



## ***CABINET SCRUTINY COMMITTEE***

***2.00 PM WEDNESDAY, 3 FEBRUARY 2021***

***VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS***

**All mobile telephones to be switched to silent for the duration of the meeting**

### **Part 1**

1. Welcome and Roll Call
2. Chairs Announcements
3. Declarations of Interests
4. Minutes of the Previous Meeting (*Pages 5 - 34*)
  - 25 November 2020
  - 10 December 2020
  - 8 January 2021
  - 13 January 2021
5. Consultation on 2021/22 Budget Proposals (*Pages 35 - 50*)
6. Pre-decision Scrutiny
  - To select appropriate items from the Cabinet (Finance) Sub Committee agenda for pre-decision scrutiny (Cabinet Finance Sub - Committee reports enclosed for Scrutiny Members)
7. Forward Work Programme 2020/21 (*Pages 51 - 54*)
8. Urgent Items  
Any urgent items (whether public or exempt) at the discretion of the

Chairman pursuant to Section 100B (4) (b) of the Local Government Act 1972

9. Access to Meetings

To resolve to exclude the public for the following items pursuant to Regulation 4 (3) and (5) of Statutory Instrument 2001 No.2290 and the relevant exempt paragraphs of Part 4 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972

**Part 2**

10. Pre-Decision Scrutiny of Private Item/s

- To select appropriate items from the Cabinet agenda for pre-decision scrutiny (cabinet reports enclosed for Scrutiny Members)
- To select appropriate items from the Cabinet (Finance) Sub Committee agenda for pre-decision scrutiny (Cabinet Finance Sub - Committee reports enclosed for Scrutiny Members)

**K.Jones**  
**Chief Executive**

**Civic Centre**  
**Port Talbot**

**Thursday, 28 January 2021**

**Committee Membership:**

**Chairperson: Councillor M.Harvey**

**Vice  
Chairperson: Councillor S.Rahaman**

**Councillors:** S.E.Freeguard, N.T.Hunt, S.K.Hunt, D.Keogh,  
S.A.Knoyle, A.Llewelyn, S.Miller, R.Mizen,  
J.D.Morgan, S.Paddison, L.M.Purcell, S.M.Penry,  
S.H.Reynolds and A.N.Woolcock

**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.*

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## Cabinet Scrutiny Committee

(Via Microsoft Teams)

**Members Present:**

**25 November 2020**

**Chairperson:** Councillor M.Harvey

**Vice Chairperson:** Councillor S.Rahaman

**Councillors:** S.E.Freeguard, S.K.Hunt, D.Keogh, S.A.Knoyle, A.Llewelyn, S.Miller, R.Mizen, J.D.Morgan, S.Paddison, L.M.Purcell, S.H.Reynolds and A.N.Woolcock

**Officers In Attendance** S.Phillips, H.Jenkins, A.Evans, A.Jarrett, K.Jones, C.Griffiths, S.Brennan, M.Roberts, D.Griffiths, A.Thomas, R.George, J.Smith, P.Walker, J.Hillier, C.Plowman, J.Woodman-Ralph and C.Davies

**Cabinet Invitees:** Councillors C.Clement-Williams, D.Jones, L.Jones, R.G.Jones, E.V.Latham, A.R.Lockyer, P.A.Rees, P.D.Richards and A.Wingrave

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### 1. **Pre-decision Scrutiny**

The Committee scrutinised the following cabinet items:

#### Gnoll Estate Country Park Masterplan

Members were provided with a summary of the Gnoll Estate Country Park Masterplan and the opportunities that the plan presents for enhancing the park.

The Chair of the Regeneration and Sustainable Development Scrutiny Committee commended the report on behalf of himself and the Regeneration and Sustainable Development Scrutiny Committee. The Chair asked officers to consider broadening the audience on the consultation to receive an extensive response in future.

Discussions took place in relation to the lack of parking available at the location and the potential for additional parking following the masterplan. Parking costs for local residents were discussed, officers highlighted that all parking costs were in line with the town centre parking.

Member asked whether certain events that the Council had previously held at the Gnoll Park would require relocation. Officers explained that there were discussions taking place to ensure events of the Council can take place.

Members highlighted that the Visitor Experience Action Plan did not include actions around enhancing biodiversity at Gnoll Estate Country Park which was noted as a key priority for respondents of the online survey. It was noted that the Officer Working Group would ensure that biodiversity actions would be taken forward within the action and plan and asked how this would be promoted and monitored. It was explained that the officer working group was still premature and the scrutiny arrangements would continue within the Leisure and Culture Scrutiny Committee enabling an opportunity to continue scrutinise and monitor this further.

Members asked officers to consider the wildlife at the park to ensure it continues to be a country park and preventing a reduction of wildlife.

Following scrutiny, the Committee was supportive of the proposal to be considered by the Cabinet Board.

#### Neath Business Improvement District Re Ballot

Members were informed of the intention of Neath Inspired (BID) to take a renewal ballot for another five year term within the Neath Town Centre area.

Members relayed concerns in relation to the levy that businesses would be required to pay, if they were in the BID zone. In addition, concerns were raised over the ongoing difficulties businesses face due to the loss of income caused by the coronavirus pandemic.

Officers assured members that they understood their current reservations but, on balance, felt that the BID renewal could support local business recovery from the pandemic over the next five years. . With regard to the levy payment Members were advised that

such a payment would only be payable by businesses with an aggregated rateable value of £6K or more. All businesses rated below this threshold would be exempt.

Following scrutiny, the Committee was supportive of the proposal to be considered by the Cabinet Board.

### IT Equipment for Schools

Members were updated on the Council processing and providing IT equipment for children in all schools.

Members noted and commended the work that had been involved in ensuring Blended Learning could succeed and the importance of attaining the equipment. It was asked whether training and software packages had been considered in line with the distribution of the IT equipment. Officers confirmed that training and software packages had been considered. It was highlighted that pupils would be accessing different platforms to achieve blended learning and schools were providing training on usage of the software and equipment.

Following scrutiny, the Committee was supportive of the proposal to be considered by the Cabinet Board.

## 2. Access to Meetings

**RESOLVED:** that pursuant to Section 100A(4) and (5) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded for the following items of business which involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 14 of Part 4 of Schedule 12A to the above Act.

## 3. Pre-Decision Scrutiny of Private Item/s

The Committee scrutinised the following private Cabinet item:

### Leisure Financial Arrangements

Members were presented with a private report providing an update on the current financial arrangements within the Leisure facilities and the effects that Covid-19 has had on these facilities.

Following scrutiny, the Committee was supportive of the proposal to be considered by the Cabinet Board.

**CHAIRPERSON**

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## **Cabinet Scrutiny Committee**

**(Via Microsoft Teams)**

**Members Present:**

**10 December 2020**

**Chairperson:** **Councillor M.Harvey**

**Councillors:** S.E.Freeguard, S.K.Hunt, D.Keogh, S.A.Knoyle, A.Llewelyn, S.Miller, R.Mizen, J.D.Morgan, S.Paddison, L.M.Purcell, S.H.Reynolds and A.N.Woolcock

**Officers In Attendance:** A.Evans, H.Jenkins, C.Davies, C.Griffiths, K.Jones, C.Furlow-Harris, T.Davies, R.Headon, C.Jones, K.Warren, S.Brennan, D.Griffiths, P. Jackson, Clarke, C.Plowman and R Davies

**Cabinet Invitees:** Councillors C.Clement-Williams, D.Jones, L.Jones, E.V.Latham, P.A.Rees, P.D.Richards and A.Wingrave

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### **1. Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on 4 November 2020 were approved.

### **2. Verbal Update on Test, Trace and Protect**

Members were presented with a verbal update on the Test, Trace and Protect Service (TTP). Before providing a breakdown of the statistics and current overall picture, Officers highlighted that the figures were a snapshot in time of a very dynamic situation and that the numbers were currently increasing.

