

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO CABINET

31 JANUARY 2017

REPORT OF THE CORPORATE RESOURCES AND IMPROVEMENT OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2017-18 to 2020-21 AND DRAFT BUDGET CONSULTATION PROCESS

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to present Cabinet with the findings and recommendations of the Corporate Resources and Improvement Overview and Scrutiny Committee in relation to:
- a) the findings of the Budget Research and Evaluation Panel (BREP) attached at Appendix A;
 - b) the responses from all the Overview & Scrutiny Committees in relation to Cabinet's draft budget proposals, attached at Appendix B.

2. Connection to the Corporate Improvement Objectives / Other Corporate Priorities

- 2.1 The improvement priorities identified in the Corporate Plan 2016-2020 have been embodied in the Overview & Scrutiny Forward Work Programmes. The amended Corporate Plan adopted by Council on 10 March 2016 formally set out the improvement priorities that the Council will seek to implement between 2016 and 2020. The Overview and Scrutiny Committees engage in review and development of plans, policy or strategies that support the Corporate Themes.

3. Background

- 3.1 In considering the challenges associated with continued budget reductions, Members of the 2013--14 BREP recognised the need for a 'whole Council' response to be adopted in managing anticipated cuts to services against a backdrop of increasing demand, public sector reform and the challenging financial outlook.
- 3.2 The BREP recommended that a Standing BREP be established to engage Members on budget proposals and to enable them to contribute community intelligence gained from their representative role towards shaping future service provision. This recommendation was endorsed by the Corporate Resources and Improvement Overview & Scrutiny Committee and by Cabinet as part of the 2013--14 draft budget consultation process.
- 3.3 It was agreed that each Scrutiny Committee would nominate two members to sit on the Standing BREP. The Panel for 2016-17 consisted of:

Cllr M Reeves (Chair of BREP and Chair of Corporate Resources and Improvement)

Cllr J Spanswick (Chair of Community Environment and Leisure)

Cllr David Sage (Chair of Adult Social Care)

Cllr N Clarke (Chair of Partnerships and Governance)

Cllr P Foley (Chair of Children and Young People)

Cllr C Green

Cllr Ella Dodd

Cllr Ken Watts

Cllr Pam Davies

Cllr Gareth Phillips

3.4 The primary purpose of the approach was :

- To achieve consensus on the direction of the budget over the life of the Medium Term Financial Strategy.
- To achieve a detailed overview and assessment of the budget proposals where the expertise and knowledge pertaining to each Committee service area contributes to a corporate understanding and appreciation of the draft budget proposals.
- To assist the Council to develop a budget for -2017-18 that aims to meet the needs of the communities of Bridgend County Borough.
- To facilitate firmer understanding of the budget setting process and the draft proposals in order to assist the Committees in making informed comments, constructive challenge and recommendations to Cabinet as part of the budget consultation process.

Methodology

3.5 The Standing BREP has met on six separate occasions and examined by means of semi-structured interviews with Directors and Officers the Budget Strategy for the Council as a whole.

3.6 The Panel also determined to focus their work on a few specific areas to examine in detail in order to assist with informing the budget proposals and also to ensure that there was no duplication between the work of the Panel and that of the individual Committees.

3.7 The three areas chosen were:

1. Collaboration with Town and Community Councils
2. The 1% proposed efficiency saving for schools
3. The proposed Community Action Fund

3.8 Detailed information was requested from Officers to inform discussions regarding the rationale behind the early draft proposals, their impact and how they linked to the Corporate priorities.

3.9 As well as meeting with the Chief Executive early on in the Panel's meetings, the BREP also invited the Cabinet Member – Resources/Deputy Leader to attend each meeting to be part of the BREP process.

3.10 Further to this, the Panel determined to invite external invitees such as Town Clerks and representative Headteachers to attend specific meetings and provide their perspectives on relevant draft proposals.

4. Current Situation / Proposal

4.1 The Corporate Resources and Improvement Overview & Scrutiny Committee considered the findings of the BREP on 17 January 2017 to determine whether the recommendations should be forwarded to Cabinet as part of the budget consultation process.

4.2 The Committee further commented that all Equality Impact Assessments should take into account the accumulative impact of budget cuts on specific services, groups and individuals.

4.3 The Committee accepted the recommendations and comments from both the BREP and the five Scrutiny Committees and agreed to submit them to Cabinet subject to a series of amendments which have been incorporated in the Appendices.

5. Effects on the Policy Framework and Procedure Rules

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

6. Equalities Impact Assessment

6.1 The draft budget proposals 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 the proposals contained within the appendices, 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.

6.2 All the savings proposals have been reviewed independently and a full Equality Impact Assessment will be undertaken before the final recommendations are made concerning next year's revenue budget.

7. Financial Implications

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

8. Recommendations

8.1 Cabinet is requested to consider the recommendations of the Corporate Resources and Improvement Overview & Scrutiny Committee, in response to the Medium Term Financial Strategy 2017-18 to 2020-21 and the Draft Budget Consultation Process.

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25 January 2017

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Background Documents:

Bridgend County Borough Council Constitution
Part II of the Local Government Act 2000: Executive Arrangements