

CABINET RESPONSE TO CORPORATE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (COSC) REPORT ON MTFS

	BREP Recommendation	Cabinet Response
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 based approach.	<p>There are systems in place to monitor school spend which includes: the monitoring of school balances on a monthly basis, the local authority and Central South Consortium working in partnership to monitor grant funding that schools receive, and the Performance and Financial Monitoring Board (which includes colleagues from the Finance Team) meeting on a half-termly basis to ensure that schools are being run in an effective way that meets the needs of all learners. As part of this meeting school budgets are discussed.</p> <p>It is proposed that a report is presented to Scrutiny Committee to detail the work that is undertaken to monitor school spend and the action taken if required to address deficit budgets.</p>
2	Cabinet to review Fees and Charges annually going forward.	Cabinet approved an updated Fees and Charges Policy in October 2021. The revised policy includes a number of new and updated sections and responsibilities, including processes to be followed where it is proposed not to increase fees and charges, and Cabinet members' authority to approve fees and charges for new services or increases to fees and charges. The policy also stipulates that charges will be reviewed annually as an integral part of the MTFS and budget and service planning processes and will be published on the Council's website.
3	<p>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.</p> <p>BREP also asks what the Authority has done to explore cost benefit options and arrangements for alternative routes, whilst awaiting the clarification.</p>	<p>The provision of free home-to-school transport for post-16 learners is non-statutory and is therefore unfunded by Welsh Government. The policy arrangement to provide free home-to-school/college transport in place in Bridgend is funded 100% by the local authority. The proposal to remove the policy provision of free transport for post-16 learners was rejected by Cabinet in September 2020.</p> <p>Post 16 (sixth-form) learners use the same buses as those pupils attending secondary schools who are of statutory school age. The routes used by buses are efficient and effective given the cohort of learners is not static and changes annually. For</p>

CABINET RESPONSE TO CORPORATE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (COSC) REPORT ON MTF5

	BREP Recommendation	Cabinet Response
		post-16 learners attending Bridgend College, these use public bus services provided by First Cymru, thereby offering flexible and efficient access transport to students on further education courses.
4	Cabinet to consider the cost of Nursery transportation given the small numbers of children using the facility and the high costs per pupil.	<p>In September 2020, Cabinet recognised that nursery transport provision could not continue in its current form and was required to change due to identified health and safety issues.</p> <p>There has been no change to the local authority's policy of providing transport to pupils attending their nearest suitable nursery school subject to living beyond 1.5 miles. Officers have since procured more suitable transport for nursery pupils at greater expense. No further saving can be made unless Cabinet is minded to remove this eligibility from the local authority's Home-to-School/College Transport Policy in the future. There are currently no plans to do so.</p>
5	Cabinet to review the cost of nursery provision.	<p>For 2021-2022, the funding allocated to primary schools in Bridgend for nursery provision via their delegated budgets is £4.7m. This is based on a weighted average of 1,570 full-time equivalent pupils across 47 schools. The delegated funding allocated per full-time pupil equates to £2,978.07.</p> <p>There are currently no nursery places in Bridgend special schools. The budget to fund nursery places in registered non-maintained settings for 2021-2022 is £391,230 and includes an element for additional support that may be required. There are currently 19 registered non-maintained settings in Bridgend. The number of early years' places funded in the non-maintained sector in the summer term 2021 was 289. Funded provision in the non-maintained sector is for part-time only and up to 10 hours per week. The termly rate payable is £585.</p>

