

THE VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL

CORPORATE PERFORMANCE AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE:
19TH FEBRUARY, 2025

REFERENCE FROM ENVIRONMENT AND REGENERATION SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE: 11TH FEBRUARY, 2025

“ INITIAL BUDGET 2025/26 AND MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN 2025/26
TO 2029/30 PROPOSALS FOR CONSULTATION (REF) –

The reference from Cabinet of 16th January, 2025 was presented by the Operational Manager – Accountancy, in conjunction with the Director of Place and the Head of Service - Neighbourhood Services. The purpose of the reference and the report was to put forward the Council’s budget proposals for consultation with the Council’s Scrutiny Committees, and other stakeholders.

A presentation was provided to the Committee, which outlined the:

- Background to the Budget for 2025/26 and Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) 2025/26 to 2029/30.
- The 2025/26 Welsh Government (WG) settlement.
- The current economic prospects.
- The main headlines for the Budget and MTFP proposals.
- The overall financial position of the Council.
- The review of cost pressures and savings.
- The overall allocation of resources.
- Details on Council reserves.
- The response by the Council to the WG consultation on the provisional settlement.

The Director of Place and the Head of Service - Neighbourhood Services referred to the financial and budgetary costs and pressures in their respective service areas which ranged from waste disposal, highway repairs through to costs surrounding the Replacement Local Development Plan.

The Committee was asked for their views on the overall approach, cost pressures, savings and alternative ideas and suggestions. The Committee responded as follows.

On Councillor Norman’s concerns on the proposals to cut the parks budget, and whether this would result in redundancies or redeployment of staff, it was explained that work around reshaping in this area and others for Neighbourhood Services was still ongoing. In such areas the Council had retained agency staff in tandem with freezing new staff appointments following

staff leaving or retiring. The aim was not for this to adversely impact permanent positions, but it was still early in the reshaping process which would take a few months.

Councillor Hooper raised several points:

- The projected savings from the proposed car parking measures remained 'baked-in' to these financial proposals, and he reiterated the impacts of these on businesses and local communities that had been discussed at the recent Special Meeting of the Committee.
- The Council faced being on the 'sharp end' of cuts due to the Welsh and U.K. Governments' policies.
- He referred to the comments made about leisure services and the commercial revenue and income opportunities there, and whether more details could be provided. Such commercial operators were already under financial pressure, which could be made worse in the light of measures such as car parking charges.
- On Community Asset Transfers that were being considered for sale, closure or transferred, this seemed to be a declinist approach, due to the cuts in funding from the Welsh and U.K. Governments and would see further decline to local town centres, etc.

In response, it was explained that with the projected car parking savings, these predated the Special Meeting, due to this item being a reference from Cabinet from 16th January, 2025. The proposed savings would be subject to further consultation prior to the Council's budget being finalised. On asset transfers, there had been positive examples of this as well, with some organisations involved in these receiving grant funding and investment in these assets, with them having a higher degree of access to such funding and support than what the Council would have had separately.

Councillor Protheroe also made several comments, as follows:

- She disagreed with Councillor Hooper's position on the Community Asset Transfers, and stated that these could be a positive development for local communities, with non-Council organisations making such assets thrive.
- She felt there was a need for a review and pause on the reduction of bins within the Vale of Glamorgan following the 25% removal. She cited the seasonal use and demand for bins to dispose of litter in the Vale's seaside tourist areas during the Summertime as a reason why this should be considered. These areas were subject to considerable littering in the Summer months, despite the best efforts of volunteer litter pickers, and the demand for bins in such areas should be considered further by the Council.
- Following on from the point above, she suggested that the Council undertake an educational piece of work with schoolchildren around the issues of littering prior to Summertime. This was particularly important for those seaside and tourist areas, i.e. to mitigate the amount of plastic entering the sea and waterways.

In response, it was explained that the Council would take stock following this latest

phase of bin removal, to consider any issues raised and to review the situation and implications of bin removal. If there were genuine and substantive concerns that were raised then the Council would ensure that litter surveys would be undertaken and to review where bins had been removed. In terms of tourist resorts, there were no plans to remove these from the immediate area, as it was fully understood that there was a significant demand and use of these during the summer months. On the bins removed as part of the 25% target, this were due to the need to remove duplication and bins that were misused. After this review, communications and a campaign would be undertaken to advise the public about litter and to take it with them should there be no bins available.

