

NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

10th January 2025

SECTION A – MATTER FOR DECISION

WARDS AFFECTED: ALL

DRAFT BUDGET FOR CONSULTATION 2025/26

Purpose of Report

To seek Member approval to consult on the draft budget proposals for 2025/26.

To confirm that consultation will take place to the 31st January 2025 prior to reviewing responses and setting a budget for 2025/26 at Full Council on 5th March 2025.

Executive Summary

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 our County Borough citizens and stakeholders in relation to the issues set out in this report. Final decisions on setting the Council's 2025/26 budget will be required to be taken at Full Council on 5th March 2025.

Context

Recent years have been characterised by considerable volatility as a result of world and domestic events.

- The pandemic period has left a significant legacy with high numbers of people requiring support from social services, homelessness services and more young people presenting with additional learning needs and more young people needing additional help to attend school and participate in their education;
- The war in Ukraine caused a further economic shock which saw energy prices, general inflation and interest rates sharply increase.

Although inflation has now returned to below 2%, many goods and services remain more costly and energy prices and interest rates remain high;

- The cost of living crisis continues with many of our residents and local businesses experiencing financial hardship;
- Whilst there has been a small increase in the number of people unemployed, the labour market remains very competitive and this is reflected in higher prices for services. The council is also continuing to experience difficulty filling some roles in our organisation. A worrying large number of people of working age are economically inactive and not looking for work;
- Capital projects have become more challenging to deliver as a consequence of a number of factors identified above; and
- Whilst the Council is engaged in a range of significant economic development opportunities and is also a key partner in responding to the changes at Tata Steel UK Ltd, the cumulative impact of these developments is challenging to resource.

The revenue settlements from Welsh Government in the last two financial years – 2023/24 and 2024/25 fell substantially short of what the Council needed to deliver its services and functions.

Additional pressures of some £70 million were identified for the two year period with Welsh Government providing some £26.9 million funding. Budget cuts, additional income, including council tax increases have been necessary to balance the budget – the associated change management activity has increased workloads, placing further pressure across the organisation.

Background

Neath Port Talbot Council's net revenue budget for the current year of 2024/25 amounts to £376.599m and together with grants and income from services results in a gross budget of c£550m which is invested in services across the County Borough.

There is a statutory duty on the Council to set a balanced budget each financial year. Prior to setting the budget the Council has a duty to consult stakeholders on changes to the Budget

Current Year's Budget 2024/25

Neath Port Talbot Council approved its 2024/25 budget on 7th March 2024.

The following table summarises Council's Budget and Funding.

	Budget	Budget
	£m	%
Service Area		
Delegated Schools	106.458	28%
Education, Leisure & Lifelong Learning	33.125	9%
Social Services, Housing and Community Safety	113.699	30%
Environment	46.515	12%
Finance / Strategy & Corporate Services	21.366	6%
Fire Authority	10.799	3%
Capital Financing	19.603	5%
Council Tax Support	20.784	6%
Other including Pay Contingency	4.250	1%
Total	376.599	100%
Funded by		
Welsh Government - Aggregate External Finance (AEF)	285.594	76%
Council Tax	91.393	24%
Discretionary rate relief	-0.388	
Total Funding	376.599	

Provisional Local Government Settlement 2025/26

The Welsh Government's Provisional Local Government Settlement was published on 11th December 2025. The headline increase in the settlement is an all-Wales average of 7.2% however; after taking account of transfers into the settlement; the actual like for like increase is only 4.3%.

Neath Port Talbot has received an increase in funding of 4.4% which is the tenth highest in Wales.

Whilst an increase in funding is clearly welcome compared to the planning assumption of no increase in revenue support grant, the actual funding increase is still nowhere near sufficient to meet existing pressures.

On an all-Wales basis the WLGA has estimated that local government faces a funding gap next year of c£560m whereas the 4.3% increase represents additional funding of only £253m, less than half the amount required.

Inevitably as a result of the above local councils will need to make difficult decisions around both cuts to services and increases to council tax levels. In determining how much funding to allocate to Councils the Welsh Government have assumed that council tax will rise by an average of 9.3%.

2025/26 Budget Overview

The table below details the amount of funding needed to run Council Services in 2025/26 and the funding available.

2025/26 Budget Summary

	£'000	£'000
2024/25 Budget		376,599
2025/26 Cost Increases		
Specific grants transferred into the settlement allocated to services (Appendix 1)	4,953	
Pay and inflation including changes to national insurance thresholds (Appendix 2)	23,116	
Service pressures and investments in services (see Appendix 3)	14,940	
Total cost increases		43,009
Anticipated specific grant to fund national insurance threshold changes		-5,855
Total Budget Required		413,753
Funded by		
Council Tax 2024/25 level		-91,393
Estimated additional council tax generated from premiums on second homes and long term empty properties		-1,500

Welsh Government funding as per provisional settlement		-306,217
Discretionary rate relief		388
Total Funding Available		-398,722
Budget Gap		15,031
Savings and income generation proposals (Appendix 4)		-8,633
Remaining budget gap to be funded by Council Tax increase		6,398
Council tax increase expressed as a percentage		7%

Members should note that a 1% increase in council tax generates income of c£900k however the net effect is actually income of £750k after taking account of the effect of council tax support costs. The cost of council tax support is accounted for in the pay and inflation line of the above table.

Changes to National Insurance thresholds

In the October budget the UK Government announced changes to employers' national insurance contribution thresholds effective from 1st April 2025. The Welsh Government are currently in discussion with the UK Government around the funding mechanism for these uplifts. The Welsh Government have confirmed that funding is not in the revenue support grant and will follow via a specific grant announcement, but this may not take place until early in the 2025/26 financial year.