CABINET RESPONSE TO CORPORATE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (COSC) REPORT ON MTF5

	BREP Recommendation	Cabinet Response
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.	<p>There have been additional costs identified with the introduction of the ALNET ACT 2018 which have been mainly staffing for new statutory posts.</p> <p>The true cost of introducing the Act is not yet known as we are in the first year of a three-year phased implementation period.</p> <p>The local authority will continue to liaise with Welsh Government (via ADEW and WLGA) with a view to ensuring appropriate resources are made available to support ALNET Act requirements.</p>
7	Cabinet urgently reviews the 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.	<p>It would be impracticable to amend school catchment boundaries on a dynamic basis in line with new housing developments.</p> <p>The majority of school catchment areas in Bridgend are mature and require no amendments. Any change to a catchment boundary requires public consultation and a Cabinet decision.</p> <p>Such a catchment change could only be implemented in line with future school admission arrangements. These are required to be approved two years in advance of them coming into force.</p> <p>Significant financial and corresponding environmental benefits can only realistically be made as a result of a policy change to reduce the current generous eligibility for school transport offered in Bridgend, or to create additional schools in local communities thereby bringing school places within walking distance of areas of high population. In the awarding of contracts following the tendering of school transport contracts, carbon reduction measures are an important consideration in scoring suitable school transport operators.</p>
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	The 'One Council' approach is already embedded into the principles that underpin the development of the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS). Ten consecutive years of austerity and very substantial 'back office' savings/cuts prior to the better

CABINET RESPONSE TO CORPORATE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (COSC) REPORT ON MTF5

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	<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>	<p>settlements of the last two years, have meant that opportunities to identify service areas to streamline further are now more difficult. In addition a more recent issue across the organisation is that demand for some 'back office' services to support the delivery of front line priorities has increased significantly, for example in areas such as human resources, business support, property, ICT, legal, procurement and finance. In some cases this has meant that budget growth has been requested to reverse previous savings decisions. However, a commitment remains to increase the effective use of digital service delivery where appropriate as per the agreed strategy, which may in due course lead to some savings opportunities, as well as implement a new service delivery model which may eventually allow further rationalisation of the Council's property portfolio, and to carry out a full phase 2 business support review, in particular across Education and Family Support and Social Services and Early Help during 2022-23.</p>
9	<p>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.</p>	<p>Bridgend Cabinet has worked through the WLGA to strongly influence Welsh Government reform of social care, particularly sustainable funding of social care to enable fair terms and conditions for the whole social care workforce. The funding of real living wage for care workers is a first step in more sustainable funding but significant long term investment is required and we will continue to work with the local government family across Wales to influence the outcome of the Welsh Government inter-ministerial paying for care group. Our priority continues to be well resourced, high quality preventative and improved outcomes for children and adults with care and support needs.</p>
10	<p>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</p>	<p>Market stability plans for all regulated services are being developed and will be presented to full Council no later than July 2022 (in accordance with Welsh Government guidance). These plans form the basis of commissioning strategies for social care</p>

CABINET RESPONSE TO CORPORATE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (COSC) REPORT ON MTF5

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	Bridgend whilst considering Ethical procurement of services as well.	services and must consider the optimal balance between commissioned and provided services to ensure the best balance. This will differ from service area to service area, for example, the optimal balance between in-house and externally commissioned domiciliary care will differ from residential care which will differ from supported living.
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.	All fees and charges in social services, as in other parts of the Council, are reviewed on an annual basis. Cabinet agrees to keep charges in Social Services under review but anticipates the option to increase charges will be limited by Welsh Government Charging Regulations which place a cap on the weekly charge for community care services. A detailed presentation was provided to BREP setting out the unit costs of social care services provided or commissioned by the Council to meet statutory duties under the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act (2014) including residential care, supported living and domiciliary care. The unit cost was calculated by dividing the cost of the service by the number of people (or hours) of service provided. This information can be provided to BREP regularly to inform its considerations.
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.	This is linked to an MTF5 saving of £35k (COM3) and is being developed currently. We shall move away from the current use of biodegradable bags as they are not compatible with the commissioned anaerobic digester. The department will investigate all forms of alternative food waste bag and ensure that it has regard to environmental impact and will result in an annual saving.
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.	This is being explored as part of the Bridgend Town Centre Masterplan work and for improvements to the main Bridgend Railway Station. A project group has been formed with key stakeholders including Network Rail and Transport for Wales to

