

CABINET RESPONSE TO CRI OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE ON BUDGET ISSUES

	BREP/Scrutiny Recommendation	Cabinet Response
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1	Members recommend that research is undertaken into how the Authority is able to deliver services imposed by Welsh Government without any additional monies as outlined in paragraph 1.7 and meet the associated additional costs - A pan Wales approach may well be more valuable. This will provide the evidence needed to enable the Council to lobby for supplementary monies to carry out legislative pressures effectively. In addition to this the Panel recommend that any lobbying for extra funding is carried out publically, to demonstrate to the public how much services costs and how much has allocated to each service.	<p>Generally it is the WLGA that will lobby for additional funding on behalf of local authorities in Wales if there are additional financial pressures caused as a result of legislative changes. However, in addition the Leader and various Cabinet members and Chief Officers have written on various occasions to relevant Welsh Government ministers and officials making the case where there are pressures and seeking additional funding.</p> <p>There have also been several meetings with Welsh Government officials and ministers, on the same basis, both with the WLGA and also separately lobbying for Bridgend.</p>
2	Members recommend that in relation to any departmental restructure a corporate approach is instigated across all Directorates, taking a bottom up approach. The Panel further recommend that any reorganisation is carried out following discussions and thorough planning by Cabinet/CMB. The Panel identified that this may well be suitable to form one of a number of annual objectives for the new Chief Executive.	<p>Currently CMB take an overview of proposed Directorate restructure proposals and of course HR ensure corporate consistency and equality. Directorate restructures are often necessitated as a result of MTFS proposals and so are, as a requirement, 'bottom up'. Every Directorate has been restructured over the last few years, often on three or four occasions, resulting in reductions in the number of staff.</p> <p>Unfortunately CMB are not quite sure of the point being made by this recommendation so clarification from BREP would be welcome.</p>

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3	Members state that some of the proposed budget reductions in this Directorate will provide small savings in the short term but will incur costs in the future. The Panel used the reduction of weed spraying as a short term example, stating that in the long run it could impact on members of the public safety and highway maintenance. Therefore the Panel recommend that longer term strategic proposals are deliberated and different models of service delivery are explored, such as external businesses that could provide service more economically.	The Communities Directorate has to look at both longer term strategic proposals and also, regrettably, shorter term measures on occasions to balance the budget. Historical examples of strategic measures include the shared fleet depot with South Wales Police and the proposal being made to Welsh Government to introduce a highways permitting scheme. Unfortunately sometimes short term measures that provide immediate savings in view of the ongoing scale of the financial savings are also required. Ideally some of the proposed savings such as the reduction in weed spraying would be avoided and in the latest MTFs proposals this item has been removed but they are only considered because sometimes there are no other alternatives that are able to make the required savings quickly.
4	Although the Panel are mindful of the extra resources required to improve collaboration and communication with Town and Community Councils (TCCs) and also between TCCs themselves, Members recommend that a Cabinet led approach is undertaken to explore options to take this forward. The Panel also recommend Cabinet revisit the Terms of Reference of the Town and Community Council Forum to ensure the Membership of the Forum is representative and that additional powers are allocated to it, such as making recommendations. Furthermore, the Panel propose the creation of a memorandum of understanding between both parties.	The role of the Community Asset Transfer Officer has been extended to include liaison with town and community councils as part of his contract extension. There are currently no proposals in the budget pressures to increase the amount of resource available for this purpose but if BREP are minded that this is a priority this could be included but of course at the expense of something else in the budget. Cabinet/CMB are content to explore initial options to take this forward but as recognised, without additional resource there will be a limit to what can be achieved. It should be noted that there is already a co-produced charter which serves as a memorandum of understanding between this Council and Town and Community Councils.
5	The Panel recommend that Cabinet take the lead in approaching all stakeholders regarding their potential for Community Asset Transfer (CAT) of all outdoor leisure facilities as outlined in the Budget Reduction Proposals 2019-20 to 2022-23.	Agreed. The public consultation exercise on charging arrangements for parks and playing fields scheduled for the first quarter of 2019 will inform the way forward. Following that it is agreed that appropriate engagement and discussion with all stakeholders will be an important part of promoting CAT and supporting organisations to transfer facilities if that is their preference.