The situation is further complicated by the fact that Councils in Wales (and across the UK) deliver services differently, with a mix of both in-house and commissioned services.

These budget proposals include an assumption that these costs will be met in full by specific grant which is a significant risk. If this turns out not to be the case this will result in an in-year funding shortfall in 2025/26 which can be funded from reserves but will need to be corrected on a permanent basis from 2026/27 onwards.

Saving and income generation proposals

In early Summer 2024 all services were tasked with identifying savings and income generation proposals amounting to the equivalent of 5% of their net budget. Early engagement was undertaken on these proposals during the Autumn of 2024.

The proposals detailed in Appendix 4, totalling £8.633m, will now be the subject of scrutiny if Members approve the recommendations contained within this report.

Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP)

The Welsh Government have indicated that a further fiscal event in the Spring of 2025 will provide Council's with an indicative multiyear settlement. Once this is received meaningful work can be undertaken to develop a three-year medium term financial strategy and plan.

Integrated Impact Assessment

The Council is subject to the Equality Act (Public Sector Equality Duty and the socio-economic duty), the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure, and must in the exercise of their functions, have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Acts.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Deliver better outcomes for those people who experience socio-economic disadvantage
- Consider opportunities for people to use the Welsh language
- Treat the Welsh language no less favourably than English.
- Ensure that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 mandates that public bodies in Wales must carry out sustainable development. Sustainable development means the process of improving the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales by taking action, in accordance with the sustainable development principle, aimed at achieving the 'well-being goals'.

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 March 2025.

There are no cuts to services proposed requiring individual impact assessments at this stage however an integrated impact first stage assessment is included with this report to demonstrate consideration of these key obligations and will be updated to incorporate findings from the consultation pending final determination in March 2025.

Legal Impacts

The provisions of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 (LGFA 1992) set out what the council has to base its budget calculations upon and require the council to set a balanced budget with regard to the advice of its Chief Finance Officer (section 151).

The Council has a legal duty to provide a range of statutory services, and these duties are not absolved if the budget is set late or not agreed. The setting of the budget is a function reserved to full Council, who will consider the draft budget which has been prepared by the Executive.

Once the budget has been agreed by full Council the Executive cannot make any decisions which conflict with it, although variations and year-in-year changes can be made in accordance with the Financial Procedure Rules. Section 30(6) LGFA 1992 provides that the Council has got to set its budget before 11 March in the financial year preceding the one in respect of which the budget is set. A failure to set or a delay in setting the budget may well affect the council's ability to enter into any new agreements unless the budget is agreed as otherwise these would be potentially unlawful as unfunded commitments.

Councils also have increasingly important financial and corporate governance reputations to keep strong and the failure to set a council tax, or even informal references to a potential failure to set a council tax, would

be likely to have a significant adverse impact on the council's reputation locally and nationally in terms of investor confidence.

The Council as a corporate body and the members, both individually and collectively, have a fiduciary duty to council taxpayers to avoid things that would result in loss of revenue or failure to deliver services along with moral and democratic obligations that this brings.

Workforce Impacts

It is not anticipated that any of the proposals will lead to compulsory redundancies. Any reduction in head count is anticipated to be delivered under the Council's voluntary redundancy scheme.

Consultation

Today will commence the formal consultation with the public and all stakeholders on the draft budget proposals.

Members will note the consultation will commence immediately following Cabinet today and close on 31st January 2025 prior to final decisions being made at Full Council on 5th March 2025.

Recommendation

It is recommended that having due regard to the integrated impact screening assessment that members:

- Commence consultation with the public on a 7% council tax increase.

Reason for Proposed Decision

To commence consultation on the 2025/26 draft budget.

Implementation of Decision

The decision is proposed for immediate implementation with the consent of the Chair of the Community, Finance and Strategic Leadership Scrutiny Committee.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Specific grants transferred into settlement and allocated to service areas

Appendix 2 – Pay and inflation assumptions

Appendix 3 – Services pressures and investments in services

Appendix 4 – Savings and income generation proposals

Appendix 5 – Integrated Impact Screening Assessment

Background Papers

None

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Appendix 1 – Specific grants transferred into settlement and allocated to service areas

Service Area	Grant Detail	£'000
	-	
Schools	Teachers pensions - Specific grant in 2024/25 to fund teachers pension revaluation effective from 1st April 2024	2,805
Schools	Teachers Pay - Specific grant in 2024/25 to fund part year effect of pay award deal effective from 1st September 2024.	839
Housing	Homelessness prevention grants transferred into settlement	1,098
Fire Service Levy	Fire Fighters Pension and pay - Specific grant in 2024/25 to fund teachers pension revaluation effective from 1st April 2024	211
Total		4,953

Appendix 2 – Pay and inflation assumptions

<u>2025/26 Pay and inflation assumptions</u>		
	Base Budget	Assumed change
Expenditure head	£	%
Teachers Pay	83,454	3.00%
Non Teaching Pay	193,175	3.00%
Premises costs excluding utilities	11,380	2.00%
Electricity	6,077	-18.50%
Gas	2,195	-14.00%
Home to school transport	10,673	3.50%
Materials	1,959	2.00%
Waste disposal	7,146	2.00%
Other Services (External Domiciliary Care)	12,444	6.73%
Subcontractors	3,168	2.00%
Levies including Fire Authority	10,846	6.30%
Out of county placements	2,963	3.00%
Contribution to third parties	14,947	0.00%
Residential Care	77,468	6.73%
Foster care allowances	6,264	3.00%
Grants and contributions	13,253	0.00%
Bed and breakfast payments	2,633	3.00%
Council Tax Reduction Scheme	20,784	7.00%
Income	-131,859	0.00%

