

Combined Meeting of all Scrutiny Committees' Recommendations on Medium Term Financial Strategy 2021-22 to 2024-25

Following the Combined Meeting of all Scrutiny Committees' consideration of the draft budget proposals, the Committee made the following recommendations:

1. The Committee recommended that the Cabinet lobbies Welsh Government to ensure that additional legislation comes with the consequential funding to avoid putting the Local Authority under additional unnecessary financial pressure from existing budgets. (CEX5 Homelessness Funding.)
2. The Committee recommended that consideration be given to greater communication with the public explaining the costs of services and how the Council spends money.
3. The Committee recommended that clarification is sought regarding the Local Government Minister expressing this year's settlement is a flat cash budget that requires no redundancies.
4. The Committee recommended that Corporate Management Board and Cabinet are requested to review and define what the role and responsibility of BREP is and respond to Corporate Overview and Scrutiny to consider.
5. The Committee recommended that Cabinet are requested to write to Welsh Government to impress upon them the need to lobby Westminster, as while NHS Staff and Teachers pay protections are devolved to Welsh Government, Local Government staff are on NJC Terms and Conditions, is not a devolved budget, and they will be subject to a pay freeze. Furthermore, the White Paper for the care sector requires that commissioned services should be paid a real living wage on the same terms & conditions as LA staff.
6. The Committee expressed concern about the Ed Psych provision and the additional pressure the pandemic placed on the service and recommend an increase in the budget for 2021-22 to alleviate the likely huge demand from younger people from the impact of the pandemic, as well as increased additional learning needs. (EFS7)
7. The Committee expressed concern that the target of £300k for 2021-22 was unrealistic and recommended that it should be removed. While it supported the CAT process it was felt that any savings should be reinvested into the service. If this target cannot be removed for 2021-22, then the Committee recommend that the target of £300k be spread across 3 years from 2022-23 onwards. (COM1)

8. The Committee recommended that the narrative be amended, as it states “this may impact on the availability to maintain the current number of children’s play areas”, but the Capital Programme is investing in play areas.(COM 1)
9. The Committee recommended that CAT Transfer progress be monitored by Subject Overview and Scrutiny Committee 3 at the half year point. (COM1)
10. The Committee recommended that the Fees and Charges policy be reviewed in 2021-22 to change it from “inflation +1%”, to just “inflation” with a view to it being implemented from the budget in 2022-23.
11. The Committee were concerned regarding the impact of cutting the Pest Control Contract completely, due to the impact on those in receipt of benefits and recommended that the Pest Control Savings proposal is placed on hold pending the Cabinet reviewing of the proposal. (CEX2)
12. The Committee recommended that a working group actively look at identifying relatively small one off investments on safe routes to schools which could offset ongoing costs of some Home to School transport. (EFS2/Budget Pressure EFS7)
13. The Committee expressed concern about spending on consultants because of the lack of in-house capacity due to service cuts made over the last 10 years and recommended that future MTFS budget savings proposals fully consider any possible long term implications that may incur additional cost in future years.(COM1)
14. While the Committee acknowledged that there were huge pressures upon the authority from the impact of Covid-19, there were incredible pressures within local communities and the Committee recommended that Cabinet embrace the concept of prioritisation based upon the needs of those local communities.