

**SCRUTINY RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2024-25 TO 2027-28**

	<b>Scrutiny Recommendation:</b>	<b>Cabinet Response</b>
<b>COSC Priorities</b>		
<b>1</b>	<p>Given the evidence provided by Headteachers at the SOSC 1 meeting over the impact a proposed 5% cut to schools delegated budget, with it being quoted as 'horrific', it was the view of COSC that should any additional funding be provided by UK Central Government for teacher pensions, priority should be given to reducing the proposed cut to school delegated budgets, taking into account SOSC 1's recommendation on this, as well as reducing the proposed council tax increase.</p> <p>It was recommended by the Committee that should the additional funding from Central Government not be sufficient to revise these budget reductions, and potentially others proposed by Scrutiny Members, a cost benefit analysis should be undertaken to consider what services the Authority are statutorily obliged to provide and what is being provided above and beyond through discretionary services, recognising that some services do play a preventative role in reducing the need for statutory intervention.</p> <p><b>(COSC 30/01/24)</b></p>	<p>This has been reflected in the final budget proposals. The pressures on school budgets and the impact of the proposed reductions have been considered and the overall reduction has been reduced in the final budget proposal.</p>
<b>BREP Overview and Priorities</b>		
<b>2</b>	<p>The Panel recommended that, given the better than expected settlement equating to an additional £1M and any other potential additional funding received by the Final Settlement, that Cabinet be asked to reconsider the following Budget Reduction Proposals:</p> <p>Prioritising the following:</p>	<p>In finalising the proposed budget for 2024/25 Cabinet have considered the additional funding from the better than expected settlement from Welsh Government and the position regarding the funding of teachers pensions. This has enabled the following to be considered :</p>

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	<p>SCH1 - Efficiency savings against School Delegated Budgets: That Cabinet look specifically at reducing the impact on individual school budgets.</p> <p>Council Tax: That Cabinet consider reducing the burden of Council Tax as best possible from the proposed increase of 9.5%</p> <p>Risk: That given the high proportion of the proposed budget reductions being categorised as red and the risk of their deliverability, that Cabinet consider whether some of the additional money needs to be held as a contingency. <b>(BREP)</b></p>	<p>The savings to be made from the schools delegated budgets has been reduced from 5% to 3%.</p> <p>The proposed allocation in the draft estimates of £550,000 to meet pressures has remained in the budget. in addition, £1m of the additional funding is being held centrally as a contingency in line with this proposal.</p>
<b>3</b>	<p>Then in no particular order:</p> <p>Given the additional money available from the provisional settlement that Cabinet be asked to reconsider the following Budget Reduction Proposals:</p> <p>COM 8 – Closure of Bridgend Bus Station &amp; associated public toilets.</p> <p>COM 20 – Removal of additional street cleansing resource and Tikspac Posts.</p>	<p>The budget proposals have fully allocated the funding available for the 2024/25 budget.</p> <p>COM 8 – This saving has been removed. Work will be undertaken in the coming year to look at all options with regards to the station, and local members will be involved in this process.</p> <p>COM 20 – This saving has been removed.</p>

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	<b>Scrutiny Recommendation:</b>	<b>Cabinet Response</b>
	<p>COM9 - Cessation of Shopmobility Scheme.</p> <p>The number of staffing budget reduction proposals in the Chief Executive's Directorate - (including Legal, HR and Procurement), the loss and impact of a significant number of posts across the Directorate and the impact of these on Services across the Authority. <b>(BREP)</b></p>	<p>COM9 – This saving will continue, and the Council will not re-provide the shopmobility scheme. As recommended by Scrutiny Committee, dialogue with Bridgend Town Council will be undertaken to look at a possible alternative delivery model.</p> <p>Budget reductions in legal services have also been reduced in the final budget proposal.</p>
<b>Capital Programme</b>		
4	<p>Following discussions regarding the Capital Programme with a review of the Capital Programme to be considered by Council in early 2024, the Committee highlighted the point that should many of the budget proposals highlighted as red not come to fruition, and given the revenue implications from the Capital Programme, Capital expenditure may have to be delayed and revisited. The Committee therefore requested that the Capital Programme be considered as part of the BREP process for 2024/25 in order to consider and scrutinise the detail sufficiently. <b>(COSC 30/01/24)</b></p>	<p>During the consultation process with Scrutiny Committees in January, the role and function of the Budget Research and Evaluation Panel was raised on a number of occasions.</p> <p>This matter will be addressed when the Terms of Reference of BREP are reviewed at the start of the new financial year.</p>

