

Meeting of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee

15 January 2025

Responses to Recommendations / Information requested.

	Recommendations / Information Requested:	Response:	Accepted / Partially Accepted / Not Accepted:
MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2025-26 TO 2028-29			
Recommendations			
1	<p>The Committee recommended:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. that all financial reports be accompanied by a glossary which is also made available on the Council's website in order to assist residents in their reading and understanding of the reports; b. that when reductions are referenced in the report that there is clarity about whether they are in net or real terms; c. that charts/graphics be included showing: 	Submitted to Cabinet on 4 February 2025 for Response	Partially Accepted

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	<p>i. the percentage increase in Council Tax over the period referred to;</p> <p>ii. the demographic growth in the borough;</p> <p>iii. the demographic growth compared to other Welsh local authorities and nationally; and</p> <p>iv. the reduction in use of agency staff.</p> <p>d. that comparison data be provided demonstrating the difference between the proposed increase to Council Tax and the average staff wage increase across the authority.</p>		
2	The Committee recommended piloting zero-based budgeting in a select area of Directorate to be determined by senior Officers.	Submitted to Cabinet on 4 February 2025 for Response	Accepted
3	The Committee recommended that a letter be sent on behalf	Please see attached a copy of the letter emailed. Response awaited.	Accepted

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	<p>of the Committee to Welsh Government and the UK Government regarding the following:</p> <p>a. expressing that national policy commitments resulting from legislative changes should be fully funded both in terms of capital funding and ongoing revenue funding including a commitment to fund employer national insurance payments for individuals employed by agencies who provide services to the Council which currently results in a £1.5m cost pressure; and</p> <p>b. expressing concern regarding the repeated lateness of the settlement and requesting a commitment to bring forward the settlement date and to request that consideration be given to providing indicative multi-year settlements.</p>	 <p>Letter from COSC to WG re National Corr</p>	

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4	The Committee recommended consideration be given to how invest to save models and further collaborative working and sharing of best practice across local authorities regarding ICT and use of artificial intelligence could expedite savings.	Submitted to Cabinet on 4 February 2025 for Response	Accepted
5	The Committee recommended that a letter be sent on behalf of the Committee to Welsh Government and the Department for Work and Pensions strongly recommend that they implement auto-enrolment of individuals to all benefits to which they are eligible/entitled when they apply for another benefit. (Scrutiny/Chair of Committee)	<p>Please see attached a copy of the letter emailed and the response received.</p> <div>   </div> <p>Letter from COSC to WG and DWP re Ber Letter from WG re Benefits Auto-Enrol</p>	Accepted
6	The Committee recognised that the funding to the Council and schools was being disadvantaged by individuals not claiming all benefits to	Submitted to Cabinet on 4 February 2025 for Response	Accepted

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	which they are entitled and recommended that Council-wide external communications be issued encouraging residents to claim all benefits to which they are entitled including Pension Credit, Housing Benefit and Eligible Free School Meals and promoting the Council's auto-enrolment process.		
7	With reference to the budget reduction proposal, CEX 6, the Committee recommended that a letter be sent on behalf of the Committee to the Police and Crime Commissioner to ascertain her reliance on the CCTV service created and managed by the Council and whether the Police and Crime Commission's contribution to CCTV has been cut and requesting a response prior to the next meeting of the Committee on 28 January 2025.	Submitted to Cabinet on 4 February 2025 for Response	Partially Accepted

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8	The Committee recommended that detailed discussions are held with town and community councils before suggestions are made in meetings that town and community councils may be able to assist when discussing funding gaps.	Submitted to Cabinet on 4 February 2025 for Response	Partially Accepted
9	While the Committee recognised that there was a budget growth proposal for a Procurement Assistant (CEX 5) in central Procurement, they reflected that there appeared to be insufficient capacity, at times, within Directorates to provide timely contributions to the Procurement process and recommended that more urgency needed to be placed on procurement highlighting it was critical to a one-council approach.	Submitted to Cabinet on 4 February 2025 for Response	Partially Accepted
10	The Committee expressed concern that all budget savings proposals within the Chief Executives Directorate and Council Wide were red and	Submitted to Cabinet on 4 February 2025 for Response	Accepted

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	possibly difficult to achieve. The Committee were advised that the vast majority of the spend in these areas is on staffing and the savings would be subject to consultation and therefore would remain red until these were complete and were then likely achievable. The Committee recommended that the narrative in the budget savings proposals to reflect that position and its red status.		
Additional Information			
11	The Committee requested Officer responses as to whether the population growth in the county borough was creating more demand in specific areas, e.g. whether families with children with special needs were moving into the area to take up the offer of in-county special schools offer or whether older people were relocating to the area.	Population growth in the County Borough is generally regarded as a positive thing, encouraging economic growth and prosperity, and recognising that Bridgend is an attractive place to live, work and visit. However, of course, increases in population also create additional demands for some services the Council provides, and it is important that they are adequately assessed and provided for, where possible. The planning process and the recent adoption of the new Local Development Plan helps to manage this process and ensure appropriate infrastructure is provided by new developments [eg Section 106 agreements for enhancements to schools or new schools related to the development] but when population growth is on a more	

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		<p>piecemeal basis it is harder to assess likely impact. We are however, experiencing increased demand for services such as homelessness and housing, social care and additional learning needs. Some of this though is related to legislative changes and also an increase in the complexity of some demand, as well as to an ageing population and population growth.</p> <p>While there is some historical anecdotal evidence of families moving to Bridgend in view of the quality and fine reputation of our special schools, such as Heronbridge, there is no firm formal evidence that this is the case, and families could move here for a variety of reasons, including work, and other family ties.</p>	
12	The Committee requested a copy of the report being presented to the Shared Regulatory Services Joint Committee at the end of January 2025 to assist the Committee in identifying statutory and non-statutory services provided by Regulatory and Corporate Services.	<p>Link for the SRS document: https://www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/Documents/ Committee%20Reports/Shared-Regulatory-Services-Joint-Committee/2025/25-02-19/Final-Draft-Budget-Proposal.pdf</p>	
13	The Committee requested a written response setting out: a. the value of the Council's borrowing liability benchmark;	<p>Response Provided:</p>  <p>The liability benchmark - January</p>	

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> b. the Council's current level of borrowing; c. whether the Council can increase its borrowing to support capital projects; and d. clarification as to whether external borrowing below the liability benchmark indicates a borrowing requirement and whether external borrowing above the liability benchmark indicates an over-borrowed position. 		
14	<p><u>Budget Reduction Proposals - CEX 6</u></p> <p>The Committee requested:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. a map of the CCTV locations; b. information regarding which service areas benefit from the CCTV, i.e. does it cover out of hours, alarm monitoring 	<p>Response provided:</p> <p>https://www.bridgend.gov.uk/my-council/freedom-of-information/open-data/</p> <p>With regards all the points B – F, this will be part of the review that will be carried out, the MTFs proposal is for 26-27, therefore works will need to be carried out which will cover these areas as part of the process.</p>	

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	<p>for Council buildings, RSLs, etc.;</p> <p>c. confirmation of other service areas who could benefit from use of the CCTV but do not yet do so;</p> <p>d. granular detail setting out what the sum of the saving of £444k entails;</p> <p>e. clarity on the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 as to where the statutory responsibility for the CCTV lies and who are mandated partners including whether Town and Community Councils are considered statutory partners under the Act;</p> <p>f. that the narrative in the budget reduction proposal be amended to reflect whether the saving related to removal of the service or a review seeking</p>		

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	contributions from statutory partners in order to maintain the CCTV service.		