#### **Local Figures**

It was stated that in the Swansea Bay Region over the last seven days the TTP Service had received 2,604 new index cases with almost 5,000 contacts associated with those cases, and in Neath Port

Talbot over the last seven days the TTP Service had received 1,124 new index cases and 2,536 contacts associated with those cases.

Officers added that the epidemiology was showing that there consistently appeared to be more contacts associated with each case in the Neath Port Talbot area than in Swansea.

### National Figures

In terms of national figures, it was noted that the seven day case incidence figure identified that Neath Port Talbot was currently the highest in Wales with 697.1 cases per 100,000 population; Merthyr Tydfil was second highest with 668 cases per 100,000 population and Swansea was ranked fifth in Wales with 549.8 cases per 100,000 population.

### Test Positivity Figures

Members were informed that Neath Port Talbot was ranked second in Wales for the amount of tests that were identified as positive at 25.5%; Merthyr Tydfil was ranked first with a 28.7% positivity rate and Swansea was at 23%.

### Age Group Breakdown

The positive cases were stated to be predominately within the working age population (40-49 year olds and 50-59 year olds); however, in recent weeks there had been an increase in the number of positive cases within the younger age groups (10-19 year olds and 20-29 year olds) which was being closely monitored and analysed.

### Clusters and Exposure Locations

The Committee was informed that there were currently 22 care homes in Neath Port Talbot with ongoing outbreaks and that there was a high level of concern over the stability of the care home sector and community care in general; due to this business continuity issues were being experienced at this point in time. It was added that there was a number of clusters in open and closed work place settings across the Country Borough.

### Schools

It was highlighted that 27 schools in Neath Port Talbot had reported more than one case in the last 14 days, however this was more likely to be due to the increase of transmission in households; the evidence was continuing to show that there was not wide transmission within the school environment and that much of the transmission within the

school age range was a consequence of what was happening at home and during out of schools activities such as birthday parties and sports training. It was added that although there was transmission in schools, they were generally providing a Covid 19 secure and controlled environment.

Members were informed that the TTP Service had developed strong working relationships with Senior Management within the Councils education department and regular dialogue was taking place between the TTP Service, regional Environmental Health Officers and the Head Teachers.

### TTP Resilience

Officers explained that one of the main challenges at the moment for the TTP Service was the extremely high workload which was putting a strain on the service as the staff were struggling with the caseloads; the Council was seeking mutual aid on a daily basis and a national team had been set up whereby requests from Councils across Wales could be submitted, however given the demand across Wales, there was not a huge amount of mutual aid being received. It was added that the service had a finite resource in terms of staff, particularly at the regional level; staff wellbeing was also a concern due to the amount of stress and anxiety and having to deal with difficult situations.

It was mentioned that the service was currently in the midst of a rolling programme of recruitment for tracers, advisors, supervisors and data analysts; there were as many as 80 posts to be filled to achieve what would be regarded as optimum capacity, however logistically it was taking a lot of time to get the right people in the right roles. Officers added that in the interim, they were currently looking to recall staff that were previously redeployed to the service to build resilience in the short term while recruitment continued.

Due to the lack of clear steer coming from Welsh Government in relation to how to deal with the high level of cases received, Officers highlighted that a prioritisation framework was being produced in order to try and efficiently deal with the workload.

### Covid 19 Enforcement

A team of Enforcement Officers were noted to have been recruited, working respectively with teams including the TTP Service, Environmental Health and the Councils Licensing department to ensure the public and business premises were complying; Officers

were receiving a lot of positive feedback in terms of that particular group of staff. It was added that the Council and affiliated services were also working closely with the Police to ensure that a coordinated response was delivered.

### Communication

In terms of communication, it was noted that the service was working closely with the Council's Communication Team to deliver the current message that individual behaviour was key; the evidence showed that it was lack of compliance of individuals in the home and social settings which was driving up the numbers locally and across Wales. Officers were concerned with the lack of compliance with self-isolation requirements, which was making mitigation measures difficult to develop and implement. The tone of the communication to the public was mentioned to have been recently changed in order to try and challenge people to deliver on their levels of responsibility.

In relation to the Covid 19 enforcement teams, it was asked if Officers could provide examples of the types of action the teams have had to undertake. It was explained that once the regional Environmental Health Officers had gathered intelligence of where there were cases and clusters of cases emerging, they would coordinate with the Enforcement Officers, who would then go out into the community to discuss with the identified workplaces and premises what measures they had in place, to make them aware of what they should be doing, and checking if they were complying with what they should be doing; essentially the Enforcement Officers link up with what the intelligence was showing as the cases emerge and go out into the community to be visible and hold those premises to account.

Members asked that due to the current high levels of cases in Neath Port Talbot, had consideration been given to introducing asymptomatic testing that had recently been implemented across some other Councils in Wales. It was stated that all options had been considered, including community wide testing, however it was not currently seen to be a solution within the local context. Currently testing demand in Neath Port Talbot was significant, with the testing facility in Margam beyond 100% capacity and the mobile testing units similar; Officers were currently looking at potential ways to build upon testing capacity within the area. Members were informed that the Incident Management Team (IMT) had been meeting several times a week looking at the latest data and intelligence in regards to the way in which the virus was behaving in the community, they would then

review the control measures that were currently in place for the whole approach being taken across the region including with communications and enforcement; the IMT would then make recommendations about any further actions that needed to be considered in light of the most recent intelligence. As mentioned, mass testing had been considered within the IMT, however currently the expert advice received from Public Health colleagues was that the mass testing would not help to bring the current size of the problem under control and would stretch the resources that were needed to target at other measures, including supporting the mass vaccination process going forward. Assurance was provided to Members that the control measures were looked at several times a week by a number of people who were involved in the process; a number of points including the need for further restrictions, in order to try and bring the number of cases under control, had been raised with Welsh Government.

It was asked if it could be considered that schools transfer to distanced learning in the lead up to Christmas as even though the number of cases in schools was small, it had the potential to spread to more people which would result in larger groups of individuals having to self-isolate close to the Christmas period; it was speculated that some parents would choose not to send their children to school in the upcoming week due to these reasons. Officers clarified that they had to take the epidemiological advice in this matter and needed to secure the right balance, to ensure the decisions made were in the interests of all pupils including those who were most disadvantaged and vulnerable. It was noted that some pupils would be engaged with the distanced learning activities, however they would be others who would not participate in them; there was also the need to secure pupil equity and safeguarding considerations must also be in the forefront of thinking. Members were informed that Officers were meeting with the Education Minister, Kirsty Williams, later on in the afternoon and will need to await the outcome of that meeting; however, at the moment it was intended that all schools in Neath Port Talbot would close on Friday 18<sup>th</sup> December. It was added that there was also a need to understand, fairly quickly, what the opening arrangements would be in January including how these plans would fit in with a whole Wales policy and strategy on seeking to suppress the virus.

Officers were asked to clarify the decision making process behind the schools opening and closing schedule in line with the evidence being received locally in terms of positive cases in schools, as other local

authorities had made their own decisions as to when they would close for Christmas. It was stated that it would be desirable to have a consistent approach across Wales in regards to opening and closing arrangements; however Officers have had to take all factors into consideration, including the possible risks of having a very large amount of children not in schools, to make a balanced decision. In regards to evidence, it was highlighted that there was a protocol in place whereby when a Head Teacher becomes aware of a case in the school they would get in touch with someone in the regional TTP Service; this was effective as it helped the process move more efficiently, as Head Teachers were essentially the first people to be aware of a positive case within schools and waiting for an indication from other informants such as TTP could take some time. Following this, the regional Environmental Health Officers would make a decision as to what extent pupils and staff needed to self-isolate based on the evidence, also taking into consideration the type of contact made and the size of the bubbles that the school had in place.

Members requested that the Communications Team put out information in regards to the risks of holding community events in the lead up to Christmas, as it had been noticed that some smaller communities with the County Borough were planning and advertising Christmas events. Officers noted Members comments and stated that they would inform the Communications Team of this request.

