

CABINET RESPONSE TO CRI OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE ON BUDGET ISSUES

	BREP/Scrutiny Recommendation	Cabinet Response
	BREP Budget Recommendations	
1	It is recommended that Cabinet support the proposal to provide match funding for a strategic co-ordinator role between TCCs and the LA, to take forward joint working following clarification of sufficient uptake by TCCs.	This would need to be considered as part of an overall review and strategy moving forward aligned to policies such as community asset transfer, and consideration would also need to be given to ensuring that all relevant Council departments are resourced to respond to opportunities for joint working rather than just employing a coordinator, or in isolation such a post is likely to lead to increased expectations but potential frustration if they cannot be progressed. A review of roles and responsibilities of each party will be required.
2	The Panel recommend that the projected overspend for Social Services for 2017-18 that will roll over for 2018-19 should be made clearer in the final budget report to Council and Cabinet so that it is fully understood that their current projected budget savings for 2018-19 actually equate to around £2.2m, not the £350,000 it appears from the individual budget proposals.	The MTFS makes it clear that all overspending services need to make those savings to restore the budget to balance.
3	The Panel recommend that in order for the Festival of Learning event to be funded, it must evidence clear measureable outcomes towards raising education standards. The Panel further recommend that Scrutiny receive detail of this for information as well as specifics of what the teachers will provide at the event to offer more of an understanding of the structure and content of the event.	Cabinet has already accepted this approach as part of the budget pressure submission. Officers will ensure a report is available for Scrutiny by Friday 2 March 2018. The report will provide a summary of activity to date and a suite of projected outcomes.

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4	The Panel recommend that the Directorate pursue sponsorship from local businesses and Bridgend College to fund the Festival of Learning. The Panel recommend that schools select a broad range of pupil representation to partake in the event to ensure there is a variety of views being incorporated.	The issues of inclusivity and sponsorship to mitigate the costs have already been accepted by Cabinet as part of the initial budget pressure proposal, and Cabinet would thank scrutiny for endorsing this approach. There is a commitment to a broad range of pupil representation. Officers are currently working with Central South Consortium and Bridgend College with a view to reducing the cost of the week-long event. Local businesses have not, as yet, been approached re financial support. We will ensure that the views of learners from all schools (and the pupil referral unit) are used to inform the event.
5	The Panel applaud the leadership approach and innovation being introduced within the OAPS Directorate but recognise and recommend the need to be vigilant to that fact that further cuts in this area can have a significant impact on frontline services across the LA.	Cabinet accepts the recommendation.
BREP Future Budget Planning		
6	The Panel recommend that Corporate Leadership is enhanced to bring Directorates together and ensure collaboration within and across all Directorates. Members further proposed that future quarterly reviews through Corporate Performance Assessments look to incorporate Scrutiny representation.	Cabinet have agreed that scrutiny chairs attend CPA. This is to avoid duplication and to help scrutiny agenda planning complement the existing performance management regime. Collaboration within and between directorates is well developed as evidenced through things like the early help and safeguarding board (co-chaired by two directors and bringing services together), CPA (chaired by the Chief Executive and bringing all directors and heads of service together) and a number of corporate groupings that are populated with managers from across the organisation such as health and safety, web redesign etc. However this is something that we need to continue to develop further in order to keep supporting our goal of working as one council. The Chief Executive is reviewing the arrangements for senior management group development and is giving consideration to opportunities to strengthen corporate leadership through the senior management structure review.

