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**Comments from individual Overview and Scrutiny Committees relation to budget proposals for 2015-16**

**1. Community Environment and Leisure Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

- 1.1. Members asked the Officers to clarify any changes or omissions to proposals as a result of recent changes to the requirement for savings. The Officer identified the changes and explained the rationale for them.
- 1.2. Members were concerned that the required savings for several of the proposals would result in a deterioration of the appearance of the county and that this would make the area less attractive to businesses and visitors.
- 1.3. Members raised concerns that carrying out less maintenance work on public facilities within the County Borough may result in more claims and costs in the long term.
- 1.4. Members noted that there is currently good service provision in place for responding to issues with pot holes in roads and raised concerns that this is an example of a 'visible' service which will now be at risk due to the requirement for savings.
- 1.5. Members queried what would happen if the proposals relating to savings for services covered by Cultural Trust are not achieved. The Officer responded that the Trust is aware of the requirement and has greater flexibility than the Authority in the way it can manage services.
- 1.6. Members noted the budget reductions attached to Bereavement Services which may lead to a reduction in general grounds maintenance activities and raised concerns that the cost to the public for the services is going up while the quality of services is diminished. Members queried whether the service should be 'standalone' so that the increased charges could be re-invested into the service and therefore not be subject to a reduction in standards due to the cut backs in other areas.
- 1.7. Members commented that regeneration would be badly hit and that, for example, this could impact on the ability of the Authority to deliver on their part of any potential opportunities link to City Deal. The Officer responded that there would be a need to focus resources on the most viable activities to ensure resilience and sustainability.
- 1.8. Members queried whether the 'Invest to Save' proposal which is currently being worked up for highways to inform a business case includes resurfacing and drainage, the Officer responded that it does.
- 1.9. Members queried whether the amount of savings linked to the reduction in weed spraying and in road marking maintenance justify the long term risk.
- 1.10. Members supported the corporate project to reduce overtime payments across the council and asked for examples of where this is happening within the Communities directorate. The Officer responded that some overtime occurs when work is required on or around the M4 but that costs can be recovered from this. Other overtime work linked to, for example, local roadworks, parks and playing fields and the call centre is part of the current review.
- 1.11. The Committee requested further information on the proposal 'COM9' which covers the review of highways maintenance/DLO services. The Committee requests detailed information on how this service is expected to look following staffing reductions and service reconfiguration to enable them to decide whether an item on the review should be included in the 2016-17 Forward Work Programme.

- 1.12. The Committee request further information on the recurrent pressure relating to public transport.

### **Consultation/engagement**

- 1.13. Members noted the public support for community services from the consultation exercise 'Shaping Bridgend's Future' and queried whether these findings had been taken into account when prioritising revisions to budget reductions. The Officer responded that there had been some adjustment for some services, such as highways, as a result of feedback from the consultation.

### **Recommendation**

- 1.14. The Committee recommend that a review of weed spraying be undertaken to ensure that this is carried out in a timely manner for maximum effect.

## **2. Corporate Resources and Improvement Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

- 2.1. Members noted recent changes to the requirement for savings and asked for clarification regarding any changes or omissions to proposals as a result of this.
- 2.2. Members asked for clarification on the changes to Principle 12 and the reference to the Budget Reduction Contingency Reserve. It was explained that this reserve was in place to bridge the gap where some projects under the remit of individual directorates may provide a risk, for example, if they take longer than expected.
- 2.3. Members asked for examples of income generation opportunities. Some examples were provided, such as Built Environment bidding for contracts and providing advice on estates management and the Authority pursuing attainment of the General Power of Competence.
- 2.4. Members asked for examples of what is covered by the Usable Earmarked Reserves listed in the report. Some examples given were - Major Claims Reserve – equalities and old claims against the Authority, Change Management - digital transformation and Car Parking Strategy - lost income while the Rhiw work is taking place.
- 2.5. Members raised concerns regarding the potential risk in reducing the number of internal audit hours. The service had delivered the necessary hours to gain sufficient assurance in 2014/15 and come in underspent and that the Chief Internal Auditor and the Corporate Director – Resources meet regularly to monitor the situation and ensure that the work programme is delivered.
- 2.6. Members expressed concern that the reduction of ICT service staff would impact on the ability to achieve other proposals, for example bringing ICT systems back in-house. It was confirmed that in-house systems can be managed by existing staff and that digital transformation would enable ICT provision to be reviewed to identify where demand could be reduced, for example where the ICT helpdesk staff are currently required to deal with issues which could be dealt with easily without their input, such as password resetting.
- 2.7. Members raised concerns regarding the comparatively small amount of savings to be gained from the proposal to reduce CCTV services operations compared to the high risk and queried whether costs could be reduced by seeking opportunities to work collaboratively with other interested parties. Options for collaborative working and funding are currently being explored.

