

# **Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council**

## **Council**

### **Report of the Strategic Leadership Team**

**5<sup>th</sup> March 2025**

#### **Matter for decision**

#### **Wards affected – All**

#### **2025/26 Revenue budget proposals**

#### **Purpose of Report**

To seek Council approval for the proposed Council 2025/26 revenue budget including investment in services; savings and income generation proposals; and proposed council tax levels. This report was commended to Council by Cabinet on 26<sup>th</sup> February 2025.

Since publication of the Cabinet report the final local government settlement has been received. This showed a very minor reduction in funding of £40k compared to the provisional settlement due to a slight reduction to a transfer into the settlement. The Council has also received the final levy notification from Mid and West Wales Fire Authority which shows a reduction of £60k which compensates for the reduced Welsh Government funding. As a result there are no changes to the proposals included in this report.

#### **Background**

Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council's ("the Council") net revenue budget requirement for 2024/25 totals £376m and when grants and income are taken into account, this means the Council's gross budget invests over c£500m in services across the County Borough.

Every year, the Council has a duty to consult and set a budget for the provision of services. This report details the proposed 2025/26 revenue budget. A separate report, setting out the proposed Council capital

programme for 2025/26, is also presented for Members' approval at today's meeting.

## Executive Summary

Cabinet agreed early engagement on a range of budget proposals on 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2024. Following this engagement, which included four scrutiny committee meetings, a number of proposals were withdrawn from the draft proposals considered by Cabinet in January 2025.

The proposals withdrawn are detailed below:

Directorate	Proposal	£'000
ELLL	ELLL I - Full cost recovery of school cleaning - now phased over two years	157
ENV	ENV J - Reduce drainage repair team and highways maintenance budget	210
ENV	ENV N & ENV O - Three weekly waste collection, removal of wheelie bins and introduction of green waste charges	739
ENV	ENV M - Reduction to neighbourhood services workforce	379
ENV	ENV X - Trading standards succession planning	20
ENV	ENV Y - Deletion of environmental health post	43
ENV	ENV Z - Deletion of vacant environmental health officer post	29
S&CS	S&CS - K - Trade Union facilities time saving	12
S&CS	S&CS J (part of) - Remove 1 FTE from HR team	42
<b>Total</b>		<b>1,631</b>

Following the withdrawal of the above, on the 10<sup>th</sup> January 2025, Cabinet approved a public consultation process on the draft budget for 2025/26.

The report considered by Cabinet outlined a residual budget gap of £15.031m. After taking account of savings/income generation proposals this budget gap reduced to £6.398m. In order to close this gap public consultation was undertaken on a council tax increase of 7%.

Details of the consultation responses can be found in Appendix 7 of this report.

Since publication of the Cabinet report the final local government settlement has been received. This showed a very minor reduction in funding of £40k compared to the provisional settlement due to a slight reduction to a transfer into the settlement. The Council has also received the final levy notification from Mid and West Wales Fire Authority which shows a reduction of £60k which compensates for the reduced Welsh Government funding. As a result there are no changes to the proposals included in this report.

Following consideration of the consultation responses and having taken on board discussion at the various scrutiny committees the final changes to the original proposals are included in these final proposals:

- The proposed saving of £500k in relation to home to school transport re-tendering has been deferred for a year due to uncertainty of deliverability in 2025/26. The Education Equalisation reserve will be utilised to manage this timing difference.

## **Provisional Local Government Settlement**

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.

For 2025/26 the provisional settlement for Neath Port Talbot was a like for like increase of 4.4% or £12.977m which was an improvement on the 0.5% or £1.5m which had initially been modelled.

This additional funding is required to meet both greater than anticipated inflationary cost increases and also additional investment in services which are included within Appendix 3 of the report including

In the main the investment relates to an additional £1.5m into the schools delegated budget and a further investment to stabilise the Social Services, Housing and Community Safety budget which has been relying previously on using reserves to fund core costs.

Appendix 3 also contains a proposal to invest an additional £110k into the Environmental Health Team. This will fund two additional members

of staff specifically to start addressing issues with ruinous and dilapidated commercial buildings.

This additional funding has also been utilised to fund the shortfall resulting from the withdrawn savings proposals as detailed earlier in the report.

## **Strategic Context**

This was set out in the January 10<sup>th</sup> report but is repeated below for ease of reference.

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.

## **Service Overviews**

### Education, Leisure and Lifelong Learning (ELLL) and Schools

This budget provides an investment of £121.129 million into the delegated schools budget and £34.331 million into the ELLL Directorate. This represents an increase of 13.8% for Schools and 3.6% for ELLL compared to the 2024/25 original budget. The investment will be used to:

- Provide education services to circa 22,000 children and young people;
- There is a significant pressure for specialist planned places for children and young people with increasingly complex needs. These are pupils whose needs cannot be met within a mainstream school and require specialist provision. Additional investment will ensure that pupils will be able to attend the appropriate specialist provision to meet their needs. Currently nearly all specialist provisions are at full capacity. This investment will also reduce the risk of increased costly out of county placements.
- Increased funding in the secondary sector aims to ensure that schools have the appropriate resources to support pupils with additional learning needs to fully engage and that learners are supported to access an appropriate curriculum and interventions to meet their needs.
- Increased demand in support for Attendance and Persistent Absenteeism
- Increased demand in supporting Leadership within our schools at all levels

### Social Services, Housing and Community Safety

The budget proposals provide investment of £127.219 million for the Social Services, Housing and Community Safety Directorate, an increase of £13.52million or 11.9% compared with 2024/25. The investment will be used to:

- Support approximately 2,400 vulnerable Children and their families; over 2,500 adults who need care and support; and support over 250 people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homelessness.

- Increase the number of placements available for those with complex needs;
- Maintain a stable workforce in social care;
- Go some way to offsetting the increasing costs in care as a result of inflation and pay awards

## Environment and Regeneration

The budget provides £48.705 million for the Environment and Regeneration Directorate, which amounts to an increase of £2.19 million or 4.7%. The investment will be used to:

- Maintain household residual waste collection on a two weekly basis;
- Not introduce black bag collections to replace wheely bins;
- Ensure that green waste collection remains free of charge;
- Protects capacity across the regulatory, regeneration and transport divisions to maintain momentum in delivering on infrastructure and economic development programmes

Despite these investments, the service remains challenging to deliver. The economic focus on NPT has resulted in an increase in grant funding being made available to deliver capital and revenue projects focussed on supporting the economy. Despite this availability, there is still a requirement to prepare and submit compelling business cases as well as resources to deliver the projects, and monitor and evaluate their effectiveness. This comes at a time when it is difficult to recruit and retain qualified and experienced staff which means that the work is being undertaken by a small complement of staff who are juggling multiple complex projects. This is repeated in our regulatory services including planning and environmental health who are also experiencing significant increases in demand with limited resources.

Our assets in terms of property, highways, bridges, structures and drainage infrastructure are also ageing and require more and more investment to maintain the status quo in terms of condition, i.e. to prevent even further deterioration. Construction costs inflation has exceeded budget allocations and as such we are relying upon capital contingency funding to undertake repairs on a more frequent basis. This is likely to continue without additional planned maintenance funding.

## Strategy and Corporate Services

The budget provides £18.006m for the Strategy and Corporate Services Directorate. The Directorate has identified the required 5% budget cut from its revenue budget for 2025/26. This budget cut is in addition to years of budget cuts to the enabling corporate services. Despite the above we are confident that we can:

- Maintain sufficient capacity to ensure good governance of the Council;
- Continue to take forward the next phases of the Future of Work and Digital, Data and Technology strategies to develop the capabilities needed to sustain the Council into the future;
- Continue to deliver key projects within the Digital Transformation pipeline to support and improve services across the Authority.
- Strengthen the Authority's approach on procurement

There continues to be an increased demand on all services across the Directorate. Organisation Development and People Management, Legal and Procurement services and Digital Services to drive forward the ambitious transformation of Council services aligned to the priorities of the Corporate Plan.

The remainder of this report now sets out the detail of the final revenue budget proposals for 2025/26 for consideration by the Cabinet.

### 2025/26 Budget and Funding

	£'000	£'000
2024/25 Budget		376,599
<b>2025/26 Cost Increases</b>		
Specific grants transferred into the settlement allocated to services (Appendix 1)	4,953	
Pay and inflation including changes to national insurance thresholds (Appendix 2)	23,211	
Service pressures and investments in services (see Appendix 3)	14,940	
<b>Total cost increases</b>		<b>43,104</b>
Anticipated specific grant to fund national insurance threshold changes		-5,695

<b>Total Budget Required</b>		<b>414,008</b>
<b>Funded by</b>		
Council Tax 2024/25 level including adjusted council tax base		-91,648
Estimated additional council tax generated from premiums on second homes and long term empty properties		-1,500
Welsh Government funding		-306,217
Discretionary rate relief		388
<b>Total Funding Available</b>		<b>-398,977</b>
<b>Budget Gap</b>		<b>15,031</b>
Savings and income generation proposals (Appendix 4)		-8,133
Use of Education Equalisation Reserve re: delayed home to school transport saving		-500
<b>Remaining budget gap to be funded by Council Tax increase</b>		<b>6,398</b>
<b>Council tax increase expressed as a percentage</b>		<b>7%</b>

## Savings and income generation

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

The final proposals detailed in Appendix 4 total £8.133m.

