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County Hall
Rhadyr
Usk
NP15 1GA

Friday, 17 February 2023

Notice of meeting

Performance and Overview Scrutiny Committee

**Monday, 27th February, 2023 at 10.00 am,
The Council Chamber, County Hall, The Rhadyr, Usk, NP15 1GA with
remote attendance**

Please note that a pre meeting will be held 30 minutes prior to the start of the meeting for members of the committee.

AGENDA

Item No	Item	Pages
1.	Apologies for Absence.	
2.	Declarations of Interest.	
3.	Public Open Forum.	
4.	Pre-decision scrutiny of the Council Tax Premiums Consultation: Long Term Empty Properties and Second Homes - To consider the findings of the public consultation exercise on introducing council tax premiums from 1st April 2024 (report to follow).	1 - 110
5.	Month 9 Budget Outturn Report - Budget monitoring report for monthly scrutiny.	111 - 164
6.	Performance and Overview Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme and Action List.	165 - 170
7.	Cabinet and Council Work Planner.	171 - 180
8.	To confirm the following minutes:	
8.1.	Ordinary Meeting - Performance and Overview Scrutiny Committee - 17th January 2023.	181 - 190

8.2.	Special Meeting - Performance and Overview Scrutiny Committee - 25th January 2023.	191 - 198
9.	Next Meeting: Thursday 27th April 2023 at 10.00am.	

Paul Matthews

Chief Executive

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
CYNGOR SIR FYNWY

THE CONSTITUTION OF THE COMMITTEE IS AS FOLLOWS:

County Councillor Jill Bond, West End;, Welsh Labour/Llafur Cymru
County Councillor Ian Chandler, Llantilio Crossenny;, Green Party
County Councillor Tony Kear, Llanbadoc & Usk;, Welsh Conservative Party
County Councillor Alistair Neill, Gobion Fawr;, Welsh Conservative Party
County Councillor Paul Pavia, Mount Pleasant;, Welsh Conservative Party
County Councillor Peter Strong, Rogiet;, Welsh Labour/Llafur Cymru
County Councillor Ann Webb, St Arvans;, Welsh Conservative Party
County Councillor Laura Wright, Grofield;, Welsh Labour/Llafur Cymru
County Councillor Sue Riley, Bulwark and Thornwell;, Welsh Labour/Llafur Cymru
Janice Watkins

Public Information

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A copy of this agenda and relevant reports can be made available to members of the public attending a meeting by requesting a copy from Democratic Services on 01633 644219. Please note that we must receive 24 hours notice prior to the meeting in order to provide you with a hard copy of this agenda.

Welsh Language

The Council welcomes contributions from members of the public through the medium of Welsh or English. We respectfully ask that you provide us with adequate notice to accommodate your needs.

Aims and Values of Monmouthshire County Council

Our purpose

Building Sustainable and Resilient Communities

Objectives we are working towards

- Giving people the best possible start in life
- A thriving and connected county
- Maximise the Potential of the natural and built environment
- Lifelong well-being
- A future focused council

Our Values

Openness. We are open and honest. People have the chance to get involved in decisions that affect them, tell us what matters and do things for themselves/their communities. If we cannot do something to help, we'll say so; if it will take a while to get the answer we'll explain why; if we can't answer immediately we'll try to connect you to the people who can help – building trust and engagement is a key foundation.

Fairness. We provide fair chances, to help people and communities thrive. If something does not seem fair, we will listen and help explain why. We will always try to treat everyone fairly and consistently. We cannot always make everyone happy, but will commit to listening and explaining why we did what we did.

Flexibility. We will continue to change and be flexible to enable delivery of the most effective and efficient services. This means a genuine commitment to working with everyone to embrace new ways of working.

Teamwork. We will work with you and our partners to support and inspire everyone to get involved so we can achieve great things together. We don't see ourselves as the 'fixers' or problem-solvers, but we will make the best of the ideas, assets and resources available to make sure we do the things that most positively impact our people and places.

Kindness: We will show kindness to all those we work with putting the importance of relationships and the connections we have with one another at the heart of all interactions.

Role of the Pre-meeting

1. Why is the Committee scrutinising this? (background, key issues)
 2. What is the Committee’s role and what outcome do Members want to achieve?
 3. Is there sufficient information to achieve this? If not, who could provide this?
- Agree the order of questioning and which Members will lead
 - Agree questions for officers and questions for the Cabinet Member

Questions for the Meeting

Scrutinising Performance

1. How does performance compare with previous years? Is it better/worse? Why?
2. How does performance compare with other councils/other service providers? Is it better/worse? Why?
3. How does performance compare with set targets? Is it better/worse? Why?
4. How were performance targets set? Are they challenging enough/realistic?
5. How do service users/the public/partners view the performance of the service?
6. Have there been any recent audit and inspections? What were the findings?
7. How does the service contribute to the achievement of corporate objectives?
8. Is improvement/decline in performance linked to an increase/reduction in resource? What capacity is there to improve?

Scrutinising Policy

1. Who does the policy affect ~ directly and indirectly? Who will benefit most/least?
2. What is the view of service users/stakeholders? What consultation has been undertaken? Did the consultation process comply with the Gunning Principles? Do stakeholders believe it will achieve the desired outcome?
3. What is the view of the community as a whole - the ‘taxpayer’ perspective?
4. What methods were used to consult with stakeholders? Did the process enable all those with a stake to have their say?
5. What practice and options have been considered in developing/reviewing this policy? What evidence is there to inform what works? Does the policy relate to an area where there is a lack of published research or other evidence?
6. Does the policy relate to an area where there are known inequalities?
7. Does this policy align to our corporate objectives, as defined in our corporate plan? Does it adhere to our Welsh Language Standards?

8. Have all relevant sustainable development, equalities and safeguarding implications
9. been taken into consideration? For example, what are the procedures that need to be in place to protect children?
- 10.
11. How much will this cost to implement and what funding source has been identified?
- 12.
13. How will performance of the policy be measured and the impact evaluated

General Questions:

Empowering Communities

- How are we involving local communities and empowering them to design and deliver services to suit local need?
- Do we have regular discussions with communities about service priorities and what level of service the council can afford to provide in the future?
- Is the service working with citizens to explain the role of different partners in delivering the service, and managing expectations?
- Is there a framework and proportionate process in place for collective performance assessment, including from a citizen's perspective, and do you have accountability arrangements to support this?
- Has an Equality Impact Assessment been carried out? If so, can the Leader and Cabinet/Senior Officers provide members with copies and a detailed explanation of the EQIA conducted in respect of these proposals?
- Can the Leader and Cabinet/Senior Officers assure members that these proposals comply with Equality and Human Rights legislation? Do the proposals comply with the Local Authority's Strategic Equality Plan?

Service Demands

- How will policy and legislative change affect how the council operates?
- Have we considered the demographics of our council and how this will impact on service delivery and funding in the future?
- Have you identified and considered the long-term trends that might affect your service area, what impact these trends could have on your service/your service could have on these trends, and what is being done in response?

Financial Planning

- Do we have robust medium and long-term financial plans in place?
- Are we linking budgets to plans and outcomes and reporting effectively on these?

Making savings and generating income

- Do we have the right structures in place to ensure that our efficiency, improvement and transformational approaches are working together to maximise savings?

- How are we maximising income?
- Have we compared other council's policies to maximise income and fully considered the implications on service users?
- Do we have a workforce plan that takes into account capacity, costs, and skills of the actual versus desired workforce?

Questions to ask within a year of the decision:

- Were the intended outcomes of the proposal achieved or were there other results?
- Were the impacts confined to the group you initially thought would be affected i.e. older people, or were others affected e.g. people with disabilities, parents with young children?
- Is the decision still the right decision or do adjustments need to be made?

Questions for the Committee to conclude...

Do we have the necessary information to form conclusions/make recommendations to the executive, council, other partners? If not, do we need to:

- (i) Investigate the issue in more detail?
- (ii) Obtain further information from other witnesses – Executive Member, independent expert, members of the local community, service users, regulatory bodies...

Agree further actions to be undertaken within a timescale/future monitoring report...



Subject: COUNCIL TAX PREMIUMS FOR LONG TERM EMPTY PROPERTIES AND SECOND HOMES

Meeting: Performance & Overview Scrutiny Committee

Date: 27th February 2023

Divisions/Wards Affected: All

1. PURPOSE:

1.1 The purpose of this report is to:

- Consider the consultation responses regarding council tax premiums on long term empty properties and second homes.
- Consider the resulting proposals to introduce council tax premiums on long term empty properties and second homes from 1st April 2024.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

2.1 To note the consultation responses received as detailed in this report.

2.2 That the Council use its discretionary powers to introduce a council tax premium for long term empty properties on a sliding scale from 100% to 300% effective from 1st April 2024. With a 100% premium applying to properties empty for 1 year, a 200% premium to properties empty for 2 years and a 300% premium to properties empty for 3 years or more.

2.3 That the Council use its discretionary powers to introduce a council tax premium for second homes of 100% from 1st April 2024 and will give further consideration to the impact on the local economy before utilising that power.

3. KEY ISSUES:

3.1 Background

3.1 Since 1st April 2017, under the Housing (Wales) Act 2014, Councils have discretionary powers to charge a premium of up to 100% (rising to 300% from 1st April 2023) on long term empty properties and second homes.

3.2 The decision to charge a council tax premium on either a long-term empty property, second home or both is a decision for each Council to make. Councils can set different levels of premium for each class.

3.3 For second homes, the legislation and guidance require Councils to make their first determination at least one year before the beginning of the financial year to which the premium relates. It is also considered good practice to give rate payers of long-term

empty properties 12 months' notice of a first determination to apply a premium. Therefore, a decision to charge a council tax premium will need to be made before 1st April 2023 and will be effective from 1st April 2024.

3.4 There is also a requirement that where a Council determines to charge premium, a notice is published in the local paper within 21 days of a decision.

3.5 Councils are expected to consult ahead of deciding to charge a council tax premium. Any decision to charge a premium must be made by Full Council (under Section 12A and 12B of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 as inserted by Section 139 Housing (Wales) Act 2014) following a period of engagement and consultation with key stakeholders. Cabinet decided on 18th January 2023 to undertake a consultation exercise to seek views on introducing a council tax premium on both long term empty properties and second homes in the county. Results of the consultation can be found in section 7 below and Appendices three to five. The outcome of the consultation and the decision whether to charge a council tax premium is due to be considered by Full Council on 9th March 2023.

4. Long term empty properties

4.1 A long term empty property is defined as a dwelling which is both unoccupied and substantially unfurnished for a continuous period of at least one year.

4.2 In determining whether a dwelling has been empty for one year, no account is to be taken of any period before 1st April 2016. In addition, the furnishing or occupation of a dwelling for one or more periods of six weeks or less during the year will not affect its status as a long-term empty dwelling. In other words, a person cannot alter a dwellings status as a long-term empty dwelling by taking up residence or installing furniture for a short period.

4.3 The regulations identify seven classes of dwellings that are exempt from the premium. These include dwellings marketed for let or sale, annexes and seasonal homes. A full list can be found on page 7 of the accompanying guidance in Appendix One.

4.4 There are currently circa 400 properties listed on our council tax system as a long-term empty property. We will however check and verify the status of each property ahead of billing for any premium to ensure premiums are applied fairly and correctly.

5. Second Homes

5.1 A second home is determined as a dwelling which is not a person's sole or main home and is substantially furnished. These dwellings are referred to in the Local Government Finance Act (LGFA) 1992 as dwellings occupied periodically but they are commonly referred to as "second homes".

5.2 There are currently circa 190 properties listed on our council tax system as a second home. As above, we will have to check and verify the status of each property ahead of billing for any premium.

6. Housing Context

6.1 The discretion given to councils to charge a premium is intended to be a tool to:

- help bring long term empty properties back into use to provide safe, secure and affordable homes

- support councils in increasing the supply of affordable housing and enhancing the sustainability of local communities

6.2 The council's draft Community and Corporate plan identifies some specific issues that the County is facing particularly in respect to house prices, an increasing demand for affordable housing and the use of temporary accommodation. Any additional revenue generated from council tax premiums could be utilised to help address some of these issues in future.

7. Results of the Consultation

7.1 The consultation ran for a period of four weeks, closing on 16th February 2023. A copy of the consultation questions can be found in Appendix Two.

7.2 A letter was sent to properties currently identified on our database as being either a long term empty property or a second home drawing attention to the consultation and encouraging people to respond.

7.3 The consultation received 276 responses. The majority of responses 217, were from residents of the county, 42 were as an owner of a second home, 18 as an owner of a long term empty property and 13 others, e.g. employees of the council, relatives, visitors to the area. (N.b. respondents could select more than one category for this answer).

7.4 Of the responses, 67% were in favour of introducing a council tax premium for long term empty properties and 58% were in favour of introducing a council tax premium for second homes in the county.

7.5 Opinion was more divided over the level of premium to apply. Although in both cases the most favoured premium was 300% (long term empty properties, 43% and second homes, 47%)

7.6 There was a varied mix of responses to the consultation. Full details of the responses can be found in Appendices Three, Four & Five. In general, those in support of a premium for long term empty properties thought this was a good idea and should help to bring homes back into use. Those who disagreed with the premium suggested that there may be valid reasons for a property to be empty and that owners were already paying full council tax. For second homes the general response in favour of a premium was if someone can afford a second home then they can afford to pay more council tax. For those who responded no, responses touched on the relatively small number of second homes in the county and the potential impact the premium may have on the tourism sector in the county.

8. OPTIONS APPRAISAL

8.1 Following the consultation, the following options were considered:

1. Do nothing, determine not to introduce a premium for either long term empty properties or second homes resulting in council taxpayers continuing to be charged full council tax on these properties.
2. Apply additional council tax charges (by way of a council tax premium) according to the popular outcome of the consultation.

3. Apply council tax charges (by way of a council tax premium) in a way that considers the potential impact on the tourism economy in the county, according to a frequently occurring argument within the consultation.
- 8.2 The results of the consultation, indicate that in both cases the majority of respondents were in favour of the introduction of a council tax premium on both long term empty properties and second homes.
 - 8.3 The following options were selected:
 1. Introduce a Council Tax premium for empty homes of 300% on a sliding scale. A charge of 100% shall be applied for properties empty for one year and shall rise to 200% for properties empty for two years and rise further to 300% for properties empty for three years or more. Upon introduction of the system in April 2024, the scale will be applied immediately. Charges will be incurred on the sliding scale according to the length of time properties have been registered as empty.
 2. Apply a Council Tax premium for second homes of 100% from April 2024. However Cabinet have indicated that they intend to review this decision ahead of implementing these premiums if it is felt that this could adversely affect the tourism industry in Monmouthshire.

9. EVALUATION CRITERIA

- Review against Welsh Government Guidance
- Comparison to other Councils in Wales currently charging a premium
- Potential future budget requirements
- The impact and effect of these premiums will be monitored (especially the potential impact on the tourism economy). A report will be brought back to this committee in 2025/26 to reflect on the first year of implementation.

10. REASONS

- 10.1 To note the responses received to the public consultation exercise about the introduction of a charge for council tax premiums for long term empty properties and second homes in the county.

11. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 The amount of additional revenue generated from the proposal will depend on the number of properties (as noted above a full housekeeping exercise is required to determine exact numbers).
- 11.2 Current modelling, estimates that for:
 - **long term empty properties:** the proposed council tax premium will generate estimated revenue of up to £1.6m. The exact amount will depend on the actual number of empty properties recorded. Work will be undertaken throughout 2023 to update records held and to notify taxpayers of these charges.
 - **second homes:** the proposed council tax premium will generate estimated revenue of up to £365,000. As above, the exact amount will depend on the actual number of eligible properties, which will be determined following a full review through 2023.

11.3 The full budget impact will be determined following a review of the property data held and an assessment of any additional resources and costs (e.g. system developer costs) required to administer the premium. The additional net revenue generated will be included in the Medium Term Financial Plan for 2024/25 onwards.

12. WELLBEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS IMPLICATIONS (INCORPORATING EQUALITIES, SUSTAINABILITY, SAFEGUARDING AND CORPORATE PARENTING)

12.1 An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed in respect of the proposal and concluded that there are no issues which would prevent the Council from implementing these premiums. See Appendix Six for full details.

12.2 As noted in paragraph 6.2, the introduction of council tax premiums will help to address some of the housing issues the county faces and in doing so contributes to the delivery of Corporate Plan priorities and well-being goals as set out in the Well-being of Future Generations Act.

13. CONSULTEES:

Cabinet
Strategic Leadership Team
Chief Officer for Resources
Head of Finance

14. BACKGROUND PAPERS:

Appendix One: Guidance on the implementation of Council Tax Premiums in Wales

Appendix Two: Consultation questions.

Appendix Three: Consultation responses

Appendix Four: Long Term Empty property comments

Appendix Five: Second Home comments

Appendix Six: Future Generations Impact Assessment

15. AUTHORS:

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Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

www.gov.wales

Guidance on the Implementation of the Council Tax Premiums on Long-Term Empty Homes and Second Homes in Wales

January 2016

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Guidance on the Implementation of the Council Tax Premiums on Long-Term Empty Homes and Second Homes in Wales

Introduction

1. From 1 April 2017, local authorities will be able to charge a premium of up to 100% of the standard rate of council tax on long-term empty homes and second homes in their areas. The legislative changes were made by the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 and the powers given to local authorities are discretionary. Whether to charge a premium on long-term empty homes or second homes (or both) is, therefore, a decision to be made by each local authority.
2. The purpose of this guidance is to assist local authorities in their decision whether or not to charge a premium in their area.
3. This guidance has been produced to ensure that there is a fair and consistent implementation of the premiums and their exceptions across Wales.
4. The guidance is statutory and is issued under powers in sections 12A (3) and 12B (4) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 ("the 1992 Act") as inserted by the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 ("the 2014 Act"). It applies to all local authorities in Wales.
5. This guidance should not be treated as an interpretation of the legislation. The interpretation of legislation is in the first instance a matter for the local authority, with definitive interpretation the responsibility of the courts.

Legal Framework for the Council Tax Premiums

6. Paragraphs 7 - 14 set out the legal framework which is common to both the premium on long-term empty homes and the premium on second homes. Requirements which are specific to long-term empty homes are set out in paragraphs 15 - 17, and those which are specific to second homes are detailed in paragraphs 18 - 19.
7. The 2014 Act amends the 1992 Act by inserting new sections 12A and 12B to enable a billing authority (a county council or county borough council) in Wales to disapply any discount granted to long-term empty dwellings and dwellings occupied periodically and apply a higher amount of council tax (a premium).
8. Local authorities have discretion to decide on the amount of the premium up to a maximum of 100% of the standard rate of council tax that applies to the dwelling.

9. Where a determination to charge a premium is made, a local authority must publish a notice of the determination in at least one newspaper circulating in its area within 21 days of the date of the determination.
10. A determination by a billing authority to charge a premium will also disapply any discount that is granted under section 11(2)(a) of the 1992 Act for dwellings in which there are no residents.
11. A billing authority can make, vary or revoke a determination made under sections 12A and 12B of the 1992 Act, but only before the beginning of the financial year to which the determination applies.
12. The Welsh Ministers also have powers under section 12A(4) and 12A(5), and 12B(5) and 12B(6) of the 1992 Act to prescribe through regulations certain classes of dwelling which may not be subject to a premium. The Council Tax (Exceptions to Higher Amounts Wales) Regulations 2015 have been made under these powers and the exceptions they prescribe are detailed later in this guidance.
13. The council tax system already provides a number of specific exemptions from council tax. The exempt groups are set out in the Council Tax (Exempt Dwellings) Order 1992. There are a number of exemptions in place for unoccupied dwellings, such as, for example:
 - where the resident is in long-term residential care or hospital,
 - where a dwelling is being structurally repaired (for up to one year),
 - where the resident has died (for up to six months after grant of probate or letters of administration).
14. A dwelling that is exempt from council tax is not liable for a premium. However, where a dwelling becomes no longer eligible for an exemption, but remains unoccupied, it will become liable for the premium. In the case of an empty home, it will be liable for a premium after it has been empty for a continuous period of one year.

Section 12A: Higher amount for long-term empty dwellings

15. A long-term empty dwelling is defined as a dwelling which is both unoccupied and substantially unfurnished for a continuous period of at least one year.
16. In determining whether a dwelling has been empty for one year, no account is to be taken of any period before 1 April 2016. In addition, the furnishing or occupation of a dwelling for one or more periods of six weeks or less during the year will not affect its status as a long-term empty dwelling. In other words, a person cannot alter a dwelling's status as a long-term empty dwelling by taking up residence or installing furniture for a short period.

17. Where a local authority makes a determination to charge a premium on long-term empty dwellings, it may specify different percentages (up to a maximum of 100 per cent) for different dwellings based on the length of time for which they have been empty. This will enable local authorities to take a stepped approach with incremental increases applying over time.

Section 12B: Higher amount for second homes

18. A second home is defined as a dwelling which is not a person's sole or main home and is substantially furnished. These dwellings are referred to in the 1992 Act as dwellings occupied periodically but they are commonly referred to as "second homes".

19. In order for a premium to apply to dwellings occupied periodically, a billing authority must make its first determination under section 12B at least one year before the beginning of the financial year to which the premium relates. This means that in order to charge a premium from 1 April 2017, a billing authority must make a determination before 1 April 2016. A determination to charge a premium in 2018 must be made before 1 April 2017 and so on.

Making a Determination to charge the Council Tax Premiums on Long-term Empty Homes and Second Homes

20. The discretion given to local authorities to charge a premium is intended to be a tool to help local authorities to:

- bring long-term empty homes back into use to provide safe, secure and affordable homes; and
- support local authorities in increasing the supply of affordable housing and enhancing the sustainability of local communities.

21. In considering whether or not to charge a premium, regard should be given to these aims. Authorities should take into account the particular housing need and circumstances in their area.

22. There are a range of factors which could help inform local authorities in deciding whether to charge a premium. Whilst some factors will be specific to either long-term empty homes or second homes, others will be common to both. A list of these factors is set out below to assist local authorities. It is not intended to be exhaustive.

- Numbers and percentages of long-term empty homes or second homes in the area;
- Distribution of long-term empty homes or second homes and other housing throughout the authority and an assessment of their impact on property values in particular areas;
- Potential impact on local economies and the tourism industry;
- Patterns of demand for, and availability of, affordable homes;

- Potential impact on local public services;
- Potential impact on the local community;
- Other measures that are available to authorities to increase housing supply;
- Other measures that are available to authorities to help bring empty properties back into use.

23. The determination by a local authority to charge a premium under section 12A or 12B of the 1992 Act must be made by full Council. Prior to doing so, a local authority must give due consideration to its statutory duties to carry out equality impact assessments under the Equality Act 2010 and the Welsh Public Sector Equality Duties 2011 and to all other relevant considerations. A local authority should also give consideration to engagement and consultation with key stakeholders, including the local electorate, before taking a decision as to whether or not to charge one or both of the premiums.

24. Having made a determination to charge a premium, in addition to the requirement to publish a notice in a local newspaper within 21 days, a local authority should give consideration to how its decision is communicated more widely, particularly to those who might be affected. This may be through the publication of press notices, providing information on website pages or other avenues to raise awareness such as, for example, direct communication with council taxpayers who are likely to be liable for the premium. A local authority may also wish to give consideration to how they advise or inform those who may be affected but who normally reside outside the local area.

Exceptions to the Council Tax Premiums on Long-Term Empty Homes and Second Homes

25. Sections 12A and 12B of the 1992 Act provide Welsh Ministers with powers to make regulations to prescribe one or more classes of dwellings in relation to which a billing authority may not make a determination to apply a premium. The Council Tax (Exceptions to Higher Amounts) (Wales) Regulations 2015 are made under these powers – a premium may not be charged on a dwelling that falls within an exception. A local authority must have regard to these exceptions before deciding to implement a premium.

26. The regulations prescribe seven classes of exempt dwellings. Classes 1, 2, 3 and 4 apply to both long-term empty homes and second homes. Classes 5, 6, and 7 only apply to second homes. The classes of dwelling are outlined in the table below and are detailed further in paragraphs 28 - 46.

Classes of Dwellings	Definition	Application
Class 1	Dwellings being marketed for sale – time-limited for one year	Long-Term Empty Homes and Second Homes
Class 2	Dwellings being marketed for let – time-limited for one year	
Class 3	Annexes forming part of, or being treated as part of, the main dwelling	
Class 4	Dwellings which would be someone's sole or main residence if they were not residing in armed forces accommodation	
Class 5	Occupied caravan pitches and boat moorings	Second Homes
Class 6	Seasonal homes where year-round occupation is prohibited	
Class 7	Job-related dwellings	

27. Each exception is described further in the next section. Additional guidance will be provided in relation to assist local authorities in the application of the exceptions for:

- dwellings being marketed for sale;
- dwellings being marketed for let; and
- job-related dwellings.

Class 1: Exception for dwellings being marketed for sale

28. This exception applies to both the premium on long-term empty homes and the premium on second homes. It excepts dwellings that are being marketed for sale. It also covers dwellings where an offer to buy the dwelling has been accepted but the sale has not yet been completed.

29. In order to qualify for this exception a dwelling must be on the market for sale at a reasonable price. In considering whether a price is reasonable, regard should be given to the sale price of comparable dwellings in the area. Additional guidance will be provided to assist local authorities in the application of this exception.

30. The exception period runs for up to one year from the granting of the exception. After an exception has ended, a dwelling being marketed for sale will not be eligible for a further exception period unless it has been sold.

Class 2: Exception for dwellings being marketed for let

31. This exception applies to both the premium on long-term empty homes and the premium on second homes. It excepts dwellings that are being marketed for let. It also covers dwellings where an offer to rent has been accepted but the tenant is not yet entitled to occupy the property because the tenancy has not yet started.
32. In order to be eligible for this exception, a dwelling must be on the market for let at a reasonable rent, that is, the rent the property would be expected to fetch having regard to the rent raised on comparable dwellings. Additional guidance will be provided to assist local authorities in the application of this exception
33. The exception period runs for up to one year from the granting of the exception. After the end of the exception period, a dwelling being marketed for let will not be eligible for a further exception period unless it has been subject to a tenancy that was granted for a term of six months or more.

Class 3: Exception for Annexes forming part of, or being treated as part of, the main dwelling

34. This exception applies to both the long-term empty homes premium and to the second homes premium.
35. This exception applies where an owner has adapted their dwelling to provide an annexe and the annexe is now being used as part of the main dwelling.

Class 4: Exception for Dwellings which would be someone's sole or main residence if they were not residing in armed forces accommodation

36. This exception applies to both the long-term empty homes premium and to the second homes premium.
37. This exception applies to dwellings that would be a person's sole or main residence but which is unoccupied because that person resides in armed forces accommodation.
38. This exception is also intended to cover armed forces personnel whose homes are unoccupied because they are living in armed forces accommodation overseas.

Class 5: Exception for Occupied caravan pitches and boat moorings

39. This exception applies to the second homes premium. It covers dwellings that consist of a pitch occupied by a caravan or a mooring occupied by a boat where the boat or caravan currently has no resident, but when next in use will be a person's sole or main residence.

Class 6: Exception for Seasonal homes where year-round occupation is prohibited

40. This exception applies to the second homes premium. It is applicable to dwellings that are subject to planning conditions that prevent occupancy for a continuous period of at least 28 days in any 12-month period.
41. This exception is intended to cover purpose-built holiday homes or chalets which are subject to planning conditions restricting year-round occupancy. The exception is based on the definition of the existing discretionary discount for seasonal homes (Class A) in The Council Tax (Prescribed Classes of Dwellings) (Wales) Regulations 1998¹.

Class 7: Exception for job-related dwellings

42. This exception applies only in relation to the second homes premium and applies to dwellings occupied by a person who is:

- a qualifying person in relation to the dwelling, but who is resident in another dwelling which is job-related (as defined in Schedule 1 to the Regulations); or
- a qualifying person in relation to a job-related dwelling.

43. A qualifying person is defined as:

- a person who is liable for council tax in respect of a dwelling on a particular day, whether or not jointly with another person; and
- a person who would be liable for the council tax in respect of a dwelling on a particular day, whether or not jointly with another person if that dwelling did not fall within:
 - i. Class O of the Council Tax (Exempt Dwellings) Order 1992; or
 - ii. Class E of the Council Tax (Liability for Owners) Regulations 1992.

44. This exception applies where a person is required to reside in a job-related dwelling. It applies to a second home that is occupied periodically because a person is required to live in job-related accommodation elsewhere. It also applies where the job-related accommodation is a person's second home.

