

**COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT**

**REPORT TO: THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE SPECIAL MEETING OF THE COUNCIL**

**SUBJECT: SPECIAL MEETING OF THE COUNCIL - 23RD FEBRUARY, 2023**

**REPORT OF:**

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**PRESENT:**

Councillors C. Smith (Presiding Member)  
P. Baldwin  
S. Behr  
D. Bevan  
K. Chaplin  
M. Cross  
H. Cunningham  
D. Davies  
G. A. Davies  
M. Day  
J. Gardner  
J. Hill  
W. Hodgins  
J. Holt  
G. Humphreys  
R. Leadbeater  
E. Jones  
J. Morgan, J.P.  
J. C. Morgan  
J. P. Morgan  
L. Parsons  
D. Rowberry  
T. Smith  
G. Thomas  
J. Thomas  
S. Thomas  
H. Trollope  
J. Wilkins  
L. Winnett  
D. Woods

WITH:

Interim Chief Executive  
Corporate Director of Education  
Corporate Director of Regeneration and Community Services  
Interim Corporate Director of Social Services  
Chief Officer Resources  
Chief Officer Commercial & Customer  
Head of Legal & Corporate Compliance  
Head of Democratic Services, Governance & Partnerships  
Head of Organisational Development  
Service Manager - Accountancy  
Service Manager – Performance & Democratic  
Service Manager – Policy & Partnerships  
Service Manager – Customer Experience & Transformation  
Communications & Marketing Manager  
Press & Publicity Officer  
Contact Centre Supervisor  
Scrutiny & Democratic Officer

ITEM	SUBJECT	ACTION
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>Apologies for absence were received from:</p> <p>Councillors C. Bainton and S. Edmunds.</p>	
No. 3	<p><b><u>PRESIDING MEMBER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS</u></b></p> <p><b><u>Congratulations</u></b></p> <p>Congratulations were expressed to:</p>	

- Megan Cottrell from Llanhilleth who had been selected as the co-captain for Wales in the under 17 Netball Team which would be playing in the Europe Netball Championships.

A letter of congratulations had been sent to Megan.

**Condolences**

Condolences were expressed to the families of:

- Former Police & Crime Commissioner, Ian Johnston on his sad death.
- Clare Drakeford, wife of the First Minister for Wales, Mark Drakeford on her sad passing.
- The thousands of earthquake victims who had lost their lives in Turkey and Syria.

Members and officers paid their respects with a minute’s silence.

**No. 4**

**DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS**

There were no declarations of interest or dispensations reported.

**No. 5**

**REVENUE BUDGET 2023/2024**

Consideration was given to the report of the Chief Officer Resources.

The Leader of the Council proposed the following:

***Appendix 2 - Cost Pressures***

- Corporate Services: Engagement & Participation Equalities & Welsh Language – Additional Staffing Requirement in the sum of £81,110 – this cost pressure **be removed**, consideration be given to identifying funding from elsewhere within the budget.

## ***Bridging the Gap Business Cases***

The following proposals **be agreed**:

- RES01 – Growth Strategy – Housing - £150,000.
- RES02 - Review of Fees & Charges for income generating services across the Council - £100,000.
- RES03 - Reduction in the Transformation Fund - £270,995.
- RES04 - Removal of Commercial and Contract Management Budget - £271,000.
- RES05 - Removal of Additional Pension Costs Budget - Aneurin Leisure Trust - £152,000.
  
- CS01 - Third Party Spend (Establish a Professional Buying Team) - £396,550.
- CS04 – Review of Telephony - £48,000.
- CS05 - Review of Electronic Document Management & Retention System (EDRM) - £104,000.
- CS09 – Members Remuneration – £50,000.
- CS10 - General Offices Income Generation - £60,000.
- CS11 – Members Grants (Special Levy) £8,910.
  
- SS - Prevention & Early Intervention - Establishment of MYST Team - Invest to Save Scheme - £416,000.
- SS01 - Reduction in Legal Fees Budget (Children’s Social Services) - £175,000.
- SS02 - Utilisation of the Children & Communities Grant - £21,025.
- SS06 - Review of Provider Manager Capacity (Supported Living and Augusta / Community Options) - £25,000.
- SS07a - Reduction in Community Options (day services bases) - £143,170.
- SS07b - Reduction in Transport at Community Options - £58,200.
  
- ENV12 – Closure of Mechanical Link - £41,000.
- ENV18 – Regeneration Income – £30,000.
- ENV23 - Removal of Dog Waste Bag Provision - £14,596.
- ENV24 - Move to Fortnightly Collection for Green Waste - £75,000.
- ENV25 – Industrial Units - £100,000.

- ED06 – Review of SLA Contracts - £20,000.
- CC02 – Review of Operational Buildings - £250,000.
- Commercial Activity & Investment - £50,000.

The above proposals totalled **£3.03m**.

The following proposals **be not agreed**:

- ED07 – Home to School Transport Service Review.
- ED08 – Aneurin Leisure Trust Management Fee – Review of Service Provision.
  