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<b>Budget Monitoring</b>		
<b>5</b>	<p>The Committee expressed concern over the rising cost of social care for both children and adults as well as the rising costs associated with out of Authority care experienced children. Whilst the Directorate was changing how it provided services, supporting the comments of the Chief Officer - Finance Performance and Change, the Committee recommended that very close and careful monitoring was required to ensure that there was not a repeat of this year's budget situation with significant overspends causing increased pressure and implications across Council wide budgets. <b>(COSC 30/01/24)</b></p>	<p>Cabinet and Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee (COSC) receive revenue monitoring reports on quarterly basis currently and this will continue next year. Monthly finance updates are currently prepared for Directors – in 2024/25 these will be considered monthly by Corporate Management Board.</p> <p>If significant variances are reported the relevant service Director and the Chief Officer - Finance, Housing and Change will discuss the causes and mitigating actions to be taken. These will be reported on a quarterly basis to Cabinet and COSC.</p>
<b>Risk</b>		
<b>6</b>	<p>The Committee discussed strategic responsibilities that the Authority will be unable to deliver, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Reduced capital receipts reducing the ability to borrow for capital projects, as borrowing is based upon ability to pay back.</li> <li>- Inability to deliver the Strategic Transport Plan, etc.</li> </ul> <p>a. The Committee recommended that these and other similar risks should be contained in the Corporate Risk Register and be properly scrutinised and subject to an objective review</p>	<p>The Corporate Risk Assessment (CRA) had been updated to reflect the increased risk the authority is currently seeking to address. The latest version of the CRA was discussed at the Governance and Audit</p>

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	<p>of risk management to ensure that the risks are being properly analysed and mitigated.</p> <p>The Committee also recommended that operational risk be monitored by the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee as the overarching Corporate Scrutiny Committee, in addition to monitoring of governance and financial risk by the Governance and Audit Committee. <b>(COSC)</b></p>	<p>Committee in January and issues raised are reflected in the CRA presented to Council as part of the suite of reports to be considered as part of the budget setting process.</p> <p>The CRA is considered by the Governance and Audit committee on regularly during the year.</p> <p>Through discussion with the Chair of COSC this can be placed on the agenda for the committee during 2024/25.</p>
<b><u>Consultation and Communication with the Public</u></b>		
<b>7</b>	<p>The Committee recommended that communication with the public be improved using as many different means as possible and that a simple pie chart graphic be distributed to residents of the borough identifying where funding comes from and how it is spent. <b>(COSC)</b></p>	<p>The information on the Council's website regarding the Council's budget has been improved this year and this has been the basis of information that has been distributed via the Council's social media account.</p> <p>Further work will be done during 2024/25 to ensure that this information is shared throughout the year.</p>
<b>8</b>	<p>The Committee recommended that there should be an in person option for the Budget consultation and other mechanisms and different communications tools used to reach people who are digitally excluded, having regard to concerns expressed by residents who felt disenfranchised as they were unable to access an online budget consultation. <b>(COSC)</b></p>	<p>The Council is currently consulting on a draft Engagement and Participation Strategy which is seeking views on how the Council can engage with the key stakeholders across the County Borough area. The preferred means of engaging with residents that are included in the final Strategy will be utilised in the budget consultation process for the 2025/2026 budget.</p>
<b>9</b>	<p>Following a discussion around Council Tax, the Panel highlighted that communication with the public was</p>	<p>See the response to 8 above.</p>

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	key and recommended that clear information be provided by any avenue possible to inform the public of the reality of the difficult situation the Authority faced with regards to future budget setting. Members highlighted that as part of this, it was paramount that any communication included explanation of what the public receive for their Council Tax. <b>(BREP)</b>	
<b>Budget Consultation Process</b>		
	(Interim Recommendation from BREP)	Noted
<b>10</b>	In view of the need for the Authority to look at any and all services for potential savings, the Panel recommend that clearer targets be set for each Directorate of what contribution they are required to make or that each Directorate be asked to identify service areas that could be reviewed to identify potential budget savings. <b>(BREP)</b>	
<b>11</b>	The Committee discussed the overall budget consultation process, highlighting that whilst having the opportunity to present an alternative budget and proposal, as many Members who do not sit on the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny and are therefore not involved in the Budget Research and Evaluation Panel, it was very difficult for other Members to know any detail for any alternative proposals. The example of Porthcawl Marina was used, in that if the Committee had known last year that the Authority subsidised this, they might have potentially proposed this as an alternative saving to be made last year in place of something else. The Committee therefore recommended that the whole budget process needed revising and improving with the aim to work together,	As outlined in Question 4 above, the terms of reference for BREP will be reviewed early in the new financial year.