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6	With reference to the lack of communication regarding potential Cabinet decisions relating to CAT, the Panel therefore recommend that Cabinet reviews its communication plan on CAT to ensure that all relevant information is distributed to all Local Members and TCC's for information.	Agreed. This matter will be picked up with the CAT officer and if necessary specific additional training and information events for all elected members and TCC's will be arranged
7	In relation to the Materials Recovery and Energy Centre (MREC) the Panel recommend that a political solution is sought to negotiate a favourable outcome for all parties involved.	Agreed. Deliberations are ongoing with NPT Council and have been for some time, including with politicians. We remain hopeful that a mutually beneficial 'amicable' solution can be found but in view of the pressure this matter causes on the overall budget all options must remain open.
8	In relation to comments being made about the possible closure of the Bus Station the Panel recommend that a press release is provided by Corporate Communications outlining the fact that the Council are exploring alternative measures for full cost recovery for Bridgend Bus Station and that there are no plans for closure of the building on 1st January 2019.	There were never any plans to close the bus station on January 1st 2019 as the proposal is a 2019-20 proposal applicable from 1st April 2019. The preferred option as set out in the revised MTFS proposals is that we seek to reduce the overall subsidy for running the bus station by attracting greater income, including from bus operators, the town council and potentially commercial enterprises who may be willing to run franchises etc. A Corporate Communication setting out this position will be considered.
9	In relation to the Home to School Transport review, Members were pleased to note that all aspects of transport will be explored, including vehicles used in day centres as BREP has previously recommended - slightly amending the opening and closing times of day centres so the buses can be made available for school transport. The Panel also recommend that consideration is given to the possibility of collaborating with other local authorities and creating an in-house resource from the current fleet for Home to School transport use.	All points proposed by Scrutiny/BREP will be incorporated into the tender specification of the Strategic Review of Bridgend County Borough Council's Transport Service, including collaboration and the creation of in-house resources. We hope to receive the resulting report after Easter.

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10	The Panel recommend introducing a charge for transport over and above Welsh Government statutory distances for Home to School Transport, which should take into account and offer concessions for low income families. Members further recommended that instead of removing the provision that the Council could provide a discounted bus pass on an existing bus route.	The local authority is unable to charge for school transport which is covered under the Learner Travel (Wales) Measure 2008. Pupils are either eligible or not, regardless of proximity (over the statutory distances) from home-to school (e.g. a child living 3.1 miles away from a secondary school is no more or less eligible than a child living 12 miles away). Service buses are currently unsuitable for home-to-school transport as many are not fitted with the required safety belts required by legislation. The local authority is aware of this and will look for opportunities to work with public transport operators to consider whether if fitted to all vehicles, public transport buses can be used to provide home-to-school transport in the future.
11	The Panel believe that the budget reduction proposal EFS49 which plans on decreasing the current nursery provision to the statutory minimum could have been implemented in previous years. Therefore Members recommend that consultation on this proposal should commence taking into consideration the proposed review process outlined in 2.13.	Nursery education provision across all Bridgend schools has a positive effect on learner outcomes. Therefore, the local authority believes that a substantial reduction in nursery provision will have an adverse impact on educational standards. Consequently, any reduction in nursery provision is not recommended.
12	If the 1% school budget reduction is implemented the Panel recommend that the Council ensure that they work closely with all schools to provide financial support and advice to agree on a deficit plan. The Panel further recommend exploring the possibility of centralising the non-teaching aspect of all school budgets and re-charge for services which would ensure that services are properly remunerated.	The outcome of the budget consultation and the recommendations from BREP and scrutiny committee have been considered. The 1% efficiency target for schools for 2019-2020 has been removed, as well as fully funding pay and prices. The local authority already works with schools in deficit and provides advice and support to them in setting and monitoring their deficit recovery plans. The non-teaching elements of school budgets cannot be centralised as delegation is a requirement under Local Management of Schools (LMS).
13	With reference to the joint responsibility between BCBC and Police for crime and disorder in the County and the integral part CCTV has to Police investigations, Members recommend that Cabinet explore joint funding with the Police for operating the CCTV service.	Agreed. We will explore the feasibility of a joint funding arrangement with the Police for CCTV.

