finalised and, as with previous years, it is anticipated that the majority of the receipts will emanate from the sale of our interests within the Porthcawl Waterfront Regeneration Area. Welsh Government have now increased their share of the joint venture and we will go forward with them as equal partners. The equalisation resulted in a substantial early capital receipt for the Council.

3.29.2 Whilst Porthcawl will be the focus of the disposal programme in the immediate future, the agreed sale of our land at Ewenny Road, Maesteg to Avant Homes is progressing well, with the land remediation works due to be completed in January 2026. The completion of these works will trigger the completion of the land sale which will bring in a capital receipt in the 2025-26 financial year. Based on the deal that has been exchanged this is likely to result in a capital receipt of around £1.35 million to the Council.

3.29.3 Since last year the sale of our former offices at Ravens Court, Bridgend, to South Wales Police has been completed resulting in a capital receipt to the Council of £1.85 million. The sale of the former YGG Cwm Garw site in Pontycymer has been delayed and will now complete in the 2026-27 financial year albeit this is a relatively small receipt of £65,000.

- 3.29.4 Our strategic land holding at Parc Afon Ewenni, Waterton, Bridgend which was due to be brought forward for sale is now being considered for our own use and will not be marketed for sale in the immediate future.
- 3.29.5 Capital receipts from property disposals are subject to the exchange of contracts, so it is prudent not to commit them until we have a contractual agreement.

3.30 Prudential (Unsupported) Borrowing

- 3.30.1 Total Prudential Borrowing taken out as at 1 April 2025 was £46.889 million, of which £31.246 million was outstanding. It is estimated that the total borrowed will increase by £7.512 million by the end of 2025-26.
- 3.30.2 Future prudential borrowing could include an estimated £1.964 million towards the purchase of fleet, £1.565 million towards new school builds and £1.5 million towards the refurbishment of Community Children's Play Areas.

4. Equality implications (including Socio-economic Duty and Welsh Language)

- 4.1 A high level Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) will be carried out and included within the Final MTFS in February 2026. The high level EIA considers the impact of the strategy, policy or proposal on the nine protected characteristics, the Socio-economic Duty and the use of the Welsh Language.
- 4.2 The proposals contained within this report cover a wide range of services and it is inevitable that the necessary budget reductions will impact on the local population in different ways. In developing these proposals, consideration has been given to their potential impact on protected groups within the community and on how to avoid a disproportionate impact on people within these groups.

5. Well-being of Future Generations implications and connection to Corporate Well-being Objectives

- 5.1 The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 provides a framework for embedding sustainable development principles within the activities of Council and has major implications for the long-term planning of finances and service provision. The 7 well-being goals identified in the Act have driven the Council's four well-being objectives.
- 5.2 The well-being objectives are designed to complement each other and be part of an integrated way of working to improve well-being for people in Bridgend County. In developing the MTFS, officers have considered the importance of balancing short-term needs in terms of meeting savings targets, with safeguarding the ability to meet longer-term objectives.
- 5.3 The proposals contained within this report cover a wide range of services and it is inevitable that the necessary budget reductions will impact on the wellbeing goals in different ways. A Well-being of Future Generations Assessment will be undertaken on proposed individual projects and activities where relevant and will feed into specific reports to Cabinet or Council.

5.4 The Council's approach to meeting its responsibilities under the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, including acting in accordance with the sustainable development principle, is reflected in a number of areas within the Medium Term Financial Strategy, not least:

5 Ways of Working	Examples
Long Term	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outlining the impact of a number of different funding scenarios (Best, Most Likely and Worst) to provide an element of flexibility to the Council. Majority of savings generated from making smarter use of resources with service reductions kept to a minimum and only as a last resort. The development of a Capital Strategy and 10 year capital programme which reflects the Council's affordability in terms of capital receipts and borrowing. Investment in capital schemes that support the Council's corporate priorities and benefits the County Borough over a longer period.
Prevention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investment in preventative measures to reduce the burden on more costly statutory services.
Collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Savings generated from collaboration and integrated working.
Integration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explicit links between the Corporate Plan, the Capital Strategy, the Treasury Management Strategy and the Medium Term Financial Strategy
Involvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A robust budget consultation exercise, including surveys, community engagement stands and social media debates, to inform proposals.

5.5 The above features are aimed at ensuring the Council's finances are as healthy as they can be for future generations. Although resources are limited, they have been targeted in a way that reflects the Council's priorities, including the seven well-being goals included in Bridgend's Well-being Plan, and this is reflected in the relevant appendices. Where possible, the Council has aimed to protect front line services and invest to save, with budget reductions targeted at making smarter use of resources, commercialisation, collaboration and transformation. The Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 Assessment is attached at **Appendix C**.

6. Climate Change and Nature Implications

6.1 The local authority's 'Bridgend 2030 – Net Zero Carbon Strategy' and Welsh Government's carbon reduction commitments will also be addressed through the Medium Term Financial Strategy, where funding allows, particularly through capital investment. Specifically they will be addressed through a number of schemes, including the School Modernisation Programme, Ultra Low Emission Vehicles, and a recurrent 2030 decarbonisation capital budget, amongst others. However, due to financial constraints, our ambition to achieve Net Zero 2030 may be compromised.

7. Safeguarding and Corporate Parent Implications

7.1 The Medium Term Financial Strategy is aligned with BCBC's Corporate Parenting Strategy, and provides substantial investment in social services, both adult and children's services through revenue budget pressures.

8. Financial Implications

8.1 This report outlines the financial issues that Council is requested to consider as part of the 2026-27 to 2029-30 MTFS. The Council's Section 151 Officer is required to report annually on the robustness of the level of reserves. The current and future anticipated level of Council reserves is sufficient to protect the Council in light of unknown demands or emergencies and current funding levels. It must be emphasised that the biggest financial risks the Council is exposed to at the present time relates to the uncertainty of Welsh Government funding, both generally for local government into the medium term with recent one-year settlements, and specifically for some of the pressures the Council is currently facing in its service areas, the increasing difficulty in the delivery of planned budget reductions as well as the identification of further proposals. Therefore, it is imperative that the Council Fund balance is managed in accordance with the MTFS Principle 9, as set out in the MTFS, and it is essential that revenue service expenditure and capital expenditure is contained within the identified budgets.