## Reserves position

The Cabinet agreed a general reserves policy which states that the general reserve balance should be kept at 4% of the net revenue budget. The 2024/25 net revenue budget is currently £376m meaning that the general reserve should be held at c£15m. If these budget proposals are approved



the 2025/26 net revenue budget will be £405.3m, meaning that a 4% general reserve balance as at 1<sup>st</sup> April 2025 would need to be £16.2m.

The latest revenue budget report shows that the general reserve balance is projected to be £15.5m at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025. This is below the 4% as per the current policy, the position will need to be reviewed over the remainder of the financial year.

The Director of Finance will also undertake a review of other Council's general reserves policies to ensure that the current policy is broadly in line with comparable sized Councils.

### **Proposals for council tax in 2025/26**

Under the Local Government Finance Act 1992 Council is required to set a balanced budget with regard to the advice of the Director of Finance (Section 151 Officer).

The Welsh Government settlement assumes that all Councils in Wales will increase council tax by 9.3%.

These budget proposals include a recommendation that council tax increases by 7% in 2025/26. Council tax at Band D for 2025/26 would be £2,002.78

Details of the increases by property band are shown below:

<b>Band</b>	<b>No of Dwellings</b>	<b>% in Band</b>	<b>Monthly Increase (12) £</b>	<b>Weekly Increase (52) £</b>
A	13,167	20.32%	7.28	1.68
B	26,571	41.00%	8.49	1.96
C	11,434	17.64%	9.71	2.24
D	7,218	11.14%	10.92	2.52
E	4,413	6.81%	13.34	3.08
F	1,353	2.09%	15.77	3.64
G	526	0.81%	18.20	4.20
H	104	0.16%	21.84	5.04
I	20	0.03%	25.48	5.88

Due to the relative number of properties in bands A-C these proposals represent an **average** increase in council tax of £9.32 per month of £2.15 per week.

The Council Tax Reduction Scheme (CTRS) provides council tax support to approximately 16,000 households within the County Borough, of which approximately 11,000 receive full support and pay no Council Tax. The remaining 5,000 households receive partial support to pay for their Council Tax.

### **Medium term financial outlook**

The current medium term financial outlook for local authorities in Wales is remains challenging.

The UK Government is currently undertaking a spending review (SR) with the results likely to be published in Spring 2025. The Welsh Government have given a commitment to providing Council's with a multi year settlement following publication and consideration of the SR.

The latest Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) estimates a three year funding gap for the period 2026/27-2028/29 of c£20m. However this will need to be completely re-cast following the receipt of the estimated multi-year settlement; and taking account latest projected pay, inflation, service pressures and the delivery of the current transformation programmes.

A further update will be presented to Cabinet in due course.

### **Fees and Charges**

The 2024/25 budget setting report included the provision of delegated powers for Corporate Directors to set fees and charges for that year and subsequent financial years (in conjunction with appropriate Members as set out for Executive and Non-Executive functions).

There is therefore no requirement to seek any further delegations as part of these budget proposals.

## **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”.

Where there are specific proposals which will impact on crime and disorder, these have been subject to separate public consultation and integrated impact assessments.

## **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.”

Section 1 of the Equality Act requires that public bodies when making strategic decisions, have due regard to the need to reduce the inequalities of outcome resulting from socio-economic disadvantage.

An integrated impact assessment (IIA) is appended to this report and this provides further detail. The main conclusion from the IIA is that:

*A full assessment is not required and in all instances the majority of respondents felt that there would be no impact on anyone with protected characteristics and there would be no impacts on the use of the Welsh Language, Biodiversity and the report embraces the sustainable development principle.*

## **Workforce Impacts**

This budget supports the Council’s commitment to social partnership and to maintaining security of employment to the maximum extent possible. The Cabinet members and chief officers have worked closely with the trade unions throughout the budget process to identify savings and income proposals and to lobby both UK and Welsh Governments to prioritise local government within their spending decisions. Staff have also been

encouraged to contribute ideas from an early point in the budget process so that everyone has an opportunity to shape the budget proposals.

## **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 balance 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 virements 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.

## **Consultation and Engagement**

In November 2024, four pre-consultation engagement events took place to help set out the context in which next year's budget is being set. These were held in Aberafan Shopping Centre (Port Talbot), The Gwyn Hall (Neath), Pontardawe Library and on MS Teams (online).

Cabinet authorised a formal public consultation on 10 January 2025. The consultation ran from 10 to 31 January 2025.

Activities during the consultation period included:

- Online questionnaire - a self-completion questionnaire was published online. Respondents were not asked to identify themselves, but were asked to indicate why they were interested in the council's budget setting process and their postcode. The survey was designed to include a mixture of both closed and open-ended questions. This allowed respondents to have the opportunity to share additional comments that were not question specific should they wish. The questionnaire was live from Friday 10 January (following Cabinet's approval).
- Offline – paper questionnaires, explainer leaflets, reference copies of the cabinet report dated 10 January 2025 and feedback boxes for completed questionnaires were made available in 42 public facilities across the county borough. These included Civic Centres, council run and community libraries, and Celtic Leisure venues amongst others. All documents were made available in Welsh and English. The questionnaire was a replica of the online version and responses were entered into the survey software for analysis.
- Stakeholder consultation events – this included 4 scrutiny committees, the Town and Community Councils Liaison Forum, Voluntary Sector Liaison Forum and Staff Council.

The consultation was promoted via:

- The council website - homepage (via the 'top tasks' button), consultations page and Let's Keep Talking pages.
- Adverts/posters on TV screens in the Neath and Port Talbot Bus Stations and Neath Train Station.
- Posters, printed questionnaires, an explainer leaflet and feedback boxes at public venues including libraries, Celtic Leisure venues, civic centres and other public buildings.
- The council's corporate social media accounts.
- Press coverage generated by cabinet reports and press releases.
- Internal communications channels (staff notice boards, staff newsletters, NPT Connect - intranet, Viva Engage)
- Members provided with promotional cards which included a QR code to disseminate to constituents.

- NPT Citizens' Panel – an email announcing the start of the consultation and inviting panel members to respond was circulated on 10 January 2025.
- NPT Community of Practice members were asked to circulate information to key stakeholders groups
- NPT News – the council's e-newsletter (January 2025)

Every scrutiny committee also met during the consultation period to review the budget proposals and to offer comment to the Cabinet.

507 people responded to the budget consultation questionnaire. In addition, three written responses were received and there were a further 149 attendees at stakeholder events during the consultation period. A summary of the consultation responses is included within Appendix 7 of this report.

## **Section 151 Officer Responsibility and Risk Management**

Section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003 requires the Chief Financial Officer to report to Council on the “robustness of the estimates” used in calculating the budget requirement.

The Director of Finance has made the necessary enquiries and received assurances from officers that the estimates are prudent and achievable.

There are a number of substantial risks contained within these proposals which will need to be monitored and managed during 2025/26. The following is not an exhaustive list but represents the most significant at this stage:

- Pay awards – If the nationally agreed pay awards exceed the sum allowed in the budget then there will be an additional in year pressure which will need structural base budget funding from 2026/27 onwards.
- The budget assumes that additional costs from changes to National Insurance thresholds will be met in full by Government. Again, if this is not the case this will result in an in year pressure and require structural base budget funding going forward.
- Vacancy factor – if there are insufficient vacancy savings achieved in year and Corporate Directors are not able to identify other savings to make up any shortfall then there is a risk of an in-year overspend. The relative value of the vacancy factor continues to reduce as pay awards continue to increase the pay bill but the vacancy factors remain as fixed amounts.

- There is a risk that the proposed increase in fees and charges will not be achieved if paying customers are below the level anticipated.
- Demand for services may increase.
- Legislative changes – there is a risk that new legislation is not fully funded placing additional pressure on council resources. This would increase the gap over the medium term.
- In-year changes to specific grant funding – if grants are reduced in real terms an in-year adjustment service levels would need to be made to enable activities to be delivered within a lower cost base.
- Ability to deliver WG recycling targets to minimise financial penalties.
- Inclement weather impacts on services, infrastructure, communities and budget/reserves – the Council retains good financial resilience as part of this budget strategy which would mitigate this risk.
- As a consequence of increases in demand there is a risk that the investment proposals being delivered across Social Services and Housing do not deliver the reductions in base budgets required. In addition to the invest to save proposals a range of other strategies will be developed to sustain service delivery without significant disruption to other council services. Whilst this is achievable in the short term, it is unlikely that this will be a sustainable position over the medium term without significant additional government investment.