In relation to testing, it was queried as to why further resources weren't being brought in immediately to assist in the demand. Officers stated that options were being considered as colleagues in the Health Board and Public Health Wales were consistently looking at testing capacity locally, looking at how this could be increased. It was added that the Leader and the Chief Executive were currently meeting twice a week with the Health Board and different options were being actively considered; Officers stated that as the position changes, they would provide Members with regular updates.

It was agreed that the Head of Planning and Public Protection (Ceri Morris) would circulate a briefing note to Members which would include the main points of the TTP Service update.

The Committee thanked all those who had worked and were currently working in the Test, Trace and Protect Service.

Following scrutiny, the update was noted

3. **Update on the Covid-19 Member Panel - Recovery Phase**

The Committee received an update report in relation to the Covid 19 Member Panel – Recovery Phase which included a summary of the business undertaken by the Panel to date.

It was highlighted that the name of the Panel had recently changed to ‘Coronavirus – Member Panel’ as the circumstances had changed since it was first established.

A discussion took place in relation to recovery from the pandemic and if it was anticipated that a recovery phase would be entered during the first few months of 2021; the Council previously started giving some thought to recovery in the summer of 2020, when infection rates were extremely low, however in a matter of weeks the situation drastically changed. Officers stated that they hope that the planning around recovery would resume by Easter when the vaccination programme had made significant progress, so that over the summer discussions could take place with Members and the communities of how the recovery will take shape. It was added that recovery wasn't a linear process and activities were already being undertaken with recovery in mind including progressing the work around the lessons learned over the past 9 months to ensure that this was not lost; there were also some immediate impacts, for example the work around homelessness and trying to develop some models for moving the people who were currently in temporary housing, into more permanent arrangements.

Members thanked all those who had been involved in contributing to the work of the Panel and the Focus Group.

Following scrutiny, the update was noted.

#### 4. **Pre-decision Scrutiny**

The committee scrutinised the following cabinet items:

##### Strategic Equality Plan 2020-2024

The Strategic Equality Plan 2020-2024 was presented to the Committee with the actions to meet the equality objectives.

Members asked how many staff had the Council employed who were on zero hour contracts and the reasoning behind why they were on this type of contract. In terms of the reason, it was noted that the individuals had elected themselves to take up casual contracts for work, for example in the Survey Team within the Environment

Directorate; there was a relatively small number of staff who had specific reasons for being on that type of contract and these individuals make themselves available and can turn work down if it suits them; there was no specific pattern of work that could be planned in advance for them. It was confirmed that Officers would circulate the exact number of staff on zero hour contracts to the Committee following the meeting.

Detailed in the circulated report, it stated that no feedback was received from an event which was held with the Community of Practice for Engagement and Involvement in order to obtain an insight into what was important to the groups they regularly engage with; it was asked who was involved in the event and why wasn't any feedback received. It was explained that the Participation Officers that the Council had across different service areas within the Council (including those who support the youth council, the looked after children version of the youth council and the community veterans) were asked to feed in any views, opinions or evidence that could support the development of the Strategic Equality Plan; whilst the equality objectives were being drafted, these Officers were asked to give some thought as to whether or not the right objectives had been selected, however due to the timing of the pandemic, the engagement work with these network of Officers was disrupted. The importance of their input and the need to pick up this work as part of the implementation was highlighted.

It was asked if the work to improve physical access to the committee facilities in both Neath and Port Talbot Civic Centres was still doable and if so, when it would be done; it was still very much the plan to improve the access arrangements for Members, especially in Port Talbot Civic Centre as there was some difficulties in terms of access particularly within the Council Chamber. It was noted that a lot of work was being undertaken prior to the pandemic, and one of the main pieces of work being looked at was clearing out the old kitchen area which wasn't being utilised anymore and turning it into a meeting room as it was a very accessible space; having a meeting room downstairs would be beneficial as one of the issues with having meetings on the upper floors was that someone within that meeting would have to be responsible for evacuation procedures and be trained to do so, if there was a fire for example.

In relation to the development of a Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic (BAME) Equality and Diversity Action Plan, Members queried whether the Council would be anonymising factors such as age, sex,



designation, names and ages so that when applications for positions were received there was no unconscious bias and if it will be adopted, what would the timescale be for implementing it. Officers confirmed that the Head of Human Resources (Sheenagh Rees) had previously identified work that needed to be actioned on the Council application forms as part of the gender equality work and a discussion had started with trade unions and workforce around the BAME aspect of this as well; many of the measures that the Council would be looking to introduce as part of gender equality, would also assist in terms of trying to get people into a position where they haven't got unconscious bias at that point in the selection process. It was added that Officers were also looking to develop an ongoing discussion with the workforce around the BAME agenda and that there were a number of staff who were very interested in helping with this thinking. In regards to the timescale, it was noted that the work had already been actioned planned and Officers would inform Members of the planned dates around implementation.

A discussion took place around the delivery of the Strategic Equality Plan, the monitoring arrangements and priorities. Officers explained that the Council had a legal responsibility to produce a Strategic Equality Plan and had to work around a particular timescale for it; earlier in the year the Equality and Human Rights Commission gave a period of grace in terms of timescale for the referral of plans, however they had been insistent that the plans needed to be published at the end of the calendar year. It was highlighted that the equality objectives had previously been presented to Cabinet Scrutiny Committee, as one of the specific legal duties that the Council had, and now Members were being presented with the actions to implement those objectives which would then need to be reported to full Council to endorse the action plan. In terms of relevance and priorities within the action plan, it was noted that these would need to be under continuous review due to the speed at which circumstances change, for example if there were to be more job losses within the community this may cause a change in the emphasis around some of the actions; there were a number of actions that were rolling forward from the old plan and there were also new areas of work, including that around the BAME community, which needed to be prioritised. It was added that there were concerns around inequalities before the pandemic, however over the past nine months this had widened and some groups within the community, the BAME community in particular, were being disproportionately affected by the pandemic

which confirmed that priorities needed to be adjusted to target this issue. In regards to monitoring, the Chief Executive (Karen Jones) stated that the committee arrangements would be reviewed in January 2021 and would include discussions around the length of the meeting agendas, staff workload and democratic oversight. It was mentioned that the Cabinet Scrutiny Committee could include the Strategic Equality Plan on their Forward Work Programme regularly for monitoring.

Officers made a note of a typing error within the report which was identified by Members.

Following scrutiny, the committee was supportive of the proposals to be considered by cabinet.

#### Comments, Compliments and Complaints Annual Report 2019/2020

The circulated report provided Members with an overview of the complaints, compliments and comments received during the period 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020.

Concerns were raised around the violent and aggressive behaviour that staff were being subject to on occasion; Officers were asked to provide more detail on this. Members were informed that the references detailed within the report were specifically around individual cases throughout the year, where the Council had some very difficult behaviours to deal with from a very small number of residents; this caused a re-think around the way in which the Council manages contact with those individuals. It was mentioned that one of those incidents involved a member of the public assaulting the Leader of the Council in Port Talbot Civic Centre. It was noted that fortunately most of the people that are in contact with the Council were polite and those contacts were handled with no issues; however, the Council was in a position where measure needed to be introduced to protect staff and in some very small number of incidents, have had to take action to limit the way in which certain members of the public could have contact with the council. Officers added that there had been individuals who were very verbally aggressive, individuals who sent persistent number of emails which is very time consuming to deal with, and in some exceptional circumstances have had individuals turn up and be physically aggressive and violent within the offices in which Police involvement was required. Although there was a small number of incidents, it was highlighted to have had a massive impact on staff, therefore Officers

were ensuring those staff got support and policies and procedures were strengthened.

Following scrutiny, the committee noted the report.

### Substance Misuse Counselling Service - Western Bay Area Planning Board

The Committee received a report in relation to the Substance Misuse Counselling Service of the Western Bay Area Planning Board.