8.2 The Section 151 Officer is also required to report to Council if they do not believe that they have sufficient resource to discharge their role as required by section 114 of the Local Government Act 1988. Members should note that there is currently sufficient resource to discharge this role.

8.3 The proposed budget includes estimates which take into account circumstances and events which exist or are reasonably foreseeable at the time of preparation. However, there is always a risk of change, as evidenced by the volatile economic environment of the last 12 months. Subject to the risks identified the proposed MTFS provides a firm basis for managing the Council's resources for the year 2026-27 and beyond.

8.4 However, the extremely challenging financial situation that the Council is facing, currently and in the coming years, cannot be under-stated. Whilst the Council's provisional settlement was slightly better than anticipated, there are still significant service pressures facing the Council going into 2026-27. These pressures, along with new emerging pressures, all need to be met from the funding available. The only way to mitigate them is through service reductions or higher increases in council tax. The Council's reserves are falling, and there is limited capacity to establish new reserves, so using reserves to balance the budget is not a robust or long term solution, particularly in light of the fact that these financial challenges are still likely to be facing us into 2027-28 and possibly beyond. All of these factors must all be taken into consideration when approving the budget for 2026-27 onwards.

9. Recommendation

9.1 It is recommended that Cabinet submits for consultation the 2026-27 annual budget and development of the MTFS 2026-27 to 2029-30, as set out in this report, prior to presenting a final version for approval by Council on 25 February 2026.

Background documents

Individual Directorate Monitoring Reports
Provisional Local Government Revenue and Capital Settlements 2026-27

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BUDGET PRESSURES 2026-27 TO 2029-30

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RECURRENT BUDGET PRESSURES

Ref	Directorate	Service	Pressure	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	2029-30
				£000	£000	£000	£000
1	Education, Early Years and Young People	ALN	Recouping Expenditure at Heronsbridge / YBC. Whilst numbers have remained stable in inter-authority recouping placements, with 20 at Summer 2025, down to 18 in Autumn 2025, the pressure is due to additional support being provided at Heronsbridge School and Ysgol Bryn Castell to mitigate further external placements.	250			
2	Social Services and Wellbeing	Adult Social Care	Adult Social Care pressures including physical disabilities homecare, learning disabilities and physical disabilities residential care, as a result of increased placements and increased costs due to changing needs.	250			
3	Social Services and Wellbeing	Children's	There is an overspend of £560k for supported accommodation. The Placement Commissioning Strategy and the Children and Young People's Transitional Strategy outline the need to grow supported accommodation options in response to the increasing number of children aged 10-15 becoming looked after, as well as ongoing responsibilities under the mandated National Transfer Scheme.	250			
4	Communities	Highways	Highways Services - insufficient budget in respect of staffing and hire charges for vehicles and equipment.	40			
5	Communities	Parks and Playing Fields	Parks and Playing Fields - maintenance budgets on cemeteries.	50			
6	Chief Executive	Finance	Funding to reinstate MTFS Budget Reduction CEX25 Finance Senior Management Savings from 2024-25. A full restructure was proposed and consulted on but it did not proceed.	70			
7	Chief Executive	Finance	Benefits - shortfall on Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) subsidy contributions towards housing benefit payments in Bridgend. Any Housing Benefit award paid over the subsidy level is borne by the Council as the DWP does not fully fund all Housing Benefit expenditure – for example, there are a number of tenancy arrangements whereby the subsidy is limited to historic local housing allowance rates or restricted by rent officer determinations.	91			
8	Chief Executive	Legal	Historical shortfall on income generated from legal fees for property transactions, S106 Agreements and Highway Agreements.	58			
Total Recurrent Budget Pressures				1,059	0	0	0

EMERGING DIRECTORATE PRESSURES

Ref	Directorate		Pressure	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	2029-30
				£000	£000	£000	£000
SCHNEW 1	Education, Early Years and Young People	Individual Schools Budget	Increase to delegated funding for schools required for energy, cleaning, building maintenance, caretaking and rates as a result of planned extensions to existing premises and proposed new build/replacement schools.	29	293	220	0
EDNEW1	Education, Early Years and Young People	Home to School Transport	Home to school transport for pupil transport for Welsh Immersion provision which supports pupils up to Year 7. The late immersion unit based in Ysgol y Ferch o'r Sgêr was established in March 2025 and all newcomers to Welsh-medium education will be immersed in the language within the unit from Monday to Thursday and spend Friday at their home-school. In line with the transport policy, pupils who are eligible to receive school transport also receive transport to the late immersion unit.	47			

Ref	Directorate		Pressure	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	2029-30
				£000	£000	£000	£000
EDNEW2	Education, Early Years and Young People	School Improvement	The budget pressure funding (£225k in 2025-26 and 2026-27) is required to support the creation of a School Improvement Group within the local authority's Education, Early Years and Young People Directorate. This additional resource has been necessary following the reorganisation of regional school improvement arrangements across Wales. This funding has facilitated the appointment of a team of school improvement partners supported by three professional officers to support digital learning and strategic development in primary and secondary schools.	225			
EDNEW3	Education, Early Years and Young People	Early Years - Additional Learning Needs	Additional Learning Needs pressures, including additional resource bases in schools, particularly for communication autism, due to the significant increase in the number of pupils with emotional, social and behavioural needs, and pupils with complex medical needs and physical disabilities.	800			
SSW1	Social Services & Wellbeing	Children's Services	<p>The Health and Social Care Bill is designed to rebalance and reform the children's social care system, specifically by eliminating for-profit providers of residential and foster care. There are significant revenue (and capital) pressures associated with meeting the requirements of this legislation against an overall significantly overspent children's placement budget. The current in-house provision and services supporting families to stay together are already dependent on grant funding.</p> <p>Due to new statutory responsibilities under the Health and Social Care (Wales) Act, which require local authorities to ensure sufficient local placement options for children, while reducing and eliminating reliance on private providers. This requirement is supported by our Placement Commissioning Strategy, which identifies the need to establish at least four additional residential homes to meet current and anticipated levels of demand.</p> <p>The 2026-27 figure includes the shortfall on homes 1 & 2, and 3 months of home 3.</p>	1,498	585	1,642	
SSW2	Social Services & Wellbeing	Adult Social Care	Front Door - Increasing demand for assessment for adults with social care needs. There is an increase in costs due to increasing demand for assessment within our Early Intervention and Prevention Service (EIPH) which is the front door to adult services. 2742 new contacts were received during April-August 2025/26 compared to 2422 for the same period in 2024/25. Undertaking a timely and accurate assessment is a key part of our sustainable and strengths based model. With the surge in demand for the service we are unable to maintain this level of service which will result in delays in the system and increased risk, and higher care costs. This will ensure we can meet the demand and prevent unnecessary escalation of need.	86			
SSW3	Social Services & Wellbeing	Adult Social Care	Complex Needs and Continuing Health Care. Increasing pressure from meeting the full care costs of people with complex needs. There is an increase in care costs to the local authority as people with complex needs, including learning disabilities and dementia, become older. Whilst they may be entitled to continuing health care contributions from the health board, this requires a high degree of expertise, persistence and a focussed assessment from our social workers to obtain this.	60			
SSW4	Social Services & Wellbeing	Adult Social Care	Transition. Learning Disabilities - Residential. An increased demand for high cost accommodation/residential care for young people with complex needs transitioning to adult social care at 18. There has been an increase in cost due to increasing numbers of young people with complex needs transitioning from Child and Family services to Adult Social Care at 18. As well as an increase in demand from young people with high levels of complexity, adults with a learning disability are also living longer. This places greater pressure on our residential budget.	800			