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14	<p>The Panel recommend that Cabinet and CMB receive the Fees & Charges – Comparison with other Local Authorities spreadsheet which collates all services that we do not currently charge for where other neighbouring Councils do. The Panel further recommend that if it is financially viable that the Council introduce the appropriate charges to align with other Councils soon as possible.</p> <p>The Panel also request that this topic is added to the Scrutiny Forward Work Programme to assist with income generation.</p>	<p>There has already been full consideration of the fees and charges spreadsheet by Cabinet/CMB as part of the budget setting process. BREP will note that there are already a number of significant proposals that seek to increase charges including for bulky waste collection, green waste, pre application planning fees and potentially for bus operators using the bus station and for users of the shopmobility scheme. Additionally we propose charging for public toilet use when appropriate, for example the new facilities proposed in Rest Bay. As BREP have pointed out it is not always financially viable to introduce charges for all services that other local authorities make a charge for, as sometimes the cost of establishing a robust fees and charges collection system can exceed the amount of potential income. However, Cabinet /CMB are very aware that opportunities to increase fee income should continue to be explored and monitored and introduced wherever that is sensible to do so.</p>
15	<p>The Panel voiced their concerns regarding the lack of inspection following work carried out throughout the Borough. Members therefore recommend that the authority undertake corporate vigilance and explore the possibility of charging companies and members of the public when they have damaged Council property. Examples of general utility works on the highway which lead to long term road surface damage were identified. The Panel also identified Members corporate responsibility in reporting issues and damages as part of their local community role.</p>	<p>As part of their role the highways inspectors already carry out inspection of work on the highway by utility companies and others. Where there is clear evidence of damage or necessary repair those matters are pursued. The proposed Highway permitting scheme (business case currently with Welsh Government) proposes that Bridgend would be the first local authority in Wales to introduce a more formal process for permitting those who wish to undertake work on the Council's highways and potentially charging accordingly. The extent to which teams can currently inspect all work undertaken on Council property is of course limited by the available resource.</p>
16	<p>The Panel identified that there may be opportunities for the Council to look into charging external companies when the authority deals with public complaints on their behalf such as V2C, Kier, Halo and Awen. Members recommend that the Member Referrals Working group explore this further as part of the current review of the Member Referral system.</p>	<p>The complaints process is separate to the Member Referral system. The complaints department receive very few complaints in relation to V2C, Halo and Awen. Those that are received are dealt with by the provider. Complaints in relation to Kier are also initially dealt with by the provider. If the complainant remains dissatisfied with the response they can complain via the corporate complaints process. The current contract does not include a charge to Kier. To introduce this would involve a change in the terms of the contract.</p>

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17	Therefore the Panel recommends that the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee considers the BREP work and seeks to explore options to include some work streams into individual forward work programmes. The Panel concluded by stating that they welcome development proposals from Cabinet to ensure BREP are used to their full potential.	Agreed. Cabinet are happy for Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee to receive feedback from the BREP process and for all Members to work together to agree how the role of BREP can be developed.
	Scrutiny Committee Recommendations	Cabinet Response
	Social Services and Wellbeing	
1.2	Members recommended that a report on the MTFS proposals be brought back to the Committee once the final budget settlement from Welsh Government is announced. Members were in agreement that due to the settlement figure not yet being finalised, the figures in the report would not be accurate and therefore needed to be re-worked before members could consider them.	The Council's draft budget is submitted for consultation by Cabinet in November after we have received the draft settlement from WG. The draft budget is then scrutinised through December and a report prepared by CRI scrutiny based on recommendations provided by other scrutiny committees and BREP. Any changes to the draft settlement are notified in the final settlement towards the end of December and they are fed into the Cabinet decisions along with the scrutiny recommendations and the budget consultation. A further version of the budget, with the final settlement figures, is not provided to scrutiny committees. The final budget is prepared for February for full Council approval.
1.3	Members recommended that once the settlement was known and the figures had been re-worked by finance colleagues that members are presented with the budget as a whole for each directorate so Members could determine the full expenditure in each directorate and not just the areas where reductions had been proposed.	As per the response in 1.2.