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7	<p>The Panel recommend the need for the Authority to adopt a Corporate approach in relation to Home to School Transport maximising the LA's minibuses such as those used for day centres. It is proposed that this be supported by slightly amending the opening and closing times of day centres so that the buses can be available for school transport. Other aspects that could be considered include the exploration of whether school staff could transport children and young people instead of hiring independent drivers.</p>	<p>Much of this has been explored already and it is evident that there are significant operational and policy problems in trying to progress this. However, Cabinet will consider extending any existing fleet review into a whole Council review with the view to fully utilise the resource we have. Furthermore the balance between effort and resource required to implement change in this area needs to be proportionate to the savings that may be made. Members should note that we have, and continue to, direct our change resource to bigger targets such as social services remodelling, post-16 review and the digital programme.</p> <p>Specifically, day services have been subject to a recent review which has included changes to transport arrangements. Further changes incorporating schools is very complex however every opportunity will be taken to continue to maximise transport resources in the future.</p>
8	<p>The Panel recommend that there needs to be a cultural shift in the way the LA works with TCC with clear strategic leadership backed by Cabinet Support. As part of achieving the Corporate Priority 'Supporting a Successful Economy', there needs to be emphasis on maintaining neighbourhood services to help ensure attractiveness for future investment.</p>	<p>See response to Recommendation 1.</p>
9	<p>The Panel recommend that to ensure effective collaborative working between the LA and TCCs there needs to be a dedicated officer to drive it from the LA, similar to the role that is in place for CATs. The Panel propose also introducing Service Level Agreements between both parties to ensure the required support is in place.</p>	<p>See response to Recommendation 1.</p>

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10	The Panel recommend that a scoping exercise be undertaken to explore the possibility of TCCs buying in various services from the LA. This exercise needs to take into account the cost of TCCs buying directly from the LA compared with TCCs employing their own staff which would incorporate on-costs including training and health and safety.	See response to Recommendation 1.
11	The Panel recommend that TCCs be provided with an accurate, up to date detailed list of available assets before their precepts are set in November/December and ensure the list is maintained regularly to illustrate when assets are no longer available.	See response to Recommendation 1.
12	Members recommend that a definitive deadline be provided in relation to the Community Asset Transfer process outlining when the Council would no longer support the Asset or service.	Cabinet recognise that sometimes a more definitive deadline would be helpful in promoting Community Asset Transfer and are currently considering options with regard to a review of Parks and Playing Fields in particular.
13	The Panel recommend a review be undertaken to consider how other LAs within Wales work with the police in relation to community policing. Members propose that the LA look to adopt similar processes as the likes of Cardiff and Neath Port Talbot in relation to the roles and responsibilities between the Authority and the Police and also how they respond to instances such as lane clearance in un-adopted areas.	The Leader and Chief Executive will explore this suggestion through their existing and regular liaison with the Police and Crime Commissioner, Chief Constable and local BCU command structure.

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14	<p>The Panel recommend that schools are encouraged to look at all aspects for savings and income generation such as halls and sports facilities etc, with detail of this included in their school plans. This will not only assist local communities but will also help minimise the impact of potential future budget savings possibly being introduced for schools in forthcoming years.</p>	<p>Cabinet recommend that BREP undertake a thorough review of all fees and charges to inform next year's MTFS.</p> <p>Schools are supported to exploit commercial opportunities wherever possible. That said, significant work has been undertaken by Bridgend and other local authorities in respect of income generation, and the outcomes have been variable. We will address this issue with Headteachers in future Bridgend Association of Secondary Headteacher and Primary Federation meetings.</p>
15	<p>With reference to income generation from schools facilities, Members recommend that a standardised fee programme is introduced and provided to head teachers as a guideline to proposed fees. This needs to take into account the charges of other local facilities within the County Borough to ensure they are competitive.</p>	<p>See response to Recommendation 14. Officer will discuss this recommendation with Headteacher colleagues and will develop a summary report to assist further exploration of this issue.</p>
16	<p>It is recommended that schools take account of the ongoing maintenance costs of their facilities when considering income generation and that the two are linked in school maintenance plans. This will ensure schools are taking into account long term planning for future replacement of such things as pitch surfaces.</p>	<p>Cabinet accepts the recommendation. Officer will work with schools to ensure they are aware of this requirement and maintenance plans are updated accordingly. This is a feature of the new corporate landlord model. The long term considerations of school based assets remain a partnership activity between schools and the council as the owner of these assets.</p>