CABINET RESPONSE TO CORPORATE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (COSC) REPORT ON MTFS

	BREP Recommendation	Cabinet Response
		look at the options for the front and rear of the current station and further links to public and active travel.
14	Cabinet to explore the potential for charging in relation to the administration fee for the issuing and reissuing of Blue Badges.	Cabinet are reflecting on the position as to whether a charge should be levied for issuing Blue badges - no decision has been reached.
15	Cabinet explore the options with regards to the future of Ravens Court.	This is currently being explored and is linked to MTFS budget reduction (COM5), which predicates the commercial letting of a wing for £50k. This covers the utility and other premises costs and generates a rental income. The building is currently being used by the MASH and the ground floor is being used by the Health Board as a vaccination centre. There is a corporate project underway looking at the future new ways of working for the Council. When the projects are completed the Council will be able to make an informed decision as to whether to retain Ravens Court, fully lease space within it or dispose of the building. All of these options are still available.
16	Cabinet to explore options for a dedicated Officer, with flexible hours, to liaise with Town and Community Council's (TCCs) 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	Whilst the local authority works in partnership with TCCs it is considered prudent to re-examine the services that are provided at a local level to ensure there is no duplication of public realm works or whether there are opportunities to pass responsibilities on to TCCs to undertake locally.
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.	The use of compacting street waste bins is being trialled in the County Borough in areas of highest footfall and litter, including at the seafront in Porthcawl. Should they prove successful it may be possible to look at rolling these facilities out to wider areas of the County Borough, where large volumes of waste collected from street litter bins has been recorded.

CABINET RESPONSE TO CORPORATE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (COSC) REPORT ON MTF5

	BREP Recommendation	Cabinet Response
18	Cabinet to review and simplify the charging structure for car parking and taper the free parking facility.	The concession of 3 hours of free parking will continue in John Street Car Park in Porthcawl and the Rhiw in Bridgend until 31 st March 2022. We are currently looking at options to increase footfall into the town centres without the necessity of reduced parking charges. These include monthly markets and activities throughout the summer in addition to drop off and click and collect zones. These will be reported back to Cabinet in due course.
19	Cabinet to explore the option for recycling black plastic and other products not currently recycled.	The recycling of black plastic is not possible under the current waste contract, as there is no identified material recycling centre. Under any new contract from 2024 it is proposed to look at all options for new material streams including black plastic.
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.	A new Strategic Housing Partnership has been established with RSLs and Terms of Reference are now being agreed. This meeting is at CEO level and is intended to improve partnership working and develop strategic responses to housing and homelessness.
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.	The 25% arrangement was put in place during the stock transfer and any amendment to this would require legal advice as to whether it is possible. Regular meetings are held with V2C on an operational level to manage and support the delivery of the Social Housing Allocation Policy to support the statutory housing duty of the Council. In addition, a strategic meeting at CEO level is held to develop partnership working and discuss operational matters or concerns.
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.	The Council does not currently have any mechanisms in place to be a provider or manager of social housing. Investigation of this option would require in-depth legal financial and Corporate Landlord advice in terms of viability and feasibility.

CABINET RESPONSE TO CORPORATE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (COSC) REPORT ON MTF5

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	BREP further asks what exploration the Authority has undertaken on providing local authority housing.	At this stage the Council has focussed its efforts on working with registered social landlords to increase the amount of social housing provided rather than exploring how it could directly provide housing itself. In the first instance, as the Council has 'stock transferred' a number of years ago, specialist legal advice would be required on whether it is even permissible to do so, and then detailed financial consideration about whether that is something the Council should consider. Again this would be a significant programme of work at a time when the Council is already very stretched pursuing other essential work. Cabinet are however willing to consider this if efforts to work with RSLs, as set out, are unsuccessful.
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.	<p>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.</p> <p>A reduction on the bureaucracy relating to grants would be welcomed. In terms of the Housing Support Grant, circa £7.8m, which provides support to the Housing Services via the 3rd sector, Welsh Government has given a three year commitment which supports longer term planning and assurance to the 3rd sector providers.</p>
24	Consideration be given to the training / recruitment of apprentices in the Housing service and the use of the market supplement to retain staff.	Consideration is being given to all factors that may ease the current pressure on the housing systems and staff. Proposals for the establishment of a specific Homelessness Team is currently being considered and where applicable apprenticeship opportunities will be evaluated.
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	The importance of addressing, as far as is possible, the significant increase in homelessness is acknowledged and fully recognised. However, it is also a complex problem with some

