



EDUCATION, SKILLS AND WELLBEING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

2.00 PM MONDAY, 8 JANUARY 2024

***MULTI-LOCATION MEETING - COUNCIL CHAMBER, PORT TALBOT
& MICROSOFT TEAMS***

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1. Chair's Announcements
2. Declarations of Interest
3. Budget Consultation 2024/25 (*Pages 3 - 72*)
4. Urgent Items
Any urgent items at the discretion of the Chairperson pursuant to Section 100BA(6)(b) of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).

K.Jones
Chief Executive

**Civic Centre
Port Talbot**

Tuesday, 2 January 2024

Committee Membership:

Chairperson: Councillor R.Phillips

Vice Chairperson: Councillor D.Thomas

Councillors: W.Carpenter, N.Goldup-John, J.Henton, D.Keogh, C.Lewis, R.Mizen, P.A.Rees, S.Renkes, S.H.Reynolds, P.Rogers and R.W.Wood

***Co-opted Voting Members** A. Amor, M.Caddick and L.Newman

***Co-opted Non Voting Members** R.De Benedictis

Notes:

- (1) *If Committee Members or non-Committee Members wish to have relevant items put on the agenda for future meetings, then please notify the Chief Executive/Chair eight days before the meeting.*
- (2) *If non-Committee Members wish to attend for an item of interest, then prior notification needs to be given (by 12.00 noon on the day before the meeting). Non-Committee Members may speak but not vote, or move or second any motion.*
- (3) *For pre scrutiny arrangements, the Chair will normally recommend forthcoming executive items for discussion/challenge. It is also open to Committee Members to request items to be raised - though Members are asked to be selective here in regard to important issues.*
- (4) *The relevant Cabinet Board Members will also be invited to be present at the meeting for Scrutiny/ Consultation purposes.*
- (5) *Would the Scrutiny Committee Members please bring the Cabinet Board papers with them to the meeting.*



Cyngor Castell-nedd Port Talbot
Neath Port Talbot Council

NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Education, Skills and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee

8th January 2024

REPORT OF THE CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER - HUW JONES

Matter for Scrutiny

Wards Affected:

All Wards

CONSULTATION ON EDUCATION, SKILLS AND WELLBEING BUDGET AND DRAFT SAVINGS 2024/25

Purpose of the Report:

1. To provide Members of the Education, Skills and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee with information regarding the savings proposals for the Education, Leisure and Lifelong Learning Directorate, set out in the Cabinet Report of 20th December 2023, with a view to aiding the scrutiny of those proposals.

Background:

2. On the 20th December 2023 the Council's Cabinet approved to commence public consultation on draft budget savings, cuts and income generation proposal to inform the Council's budget for 2024/2025.

3. The attached report deals in more detail those savings strategies which fall under the remit of this Scrutiny Committee.
4. Each scrutiny committee is invited to scrutinise the budget proposals that sit under their committee's remit, as part of the overall budget consultation exercise.

Integrated Impact Assessment:

5. N/A

Valleys Communities Impacts:

6. N/A

Workforce Impacts:

7. N/A

Legal Impacts:

8. N/A

Risk Management Impacts:

9. N/A

Consultation:

10. Public Consultation on all of the draft savings proposals set out in the Cabinet report of 20th December 2023 has commenced and will run until 10th January 2024.

Recommendation:

11. It is recommended that Members review and scrutinise the savings proposals included in this report, which fall under the remit of the Education, Skills and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee.

Reasons for Proposed Decision:

12. To ensure members of the Education, Skills and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee are able to contribute to the consultation on the draft Budget 2024/25.

Implementation of Decision:

13. N/A

Appendices:

14. Appendix 1 – 2024/2025 Budget Proposals as presented to Cabinet on 20th December 2023.

List of Background Papers:

15. Not Applicable

Officer Contact:

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Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council

Cabinet

Report of the Corporate Directors Group

20th December 2023

Matter for decision

Wards affected – All

2024/25 Budget proposals for consultation

Purpose of Report

To seek Cabinet approval to consult on the draft budget proposals for 2024/25.

A short consultation will take place to the 10th January 2024. Responses provided will be reviewed prior to presenting a final budget for 2024/25 at Cabinet and Council on 21st and 28th February 2024 respectively.

Introduction

Today's report does not seek final decisions from the Executive. The aim of this report is to seek approval to go out to consultation and listen to the views of stakeholders in relation to the issues set out in this report.

These proposals have been prepared prior to the release of the draft Welsh Government budget for 2024/25 and therefore the provisional local government settlement. The final proposals to be considered at the end of February 2024 will have to be amended to reflect the impact of these announcements if they are different to those assumed within these proposals.

Background

The Public Sector has faced a sustained period of real term reductions in funding levels for over ten years with Neath Port Talbot Council securing reductions in the revenue budget in excess of £100m in real terms since 2008. As well as finding genuine efficiencies and economies in the cost of services and functions (as has been the case in other councils) the scale of austerity measures imposed by the UK Government has also seen deep cuts in services and jobs, particularly in those services delivered under discretionary powers.

2023/24 has proved to be a period characterised by challenges on several fronts, including:

- The economic shock that arose from the illegal war waged by the Russian Government on Ukraine with its associated energy and general inflation impacts;
- Exceptional workload demands arising from the legacy of the Covid-19 pandemic;
- Additional workload demands arising from the Cost of Living crisis;
- Pay awards agreed in excess of funds made available from the governments;
- Continuing supply chain disruption arising from Covid-19 and the wider impacts of BREXIT;
- Structural changes in the labour market creating recruitment and retention challenges across many occupational groups;
- A substantial programme of policy initiatives arising from the Labour-Plaid Cymru Co-operation agreement;
- Local policy initiatives prioritised by the Rainbow Coalition; and
- Significant new investor interest.

The budget agreed for 2023/24, following consultation, provided for an **increase** in unavoidable costs of **£42,189 million** (unfunded pay awards from 2022-23; pay awards and inflation in 2023-24; and unavoidable pressures). This was funded by £14,352 million net savings across the revenue budget; the use of £3.5 million general reserves; the use of £1.4 million from the leisure specific reserve; an increase in council tax of 4.5% (which in part provided for an increase in the Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Authority levy equivalent to 1.8% on council tax); and an increase in the council tax collection rate).

In proposing the budget strategy, members of council were advised by

the Council's Chief Finance Officer that a number of significant risks would need to also be managed in-year. The most recent revenue budget monitoring report indicates that most elements included within the budget strategy are on track but some highlighted risks that were not funded within the budget have materialised. Officers are focusing on mitigating these risks with the objective of bringing overall spending back within budget by year end.

The Chief Finance Officer also noted that the prospects over the medium term were challenging, estimating a further £48 million pressures over the four year period 2024-28. A number of areas for review were highlighted in the budget report to inform the development of the budget strategy for future years, including:

- Further work to review the Council's accommodation portfolio, delivered in phases;
- Work to reduce energy consumption, improve energy efficiency and to accelerate the move to renewable energy sources;
- A review of the Council's fleet and wider transport arrangements;
- A series of reviews to examine external commissioning and procurement spend;
- Further re-basing of the Council budget to reflect changes to the operating model;
- Re-modelling of statutory services to meet the needs of our population differently and at lower cost;
- Work to re-model discretionary services with a focus on alternative income and efficiency;
- Further automation of services and functions; and
- Consideration of increased council tax rates for empty properties and second properties

The workstreams highlighted above have been progressed throughout this financial year. Additionally, officers have reviewed all of the budget ideas submitted as part of the public consultation exercise and which were noted in the final budget report.

2024/25 Estimated Budget Gap

The table on page 9 shows the estimated amount of funding needed to run council services in 2024/25 and the funding available

During the current financial year managers have been asked to maintain a tight financial discipline to mitigate any overspend arising from the unfunded pay award. Specific measures taken include:

- All vacant posts have been assessed as to when the posts realistically will be filled or if they even need to be filled until the next financial year
- Additional income generation has been built in where considered deliverable
- Identifying posts where the pay award can be offset e.g. against grants/consultancy works; and
- Seeking member authority to implement any other cost reduction/income generation measures in-year where this does not require a new policy decision

In setting its budget for 2023/24, Council agreed to utilise £3.5m from general reserves. When considering the position for 2024/25 this £3.5m represents a 'gap' which needs to be made good. In addition to the above the Council is facing pay and inflationary increases for 2024/25 totalling c£15m.

There are unavoidable service pressures which will also increase the estimated cost of running council services by £4.7m as detailed in Appendix 2.

When setting the 2023/24 budget, Council agreed a number of 'pressures to be monitored' that were not built into the base budget. Of these, it is now apparent that in the Social Services, Health and Housing Directorate £6.8m of these 'pressures to be monitored' have become annual recurring costs pressures, largely as a result of more people needing care and support and more people presenting with complex needs with attendant high cost care and support packages. It is noted that unlike previous years, Social Services has not been able to access winter pressure funding or end of year funding to alleviate these pressures and the cost now falls to the revenue base budget.

The scale of the pressures within the Social Services system is such that a multi-year solution will need to be established. This will require additional, recurring revenue funding for the adult social services budgets over a number of years, along with an invest to save programme of service change designed to reduce demand coming into the system and to meet care needs at lower cost in more appropriate settings. In

order to allow for the implementation of longer term cost saving measures it is proposed that £5.3m of pressures be funded in 2024/25 from specific Directorate reserves with permanent funding and service changes identified for the 2025/26 financial year onwards. Investing more resources in adult social care will clearly have direct implications for opportunities to fund other council services.

The budget strategy proposed in this report is based on the assumption that the Council will receive an increase in its Revenue Settlement Grant of 3.1% from the Welsh Government in 2024/25. This is based on planning assumptions provided by Welsh Government officials. The Council expects to be advised of the provisional Settlement on 20th December 2023.

The final budget proposals that will be considered by Cabinet and Council in February 2024 will be adjusted in the event that the provisional Settlement varies from the budget assumptions herein.

Service Pressures

In terms of service pressures, the most recent data suggests that demands in many areas of the Council continue to be at increased volume and in many instances increased complexity. This picture was outlined in a report entitled 'Outlook' presented to the Cabinet in September 2023. Relevant extracts from that report are identified below for context and updated where appropriate:

Homelessness- the number of people in temporary accommodation has increased from 313 people in 2019-20 to 832 in 2023-24. Without intervention, it is estimated that this will continue to increase to around 2,233 people in 2027-28. In cost terms this would see an increase from £2.6 million in 2023-24 to £4.4 million in 2027-28. Demand is being driven by a number of factors:

- Policy change from Welsh Government which has not been fully funded but has lowered the threshold for qualifying for support from councils;
- Family pressures arising from the cost of living crisis;
- A reduction in affordable accommodation in the private rented sector;

- Insufficient accommodation due to market factors, particularly one-bedded accommodation; and
- An increase in care leavers and youth homelessness.

Children's Social Services – at the beginning of January 2023 there were 1,272 children and young people receiving some level of support from the Council. Contacts to the service were 2,209 in that month, compared with 1,435 in April 2021. Pressures are being experienced in relation to the complexity of need being presented to the service also. The number of children and young people requiring a high cost residential placement is circa 20 – double the number we would have experienced prior to the outbreak of Covid-19 and there are also a growing number of unaccompanied child asylum seekers being allocated by the UK Government who require support. This situation is compounded by the lack of suitable placements, further impacted by the Welsh Government's policy to eliminate profit from the care market. Ensuring a stable workforce will need to remain a priority focus throughout the period with the need to ensure remuneration and our wider employer offer remains attractive in a highly competitive labour market.

Adult Social Services – new contacts to the service were 9,265 in 2022-23 compared with 6,259 in 2018-19. Demand is projected to continue to rise given that the population is ageing and in particular, the number of people living with dementia is expected to double within 20 years. Covid-19 has had a major impact on the care market with a large number of providers withdrawing from the market entirely. The cost of providing care has also increased significantly, linked to the Welsh Government's policy to provide at least the Real Living Wage and the impact of enhanced infection control regimes. The number of people with disabilities requiring a specialist residential placement has seen a sharp increase linked to Covid-19. The number of people accessing health service continues at a very high level, placing additional pressure on social services to ensure care packages are available for those who need them, to expedite hospital discharge.