The tables included in appendix 4 of this report provide additional information regarding the risk/impact of each savings proposal.

## **Recommendation**

It is recommended that Council having due regard to the integrated impact assessment information set out in appendix 8 consider the following recommendations.

**Recommendation 1** - In relation to the proposed revenue budget for 2025/26 approve the revenue budget as set out in appendix 5 of the report.

**Recommendation 2** - In relation to the setting of Council Tax levels for 2025/26 Council approve that Council Tax in 2025/26 will increase by 7%. The 2025/26 Band D equivalent for Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council will be £2,002.78

## **Reason for Proposed Decision**

To fulfil the statutory requirement to determine the budget for 2025/26.

To provide a mechanism for dealing with any variation between the provisional and final Welsh Government settlements

## **Implementation of Decision**

The decision is proposed for implementation after consideration and approval by Council.

## **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 – 2025/26 Proposed Revenue Budget

Appendix 6 – Schedule of reserves

Appendix 7 – Summary of consultation responses

Appendix 8 – Integrated Impact Assessment

## **Background Papers**

- Outlook Report – Council 26<sup>th</sup> July 2024
- Budget Progress Report – Cabinet 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2024
- Permission to Consult Report– Cabinet 10<sup>th</sup> January 2025

## **Officer Contact**

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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 fire fighters pension revaluation effective from 1st April 2024	211
<b>Total</b>		<b>4,953</b>

## Appendix 2 - Pay and inflation assumptions

<b><u>2025/26 Pay and inflation assumptions</u></b>		
	<b>Base Budget</b>	<b>Assumed change</b>
<b>Expenditure head</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>%</b>
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
<b><u>Directorate</u></b>	-	
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
<b>Total</b>	-	<b>14,940</b>

### Appendix 3 - Service pressures and investments in services

Directorate	Detail	£'000
		2025/26
	-	
<b><u>Schools</u></b>	-	
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
<b>Total Schools</b>		<b>2,600</b>
<b><u>Education, Leisure &amp; Lifelong Learning (ELLL)</u></b>		
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
<b>Total ELLL</b>		<b>410</b>

### Appendix 3 - Service pressures and investments in services

Directorate	Detail	£'000
		2025/26
<b><u>Environment (ENV)</u></b>		
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
<b>Total ENV</b>		<b>810</b>
<b><u>Strategy and Corporate Services</u></b>		
Communications and Marketing	Additional funding for resources	20
<b>Total Strategy and Corporate Services</b>		<b>20</b>

### Appendix 3 - Service pressures and investments in services

Directorate	Detail	£'000
		2025/26
<b><u>Social Services, Housing and Community Safety (SSH&amp;CS)</u></b>		
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
<b>Total SSH&amp;CS</b>		<b>8,800</b>
<b><u>Other / Council Wide</u></b>		
General Contingency	Increase in general contingency budget	300
Pay and prices contingency	Contingency to cover general pressures on pay and prices	2,000
<b>Total Other</b>		<b>2,300</b>
<b>Grand total service pressures investments</b>		<b>14,940</b>

## 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-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
<b>Total</b>							<b>8,132,759</b>

## Appendix 5 – Proposed 2025/26 Revenue Budget

<b>Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council</b>		
<b>2025/26 Proposed budget and financing</b>		
	<b>2024/25</b>	<b>2025/26</b>
	<b>Original Budget</b>	<b>Original Budget</b>
	<b>£'000</b>	<b>£'000</b>
Delegated Schools	106,458	121,129
Education, Leisure and Lifelong Learning	33,125	34,331
Social Services, Housing and Community Safety	113,699	127,219
Environment	46,515	48,705
Strategy and Corporate Services	21,366	18,006
Finance	0	4,573
	<b>321,163</b>	<b>353,963</b>
<b>Levies</b>		
Swansea Port Health Authority	46	37
Corporate Joint Committee Levy	127	114
Fire Authority	10,799	11,479
Fire Authority - pension grant	-230	0
Margam Crematorium	1	1
	<b>10,743</b>	<b>11,631</b>
<b>Contributions</b>		
Archive Service	106	106
Magistrates Court	10	10
	<b>116</b>	<b>116</b>
<b>Other Expenditure</b>		
Treasury Management / Capital Financing	19,603	19,982
Council Tax Support	20,784	22,239
Pay Contingency - General	2,238	2,000
2024/25 Pay Contingency - Schools	1,577	0
General Contingency	375	1,138
Assumed grant towards National Insurance costs		-5,695
	<b>44,577</b>	<b>39,664</b>
<b>NET REVENUE BUDGET</b>	<b>376,599</b>	<b>405,374</b>
<b>Funded by:</b>		
Aggregate External Finance	285,594	306,217
Discretionary Rate Relief	-389	-388
Council Tax - Neath Port Talbot	91,393	99,545
<b>TOTAL FUNDING</b>	<b>376,599</b>	<b>405,374</b>

## Appendix 6 – Schedule of Reserves

Description	Reserve Balance at 1st April 2025 £	Original Budget Reserves 2025/26 £	Current Projected Balance @ 31st March 2026 £
<u>Education, Leisure and Lifelong Learning</u>			
<u>Delegated Schools Reserves</u>			
Primary Schools	4,836,074	0	4,836,074
Secondary Schools	93,299	0	93,299
Special Schools	Cr171,130	0	Cr171,130
Middle School	3,050,551	0	3,050,551
Repair & Maintenance	Cr161,160	0	Cr161,160
	<b>7,647,633</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>7,647,633</b>
<u>Education, Leisure and Lifelong Learning Other</u>			
Additional Learning Needs Reserve	Cr1,023,000	175,000	Cr848,000
Equalisation Account-Education	Cr1,259,690	363,101	Cr896,589
	<b>Cr2,282,690</b>	<b>538,101</b>	<b>Cr1,744,589</b>
<b>Total Education Leisure &amp; Lifelong Learning</b>	<b>5,364,943</b>	<b>538,101</b>	<b>5,903,044</b>
<u>Social Services, Health and Housing</u>			
Community Care Transformation Reserve	Cr35,182		Cr35,182
SSHH IT Renewals Fund	Cr700,000		Cr700,000
Housing Warranties Reserve	Cr220,000		Cr220,000
Hillside General Reserve	Cr575,021		Cr575,021
Ring Fenced Homecare Funding	Cr16,149		Cr16,149
Youth Offending Team Reserve	Cr167,897		Cr167,897
<b>Total Social Services, Health and Housing</b>	<b>Cr1,714,249</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>Cr1,714,249</b>
<u>Environment</u>			
Transport Reserve	Cr540,173		Cr540,173
Asset Recovery Incentive Scheme	Cr87,893		Cr87,893
Swansea Bay City Deal	Cr264,500		Cr264,500

## Appendix 6 – Schedule of Reserves

Description	Reserve Balance at 1st April 2025 £	Original Budget Reserves 2025/26 £	Current Projected Balance @ 31st March 2026 £
Local Development Plan	Cr278,550	76,787	Cr201,763
Parking Improvement	Cr33,350	30,500	Cr2,850
Waste Reserve	Cr518,603		Cr518,603
Winter Maintenance Reserve	Cr668,429		Cr668,429
Neath Market	Cr253,106		Cr253,106
Baglan Bay Innovation Centre - Dilapidation Reserve	Cr77,517		Cr77,517
Renewable Energy Reserve	Cr24,162		Cr24,162
Environmental Health - Housing Equalisation	Cr36,699		Cr36,699
Environment Equalisation Reserve	Cr2,004,484	324,790	Cr1,679,694
Pantteg Landslip Reserve	Cr375,961		Cr375,961
Metal Box Reserve	Cr403,825		Cr403,825
<u>Trading Account</u>			
Operating Account - Equalisation	Cr36,043		Cr36,043
Vehicle Tracking	Cr82,686		Cr82,686
Vehicle Renewals	Cr5,779,797	Cr1,333,971	Cr7,113,768
<b>Total Environment</b>	<b>Cr11,465,778</b>	<b>Cr901,894</b>	<b>Cr12,367,672</b>
<u>Strategy and Corporate Services</u>			
Elections Equalisation Fund	Cr75,238	Cr15,000	Cr90,238
Health & Safety/Occupational Health	Cr40,501		Cr40,501
Digital Transformation Reserve	Cr1,170,000	266,367	Cr903,633
Digital Reserve	Cr533,893	292,160	Cr241,733
Schools IT Equalisation (HWB)	Cr400,000		Cr400,000
Chief Executives Equalisation Reserve	Cr151,328	50,000	Cr101,328
Organisational Development Reserve	Cr2,941,024	352,000	Cr2,589,024
Building Capacity	Cr107,295		Cr107,295
Financial Services Equalisation	Cr78,000	78,000	0

