

CABINET - TUESDAY, 11 FEBRUARY 2020

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CABINET HELD IN COMMITTEE ROOMS 1/2/3, CIVIC OFFICES, ANGEL STREET, BRIDGEND, CF31 4WB ON TUESDAY, 11 FEBRUARY 2020 AT 14:30

Present

Councillor HJ David – Chairperson

PJ White

HM Williams

D Patel

Apologies for Absence

CE Smith and RE Young

Officers:

Gill Lewis	Interim Head of Finance and Section 151 Officer
Kelly Watson	Head of Legal & Regulatory Services
Mark Shephard	Chief Executive
Susan Cooper	Corporate Director - Social Services & Wellbeing
Mark Galvin	Senior Democratic Services Officer - Committees
Lindsay Harvey	Corporate Director Education and Family Support

15. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

16. MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2020-21 TO 2023-24 AND DRAFT BUDGET CONSULTATION PROCESS

The Chairperson of the Council's Budget Research and Evaluation Panel (BREP), presented a report on behalf of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The purpose of the report was to present Cabinet with the findings and recommendations of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee, in relation to:

- The findings of BREP attached at Appendix A and Appendix B to the report.
- The responses from all the Subject Overview and Scrutiny Committees in relation to Cabinet's draft budget proposals, attached at Appendix C.

By way of background information, he explained that in considering the challenges associated with continued budget reductions, BREP Members recognised the need for a 'whole Council' response to be adopted in managing anticipated cuts to services, against a backdrop of increasing demand and the challenging financial outlook.

The next section of the report confirmed the role of both the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee (COSC) and BREP in terms of both these bodies having the overall responsibility for budget monitoring throughout the year.

The terms of reference of BREP were outlined in paragraph 3.4 of the report.

He proceeded, by advising that the COSC considered the findings of the BREP and all Subject Overview and Scrutiny Committees on 4 February 2020, in order to determine whether the recommendations should be forwarded to Cabinet as part of the budget consultation process. These were split into the above mentioned Appendices that supported the covering report.

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The Chairperson of BREP then gave a resume of some of the key information contained in the report's Appendices, following which, the Leader invited any comments or questions from Cabinet Members.

The Deputy Leader extended his thanks to BREP, all Overview and Scrutiny Committee Members and the Scrutiny section for their hard work in ensuring that proposal's relating to the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) had been both shared and subjected to consideration and examination. He recognised the fact that Scrutiny in the Authority was cross party and therefore, any views fed back to the Cabinet on the budget, formed a 'One Council approach.' The recommendations of Scrutiny would be examined by Cabinet with support from the Corporate Management Board (CMB) and formally responded to as part of the main MTFS report that would be considered by Cabinet then determined by full Council. He also applauded the thorough way the Council's budget proposals were scrutinised, which had been positively acknowledged as 'best practice' by the Council regulators.

The Cabinet Member – Social Services and Early Help referred to Recommendation 2 at Appendix A to the report, where reference was made to 'there needing to be further work done to break the silo approach to budgeting.' He felt that in recent years the Council had broken away from this 'silo' approach.

The Chairperson of BREP acknowledged this and the fact that the Council had in recent years improved in this area as the workforce had become leaner in response to cuts in settlements. He added however, that BREP and some other Members of Overview and Scrutiny Committees, felt that more work could be carried out through partnerships and organisations tackling issues together, including through pooling their resources. An example of this was that such further work was required he felt, between the Authority and Town/Community Councils, in order to overcome issues and problems at a community level, including through Town/Community Councils increasing their precepts for this purpose, so as to continue supporting BCBC financially on certain smaller initiatives.

The Leader advised that with a £270m net budget that supported approximately 800 services served by 6,000 employees, meant that there could be a risk of some employees working in silo, but largely this was due to the fact that a considerable number of these workers focused on specialist areas. He added though that this approach had improved within the Council in recent years through the introduction of cultural changes and Management shrinking, resulting in Managers being responsible for wider work areas, since the inception of austerity. He did acknowledge however that there was some room for further improvement in this area.

These comments were echoed by the Interim Head of Finance and S151 Officer, who also added that the Council were adopting a more strategic approach in recent years, than it had previous to this period.

The Cabinet Member – Future Generations and Wellbeing added that there were examples where the Council were breaking away from a 'silo approach,' for example through combining work areas, such as Wellbeing and Social Services.