- ENV - Move to 4 Weekly Refuse Collection.
- ENV02 - Closure of all Play Areas.
- ENV03 - Reduction in Street Cleansing Provision.
- ENV04 - Reduction in Street Lighting Provision.
- ENV05 - Public Toilet Provision - Withdraw Funding.
- ENV06 - Waste - Closure / Part Closure of HWRC's.
- ENV07 - Waste - Reduction in Recycling Rounds.
- ENV08 - Removal of School Crossing Patrollers.
- ENV09 - Removal of Match Funding re: Subsidised Bus Service.
- ENV11 - Discontinuation of Pest Control Treatment Service.
- ENV14 - Cease Support for Armistice Parades.
- ENV15 - Reduction in Enforcement Wardens.
  
- SS04 - Income Generation - Cwrt Mytton.
- SS09 - Capping of Community Domiciliary Care High-Cost Packages.
- SS10 - Closure of Supported Living Bungalow – Reducing from 4 to 3.
- SS11 – Income Generation - Hydrotherapy Pool (Bert Denning).
- SS13 - Outsource / Closure of Cwrt Mytton.
- SS14 - Review of In-House Domiciliary Care Service and Potential Externalising of Extra Care.

The Leader of the Council further proposed:

- A 4.2% increase in the Individual Schools Budget (ISB).

- A Council Tax increase of 3.45%.

It was noted that the total use of reserves would amount to **£4.3m**. The Leader proposed that the Chief Officer Resources consider which specific reserves to utilise in finalising the budget and said officer to provide an update at the Special Meeting of the Council on 6<sup>th</sup> March, 2023 in terms of the use and management of reserves going forward.

In reply to a request, the Chief Officer Resources undertook to pursue options for consideration in respect of the current credits within the council tax accounts due to overpayments. However, the officer stressed that this would be on the understanding that if individuals submitted valid claims, the Council would be duty bound to repay the monies.

The Leader of the Independent Group, thereupon, confirmed that the Group supported the majority of the proposals outlined above by the Leader of the Council with the **exception of the following and proposed that the following amendments:**

- CS11 – Members Grants (Special Levy) - £8,910 – **this proposal was not supported.**
- ED01 – Reduction in ISB Schools Funding - £252,000 – **this proposal was not supported.**
- ENV22 – Trade Waste - £64,000 – **this proposal was supported.**

The total amount of proposals **agreed amounted to £3.002m** whilst the total proposals **not agreed amounted to £1.18m**.

The Leader of the Independent Group further proposed:-

- A Council Tax increase of 2.5%.

This would increase the draw on reserves by £553,764 with the total draw on reserves totalling **£4.72m**.

A recorded vote was, thereupon, requested.

**In Favour of the amended proposals** – Councillors D. Davies, G. A. Davies, M. Day, J. Hill, W. Hodgins, J. Holt, G. Humphreys, J. P. Morgan, L. Parsons, G. Thomas, J. Wilkins.

**Against the amended proposals** – Councillors P. Baldwin, S. Behr, D. Bevan, K. Chaplin, M. Cross, H. Cunningham, J. Gardner, R. Leadbeater, E. Jones, J. Morgan, J.P., J. C. Morgan, D. Rowberry, C. Smith, T. Smith, J. Thomas, S. Thomas, H. Trollope, D. Wilkshire, L. Winnett, D. Woods.

**The vote on the amendment was not carried.**

As none of the Members that had voted against the amendment were opposing the preferred option (1) a further vote was not required.

RESOLVED, subject to the foregoing, that the report be accepted and Option 1 be endorsed, namely that:

- The 2023/24 revenue budget as shown in table in paragraph 5.1.15 of the report be agreed.
- The outcomes within the overall provisional Revenue Support Grant (RSG) Settlement and the potential for further change in the Final RSG Settlement (paragraphs 2.6 – 2.17 of the report) be noted.
- The outcomes within the BGCBC provisional RSG Settlement and its impact upon the Medium Term Financial Strategy (paragraphs 2.18 – 2.26 of the report) be noted.
- The updated cost pressures and growth items identified in Appendix 2 (paragraphs 5.1.10 – 5.1.16 of the report) for inclusion in the Council's budget be agreed **with the exception of** Engagement & Participation Equalities & Welsh Language – Additional Staffing Requirement in the sum of £81,110.
- A 4.2% increase in the Individual Schools Budget (ISB) be agreed.
- The Bridging the Gap proposals delivering financial efficiencies and budget cuts towards the budget gap (paragraphs 5.1.25 to 5.1.32 of the report) be approved **with**

**the exception of:**

- ED07 – Home to School Transport Service Review.
- ED08 – Aneurin Leisure Trust Management Fee – Review of Service Provision.
  
- ENV - Move to 4 Weekly Refuse Collection.
- ENV02 - Closure of all Play Areas.
- ENV03 - Reduction in Street Cleansing Provision.
- ENV04 - Reduction in Street Lighting Provision.
- ENV05 - Public Toilet Provision - Withdraw Funding.
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- SS11 – Income Generation - Hydrotherapy Pool (Bert Denning).
- SS13 - Outsource / Closure of Cwrt Mytton.
- SS14 - Review of In-House Domiciliary Care Service and Potential Externalising of Extra Care.
  
- The use of reserves in the sum of £4.3m to balance the budget for 2023/2024 be approved.
  
- A Council tax increase of 3.45% for 2023/24 be agreed.

**No. 6**

**MEMBERSHIPS REPORT**

**Consideration was given to:**



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**DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE**

- To appoint a Chair of the Democratic Services Committee.

RESOLVED that Councillor Joanna Wilkins be appointed Chair of the Democratic Services Committee.

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