

**SCRUTINY RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2026-27 TO 2029-30**

	<b>Scrutiny Recommendation:</b>	<b>Cabinet Response:</b>	<b>Accepted/ Partially Accepted / Not Accepted:</b>
<b><u>General - Recommendations:</u></b>			
<b>1</b>	<p><u>Council Tax</u> The Committee expressed concern regarding the proposed above inflation increase to Council Tax and the pressure many residents are facing in balancing their household budgets to meet the cost of Council Tax. The Committee therefore strongly <b>recommended</b> that Cabinet considers reviewing its final budget settlement including the current reduction proposals and using the unallocated funding from the uplift to 4.6% to ensure the lowest possible Council Tax.</p>	<p>The final budget proposals now include a proposed council tax increase of 4.7%</p> <p>The rationale for not reducing it further is to have a contingency in the year to meet unforeseen pressures including pay pressures. The contingency, if not required, would enable the reduction of 1% for schools to be removed from the 2027-28 budget requirements without having to be found from council tax in that year.</p>	Accepted
<b>2</b>	<p><u>Narrative re: Demographic</u> With reference to paragraph 3.1.3 of the Cabinet report, the Committee <b>recommended</b> that further narrative be included regarding the changing demographic of the County Borough and that there be a greater breakdown of age ranges, e.g. young people, adults and older people, etc. to further understand the future impact on pupil numbers in schools and the provision of social care for service provision planning.</p>	<p>The narrative regarding the demographic changes will be updated for the final budget papers.</p>	Accepted
<b>3</b>	<p><u>Fully Funding National Policy Commitments</u> The Committee <b>recommended</b> that all new policy commitments resulting from legislative pressures</p>	<p>The need for new initiatives to be fully funded is regularly raised with Ministers and senior officials in</p>	Accepted

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	from UK or Welsh Government (WG) should be fully funded and that the Committee fully support Cabinet in lobbying Westminster and WG to provide adequate funding.	Welsh Government and Westminster. This will continue.	
<b><u>Education, Early Years and Young People Directorate – Recommendation:</u></b>			
4	<p><u>Transformation in Schools and Education</u> The Committee discussed the need for transformation across the whole Council, specifically the schools and education function to see what can be done better and the impact that the funding formula applied to schools budget allocations has on the variances between schools' budget balances and <b>recommended:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. that work be undertaken to provide better understanding of the reasons for the variances between schools' budget balances;</li> <li>b. that the funding formula applied to schools' budget allocations be reviewed; and</li> <li>c. that the above be fed back into next year's budget setting together with an update regarding what transformation has taken place in schools and education.</li> </ul>	<p>A full review of the school funding formula would take a significant time to undertake, and would merely move the same funding around within schools, creating winners and losers. Any proposed changes to the funding formula would need to be consulted on with all governing bodies before progressing. Work could be undertaken on reasons why there are variances in school balances e.g. falling pupil rolls, comparatively higher staffing levels etc. An update on progress will be provided as part of the budget setting process next year, along with details of any transformational projects in schools and education.</p>	Partially Accepted

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<b><u>Communities Directorate - Recommendations:</u></b>			
<b>5</b>	<p><u>Flood Prevention and Public Realm</u> The Committee discussed Cabinet’s response to Recommendation 17 from the Scrutiny Budget Working Group which stated, ‘the Directorate will look to prioritise spend on flood prevention measures’, but highlighted that it is vital reference is made to funding for flood prevention in the MTFs and <b>recommended</b> that Cabinet consider including flood prevention measures within the narrative in <i>NEW 4, Public Realm</i>, in the Additional Final Settlement Budget Pressures, £1.5m.</p>	<p>The narrative for this cost pressure will be reviewed to make reference to flood prevention.</p> <p>Consideration will be given at year end to the establishment of a new Earmarked Reserve and to establishing a fund to support householders when their properties are flooded.</p>	Accepted
<b>6</b>	<p><u>Council’s Approach to Flood Prevention and Engineering Services</u> Members referred to the link between the Scrutiny Budget Working Group Recommendations 17 (Flood Prevention) and 18 (Engineering Services) and highlighted the opportunity to utilise engineering and nature-based solutions to flood prevention. The Committee <b>recommended</b> that consideration be given to looking at flood prevention with an engineering focus, e.g. planting trees to create wetlands to slow water flow away from housing to prevent flooding, replacing verges with sustainable drainage systems, etc. and being</p>	<p>Agree that consideration would be given to engineered flood prevention measures within the Borough, in order to seek additional grant funding for preventative works.</p>	Accepted

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	bolder and more proactive in the attraction and use of available grants and funding.		