Education – Covid-19 and the policies implemented to protect the NHS and save lives has had a significant impact on children and young people. Many children and young people have experienced anxiety returning to school and have struggled with social isolation with adverse impacts on their emotional wellbeing. The cost of living crisis is

compounding this and there are increased waiting times for key partner services.

Attendance rates are below rates that were achieved prior to the pandemic and it is of considerable concern that fixed term and permanent exclusions have increased across secondary schools. Welsh Government's additional learning needs legislation has placed significant pressures on all schools for which there has been no additional funding. Furthermore, the increase in the number of young people who have been identified with additional learning needs is placing intolerable pressure on budgets as schools struggle to meet their statutory duties in respect of these young people. Home to school transport is a further pressure requiring attention with more children and young people requesting transport and prices increasing well above budget.

Leisure and Culture – participation levels are slowly recovering but income levels remain below the levels seen prior to the pandemic. The cost of living crisis is also contributing to this. Given the significant pressures across statutory services and functions, there is greater pressure to reduce deficits and subsidies further.

Environment Services – public protection services were particularly impacted by Covid-19 and although recovering steadily, continue to address backlogs of inspection activity following the need to refocus the services to support public health policy throughout the pandemic period. Alongside inspection backlogs, contacts to the service have been unusually volatile and often complex. The planning service experienced a high volume of applications but has recovered well. It is however, continuing to experience an unusual level of very complex large applications, including the Global Centre for Rail Excellence and Wildfox Resort Afan Valley, together with major projects associated with the opportunities around the Freeport and renewable energy projects which whilst determined by the Planning Environment Decisions Wales (PEDW) require a huge amount of officer time. During this time, the Council has also progressed the review of the Local Development Plan within statutory timescales. All of this combining to place a continuing pressure which is set to increase further following the announcement that an Electric Arc Furnace is to be constructed at Tata.

Streetcare - A revised Waste Management Strategy was developed in the current financial year to position the Council to achieve the next recycling target of 70% by 2024-25. This requires considerable change within the service if we are to avoid financial penalties. Residents'

expectations of standards for the public domain, despite additional investment, exceed the capacity of the service and therefore continues to provide an ongoing challenge. The service continues to proactively draw down grant funding to address drainage and highways maintenance with some good impacts. However, the deteriorating age and condition of infrastructure, coupled with the impacts of climate change presents an ongoing challenge.

Property and Regeneration – additional grant funding through Levelling Up and Shared Prosperity Funds have been very welcome but are challenging to deliver given the tight timescales for delivery. This work runs alongside the Innovation and Local Carbon Growth and the Homes as Power Stations programmes now in delivery as part of the Swansea Bay City Deal and the Celtic Freeport secured in February 2023 following a Freeport Competition launched by the UK and Welsh Governments. The recent announcement by Tata and the UK Government will add to workloads and are being accommodated within a considerably expanded capital programme that is also delivering improvements across the school estate; enhancements to child care provision; community regeneration projects; and delivering a rationalisation of office and depot accommodation. The priority being given to decarbonisation and climate change at all levels of policy making, together with the energy crisis, is also placing pressure on our energy function, requiring action at strategic and tactical levels.

Transport and Engineering – the service will need to continue to manage the introduction of the 20mph default limit introduced by Welsh Government and changes to the funding of the bus network. Both of these areas are impacting significantly on local residents with concern that a much reduced bus service may develop if the Welsh Government makes further cuts to bus subsidies. Car parking income remains well below pre-pandemic levels requiring a review of parking infrastructure and fees. Good progress is being made with a number of major and minor highways projects and increased capacity within the service will help increase the amount of funding secured to support the development of active travel routes across the county borough. Managing the legacy infrastructure of the Council will continue to be a challenge given the limits on funding available to the Council with most grant income available to support new infrastructure development and limited scope to bring in additional income to address legacy infrastructure.

Corporate Services and Governance Systems – the summary of pressures identified above combine to place ongoing pressure on

corporate services and governance systems to adapt and facilitate the change needed. Additionally, further work will need to continue in 2024-25 to fully restore governance systems, as we move beyond Covid-19 recovery. Our Corporate Performance Management Framework will need to be strengthened whilst our Strategic Equalities Plan, our climate change and nature emergency frameworks; as well as new legislation such as the Social Partnership Duties will also need attention.

2024/25 Budget gap summary

	£'000
Use of general reserves to fund 2023/24 budget	3,500
Inflation and pay awards (appendix 1)	14,824
Increase in fire service level - equivalent to c1% increase in council tax	694
Unavoidable pressure – cost of running indoor leisure – equivalent to c2% increase in council tax (appendix 2)	1,400
Other unavoidable pressures (appendix 2)	3,300
Pressures to be monitored now recurring costs (appendix 3)	6,800
Total cost pressures to be funded	30,518
Funding available	
Welsh Government (WG) funding increase at 3.1% (estimated)	-8,578
Council tax increase modelled at 5%*	-4,233
Social Services directorate reserves	-6,800
Savings / income generation proposals identified (appendix 4)	-8,183
Total assumed funding available	-27,794
Remaining budget gap	2,724

**This is a figure used for modelling purposes only and does not indicate a firm proposal due to the lack of availability of Welsh Government funding information and the need to resolve the remaining budget gap.*

Proposed strategy for closing the budget gap

Since it became apparent that the financial outlook had deteriorated significantly officers have been working on proposals to close the budget gap. This work has been multi-faceted and has included early engagement with staff, trade unions, all members of Council, representatives of the school community and other interested stakeholders.

The starting point in relation to the 2024/25 budget strategy has been the work undertaken during the current financial year to drive down the projected overspend as already referenced on pages 3 and 4 of this report. However, despite this work there remains a structural pressure requiring a permanent solution which needs to be addressed as part of the budget strategy detailed below.

The budget strategy for 2024/25 is based on the following key objectives:

Maintaining a clear focus on recovery from Covid-19 and pressures arising from the Cost of Living Crisis

There are exceptional pressures across the Council as the impact of policies pursued during the Covid-19 response period emerge, compounded by the continuing cost of living crisis. In particular, there are much higher volumes of demand/need presenting in social services, housing and education, together with an increase in the complexity of need. It is not yet clear when the rise in demand/need will peak. The budget strategy makes proposals for a number of spend to save initiatives designed to reduce demand for service and to secure lower cost solutions whilst still maintaining focus on enabling positive outcomes to be achieved for people in need of support. The changes proposed are crucial to avoid more cases escalating to a point of crisis when much more expensive solutions would need to be found.

Good progress has been made in the Environment Directorate to recover from the impact of Covid-19, however, some backlogs of work and pent up demand remain. The budget strategy recognises the need for continued support to fully recover whilst also recognising the need to achieve the next recycling target of 70%; ensure the public realm is sufficiently maintained; and that infrastructure across the county borough is accessible and safe.

Facilitating and Enabling Economic Growth

There has been a mixed impact across the local economy as the pandemic and cost of living crisis have taken their course. The Council has been responsible for administering significant financial support to businesses on behalf of government and providing other practical support where possible.

We are also dealing with a growing portfolio of major economic development initiatives. The Council has been successful in its bid, along with partners, to establish a Freeport covering the port of Port Talbot and the Port of Milford Haven which should attract seed capital of £25 million and potentially £0.5 billion in retained business rates for investment in hard and soft infrastructure over the programme life cycle.

There is also a £250 million proposed investment in an adventure resort in the Afan Valley; a £200 million proposed investment in a Global Centre for Rail Excellence in the Dulais Valley; a £28 million investment programme over the remainder of this financial year and the next financial year through the Shared Prosperity Fund; the City Deal programme continues; together with the potential to draw down significant capital funds to support innovation and housing developments.

The Council has also been successful with four levelling up fund (LUF) bids. The most recent of these being announced in November 2023, namely, £14m for the transformation of the Princess Royal Theatre and Public Realm within Port Talbot Town Centre and £13m for the Newbridge Road Bridge project.

The investment in an Electric Arc Furnace for the Tata site in Port Talbot will also require attention from the Council in its role as the local planning authority.

The Council has performed well in supporting these initiatives thus far but will need to increase investment in its economic growth functions to secure the successful delivery of this portfolio and to maximise the benefits to local people and local supply chains.

Delivering local and Welsh Government policy priorities

We are in the third year of the current Senedd term and in the second year of the local government term. The Welsh Government has set out an extensive programme of policy commitments that will impact on councils. It is essential that any new policies are fully funded and that the capacity of local government to make changes in the current climate is properly understood. The Council also has its own policy priorities which are being implemented and which will feature in an updated Corporate Plan that will be presented to Council in March 2024.

Ensuring a sustainable Council

There has been a material change to the Council's operating environment over this financial year. The much changed budget outlook, the workforce constraints and the pace of change combine to challenge the existing operating model.

Over the medium term, the Council will need to pursue a robust strategy that will transform the way services and functions are delivered within a clearly defined framework of priorities, whilst also ensuring financial sustainability and good governance.

General Reserves Position

The Council agreed a general reserves policy which states that the general reserve balance should be kept at c4% of the net revenue budget. The 2023/24 net revenue budget is currently £360m meaning that the general reserve should be held at c£14.4m.

The latest budget monitoring report presented to Cabinet showed that the current general reserve balance (Q2 2023/24) stands at c£15.4m. At present there is not a great deal of scope to use general reserves to once again support the Council's 2024/25 budget proposals. This position may however change before the Council has to consider its final budget proposals in February 2024.

Specific Reserves Position

During the 2023/24 financial year an exercise has been undertaken to repurpose specific reserves of £8m in order to support three long term transformation proposals. As noted earlier in this report £6.8m of specific reserves have also been committed to fund Social Services pressures during 2024/25.

The latest budget monitoring report presented to Cabinet on 13th December 2023 shows that after taking all commitments into account, specific reserve balances will have reduced to c£50m (excluding delegated school reserves). It is important that specific reserve balances are protected over and above existing commitments to ensure that the Council has a degree of financial sustainability.

In relation to delegated school balances latest estimates show that there will be an overall deficit balance of c£4m on school reserves by 31st March

2024. Management of school budgets are a matter for governing bodies however decisions made by the Council in terms of overall funding levels for schools impact on the amount of funding available for distribution through the delegated schools funding formula.

Savings and income generation

Over the course of the summer and autumn periods, officers have been working to identify a range of savings and income generation measures that can contribute to closing the budget gap detailed earlier in this report.

Income

- The strategies proposed in appendix 4 show a clear focus on maximising income generation, especially across the leisure portfolio. The proposals include challenging but realistic targets which can be achieved by further developing commercial approaches.
- In relation to fees and charges, the budget assumptions include a general uplift of 7.5% in total income receipts, arising from a combination of variations in price and activity. The 7.5% is a planning assumption. Corporate Directors, in line with delegated powers, will seek to maximise income through fees and charges as appropriate, responding to market conditions and being agile in relation to fees and charges. They will also address one of the issues raised as part of the 2023/24 budget consultation where members requested the following:

‘Pricing of services – optimise this to accommodate different levels of service’

- Drawing down new funding through relevant programmes. Earlier in this report the range of regeneration programmes that are being progressed was referenced. Officers have already been successful in attracting significant funding to support the Council’s heritage and culture aspirations. Where possible the Council will seek to recover the full cost of its involvement in specific programmes.