45. The definition of a job-related dwelling is given in the Schedule to the Regulations. Although this exception is similar to the job-related discount under the Council Tax (Prescribed Classes of Dwellings) (Wales) Regulations 1998, it differs because the discount only applies if the job-related dwelling is a person's sole or main residence.

¹ SI 1998 No 105

46. Another difference from the job-related dwelling discount is that there is no requirement for the taxpayer to be liable for council tax in respect of two dwellings, meaning that a person who has either a main home abroad or a job-related dwelling abroad can also benefit from the exception. Additional guidance will be provided to assist local authorities in the application of this exception

Reducing Liability for the Council Tax Premiums on Long-Term Empty and Second Homes

47. Under section 13A of the 1992 Act, a billing authority has discretionary powers to reduce council tax liability to such extent as the billing authority thinks fit. The power can be exercised in particular cases or by determining a class or case. The power may be used to reduce council tax liability in circumstances where a local authority may otherwise charge a premium.

48. Some illustrative examples of where a local authority might consider using these powers include:

- where there are reasons why the dwelling could not be lived in;
- where there are reasons why a dwelling could not be sold or let;
- where an offer has been accepted on a property but the sale has not yet been completed and the exception period has run out;
- where charging a premium might cause hardship.

49. The above list is not exhaustive and billing authorities will want to consider all factors they think are relevant.

50. It is a matter for a local authority as to whether the discretionary 13A powers are used to reduce council tax liability in respect of a premium. In the interest of fairness and transparency, a local authority should have a clear policy on whether, and how, these powers will be used. The authority should, however, consider each case on its merits having taken into account the circumstances of the case.

51. It should be noted that deliberations around the use of the discretionary 13A powers are likely to be different when they are considered to reduce council tax liability resulting from a premium compared to reducing liability from the standard rate of council tax. This is because dwellings liable to a premium are already liable for the standard rate of council tax.

Appeals

52. If a person is aggrieved by a calculation by the local authority of the amount of their council tax liability including their liability to pay a premium, they must, in the first instance, make an appeal to their local authority.
53. If they are aggrieved by the decision taken by their local authority or if the local authority does not provide a decision within the required timescales, they can appeal to the Valuation Tribunal for Wales but only after they have exhausted the local authority's appeals process.
54. Further information on the appeals process can be found on the Valuation Tribunal for Wales' website via the link below:
<http://www.valuation-tribunals-wales.org.uk/home.html>.

Next Steps

Amendments to related legislation

55. In order to ensure that local authorities are able to administer and enforce the premiums the Welsh Government will amend relevant legislation to reflect the introduction of the premiums for example, changes to the calculation of the tax-base and to the appeals process.

Administration and Enforcement

56. In order to assist local authorities with the administration and enforcement of the premiums, in particular the application of the exceptions, additional guidance will be provided.
57. In response to concerns raised by some authorities about administrative difficulties and potential avenues for abuse, this guidance will also provide additional information to assist local authorities in applying the exceptions for:
- dwellings being marketed for sale;
 - dwellings being marketed for let; and
 - job-related dwellings.

Use of additional revenue generated from the Council Tax Premiums

58. A local authority will be able to retain any additional funds generated by implementing the premiums and amendments to the calculation of the tax base will be made to facilitate this. However, authorities are encouraged to use any additional revenue generated to help meet local housing needs, in line with the policy intentions of the premiums.

59. Specific requirements in relation to reporting on additional revenue generated and its subsequent use will be set out in further guidance. Further details on this are provided in the next section.

Monitoring and Reporting

60. In order to monitor the effectiveness of the premiums and to ensure that information on their usage is clearly made available to local council tax payers, the Welsh Government will require local authorities to monitor and report on the implementation of the premiums.

61. The specific requirements in relation to this will be set out in further guidance which will be published prior to April 2017. This is likely to include:

- Number of properties liable for the premiums;
- Additional income raised from implementing the premiums;
- How any additional income has been used;
- Number of empty homes which have been brought back into use.

62. A new module is currently being developed on Datatank for local authorities to use in modelling, monitoring and reporting on the premiums. This will be available to all authorities in the New Year.

Local Taxation Team
Welsh Government
December 2015

Consultation – Council Tax Premiums for long term empty properties and second homes

Monmouthshire County Council's Cabinet has agreed to undertake a consultation exercise about charging a council tax premium for long-term empty properties and second homes in the county.

Sections 12A and 12B of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 allows Councils in Wales to charge a premium of up to 300% (100% prior to April 2023) on top of the standard rate of council tax, on long term empty properties and second homes.

This Legislation has been in place since 2017 and allows each council to choose whether or not to introduce these premiums. To date the Council hasn't sought to introduce a premium, however we now wish to hear your views about whether a premium should be introduced in the future.

A **long-term empty property** is defined as a dwelling which is both unoccupied and substantially unfurnished for a continuous period of at least one year.

A **second home** is defined as a dwelling which is not a persons sole or main home and is substantially furnished.

Monmouthshire currently has extremely high levels of homelessness. A large amount of the Council's finances are dedicated to providing short term emergency accommodation. In line with Welsh Government guidance the council is able to retain any additional revenue generated from these premiums to help bring long term empty properties back into use to provide safe, secure and affordable homes and to help to increase the supply of affordable housing and enhance the sustainability of local communities.

If introduced the earliest the council could charge a council tax premium would be for the 2024/25 financial year. If approved the council will seek to notify all rate payers affected by the premium to give them as much advance notice of the change as possible.

If you wish to share your views please respond to this consultation by **16th February 2023**.

Data Protection and Confidentiality - We comply with all legislation governing the protection of personal information, including the Data Protection Act 2018 and the UK:

General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR). Any personal information you supply in this form will remain strictly confidential and anonymous. This information will be held and used in line with our retention policy. For more information about privacy, please visit:

<https://www.monmouthshire.gov.uk/your-privacy/>

If you require the questionnaire in another language or format or simply require assistance in completing the form, please telephone 01633 644644 or email contact@monmouthshire.gov.uk and we will be happy to help.

1. Should the Council use it's discretionary powers to charge a premium on **long term empty properties** in the county? *

Yes

No

Don't Know

2. In reference to question 1 above please provide any comments here:

3. If you answered 'yes' to question 1, what level of premium do you consider appropriate for long term empty properties? *

- 25%
- 50%
- 75%
- 100%
- 150%
- 200%
- 250%
- 300%
- Don't Know
- Not Applicable

4. In reference to question 3 above please provide any comments here:

5. Should the Council use it's discretionary powers to charge a premium on **second homes** in the county? *

- Yes
- No
- Don't Know

6. In reference to question 5 above please provide any comments here:

7. If you answered 'yes' to question 5 what level of premium do you consider appropriate for second homes? *

- 25%
- 50%
- 75%
- 100%
- 150%
- 200%
- 250%
- 300%
- Don't Know
- Not Applicable

8. In reference to question 7 above please provide any comments here:

9. Do you have any other comments in relation to this consultation?

10. Are you responding to this consultation as:

- A resident of Monmouthshire County Council
- The owner of an empty property in the county
- The owner of a second home in the county
- Other

11. How would you describe your gender?

- Male
- Female
- Non-binary
- Prefer not to say

12. Which of the following options best describes how you think of yourself?

- Heterosexual
- Gay or lesbian
- Bisexual
- Prefer not to say

13. How old are you?

- Under 18 years old
- 18 to 24 years old
- 25 to 34 years old
- 35 to 44 years old
- 45 to 54 years old
- 55 to 64 years old
- Over 65 years old
- Prefer not to say

14. How would you describe your ethnic group?

- White
- Mixed/Multiple ethnic group
- Asian/Asian British
- Black/African/Caribbean/Black British
- Other ethnic group
- Prefer not to say

15. Are you registered as having a disability?

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say

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Appendix Three: Consultation Responses

The consultation ran from 18th January to 16th February 2023. The survey was available via an online form. For anyone who had difficulties accessing the form, our Contact Centres and Hubs were available to help.

The Council also sent a letter to all council tax payers whose property is currently listed as either a long term empty property or a second home, drawing their attention to the consultation and inviting them to respond.

In total, 320 responses were received to the consultation.

- **240** from residents of Monmouthshire County Council
- **29** as an owner of an empty property in the county
- **58** as an owner of a second home in the county
- **20** others. Includes, employees of MCC, relatives of second homeowners, workers in the county, a business association and visitors holidaying in a second home.

(N.b. respondents could select more than one category for this answer).

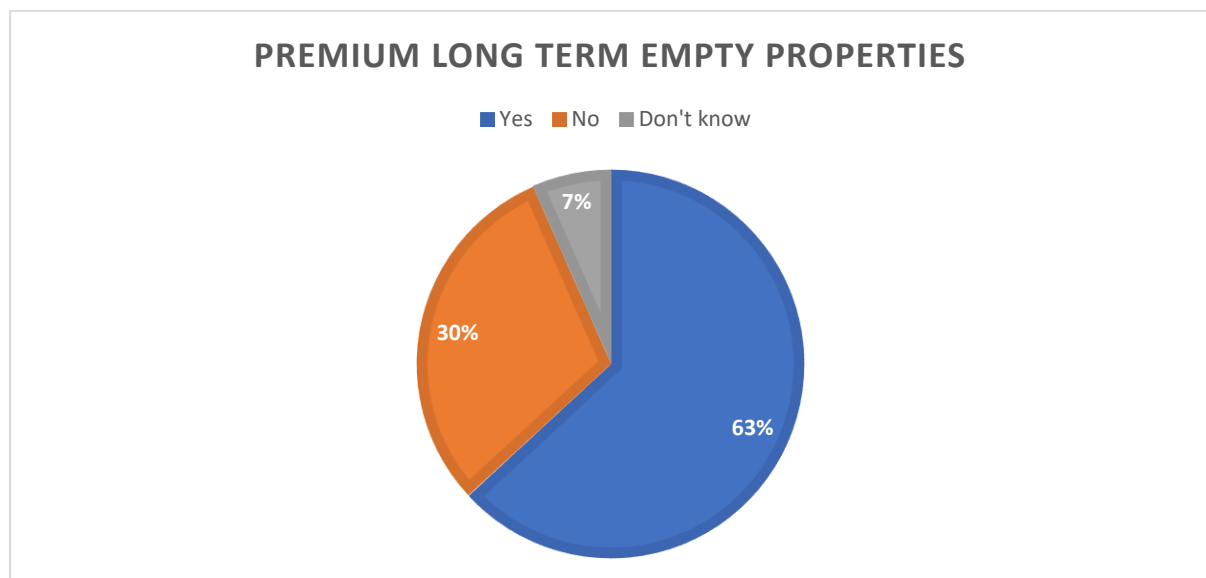
A summary to the consultation responses is provided below:

Long Term Empty Properties

Should the Council use its discretionary powers to charge a premium on long term empty properties in the county?

320 responses were received to this question

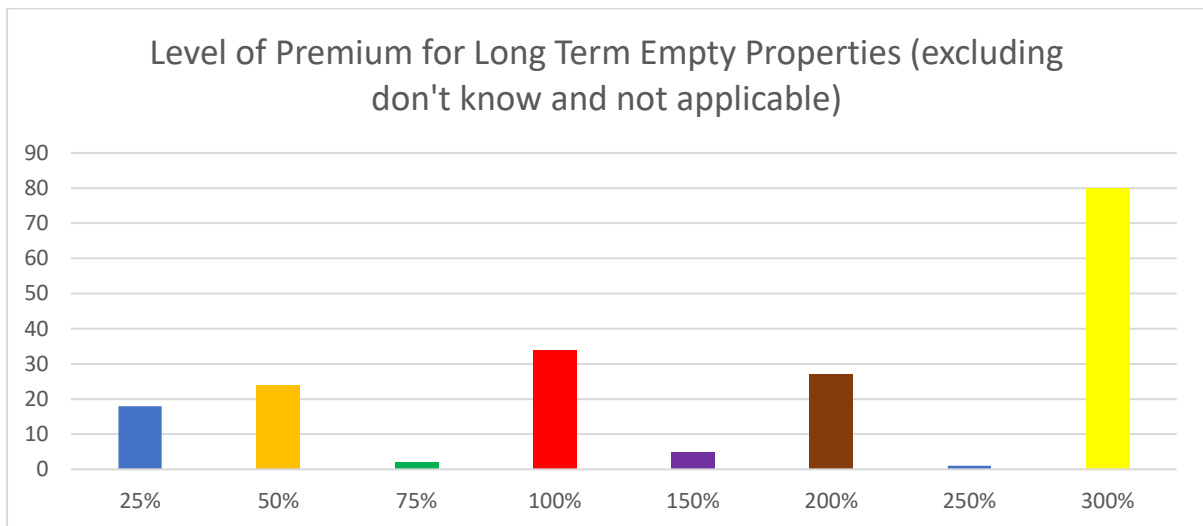
- 202 (63%) answered '**Yes**'
- 97 (30%) answered '**No**'
- 21 (7%) answered '**Don't know**'



What level of premium do you consider appropriate for long term empty properties?

320 responses were received. Of these, 129 either answered don't know or not applicable, as they answered no to the previous question. Of the 191 respondents that did select a percentage, the split was as follows:

- 18 (9%) answered **25%**
- 24 (13%) answered **50%**
- 2 (1%) answered **75%**
- 34 (18%) answered **100%**
- 5 (2%) answered **150%**
- 27 (14%) answered **200%**
- 1 (1%) answered **250%**
- 80 (42%) answered **300%**



A wide range of comments and viewpoints were received from respondents. In total we received 347 comments. A full list of these comments can be found in Appendix Four. The comments are split down between those that answered 'yes', 'no' and 'don't know' followed by comments made specifically about the level of premium to apply.

Second Homes

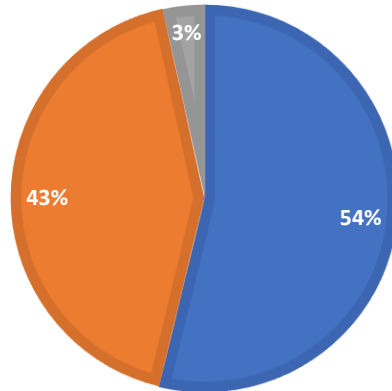
Should the Council use it's discretionary powers to charge a premium on second homes in the county?

320 responses were received to this question

- 172 (54%) answered '**Yes**'
- 137 (43%) answered '**No**'
- 11 (3%) answered '**Don't know**'

PREMIUM SECOND HOMES

■ Yes ■ No ■ Don't know

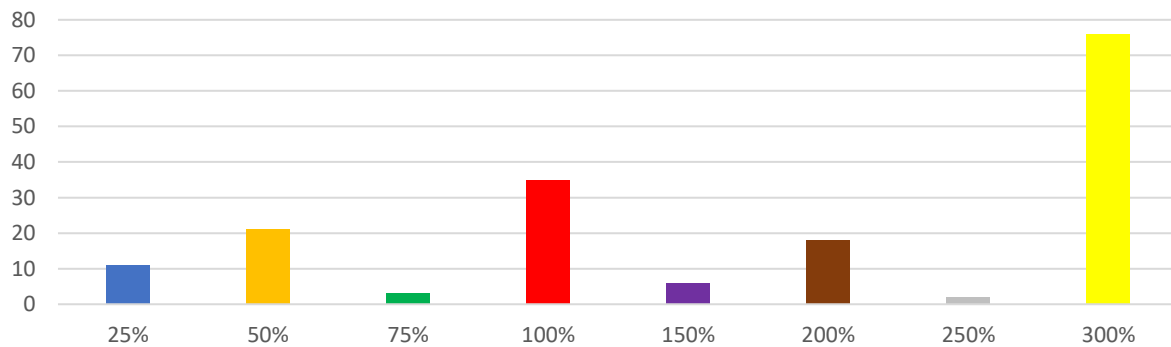


What level of premium do you consider appropriate for second homes?

320 responses were received. Of these, 148 either answered don't know or not applicable, as they answered no to the previous question. Of the 172 respondents that did select a percentage the split was as follows:

- 11 (6%) answered **25%**
- 21 (12%) answered **50%**
- 3 (2%) answered **75%**
- 35 (20%) answered **100%**
- 6 (4%) answered **150%**
- 18 (11%) answered **200%**
- 2 (1%) answered **250%**
- 76 (44%) answered **300%**

Level of Premium for Second Homes (excluding don't know and not applicable)



A wide range of comments and viewpoints were received from respondents. In total we received 325 comments. A full list of these comments can be found in Appendix Five. The comments are split down between those that answered 'yes', 'no' and 'don't know' followed by comments made specifically about the level of premium to apply.

General responses: 141 comments were made about the consultation

- I trust a solution agreed by majority is found.
- A poor method of increasing council revenue. Will inhibit Monmouthshire as a place to live and invest. People will prefer to live over the border in England.
- About time this sort of action was taken.
- Action on second homes is long overdue.
- Adding discretionary premiums is bad for land ownership and investment in property whether for tourism or rental or own use. It will erode inward investment into Monmouthshire generally.
- As mentioned before, it's morally reprehensible to own more than one home. Currently, ordinary tax payers, most of whom these days are struggling to make ends meet, are having to subsidise the provision of emergency accommodation for homeless people. It's time to start charging the very wealthy.
- By adding premiums to 2nd homes you are driving investment out of the area, people will sell up and invest their money elsewhere. Driving down property prices and desirability for the area.
- Can anything be done about homes being used for air b&b?
- Charging a premium on council tax for second homes is not necessary in Monmouthshire, as it is not nearly as much of a problem here as it is in other parts of Wales. Homelessness is unlikely to be reduced by raising marginally more tax revenue.
- Compared to other councils in Wales, the number/proportion of empty homes and second homes in Monmouthshire is very small indeed. The proposal to charge a significant council tax premium solves no obvious problem, and could be financially counterproductive if it drives people out of Monmouthshire who might otherwise facilitate jobs and investment.
- disgraceful
- Driving out second home owners, of which i am not one, will make the local area lose revenue, damaging local businesses.
- Fully support revenue to be used for those in need
- Given the average UK house price is much higher than the average house price in Monmouthshire, the issue is clearly not the availability of affordable housing. The policy proposal would appear to be politically motivated following the 2022 Council elections, given the accompanying literature does not say there has been a rise in homelessness, nor any other change that prevents the Council from dealing with the issue in a cost effective manner. It is not clear what the process will be to confirm the policy but I assume that elected officials will believe that empty/second home owners will not vote and therefore they will be safe in bringing in a policy that results in significant financial disadvantage for a very few disenfranchised people. If the Council needs money clearly raising taxes by a minimal amount for all tax payers is fairer. Forcing people to sell their homes will not help homeless people who cant afford to buy them and based on the number of houses quoted in the related information any monetary amount gained would be minimal. As such the decision to bring this policy in appears to be highly discriminatory.
- Grateful for the opportunity, thank you.

- Great to provide feedback on this. Hope that you will consider my comments. In our case we converted our garage to accommodate our elderly parents but as they recently passed away we are using the extension to occasionally rent out as Airbnb. We live in the house and it's never empty. Currently we are paying two council tax bills although it's all one house. We therefore do not fit into the property classification set out at the beginning of this survey. I see no reason to charge additional council tax as this should be covered under current arrangements.
- house prices in Monmouthshire are ridiculous and forcing families to move away (to the valleys) for rich usually English people to move in as holiday places taking away the soul and heart of the families who lived here for generations, for Welsh people taking away the land and the language and destroying local economies, schools, public services
- I agree with the consultation: unfortunately the whole concept of increasing council taxes for second home is just politically driven.
- I am concerned that this appears to be mainly for the reasons above. It may result in us selling this property, which is close to our family. The property is not commercially let, but is used by family and friends and by people who are unable to afford a holiday, at no cost. This brings in considerable income to this area.
- I am extremely impressed by the Monmouthshire Council doing this Consultancy exercise, and only hope that they act accordingly on increasing the Council Taxes to the highest levels possible, especially for Empty Properties, which is beyond me, why anyone could leave a property empty, when there is such need for Housing.
- I believe this may deter some people from owning second homes but I doubt that it will have much effect on what is happening as there is always someone willing to pay for the perk of a second home in a beautiful location. Wherever there is money to be made someone will profit.

I appreciate that in some locations there has been a shift to ghost villages but what has been witnessed locally is, an injection of cash into the property market with people buying old deteriorating property and renovation as well as barn conversions. This has led to increasing numbers of property and improvements to quality of property on the market and to increasing the number of non local people in the area. I.e. bringing trade and prosperity in.

I am sure this tax will increase the revenue to the local council which is fine.

I don't believe it will solve the situation of local youth being pushed out of a high market price by outsiders as this is capitalism.

If there is high demand and shortage of supply the price will go up. As you cannot dictate who can live in an area i.e. Welsh only as this would be racist then whoever wants a second or third or fourth home can. The big business will go unaffected if they run the holiday homes as a business as they only pay business rates.

Homelessness is such a complex issue caused by mental health issues drug and dependency break down of families poor education, lack of support for those leaving institutions such as the military or foster homes etc Maybe the revenue could go into the kind of help that could solve these issues.

Also bringing thousands of refugees into the county where homelessness already exists is a questionable policy. In addition inability to close borders to refugees another.

I would like to see figures on how much increase in homeless is a result of second homeowners?

There are more and more grown up children living with their families due to inability to afford homes as the low pay for local trades cannot compete with the higher paid remote workers. If the council want to help the Welsh locals (not just the Welsh speakers) providing more cheap low quality homes is not the answer. This will just create a land that was green and pleasant into a land full of cheap low cost housing I don't think you could ever plug the hole as long as the borders of UK are open. What could be and should be a

priority is the refurbishment of inner city disused old period property making decent homes in brown field rather than constant new construction. This might be done with the 400 houses currently empty. The infrastructure is already in place like road and train links to these properties.

We need to move away from Capitalism to solve the other problems maybe look to Sweden and Denmark for solution

- I do not believe that this is a premium that can be levelled fairly across the board. Individual circumstances differ. There may be one owner for multiple properties or just one owner struggling to keep a family home to pass to the next generation. There may also be properties that are long term empty where there is no intent of anything being done to them.
- I fail to see what questions 11 to 20 have to do this issue.
Pob lwc
- I feel we need to be welcoming of others into Wales and Abergavenny. Each property should pay Council Tax in accordance with the properties banding.
- I find it hard to believe that the council is considering this insular tax which could have negative overall outcomes.
- I have always maintained my empty property and it was burgled and badly damaged last September by metal seekers so now sits waiting to be repaired as it has no heating. Again I do not think this consultation makes allowance for individual circumstances. I should have a reduction in CT currently as the property is unliveable without heating but am told this cannot be given.
- I have concerns that those with the means will find loopholes to increased council tax on empty properties and second homes.
- I hope that consideration will be on a case by case basis.
- I hope you make a difference by imposing charges
- I recognise the need for homes for local residents, but wonder why, for example in Brynmawr, Ebbw Vale and other towns, there are many empty and almost derelict homes. Could the Council not investigate purchasing and refurbishing some of these as they would make excellent starter homes and contribute to the regeneration of the area? They would also be more directly affordable to those actually in need, as houses like my own and many other second homes would be very expensive for first-time buyers, especially in the current economic climate, whereas purchase/rental of homes in the old industrial towns would be more affordable, and also more practical for those who may not have access to a car and need shops and other facilities nearby.
- I sincerely hope, if you were to bring in this premium, that you would let everyone affected know about it as soon as possible.
- I think essentially the whole idea of trying to find housing and raise additional funds is great. In practice, i am unsure whether it will have a great affect on either as in counties such as Pembrokeshire, this has just resulted in the selling of second homes, also priced at a premium, and people looking to change to a more business model of letting if that's what the home is used for. Welsh legislation for private landlords has also had the same affect with private landlords selling up in their droves, twice as fast as England which in effect is just taking existing rental properties of the market which is creating a further shortage in the private rental market, which is such a big part of the provision of homes to rent. The consultation needs to look at the whole picture.
- I think if people are wanting to purchase second homes in the county it is unlikely that charging a council tax premium will discourage this, but perhaps a premium may help discourage this so that others in the county may be able to afford to buy their first home in the are rather than being priced out.
- I think if you own a second home in Monmouthshire you should pay full council tax plus going forward a sort of 2nd home tax fee at time of purchase.
- I think it is a great idea but consideration needs to be given to its application to ensure fairness and not ruthlessness.

I would also strongly address the possibility of the compulsory purchase of long term empty homes.

- I think there needs to be more short-term housing for the homeless and this could be forced when housing developers put forward their plans.
- I think this is a good idea and is preferable to a general rise in council tax
- I think this would be a splendid initiative and could only help the dire housing situation (which is particularly acute in Usk).
- I understand that you are trying to repair the budget hole you have but you are targeting wrong people for the wrong thing.
- I would like to understand the real economic and community impact of second home owners in the county. In our case, we are at the property for 3 days a week, yet make limited demands on public services. We invest in local trades and workforce (gardeners, cleaners, trades). I find it hard to see an rational argument for households such as ours to be charged an additional penalty for our impact.
- I would welcome a positive and decisive effort to redress the balance of property ownership discouraging those who are selfish and wish to own two properties and those who are oblivious to the needs of young people/families and homeless people in our community by simply allowing perfectly good properties to stand empty. We should all feel responsibility to our communities.
- If a second home tax is brought in some consideration should be made for owners who own the property to support local family e.g. an aged parent etc. This group actually reduces demands on council services such as social care but put little demand on council services.
- If increased premiums are due to be paid from 1st April, it doesn't allow much time for an owner to prepare. At the very least it should be increased gradually over several years. Otherwise it could send people into poverty.

What about the cost of living crisis? Council tax prices are increasing for everyone, so is this the right time to be doing this? Potentially this could have a significant impact on families lives and should be very carefully considered.

Owning a second home or long term empty property doesn't mean the owners can afford to pay premiums. It could be that its been in a Welsh family for decades/generations. If premiums are high, the owners could be forced into selling the property quickly, which may mean accepting a lower price for a quick sale, allowing for rich property developers to come in and renovate and make a profit. Is this something that the Council wants to support?

The proposed scheme could discriminate against middle income families, who are already facing tough financial times. Those on high incomes will simply be able to afford the premiums and the property will remain out of use, therefore not solving the problem of a housing shortage.

Some properties are in remote locations, with no road access, running water or sewerage (despite already paying full council tax), so can't be let, are difficult to improve, e.g. getting contractors on site etc. What support can the council provide for properties in these difficult locations? Adding a premium won't alter the fundamental reason why they are empty, nor help bring them back into use.

The new premium process should include an extra exemption bracket for properties that don't fall into the categories currently provided. There may be other reasons why a property is empty or used a second home - an owner should have the opportunity to outline what these reasons are, in order for a sensible plan of action to be agreed with the council to bring the property back into use.

The new premium process is based on current council tax bandings, which were set out some time ago. To be fair, there should be a separate process to re-evaluate the current council tax banding, to ensure it's now accurate. Owners should be able to request additional support, perhaps a site visit from an officer, so they can assess the building and give guidance on the best way forwards. This new process should be offered specifically to those properties subject to any increase in premiums, so assessments are dealt with quickly and in relation to the bigger picture of trying to bring properties back into use.

The use of the revenue funds generated from any new process should be transparent. What is the purpose of the revenue generation exactly? The information provided on the website states that the additional revenue generated will be used by the council to bring long term empty properties back into use. How exactly would this be done? Would the revenue generated be made available via a grant process for making improvements, or some other scheme to bring properties into use? It should not simply be used as an additional revenue generation process, in effect transferring the Councils financial difficulties onto the home-owner in already difficult times. The use of the money generated should be clearly defined, and the amounts and their spend should be held in the public domain and available for review/scrutiny by the public. Also if the new premiums increase by a huge amount, e.g. 300%, people will be forced to sell and then eventually this revenue stream will cease, making it unsustainable.

A quick calculation shows that this scheme could generate £3m per year (based on 590 dwellings, with a 300% increase for average tax bills of £1800). Even if the Council then use this funding to provide a home improvement grant system, the maximum for each home would be £5400. Is that going to be enough for an owner to be able to get their property up to a standard to let?

