

Meeting of Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee

24 July 2023

Responses to Recommendations

Budget Monitoring 2023-24 – Quarter 1 Revenue Forecast

Following detailed consideration and discussions with Officers and Cabinet Members, the Committee made the following Recommendations:

1. That consideration be given to partnership working with local farmers to source fruit and vegetables for school catering potentially at a lower cost.

Officer's Response

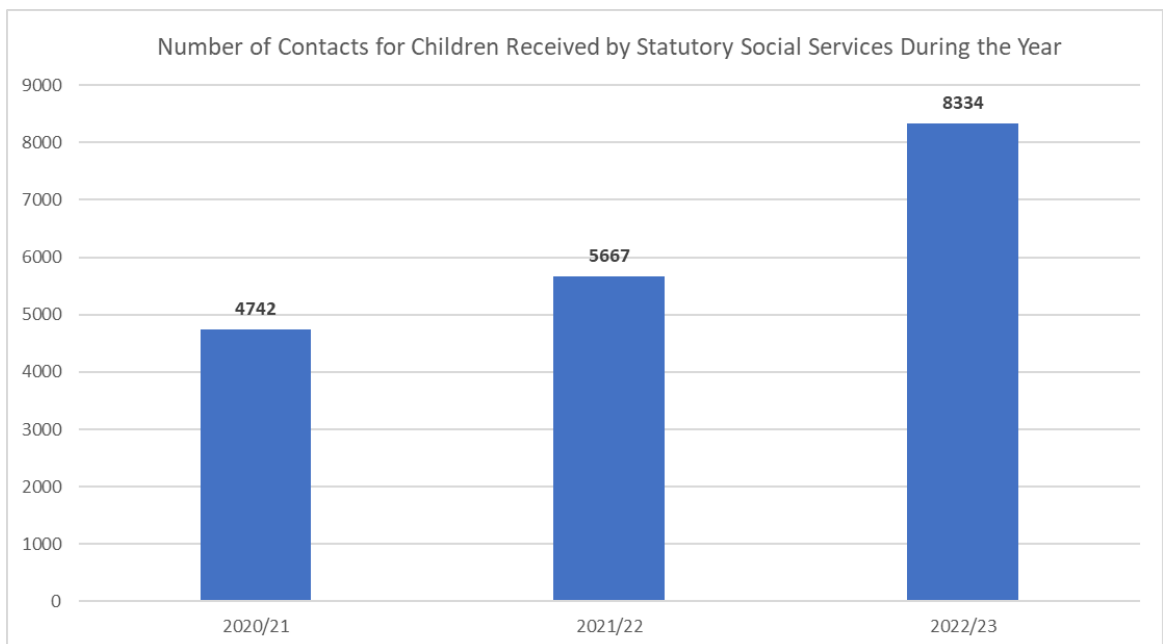
Officers are currently directly supporting a Welsh Government project 'Localising Food Sourcing in Wales' which is examining the opportunities and risk associated with using local providers to support public sector food provision, in particular school meals. It is recommended to await the findings of this project prior to any further development in this area.

Additional Information

Following detailed consideration and discussions with Officers and Cabinet Members, the Committee requested:

2. A graph demonstrating the exponential increase in the demand being experienced in children's social care over a 3-year period.

Officer's Response



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3. Copies of the case studies demonstrating the complexity being experienced in adult social care.

Officer's Response

Please see Attachment A.



Attachment A -
Complexity in Adult

4. Whilst recognising that it was too early in the year to provide a realistic projection of council tax income for this financial year, the Committee requested whether a best case, worst case and predicted case scenario model could be provided to give an indication of the likely income from the collection of council tax.

Officer's Response

This will be done and included in the Q2 monitoring report for consideration by Committee in October 2023.

5. The Committee acknowledged that one of the most significant budget reduction proposals unlikely to be achieved in full in the Communities Directorate was charging Blue Badge Holders for parking (COM 2), due to the traffic management team currently being engaged in the introduction of the national speed limit in built up areas. The Committee requested that a message be circulated among Members advising of the timescale for the necessary consultation regarding the Blue Badge Scheme.

Officer's Response

Agreed - The public consultation on the Blue Badge Scheme is scheduled to take place in Autumn 2023, once the implementation of the speed restriction legislation (20mph) is concluded. The consultation will require a Cabinet Report to proceed and as part of this, all Members will be advised of the timeframe and process.

Quarter 4 Performance Report 2022-23

Following detailed consideration and discussions with Officers and Cabinet Members, the Committee requested:

6. A breakdown, by Directorate, of:
 - a. the cost of agency staff; and

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- b. the cost differential between an agency worker and an equivalent full-time Member of staff.

Officer's Response

Unless approved otherwise, agency workers should be paid at the same rate as BCBC staff. In some circumstances agency staff are paid on enhanced rates due to market pressures. These arrangements are made by the service area.

7. With regard to the support provided to start-up business', a breakdown of the number which have benefitted from advice, start-up grants or other support.

We supported **156** potential business startups with non-financial help and offered **36** Business Start Up grants during the period 22/23.

8. Concerns were expressed regarding the clawbacks for sickness absence in schools being based on pupil numbers rather than staff numbers and heard that the Schools Budget Forum (SBF) had asked that consideration be given to it being weighted differently. The Committee therefore requested an update when Education and Family Support Officers and Finance Officers had discussed the matter and prior to the next SBF.

Officer's Response

In accordance with the terms and conditions of the Mutual Fund SLA, if there is a deficit balance at year end, above the agreed carry forward limit, then fund contributors (schools) will be required to meet this deficit by means of an end-of-year charge, which is based upon the same January pupil numbers on which the original calculations/delegated funding have been based.

As the funding is not delegated on staffing numbers, for which ratios will vary from school, it would be unfair to use staffing numbers as a basis for any recharge.

We have reviewed the recording of the most recent School Budget Forum meeting, at which the Mutual Fund was discussed, and the proposals were to receive regular updates on the fund balance and also to consider the possibility of implementing half yearly recharges, in order to avoid any unexpected significant recharges at year end.

Paying in higher contributions at the start of the financial year was also a suggestion made, but I can find no record of a proposal to change the basis of any recharge from pupil to staffing numbers.

The up-to-date balance for the Mutual Fund will be reviewed at the next (Autumn Term) School Budget Forum meeting and, depending on that

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balance, a recommendation made for the way forward, which could be to process a half yearly recharge.

9. Details of the options being considered to enable the reuse shop at Maesteg Community Recycling Centre to reopen.

Officer's Response

Noted – The reuse shop at Maesteg Community Recycling Centre is now reopened for 2 days a week via third party provider.

Corporate Self-Assessment 2022-23

Following detailed consideration and discussions with Officers and Cabinet Members, the Committee requested:

10. An update report detailing the outcome of the Council's partnership with Valleys to Coast and £500,000 contribution towards bringing 35 long term empty properties back into use.

Officer's Response

Of the 35 properties, 26 are back in occupation. The works are still ongoing in 4 of the properties where extensions/additional works were required and there are 5 of the properties that are completed ready to let and awaiting lease information prior to occupation - these were expected to be let imminently.