Appendix 3 – Service pressures and investments in services

Summary		£'000
		2025/26
<u>Directorate</u>	-	
Schools	-	2,600
Education, Leisure and Lifelong Learning	-	410
Environment	-	810
Social Services, Housing and Community Safety	-	8,800
Strategy and Corporate Services	-	20
Other / Council wide	-	2,300
Total	-	14,940

Appendix 3 – Service pressures and investments in services

Directorate	Detail	£'000
		2025/26
	-	
<u>Schools</u>	-	
Schools	Welsh Medium Starter School Neath Abbey	350
Schools	Address historical shortfall in teaching assistant funding	750
Schools	Additional investment in schools delegated budget - Secondary schools only	1,500
Total Schools		2,600
<u>Education, Leisure & Lifelong Learning (ELLL)</u>		
Additional Learning Needs	Additional funding required to fund current out of county placements	350
Project Development and Funding	Additional funding to increase capacity by one post in the project development and funding team	60
Total ELLL		410

Appendix 3 – Service pressures and investments in services

Directorate	Detail	£'000
		2025/26
<u>Environment (ENV)</u>		
Environment general	Base budget funding for posts previously funded from service resilience reserve	500
Environment general	Increase in resources to additional supplies and services	200
Environmental Health	Funding to increase capacity in Environment Health team by two posts	110
Total ENV		810
<u>Strategy and Corporate Services</u>		
Communications and Marketing	Additional funding for resources	20
Total Strategy and Corporate Services		20

Appendix 3 – Service pressures and investments in services

Directorate	Detail	£'000
		2025/26
<u>Social Services, Housing and Community Safety (SSH&CS)</u>		
Adult Services	Increase in base budget to meet current cost	5,700
Adult Services	Further additional Increase in base budget to meet current cost	2,000
Housing and Homelessness	Increased cost of provision	1,100
Total SSH&CS		8,800
<u>Other / Council Wide</u>		
General Contingency	Increase in general contingency budget	300
Pay and prices contingency	Contingency to cover general pressures on pay and prices	2,000
Total Other		2,300
Grand total service pressures investments		14,940

Appendix 4 – Savings and income generation proposals

Directorate	Chief Officer	Reference	Scrutiny Committee	Service Area	Description of how budget reduction will be delivered	Risks and Impact	£
ELLL	Chris Saunders	ELLL-A	ES&W	Margam Country Park	Staff changes and reductions of 1FTE. Driving income through improvements to the car parking arrangements and the programme of events.	Potential redundancy. Weather associated risks associated with achieving increased income. Impact of Eisteddfod and associated fallow/ build period. Utility costs remain high.	150,000
ELLL	Chris Saunders	ELLL-B	ES&W	Pontardawe Arts Centre	New cinema and improved catering arrangements	Potential overrun of the capital project to build the new cinema and cafe.	40,000
ELLL	Chris Saunders	ELLL-C	ES&W	Indoor leisure	Indoor Leisure - trading improvements & cost reduction	Final contract fee arrangements with Celtic Leisure still to be agreed given the Budget announcements regarding the treatment of National Insurance in particular.	175,000
ELLL	Chris Saunders	ELLL-D	ES&W	Indoor Leisure	Temporary estimated full year saving from the closure of Pontardawe Swimming Pool on Health and Safety grounds.	Short/medium term saving. This figure should be treated with caution until the full extent of the effect of retained/ defrayed income is known	233,250
ELLL	Chris Saunders	ELLL-E	ES&W	Aberafan Seafront	Additional/funfair and events	Market appetite established. Risks remain around the need for planning permission and tendering.	25,000
ELLL	Chris Saunders	ELLL-F	ES&W	Education Learning Resource Service	Increased income target	This requires a reset within the service and requires a focus on commercial activity.	10,000
ELLL	Chris Saunders	ELLL-G	ES&W	Libraries	Reduce resources budget - stop purchase of DVD's	Minimal	10,000
ELLL	Rhiannon Crowhurst	ELLL-H	ES&W / ERSS	Home to school transport	Externally led review of all existing arrangements	This work is ongoing with the aim of identifying savings over a number of years.	500,000
ELLL	Rhiannon Crowhurst	ELLL-I	ES&W	Primary school cleaning	Full cost recovery - Increase cleaning recharge to schools phased over two years	This strategy depends on what is agreed in relation to the delegated schools budget.	150,000

Appendix 4 – Savings and income generation proposals

Directorate	Chief Officer	Reference	Scrutiny Committee	Service Area	Description of how budget reduction will be delivered	Risks and Impact	£
ELLL	Rhiannon Crowhurst	ELLL-J	ES&W	Education Support Services	Reducing hours and service remodelling	Flexible retirement requests (if granted) can be mitigated for; grant funding used to cover core posts - there is a risk that the grant funding will not be renewed leading to future capacity pressures in key strategic service areas; compulsory redundancy will cause pressure on services which can only partially be mitigated for in the short term through work being picked up by existing staff, and which might lead to future pressures	80,000
ELLL	Chris Millis	ELLL-K	ES&W	Education Development Service	Reduce staff costs/offset against specific grant	If the grant were to cease or the member of staff were to return from the secondment before the end of the grant's terms of conditions	25,000
ELLL	Andrew Thomas	ELLL-L	ES&W	Pension & Early Retirement	Core budget requirement has reduced	No impact	15,000
ELLL	Hayley Lervy	ELLL-M	ES&W	Education Psychology Service	Offset costs against grant	Reducing an educational psychologist's (EP) contract from 80% to 50% significantly impacts the service's ability to support children, families, and schools. It reduces capacity for timely assessments, interventions, and consultations, delaying the identification of needs and early intervention that are critical for addressing learning, behavioural, and emotional challenges. This increases pressure on schools and other staff, and risks fragmented support due to reduced multi-agency collaboration.	9,000