Ref	Directorate		Pressure	£000	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	2029-30
SSW5	Social Services & Wellbeing	Adult Social Care	Transition - Independent Domiciliary Care. An increased demand for high cost accommodation/residential care for young people with complex needs transitioning to adult social care at 18. The pressure is based on increasing numbers of placements (and increasing complexities of need) made in long-term homecare services over the past 18 months, due to demographic pressures, such as an ageing population and increasing dementia.	151				
SSW6	Social Services & Wellbeing	Commissioned Services	Implications of Real Living Wage (RLW) uplifts on commissioned contracts within Social Services and Wellbeing, to meet Welsh Government's commitment to the real living wage in social care, based on the announced increase to RLW from £12.60 in 2025 to £13.45 (6.7% increase) in 2026.	3,000				
SSW7	Social Services & Wellbeing	Directorate Wide	Establishment of an accommodation unit, similar to the school modernisation team, to develop business cases, seek funding and manage social services accommodation proposals for in-house services. This will initially focus on children's accommodation, to meet the requirements of the Health and Social Care (Wales) Act 2025 in terms of eliminating profit from the care of looked after children, but will also manage changes in provision for adult services, with a view to investing to achieve longer term budget savings.	250				
COM1	Communities	Waste	Additional revenue funding required, over and above the current budget, to operate the waste service as an in-house service from July 2027, as agreed by Cabinet. Separate one-off mobilisation costs that are required eg ICT system costs, legal and HR costs, are being funded by an earmarked reserve, and some may be funded from the Extended Producer Responsibility contribution. An element of the funding is required in 2026-27 to enable containers and personal protective equipment to be pre-ordered in time for the July 2027 start date.	275	965			
COM2	Communities	Transport	Bus Subsidies: to include provision to undertake pilot schemes on routes no longer served by bus operators.	50				
CEX1	Chief Executive's	Taxation	Shortfall in Court Cost Income from council tax and Non Domestic Rates, both historically and as a consequence of changes to the legislation for the administration and enforcement of council tax which are due to be introduced by Welsh Government from 01/04/2026 (The Council Tax (Discount, Disregards and Exemptions) Regulations 2026).	75				
CEX2	Chief Executive's	Democratic Services	The current Welsh Government consultation on committee meetings, ending on 28 November 2025, proposes extending the mandatory broadcasting of council meetings to include all statutory committees like Democratic Services and Planning, as well as Cabinet meetings (presently it is just full council). Additional revenue funding, over and above the current budget would be needed to increase capacity to comply with this requirement and the infrastructure needed to support this approach. Furthermore, the new conferencing system for the Chamber and Committee Rooms aligned with the Council's digital transformation project will require more resource. Furthermore, the recent Panel Performance Assessment identified that a critical component of any emerging transformation plan will be our approach to the digital function. Resources will therefore be required to provide ongoing support to our Elected Members to help them understand and champion these digital initiatives. A key area of support will be the Member Referral System providing an effective digital platform for handling constituents' cases and effectively manage their workload.	36				
CEX3	Chief Executive's	Democratic Services	Strengthening Democratic Services capacity to assist with policy advice, support and development.	50				

Ref	Directorate		Pressure	£000	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	2029-30
CEX4	Chief Executive's	Legal Services	In the MTFS 2025-2029 additional revenue funding was granted for the appointment of a dedicated S106 officer and an assistant in the Communities Directorate. The establishment of an Infrastructure Management Board to develop and implement an Infrastructure Management Plan has also been agreed in principle. The purpose behind these actions is to ensure the Council obtains maximum benefit from S106 funding, particularly as the Replacement Local Development Plan (RLDP) will generate around £155 million in S106 income over the course of the plan period. The implication is that there will be a greater demand on legal advice on S106s going forward and therefore additional revenue funding will be required over and above the current budget for Legal Services to meet this work in-house.	65				
CEX5	Chief Executive's	Human Resources	Permanent funding for additional resource to ensure we meet our mandatory pension reporting requirements that have significantly changed in recent years due to greater reporting requirement for both Teachers and LGPS with separate monthly returns. There is also additional work following the McCloud ruling.	81				
CEX6	Chief Executive's	Human Resources	Previous savings against the Learning & Development were mitigated by vacancies that now need to be filled to ensure we meet operational payroll deadlines.	57				
CEX7	Chief Executive's	Transformation	Following the outcome of the Panel Performance Assessment, the development of a multi-skilled transformation team to take forward transformation across the Council, to progress change at pace, leading to deliverable savings in the medium to longer term.	500				
CW1	Council Wide	Capital Financing	Revenue Funding to meet the costs of unsupported borrowing, to support the capital programme, not least the Sustainable Learning for Communities Programme and capital expenditure for communities.		500	500	500	
Total Budget Pressures				8,135	2,343	2,362	0	
TOTAL ALL BUDGET PRESSURES					9,194	2,343	2,362	0
TOTAL PRESSURES								
					29	293	220	0
					1,322	0	0	0
					6,345	585	1,642	0
					415	965	0	0
					1,083	0	0	0
					0	500	500	0
					9,194	2,343	2,362	0