Savings

In relation to accommodation and energy, a number of initiatives are underway including:

- Reducing the council's accommodation portfolio by selling and repurposing buildings thus reducing the associated operational costs;
- A number of tactical proposals have been included in the budget strategy for 2024/25 that will reduce the footprint needed for council operations. This includes releasing office space at Tregelles Court; and changed uses of the Annexe at Neath, the Quays and Port Talbot Civic Centre;
- Options for reducing the number of large office buildings in the portfolio are also being assessed. Proposals will be brought forward in 2024/25, linked to the regeneration plans for the county borough;
- Assisting building managers to reduce energy consumption by ensuring that building management systems are optimised where possible thereby reducing energy consumption;
- Installing energy efficiency measures, such as more efficient lighting in the Neath Civic Centre and the Quays; and
- Targeting a programme of renewable energy solutions and energy efficiency measures across the estate on a prioritised basis. The energy team is being expanded on an invest to save basis to deliver the improvements available to the council at greater pace.

Officers have undertaken a further detailed examination of expenditure and identified further opportunities to drive down costs by improving the economy and efficiency of the organisation. Every directorate has been charged with finding 2% savings on top of other budget measures. The aim has been throughout to protect jobs and services to the maximum extent possible.

Proposals for council tax in 2024/25

Under the Local Government Finance Act 1992 Council are required to set a balanced budget with regard to the advice of the Chief Finance Officer (Section 151). A budget can be legitimately balanced through the use of reserves however, Council must be mindful that once spent, reserves are no longer available to balance future years' budgets.

The decision to bring the indoor leisure services back in house resulted in an unfunded recurring budget pressure of £2.8m. As set out in the agreed 2023/24 budget proposals, this was to be funded via council tax over two years. In 2023/24 council tax was increased by 2% with the remaining cost increase of £1.4m met from reserves. It is now necessary to raise council tax by the equivalent of 2% in 2024/25 to fully fund this decision.

The cost of bringing back leisure services has subsequently increased by a further £1.3m due to increased energy costs and the pay awards agreed for 2023/24 and 2024/25. As a result of this the transfer back in house cannot be afforded in 2024/25. The trade unions and Celtic Leisure Board have been advised that there will be a further delay of 12 months.

The Chief Fire Officer has presented an increase in the Mid and West Wales Fire Authority above the rate of inflation at between 7% and 9%. The funding provided within the local settlement in relation to the Fire Service is wholly inadequate meaning that any rises in the levy fall entirely on the tax payers of Neath Port Talbot. Assuming that the levy is at the lower end i.e. 7% then that equates to another 1% increase in council tax for 2024/25.

Taken together both of the above mean that council tax will need to rise by 3% simply to cover the additional cost of Celtic Leisure services and the Fire Authority.

There is also a need to raise council tax to fund the increased costs and pressure of general council services. If there is no additional funding from the Welsh Government in the provisional local government settlement council tax could increase by approximately 10% to close the current budget gap.

The amount of funding generated from potential increases to council tax is shown in the table below. The income in the table is shown 'gross' and then 'net' i.e. the actual amount of increased income after deducting the cost of providing council tax support.

Council tax increase	Income generated per annum gross	Income generated per annum net of CTRS
%	£'000	£'000
5	4,230	3,385
6	5,076	4,062
7	5,922	4,739
8	6,768	5,416
9	7,614	6,093
10	8,460	6,770
11	9,306	7,447
12	10,152	8,124

At the time of publishing this reports the provisional local government settlement has not been received. Once received it will need analysis before the underlying impact can be understood. As a result this report does not contain any firm proposals in relation to council tax levels for 2024/25.

Agreeing the budget and setting council tax will be a decision for full Council in February 2024.

Crime and Disorder Impact

The Council has a legal duty under Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 to carry out all its various functions with “due regard to the need to prevent Crime and Disorder in its area”.

Individual proposals are being assessed as to their impact on crime and disorder and should any specific impact be identified these will be identified against individual proposals and summarised in final proposals.

Integrated Impact Assessment

The Equality Act 2010 requires public bodies to “pay due regard to the need to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act;
- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; and
- foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristics and persons who do not share it.”

An integrated impact assessment (IIA) is appended to this report.

Sustainable Development

The Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015 (“the 2015 Act”) requires the Council to think about the long-term impact of their decisions, to work better with people, communities and each other and to prevent persistent problems such as poverty, health inequalities and climate change. The 2015 Act imposes a duty on all public bodies in Wales to carry out “sustainable development”, defined as being, “The process of

improving the economic, social, environmental and cultural wellbeing of Wales by taking action, in accordance with the sustainable development principle, aimed at achieving the wellbeing goals." The action that a public body takes in carrying out sustainable development includes setting and publishing wellbeing objectives, and taking all reasonable steps in exercising its functions to meet those objectives.

As part of the sustainable development principle the Council has a duty to set a balanced budget. Stakeholder consultation on these draft proposals will enable the Council to take account of responses and other relevant information to assist it to finalise its allocation of resources in February 2024.

Workforce Impacts

We remain committed to securing the employment of our staff and have well developed policies in relation to supporting people to move to greater priority work which will be utilised as we continuously shape our operating model. The draft proposals within this report have been subject to early and ongoing engagement we have had with trade unions

Public Engagement and Consultation

The previous Administration previously undertook an extensive 'let's talk' consultation exercise. As part of the process to develop these draft budget proposals, a new exercise 'Let's Keep Talking' has taken place. This is complemented by consultation exercises on the council tax premium options; service change proposals and any policy changes.

The formal consultation is now the opportunity to take further soundings while proposals are at formative stage.

Members will note the consultation will commence immediately following Cabinet today and close on 10th January 2024.

Risks

There are a number of substantial risks associated with these proposals which, if approved at final budget setting stage, will need to be monitored

and managed during 2024/25. The following is not an exhaustive list but represents the most significant at this stage:

- Energy costs – the energy market remains volatile and price is not within the direct control of the Council. This will be mitigated by focusing attention on reducing consumption, where feasible; the deployment of invest to save energy initiatives, including energy efficiency measure and renewable energy solutions; whilst also ensuring that energy tariffs are optimised.
- Vacancy factor – the council continues to operate within a tight labour market. A vacancy factor of 5% was introduced in 2023/24 in recognition of recruitment and retention challenges. This now represents a permanent reduction in the associated budgets. Managers will be expected to contain workforce costs within these reduced staffing budgets and will need to put forward bids for additional staffing budgets as new service pressures.
- Fees and charges – there is an assumed increase of 7.5% from fees and charges. There is a risk that any increased charges may result in lower level of activity, suppressing overall income generated. In the event that income targets are not achieved, managers will be expected to bring forward alternative strategies for meeting the resultant budget shortfall.
- Removal of subsidies – if the reduction of subsidies is not achieved over the course of the MTFP period, there is a risk that the council will need to cut services to achieve a balanced budget.
- Adult Social Care – the service is seeing an unprecedented increase in demand. Invest to save proposals have been developed but there is a risk that these will not be able to fully offset the projected pressures. Additional mitigations to achieve other cost savings and income will need to be brought forward to achieve a balanced budget position. The consequence of not doing this will mean that cuts to wider council services and functions will need to be considered.
- Homelessness – there is an invest to save proposal aimed at keeping people in tenancies and thereby reducing the number of people requiring emergency and interim accommodation, whilst also increasing the number of units of accommodation available. In the event that the invest to save initiative does not deliver the intended benefits, the council will need to consider cuts to wider services and functions to enable it to deliver its statutory duties.
- Education – schools are reporting increased pressures as a result of the increased number of children and young people in need of additional support. These pressures are also reflected in home to school transport costs. Failure to provide sufficient funding risks a

reduced workforce across the county borough's schools and a corresponding impact on the outcomes achieved by children and young people.

- Regeneration – should the council be unable to increase capacity and capability to deliver the range of significant economic development opportunities, the county borough will not realise the opportunity to create new and sustainable jobs for local people.
- Pay – increasingly the Council finds itself unable to match salaries for similar posts in other sectors. This risks further difficulties in sustaining a sufficient workforce which could impact on the council's ability to deliver its services and functions or could lead to increased costs if the Council finds itself more reliant on externally procured services.
- Children's Services – there are growing numbers of children in need of care and support and more presenting with complex needs. There is a risk that in the current care market and labour market that the council will be unable to maintain stability in its children's services leading to increased safeguarding risks and cost.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Cabinet:

- Authorise the Chief Executive to consult with the public on the draft budget proposals contained in this report.

Reason for Proposed Decision

To fulfil the statutory requirement to consult on the 2024/25 draft budget proposals.

Implementation of Decision

The decision is proposed for implementation immediately after consultation with the chair of the Cabinet Scrutiny Committee.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Inflation assumptions – selected headings

Appendix 2 – Unavoidable service pressures

- Appendix 3 – Pressures to be monitored – now recurring costs
- Appendix 4 – Savings and income generation proposals
- Appendix 5 – Summary of 2023/24 budget suggestions
- Appendix 6 – Work in progress
- Appendix 7 – Accommodation review update for information
- Appendix 8 – Schedule of energy saving proposals for information
- Appendix 9 – The Councils funding and spending 2023/24
- Appendix 10 – Integrated Impact Assessment

Background Papers

- Budget working files.
- Consultation regarding introduction of council tax premiums for second homes and long term empty properties (Cabinet 26th June 2023)
- Consultation regarding changes to streetlighting energy (Environment, Regeneration and Street Scene Cabinet Board 14th November 2023).
- Transformation of Housing and Homelessness (Cabinet 13th December 2023)
- Transformation of Adult Social Care (Cabinet 13th December 2023)

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Appendix 1 – Inflation assumptions

Expenditure Category	Inflation %
Pay(2.5% & 1.5% contingency)	4.00%
Employee other	4.00%
Energy - gas and electricity	0.00%
NNDR	1.00%
Other premises	2.00%
Home to school transport	5.00%
Other transport	2.00%
Supplies And Services	0.00%
External waste contracts	5.00%
Adult services	7.10%
Childrens services	5.00%
Other payments to third parties	2.00%
Internal Services	2.00%
Transfer Payments	2.00%
Fire Service Levy	7.00%
Council Tax Reduction Scheme	5.00%

Appendix 2 – Unavoidable service pressures

Summary		£'000 2024/25	£'000 2025/26	£'000 2026/27	£'000 2027/28	£'000 2028/29	£'000 Total
<u>Directorate</u>							
Schools		1,050	1,100	750	750	750	4,400
Education, Leisure and Lifelong Learning		1,650	1,300	0	0	0	2,950
Environment		500	500	850	0	0	1,850
Social Services, Health and Housing		1,500	6,850	1,500	1,000	1,000	11,850
Corporate Services		0	0	0	0	0	0
Other / Council wide savings		0	0	0	0	0	0
Total		4,700	9,750	3,100	1,750	1,750	21,050
<u>Directorate</u>	Detail	£'000 2024/25	£'000 2025/26	£'000 2026/27	£'000 2027/28	£'000 2028/29	£'000 Total
<u>Schools</u>							
Schools	Welsh Medium Starter School Neath Abbey	300	350				650
Schools	Address historical shortfall in teaching assistant funding	750	750	750	750	750	3,750
Total Schools		1,050	1,100	750	750	750	4,400

Appendix 2 – Unavoidable service pressures

		£'000 2024/25	£'000 2025/26	£'000 2026/27	£'000 2027/28	£'000 2028/29	£'000 Total
<u>Education, Leisure & Lifelong Learning (ELLL)</u>							
Leisure	Increased cost of operating indoor leisure by Celtic Leisure - phased over two years	1,400					1,400
Leisure	Additional cost of running indoor leisure if insourced		1,300				1,300
Additional learning needs	Increase in planned places for children with additional learning needs	250					250
Total ELLL		1,650	1,300	0	0	0	2,950
<u>Environment (ENV)</u>							
Environment	Core fund posts funded from service resilience reserve	500	500				1,000
Environment	Budgets temporarily reduced by £850K over two years to fund staff undertaking work associated with grant income. When the grant ends in 2025/26 the budget needs to be reinstated.			850			850
Total ENV		500	500	850	0	0	1,850
<u>Social Services, Health and Housing (SSHH)</u>							
Adult Services	Actual growth in placements	1,500	5,750	1,500	1,000	1,000	10,750
Housing and Homelessness	Increased cost of provision		1,100				1,100
Total SSHH		1,500	6,850	1,500	1,000	1,000	11,850
Grand total funded unavoidable service pressures		4,700	9,750	3,100	1,750	1,750	21,050

Appendix 3 – Pressures to be monitored now recurring costs

Directorate	Pressure	£'000	Risk if not supported
Social Services, Health and Housing	Market Pay supplement for Social workers	1,011	Social workers leaving NPT to work for other LA's who are currently paying more-meaning more work for those remaining, less time to do more detailed assessments of clients and clients potentially being placed into high cost placements as a first resort
Social Services, Health and Housing	2023/24 base budget funded from reserves - anticipation that late notification of grants will offset	3,840	Reserves will run out leaving base budget gap
Social Services, Health and Housing	Homelessness	1,100	Failure of statutory duty, people will be forced to live back on the streets)
Social Services, Health and Housing	Residential Care increase in placements	900	Failure of statutory duty
TOTAL		6,851	

These pressures to be monitored will be funded from Directorate reserves in 2024/25 but appear as unavoidable pressures in 2025/26.