She then referred to Recommendation 1 at Appendix A, 'in terms of Legal and Procurement's obligations to the MTFS, the recommendation that funding is increased to address, for example, specific support to new initiatives, e.g. Community Asset Transfer Scheme (CATS). She sought clarification whether this request for increased funding was in respect of Legal and Procurement or CAT.

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The Chairperson of BREP advised that this Recommendation was requesting whether there was enough financial support available to put in place any further administrative staff that in all probability will be required, to process the extra work envisaged in the future to support the CAT process, when Clubs and Organisations proceed to take over the management of sports pavilions and playing fields.

The Cabinet Member – Future Generations and Wellbeing, then referred to Recommendation 4, ‘that Cabinet be requested to review the Authority’s financial relationship with partners, especially within the Community Safety Partnership.’ She asked if this meant seeking to obtain increased financial support, for collaborative working to support, for example, improvements within communities. She further asked if this request solely related to the Police or other key stakeholders also.

The Chairperson of BREP advised that one of the roles of Overview and Scrutiny was to try and save the Authority money in areas where it could do so. This Recommendation related to the expense for the provision of CCTV across the County Borough and though the main centralised system for this was based in the Council at the Bryncethin Depot and supported by BCBC staff, BREP felt that the provision of this could be financially assisted by the Police and Crime Commissioner, in particular, as well as other organisations that comprise the Community Safety Partnership Board.

The Cabinet Member – Future Generations and Wellbeing, referred then to Recommendation 6, ie ‘BREP considers the outcome of the scrutiny process with regards to CAT in the financial year 2020-21 and that Cabinet endorses this recommendation.’ She sought further clarification on this Recommendation.

The Chairperson of BREP, explained that this just related to the fact that BREP wished to be regularly updated on the future of CAT moving forward. This included the progress that was being made with regards to Sports Clubs taking over assets through the CAT process, and Scrutiny also being kept up to speed on the future levels of funding that will be set aside for this purpose. He added that this linked to Recommendation 1 discussed earlier in debate and that BREP Members were seeking assurance that there was sufficient capacity to deliver upon both Recommendations.

In respect of Recommendation 5 of Appendix A, the Cabinet Member – Future Generations and Wellbeing, asked if BREP had discussed the “value” of the Council’s Town and Community Council Forum.

The Chairperson of BREP not dislike other Members, felt that a lot of the items considered by the Forum did not achieve measurable outcomes. A considerable amount of debate was generated by Members as a result of reports being submitted to its quarterly meetings, as well as it being a meeting that shared information on key topics relating to both the Authority and outside organisations, including the likes of the third sector. But the Committee had no powers and therefore were unable to make firm decisions on items. BREP considered that the Forum should be given extra support also through looking at updating the Town and Community Council Charter and accompanying Memorandum of Understanding. The Forum should offer more in the way of direction and lead upon collaborative working more proactively, including joint working between Town/Community Councils, particularly those that adjoined Wards, and for Town/Community Councils to also support more some of the work undertaken by the local authority, where this was possible.

The Leader thanked the Chairperson of BREP for attending the meeting and presenting the report and asked him if he had any concluding observations for Cabinet.

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The Chairperson of BREP thanked Cabinet and CMB for allowing him the opportunity to present the report. He confirmed that BREP would need to consolidate and revisit the recommendations in due course if necessary, in order to ensure their validity and deliverability, and to monitor as time progresses into the next financial year and the budget setting process, including areas where the Council's Revenue and Capital budget was being spent.

The Leader concluded debate on the report by stating that BREP was a cross-party Panel and therefore, in order for them to reach a balanced view on all elements comprising the MTFS proposals as it monitored the budget throughout the year, attendance levels of BREP Members at meetings needed to be improved and such improvement maintained. He would remind Group Leaders of this at the next Group Leaders meeting. He added that Cabinet's responses to the recommendations would be sent to all BREP Members in advance of the budget meetings of both Cabinet and Council. He and Cabinet colleagues welcomed any feedback from BREP Members on these upon receiving them.

RESOLVED: That Cabinet agreed to give consideration to the recommendations of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee, in response to the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2020-21 to 2023-24 and the Draft Budget Consultation Process and respond to these in the report to be considered by Cabinet at its next meeting dated 25 February 2020.

17. URGENT ITEMS

None.

The meeting closed at 15.07 pm