- If the Welsh Government wishes to discourage second homes, a more effective option would be to introduce a premium on Stamp Duty for the purchase of more second homes rather than penalize those who already own second homes.
- If these houses are paying 100% council tax it doesn't seem fair to charge more. It may affect the amount of private rental properties available in Monmouthshire and there is already a shortage.
- If tourism is a major contribution to the area, don't jeopardize it through too punitive measures.
- If you require additional funds to provide new social housing then the contributions should be evenly spread between EVERY single adult person in the country, through income tax and council taxes, not by picking on a few individuals just because they have two homes. You may think we have lots of money, but as OAP's, we don't!
- I'm fully in support of this proposal
- In general, I think a blanket policy of potentially increasing the tax by up to 300% except in those parts of Wales where there is acute pressure from second home owners is inappropriate and too broad brush. Second home owners should not be regarded as a blight but a benefit in areas which are not under acute pressure. The policy should be very carefully targeted with great care and not used merely to increase revenue in hard times.
- In my case, my holiday rental is not allowed to be sold separately from my main residence (for planning reasons) and, if I were faced with an increased council tax bill (bearing in mind the WAG rule changes this year mean I will anyway face a 'normal' council tax bill where previously I had had a 100% exemption), it would make my business uneconomic. As I can't sell the property or rent it separately, for planning reasons, I would be forced to return it to being an outbuilding. This would remove a (currently) viable business and source of tourist income from Monmouthshire. I suspect many others would be in a similar position, thereby reducing the Monmouthshire tourist industry to being a 'day-tripper-only' location for most families (hotels and even B&B's are too expensive for the 6-person, 1-

week, family-stays we have). Cottages a few miles over the border, in England, don't have this problem and would massively out-compete our property.

The Wye valley is a marginal tourist area (check with any cottage rental company, e.g. Cottages.com) - it is not Snowdonia, Pembrokeshire or the Gower. Cottages located on the Welsh side of the border could not simply increase their prices to mitigate any additional council tax as customers would simply book cottages on the English side of the valley or in the Forest of Dean instead. For my property to break even, with a 300% increase in council tax (i.e. 400% from where I was in 2022), I would need to at least double my prices (and these are set by the commercial lettings agency I use, not me). This is simply unviable and the lettings agency would drop me from their books, as they would get no takers.

- In Response to the questions below, why should my gender, sexual preference, religion and ethnicity have any bearing on this survey. Surely questions related to property ownership are far more relevant and how 2nd homes or rental properties in Monmouthshire. I refuse to answer the Welsh section too as I don't feel it has any place in this survey.
- Incentives to encourage letting out of long term empty homes, in particular, would be preferable to punitive measures !!
- Introducing these premiums at the maximum level would be a strong message that MCC supports equality of opportunity and the wellbeing, vitality and sustainability of our communities.
- Is this just a punitive tax to increase council revenue or an effort to reduce homelessness? If the latter, taxing second homes is unlikely to solve the problem.
- It appears to me the consultation is so simplistic as to be of no value in establishing policy. For example, if people who are unaffected by a policy as asked how much others should be required to pay they are likely to say a high amount. However, that does nothing to establish whether those who are affected could afford to pay the amount those unaffected consider appropriate. Similarly, it does nothing to establish whether the purpose of the policy would be achieved by its implementation. In my case as explained above, it would have the opposite effect to that desired as no further accommodation would be provided and the Council would receive less income.

There is also seemingly no consideration of the condition of the uninhabited properties. Maybe they are uninhabited for a very good reason. What is being done to review this and why is it not addressed within the consultation? For example, does the Council wish to oblige owners to rent out property which perhaps does not meet modern standards?

The location of the properties is also a relevant consideration which is not addressed within the consultation. The County is comprised to a large extent of rural areas, with relative modest urban conurbations. It is supposed, that the people who require the housing in question live in the urban areas then the policy would be of no benefit to them if the housing were in the rural areas, and vice versa.

The other aspect of this is whether the same objective could be obtained by alternative means. For example, it is said there are 400 unoccupied premises. If that number of additional houses is required then the Council could build them. That might mean Council Tax is increased for everyone but that seems to me fairer than requiring a small number of people to shoulder the burden of resolving the problem.

The consultation also ignores the most fundamental issue, which is the ability of those who would be affected to pay the premium. As I've said, I could not so I would take the steps necessary to ensure it no longer applied to me. There might be some who could afford it and will pay. Again, that would mean no extra properties would become available. There

will also be those who can't pay who would like to make the property habitable but can't afford to do so. Will they get help with those costs or will they have to sell? If they do then who will they sell to and will it benefit those who the Council think should inhabit the properties?

There is nothing in the consultation about any of these practical issues so it simply cannot facilitate an informed decision.

- It is essential that steps are taken to prevent our communities dying out. Steps also need to be taken against Airbnb and other business models that are exempt. I would be more than happy to pay 10-15% on hotel charges
- It is important for the council to understand why a property is empty and what the long term plans are for the property before making any judgement. In our case, the renovation is taking longer than we would have liked, but it is progressing and we do not intend to own 2 homes for longer than necessary. The house being renovated is not habitable, so should not incur higher taxes. neither are we using any of the council services for the second home (no waste collection e.g.)
- It's a disappointing and obvious but shameful thing to be considering putting any tax up for anyone in a cost of living crisis and inflationary bubble.
- Just because the Welsh Assembly gives the power to the council to use an un-fair tax premium it doesn't mean it is right to use it. This totally distracts from the unlaying problem of council under funding, a lack of social housing, and relating to the use of council services and paying for them.
- Learn grammar. A council uses its powers, not "it's" powers.
- Mae parchorin absennol yn sugno bawdy a llewyrth o'r gimlets.
- Make sure whatever measures are imposed , affect only those who are in their situation by choice andnot ... those who are in it by necessity.
- Measures that are brought in often have unintended consequences and result in a shrinking rental sector which costs the council more in paying bed and breakfast accommodation for the homeless.

There need to be exemptions for those in need of care and support from their family where they have purchased a small second property to be nearer younger relatives based in Monmouthshire and their first property is on the market. Often warden assisted property or property for the elderly if first property takes a long time to sell and service charge fees have to be then paid for both properties.

In other words there need to be exemptions for second (one or two bedroom) homes for those who move to obtain the help and support of younger relatives until the first property is sold.

As may end up paying 2 lots of service charges, 2 lots of council tax and then any increase in council tax on top.

- My Aunt returned to her country of birth with her husband in the 1950's. He became the local postman until he retired. They at first rented a condemned cottage without mains water or an electricity supply; this they purchased later. My son inherited the cottage and during the past 10 years has upgraded the property employing local labour and materials. If he has to sell there will be a loss of income to the hospitality and general supplies industry since the wider family enjoy frequent visits.
- My family come from Brynmawr and I inherited my aunts house in Abergavenny. I have lived and worked in England all my adult life but come ' home' to my house in Abergavenny at least every fortnight. My 92 year old father lives in Cardiff, where I was brought up. My adult children, who are half Welsh come to stay in Abergavenny regularly.

Our house in Abergavenny is truly a second home and brings myself and my family immense joy.

Monmouthshire is not Cornwall, it is not awash with second homes which dislocate the housing market for local residents. At a time when everything is seen as a potential source of revenue I would ask you not to introduce such a hostile act for little financial gain to the Council. I suspect it will be revenue negative for Monmouthshire economy as a whole and sends a very bad message.

- My wife and I are joint owners of the property. When this consultation arrived by post she telephoned to ask that her name be added to that of the addressee, since there was otherwise an under-reporting of concerned individuals. She was assured that your records show that she was jointly liable for any council tax levied upon this property but told there was no way in which the computer programme could be altered to record joint ownership or additional views and demographic profile. She is white, female, Christian and a feminist and wants you to recognise that this form of inquiry privileges men and their responses to any issues raised. Please respond to this point; better still, revise the process.
- Our house has a planning schedule which stops the annex being sold or rented separately to the main house. but we have been targeted for the premium, despite it being out of our control to do anything differently. as advised by your representative on the phone I have emailed into counciltax@monmouthshire.gov.uk
- Our inherited second home is a flat in our home town.
We use it to support an elderly near relative for at least 150 days per year.
We are helping to prevent this relative from having to go into care.
If and when we decide to sell the property it will be to anyone at the then current market value.
- Owning empty, damaged, listed property is a responsibility in itself, renovating it properly, sensitively and in keeping is not cheap. Doing it properly takes time. We are not trying to gain any advantage, we are not delaying things - we had a sewage flood that set us back 6 months, Covid kept us at home. Our project is probably 18 months behind as contractors have missed out on time slots because of delays. It's all part of the joy of listed buildings. Getting high additional council tax as well would be mad, and a deterrent to those who genuinely want to conserve our heritage.
- Penalise second home owners who like their get away home but don't contribute fully to the local economy as they are away from these homes for long periods throughout the year.
People who leave homes empty should only pay the full council tax and no more.
- People who can obviously afford it, having more than one house, should pay more.
- People with second homes give very little to the community
- Perhaps you need an additional classification of "holiday let" properties, which could retain the standard 100% charge reflecting both their lower demands on local services, and economic benefit provided to the tourism industry.
- Probably loads in context of the bigger picture. Scrutinise all budgets audit where the money goes. Cut out waste turn off lights and heating. Invest in environmental impact training.
- Properties that are holiday lets should be charged at a premium. If they are then let for a large proportion of the year they may apply for a rebate. There should be no rebate as a matter of course. Some holiday lets are unviable and these should be encouraged to return to the open market.
- Questions too narrow in scope

Also on my religion or belief why no other ??

- Rather than taxing your way forward why not use the fact that you have tax raising powers as a negotiating tool with these owners to let the Council use the properties to provide accommodation for people in need. There are many business properties in Monmouth town that have been empty for many years. Why not negotiate with these owners to

refurbish and provide accommodation above the shop areas that you would manage. In return they could have a period of reduced business rates on the shop area.

- Second home ownership is a blight on local communities, artificially inflating house prices, and forcing out the locals. It is killing communities, especially coastal ones, in the UK. Most second home owners can afford to support their chosen community more than they do in their few weeks of residency. Leaving property empty for long periods, usually so that it decays and can be redeveloped, or in hopes of a larger profit later, changes the appearance of the town, and should be discouraged.
- Second Homes and Empty Properties are an easy target for increased tax. Is this really a good path for a Council to proceed? What other groups will be next? Many of these homes are inherited properties of local families. Will this decision affect inheritance of property in Monmouthshire? From the number of properties in these categories and average Council Tax of £2000.00 is this economic? Many properties might be sold - current market value prohibits the homeless similarly if properties are rented. More could be raised if Council tax is paid on holiday let properties.
- Should it be agreed that premiums are introduced for both second home owners and long term empty property owners, it should be made very clear to these owners why they are being asked to pay this premium - that Monmouthshire has a housing and homelessness issue; that young people who have been brought up in the County are forced to live in other areas because they can't afford a local home; that Council funds are scarce and that these owners will be making a financial contribution.
- Some second home owners use their second homes often and different charges should apply if a home is used at least 180 days a year. Some allowance should be made for owners who have owned their property for over 20 years.
- Something seriously has to be done to limit empty properties in the area. This includes units within Caldicot town centre, the old QS building could be being used to house the homeless for a short term. It could easily be sectioned into numerous pods/rooms.
- stop dithering and do it
- Stop wasting money and spend it removing Drakeford.
- Tackling homelessness and property-idleness should be high on the Council's list of priorities.
- Thank you for consulting us. It is lovely to be able to share views with you on subjects one fields passionately about. These moves are LONG over due. Please apply the 300% rates and get these properties back contributing to our communities.
- Thank you for opening this up for public comment. This is a critical issue nationwide. I have no objection in principle to people owning a second home which they rent out (though again, the level of council tax should reflect this), but I do feel very strongly that nobody should own more than two homes until everybody has at least one.
- Thanks for consulting and hopefully progressing these plans
- The consultation is timely and appropriate when considering the housing shortage in the area.
- The consultation needs to look at what is beneficial the whole of the county not isolated areas.
- The consultation states an objective for an empty homes premium ("to provide an incentive for encouraging occupation"). But it gives no objective for a second homes premium. Given the tiny proportion of homes in Monmouthshire that are second homes, it seems unlikely that these would lead to any of the issues potentially arising elsewhere in Wales (e.g. empty villages, exclusion from home-ownership, reduction in Welsh language use). So it is not clear why the council would seek to charge such a premium or even to consult on this.

- The council need to use all powers to get as much revenue as possible to help its citizens
- The council will undoubtedly face some very sophisticated and high-powered lobbying from rich, articulate and well-connected second-homers and owners of long-term empty properties. I very much hope that the council can hold their nerve and do the right thing for the residents of Monmouthshire
- The County is beautiful and we respect it and aim to keep it that way by maintaining the property and always keeping up with any repairs. This is the haven that helps my disabled cope with her illness.
Thank you
- The impact of historical in - migration to Monmouthshire is disturbing in terms of it's identity as being a Welsh county. The nature of our settlements is changing rapidly as anglicisation continues. At times in Monmouth, I don't feel as if I live in Wales at all. As nice as many of our friends are who have arrived from over the border, they also bring their political outlook, a distorted view of what Wales is and almost all have no respect for our devolved status - as clearly demonstrated by their adherence to English covid rules during the pandemic. The second home opposite us was allowing visitors from England throughout Welsh lockdown.
- The preamble to this consultation focuses on the homelessness issue, this should not be relevant to this debate. The Council should ensure that builders build more affordable social housing through more rigorous planning policies on new build housing sites. Hundreds of new homes are being built and the proportion of social and affordable housing that developers are required to build should be higher. Empty properties in areas where homelessness is an issue should be targeted individually, with positive measures to understand barriers to occupation. Second home owners should not be penalised and treated as 'foreigners' with excessive cash reserves, they have all chosen to have properties in the area for many reasons, but all because they love the County and genuinely wish to support local communities. Divisive and negative economic policies serve to undermine community cohesion and create unnecessary tension.
- The questionnaire design is poor: grammatical errors (several instances of incorrect use of 'it's'); conflates gender and sex; ill-considered categories for 'ethnic group'; confusion as to whether Q.16 is asking about registered or self-identified disability; no provision for non-religious beliefs (e.g. humanism).
- The time limits for structural repairs is far too short especially when the building is Listed. The properties are unlikely to meet the standards that are and will be required for letting. The council should focus on building new energy efficient, sustainable housing.
- The wording of this form and the accompanying press release is very poor indeed. It would be surprising if you get many responses as it seems deliberately engineered to get very few responses and next to no meaningful comments. There is no better information on the website and I have failed to find any mention of Welsh Government settlement figures for this serious subject in any of your documents.
There is more nonsense about my gender age and ethnicity in the questions than about the serious economic topic concerned. Please stop being so politically correct and think about the prosperity of the county and its rental businesses.
Self catering properties in Monmouthshire are largely of good quality and bring into the county high spending people all year round (not part of the year as in some Welsh Counties) See STEAM FIGURES . They contribute greatly to employment and to the tourism spend multiplier. It seems as if some officials do not understand the difference between a busy self catering property and a rarely used second home. This is shocking. Second homes should pay rates. Why they should pay more when they are unused is beyond me as they cause no difficulty to anyone, are not demanding of road, education, refuse or health provisions.
Question 10. Who or what is a resident of Monmouthshire County Council. Do you mean of the County or are people now resident in the council offices? very poor wording.

- There are a range of reasons why properties are unoccupied or used as second homes and there needs to be an easy way to discuss this with a sensible approach to applying discretion without resort to legal process.
- There are plenty of ways to obtain additional funds for a council. This is not one of them.
- There is a balance to be found. Second home owners should contribute more in council tax, despite using less services, as their absence from local affairs is a societal cost in a non financial way and many of the aspects of local society that attracted the owners still needs to be paid for. On the other hand local communities need tourism and UK holidaymakers, and need the investment people put into second homes. But communities also need to feel that having second homes in their community is worthwhile and so an extra contribution is both fair and should be portrayed as a valued contribution by councils.
- There is a house near mine that has been empty for years and I think it is such a waste.
- There will be a negative impact on tourism if this premium goes ahead. We use our second home at least once a month and for two weeks in the summer plus over Christmas. Often, we arrange for friends and families from England to visit my home town at the same time. This considerably boosts the amount of money spent on these visits. This will all stop if we cannot retain our second home which is in my home town. I am fiercely proud of being Welsh. But I do feel I am being banished from my own country. It is difficult to promote Wales if you are no longer able to visit your home town yourself.
- These measures won't tackle homelessness. Need to build council houses to tackle that.
- This is an obvious soft target to raise income for the council just like parking charges were. This has contributed to the decline of our town centres and will backfire in the long term by discouraging investment and improvement to the housing stock in the long term.
- This option is just another way to punish people who are already contributing to the local economy or trying to improve their properties. If an empty property is left to deteriorate then maybe an additional charge could be considered but for those trying to make home improvements then it seems very unfair
- This seems like a short term knee jerk response that will create a long term Economic dis benefit to the county
- TO INTRODUCE A PREMIUM ON PROPERTY CHARGES WHEN THERE IS ABSOLUTELY NO BURDEN ON THE LOCAL AUTHORITY IS UNFAIR AND COULD ALMOST BE DEEMED AS PUNITIVE CHARGE FOR INVESTING IN THE PROPERTY MARKET AS OPPOSED TO INVESTING IN STOCKS AND SHARES OR GOLD ETC IT IS MANIFESTLY UNFAIR
- Wales and particularly Monmouthshire already does enough to discourage people from visiting with petty regulations, exorbitant council tax rates, and high car parking charges.
- We currently have an empty property in Monmouthshire which is being renovated. As the renovation has taken over a year we are now paying council tax in 2 counties which seems unjust.
- We have rented out a flat via Airbnb, and there is clearly not enough supply in the centre of number for this. It brings in much-needed support for the businesses and shops of Monmouth, and I think it would be an own goal to penalise this.
- We have several properties in Monmouthshire including long term let's and holiday lets. There's normally a good reason why properties are empty for long periods of time.

As feedback we have been improving one of our properties so it has been empty. We investigated the Monmouthshire support for improvements that was available. The MCC staff were really helpful but the length of time taken to obtain the support meant that the property would have been empty for much longer than with other forms of finance.

We also have one property that we sometimes let longer term and other times holiday let. In this case the property would flip flop between commercial and residential. It is not clear

how easy this would be to do.

It is not clear from the consultation how many second homes and empty properties would be subject to any charge and therefore how much more money could be raised. We received 3 letters from the council in relation to this consultation. One property is for sale and would be exempt from the charge, one has a planning restriction so that it cannot be used as a permanent dwelling and the other is a holiday let that over COVID was occupied as an AST and was therefore categorised as residential. None of these will attract a cost under the proposals.

One final comment is that this consultation seems to be driven because of the lack of accommodation available in Monmouthshire. One of the significant barriers to creating residential accommodation is not the number of empty properties but the time taken for planning issues to be resolved in the county. If the planning department were able to operate to their obligated timeframes more dwellings would be available in the county. Our experience is that this aspect contributes significantly to delays in turning empty and potentially new properties into dwellings and addressing this issue would impact more significantly on the issue than a notional increase in council tax on a small number of properties most of which will be exempt.

- We would like to rent it out to help with homelessness but having been unable to get into Wales this has set us back by 18 months. If a premium is applied we feel aggrieved as the property would have been finished and be rentable or we would have moved in ourselves by know guilt time. There needs to be some natural justice in all of this please.
- When it comes to a property that has been classed as "long term empty" due to the owner having to defer building work being carried out for the past 6 months because they have had to look after a terminally ill relative, until they recently passed, is morally wrong. Again, this should be assessed on an individual basis, instead of taking the approach of financially crippling people at the worst possible time.
- While I strongly support the general idea, I would stress the need for a workable appeals process.
- Why have we not already done this.
- Why is it down to homeowners to provide accommodation and a premium to the homeless. It is down to the government to build more accommodation or affordable housing for local people. This is yet another short fall despite increased taxes and costs
- Why should people have second homes when there are large numbers who have no home at all, or have to move away from their roots to find a home.
- Will something more also be done about empty business premises? Like the Royal Hotel in Usk which has been empty for at least 10years. Compulsory purchase of buildings left to fall down would be good. They could then be turned into flats for the homeless. Also is Monmouthshire going to appoint an empty homes officer as recommended by WG?
- With all of the squeezes it is very unfair to add additional taxes without really knowing the circumstances. A broad approach like this will end up taxing people who don't deserve it and can ill afford it. As I have mentioned we would sell our property if there were a buyer - instead of it being empty we bring people in to the region who spend money in local venues. Please don't penalise everyone without understanding the situation.
- with the cost of living crisis everyone is struggling I am not a property developer and will not be making money out of the property
- yes i think its a brilliant idea and well overdue !
- Yes, start managing with the budget you have. People cannot afford any more money. We do not have a bottomless pit of cash to give to you, utility companies and good retailers. Cut your cloth to suit your budget. Stop paying executives and councillors top whack. Turn the lights off in your buildings and turn the heating down a few degrees! Stop having unnecessary meetings that cost time and money and start running a lean, cost effective and efficient council.

- Yes, the whole idea is abhorrent. I'm sure many will vote yes in some mad feeding frenzy of sticking it to those who must have more than they do. Fairness would be those that use the most services pay pro-rata, but as Mrs Thatcher found out, not matter how fair that would be, those used to getting things for nothing will always complain when faced with the real value of services they receive.
- Yes, we are of the wealthiest counties in Wales, you need to be charging tax at a much higher rate to the most wealthy. We a good share of the millionaires!!!
- You don't make any reference to the owners ability to pay a premium charge in any cases. I get the whole 'tax the rich more' philosophy, and I do not own a second property personally, but I cannot see any fairness in charging a premium on an assumption that a second home/vacant property owner can afford to pay more.
- You should not charge anything extra as the council tax in Wales is ridiculously high as compared to England

Other optional questions:

- Gender:

Male	126
Female	139
Non binary	1
Prefer not to say	43
Other	3

Is the Gender you identify with the same as your gender registered at birth

Yes	257
Prefer not to say	49

- Sexuality:

Heterosexual	211
Gay or Lesbian	9
Bisexual	3
Asexual	1
Prefer not to say	68
Other	11

- Age:

18 to 24 years old	1
25 to 34 years old	14
35 to 44 years old	31
45 to 54 years old	51

55 to 64 years old	81
Over 65 years old	84
Prefer not to say	46
Other	1

- Ethnicity:

British	118
English	26
Indian	1
Irish	1
Scottish	3
Welsh	103
White and Asian	4
Prefer not to say	42
Other	7

- Registered disabled:

Yes	20
No	240
Prefer not to say	50

- Religion/Belief:

No religion or belief	127
Buddhist	1
Christian	105
Muslim	1
Prefer not to say	70

- Caring responsibilities:

None	176
Primary Carer of a child/children under 18	48
Primary Carer of a disabled child/children	3
Primary Carer of a disabled adult (18 and over)	7
Primary Carer for a older person	21
Secondary Carer	17
Prefer not to say	39

- Impact on the Welsh Language – in excess of 300 comments were made to this question. Responses are shown below.
 - A person does not need to speak Welsh to be Welsh.
 - A ridiculous sum of money is spent on promoting the Welsh language. Local councils should be able to decide how much is justified in their area. Having this language forced upon us makes us resent it.
 - Accept Welsh is fading away. English is more important. Stop wasting money on doing everything in 2 languages.
 - Agree with promotion of Welsh
 - Allowing young people from local areas to stay locally will embolden a sense of community and those learning Welsh will continue to live in our county and have the ability to use the language rather than moving away
 - As a Fellow of the Learned Society of Wales, I am a strong advocate of equal support for the Welsh language and culture. The number of second homes in Monmouthshire is quite low, much lower than in holiday destinations elsewhere in Wales (e.g. Pembrokeshire, Carmarthenshire, Ceredigion), so the effect of these proposals on the Welsh language would seem to be marginal.
 - As a Welsh speaker, second homes affect us very negatively. Since moving south I am surprised at attitudes towards my language. I feel very strongly about Monmouthshire place names, how they have been changed into nonsense names because apparently English people are incapable of saying the real names correctly. Why are so many English people completely stupid when it comes to languages, and why do we accept that their revised versions are right? We need to embrace our history especially in one of the counties that has fought so hard to exist in Wales. It shouldn't be hard for people to learn to respect that this is a different country I propose place name pronunciation and meaning as a starting point at least!
 - As I have alluded to above, Welsh is under threat from immigration. I personally complained to the Welsh Language Commissioner when the Monmouthshire Beacon ran a story about the former Conservative MCC who were considering replacing bilingual road signs with English only signs! The Commission found in my favour over 3 breaches of the regulations! When such a large % of the county are not native to Wales, their attitudes to the use and even existence of Welsh as a language of ANY status, let alone equal status, greatly diminishes the potential for Welsh to survive, let alone grow.
 - By ensuring that young families could afford to buy or rent property within their communities, would help to make it clear that these are distinctively Welsh communities, not just holiday accommodation which takes no account of the local community. This would help to make clear that the Welsh language is at least as culturally important as English and encourage people to be proud of being able to speak Welsh.
 - Cannot see the relevance of this question. I am not a Welsh speaker nor are any of my family (also Welsh) or friends or colleagues or neighbours. I prefer to see the levy as a means of levelling up.
 - Do not know
 - Do not understand this question in the context of the survey
 - Don't think it's an issue regarding the subject matter

- Dylid bob amser hysbysu'r ffaith bod yr iaith Gymraeg yn cael ei defnyddio yn Sir Fynwy a bod cyfleoedd i bawb fanteisio ar hyn, boedd hynny mewn addysg neu dysgu'r iaith yn oedolyn. (The fact that the Welsh language is used in Monmouthshire should always be informed and that there are opportunities for everyone to take advantage of this, be it in education or learning the language as an adult).
- Empty houses force Welsh families to move away (in our case FoD) and our community suffers from these Welsh learners forced out of the villages.
- Hard to say without knowing more about the language preferences of property owners and the culture of the residential areas in which properties are located.
- Honestly don't think there would be any impact on Welsh language uptake. Welsh is rarely spoken in my home town. I have been taking Welsh lessons as I believe it important to preserve the language and culture of Wales.
- Houses for local people i.e. Welsh, would preserve the culture and language as we are at severe risk of diluting these and is that not what people love about visiting ??
- How many council employees speak Welsh and use it daily? Not many... absolutely no use at all.
- How many of the second homes are owned by families with school age children who are primarily educated outside of Wales? If this is a significant number, then it could be argued that fewer children with an interest in the county are exposed to Welsh language education.
- I believe the Welsh Language should be preserved but realise it is not a commercial language -A great Cultural asset to be encouraged .
- I cannot see how this has any impact on the Welsh language.
- I cannot see how this survey on second homes or empty properties will have any impact on the Welsh language.
- I cannot see that they would have much effect except I suppose second home owners are less likely to have an interest in the Welsh language - but that is really rather a tenuous link.
- I cannot see they would have any direct affect.
- I can't foresee any significant effects on opportunities for people to use Welsh or the treatment of the Welsh language. Perhaps encouraging empty properties or second homes to be made available for people to live in full-time would enable families with young children (learning Welsh at school) to stay in the county and therefore help sustain/grow the use of the Welsh language in our communities... but I think this would be a minor effect.
- I can't immediately see how raising council tax here would impact the development of the Welsh language. Perhaps I'm just being twp.
- I can't see a link
- I can't see the relevance
- I can't think of a negative effect. A positive effect could be enabling communities to retain more people with local connections and with the rise in learning of Cymraeg it will surely underpin a Welsh identity thus supporting the use of the language and acknowledgement of the culture
- I do not believe this will affect the Welsh language.
- I do not see any relationship between these proposals and the furtherance of the Welsh language in the Monmouthshire area. This question is more applicable to seaside towns such as St David's or Barmouth where there is a much stronger argument that second homes are to the detriment of the local community. Having said that, it should not be forgotten that immigration can bring a vibrancy and increased wealth to an area. It's a matter of balance and perspective.
- I do not see any relevance.
- I do not understand how this consultation affects the Welsh language as the primary language in the county is English with even the majority of parents of children attending

Welsh schools speak to their children in English witnessed by myself as living in close proximity to a Welsh speaking school.