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	as 'One Council'. The Committee agreed to work with the Welsh Local Government Association on a review of Scrutiny, with particular focus on the budget consultation process. <b>(SOSC3)</b>	
12	The Committee requested a list of all services the Council provides to residents, businesses, whomever, including whether they have a level of statutory element or are completely non statutory, understanding that it is a significant piece of work but providing sufficient detail to feed into the Budget Research and Evaluation Panel (BREP) for next year's Budget considerations and the need to identify future savings for the next few years while understanding the impact of potential changes on residents. The Committee recommended that the future BREP process could then sit upon that registry of services to inform decisions going forward. <b>(COSC)</b>	This is noted and will be picked up in the review of BREP outlined at Question 4 above.
13	In relation to any BREP review and potential amendment to the Terms of Reference of BREP, the Committee noted the response from the Chief Officer Legal and Regulatory Services, HR, and Corporate Policy that whilst BREP was quite unique to Bridgend, it was not as straightforward as COSC deciding what BREP could do, and there was a process and other options needed to be considered to see if there was something more workable but would need to be taken away and proposals developed to put to the relevant body to make a determination. <b>(COSC 30/01/24)</b>	This is noted and will be picked up in the review of BREP outlined at Question 4 above
14	Given various concerns expressed over the overall Budget process and particularly the future purpose of the Budget Research and Evaluation Panel, the	This is noted and will be picked up in the review of BREP outlined at Question 4 above.

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	<p>Committee supported the recommendation of SOSC 3 that a full review be undertaken. As part of this the Committee requested that consideration be given to the BREP process starting much earlier in the year, with a framework for a continuous process throughout the year whereby timely responses to requests for information are provided to BREP as well as the budget book shared directly with Members. The Committee also requested that BREP have more emphasis and focus on the Local Authority's consultation with the public and receive more feedback from broader conversations with residents.</p> <p><b>(COSC 30/01/24)</b></p>	
<b>Budget Settlement and Funding</b>		
<b>15</b>	<p>The Committee expressed concern regarding the lack of recognition of the difficulty of setting budgets based on short term reliance on Grant funding, the instability and uncertainty when short term Grant funding is removed and the impact on the stability of providing services. The Committee recommended that a letter be sent to Welsh Government lobbying for the discontinuation of short term Grant funding in favour of sustained long term funding included in the settlement. <b>(SOSC2)</b></p>	<p>This issue continues to be consistently raised by both the Chief Executive, Leader and senior officers whenever the opportunity arises in an appropriate forum.</p>
<b>16</b>	<p>The Committee expressed concern over the lack of funding provided by Welsh Government for new legislation introduced and the resulting impact this had on Local Authority budgets in meeting new requirements. The example used was Universal Free School Meals, and whilst not part of the Communities remit, Members highlighted that the requirement for funding for UPFSM puts pressure on the Local</p>	<p>This issue continues to be consistently raised by both the Chief Executive and Leader whenever the opportunity arises in an appropriate forum. It is often the indirect 'costs' in terms of officer time and the opportunity cost of having to forego other work that erodes capacity and can be most onerous, and this is often 'unknown' at the time new legislative or policy commitments are made.</p>



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	<p>Authority budget and has resulting implications on all services when having to fund budget gaps in the overall Council budget. The Committee therefore supported any proposal for the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee to write to WG to express these concerns and request that new legislation be accompanied by suitable, sufficient funding. <b>(SOSC3)</b></p>	
17	<p>Whilst acknowledging the proposed 3% budget increase from Welsh government as part of its draft settlement, the Committee expressed serious concerns regarding the mounting pressures on local services including schools and social services, and the fact that the settlement was simply not enough to cover such pressures. The Committee appreciate that this was the same for all Local Authorities, however, given reports received that the Minister wished to protect school budgets, Members stated that more needed to be done by Welsh Government to support and fund Local Authorities appropriately. The Committee therefore agreed to write to Welsh Government to highlight these issues and to support Cabinet in putting extra pressure on Ministers to address the funding situation for Local Authorities. In addition to this, the Committee asked that this letter to Welsh Government also highlight the need for Local Authorities to receive earlier clarification on any external or central budget allocation. This is as a consequence of the ongoing uncertainty currently being experienced in relation to teacher pensions and whether these will be centrally funded. Without such information, it is extremely difficult for Local Authorities to effectively plan and produce, and more</p>	Noted