Appendix 4 – Savings and income generation proposals

Directorate	Chief Officer	Reference	Scrutiny Committee	Service Area	Description of how budget reduction will be delivered	Risks and Impact	£
						The strain on remaining EPs may diminish service quality, jeopardizes compliance with statutory requirements, risks legal challenges, and compromises outcomes for vulnerable children, ultimately creating greater long-term costs.	
ELLL	Hayley Lervy	ELLL-N	ES&W	Specialist Commissioning for Schools	This saving will be for one year only. Occupational Therapy post commissioned from Health will be funded from reserves instead of core.	This post will be to support secondary schools in building capacity to support pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. This is a rising area of need, this work supports emotional regulation and has been highlighted as good practice by Welsh government. The post holder will be seconded to undertake this work and back-filled. This work will be halted if not funded.	55,000
ELLL	Hayley Lervy	ELLL-O	ES&W	Learning Difficulty Team	Staff costs offset against grant funding.	Any ceasing or reduction of grant will impact on service delivery, as numbers of pupils with complex needs and demands on the service continue to increase. If we cannot depend on grant money to fund, this would impact on both service delivery and on schools' ability to support pupils needs.	12,000

Appendix 4 – Savings and income generation proposals

Directorate	Chief Officer	Reference	Scrutiny Committee	Service Area	Description of how budget reduction will be delivered	Risks and Impact	£
ENV	David Griffiths	ENV-A	ERSS	SAB & Highway Development Control	Increase in fees and charges	Increased inspection fees could deter developers from progressing development in the County Borough.	11,000
ENV	David Griffiths	ENV-B	ERSS	Transport Support	Reduction on the Council revenue spent on local bus support and utilising Welsh Government grants only to support the bus network.	Risk of criticism as LA will no longer be supporting local bus network financially with own revenue.	75,000
ENV	David Griffiths	ENV-C	ERSS	Community Services Transport Unit	Cutting on call rota saving £10,000 and relying instead on private transport providers	The impact will be no out of hours service support. Mitigation is that Emergency Planning and Social Services can be supplied with contact details for external transport contractors directly to undertake emergency transport as necessary.	10,000
ENV	David Griffiths	ENV-D	ERSS	Transport Management	Increase in charges to external organisations using the councils fleet repair services	Client organisations may take their business elsewhere impacting on the income streams currently achieved.	6,200
ENV	David Griffiths	ENV-E	ERSS	Transport Maintenance	Additional External Income.	Client organisations may take their business elsewhere impacting on the income streams currently achieved.	1,800
ENV	David Griffiths	ENV-F	ERSS	Road Safety	Increased charges on training courses provided to external organisations.	Could result in less organisations utilising Council operated training services.	14,000
ENV	David Griffiths	ENV-G	ERSS	Maintenance - Bridges	Reduction of the maintenance budget which is relied upon for bridge inspection works and regular small scale maintenance. The budget also covers retaining structures.	Assets will continue to deteriorate and repairs will in the longer term be more expensive.	28,000
ENV	Nicola Pearce	ENV-H	ERSS	Corporate	Savings to budget as the reimbursements required by City and County of Swansea Pension Fund gradually decrease.	No impact	42,000

Appendix 4 – Savings and income generation proposals

Directorate	Chief Officer	Reference	Scrutiny Committee	Service Area	Description of how budget reduction will be delivered	Risks and Impact	£
ENV	Michael Roberts	ENV-I	ERSS	Maintenance - NetMan	Reduce Asset Surveys budget from £98K to £87K.	With reducing budget and increasing costs over time there will be a less accurate asset inventory and condition data on which to base highway asset management decision making.	11,000
ENV	Michael Roberts	ENV-K	ERSS	Maintenance - Day to day	Increase fees and charges for use of the highway by 10% or in line with Swansea whichever is the greater to increase income by £50K.	No significant risk regarding fees and charges as they will still be similar to other councils.	178,000
					Reduce day to day works budget allocations for road assets - markings, signs, speed cushions, safety fences, cattle grids and the like by £105K plus reduce the consultancy support budget used for drainage feasibility work by 50% saving £25K.	Less work will be undertaken on the highway network and the reduction in the consultancy budget will impact on the council's ability to draw on specialist advisors to support grant bids in the future.	
ENV	Michael Roberts	ENV-L	ERSS	Lighting Services	Start street lighting dimming earlier at 22.00hrs as opposed to 01.00hrs - Lighting would dim earlier and higher profile (£22k)	Lighting would dim earlier and could have a higher public profile	30,000
					Trim' lights to shorten 'on-time' by some 20 mins per day, with around a 10 minute saving at start and end of each night time but remaining compliant with the ILP guide suggests these values can be lowered to 20 and 10 lux respectively. (£8k)	Lighting would be turned on slightly later and off slightly earlier and could have a higher public profile	
ENV	Michael Roberts	ENV-P	ERSS	Cemeteries	Increase in fees and charges associated with cemeteries to more align with those set by Bridgend CBC.	Significant increases in fees would likely bring discontent from the bereaved	24,000
ENV	Ceri Morris	ENV-Q	ERSS	Pest Control	Delivered through increased income target. Potential to achieve without increasing fees.	In light of current levels of service demand / performance of the Pest Control team, there is the potential to achieve this increased income target	9,000