Members expressed the importance of funding for this particular area of work, as it could help towards preventing drug related deaths; Officers were asked to provide further details on the money being received, including the Substance Misuse Action Fund (SMAF). Officers explained that the SMAF was a grant that was provided to the region from Welsh Government; the Area Planning Board was a partnership that Welsh Government required that the Council and its partners have in place and it was the job of that partnership to determine how that grant was used. It was noted within the region there was a pattern of services that support substance misuse which had been there for quite some time; through the improvement work being completed, it had been identified that there was a need for work to be developed to join up the services for the purposes of the service users who would need to access them. Officers stated that there currently was too much fragmentation with people being passed from different parts of system, as well as a backlog in some places where there were waiting lists which was an issue as staff needed to be able to respond to those service users in a timely way; the Strategic Manager for Partnerships and Community Cohesion (Claire Jones) would be supporting an exercise next year to recommission the services in the region to ensure they become better fit for purpose, however it would take between 18 months and two years to make its way through the entire system. Members were informed that in the meantime, Officers had been looking more critically at what the money was doing within the current services, and within this particular case with counselling services, the report showed that too much money was going in for amount of need that the service was currently supporting; the Area Planning Board were asking for some of the money, that wasn't needed in the particular service, to be re-directed to help staff provide more timely access to those people who needed support. It was added that the plan was to put the spare money into the low threshold prescribing services. Officers explained that one deficient in the current model was that there was not enough

support in primary care for people who were addicted to substances, resulting in people staying too long in the secondary care service (hospital base services) which meant that these services were full and could not take on any new service users; more capacity was needed in the primary care part of the system for those who were stable or could have their needs met this way, which would then result in more capacity within secondary care for the more complex cases to be dealt with in a timely way.

Following scrutiny, the committee was supportive of the proposals to be considered by cabinet.

#### Syrian Resettlement Programme: Support Service

Members received a report on the Syrian Resettlement Programme (Support Service); detailed within the report it stated that one family had declined support and two families had left the programme, Members asked if the reasons for this could be explained. It was noted that there were different, legitimate reasons families had moved away for example, job opportunities or because they wanted to be within a different community.

Following scrutiny, the committee was supportive of the proposals to be considered by cabinet.

#### NPT Air Quality Progress Report 2020

The NPT Air Quality Progress Report for 2020 was presented to the Committee and Officers highlighted that the Council was in a positive position in meeting the air quality objectives; the report captured the 2019 calendar year, therefore the impact of the Covid 19 restrictions weren't necessarily included within the detail.

Concerns were expressed in relation to the evidence of non-compliance with nickel levels at Tawe Terrace and it was asked if the Vale Inco works in Clydach also impacted on the levels as well as the main source, Wall Colmonoy works; Members also asked for more detail around this issue as the Councils aim was to minimise the emissions. Officers confirmed that Wall Colmonoy was the issue causing the non-compliance; monitoring of the Vale Inco metal plant was commenced by the old Lliw Valley Borough Council, but monitoring did continue following Local Government re-organisation. Officers added that it had been required to relocate the sampler from where it was in Trebanos to Pontardawe due to the fact that the Trebanos sewage works was upgraded; however, the measurements at Pontardawe leisure centre do continue to monitor the impact of

nickel emissions from the Vale Inco plant and it was displaying low levels. In relation to how the issue is dealt with on a day to day basis, it was noted that it was the Council's responsibility to regulate this particular operator and Officers would be looking at enhanced regulation in terms of maintenance procedures and Best Available Techniques (BAT); these conversations and issues were ongoing, however the Head of Planning and Public Protection (Ceri Morris) would liaise with the relevant Officer to gather more detail for Members outside of the meeting.

Members were informed that this particular industrial operation was the most heavily regulated within Neath Port Talbot and the situation in relation to Wall Colmonoy was being taken very seriously; Officers, with other colleagues from other organisations, meet regularly to ensure the Council were securing improvement, to which has been progressing over the years however there was still further work to do. It was added that Officers were putting a lot of pressure on the company, who have since improved their maintenance and management systems.

It was queried how long this issue had been ongoing, to which Officers stated that they would have to confirm what the levels had been over the various years prior to 2019 and provide this information to Members following the meeting, however the levels were known to change year on year. It was mentioned that this issue had been reported on an annual basis to the Regeneration and Sustainable Development Scrutiny Committee; it was not a new situation, however it was improving which demonstrated the work that had been undertaken with Officers at securing some form of success.

Detailed within the circulated report it stated that nuisance dust related to activities at Tata Steel Works did not have an impact on health in the same way as other pollutants; Members asked what measurements were used to determine this and how could Officers be sure that it was not having a growing impact on people's health. It was agreed that Officers would provide this information outside of the meeting and at a future meeting of the Cabinet Scrutiny Committee.

Members asked if Officers could take into consideration the fact that Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council were in the process of approving a 90 metre stack close to Glynneath and stressed the importance of having this area regularly monitored once it had been approved.

It was queried as to whether there was some degree of doubt around the accuracy of the monitoring process itself due to the fallout levels in Prince Street and Port Talbot Fire Station being very different even though the sites were quite close together. It was noted that there were no current concerns in relation to the accuracy of the monitoring process as even though the two sites were close together, it wouldn't necessarily be expected that the results be identical and tally all of the time; the polluting impact of the Steel Works seems to be mainly felt in the vicinity of the Prince Street Site and the extent as to how each site would be impacted was dependent upon some variables including, which sources in the vicinity the blast furnaces were producing the pollution and which direction the wind is blowing at any given time.

Following scrutiny, the committee noted the report.

5. **Access to Meetings**

**RESOLVED:** that pursuant to Section 100A(4) and (5) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded for the following items of business which involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 14 of Part 4 of Schedule 12A to the above Act.

6. **Pre-Decision Scrutiny of Private Item/s**

The committee scrutinised the following private cabinet item:

**Passenger Transport Subsidised Network**

Members were updated on the private report on the Passenger Transport Subsidised Network.

Following scrutiny, the committee noted the report.

**CHAIRPERSON**

## **Cabinet Scrutiny Committee**

**(Via Microsoft Teams)**

**Members Present:**

**8 January 2021**

**Chairperson:** **Councillor M.Harvey**

**Vice Chairperson:** **Councillor S.Rahaman**

**Councillors:** S.E.Freeguard, N.T.Hunt, S.K.Hunt, A.Llewelyn, S.Miller, R.Mizen, J.D.Morgan, S.Paddison, L.M.Purcell, S.M.Penry, S.H.Reynolds and A.N.Woolcock

**Officers In Attendance** A.Evans, A.Jarrett, H.Jenkins, C.Griffiths, K.Jones, D.Giles, A.Thomas, S.Brennan, K.Warren, I.Finnemore, K.Gilbert, N.Pearce, M.Shaw, J.Woodman-Ralph, C.Plowman and C.Davies

**Cabinet Invitees:** Councillors C.Clement-Williams, D.Jones, L.Jones, R.G.Jones, E.V.Latham, A.R.Lockyer, P.A.Rees, P.D.Richards and A.Wingrave

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### **1. Declaration of Interest**

The following member made a declaration of interest at the commencement of the meeting:

Cllr. C. Clement-Williams -

Re. Item 10 - Proposed Creation and Extinguishment Orders for the footpath from Hodgsons Road to the river Tawe Community of Ystalyfera – as she has relatives living in Hodgsons Road.

## 2. **Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

The Minutes of the previous meeting held on the 11<sup>th</sup> November 2020, were approved.

## 3. **Pre-decision Scrutiny**

The Committee scrutinised the following Cabinet items:

### The Commitment to a Preferred IT System to Support Social Services Functions

Members were updated in relation to a preferred IT system to support Social Services functions.

Discussions took place ascertaining whether the proposed system would be compatible with the Health Service to retain effective collaborative working. It was explained that the IT system would be made available to relevant Health staff to enhance team working.

It was highlighted that updated versions of Oracle would be available within the next couple of years. It was asked how the remodelling of Adult Services would fit in with the IT update timescales. It was noted that the updates would enhance the remodelling of Adult Services. It was noted that as the remodelling continues the Council would update to the relevant IT system as required.