- I don't consider this question relevant to the key issue - empty homes. (I can speak some Welsh)
- I don't feel qualified to say really and I am not a Welsh speaker. However I am sure people owning 2nd homes on the scale it is in the county is not hampering efforts to spread the use of the Welsh language. It would be misguided to think that any reduction on the relatively small number of 2nd homes would mean more Welsh being spoken. The increase in use of the language is concerned with schools and culture not reduction in a small number of 2nd home owners
- I don't see a connection
- I don't speak Welsh. This question seems random.
- I don't think it will make any difference
- I don't think there would be any effect on the use of Welsh language in this area which is little used anyway.
- I don't think this applies?
- I don't feel competent to answer this question.
- I don't think our county is an area where this will have a big effect.
- I don't think there's any connection or relevance. They are separate matters
- I don't think this will help in any way
- I feel that increasing the council tax on second homes would actually incentivise people to buy second homes outside Monmouthshire and Wales. Many new learners of Welsh (or, like myself, those who learnt as a child and are now re-taking Welsh lessons in later life) would therefore be lost, in a county where Welsh is not habitually spoken, but has seen a resurgence in recent years with many incomers from England taking up Welsh or sending their children to Welsh-medium schools.
- I feel we promote a strong advocacy for Welsh language and that maybe people who can speak Welsh e.g. in shops etc could display a sign so that it would help to hear it more
more Welsh language classes for adults in the evenings
- I have no firm opinion on this matter. I like the idea of a good strong Welsh speaking tradition though.
- I have not seen evidence of local people wanting to learn or speak Welsh. If tourism was increased, it may increase people's interest in learning Welsh as that would become part of the tourism industry.
- I hope that the proposals would have a benefit on the use of the Welsh language as the encouragement of the use of Welsh is important for Wales and it's cultural identity.
- I love to hear people using the Welsh language and do not feel that there would be any change to the opportunities for people regarding the Welsh language.
- I see no effect on the Welsh language from these proposals
- I sincerely hope your actions would not discriminate against English only speakers in Wales.
- I speak English not Welsh so need everything in English. Happy for Welsh speakers to have everything in Welsh. Bilingual signs are good.
- I think it would have no impact, Welsh speaking in Monmouth is limited to a small part of the population
- I think this question is a little odd and seems to be box-ticking for WG
My idea of restricting people having second homes from outside the county could only support the Welsh Language.
- I would not see these proposals having an effect on the Welsh language. The impact on housing stock will be small.
- I'm not sure this is a bit problem in Monmouthshire but if it encourages second home owners to sell to Welsh people it can only improve Welsh language use and provisions.

- Idiotic Public sector speak.
What language people speak should have no effect whatsoever on taxes they pay.
- I'm afraid that I have no desire to promote the use of the Welsh language, having grown up in Europe where different languages predominated and they, along with regional differences - do you know how many versions of German are commonly in use? - at least three - and it all works perfectly well to this day.
In fact I'm against road signage being bilingual - I think it's a distraction that is liable to cause accidents. There's many a time I have driven past a sign without being able to sort out the bit that I can read.
- I'm not sure how relevant this is to this particular issue, but I am all in favour of promoting the teaching / learning and use of Welsh as widely as possible. Lose a language, lose a culture.
- Imposing penalties on second home owners may run counter to the objective of allowing or encouraging lifestyles in which people engage in both Welsh and English languages and cultures.
- In a largely English speaking county, I doubt that the changes would have a significant impact.
- In Monmouthshire there would be minimal effect on people using the Welsh language. The majority of Monmouthshire Local people born in the county and their parents and possibly grandparents do not speak Welsh as a first language they speak English.
- Increased sale of 2nd homes, possibly increasing the number of children in local schools, which would then be over subscribed, so detrimental.
- Increasing the Council Charge for second homes could limit or reduce the number of properties left empty or used as holiday lets, thereby having more long term usage by families. They can have the opportunity to learn of the county's wonderful Welsh heritage, to value the meaning of its descriptive place names and to have their children attend our Welsh language schools
It is most encouraging to have many incoming residents to Monmouthshire as well as long term residents, now learning the Welsh language. Many of these have become very proficient and make a valuable contribution to the Welsh language activities in the county.
- Inhibiting the tourist trade would lessen revenues for Wales, leaving less money to spend on promoting Welsh culture.
- Irrelevant to this consultation.
- Irrelevant. What a ludicrous question to ask. And it suggests increasing council taxes for certain properties has some anti-foreigner undertones to it.
- It is possible that the proposals may lead to more people living permanently in Monmouthshire and, therefore, a few more people speaking Welsh (which is good). I don't think it will have a huge impact on the current situation.
- It is wonderful that the beautiful Welsh language is now starting to flourish. I do not think that the second home owners will have any effect on this one way or another. It is substantially an issue for those almost certainly with first homes in the county/country who have a choice unless of course they are in roles which require the ability to speak Welsh as well as English (if they are indeed English speakers).
- It matters not.
- It sends out a message that outsiders are not welcome, don't do it.
- It won't have any at all. No one ever speaks Welsh in Monmouthshire anyway.
- It would improve future prospects of the Welsh language by releasing housing in rural areas for locals and not diluting population of Welsh speaking areas. I recognise that it could be interpreted as racial bias.
- It'll have very little effect either way in Monmouthshire
- likely to improve the opportunities for people to live permanently in Monmouthshire and may therefore increase access to and use of Welsh

- Little impact in a relatively non-Welsh speaking County.
- May help Welsh language if more people lived in towns and support local services and courses etc.
- Minimal
- Monmouth, specifically, is a border town, and thus highly unlikely to adopt Welsh as the primary language, the same as border towns around the world. Enabling the locals to live where they were born, and afford to bring their children up here would increase the use of Welsh, since it is taught in schools.
- Monmouthshire has been Norman French, latterly English speaking for over 1000 years. Because Edward Heath erroneously believed it was Wales, doesn't mean it s populace need spend time learning a non-native tongue
- Monmouthshire is a part of the United Kingdom. The language of the UK is English. People are free to speak Welsh or any other language but it should not be forced upon us. Why not consider Polish - probably more people speak Polish fluently in the area than Welsh.
- more events, learning classes, advocacy for people to speak it around town.
- More local people living in holiday hotspots that are currently excluded by price - this would improve the extent of the Welsh language.
- More permanent residents would increase the chances of embracing the Welsh language
- Negative and detrimental. We should be welcoming visitors and non-residents.
- Negative effect
- No effect.
- No effect. Welsh language is surely a personal matter depending on region and family history. I firmly believe that to try and force parity between English and Welsh would be counter productive. English is a global language Welsh is not.
- No impact on Welsh language in Monmouthshire.
- No views on this
- No views, Born in Monmouthshire. Never taught it .Never needed to use it. This is border country , plenty can't grasp English so what chance Welsh. Its good to teach but English speaking only Welsh people should not be discriminated against. Cymru am byth!
- None - stupid question
- Not applicable Welsh is not spoken in this area
- Not relevant to this important consultation.
- Not something that concerns me
- not sure as I am not a Welsh speaker.
- Not sure how this is relevant.
- Not sure that it would have any effect
- Not sure what this means. Releasing empty properties may help with outward migration of Welsh speakers?
- On the Welsh language in Monmouthshire, none!
- Penalties for second home ownership would deter lifestyles which allow people to engage in both Welsh and English language and culture.
- Ridiculous question - this is about council tax premiums to fund homelessness - no idea how that links to the Welsh language.
- Second homes have a huge negative impact on the Welsh language, as native speakers switch to English to accommodate non Welsh speakers needs socially and in shops etc. Changes the dynamics of an area.
- Second homes have a negative effect on the Welsh Language and reduce the opportunities for Welsh to be spoken regularly in the communities where there is a disproportionate amount of second homes.

- slight improvement
- Sorry but I don't want to answer this question
- Sorry but I have no experience or knowledge enough to answer this. Being a grandparent of two who are fluent Welsh Speakers, I can but refer the question to them. They will give feedback in a separate survey questionnaire.
- Supporting local people who are more likely to speak Welsh to live in Welsh houses.
- The more second homes, the more English speaking presumably but I'm not sure how many Welsh speaking communities there are in Monmouthshire.
- The Welsh language should not be promoted as it is at present. The cost is prohibitive and not justified.
Welsh should be a voluntary language not an induced one at vast expense. In Monmouthshire it is totally unnecessary to promote the language in schools
- There would be no effect on the Welsh language.
- This drive to establish the Welsh Language can be very divisive and raises divisions rather than contributing to community.
Are we saying that there are second class citizens because they do not speak Welsh.
- This will have no effect at all on the Welsh language.
- This would have no effect on the Welsh language whatsoever - it seems idiotic to even consider this. Welsh language is important for Welsh people re Welsh culture, heritage etc, but English is important as it is the international language. Welsh people should be encouraged to be bilingual as for example in the Nordic countries.
- Undecided
- Unfortunately I do not speak Welsh, but belief that not being Welsh impacts on the culture of an area, which is especially applicable to Monmouthshire being on the border with England.
- Utterly irrelevant to this survey
- 'views on the effects that the proposals would have on the Welsh language' - I assume you are talking about the increased rates. If we get more homes occupied all year, these increase the potential for more people with children going to Welsh language schools. My brother and his wife moved from Bristol many years so their children could be brought up speaking Welsh. Affordable housing by removing these 2nd homes will help more people.
- We are in favour of preserving the Welsh language and culture - Ms Davies was brought up on both and has Welsh speaking heritage. We do not think that outpricing second home owners will affect these issues - adversely it may impact negatively on the local economy.
- We support the Welsh language as our grandchildren are Welsh and will be brought up speaking the language. However, I do not believe that Monmouthshire has a high proportion of Welsh-only speakers.
- Welsh language was nearly annihilated in the 80s and we need to preserve our culture and heritage..its our identity as Welsh not English
- what a waste of money the Welsh language is the is so much that the money could be spend on like our hospitals
- Whether or not this proposal is adopted, it will have no effect on the use or otherwise of the Welsh language.
- Would not effect the Welsh language
- As I understand it there are no proposals as yet. It is a consultation on whether the Council should use its discretionary powers. However, I think that if the Council introduce a premium on second homes in Monmouthshire, less people who are Welsh by birth will buy here. They will look elsewhere.
- Bilingual signs

- I can't see a feasible solution to the Welsh language problem - unless you make it mandatory for all second home owners to attend Welsh classes, which would be impractical to organise and impossible to monitor and enforce.
- I do not believe this would affect learning the Welsh language.
- I don't know. All I do know is that while at school in Ebbw Vale in the 50s and early 60s - EV was in Monmouthshire - we were not compulsorily or routinely taught Welsh. This is a great regret in my life, and I think this has had a greater impact on the Welsh language than any of the proposals might have, either positively or negatively.
- I speak and read Welsh as a native of Gwent where I was born in 1959. I use my Welsh verbally whenever I can and am fluent. I think everything should be done to extend the use of Welsh in the County as it is part of Wales. If I wanted tenants I would favour Welsh speaking tenants and I use Welsh with my neighbour at the property in question. Second homes in Wales should be severely restricted in favour of native residents.
- I think it would have a neutral effect.
- I'm not sure what this questionnaire on property has to do with my sexual orientation, religion, or the Welsh language. My family has lived in Monmouthshire or Herefordshire for three generations, and I think anything that is done to create friction between the English and the Welsh is unhelpful.
- If learning Welsh privately, lessons may have to be forfeited and thus lessons stopped. This will have a detrimental effect
- It should not be possible for the Welsh language placenames to be anglicised be they homes or geographical features in the landscape this is our heritage and spells out what Wales is about. Diolch yn fawr am cymryd amser i ddarllen yr atebion dwi wedi rhoi.
- The CLA policy on Welsh language is that the Welsh language should be used in a positive capacity not in a negative or discriminatory capacity. Where there is legitimate value to be added to a business operation through use of the Welsh language or there is a desire from the owner / land manager to conduct business through the Welsh language then this should be encouraged and supported. People who do not wish to do this should not be treated negatively.
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- The increase in taxation should not be on disabled people and old age pensioners. Maybe personal working could pay in proportion to their earnings?
- The local community that I visit do not speak Welsh so I don't see how it would be affected
- The proposals will have no effect.
- There will be absolutely no effect on the language.
- There would be no effect.
- These proposals have absolutely nothing to do with any aspect of language. While I understand this is presumably a required question to all consultations, surely it's obvious that a question about taxation doesn't impact language?
- These proposals have absolutely nothing to do with the Welsh language, so I don't see how it can possibly have any effect in any way.
- This is a completely silly question and has no bearing on the consultation whatsoever
- This is a completely silly question and has no bearing on the consultation whatsoever
- Very Bad proposal .
- At the age of 84, I am too old to learn Welsh, but I understand any concerns

- I believe these proposals could be harmful as it further enshrines difference and seeks to 'other' people not presumed to be Welsh or presumed not to be interested in learning the Welsh language.
- I think it will be neutral, save that it may exclude people with a real love for Wales and it's language.
- I'm not sure how council tax premiums will help the Welsh language? Legislation on equality of language along with funding for schools and the arts are the only known way to promote a language that i am aware of? given that the majority of the richest people and entities are outside of Wales, making Wales more expensive is likely to damage the Welsh residents by pricing them out of the markets
- It will have no effect
- Monmouthshire is primarily a non Welsh speaking county so this would not have any effect on the Welsh language.
- My children attended a Welsh-medium primary school (in Powys) and a Welsh-medium secondary school (Ysgol Gyfun Gwynllyw in Monmouthshire). I had to pay for them to use the school bus for Ysgol Gyfun Gwynllyw (because we lived in Powys), but I am so glad they had this opportunity. In my experience there are many Welsh people, born and bred in Wales, who have no interest in the Welsh language, whereas there are many people, even those without any Welsh heritage, who take the trouble to learn Welsh and send their children to Welsh-medium schools, so I do not think you should be overly worried about the Welsh language being treated less favourably than English. The council could perhaps notify residents about Welsh classes rather than leave it to chance that they find out about such classes !
- None. The proportion of homes involved is too small to have any discernible effect on the Welsh language.
- This is a very difficult question to answer it almost borders on ridiculous
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Appendix Five: Consultation responses – Second Homes

Yes to premium:

- 190 isn't that many second homes, some single villages in Cumbria have that many...but if you can afford two homes and you are effectively denying someone, somewhere else to live..... pay a bit towards that cost of housing them?
- A lot of people are struggling to afford one home at the moment. If they can't afford the associated costs of having a second home they should sell it to allow others to benefit from the home.
- Again high enough to be punitive.
- Again ..you have your own place to live and buy a property to spend a few weeks in or rent out to holiday makers .in small communities this has a massive impact on families and children no longer can afford to stay where they were born as rich people buy up properties because they see investment opportunities not a home.
- Any homes not lived in full time should be charged a premium.
- As above. I would like to add that in some places that I have visited, Canada and New Zealand, for example, second home ownership is prohibited in areas of outstanding natural beauty. Residents may only sell to locals, and property can only be bought by those who can prove that they live and work in the area. New building is extremely discouraged, to reduce the impact on the area of over population with insufficient infrastructure. This keeps house prices affordable for locals working in key industries and those in essential but seasonal jobs such as tourism. I would like to see this policy applied to large areas of Wales.
- As above. No one needs a second home when so many people don't own (or are even able to rent) a first home.
- As I have said second home owners are well off, make them pay more.
- Assuming this does not apply to properties utilised as holiday rentals for minimum period per annum
- Definitely. I have seen too many towns and villages destroyed by second home owners. Strong words but true. These home contribute nothing to the communities, as the owners do not live their. They don't use the shops, schools, attend village or public events. Plus they remove a home out of the market that would otherwise be occupied by a family or someone who would contribute all the 2nd home owner doesn't and most likely be employable too. These second home owners will often argue they don't use the services, so they should pay the standard rate. I don't agree, by occupying a home on a part time basis, they remove it from the local housing stock from people who contribute as detailed above. The Council rates on 2nd homes needs to reflect the loss to the community.
- Firstly, there are too many people unable to afford one home to justify not introducing a policy that discourages people from having second homes. Secondly, people in second homes likely contribute less to the local economy than someone residing in the property full-time. Thirdly, it is a reasonable assumption that the vast majority of people with second homes are wealthy (how would they be able to sustain a second home during a cost of living crisis, if not); if they are sufficiently wealthy, introducing a premium means that they can either decide to retain their second home but contribute more to our public services (through the premium) or long-term rent out or sell their home to someone who wants to use it as their primary residence.
- Having homes empty for most of the year when people are homeless is not acceptable but premiums should not be too high as income from second home owners may be important in some parts of the county

- Having more than one property is unnecessary and arguably greedy. The social impacts on communities are well documented. Turning our settlements into dormitories for wealthy outsiders has already 'anglicised' much of the east of the county and eroded the original rural culture. The increasing 'urbanite' attitudes to rural issues is disappointing. The hostile attitudes to anything 'Welsh' like signage and place names is truly bigoted much of the time.
- Helps reduce house prices making them affordable to local residents
- Homes used for short term holiday lets that would otherwise be rented long term or sold can be problematic to the housing market.
- Houses should not be treated as an investment. There is not enough housing stock for properties to remain empty for long periods of time.
- Housing in Monmouthshire is limited despite new developments. Since the opening of the bridge from England to Wales we have seen many more people looking to settle here. There are a number of people who are wealthy and like to have a second home in our beautiful county. This is not helpful for future generations wellbeing and ability to stay in the county which again exacerbates our problem of having an aging population.
- I am concerned you think there are only 190 of these! I assume this would include Airbnb's.
- I know a landlord in Caldicot who owns at least 5 houses within the area. Rents them out privately for cash in hand as a premium
- I think it depends what the second home is used for. For example, if it is demonstrated that it is used for long term rental, then increasing the council tax would probably drive up rental rates.
- I think that as money is being generated by these properties then they should pay a premium. especially as local people are struggling to buy homes within the county as cannot compete with rich second home owners. There could be a situation where Monmouthshire has a high proportion of holiday homes and no one else, which will impact on local amenities.
- If houses are for sale particularly after a death or going into care there should be some discretion.
- If people can afford 2 homes they can afford to pay more, that is a property that could be used for someone who lives here permanently and contributes to the local area for more than a few weeks a year
- If people can afford a 2nd home, then they can afford it and obviously draw on council services sometimes.
- if the second home is being rented out to the council or family then not so much
- If they are used as holiday homes, consideration should be made of whether a too big an increase in council tax would make the holiday home unprofitable.
I know that holiday homes are controversial but tourists have to stay somewhere and they bring income.
- If they can afford a second home then they can afford to pay a premium.
- If you can afford a second home you can afford to pay the extra
- If you can afford to keep a second home, you can afford to pay an extra council tax premium.
- In a place where people are homeless, owning a second home should be seen as socially unacceptable. Financial incentives should be used to signal this and discourage it. Where those choose to retain second homes, then it is only fair that they contribute more back to the communities that they impact.
- In light of the housing needs of younger and less socioeconomically secure people, it is shameful that older, wealthier people are able to hold on to a main residence and one (or more) often smaller residences, thus keeping those smaller residences out of the housing market

- In my opinion nobody actually needs a second home - particularly when such second homes deprive local people (who live permanently in the county) from finding somewhere to live.
- In this case people locally should benefit from the homes available, (not outsider's) they cause a surge in prices and stop younger people from getting on the housing ladder in their local area.
- Is there a loop hole where people could claim they use the dwelling for a job but are actually working from home and therefore not exempt from the premium? I hope this would not be the case by the occupant needing to provide proof of a local work address.
- it depends if their second homes which are used as holiday homes for personal use etc then yes and full charge of 300%
if they being used for other family members as they cant afford to get their own home e.g. for a child or grandparent then maybe no or at a very low premium
if they being used to rent out at a reasonable rate or rented out to the council then again maybe no or at a very low rate 25%
i have scored below on the basis its not a buy to let property and that its a personal use second home
- It depletes housing stock for locals
- It shouldn't apply to those people who have a holiday let property within the curtilage of their main residence even if the holiday let is on a separate legal Title.
- It will provide limited additional income, but will discourage further homes being lost to the housing market as second homes.
- just do it!
- Look after our
 1. Our own people to help them find first homes.
 2. Ensure homes are available to those, who move into Wales to work.
- Mae'n bwysig bod trigolion tai lleol yn cyfrannu at yr economi a'r gymdeithas leol. (It is important that local housing residents contribute to the local economy and society).
- Many people are not able to afford one home let alone two!
- Many second home owners bring much money into the community and tend to use restaurants and public houses much more than local residents and make a valuable contribution to the Monmouthshire economy.
- Monmouthshire attracts tourists and, to a limited extent, second home owners can make a contribution to the area when they visit the home. However, this contribution to the local economy depends on how often they visit and whether they buy locally when visiting their home. Second homes are, undeniably, now part of the housing problem. Second home owners mean there are fewer houses for local people to buy or rent. They should be asked to pay a premium for owning a second home. Second home owners have chosen to buy in the County because they like it enough to make a large financial investment. Should they want to continue to own a second home, by paying a premium, they would be contributing financially to keeping Monmouthshire a good place to visit.
- More difficult to answer because if in regular use because of week-time working elsewhere. But if relatively little used or purchased for investment purposes then some penalty is appropriate. Less relevant perhaps in locations where that type of property is beyond the financial reach of the many.
- Most of the comments above still apply to this question
- My wife and I live in Sheffield and have owned a second home in Monmouth since 1991, so I have a personal interest in the outcome of this consultation. As a Governor of Haberdashers' Monmouth Schools, I attend meetings in Monmouth some ten or a dozen time a year, aiming to give something back to the School that (thanks to a generous scholarship funded by Monmouthshire LEA in the 1960s) put me on the road to a fulfilling academic career in Sheffield and Oxford. I am a member of a theatre group in Llandaff and a Founding Fellow of the Learned Society of Wales. So the house is in no

simple sense a "holiday home", though it does serve as that, too, giving me a chance to spend time in the country of my birth and the county of my upbringing. I do support the principle of a premium on second homes but would like it to be recognised that second home owners can and do give to the community, not just economically -- as consumers and employers -- but also by service to local institutions. The property is never let but we allow friends and family to use it at no charge: all these visitors report enjoying shopping and eating out in Monmouth and elsewhere in the county. For this reason, I do not support the same level of premium for second homes as for empty properties.

- No problem with true holiday/business lets, but personally seen many properties sold locally then sit empty for long periods only occasionally occupied on weekends or bank holiday times
- Nobody needs two or more homes.
- not enough starter homes for our young people if you can afford an additional 'home' you can afford any additional expenses
- Owners of second homes use LESS council services so there is not an argument on fairness of costs grounds. However there IS an argument that second home owners should contribute more than local residents on the grounds that they could rent out their properties for extra income, and that they have a duty to contribute more obviously to an area which they presumably found attractive enough to warrant a second home, and this would also help them be more VALUED by local communities for contributing MORE than their standard share, and this helps to compensate for their relative lack of local community participation. The premium should be seen as a POSITIVE way of contributing, NOT a punitive disincentive for second homes and the associated tourism and investment revenues into the area.
- People should have to pay the same as other people.
- People should pay a premium for having the privilege of owning a second home. We need to change our culture from one of acquisition (constantly wanting more) to one of sufficiency (accepting what's enough).
- Second home ownership prevents young people from being able to buy homes in their local area
- Second homes are a selfish luxury
- Second homes are noted for often using affordable housing which should be available for young people who were born and grew up in the area. Any premium should take this into account and make it less financially attractive to have an underused second home.
- Second homes bring limited economic or social benefit to the community and the council tax premium can start to make up for that to benefit the residents.
- Second homes deprive local people of accommodation and, in excess, turn villages into effective ghost towns.
- Second Homes generate very little to the Community , in terms of revenue, or Community spirit and Goodwill to the local shops and permanent residents.
- Second homes has huge impact on small villages and towns if only occupied seasonally or short duration.
- Second homes push up prices so locals are priced out of the market. Some villages are ghost villages in winter.
- see comment above. the gains made by the owners of the properties in terms of an increase in market values is at the expense of people who are trying to find affordable homes.
- See my thoughts above
- Seems fair except for where people are using the accommodation associated with their job.
- Should not apply to seasonal accommodation restricted by planning rules or the weather, e.g. boats and caravans

- The issue of second homes in Wales should have been addressed long ago. People who move to Monmouthshire and contribute to the life and economy of the county are more than welcome.
- There are a shortage of affordable homes for young adults and families especially in the villages where properties are being purchased as second properties or being let out as holiday accommodation.
- There is a shortage of homes so the extra tax on second homes will help provide one home for the people who have none.
- These are homes that could be occupied by local residents who contribute day in, day out, to our local economy. Second homes are a luxury. If people can afford second homes, they can afford a premium for the privilege. But again, perhaps there should be a right of appeal. Many years ago we purchased a property that we extended and refurbished with a view to moving to Monmouth. Our move was delayed because it was inappropriate to move the children's schools - so maybe a right of appeal for this too?
- These houses are left for majority of the year, and families are forced out where they grow up. They bring no income to the village, destroy any sense of community, cause animosity among neighbours of these properties.
- They need to be discouraged from speculating on the housing market. Holiday homes increase the shortage of housing in the area
- This is a definite Yes.
- This is an excellent opportunity to try to rectify the very regressive nature of council tax. Side note: I wish people would stop using the term "second home" to describe these investment/holiday properties. It's deliberately emotive language to make these extravagances seem more reasonable by couching them in relatable terms (everyone needs a home, so two only seems like a minor indulgence). The reality is they are not homes, second or otherwise.
- This is necessary to help affordability of property for local residents. Parts of Pembrokeshire have been priced out of local people affording to stay in their home area, we don't want this problem here.
- This need not be a great amount but some charge should be made at a decision and pro rata according to a determined scale.
- This should apply to second homes not being used as accommodation businesses on which Monmouthshire Tourism has a high dependency. A threshold level should be set e.g. offered commercially for very short term (max 3 months) or holiday lettings for at least nine months out of every twelve.
- This should be done carefully. I think it may be appropriate if properties are used solely as a second home for the owner but if they are let out as a holiday property and support sustainable tourism then this should not be the case. Criteria need to be defined for the length of time let out etc.
- Until the current pressure on housing stock eases, it seems only right that those who choose to have two or more properties should be penalised financially, because this choice stops locals from getting somewhere to live. I also believe the argument so often wheeled out in defence of second-homing, namely that second-homers bring revenue into the area, is specious. For many years the cottage next to mine was a second home, was only used for two or three days a year and it was obvious that the occupants were bringing their food down with them - hence no real contribution to the local economy at all.
- What about excessive levels of B&Bs and buy-to-lets that are in effect second homes? How will the council know whether it's a second home? What's to stop people claiming it's their main home and living elsewhere. Who / how will that be prevented?
- While the number of second homes is small there should be a premium.
- Wye Valley is full of air b'n'b properties.
- Yes if people own second homes for personal use only then they should pay a premium

- Yes, providing that the money raised is used for suitable purposes.
- Ownership of second homes by people outside of Wales needs to be discouraged. If it also affects Welsh residents that is just unfortunate. It is not the same debate as the Empty Property issue which as I said above is more complex. People only own second homes for one reason as second homes to use.
- Second homes may be used for holiday let's and so bringing income to the owner and additional tenants using services. It seems right the owner should pay a premium.
- So long as it is a proper second home (i.e. is furnished and is lived in or rented out for a few months each year)
- Unfortunately, the consensus within our membership is that the use of premiums on second homes has not made a meaningful or significant impact on improving the housing supply in rural areas. Even with a large number of second homes being purchased within Wales pre COVID19, the "Rush to the countryside" brought on by the pandemic has placed immense pressure on rural housing, making the availability of housing for local and younger generations even more difficult. With more people moving from towns and cities to the countryside, seeking a quieter life with more space, so there is an increased need to build more affordable homes.

A large majority of our members, many who reside within Monmouthshire, believe that if a second homeowner/buyer was capable to afford an additional property, they should be able to afford an increased premium on their tax. They should contribute fairly to the local economy and for the privilege of living in such a sought-after location. However, it should also be considered that many people invest in a second home for retirement purposes, where the initial home is sold in time to create a pension lump. The UK has a pension crisis owing to decades of low interest rates, so by increasing the premium this removes a fair pension option for some.

The understanding is if the premium is increased in a local authority in Wales, there needs to be a sincere reason for this, usually due to being a desirable location. However, consideration needs to be taken for areas that are not as popular. Each local authority should be mindful for the needs within that authority and how an increase to the second home premium will have on genuine businesses if they are not to reach the 182 threshold days for business rates. Nevertheless, the premium charged should encourage occupancy, to ensure these properties are not being left empty for many months, especially over the quieter low season months.

Self-catering accommodation brings many positive attributes to rural communities with a large contribution to the economy. Many of these visitor accommodation businesses provide jobs to local residents and support other local business' such as shops, pubs and restaurants, which rely on visitors. An obvious point is that some properties that wouldn't be suitable for long term accommodation have diversified into holiday lets to support that business' income stream. This allows the preservation of older buildings that would normally have been left to ruin and dilapidate. Through this change the characteristic of many rural holiday lodgings becomes available for tourists to experience, where they wouldn't normally have had the opportunity.

