



CYNGOR BWRDEISTREF SIROL
RHONDDA CYNON TAF
COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

**A Virtual meeting of the
JOINT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE**

**will be held on
MONDAY, 5TH FEBRUARY, 2024 at 12.00 PM**

Contact: Emma Wilkins (Tel No. Emma.Wilkins@rctcbc.gov.uk)

Non Committee Members and Members of the public may request the facility to address the Committee at their meetings on the business listed although facilitation of this request is at the discretion of the Chair. It is kindly asked that such notification is made by 5pm 1st February, 2024 on the contact details listed above, including stipulating whether the address will be in Welsh or English.

LIST OF ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

1. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

To receive disclosures of personal interests from Members in accordance with the Code of Conduct

1. Members are requested to identify the item number and subject that their interest relates to and signify the nature of the personal interest; and
2. Where Members withdraw from a meeting as a consequence of the disclosure of prejudicial interest they must notify the Chairman when they leave

2. MINUTES

To receive the minutes of the meeting of the Joint Consultative Committee held on the 20th December 2023 as an accurate reflection of the meeting.

(Pages 3 - 8)

3. BUDGET CONSULTATION 2024/25 (PHASE 2)

To receive a presentation and seek comments from the Joint Consultative Committee, upon the draft 2024/25 Budget Strategy, as agreed by Cabinet.

(Pages 9 - 36)

4. URGENT BUSINESS

To consider any items which the Chair, by reason of special circumstances, is of the opinion should be considered as a matter of urgency.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A. H. Jones', written in a cursive style.

Director of Democratic Services & Communication

Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg / This document is also available in Welsh



RHONDDA CYNON TAF

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL JOINT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

Minutes of the virtual meeting of the Joint Consultative Committee meeting held on Wednesday, 20 December 2023 at 3.00 pm.

County Borough Councillors - Joint Consultative Committee Members in attendance:-

Councillor A Morgan Councillor M Webber (Chair)
Councillor A Crimmings Councillor G Caple

Trade Union Members in Attendance

Mr P Crews (Unison)
Mr C Jones (GMB)
Ms L Davies (Unite)
Mr A McCarthy (Unite)

Officers in attendance

Mr P Mee – Chief Executive
Mr C Hanagan, Service Director of Democratic Services & Communication
Mr R Evans, Director of Human Resources
Mr P Griffiths, Service Director – Finance & Improvement Services
Ms L Lawson, Performance Manager

1 DECLARATION OF INTEREST

In accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct, there were no declarations made pertaining to the agenda.

2 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and to the extended invite to the Education Trade Unions and for the benefit of whom, introductions were made.

3 MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the 7th February 2023 were an accurate Reflection of the meeting, subject to the addition that Mr G Morgans attended the meeting on behalf of Mr C Jones (GMB).

4 THE ANNUAL SELF-ASSESSMENT 2022/23 INCORPORATING THE COUNCIL'S CORPORATE PERFORMANCE REPORT

The Performance Manager and Chief Executive provided the Joint Consultative Committee with the Council's Self-Assessment for 2022/23, in advance of consideration by Council, in accordance with the requirements of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021, which sets out duties to consult about the extent to which the Council is meeting its performance requirements. The statutory consultees include every trade union recognised by the Council.

For background, Members were advised of the previous assessment for 2021/22 and the Performance Manager continued by noting that the nine themes identified in 2021/22 remain relevant. In addition, two further themes had been highlighted and it was added that the Council needed to continue to strengthen its arrangements for service user engagement and participation, particularly the evaluation of outcomes. Following on, it was noted that the Council also needed to further strengthen and articulate its organisational culture and values on equality and diversity and, in doing so, support its on-going arrangements in setting out clear expectations for staff and services.

It was explained that the Council's Self-Assessment is integrated with its annual Corporate Performance Report, which was contained within Appendix 1 of the report, and comprises six sections, as set out at paragraph 4.5. The process and approach to compile the Self-Assessment was also advised upon.

Before handing over to the Chief Executive the Performance Manager concluded that through the arrangements in place the Council could evidence that it meets the requirements of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act.

The Chief Executive reinforced the regular reporting mechanisms taken forward to Members in respect of the Council's strategies and policy developments which forms part of the self-assessment. The Chief Executive added that the self assessment reflected the diverse range of functions and services provided by the Council and scale of services delivered upon.