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	importantly consult on, a correct and informed balanced budget. <b>(SOSC 1)</b>	
18	<p>Members referred to various discussions held recently by all Scrutiny Committees and evidence provided by Cabinet Members and Officers in which serious concerns were raised over the Council's capacity to deliver on new Welsh Government legislation without the assurance of sufficient funding. The Committee therefore recommend that not only do the Scrutiny Committee write to the Minister for Finance over this but also recommend that Cabinet do the same to lobby Welsh Government and UK Government through the WLGA, to stress that it is simply unsustainable for Local Authorities to exercise their statutory duties as well as implement new legislative changes without the consequential financial resources and, in addition, the human resources to deliver their policy objectives.</p> <p>The Committee also emphasised the point made by SOSC 2 in relation to their concerns around the instability that reliance on short term grant funding causes as well as SOSC 1's comments on the need for earlier clarification on any external or central budget allocation. To add to this, the Committee requested that there was also a need to lobby Welsh Government for a multi-year funding settlement so that more informed, longer term budget planning could be undertaken. <b>(COSC 30/1/24)</b></p>	Noted
<b><u>Transformational Change</u></b>		
	The Committee supported the view that there was drastic transformational change needed across the Local Authority in order to meet future service	The current predictions are that further savings will be required in future years. To deliver these, the Council will have to review all services in order to refocus,

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19	provision within difficult budgets. However, it was highlighted that care needed to be taken where budget reductions have additional ramifications on other services, such as schools, to not unduly burden those services, on top of their own reductions. <b>(SOSC 1)</b>	reduce or remove them. It is noted that care will need to be taken to ensure a change within one service area does not result in unintended consequences elsewhere in the Council.
20	As well as the need to look at other Local Authorities for new ways of working and best practice, given the innovative work that has been taking place within the Social Services Directorate, such as looking at different ways of working, reviewing and redesigning services and creative solutions to staffing issues, the Committee recommend that these be shared across Directorates as part of the Authority's focus on transformational change. <b>(COSC 30/1/24)</b>	Noted.
<b><u>Interconnectivity/Implications of Budget Reductions</u></b>		
21	Following discussion regarding staffing reductions across multiple areas of main Council back-office services, the Committee recommended that a qualitative impact assessment be undertaken of the cumulative and longer-term impact of these reductions on the Local Authority. Appreciating that a full assessment would take time and would take place after the 2024/25 budget settlement is agreed, the Committee recommended that Cabinet evidence how they have considered the interconnectivity between budget reductions and the potential impact this will have on achieving the budget savings. As well as the example given above regarding the impact of staffing reductions to main Council back-office services, there are also further examples such as the impact that cuts to schools and educational support services will	This point is noted.

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	have on vulnerable children and young people, potentially resulting in increasing pressure on social services. <b>(COSC 30/01/24)</b>	
22	Linked to this the Committee expressed concern at the overall robustness of the budget, given the comments above on the interconnectivity of budget cuts and the negative impact they could have on other services as well as the number of reduction proposals identified as red in terms of risk of achievability. Added to this is the prediction that 80% of schools will result in deficit budgets should the 5% delegated school budget saving go forward for 2024/25. Whilst acknowledging that schools would put in place deficit recovery plans, Members stated that there was the risk that if these plans weren't successful after 3 or even 5 years (if extended) the responsibility including potential intervention/management of such schools would fall back on the Local Authority. This is aside from any additional support and potential intervention required from the Authority during the time the recovery plan. The Committee requested reassurance over how these aspects had been assessed to ensure the robustness of the budget put forward, both for 2024/25 and also in the longer term, to ensure that these savings would not result in increased demands and costs down the line. <b>(COSC 30/01/24)</b>	Setting a balanced budget this year has proved extremely challenging and undoubtedly many of the proposals carry risk as the Council is at the stage where there are very few budget proposals that can be implemented without risk and without consequence. The budget has been drawn up informed by the agreed medium term financial principles and an assessment of the risk of each proposals as set out in the narrative for each proposal. Moving forward, and in the longer term, greater focus will be necessary to continue to deliver those services that are deemed to be the priority as it has become impossible to protect all Council services and deliver them to the levels that have been provided historically.
23	Given that a number of Social Services and Wellbeing Budget Reduction Proposals include reference to Reviews, the Committee seeks clarity as to what is still under consideration going forward, the risks to the deliverability of any proposals that include	The majority of budget savings where the term 'review' is used require negotiation with key partners – Halo and Awen – and cost reductions will need to be achieved in accordance with legally binding contracts and partnership agreements.