## Appendix 6 – Schedule of Reserves

Description	Reserve Balance at 1st April 2025 £	Original Budget Reserves 2025/26 £	Current Projected Balance @ 31st March 2026 £
<b>Total Strategy and Corporate Services</b>	<b>Cr5,497,279</b>	<b>1,023,527</b>	<b>Cr4,473,752</b>
<u>Corporate Other</u>			
Insurance Reserve	Cr3,885,382	280,000	Cr3,605,382
Income Generation Reserve	Cr113,230		Cr113,230
Corporate Contingency	Cr1,927,547	1,542,862	Cr384,685
Transformation and Modernisation	Cr2,178,975	1,542,460	Cr636,515
Capital Support Reserve	Cr683,447		Cr683,447
Covid Recovery	Cr243,000	170,000	Cr73,000
Treasury Management Equalisation Reserve	Cr9,652,687		Cr9,652,687
Hardship Relief Scheme (Warm Wales)	Cr550,000		Cr550,000
Discretionary Fund	Cr100,000		Cr100,000
Accommodation Strategy	Cr2,319,722		Cr2,319,722
<b>Total Corporate Other</b>	<b>Cr21,653,990</b>	<b>3,535,322</b>	<b>Cr18,118,668</b>
<u>Joint Committee</u>			
Margam Discovery Centre - Building Maintenance Reserve	Cr231,773	Cr57,333	Cr289,106
Environment Legacy Reserve (SWTRA)	Cr259,728		Cr259,728
Substance Misuse Area Planning Board	Cr373,326		Cr373,326
WB Safeguarding Board Reserve	Cr88,014		Cr88,014
<b>Total Joint Committee</b>	<b>Cr952,841</b>	<b>Cr57,333</b>	<b>Cr1,010,174</b>
<b>Total All Earmarked Reserves</b>	<b>Cr35,919,194</b>	<b>4,137,723</b>	<b>Cr31,781,471</b>
<b>General Reserve</b>	Cr15,449,692	0	Cr15,449,692
<b>TOTAL ALL RESERVES</b>	<b>Cr51,368,886</b>	<b>4,137,723</b>	<b>Cr47,231,163</b>

# Appendix 7 - Summary of consultation responses

## Draft Budget 2025-26

### Consultation Summary Report

#### 1.0 Background

1.1 On 10 January 2025, Cabinet authorised officers to consult members of the public on the Draft Budget Proposals for 2025-26. The public consultation followed four pre-consultation engagement events in Aberafan Shopping Centre, The Gwyn Hall, Neath, Pontardawe Library and on MS Teams to help set out the context in which next year's budget is being set. These took place in November 2024.

1.2 The consultation objectives were to:

- provide a mechanism for people to contribute their views to the budget setting process.
- find out if people agree or disagree with the draft budget which included a number of savings and income generation measures.
- provide an opportunity for people to share any other views on our Draft Budget 2025-26 (e.g. to comment on any of the specific proposals detailed in the cabinet report).
- provide an opportunity for participants to share their view on a proposed Council Tax increase of 7%.
- provide a mechanism for people to share any other suggestions they might have on how the council can generate income and/or reduce the budget gap.
- ensure that the consultation was available to as many residents and organisations as possible.

#### 2.0 The Consultation Process

2.1 A range of engagement and consultation activities took place to gather feedback to help inform the 2025-26 budget setting process, as follows:

Date	Activity	No. of people Reached
10.1.25-31.1.25	Online questionnaires and paper versions with feedback boxes in 42 public venues	507 responses
10.1.25-31.1.25	Responses via letter/email/on behalf of organisations	2 responses
10.1.25-31.1.25	Stakeholder consultation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Community, Finance and Strategic Leadership Scrutiny Committee 13.1.25 (20)</li><li>• Staff Council 13.1.25 (17)</li><li>• Social Services, Housing and Community Safety Scrutiny Committee 14.1.25 (18)</li><li>• Education, Skills and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee 16.1.25 (21)</li><li>• Environment, Regeneration and Streetscene Services Scrutiny Committee 17.1.25 (13)</li></ul>	149 attendees

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- Voluntary Sector Liaison Forum 21.1.25 (37)
- Town and Community Councils Liaison Forum 27.1.25 (23)

**TOTAL**

**659**

- 2.2 The consultation was promoted via:
- The council website - homepage (via the 'top tasks' button), consultations page and Let's Keep Talking pages.
  - Adverts/posters on TV screens in the Neath and Port Talbot Bus Stations and Neath Train Station.
  - Posters, printed questionnaires, an explainer leaflet and feedback boxes at public venues including libraries, Celtic Leisure venues, civic centres and other public buildings.
  - The council's corporate social media accounts.
  - Press coverage generated by cabinet reports and press releases.
  - Internal communications channels (staff notice boards, staff newsletters, NPT Connect - intranet, Viva Engage)
  - Members provided with promotional cards which included a QR code to disseminate to constituents.
  - NPT Citizens' Panel – an email announcing the start of the consultation and inviting panel members to respond was circulated on 10 January 2025.
  - NPT Community of Practice members were asked to circulate information to key stakeholders groups
  - NPT News – the council's e-newsletter (January 2025)

### 3.0 Main Findings from questionnaire on Draft Budget Proposals 2024-25

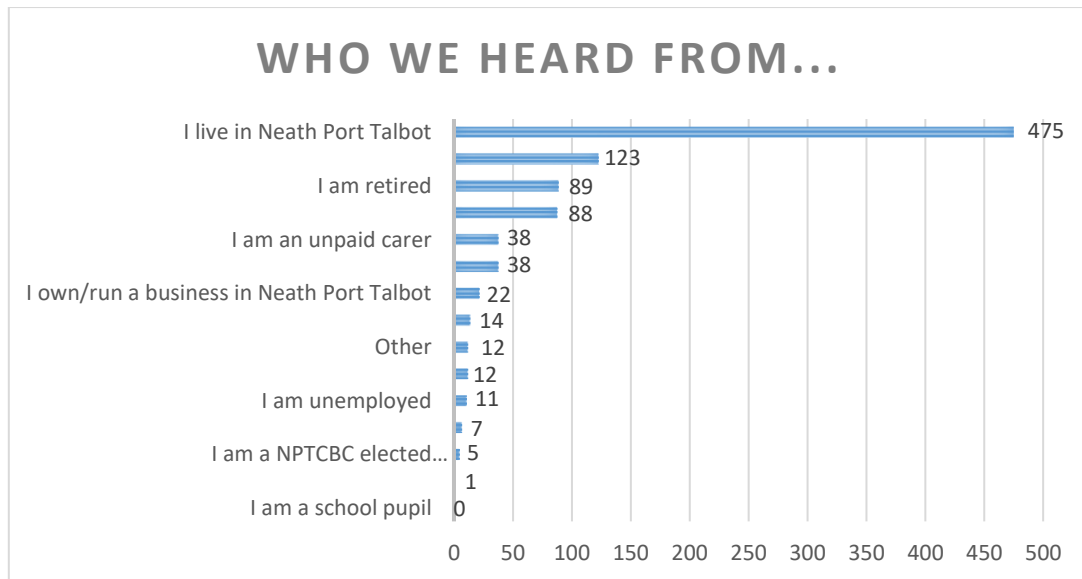
- 3.1 The survey was designed to include a mixture of both closed and open-ended questions. This allowed respondents to have the opportunity to share additional comments that were not question specific should they wish. These comments are summarised within the report and raise some important areas for consideration.
- 3.2 This report summarises the findings from the online questionnaire. A total of 507 questionnaires were completed during the consultation period (10.1.25 – 31.1.25). 505 were completed in English and 2 in Welsh, with 496 responding online and 11 via printed questionnaires.

## Appendix 7 - Summary of consultation responses

### 3.3 Summary of responses to main questions

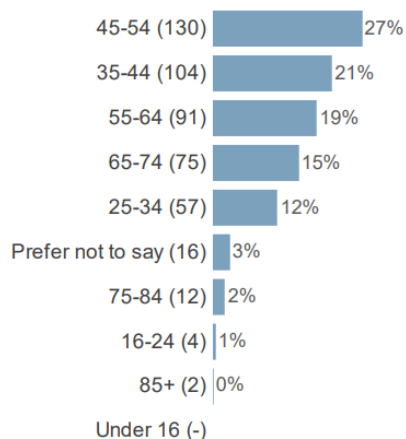
Graphics are used in this report. Where percentages do not add to 100, this may be due to rounding to the nearest whole number, the exclusion of “don’t know” categories, or multiple answers.