Budget Reduction Proposals 2026-27 to 2029-30

APPENDIX B

Ref.	Budget Reduction Proposal	Impact, including on 5 Ways of Working as set out in the Well-being of Future Generations Act	Budget 2025-26 £'000	Total Budget Reduction 2026-2030 as % of 2025-26 Budget	2025-26 Budget Reductions £'000	Proposed 2026-27 £'000	Proposed 2027-28 £'000	Proposed 2028-29 £'000	Proposed 2029-30 £'000
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RAG STATUS KEY

RED	Proposals not fully developed/include high delivery risk incl. e.g. consultation
AMBER	Proposal in development but includes delivery risk
GREEN	Proposal developed and deliverable

EDUCATION, EARLY YEARS AND YOUNG PEOPLE

EEYYP1	Review of Home to School Transport	The new Home to School Transport Policy was implemented on 1 September 2025. The Budget reduction proposal was split over two financial years. The efficiency savings are ongoing and contracts have been adjusted to take into account the change of eligibility of pupils.	10,892	4%	675	417			
EEYYP2	Efficiencies in Catering Budget	The efficiency saving will be met through a reduction in the Catering Service's core budget across a number of areas, including non-staffing costs, procurement etc. Little impact is envisaged on front line services.	£5.082m gross budget	6%		300			
Total Education, Early Years and Young People Directorate						717	0	0	0

SOCIAL SERVICES AND WELLBEING

SSW1	Achieve better value for money by Cabinet considering a recommendation to extend the Healthy living partnership	On 22nd October 2024 Cabinet agreed to the proposed extension of the term of the Healthy Living partnership agreement with GLL/ HALO . Officers for the Council have since agreed the terms of the deed of variation and wording of the applicable procurement notices with GLL/HALO. The completed deed of variation is awaiting to be published as per the required procurement notices. The extension of the Healthy Living partnership provides certainty on service delivery and an opportunity for the reprofiling of service and management fee.	£1.175m (Management Fee)	17%			200		
SSW2	Redevelop the indoor bowls arena space and explore redevelopment for other purposes that offer increased income generation	The operation of the indoor bowls hall at Bridgend Life Centre generates operating costs that are difficult to cover based on the seasonal usage by the indoor bowls club. Any changes to indoor bowling would not be popular and may have a negative impact on the Council's wellbeing goals. The development of the wellbeing hub inside the bowls hall has improved usage by downsizing the number of bowling rinks already. With investment there may be possibilities for seasonal increased income generation. Potential need for alternative community venue for indoor bowls.	£1.175m (Management Fee)	2%	10	10	10		

Budget Reduction Proposals 2026-27 to 2029-30

APPENDIX B

Ref. Page 11	Budget Reduction Proposal	Impact, including on 5 Ways of Working as set out in the Well-being of Future Generations Act	Budget 2025-26 £'000	Total Budget Reduction 2026-2030 as % of 2025-26 Budget	2025-26 Budget Reductions £'000	Proposed 2026-27 £'000	Proposed 2027-28 £'000	Proposed 2028-29 £'000	Proposed 2029-30 £'000
SSW3	Achieve better value for money by Cabinet considering a recommendation to explore an agency model for the Healthy Living Partnership	Recent changes to legislation mean that Local Authorities (LAs) do not have to charge VAT on leisure activities so could engage a company to act in an agency capacity and therefore save the irrecoverable VAT. Implementation of an agency model as part of the Healthy Living partnership would allow HALO to collect income on behalf of the local authority so income remains 'non-business', which would mean HALO would not have to pay irrecoverable VAT on expenditure. The council would need to seek independent advice to understand the risks associated with the agency model.	£1.175m (Management Fee)	17%		200			
SSW4	Business efficiencies in support services through reviewing structures in business support, performance and commissioning.	The commissioning team is at full capacity with all colleagues on permanent contracts, so any MTFS saving / restructure will result in redundancy costs. The team are also driving forward key transformational change linked to MTFS savings, so any reduction on capacity will impact our ability to deliver targeted savings elsewhere in the MTFS. There is also a risk that we will not be able to meet essential requirements of the newly implemented WG Code of Practice for commissioning care and support, nor our own internal Contract Procedure Rules, where there is a risk that tenders cannot be undertaken within required timescales. Business support has been restructured to provide a support office model which ensures that statutory minutes linked to safeguarding are completed and distributed in a timely manner and to ensure social work tasks are carried out by support officers, thus maximising the amount of time that social workers spend with children, adults, families and carers. Reduction in this resource will increase the administrative burden on social work staff. Any reduction in the performance team will impact on the ability to complete statutory performance returns. There is a high probability reductions in these teams will result in compulsory redundancies.	2,730	5%	129	129			
SSW5	Adult Social Care Placements - Review the level of support provided within supported living and residential placements across ASC to ensure that we focus on people's strengths and maximise their independence.	As well as 'right sizing' of support we will also 'step down' where it is possible from residential placements to more independent options such as Supported Living and 'Shared Lives.' The delivery of these savings will only be achieved if there is permanent funding secured for the commissioning for complex needs team. It is important that they are focussed on delivering improved outcomes for individuals by supporting more independent living.	40,522	1%		370			
SSW6	Review the levels of support provided through direct payments for all adult groups to ensure that we focus on people's strengths, maximise their independence and reduce their reliance on formal care in line with direct payments policy.	The delivery of these savings will only be achieved if there is permanent funding secured for the commissioning for complex needs team. It is important that they are focussed on delivering improved outcomes for individuals by supporting more independent living.	6,313	4%		250			
SSW7	Day Service Placements - Review the day opportunity placements we commission with independent providers for people with a learning disability and re-provide this within our in-house services.	It is important that there is a positive, outcome focussed, progressive offer from in-house services which maximises independence and supports individuals to achieve their personal outcomes. This should also represent better value for money.	648	8%		50			