Appendix 4 – Savings and income generation proposals

Directorate	Chief Officer	Reference	Scrutiny Committee	Service Area	Description of how budget reduction will be delivered	Risks and Impact	£
						without increasing fees. Impact should therefore be minimal.	
ENV	Ceri Morris	ENV-R	ERSS	Pollution Control (Including Giants Grave Land Fill)	Delivered through [1] recharging of officer time where appropriate and reduction of the materials budget for Giants Grave	Impact on Development Management service (through planning consultations) will be absorbed – any costs can be clawed back through PPAs. Impact should therefore be minimal.	11,000
ENV	Ceri Morris	ENV-S	ERSS	Development Management	Trimming of the following budget lines: [1] statutory advertising (£2,869); [2] other advertising (£3,162); and [3] professional fees (£10,000)	Will result in reduced ability to commission external consultants/specialists to assist with DM caseload.	16,031
ENV	Ceri Morris	ENV-T	ERSS	Policy	Trimming of professional fees budget line. Will result in reduced ability to commission external consultants to assist with the LDP work programme.	Will result in reduced ability to commission external consultants to assist with the LDP work programme. This will lead to the requirement for more inhouse work, creating additional pressure on a small team of officers. Any further cuts may result in the Authority having an unsound plan due to the level of evidence that is required to meet the LDP Regulations.	24,547
ENV	Ceri Morris	ENV-U	ERSS	Countryside	Delivered through [1] increase in income generation from fees for Statutory Orders (£2,500); [2] reduction in advertising budget (£5,000); and [3] reduction in expenditure of 'Other Services' budget line (£6,909)	This will reduce ability to replace larger Wales Coast Path infrastructure such as gates and bridges. Further cuts to this budget line in the future could result in more path closures due to unsafe structures, reducing the ability to deliver our statutory function.	14,409

Appendix 4 – Savings and income generation proposals

Directorate	Chief Officer	Reference	Scrutiny Committee	Service Area	Description of how budget reduction will be delivered	Risks and Impact	£
ENV	Ceri Morris	ENV-V	ERSS	Biodiversity, Countryside & Wildlife Projects	Delivered through [1] reduction in expenditure (£8,000); and [2] increased income generation target over and above existing target (£6,695)	Continued cuts to the expenditure budget line will eventually undermine ability to work safely and ensure we have the correct/necessary equipment to deliver services.	14,695
ENV	Ceri Morris	ENV-W	ERSS	Building Control/Regulations	Delivered through a combination of [1] the removal of Dangerous Structures out of hours cover (£11,000); [2] reduction of the 'Works in Default' budget line (£3,000); and [3] reduction in car allowance budget line (£1,000).	Removal of Dangerous Structures comes at possible risk to public safety. Even though the council has powers to act, this is not specific in carrying that out 24/7. However, there are councils that do not provide cover out of hours. In respect of the 'Works in Default' budget, generally this is adequate as all attempts are made to recover costs. However, there are occasions whereby we need to carry out work where no owner of the building/structure can be established and cost recovery is not possible. While the budget could be reduced by £3,000, this will place additional reliance upon the Capital programme contingency fund.	14,970
ENV	Simon Brennan	ENV-AA	ERSS	Civic buildings	Increased income from the lease of floorspace within the Quays and possible changes to the Concierge/ facilities site officer roles.	This will increase the potential for damage/theft at The Quays but this will be mitigated by the presence of CCTV. It will also require changes to the way the staff (and any Gold command use) access the facility 'out of hours.	150,000
ENV	Simon Brennan	ENV-AB	ERSS	Former Metal Box building	Changes to the management of the facility.	The changes will potentially make the available space less attractive to potential occupiers	135,000

Appendix 4 – Savings and income generation proposals

Directorate	Chief Officer	Reference	Scrutiny Committee	Service Area	Description of how budget reduction will be delivered	Risks and Impact	£
S&CS	Chris Owen	S&CS-A	CF&SL	Digital Services	Post reduction - 3 x Senior Infrastructure Operations Engineer (Grade 8) Voluntary Redundancy	The reduction of these posts within the team will lead to a redistribution of work across the remaining team, and monitoring will be in place to ensure that workloads remain manageable. Having fewer numbers in the team will also lead to slower response times to resolve issues and on the time taken to deliver on Strategic Initiatives and projects.	156,906
					Post reduction Grade 9 - Voluntary Redundancy	Discussion are on-going to confirm a Voluntary Redundancy however the impact of losing any post will impact our ability to maintain the current level of service delivery as we strive to drive forward the strategic objectives set in our new digital strategy, operational efficiency, and service delivery of the council.	58,204
					Post reduction Grade 5 - Voluntary Redundancy	Discussion are on-going to confirm a Voluntary Redundancy however the impact of losing any post will impact our ability to maintain the current level of service delivery as we strive to drive forward the strategic objectives set in our new digital strategy, operational efficiency, and service delivery of the council.	39,050

Appendix 4 – Savings and income generation proposals

Directorate	Chief Officer	Reference	Scrutiny Committee	Service Area	Description of how budget reduction will be delivered	Risks and Impact	£
					Reduced working hours - 1 x Senior Infrastructure Operations Engineer (Grade 8)	The reduction in working time for this post will lead to a redistribution of work across the remaining team, and monitoring will be in place to ensure that workloads remain manageable. Having fewer numbers in the team will also lead to slower response times to resolve issues and on the time taken to deliver on strategic Initiatives and transformation projects.	9,895
S&CS	Chris Owen	S&CS-B	CF&SL	Digital Services	Mobile phone contract changes	No disruption to service, some additional reporting to management to ensure data usage controls	20,000
S&CS	Chris Owen	S&CS-C	CF&SL	Digital Services	Provide Barrier Access and AI Monitoring for SRC	There is potential that the CCTV service could provide a managed barrier access control at the main gate of the SRC. This would provide income to the service. Potentially reducing operating costs within the SRC due to improved access control measures. Reduce potential site thefts of equipment. It should be noted there will be an infrastructure cost to implementation.	10,000