Councillor Ernest raised his concerns about the following:

- On the declining share of the Council's budget for Neighbourhood Services, its impact on local communities and residents having to pay increasing levels of Council Tax but with less services provided by the Council. This contrasted with the considerable share of the budget allocated to schools and social services, with both areas seeing considerable overspends.
- On Community Asset Transfers, he referred to those examples where community groups and others had struggled with the maintenance and management of former Council community centres. These were essential hubs for the community offering a wide range of services and activities, and such facilities could suffer post-transfer with insufficient volunteers and an absence of Council management and oversight.

In response, it was explained that community groups and others which took over former council assets and community centres could apply and receive funding to help them run and maintain such facilities, which had been a challenge for the Council due to its competing demands and priorities. On spending on social services and schools, there were targeted proposals in place for reshaping these services, to ensure their continued deliverability and sustainability.

The Executive Leader and Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources referred to the scale and complexity of educational needs and those associated with social services, and the Council's duty of care in these areas. She also spoke about the positive examples and successes concerning Community Asset Transfers (i.e. the community libraries set up), and the Council was open to communities taking over local centres and hubs to help them thrive. The Council would be able to help such ventures start up in order for communities to successfully manage such assets. On the concerns raised about country parks, work would be done around the green and blue spaces, to make sure that what the Council provided was what residents wanted and to ensure that the parks remained commercially sustainable and cost neutral.

There being no further comments or questions, and after considering the report, the Committee subsequently

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the following comments be passed to Corporate

Performance and Resources Scrutiny Committee as the lead Scrutiny Committee in order for them to be forwarded to Cabinet:

- In light of the car parking savings / proposals still being part of the report and consultation, it was important to consider the comments, etc. made and included as a recommendation at the Special Meeting of the Environment and Regeneration Committee on 28th January on these proposals and that, following consideration by the Committee, the report be referred back to Cabinet with the following comments / issues identified, in order for additional work to be done on the report's proposals prior to implementation:
 - The Committee welcomes the proposal concerning residential parking permits;
 - That Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) be applied to each of the proposals referred to in the report. The Committee felt there had been insufficient consideration on these and the impacts on the locations affected and further work was required;
 - Regarding the point on the use of EIAs above, this included Court Road multi-storey car park, with further work needed to identify current use and the potential impact of its closure on the availability of alternative car parking spaces, the potential impact that might have on nearby residents and any mitigation that would be required to address those concerns. The Committee was of the view that the future of Court Road car park should be set within a vision for the town centre in relation to town centre renewal and that consideration should be given to include a capital bid to secure the future of the car park as part of that process. Creative solutions should be explored to secure the future of the car park;
 - Regarding the on-street car parking proposals, further consideration be given on this, including a period for free car parking of one or two hours and / or seasonal parking;
 - Should on-street parking charges be introduced, then there should be a review period built into that so appropriate changes could be made as required;
 - That the legal position in relation to the use of any money that might be raised through the introduction of car parking charges be clarified, in order to fully understand what that money could be spent on specifically;
 - With regard to off-street parking charges, the Committee's view was that work should be done to improve the car parking facilities at Cliff Walk – Penarth, and Bron y Mor – Barry, prior to the implementation of charging at those locations;
 - That appropriate enforcement capacity would be required to achieve the objectives of introducing charging both in on-street and off-street areas;
 - Consideration should be given to what approaches could be made to ensure affordability in relation to parking permits so that local residents who might be experiencing financial hardship were not disadvantaged;
 - In relation to off-street charges there should be engagement with the

relevant stakeholders in the Western Vale in relation to the service design of car parks in that area.

- That the Council undertake an educational piece of work with schoolchildren around the issues of littering prior to Summertime.
- A review and pause of the reduction of bins within the Vale of Glamorgan following the 25% removal.

Reason for recommendation

In order that Cabinet be informed of the comments of the Committee before making a proposal on the Capital Programme.”