Budget Reduction Proposals 2026-27 to 2029-30

APPENDIX B

Ref. Page	Budget Reduction Proposal	Impact, including on 5 Ways of Working as set out in the Well-being of Future Generations Act	Budget 2025-26 £'000	Total Budget Reduction 2026-2030 as % of 2025-26 Budget	2025-26 Budget Reductions £'000	Proposed 2026-27 £'000	Proposed 2027-28 £'000	Proposed 2028-29 £'000	Proposed 2029-30 £'000
1 SSW8	Residential and Non Residential Charging - In line with Fairer Charging regulations, apply a 10% increase in both residential and non-residential charges so we continue to move towards full cost recovery.	As any charges levied are in line with Welsh Government Fairer Charging Regulations the impact on individuals is mitigated. The increase is in line with the MTFS principle to move towards full cost recovery across all service areas.	-10,186	-2%		232			
	Total Social Services and Wellbeing Directorate					1,041	410	0	0

COMMUNITIES

COM1	Review of cleaning specifications and frequencies on BCBC Operational assets.	Will impact cleaning standards and visibility of cleaning frequencies but change is considered feasible. Will need to review cleaning staff numbers and potential for redundancies however aim will be to implement changes through staff redeployment and recruitment changes across the wider cleaning contract thus avoiding redundancy issues.	308	11%	35	35			
COM2	Further review of cyclical servicing and maintenance contracts dialling back maintenance items to safety critical and statutory compliance only.	Reduction of cyclical maintenance activity counter productive for long term asset operation. Potential for reduction in Business Support staff as a result of the reduction in cyclical orders although savings to Business Support already form part of current MTFS.	1,452	3%	45	40			
COM3	Increase income across the commercial property portfolio	Change will take time to implement and require additional surveyor resource over time.	1,626	1%	15	15			
COM4	Increase fees on Bereavement services, i.e. burial charges by 10%	Income target has been based on historic income levels achieved and the application of a 10% increase to current charges. There is a risk to achieving the income target if there is a reduction in burials compared with the last two years if they return to pre-pandemic levels, or if relatives seek alternative services from neighbouring authorities.	Income budget £679K	10%		68			
COM5	Reduce the budget available for the Climate Emergency Response Programme, including Ultra Low Emission Vehicles (ULEV) implementation	The Climate Emergency Programme will have to be remodelled. This will impact on the Welsh Government's net zero 2030 target and will now require additional grant funding from external sources or joint working with partners to achieve our ambitious targets.	414	12%		50			
COM6	Reduce available property maintenance budgets in Corporate Landlord by up to 10% per asset	Risk to safety and statutory building compliance. Reduction of maintenance activity counter productive for long term asset operation. This reduction would be limited to assets where non essential maintenance items can be removed. Will have a resulting negative affect on teams delivering maintenance functions with reduction in volume of orders, but these reductions have been taken previously and could be taken again if required	1,501	7%		100			
COM7	Reduction in Traffic & Transportation Budget with relation to the provision of Car Parking	This saving could be realised by looking to increase the opening hours at the Rhiw Car Park to encourage use during the night time economy, which could increase fee income and reduce operating costs by moving to a pay & display operation.	1,341	7%		100			
	Total Communities Directorate					408	0	0	0

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CHIEF EXECUTIVES

112	CEX1	Review provision of the CCTV service.	This is a non statutory service, provided by the Council, the main benefit of which is felt by other public sector bodies. The saving will be achieved by requesting contributions from South Wales Police or the Community Safety Partnership, or by reducing the specification of live coverage.	462	54%	250			
		Total Chief Executive's Directorate				250	0	0	0

	GRAND TOTAL REDUCTIONS					2,416	410	0	0
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ESTIMATED BUDGET REDUCTION REQUIREMENT (MOST LIKELY) 2,416 10,349 10,122 9,884

REDUCTION SHORTFALL					0	9,939	10,122	9,884
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832	0	0	0
1,106	0	0	0
478	410	0	0
2,416	410	0	0

WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS (WALES) ACT 2015 ASSESSMENT

Project Description (key aims): Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2026-27 to 2029-30	
Section 1	Complete the table below to assess how well you have applied the 5 ways of working.
Long-term	<p>1. How does your project / activity balance short-term need with the long-term and planning for the future?</p> <p>The development of the MTFS aims to balance short-term needs in terms of meeting savings targets, while safeguarding the ability to meet longer-term objectives. It provides a financial basis for decision making and aims to ensure that the Council's finances can be as healthy as they can be for future generations. It does this by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outlining the impact of a number of different funding scenarios (Best, Most Likely and Worst) to provide an element of flexibility to the Council. • Adhering to a clear set of MTFS principles and annual budget principles that drive expenditure decisions. • Ensuring that the majority of savings are generated from making smarter use of resources with front line service reductions kept to a minimum and only as a last resort. • The development of a 10 year capital programme which reflects the Council's affordability in terms of capital receipts and borrowing and investment in capital schemes that support the Council's well-being objectives and benefits the County Borough over a longer period. • Protecting front line services as far as possible.
Prevention	<p>2. How does your project / activity put resources into preventing problems occurring or getting worse?</p> <p>The MTFS attempts to balance investment in preventative measures against costs of reacting to unanticipated situations in statutory services. Each budget reduction proposal is weighed in terms of the impact on other areas of the Council, on the public and on the Well-being of Future Generations. Where a budget cut in one area of non-statutory prevention would lead to increased costs in another, this is not considered to be good financial management. A number of budget pressures target investment in preventative services, and budget reductions are achieved through remodelling of existing service provision to prevent more costly long term pressures. In addition, the Council's capital programme targets significant investment in refurbishing or replacing highways, buildings and other infrastructure to prevent longer term maintenance costs.</p>

