

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL
REPORT TO TOWN AND COMMUNITY COUNCIL FORUM

15 FEBRUARY 2021

REPORT OF THE INTERIM CHIEF OFFICER – FINANCE, PERFORMANCE AND CHANGE

OUTCOME OF THE CONSULTATION ‘FIT FOR THE FUTURE’

1 Purpose of report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to present the Town and Community Council Forum with a copy of the Outcome of the ‘Fit for the Future’ consultation report that was presented to Cabinet on 19 January 2021, for information.

2 Connections to corporate well-being objectives / other corporate priorities

- 2.1 This report assists in the achievement of the following corporate well-being objectives under the **Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015**:

1. **Supporting a successful sustainable economy** – taking steps to make the county borough a great place to do business, for people to live, work, study and visit, and to ensure that our schools are focussed on raising the skills, qualifications and ambitions for all people in the county borough.
2. **Helping people and communities to be more healthy and resilient** - taking steps to reduce or prevent people from becoming vulnerable or dependent on the Council and its services. Supporting individuals and communities to build resilience, and enable them to develop solutions to have active, healthy and independent lives.
3. **Smarter use of resources** – ensure that all resources (financial, physical, ecological, human and technological) are used as effectively and efficiently as possible and support the creation of resources throughout the community that can help to deliver the Council’s well-being objectives.

- 2.2 The ‘Fit for the Future’ 2020 consultation sought to obtain views on the future direction of the council following the Covid-19 pandemic. The allocation of financial resources determines the council’s ability to meet its well-being objectives. As such the report links to all the well-being objectives.

3 Background

- 3.1 Following a number of years of reductions in funding from central government, and continued financial pressures, along with addressing post-Covid-19 recovery, 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 (BCBC) has made reductions from its budget of £22 million over the last four years (2017-18 to 2020-21), with an expectation of significant further reductions required over the next four years.

- 3.2 A public consultation exercise was undertaken over an eight week period from 19 October 2020 to 13 December 2020. Respondents were asked to share their views on a range of areas including:
- Responding to the COVID-19 pandemic;
 - Business and the economy;
 - Health and wellbeing;
 - Customer access to Civic Offices;
 - Digitalisation;
 - Council Tax levels;
 - The future.
- 3.3 Budget consultation exercises have been undertaken annually since 2013-14. This 'Fit for the Future' 2020 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, as well as adapting to the challenges around social distancing that the pandemic has created. A wide variety of methods of communication were used including surveys, social media, a number of online engagement sessions, online FAQ sessions as well as videos, radio adverts and media releases. Due to the impact of Covid-19, and the inability to engage with residents face to face in the community, the council wanted to make sure that as many people as possible could get involved in the consultation and ensured that accessible versions of the survey were available – large print, easy-read and youth, as well as standard. An advert was also placed in the Glamorgan Gazette notifying non-domestic rates payers of the consultation, and inviting them to participate, as required by Section 65 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992.
- 3.4 The budget consultation was live between 19 October 2020 and 13 December 2020. The surveys were available on the council's website and paper copies were sent directly to residents upon request.
- 3.5 In order to gather views of young people, the consultation team attended the Bridgend Youth Council meeting on 24 November 2020. The Youth Council took part in discussions around some of the key questions within the consultation and were encouraged to complete the full consultation online. 11 young people engaged in the session. In addition, in order to encourage participation of young people in secondary schools and Bridgend College, the consultation team wrote to all Governing Bodies and headteachers as well as the Principal of Bridgend College to promote the consultation amongst their learners as well as school staff and parents/carers.
- 3.6 The consultation aimed to reach the following key stakeholders: general public/residents, Citizens' Panel members, elected members, BCBC employees, Bridgend businesses, town and community councils, school governors, Bridgend Community Cohesion and Equality Forum (BCCEF) members, local interest/community groups, Bridgend Association of Voluntary Organisations (BAVO), Bridgend College, partners, secondary schools (including head teachers) and media outlets.

- 3.7 The consultation was supported by a full communications and promotional plan. The main activities included three media releases, a BCBC budget explainer video, various press release/editorials in the media, a social media/web campaign, radio campaign, direct marketing to key target audiences e.g. businesses, schools, Youth Council and internal communications for staff and elected members.
- 3.8 As well as the explainer video, four additional videos were created to promote the consultation on social media due to the impact of the pandemic. These videos featured the Chief Executive, Leader, Deputy Leader and Youth Mayor.
- 3.9 In addition to general social media content, four polls were created on Twitter which generated 122 votes to key questions within the budget consultation survey.
- 3.10 The Fit for the Future consultation was included in eight weekly govDelivery bulletins and one stand-alone bulletin during the live period. govDelivery is a new communications tool that has been implemented by the authority in 2020 to send messages directly to residents' email inboxes in the language of their choice. There are currently 37,360 English language subscribers and 220 Welsh language subscribers from Bridgend County Borough to the weekly Covid-19 update emails. Overall, the govDelivery emails generated 1,839 link clicks through to the budget consultation webpage.

4 Current situation/proposal

- 4.1 Attached to this cover report is a copy of the report to Cabinet on 19 January 2021 on the Outcome of the 'Fit for the Future' Consultation (**Appendix A**)
- 4.2 The attached consultation report (**Appendix B**) sets out in detail the views expressed by those who participated.
- 4.3 Overall, the council has received 1,831 interactions from a combination of survey completions, engagement at various meetings, social media engagement and via the authority's Citizens' Panel. Due to the impact of Covid-19 this is a decrease of 5,606 (75%) on the 7,437 interactions from last year. A total of 1,421 survey responses were received, which is a decrease of 58% on last year's survey completions.
- 4.3 The response rate, by method of interaction is set out below:

Interactions	Number
Survey completions	1,421
Events/meetings/workshops	203
Emails	3
Letters	1
Telephone calls	2
Social media comments	79
Social media polls	122
Total interactions	1,831

- 1,421 responses to the surveys were received in total.
- Overall 203 people attended the various online events and meetings.
- A total of 201 interactions were received via social media. This includes 79 social media comments and 121 social media poll votes.

- 6 comments were received by email, telephone and webpage feedback.

5 Effect upon policy framework & procedure rules

5.1 There is no impact on the policy framework and procedure rules.

6 Equality Impact Assessment.

6.1 There are no equality implications arising from this report.

7 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 Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) to be presented to Council in February 2021.

8 Financial implications

8.1 There are no financial implications arising directly from this report.

9 Recommendation

9.1 That the Town and Community Council Forum receives and considers this report alongside the detailed reports attached as Appendix A and Appendix B.

Gill Lewis

Interim Chief Officer – Finance, Performance and Change

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Contact Officer: Nicola Bunston
Consultation Engagement and Equalities Manager

Telephone: (01656) 643664

E-mail: nicola.bunston@bridgend.gov.uk

Postal Address: Bridgend County Borough Council
Civic Offices
Angel Street
Bridgend
CF31 4WB

Contact Officer: Deborah Exton
Deputy Head of Finance

Telephone: (01656) 643604

E-mail: deborah.exton@bridgend.gov.uk

Postal Address: Bridgend County Borough Council
Raven's Court
Brewery Field
Bridgend
CF31 4AP

Background Documents: None