CABINET RESPONSE TO CORPORATE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (COSC) REPORT ON MTF5

	BREP Recommendation	Cabinet Response
	to the significant increase in homelessness and the lack of resources.	restrictions on the type of temporary and quicker solutions that are deemed acceptable to Welsh Government, and a multi-agency approach is required involving registered social landlords and a range of 'wrap around' service providers. Moving forward the additional pressures and demand will mean that this will be a corporate priority. This will become a particularly acute issue if and when additional Welsh Government funding to mitigate the issues ends.
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.	The process for engaging with the public effectively is always reviewed regularly and good practise from other organisations considered and implemented where appropriate. The requirement to engage effectively with the public as part of the Council's statutory requirement to self-assess its corporate performance will mean effective public engagement and feedback on the way that services are delivered will become an even greater priority moving forward, to help inform and shape future service delivery.
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.	Agreed - There is already a firm commitment to a 'One Council' approach from both Cabinet and Corporate Management Board. This is evidenced in our approach to the budget, service delivery and to the development of partnerships and further collaboration. The intention of this approach is to ensure that all parts of the Council can make effective contributions to partnerships and that any consequences for other departments are understood and recognised. The prominent role we play in the Public Services Board (PSB) and the Regional Partnership Board (RPB) also contribute significantly to this approach, as well as regular separate meetings with each of the key organisations listed. However, it should also be recognised that sometimes in an organisation that delivers up to 800 different services, there are decisions and actions that need to be made, for various reasons, quickly or in isolation, where it becomes more difficult to demonstrate so obviously that 'One Council' approach.

CABINET RESPONSE TO CORPORATE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (COSC) REPORT ON MTFS

	BREP Recommendation	Cabinet Response
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.	Agreed - A number of options are currently being considered as part of the Council's corporate communication approach to put out information that helps the public gain a better understanding of what the Council does, what it is responsible for, and to also address some of the misinformation that currently circulates, particularly on social media.
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.	Cabinet is content to receive a proposal from BREP on how it would like feedback on its recommendations from Corporate Directors, and how moving forward it would like to engage with Cabinet with regard to its recommendations as the preparation of the MTFS develops.
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.	Cabinet is happy to work with BREP to develop a proposal to look at the provision of statutory and discretionary services in a meaningful way, and determine which statutory services are provided beyond the statutory minimum, the range of discretionary services the Council provides, and the link between the two in terms of prevention and early intervention, which can reduce the pressure on statutory services. It is important this is set out and agreed properly with very clear aims and outcomes as this is potentially a very significant piece of work, requiring

CABINET RESPONSE TO CORPORATE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (COSC) REPORT ON MTFIS

	BREP Recommendation	Cabinet Response
		substantial amounts of time and resource, and the results must be worth the effort in terms of establishing potential areas of saving and /or additional investment as appropriate in particular service areas.