Integration	<p>3. How does your project / activity deliver economic, social, environmental & cultural outcomes together?</p> <p>The Medium Term Financial Strategy is closely aligned to the Council's Corporate Plan, with explicit links between resources and well-being objectives. The MTFS has been guided by its well-being objectives. The development of the Corporate Plan and MTFS are both the responsibility of Cabinet and the Corporate Management Board.</p>
Collaboration	<p>4. How does your project / activity involve working together with partners (internal and external) to deliver well-being objectives?</p> <p>A number of budget reduction proposals are achievable through inter-agency working, with the Third Sector, Social Enterprises, other local authorities and partners. These include joint services across local authorities, and with the Health Service, and new models of working internally to provide more resilient services. A number of services already collaborate with other partners and these continue to improve performance whilst operating with reducing resources.</p>
Involvement	<p>5. How does your project / activity involve stakeholders with an interest in achieving the well-being goals? How do those stakeholders reflect the diversity of the area?</p> <p>We will be undertaking our annual budget consultation prior to the final budget being presented to Cabinet and Council at the end of February. The aim of the consultation will be to seek views on the priority areas for residents, in order to enable us to review and set a balanced budget. It is recognised that budget planning for 2026-27 continues to be challenging, and that the Council is facing even more demand and cost pressures than experienced in previous years, as a result of the global economic circumstances arising from the continuing cost of living crisis and economic background.</p> <p>The results will be collated and considered by Cabinet in order to further inform final decisions on the MTFS.</p>

Section 2 Assess how well your project / activity will result in multiple benefits for our communities and contribute to the national well-being goals		
Description of the Well-being goals	How will your project / activity deliver benefits to our communities under the national well-being goals?	Is there any way to maximise the benefits or minimise any negative impacts to our communities (and the contribution to the national well-being goals)?

<p>A prosperous Wales</p> <p>An innovative, productive and low carbon society which recognises the limits of the global environment and therefore uses resources efficiently and proportionately (including acting on climate change); and which develops a skilled and well-educated population in an economy which generates wealth and provides employment opportunities, allowing people to take advantage of the wealth generated through securing decent work.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved educational outcomes for children and young people leading to a well-educated and skilled population to meet future skills needs. • Improve future outcomes for young people including educational attainment, cohesive safe communities are more attractive and easier places to do business. • Increase productivity, employment and skills. Encourage a lower carbon economy. 	<p>The majority of savings will be generated from making smarter use of resources with front line service reductions kept to a minimum and only as a last resort.</p> <p>The MTFS is aligned with the Corporate Plan to achieve the Council's current well-being objectives:</p> <p>Funding is targeted in line with these priorities and in line with the 13 MTFS Principles.</p>
<p>A resilient Wales</p> <p>A nation which maintains and enhances a biodiverse natural environment with healthy functioning ecosystems that support social, economic and ecological resilience and the capacity to adapt to change (for example climate change).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Break long term cycles to secure better outcomes for people and communities. • Stronger individuals and communities are more resilient to change. • Communities place a greater value on their environment and more people get involved in local issues and recognise the importance of green space in wellbeing and as a prevention factor. • Healthy active people in resilient communities, volunteering, keeping young people in the local area, reducing travel to work, increased use and awareness of green spaces. 	<p>The impact on local communities will be monitored through the wide range of services that will continue to be provided by the Council or its partners.</p>

A healthier Wales A society in which people's physical and mental well-being is maximised and in which choices and behaviours that benefit future health are understood.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved future physical and mental well-being, by reducing health harming behaviours. • Promote more involvement in communities to benefit mental health, social and physical activity. • Focus on healthy lifestyles and workplaces, increased income linked to health. 	The impact on local communities will be monitored through the wide range of services that will continue to be provided by the Council or its partners.
A more equal Wales A society that enables people to fulfil their potential no matter what their background or circumstances (including their socio economic background and circumstances).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helping all children and young people to reach their full potential, by improving their early years experiences and ensure access to information to help make informed decisions. Improving outcomes for teenage parents and their children. • Recognising that communities are becoming more diverse. Addressing barriers that some groups have in feeling part of communities. • Address income inequality and health inequality, focus on disability, older people and other equality groups. Focus on increasing income and reducing the skills gap. 	The impact on local communities will be monitored through the wide range of services that will continue to be provided by the Council or its partners.
A Wales of cohesive communities Attractive, viable, safe and well-connected communities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased number of confident secure young people playing an active positive role in their communities. 	The impact on local communities will be monitored through the wide range of services that will continue to be provided by the Council or its partners.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Healthy active people in resilient communities, keeping young people and skills in the local area, tackling poverty as a barrier to engagement in community life a supportive network, developed through initiatives at work, can help to support staff through challenging times in their lives. 	
<p>A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language</p> <p>A society that promotes and protects culture, heritage and the Welsh language, and which encourages people to participate in the arts, and sports and recreation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural settings provide support sensitive to our increasingly diverse communities and help us identify opportunities to increase the number of Welsh speakers. • Importance of culture and language as a focus for communities coming together. • Bringing more people from different cultures together. More people identifying with their community. • Encourage take up of sports, arts and recreation initiatives through the workplace. • Ensure Welsh culture and language are a part of this. Welsh language skills are beneficial to businesses and in increasing demand. 	<p>Compliance with the Welsh Language act and specific Welsh Language Standards will be monitored as part of the annual report.</p>
<p>A globally responsible Wales</p> <p>A nation which, when doing anything to improve the economic, social,</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diverse, confident communities are resilient to change. Promotes a 	<p>The impact on local communities will be monitored through the wide range of</p>

<p>environmental and cultural well-being of Wales, takes account of whether doing such a thing may make a positive contribution to global well-being.</p>	<p>better knowledge of different cultures and a better knowledge of the local environment.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Healthy lifestyles include cultural activities that promote understanding of diversity of communities, different cultures, races. Promote apprenticeships to people from different backgrounds. 	<p>services that will continue to be provided by the Council or its partners.</p>
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Section 3 Will your project / activity affect people or groups of people with protected characteristics? Explain what will be done to maximise any positive impacts or minimise any negative impacts			
Protected characteristics	Will your project / activity have any positive impacts on those with a protected characteristic?	Will your project / activity have any negative impacts on those with a protected characteristic?	Is there any way to maximise any positive impacts or minimise any negative impacts?
Age:	Unknown - The impact, positive or negative, will depend on the nature of the service delivered, the specific budget reduction proposed or budget pressure funded and the service user.		This will vary according to the service provided and will be considered through individual Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs).
Gender reassignment:	See above		This will vary according to the service provided and will be considered through individual EIAs.
Marriage or civil partnership:	See above		This will vary according to the service provided and will be considered through individual EIAs.
Pregnancy or maternity:	See above		This will vary according to the service provided and will be considered through individual EIAs.
Race:	See above		This will vary according to the service provided and will be considered through individual EIAs.