The Chief Executive took the opportunity to reflect on the previous nine themes identified in last year's self assessment including financial resilience, workforce pressure and climate change strategy and commented on the good progress against such themes, although reiterated that they still remained relevant due to their medium to long term nature. The Chief Executive referenced the corporate functions within the self assessment, and how the Council have applied the sustainable development principles and confirmed that he was satisfied that the assessment outlined how the Council was discharging its functions effectively for its residents and service users.

The Chair thanked officers for the detailed reports and the comprehensive information contained within, and commented on the financial pressures experienced by the Council.

Mr P Crews, (Unison) referenced the Local Government Settlement and how this would affect any strategies and priorities identified. The Chief Executive provided feedback on the importance of funding to deliver and inform the Council's priorities going forward.

It was **RESOLVED**:

- I. To review the draft Self-Assessment at Appendix 1 and consider whether it is an accurate and robust reflection of the position of the Council and its services and meets the requirements of the [Local Government and Elections Act 2021 Part 6](#).
- II. To offer any observations to the Chief Executive prior to consideration by Council in January 2024.

5 WORKING WITH OUR COMMUNITIES - THE COUNCIL'S DRAFT CORPORATE PLAN 2024-2030 (FOR CONSULTATION)

Through the report, the Chief Executive provided the opportunity for the Joint Consultative Committee to contribute to the development of the Council's new Corporate Plan from 2024/25 – 2029/30.

The Chief Executive advised that the new draft Corporate Plan sought to set the overall direction for the Council, describing its vision, purpose and ambition as the local authority for the County Borough and referred Members to Appendix 1 of the document which provided a draft plan for the next six years.

It was added that the new draft Corporate Plan would build on previous Corporate Plans and be a key part of the Council's budget, performance and delivery planning processes. As a result, the draft Corporate Plan must take into account the fact that Rhondda Cynon Taf Council and the wider public sector continues to face significant financial and other challenges. It was noted that the Corporate Plan would need to address the current and future challenges as well as meet a legal duty to develop and agree a Well-being Plan.

The Chief Executive highlighted the priorities identified through the plan as:

- People and Communities;
- Work and Business;
- Nature and the Environment; and
- Culture and Heritage.

In respect of consultation, it was advised that the elements that will contribute towards a new Corporate Plan have been informed by listening to and hearing what residents of all ages, communities, partners, and staff have been telling the Council across a wide range of engagement activity. It was confirmed that this approach would continue during the development of the plan and the associated actions.

Before receiving the Committee's comments in respect of the draft plan, it was advised that the new Corporate Plan would be approved by Council in conjunction with the approval of the 2024/25 budget in March 2024.

The Chair spoke of the ambitions and clear vision of the Council over previous years and the resilience of the Council in dealing with unforeseen circumstances and the positive collaborative working during such periods, with organisations, the community and staff.

Mr P Crews,(Unison) queried how the Council will look to achieve its ambitions reflecting on the recent Local Government Settlement announcement, with particular reference to the cuts to protected business rates. The Chief Executive agreed on the difficulties of setting an ambitious long term plan when the Council is facing significant financial challenges, however added that the Corporate Plan provided a high level strategic framework, with detailed action plans in place to support the delivery of agreed priorities.

Mr C Jones (GMB) spoke of the leading way of the Council which always put the Council at the forefront and welcomed the ambitions in the plan. Mr Jones reiterated concerns in respect of financial challenges and commented on the importance of continual staff communication and early engagement to which the

Chief Executive noted and commented on the importance of staff as the Council's most valuable asset which was supported by the Chair.

The Cabinet Member for Health and Social Care spoke of the challenges for Health and Social Care and also spoke of the significant investment made by the Council within these areas alongside the positive on-going aspirations of the Council.

Mr A McCarthy (Unite) commented on the support and value of social care and spoke of the importance of social partnership engagement, and sought clarity on what lessons have been learnt around engagement following recent service changes and also reflected on the greater need for social partnerships with the financial pressures facing the Council and the potential erosion of facility time. The Chief Executive welcomed the comments and spoke of the importance of engagement with Trade Unions on the new draft corporate plan to help develop the correct objectives and priorities for the Council and the related wellbeing plan. The Chief Executive spoke of the increasing demand and complexities within social care and commented that if such demand continued then services would not be sustainable in the long term and the need for Local Authorities to challenge and adapt the service models being delivered. The Director of Human Resources also provided a response in respect of facility time, advising that although this has been reviewed and reduced, it was still of a comparable if not better position than other Local Authorities.