Appendix 4 – Savings and income generation proposals

Directorate	Chief Officer	Reference	Scrutiny Committee	Service Area	Description of how budget reduction will be delivered	Risks and Impact	£
S&CS	Chris Owen	S&CS-S	CF&SL	Digital Services	Hardware and Software	<p>The reduction in the budget on hardware and software can lead to outdated technology, resulting in slower performance, increased downtime, and reduced productivity. This can hinder the ability of employees to perform their tasks efficiently and meet business objectives.</p> <p>Insufficient funding for new technologies can stifle innovation and prevent the council from adopting cutting-edge solutions that support service transformation and we will need to explore alternative ways of financing these investments via the capital programme.</p> <p>On-going under investment in hardware can affect the quality and speed of customer service, leading to dissatisfaction and increased complaints and increase pressure in other service areas who require hardware / software to undertake their business function.</p>	140,000
S&CS	Sheenagh Rees	S&CS-F	CF&SL	Emergency Planning Team	Increase COMAH (Control of Major Accident Hazards) SLA (Service Level Agreement) income	We will work on developing plans to increase support available to COMAH sites as we look to increase fees and we will consult. It must also be noted	3,046

Appendix 4 – Savings and income generation proposals

Directorate	Chief Officer	Reference	Scrutiny Committee	Service Area	Description of how budget reduction will be delivered	Risks and Impact	£
						that by 2027 / 2028 we anticipate loss of TATA income.	
S&CS	Sheenagh Rees	S&CS-G	CF&SL	Emergency Planning Team	Temporary change in team structure (flexi retirement / succession planning)	This is for one year only and we will need to review this structure for future years.	11,500
S&CS	Sheenagh Rees	S&CS-I	CF&SL	Policy & Executive Support	Delete vacant hours @ GR 8	Workload will be redistributed and monitored to ensure workloads remain manageable.	10,000
S&CS	Sheenagh Rees	S&CS-J	CF&SL	Human Resources	Service Remodelling of the HR Team. Delete 0.6 FTE Voluntary Redundancy	As a result of this reduction in staffing, coupled with increased demands for services and our proposed longer term strategic approach to the service that the HR team will deliver in future, we will mitigate these risks with increased use of technology, we are piloting Co-pilot to remove work from the team and make our processes as efficient as possible.	32,512
S&CS	Sheenagh Rees	S&CS-T	CF&SL	Corporate Strategy	Software	No significant impact or risk associated with this.	7,000

Appendix 4 – Savings and income generation proposals

Directorate	Chief Officer	Reference	Scrutiny Committee	Service Area	Description of how budget reduction will be delivered	Risks and Impact	£
S&CS	Craig Griffiths	S&CS-L	CF&SL	Legal and Democratic Services	Service Remodelling through Voluntary Redundancy	The deletion of the Mailroom Supervisor post (who will be departing in March 2025) will result in increasing supervision responsibilities for the Business Support Manager, who will now supervise the service directly. The officer who will be departing is currently coordinating the majority of FOI requests and this work will be re-distributed amongst the remaining team; we will monitor workloads to ensure that they remain manageable and additional members of staff are being trained to help manage the consideration of Freedom of Information requests to ensure the statutory obligations continue to be met..	39,050
S&CS	Craig Griffiths	S&CS-M	CF&SL	Legal and Democratic Services	Service Remodelling through Voluntary Redundancy of Solicitor	Less of a dedicated resource for a specific area of education law provision from January 2025 onwards but workload will be incorporated amongst other teams/fee earners. This will ensure that resilience can also be included within the service to ensure that more than one officer will have experience of this type of work. This does place additional pressure on officers to meet additional demands for work but this will be monitored through regular supervision to ensure	63,848

Appendix 4 – Savings and income generation proposals

Directorate	Chief Officer	Reference	Scrutiny Committee	Service Area	Description of how budget reduction will be delivered	Risks and Impact	£
						work commitments are not too unmanageable.	
S&CS	Craig Griffiths	S&CS-N	CF&SL	Legal and Democratic Services	Income Generation	To be achieved through legal work and democratic services support associated with Celtic Freeport and other such projects and offering procurement support work to town and community councils. This does place additional pressure on officers to meet additional demands for work but this will be monitored through regular supervision to ensure work commitments are not to unmanageable.	20,000
S&CS	Craig Griffiths	S&CS-O	CF&SL	Legal and Democratic Services	Reprofiling of funding from Corporate Joint Committee	To be achieved through allocating contributions received to specific posts and funding as opposed to generic usage. Funding was being used to support succession planning through recruitment of trainee solicitors but this will have to stop and use to underpin service. The ability to recruit junior staff to plan for the time when postholders retire/leave the Council will have to temporarily cease until new funding streams can be identified. To counteract this, steps will be taken to provide training to officers in other areas to enable service continuity and resilience to be met.	20,000

Appendix 4 – Savings and income generation proposals

Directorate	Chief Officer	Reference	Scrutiny Committee	Service Area	Description of how budget reduction will be delivered	Risks and Impact	£
S&CS	Craig Griffiths	S&CS-P	CF&SL	Legal and Democratic Services	Amendment of Service Delivery in Mail Room	Service Recharges to outside organisations who utilise the mailroom facilities (i.e. trade unions) will be increased to ensure full cost recovery i.e. staff time in processing, stationery costs, full postage costs (however this will continue to remain discounted to direct postage). At present a small percentage of fees are not being recovered as part of overhead costs, this will be reflected in fees and charges. Hire Car costs will be reduced as part of renewal of vehicle and less demand with increased reliance on pool cars as an alternative. All changes will not have a detrimental impact on service delivery. Volume of mail is decreasing but at the same time the service transforming delivery to ensure more digital solutions are offered to negate courier runs.	15,000
S&CS	Craig Griffiths	S&CS-Q	CF&SL	Legal and Democratic Services	Reduction in legal services resources	There will be a reduction to one of our subscriptions which will remove access to precedent documents and specific legal updates. Information will still be readily available from other sources however it will require additional time to research without information be readily available. Consideration of this has been given to legal officers who understand the need to ensure savings can be realised. Training has also been	10,000