CABINET RESPONSE TO CORPORATE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (COSC) REPORT ON MTF5

	Scrutiny Recommendations	Cabinet Response
	Chief Executive's Directorate and Council Wide	
CE1	The Committee recommended that the Medium Term Financial Strategy and the Corporate Plan be reviewed and adjusted based upon the volatility of the funding, the difficulties of financial planning on a 3 to 5 year cycle and the need to be prudent moving forward.	Agreed - There will be an opportunity post local government elections in May, for whoever forms the new administration to review with the Corporate Management Board plans moving forward, based on political priorities but also projections of future settlements, underlying service and cost pressures and legislative requirements.
CE2	The Committee recommended a corporate overview of procurement and tendering process be undertaken and looks at added liabilities to the Authority for staffing costs, which would include National Insurance contributions, national pay / wage increases, etc.	<p>A Corporate Procurement Strategy was approved by Cabinet in September 2021. The strategy is an important document setting out procurement practices and actions the Council will take in respect of its procurements and in line with internal and external policies and procedures.</p> <p>The procurement processes are regularly reviewed to ensure they are compliant with current regulations. Each service area undertakes monitoring of its own contracts and identifies when there are imminent changes that will have financial implications.</p>
CE3	The Committee requested clarification whether the requirement for the Authority to meet increased National Insurance contributions for staff in commissioned services is from employment law or from within the terms of the contracts.	It will be a condition of the contract that the Provider complies with all statutory employment requirements.
CE4	The Committee recommended that the Authority lobbies Welsh Government and UK Government for consequential funding for the additional requirements placed upon Local Authorities from legislative and regulatory pressures, including those relating to: the Additional Learning Needs Act, the Environmental (Wales) Act 2016, the Welsh Government's commitment to eradicate homelessness, local	<p>Agreed - The Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA), on behalf of local government in Wales, lobbies and campaigns regularly to government along these lines. Similarly Chief Officers and Executive Members of the Authority take every opportunity in meetings with government officials and ministers to do the same.</p> <p>In terms of the £19.6 million uplift in funding this is committed as follows:</p>

CABINET RESPONSE TO CORPORATE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (COSC) REPORT ON MTF5

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	<p>authorities' responsibilities in respect of responding to climate change and meeting net zero carbon targets, the implications of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021, etc. and asks Welsh Government to identify what within core funding covers these additional responsibilities. The Committee also requested an itemised breakdown of how much the additional legislative / regulatory commitments such as Teachers' Pay, NI Contributions, Real Living Wage, etc, take out of the £19.6 million uplift in funding, in order to receive an accurate indication of the remainder of the 9.2% budget settlement increase.</p>	<table border="1" data-bbox="1128 288 1928 746"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>£'000</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Pay Pressures</td> <td>5,000</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Price / Demographic Pressures</td> <td>3,613</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Unavoidable Budget Pressures including £2.5m for Real Living Wage</td> <td>11,338</td> </tr> <tr> <td>NI Increases External Services</td> <td>1,000</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Total Additional Pressures</td> <td>20,951</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Offset by Budget Reductions</td> <td>-631</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>20,320</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>The shortfall in funding over and above the £19.6m will be met from additional council tax arising from the increased council tax base (approved by Council in November 2021) and funding released from a review of pay awards based on latest negotiations.</p>		£'000	Pay Pressures	5,000	Price / Demographic Pressures	3,613	Unavoidable Budget Pressures including £2.5m for Real Living Wage	11,338	NI Increases External Services	1,000			Total Additional Pressures	20,951			Offset by Budget Reductions	-631				20,320
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CE5	<p>The Committee recommended that Cabinet write to Welsh Government urging them to set a multi-year Medium Term financial Strategy budget settlement cycle of 3 or 5 years.</p>	<p>Agreed - This is a long standing issue, and again any letter and representation would more typically come from the WLGA on behalf of all of local government in Wales. The Welsh Government have this year given an indication of an indicative settlement for all of local government for the next two years (three years overall) but we are not given any indication of what our individual settlement might be within that total, and the range of settlements to the 22 local authorities can vary significantly.</p>																						
CE6	<p>In respect of budget pressure CEX1, the Committee recommended consideration be given to continuing to reduce the cost of postage centrally due to the increase in digital service provision, and requested the</p>	<p>Covid-19 has resulted in the organisation working differently with remote working being initially mandated by Welsh Government. The postage budget has been impacted due to the changing work environment. As the organisation moves to a hybrid model of</p>																						

