

**Special Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee 3rd December 2018 –
Main Discussion Points MTFP Proposals**

3. Draft Budget Proposals for 2019/20

- Members queried the need to make savings in advance for 2020/21 given the extent of the cuts for 2019/20 – Officers explained that this assists in planning for savings moving forward
- Fire service levy – Members held concerns around the level of payment required. Officers explained that this is a mandatory levy but that WG are currently consulting on a levy versus precept moving forward
- Query on City Deal contribution – Officers explained that this is a binding regional agreement between the 10 local authorities (contribution is mandatory)
- BIP strategic reviews – Members expressed the need for more detailed information and timescales. Officers referred to explanation given at Members' Seminar about what these reviews will entail, including the complexity and scope of the reviews which will cover a wide range of service areas
- A Member suggested that savings should encompass a longer term strategy eg looking at savings across Years 1, 2 and 3
- Queries around the terminology to describe impact of savings proposals – Officers explained that this is a subjective HOS assessment e.g. in the case of vacancy management there may be a low impact as these are vacant posts that are being deleted
- Discussion around PFI review – Officers explained that this is work in progress and an options appraisal will be presented to Cabinet in 2019
- Concerns around a detrimental impact on the appearance of the county borough if services such as civic amenity sites close or if charges are implemented for waste collection
- Concerns over reduction in the Music Service budget
- Discussion around CSW proposals and new parking enforcement roles – Members queried the need to cease the CSW service in view of the creation of the new parking enforcement service. Officers explained that consideration of this proposal is within the remit of the Regeneration and Environment Scrutiny Committee; however, parking enforcement will be a new income generating service, and Members were asked to note that no new budget will be created for this as salary costs will be covered by fines and penalties. The P&R Scrutiny Committee formally recommended (by the majority present) that other savings proposals be sought as an alternative to the deletion of the CSW posts
- A Member suggested that the views of P&R as an overarching scrutiny committee should be reported back to Cabinet – the Committee were reminded that final savings proposals are subject to consideration by full Council
- Budget savings suggestion from a Member - that Officers look at Fleet Management savings and the way vehicles are managed, and the opportunities to save or reduce expenditure.

4. 2019/20 Draft Savings Proposals for Corporate Services and Miscellaneous Finance

- Discussion around deletion of Communities Match Funding Budget and the potential implications for the Bargoed Ice Rink event
- Discussion around pension contributions former authorities – Officers provided an explanation of the reduced liability requirement and explained that this is an historical liability which will further reduce in years to come
- A query was received regarding the number of posts that would be affected by the restructuring proposals across Corporate Services – Officers explained that this will be in the region of 10-15 posts; some of these relate to vacant posts and it is anticipated that the other post holders will be redeployed or released through business cases.
- The Scrutiny Committee held concerns over vacant posts and vacancy management being classed as “nil impact” savings, given the potential impact on staff morale and the continuing pressure on resources. Officers explained that the Authority is striving not to fill vacant posts wherever possible and were reminded of the need to make savings and deliver services in a different way. It was explained that this will inevitably lead to a reduction in the services that can be delivered and that given the reductions in year on year funding, expectations regarding the level of service that can be delivered need to be adjusted accordingly
- A Member suggested that it would be helpful to have a Special Council or Members Seminar where all Heads of Service could deliver a 10-15 minute presentation on the proposals for their service area and respond to queries and concerns from Members. Members were advised that a Members Seminar would be more conducive to the level of discussion and debate required on each of the proposals; additionally they were reminded that their comments will be fed back to Cabinet and the Interim Chief Executive in any event. However, it was acknowledged that a Members Seminar (or series of seminars) might be a more beneficial approach to the consideration of budget saving proposals in future years, as it would give all Councillors an opportunity to ask questions, and remove the current limitations whereby Member scrutiny of draft proposals under each directorate is ring-fenced to the relevant Scrutiny Committee. It was unanimously agreed by the Scrutiny Committee that this recommended approach be relayed to Cabinet and the Interim Chief Executive.
- Discussion took place regarding the proposed reduction in the budget that support SLAs with the voluntary sector. Members felt that the 16.76% reduction in the total budget is particularly high and held concerns regarding the detriment impact that the proposals would have on the support that is given to the voluntary sector. In response, Officers referred to the need to make savings to address the £15.6m shortfall in funding and of the difficult decisions that need to be made as a result, and Members were advised that if they were minded to reinstate any of the proposed savings that have a public impact, they would need to seek alternative savings proposals to deliver a balanced budget. Moving forward, the situation is only set to worsen and further savings that have a heightened impact on the public will need to be delivered.
- Members asked whether savings could be achieved via the outsourcing of services. It was explained that although this will be considered as part of the options appraisals within the strategic review of services, generally outsourcing does not have the potential to produce a high level of savings.