Religion or Belief:	See above	This will vary according to the service provided and will be considered through individual EIAs.
Race:	See above	This will vary according to the service provided and will be considered through individual EIAs.
Sex:	See above	This will vary according to the service provided and will be considered through individual EIAs.
Welsh Language:	See above	This will vary according to the service provided and will be considered through individual EIAs.

Section 4 Identify decision meeting for Project/activity e.g. Cabinet, Council or delegated decision taken by Executive members and/or Chief Officers

Cabinet	
Compiling Officers Name:	Deborah Exton
Compiling Officers Job Title:	Deputy Head of Finance
Date Completed:	30/11/2025

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GLOSSARY OF FINANCIAL TERMS

Aggregate External Finance (AEF)	Aggregate external finance (AEF) represents the support for local revenue spending from the Welsh Government and is made up of formula grant. Formula grant includes the revenue support grant (RSG), and the distributable part of non-domestic rates (NDR). Amounts are determined annually and in advance of each new financial year as part of the Local Government Financial Settlement.
Appropriations	Transfer of funding to or from a specific account e.g. earmarked reserve.
Assets	Any item of value owned by an entity (e.g. buildings, vehicles). Assets can be classed as Non-current or capital assets where the asset has a useful life of more than one year (e.g. buildings, vehicles), or a current asset which includes cash or other assets which can reasonably be expected to be converted to cash in the normal course of business including stocks, debtors etc.
Band D	Dwellings are assigned to different council tax bands (A to I) based on their value. Band D is considered the median band. Council tax can be measured in 'band D' terms. Band D has historically been used as the standard for comparing council tax levels between and across local authorities.
Budget	A statement expressing the Council's policies and service levels in financial terms for a particular financial year. In its broadest sense it includes both the revenue budget and the capital programme and any authorised amendments to them.
Budget Head	For a particular service activity, the level of detail at which revenue or capital budgets are approved by the Council, whether in the Budget Book, the latest approved capital programme or as a result of supplementary estimates approved for the budget year.
Budget Pressure	See 'Pressures'
Budget Reductions	Budget reductions are measures to reduce the net budget of the Council. They can be achieved in a number of ways, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * reducing or removing the spend on the service eg reducing the number of staff, providing less of a service. * generating more income to offset costs of a service eg moving to full cost recovery. Both have the same impact in terms of reducing the net budget required to run that service.
Business Rates	See "Non-Domestic Rates"
Budget Requirement	The Budget Requirement is the amount of expenditure that is funded by council tax and general support from central government, i.e. revenue support grant and redistributed non-domestic rates.
Budget Virement	See Virement

Capital Programme	The Council's financial plan covering capital schemes and expenditure proposals for the current year and a number of future years. It also includes estimates of the capital resources available to finance the programme.
Capital Expenditure	Spending on non-current assets (buildings, equipment and land) intended to benefit future accounting periods or spending that increases the capacity, economy, efficiency or lifespan of an existing asset.
Capital Receipts	Capital receipts are the money councils receive from asset sales, the use of which is normally restricted to funding other capital expenditure or paying off debt. The receipts cannot usually be used to fund revenue costs.
Contingency	An amount of money that is included in a budget to cover potential events that are not specifically accounted for in the specific cost estimate.
Council Tax	System of local taxation introduced in April 1993. A property tax levied on homes determined by placement of residences within 9 valuation bands (A-I). There are exemptions for certain types of property and discounts for people in certain circumstances.
Council Tax Base	The estimated number of chargeable properties, expressed as the equivalent number of 'Band D' properties in the Council's area. The Council is required to annually advise the Welsh Government of its Council Tax Base (as at 31st October), which they use in the Local Government Financial Settlement, and to allow the Council, South Wales Police Authority and Town / Community Councils to calculate the following year's Council Tax charges.
Council Tax Reduction	Council Tax Reduction (CTR) provides assistance for those on low incomes with a liability to pay council tax
Council Wide Budgets	These include budgets, provisions and services that are Council wide, and are not managed by an individual directorate.
CPI	The main inflation rate used in the UK is the CPI (Consumer Price Index). The Chancellor of the Exchequer bases the UK inflation target on the CPI. The CPI inflation target is currently set at 2%. The CPI differs from the CPIH in that CPI excludes housing costs.
Deficit budget - schools	A school deficit budget occurs when a school's planned or actual spending exceeds its planned or actual income for a given financial year. This means the school has more expenses than income, leading to a negative financial balance.
Earmarked Reserves	An authority may choose to earmark reserves, putting aside resources to deliver specific longer-term objectives – for example, the replacement of vehicles, plant and equipment. The purpose and usage of each earmarked reserve should be clearly set out. They can only be used for one-off purposes, not recurrent / ongoing spend.
Fees and Charges	Income raised from making charges for the provision of services such as licence permits, car parking and planning fees.
Financial year	The period of twelve months commencing on 1 April