- 2.8. Members raised concerns regarding the Corporate/Council Wide proposal to rationalise and reduce voluntary sector funding.
- 2.9. Members raised concerns regarding the Corporate/Council Wide proposal to reduce insurance premiums. The Authority had transferred some services to Trusts and confirmed that employees and the public were not at risk.
- 2.10. The Committee requested further information to clarify the situation regarding the implementation of the living wage in April 2016, to include information on the distinction between living and minimum wage, the staff that this applies to, whether the amount paid is dependent on age, the costs to the council and whether this cost is likely to become a pressure.
- 2.11. The Committee requested further information on CCTV services operations, to include information on who is using it, who can access it, what is being identified using CCTV and the potential for working collaboratively with other interested agencies as an opportunity for income generation.

### **Consultation/engagement**

- 2.12. Members noted the response to the budget consultation and asked whether some smaller budget items which impact on the public may be looked at again in the light of the changes to savings requirements. It was reported that there had been some adjustment for some services as a result of feedback from the consultation and that there were still a few things to be decided between the draft and final budget and time to reflect on the consultation responses.

### **3. Partnerships and Governance Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

- 3.1. Members asked the Officer to clarify any changes or omissions to proposals as a result of recent changes to the requirement for savings.
- 3.2. Members queried the impact on Legal and Regulatory Services of the discontinuation of the Regional Collaboration Fund and what would happen when the funding ceases. It was reported that, while the funding had benefitted the service, BCBC are currently still in a good position to continue collaborative working.
- 3.3. Members asked about the overall picture regarding the regulatory services budget and how the changes in the department would impact on service provision and support. It was reported that the changes would impact on everyone, and examples were given of ways that the service will respond to the requirement for saving and work more efficiently, such as using the 'Modern Gov' system and frameworks for procurement and legal services. Performance would be measured and monitored against Lexcel standards.
- 3.4. Members noted the amounts allocated to proposals under consideration or not yet developed within the LARS directorate. It was reported that the proposals yet to be developed would be planned and managed through the Programme Management Board.

### **Consultation/engagement**

- 3.5. Members acknowledged the successful use of social media and Twitter Q and A sessions during the budget consultation period.

### **Recommendations**

- 3.6. The Committee recommend that information on all BCBC services, projects and activities which involve partnership working is collated and provided to the Committee to enable them to identify areas which fall under the remit of Partnerships and Governance. This will help to inform the Forward Work Programme, increase the effectiveness and impact of the Committee and identify areas which may be suitable for partnership working in future.
- 3.7. The Committee are concerned that the scrutiny function of the authority is at risk of being jeopardised due to current staffing levels and would strongly recommend that the staffing levels are maintained at 2.6 to ensure that the Authority is supported by an effective scrutiny function.

#### **4. Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

- 4.1. The Committee raised concerns over the process for retendering the bus contracts as Members reported that some bus companies hadn't reapplied as they did not view it as a profitable contract. Members questioned the fact that the Children's Directorate does not have any input into the tendering process and as a result, whether the Local Authority was getting the bottom end of the market in terms of Bridgend children being put on buses that are not of a quality that we would expect.
- 4.2. Members asked for further detail in relation to the savings associated with CH3 – Retender Learner Transport Contracts, specifically:
- how close were the Authority in achieving the £400,000 this year and how achievable was next year's target of £100,000
  - have any complaints been received in relation to these changes?
- 4.3. The Committee asked for further information into the Science behind the Cabinet decision, in principle, that schools should be expected to find 1% efficiency savings specifically what information the Cabinet are basing their decision on?
- 4.4. The Committee asked for further detail of how many schools within the County Borough were in a deficit position in order to assist them in understanding the impact of any future budget reductions.