Members discussed the earliest date as to when the Council would realistically migrate on to the WCCIS platform. Officers confirmed that they wouldn't consider changing their views within the next 5 years.

The risk elements were queried, such as the allocation of IT staffing resources and funding of the work. Officers assured members that the skill set to develop the system was within the team and a plan had been considered to ensure there were resources within the team. It was also noted that there would be a transfer of budget reserves from Social Services to the Central IT Team to cover the costs.

It was asked whether we would be at a disadvantage for keeping our I.T system in house. Officers confirmed that the council wouldn't be at a disadvantage as the IT system would be tailored specifically for Neath Port Talbot.



Following scrutiny, the Committee was supportive of the proposal to be considered by the Cabinet Board.

Proposed Creation and Extinguishment Orders for the footpath from Hodgsons Road to the river Tawe – Community of Ystalyfera

(Cllr. Clement Williams re-affirmed her interest at this point and withdrew from the meeting)

Officers made an amendment to the report, changing Ward Affected from 'Ystalyfera' to 'Godregraig'.

Following scrutiny, the Committee was supportive of the proposal to be considered by the Cabinet Board.

4. **Forward Work Programme 2020/21**

The Forward Work Programme was noted.

**CHAIRPERSON**

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## **Cabinet Scrutiny Committee**

**(Via Microsoft Teams)**

**Members Present:**

**13 January 2021**

**Chairperson:** **Councillor M.Harvey**

**Vice Chairperson:** **Councillor S.Rahaman**

**Councillors:** S.E.Freeguard, S.K.Hunt, D.Keogh, S.A.Knoyle, A.Llewelyn, S.Miller, R.Mizen, J.D.Morgan, S.Paddison, L.M.Purcell, S.H.Reynolds and A.N.Woolcock

**Officers In Attendance:** A.Evans, A.Jarrett, H.Jenkins, C.Davies, C.Griffiths, K.Jones, C.Plowman, H.Jones, N.Pearce, R.Davies, R.Turner and J.Woodman-Ralph

**Cabinet Invitees:** Councillors C.Clement-Williams, D.Jones, L.Jones, R.G.Jones, A.R.Lockyer, P.A.Rees, P.D.Richards and A.Wingrave

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### **1. Pre-decision Scrutiny**

The committee scrutinised the following cabinet items:

#### **Revenue Budget Update and Monitoring Report 2020-21**

The Committee was presented with the Revenue Budget Update and Monitoring Report 2020-21 which provided an overview of the financial implications of COVID 19 on the Council's Financial Resources and 2020/21 Budget.

Detailed in the circulated reported it stated that Welsh Government had funded £424k for loss of income for the Arts Venues during the period April to June, to which it was asked how that money had been utilised. It was noted that the Council had budgeted for income for the whole of the year; the venues had been closed for nine months, and staff expected them to be closed for the remaining three months of the year. This money was mentioned to be the total value of income

that the Council would have been generating, which covered the costs therefore all costs had been re-funded. It was added that the Arts Venues staff had not been furloughed, and instead had been re-deployed.

In relation to residential placements for children at risk, the report stated that there had been an £385k overspend; it was asked whether the Council was anticipating that the need for more residential placements would increase further. Officers confirmed that this year there had been just over two additional placements; the budget had been increase by two placements as there were now 11 children in placement and staff were expecting it to stay around this number for some time. It was noted that the Council were not anticipating additional residential care need, above the 11 that were mentioned, although this was difficult to assess. Officers anticipated that there would be increased pressures on the Looked After Children (LAC) system as a result of the impact of COVID 19; however, expected that this could be dealt with within the foster care systems, as most additional care placements would be in foster care and not in residential care.

The report highlighted that Welsh Government funding was being made available for the period July to March, to increase the hourly rate paid (by £1 per hour) to providers of domiciliary care who were experiencing additional costs due to the pandemic; it was asked whether increase in pay was just for the external providers. It was noted that Welsh Government had made various packages of additional funding available to residential and home care; in terms of the home care, the £1 pay increase was for the external providers, however the Council would be reimbursed £1 for both external and internal providers, therefore the in-house services would also be benefiting from this.

The Communication and Marketing overspend was stated to be at £26k due to additional costs incurred from the impact COVID 19, such as signage, banners; Welsh Government had only funded 25% of costs and Members mentioned that this percentage was disappointing. Officers mentioned that Welsh Government had provided a significant amount of financial support as highlighted in the report, however in some instances they had said they were not going to be covering all costs as they believed that some of the Councils base budgets and overall contingencies and resources should contribute towards particular overspends.

Members were informed that the Community Care Management had a £78k underspend, which was largely due to a reduction in the number of payments made to external assessors for Deprivation of Liberty (DOLS) assessments; it was asked whether the rules for these applications had changed or if individuals had been missed out in this context, as the underspend was quite significant. It was highlighted that this wasn't the case and that the number of DOLS assessments being carried out had been impacted by COVID 19, which was reflected in the underspend; Officers confirmed they would find out the detail of the waiting list for these assessments and provide Members with the information accordingly.

Following scrutiny, the committee was supportive of the proposals to be considered by Cabinet.

#### Draft Budget for Consultation 2021/22

The Draft Budget for Consultation 2021/22 was presented to Members which included draft budget proposals, financial savings, service reductions and income generation proposals; subject to Cabinet approval, it was proposed that the consultation would take place following the meeting and last up to 12 February 2021.

The Chair highlighted that the individual Scrutiny Committees would be given the opportunity to scrutinise areas of the draft budget, within their remits, in more detail in their upcoming meetings.

It was stated that the proposals included in the report took into account the Provisional Local Government Settlement that was announced by Welsh Government in the lead up to Christmas. Officers mentioned that the report proposed to set a budget of £317m which was inclusive of using £3.1m reserves, going to consult on 3.75% council tax increase and investment proposals of around £7.7m on top of inflation, mainly to deliver on the increase in demand for services for the next financial year; there will be further work needed in respect of future financial years, once COVID 19 was no longer a challenge and the UK Government had carried out their spending reviews, giving indicative funding levels into subsequent financial years.

Neath Port Talbot's provisional settlement was noted to be sixth out of the 22 Local Authorities in terms of revised budget share from Welsh Government, however Neath Port Talbot continually had either the second or third highest council tax rates in Wales, with a proposed increase of 3.75% for the next financial year; Members

asked how was this being justified by Welsh Government. Officers confirmed that Welsh Government had given a general settlement increase of 3.8% across the whole of Wales; Neath Port Talbot's increase was better than the average, at 4.2%. It was highlighted that one of the major drivers of the formula, to distribute the £4.6billion across all 22 Local Authorities in Wales, was population; population in Neath Port Talbot had slightly improved compared to the all Wales position which was one of the major changes and reasons why some Local Authorities had benefited more than others.

Members asked if Welsh Government could be influenced to change the standard spending assessment as part of the final settlement as it currently did not meet the needs of some Councils. It was noted that this was something that could be looked into for future years; to be able to have better influence and opportunities to obtain better resources. It was mentioned that it would not be beneficial for anyone to try and do this between now and the final settlement for this financial year.

Officers were asked to provide comment on the patterns of reserves reflected in the figures provided by the Director of Finance and Corporate Services.

Financial Year	Closing General Reserve	General Reserve as % of Budget
2018/19	£20.9m	7.4%
2019/20	£19.9m	6.9%
2020/21 (forecast)	£14.6m	4.8%
2020/21 (draft budget)	£12m	3.8%

It was explained that the original forecast for the end of this financial year (2020/21) was impacted by COVID 19; the new forecast was detailed in the table above. The report noted some of the prudent measures the Council had adopted in recent years, plus the significant council tax collection rates that were achieved; the Council had been achieving between 97.9% - 98% collection rates in previous years, which had boosted the amount of monies that were held in the general reserves. It was added that this had helped put the Council in a better position this year to be able to propose, as part of draft budget, to use a further £3.1m for the next financial year to enable the Council to be in a better financial position for 2022/23, when

further considerations were taken into account in the budget setting process around what was affordable and the priorities of the Council.