- Where 2nd or vacant properties are not contributing to the local community it would be reasonable to charge a premium.
- definition of a second home should relate to a dwelling that is completely separate from the land containing the main / first home
- My husband and I have a home in Monmouthshire. We recognise our fortunate and privileged position and think it is reasonable that we should contribute more towards council tax. We would feel that a 50% premium would be fair and would enable us to continue to live here, where we have strong family, friend and community ties and where we ultimately intend to live full time. We do not feel a significant premium would be appropriate. It may affect the local housing market for all homeowners. Additionally it would not take into account tapering of time spent in Monmouthshire, ie would impact

all second home owners equally regardless of whether they visit once a year for a holiday, or spend four to five months a year here, as my husband and I do. Regarding long term empty properties, we feel this is a tough one - if it's gratuitous then yes a premium should be applied, but if someone is actively seeking to sell a probate property and struggling to shift it, then perhaps six months is too short.

-

No to Premium

- 1) Affordable housing is hugely important. This is not exclusive to Wales. It is a challenge across the UK. What is needed is a strategy to fund building, and creativity towards mortgages that ensures residents can buy their own homes, or have access to decent rented property. Punishing second home owners, though politically attractive, is not enough to help young people start on the property market.
- 2) Second homeowners already pay full council tax but largely do not use council amenities. For example, unlikely to use schools within boundary of a second home, or access care facilities. This "subsidy" will stop if second homeowners withdraw.
- 3) If the purpose of this premium is to get make second home owners sell-up there is a lack of hard data on who is buying up second homes as they return to the market. Are these properties being bought by first time buyers? Or are they being bought by landlords/companies who already own multiple properties? Will they be converted to bed-sits which would reduce the number of affordable houses?
- 4) There are wealthy second home owners who will just pay the proposed second home premium with ease. This premium will change the type of second home owners.
- 190 second homes in the county is a miniscule number and there is clearly not a problem in Monmouthshire. Any premium would clearly be for revenue raising purposes rather than to discourage second homes - should be raised by other means i.e. long term empty homes.
- 190 second homes in the county is an extremely low figure and is clearly not a problem here. Any premium charged would clearly be for revenue raising purposes rather than to discourage second homes. Assuming that a proportion of these are holiday lets, they will produce tourist revenue for the area and on balance, probably provide more benefit than main residences. I
- 2nd property owners are already paying council tax why should they pay more than their neighbours
- A home is a home and if it is being maintained to a good standard and used at various times I cannot see why people should be penalised unless of course the idea is too discourage people from visiting Monmouthshire.
- A lot of these properties supply the tourist industry that generates income and employment to the county.
- A second home doesn't use the level of services for which Council Tax is charged. Given that there are only 190 registered this is approximately 0.5% of the County's housing stock (according to the figures provided by the Council there are 35,200 households in Monmouthshire). This clearly isn't the sort of issue that counties like Cornwall face, and isn't likely to become so. Second homes in Monmouth are often in remote rural locations where regular residents would find it challenging to live, they often upkeep old properties at large expense and they provide much needed 'external' cash into the local economy. More positive schemes should be used to encourage 'second homeowners' to support the local communities in which they share.

- A second-home owner pays the full amount of council tax despite not being in residence for the full year. Therefore the council is benefiting from less use of certain services (waste collection etc.) while we contribute to the local economy in terms of spending on food, leisure etc.
- Any home that is occupied should pay council tax, but there is no reason to charge extra.
- Are you going to charge for boats and motor homes too ? It's an individuals choice where he puts his money whether behind bar a bet on a horse or into a home. The problem is not enough houses or too many people. Demand outstrips supply so prices increase. Homes aren't cheap to build as regulations are too draconian and a shortage of trades people. This will merely discourage investment hence supply yesterday's holiday homes become today's family homes. Look at the chalets built in the countryside in the 20thc now rebuilt as family homes.
- Are you trying to destroy tourism in Wales? Many parts of Wales rely on the second homes. In the second homes they pay rates and don't add to the burden of using the schools or GP's.
- As long as they are used they are probably an asset to the local economy. The community is not being priced out or empty village syndrome like some holiday areas.
- As opposed to long term unoccupied these homes do get used. If this was a high tourist area such as Pembrokeshire where local residents maybe get priced out of the market by second home owners then I think there is a case for increasing charges. However, I see no such pressure in Monmouthshire
- As the owners are paying full Council Tax but only making limited use of services then they are already contributing disproportionately to the provision of Council services. Also, if these homes are let as holiday homes, for example, then that brings visitors into the County, which benefits local businesses. That income might be lost if the policy were to be implemented.
- Charging a council tax premium on 190 properties would not raise a significant amount of money, or help homelessness - the homeless would still be unable to afford to buy or rent these 190 properties if they were on the market. People are homeless because of wider issues in society stemming mostly from local and national government policy. There is no guarantee that the marginal increase in tax revenue would even be used to help the homeless.
- Charging a premium on second homes will not help to solve homelessness. Existing owners are unlikely to dispose of their homes and any premium would be for revenue raising purposes rather than a deterrent. 190 second homes is an extremely small number and would have a negligible effect on revenue.
- Council tax is supposed to be for paying for services. If a home is empty part of the time then fewer local services are used so why should the owner be paying even more for services they don't use?
- Council tax should not be used as a penalty in some kind of class war. Council tax pays for the services used. Second homes should pay in full, but no more.
- don't any one what people to get on in life
maybe we should not go to work or try to better ourselves because all that happens is people what to take hard earned money off us
- Each second home should be assessed individually.
- Full council tax is already paid but not the same level of cost to the council budget are incurred.

If the costs go up properties will become uneconomic. There is potential to drive down property values.

- I am a second homeowner. I have a one bedroomed cottage which is used frequently. The property cannot be occupied fulltime as it is judged to be too small for fulltime occupancy by Monmouthshire Council. I already pay £1,920 a year in council tax which

is a hefty amount for such a modest dwelling to pay for the services provided. It would therefore seem to me punitive to charge more than the current rate with the apparent goal of discouraging second home owners in the county. In my case, there is no alternative use for the property, Cattery Cottage, LLanishen.

- I am aware of several second home owners who have inherited modest properties in and around Abergavenny. These properties are very well used by families and contribute to local economy each week. Driving such owners out of occupancy seems unnecessary to me.

Applying a law of 3rds to the number of second home owners in Monmouthshire - 200 second home owners - average Council Tax of £2000.00 per year.

66 decide to pay the increase of 100% = £132,000 increase in income

66 decide to sell or rent property to a primary residence buyer - no increase in income from Council Tax.

66 decide to rent property to person in receipt of universal credit and other exemptions, Council Tax is not paid,

MCCouncil in deficit of £132,000.

On balance there is no income benefit from adding a premium to 200 second home owners.

Better to have income from 200 second home owners x £2000.00 average Council Tax = £400,000.00

- I believe that a lot of the 'second homes' are actually holiday lets that bring money and business into the area. We own one that is let for 100 days per year. We had not yet registered as a FHL due to Covid and we are actually happy to pay 100% council tax. It is not possible for us to reach the new criteria of 182 days so this is no longer going to be an option. The likely impact of an additional premium is that we will have to stop our holiday let. This may well result in another (small) dwelling but the taxis, cleaners, restaurants, pubs, shops, coffee shops, tourist attractions that benefit from our customers will lose out. Our cottage was built as holiday accommodation and is much better suited to than to residential accommodation.
- I do not believe it is fair to further tax individuals (who are likely already high tax payer) to make up for poor management of public finances by both successive governments and local councils. Effective long term strategies need to be developed rather than additional tax burdens. If someone chooses to invest their money in a second property (as opposed to a pension or investments) this is their choice, they will already be subject to income tax and capital gains tax.
- I don't think Monmouthshire has a problem like some places elsewhere in Wales with 2nd homes so a rise would be unnecessary and in fact punitive. 2nd home ownership rates in Pembrokeshire and Gwynedd are four or five times higher than Monmouthshire. So what is the aim? To stop second home ownership when few people are directly affected and the effect on house prices is non-existent to negligible? Or just to take money from those deemed able to afford it, without looking at the wider effect that might have. If it's the latter then that's just punishment because the actual cost/use of services of 2nd owners is (usually) considerably lower than standard owners. Many 2nd owners are actually very engaged locally and make efforts to spend money locally.
- I have already explained my rationale further up in this questionnaire.
- I strongly disagree that a second home charge should be applied to all second homes. There should be careful thought to the definition of a second home. I agree that those used for a holiday home can have a negative impact on local communities. I was also surprised and how few second homes (190) there actually are. The definition of job related dwelling does not consider those who have a second home to be close to their workplace. I am a managing director of a SME who lives in Wales during the week and returns to a family home at the weekend. My company did not fund a home for me.

Instead I purchased a house that had been empty for 18 months and brought it back into repair. The business I manage has expanded to provide more local jobs. The consultation feels like a blunt approach. Given I have choice about where to locate the business you give me pause for thought.

- I understand that there are only 190 second homes in the County - a negligible number. Monmouthshire will lose visitors' support to the local hospitality industry and others.. Any premium would clearly be for revenue raising purposes rather than to discourage second homes.
- If the owner uses the property as a second home they are already paying double council tax, utilities and insurance. Increasing the council tax will only force them into selling the property which will mean the money they spend in the local economy will be lost. Also it is highly unlikely that the homeless people this change is trying to help will be able to move into these vacated properties
- If you already collect 100% charge from them (noting the owner may seldom use the local services) where is the justification to charge more - aside from an assumption that the owner can actually pay more
- It is unjustified as second home owners bring wealth to an area and use less services than full time residents.
- It should depend on where the main residence is. If the main residence is also in Monmouthshire then i would imagine a discount would be in order, if its outside Monmouthshire then the standard rate. I can't see how it would be fair to charge a premium when they are using less services.
- It will massively reduce investment in tourism - this policy will reduce the economic generation of wealth into the county and have a negative effect on jobs and investment in tourism.
- Its unclear what these properties are used for holiday lets, holiday homes etc. Its unlikely these would be suitable to tackle homelessness and if lost would negatively impact local economies.
- Mainly empty houses don't use services much, so they're already paying over the odds
- Many "second homes" are properties associated with the owner's main residence, for example properties which were built as, or converted to, holiday lets, encouraged by 'rural diversification' schemes (e.g. farmers needing to diversify their income). Counting these in the same way as holiday homes owned by people living far away would be unfair. In many cases, they cannot be used as permanent homes due to their planning permissions, only as holiday lets (but with year-round occupancy being allowed, thus meaning they don't benefit from existing exemptions). Clearly no-one is going to build a 'holiday home' for their own use, adjacent to their existing home. A rule stating that for a residence to fall under the designation of a 'holiday home', it's owner(s) must live outside of the county of Monmouthshire, would overcome this issue. Note that the WAG requirement for a holiday home to be classed as a business is an unrealistic test in Monmouthshire; it is simply not a sufficiently 'prime' tourist area for most properties to meet the 'number of days rented' hurdle (182 days).
- Many people live in urban environments because of their work and should not be prevented from choosing to visit places with better environments as a part time resident.
- Many second home owners employ tradesmen (builders, gardeners, cleaners etc) and also spend money during their stays here on leisure activities (eating out - a local pub where we eat frequently has said that he relies on regular business from second home owners), shopping locally etc) and money would therefore be lost to the local economy. (I personally have spent in excess of £100,000 doing up a rundown property using two lots of builders, kitchen fitters, bathroom installers, double glazing, garage door installers etc etc and buying expensive furniture and fittings - all from local tradesmen and retailers), we eat out almost every day we are here (frequently winter and summer) and therefore spend lots of money whilst we are here. We do not use council facilities - we even take our rubbish home with us.

- Many second homes are being let as holiday lets. We have a property that is a holiday home and we don't use it at all. We have had to do this as we can't sell the property - we have tried! So instead of it sitting empty we rent it as a holiday let and it brings tourists to the area who spend lots of money. To be penalised for this seems very unfair. If any levy is added it should only be for holiday homes that are left empty for large parts of the year and do not bring tourists to the region.
- Monmouthshire has one of the lowest rates of second home owners in Wales. Well below other counties where second home ownership is viewed as an issue. The low number of second homes is therefore unlikely to have any impact on the affordability of housing in the county. It is likely if brought in people will sell up or declare as their first home - thereby not increasing revenue for the county. Second home owners have already paid a considerable sum of additional land tax upon purchase of a second home in Wales. The poll does seem unfair given the low number of second home owners in the county.
- Monmouthshire is not a seaside resort and the house prices currently reflect market prices and are not inflated above the county average
- Most second homes will be rented for part of the year as holiday accommodation, improving the tourist monetary spend in the community
- No premium is acceptable.
- No they are boosting the local economy by having a second home and visiting or letting it as a holiday let. It is not empty.
- Not all second homes are owned for leisure purposes. I own a property in Pwllmeyric which is not my main residence. It is furnished. (so classed as a second home) My daughter locally depends on me for childcare to enable her to continue working for the Dept of Health. Her own health is now significantly compromised with uncertain prognosis. Hence I stay frequently to help her out. She does not have the space for me to stay over.

I cannot move here permanently yet as other daughter in Yorkshire has significant mental health issues following the death of my husband (her father) so I am needed there too.

- Personal interest. My wife and I own a second home in Monmouth. We stay approximately 30 nights each year in our flat. We pay 100 pc council tax. We use very little of council facilities but happy to pay what everyone else pays . We aren't registered with any doctors or dentists. We abided with all covid restrictions and stayed in Bedfordshire. Will you raise lots of income by increase in council tax on a small number of properties .
- Properties would need to be fully accessed, and in fact if properties/rooms were not being used fully for good reason (e.g family use) then a relaxation in community taxation should be considered/given as services are not being used.
- Property owners already pay council tax and bring additional revenue to the local area through tourism. Adding to this is wholly disproportionate.
- Property pays full council tax without consuming services
- Same reasons as set out in 2
- Second home definition too vague
- Second home owner support a large part of our economy and make up considerable hospitality spend
- Second home owners bring money into the region through tourism.
- Second homes is not a problem in Monmouthshire and often they end up being rented and there is a lack of properties to rent due to such measures and also due to the changes in the law for landlords in Wales which provide better protection for tenants but have the unintended consequences of putting off landlords.

- Second homes mean that services in the county are not being used as extensively as they otherwise would be. Therefore, the fact that a property is a second home just means that it is not putting demands on service. Further, if a premium is placed on second homes it seems likely that they would then let them for holiday lets and they would not be liable for council tax, so the council would lose an income.
- Second homes shouldn't have a premium added as in our case there is very light use on services such as waste collection, roads etc. The intention of adding a premium charge is clearly to bring in general revenue and not due to being overrun with second homes in Monmouthshire - 190 homes is a very small number in this county.
- Second properties already paying 100 % of Council Tax despite using only a tiny fraction of the services paid for. E.g. Refuse Collection, Police Service etc !! + Some second properties, such as the one I own, are kept for specific purposes such as providing a base for family members engaged in the care of other disabled family members, which I may add saves the council millions !
- Should be happy people want to live here and you're making a fortune by building all the new houses everywhere- stop being greedy - cut costs elsewhere by stopping wasting money paying for pointless and useless services that only a handful use
- Stop increasing taxes
- Surely we want to encourage people to spend time in our beautiful County, not drive them away by high premiums? We need as many people as possible to come and support local businesses and communities? We already have empty properties in our town centres making them unattractive and unappealing. Bring people in. Don't drive them away.
- Tax is already being paid.
- The county does not suffer from localised problems of second home ownership unlike coastal counties. The premium is therefore inappropriate. The 'political' point may also be made that an individual should be allowed to use their taxed income as they see fit in a free society. The policy is overtly socialist.
- The number of second homes in Monmouthshire is relatively low (compared with other locations in Wales) and the additional revenue recoverable would not justify the controversy the measure would generate and/or the distress that would be caused to some second-home owners who have good reasons for maintaining second homes in the County, relating, for example, to:
 - (a) strong family or community ties in the local neighbourhood;
 - (b) constraints (e.g. relating to work, caring responsibilities or health issues) currently preventing them from living in the property on a permanent basis;
 - (c) longer-term accommodation plans relating to impending or future life-course events (e.g. retirement, career moves);
 - (d) combinations of the above.

Discretionary exceptions could be made for individual cases, but this would require a fair and transparent decision-making appeals process and would be administratively demanding.

- The number of second homes in Monmouthshire would seem to be relatively small and is no doubt significantly smaller than in other parts of Wales. The additional revenue recoverable would disproportionate in relation to the controversy it would cause. Many second home owners need to have second homes, if for example: they have family connections and perhaps caring obligations in more than one part of the UK, or if they have to work a long way from their family home (where this might not be covered by the Class 7 exemption). Also some people buy second homes in readiness as part of a long-term retirement plan.

If the council is determined to penalise second home owners, they should at least allow exceptions in such cases. But administering this would require some kind of application

or appeals process, which would pose an administrative challenge out of all proportion to the value of the revenue at stake.

- The proportion of households classed as second homes is a very small proportion of the housing stock, and causes no issues for local communities. Monmouthshire outperforms most of Wales on the majority of measures based on publicly available data (local area summary statistics), including the provision of affordable housing.
- The second homes may have family living in them.
- The Welsh Government apparent reason for bringing in the new tax rules for second homes was to address issues with people finding an affordable home in the place they have grown up.

If the County had an issue with young people finding an affordable home this would have been clearly stated as a reason in the consultation paper.

But it was not

Instead, Monmouthshire County Council ('MCC') appear to be trying to suggest there is some link between the number of second homes in the County and the alleged 'extremely high levels of homelessness'.

But absolutely no facts or figures are presented in the consultation paper to support this allegation.

This allegation has any substance behind it!

This is simply a ruse by MCC to pull in some additional revenue from second home owners who the Labour controlled council assume must be wealthy.

According to the MCC website 'Currently there are approximately 190 second homes in the County' and that these properties already pay 100% Council Tax.

Are second home owners not already paying an additional premium i.e. paying 100% Council Tax when only occupying their property (and therefore local amenities) for less than 50% of the time.

What is the justification for charging second home owners more than 100%?

It is ridiculous for MCC to infer that the 190 second homes are somehow causing a detrimental affect on the County and that they should be financially penalised as such.

And how much additional revenue precisely does MCC seriously think this will raise when there are in fact only 190 second home owners in the County.

- There are few second homes in the county and the second homes already pay full council tax for limited council services. Second home owners bring business into the county through use of local suppliers from building to shopping.
- There is no economic impact assessment provided and no reference to Monmouthshire's own well researched STEAM figures. These should be used to determine the value of a so called second home which may in fact be a valuable holiday rental. Holiday rentals provide jobs, support local services and other businesses including retail and hospitality and including attractions owned by MCC.
. During the pandemic the lack of trade/employment caused by the ban on self catering guests was painfully apparent. There were severe economic realities as a result. There

is no need to replicate this!

Penalising so called second homes which are in fact rented out is not the way to go. Please be extremely careful when defining a second home. Something which is only used by its owners a few weeks a year is not at all the same as something which is in fact a busy holiday rental. A true second home should be taxed but a holiday rental which narrowly fails to meet the ludicrous new Welsh Government 182 nights rules should NOT be penalised! It contributes greatly to the prosperity of the County!

Owners of second homes and rental businesses both invest in the county and spend within it. They support other professions and businesses and are undemanding of services. Where is the economic impact report which allows this to be properly reviewed and understood?

- There maybe justifiable reasons as to why the property is empty, why should the owner have to potentially pay more if this is the case.
- this is not fair on those who worked hard for their 2nd home . the trick it to encourage people to do things and not discourage. most people would sell their houses and this is not going to fix problem of homelessness
- This would be counter intuitive to growing Monmouthshire's growing tourist industry and income from it. Too short-termism and approach.
- This would be punitive for families who have owned second homes for many years and who might struggle to find the extra money to fund additional taxes. We are already very highly taxed.
- Tourism is a major source of income to Monmouthshire and contributes greatly to both the economic and social well-being of the community. I was born in Abergavenny and much of my family continues to live there. I have always come back frequently throughout my life while my parents were alive and since, and I inherited my second home on the death of my father. Since my retirement, I now spend about 40% of my time there & during my and my friends' visits, we use local shops, restaurants and visit local sites, all of which help towards the local economy. My visitors always comment on how lovely the area is and often come back to the area themselves, staying in local hotels/B&Bs, and patronising local pubs, restaurants and shops. I have, and continue to, carry out major improvements and repairs to my home, using local labour, and also employ a local gardener to tend to the property in my absence. I fully intend to retire to this property in the next few years and take up permanent residence.
- Unfair. Negative.
- We already pay full council tax to Monmouthshire County Council. We bought our second home in good faith for love of Wales over 20 years ago and not for gain. Ms Davies has Welsh heritage, she went to Welsh Girls' School in London and Swansea University. We did not expect the proposed increase in council tax. We contribute financially to the local economy when in Abergavenny but use the services less than permanent residents. Between 100 - 300% increase in council tax seems discriminatory and unfair.
- We currently pay full council tax on an inherited flat.
Quite happy to do so.
Any premium is discrimination of second home owners.
- We have a property classed as a second home but which is a holiday let that we have refurbished and live next door. The holiday let is of a high standard and is let to tourists most of the year. A premium charged by the council on such properties would severely hamper our ability to do business and thus deny the county of tourist revenue spent in nearby shops, pubs and restaurants. Monmouthshire's main income is tourism and such a move to charge a premium on holiday lets threatens to drastically limit the number of good-quality properties for tourists to stay at and visit the county. We employ local people to service the property and operate at a small profit margin. A premium would threaten to make the business untenable. Tourism is Monmouthshire's main revenue source and should be supported rather than penalised.

- We have had a second home in Monmouth for more than 20 years in which we have contributed to the well being of the area by paying our council tax; as second homers obviously we do not benefit as much from all the services provided by the council as permanent buyers, so net contributors to the council.
- What are you trying to achieve?
- While it may appear that everyone with a second property is in a great financial position, that may well not be the case for everyone, and putting everything into that property might be a way to bring them out of financial hardship and try to make life slightly less troubling so they can have some enjoyment with their family. The price of living has already pushed some people to living month to month, nursery fees so people can go back to work, to then charge a additional tax on something which is just about covering itself due to a decline in tourism doesn't seem fair. It would also only serve to decrease tourism in the area further if people then had to stop providing local accommodation and people stopped visiting.
- Why is it appropriate for owners of second properties to pay a premium. The owner of the house is still only using the services provided and charged for by the council tax in the same way someone that owns one house does. If a second home was exempt then i can see why a charge would be applied but do not understand a premium being added.
- Why should owners be penalised for owning a property? When the property is in use it is bringing income into the area.
- Why when people are trying to better them selves should the be screwed over the the council?!?
- You need to encourage tourists and second home owners not turn them off. Putting up prices will only drive costs to the customer not the owner.
- As above, Your definition of "second homes" omits a significant use case, that of holiday let. The threshold for a property to be considered a holiday let (in terms of days per year occupied) is unrealistically high in many cases, and the premiums being proposed threaten the tourism sector, which is a significant industry within Monmouthshire.
- If the house is occupied for part of the year or more frequently as a holiday let then the occupants will be supporting local businesses. Also the property will be maintained.
- In towns where this has been done, it has not stopped people coming, it has only increased rental costs which only goes to exacerbate problems for the locals, putting property ownership further out of reach.
- is the number of second homes in the county large enough, and suitable enough, to make a big difference to either the homeless or those living in the area and wishing to buy? I believe that is the rationale in popular second home hotspots. In all my years in the area I have not been aware of the county being such a hotspot.
- My understanding of the rationale behind the legislation in relation to second homes was that the premium was designed to alleviate problems where communities were being adversely affected through a high concentration of second homes in an area. On the Council's website it states that there are 39,200 Council tax payers and 190 second homes. Second homes therefore account for less than 0.5% of Council Tax payers in Monmouthshire. The exercise of a discretion to impose a premium where there is no second home issue in Monmouthshire may well be regarded as unreasonable and subject to challenge in the Courts.

To date the Council has clearly decided no premium should be applied even though the discretionary power has existed for some time. The Council would need very clear evidence of changed circumstances - not just the change in the amount of premium it could levy - to justify why a premium should be applied from April 2024, when it was not

applied previously.

Again the administrative costs of introduction of any premium and enforcement would need to be analysed against income that might be recovered.

The contribution of second home owners to the local area should not be overlooked as well as the fact that second home owners are already paying a full Council tax, while using something less than full services.

Finally second home owners can purchase elsewhere. It would be unfortunate indeed if as a consequence of introduction of a premium people who are Welsh by birth feel unwelcome in Monmouthshire.

- Nanny state at its finest, potentially picking on people who've worked hard to afford a second home
- People are entitled to have second homes. It is inconceivable to suggest ,charging them for it. People work hard and want to invest in the county and you are putting them off for ridiculous reasons. Some people use second homes every weekend. some people live in them for 6 months of the year. some have invested in them to retire too. its disgraceful to attempt to charge innocent people who make an effort like these people
- Talk to the owner to see how much use they make of the property, and how much they are contributing towards the local economy.
- This is clearly unfair, second home users will generally use minimal council services so to be changed more is ridiculous. The policy seems to ignore longstanding family connections to the area. In my own case I want to retire to the property - this policy will force me to sell and pay tax and then in a couple of years buy another property and pay tax. The property needs refurbish work before it could be sold causing me more financial cost and stress.
- All dwellings must pay Council Tax
Council Tax on holiday lets must be included in this.
There seem to be a large amount of farms with holiday lets. It would a good idea if these payed Council Tax.
- As full Council Tax would be paid whilst a property is used as a second home, I do not believe there is any justification for a premium on second homes as there would probably be less demand on council resources and services for a home that is not continuously occupied.
Also I do not believe that the owning of second homes in Monmouthshire is anything like the issue arising of high house prices in coastal holiday resorts causing unaffordability issues to local populations.
- Council tax on second homes should not be increased because it will reduce inward flow of money from other parts of Wales and particularly the UK. The discretionary spending of second home owners helps local economies and any reduction would reduce economic activity.

There is no shortage of properties in Monmouthshire for people to rent or buy. As a result local residents are not forced out of the area by second home owners.

In addition second homes are likely to be at the higher end of the housing market and the sale or renting of such homes will not meet the County Council's aim of providing affordable housing to buy or rent.

- If increased premiums are due to be paid from 1st April, it doesn't allow much time for an owner to prepare. At the very least it should be increased gradually over a number of

years. Otherwise it could send people into poverty.

What about the cost of living crisis? Council tax prices are increasing for everyone, so is this the right time to be doing this? Potentially this could have a significant impact on families lives and should be very carefully considered.

Owning a second home or long term empty property doesn't mean the owners can afford to pay premiums, it could be that its been in a Welsh family for decades/generations. If the premiums are high, the owners could be forced into selling the property quickly, which may mean accepting a lower price for a quick sale, allowing for rich property developers to come in and renovate and make a profit. Is this something that the Council wants to support? The potential scheme could unfairly discriminate against middle income families, who are already facing tough financial times. Those on high incomes will simply be able to afford the premiums and the property will remain out of use - therefore not solving the problem of a housing shortage.

- It is manifestly unfair to do so
- No, I think it would not be a good idea. It may push people to sell their houses but, in the current climate, the likelihood is that wealthy people from cities will purchase the houses and they will remain as second homes, as the new owners may well have enough money not to be fazed by the premium. Not only that, if you were to announce that a premium will be brought in from the 2024/25 financial year, this might make it more difficult for people in my position to sell their houses.
- NO, the council together with the Welsh government should fund new social housing from taxes already received, NOT from hard working, hard saving individuals.

WHY should WE be discriminated against just because we worked hard and saved hard. Again, why should we be discriminated against just because the political parties (Conservative, Labour/Liberal and Plaid Cymru) failed over the last fifty years to build new social housing, WHY should WE be PENALISED!

We were born and grew-up in Monmouthshire but were forced to move away for economic reasons. We've since been lucky enough to inherit a property, which now allows us to provide periodic childcare to our grandchildren who live in the near vicinity. Our children would be also be penalised with additional childcare costs if we couldn't afford the council taxes. Every person in this country received the same basic education and therefore had the same opportunities that we've had to earn a living and provide for themselves. I fail to see why we should have to provide for them.