### 3.4 Demographic profile

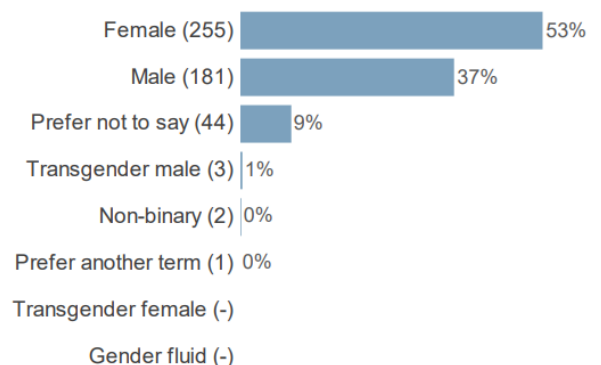


The graph above shows the number of participants taking part from each section of the community. 505 participants completed this question in the survey with 94% of respondents being residents of NPT.

#### Age: What is your age group?



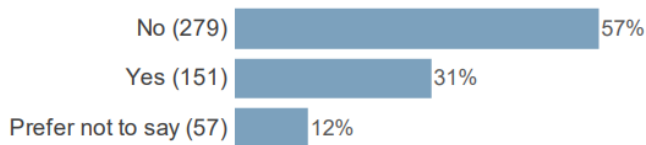
#### Sex: How would you describe yourself?



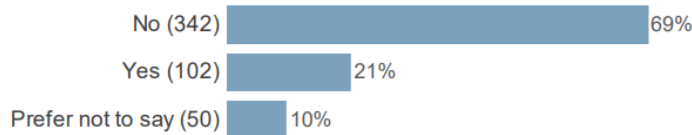


## Appendix 7 - Summary of consultation responses

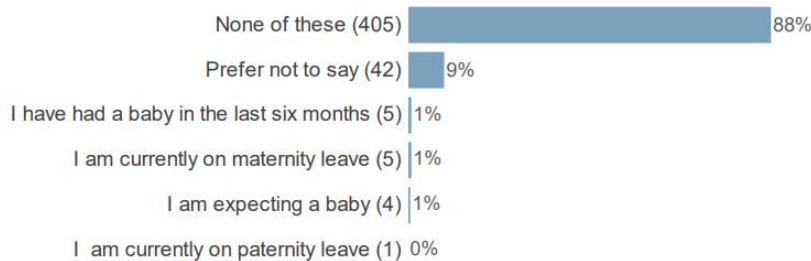
**Caring Responsibilities: Do you provide regular, unpaid, substantial care for a relative, friend or neighbour who is unable to manage at home without help because of sickness, age or disability? (please tick only one)**



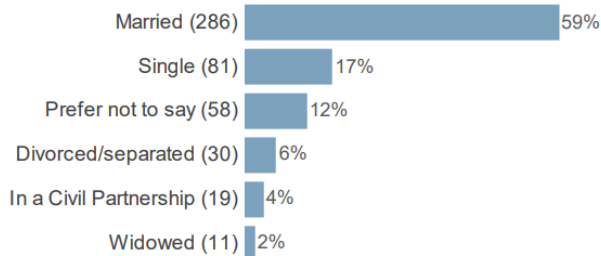
**Do you consider yourself to have a disability?**



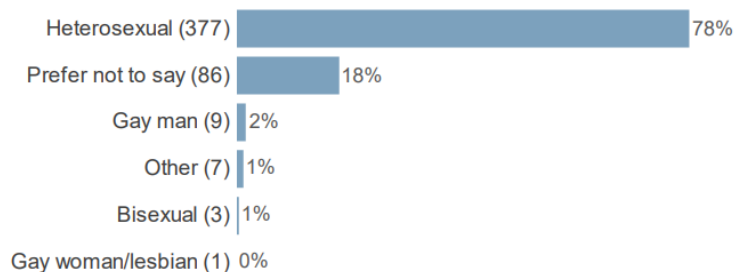
**Pregnancy and maternity/paternity: Please indicate if any of the following apply to you (please tick all that apply).**



**Marriage and civil partnership: Are you? (please tick only one)**

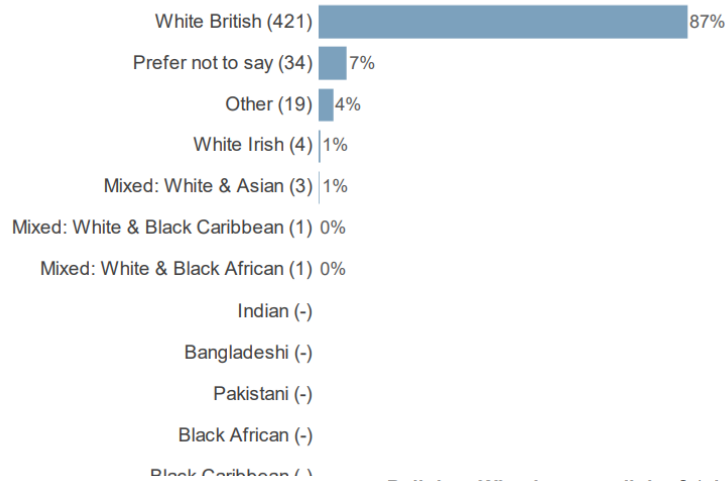


**Sexual Orientation: What is your sexual orientation (please tick only one)**

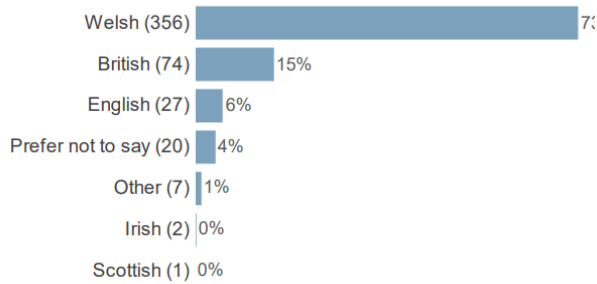


## Appendix 7 - Summary of consultation responses

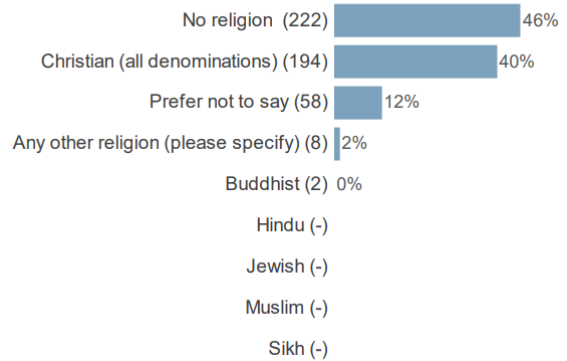
### Ethnic origin:



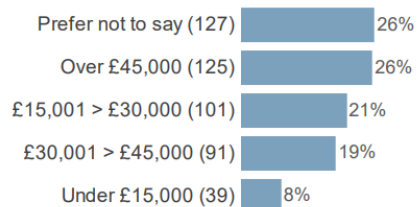
### Nationality:



### Religion: What is your religion? (please tick only one)



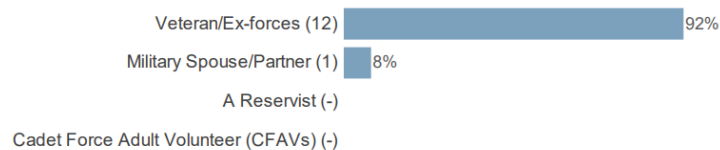
### Household Income: Approximately how much income comes into your household each year?



### Are you a member of the Armed Forces Community?



### If yes, are you:

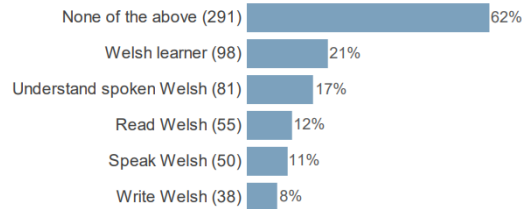


## Appendix 7 - Summary of consultation responses

### What is your main language?



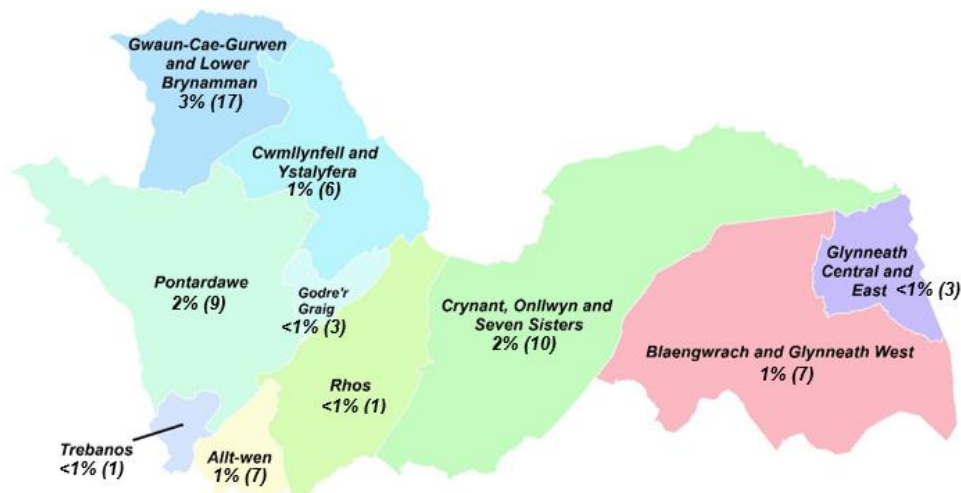
### Welsh Language: Can you understand, speak or write Welsh? (Tick all that apply)