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<p>17</p>	<p>Following discussion over the Schools Music Service and with reference to possible future budget pressures within schools, the Panel recommend that as the Music Service is a select service, that its allocated funding be removed in favour of retaining key school staff. The Panel further proposed that the funding be subsidised by the child’s parents, by way of means testing.</p> <p>The Panel further recommend that when the above proposal is considered the following points are taken into account:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What level of music service provision is mandatory; • What service provision is each school providing; • How many pupils are currently paying for music provision • Equality Impact Assessment. 	<p>The School Music Service has recently been reviewed and substantial savings have already been made. Parents currently subsidise through their “friends” organisation.</p> <p>Cabinet considers means testing to be detrimental to the children accessing the service from disadvantaged and lower-income backgrounds. Cabinet further considers that the administration of this testing would be significantly disproportionate to the cost of the service.</p>
<p>18</p>	<p>The Panel recognise that it is sometimes more straight forward to introduce change in some Directorates than others, however recommend that there needs to be more Transformational Leadership and culture change across the LA, thus ensuring that long term, realistic planning and change is clearly conveyed and understood by staff at all levels and that future needs, both budgetary and service, can be met.</p>	<p>The Corporate Management Board oversees a change programme that encompasses changes within individual directorates (Such as social services remodelling) and those that stretch across all directorates (such as the digital programme).</p> <p>The existing proposals for restructure within the Operational and Partnership Services Directorate are a component intended to bring together some of the key disciplines required to drive aspects of culture change such as communications and customer service. This direction of travel is to be built upon as part of the Chief Executive’s review of senior management structure.</p>

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19	The Panel recommend that a review be undertaken of how the budget is presented to ensure that Members and the public are able to fully understand the implications of the proposals being put forward. The Panel further propose that this review include the input of Members and consider how the budget is presented in other LAs.	Cabinet recommends that BREP undertake a review on the presentation of the budget in 2018/19
	Comments from Individual Overview and Scrutiny Committees	
	Subject Overview and Scrutiny Committee 1 Education and Family Support	
20	The Committee recommend that in order for Members to support the Festival of Learning proposed budget growth there needs to be clear objectives and outcomes in order to see what is going to be achieved from this one-off investment.	See response to recommendation 3 from BREP. Cabinet has already accepted this approach as part of the budget pressure submission. A report will be provided to Scrutiny by 2 March 2018 outlining proposed objectives and outcomes.
21	The Committee recommend that the Authority lobby Welsh Government to consider longer term budget planning to enable Local Authorities to better plan for the future and have security of funding for projects and priorities.	The WLGA has consistently over a long period of time worked with local authorities to lobby for long term budgets. Cabinet accepts the recommendation and will continue to lobby for this.

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22	<p>The Committee recommend that the Authority ensure that strong links are made between any future investment for schools and the current and future Local Development Plan with closer working relationships with all those involved. This is in line with the requirements of the Wellbeing and Future Generations (Wales) Act in terms of how decisions taken now should be taking account of the longer term impact on future generations.</p>	<p>Cabinet accepts the recommendation. Please note however that there are already strong working relationships between relevant officers in the planning department and in Education. The School Modernisation Team liaises closely with Planning and the housing development schedule is incorporated into the pupil projections for each school. Band B proposals are informed by knowledge of housing developments currently under construction and future planned developments. Officers will continue to work closely on this key issue. The Council is embarking on a full review of the LDP. This will be addressed within the bounds of the LDP process.</p> <p>Cabinet is confident that the LDP Steering Group will take on board these recommendations during the review.</p>
23	<p>The Committee recommend that early and serious consideration be given to the proposals for future Education cuts of a 1% efficiency saving from 2019-20 onwards including evidence of potential impact and how schools and the Local Authority can plan to minimise this impact on schools, staff and most importantly on pupil performance.</p>	<p>Cabinet seeks clarification on this recommendation, and would recommend that BREP considers this in-depth to inform next year's MTFS.</p> <p>Discussions are already underway with schools to ensure that they plan ahead. It is worth noting that 52.5% of schools are projecting a deficit balance at year end (with an overall school budget deficit of £1.16m). While further efficiency savings may be necessary, the impact of this proposal will be considered in full and brought forward for debate.</p>
	<p>Subject Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2 Social Services and Wellbeing</p>	
24	<p>Due to the issues in achieving income generation due to the Welsh Government cap of £70 per week for non-residential care, the Committee recommend that Cabinet lobby Welsh Government to consider the possibility of introducing a means tested cap that takes into account people who are able to pay supplementary monies."</p>	<p>This is current Government policy. The Council will continue to engage in discussions with Welsh Government and as a result of ongoing representations by the WLGA understands that the cap is projected to rise in the coming years.</p>