- People have second homes for many reasons - work commitments elsewhere and to be near older family members at weekends are common reasons. The tourist economy is vital to this area and driving it away to England will not help local businesses. Neither will it solve any housing shortages. The number of second homes is very small so the revenue raised will in no way compensate for the loss of people who come here and spend money in hospitality and retail. Second home owners also make very little use of council services whilst paying full council tax. I have a second home in Monmouth because my family has lived there since 1840 and I care for an elderly family member when I visit. Work and other commitments mean I have to be in London and I can't have two primary residences. Don't just see the stereotype - second homes are not about greed. They are also about people wanting to be active in the community. I purchased a property that had been on the open market for many months, I did not pay an inflated price and I was not in competition with a local person. I make no money from my property, I pay full council tax, I spend hundreds of pounds in local businesses every

time I'm in residence, I rarely use council services and I am an active member of the community.

- The proposed premium is indiscriminate in its application. The consultation itself concedes that a second home could be acquired in different ways, e.g. via inheritance. Ownership in itself does not automatically translate into an ability to pay triple or quadruple the standard rate of council tax
- The reason that the cost of property is high and the fact that the area is relatively cheap compared to surrounding areas. This tax will hit people who actually take up less of the council's resources. This is a smokescreen to make it look like the council is doing something, and possibly exclude incomes from the area
- There are around 190 second homes in Monmouthshire. This compares with a total of around 94,000 people (41,000 households) in Monmouthshire - so they constitute a tiny proportion (less than 0.5%) of the total. These homes are already subject to the full 100% council tax charge in Monmouthshire - even though they may not be fully benefiting from council services. So they are already paying a higher rate of council tax (which is being used to subsidise council services for others). To demand that such a tiny minority of residents (likely fewer than 500 occupants out of 94,000) should pay 2, 3 or 4 times the full council tax rate - with no regard to their available income, their financial situation, the nature of their property, or how they came to own a second home - would be punitive and disproportionate, and could potentially cause hardship.
- There is almost invariably a valid reason for a person to own two properties. It could be for family reasons or for personal holiday or health requirements. A second home is already charged a 4% levy on LTT when purchased. If it is to be let for holidays then it will be bringing in revenue to the local economy and the additional council tax will either increase the rental charges or cause owners to sell, either way causing a loss of a vital opportunity for visitors to experience all that the county has to offer
- we get charged and everyone is struggling at the moment any way - I would not have a second home this will be my main home but with covid struggled to get contractors to do renovation works
- We put more into the local economy that take out.
Use local Eyecare, Hair, Computer Services, Car Service, Builders Supplies, Local Builders and Tree Service , DIY Shop, Garden Centre, Eating out,
Until lockdown, we have attended many local events, Monmouth Show, St Thomas Church events, Olympic Torch,
- Your Local Housing Market Assessment 2020 2025 does not mention second homes as being a source of tightness in the housing market in Monmouthshire. Of the 38,233 houses in Monmouthshire only 190 (less than 0.5 percent) are recorded as second homes. Second homes are not mentioned in any of the graphs or pie charts in your Housing Market Assessment, presumably because they make up such a tiny proportion of the housing stock.
The introduction of a premium on second homes could therefore not be considered an economically motivated measure but rather a politically motivated measure which could be easily prove negative to the private commercial revenue of Monmouthshire...

Don't know:

- Consider this on an individual basis. What type of property is this? Is the property being used as a second home and holiday rental? Is there income being generated

through this property? If so, what proportion of this income is being contributed back into the community?

- I truly don't know. Part of me says yes - particularly if the second home is let as a business, Airbnb type arrangements. Part of me says no - particularly if the home is only used by the family who own it on a very regular basis as they are part of a community and contribute to the local economy whilst they are residing. In the latter case, these people use little of our public services (no schooling, social care etc) so charging them more seems churlish. However, if the home is run as a business most of the time then there is an argument for charging more. Indeed, couldn't business rates be charged??
- many of these homes are more remote and not suitable for renting long term. If they are rented out commercially then i guess owners would look to satisfy the business rating aspect and therefore avoid paying any council tax or business rates. These properties could also be providing income for the tourism economy.
- My main home is in Bradford-on-Avon, Wiltshire. My second home in Abergavenny is an inherited property. I have friends in both towns and split my time around 2/3 in England and 1/3 in Wales and am committed to the area. I am an active contributor to my community in Abergavenny. My current plan is to retire to this second home in 3-4 years' time.
- Numbers are small but would bring into line with other areas in Wales
- This is more difficult as second homes may bring in income to the area. However, in areas where occupation is strongly seasonal and there is a shortage of homes for locals, the habit should be discouraged.
- You have written to me in the case of the house in Monmouth which i own. This house was bought by my parents in 1975 (they moved from Llanellen) and was the family home. I lived there before i went to London for work. After that i made frequent trips to the house to see my parents and for holidays and to spend time in Wales . After their deaths i have visited the house for holidays, weekends etc. I regard it as my family home and an important part of my Welsh heritage. It is also the case that i have lived on the street for longer than the vast majority of the people who live there now. It is not a case of "an outsider" who has only been to the area once or twice and snaps up a property. I would be very sad if i were forced to leave Wales through the imposition of a larger council tax. I imagine that to the extent that there are second homes in Monmouthshire , most of them fall into this category, but that is of course for you to say.
- Second homes can be a problem in some cases but can also be a good thing in others and it is very difficult to consider a shotgun situation that hits them all the same way. Punitive rates can be a tool where harm is being caused to a local community due to second homes but I would say that above 50% extra and it becomes a penalty. Letting out holiday homes often provides a vital source of local income in many situations and I think one has to be very careful in not hitting this market.

Level of premium to apply

- A 300% levy is not unreasonable, and may help persuade owners not to use their empty property as a source of unearned income
- 3X is not sufficient either in my opinion. What level should it be? We will only know once 2nd home owners put their 2nd homes on the market. I don't believe 3X will deter many. Let's see, if you do apply 3X.
- All properties should pay full council tax.

- Anyone whom has a second Home can afford the Premium in Council Tax.
- At least 300%..
- Class 5 should be exempt from additional taxation
- Don't understand what the tipping point is for people to decide to give up second homes.
- Each property should pay Council in relation to their banding.
- For the sake of the environment we should not be building new homes but using the housing stock that currently exists. Not dealing with this issue just pushes more problems for our children and the environment in the future. Discouraging second homes would also help those running holiday cottages, hotels and B&Bs to make a living rather than selfishly wanting a property just for occasional personal use. I do think holiday let's should have higher rateable value too, but that's not the question I suppose.
- Government see landlords & property owners as an easy target - you are already driving people out of the sector and will be spending many multiples of your current expenditure on temporary accommodation. When the chickens come home to roost, you will be asking for help not penalising the sector.
- Here I am talking about true rarely used second homes NOT holiday rentals! However care should be taken. If the second home was fully occupied all year there would be a call on the county to supply health care, roads, school places , refuse collections and many other services. An under used property causes little expense to the county!
- Higher premiums should have a higher impact
- Holiday homes in some areas are too many and this restricts homes available for locals.
- Homes for local residents.
- I am already paying what amounts to a 33% premium on my second home because I am not eligible for the sole occupancy discount. My resources are not limitless so hope that the council will not see this as an opportunity to levy a huge increase. If an increase is agreed I think it is appropriate to limit it to 25%.
- I am now a pensioner and already pay 100% council tax, but do not use services such as waste collection & education for much of the calendar year, so feel that a premium on the tax would be unfair and a disincentive to people who have had to live elsewhere for their working lives from choosing Monmouthshire as a second home destination in favour of other areas across the border in England.
- I believe it is only fair to charge double for those with second homes - these could be left largely unoccupied for most of the year.
- I do not agree with this but any premium should be small and sustainable, council tax is already too high relative to service provision and set to rise again this year.
- I don't think 300% is high enough, but it's as high as I can go.
- I have already explained my rational further up in this questionnaire.
- I would hope that having to pay heavily would encourage owners to sell their property and just rent when they go on holiday.
- If a levy in excess of 100% was ever brought in I would sell up and never visit the area again. We have contributed a lot to the economy of the area and feel that Monmouthshire's economy would suffer. Having a second home is not the same as an empty property.
- If people can afford two home they can afford the tax.
- If the owner can afford a second home then they should contribute more to the community. This value seems fair for the actual residents.
- If they can afford a second home in Monmouthshire then I would suggest they are very wealthy indeed. We need to put a stop to this and I would even argue for a cap on the number of people from outside the county buying second homes per year. This should be a small number to maximise our housing stock and reduce council need for emergency housing.
- If they can afford two homes then they should be able to afford the premium set

- If you can afford to own two (or more) homes, you can afford to pay a higher rate of council tax for the privilege
- If you can afford to take a second home you should help fund social housing.
- If you could charge 400% I would be happy with that. Local communities deserve affordable and available housing.
- It may be that premiums should vary in different parts of Monmouthshire
- It needs to be prohibitively expensive but it also needs to be applied with consideration and not with a broad brush.
- It would be useful to have more figures.
- Leave it alone, the council should lead by example . The council have plenty of vacant under maintained and un used buildings. The estate needs managing properly to extract its full potential.
- Local people have to move to remoter areas in order to afford a home
- Many second home owners have little understanding, and even less concern for, the social and cultural changes they cause to a rural area. The impacts on house prices for our local young people trying to buy a home has been heart breaking. Hopefully many of these owners, and future prospectors, will go elsewhere for a property 'bargain' if a proper premium is adopted.
- Many second homes will presumably bring in tourist revenue to the area and can be considered to have a net benefit to the county.
- Need to balance housing pressure with the economic benefits of tourism
- No premium
- Obviously N/A is not needed because the statement is only answer this question if....
- Our own children can't afford to get on the ladder locally. It's unfair.
- Owners will turn to the rental market (e.g. air bnb) and pay zero council tax (business rates)as they will fulfil the minimum required letting to qualify.
This will bring in less council tax and cause potential disruption to neighbourhoods.

This area of Monmouthshire (Pwllmeyric)is not a holiday destination and the second homes are a relatively low proportion of the total.

Premiums could be charged on second homes in holiday hot spots to try and level out and sustain the communities.

- Perhaps hike the premium gradually?
- Second home owners are less likely to place high demands on council services but should contribute more than residential owners. They generally bring friends and family to the area and to some extent support the local economy.
- Second homes as holiday lets, provide a good profit for their owners.
- Second homes should contribute to the local economy.
- Should just pay the same as others in area.
- Should not apply to areas of Monmouthshire which are not popular for second homes
- Some categories of second homes should attract a charge - but job related homes never should. The definition for class 7 is not broad enough.
- Somewhere between 50% and 100% would seem right. More than 100% seems punitive, sends a signal that tourism and non residents are unwelcome and will disincentivise investment and tourism. Up to 100% can be justified as a POSITIVE thing that second home owners can do to help the local communities by making a significant extra contribution.
- Start at 2000% and review it later.
- stop holiday homes help the people of Monmouthshire

- The premium should be high.
- There needs to be a significant impact/premium for owning a second home.
- These people who own second homes must be so well off, I can hardly manage bills for one property with out getting into debt.
- They can afford it
- This would assist with paying for amenities and services, without which would people come here for holidays.
- This would ensure that the owners really wanted the property or hasten its return to the market.
- Those buying second homes obviously have excess monies and it will take the maximum premium to discourage them.
- Unknown - to be assessed - determined by each case/ area
- Will act as a disincentive to second home buyers.
- With high levels of homelessness and low levels of house-building re lack of infrastructure to cope with more housing, it's important that all available housing is used to alleviate the social ills for local people as a priority
- Yes, but Covid has left some of us unable to finish a renovation as we were banned from entering Wales for nearly 18 months. So we cannot inhabit the property with no bathroom or kitchen which we want to do and full time. We would like the council to provide more council tax relief until a property is habitable.
- Yes, providing that the money raised is used for suitable purposes.
- CLA believe that people who own a second home in Wales should contribute to the local area that they have purchased a property in. However, this should not impact true holiday accommodation businesses, which rural communities rely on so heavily. Furthermore, the percentage charged should be reviewed on a 3 year basis to allow the rate to be altered to accommodate trend changes to advantage the area and its permanent residents.
- I believe a premium should be added but I am not clear what this might mean in practice and so do not feel able to give an opinion on how much it should be.
- I do have a vested interest. For many years I have owned a small flat in Abergavenny, which I visit frequently. My reasons for doing so are (1) eventually to move to it, and (2) not to be a burden on my family, all of whom live in the vicinity, when I do move. I grew up in the area and am now in my seventies. I also always patronise the local shops for whatever I need, which must contribute to the local economy .
- I think it would be reasonable to develop categories depending on the type of occupation and contribution to the local community.
- Initially I would double the CT on SH but 300% may be needed ultimately.
- Rates are supposed to cover the costs of facilities used/available to householders - not as an easy way to gain more money.
- The people staying in the homes will be spending money and enjoying activities locally so having a positive effect. The homes might not be suitable for permanent residence if they are isolated etc. If the premium is too high , they could become unaffordable to maintain.
- Why penalise a person contributing to the local economy.

- You already charge a full council tax on empty properties that exert little or no cost to the council (road use, refuse collections and other services); it seems this additional charge is largely to punish.
- It doesn't seem unreasonable to pay a premium but not an onerous one.
The list of exemptions should be reviewed as there are a number of reasons why properties might be classed as second homes..
The second home properties are already contributing via council tax to services that are not used e.g. waste. If they were occupied properties the costs to the council would rise.
- premium should relate to the value of the second home - similar to the current rateable bandings
- ZERO, why should you rip-off hard working, hard saving individuals. We are OAP's and can't afford additional premiums, especially when we took on the property to allow us to give periodic childcare to our grandchildren

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Appendix Four: Consultation responses – Long Term Empty properties

Yes to premium:

- A lot of properties are just left to go to ruin and I presume no council tax is payable as they are not occupied.
- A number of houses in our village have been empty for several years , and we are seeing young families who are brought up in the village yet can't stay in the village and forced out.
- A year isn't a 'long' time. Two years is. Renovating from derelict listed property certainly takes a lots of time, it also takes a lot of money, less money perhaps if you take more time and do it yourself.....
- Absolutely. There are a number of empty homes in Wyesham, which have been unoccupied for over 10 years. We have families desperate to stay in the area, but have limited options.
- Accommodation is in such short supply, empty homes should be discouraged
- All properties should be put to good use
- All properties should pay full council tax.
- All properties that are empty for more than 1 year should automatically be charged the Max rate that can be applied.
- An appropriate amount should be determined for each case.
- As well as a premium, owners should be made to keep properties to a minimum standard of repair and not allowed to let properties rot away.
- Class 3 should be exempt
- Clearly this will depend upon the circumstances and exceptions should be considered where significant refurbishments have been required or the property has been marketed and is just not being rented. If all efforts have been made the property should be exempt from a levy but if not then this would encourage sale or letting of empty properties.
- Council tax is based on property not persons and is for the provision of services to all households
- Definitely. The property owner should be doing everything in their power to bring that property back in to use. Too many properties on the high street, I know from experience look for extortionate rents and/or increase rents once they have a tenant, squeezing them out of business. Only by making a deterrent of the 3 X council tax for it being unoccupied, will make these landlords keen to look after their tenants, as opposed to seeing them as a easy way to generate money. I have run my own business, I am in favour of fair business. But not what I have seen with some of these property landlords.

- Do not think second homes should be allowed to be free of extra costs
Do not think second homes should be allowed in the first place
- Empty houses should be in use to house people that need them. It's a waste to have an empty house and there is no reason for it.
- Empty properties bring no economic or social benefit to the community and the council tax premium can start to make up for that to benefit the residents. This is assuming the exemptions laid out are retained
- Empty properties should be brought into full time use. Protects communities and make more housing available.
- Given the need to achieve a greater number of homes, penalising owners of unoccupied properties seems an obvious course.
- Homes are in short supply for young people. We must do all we can that homes are available to ensure people can stay in their locality.
- Homes can be empty for many reasons. There should be incentive not to leave homes empty, however emptiness due to renovation should be exempt from excess charges for a maximum period of 18 months providing the renovation is clear and evident, work is in progress and a reasonable statement of the work scheduled and the time to be taken has been made.
- Housing is desperately needed in the county and it seems an outrage that there are so many long-term empty properties which could house those without a home (for whatever reason).
- I am aware of several long term empty properties in and around Abergavenny. There appears to be no incentive to move these properties into occupancy. All properties should pay Council Tax.
- I am concerned over the lack of data when it comes to quantifying 'extremely large numbers of homeless' and the associated cost. You have quantified the number of long term empty properties and second homes but if there are thousands of homeless say and only 400 long term empty homes, it is not going to solve the issue is it?
- I feel that this premium should also applied to properties above a retail premises where multiple floors stand empty and in a poor state of repair. There are many examples of this on Monmouth High Street.
- I have a property adjacent to mine that has been empty for over 10 years. The garden is not maintained and causes me issues as I am supposed to talk about the evergreens according to the policy on this but I can't.
- I have answered yes, but I am assuming this is only for residential property, not business premises?
- I know of several empty three bedroom family homes in Usk. On investigation we discovered an empty house on Priory Gardens, unoccupied for thirteen years, where the owner was registered with the doctor in Usk despite living in Newport. There are other buildings such as The Royal Hotel Usk which remains closed for ten years and cannot be sold because of a family dispute.

This is an ongoing problem and with the crisis in housing is totally unnecessary and both selfish and uncaring by the owners.

- I share the Council's concern over homelessness and see the force and value of this proposal.
- I think it is important that owners of empty properties should think very hard about maintaining that emptiness
- I think it's appropriate and measured to provide an encouragement for long-term empty property to be returned to use. This will help to encourage home owners to return the property to effective use and for occupants to contribute to the local economy.
- I would like to see a levy on second home owners when permanent housing stock is used as a holiday home or kept empty for months at a time. I would exclude caravans, one-bed cabins and such like, glamping pods, yurts etc - those building that do not have foundations or could be considered moveable.
- If a property has been empty for a year or more then one has to question why? Perhaps the Council should encourage the owner to work with them to restore the property to a habitable state so that the Council can use the housing stock for housing people in need. If this was agreed then the property owner could be refunded the premium taxation but, the incentive for cooperating with the Council must be that the housing stock is 'given' over to the Council to use for a period of time. A win, win.
- If a property is empty long term then it could fall into disrepair and benefit no one
- If long term is defined as 1 year that is a reasonable amount of time to refurbish the property. There would need to be exemptions for demonstrable specific circumstances e.g. legal, planning or building delays.
- If you are affluent to afford additional housing then yes,
- In these days of Housing shortages, it is nothing short of criminal neglect to have properties left empty on a long term basis, clearly the owners can afford to do so, therefore need some incentive to get this Housing stock back on the open market.
- It could help with housing for local people
- It is a concern that these properties haven't been targeted before. In the current economic climate and housing crisis, these properties are a disgrace to our county.
- It is important that we utilise such properties to support the vulnerable
- It is right to encourage occupancy of empty homes.
- It makes no sense, morally or economically, for homes to stand empty while there are people who, for whatever reason, find themselves homeless.
- It seems to me to be a "no-brainer" to try to reduce the number of empty properties when there are people without homes or forced to remain in the parental home.
- it would help the council with regard to the budget impact as a result of the cost of living crisis
- It's a disgrace that properties can be left empty and left to the elements until they basically are so run down they have to be demolished . When I lived in rogiyet from 2012 a property in Crossway was empty and degrading as well as the rogiett Hotel in station Road...still to this day no one living or using the property so this tax would make profiteers think twice about keeping empty properties. It's a money making enterprise .it spoils communities and is an ugly eyesore
- Leaving homes empty long-term when young local families cannot find somewhere to live is unbelievably selfish
- Long term empty is an issue, but the council should explore why this is the case. For example, there could be an on going court case about sales or ownership. It could be that the occupant has had to move away to get a job and is struggling to sell.
- Long term empty properties should be charged a high premium to encourage selling on / letting to homeless charities.
- Long term empty properties should be discouraged.

- Long term empty properties that are not carrying out the business that they are designated for.
- Long term should apply to properties empty for six month or more.
- Mae anheddau gwag dim ond yn cronni gwerth tra'n cyfrannu dim i'r gymdeithas leol. (Empty dwellings only accrue value while contributing nothing to the local society).
- make it punitive to reduce the number of uninhabited dwellings and to reduce the proliferation of holiday homes
- Many people are waiting for a home, be what that may, a roof over their head!
- My children both at home still, because they cannot afford to buy in the town they were born in. If people can afford to own 2 homes they should be able to afford to pay council tax on them both.
- my neighbourhood has almost 30% 2nd homes to the detriment of the community
- My only concern is the reason for the property being empty and if charging more council tax will prevent owners from carrying out repairs. Conversely increases in council tax may encourage owners to carry out repairs and get property ready to rent out.
- On properties that are just left unoccupied due to dispute or disrepair. Not on occupied rentals, holiday lets and second homes.
- Once they have been empty for a year (or so), then it seems reasonable to charge a premium to encourage people to do something with them.
- Only if there is no valid reason for the property being empty.
- Our towns and villages would thrive with less empty properties within them
- Owners of second properties in Monmouthshire have driven up prices, so now youngsters are unable to purchase their first home in the county. I have two daughters, one now is forced to live at home due to the high rents and house prices. It just seems now the rich are getting poorer and the poor are getting poorer.
- People should not be able to hoard homes, they need people in them.
- Several of the empty buildings in the county are structurally unsound and pose a danger to the public. I live next to one such building which the owner refuses to make safe, despite the fact it overhangs the main high street, the garden is full of rats and completely overgrown and the electrics are exposed to the rain and are dangerous to the residents next door. There have previously been pigeons inside and there is moss growing inside. Letting these buildings fall into this level of disrepair is unacceptable, especially as the high street is currently declining to the point where most buildings are becoming too far gone to even consider repairing and becoming habitable or viable for commercial use. It is also unacceptable that the people who own some of these empty buildings that have been allowed to fall into such disrepair, and that the owners are allowed to maintain possession of these buildings.
- Suggested extension of exemption for homes that are for sale for over a year provided that evidence has been supplied that every effort is being made to sell the property (including reductions in price etc) and that where sales have fallen through it is of no fault of the seller. And that this is limited to a 2nd year extension.
- The council has a duty to its residents / citizens first - not to enable influx of second home buyers who then create a market in second homes and push up prices to make properties less affordable for people already living here
- The Council should use all and every power at its disposal to bring long term empty properties into use, including offering owners the opportunity to rent them through the Council
- The county is in desperate need of properties to house the homeless, if people cannot afford to make the property habitable they need to consider whether it would be better if they sold it.
- The housing crises can only be abated by making more homes available. There is as shortage of building land and increasing pressures caused by new housing on local

infrastructure. Under used property add the to problem and a premium on these would contribute to tackling the problem that they cause.

- The levels of homelessness in the County are high. Council funds are scarce and have to be shared out wisely. As a society, we have to all think differently about tackling the housing crisis. Many long term empty property owners may not realise that an empty house contributes to a housing problem. Introducing a premium could make them think and manage the property more appropriately.
- The need for local people to purchase to stay in their community
- The owners need to do up properties to rent out to families, the housing crisis will never get any better.
- The owners should be contacted by MCC to establish why the property is empty. Assistance could be provided to help advertise the property or help with repairs, if required. Owners unwilling to liaise with MCC should have the premium imposed on them.
- The potential loophole of substantially furnished needs to be closed so that it isn't possible for the owner to put crappy furniture in rooms in order to claim that it fits the criteria.

Is it possible to investigate the option to compulsory purchase any long term empty property?

- There are exemptions for certain circumstances such as longer term hospital or residential care. As long as common sense is applied to the handful of cases where there is a genuine reason for the property being empty (such as owner missing but not declared dead) I see no reason for it.
- there are loads of empty homes just used for holidays which then effects money spent in local businesses, schools etc. there are young families, homeless, etc looking and desperate for homes that cant get homes as they are being bought up quickly for holidays homes. Monmouthshire is in need of a change i think its a brilliant idea.
- There are too many empty properties in the areas of Rogiet and Caldicot that could be used to ease homelessness.
- There are too many empty properties owned by people who seem in no rush to develop or sell. Need to ensure all buildings are used.
- There is a housing shortage in the county and we (society) should be taking every measure possible to address this.
- There is a shortage of homes for people, if people can leave properties empty they must be living somewhere else
- There is an urgent need of long term residential accommodation , particularly for young people wanting to work in Monmouthshire. As there are already, a considerable number of dwellings which are left vacant year after year. We are losing these dwellings to long term occupation. In an effort to address the problem we are also losing large swathes of green field sites for new build some of which could be reduced by full occupation of existing homes.
- There is no excuse to leave a property empty in the current climate. People are desperate for homes. An empty property deteriorates and attracts vandalism
- There is no reason why a property cannot be in use
- There needs to be a large incentive to ensure empty properties are occupied without delay, in view of the accommodation shortage.
- There needs to be this 'incentive' to make some people free up empty dwellings to help thy housing crisis. There's been one such empty property for over 10 years in our road!
- There's a housing shortage already. My husband and I both have good, well paid jobs in the local area (Caldicot), yet we can't afford to buy a home in Monmouthshire.
- these properties effectively reduce the available stock of housing and push up the price of what accommodation is available. At the very least, owners should contribute to the social welfare of Monmouthshire residents whom their selfishness is affecting

- They had this where I loved previously and it helped reduce empty homes
- They should be available for housing.
- This is an excellent idea. It won't be popular with some people but there are a number of properties in my local area that have been derelict/empty for years and this housing could be put to good use. As a county we have to do everything we can to tackle problems of homelessness and this is probably the only way left for the council to address it.
- This is an issue that may be appropriate in extreme cases in urban areas where there are the right services and facilities for people who need accommodation but the high levels proposed should be only in very exceptional cases, and not as a blanket penalty.

In contrast to urban properties, Rural properties have little in the way of employment, no transport nor sufficient facilities, and as such they are completely unsuitable to solve home shortages and should be treated completely differently.

Also the one year exemption for repairs to properties is completely unrealistic. Older properties need several years to bring them up to modern standards with proper utility services, heating and insulation etc.

- This is essential to protect local communities. We have visited West Wales for holidays twice last summer and have been shocked at how the places we once knew are dead with no local communities left
- This will be an incentive for owners to utilise the buildings to benefit the county
- This would force owners of empty properties to do them up and rent them out or sell them.
- This would help bring more, much-needed homes, back into use and raise (again, much-needed) revenue for the council.
- To make owners of empty properties make a fair contribution to the local community.
- too many long term empty properties that are an eyesore just being held onto by greedy landlords protecting their 'investments'
- We have a housing crisis and it needs to be addressed. Premium should maybe scale up if empty longer than a year.
- When accommodation is in such short supply, it's morally reprehensible to own a property which isn't being lived in full time
- While there is a significant amount of homelessness and while local authorities are starved of resources for providing enough affordable accommodation there must be a deterrent to keeping existing dwellings empty. A secondary benefit would be the increase in resources to help the homeless.
- With housing costs (building, buying and maintaining) and increased homelessness pressures, for property to sit empty seems so wasteful and to have more than one property a luxury. If owners choose to continue to do this then applying a higher charge to better support the challenges of homelessness, vulnerable people and communities where the property is feels fair.
- With so much homelessness and not enough social housing, please charge those who deliberately keep properties unused. However, there are two further exemptions I would like to add, or at least a right of appeal.
 1. I recently had a property on the market for four years while seven sales fell through. I was paying full rate Council Tax throughout and it nearly bankrupted me, through no fault of my own - offers fell through because of Brexit, Covid, inability to get a mortgage, etc etc - I really tried my utmost to sell this property and it was punitive enough to have to pay full rate Council Tax. Maybe there should be a right of appeal on a premium?
 2. Some friends have a property they are trying to convert to liveable accommodation but have been unable to proceed because they are held up by the MCC Planning

Department who, quite rightly, are being very fussy about the conversion of a very old barn. A right of appeal on a premium would seem appropriate.