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	Communities	
2.4	The Committee commented that visible services should be protected from budget reductions, in particular cleaning services. Members therefore recommend that if the Council should receive any additional funds from Welsh Government that consideration should be given to retaining monies to offset COM41 and COM41a.	The final MTFS proposals have removed the street cleaning proposals from the recommended savings in 2019-20. It is of course difficult to commit to 'protection' moving forward as to a large extent that will depend on the overall level of future settlements but Cabinet/CMB is very aware of the need, where we can, to minimise further savings to visible services and / or seek alternative ways of carrying out this work, for example in partnership with town and community councils.
2.5	During their discussions regarding COM42 and COM42a, the Committee recommend that communication is distributed to Town and Community Councils and the voluntary sector to inform them of the proposed budget reductions. The Committee was pleased to hear that the Council is streamlining the process for Community Asset Transfer to assist with a more effective process for all parties.	Please see responses to recommendations 4 to 6.
2.6	The Committee recommend that prior to the public Budget Consultation being finalised next year that Budget Research and Evaluation Panel receive the proposed questions in the consultation to ensure there are some direct questions regarding the proposed budget reductions as opposed to more generic questions that could be misinterpreted.	Agree that the budget consultation questions should be shared with BREP. A discussion was held with BREP on the budget consultation prior to launch this year. The consultation contained a number of specific and direct questions, in addition to general questions.
	Education and Family Support	
3.5	The Committee commented on the potential financial impact the proposed efficiency saving against the school budgets would have on schools that were already in deficit and the increased difficulty it would impose on recovering from that position within the statutory timeframe. Members therefore recommend that if the Council should receive any additional funds from Welsh Government that consideration should be given to retaining monies to offset SCH01.	Agreed for 2019-20. The outcome of the budget consultation and the recommendations from Bridgend Research Evaluation Panel (BREP) and scrutiny committee have been considered. The 1% efficiency target for schools for 2019-2020 has been removed, as well as fully funding pay and prices. The non-teaching elements of school budgets cannot be centralised as delegation is a requirement under Local Management of Schools (LMS).

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	Chief Executive's	
4.2	The Committee discussed the Members Community Action Fund and whilst Members agree with the principle of the project, they cannot support the funding to continue and therefore recommend that the Directorate continue with the removal of the Members' Community Action Fund.	Agreed. A report was taken to Audit Committee and to Cabinet on the Community Action Fund (CAF). The recommendation was that Cabinet cease the CAF and transfer the £285k funding back into the MTFS for consideration when setting the budget for 2019-20 to 2022-23. The budget is contained within the budget reduction proposals for removal in 2019-20 (CEX2).
	Corporate Overview	
5.2	As outlined in Budget Research and Evaluation Panel the Committee recommend that Bridgend Council should introduce fees and charges to align with other Councils; explore the possibility of charging companies and members of the public when they have damaged Council property; explore joint funding with the Police for operating the CCTV service.	Please see responses to recommendations 13, 14 and 15, and 5.3. With regard to the CCTV service, please see the response to BREP recommendation 13.
5.3	In addition to the aforementioned comments, the Committee recommend that the Council explore the possibility of introducing fines for members of the public that damage public property and do not adhere to the highway code by making full use of CCTV already in place in Bridgend and the BCBC owned camera car used to deter dangerous parking around schools in the Borough.	Criminal damage is a criminal action which would need to be pursued by the police. We could take separate civil action for damage, depending on the value of the damage we may claim under the insurance – it would then be for insurance to lead on any civil claim. CCTV can be used as evidence in a claim. We would need to apply to the data controller for its release and satisfy the legal requirements on a case by case basis. It's effectiveness in civil proceedings will depend on the clarity of the footage. We only have limited enforcement powers in relation to highways issues. The camera car has equipment of suitable standards to produce admissible evidence.