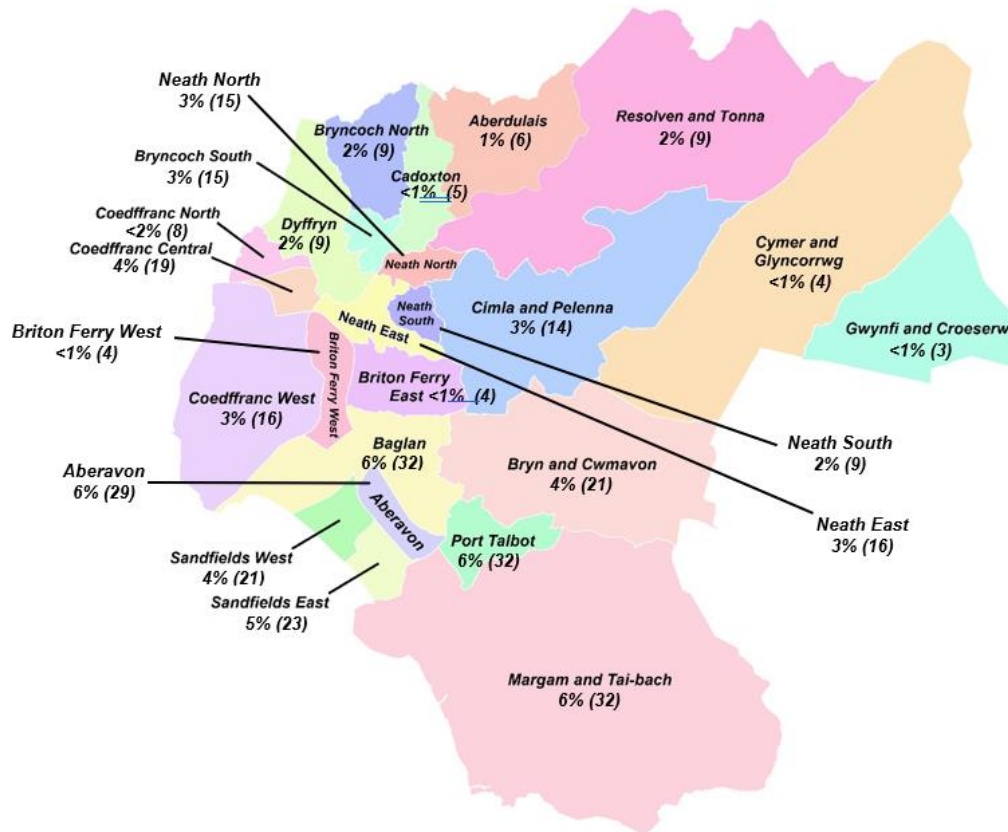
### Respondents by ward:

The geographical spread of respondents is outlined on the ward map below. Please note that:

- 15% (74) respondents chose not to provide their postcode
- 1% (6) of the postcodes provided were outside of NPT
- 2% (8) respondents provided a partial or invalid postcode
- 1% (6) respondents provided a postcode for their place of work



## Appendix 7 - Summary of consultation responses



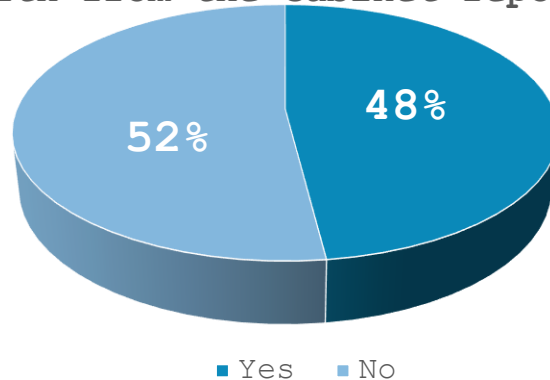
The percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number and are of the total number of respondents (507)

### 3.5 Draft Budget Report

Respondents were given the opportunity to provide their opinion on whether they agreed or disagreed with any proposals outlined in the draft budget report. Responses were as follows:

## Appendix 7 - Summary of consultation responses

Respondents were asked are there any specific proposals you agree or disagree with from the Cabinet report?



- 3.6 **Disagreement** – Of those who noted that they disagreed with certain aspects of the draft budget, respondents were afforded the opportunity to describe in detail their concerns. A thematic analysis was conducted on the 134 responses received and is provided below.

### 1. Council Tax Increases

A number of respondents to this question indicated they were strongly opposed to the proposed 7% increase in council tax (there was also a specific question on the proposed Council tax increase – see 3.8). The primary concerns include:

- **Financial Burden:** Residents, particularly those on fixed incomes such as pensioners, and those already struggling with the cost of living, feel that the increase is unaffordable. They argue that their wages have not increased in line with the proposed tax hike, making it difficult to manage their finances.
- **Value for Money:** There is a widespread perception that the increase in council tax is not justified by the quality of services provided. Residents feel that they are paying more but receiving less in return, leading to frustration and dissatisfaction.
- **Fairness:** Some comments highlight the perceived unfairness of the tax increase, especially when services are being cut. There is a sense that the council is not considering the financial strain on residents and is instead passing on the burden to them.

### 2. Service Cuts and Quality

Respondents are concerned about the reduction in various services and the impact on their quality of life:

- **Waste Collection:** Changes to rubbish collection schedules and the introduction of smaller bins have led to dissatisfaction. Residents feel

## Appendix 7 - Summary of consultation responses

that the service has deteriorated, and they are now required to pay for additional private collections.

- **Road Maintenance:** The poor condition of roads and the reduction in maintenance budgets are major concerns. Residents are worried about the safety and usability of the infrastructure, and they believe that further cuts will exacerbate the problem.
- **Educational Support:** Reductions in educational services, such as the proposed cuts to educational psychologists, are seen as detrimental to children and families. Residents fear that these cuts will delay the identification and support of children's needs, putting additional pressure on schools and other services.

### 3. Financial Management and Efficiency

There is a call for better financial management and efficiency within the council:

- **Staff Reductions:** Some comments suggest that the council should undertake a compulsory redundancy program to reduce the headcount, which is seen as excessive for the population size.
- **Expense Management:** Residents criticise high salaries for senior staff and the perceived inefficiencies in council operations. They suggest cutting unnecessary expenses and focusing on essential services.
- **Grant Funding:** There are calls for the council to seek additional grant funding and to offset some costs against these grants. Residents believe that better financial planning and management could alleviate the need for such high tax increases.

### 4. Impact on Vulnerable Groups

The proposed budget changes are seen as having a disproportionate impact on vulnerable groups:

- **Elderly and Low-Income Families:** The increase in council tax is particularly challenging for the elderly and low-income families who may not qualify for additional support. These groups are already facing financial difficulties, and the tax increase could push them further into hardship.
- **Disabled Individuals:** Concerns are raised about the reduction in funding for services that support disabled individuals, such as the Child Disability Team. Residents worry that these cuts will have wide-reaching effects on mental health, housing, and overall quality of life for disabled individuals and their families.
- **General Well-being:** The overall sentiment is that the budget proposals do not adequately consider the needs of the most vulnerable residents, leading to increased stress and financial strain.

3.7 **Agreement** – Of those who noted that they agreed with aspects of the draft budget, respondents were afforded the opportunity to describe in detail their

## Appendix 7 - Summary of consultation responses

positive views. A thematic analysis was conducted on the 66 responses received and is provided below.

### 1. Rationalisation and Efficiency

Many comments support the idea of rationalising council buildings and improving efficiency:

- **Rationalising Buildings:** There is agreement on the need to rationalise the use of council buildings to save costs. This includes consolidating office spaces and reducing the number of buildings maintained by the council.
- **Reviewing Contracts:** Several comments highlight the importance of reviewing contracts to ensure value for money and to eliminate unnecessary expenses. This includes renegotiating terms and seeking more cost-effective solutions.
- **Efficiency in Service Delivery:** There is support for reviewing how services are provided to ensure they are delivered efficiently and effectively. This includes reducing duplication of work and focusing on core service delivery.