- Yes as it should act as an incentive to occupy the property or sell it.
- Yes, as is relevant to second homes as a luxury to living standards of the owners. However, discretion is needed for a range of reasons for absence from property when it is a persons sole residence. Such persons might have very low financial resources. I am one such person who must retain ownership of my own home , but on a small pension, because in my case I am disabled and long term sick , and my carer resides in another nearby country , who can not yet leave his very elderly mother, who was in a care home there. . This arrangement is finite. Rather than list other examples of possible exemptions, I state that absolutely, there are many people who through force of circumstances, are unable to live in their primary property for unspecified periods of time. Limiting the exemption to one year .. can be unrealistic.
- Yes, providing that the money raised is used for suitable purposes.
- young families from Monmouthshire need to have fair playing field to purchase properties its all being given away to cash buyers who are rich from other places
- Empty properties don't contribute to the community or local businesses and can bring down the look of an area if not maintained.
- Talk to the owner of the property to find out why it is "long term empty"
- There is no incentive to sell or let empty properties and this may incentivise the sale or let by the owners.
- To encourage occupation, charging an empty property premium is an encouraging exercise, however, we understand that there is an array of varying factors that require consideration for extended timeframes where properties are left empty. There is a need for more flexibility for refurbishment to properties that are empty, especially with the cost-of-living crisis.
- You need to establish WHY the property is empty. if it is for no good reason, the owner should be given a limited time to do something about it, otherwise a penalty will be imposed. Good properties which someone could buy or live in should be occupied.
- definition of a long term empty property should relate to a dwelling that is completely separate from the land containing the main / first home
- Long term empty homes are of no benefit to the community or of any enjoyment to the owner. It would be however useful to determine the reason for these properties being long term empty. Disputed Wills etc should not be penalised.
- Only if that the property is not being maintained or is causing detriment to the local residents and/or environment
- Where possible, empty properties should be occupied

No to premium:

- A charge would reduce the availability of improved accommodation in the county
- Annex's which under the council's definition could be termed 2nd homes, or long term empty properties generally form part of the main house (with a single address for the whole) and therefore cannot be sold separately. This point is generally laid down and enforced by the council's own planning rules and therefore annex to a main house and used by the family should not be subject to the proposed premium.
- As full Council Tax is already being paid but no services are being provided (which must be the case if the properties are empty) then the owners are already contributing significantly more towards the provision of Council services than others. Also, if an additional charge is levied that is as likely to cause the owners to render them uninhabitable as it is to make them rent or sell the property. It is certainly what I would

do, which would mean the Council will receive less money not more.

In my case the property in question is a one bedroom flat above my garage. It was built because the previous owner had a daughter who required 24/7 care and the carers required somewhere to take their breaks. It was not intended to be for permanent occupation and is not suitable for it. It is on the same plot of land as my house and within 10 feet of it. In no sense is it a property I would consider letting to others or that I could ever sell. Accordingly, rather than pay even more Council Tax (which I wouldn't be able to afford) I would just remove the kitchen and bathroom and just use the building for its primary purpose, which is as a garage.

- Because you are already charging 100% council tax on the empty property, the owner is still paying the council tax fully so charging a premium especially up to 300% is very unfair.
- Being charged 100% of council tax currently is sufficient to discourage long-term vacancy without good reason (for residential properties).
- Could be empty due to flood, damage etc
- Council tax is meant to pay for services used, not for Political purposes. Empty buildings do not use services
- Council tax should not be used as a penalty in some kind of class war. There should be other measures available to deal with unoccupied properties.
- Each property, given that there are only 400, should be treated individually. I suspect many of these are uninhabitable/need considerable work to bring them up to acceptable living standards. Charging more Council Tax will potentially make this less likely. If a property is empty it is not using any services for which Council Tax is charged. More positive schemes should be used to encourage long term empty property's homeowners to bring properties back to use.
- Empty houses don't use services so they're already paying over the odds.
- Greedy Council. Thin end of the wedge.
- How about helping landlords instead of penalising them? Rent Smart Wales is a disaster and landlords in Wales are selling because of it. If you're not careful you'll have no rental properties, housing market crash and more homeless people.
- I do not believe it is fair to further tax individuals (who are likely already high tax payer) to make up for poor management of public finances by both successive governments and local councils. Effective long term strategies need to be developed rather than additional tax burdens.
- I think when a relative has passed away or is in a care home it would be unfair to charge the family as a result.
- If a property is empty then they aren't using any services provided by the council, as such it should be more likely that a re-bate should be provided not charging a premium, that would seem fairer. You should look at charging more for households with more people in the property, that would seem fairer.
- If any further council tax is added to a 2nd home owner, I fear it will deter people from buying properties, and those who already have a 2nd property selling up. And as much as people are upset about 2nd home owners, they provide extra revenue by letting out their properties. I understand local people are upset as they are no longer able to buy their own county. If the council decide to go ahead with their plans, I think the lowest amount should be charged.

The other alternative is to say 2nd home owners can only rent out their properties to locals. I know 2nd home owners have 2nd properties so they can rent out in the summer to gain revenue for themselves.

I fear if we keep bashing the English, we will drive anyone from buying in Wales, thus losing revenue from those visiting.

I absolutely love Wales and moved here in December 2019 as my mother in law was ill then, sadly passing away in 2020 leaving us her house. We sold our house in London, in order we could devote all our time at our home in Wales as we could not afford to run both properties. My mother in law was born in Raglan and father in law in Mertha Tydfil so we have connections in Wales.

- If the owner of an inherited property is undertaking repair and renovation of that property prior to occupancy and that work has to be done over a long period of time then I feel it inappropriate to charge a premium. Those persons are not depriving others of a home and should not be penalised for being fortunate enough to have had family that worked hard to provide for their families. An increase in premiums would possibly force an undesirable sale.
- If there is an extra charge ,the full exemption should remain in place for the whole time when the property is on the market as some properties are difficult to sell.
- If they don't use the full council services why should they pay more money
- If you already collect 100% charge from them (noting the owner may seldom use the local service) where is the justification to charge more - aside from an assumption that the owner can actually pay more
- If you want to resolve the availability of homes for rent, fix the tax system which punishes landlords (section 24, etc.)
- In breach of article 8 of the Human rights Act. A disproportionate interference with a right to property. Also article 1 of part 2 of the first protocol is engaged.
- In my case the property shares a drive with my main house and is used as an annex. I have no problem with paying the normal tax although the property does not use a lot of the council services.
It seems odd that if I moved in as a single occupant I would get a discount in spite of increased use of council services.
- In this current economic climate a lot of long term empty properties just wouldn't sell.
- It is not as simple as this . There are many issues at play here. Listed building non compliance with modern standards (epc rated mainly). People needing long term hospitalisation and possibly suffering from mental health issues. After all 100% charge for an empty property is good value compared to its impact on resources . This seems to be bullying a minority. Far better to engage with the owners for a solution. Heritage officers charging for pre application advice is an example . In these days of top heavy on the beaurocracey means there is less money for fabric on the ground. Give money to tradesman to get the job done not on creating reams of fine reading material. That's the way to get things done.
- It is often not the fault of the building owner that the property is empty. For example, you may want to complete works to make the property habitable, but money issues means this cannot happen.
- It is unjust and as long as the council is receiving council tax owners should not pay a premium. It is not as if any council services are even being used.
- it is up to the owner of the property how long the property stays empty i had to pay full council tax and used no facilities
- It seems very unfair that an unoccupied property should incur a higher charge when the services council tax pay for aren't being used. Some of these properties might be in the process of a renovation before being sold or let. Having to pay a higher council tax will only delay the renovation as money that could be spent on building materials will have to be used to pay the higher council tax. This means that it will take longer before the people in need of a home are able to move into the property on a buy or let basis.
- It will decrease tourism

- It's just a tax grab. It won't make houses any cheaper or affordable. What you need is a long term housing strategy to build affordable homes.
- Long term empty properties are already charged council tax at 100%, whereas previously they had a discount. Council tax is supposed to be a tax to pay for services residents use. If a property is empty then no services are being used, so any tax on empty properties at whatever % is a penalty and not in the spirit of what council tax is supposed to be for. Most empty properties are uninhabitable anyway and by charging up to 300% premium the owner will have less money in which to renovate the property, so make it more unlikely for the property to be brought back to a liveable standard. If the council or Welsh Government want to bring properties back into habitable state then they should offer to buy those properties at full market value before charging a penalty via council tax
- Long term empty properties should be discouraged and should be charged at the full rate without any discounts in order to encourage some form of occupation, but there doesn't need to be a premium.
- Maybe the council should ask. The reason why the property is empty before charging any council tax. My property is empty for a reason which is beyond my control.
- No information has been provided on the scale of accommodation that is empty. The reasons for the uninhabited buildings can be very varied and challenging.
- Not all empty properties are empty due to someone not utilising that space, perhaps its something that they hope to let but financially are not able to do as the property has structural or maintenance work that needs to be completed to make it safe. Charging an individual on an empty property would only increase financial hardship.
- Not all empty properties are suitable to be used for rental
- Not for the first year
- People are already struggling to pay bills. If the property is not being used there are additional services required that are supplied by council so I do not see any reason to charge a premium.
- Planning law often slows down proposals to re-develop properties. If applied, the limit should be 3 years not 1
- Private ownership of property is none of the council's business. People are already paying council tax for these properties but are not using the services provided by the council so the council already has a net gain.
- Property not consuming council services
- Second properties already paying 100 % of Council Tax despite using only a tiny fraction of the services paid for. E.g. Refuse Collection !!
- Seems to be grossly unfair and I'll thought out legislation. It doesn't take account of peoples ability to pay or their personal circumstances and from what I understand could be applied to buildings which are little more than a hut. I don't think people will object to you using a carrot to bring these properties online, but you seem to be using a stick and a big one at that. You need to re look at the proposal and come back with far more exemptions.
- The owners are already paying full rate and not using any local services.
- The property is empty for a reason this would add extra pressure to the owner.
- The wait to get builders to do any work at a reasonable price has stopped me from getting work done that I wanted. I don't think I should be penalised for that
- There are many and complex reasons why a property would be classified as long term empty. It is unlikely that many are sitting empty as assets of overseas investors for long term gains. It is equally unlikely that these properties would provide suitable stock for communities in need.
- They are already paying full council tax without using any of the services. It is money grabbing and clearly based on an objection to people who have worked hard to be

able to afford a second home. I am rather disturbed that the council is seriously considering this.

- They may be empty for a good reason not in your criteria, and if already paying 100% council tax I think that is fair.
- They should be reduced as unoccupied
- This should be considered on an individual basis. Asking the question of why the property is currently empty, would be a good start.....
- This would be too arbitrary an approach and there is no way of ensuring it could be applied fairly.
- Those more fortunate should not be penalised why not offer an incentive to those home owners to use the accommodation instead
- Unfair - especially as the properties probably aren't fully utilising the council services but are paying full council tax.
- Usually there are circumstances why the property is empty
- Very unfair to people trying to sell their property (e.g. after a bereavement). My late fathers house has been on the market for a year . We already have to pay 100% of the premium, and do not get a discount like single people
- We are currently renovating a property which we purchased in July 2021. As soon as it is complete (later this year) we will sell our current property and move in to the new home. We don't intend to own 2 homes and the property being renovated is currently not fit to live in - no windows, doors, heating, lighting, plumbing etc, so I don't think a higher tax should be charged in this instance.
- We don't need more more Taxes!
- Why is it appropriate for owners of long term empty properties to pay a premium when if the house is empty then the council taxes resources are minimal so why pay a premium when council tax rates are already high.
- You are not servicing the property by providing refuse collections or other services so what are they paying for exactly?
- Your question is ridiculous, it is a very broad question to reduce the answer to yes or no.
My particular concern is that after someone dies and the family is left with the property, 6 months is far too short an amount of time, before the premium is charged. Has anyone had the simplest of estates resolved and a property sold in 6 months, two years would be more reasonable.
- For properties that are actively on the market to be sold there should be no charges made. It's simple to get confirmation from estate agents and or websites. The prospective purchasers of my home dropped out just weeks before the anticipated sale and so the property had to go back on the market.
- I have been going to Llandogo for over 40 years as a fisherman and spend several days a year there. As I'm now retired I wanted to spend more time in the area and consulted with the locals I know as to whether they thought it appropriate for me to buy a second home as I didn't want to deprive anybody locally. The response I got was that I contribute as much to the local community/economy as most locals and it was entirely appropriate. When I'm not at the property, I offer it for Airbnb which brings in additional revenue to the local area both for the cleaners and local tourist attractions. If I were to be charged a premium it wouldn't be a viable proposition as I already have to pay nearly £2000 insurance annually to cover Airbnb.
- I understand the reasoning for considering this but there are often a range of complex reasons why a property is empty in the short to medium term. My mother is in a care home and owns 50% of the house I live in at Risca. I am 64 this year and classed as vulnerable by Torfaen CBC where my mother has been in care for four years she is

93. As it is my main home Torfaen will not take it into account when considering mothers assets for care costs. By living here in Risca I protect her but means I have been unable to move to the property near Abergavenny which has remained empty being a former holiday let. So I cannot claim it as my main residence. I do not want to sell or rent out that property as I have done that in the past and find it stressful and increasingly complex. Every owner will have individual issues some may be in various ownership where they cannot agree what to do. I think increasing the CT is too simplistic a solution though understand the reasoning. My property used to sleep 16 as a holiday let and would not be appropriate for a homeless family as it is also very rural which is another complexity in the debate and creates a limited market for renting.

- It is clearly unfair on principle to charge people extra tax when they use less council services. Presumably most empty properties are not habitable. If the intent is to bring an empty property on to the market you should look to work with the property owner to do so rather than threaten them with further charges.

- **OBJECTIONS TO MONMOUTHSHIRE PROPOSAL TO LEVY PUNITIVE RATES ON DWELLINGS VACANT FOR MORE THAN 12 MONTHS**

I wish to object to the public survey from Monmouthshire Council asking if they should levy punitive rates on Empty Dwellings. This type of survey simply begs an up vote from those that are sadly experiencing difficulty in finding domestic accommodation whilst at the same time providing no background information on the subject whatsoever.

What they first need to answer before launching a survey like this is 'Why would any owner (including housing associations) of an empty dwelling that could bring thousands of pounds of income a year (and incidentally still has to pay full rates), deliberately leave them empty?'

They should know that a certain background percentage of dwellings empty for more than a year has always existed and if you exclude those stuck in sales chains and legal or probate difficulties, the percentage is miniscule and tends to be fairly stable. Most of the rest are either derelict, awaiting or undergoing significant refurbishment or demolition, or cannot be occupied legally due to health and safety issues. Some are simply unviable to refurbish and others are in places that no one wants to live. Recent minimum thermal acoustic and fire liability requirements in older stocks particularly, add to the pile. It is stated that the objective of levying punitive rates is to provide an incentive for encouraging occupation but wielding a stick is most unlikely to change many of these situations in a significant way and could in fact make the issue worse. Such a levy also has the prospect of being easily avoided, so why even consider it. Monmouthshire Council (however justified) is refusing to let significant housing schemes go ahead until the drains are fixed and are therefore themselves directly responsible for a shortage of housing stock. Are they proposing to levy punitive rates on themselves for doing so and on anyone with planning permission but that is not getting on with building?

I think the answer lies in first trying to understand why each property is empty, offering to fast track any regulation or planning issues and providing grants where it could be of help to get the most likely of these properties back into the market.

- Stop your ripping people off, the council tax charges are too high as it is
- The property is used to enable my disabled wife to get away from the pressures of "town" life, which helps her to cope with her illness. The property is well maintained

and promotes the beauty of the county. We are both old age pensioners and would find this financial increase very difficult to cope with.

- There are a variety of reasons why a property may be empty. It may only be temporary for instance. It is appalling to suggest taking extra money off people without any knowledge of each individual situation.
- There are usually good reasons why a property is empty. In our case, we spent three years refurbishing a grade 2 listed property that had run into disrepair while in council ownership. We feel we have done Monmouth a service in restoring this beautiful building and helped out with a lack of supply for this type of property. The costs involved with having an empty building for this length of time are already significant, and adding further costs would dissuade people like me from doing it again. Our project has provided much needed work for the area, and is helping to keep Monmouth a beautiful market town where people want to go.
- They should not do any thing .
- Your definition of "empty properties" omits a significant use case, that of holiday let. The threshold for a property to be considered a holiday let (in terms of days per year occupied) is unrealistically high in many cases, and the premiums being proposed threaten the tourism sector, which is a significant industry within Monmouthshire.
- The Monmouthshire Council public consultation over whether to levy punitive rates on dwellings empty for more than twelve months and second homes contains several issues that cause me great concern. This can hardly be described as a fair consultation either when there is nowhere on the survey form to vote for less than a 25% increase (and it won't let you finish the page until you select one), or for suggestions that a longer period of time should elapse.

Apart from being unavailable for full time occupation, there is no similarity whatsoever between the two categories and it looks like many holiday cottages could also be dragged in as well and they are yet another category.

The question as to why owners (including housing associations) might leave properties empty for more than a year when they could bring in thousands of pounds and provide essential accommodation is never addressed and owners of empty property pay full rates anyway.

The fact is that a background percentage of empty dwellings always exists and is generally fairly stable. If you exclude those stuck in sales chains, legal, planning or probate difficulties (that would not get driven back into the market any faster), the percentage is miniscule. Most of the others are derelict, awaiting or undergoing refurbishment or waiting for a builder to start. Some properties are unviable and others are in locations where there is no demand. Twelve months is in any case a very short time to turn a wreck around but all of these problems are lumped into the statistics.

Whilst certain well recognised problems come with empty properties, to consider introducing something so punitive on top of normal rates should only be done if there is absolute proof it will work in any significant way and I see no proof that it will anywhere at the moment. The stated objective behind the proposal is 'to provide an incentive for encouraging occupation'. Sorry, but punitive rates are a punishment, not

an incentive. It is a proposal that is not only unlikely to reduce the normal background level of empty dwellings but could actually make the situation worse.

Punitive rates that fail to address the stated objectives will result in major legal challenges and avoidance measures, so why even consider it when councils already have legal tools to take over empty properties that they consider essential? It would appear that they simply don't want anything to do with it themselves because they already know why this background percentage is there and how intractable some of the problems are.

To levy punitive rates when refurbishing or rebuilding work is already underway or is being held up due to planning and regulation delays would also be exceptionally unfair. Additionally, if selling a property that has been empty for more than a year, buyers will be deterred because they will immediately be paying punitive rates and those rates may be way out of proportion to the value of the property. So there would have to be exemptions and then it all gets messy.

Monmouthshire Council itself is refusing to let significant housing schemes go ahead due to perceived drainage issues and are therefore themselves directly responsible for a shortage of housing stock. Are they proposing to levy punitive rates on themselves for doing so and on anyone with planning permission that is not getting on with building?

Holiday homes and holiday lets are also completely different issues. In many cases both can be beneficial and holiday lets in particular are critical for many small farmers and local economies. Many people actually restore empty dwellings for their holiday home or build entirely new properties that will all go back into mainstream occupation in due course, so how could it be fair or even desirable to levy punitive rates in every case?

With empty dwellings, the obvious course to pursue is to first find out why the properties are individually vacant and then to have a fast track system through any planning, regulation, grants or loans issues that could assist getting them back faster into the market.

I did some time ago raise the possibility of an investment organisation that could use the council's powers if needed to take over empty property and filter expertise and grants into getting housing stock onto the market and am willing to expand on the idea if required.

- All dwellings must pay Council tax
- I do not think this would be fair to anyone already paying council tax
- I have answered no to this question because I do not believe that a one year exemption from the empty property surcharge is sufficient for work to be completed on most property in need of refurbishment. The County Council's time scale of a one year is at odds with the time scale set out in the higher rates of Land Transaction Tax Wales (LTT).

An arbitrary one year exemption is too simplistic. A distinction needs to be made between houses having been empty for long periods and houses which have recently been purchased. Many newly purchased houses require considerable work to bring them up to modern standards. It is difficult to commission and instruct architects, obtain planning permission and seek builders to undertake modernisation work in less than one year. The likely timescale is recognised in the higher rate of LTT as a period

of 3 years grace is given to the buyer. Houses which require less work will automatically be returned to use sooner than a year because it is financially sensible to do so.

For recently purchased properties Monmouthshire County Council should align their time scale with those of the LTT which recognises that alterations can take up to 3 years. Following a 3 year period the County Council could consider introducing an empty property surcharge on a sliding scale which could increase every year, so encouraging work to be completed. This would remove any sudden cliff edge.

Also it must be remembered that empty properties do not use many of the County Council services like, refuse collection, education and social services, and therefore, the County Councils already benefit considerably from the present system.

- I have been contacted about this consultation in connections with my parents family home in the County which is currently unoccupied since my late Mother's death. The property was my parents sole home in their later years. Priory to that it was my grandparents sole home. It has been in the family since the 1940's.
I am currently starting the process of renovating the property with the intention of eventually moving there from my present home in Blaenau Gwent.
I am paying full Council Tax on the property whilst causing little or no drain on Council resources or services. My wife and I are retired with limited income and any increase in the already substantial Council Tax is unjustified and unaffordable, particularly in the present economic situation. It is our intention to relocate to the property and to dispose of our present home.
- I have received a letter from you saying that a house I own in Monmouthshire is regarded by Monmouthshire County Council as a second home. Whilst my house does fall within your definition of a second home, I did not purchase it, nor do I use it as a second home (I live in Powys). I inherited it when my father died. Initially I considered living there, but have recently decided it is a bit too remote. I am running a business which takes up most of my time, especially since the pandemic, and I have very little time to sort out the house which has a lot of things in it. I think it would be very unfair if you were to put a premium on the council tax I am already paying. I want to sell my business and retire, but the current economic climate makes this difficult. If you were to go ahead and add a premium to the council tax, this would push me to the brink in this economic crisis. I sincerely hope you do not go ahead with this.
- If the premiums are due to be paid from 1st April, it doesn't allow much lead in time for an owner to prepare for an increase in prices - in the very least it should be increased gradually over a number of years. A huge premium starting in April, in the current climate could send people into poverty.

What about the current cost of living crisis? Council tax prices are increasing for everyone, so is this the right time to be doing this? Potentially this could have a significant impact on families lives and should be very carefully considered.

Owning a second home or long term empty property doesn't mean the owners can afford to pay premiums, it could be that its been in a Welsh family for decades/generations. If the premiums are high, the owners could be forced into selling the property quickly, which may mean accepting a lower price for a quick sale, allowing for rich property developers to come in and renovate and make a profit. Is this something that the Council wants to support?

- The property has been long term empty as currently undergoing refurbishment. Taken a lot longer than anticipated due to the pandemic curtailing works. Getting labour to complete the works. Continuous problems with the boiler/heating system and getting the labour. External works with tree management and fencing still needing to be

done. Would prefer not to have to pay the full 100% Council Tax while the property cannot be lived in and certainly don't want this charge to be increased.

- The proposed premium is indiscriminate in its application. Properties are usually long term empty for a reason. They may not be in a suitable location or condition for someone else to wish to purchase or occupy.
- There are a multitude of reasons why a property deemed as long term empty may continue to be empty. In my particular case it is a lack of funding for many reasons that include personal ongoing expenditure on education 5 children through university, significant loss of self employment earnings due to the pandemic and a reluctance from banks to finance a complete renovation that is required to make the long term property habitable. To introduce a premium on property charges when there is absolutely no burden on the local authority is unfair and could almost be deemed as punitive for investing in the property market as opposed to investing in stocks and shares or gold etc.
- There are around 400 long term empty properties in Monmouthshire. This compares with a total of around 94,000 people (41,000 households) in Monmouthshire - so they constitute a very small proportion (less than 1%) of the total. These properties are already subject to the full 100% council tax charge in Monmouthshire - even though they do not fully benefit from council services. So they are already paying a higher rate of council tax (which is being used to subsidise council services for others). To demand that such a small number of owners should pay 2, 3 or 4 times the full council tax rate - with no regard to their available income, their financial situation, the nature of their property, or how it has come to be empty - would be punitive and disproportionate, and could potentially cause hardship.

Don't know:

- For me this would depend on why the property was unoccupied.
- I am unsure whether it will provide much help towards the homeless problem or much towards the budget. Having had experience in looking at this dilemma when I worked in the Council Tax section. It does provoke a lot of anger from homeowners who may have worked hard or inherited properties to be essentially told what they can or what they should do with their properties. A lot of these empty properties are not in a fit state to rent out especially due to new Welsh legislation. I know that there are schemes available to borrow money to bring them up to date but, in my experience a lot of empty properties are owned by older people. Also they may be owned or have been in the family of elderly people who just do not want the hassle of renting.
- I don't know how many empty homes there are in the county.
- I just don't understand how it would help.
- I own a property in Pwllmeyric which is not my main residence. It is furnished. (so classed as a second home) My daughter locally depends on me for childcare to enable her to continue working for the Dept of Health. Her own health is now significantly compromised with uncertain prognosis. Hence I stay frequently to help her out. I cannot move here permanently yet as other daughter in Yorkshire has significant mental health issues following the death of my husband (her father) so I am needed there too.
- Numbers of such houses not quoted in information but imagine is low
- Only " it is " is "it's".
So in this case you should refer to "use its" rather than "use it's"

- The question are, why are these properties empty, is it the cost of maintaining them to the standards of listings officers or merely an unwillingness to do something with them

Level of premium to apply

- 0%. You need them more than they need you.
- A modest increase of 50% I feel would be an incentive to owners to consider their moral duty.
- A premium on underused property should incentivise getting them back onto the market. the higher the premium, the more of an incentive
- A range would have been a better question. A range between 25% and 50% seems reasonable.
- Again this is political and just envy.
- Again, presume this is for long term empty residential properties, not business premises.
- All homes in the county are provided with the services of the Council e.g. refuse collection, road maintenance, street lighting, police, schools etc regardless of whether any particular home has a need for some of the Council services. Therefore ALL homes should contribute to the cost of these services. Sometimes the condition of these homes and gardens are badly neglected causing deterioration of the building and a problem for neighbours.
Since the owners of these vacant or part vacant homes can afford to also have their own long term dwelling, they should be charged a supplement to the normal Council Tax for the second home. However, maybe a special exclusion could be given to those who, because of their employment, have to live as their main dwelling, in a 'tied' home which belongs to their employer,
- All properties should pay full council tax.
There should be no additional premium.
- An empty property is using far less council services than an occupied one so the owners are already paying a premium.
- Any charge would reduce value of property and development of alternative accommodation
- Anything over 100% would be best.
- As above. Long term disuse of so called holiday homes reduces income not only to the council, but the wider community, and denies local people residency by inflating house prices.
- Because as I mentioned they leave them empty for decades and make a fortune on resale . Our communities need to be cherished and protected and not be beholden to property entrepreneurs!
- But how is the 'long term' defined? No penalties should apply if an owner is clearly not retaining the property for speculative purposes, and, for example there are exceptional circumstances preventing or delaying its sale or renovation.
- Charging the maximum amount will either prompt those holding on to empty properties to release them back to local communities or continue to pay and cover relevant costs for MCC
- Consider that premium should be at least or over 100pc
- Don't go ahead with this unfair tax
- Encourage a fast sale!
- For properties that have been empty long term 300%. Perhaps a sliding scale, over 1 year 100% over 2 years 200% anything in excess of 3 years 300%
- I believe a higher premium on these empty buildings would give the owners an incentive to make them safe, if not to live in then at least to walk past

- I consider this reasonable
- I do not agree with this but any premium should be small and sustainable, council tax is already too high relative to service provision and set to rise again this year.
- I don't think people should have to pay for having a 2nd home. As mentioned earlier, it will deter people from coming to Wales who do bring in revenue.
- I feel the premium should be steeply tapered with 300% for those empty for 3yrs and then go higher still for those empty longer.
- I have entered an average %. Perhaps there should be a sliding scale from 100-300%, rising with the increasing length of time a property has been empty.
- I suggest An escalating increase, from year one 25%, through two 50%, three 75 up to 150% etc will pick up those dragging their heels or with no intent to actually get on with it.
- I think premium should be introduced on a graduated basis.
- I think the premium has to be significant to prompt action.
- I think you could have a sliding scale tariff depending on the value of the property and the particular reasons why the property is empty e.g. someone has died intestate. It can longer than a few months to sort out ownership of a property.
- I think you would have to look at individual cases
- I would charge 500%
- I would impose a graduated increase after the first year .
- I would like to see a tariff that takes into consideration the length of time a property is left vacant rising on an annual basis unless good reason can be shown for why the property is empty.
- If a property is not empty for a reasonable reason (as provided by the exemptions), I don't see why the premium shouldn't be set as high as permitted.
- If people can afford to deliberately keep properties unoccupied, they can afford to pay a premium for doing so.
- If the owner agrees to my answer to question 1 then they would be refunded this premium amount. If they object and persist in keeping the empty property then each year increase the premium tax by 50% until they reach the 300% limit. This gives the Council 4 years to 'negotiate' with the Council to provide the property for them to use.
- If they can afford to leave a property empty, they have sufficient funds
- If they can afford two homes they can afford the maximum tax Plus lots of these homes fall into dis- repair making the area unpleasant for full-time residents.
- If this were the case then maybe they could receive a grant to do up, charge a fair rate and receive a grant to do them up.,
- If you can afford to own two (or more) homes, you can afford to pay a higher rate of council tax for that privilege
- If you really need to then a lower figure of 25% or less
- In principle if a house is long-term unoccupied then having a greater disincentive to keep it that way may assist in returning that home to housing stock
- Introducing a high premium on their Council Tax would make them think about the problem - they may sell the property and, if they don't, at least the higher Council Tax will mean they are making a financial contribution to the local area.
- It depends on the circumstances, it seems unfair, for example, if a property is up for sale by an estate but the purchase process is taking a long time so exceeds the 6 month time limit after probate, for a premium to be charged.
- It has to be a high amount otherwise second home owners who have left properties empty for a long time, will not be overly bothered by a small rise.
The Rogiet hotel is a prime example of a large empty property going to ruin.
- it has to be as high as possible to reduce the impact on those who cannot afford their own council tax and to reduce the pressure on house pricing in the area

- It may force some people to sell their property and we can have neighbours to at least discuss issues with.
- It must be high enough to be punitive.
- It needs to be a high enough to be a penalty for doing nothing with an empty property.
- It needs to be a high rate to try and elicit some sort of change and bring properties back to the market. Where individuals/families cannot agree to sell properties then they have to pay towards the counties housing costs. I would go higher but I think this should do the trick.
- It needs to be enough for people to consider renting or selling their emptying houses.
- It would be good to encourage occupancy for currently open houses. However if a house is on the market and steps are being taken to change ownership - continuing additional charges seem unfair.
- It would be useful to have more information on the sums involved
- It would depend on the reason for the house being empty
- It's a scandal that there are empty properties and homeless people/families. Long term empty properties must be brought back into use to alleviate social ills
- Long-term empty properties should be released for use by local people
- Make people pay a premium for being greedy.
- Maximum deterrent to remaining empty.
- Must be high to force people to give up empty homes
- Narrow minded questions again
- No premium is acceptable. If anything as it is unoccupied it should attract the single occupancy discount
- No premium.
- One reservation would be over properties that need structural repairs. More than one year's exemption should be allowed if the need can be demonstrated. We purchased a property that was in very poor condition (water coming through the roof, major structural crack in external wall where a lintel had rotted, the gas boiler was condemned, etc.) We needed to get planning permission for repair work as it is in a conservation area (replacement windows needed to be approved, etc) - that took several months, including getting architect's drawings before being able to even submit the application. Then we found ourselves in a long waiting list for good builders. And when builders finally started work, it was the best part of a year before we could move in. All of this meant that we were already needing to pay rent. We have eco-retrofitted the house, which should be required of all property in poor condition. But paying extra council tax while all this went on might have been the final straw in making it unaffordable.
- Owners need to be discouraged from speculating on the housing market.
- People renting second homes or keeping them empty for their own use can afford these prices. It will also help to reduce the ridiculous hike in house prices in some areas
- People who don't know think this is a tax on the rich, but in the main its asset not cash rich who just happen to be custodians. Every situation is different. One size doesn't fit all.
- Perhaps a rising premium as the period of non-occupation increases?
- Perhaps the amount should increase, depending on how long the property is empty for and, if it is for sale, how well the owners are marketing it.
- the gains made by the owners of the properties in terms of an increase in market values is at the expense of people who are trying to find affordable homes. A 300% levy is not unreasonable, and may help persuade owners not to use their empty property as a source of unearned income
- Should not apply when properties are "accidentally" empty
- Strong financial disincentive needed to minimise long term empty homes. This value seems fair for the actual residents.