It was asked if the actual wording of the consultation, which was going out to the public to respond, could be shared with Members. Officers agreed to circulate the wording to Members and highlighted that it would also be uploaded onto the Councils website. Members were provided with the following information in relation to the aim of the consultation, which was a Council budget setting process for 2021/22 questionnaire, and the types of issues it was going to raise:

- Confirms that the Council's gross investment in Council Services was around £445m, and that there was a £3.2m gap in order to face the budget next year
- References and links to the report circulated to the Committee (Draft Budget for Consultation 2021/22)
- Highlights the facts that the Council was consulting on using £3.1m of general reserves, increasing council tax by 3.75% and using measures of savings an income generation already approved by Council last year (135k to be used)
- Provides indication of what an increase of 3.75% in council tax is and asks the public for their views around the increase
- Explains general reserves and gives examples of what is meant by general reserves and the potential use of the £3.1m
- Asks for any suggestions on ways the Council could generate income or save money.
- Asks if there were any Council Services that individuals think should be protected, reduced and/or stopped altogether
- Asks questions in relation to the £7.7m worth of investments the Council were making and if the public agreed with them

It was added that the consultation this year would be slightly different due to COVID 19; the Council would be encouraging through social media platforms and other measures for the public to consult and respond to this consultation.

It was asked if the proposed 3.75% increase in council tax could be reconsidered after the consultation had concluded, due to the significant financial impact that COVID 19 has had on the public. It was stated that all Members were included in the budget setting and were encouraged to get involved in this process by promoting the consultation to their communities to take part and submitting

information in regards to suggestions and ideas in altering, changing or improving the budget.

Members were informed that the proposed 3.75% increase in council tax was lower than the council tax set for the current financial year and the Council were doing their utmost in appreciating those businesses and individuals affected by COVID 19; the Council had paid £32m so far in relation to business grants since the outbreak of the virus. It was added that there were no cuts proposed in the budget and one of the priorities was improving settlements within individual departments; it was the first time the Council had taken a significant amount of money out of reserves in order to compensate for the unjust settlements that had been in place for some time.

A discussion took place in relation to the reserves and if there were any implications based on what was proposed. Officers stated that the predicted reserves for the end of this year was £14.6m (4.8%) and should the Council be provided with additional income loss refunds from Welsh Government, that position may improve; the Council had recently been asked to prepare a loss of income claim for the quarter which ended in December and there were indications that a further claim could be made for this next coming quarter. It was noted that the external auditors will want to see the Councils plans for a sustainable budget going forward from 2022/23; the UK Government hadn't announced their spending review for funding levels beyond 2022, that information would hopefully be available late summer/early autumn and work will be carried out by Officers and the Cabinet over the summer to try and develop strategies to have balanced budgets from 2022/23 onwards. Officers added that they were not expecting any challenges from auditors based on the proposals the Council was putting in front of Cabinet and the public, as part of the consultation process. It was highlighted that previously, external auditors and other had stated that anywhere in the region of 3-5% was appropriate for Councils to have, and at around 3.8% predicted by the end of next year meant that Neath Port Talbot Council were within that appropriate level; however, additional work needed to be carried out imminently for 2022/23 as the Council couldn't continue to take £3.1m reserves out year on year.

The committee thanked all of the staff in Finance Services for their work throughout the COVID 19 pandemic.

Following scrutiny, the committee was supportive of the proposals to be considered by Cabinet



2. **Forward Work Programme 2020/21**

The committee noted the Cabinet Scrutiny Forward Work Programme 2020/21.

3. **Access to Meetings**

**RESOLVED:** that pursuant to Section 100A(4) and (5) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded for the following items of business which involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 14 of Part 4 of Schedule 12A to the above Act.

4. **Pre-Decision Scrutiny of Private Item/s**

The committee scrutinised the following private Cabinet item:

Delivery of Disabled Facility Grants for Bridgend County Borough Council

Members were presented with a private report on the Delivery of Disabled Facility Grants for Bridgend County Borough Council.

Following scrutiny, the committee was supportive of the proposal to be considered by Cabinet.

**CHAIRPERSON**

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## NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

### CABINET SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

#### REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF FINANCE AND CORPORATE SERVICES

3<sup>rd</sup> February 2021

#### SECTION A – MATTER FOR SCRUTINY

WARDS AFFECTED: ALL

#### CONSULTATION ON 2021/22 BUDGET PROPOSALS

##### 1. Purpose of Report

To provide Members of the Cabinet Scrutiny Committee with supplementary information regarding the 2021/22 draft budget proposals as set out in the Cabinet Report of 13<sup>th</sup> January 2021, with a view to aiding the scrutiny of those proposals. Consultation on the Draft Budget proposals is ongoing until the 12 February 2021 prior to final budget decisions taking place on the 8/9 March 2021.

##### 2. Executive Summary

The draft budget proposals for consultation approved by Cabinet on 13<sup>th</sup> January 2021 shows a funding gap of £3.235m for the 2021/22 financial year.

The proposals included a small number of savings strategies which have already been scrutinised, consulted on and were approved by Council on 6th March 2020.

The report also detailed that a draft contribution of £3.1m from general reserves is required to balance the 2021/22 budget position.

This report sets out relevant areas for this scrutiny committee to consider as part of the consultation process.

### 3. Background

Neath Port Talbot Council's net revenue budget for the current year of 2020/21 amounts to £304.082m and together with grants and income from services results in a gross budget of £445m which is invested in services across the County Borough.

The following table summarises the Council's Funding and Net Budget for 2020/21.

<b>Funding 2020/21</b>	<b>Budget</b>	<b>Budget</b>
	<b>£m</b>	<b>%</b>
Revenue Support Grant	£177.353	58.32%
National Non Domestic Rates	£49.409	16.25%
Discretionary Rates Relief	-£0.387	-0.13%
Council Tax	£77.707	25.56%
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>£304.082</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

<b>Net Budget 2020/21</b>	<b>Budget</b>	<b>Budget</b>
	<b>£m</b>	<b>%</b>
Education, Leisure & Lifelong Learning (including Schools at £90.137m)	£116.019	38.15%
Social Services, Health & Housing	£83.281	27.39%
Environment	£39.525	13.00%
Finance & Corporate Services	£18.208	5.99%
Fire Authority	£7.891	2.60%
Capital Financing	£19.282	6.34%
Council Tax Support	£18.748	6.16%
Other including Contingency	£2.778	0.91%
Use of Reserves	-£1.650	-0.54%
<b>Budget Requirement</b>	<b>£304.082</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

#### 4. 2021/22 Budget Proposals

On the 22<sup>nd</sup> December 2020 the Welsh Government (WG) published details of the 2021/22 Provisional Local Government Settlement. This shows that WG will increase its funding to Local Government by £4.651bn, a 3.8% increase on the adjusted base for 2020/21. Neath Port Talbot Council's share is £236.680m which is 6<sup>th</sup> best in Wales and an increase of £9.9m or 4.2%.

For 2021/22 the total draft funds available to run Council Services is £317m but this remains short of what is required to meet inflation, pay awards and other demand pressures which total £320.2m. Therefore there is a funding shortfall next year of £3.235m.