### 2. Cost Recovery and Income Generation

There is a strong emphasis on recovering costs and generating additional income:

- **Full Cost Recovery:** Many comments agree with the proposal to ensure full cost recovery for services provided to external organisations. This includes charging appropriate fees for services to cover their costs.
- **Increasing Fees and Charges:** There is support for increasing fees and charges for certain services, such as leisure centres and social care, especially for those who can afford to pay more. This is seen as a way to generate additional income without disproportionately impacting vulnerable residents.
- **Grant Funding:** Applying for more grant funding is seen as a positive step to bring in additional resources without increasing the financial burden on residents.

### 3. Protecting Essential Services

There is agreement on the importance of protecting and prioritising essential services:

- **Social Care and Waste Services:** Comments support ring-fencing funding for essential services such as social care and waste management to ensure they continue to meet residents' needs.
- **Education Funding:** There is agreement on the need to protect and potentially increase funding for education, particularly for secondary

## Appendix 7 - Summary of consultation responses

schools. This includes maintaining budgets for educational services that directly impact children and families.

- **Service Improvements:** Some comments suggest that any increase in council tax should be accompanied by improvements in service quality to ensure residents feel they are getting value for their money.

3.8 **Council Tax** – Respondents were asked how supportive they would be of a Council Tax rise to help protect/avoid cuts to services provided by the council. Responses were as follows:

Response	Number	%
Strongly agree	10	2%
Agree	48	10%
Neither	53	11%
Disagree	88	18%
Strongly disagree	305	61%
Base	504	

### Consultation Themes – Council Tax

**Supportive:** of the 58 respondents who indicated they “agree” or “strongly agree”, 40 (69%) gave reasons for their response. The following thematic analysis summarises the main themes constructed from the data.

#### 1. Necessity for Maintaining Services

Many respondents emphasise that the proposed increase is crucial to maintain the current level of services provided by the council. They argue that without this increase, essential services such as social care, education, public safety, and other community services would face significant cuts. This theme highlights the importance of these services to the quality of life in the community and the potential negative impact if they are reduced.

Example: *"Although I'm not happy about it, it is necessary in order to maintain vital services."*

Respondents recognise that services like street cleaning, emergency services, and public amenities are integral to the community's well-being. They believe that the increase is a necessary measure to ensure these services continue to operate effectively and meet the community's needs.

#### 2. Fairness and Responsibility

This theme revolves around the perception of fairness in the proposed tax increase. Respondents feel that the increase is distributed equitably across different property bands, ensuring that those with higher property values contribute more. There is also a sense of collective responsibility, where everyone in the community is expected to contribute to the common good.



## Appendix 7 - Summary of consultation responses

Example: *"It is the responsibility of the whole electorate. Increasing by percentage those in the higher bands will contribute more which is fair."*

The idea of fairness is crucial, as respondents believe that a progressive tax system, where higher earners pay more, is fair. This approach is seen as a way to balance the financial burden and ensure that the increase is manageable for all residents, particularly those in lower property bands.

### 3. Economic Realities and Budget Constraints

Respondents acknowledge the financial challenges faced by the council, including a significant budget gap. They understand that the proposed increase is a response to these economic realities and is necessary to avoid deeper cuts to services. This theme reflects an awareness of the broader economic context and the difficult decisions that need to be made.

Example: *"The budget gap of £15 million is a stark reality that, if left unaddressed, could lead to significant service cuts."*

The economic pressures on the council are seen as unavoidable, and respondents recognise that additional revenue must be generated to bridge the budget gap. They understand that without this increase, the council would struggle to fund essential services, leading to a decline in service quality and availability.

**Unsupportive:** of the 393 respondents who indicated they "disagree" or "strongly disagree", 334 (85%) gave reasons for their response. The following thematic analysis summarises the main themes constructed from the data.

#### 1. Financial Hardship and Affordability

Many respondents are experiencing financial difficulties due to the current economic climate, including rising costs of living, energy bills, and reduced benefits. The proposed council tax increase is seen as an additional burden that many cannot afford.

Examples: *"I am a pensioner on a limited income and already struggling with the scrapping of the winter fuel allowance. I don't have spare money so I will have to cut back."*

*"People are struggling with the cost of living. Increasing council tax will put extra pressure on already tight finances."*

This theme highlights the real-life struggles of residents who are already making tough choices between essential needs like heating and food. The increase in council tax could push some individuals and families into deeper financial distress.

#### 2. High Existing Council Tax Rates

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Some respondents feel that NPT already has one of the highest council tax rates in Wales, and further increases are seen as unjustifiable, especially when compared to other local authorities.

Examples: *"We have the highest council tax in Wales, services that are provided are already diabolical without charging us more."*

*"Currently paying one of the highest council tax rates in the borough and it is set to rise yet again. Services are getting worse, and council tax is always rising."*

This theme underscores the frustration of residents who feel they are already paying more than their fair share. The comparison to other local authorities adds to the perception of unfairness and exacerbates dissatisfaction with the council's financial management.

### 3. Perceived Inefficiency and Waste

There is a strong sentiment that the council is not managing its resources efficiently. Respondents believe that there is significant waste and that high salaries for council employees are not justified. They call for better internal reviews and cuts to non-essential departments before increasing taxes.

Examples: *"I'd like to see evidence of internal council job reviews and cuts to non-essential departments and services before passing the burden onto taxpayers."*

*"Make savings elsewhere, cut middle management jobs first before hiking council tax."*

This theme reflects a lack of trust in the council's ability to manage its budget effectively. Residents are calling for greater transparency and accountability, and they want to see concrete actions taken to reduce waste before any tax increases are considered.

### 4. Declining Quality of Services

Many respondents feel that despite paying high council taxes, the quality of services provided by the council is declining. They cite issues such as poor road maintenance, inadequate waste collection, and reduced public services.

Example: *"Reducing services and increasing costs, when the quality of roads and services aren't improving."*

This theme highlights the disconnect between the amount residents are paying and the quality of services they receive. It suggests that residents are not seeing value for their money, which fuels dissatisfaction and opposition to the council tax increase.

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### 5. Impact on Vulnerable Populations

Concerns were raised about the disproportionate impact of the tax increase on vulnerable groups, including pensioners, low-income families, and those on fixed incomes. These groups are already struggling to make ends meet and are particularly sensitive to any additional financial burdens.

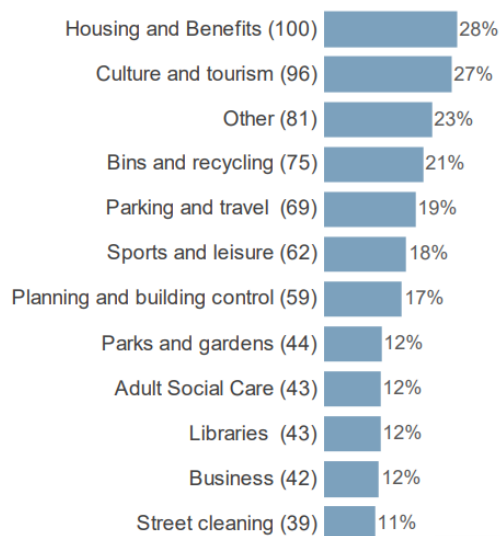
Examples: *"Many elderly are over the pension credit threshold and do not receive it or any help. They will not be able to afford this increase as they don't get pension credit nor a reduction in council tax or winter fuel help."*

*"As a single occupant, I pay a disproportionate amount in Council tax as compared with families, and the larger the family the more disproportionate the gap."*

This theme emphasises the need for the council to consider the social and economic impact of tax increases on the most vulnerable residents. It calls for more targeted support and a fairer distribution of the tax burden to protect those who are least able to afford it.

- 3.9 [Suggestions for income generation and reducing spending](#) – Respondents were asked if they have any suggestions on how the council can reduce the budget gap through income generation and/or reduce spending. They were providing a list of services to assist their responses. The bar graph below highlights where participants made their suggestions.

**Do you have any ideas or suggestions on how we could reduce spending or generate income? Please select the service areas and provide your suggestions.**



\* Other (81) services have been organised into 5 key services which are provided by NPTC; staff and management costs, operational efficiency, revenue and fines,

## Appendix 7 - Summary of consultation responses

property and assets and, public services and community support.

Whilst respondents were asked to provide specific suggestions on each service selected, comments did not reflect the service. Therefore, a thematic analysis has been conducted on the suggestions provided to generate income or reduce spending.

### Income Generation

#### 1. Leverage Public Assets

Many suggested that the local authority should make better use of existing public assets to generate revenue. For example, suggestions were made to rent out community centres, parks, and sports facilities for events and private functions. Develop underutilised land for commercial purposes or public-private partnerships. This approach maximises the use of public assets, providing a steady income stream while serving community needs.

