

**COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT**

**REPORT TO: THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE JOINT  
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (BUDGET MONITORING)**

**SUBJECT: SPECIAL JOINT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE  
(BUDGET MONITORING) – 8<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY, 2022**

**REPORT OF: DEMOCRATIC & COMMITTEE SUPPORT OFFICER**

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**PRESENT: COUNCILLOR S. HEALY (CHAIR)**

Councillors M. Cook  
D. Bevan  
M. Cross  
G.A. Davies  
G.L. Davies  
W. Hodgins  
P. Edwards  
K. Hayden  
J. Hill  
W. Hodgins  
J. Holt  
C. Meredith  
J. Millard  
M. Moore  
J.P. Morgan  
J.C. Morgan  
L. Parsons  
K. Rowson  
T. Smith  
B. Summers  
S. Thomas  
H. Trollope  
B. Willis  
L. Winnett

**Co-opted Member**

T. Baxter

**WITH: Managing Director  
Chief Officer Resources  
Corporate Director Education  
Corporate Director Social Services**

Head of Legal & Corporate Compliance  
 Head of Governance & Partnerships  
 Service Manager Neighbourhood Services  
 Corporate Procurement Manager Commercial Services  
 Scrutiny & Democratic Officer/Advisor

| ITEM  | SUBJECT  | ACTION |
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| No. 1 | <p><b><u>SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION</u></b></p> <p>It was noted that no requests had been received for the simultaneous translation service.</p>   |        |
| No. 2 | <p><b><u>APOLOGIES</u></b></p> <p>An apology for absence was reported for Councillor P. Baldwin.</p>   |        |
| No. 3 | <p><b><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS AND DISPENSATIONS</u></b></p> <p>No declarations of interest or dispensations were reported.</p>  |        |
| No. 4 | <p><b><u>REVENUE BUDGET 2022/2023</u></b></p> <p>Consideration was given to report of the Chief Officer Resources.</p> <p>The Chief Officer Resources presented the report which provided an update on the positive provisional local government settlement for 2022/23 and its impact upon the Council's budget; and sought agreement of the detailed revenue budget for 2022/23, and the level of Council Tax increase for the 2022/2023 financial year.</p> <p>The Officer spoke to the report and highlighted the main points contained therein. The headline increase for BGCBC after allowing for transfers was 8.4% (£10.4m), compared to the all Wales increase of 9.4%. This was a positive settlement and combined with the opportunities identified in the Bridging the Gap programme meant that subject to the recommendations in the report being</p> |        |

agreed, the Council was able to agree a budget for 2022/23.

A Member referred to the blended learning approach introduced in schools in response to the Covid pandemic, and asked whether the Council intended to continue self-supporting the licence and ICT equipment for those families in need of support.

In response the Corporate Director of Education confirmed that a budget pressure had been identified for the 2022/23 financial year related to ICT developments within schools, and this would be an element for consideration by Members at the full meeting of the Council on the 17<sup>th</sup> February, 2022.

A Member referred to Appendix 2, particularly the cost pressure within the Environment Portfolio and asked whether this would reduce if the passporting of waste gate fees was agreed.

The Chief Officer Resources explained that the cost pressure within the Environment Portfolio excluded any cost pressure in relation to the waste gate fees. If the transfer of the waste gate fees grant was not agreed the cost pressure within the Portfolio would increase.

A Member then proposed the following amendment to Option 1 as follows:

In light of the headline uplift of 8.4%, Members accept Sections 3.1.1 to 3.1.6 of Option 1; and that decision on Sections 3.1.7 and 3.1.8 (transfer of any surplus budget into the Financial Resilience Reserve, and recommendations around the Council Tax increase) be **DEFERRED** pending further consideration at the Special Meeting of the Council on 17<sup>th</sup> February, 2022.

The proposal was seconded, and following a brief discussion the amendment was carried.

The Committee AGREED, subject to the foregoing, to recommend that the report be accepted and the amended Option 1 be supported as follows:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Members recommend to Executive and Council the 2022/23 revenue budget as shown in table 2 in paragraph 5.1.13.</li><li>• Members note the outcomes within the overall provisional RSG Settlement and note the potential for further change in the Final RSG Settlement (paragraphs 2.7 – 2.17).</li><li>• Members note the outcomes within the BGCBC provisional RSG Settlement and its impact upon the Medium Term Financial Strategy (paragraphs 2.18 – 2.24).</li><li>• Members recommend to Executive and Council the cost pressures and growth items (£4m in total) identified in Appendix 2 (paragraphs 5.1.9 – 5.1.12) for inclusion in the Council’s budget.</li><li>• Members recommend to Executive and Council passporting the grants transferring into the Settlement of £265,000 to the relevant services (paragraphs 5.1.14 – 5.1.18).</li><li>• Members recommend to Executive and Council an uplift of £3.91m which equates to 8.4% increase to the ISB (paragraphs 5.1.19 to 5.1.22).</li><li>• Decision relating to any surplus budget from the Bridging the Gap proposals be deferred for consideration at the Special Meeting of the Council on 17<sup>th</sup> February, 2022.</li><li>• Decision relating to the Council Tax increase for 2022/23 be deferred for consideration at the Special Meeting of the Council on 17<sup>th</sup> February, 2022.</li></ul> |  |
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