Trade Union members commented on the timings of service change proposals and the importance of collective partnership engagement for the benefit of all. The Chief Executive fed back that the Council continues to be fully committed to open and constructive engagement with Trade Unions and indicated that, in the context of the challenging financial outlook, the Council would welcome Trade Union colleagues coming forward with ideas and proposals to deliver more efficient services.

It was **RESOLVED**

- I. To provide feedback on the early draft elements of the new Corporate Plan and whether it sets out:
 - a) A clear vision and purpose for the Council.
 - b) The right priorities/Well-being Objectives for the Council, namely
 - People and Communities
 - Work and Business
 - Nature and the Environment and
 - Culture and Heritage.
 - c) The principal actions within each Well-being Objective that will have the greatest impact to achieve the new Vision.
 - d) Clear commitments in respect of residents, staff and partners.
- II. To note the engagement on the four proposed Well-being Objectives and the high level priorities.

6 BUDGET CONSULTATION 2024/25

The Service Director Finance and Improvement Services presented the report to Members which sought the views and comments of the Joint Consultative Committee as consultees to the first phase of the Council's 2024-25 Budget

Consultation. Members were advised that the Committee's feedback would be incorporated into a Budget Consultation report, alongside all other feedback received from stakeholders, for consideration by Cabinet as part of developing a draft Revenue Budget Strategy for 2024/25.

To assist the Committee, the Service Director Finance and Improvement Services proceeded with a PowerPoint presentation on the phase 1 Budget consultation.

The Chair thanked the Service Director for the overview of the key strategic building blocks to help inform the development of a draft revenue budget strategy for the 2024/25 financial year. The Chair also spoke of the importance of setting a reasonable Council Tax level, commenting on the high levels of deprivation and challenges within communities across the County Borough.

The Cabinet Member for Health and Social Care commented on the stable financial position of the Council and also reiterated the need for a Council Tax level to be as low as reasonably possible.

Mr P Crews (Unison) thanked the Service Director for the presentation and the detail contained within. A query was raised as to the funding of Police Community Support Officers by the Council and also the Council's continued financial commitment to its Apprenticeship Scheme.

The Service Director confirmed that funding is in place to support Police Community Support Officer provision. In respect of the Apprenticeship Scheme, the Service Director confirmed that the Council continues to support both Graduate and Apprentice Schemes, this being informed by its workforce planning arrangements and funded through a mix of core and one-off resources.

Mr C Jones (GMB) referenced the minimum general reserve balance level of £10Million as set out by the Council's Section 151 officer and requested clarity on the view of Audit Wales in this regard. Reference was also made to the earmarked reserve balances and how often these are reviewed.

The Trade Union Member also commented on the Council Tax level proposal and referenced the Welsh Government comments on local authorities keeping Council Tax at a low level and potential for capping, and sought clarity on what the cap might be, indicating that a higher Council Tax level may prevent future job losses and service change proposals.

The Service Director advised of the rationale for the £10Million minimum general reserve level set out by the Council's Section 151 officer, this being a professional judgement based on the financial pressures facing the Council, the strength of its balance sheet and the need for continued financial stability into the future. The Service Director added that Audit Wales has a statutory responsibility to audit the Council's statement of accounts each year, that includes its reserves, with the latest audit opinion being unqualified i.e. a clean audit opinion.

In respect of a council tax cap it was advised that Welsh Government has not considered it appropriate to set an arbitrary level of council tax increase, albeit Welsh Government has indicated its on-going expectation that local authorities will take a responsible approach to setting council tax levels.

The Service Director noted examples of the specific purposes for which the Council's earmarked reserves had been allocated and provided assurance around the on-going and robust arrangements to monitor reserve levels that included in-year updates reported to elected Members to enable this area to be scrutinised and also options for elected Members to consider to re-allocate reserves, where appropriate, to support further additional investment into Corporate Plan priority areas.

A further query in relation to invest to save was raised to which the Service Director fed back that the Council has in place a rolling programme of operational invest to save schemes of in excess of £1M per year alongside other specific invest to save schemes being progressed such as hydro and solar projects.