#### **Consultation/engagement**

- 4.5. The Committee referred to the proposed consultation area that was planned for development in the Civic Offices, as indicated by the Cabinet Member- Children's Social Services and Equalities, and asked that the Committee be kept fully involved with the progress of this work. Members were keen that they were notified of when things were happening and any issues feedback to them so that they could assist in addressing these.
- 4.6. The Committee expressed general concerns in relation to collaborations and partnership working particularly those under Western Bay. Members were concerned that these collaborations would not be able to continue to make savings and moreover, should Local Government reorganisation take place, these collaborations and the work underneath them will all have to be unravelled at a cost to the Authority.
- 4.7. The Committee wished to formally acknowledge their awareness of the plans for further education services previously delivered locally are to be transferred out of the Local Authority and placed under the Consortium, such as Governor Support. Members expressed concerns over this due to the Consortium being a non-elected body and having no formal democratic accountability.

## **Recommendations**

### **Learner Transport**

- 4.8. The Committee expressed concerns over the implementation of the budget cuts for Learner Transport. Members reiterated prior concerns over the apparent lack of coordination and cooperation between the Education Directorate who hold the budget for this service and the Transport Department, who are responsible for the direct provision. The Committee supported the notion of the need for proper project management of Learner Transport and recommend that this comes from outside of the two responsible areas in order to provide an objective oversight.
- 4.9. Members expressed concern over the suggestion that there was a significant reduction in the amount of pupils utilising the school transport service at the beginning of the school year and those remaining half way through and at the end of the school year. The Committee recommend that Learner Transport contracts be continually reassessed throughout the year in order that should there be any significant decrease in the numbers utilising this service, any unviable buses can be combined.
- 4.10. The Committee questioned the use of the Authorities own minibuses and the fact that they sit idle at various times throughout the day. The Committee recommend that Transport for the Authority be reviewed to consider whether changing the times of various services such as day centres, marginally, would assist in being able to utilise the Authority's own minibuses in a more effective and efficient way and achieve further savings. Furthermore Members added that the Authority needs to look at what technology can be introduced and used to monitor where the buses are throughout the day, what they are doing and who they are picking up in order to run the service more efficiently.

### **Nursery Education**

- 4.11. The Committee raised concerns over Nursery Education provision in that funding is being used from the schools budget for provision that exceeds the statutory requirement and encompasses children as young as 3 years of age. Members recalled the reduction proposal to go to the statutory requirement indicated in the previous MTFS, which amounted to a saving of £1.5m. The Committee questioned where this budget reduction would come from in the future if not through Nursery Education and expressed concerns over the fact that this could further impact on schools if their budget is not protected. The Committee recommend that this subject area be revisited both by the Directorate and the Scrutiny Committee to examine the options for future Nursery Education provision and its associated implications for schools.
- 4.12. The Committee referred to SCH1 - Agreement in principle: Cabinet have agreed that schools should be expected to find 1% efficiency savings'. Given the fact that some schools are already experiencing a deficit and issues regarding classroom sizes, the Committee recommend that the proposal be reworded to state that schools 'could', not 'should', be expected.

## **5. Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

- 5.1. Members asked for clarification regarding any changes or omissions to proposals as a result of recent changes to the requirement for savings.

- 5.2. Members requested that the paragraph on page 25 of the report on the Medium Term Financial Strategy 2016-17 which relates to the increasing number of young people with complex disabilities is reworded.
- 5.3. Members queried whether the savings figures quoted could be perceived as target savings to reach rather than looking at making as much savings as possible, which could be over and above the saving figures quoted.
- 5.4. Members were concerned that the Authority would not be in a position to take up opportunities to work with recipients of Direct Payments except in cases of complex care. The Officer responded that provision of specialist care is still in-house, and that there is a need to explore all potential opportunities and to look at the experience of other authorities.
- 5.5. Members noted the unavoidable pressure of £31,000 relating to a Carers Development Officer role for which grant funding has ended and queried whether the Authority could find other ways to use the allocated budget to support Carers.
- 5.6. The Committee requested further information to show evidence of the impact and outcomes related to the work of the Carers Development Officer.
- 5.7. Members supported the use of a transitional approach in reconfiguring the use of beds at Bryn Y Cae.