The Cabinet report of 13<sup>th</sup> January 2021 sets out the draft proposals to close that gap by implementing the already approved cuts/income generation of £135k, use of £3.1m of general reserves and increase council tax by 3.75% to balance the budget. Details are set out in the tables below:

#### Estimated increase in Budget required 2021/22

	£'000
<b>Net Budget 2020/21</b>	<b>304,082</b>
Pay Awards and inflation	6,602
Pressures	7,739
Transfers into 2021/22 settlement	186
Reverse use of General Reserves 20/21	1,650
<b>Draft Budget Required 2021/22</b>	<b>320,259</b>

#### Estimated total funding available 2021/22

	£'000
<b>Net Budget 2020/21</b>	<b>304,082</b>
Increase in WG Funding	9,918
Increase in Council Tax proceeds @ 3.75%	3,024

<b>Draft Funds Available 2021/22</b>	<b>317,024</b>
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### **Draft Budget Gap 2021/22**

	<b>£'000</b>
Total Budget Required 2021/22	320,259
Estimated Funds Available	317,024
<b>Total Budget Gap 2021/22</b>	<b>3,235</b>
<b>Budget Gap to be funded by</b>	
Use of General Reserves 2021/22	-3,100
Savings/Income Generation Proposals already approved	-135

## **5. Service Pressures**

Of the £7.739m Pressures outlined above £1.75m relate to the services overviewed by this Scrutiny Committee. In addition there are £1.537m of one-off pressures which are proposed to be funded from specific reserves.

Details of these pressures are outlined in Appendix 1 of this report.

## **6. Savings / Income Generation Proposals**

The budget proposals for 2021/22 include savings/income generation strategies totalling £135k. These have already been the subject of consultation and scrutiny as part of the 2020/21 budget setting proposal and are included in this report for information only, but will, as appropriate, be updated for timing or changes in value.

Details of proposals relevant to this Scrutiny Committee are included in Appendix 2.

## 7. Financial Outlook

The latest Medium Term Financial Plan position is outlined in the table below:

	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
	£'000	£'000	£'000
Budget Gap before Directorate Savings	3,235	15,981	17,318
<b>Cumulative Gap</b>	<b>3,235</b>	<b>19,216</b>	<b>36,534</b>
FFP Reductions	-135	-176	-50
Funded from General Reserves	-3,100		
Budget Gap (gross of use of reserves) @ Jan 2021	0	18,905	17,268
<b>Cumulative Gap @ Jan 2021</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>18,905</b>	<b>36,173</b>

Members should however be aware that there are a number of factors which could impact on the Council's financial position going forward.

Due to the impact of Covid19 the Chancellor of the Exchequer has delayed his Budget Statement until 3 March 2021, with a further multi-year UK Government Spending Review announcement due later in 2021, which will inform public spending plans for the next few years. The outcome of that review will allow the Welsh Government to develop plans and hopefully multi-year funding settlements for 2022/23 and onwards.

WG also confirmed that the current settlement and specific grants exclude Covid related funding. Members will note that for 2021/22 the UK Government is providing WG with an additional £770m for Covid related costs.

Given the adverse impact that Covid19 is having on the whole of the UK economy and on Government taxes we should expect that there will be ongoing budget challenges for the next few years.

Members should note though that work is ongoing to verify whether additional budgets are required for the following items. If so they will need to be built into the final budget decisions due in March 2021:

- Legislation
- Any reduction in specific grants affecting service need
- Any changes identified as part of the final Local Government Settlement or UK Government announcements.

Continuous monitoring and appropriate changes will be made re Brexit, other economic, public spending and taxation matters including those mentioned by the Chancellor in his Budget announcement due on 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2021.

## 8. Opportunities and Threats for Services

The Corporate Services budget for 2020/21 total's £18.406m, this report includes savings/cuts/income generation of £50k for 2021/22 and a total of £80k for the period 2022/23 to 2023/24. Details of these savings are shown in the table below:

Division	2020/21 Revised Budget £'000	Savings Proposals		
		2021/22 £'000	2022/23 £'000	2023/24 £'000
Democratic and Corporate Services including Digital Services	8,253	50	30	50
Legal Services	2,457			
Human Resources	2,498			
Finance	3,646			
Directorate Management and Third Sector Grants	1,552			
<b>Total</b>	<b>18,406</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>50</b>

The savings proposed for 2021/22 to 2023/24 have already been scrutinised and agreed as part of the 2020/21 budget setting process.



## **Funding for unavoidable service pressures – base budget**

Appendix 1 of this report details additional funding proposed for inclusion in the 2021/22 budget to deal with unavoidable service pressures within Corporate Services. Further information on these pressures are included below:

### **Legal and Democratic Services – £142k**

- Procurement - £5k has been included to cover the full year impact of an additional post. The post was required in order to manage increased workloads in the team, primarily in relation to Social Services and Environment contracts.
- Information Governance – A pressure of £47k is included to fund an additional member of staff. This team helps to ensure that the Council complies with its legislative requirements in relation information governance and data protection.
- Property – An additional £60k has been included to fund additional staff resources required as a result of the increased workload for the team from the City Deal Programme and other development work.
- Land Charges and Legal Services - £25k and £5k respectively have been included to cover reduced income levels resulting from a change in HMRC tax liability and an increase in the rate of fees payable to the Information Commissioners Office.

### **Human Resources and Organisational Development – £97k**

- Media – A pressure of £35k has been included to provide additional capacity for this service area which has seen unprecedented demand during the last year.
- A pressure of £27k has been included to help the Council further understand the poverty issues within the County Borough. By including this pressure in the base budget we will be able to continue to fund a system which enables the

Council to understand who is facing financial hardship and the opportunities that may exist to mitigate that.

- Corporate Policy - £35k has been included to provide increased capacity for the team. The Local Government and Elections Act 2021 is proposing a number of significant changes including amendments to the voting franchise and changes to performance management arrangements which will impact on the workload of the team.

#### Digital Services – £160k

- £50k and £30k have been included in relation to the increased cost of licences. The £50k is for Microsoft Licences and is due to the number of staff now working from home and therefore requiring access to more Microsoft products. The £30k relates to an increase in the cost of Computer Aided Design (CAD) package licences; as used by architects and engineers.
- A £50k pressure has been included to fund additional staff resources in order to allow the service to provide increased support for users of external IT applications. Specifically the proposal will bring together a number of activities involving the provision of support to various databases. It will remove duplication, improve resilience and free up capacity in a number of services which can then be redirected to support council priorities or converted into cashable savings to support the Council's overall budget position
- £30k has been included to develop automated processes which will replace manual repetitive work. Following Council's approval of "smart and Connected" – our revised digital strategy, we have been piloting a range of new approaches. Robotic Process Improvement in our HR team has shown there is a business case for scaling up the use of this technology across other manual and repetitive processes. This investment is expected to release capacity which can either be redirected to other council priorities or converted into cashable savings to assist the Council's overall budget position

### Finance – £25k

- A £25k pressure has been included due to a reduction in income from the Department of Work and Pensions for the Housing Benefit Service.

### Corporate - £1,250k

- £500k has been included to increase the Council Tax Support budget. Unfortunately since the start of the pandemic the number of people requiring Council Tax support has increased by over 500. There is also the possibility that this number will rise even further when the UK Government's Job Support Scheme (Furlough) comes to an end.
- A pressure of £250k has been included to fund the cost of pay increments arising from changes to the Green Book pay and grading structure across all Services.
- Contingency – A general contingency of £500k has been included in the base budget in order to deal with unforeseen events including the recent severe flooding.

### Other - £76k

The following budget pressure relates to a service which will transfer to the purview of the Education, Skills and Culture Scrutiny Committee following the changes to senior management approved at Personnel Committee on 7<sup>th</sup> January 2021.

It is included in this report for scrutiny as the budget will be re-aligned with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021 and this will be reflected in the final budget report to Cabinet and Council in March.

- Domestic Violence - £76k has been included to provide continuity of funding for two additional Independent Domestic Violence Advisors. Unfortunately the service has seen a substantial increase in demand due partly to the Coronavirus Pandemic. These staff work with those facing the greatest risk of violence and harm. Caseloads are unsafe if these posts are not sustained.

## **Funding from specific reserves**

Funding has been provided from the Corporate Contingency reserve for the following time limited pressures:

### **Safe and Well Service**

£66k has been allocated to continue the provision of this service into 2021/22 as the Coronavirus pandemic continues and the most vulnerable in our communities still require ongoing support. Ongoing support for communities will, in due course, be addressed as part of the recovery planning.