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	Subject Overview and Scrutiny Committee 3 Communities	
25	<p>In relation to the budget reductions proposals put forward for 18-19 for the Communities Directorate, the Committee fundamentally do not agree with them in their entirety and recommend that the Social Services and Education Directorates who have the two highest budgets in the Authority be looked at Instead to make up these savings.</p>	<p>Cabinet are obliged to present a balanced draft budget for Scrutiny and the wider public to comment on. Scrutiny and the Budget Research and Evaluation Panel have the opportunity to look at each and every line of reduction proposals and suggest an alternative for Cabinet to consider. Cabinet are aware of the challenges that face the Authority. Since 2014-15 the council's aggregate budget reductions have been £35.828 million. Page 11 of Appendix I clearly illustrates budget reductions by service area.</p> <p>There are differing opinions and recommendations provided by different scrutiny committees, reflecting the impact of budget reductions or additional pressures in their service areas, with a combined effect of recommendations to protect all services.</p> <p>Cabinet provides a corporate "one Council" response to balance out need and support our priorities as informed by the public, and this is what Cabinet has done. This is supported by the Budget Consultation responses outlined on page 20 of the MTFS. Clearly not all services can be deemed a priority, and Cabinet has recognised that, nationwide, a combination of austerity and increasing demand is seeing a shift in resources towards social care and education and away from public realm services.</p> <p>Nevertheless it must be recognised that the MTFS is also about investment, and whilst services are making significant revenue savings, we are also investing in a number of areas. After our investment in new schools our biggest investments are in, for example, highways.</p>

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26	<p>The Committee expressed concerns over the proposals for the removal of subsidised bus services (COM 27), particularly given the fact that bus companies themselves are cutting their own routes and that the Authority's own proposals for service cuts have not yet gone out for public consultation. The Committee therefore recommend:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Prior to any decision being made on the routes being cut, Cabinet also receive information on what routes bus companies themselves are cutting in order to understand the overall impact of the combined route reductions; b) That no decision is made regarding the proposed budget cuts to the service until public consultation has been completed; <p>The Committee also requested that Scrutiny get the opportunity to receive an item on the proposals and the outcome of Consultation for the removal of subsidised bus services as a pre-decision item before going to Cabinet.</p>	<p>Cabinet have already agreed to a public consultation on subsidised bus services which will take place in the Spring. This together with intelligence on what routes the bus companies are themselves intending cutting will inform a future cabinet report prior to any final decisions on budget cuts. If the timing of the relevant scrutiny committee meeting is appropriate Cabinet supports the proposal that a paper be brought there as a pre – decision item.</p>

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27	<p>In relation to COM1, the Committee recognise the work being undertaken to look at various options for public conveniences such as the comfort scheme and the possibility of Town and Community Councils taking these on. However given the focus of this Authority to improve our towns and encourage the public back into them, together with the view that public toilets are an essential necessity, the Committee recommend that no cuts are made to public conveniences within the Local Authority.</p>	<p>The Communities Directorate are working with stakeholders and other providers to find alternative ways of delivering this service.</p>
28	<p>The Committee made comment on the management savings being put forward by the Communities Directorate and the fact that these are not reflected in other Directorates. In light of sharing the burden of the budget cuts, the Committee recommend that other Directorates also look towards management efficiency savings.</p>	<p>All directorates have made and continue to make managerial savings. It is a false assumption that such savings are only being made in one directorate.</p>
29	<p>The Committee recommend that instead of disposing of the councils land and selling it off, the Authority look at the potential for revenue through development. One suggestion was the need for increased properties for small businesses in the County Borough. Members also recommend considering what land development and income generation other Local Authorities have achieved to determine what areas have been successful.</p>	<p>This is a matter that is being considered by the new corporate landlord service with specific choices over revenue or capital generation through property assets being taken on a case by case basis.</p> <p>However, Cabinet does note that the 21st Century School Modernisation Programme was only achievable through Capital Receipts from the sale of Council land, and thus the right balance needs to be achieved,</p>

