

**CABINET RESPONSE TO CRI OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE ON BUDGET ISSUES**

	<b>BREP Recommendation</b>	<b>Cabinet Response</b>	<b>Action to be Completed by</b>
1	In terms of Legal and Procurement's obligations to the MTFS, the panel recommended that that funding is increased to address, for example, specific support to new initiatives e.g. Community Asset Transfer Scheme (CATS).	With regard to ensuring that appropriate resource is made available to progress CAT across the Council a business case has been prepared by the CAT officer to increase capacity and enable the CAT process to be accelerated. This includes proposals to increase resource in the relevant areas of property and legal, and the change management fund has been increased accordingly to allow appropriate bids for funding to be supported.	Corporate Management Board to approve the business case March 2020, to allow implementation early in the new financial year when it is anticipated there will be an increase in demand to progress CAT.
2	The Panel therefore recommend to Cabinet that there needs to be further work done to break the silo approach to budgeting.	There has been a significant change in approach over recent years to ensure that the whole budget, and its implications, are considered jointly by Cabinet/CMB. Cabinet believe therefore that the 'One Council' approach is largely adopted in setting the budget but recognise that there is always more that can be done and will endeavour to continue to work with the Chief Executive and senior managers to ensure this happens.	The budget setting process for the 2021/22 budget will start initially in June 2020 and the principle of operating as 'One Council' will be reinforced as a key priority and principle
3	The Panel recommends that Cabinet and CMB review statutory and non-statutory services with particular emphasis on non-statutory preventative services being beneficial and cost effective to the Authority.	The distinction between statutory and non-statutory services is not always a helpful one in determining priorities. It is recognised that what is more important is understanding and evidencing the impact of services. Certainly, for example, some of the early intervention non statutory services in both Education and Social Care have demonstrable impact in managing and preventing demand for some of the statutory services in those areas. Cabinet and CMB will continue to review the impact of various interventions and ensure that investment is made in those services that are most cost effective and make the most difference.	This process is ongoing but informed by some of the performance information that will become available at the end of quarter 3 and the year end, quarter 4, corporate performance assessment.

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4	The Panel recommend to Cabinet that they review the Authority's financial relationship with partners, especially within the Community Safety Partnership.	There are clearly some examples where the potential to seek greater financial contributions from relevant partners should be considered and potentially pursued. For example: contributions towards the costs of operating the CCTV service (already being pursued with the police), the post 16 school transport service and numerous examples where town and community councils might reasonably make a contribution towards sustaining or enhancing a service. These will continue to be explored thoroughly as part of the annual budget setting process and as part of the ongoing relationship and collaboration arrangements with partners.	Ongoing as part of existing partnerships and collaborations.
5	BREP therefore recommend to Cabinet to establish a more strategic approach to working in partnership with TCC's to support the MTFS.	The Chief Executive has prepared a paper, that has been agreed by Group Leaders, seeking to review and change the nature of the existing Town and Community Council Forum and potentially create a ' Board ' with an annual work programme to enable the Council and Town and Community Councils to work better in partnership, with agreed strategic priorities.	Initial paper to be presented to March Town and Community Council Forum and implemented for the next financial year subject to the input and agreement of T and CC's.
6	BREP considers the outcome of the scrutiny process with regards to CAT in the financial year 2020/21 and that Cabinet endorses this recommendation.	The CAT process was fully reviewed during the 2019/20 financial year resulting in streamlining of the process to make it simpler and quicker. This new process has not yet had the opportunity to bed in but Cabinet are content that BREP continue to monitor and look at the success of CAT through 2020/21 and recommend where they think further improvements can be made, as real transfers emerge.	Ongoing through 2021/22 as part of the BREP process.

