

# BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

## REPORT TO CABINET

18 DECEMBER 2018

### REPORT OF THE INTERIM HEAD OF FINANCE AND SECTION 151 OFFICER

#### OUTCOME OF THE CONSULTATION 'SHAPING BRIDGEND'S FUTURE'

##### **1.0 Purpose of this report**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform Cabinet of the outcome of the 'Shaping Bridgend's Future' 2018 consultation which asked citizens to share their views on a number of key budget proposals being considered over the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) period.
- 1.2 This report provides an overview of the budget consultation activities, analysis and key findings.

##### **2.0 Connection to Corporate Improvement Objectives / Other Corporate Priorities**

- 2.1 This report assists in the achievement of the following corporate priorities:-
  - 1. Supporting a successful economy – taking steps to make the county a good place to do business, for people to live, work, study and visit, and to ensure that our schools are focused on raising the skills, qualifications and ambitions of all people in the county.
  - 2. Helping people to be more self-reliant – taking early steps to reduce or prevent people from becoming vulnerable or dependent on the Council and its services.
  - 3. Smarter use of resources – ensuring that all its resources (financial, physical, human and technological) are used as effectively and efficiently as possible and support the development of resources throughout the community that can help deliver the Council's priorities.
- 2.2 The 'Shaping Bridgend's Future' 2018 consultation sought to obtain views on specific budget reduction proposals across Council directorates. The allocation of financial resources determines the Council's ability to meet its corporate objectives. As such the report links to all corporate priorities.

##### **3.0 Background**

- 3.1 Following further reductions in funding from central government, all Councils across the country are continuing to change the way they work and the services they provide so that they can manage with less. Bridgend County Borough Council has made reductions from its budget of £30.7 million over

the last four years, with an expectation of significant further reductions required.

- 3.2 Respondents were asked to share their views on a range of budget proposals being considered between 2019-20 and 2022-23, including: proposed increases to council tax, considering which services to protect and/or cut over others, post 16 transport, nursery education, school budgets, leisure and cultural services (our partnerships with Awen and Halo Leisure), recycling and waste, social services, bus services and nursery education.
- 3.3 Budget consultation exercises have been undertaken annually since 2013-14. This 'Shaping Bridgend's Future' 2018 consultation exercise has built on the knowledge gained from the previous consultations and further developed the consultation to include new ways for people to participate and engage with the Council. A wide variety of methods of communication were used including surveys, social media and drop in sessions with clicker pads.
- 3.4 In addition, In order to gather the views of young people the consultation team attended an all-Bridgend head-teacher's event to promote the survey as well to ask individual schools to take part in interactive sessions in order to gather feedback. As a result, all nine comprehensive schools across the county borough took part in clicker-pad sessions with an average of 87 young people taking part in each school (Coleg Cymunedol y Dderwen were the exception to this. Due to ICT issues a group of 70 young people completed paper surveys instead).
- 3.5 Interactive sessions also took place in 15 primary schools and a total of 832 pupils in years five and six took part in these pupil-led sessions. A separate report has been produced for primary schools but the highlight report is detailed in section nine of the attached Budget Consultation report.
- 3.5 The budget consultation overview, document and different surveys were made available between 24 September and 18 November 2018. The surveys were available on the council's website while paper copies were available to complete at local libraries and other venues.
- 3.6 The consultation aimed to reach the following key stakeholders: citizens of Bridgend County Borough, schools, BCBC cabinet members/councillors, local businesses, the third sector, council staff, town and community councils, partner organisations, community and equality groups, youth services/council and local media.
- 3.7 Methods of engagement included a survey (available online and paper copies at all local libraries), community meetings/events/stands (open to the public to attend), elected member workshops, other meetings/networking events, social media debates and comments, and a dedicated Citizens' Panel survey (available online and paper copies). A bespoke survey was also designed for youth engagement and an accessible version of the survey was also available. Survey completions and/or comments were collated as part of the

different events and meetings. Feedback to the consultation was also welcome via letter, email or telephone.

