

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CORPORATE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
HELD REMOTELY - VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS ON TUESDAY, 1 FEBRUARY 2022 AT 09:30

Present

Councillor KL Rowlands – Chairperson

JPD Blundell
RMI Shaw
AJ Williams

DG Howells
JC Spanswick

M Jones
MC Voisey

RL Penhale-Thomas
A Williams

Officers:

Lucy Beard Scrutiny Officer

Meryl Lawrence Senior Democratic Services Officer - Scrutiny

Kelly Watson Chief Officer Legal, HR and Regulatory Services

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None

2. MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2022-23 TO 2025-26 AND DRAFT BUDGET
CONSULTATION PROCESS

The Senior Democratic Services Officer – Scrutiny presented the report to the Committee and referred to Appendix A, the final report of the Budget Research and Evaluation Panel (BREP) and Appendix B, the response from all Overview and Scrutiny Committees to Cabinet’s draft Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) including the proposed budget pressures and draft budget proposals. She advised that in paragraph 9 of the report the Committee was asked to determine whether it wished to submit the Recommendations in Appendices A and B to Cabinet on 8 February 2022, as part of the budget consultation process, subject to any modifications and amendments that the Committee decided were appropriate.

The Chairperson asked if any Members had any questions or comments on the recommendations in Appendix A or B.

Following discussions regarding the BREP Final Report in Appendix A, the Committee strengthened the wording of BREP Recommendations 3, 7, 11, 12 and 22, by agreeing the addition of the words in bold and italics below:

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 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 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 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.

The Committee endorsed the BREP Recommendations 1 to 28 in Appendix A, subject to the strengthening of the above Recommendations and the addition of the following further two Recommendations numbered 29 and 30 below:

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.

The Committee endorsed the Scrutiny Committees' Recommendations on the Medium Term Financial Strategy 2022-23 to 2025-26 contained in Appendix B.

RESOLVED:

The Committee determined that it wished to submit the Recommendations outlined in Appendices A and B to Cabinet on 8 February 2022 as part of the budget consultation process, subject to the inclusion of the above amendments and additional Recommendations agreed by the Committee.

3. **URGENT ITEMS**

None.