

**Recommendations of the Budget Research and Evaluation Panel in respect of the Medium Term Financial Strategy 2022-23 to 2025-26**

**Recommendation 1**

Cabinet to review how school budgets are being used and how does the local authority demonstrate value for money in how schools are funded, taking an evidenced base approach.

**Recommendation 2**

Cabinet to review Fees and Charges annually going forward.

**Recommendation 3**

Cabinet to seek clarification from Welsh Government in relation to Post 16 bus passes and who is paying for them, ensuring that any cut to Post 16 Transport would not disadvantage those learning in more than one environment, due to the availability of courses.

BREP also asks what the Authority has done to explore cost benefit options and arrangements for alternative routes, whilst awaiting the clarification.

**Recommendation 4**

Cabinet to consider the cost of Nursery transportation given the small numbers of children using the facility and the high costs per pupil.

**Recommendation 5**

Cabinet to review the cost of nursery provision.

**Recommendation 6**

Cabinet lobbies Welsh Government, through the Welsh Local Government Association to ensure that additional legislation, in terms of the ALN bill, comes with the consequential funding.

**Recommendation 7**

Cabinet urgently reviews school catchment areas to ensure that recent housing developments are taken into consideration, in order to also help identify financial, carbon and environmental savings on transport, so at the end they are taken into consideration to also identify financial savings on transport costs.

**Recommendation 8**

BREP acknowledges that due to ageing population and the impact of Covid and long Covid, social care costs are increasing and there will be a potential budget pressure and so proposed budget savings will have to be found in other ways, by looking more strategically across the whole Council and to explore what can be streamlined and still fulfil statutory duties.

Specifically, Cabinet is recommended to take a one-Council approach and look at areas of duplication of functions across the Council and scope for close integration to

work smarter e.g., in back office administration, complaints, customer service, referrals and business support in Education and Social Services which was recommended last year.

#### Recommendation 9

Cabinet is requested to put forward a motion to Welsh Government and Westminster to fund wholesale reform of the social care system with the strategic aim to fund social care fit for the future.

#### Recommendation 10

Cabinet explores re-balancing the market between commissioned and in-house services in the future and how best that suits the needs of the county borough of Bridgend whilst considering Ethical procurement of services as well.

#### Recommendation 11

Cabinet explores potential for increasing charges in Social Services, and provides BREP with a breakdown of the cost and quantum of support to local residents of the community.

#### Recommendation 12

Cabinet investigates all new forms of food waste bags, having regard to the environmental impact and to lower the financial cost to the Authority.

#### Recommendation 13

Cabinet explores the opportunity of merging Bridgend Bus Station with Bridgend Railway Station into a transport hub, fit for the County as a whole.

#### Recommendation 14

Cabinet to explore the potential for charging in relation to the administration fee for the issuing and reissuing of Blue Badges.

#### Recommendation 15

Cabinet explore the options with regards to the future of Ravens Court.

#### Recommendation 16

Cabinet to explore options for a dedicated Officer, with flexible hours, to liaise with Town and Community Council's (TCC's) to check if there is any duplication between work done by the local authority and TCC's to see if there are savings in relation to weed spraying, additional grass cutting, etc.

#### Recommendation 17

Cabinet to explore the use of compacting bins in parks and review the frequency of collection and duplication of services e.g., Park and Street Scene both collecting bins and Highways and Parks both cutting grass.

#### Recommendation 18

Cabinet to review and simplify the charging structure for car parking and taper the free parking facility.

#### Recommendation 19

Cabinet to explore the option for recycling black plastic and other products not currently recycled.

#### Recommendation 20

Cabinet to revisit the relationships with Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) across the county borough to broaden the scope of partnerships and improve the consistency of the operation seen by the public, with the local authority to be able to fit different models and provide different solutions with multiple RSLs.

#### Recommendation 21

Cabinet to revisit the relationship with V2C and renegotiate access to the 25% housing stock that is not currently available for allocation by the local authority housing officers, who manage the common housing register.

#### Recommendation 22

Cabinet to consider future social housing being provided by the local authority including the options for the next 20 years and exploring a new model, and where developers are granted permission the social housing element is prioritised.

BREP further asks what exploration the Authority has undertaken on providing local authority housing.

#### Recommendation 23

Cabinet to press the Welsh Government to transfer money currently provided on a grant basis directly into the RSG, to save on the significant time/costs of administering, monitoring, and reporting upon grants and the lack of ability to plan ahead for schemes from short term grant funding.

#### Recommendation 24

Consideration be given to the training / recruitment of apprentices in the Housing service and the use of the market supplement to retain staff.

#### Recommendation 25

Cabinet to look at the priorities within the corporate plan with a view to Housing within the Chief Executive's Directorate being included as a priority in the Plan, due to the significant increase in homelessness and the lack of resources.

#### Recommendation 26

Cabinet to renew where the local authority is in terms of the consultation process and whether there are opportunities to improve public engagement, taking into consideration experiences from other local authorities or the public and private sectors.

#### Recommendation 27

Cabinet and the Corporate Management Board reinforce the "One Council" approach and go further to develop a "One Bridgend" approach when working with key partners to deliver community based services. Key partners that can be identified to include but not exclusive to the Police, Health, Social Landlords, Awen, Halo, and Kier.

#### Recommendation 28

Cabinet and the Corporate Management Board consider a review of the corporate communication strategy to highlight the specific responsibilities that Bridgend County Borough Council has for the delivery of public services. This may well improve the public's knowledge and understanding of the Council's responsibilities and provide clarity for key stakeholders intrinsically linked to community based services.

#### Recommendation 29

BREP requests clarity upon how its Recommendations have been incorporated into the draft Medium Term Financial Strategy, and these particular budget proposals and for the medium term, what Corporate Directors have done to take account of BREP Recommendations, and any that have been rejected, to enable a transparent debate on the recommendations put forward, and that future BREP recommendations ought to inform the budget process from an earlier stage and a written response to each of its Recommendations be provided earlier to enable those considerations to be built into its final Recommendations to Cabinet.

#### Recommendation 30

BREP is looking ahead to the next Council term and the next five years, given the likelihood that the settlement for the next financial year is a one-off and there are likely to be significant cuts needed in the next Council Term, BREP requests a breakdown of which services in each Directorate are discretionary and clear differentiation between statutory services, to provide clarity to BREP Members.