CABINET RESPONSE TO CORPORATE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (COSC) REPORT ON MTF5

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	savings being made by individual Directorates be identified.	working, it will allow for a review of the postage budget, along with the Print Strategy, to look at alternative channels such as digital, with the intention of reducing the reliance on physical paper.
CE7	In respect of budget pressure CW1, the Committee recommended that the Cabinet requests clarity on the outcome of the consultation undertaken upon Fire and Rescue Service precept / funding.	The Fire and Rescue Authority approved a draft revenue budget for consultation on the 20th December 2021. The consultation commenced after that meeting and the final budget decision will be taken by the Fire and Rescue Authority at its meeting on the 14th February 2022.
CE8	In respect of budget pressure CW3, the Committee expressed concern about whether the £1m would be sufficient to meet the range of potential services it may need to support, given the extent of previous claims from the Welsh Government Hardship Fund by such services e.g., schools, homelessness, etc. and requested itemisation of what the pressure is to support following the ending of the Welsh Government hardship fund.	The £1m figure is an estimate of the total budget we think may be required to pick up additional burdens once the Welsh Government hardship fund is removed from April 2022, and for items not covered by other growth included in the budget. There is currently no itemisation available as currently it remains unknown what and where additional burdens and pressures the Council will need to cover, but we can speculate, for example, that the cost of providing the leisure contract moving forward, if we are minded to want to keep the service the same, might increase as the number of paying customers has reduced significantly. This would be one example of a potential recurring additional cost. For additional costs or burdens that are anticipated to last only for a short period there is additional funding in a Covid reserve.
	Education and Family Support Directorate and Schools	
ED1	The Committee supported the COSC recommendation made on 19 January 2022 for a robust review of the Medium Term Financial Strategy and the Corporate Plan to be undertaken, as they were planned prior to the pandemic. The Committee requested that Cabinet be mindful of the consequences of the pandemic impact including learning catch up, the mental health of	Safeguarding and the mental/physical health of children are priority areas for the Education and Family Support Directorate. Schools can access direct support, advice and information linked to safeguarding via the Education Engagement Team. This will continue to be offered with ongoing training and information being provided via professional development workshops, safeguarding forums and safeguarding training.

CABINET RESPONSE TO CORPORATE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (COSC) REPORT ON MTFS

	Scrutiny Recommendations	Cabinet Response
	children and safeguarding issues when looking at this review, and the impact of potential future reductions on schools and teaching.	There is an on-going audit and review of services which support the mental health and wellbeing of pupils and we are adapting resources wherever possible to meet the increased demand.
ED2	In relation to the indicative Budget Reduction SCH1 of 1% for 2023-24 to 2025-26, the Committee recommended that the Cabinet lobby Welsh Government regarding the detrimental effect Covid has had on children and their learning and the need to start examining and discussing funding for schools looking ahead, as Wales has the lowest funding per pupil in the UK and Bridgend is lower than some other Welsh Authorities, and the need to try to protect children's learning from future savings that could potentially impact on the effectiveness of teaching.	Children's wellbeing and learning remains a priority for the local authority. Schools have been in receipt of a wide range of additional funds from Welsh Government (eg Recruit, Recover and Raise Standards RRRS grant) to support the learning recovery following the pandemic and it is acknowledged that such funding is likely to be needed for many years to come.
ED3	The Committee recognised the need to be able to plan ahead for future years in the MTFS and supported the recommendation proposed by COSC on 19 January 2022, that Cabinet write to Welsh Government urging them to set a multi-year Medium Term financial Strategy budget settlement cycle of 3 or 5 years	See response to CE5
ED4	The Committee recommended that consideration be given to the cost of living crisis to try to keep any future Council Tax increase to as minimal as possible.	Cabinet always strive to keep Council tax levels as low as they realistically can be, having taken into account the level of the settlement from Welsh Government, the amount of any additional growth pressures and new burdens and the impact of any cuts that would need to be implemented to offset any lower Council Tax. This is of course a difficult balancing act and the size of the Welsh Government settlement this year allowed Cabinet the opportunity to propose a freeze in Council tax, recognising the current cost of living crisis. That has not been a realistic option in any of the previous years over the last decade. Moving forward those same factors will need to be considered in setting the annual Council tax rate, but the provisional overall settlement for