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7	That BREP considers the outcome of the scrutiny process with regards to the consultation process in relation to Home to School Transport and advises Cabinet/CMB on any issues that could be discussed outside of the Scrutiny process and that Cabinet/CMB support this.	The proposals to amend the local authority's Home-to-school/College Transport Policy has followed good practice guidance in offering a full 12-week public consultation with bespoke engagement with learners. This follows the same approach that the local authority took in 2014 when the policy was previously consulted upon. Scrutiny will be presented with the outcome of this consultation in March 2020 to review the approach and provide recommendations to Cabinet as part of their consideration on the policy proposals and consultation report.	31 <sup>st</sup> March 2020
8	The Panel recommend that Cabinet ask the Corporate Director, Education and Family Support to review KS2 PAN to allow some flexibility where children are refused entry to their closest school and therefore putting extra pressures on the family to transport their children to a school further away with the costs being passed onto the Authority.	The local authority has a statutory duty to ensure the effective and efficient education of all pupils. The published admission number (PAN) of a school is directly related to the capacity of the school. Any decision to breach the PAN should not be taken lightly and the School Admissions Code 2013 identifies that the admission number reflects the school's ability to accommodate pupils and it should not be exceeded other than in exceptional circumstances. Although there are pressures on places within certain year groups in primary schools in Bridgend, no school is currently at capacity. The additional financial pressure of transporting pupils to alternative schools cannot be considered as an exceptional circumstance to admit over a school's PAN.	Ongoing

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<b>8 cont.</b>		<p>It is not uncommon for local authorities to transport pupils to schools that are not their nearest suitable schools especially when these pupils have been admitted as 'in-year transfers'. The local authority is unable lawfully to hold back places for pupils for in-year admissions on the basis of, for example, a house move. There has not been a significant escalation and therefore cost of the need for school transport for pupils refused admission to the nearest suitable school to other schools in the county borough.</p> <p>The School Modernisation Team is currently leading on a school capacity review to assess whether additional capacity can be secured from the existing accommodation at each school (eg by using intervention spaces as teaching spaces). Additionally, there are proposals to expand capacity through Band B of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools Modernisation Programme.</p>	
<b>9</b>	That Cabinet continues to support schools with deficit budgets but looks to extend this support by engaging with schools at the initial budget planning process.	Education and Family Support and Finance officers will continue to support schools with the financial management process. Termly meetings are held with headteachers and governors from schools in deficit budget positions. Support is provided during the deficit budget setting process and schools are actively involved when monitoring progress, additional support is provided from the Directorate where possible.	Ongoing

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10	Cabinet considers a political approach to the WG Minister for Finance and Trefynydd to discuss the current management of grant funding. A Pan Wales approach could be taken to ensure some of this grant funding could be included in the revenue support grant.	Work has been undertaken on reviewing the quantum and spread of our grants. Inevitably there will be timing issues and restrictions on the use of grants, particularly in some cases the short term nature of the funding. Representations are made through the Society of Welsh Treasurers and the WLGA to streamline grants wherever possible and to give more certainty on longer term funding. We are working with the WG on funding flexibilities.	
11	That Cabinet and CMB ensure that all previous recommendations on charging are delivered and take a fresh look at commercial opportunities to support the MTFS.	The Council continues to look proactively at commercial opportunities. Currently, for example, there are a number of property and energy related schemes that are being explored but clearly the terms of any financial agreement and the risk profile has to be right for the Council and meet the principles of its capital strategy. One of the challenges remains weighing up the amount of time and resource that is necessary to pursue commercial opportunities against the likely commercial return and a number of proposals have been rejected in previous years for this reason. Sometimes for smaller schemes it is difficult to prioritise speculative projects when the capacity in areas such as Property, Energy and Street Scene are already very stretched.	Cabinet is happy to receive from BREP and scrutiny any specific suggestions for commercial consideration as part of the 2021/22 budget setting process.

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	<b>Social Services and Wellbeing</b>		
1.1	RE SSW26, particularly in respect of Bridgend Resource Centre, the committee would welcome further investigation into the quality of provision and the efficacy of the current approach, which should be one council.	<p>BRC provides a day service for 50 young adults with very complex needs and 8-12 people with advanced dementia. The day service has 1 manager, 2 team leaders, 6 assistant team leaders and 30 day support workers. The management structure is 4% of the overall day services budget whereas a few years ago the management structure was 16% of the overall budget. The Service has recently revised the service principles and have a new quality audit tool which will commence in March 2020. There have been no reported issues of the quality of care or support delivered at the Centre. The resource centre is equipped to deal with complex conditions and complex behaviours and the staff are all trained up to at least QCF level 2 although most staff have a QCF 3 and some have level 5.</p> <p>The building is a key feature of the success of the model. It has been purpose built to a very high specification and is therefore able to effectively manage high risk behaviours. E.g. managing the risk of people wandering off/leaving the building by a very advanced door control system. It has also proved to be a cost effective model. This model for those individuals with very complex needs was initiated in order to provide an improved quality provision and better outcomes for individuals as well as being cost effective. It would not be cost effective to re-produce the Bridgend Resource Centre model elsewhere.</p>	Development of alternative day time opportunities to continue with close financial monitoring by Group Manager and Head of Service