Following the discussions it was RESOLVED:

- I. To provide feedback, as the Committee considers appropriate, as part of the Council's 2024-25 Budget Consultation.
- II. To request the Service Director for Democratic Services & Communications to provide Cabinet with the feedback of the Joint Consultative Committee

This meeting closed at 4.40 pm

**Cllr M Webber
Chair.**



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

MUNICIPAL YEAR 2023-24

JOINT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

5 FEBRUARY 2024

BUDGET CONSULTATION 2024-25 (PHASE 2)

REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES AND COMMUNICATION

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1. For Members of the Joint Consultative Committee to comment on the draft 2024/25 Revenue Budget Strategy as part of the second phase of the Council's 2024-25 Budget Consultation.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Members:

- 2.1. Provide feedback on the draft 2024/25 Revenue Budget Strategy as part of phase 2 of the Council's 2024-25 Budget Consultation.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 To afford the opportunity for the Joint Consultative Committee to provide its feedback on the 2024-25 Budget Consultation, as part of its role as a consultee in the process.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 Every year the Council undertakes a comprehensive approach to its annual budget consultation, providing a wide range of engagement methods for residents and stakeholders to take part in the process.
- 4.2 Cabinet, at its meeting on [23rd October 2023](#), agreed the Council's 2024/25 budget consultation arrangements. The first phase of the 2024-25 Budget Consultation process took place between 14 November and 19 December 2023, with the Joint Consultative Committee providing feedback as part of its 20th December 2023 meeting.

5. 2024-25 BUDGET CONSULTATION (PHASE 2)

- 5.1 At the Cabinet meeting on the 24th January 2024 the Cabinet Committee considered the report of the Deputy Chief Executive and Group Director of Finance, Digital and Frontline Services in respect of the draft 2024/25 Revenue Budget Strategy. ‘
- 5.2 As part of the recommendations of the Cabinet, Members, in line with the reported timetable of budget setting, [Resolved](#) to the undertaking of the second phase of the budget consultation process and to receive the feedback from this consultation in order to consider and determine the final budget strategy for submission to Council in March 2024.
- 5.3 The Joint Consultative Committee is requested to provide comment on the draft 2024/25 Revenue Budget Strategy, as part of the second phase of the 2024-25 Budget Consultation process.
- 5.4 The PowerPoint presentation (as appended to this report) will be presented to the Committee as part of the phase 2 process.
- 5.5 For Members information, the Committee’s feedback will be incorporated into a Budget Consultation report, alongside all other feedback received from stakeholders, for consideration by Cabinet as part of determining the final budget strategy for submission to Council,

6. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS/SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY

- 6.1 The 2024-25 Budget Consultation process aims to provide opportunities for all of the Council’s stakeholders to get involved in giving their feedback, through a wide range of engagement methods.

7. WELSH LANGUAGE IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1. There are no Welsh language implications arising from this report.

8. CONSULTATION/INVOLVEMENT

- 8.1. The Joint Consultative Committee is requested to act as a consultee as part of the Council’s Budget Consultation process.

9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 There are no financial implications as a result of the recommendations set out in the report.

10. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

- 10.1. The Council has a legal duty under the Local Government Finance Act 1992 to set a balanced budget and also a legal duty under the Local Government Act 2000 for it to be reported to and approved by Full Council. The phase 2 budget consultation process provides the opportunity for stakeholders to feedback on the Cabinet's draft 2024/25 Budget Strategy and for Cabinet to take this feedback into consideration as part of determining the final budget strategy for submission to full Council.

11. LINKS TO CORPORATE AND NATIONAL PRIORITIES AND THE WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS ACT

- 11.1 The budget setting process impacts on all Council services and contributes, in turn, to the delivery of the Council's Corporate Plan priorities.