Appendix 4 – Savings and income generation proposals

Reference	Board	Lead	Service Area	Description of how saving/additional income will be achieved	£'000 2024/25	£'000 2025/26	£'000 2026/27	£'000 2027/28	£'000 2028/29	£'000 Total
			Directorate							
			Schools		250	0	0	0	0	250
			Education, Leisure and Lifelong Learning		1,604	873	766	0	0	3,243
			Environment		1,856	390	185	0	0	2,431
			Social Services, Health and Housing		2,063	75	1,000	1,500	1,100	5,738
			Strategy and Corporate Services		610	250	350	0	0	1,210
			Other / Council wide savings		1,800	1,500	0	0	0	3,300
			Total		8,183	3,088	2,301	1,500	1,100	16,172

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Reference	Board	Lead	Service Area	Description of how saving/additional income will be achieved	£'000 2024/25	£'000 2025/26	£'000 2026/27	£'000 2027/28	£'000 2028/29	£'000 Total
			Schools							
SCH1	ESW	Noelwyn Daniel	Procurement and routine spend - Schools	Review of contracting and procurement arrangement has identified scope for significant savings	250					250
			Total (Schools)		250	0	0	0	0	250

Appendix 4 – Savings and income generation proposals

Reference	Board	Lead	Service Area	Description of how saving/additional income will be achieved	£'000 2024/25	£'000 2025/26	£'000 2026/27	£'000 2027/28	£'000 2028/29	£'000 Total
-		<u>Education, Leisure and Lifelong Learning (ELLL)</u>	-							
ELLL1	ESW	Chris Saunders	Margam Country Park	Car park changes, orangery improvements, catering improvements, motorhome site, land train and additional catering.	100	150	206			456
ELLL2	ESW	Chris Saunders	Pontardawe Arts Centre	Additional events and catering improvements	40	40	40			120
ELLL3	ESW	Chris Saunders	Princess Royal Theatre	Additional events and pricing review.	58	58				116
ELLL4	ESW	Chris Saunders	Indoor leisure	Indoor Leisure - trading improvements.	460	100	100			660
ELLL5	ESW	Chris Saunders	Aberafan Seafront	Seafront - New kiosk run in house	25	25				50
ELLL6	ESW	Chris Saunders	Library Service	Staffing restructuring – no compulsory redundancies	20		20			40
ELLL7	ESW	Rhiannon Crowhurst	Home to school transport	Externally led review of all existing arrangements	350	500	400			1,250
ELLL8	ESW	Rhiannon Crowhurst	School Meals	Offset Universal Primary Free School Meals (UPFSM) admin grant against core salary costs	70					70
ELLL9	ESW	Rhiannon Crowhurst	Primary school cleaning	Full cost recovery - Increase cleaning recharge to schools	234					234
ELLL10	ESW	Hayley Lervy	Out of County Placements	Remove current contingency within Independent Sector / Out of County Placements budget	200					200
ELLL11	ESW	Chris Millis	Parent, Pupil & Governor Support	Offset Period Dignity admin grant against core salary costs	17					17
ELLL12	ESW	Chris Millis	Education, Development & Inclusion Services	Offset Regional Consortia Support Improvement Grant (RCSIG) against core salary costs of Safeguarding Team - education & development	20					20
ELLL13	ESW	Chris Millis	Youth Service	Offset youth support grant against core funded post	10					10
		Total (ELLL)			1,604	873	766	0	0	3,243

Appendix 4 – Savings and income generation proposals

Reference	Board	Lead	Service Area	Description of how saving/additional income will be achieved	£'000 2024/25	£'000 2025/26	£'000 2026/27	£'000 2027/28	£'000 2028/29	£'000 Total
		<u>Environment (ENV)</u>								
ENV1	ERSS	Simon Brennan	Accommodation review - phase 2	Further savings from rationalisation of buildings including closure of Tregelles Court office building	96					96
ENV2	ERSS	Simon Brennan	Accommodation review - phase 3	Further savings from rationalisation of buildings including depots		322				322
ENV3	ERSS	Simon Brennan	Grant maximisation	Maximising the charging of staff time against external grants whilst available	350					350
ENV4	ERSS	Simon Brennan	Former Metal Box building	This is a savings target aimed at removing the current operating subsidy of the former Metal Box premises in Neath.	185	185	185			555
ENV5	ERSS	Simon Brennan	Property & Regeneration (Strategic Funding)	City Deal Programme Management saving	142	-142				0
ENV6	ERSS	Simon Brennan	Property & Regeneration (Facilities Management)	Reduce cleaning posts (currently vacant)	24					24
ENV7	ERSS	Mike Roberts	Gnoll Country Park	This is a savings target aimed at removing the current operating subsidy of the Gnoll Country Park. Details of how this will be achieved are to be developed.		25				25
ENV8	ERSS	Mike Roberts	Street lighting	Reduction in energy costs in relation to street lighting - introduction of dimming and other energy saving measures	300					300
ENV9	ERSS	Mike Roberts	Streetcare (Waste)	Increase recycle Income following the remodelling of the MRec	400					400
ENV10	ERSS	Mike Roberts	Streetcare (Waste)	Energy savings at the Mrec	50					50
ENV11	ERSS	Mike Roberts	Streetcare (Waste)	Take action to reduce the level of breakages evident in the recycling boxes/bags	25					25
ENV12	ERSS	Mike Roberts	Streetcare (Neighbourhood)	Termination of Neath Canal Public Access Rights Agreement on lower section	35					35

Appendix 4 – Savings and income generation proposals

Reference	Board	Lead	Service Area	Description of how saving/additional income will be achieved	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
					2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	Total
ENV13	ERSS	Mike Roberts	Streetcare (Neighbourhood)	Termination of License Agreement on the upper section of the Neath Canal	100					100
ENV14	ERSS	Mike Roberts	Streetcare (Neighbourhood)	Full Cost Recovery for schools grounds maintenance	50					50
ENV15	ERSS	Dave Griffiths	Highways and Engineering (Road Safety)	Learner Travel Wales Measure	7					7
ENV16	ERSS	Dave Griffiths	Highways and Engineering (Highways Development Control)	New range of charges for Sustainable Drainage (SAB) pre-application advice	9					9
ENV17	ERSS	Dave Griffiths	Highways and Engineering (Highways Development Control)	Section 278 and Section 38 Agreements are to be increased by 10%	TBC					0
ENV18	ERSS	Dave Griffiths	Highways and Engineering (Transport Management)	SLAs with SWTRA and Tai Tarian to be reconsidered with a view to increasing income by 5%. These are not double counted against the fees and charges income target	5					5
ENV19	ERSS	Dave Griffiths	Highways and Engineering (Engineering Consultancy)	Increase the multiplier to maximise staff costs from the capital programme	20					20
ENV20	ERSS	Ceri Morris	Planning and Public Protection (General Environmental Health)	Increase income above 7.5% threshold on pest control service (£7k), Japanese Knotweed management service (£4k)	11					11
ENV21	ERSS	Ceri Morris	Planning and Public Protection (General Environmental Health)	Increase the number of grant applications to WG to secure funding for air quality monitoring	5					5
ENV22	ERSS	Ceri Morris	Planning and Public Protection (Trading Standards, Food & Health Protection)	General cuts to a variety of budgets including Proceeds of Crime Act (POCA) costs to be trimmed, less promotion of events, car allowances, transport recharges	11					11
ENV23	ERSS	Ceri Morris	Planning and Public Protection (Trading Standards, Food & Health Protection)	Increase in fees and charges above the 7.5% threshold.	2					2
ENV24	ERSS	Ceri Morris	Planning and Public Protection (Policy, Countryside & Wildlife)	Reduction in use of consultants i.e. reduction in professional fees budget	9					9
ENV25	ERSS	Ceri Morris	Planning and Public Protection (Policy, Countryside & Wildlife)	Reduction in Rights of Way Maintenance budget	5					5

Appendix 4 – Savings and income generation proposals

Reference	Board	Lead	Service Area	Description of how saving/additional income will be achieved	£'000 2024/25	£'000 2025/26	£'000 2026/27	£'000 2027/28	£'000 2028/29	£'000 Total
ENV26	ERSS	Ceri Morris	Planning and Public Protection (Policy, Countryside & Wildlife)	Reduction in project work	5					5
ENV27	ERSS	Ceri Morris	Planning and Public Protection (Development Management)	Increase in non statutory preapplication fees above the 7.5% threshold	4					4
ENV28	ERSS	Ceri Morris	Planning and Public Protection (Development Management)	Increase in the number of Planning Performance Agreements secured (PPAs)	1					1
ENV29	ERSS	Ceri Morris	Planning and Public Protection (Building Control)	Reduction in spend on professional fees, general clothing, electrical testing, stationery etc	5					5
		Total (ENV)			1,856	390	185	0	0	2,431
		Social Services, Health and Housing	-							
SSH1	SSHCS	Angela Thomas	Adult Social Care	Transformation of adult services including Trem-glyn, Gelligron, Carers Service, Bespoke Enterprises and Falls Response			1,000	1,500		2,500
SSH2	SSHCS	Angela Thomas	Adults Services	Transport Reconfiguration - Change opening times of in house day services to enable environment transport to perform the paid for external transport. Time to implement, part year savings 23/24, full year saving is £150k	75	75				150
SSH3	SSHCS	Angela Thomas	Adults Services	Placements - Full review of placements	500					500
SSH4	SSHCS	Angela Thomas	Adults Services	Offset cost of three grade 10s against external grant funding	168					168
SSH5	SSHCS	Angela Thomas	Adults Services	Staff restructuring - ER/VR offer for specific posts, part year saving 23/24, full year saving £239k	200					200
SSH6	SSHCS	Angela Thomas	Adults Services	0.5 Carers Monitoring Officer (G6) - Grant funding	15					15
SSH7	SSHCS	Angela Thomas	Adults Services	Night Support Workers - Remove Sleep-in in high cost scheme and a cluster of schemes, (costing needs firming up, 140k + £35k x 6 schemes)	350					350
SSH8	SSHCS	Angela Thomas	Adults Services	Direct Payments - Full review of direct payments	100					100

