

Monmouthshire Scrutiny

Performance and Overview Scrutiny Committee ~ Feedback to Cabinet of Meeting held on 10th February 2026

Report Item 4: Financial Update

Members focused their questions on the financial pressures across schools, children's services, housing, capital projects, and overall budget sustainability. They asked about the timescales and monitoring of recovery plans for schools in deficit, the drivers of external legal spend in children's services, and the causes and resolution of overspends in housing, including the impact of the Severn View delay. Several questions probed the management of rising school deficits, staffing-driven cost pressures, the effectiveness of surplus recovery measures, and differences in school risk categorisation. Members also queried whether the reported £1.1m surplus was structurally sound or reliant on one-offs, how the Council would tackle growing ALN and social care pressures, and whether capital slippage reflected performance issues or timing. Further questions challenged the structural sustainability of the overall budget, sought clarification on debt financing gains, and explored trends in debt recovery, particularly in social care. Members also requested data on leisure centre performance, asked about passenger transport overspends, the impact of Storm Claudia on the capital programme and EFAS rules, monitoring of contractor charging regimes, and the incremental changes schools plan during multi-year budget recovery.

Chair's Conclusion:

The Chair thanked the Cabinet Member for the report and their responses to the committee's questions.

Report Item 5: Draft Revenue & Capital budget proposals

Questions centred on the balance between council tax increases, service protection, and efficiency. Members asked whether a 5.95% rise – and over 30% cumulative increases in recent years – was reasonable and whether the Council was doing enough to transform services rather than relying on tax rises. They queried the justification for council tax increases outpacing inflation, and whether the budget would allow the Council to address potholes, including capacity constraints and the long-term costs of temporary repairs. Members asked about the level of Welsh Government support for the Chainbridge works, whether the £1m uplift to schools

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covered pay and ALN pressures, and whether National Insurance funding would be adequate. They also sought assurance on the Council's resilience to extreme weather events, raised concerns about reactive versus proactive highways maintenance (highlighting the Llanthony landslip), and asked whether the proposed 3.8% rise in fees and charges would apply uniformly. Further questions looked at whether the additional £5.5m for Highways could support technology or staffing improvements for hot-potholing, and whether any funding could be ring-fenced for footways and rights of way.

Chair's Conclusion:

The Chair thanked the members for their questions, and the Cabinet Member and officers for the report and their responses.