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	reviews, and whether they can be relied upon to set a balanced budget. <b>(SOSC2)</b>	
<b><u>Income Generation and Full Cost Recovery</u></b>		
<b>24</b>	The Committee recommended that potential income generation opportunities from sharing services be actively explored, proactively offering the Authority's services where there is potential for income to be generated, to mitigate against some of the future budget reductions which would be required over the course of the Medium Term Financial Strategy. <b>(COSC)</b>	This has been explored for the regional internal audit service and it is the intention of the service to tender to provide audit services to other public sector services once the service is well established.  The opportunity to extend this to other service areas will be considered during 2024/25.
<b>25</b>	Whilst noting the comments provided in relation to the Authority's Street Works team and that costs could only be sought on permits to cover the Council's own costs, the Committee recommended that the Directorate explore what other Local Authorities were doing in this area, including Carmarthen County Council, to determine if there was any possibility at all of income generation. <b>(SOSC3)</b>	This point is noted, and benchmarking activities will be undertaken in this regard.
<b>26</b>	The Committee recommended the need to consider every possible opportunity to maximise income generation across the Authority, from sharing services with others, looking to partners, the third sector and other Local Authorities to proactively offer the Authority's services where there is a potential for income to be generated, in order to mitigate future budget reductions. <b>(COSC 30/01/24)</b>	See 24 above.
	The Committee recommend that where possible, full cost recovery is prioritised, with examples such as	Principle 6 within the Medium Term Financial Strategy states :

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27	bulky waste collections, Porthcawl Harbour and the street works permits. Furthermore, the Committee recommend that where possible, through reducing subsidies to services where appropriate and consideration of additional commercial income generation, these funds be used to offset some of the Communities Directorate costs or savings, that are public facing and viewed by the public as most commonly associated with their Council tax. <b>(COSC /01/24)</b>	<p><i>Financial plans will provide an optimum balance between income and expenditure for both capital and revenue, with opportunities for generating additional income taken in line with the Council's Fees and Charges Policy.</i></p> <p>In these budget proposals the need to ensure full cost recovery for those services where a charge is levied is stressed.</p>
<b>School Delegated Budgets</b>		
28	<p><b>SCH 1</b> In relation to the proposed reduction related to Schools Delegated Budgets of 5% in 2024-2025, Members expressed strong concerns over the size of the saving for the forthcoming year and the potential impact this would have on school budgets, with reports stating that this was unsustainable and would result in over 80% of schools within the County Borough going into deficit.</p> <p>Evidence provided by representatives of the School Budget Forum highlighted the recent significant increase of vulnerable learners that has been seen by all schools since the pandemic, more than has ever been seen before. It was reported that the impact of the proposed 5% reduction to school budgets, together with the further proposed reductions in support services, could severely affect vulnerable learners.</p> <p><b>a</b> In order to lessen the impact as much as possible and enable schools more time to plan and</p>	<p>These concerns are noted.</p> <p>The final budget proposals now include savings of £3.441m, or 3%, for the 2024/25 financial year.</p>