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30	The Committee recommend that the £40,000 reduction proposed for third sector support for with Community Asset Transfer (CAT) be removed given the impact this will have on achieving the savings required from CATs.	Cabinet does not accept that reducing this particular area of support will impact on savings achieved from CAT. It is intended however to review and refresh the CAT process, including support to third sector organisations, as part of a programme of work to review the effectiveness of CAT over the last two years and ensure it is fit for purpose moving forward.
31	The Committee did not support the discretionary growth items of £500,000 for schools to replace the Welsh Government reduction in the Education Improvement Grant and the £65,000 proposed for the week long 'Festival of Learning'. At a time of austerity and serious budget cuts the Committee views that these budget growths should not be supported and the money could be better spent elsewhere in the Authority. Should the 'Festival of Learning' continue to take place, the Committee recommend that it be held in school holiday time so as to reduce the costs for providing teacher cover.	<p>Cabinet do not accept this recommendation.</p> <p>Council agreed that the budget for schools would be maintained in 2018-19.</p> <p>Removal of this sum of money would adversely affect school improvement.</p> <p>As noted in the response to Recommendations 3 and 4 above, Officers are currently in discussion with partners to mitigate the (financial) risk associated with holding the week-long professional development and learner engagement event. The report to Scrutiny at the start of March will provide further detail.</p> <p>Officers do not recommend that the event is held in school holiday time as this will inevitably significantly reduce teacher involvement and learner engagement.</p>
32	The Committee recommend that the Authority explore further whether there are greater opportunities for collaborative working for Community Services in order to achieve savings and at the same time improve these services.	The Authority will continue to explore collaborative working opportunities where they make sense in terms of preserving valuable public services, cost savings, greater efficiency or enhanced resilience.

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33	<p>The Committee recommend that the Authority consider the services provided by the Association for Public Service Excellence (APSE) to possibly assist in longer term planning and sustainability of Community Services.</p>	<p>APSE has been engaged for various pieces of work when this has been considered to add value. In particular some of their benchmarking data and analysis has proved useful in services such a highways and parks and grounds maintenance.</p>
34	<p>The Committee expressed concern that the Authority continues to look to the Communities Directorate for further budget savings that are disproportional to those of other Directorates. The example given was that for 2018-19 the Communities Directorate is being asked for a 6% cut of its own budget whilst other Directorates, which hold around 2/3 of the Councils total budget are only being asked to make between 0.5 and 0.6% savings out of their own budget.</p> <p>Members understand this is due to the fact that the services within the Communities Directorate are not deemed as Council priorities. However the Committee also questioned as to whether the Authority was taking into account what the priorities were for the public. With this in mind the Committee recommend that the Authority reconsider its corporate priorities to take account of the ‘public element’ and realign Community Services as a Corporate priority.</p>	<p>The recent eight week public consultation Shaping Bridgend’s Future 2017 received public support for the idea of protecting some services over others.</p> <p>The highest area of support was for care of older people and services for disabled people, followed by schools, youth services and children’s social services, and then highways, street lighting and infrastructure improvements.</p> <p>The MTFs demonstrates significant support in all of these three areas.</p> <p>Cabinet are satisfied that the Council’s Corporate Priorities are aligned with the findings of the most recent public consultation.</p>

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35	<p>Whilst not wishing to make cuts to Education and Schools and likewise Social Services, the Committee believe that with such large budgets there have to be efficiency savings within these Directorates that could assist with sharing the burden of the Authority's budget cuts. It is therefore recommended that where the Committee have concerns around cuts within the Communities budget, such as those mentioned above such as public conveniences and CATs, the Authority instead look to these other Directorates to make up these savings proposed.</p>	<p>Cabinet does not accept that no efficiencies have been made in other directorates, and notes that £35.8m savings have been made across the Authority since 2014-15. However, Cabinet will look to BREP to take a more proactive role in balancing competing demands for resource.</p>