Appendix 4 – Savings and income generation proposals

Directorate	Chief Officer	Reference	Scrutiny Committee	Service Area	Description of how budget reduction will be delivered	Risks and Impact	£
						undertaken with other subscriptions to ensure officers know where to locate information which would be relevant to their service area.	
S&CS	Craig Griffiths	S&CS-U	CF&SL	Legal and Democratic Services	Electoral Services - General Office Expenses	At present, the Elections Registration Team hold budgets for general office expenses such as stationery, printing, posting. An evaluation of budgets have suggested those figures can be reduced without any detrimental impact. 2025/2026 does not currently have an election planned but onward consideration will be given for 2026/2027 and future years as we coordinate Senedd Elections and Local Government Elections and will be included as part of cost recovery from Welsh Government or utilisation of general reserves to fund any gap.	10,000
S&CS	Craig Griffiths	S&CS-V	CF&SL	Legal and Democratic Services	Democratic Services - General Office Expenses	At present, the Democratic Services team hold budgets for general office expenses such as stationery, printing, posting. An evaluation of budgets have suggested those figures can be reduced without any detrimental impact	1,246
Finance	Huw Jones	FINC-A	CF&SL	Finance Division	Contract saving from re-tendered insurance contracts	No risk	158,000
Finance	Huw Jones	FINC-B	CF&SL	Finance Division	Service remodelling of financial services	Minimal risk	73,400

Appendix 4 – Savings and income generation proposals

Directorate	Chief Officer	Reference	Scrutiny Committee	Service Area	Description of how budget reduction will be delivered	Risks and Impact	£
SSH&CS	Chele Zandra Howard	SSH&CS-A	SSH&CS	Housing & Communities	Reducing the costs of providing homelessness services through service redesign and preventing people from requiring temporary accommodation	The demand for temporary accommodation will continue to rise	112,000
SSH&CS	Keri Warren	SSH&CS-B	SSH&CS	Children & Young People Services	Natural reduction in the number of non-looked after children (LAC) allowances (Residence Orders, Special Guardianship Order (SGO) & Adoption Allowances)	If the number of SGO/Adoption allowances increase there will be limited scope to provide financial support to new SGO Carers & Adoptive Parents.	232,000
SSH&CS	Keri Warren	SSH&CS-C	SSH&CS	Children & Young People Services	Review of Children Services structure and a reduction of posts where appropriate	Any reduction in staffing levels could create instability and will effect the Service's ability to manage demand.	386,000
SSH&CS	Keri Warren	SSH&CS-D	SSH&CS	Children & Young People Services	Fostering Service - Reduction in budget for in-house allowances, external agency costs & Carer travel	Historically the underspend for in-house allowances has offset the overspend in external residential provision. This would no longer be an option so there would be continued pressure to reduce the numbers of children in residential care. Also any changes in relation to the harmonisation of fostering allowances/fees across Wales would be a potential risk as there would be limited scope to increase rates.	630,000
SSH&CS	Keri Warren	SSH&CS-E	SSH&CS	Children & Young People Services	Income Generation - provide fostering placements to neighbouring LA's	Any impact or risks will be effectively managed by the Fostering Service to ensure it will not impact on the capacity and demand in NPT.	52,000

Appendix 4 – Savings and income generation proposals

Directorate	Chief Officer	Reference	Scrutiny Committee	Service Area	Description of how budget reduction will be delivered	Risks and Impact	£
SSH&CS	Keri Warren	SSH&CS-F	SSH&CS	Children & Young People Services	Health visitor post	n/a - vacant post	21,000
SSH&CS	Keri Warren	SSH&CS-G	SSH&CS	Children & Young People Services	Reduce Section 17 (S17) discretionary spend budget	Reduced scope to fund S17 related provisions, items etc.	50,000
SSH&CS	Keri Warren	SSH&CS-H	SSH&CS	Children & Young People Services	Reduction in the number of Looked After Children Taxi Routes	Less contingency if the demand for transport increases	21,200
SSH&CS	Angela Thomas	SSH&CS-I	SSH&CS	Adult Services	Direct Payments (DP) whole system review (inc Payroll and Suitable Person service).	Any impact of risks will be effectively managed by Adult Services to ensure it will not impact on capacity and demand. Positive impact of promoting an individual's ability to access prevention and early intervention services.	250,000
SSH&CS	Angela Thomas	SSH&CS-J	SSH&CS	Adult Services	Develop provision for Complex Care (Mental Health, Learning Disabilities, Neurodivergent) to include both Capital and Revenue investment. This Transformation Programme will allow placements to be delivered in house and in county with less restrictive models of care..	Ability to deliver savings within required timescales. Will require a whole council approach to identify suitable land, planning permission, and work with the capital programme which is under significant pressure.	2,000,000
SSH&CS	Angela Thomas	SSH&CS-L	SSH&CS	Adult Services	Outcome focussed reviews of supported living schemes and residential care. Using opportunities to share care and access community services to reduce costs	Service user willingness to accept new models of care	650,000
SSH&CS	Angela Thomas	SSH&CS-M	SSH&CS	Adult Services	Review of Domiciliary Care calls, sit in services and wakeful/sleep-in support to develop alternative models	Families and service users anxieties to changes in care provision	500,000
SSH&CS	Angela Thomas	SSH&CS-O	SSH&CS	Adult Services	Implement Trem y Glyn Reablement Capacity. NPT residents will have access to a bedded reablement facility to enable their independence to be maximised.	Risk of delay in achieving full capacity of reablement beds.	260,000