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	<p>prepare, the Committee recommend that the proposed saving of 5% be reduced and spread out across years 2, 3 and 4, starting with only a 2% reduction for 2024-25, followed by 2% for each year 2-4, thereby still making the overall 8% required.</p> <p><b>b</b> To fill this budget gap, the Committee recommend that Cabinet consider utilising any potential funding the Authority might receive from Central Government relating to teacher pensions as well as revisit the proposed budget pressures of £11,856m and consider which ones could be postponed for 2024-2025. <b>(SOSC1)</b></p>	<p>This has been done in the final budget</p>
<b><u>Front-loading School Mergers</u></b>		
<b>29</b>	<p>EDFS5 The Committee recommend that proposals such as merging of schools at EDF5 be re-considered to determine whether these savings can be front loaded and made sooner rather than later. <b>(COSC 30/01/24)</b></p>	<p>Actions that require significant policy change (such as the merger of schools) require statutory consultation, and are bound by legislation, which mean that these proposals cannot be expedited in advance of stipulated timeframes. Subject to the outcome of consultation, due consideration and decision, effort will be made to progress policy change at pace where appropriate.</p>
<b><u>Children's Services Framework</u></b>		
<b>30</b>	<p>Members referred to a new framework that was being developed for working arrangements in Children's Social Services which was planned to be in place by 2026. In view of the predicted overspend and increasing budget pressures in Social Services, the Panel recommend that Officers and Cabinet explore the possibility of frontloading and accelerating the rollout of this Framework to try and stabilise the</p>	<p>In September 2023 Cabinet and Council approved a 3 year strategic plan for children and families in Bridgend. Prior to the development of this plan in August 2022 Care Inspectorate Wales had advised the Council of its serious concerns with regard to Bridgend children's services. Rapid and sustainable improvement was required. Two subsequent inspections identified rapid improvement in key areas – good progress is being made to deliver the sustainable change set out in the 3</p>

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	service and avoid further cost implications at an earlier stage. <b>(BREP)</b>	year plan, particularly in the implementation of a clear practice model, stabilisation of the workforce and reduction in child protection registrations. There is steady progress in the reduction of the number of care experienced children. In common with all local authorities in England and Wales Bridgend is experiencing challenges in securing good quality value for money independent sector placements for the small proportion (6.5%) of care experienced children who require independent residential care which is the most significant budgetary challenge. A range of short, medium and longer term actions have been identified and are being progressed. However, the complexity of the challenge with regard to children's placements needs to be understood and will continue to require close scrutiny, monitoring and whole Council responses during the coming year to ensure that the Council meets statutory safeguarding and corporate parenting responsibilities in the most cost effective way.
<b>Support Services and ALN</b>		
<b>31</b>	<p><b>EFS 12, 13 and 14 Support Services and Pupils with Additional Learning Needs</b></p> <p>The Committee highlighted the negative impact the proposed reductions of EFS, 12,13 and 14 would have on pupils with Additional Learning Needs (ALN) as identified by Headteacher representatives at the meeting. Members were particularly concerned with the fact that these reductions could result in the Authority not meeting its statutory duties to these children and young people in meeting the timescales for assessments. The Committee strongly supported the view of how important these assessment for pupils with ALN were, many of which have complex</p>	<p>The growth proposed in EFS4 relates to edge of care services, a need identified in an external review undertaken to inform the sustainable service proposed for Children's Services and agreed by Council in September 2023.</p> <p>Within the budget proposals, there is growth proposed for ALN services of £500,000 at EFS1. It is proposed that the allocation of this funding takes account of the issue raised.</p>



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	needs, thus requiring a swift assessment so that they are able to access the support services they require. As a result of these concerns and the Authority's legal obligation to these pupils, the Committee recommend that EFS 13 and 14 be removed from the budget reduction proposals and that these associated budgets be ringfenced against future reduction. Members proposed that this saving of £67,000 could potentially be found from within the proposed £500,000 growth proposed under EFS4, and asked for clarification for the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee, of what this £500,000 incorporated, for consideration by Members at the final budget meeting on the 30 <sup>th</sup> of January. <b>(SOSC1)</b>	
<b>32</b>	Building upon the above recommendation, the committee expressed strong concern over all proposed reductions which highlight a potential impact in meeting the Authority's statutory duties. Members highlighted the significant ramifications this could have for the Local Authority and recommend that Cabinet guard against this as a priority, revisiting those proposals which put the delivery of statutory duties at risk. <b>(SOSC1)</b>	<p>Due to the level of savings required to balance the 2024/25 budget, it has not been possible to protect services to learners and vulnerable individuals in the County Borough.</p> <p>The final budget proposal has reduced the level of savings required from schools in the coming year.</p> <p>The Education and Family Support Directorate will continue to work with schools to monitor the impact of change across the schools.</p>
<b>Financial Scheme for Schools</b>		
<b>33</b>	Whilst appreciating that proposed changes to the school funding formula (other than that bound by legislation) can be raised and discussed by the School Budget Forum, Members highlighted the fact that as circumstances have changed so much since the Covid pandemic, and the funding pressures now being faced by schools, there was a need for the	The Financial Scheme for Schools was updated in full in 2019 and amendments have been made to specific sections, where necessary, since that time. Any changes to the Financial Scheme for Schools of the Funding Formula can only be made following full consultation with governing bodies, and this usually

