

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO CABINET

30 JANUARY 2018

REPORT OF THE CORPORATE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2018-19 to 2021-22 AND DRAFT BUDGET CONSULTATION PROCESS

The Chairperson has accepted the following item as urgent in accordance with paragraph 2.4 (e) of the Cabinet Procedure Rules within the Constitution, in order to enable sufficient time for Cabinet to consider both the findings of the Budget Research and Evaluation Panel (BREP), together with the responses of each of the Subject Overview and Scrutiny Committees on the draft Budget proposals contained within the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS).

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to present Cabinet with the findings and recommendations of the Corporate 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 Subject 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 key improvement objectives identified in the Corporate Plan 2016–2020 have been embodied in the Overview & Scrutiny Forward Work Programmes. The Corporate Improvement Objectives were adopted by Council on 1 March 2017 and formally set out the improvement objectives 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 At the meeting held on 7 August 2012, the Corporate Resources & Improvement Overview and Scrutiny Committee approved the approach for the proposed 2013-14 Budget Consultation Research and Evaluation Panel (BREP).
- 3.2 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.

- 3.3 The 2013-14 Panel therefore recommended that a Standing BREP be established to engage members on budget proposals as well as to enable members to feed in community intelligence gained from their representative role and to engage in shaping future service provision. This recommendation was endorsed by both the Corporate Resources and Improvement Overview & Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet as part of the 2013/14 draft budget consultation process.
- 3.4 Under the new Scrutiny Committee structure the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee (COSC) has the overall responsibility for budget monitoring throughout the year. As such it was agreed at a meeting of Council in September 2017 that it would continue this role and appoint BREP from within its Members of the COSC.
- 3.5 The purpose of the Budget Research and Evaluation Panel was subsequently agreed as the following:
- To achieve consensus on the direction of the budget over the life of the medium term financial strategy.
 - To achieve a detailed overview and assessment of the budget proposals where the expertise and knowledge of each Committee contributes to a Corporate understanding and appreciation of the draft budget proposals;
 - To assist the Council to develop a budget for the forthcoming year that aims to meet the needs of the communities of Bridgend County Borough;
 - To facilitate firmer understanding of the budget setting process and the draft proposals in order to assist the Committees in making informed comments, constructive challenge or recommendations to Cabinet as part of the budget consultation process.
- 3.6 Each Subject Overview and Scrutiny Committee (SOSC) would continue to receive an individual set of Directorate Budget proposals to scrutinise in December, as has previously been the case. The comments and recommendations from each Committee would then be consolidated along with the BREP's comments into one report which would be presented to Cabinet.

4. Current Situation/Proposal

- 4.1 The Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered the findings of the BREP on 25 January 2018 to determine whether the recommendations should be forwarded to Cabinet as part of the budget consultation process.
- 4.2 When collating comments and conclusions of meetings during the BREP process this year, in addition to proposing recommendations in relation to the draft budget proposals 2018-19 to 2021-22 and the budget consultation process, the Panel have made several recommendations regarding future budget planning and also proposed recommendations to other forums within the Authority.

4.3 For ease of reference and to ensure there is a focus regarding the budget specific recommendations, Corporate have split the recommendations into separate appendices. They are set out as follows:

- A1 - Recommendations in relation to Medium Term Financial Strategy 2017-18 to 2020-21;
- A2 - Future Budget Planning Recommendations from BREP;
- A3 - Recommendations to other forums within the Authority.

4.4 The Committee accepted the recommendation and comments from both the BREP and the three Subject Overview and 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

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

Cabinet is requested to consider the recommendation of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee, in response to the Medium Term Financial Strategy 2018-19 to 2021-22 and the Draft Budget Consultation Process.

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Background Documents:

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