CABINET RESPONSE TO CORPORATE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (COSC) REPORT ON MTF5

	Scrutiny Recommendations	Cabinet Response
		local government over the following two years indicates that this year's freeze is likely to be a one off and that some increase in Council Tax will be necessary in future years.
ED5	In relation to budget pressure EFS6, the Committee recommended that the Authority continue to lobby Welsh Government for the awaited WG review of learner transport, in order to progress the outcome relating to this pressure for home to school transport.	Cabinet Members will continue to liaise closely with Welsh Government Ministers, via the WLGA, to ensure the review of learner travel is published as soon as possible.
	Social Services and Wellbeing Directorate	
SS1	In relation to budget pressure SSW5, the Committee recommended that consideration be given to lobbying Welsh government to set a Welsh national salary, terms and conditions for social workers to alleviate Childrens social worker recruitment and retention pressures for Local Authorities, similarly to the national arrangements for teachers, police and nurses.	BCBC Cabinet Members and senior officers are working closely with Welsh Government and Social Care Wales, through the Welsh Local Government Association and Association of Directors of Social Services Cymru, to promote positively national actions to address the extreme challenges in the social care and social work workforce. There has been some success through the Welsh Government policy to implement the Real Living Wage for care workers as part of the programme for government. However, it is recognised that this is only part of the solution and a national pay and grading system, similar to that for the education workforce and NHS workforce, alongside improved national workforce planning (including student bursaries similar to those available for NHS workers) would be a positive development.
SS2	In addition to the above, the Committee expressed concern at the significant reliance and potential cost of agency staff in Children's Services and requested assurance that the situation is kept under review and all that can be done to reduce it considered.	Vacancy rates in children's social work in Bridgend (as in other local authorities in Wales and across the UK) present a significant risk to the effective delivery of statutory children's services. Agency workers are essential in ensuring that statutory duties are met, but a stable, well supported permanent social work workforce is fundamental in sustainably improving outcomes for children and families. The social work agency market is itself highly competitive and the cost of securing quality agency

CABINET RESPONSE TO CORPORATE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (COSC) REPORT ON MTF5

	Scrutiny Recommendations	Cabinet Response
		workers is increasing. These issues have the highest priority for Cabinet and Corporate Management Board. Cabinet will consider a 3 year strategic plan for children's services in February. There are clear actions in this plan to address the workforce challenges. The Corporate Director for Social Services and Wellbeing chairs a fortnightly project board which has set and is overseeing a number of strategic actions to ensure the Council is able to meet statutory duties through a permanent workforce. These actions include strengthening the skill mix in teams so social workers can focus on their professional duties and the 'grow your own' social work scheme which is seconding increasing numbers to the social work degree course which will, over time, mean that there is a considerably enhanced supply of newly qualified social workers contracted to Bridgend.
SS3	In relation to budget reduction proposal SSW1, the Committee recommended consideration is given to ensure that service users are not excluded by the use of technology / digital service delivery.	Technology is a key enabler of effective and efficient care services and has over a number of years enabled people to remain more independent in their own homes. Critical to this success is that the technology is linked to a human response. Good examples are the lifeline service and falls detectors. This approach to combining technology and human to support people to live in their own homes will continue and as technology develops it is important it is used to enhance the lives of people with care and support needs.
SS4	In relation to budget reduction proposal SSW2, the Committee requested assurance that consideration of new ways of working includes options for face-to-face service e.g., for those who are unable to engage in other ways e.g., via telephone completion of forms, etc.	Social care services have, throughout the pandemic, been provided in person as it was not possible to provide them remotely. Other services and approaches were at times provided digitally or through a mix of digital and face to face contact. The usual operating model for Social Services and Wellbeing services will be that which delivers the best outcomes for people most effectively. For most services for people with care and support needs this will be face to face, but supplemented and enhanced