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	<b>Scrutiny Recommendation:</b>	<b>Cabinet Response</b>
	<p>Local Authority to instigate a review of the financial scheme for schools. The Committee also expressed concern over reports that primary school governing bodies may have not been involved or consulted upon previous reviews and changes to the funding formula.</p> <p>The Committee therefore recommend that a full review of the financial scheme and funding formula for schools be undertaken, with full involvement of both primary and secondary governing bodies supported by training provision on this subject so that governors, who are, after all, volunteers, are suitably informed to participate fully in the review. <b>(SOSC1)</b></p>	<p>happens through the Director's termly report to Governors.</p> <p>However, both of these proposals will be taken through the School Budget Forum for consideration. If taken forward this work will require resource and input from headteachers.</p>

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<u>Vulnerable People</u>		
34	<p>The Committee recommended that to protect our most vulnerable, given the better than expected settlement equating to an additional £1M and any other potential additional funding received by the Final Settlement, that Cabinet be asked to reassess the following Budget Reduction Proposals for the reasons stated for each:</p> <p>a. <b>SSW16</b> - The Committee expressed concern regarding the removal of 50% of the budget to reduce or remove support for children and young people with additional needs and families to access community activities and opportunities, given the potential high impact upon the individual and their families and risks detailed in the report.</p> <p>b. <b>SSW20</b> - The Committee expressed concern regarding the removal of the caseworker resource and efficiency savings from the third Sector Contracts - hospital discharge and that the loss of this service could impact negatively on timely support for people to return home from hospital. <b>(SOSC2)</b></p>	<p>Whilst there has been some additional funding available, Cabinet has had to make some difficult decisions and it has not been possible to provide the funding required to maintain these services.</p>
<u>OOO Placements</u>		
35	<p>The Committee reflected on the high cost of Independent Residential Placements for Care Experienced Children and the cost of those placements that were Out of County and while recognising the complexities and difficulties and whilst supporting the plan in place and the work</p>	<p>Council and Cabinet have approved a 3 year sustainability plan for children and families which will be closely monitored by scrutiny and Cabinet and through the all-party Social Services Improvement Board. The measures in the plan include a reduction in the number of care experienced children and a shift in the balance</p>

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	ongoing, recommended that bringing those placements back into county provision where possible be emphasised as a priority, to meet needs and work towards reducing the cost over two to three years. <b>(SOSC2)</b>	of spend from high cost independent residential placements to evidence based targeted prevention services.
<b>Engagement with Town and Community Councils</b>		
<b>36</b>	COM6 In relation to Bereavement Services and potential future efficiency savings, Members recommended that the Local Authority engage with Town and Community Councils to consider where they might be able to assist and take on some future responsibilities for the maintenance of cemeteries within the County Borough. <b>(SOSC3)</b>	Noted – The team will consider the feasibility of this request and have discussions with Town & Community Councils as appropriate.
<b>37</b>	COM9 In relation to the cessation of the Shopmobility scheme, the Committee recommended that the Authority consider approaching Bridgend Town Council to explore if they had any interest in taking on and maintaining the service. <b>(SOSC3)</b>	Noted - See response to COSC point 3 above.
<b>Bridgend Bus Station</b>		
<b>38</b>	COM8 <b>a</b> Whilst acknowledging that the proposed closure of Bridgend Bus station relates to 2025-2026 budget savings, the Committee expressed strong concerns over the impact of this proposal including how it will affect the community, Bridgend town and its transport links. The Committee referred to other large bus stations in other Local Authorities where they have utilised wall space with advertising, thereby creating an income for the Authority. Given the amount of	Noted - See response to COSC point 3 above.