Appendix 4 – Savings and income generation proposals

Directorate	Chief Officer	Reference	Scrutiny Committee	Service Area	Description of how budget reduction will be delivered	Risks and Impact	£
SSH&CS	Angela Thomas	SSH&CS-P	SSH&CS	Adult Services	Review of Adult Services structure and a reduction of posts where appropriate	Any reduction in staff will be via vacancy management .	250,000
Total							8,632,759

Appendix 5 – Integrated Impact Assessment Screening Impact Assessment - First Stage

1. Details of the initiative

Initiative description and summary: Draft Budget Proposals 2025/2026
Service Area: Services identified across the directorate
Directorate: All
Strategic Decision: Yes

2. Does the initiative affect:

	Yes	No
Service users	X	
Staff	X	
Wider community	X	
Internal administrative process only	X	

3. Evidence used in the Assessment

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. Information is collected through a variety of methods ranging from application forms and reviews, to satisfaction surveys and consultations.

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.

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

Separate briefings will be held with Trade Unions, Town and Community Councils and the Voluntary Sector liaison forum.

There will be an on-line consultation form as well as physical paper questionnaires which be available at multiple locations across the County Borough.

Appendix 5 – Integrated Impact Assessment Screening

he already established 'Community of Practice' will also be utilised in order to extend the reach of the consultation as far as possible.

The short timescale for the consultation has arisen due to the fact that the Welsh Government provisional local government settlement was in mid December and time will be required in February to consider the impact of the settlement and consider consultations responses.

4. Does the initiative impact on people because of their:

	Yes	No	None/ Negligible	Don't Know	Impact H/M/L/D	Reasons for your decision and details of the impact
Age		X				<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. 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. 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>
Disability		X				
Gender Reassignment		X				
Marriage/Civil Partnership		X				
Pregnancy/Maternity		X				
Race		X				
Religion/Belief		X				
Sex		X				
Sexual orientation		X				

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	Yes	No	None/ Negligible	Don't Know	Impact H/M/L/D	Reasons for your decision and details of the impact
						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.

5. Does the initiative impact on:

	Yes	No	None/ Negligible	Don't know	Impact H/M/L	Reasons for your decision (including evidence used) / How might it impact?
People's opportunities to use the Welsh language		X				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 language no less favourably than English		X				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

6. Does the initiative impact on biodiversity:

	Yes	No	None/ Negligible	Don't know	Impact H/M/L	Reasons for your decision (including evidence) / How might it impact?
To maintain and enhance biodiversity				X		Unknown. There is no clear route to demonstrate either positive or negative impact on biodiversity. Future impacts assessment will benefit from the biodiversity service assessments which are currently being undertaken to

Appendix 5 – Integrated Impact Assessment Screening

						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
To promote the resilience of ecosystems, i.e. supporting protection of the wider environment, such as air quality, flood alleviation, etc.				X		Unknown. There is no clear route to demonstrate either positive or negative impact on the resilience of ecosystems. 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. Does the initiative embrace the sustainable development principle (5 ways of working):

	Yes	No	Details
Long term - how the initiative supports the long term well-being of people	X		Work has commenced on developing a medium term financial plan to cover the period 2025--2030 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 2025/2026 financial year in relation to closing this budget gap.
Integration - how the initiative impacts upon our wellbeing objectives	X		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. Proposals include protection for some services that enable early

Appendix 5 – Integrated Impact Assessment Screening

			intervention and prevention activities that reduce demand on public services whilst promoting wellbeing, for example in social services.
Involvement - how people have been involved in developing the initiative	X		The Corporate Plan and Medium Term Financial plan will include collaboration with partners.
Collaboration - how we have worked with other services/organisations to find shared sustainable solutions	X		The consultation will be communicated as widely as possible and a significant amount of pre-consultation engagement has taken place.
Prevention - how the initiative will prevent problems occurring or getting worse	X		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. 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).

8. Other Impacts

	Yes	No	None/ Negligible	Don't know	Impact H/M/L	Reasons for your decision (including evidence) / How might it impact?
Valley Community Impacts		X				Individual proposals are being assessed as to their impact on valley impacts and should any specific impact be identified these will be identified against individual proposals and summarised in final proposals.
Crime and Disorder Impacts		X				Individual proposals are being assessed as to their impact on crime and disorder impacts and should any specific impact be identified these will be identified against individual proposals and summarised in final proposals.
Counter Terrorism Impacts		X				Individual proposals are being assessed as to their impact on counter terrorism impacts and should any specific impact be

Appendix 5 – Integrated Impact Assessment Screening

						identified these will be identified against individual proposals and summarised in final proposals.
Violence against women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Impacts		X				Individual proposals are being assessed as to their impact on these impacts and should any specific impact be identified these will be identified against individual proposals and summarised in final proposals.

9. Declaration - based on above assessment (tick as appropriate):

A full impact assessment (second stage) is not required to commence consultation	X
Reasons for this conclusion	
An overall conclusion will be drawn once consultation responses have been received and considered. A full assessment is not required at this stage but will be included as part of future decision making in respect of the 2025/2026 budget.	

	Name	Position	Date
Completed by	Huw Jones	Director of Finance	24 th December 2024