CABINET RESPONSE TO CORPORATE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (COSC) REPORT ON MTFS

	Scrutiny Recommendations	Cabinet Response
		by digital communications where this is more effective in achieving outcomes identified.
SS5	In relation to budget reduction proposal SSW3, the Committee suggested that the use of the term service remodelling had negative perceptions which could have adverse impact on staff and service users and did not make clear the extensive advocacy and consultation undertaken to listen to the wishes of service users, and recommended consideration be given to more positive terminology and explanation of the budget line, such as tailoring or ongoing continuous improvement, etc.	Accepted – all changes to the way services are provided should strongly evidence co-production with people whose lives that service impact on. Language is important and if the language used could cause undue anxiety or concerns we must challenge ourselves and change the narrative we use to explain the proposal.
SS6	In relation to general comments relating to budget pressure CW3, the Committee recommended that consideration be given to reviewing the £1M pressure, as due to the extent of the significant reliance on the former Welsh Government hardship fund by a number of services including those within Social Services and Wellbeing, there was concern that the figure may be insufficient and a reduction in service delivery could ensue.	See response to CE8
	Communities Directorate	
CM1	The Committee requested a written breakdown of the list of Community Asset Transfers that had taken place to date with the maintenance costs per site to identify the savings.	A detailed response has been prepared and forwarded to Scrutiny for circulation to its members on the 01/02/22.
CM2	The Committee welcomed that a report would be prepared to Cabinet upon the Community Asset Transfers, including an update upon those community facilities clubs had not expressed an interest in transferring.	The Leader of the Council agreed that a Cabinet Report updating on the progress on the Community Assets Transfer Programme would be brought forward in the Spring.

CABINET RESPONSE TO CORPORATE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (COSC) REPORT ON MTFS

	Scrutiny Recommendations	Cabinet Response
CM3	<p>The Committee welcomed the 9.2% uplift in the settlement from Welsh Government but is disheartened that savings are still proposed to the Communities Directorate particularly the Strategic Regeneration Fund, because of its importance for future generations. The Committee recommends that any reductions in the Communities Directorate are the last resort and that the Strategic Regeneration Fund budget particularly is protected as much as possible from reduction, as a priority from the list of Communities Directorate proposed reductions. (Budget reduction proposals, particularly COM1)</p>	<p>Whilst the support of the Scrutiny Committee for the Communities Directorate is acknowledged, future budget recommendations for savings in 2023-24 will be made with full corporate budget visibility as part of next year's MTFS process.</p>
CM4	<p>In relation to budget pressure COM1, COM2 and COM3, the Committee requested information be provided regarding increased tonnages for kitchen waste, blue bag waste and street litter and the percentage increases in respect of each.</p>	<p>The increased tonnage from Waste Collections that relate to the budget pressures are as follows: -</p> <p>COM1: Increase in Kitchen Waste tonnage</p> <p>2019/20 7,893.42 tonnes recorded 2020/21 8,992.24 tonnes recorded An increase in kitchen waste tonnage of 14%</p> <p>COM2: Increase in Blue Bag Waste tonnage</p> <p>2019/20 11,948.23 tonnes recorded 2020/21 13,939.22 tonnes recorded An increase in Blue Bag waste tonnage of 17%</p> <p>COM3: Increase in Street Litter Collection</p> <p>2019/20 1,054.33 tonnes recorded 2020/21 1,127.33 tonnes recorded</p> <p>An increase in street litter waste tonnage of 6%</p>

CABINET RESPONSE TO CORPORATE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (COSC) REPORT ON MTFS

	Scrutiny Recommendations	Cabinet Response
CM5	The Committee recommended that Cabinet examine all discretionary services to ensure they are all achieving value for money for the local authority.	Clarification on what the Committee are seeking to achieve here is important. The Council runs up to 800 different services, many of which are discretionary in nature. The distinction between statutory and discretionary services can be misleading as the role and value of discretionary services, for example in reducing the demand for some statutory services, is huge. In addition we offer some statutory services beyond the statutory minimum. The extent to which the Council provides and invests in discretionary services is 'examined' every year as part of the budget setting process and as part of ongoing performance assessment. Any more formal 'examination' beyond that on a service by service basis, would be an enormous and onerous undertaking, but Cabinet are happy to look at specific issues if the committee have particular concerns or issues.