Fiscal	Relates to public finance, especially taxation, public revenues and public debt.
Gross Revenue Budget	The Gross Revenue Budget includes all funding available to the authority, not just Revenue Support Grant, Non-Domestic Rates and Council Tax, but also other specific grants, fees, charges and other contributions that the Council receives.
Hypothesized Funding	Ring-fenced funding, which must be spent on particular services or initiatives
Inflation	The rate of increase in prices over a given period of time.
Insurance	Insurance is one of the ways that the councils manage the risk of losses.
Levy	A levy is an amount of money a local authority is compelled to include in its budget on behalf of another organisation – for example, the Fire and Rescue Authority, Coroner's Service etc. This does not appear as a separate item on the council tax bill like a precept would.
Local Government Settlement	The annual allocation of funding from the Welsh Government to local authorities.
Medium Term Financial Strategy	The MTFS is a rolling financial plan that is updated annually by local authorities. Typically, this will include planned expenditure for three to five years.
Multiplier	The multiplier is a figure set by Welsh Government each year. It determines how much you pay in Business (Non-Domestic) Rates by applying it to the rateable value of your property.
Net Revenue Budget	The Net Revenue Budget is the budget after fees, charges, other income and specific grants are taken into account. It is funded from the Revenue Support Grant, Non-Domestic Rates and Council Tax.
Nominal Value	Nominal value does not take into account the effect of inflation, it is an absolute monetary value.
Non-Domestic Rates	Also known as 'business rates': a form of taxation on commercial and business properties (i.e. non-domestic properties). Business rates are based on the property's rateable value which is set by the Valuation Office Agency. Your local council calculates your business rates bill using a 'multiplier', set by Welsh Government. Non-Domestic Rates are collected by each Council for properties in their area. Each Council then receives a share of the total available as part of its annual funding, based upon its total adult population.
Non-Recurrent	One-off income, expenditure or savings.
Outturn	Expenditure actually incurred.
Over spend	When referring to expenditure the actual expenditure incurred is greater than the budget. When referring to income the actual income achieved is less than the budget.
Precept	This is the Council Tax collected by the Council on behalf of the Town and Community Councils and the South Wales Police Authority
Pressures	A budget pressure is an increase in cost that is generally beyond the control of the service or organisation.
Prudential Borrowing	See 'Unsupported (Prudential) Borrowing'
Real Value	Real value is after taking into account the value of inflation.

Recurrent	Ongoing income, expenditure or savings
Reserves	These are balances in hand that have accumulated over previous years and are held for defined (earmarked reserves) and general (general reserves) purposes. Councils are required to regularly review the level and purpose of their reserves and to take account of the advice of the Chief Finance Officer.
Revenue	A term used to describe the day-to-day costs of running Council services e.g. salaries, utility costs for buildings, cleaning, transport related costs, food, general supplies e.g. consumables such as paper, stationery etc.
Revenue Support Grant (RSG)	The Revenue Support Grant (RSG) represents the major element in the support for local revenue spending that the Council receives from the Welsh Government. Amounts are determined annually and in advance of each new financial year as part of the Local Government Financial Settlement, and form a part of the Aggregate External Finance (AEF), along with a share of Non-Domestic Rates.
Revised Budget	This is constructed from the original budget for the year and movements to adjust for known under or overspending within the overall cash limit for the service.
Risk Management	A planned and systematic approach, involving culture, structure and processes, to provide assurance that the Council's significant risks are identified, evaluated and managed effectively.
Section 106 Agreements	Section 106 agreements, also known as planning obligations, are agreements between developers and local planning authorities that are negotiated as part of a condition of planning consent. The Town and Country Planning Act 1990 enables local authorities to negotiate contributions towards a range of infrastructure and services, such as community facilities, public open space, transport improvements and/or affordable housing. The funding received is referred to as Section 106 funding.
Section 151 Officer	Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972 requires every local authority to make arrangements for the proper administration of their financial affairs and requires one officer to be nominated to take responsibility for the administration of those affairs.
Specific government grants	Grants given to local authorities by the government to support specific activities or projects. There are specific terms and conditions associated with spending and accounting for these grants.
Standard Spending Assessments (SSAs)	Standard Spending Assessments (SSAs) are notional assessments of each council needs to spend on revenue services, calculated each year by the Welsh Government for use in the distribution of the Revenue Support Grant (RSG). SSAs are calculated prior to the year to which they relate using principles established by the Welsh Government, which encompass the demographic, physical and social characteristics of each area, as reflected by a range of indicators.

	An authority's SSA is derived as a funding mechanism to distribute the RSG, it is not and should not be viewed as a target level of expenditure for an authority. The RSG funding is un-hypothesized, SSAs are not meant to be prescriptive in any way, and therefore authorities will spend at levels above and below their SSA according to decisions that have been made locally.
Supported Borrowing	A source of funding from the Welsh Government to finance general capital expenditure. Allocations are issued annually to each local authority as part of the Local Government Financial Settlement. The Welsh Government includes an element within the Revenue Support Grant to fund the cumulative costs of this borrowing that is classed as supported borrowing.
Taxbase	This is the number of Band D equivalent dwellings in a local authority area after taking into account any discounts, premiums and exemptions. An authority's tax base is taken into account when it calculates its council tax.
Treasury Management	The management of the authority's cash flows, its borrowings and its investments, the management of the associated risks, and the pursuit of the optimum performance or return consistent with those risks.
Treasury Management Strategy (TMS)	The strategy for the Treasury Management activities to be adopted for a particular financial year. The strategy needs to be flexible enough to allow the Head of Finance to respond appropriately to changing circumstances during the course of the year to the best advantage of the Council.
Under spend	When referring to expenditure the actual expenditure incurred is less than the budget. When referring to income the actual income achieved exceeds the budget.
Un-hypothesized Funding	Funding allocated without restrictions on how it should be spent.
Unsupported (Prudential) Borrowing	Borrowing to fund capital expenditure which exceeds Welsh Government support in the Revenue Support Grant. Councils can choose to fund capital expenditure through Unsupported (Prudential) Borrowing so long as they demonstrate that borrowing is prudent, sustainable and affordable, as the ongoing revenue costs of unsupported borrowing will still need to be met from available resources.
Unusable Reserves	Unusable reserves are established for specific legal or accounting purposes and cannot be used to fund future expenditure.
Usable Reserves	Usable reserves are referred to as cash-backed reserves that can be used to fund future expenditure. Some reserves however will be subject to restrictions on their usage. These include Schools Reserves, Capital Grants Unapplied and Capital Receipts Reserves.
Value for Money	Broadly value for money is the extent to which objectives are achieved in relation to costs. It is about achieving the optimum

combination of costs and benefits to an organisation. Value for money is more formally defined as the relationship between economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

Economy is the price paid for what goes into providing a service. Efficiency is a measure of productivity – how much you get out in relation to what is put in.

Effectiveness is a measure of the impact achieved and can be quantitative or qualitative. Outcomes should be equitable across communities, so effectiveness measures should include aspects of equity.

Agenda Item 10

By virtue of paragraph(s) 14, 16 of Part 4 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

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