

**Special Regeneration and Environment Scrutiny Committee 18th December 2018 –
Main Discussion Points MTFP Proposals**

3. Draft Budget Proposals for 2019/20

Appendix 1 – Department Nil Impact Proposals Savings

Appendix 2 – Communities Directorate 2019/20 Permanent Savings Summary (those with a nil impact)

Appendix 7 – Communities Directorate 2019/20 “temporary”

- The above proposals were unanimously supported by the Committee

Appendix 3 – Public Protection 2019/20 draft savings proposals and MTFP proformas

- General concerns were raised regarding the impact of some proposals on staff
- **Civic meals increase 5%** - Members sought clarification on what the increase would mean in monetary terms and suggested it would be useful to have examples of price increases against menu options in future years. A Member queried whether the service could be outsourced and it was confirmed that this model would be considered as part of the Catering Service review
- **Cessation of the CSW service**
Detailed discussion took place regarding the proposal. Officers provided further information on the CSW roles, including the number of posts, shift patterns and the number on duty at any one time, and the public impact if the service were to be withdrawn (including public reassurance and support at Council events). Officers outlined the rationale for withdrawing the service, explaining that Caerphilly are the only Welsh LA that utilise CSWs in their current form. With regards to the new parking enforcement posts, it was confirmed that CSW staff have the option to apply if they so wish. The Committee voiced their support for the retention of the service as a valued asset to the authority. Concerns were raised regarding the maintenance of enforcement issues if the service were to be withdrawn (such as littering and dog fouling) – the Committee were advised that these duties are also covered by the Environmental Health Enforcement Team.

Following due debate, it was moved and seconded that the CSW service be retained, and that alternative savings be achieved by reducing the number of Cabinet posts from 9 to 5 (by realigning the directorate portfolios) and implementing park and ride charges.

An amendment to the motion was moved and seconded that the CSW service be retained (which was agreed by the majority present with two against). The Committee then took the substantive motion in that the CSW service be retained, which was agreed by the majority (with 1 abstention). It was then moved and seconded that park and ride charges be implemented as an alternative saving to cessation of the CSW service, which was agreed by the majority (with 1 abstention).

- **Provision of Meals Direct Service to Section 117 clients only (ceasing service to all other clients)**
Members expressed concerns regarding the number of posts that would be lost through the proposal, and commented on the value of the service to those in need, particularly vulnerable groups of people. Following due debate, it was moved and seconded that the service be retained, and was agreed by the majority present (with 1 abstention)

- **Introduction of £20 charge for rat treatments**

The Committee sought clarification on the rationale for introducing the charge and it was explained that this is another discretionary area. Charges vary across other Las where such a service exists. The Committee were asked to note that the Council does not have a duty to keep private land from infestation, and that the charge is a contribution towards the overall cost of the service. A means-tested discount of 50% will be available. Concerns were raised that the charge will cause the rat population to increase but Members were advised that there is no evidence of this in the 5 Las that do not provide a rat treatment service. Following due debate, it was moved and seconded that the charge not be introduced and this was agreed by the majority present (with 1 abstention).

Appendix 4 - Community and Leisure Services 2019/20 draft savings proposals and MTFP proformas

- Discussion around proposed reduction of caretaker support across community centres – it was explained that this will entail a transitional period (1 hour for now and then part-year from October 2019)
- Concerns around proposed closure of 2 civic amenity sites – the Committee felt it would not be conducive to discuss until the findings of the Waste Review Group are brought to the Committee in February 2019. Members were advised that based on the work carried out by the Group to date to examine the workstreams, they are likely to recommend the closure of 2 sites
- Proposed removal of one weed spraying application – Members raised concerns about the negative impact this could have on the landscape of the authority. Officers referred to the reduction in grass cuts and emphasised the need to make savings
- Proposed closure of all 5 public conveniences – Members raised concerns as to the impact this would have on residents and asked whether this could be withdrawn until the consultation results of the Draft Local Toilets Strategy are received (which was discussed by the Committee the previous week). Members were reminded of the need to make savings and that although the high public impact has been acknowledged, this is a discretionary service and the Council does not have a duty to provide public toilets.

Appendix 5 - Infrastructure 2019/20 draft savings proposals and MTFP proformas

- Proposed reductions in carriage resurfacing/surface dressing and highways reactive maintenance budgets - Members expressed concerns regarding road conditions across the authority and the lifespan of resurfacing treatments. Officers outlined efforts to maximise the budget across the highways network. Clarification was sought on the reasons for sinking roads in Bargoed Town Centre and it was explained that these are due to underlying issues such as drainpipes, construction and topography characteristics. Such works are subject to a maintenance period of 12 months and can be rectified if these are caused by a latent defect.
- Concerns were also raised that these reductions could have cumulative effects on the condition of the road network and could lead to increased repair costs in future years. Officers explained that they are making concerted efforts to maximise grant funding (reductions for which have had an increasing impact over the years on back office staffing, planned maintenance and reactive maintenance). The Council are lobbying WG to mitigate funding losses but there are no guarantees this will be successful.

- Discussion took place regarding pothole intervention criteria and a query was received regarding the number of insurance claims – Officers confirmed they would arrange to circulate this information to Members
- Officers responded to queries in respect of gully cleaning and intervention criteria in the event of blockages – it was explained that it is intended to undertake a more targeted approach in high risk areas
- Queries on street lighting maintenance – Members were referred to the report recently considered by the Scrutiny Committee and approved by Cabinet, which will see LED conversion of all columns and the retention of the SALIX grant
- A Member queried whether a charge could be placed on contractors arising from road wear and tear caused in the vicinity of construction areas – Officers confirmed that the Council does not have the power to levy such charges

Appendix 6 – Regeneration and Planning 2019/20 draft savings proposals and MTFP proformas

- No queries were received regarding this section of the draft savings proposals and the Committee raised no objections regarding these proposals

As such, the Committee supported the proposals contained in Appendices 1, 2 (nil impacts only), and 7 and raised no objections regarding the majority of the proposals within Appendices 3 to 6. They requested that the comments and concerns raised throughout the course of the meeting on a number of the proposals be relayed to Cabinet.