### **Procurement**

£45k per annum for two years has been provided to support the procurement team deal with a temporary increase in demand for their services. The team will be required to support new contractual arrangements in relation to Leisure, Margam Park and Waste Services.

### **Information Governance**

An allocation of £47k per annum has been provided for two years to fund an additional member of staff to deal with information governance and data protection issues.

## **Other issues**

A number of initiatives and developments which will impact on Corporate Services need to be monitored to ensure that both operational and financial implications are understood. These include but are not limited to:

- The Ongoing Coronavirus Pandemic in relation to demand on Council Services
- Brexit
- UK and Welsh Government Public Spending plans
- The Local Government and Elections Act 2022 including web casting; performance self-evaluation and peer reviews; and the introduction of Corporate Joint Committees (CJC's).
- The effect of Covid-19 on staff availability and health
- Loss of experienced senior staff
- Implementation of a new integrated HR / Payroll system

- The City Deal Programme
- Inclement weather including recent severe flooding
- Re-tendering of the Leisure Services contract
- Changes to the procurement and information governance regime stemming from new legislation that will come from the UK Government
- Proposed changes on the law in respect of registration services
- As the Council transitions into recovery and a 'new normal' employees and managers will require different tools and skills sets to operate in what will no doubt be a changed environment.

This is not an exhaustive list and any significant developments will be reported to this Scrutiny committee if and when appropriate.

## **9. 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.

## **10. 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.”

This draft budget consultation report refers to the need to make budget savings, cuts or generate extra income of £135k in 2021/22 together with the use of £3.1m from General Reserves with a further

budget gap of £36m over the following 2 years, assuming that WG don't provide any increased funding in both years. Individual Impact Assessments for specific service reduction and income generating proposals have previously been undertaken and hence not included in this report as there are no new proposals for next year.

## **11. Workforce Impacts**

Any impacts on the workforce are set out in this report.

## **12. Consultation**

A public consultation will run from 13<sup>th</sup> January 2021 to 12<sup>th</sup> February 2021. The savings/income generation proposals will not be included in this consultation as they have already been consulted on and approved by Council.

## **13. Recommendation**

It is recommended that Members review and scrutinise the proposals included in this report.

## **14. Appendices**

Appendix 1 - - Revenue Service Pressures 2021 to 2024 & Budget Pressures funded from Specific Reserves  
Appendix 2 – Savings/Income Generation proposals previously approved

## **15. Background Papers**

Budget working papers

## **16. Officer Contact**

For further information on this report item, please contact:

Mrs. Karen Jones – Chief Executive  
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Mr Hywel Jenkins – Director of Finance & Corporate Services  
E-mail: [h.jenkins@npt.gov.uk](mailto:h.jenkins@npt.gov.uk)

## Revenue Service Pressures &amp; Investment 2021 to 2024

Ref	Board	Service area	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
			£'000	£'000	£'000
CORP17	CAB	Housing Benefit Admin Subsidy Grant reductions	25	25	25
CORP19	CAB	Procurement Online Resources - Current Sell to Wales and e-tendering services possible end of WG payment delayed until 2022	0	40	0
CORP21	CAB	ICT Microsoft Licence - increased costs	50	0	0
CORP22	CAB	Procurement - full year impact from additional post provided in 2020 to manage increased Social Services and Environment contracts	5	0	0
CORP23	CAB	Local Government & Elections Act - 1 post built in to provide additional capacity. Further implications and impacts will be reviewed in year including web casting, cost of Peer Review process, CJC's/petitioning etc.	35	0	0
CORP24	CAB	Domestic violence - 2 additional Posts - due to increased caseloads due to Covid and the need for resilience in the service.	76	0	0
CORP25	CAB	Media additional posts - to improve service resilience and to deliver the service via different methods (currently funded from TTP grant)	35	35	0
CORP26	CAB	Increased cost requirements for architects and engineers (CAD) IT Design Licences	30	0	0
CORP27	CAB	IT Coordination administration - for external IT applications	50	0	0
CORP28	CAB	IT costs re automated process to carry out repetitive processing work	30	0	0
CORP29	CAB	Poverty data analysis and support	27	0	0
CORP30	CAB	Information Governance - additional member of staff to manage information governance and data protection work	47	0	0
CORP31	CAB	Land Charges - reduced income levels as a result of HMRC Tax Liability for Official Search Fees	25	0	0
CORP32	CAB	Legal Services - Data Protection Fee increase for Council and Registration Service as set by Information Commissioner's Office	5	0	0
CORP33	CAB	City Deal Property Legal Support	60	0	0

## Revenue Service Pressures &amp; Investment 2021 to 2024

Ref	Board	Service area	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
			£'000	£'000	£'000
OTH009	CAB	New Green Book pay scale additional annual cost provision	250	250	0
CONT8	CAB	Council tax support - increase in claimants following COVID19	500	0	0
CONT1	CAB	General Contingency	500	3,000	3,000
CONT7	CAB	Capital financing costs re 21st Century Schools Band B investment	0	800	0
		<b>Total</b>	<b>1,750</b>	<b>4,150</b>	<b>3,025</b>



## Revenue Service Pressures &amp; Investment 2021 to 2024

## Budget Pressures funded from Specific Reserves

Ref	Board	Service area	2021/22	2022/23	Comment
			£'000	£'000	
CORP34	CAB	Procurement - additional resources to manage Leisure, Margam Park and Waste contracts for 2 years	45	45	
CORP35	CAB	Safe & Well - 2 Posts to facilitate the service in 2021/22.	66	0	
CORP36	CAB	Information Governance - 3rd member of staff to work on audit of information governance and data protection work for 2 years	47	47	
		<b>Total from Corporate Contingency Reserve</b>	<b>1,437</b>	<b>92</b>	The Reserve has an estimated balance of £2.221m at 31 March 2021
CORP39	CAB	Digital Services - Rewrite of Social Services system	100	100	
		<b>Total from IT Renewals Reserve</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	The Reserve has an estimated balance of £761k at 31 March 2021

## Savings / Income Generation Previously Approved

Ref	Board	Description	Lead	Main Impacts	Net Budget 2020/21	% Savings	2021/22 £000	2022/23 £000	2023/24 £000
CORP 902	CAB	Reduce management cost - Asst Chief Exec and Digital Services	Karen Jones	Full year effect from 2020/21 of Management review following staff turnover.	8,197	0%	30	0	0
CORP 903	CAB	Digital strategy - further transformation of customer services	Karen Jones	Following success of the Digital strategy this has enabled further remodelling of customers to reflect a shift in customer volumes between face to face, online and telephone channels. This will mean a gradual reduction in face to face services. Automation of telephone calls at contact Centre Service leading to a reduction in the number of jobs. Continued since 2019.	568	4%	20	0	0
CORP 904	CAB	Income generation - info asset sponsorship - implementing the corporate communications and community relations strategy	Karen Jones	Income Generation and Digital Strategy - Introduce targeted sponsorship and advertising policy for the Council's information assets, based on ethically and commercially sound policy. The business case is being developed and is likely to require pump prime funding i.e. invest to save. Delayed due to Covid19 to 2022/23 on.	N/A	N/A	0	30	50
		<b>Total</b>					<b>50</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>50</b>

**DRAFT**  
**Cabinet Scrutiny Committee**  
**Forward Work Programme 2020/21**

Date of Meeting	Agenda Item	Officer
21 October		
4 November		
11 November	(Special Budget)	
25 November		

9 December	Test, Trace and Protect – update	
	Covid -19 Recovery Strategy (inclusion of Local Area Co-ordinators)	
6 January		
13 January		
3 February	Budget	
Special Meeting (Date TBC)	Public Services Board – look at the Health Board specifically and have a representative from the Health Board attend the meeting	

24 February		
8 March	(Special Budget)	
7 April		
21 April		

**Items to be programmed in for future meetings**

- Urgency Actions to be reported back for information

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