Appendix 4 – Savings and income generation proposals

Reference	Board	Lead	Service Area	Description of how saving/additional income will be achieved	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
					2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	Total
SSHH9	SSHCS	Keri Warren	Childrens Services	Reduction in residential placements - Savings of step-down to Foster Plus Scheme and Supported Accommodation. Draft budget for 24/25 is based on 17 fte placements, aim is for 15 fte by end of March 25. Savings factor in cost of Foster Plus/Supported Accommodation. Will take time to implement, anticipated part year saving in 24/25 is £221k, full year saving is £601k	221					221
SSHH10	SSHCS	Keri Warren	Childrens Services	Hillside Recharge - Recharge Hillside fully for the support that children's service provide	92					92
SSHH11	SSHCS	Keri Warren	Childrens Services	Reduction in Looked After Children (LAC) Taxi Routes - Full review of all Taxi Routes to ensure Service is required, savings have already been identified in-year (23/24)	100					100
SSHH12	SSHCS	Keri Warren	Childrens Services	Recharge existing Social Work staff to Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) Scheme - Continue to utilise existing staff as part of the UASC service delivery, funded via the Home Office	117					117
SSHH13	SSHCS	Keri Warren	Childrens Services	Reduction in non-Looked after children (LAC) Allowances - Natural reduction in Residence Orders/Special Guardianship Allowances	50					50
SSHH14	SSHCS	Andrew Jarrett	Business Support	Staff restructuring	75					75
SSHH15	SSHCS	Chele Howard	Housing and homelessness	Service transformation - new housing support model					1,100	1,100
		Total SSH&H			2,063	75	1,000	1,500	1,100	5,738
		<u>Strategy and Corporate Services</u>	-							
SCS1	P&R	Huw Jones	Finance Division	Permanent closure to the public of cash desks at Neath and Port Talbot Civic Centres.	52					52
SCS2	P&R	Huw Jones	Finance Division	Contract savings from renewal of banking contract on revised terms	4					4
SCS3	P&R	Huw Jones	Finance Division	Contract saving from re-tendered insurance contracts	82					82

Appendix 4 – Savings and income generation proposals

Reference	Board	Lead	Service Area	Description of how saving/additional income will be achieved	£'000 2024/25	£'000 2025/26	£'000 2026/27	£'000 2027/28	£'000 2028/29	£'000 Total
SCS4	P&R	Sheenagh Rees	People and Organisation Development Division	Explore potential to provide services under an SLA to support regeneration projects	25					25
SCS5	P&R	Sheenagh Rees	People and Organisation Development Division	Review Staffing structure	123					123
SCS6	P&R	Craig Griffiths	Legal and Democratic Services	Undertake a review of legal services resources to ensure consolidation of spend and most efficient use. Work presently on-going to achieve this with the aim of also reducing the number of licenses. More to generic licences instead of a licence for each member of staff.	5					5
SCS7	P&R	Craig Griffiths	Legal and Democratic Services	Increase income in land charges services and establishment of charging regimes in respect of local land charge services	5					5
SCS8	P&R	Craig Griffiths	Legal and Democratic Services	Development of a Celebrant Service within the Registrar Office (RO) to not only consider income generation but offer a service which there appears to be demand for in the community and which the Register Office staff appear to have knowledge and ability to progress. RO currently developing business plan to achieve.	5					5
SCS9	P&R	Craig Griffiths	Legal and Democratic Services	Review of fees and charging in Register Office to be undertaken with the aim of changing the legal status of the marriage room which would enable the Council to charge more for the current venue (in line with approach that other districts take). RO to work with Property and Regeneration to identify if any larger venues also available to assist in income generation. Work is ongoing with the General Register Office to discuss the process this would have to take	5					5
SCS10	P&R	Craig Griffiths	Legal and Democratic Services	Introduction of new fees for licensed premises and special procedure rules following amendment of UK Legislation. Timescale expected in 2024	20					20
SCS11	P&R	Craig Griffiths	Legal and Democratic Services	Increase in work capable of being recharged i.e. SWTRA, Margam Crematorium, Town and Community Councils, Tai Tarian and other parties	7					7

Appendix 4 – Savings and income generation proposals

Reference	Board	Lead	Service Area	Description of how saving/additional income will be achieved	£'000 2024/25	£'000 2025/26	£'000 2026/27	£'000 2027/28	£'000 2028/29	£'000 Total
SCS12	P&R	Craig Griffiths	Legal and Democratic Services	Increasing Surcharges in Mailroom and making efficiencies in performance	3					3
SCS13	P&R	Craig Griffiths	Legal and Democratic Services	Deletion of Modern Apprentice in Legal Business Support (Currently Vacant) - Post is currently vacant but at present time team members are working at capacity in providing administrative support to legal officers and in Council wide processes. Increasing demand for digital bundles with HM Courts has meant workloads have changed requiring further time for officers in preparation. Whilst workloads could be absorbed there will be a pressure on existing team members to meet demand.	28					28
SCS14	P&R	Craig Griffiths	Legal and Democratic Services	Increase income target in Commercial and Governance - Indications have been provided that in the next three to four years there will be additional in legal and procurement work from SWTRA. As a result of this we could increase the income target accordingly.	2					2
SCS15	P&R	Craig Griffiths	Legal and Democratic Services	Increase income target in Register Office - The budget is currently £212,000 whereas in the last financial year we have brought in £234,000 (this being without all the additional proposals we now have to increase). On the basis of the current registration figures, this figure is achievable without any detriment to service delivery.	6					6
SCS16	P&R	Craig Griffiths	Legal and Democratic Services	Reallocation of Corporate Joint Committee Funding	35					35
SCS17	P&R	Chris Owen	Digital Services	Reviewing specific contracts including mobile telephony in light of hybrid working and reduction in photocopier numbers (separate to energy savings)	20					20
SCS18	P&R	Chris Owen	Digital Services	Review of Service Level Agreements	20					20
SCS19	P&R	Chris Owen	Digital Services	As part of moving CCTV back to 24/7 operation, explore income generation options (e.g. extend coverage to Town Councils under SLAs, alarm line monitoring, concierge etc.)	15					15
SCS20	P&R	Chris Owen	Digital Services	Modernisation of technical infrastructure – power consumption cost reductions	29					29

Appendix 4 – Savings and income generation proposals

Reference	Board	Lead	Service Area	Description of how saving/additional income will be achieved	£'000 2024/25	£'000 2025/26	£'000 2026/27	£'000 2027/28	£'000 2028/29	£'000 Total
SCS21	P&R	Chris Owen	Digital Services	Remove current vacancies from structure	119					119
SCS22	P&R	Noelwyn Daniel	Strategy and Corporate Services	Remodelling of Corporate Services to include Digital Services; Finance Division; Legal and Democratic Services; People and Organisational Development		250	350			600
		Total Strategy and Corporate Services			610	250	350	0	0	1,210
		<u>Other / Council wide savings</u>	-							
CORP1	P&R	Huw Jones	Reduce energy contingency budget	Reduction in revenue budget set aside for energy efficiency - significant investment will require capital investment so provision made in capital programme	1,800					1,800
CORP2	P&R	Huw Jones	Council tax premiums	Possible introduction of council tax premium for second homes and long term empty properties. Subject to Member decision following consultation.		1,500				1,500
		Total Other			1,800	1,500	0	0	0	3,300
		Grand total all savings and income generation			8,183	3,088	2,301	1,500	1,100	16,172

ESW = Education, Skills and Wellbeing

P&R = Cabinet (Policy and Resources)

ERSS = Environment, Regeneration and Streetscene

SSHCS = Social Services, Housing and Community Safety

Appendix 5 – 2023/24 budget suggestions

	Suggestion	Lead Officer	Support	Progress
Budget 2023-24 Ideas and Suggestions				
1	YDT (registered as a warm space) - with regard land at the back of the building, we asked if we can buy the land – it would be an opportunity for the council to raise money	Simon Brennan	David Phillips	This is addressed in the commentary on assets disposal below
2	Also, have you thought about solar panels on buildings?	Simon Brennan	Chris Jones	There will be a programme of energy efficiency and renewable energy projects, prioritised according to deliverability and impact. A dedicated decarbonisation and energy management team is being created to deliver this work
Page 40	Can we go and speak to the bigger companies to see if they will be more forthcoming? / Could we look at some sort of corporate fund from these big companies?	Chris Saunders	Andrew Griffiths	The Council has put in place a number of sponsorship arrangements. The potential to expand this is under consideration
4	Sell Aberavon Shopping Centre Multi-Storey Car Park	David Griffiths	Steve Cook	A review of all car parks is being undertaken. This will identify those surplus to requirements and also opportunities to create additional facilities linked to the visitor economy and active travel arrangements.
5	Review security arrangements now CCTV is 24/7	Chris Owen	Chris Cole	The CCTV control is now 24/7 operated. Work is underway to identify opportunities to insource alarm monitoring activity. Subject to being able to achieve accreditation, the service can also explore income generation opportunities through providing support to other public estates in the area.
6	Develop room hire 'offer' to maximise use of Council accommodation	Noelwyn Daniel	Richard Jenkins	This will be looked at as part of a programme of budget efficiency reviews linked to the 24/25 budget process.
7	Limit external room hire	Noelwyn Daniel	Richard Jenkins	An estimated £165k was spent on external room hire in 22/23. Re-purposing of some facilities will enable this budget to be reduced.
8	Many suggestions to increase income by taking a more commercial approach	Chris Saunders	Andrew Griffiths, Paul Walker	The priority focus has been upon leisure and an updated business plan will be brought forward as part of the 24/25 budget process.

Appendix 5 – 2023/24 budget suggestions

	Suggestion	Lead Officer	Support	Progress
9	Maximise the use of external funding	Huw Jones	Lisa Willis	Sums have been included in the 23/24 and 24/25 budgets to allocated overhead back to grant funding. Additional opportunities have been identified through the CJC and Freeport arrangements. A further review will be undertaken as part of the 24/25 budget process.
10	Foster carers – feasibility of improving in-house ‘offer’ to reduce reliance on external/independent foster carers	Keri Warren		A detailed proposal has been developed and will be included in the budget process for 24/25 as an invest to save proposal.
11	Set a clear policy for ‘community hubs’ to improve access for communities and promote more joined up working – reduce duplication etc	Andrew Jarrett	Sarah Waite	This work is being developed through the work under the Wellbeing Objective 2 – thriving and sustainable communities
12	Review internal charging arrangements	Huw Jones	Nicole Blackmore	This is being continuously reviewed.
13	Process reviews – mail monitoring; business support; performance data; room booking; upskill staff in systems thinking; debt management; i-Trent	Noelwyn Daniel	Craig Griffiths, Sheenagh Rees, Chris Owen	A series of budget efficiency reviews is being conducted to inform the 24/25 budget process.
14	Customer service – customer portal; user centric design;	Sheenagh Rees	Sylvia Griffiths	A review of customer services has commenced. The focus for phase 1 of the review is to be brought forward for agreement with the Cabinet Board.
15	Succession planning- expand apprentice and trainee programmes;	Sheenagh Rees	Diane Hopkins	This is being addressed as part of the Future of Work Strategy
16	Promote flexible retirement and flexible working	Sheenagh Rees	Diane Hopkins	This is being addressed as part of the Future of Work Strategy
17	Limit travel and maximise use of video conferencing	Noelwyn Daniel	Anne Marie O Donnell	A review of current car allowances claimed has been carried out as part of the budget efficiency reviews being undertaken to inform the 24/25 budget process.
18	Review street lighting	Michael Roberts	S Owen	A report has been commissioned. Consultation on options has been authorised. Final feedback will be incorporated into the final budget report.
19	Introduction of vending machines	Noelwyn Daniel	Richard Jenkins	A series of budget efficiency reviews is being conducted. Welfare facilities will be addressed as part of the work on accommodation.
20	Pricing of services – optimise this to accommodate different levels of service and ability to pay	Huw Jones	Nicole Blackmore	A set of scenarios have been modelled as part of the 24/25 budget process.