#### 2. Increase Local Taxes and Fees

A number of respondents suggested that there is a need to adjust local taxes and fees to reflect current economic conditions. Specifically, respondents noted that the local authority should incrementally increase property taxes, business rates, and service fees and introduce new fees for services like waste management or parking. While this can generate significant revenue, it should be done cautiously to avoid undue burden on residents and businesses. Transparent communication about the reasons for increases would be essential.

#### 3. Apply for Grants and Funding

Many participants suggested that the local authority should actively seek grants and funding from national and regional governments, as well as private foundations. Grants provide additional resources without increasing local taxes. Building strong relationships with funding bodies and staying informed about available opportunities would be vital to make this sustainable.

#### 4. Develop Commercial Opportunities

- Some respondents suggested that the local authority should better engage in commercial activities that generate revenue for the local authority. For example, suggestions were made to look to establish relationships with municipal enterprises such as local energy companies, waste management services, or public transport systems. Respondents suggested that by engaging in commercial ventures, this may provide a sustainable revenue stream. However, careful planning, market research, and risk assessment are necessary to ensure success.

#### 5. Tourism and Cultural Events

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- A number of respondents suggested that there is a need to better promote tourism and cultural events to attract visitors and generate income.  
This included suggestions to Organise festivals, markets, and cultural exhibitions and to develop tourist attractions and improve local amenities. Participants suggested that through tourism, this will boost the local economy by increasing spending in local businesses. Effective marketing and investment in infrastructure are key to attracting visitors.

### Spending Reduction

#### 1. Implement Efficiency Improvements

Many respondents suggested that the local authority should look to streamline processes and adopt digital solutions to reduce costs. Examples such as implementing systems such as e-governance systems, automate administrative tasks, and conduct regular audits to identify inefficiencies. Respondents suggested that ensuring the improvements can lead to significant cost savings. Investing in technology and training staff can enhance productivity and reduce long-term expenses.

#### 2. Review and Optimise Services

Many respondents suggested that there is a need for an internal evaluation of existing services to identify areas for cost reduction or reduce duplication.

It was also suggested that service reviews should be conducted to assess usage and impact. Consider reducing or merging low-demand services. Respondents noted that by analysing and reviewing services, this will ensure that resources are allocated effectively. Further, through continuous engagement with the communities, this will help to understand their needs can help make informed decisions.

#### 3. Shared Services and Partnerships

Many respondents suggested that NPT should work closely with neighbouring authorities and organizations to share resources and reduce costs. Suggestions included; sharing administrative functions, joint procurement of goods and services, and collaborating on large projects. It was suggested that shared services can achieve economies of scale and reduce duplication. Building strong partnerships and clear agreements are essential to save money.

#### 4. Energy and Resource Efficiency

A number of respondents suggested that measures should be undertaken to reduce energy consumption and resource use. Suggestions such as upgrading to energy-efficient lighting and heating systems, promote recycling programs, and reduce water usage were all popular. Some noted that by saving energy and resource efficiency not only save money but also contribute to environmental sustainability. Regular monitoring and maintenance ensure continued savings.

## Appendix 7 - Summary of consultation responses

### 5. Reduce Non-Essential Expenditures

A number of residents suggested that there needs to be a cut back on non-essential spending and to focus on resources on critical services. Some examples include limiting spending on travel, conferences, and non-essential projects and to implement stricter approval processes for discretionary spending. Many notes that by reducing non-essential expenditures frees up funds for essential services and projects. Clear guidelines and oversight are necessary to ensure compliance.

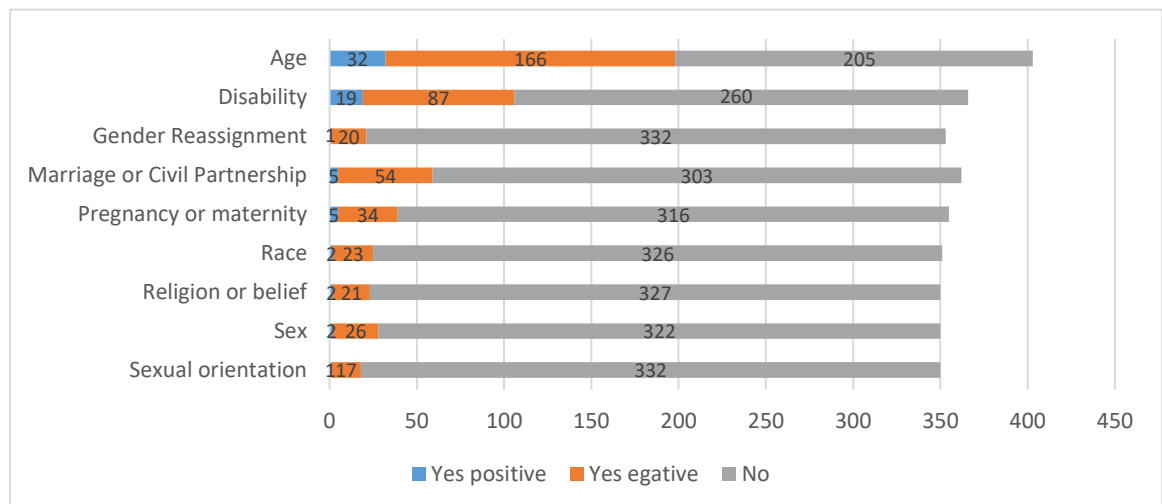
### 6. Volunteer and Community Involvement

There were a number of respondents who suggested that the local authority should encourage volunteerism and community involvement to support local services and initiatives. Examples include establishing volunteer programs for park maintenance, community events, and social services. Furthermore, there is a suggestion that there is a need to partner with local organizations and businesses for support.

## 4.0 Questions to inform the Integrated Impact Assessment

4.1 Respondents were asked a series of additional questions to help inform the Integrated impact assessment. These were as follows:

Would our Draft Budget 2024-25 proposals have an impact on you and/or your family because of your and/or their:



What effect do you think our Draft Budget 2024-25 proposals will have on people's opportunities to use the Welsh Language?

## Appendix 7 - Summary of consultation responses



What effect do you think our Draft Budget 2024-25 proposals will have on treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language?

**Impact Assessment - First Stage**

**1. Details of the initiative**

<b>Initiative description and summary:</b> Final Budget Proposals 2025/2026
<b>Service Area:</b> Services identified across the directorate
<b>Directorate:</b> All
<b>Strategic Decision:</b> 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



## Appendix 8 – Integrated Impact Assessment

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.

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 was due to the fact that the Welsh Government provisional local government settlement was in mid December and time was required in February to consider the impact of the settlement and consider consultations responses.

### UPDATE FOLLOWING PUBLIC CONSULTATION

Public consultation was undertaken in relation to the proposal to increase council tax by 7%. There were 504 responses receive to the questionnaire and two written responses were received. For each of the groups of protected characteristics the majority of respondents felt that there would be no significant impact.

#### 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				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
Disability		X				
Gender Reassignment		X				

## Appendix 8 – Integrated Impact Assessment

	Yes	No	None/ Negligible	Don't Know	Impact H/M/L/D	Reasons for your decision and details of the impact
Marriage/Civil Partnership		X				<p>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> <p>The Council continues to be aware of its position as employer, provider and commissioner of services and to this end strives to ensure its ability to meet its legal obligations.</p>
Pregnancy/Maternity		X				
Race		X				
Religion/Belief		X				
Sex		X				
Sexual orientation		X				

### 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.

## Appendix 8 – Integrated Impact Assessment

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
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### 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		<p>There is no clear route to demonstrate either positive or negative impact on biodiversity.</p> <p>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</p>
To promote the resilience of ecosystems, i.e. supporting protection of the wider environment, such as air quality, flood alleviation, etc.				X		<p>There is no clear route to demonstrate either positive or negative impact on the resilience of ecosystems.</p> <p>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</p>

## Appendix 8 – Integrated Impact Assessment

						actions of future changes to service/policy, etc. as part of delivery of the Biodiversity Duty Plan
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### 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 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.

## Appendix 8 – Integrated Impact Assessment

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).
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### 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 have been assessed and at this stage no impacts have been identified.
Crime and Disorder Impacts		X				Individual proposals have been assessed and at this stage no impacts have been identified.
Counter Terrorism Impacts		X				Individual proposals have been assessed and at this stage no impacts have been identified.
Violence against women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Impacts		X				Individual proposals have been assessed and at this stage no impacts have been identified.

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

A full impact assessment (second stage) is not required to commence consultation	X
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## Appendix 8 – Integrated Impact Assessment

Reasons for this conclusion

A full assessment is not required and in all instances the majority of respondents felt that there would be no impact on anyone with protected characteristics and there would be no impacts on the use of the Welsh Language, Biodiversity and the report embraces the sustainable development principle.

	Name	Position	Date
Completed by	Huw Jones	Director of Finance	10 <sup>th</sup> February 2025