12. CONCLUSION

- 12.1. The 2024-25 Budget Consultation process affords opportunity for the Committee to contribute and comment on the draft 2024/25 Revenue Budget Strategy as part of phase 2 of the Council's Budget Consultation process.
- 12.2. The feedback all stakeholders provide via the consultation process will be incorporated into a Budget Consultation Report to be considered by Cabinet as part of it determining a final 2024/25 revenue budget strategy for submission to Council in March 2024.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

as amended by

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

JOINT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

5TH FEBRUARY 2024

**REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES &
COMMUNICATIONS**

BUDGET CONSULTATION 2024-25 (PHASE 2)

**Rhondda Cynon Taf
County Borough Council**

Budget Consultation 2024/25 (Phase 2)

Contents

- Introduction – 2024/25 Draft Revenue Budget Strategy
- The Council’s Current Financial Position (2023/24)
- Phase 1 Budget Consultation – Headlines
- Provisional Local Government Settlement 2024/25 – Headlines / Implications for Rhondda Cynon Taf
- Cabinet Proposed Budget Strategy 2024/25
- Next steps and key dates

Introduction – 2024/25 Draft Revenue Budget Strategy

- Strategy options contained in this presentation are those proposed by Cabinet at its meeting on 24th January 2024 (after taking account of the 2024/25 provisional local government settlement and phase 1 budget consultation feedback)
- Consultation / Pre-Scrutiny will be a key component of this work and will be fed through when Cabinet meets to finalise its recommended Budget Strategy in February

Council's Current Financial Position (2023/24)

- Audited Accounts for 2022/23 – General Fund Balances at £10.240M
- Medium Term Financial Planning & Service Transformation Reserve (Transitional Funding)
 - 31st March 2023 = £4.887M
 - 2023/24 in year savings (at 30th Sept 23) = £2.142M
 - Level of Transition Funding = £7.029M

Phase 1 Budget Consultation – Headlines

- Phase 1 Consultation period ran from 14th November 2023 to 19th December 2023, over 500 people took part in the various engagement activities - feedback included....
- For Council Tax:
 - 75.6% of respondents fed back that protecting as many services as possible by applying a reasonable increase in Council Tax to contribute to closing the budget gap was preferable
 - 68.1% agreed a council tax increase of between 3% and 5% is acceptable given the financial pressures the Council faces
- For Schools, 50.3% of respondents were in favour of funding pay costs only and 49.7% in favour of funding pay costs plus a contribution to non-pay pressures
- For Social Services, 81.1% of respondents agreed that the Council should continue to prioritise social services as a key area for additional investment

Phase 1 Budget Consultation – Headlines

- Where the Council applies a fee / charge for services, 82.3% of respondents agreed that individual reviews of fees and charges is a reasonable approach to take

In general, respondents were in favour of protecting essential services and applying small increases to non-essential services where needed

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- When respondents were asked which services are important to them – feedback included:
 - Social care and support for vulnerable people were reported the most in the comments, along with schools, libraries, waste and recycling collection, and leisure services
 - On-line services were also seen to be important to residents as long as there were alternatives for those who are not on-line

Phase 1 Budget Consultation – Headlines

- 82.5% of respondents fed back that the approach to efficiencies outlined was a good strategy and 81.1% fed back that we should continue to expect our managers to deliver more efficient services
- 63.6% of respondents fed back that the Council should continue with its strategy on reserves

Provisional Local Government Settlement 2024/25 – Headlines

- Received on the 20th December 2023
- Headlines:
 - An all Wales average increase in resources of +3.1% (in line with the indicative level provided as part of the 2023/24 settlement)
 - An increase for RCT of +2.8%
 - Range of settlement levels +2.0% to +4.7% (funding floor protection in place so that no LA receives a settlement below +2.0%)
 - No transfers into / out of the settlement and no indication of future year settlement levels
 - Capital Funding – reduced by £0.058M to £13.828M
 - Specific Grants – all Wales level only:
 - Revenue - £1.37bn Revenue (includes a £10M reduction (all Wales) in Social Care Workforce Grant that funds our core base budget)
 - Capital - £0.962bn

Provisional Local Government Settlement 2024/25

– Implications for Rhondda Cynon Taf

- Combined impact of ‘Revised Budget Requirement and Provisional Settlement’ and ‘agreed Early Budget Reduction Measures’

	£'000
Budget Gap at MTFP	35,005
<u>Provisional Settlement</u>	
RSG Reduction (3.1% to 2.8%)	1,816
SS Workforce Grant Reduction	815
Council Tax Base	- 983
Restated Gap at Provisional Settlement	36,653
Agreed Budget Reduction Measures	- 10,743
Remaining Budget Gap at Provisional Settlement	25,910

- It is against this position that Cabinet have developed their draft Budget Strategy