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	<b>Social Services and Wellbeing</b>		
1.1 cont.		<p>There are also a number of people with a learning disability who receive day time support from the independent sector. The cost of this is under close scrutiny as there has been an increase in costs over the last 12 months. The individuals have received a very individual and at times bespoke service which has been of a high standard but this has not been cost effective. The service has recently reviewed the care needs to those attending the Centre and as a result have identified 12 individuals who are going to be introduced to a community daytime service. This will free up places for 12 people who are currently within the independent provision. This will in turn have a positive impact on the budget.</p> <p>There are a further number of people with a more moderate learning disability who receive day time support closer to the community in which they live and there are 4 bases across the Borough where people are able to attend and get the support that they have been assessed as needing. The service is currently reviewing the day time model which make sure that assessment of need are based on a preventative and strength based approach. As result there are now a range of alternative support and community options available to people with a learning disability. Development in this area will continue.</p>	

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	<b>Communities</b>		
<b>2.1</b>	In respect of budget pressure COM10 Members asked that the £2m realm fund prioritise gully and culvert maintenance in particular.	It is intended that investment will be made in improvements to gulleys and culverts as part of the programme of works to invest an additional £2 million in the 'public realm' across the County Borough. It should be noted however that not all gulleys and culverts are on Council land or the responsibility of the Council to maintain so we are also working with relevant partners such as V2C Housing to ensure that they properly understand and carry out their maintenance responsibilities.	The proposed programme of work for the 2020/21 'public realm' fund is currently being prepared by officers for approval by the Cabinet Member prior to the start of the 2020/21 financial year.
<b>2.2</b>	Regarding COM42a Members recommend that condition surveys should be completed on all assets to ensure the condition of the asset is known before being handed over. Members also asked for confirmation on how these assets will be monitored and what strategy is in place if an asset is seen to be deteriorating.	Condition surveys are in the process of being carried out for all building assets that have been identified as priorities for CAT, such as parks pavilions. In addition it is proposed to make a high level assessment of other assets such as playing fields to better understand their current state and investment requirement. It is proposed that all CAT is on the basis of full repairing responsibility passing to the relevant group or town and community council under the terms of a lease or licence.	Ongoing as part of the approved CAT process.



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<b>2.2 cont.</b>		The Council will continue to monitor the assets under the terms of the lease and reserve the right to step in if it clear that assets are deteriorating. However, the whole basis of CAT is that it is in the interests of the relevant club(s) or group to ensure that the assets are maintained to a standard that they remain in beneficial use. It should be noted that the alternative that the Council is proposing in the absence of CAT for some facilities is that often those assets would close and not be maintained anyway as there would not be the financial resource to do so.	
	<b>Education and Family Support</b>		
<b>3.1</b>	In respect of EFS1 and EFS41 Home to School Transport, Post 16 Education and the School Modernisation Programme with the development of new schools and its impact on existing catchment areas and Section 106 Agreements there needs to be a one Council approach with officers from Education, Planning and Finance working in a holistic manner to provide footways and crossing points thereby negating the reliance on and the cost of school transport. That safe routes to school be part of the review of Post 16 education.	Planning officers, finance officers and highway safety officers are closely integrated into the School Modernisation Programme's governance arrangements. Traffic impact assessments are developed for each scheme and include discharging the council's statutory responsibility to consider active travel arrangements. Schemes and the peripheral transport infrastructure supporting those schemes include specific requirements for active travel links into communities.	Ongoing