Appendix 5 – 2023/24 budget suggestions

	Suggestion	Lead Officer	Support	Progress
21	Review mayoral model	Noelwyn Daniel	Caryn Furlow	The activities of the mayoral office are increasingly being supported by new sources of funding to minimise the cost on the council tax payer. In terms of the main costs, it should be noted that there is a legal requirement for an impartial chair and vice chair of the council to be appointed. In the event a mayor was to be replaced by a chair there would be no saving as both models attract remuneration at the same level.
22	Social Impact Bonds	Karen Jones	Huw Jones	A task and finish group is meeting under the Council's scrutiny arrangements to explore the merits or otherwise of this proposal.
23	Sell land and assets	Simon Brennan	David Phillips	The Council keeps its property holdings under constant review to ensure that they remain consistent with service provision needs and optimum use is made of land and buildings. Any property that is declared surplus is dealt with in a manner that secures value for money without compromising the Council's statutory responsibilities and duties
24	More robust enforcement – litter; dog fouling; Proceeds of Crime;	Noelwyn Daniel	Ceri Morris, Craig Griffiths, Neil Chapple, Rhiannon Crowhurst,	The Council's enforcement policy is reviewed on a regular basis.
25	Reduce frequency of waste collection	Michael Roberts	Chris Roberts	The waste strategy has been reviewed and approved by the Cabinet. A move the three weekly collection for residual waste is part of a series of measures required to drive up recycling rates.
26	More plant based options in school catering	Rhiannon Crowhurst	Jayne Dennis	The menus for schools are kept under continuous review.
27	Use more therapists in the assessment of care packages to 'right-size' care packages	Angela Thomas	Adrian Bradshaw	This is being addressed as part of the Adult Social Care Strategy
28	Greater use of digital solutions in the delivery of some aspects of care – medication management	Angela Thomas	Adrian Bradshaw, Chris Owen	This is being addressed as part of the Adult Social Care Strategy
29	Consider more shared services – internally and with other organisations	Noelwyn Daniel		This will be considered as we work through the budget strategy for 24/25

Appendix 5 – 2023/24 budget suggestions

	Suggestion	Lead Officer	Support	Progress
30	Focus on tourism, economic development	Chris Saunders and Simon Brennan	Karleigh Davies, Andrew Collins, Julie Davies	A new Head of Leisure, Tourism, Culture and Heritage post has been created and filled. An updated Destination Marketing Strategy and a new Culture Strategy were signed off in September 2023. This will provide the strategic framework for promoting and developing the visitor economy. Additional posts have been included in the Economic Development Team through the Shared Prosperity Fund. A new strategic regeneration capability is being developed to support major investment opportunities, including, Freeport, Wildfox, GCRE and the wider renewable energy sector
31	Switch council tax demands to digital notification	Huw Jones	Ann Hinder	Initial work has been undertaken. Capacity will need to be created to move this project forward.
32	Digital timesheets for streetcare services	Michael Roberts	Chris Roberts	Discussions between Service and Payroll at early stage
Page 43	Encourage more volunteering	Noelwyn Daniel	Sheenagh Rees	A staff volunteering policy is under development and will be brought forward for decision in 24/25
34	Community lottery	Karen Jones	Huw Jones	A meeting with a community lottery provider has been scheduled to consider the cost-benefits of this proposal. It was not considered feasible for the Council to deliver this given the very low returns for the cost that would be expended. The Director of NPT Council for Voluntary Services is prepared to consider this but in the 24/25 financial year due to other pressures.

Work in progress over and above firm proposals already developed

There has been a considerable amount of scrutiny across all areas of the Council's budget. A number of areas of work for ongoing attention have been identified which will be further developed for future financial years:

- A review of all procurement activity - managers will be provided with management information and support to identify during 2024/25 if there are areas where further savings could be made;
- Workforce - we will be giving sickness absence, cover costs and the use of overtime further attention throughout 2024/25 together with a review of casual staff;
- Fleet – we are continuing with a programme of work to right-size the fleet, ensure the fleet efficiency is optimised and continuing our decarbonisation of the fleet programme;
- Automation - we will be reviewing the digital pipeline to make sure we are using technology to best effect;
- Income generation – we will be prioritising further income generation measures;
- Once the budget has been agreed for 2024/25, we will also be undertaking sustainability reviews of all services and identifying how we can further reduce the net operating cost of all services drawing on these and other measures. Work will need to commence early given the challenging outlook for the 2025/26 budget and beyond.

Appendix 7 – Accommodation review update

Background

The role of civic buildings in delivering services has fundamentally changed since the pandemic. With hybrid working, significantly less staff are occupying council buildings (the Quays and two civic centres are at approximately 3/5 of their maximum occupancy).

Added to this, utility bills are continuing to soar - prior to the start of the war in Ukraine, energy bills for our civic buildings were in the region of £6m, these have more than doubled to around £14m, with no sign of them reducing in the foreseeable future.

Furthermore, the Welsh Government recently announced significant budget pressures, indicating that local government will continue to face challenging budget rounds for 2024-25 and beyond.

All of the above has sharpened the council's focus on the need to make accommodation savings and the development/delivery of an accommodation strategy to help the council reduce running costs is now a heightened priority.

Phase 1 of the strategy involved:

- moving 90 staff based at Cimla Hospital to Neath Civic Centre.
- moving 24 staff from Forge Road to share space with other social services staff in Fairways.
- Closing Ffrwydwyllt House and moving 60 staff into a mixture of PT Civic and Taibach Library.
- Closing Orchard Street and moving 16 staff in to NCC.

These moves were completed in March 2023.

Executive Summary

To avoid doubt relating to potential double accounting of savings identified as part of the Accommodation Review it must be noted that any savings resulting from works undertaken to reduce energy consumption will assist in closing the budget pressure that exists in the Environment Department on Energy.

The two posts surrendered as part of this work will contribute to the 2% budget target for the Facilities Management team and the £20k saving on the Photocopier contractual costs is included in the 3% target saving for Digital Services as is the £5k income target for wedding is allocated against the 3% target for Legal Services.

As a direct result of the work undertaken since August on the 2nd Phase of the Accommodation Review work **£438,852.00** of savings / cost avoidance (Energy) has been identified.

- Closure of Tregelles Court will deliver
 - £96k saving on security costs

Appendix 7 – Accommodation review update

- £15k saving on Energy Consumption
- £12k saving on cleaning post (vacant post)
- Reconfigure External Lighting at Quays and SRC will deliver.
 - Quays - £6,751.00
 - SRC - £8101.00
- Installation of Efficient Lighting :
 - Neath Civic - £50k / yr
 - Quays - £71k / yr
 - SRC - £15k / yr
- Neath Annex
 - £44k income from Western Bay
 - £5k increase in income generation from Weddings
- Review of Photocopier Estate :
 - £20k savings in contract costs due to reduction in estate.
 - £40k saving in energy consumption with reduced photocopier estate.
- Reconfiguration of Civic Buildings to create additional meeting and conference space will assist in a cost avoidance on External Room Hire by £100k

Appendix 7 – Accommodation review update



Cyngor Castell-nedd Port Talbot
Neath Port Talbot Council

Strategol / Strategic

- Produce a draft **Accommodation Strategy** that focuses on optimising our office accommodation resources for enhanced efficiency, sustainability, and employee well-being, while fostering innovation and community engagement within Neath Port Talbot Council. Primary Objective is to reduce from three to two main civic buildings – **November 10th 2023**
- Present the draft Place Plan for Port Talbot Town Centre – **November 10th 2023**

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Cyngor Castell-nedd Port Talbot
Neath Port Talbot Council

Tactical Objectives to be delivered by March 31st 2024

- Reconfigure PT Civic - create space on ground floor for conference facilities / hot desking – aligned to updated floor plans agreed by strategic accommodation group (Target saving – external room hire)
- Vacate Tregelles Court Offices – Relocate to The Quays / SRC, secure alternative accommodation for WBA, and remove security, replacing with CCTV managed service (Target saving – Energy, Building, Security)
- Relocate Social Services staff from Neath Annexe to Neath Civic as Phase 1 for the building (Target saving – Energy, Building)
- Identify alternative accommodation for Registrars (Target saving – Energy, Building)
- Migrate any external customer facing services from The Quays to PT Civic (The Quays is not customer facing, allows review of concierge services)

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Appendix 7 – Accommodation review update



Cyngor Castell-nedd Port Talbot
Neath Port Talbot Council

Tactical Objectives to be delivered by March 31st 2024

- Commission replacement lighting programme at Neath Civic and The Quays (spend to save BC & identify future energy savings)
- Optimise Building Management Systems at Neath Civic and The Quays (Target saving – energy)
- Optimise Solar Canopy at The Quays to reduce energy costs (Target saving – energy)
- Finalise floorplate rationalisation at The Quays - 3 from 6 floor plates (Target saving – energy)
- Reduce photocopier estate by circa 50% (Target saving – lease costs and energy)
- Remove all non-essential appliances from Civic buildings - kettles, fridges etc (Target saving – energy)

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The accommodation review phase 2 will now focus on the development of a Corporate Accommodation Strategy, linked to place plans where applicable, along with a series of tactical activities to realise urgent efficiencies. The tactical activities have a range of interdependencies that will need careful planning and communication.

Appendix 7 – Accommodation review update

Progress against the agreed proposals is as follows :

Strategic Activity	Description	Timeline	Update
Develop Corporate Accommodation Strategy	<p>Focus on optimising our office accommodation resources for enhanced efficiency, sustainability, and employee well-being, while fostering innovation and community engagement within Neath Port Talbot Council.</p> <p>Primary Objective is to reduce current civic building footprint.</p>	10 November 2023	<p>A huge amount of data has been gathered on the current corporate estate to feed into the strategic plan.</p> <p>Officers have engaged with independent specialists to support the creation of the strategy for consideration.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 3 Civic Site visits planned 2nd November with Bruton Knowles Consultants. - Phase 1 - report by Mid November will be an options paper regarding the current civic buildings for CDG and CMB to consider which options ones are palatable that will allow further detailed analysis to be carried out with estimated timescales and costs for delivery.
Develop draft 'Place Plan' for Port Talbot Town Centre	In development with Simon Brennan	TBC	Outline timeline with key milestones requested.

Appendix 7 – Accommodation review update

Tactical Activity	Description	Timeline	Update
Reconfigure Port Talbot Civic Centre	Create space on ground floor for conference facilities / hot desking – aligned to updated floor plans agreed by strategic accommodation group. (Target saving – external room hire £100k)	October 2023 – March 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Detailed room assessments have been completed. - Risk around current electrical distribution being assessed with a view to replacing. Electrical Engineer meeting specialists w/c 30/10/23. - Action plan being developed to set out sequence of moves which will be communicated to relevant HoS/AMs for onward dissemination to staff. - All meeting rooms to be equipped with necessary AV technologies. - Moves planned to commence on 20 November following decoration by building services.
Vacate Office Space at Tregelles Court	Relocate office staff to The Quays, secure alternative accommodation for Western Bay Adoption (WBA) Service, and remove security - replacing with CCTV managed service Building, Security - £96k Reduced Energy Consumption - £15k Giving up one funded vacant	October 2023 - March 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Engagement with Environment colleagues to assess requirements. Potential issues highlighted to Mike Roberts for consideration. - These should not be a barrier. - Engagement with WBA (Tracey Wills / Nicola Rogers to establish alternative accommodation at the Annex in Neath. Positive response received from WBA. WBA currently contribute £44k to cover costs but it has transpired

Appendix 7 – Accommodation review update

	cleaning post - £12k		that this SLA has not been recently reviewed despite increased running costs of accommodation.
Neath Annexe	Relocate Social Services Office staff to Neath Civic and move WBA adoption in from Tregelles Court. (Target saving – Energy / reduce pressure, WBA income £44k to offset building costs) Giving up one funded vacant cleaning post - £12k	31 December 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Review undertaken to identify alternative suitable accommodation for the Register Officer and its associated functions. It was concluded that no such facility within the ownership of NPT was suitable and the Annex did provide the opportunity for increased income generation by allowing larger ceremonies to take place and to further enhance service delivery as part of new services being offered. Larger rooms could also be made available as meeting/conference facilities when not required by Register Office. - A previously owned site would have been ideal for Registrars ‘The Laurels’ but as no longer owned this was discounted and even if we did the cost of upgrading could be high. - 7 November District Registration Officer visiting to check proposal for WBA to co-locate. - Dependency on relocation of customer services from Neath Civic to Port Talbot Civic and relocation of Celtic within Neath Civic – network requirements reconfiguration.