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	<p>potential advertising space that is available at Bridgend Bus Station, the Committee recommended that the Authority remove COM8 as a potential efficiency saving and instead replace it with a proposal for potential commercial income generation in order to protect the bus station for the future.</p> <p><b>b</b> In addition to this, supporting what the Corporate Director, Communities stated about looking at the Council's assets and how they could be more energy efficient, the Committee recommend that the Directorate explore potential energy efficient initiatives that could be made on Bridgend bus station. Members suggested that solar panels, for example, could be installed on this facility which could assist in mitigating the station's associated costs. <b>(SOSC3)</b></p>	Noted - See response to COSC point 3 above.
<b><u>Porthcawl Harbour</u></b>		
<b>39</b>	<p><b>COM10</b> The Committee supported the proposal to review berthing fees for Porthcawl Marina, with agreement that the Council should not be subsidising this. The Committee were of the view, and therefore recommended, that this could be considered further, if not this year, for future years, to explore if there was any potential to increase the berthing fees for the marina as a method of income generation for the Authority. <b>(SOSC3)</b></p>	Noted – a further review of berthing fees at the Porthcawl Marina will be undertaken to look at whether full cost recovery is possible.
<b><u>Street Cleansing</u></b>		
<b>40</b>	<p><b>COM20</b> <b>a</b> The Committee had numerous concerns regarding COM 20 and the proposal to remove</p>	Noted - see response to COSC point 3 above.

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	<p>additional street cleansing resource given the potential visual and environmental impact this could have on communities across the Borough. Members recommended that if funding is provided via Central Government for teacher pensions, £125,000 of this be utilised to continue to fund street cleansing, thereby removing COM20 from the budget reductions. <b>(SOSC 3)</b></p>	
41	<p><b>b</b> In addition to this, as part of the need for transformational change within the Authority, the Committee recommend that the Council consider the potential for multi-skilled teams of staff who could cover a wider remit, such as grass-cutting and street cleaning as one example. The Committee propose that the Directorate look at what neighbouring Local Authorities are doing in this area, with the aim to provide a more effective, joined up service within Bridgend. <b>(SOSC3)</b></p>	<p>Noted – Officers are currently developing an in-house grass cutting service and will be considering any further efficiencies that can be driven from this as a result.</p>
<b><u>Community Recycling Centres</u></b>		
42	<p>COM25</p> <p><b>a</b> In relation to the proposal to close all Community Recycling Centres by an additional day per week on the weekend, the Committee felt this was not acceptable, particularly given the fact that it had not seen the impact of the first day of closure as this has yet to come into effect. In light of the impact this could have for the public and the Authority, including the visual impact and associated costs from a potential increase in fly-tipping, the Committee recommend that this proposal be removed. Members instead propose that some of this £60,000 be found by moving forward with the proposal to commercially let the</p>	<p>Noted – A public consultation will be undertaken on this proposed saving and ways to further minimise the impact be examined before any implementation.</p> <p>The possibility of bringing the savings proposal to let Pandy Depot forward into 2024/25 as recommended by Scrutiny Committee, is also being examined.</p>

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	<p>Pandy Depot, identified at COM24, bringing this into 2024-25 savings.</p> <p><b>b</b> Members also recommend that if further savings are still required, the Authority look instead to potentially reduce the opening hours for the Centres, rather than closing for an additional full day. Finally, in a worst-case scenario, should the Centres have to close for a second additional day, the Committee recommend this be another weekday, not a weekend, when the majority of the public would be looking to utilise the Centres.</p> <p><b>c</b> Linked to COM25, the Committee further recommend that the Authority consider potential ways the Community Recycling Centres could work smarter, such as the introduction of appointments to reduce queues. Members commented that some Local Authorities had introduced appointments during the pandemic and had continued with this method as it had proved to be effective. <b>(SOSC3)</b></p>	<p>Noted – See comments above.</p> <p>Noted – The use of a booking system at CRCs during peak times will be considered, as recommended by the Scrutiny Committee, albeit there is no software in place to undertake this function currently.</p>
<b><u>Green Innovation Cost Benefits</u></b>		
43	<p>COM30 Members commented on the decision to revert back to diesel waste vehicles and agreed that this was a suitable saving given the view of Members that there was not enough evidence that Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil (HVO) fuel offered any greater fuel efficiency or air quality benefits as well as any benefits to local business. In light of the current and predicted future financial situation the Authority finds itself in, the Committee recommended that going forward no such 'green innovation' should be pursued</p>	Noted.

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	unless it either contributes to revenue savings, offers a direct and tangible benefit to residents or enables a consequential efficiency elsewhere in the Council budget. <b>(SOSC3)</b>	
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