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<b>3.1 cont.</b>		<p>However, there is no match funding from Welsh Government to support these initiatives from the School Modernisation Programme and must be paid for fully by the council. These active travel links need formal identification as available routes to school. However, as post-16 education is non-statutory, there is no legal basis to consider available routes to school in the context of post-16 learners.</p> <p>Officers will ensure that throughout the planning for Band B projects of the School Modernisation Programme, that there is early discussion with transport planning officers to assess and act on opportunities to bid for grant from Welsh Government to support additional active travel links where needed, to support new school builds and to reduce the burden on home-to-school transport.</p>	
<b>3.2</b>	A request be made to the Police to establish the differing levels of support the Police, PCSOs and School Liaison Officers provide to support schools across the County Borough.	Officers will work with colleagues in South Wales Police to develop this	30 <sup>th</sup> April 2020

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3.3	In relation to EFS5 with regard to the increase in number of pupils eligible for free school meals, that it be established whether the Pupil Development Grant can be used for the provision of food for breakfast clubs.	There are set criteria on what the PDG Access grant can be used for and provision of food for breakfast clubs does not fall under the criteria.	
	<b>Chief Executive's</b>		
4.1	In relation to the consultation 'Shaping Bridgend's Future', Members suggested that future Budget Consultation's should include a caveat at the bottom stating that 'should the settlement be more generous, this could be subject to change' or similar.	A phrase could be included within the budget consultation document highlighting that the proposals could be subject to change if the final settlement is better or worse than the current projections.	To be included in the 2020/21 budget consultation in September 2020
	<b>Corporate Overview and Scrutiny</b>		
5.1	In relation to EFS41 the Committee expressed concern at the proposal to seek the full cost recovery of Post 16 transport as it believed its removal would impact on the economy and disadvantage pupils living in rural areas and in valley communities from accessing post 16 education due to the distances they would have to travel to attend lessons. The Combined Overview and Scrutiny Committee requested that Cabinet consider the removal of this budget reduction proposal from the Medium Term Financial Strategy until such time as the consultation on post 16 education had been completed.	This saving relates to the current policy proposal to remove the local authority's discretion to provide post-16 learners with free home-to-school or home-to-college transport. The view of Scrutiny Committee is noted and will be reported to Cabinet as part of the responses to the public consultation on this proposal.	30 <sup>th</sup> April 2020
5.2	In relation to budget reduction proposal EFS33 that Cabinet consider not removing escorts on primary school service with fewer than 8 pupils on the grounds of safety to the pupils, to protect the drivers of home to school transport and in the interest of road safety.	The view of BREP will be reported to Cabinet as part of the responses to the public consultation on this proposal.	30 <sup>th</sup> April 2020

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5.3	In relation to budget reduction proposal CEX19 a request be made to the Police and Crime Commissioner that the police consider making a contribution towards the funding of the CCTV service due to the use of CCTV footage by the police in detecting crime and in securing convictions. That the Authority explore working collaboratively with other local authorities on the provision of the CCTV service.	See earlier answer to number 4 of Corporate Scrutiny Recommendations. We are already in dialogue with the Police, and the Police and Crime Commissioner, both about directly getting an annual financial contribution towards the cost of operating the CCTV service but also about collaborating with other neighbouring authorities to share the cost of the service, now that the historic arrangement with the Vale of Glamorgan Council has ended.	It is anticipated that a formal response will be forthcoming from the Police before the end of this financial year now that their annual precept figure for the 2020/21 budget is known.
5.4	That the Authority continue to lobby the Welsh Government through the Welsh Local Government Association to fully fund the cost of legislative changes in order to alleviate those pressures and new responsibilities placed on local government to deliver the Welsh Government's agenda.	This is something that is a fairly continuous process, directly in terms of the Council's responses to consultations and through the WLGA where collectively the local authorities in Wales will make the case for local government to be properly funded, particularly when it seems that 'new burdens' emerge through legislation.	Ongoing process.
5.5	The Committee expressed that other agencies, particularly the NHS were not co-operating with the Authority in publicising the EU Settlement Scheme and requested that the Chief Executive raise this matter through the Public Service Board and Regional Partnership Board. Additionally, the Committee requested that the Chief Executive write to the Welsh Government requesting that it undertakes a media campaign to publicise the EU Settlement Scheme to encourage citizens to register to become UK citizens.	The feedback we have had is that this does not appear to be a particular problem in terms of other agencies cooperating with publicising the EU settlement scheme. However, there is always more that can be done and Cabinet will request that the Chief Executive writes to Welsh Government requesting further effort and publicity to promote the scheme.	March 2020