Appendix 7 – Accommodation review update

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reduce running costs by circa 50% with WBA income - Additional conference facility for circa 40 to 50 people. - Review building management controls to further reduce operating costs. Energy efficiency measures including thermostats and LED lighting – Tie into lighting works. - Save on the running costs where possible including cleaning costs with a view to net off.
Finalise floorplate rationalisation at The Quays	Complete the relocation of staff and equipment from Ground and Second floor to first floor (Target saving – Energy / reduce pressure – these will be known once Syscom report produced)	17 November 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Additional storage being introduced to old mailroom to support the moves. - Updates to Building Management Controls to mothball floors in line with the BMS review workstream. - Report from Syscom expected that will indicate possible energy consumption reductions.
Efficient lighting solutions at Neath Civic and The Quays / Neath Annexe	Scope, commission and implement replacement solutions – (Target saving – Energy / reduce current budget pressure on energy costs) Energy Savings from implementation of efficient lighting :	31 December 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Specialist contractor undertaking detailed assessments of buildings - Paper to be presented to CDG to cover the capital costs and include the reduced annual costs. - SB picking up with Chris Jones as part of wider Energy work.

Appendix 7 – Accommodation review update

	Quays - £71k / yr Neath Civic - £50k/yr SRC - £15k/yr		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Return on Investment is estimated at 3yrs for The Quays and 6yrs for Neath Civic
Optimise Building Management at The Quays / SRC / Neath Civic	Scope, commission and implement - (Target saving – Energy / reduce current budget pressure on energy costs – awaiting costs from SYSCOM) Reduction in car park lighting at Quays and SRC will deliver a £14.9k saving	31 December 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Specialist contractor commissioned. - Separate work being undertaken to reduce consumption of The Quays car park lighting. - Requested update on the proposal. - Need to include PT Civic and Neath Annexe
Migrate Customer Contact from The Quays	The Quays is not customer facing -	31 December 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Further engagement required with service areas and customer services to understand how this can be improved. - Current review underway of all contact points referenced on website and via search engines
Corporate Photocopier Rationalisation	Review and rationalise under utilised photocopiers - (Target saving – contract costs £20k) Energy Reduction savings due to 50% reduction in estate - £40k	31 March 2023 (aligned to contract term dates)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Detailed analysis of copiers that are operating at less than 6k copies per month - Engagement with service areas that currently utilise these copiers to ensure no unintended consequences - Removal / relocation of devices aligned to plan
Update Congregate Room Booking	Full update of the Congregate Room Booking System to ensure all rooms are represented and	31 December 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Current list has been exported and is being reviewed against the estate

Appendix 7 – Accommodation review update

	available for booking (Target saving – Room Hire, already captured above)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Updates to room availability and communications required
Removal of all non-essential appliances	All staff will be required to remove any personal / non-essential electrical items from all corporate buildings (Target saving – Energy / reduce pressure)	1st December 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Amnesty location to drop items off in each building. - Communications has gone out to staff and more in the pipeline.
Adjust building opening patterns	Reduction in the Civic opening hours.	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - This would have a direct impact on staff that are attributed to the buildings to undertake specific duties, e.g. Concierge and Cleaners. Any alteration to their working hours would require a full management of change process. - Due to more staff moving into the buildings as part of the activities above, the use will naturally intensify. As such whilst cleaning is generally done after 5pm when most staff have left, reducing the opening hours would mean that general cleaning, vacuuming etc would need to be undertaken around staff. This would be disruptive to a working environment, and also have a H&S impact with wet floors in the toilets and trailing leads. - Due to the nature of some meetings, they take place later on in the day e.g.

Appendix 7 – Accommodation review update

			Political party meetings, some training and Mayoral appointments. These would need to be hosted elsewhere.
	Reduction in the Civic opening days.	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - This would have a direct impact on staff that are attributed to the buildings to undertake specific duties, e.g. Concierge and Cleaners. Any alteration to their working hours would require a full management of change process. - Statutory services run from some of the Civics, and this would have an impact on the ability to run the services. - There would be greater pressure on meeting and training facilities due to the reduction in days that these are available. - Not all staff have the ability to work from home. - There would be an impact on sub-contractors undertaking planned maintenance visits and statutory checks.

Appendix 8 – Schedule of energy saving proposals

Energy, Carbon & Water Management – Progression Report

Purpose of Report

To provide an update on current/proposed response actions being undertaken, implemented and developed to improve energy and carbon performance across the Council's operational service delivery to negate the cost impact of the current energy contract price increases.

Summary - Main Work Stream Activities

There are two strands to the programme: reducing energy usage and reducing energy cost.

An analysis has been undertaken on the current energy contract and it remains the best option currently available for the package of energy that the Council requires. As detailed on the attached spreadsheet, the contract predicts savings of 16% on electricity and 20% on gas.

The following main work stream activities to reduce usage are either underway or will be progressed in 2024:

1. Building Rationalisation

Phase 1 of the accommodation strategy has been completed with 5 staff accommodation buildings being closed and either handed back to the landlords (where leased) or being made available to let/for sale if owned by the Council.

Phase 2 of the accommodation strategy is ongoing

2. Optimisation Actions

In addition the following work is being undertaken

Building Management System (BMS) & Control Reviews

- To reduce usage across the portfolio we currently undertake annual checks of controls and systems (in buildings without Building Management Systems) and monitor bill usage. It is proposed, where appropriate, to combine the work of Building Services with the Energy and Carbon Reduction team on site to provide a more holistic service.
- There are 17 BMS systems (of varying age and quality) across the portfolio. They are, effectively, a more sophisticated controls system that allows better and remote interrogation of the controls in the building. An example of the BMS report on a school is attached.
- The recent energy systems optimisation review and school engagement project at Ysgol Cwm Brombil achieved savings of 179,000 kWh over the year, a 25% reduction.

Appendix 8 – Schedule of energy saving proposals

- More comprehensive BMS audits have been undertaken at the Quays/SRC and Neath Civic within the pilot programme. Full programme currently being formulated meeting arranged with BMS provider to understand realistic rollout timeframe for the remaining operational sites with BMS.

Site Engagement & Management

- Engagement site good practice guidance – Currently writing site energy/carbon good practice guidance across the operational building portfolio – Completion timeframe January.
- Energy Sparks – About to implement the Energy Sparks initiative throughout the school portfolio for applicable schools. Tranche 1 scheduled January 2024.
- Celtic Trust - Instigated regular meetings to setup energy, carbon and water improvement, engagement activity and programme.

3. Improvement Programmes

Refit Programme

- The Refit programme offers the opportunity to undertake large-scale renewable programmes at scale and pace. It was not possible to enter the Refit Programme under the current framework. However, the Energy/Carbon Section are currently compiling and collating the necessary data and site information to engage with the new Framework when it is launched in April 2024.

Lighting Programme

- Sports Wales Grant – Successful £200k funding bid for LED lighting upgrade projects within three Leisure Centres.

Solar PV Programme

- Solar PV programme – Progressing PV schemes at 14 schools, also undertaking solar PV feasibility investigation on the Quays/SRC. Installing PV system on the new catering blocks at Coedffranc and Sandfields Primary schools.

4. Policy & Strategy

- LAEP – Managed the progression of the LAEP programme currently at the priority action stage.
- Net Zero implementation (costed) plan – about to appoint the Carbon Trust to formulate NPT Council's costed Net Zero implementation plan.
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Appendix 8 – Schedule of energy saving proposals

Dependencies

- Site Engagement – Effectiveness of site engagement energy good practice dependant on the implementation of actions by site/building managers.

Buildings identified for potential energy efficiency projects

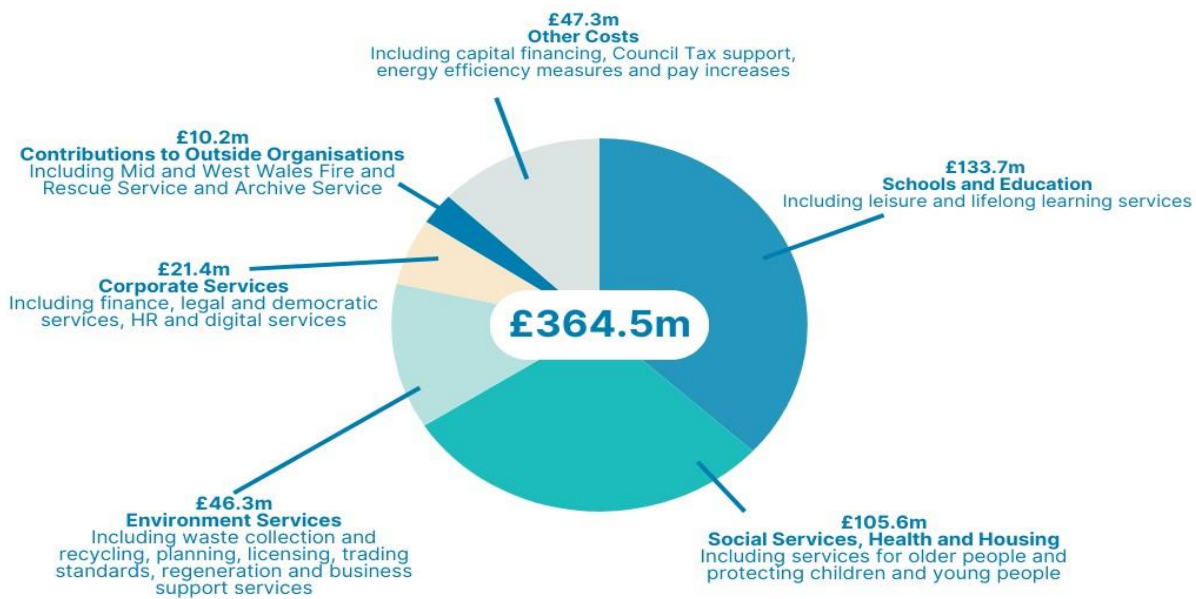
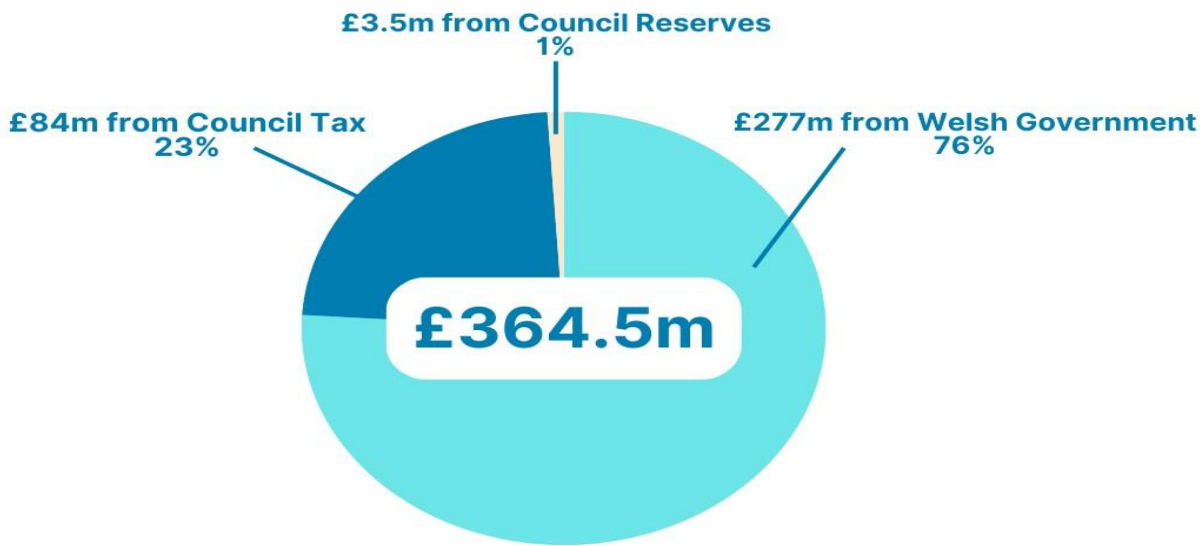
(Subject to discussion and agreement with responsible persons/headteachers/governing bodies)