3.8 The consultation was supported by a full communications and promotional plan. The main activities included: a Wales Online digital package, various press release/editorials in the media, a social media/web campaign, poster/sign campaign, direct marketing to key target audiences e.g. businesses, schools, youth council and internal communications for staff and elected members.

#### 4.0 Current Situation / proposal

4.1 The attached consultation report (Appendix 1) sets out in detail the views expressed by those who participated.

4.2 Overall, the council has received 5,288 responses via the various consultation mechanisms identified in paragraph 3.8. The 5,288 interactions total 3.69% of the Bridgend County Borough population and represents a significant increase on last year's figure of 2619.

4.3 The response rate, by method of interaction is set out below:

Interactions	Number
Survey completions	2,677
Events/meetings/workshops	2,148
Emails	9
Letters	1
Telephone calls	6
Social media comments	165
Social media Q&A	282
<b>Total interactions</b>	<b>5,288</b>

- 2,677 responses to the surveys were received in total. This represents a 44% increase on last year's total of 1,858.
- Overall 2,148 people attended the various events, workshops and meetings – these figures include schools. This represents a significant increase on last year's total of 152.
- A total of 447 interactions were received via social media. This includes 282 interactions from the live question and answer (Q&A) session. This represents a 25% decrease for overall interactions compared to last year's figure of 593 but a 25% increase compared to last year's figure of 226 for the Q&A.
- 16 comments were received by email, telephone and letter.

#### 4.4 Headline figures and themes include:

##### **Council increase/decrease and protecting/cutting services**

<b>Headlines from the Public Consultation</b>
<b>Council Tax</b>
48% of respondents stated that they would not be willing to pay more council tax in order to protect services (than the proposed 4.9% increase).
<b>Services to Protect</b>
Most popular services to <b>protect</b> (through council tax or by comparing all proposals) were schools, care of older people, services for disabled people and leisure services.
53% of respondents disagreed with the proposal to ask schools to make budget savings of 1% per year over the next four years.
66% of respondents disagreed with the proposal to make savings through reducing day centres or services.
<b>Increasing Revenue</b>
79% of respondents stated that Blue Badge holders should pay for parking, 48% stated Blue Badge holders should pay the same amount as non-Blue Badge holders. A further 31% stated that Blue Badge holders should pay a reduced rate.
60% of respondents stated that they would be willing to pay more to access sports facilities, pavilions and parks (10% stated significantly more and 50% stated a small amount more).
48% of respondents stated that the council should explore the option of charging for shopmobility.
When asked about increased revenue within recycling and waste 53% of respondents were willing to pay an increased charge to £20 for three bulky item collection.
<b>Services to Cut</b>
Services most frequently selected to make <b>cuts</b> were libraries, arts centres and theatres, sports and recreation services, weed spraying, funding for post-16 transport and separate collection for absorbent hygiene products.
48% of respondents agreed that nursery provision should be reduced to 15 hours per week in order to make budget savings.
47% of respondents agreed that funding for post-16 transport should be removed in order to make budget savings.
46% of respondents agreed that the bus station should be closed in order to make budget savings.

#### **5.0 Effect upon Policy Framework and Procedure Rules**

5.1 There are no proposed changes to the policy framework and procedure rules.

#### **6.0 Equality Impact Assessment**

6.1 Budget reduction proposals pursued will be subject to the appropriate equality impact assessment prior to implementation.

## **7.0 Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 Implications**

7.1 The well-being goals identified in the Act were considered in the preparation of the Budget Consultation. Officers have considered the importance of balancing short-term needs in terms of meeting savings targets, while safeguarding the ability to meet longer-term objectives and maintain sustainable services, when proposals were devised. A full Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 assessment will be completed for the final MTFS presented to Council in February 2019.

## **8.0 Financial Implications**

8.1 The consultation report seeks to inform and aid cabinet members' decisions on the future direction of the Council and how to meet the challenging budget constraints in the years ahead.

## **9.0 Recommendation**

9.1 Cabinet is recommended to note the outcome of the consultation with interested parties as detailed in the attached consultation report.

**Gill Lewis**  
**Interim Head of Finance and Section 151 Officer**  
**December 2018**

**Appendix 1: Shaping Bridgend's Future Consultation Report**  
**Background Documents - None**