Cabinet Proposed Budget Strategy 2024/25

- The following slides set out the key elements of the draft 2024/25 Revenue Budget Strategy proposed by Rhondda Cynon Taf Council's Cabinet on 24th January 2024
- The Cabinet's proposed Budget Strategy comprises:
 - Council Tax
 - Schools Budget
 - Efficiencies
 - Service Specific / Expenditure Changes
 - Use of reserves

Cabinet Proposed Budget Strategy 2024/25

Council Tax

- Council Tax levels for the past 5 years (average Band D increase excluding Community Council and Police Precepts)

Financial Year	RCT Council Band D % Increase	All Wales Average Band D % Increase	RCT Position Compared To Local Authorities Across Wales
2019/20	3.60%	6.16%	Lowest Increase
2020/21	2.85%	4.62%	Lowest Increase
2021/22	2.65%	3.58%	Lowest Increase
2022/23	1.00%	2.20%	Joint 5th lowest increase
2023/24	3.90%	5.52%	4th lowest increase

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- The Cabinet is proposing that Council Tax be increased by 4.9% for next year (compared to the originally modelled Council Tax increase of 3.90%), generating additional income of £1.03M
 - Band A – an increase of £1.01 per week
 - Band D – an increase of £1.52 per week

Cabinet Proposed Budget Strategy 2024/25

Schools Budget

- The Cabinet's proposed budget strategy would:
 - Fully fund all pay awards
 - Provide a further £1M toward non-pay costs (after adjusting for reduced energy costs and includes funding from the charge for the additional childcare available alongside free breakfast club provision)
 - After absorbing non-inflationary pressures, as is the case for all other Council Services, 1.3% school efficiency saving requirement compared to 6.6% for non-school services
 - In overall terms, the proposal will see the Schools Budget increase from £186M to £197.9M, an increase of £11.9M (+6.4%)

Cabinet Proposed Budget Strategy 2024/25

Efficiencies and Service Operational Reconfiguration

- The Council has for many years delivered against ambitious efficiency targets without adversely impacting on frontline services
- The current year's budget strategy (2023/24):
 - £16.1M of efficiencies and service operational reconfigurations identified and delivered in the current year without having a significant detrimental impact on frontline service provision
 - Has continued the approach of early identification and delivery 'in-year' of efficiency savings = £2.142M realised early in 2023/24
- For 2024/25, £8.2M of early budget reduction measures already agreed and accounted for in coming to the £25.9M budget gap

Cabinet Proposed Budget Strategy 2024/25

Efficiencies

- For 2024/25, the continuation of a Council wide approach to identify a range of budget reduction options in light of funding levels being significantly short of the significant pressures faced (with review and assessment by the Senior Leadership Team)

£5.246M of further efficiency and operational service reconfigurations that will not have a significant detrimental impact on front line services

Categorisation	£'000
General Efficiency Measures - cost reduction / additional income	2,104
General Efficiency Measures - service restructuring and vacancy management	1,081
Operational Service Reconfiguration	905
General Efficiency Measures - Recharge of costs / use of external funding	1,156
Grand Total	5,246

Cabinet Proposed Budget Strategy 2024/25

Specific Service / Expenditure Changes

A number of budget reviews have been undertaken to ensure that the budget reflects updated projections of demand and cost and takes account of agreed service policy change

Energy

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- Following a significant increase in gas and electricity costs for the current year, lower contract rates have been secured for 2024/25 as forecasted as part of the Council's MTFP arrangements
- Revised projections have been calculated for next year enabling the base budget requirement to be reduced (including schools)
 - In parallel, the Council is progressing the development of a solar farm that will generate energy and create a new income stream from 2024/25
 - **Base budget reduction £4.479M**

Cabinet Proposed Budget Strategy 2024/25

Specific Service / Expenditure Changes

Base Budget Updates

- Graduate and Apprentices – funding managed locally by services in line with workforce planning arrangements, with an on-going commitment to both programmes
- Staff Benefits Scheme – additional income generated from the roll-out of the scheme, over and above that already reinvested back into our staff development programmes
- Updated contribution level for the Central South Consortium Joint Education Service and updated arrangements for the delivery of the Council's Internal Audit Service
- Updated caseload and demand for the Council Tax Reduction Scheme
- **Base budget reduction £1.338M**