Ysgol Bae Baglan
The Quays
YG Ystalyfera
Neath Leisure Centre
Llangatwg Comprehensive
Tregelles Court Depot
Dwr Y Felin Comprehensive
Port Talbot Civic Centre
Ysgol Cwm Brombil
Cwmtawe Comprehensive
Hillside Secure Unit
Margam Crematorium
Margam Country Park
St Josephs Comprehensive
Cefn Saeson Comprehensive
Ysgol Maes y Coed
Neath Civic Centre (New)
Ysgol Hendre Residential School
Baglan Primary
Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Dur
Cwmafan Primary (Junior Building)
Trem y Mor
YGG Rhosafan
Tywyn Primary
Gnoll Primary
Croeserw Primary
YGG Castell Nedd
Ysgol Hendrefelin (Velindre site)
Sandfields Primary
Pontardawe Arts Centre
Coed Hirwaun Primary
Wauanceirch Primary
Alderman Davies Church In Wales Primary
Neath Civic Annex & Registrars (Old County Court)
Pen Afan Primary
Aberavon Leisure and Fitness Centre
Afan Lido Bowls
Gwyn Hall
Neath Sports Centre

Appendix 8 – Schedule of energy saving proposals

Pontardawe Leisure Centre
Pontardawe Swimming Pool
Vale of Neath Leisure Centre

Appendix 9 – Where does the Council spend its budget



1. Details of the initiative

	Title of the Initiative: Draft budget proposals 2024/25
1a	Service Area: Services as identified across the directorates
1b	Directorate: All
1c	<p>Summary of the initiative:</p> <p>This Integrated Impact Assessment relates to the Council’s budget proposals for 2024/25.</p> <p>The Draft Budget proposals include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Investment of £4.7m in additional service pressures over and above cost increases arising as a result of inflationary pressures. ➤ Savings of £8.1m with no major cuts to services or job losses ➤ Use of Social Services directorate reserves of £6.8m to assist in funding pressures whilst long term transformation proposals are developed ➤ The proposals do not include a specified increase in council tax to be consulted on due to the lateness of the Welsh Government settlement information <p>The Council is legally required to produce a balance budget. In setting its budget the Council utilises funding received via the financial settlement from the Welsh Government including share of Non Domestic Rates, additional grants for specific service areas along with income from council tax.</p>
1d	<p>Who will be directly affected by this initiative?</p> <p>Residents of Neath Port Talbot.</p>
1e	When and how were people consulted?

	<p>As part of drawing up the draft proposals two all Member seminars have already taken place; briefings have been held virtually and face to face with staff and trade unions (both teaching and non-teaching) Members of the Cabinet have also held engagement sessions at various locations across the County Borough to explain the financial position the Council is facing to residents</p> <p>The formal consultation period will commence on 20th December and conclude on 10th January 2024.</p> <p>Separate briefings will be held with Trade Unions, Town and Community Councils and the Voluntary Sector liaison forum.</p> <p>There will be an on-line consultation form as well as physical paper questionnaires which be available at multiple locations across the County Borough. The already established ‘Community of Practice’ will also be utilised in order to extend the reach of the consultation as far as possible.</p> <p>The short timescale for the consultation has arisen due to the fact that the Welsh Government provisional local government settlement is not due until 20th December and time will be required in January to consider the impact of the settlement and consider consultations responses.</p> <p>.</p>
<p>1f</p>	<p>What were the outcomes of the consultation?</p> <p>This report is seeking approval from the Executive to start the formal consultation process.</p> <p><u>Changes to original proposals</u></p>

	None at present.
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2. Evidence

What evidence was used in assessing the initiative?
<p>Service areas collect and more importantly utilise data on service users as part of the ongoing development and delivery of individual services. In addition to the number of people using the service other relevant information such as age, sex, disability, etc., is also collected which in turn informs policy development and service provision.</p> <p>Information is collected through a variety of methods ranging from application forms and reviews, to satisfaction surveys and consultations.</p>

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3. Equalities

a) How does the initiative impact on people who share a protected characteristic?

Protected Characteristic	Why will it have this impact?
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<p>Age Disability Gender reassignment Marriage & civil partnership Pregnancy and maternity Race Religion or belief Sex Sexual orientation</p>	<p>The Council is committed to prioritising investment in schools and educating children and is not proposing any significant reduction to the Delegated Budgets for Schools.</p> <p>An increase in funding for other Education Leisure and Lifelong Learning Services will help to protect services to vulnerable families and children through the provision of additional support for learners as well as funding increased capacity following the roll out of the Additional Learning Needs Legislation.</p> <p>Investment in children’s and adult social services will continue to support people with learning disabilities and general provision towards care package costs. This investment will improve service provision to children and the elderly. Any specific changes to services will be the subject of separate impact assessments.</p> <p><u>Post Consultation</u></p>
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<p>What action will be taken to improve positive or mitigate negative impacts?</p>
<p>Officers will monitor the response to the proposals.</p>

b) How will the initiative assist or inhibit the ability to meet the Public Sector Equality Duty?

Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED)	Why will it have this impact?
<p>To eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation</p> <p>To advance equality of opportunity between different groups</p> <p>To foster good relations between different groups</p>	<p>The Council continues to be aware of its position as employer, provider and commissioner of services and to this end strives to ensure its ability to meet its legal obligations.</p>

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What action will be taken to improve positive or mitigate negative impacts?
<p>Officers will monitor the response to the proposals.</p>

4. Community Cohesion/Social Exclusion/Poverty

	Why will it have this impact?
Community Cohesion	Whilst it is unlikely that the proposals will in themselves have significant impact on community cohesion in the short term there is a likelihood that long term impacts could be possible.
Social Exclusion	Whilst it is unlikely that the proposals will in themselves have significant impact on social exclusion in the short term there is a likelihood that long term impacts could be possible.
Poverty	<p>Research studies previously conducted by Sheffield Hallam University demonstrate that areas within the county borough are disproportionately and negatively affected by the UK Government’s welfare benefits changes and this continues to be the case.</p> <p>The Council continues to work in partnership to mitigate the impact of the welfare benefit changes and ongoing budgetary uncertainty.</p> <p>The Council continues to work on an anti-poverty agenda including:</p> <p>Anti-poverty strategy -development of a multi-agency strategy to outline what needs to be done to improve the lives of those living on a low income in Neath Port Talbot.</p>
What action will be taken to improve positive or mitigate negative impacts?	
Officers will monitor the response to the proposals.	

5. Welsh

	+	-	+/-	Why will it have this effect?
What effect does the initiative have on: - people’s opportunities to use the Welsh language		✓		The Council currently has relatively small numbers of staff with Welsh language skills. Opportunities for staff to use their language skills will continue to be promoted and training will continue to be made available.
- treating the Welsh and English languages equally	✓			The Council is committed to the principles as embodied in the Welsh Language Measure (2015) and the standards in particular will continue so that the Welsh language is treated no less favourably than the English language

What action will be taken to improve positive or mitigate negative impacts?

Officers will monitor the response to the proposals.

6. Biodiversity

How will the initiative assist or inhibit the ability to meet the **Biodiversity Duty**?

Biodiversity Duty	+	-	+/-	Why will it have this impact?
To maintain and enhance biodiversity				Unknown. There is no clear route to demonstrate either positive or negative impact on biodiversity.
To promote the resilience of ecosystems, i.e. supporting protection of the wider environment, such as air quality, flood alleviation, etc.				Unknown. There is no clear route to demonstrate either positive or negative impact on the resilience of ecosystems.

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What action will be taken to improve positive or mitigate negative impacts?

Future impacts assessment will benefit from the biodiversity service assessments which are currently being undertaken to help determine what, if any, impacts service areas have on biodiversity. The assessments will help inform where services areas will be required to undertake specific assessments when appropriate to determine the extent and any mitigating actions of future changes to service/policy, etc. as part of delivery of the Biodiversity Duty Plan

7. Wellbeing of Future Generations

How have the five ways of working been applied in the development of the initiative?

Ways of Working	Details
<p>Long term – looking at least 10 years (and up to 25 years) ahead</p>	<p>Work has commenced on developing a medium term financial plan to cover the period 2024-2029. This plan highlights that there is a significant financial gap between the estimated funding available and the cost of running Council services over that period. Work will continue during 2024/25 financial year in relation to closing this budget gap.</p>
<p>Prevention – preventing problems occurring or getting worse</p>	<p>Proposals have been developed to help prevent intensifying current financial issues in the future. By preparing a medium term budget outlook the Council is mindful of the need to deliver statutory functions as well as considering its wider service provision which contribute to the wellbeing of its citizens.</p> <p>Proposals include protection for some services that enable early intervention and prevention activities that reduce demand on public services whilst promoting wellbeing, for example in social services.</p>
<p>Collaboration – working with other services internal or external</p>	<p>Preparation of a new Corporate Plan and Medium Term Financial plan will include collaboration with partners. During the Coronavirus pandemic the Council has effectively partnered with a wide variety of organisations and future plans will build on these relationships.</p>
<p>Involvement – involving people, ensuring they reflect the diversity of the population</p>	<p>The consultation will be communicated as widely as possible and a significant amount of pre-consultation engagement has taken place.</p>

<p>• Integration – making connections to maximise contribution to:</p> <p>Council’s wellbeing objectives</p>	<p>The financial settlement and the specific grants that underpin Council services are key to the delivery of the Council’s wellbeing objectives thereby having a positive impact.</p> <p>The proposals will help ensure the business of the Council is managed to maximise the long term benefit for the citizens of Neath Port Talbot (the crosscutting objective relating to governance and resources).</p>
<p>Other public bodies objectives</p>	<p>It is possible to demonstrate the alignment between the Council’s Corporate Plan, the Public Services Board Plan and other key planning arrangements which will ensure a more holistic approach to improving outcomes over the lifetime of all plans.</p>

9. Monitoring Arrangements

Provide information on the monitoring arrangements to:

Monitor the impact of the initiative on Equalities, Community Cohesion, the Welsh Measure, Biodiversity Duty and the Wellbeing Objectives.

Officers will monitor the response to the proposals.

10. Assessment Conclusions

Please provide details of the conclusions reached in relation to each element of the assessment:

Appendix 9 – Integrated Impact Assessment

	Conclusion
Equalities	There are positive impacts in relation to the early intervention and prevention work in social services predominantly for older and disabled people.
Welsh	The budget proposals do not include any reductions in staff numbers so there should be limited impact on the Welsh language. Opportunities remain for staff to use their language skills will and further training will be made available and promoted.
Bio	There is no clear route to demonstrate either positive or negative impact on biodiversity or the resilience of ecosystems.
WBFG	<p>The Council has worked hard to strike the right balance in its budget proposals for 2024/25 including the use of £6.8m specific reserves in order to try to protect services and jobs to the maximum extent possible. as possible.</p> <p>This has included increases in funding for some services that enable early intervention and prevention activities that reduce demand on public services whilst promoting wellbeing; protection for integrated services that have been established to deliver more joined up services for citizens; protection for services that have a long term impact on sustainability; and protection for key collaborative arrangements. The areas that have received additional funding are reflected in the four Well-being objectives that the Council has set.</p>

Overall Conclusion

An overall conclusion will be drawn once consultation responses have been received and considered.

11. Actions

What actions are required in relation to obtaining further data/information, to reduce or remove negative impacts or improve positive impacts?

Action	Who will be responsible for seeing it is done?	When will it be done by?	How will we know we have achieved our objective?
Undertake public consultation on draft budget proposals	Chief Finance Officer	Between 20 th December 2023 and 10 th January 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultation responses received
Consider consultation responses and amend proposals where appropriate	Senior Management Teams	During and at the conclusion of the consultation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revised budget report, including any proposed amendments, for consideration at Cabinet, Cabinet Scrutiny and Council. This will include final proposals on council tax levels for 2024/25.