Cabinet Proposed Budget Strategy 2024/25

Specific Service / Expenditure Changes

Additional childcare prior to commencement of Free Breakfast Club provision

- The proposal has been subject to a separate public consultation process
- Reported back to Cabinet 24th January with decision to implement the proposal and additional income generated reinvested into the school budget
- **Additional income generated £0.495M**

Capitalisation of spend

- Expenditure that is currently funded from revenue budgets that could be funded from Capital Budgets
- **Base Budget reduction £0.5M**

Cabinet Proposed Budget Strategy 2024/25

Specific Service / Expenditure Changes

Fees and Charges

- General level of inflation has been over 5% for the majority of the past 12 months and higher for specific areas of expenditure e.g. food inflation at between 10% and 19%

The proposal:

- Is for the general rate of increase across Council fees and charges to be 5% - with the Council absorbing the full inflationary implications
- A number of exceptions...that would generate **additional income of £452k in a full year**

Cabinet Proposed Budget Strategy 2024/25

Fees & Charges

Proposed Exceptions

Area of Charge	Proposed Specific Changes
Car Park Charges	<p>Season tickets/residential parking permits – Freeze</p> <p>Short stay/long stay up to 4 hours £0.10 increase and a £0.20 increase over 4 hours</p> <p>With the additional income generated used to off-set increased transaction costs incurred by the Council where card payments are made to purchase car park tickets (payment machines being upgraded)</p>
School Meals (Secondary Schools)	£0.15 per meal
Leisure for Life – Membership / Pay and Play	Membership +£0.50 (with further proposals set out in the full Fees and Charges Review)
Rhondda Heritage Park	£9.95 to £10.95 Adult Entry (with further proposals set out in the full Fees and Charges Review)

Cabinet Proposed Budget Strategy 2024/25

Fees & Charges

Proposed Exceptions

Area of Charge	Proposed Specific Changes
Lido (Pontypridd)	Standard admission charge / cold water swim / paid activities - freeze Children under 16 – remain free Boxing day swim: +£0.50 Introduction of a £0.25 booking fee per individual ticket purchased to help reduce the number of pre-bookings that do not result in attendance
Community Meals (meals on wheels) & Day Services meals	Increase of £0.25
Non-residential care services	Home care Hourly Rate: £20.00 to £21.00 per hour Day Centre Services daily rate: from £20.00 to £21.00 per day Direct Payment hourly rate: £10.00 to £11.00 per hour
Bulky Waste Collection	From £17.00 to £20 (for 3 items)

- In addition to the above, the proposed extension of the Street Licensing Scheme across the whole County Borough is subject to consideration by the Council's Licensing Committee (30th January 2024)

Cabinet Proposed Budget Strategy 2024/25

Use of Reserves

- The impact of the Budget Strategy proposals

	£'000	£'000
Remaining Budget Gap at Provisional Settlement		25,910
Council Tax	- 1,029	
Service Efficiencies	- 8,664	
Energy Budget Requirement	- 4,479	
Base Budget Adjustments	- 1,338	
Charging for Childcare (alongside free breakfast clubs)	- 495	
Capitalisation	- 500	
Fees and Charges	- 452	
		- 16,957
Remaining Budget Gap		8,953

- Remaining budget gap proposed to be funded through the release of reserves funding

Phase 2 Budget Consultation

- To run from 24th January to 9th February 2024
- The consultation approach includes:
 - On-line questionnaire via the Let's Talk website
 - Young persons engagement via schools
 - Social media
 - Face to face / on-line Zoom meetings with:
 - School Budget Forum
 - Older Persons Advisory Group
 - The Council's 'Overview and Scrutiny Committee' and 'Joint Consultative Committee'

Next steps and key dates

- 9th February 2024 – Phase 2 consultation ends and all feedback reported to Cabinet on 21st February 2024
- 21st February 2024 - Cabinet meeting to consider the feedback from the Phase 2 Consultation and for Cabinet to agree its final Revenue Budget Strategy for 2024/25 for recommending to Council
- March 2024 - Final 2024/25 Local Government Settlement – Receipt of final settlement figures from Welsh Government
- 6th March 2024 – full Council meeting
 - Cabinet to submit its recommended 2024/25 Revenue Budget Strategy and Council Tax levels to Council

Thank you