- Tax is already being paid on the property. Lowest option available.
- That maximum amount should be done to stop these houses being empty, which destroy communities and bring no income to the village
- The amount charged needs to be large enough to compel empty house owners to take some action (preferably to allow occupation of the house in some way).
- The empty building does not demand any council services and will pay full council tax plus a penalty
- The higher the premium the more likely to sell up
- The maximum lever possible.
- The maximum would ensure the property was brought back into good use. Once the premium had been charged for say 5years would it be possible to seize the property and bring it back into use or sell at auction.
- The option to fill property, rent or sell is there so high rate will persuade.
- The owner has to care and make them question why property is empty after 5/10/15 years.
- The owners can clearly afford to leave properties empty, for whatever reason, so unless the penalty is severe enough, they will not change their strategy in the future.
- The premium needs to be prohibitive.
- The premium needs to generate action from the owner/s
- The rate could rise by 25% each year it remains empty.
- The unoccupied rate needs to be an incentive to the landlord/property owner to get that property back contributing to the society. The current rates are not an incentive.
- There are sufficient and justified exemptions (e.g. for homes which are unoccupied while they are on the market); there is no justification for leaving a home empty in the long term and so removing it from the county's housing stock. Those who choose to do this should be expected to pay for the "privilege."
- There may be good reasons why a property is empty long term, so the premium should not be too onerous.
- There should, however, be provision for exempting owners from any penalties where:
 - (a) It is evident that they are not retaining the property for speculative purposes AND
 - (b) there are exceptional circumstances preventing or delaying its sale or repair (and in this context a fair and just definition of what is meant by 'long-term').
- There's a housing crisis, so empty buildings should be used to help.
- They need to consider how they can help others. If they can't afford the premium then they need to sell the property to allow others to occupy it.
- They should pay what they would if they occupied the house, home.
- This needs to be proportionate and it maybe that there needs to be a different approach to different types of property or the length of time it's been empty.
- This seems a measured response to what is actually seems a small problem in Monmouthshire. I strongly believe that any changes should be introduced slowly. Anything over a 100% surcharge would in my view be immoderate.
- This will incentivise repurposing of some of the properties, hopefully to help increase the supply of housing.
- To encourage people to resolve their dispute but nit make it so exorbitant that they get into debt.
- Too many properties just sitting empty, assuming many as investments, reducing potential stock especially for local families and youngsters wanting to stay in the area but struggling to afford to
- Typically, empty property owners already pay council tax whilst receiving no services. Adding to this is wholly disproportionate.
- Unless it affects them financially, they will just do nothing
- Use the most incentive to get the property in use

- We do not have knowledge about empty properties in Monmouthshire. Those in our area are being renovated for reoccupation.
- When a person is trying to sell or rent it is often due to changing circumstances which may cause financial hardship.
- When my mum died and the property was left empty we had to pay council tax. Although I would have sorted out her affairs more quickly if we had to pay tax straightaway.
- Why is an answer compulsory? The premise of the question is that the answer given was 'yes'. When it was 'no' the question simply doesn't apply.
- you do not know reasons why a property could be empty for a long time
- An appropriate Levi may push the owners into action to sell or rent the property
- CLA consider that a premium of 50% should be charged after 9 months of the property being empty. This would allow sufficient time for refurbishment. This rate should be reviewed on a 3 year basis to allow the rate to be altered to accommodate trend changes to advantage the area and its permanent residents and businesses.
- Dependent upon circumstances
- I believe a premium should be added but I am not clear what this might mean in practice and so do not feel able to give an opinion on how much it should be.
- Larger properties already pay a substantial CT charge as Band G or H
- The owners are not contributing to the local community, and are depriving somebody of a home.
- The premium should act as a deterrent to having empty homes so needs to be large
- Why is there no option to say zero - completely bent survey question
- Would find it hard to cope with financially
- You already charge a full council tax on empty properties that exert little or no cost to the council (road use, refuse collections and other services); it seems this additional charge is largely to punish.
- I think there needs to be context and different levels taken into account. Those who keep property empty at the detriment of their local community just for the sake of 1 holiday a year, is very different to someone who is unable to sell their property for some reason.
- if the Council do decide to introduce these premiums then it should be done gradually over time, with plenty of forewarning to allow property owners to work out an appropriate plan. A sudden increase could have a significant negative impact on already struggling families
- Owners of a long term empty property are already paying full council tax, but are unlikely to be using any council services for that address. Therefore they are paying for services they don't use, which is in effect a premium.
- If you charge 50% for single occupancy then I believe if a charge is to be made for long term empty 25% is sufficient.

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Integrated Impact Assessment document

(incorporating Equalities, Future Generations, Welsh Language and Socio Economic Duty)

<p>Name of the Officer completing the evaluation</p> <p>Ruth Donovan</p> <p>Phone no: E-mail: ruthdonovan@monmouthshire.gov.uk</p>	<p>Please give a brief description of the aims of the proposal</p> <p>Council tax premiums for long term empty properties and second homes</p>
<p>Name of Service area</p> <p>Revenues</p>	<p>Date</p> <p>14th February 2023</p>

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Are your proposals going to affect any people or groups of people with protected characteristics? Please explain the impact, the evidence you have used and any action you are taking below.

Protected Characteristics	Describe any positive impacts your proposal has on the protected characteristic	Describe any negative impacts your proposal has on the protected characteristic	What has been/will be done to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
Age	There are potential benefits to the proposal if this allows more local people to stay in their communities and support their older relatives.	There is evidence that profiles of second homeowners are generally middle aged or retired. Therefore, the introduction of a council tax premium on second homes could have a greater financial effect on older people.	Provide at least 12 months' notice of premiums to allow homeowners to plan for the future and to take mitigating actions.
Disability	None identified	None identified	N/A
Gender reassignment	None identified	None identified	N/A

Protected Characteristics	Describe any positive impacts your proposal has on the protected characteristic	Describe any negative impacts your proposal has on the protected characteristic	What has been/will be done to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
Marriage or civil partnership	None identified	None identified	N/A
Pregnancy or maternity	None identified	None identified	N/A
Race	None identified	None identified	N/A
Religion or Belief	None identified	None identified	N/A
Sex	None identified	None identified	N/A
Sexual Orientation	None identified	None identified	N/A

2. The Socio-economic Duty and Social Justice

The Socio-economic Duty requires public bodies to have due regard to the need to reduce inequalities of outcome which result from socio-economic disadvantage when taking key decisions This duty aligns with our commitment as an authority to Social Justice.

	Describe any positive impacts your proposal has in respect of people suffering socio economic disadvantage	Describe any negative impacts your proposal has in respect of people suffering socio economic disadvantage.	What has been/will be done to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
Socio-economic Duty and Social Justice	<p>The proposal has the potential to increase the available housing stock to the local community. Allowing families to stay together and support each other.</p> <p>The county is facing some specific issues in respect of house prices, an increasing demand for affordable housing and the use of temporary accommodation.</p> <p>Revenues raised from the premiums will be used to help address some for these issues in the future.</p>	<p>Second homeowners support their local communities, shopping locally etc. Some also rent out these properties bringing people into the county where they spend in the local community.</p>	

3. Policy making and the Welsh language.

How does your proposal impact on the following aspects of the Council's Welsh Language Standards:	Describe the positive impacts of this proposal	Describe the negative impacts of this proposal	What has been/will be done to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts
<p>Policy Making</p> <p>Effects on the use of the Welsh language,</p> <p>Promoting Welsh language</p> <p>Treating the Welsh language no less favorably</p>	<p>Potential to keep local communities together and for Welsh Language skills to remain in the County.</p>	<p>None identified – considered to be small given the small number of second homes in the county.</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p>Operational</p> <p>Recruitment & Training of workforce</p>	<p>None identified</p>	<p>None identified</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p>Service delivery</p> <p>Use of Welsh language in service delivery</p> <p>Promoting use of the language</p>	<p>None identified</p>	<p>None identified</p>	<p>N/A</p>


4. Does your proposal deliver any of the well-being goals below? Please explain the impact (positive and negative) you expect, together with suggestions of how to mitigate negative impacts or better contribute to the goal. There's no need to put something in every box if it is not relevant!





Well Being Goal	Does the proposal contribute to this goal? Describe the positive and negative impacts.	What actions have been/will be taken to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
<p>A prosperous Wales Efficient use of resources, skilled, educated people, generates wealth, provides jobs</p>	<p>Positive: Potentially allows communities/families to stay together rather than having to move away to live and work.</p> <p>Premiums should encourage occupancy and bring properties back into use.</p> <p>Negative: Some second homes help to promote tourism, bringing visitors, jobs and investments to the county. Owners are currently paying 100% council tax and feel they are already contributing to the county. Changes elsewhere within wider rates legislation (e.g. Self Catering rules) have the potential to bring properties back into the Council Tax list and thereby also be liable for the premium. These owners are concerned about the impact this may have on their business</p>	<p>Inform rate payers of any decisions as early as possible to allow them to plan for the future.</p>
<p>A resilient Wales Maintain and enhance biodiversity and ecosystems that support resilience and can adapt to change (e.g. climate change)</p>	<p>No impact</p>	<p>None identified</p>
<p>A healthier Wales People's physical and mental wellbeing is maximized and health impacts are understood</p>	<p>No impact</p>	<p>None identified</p>
<p>A Wales of cohesive communities Communities are attractive, viable, safe and well connected</p>	<p>See above</p>	<p>None identified</p>

Well Being Goal	Does the proposal contribute to this goal? Describe the positive and negative impacts.	What actions have been/will be taken to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
A globally responsible Wales Taking account of impact on global well-being when considering local social, economic and environmental wellbeing	No impact	None identified
A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language Culture, heritage and Welsh language are promoted and protected. People are encouraged to do sport, art and recreation	No impact	None identified
A more equal Wales People can fulfil their potential no matter what their background or circumstances	Potential to invest the premium into the supply of affordable homes in the area.	None identified

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5. How has your proposal embedded and prioritised the sustainable governance principles in its development?

Sustainable Development Principle	Does your proposal demonstrate you have met this principle? If yes, describe how. If not explain why.	Are there any additional actions to be taken to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
 <p>Balancing short term need with long term and planning for the future</p>	There is the potential to utilise the income generated from these premiums to improve the supply of affordable homes in the county, which is a more longer term objective	N/A

Sustainable Development Principle	Does your proposal demonstrate you have met this principle? If yes, describe how. If not explain why.	Are there any additional actions to be taken to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
 <p>Collaboration</p> <p>Working together with other partners to deliver objectives</p>	N/A	N/A
 <p>Involvement</p> <p>Involving those with an interest and seeking their views</p>	Public consultation ran for a period of four weeks to seek views on the proposal to introduce council tax premiums for long term empty properties and second homes. The views expressed were noted and considered as part of the decision making.	N/A
 <p>Prevention</p> <p>Putting resources into preventing problems occurring or getting worse</p>	It is proposed to use some of the revenue generated from these premiums to improve the supply of affordable homes in the county and to reduce the use of temporary accommodation. It is currently costing the Council circa £1m in Housing Benefit costs to fund these placements, diverting money away from other service areas.	N/A
 <p>Integration</p> <p>Considering impact on all wellbeing goals together and on other bodies</p>	N/A	N/A

6. Council has agreed the need to consider the impact its decisions has on the following important responsibilities: Corporate Parenting and Safeguarding. Are your proposals going to affect any of these responsibilities?

	Describe any positive impacts your proposal has	Describe any negative impacts your proposal has	What will you do/ have you done to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
Safeguarding	None identified	None identified	N/A
Corporate Parenting	None identified	None identified	N/A

7. What evidence and data has informed the development of your proposal?

- Information from other councils who have introduced council tax premiums
- Welsh Government guidance
- Council tax database
- Public consultation

8. SUMMARY: As a result of completing this form, what are the main positive and negative impacts of your proposal, how have they informed/changed the development of the proposal so far and what will you be doing in future?

Positive:

- Any additional revenue generated will be used to help address housing issues (e.g. affordability, availability and use of temporary accommodation) in the county.
- Potentially reduces the number of second homes and empty properties in the county releasing more homes for local people

Negative:

- The likely number of second homes in the county represents a relatively small proportion of the overall council tax dwellings in the county.
- Second homeowners generate income to the local community.
- Potential increase in the Revenues Team’s workload and resources for minimal additional income (depending on the percentage premium applied).
- The overall council tax collection rate may reduce if council taxpayers refuse to pay the premium.

9. ACTIONS: As a result of completing this form are there any further actions you will be undertaking? Please detail them below, if applicable.

What are you going to do	When are you going to do it?	Who is responsible
If a decision is made to charge council tax premiums a notice will be published in the local press giving ratepayers 12 months notice of the change.	March 2023 – press notification April 2024 – start charging premium	Revenues/Finance
A full review of properties listed as a second home and long term empty property will be undertaken	April 2023 to October 2023	Revenues
The council will write to every ratepayer affected to check their details and notify owners of the charge	April 2023 to October 2023	Revenues
Council Tax premiums will be reflected in the Council Tax base for the Authority in 2024/25 and built into the Medium Term Financial Plan	October 2023 to March 2024	Finance
The 2024/25 annual council tax bills and all bills thereafter will include these premiums where applicable	March/April 2024 onwards	Revenues

10. VERSION CONTROL: The Equality and Future Generations Evaluation should be used at the earliest stage, such as informally within your service, and then further developed throughout the decision making process. It is important to keep a record of this process to demonstrate how you have considered and built in equality and future generations considerations wherever possible.

Version No.	Decision making stage	Date considered	Brief description of any amendments made following consideration
1	Consultation Responses	14/02/23	

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SUBJECT:	REVENUE & CAPITAL BUDGET MONITORING 2022/23 – MONTH 9 FORECAST
MEETING:	PERFORMANCE AND OVERVIEW SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
DATE:	27th February 2023
DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED:	ALL

1. PURPOSE:

- 1.1 To provide Committee members with information on the Authority's financial forecasts for the 2022/23 financial year in respect of the revenue budget, capital programme, and associated reserves position.
- 1.2 This report is being considered for pre-decision scrutiny by the Performance and Overview Committee as part of their responsibility to:
 - assess whether effective budget monitoring is taking place;
 - monitor the extent to which budgets are spent in accordance with the agreed budget and policy framework;
 - challenge the reasonableness of variances to budget, and;
 - consider the progress in relation to mandated budget savings proposals for the year.
- 1.3 Feedback from this Committee will be considered by Cabinet when they receive this report at their meeting on the 1st March 2023.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO PERFORMANCE AND OVERVIEW SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

- i. That the Performance and Overview Scrutiny Committee perform pre-decision scrutiny on the Authority's Month 9 financial forecasts for the 2022/23 financial year in respect of the revenue budget, capital programme, and associated reserves position.
- ii. That the Committee as part of their role assesses whether effective budget monitoring is in place; the extent to which budgets have been spent within the agreed budget and policy framework, including the reasonableness of the explanation for variances and; consider the achievement of progress in meeting mandated budget savings targets.
- iii. That Committee feedback is provided to Cabinet who will receive this report at their meeting on the 1st March 2023.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS TO CABINET

- 2.1. That Cabinet recognises a net improvement of £1.62m since the previous revenue budget forecast that results in a forecast over spend at month 9 of £7.53m.

- 2.2. That Cabinet note that this is driven primarily by incorporating the budget recovery plan into forecasts at month 9, along with substantial unbudgeted grant funding notified in respect of Children’s services that is significantly offset by further costs within the service.
- 2.3. That Cabinet note that the overall revenue budget outturn as currently forecast would need to be subsidised by £3.4m of capital receipts which are being used to fund identified eligible expenditure under the flexible use of capital receipts directive.
- 2.4. That Cabinet notes the update to the budget recovery plan as outlined in **table 3**. This projects that a draw on revenue reserves of £6.06m will now be required to ensure a balanced outturn position is achieved; representing an increase of £1.06m in the contribution anticipated to support the budget recovery plan from month 6.
- 2.5. That Cabinet recognise:
- the implication of drawing on the level of useable revenue reserves to this degree in 2022/23,
 - the usage also being proposed to assist the 2023/24 budget,
 - the trend of budgetary over spends in high cost service areas, and wider economic uncertainty.
- 2.6. That Cabinet note the financial risk represented by the current volatile environment in Adult’s and Children’s services require the respective Chief Officers and the Responsible Financial Officer to continue to closely monitor and manage operational and financial performance to ensure that all possible remedial action is taken to constrain cost and that this is reported to the Cabinet Portfolio Holder regularly.
- 2.7. That Cabinet require the Responsible Financial Officer to make consideration of strengthening the reporting of budget forecasts and savings progress during 2023/24.
- 2.8. Cabinet considers the forecast capital outturn spend of £61.8m as outlined in **appendix 1** that currently indicates a forecast over spend of £183k, noting the continuing difficulty in delivering capital projects to their allocated budget in the current challenging economic environment.
- 2.9. That Cabinet note the forecast 100% delivery of the budgeted mandated savings as detailed in **appendix 2** and as approved as part of the budget set by full Council.
- 2.10. Cabinet notes the extent of forecast movements in Schools reserve usage contained in **table 6**, and **appendices 1 & 3** which highlight the possibility of a further nine schools entering a deficit reserve position by the end of the financial year.

3. KEY ISSUES:

Context

- 3.1. In setting the 2022/23 budget there was an expectation that the Council would see a gradual return to a more stable operating environment relative to the last two years, with the direct impacts of the pandemic potentially set to ease.
- 3.2. There was a known and accepted risk that the Welsh Government Hardship fund would end and that the challenges experienced in achieving historic income levels would continue, and that the permanent change in national policy initiative around the needs of the homeless would not be adequately funded by Welsh Government.
- 3.3. The budget round therefore saw £10.1m of budget pressures accommodated, notably around the expected levels of pay; Additional learning needs demands; increasing demand and complexity of Children's care cases; increasing demands upon adult social services and; significant service pressures within the passenger transport unit and within recycling and waste.
- 3.4. It was therefore disappointing that despite accommodating the above pressures into the 2022/23 budget, that significant further in year service pressures had materialised during the year, with many of these pressures developing in the same key areas that have been provided additional support in the budget.
- 3.5. The first budget forecast of the year carried out at the end of July 2022 saw an unprecedented forecast over spend against budget of £8.8m. The most concerning aspect was the combined speed and scale that these cost pressures had developed following a balanced budget being set just four months earlier.
- 3.6. Whilst officers rightly revisited the robustness of the budget process undertaken, what became apparent from the outset of the financial year was the immediate and significant impact that the deterioration in the wider economic environment was placing upon Council services. Record price rises on goods and services, supply chain disruption, soaring energy costs, increased interest rates, and recruitment challenges immediately placed unprecedented pressures upon the demand and cost of service delivery.
- 3.7. With the Cost of living crisis having a significant impact on our communities, there has been a growing demand for additional Council services, a reduced call on income generating services, and impacts upon debt recovery. The wider and longer lasting impact of the pandemic has continued to be felt in the areas of Homelessness, Children's services, Adult social care and Children's additional learning needs.
- 3.8. Against this backdrop, Cabinet immediately required Chief Officer's to develop a range of appropriate budget recovery measures to look to arrest the over spend position, whilst noting that the ongoing operating environment and complex external dynamics in place would severely restrict the options available.
- 3.9. To this end, the month 6 report at the end of September 2022 put forward a package of budget measures to combat what was now an updated forecast over spend of £9.15m. These measures relied upon driving service efficiencies, maximising income levels, and extending the flexible use of capital receipts to support the revenue budget. Where all of

these service based measures were exhausted, the subsequent deficit was then forecast to be met from useable revenue reserves.

Month 9 forecast

3.10. **Table 1** below summarises a forecast £7.5m net over spend against the Council's revenue budget for the year.

Table 1: 2022/23 Revenue budget forecast as at Month 9

Directorate	Total budget for the year	Total forecast expenditure / (income)	Total forecast variance to budget	Variance as a % of budget
	£000's	£000's	£000's	%
Social Care, Health & Safeguarding	58,557	64,335	5,778	9.9%
Children & Young People	59,416	60,343	927	1.6%
Communities & Place	24,017	23,410	(607)	-2.5%
Monlife	5,074	5,326	251	5.0%
Chief Executive Unit	3,190	2,965	(225)	-7.1%
People & Governance	4,936	5,014	79	1.6%
Resources	7,973	8,308	335	4.2%
Corporate	23,603	25,480	1,877	8.0%
Appropriations	5,933	5,486	(447)	-7.5%
Financing	(192,699)	(193,136)	(437)	0.2%
Total	0	7,531	7,531	

3.11. The updated forecast at month 9 represents a net improvement of £1.62m since the previous revenue budget forecast. However, this is driven primarily by incorporating the service budget recovery plan that had been identified at month 6 into the forecast at month 9 which has improved the overall forecast by £1.83m.

3.12. When disregarding the inclusion of the service recovery plan, it is important to note that there has been a further deterioration in service forecasts between month 6 and month 9 of £202k due to:

- A further net increase in expenditure of £67k within Children's Services where costly emergency arrangements continue despite stable overall numbers of looked after children. It is important to note that this net position is after allowing for unbudgeted grant of £1.1m that has been notified since month 6, and therefore the gross deterioration in overall cost is £1.167m.
- £240k additional ALN transport pressures due to increased operator costs. This is a combination of agreed contract uplifts to cover pay and fuel inflation (average 8%) plus increases as a result of operator hand-backs pushing up prices on re-tendering due to market forces.

- A shortfall of £360k against the identified service recovery target of £2.185m, with the deficit primarily falling within the Social Care directorate.

- 3.13. The deteriorating position is again disappointing and predominated by the continuing concerning position within Social Care which is subject to complex internal and external dynamics in respect of Children's care placements, the complexity and demand of Adults care needs, the interplay with Health, and the well documented market issues that are both leading to difficulty recruiting and retaining care staff, and increasing external provider costs.
- 3.14. The volatility of Social care costs continues to present a significant ongoing risk to the final outturn position for the year. Forecast costs for the year have increased at every reporting period and have been masked at month 9 by the notification of substantial unbudgeted grants in relation to Children's services of £1.1m. Overall, within Children's services there has been a gross deterioration in cost of circa £1.167m since month 6 with further fee increases and new children coming into care into costly placements. The volatility within children's services and reliance on emergency arrangements continue to provide a high level of risk to further levels of over spend developing through to year end. Further work is being undertaken to identify potential future risk of cost within Children's Services (e.g. placement breakdown or deterioration in family safeguarding arrangements).
- 3.15. Immediate arrangements have been put in place to closely manage and constrain cost wherever possible, whilst having regard to the challenging parameters that have been documented above. In the short term, in Children's services this centres itself around reviewing and planning packages of care with a view to progressing care plans using less costly arrangements, whilst in Adults services the steps in place to re-focus our internal teams to reable clients is intended to avoid the need for more costly care packages.
- 3.16. It is however recognised that the ability to constrain costs within such a complex operating environment and where strict statutory responsibilities are designated upon the Council is challenging when looking beyond simple value for money considerations. The detailed work to understand, manage and transform service delivery into a model that meets service needs within a reduced cost envelop will take time, and, will be subject to many interlinking external factors that are sometimes beyond the Council's immediate control and influence.
- 3.17. As we look across other service areas, the wider economic and inflationary environment continues to impact service delivery, both in respect of cost, volatility, supply chain disruption, and in presenting continued recruitment challenges.
- 3.18. Importantly, the overall outturn position as noted within this report continues to be supported by £3.4m of identified eligible expenditure to be funded from capital receipts under the flexible use of capital receipts directive. These measures are intended to allow for a period of service transformation which delivers service efficiencies over the longer term. As capital receipts forecast to be generated by the Council start to fall away after 2022/23, the reliance upon this measure will need to be carefully weighed against the other pressing capital pressures and wider capital investment aspirations of the Council.
- 3.19. In considering all the above, at month 9, this continues to represent a unique and unprecedented operating environment for the Council, and one which severely curtails the

immediate ability of the Council to influence its primary expenditure and income drivers, and therefore its ability to be able to bear down further on cost or increase income to any significant degree without resorting to more extreme measures.

- 3.20. As we look to the remainder of the financial year the key financial focus now centres itself on closely monitoring and managing operational and financial performance, specifically in relation to Social Care, but also in all other service areas, to ensure that all possible remedial action is taken to constrain cost. This will be vital to ensuring that the Council ends the year in a financially sustainable position.
- 3.21. When looking beyond this financial year, it is important to note that many of the savings that will assist the in-year budget recovery are one-off or temporary in nature and will not necessarily bring any further benefit to future year's budgets. Conversely, the majority of those pressures highlighted above are demand driven and recurrent in nature and have been scrutinised for consideration as part of the final budget process for 2023/24.
- 3.22. A full breakdown of the variances forecast by services at Month 9 is contained within **appendix 1**, however at a summary level the principal pressures and mitigating savings forecast are within the areas of:

Table 2: Summary of principal pressures and savings forecast at Month 9

Pressure/Saving	£000's	Description
Children's services	4,423	Children looked after numbers have decreased by 1 since month 6, however there continue to be increasing numbers of high cost placements, including extremely costly emergency arrangements for children where there is no regulated placement. Alongside this there is continued use of agency staff to fill vacancies. £1.1m of grant received since month 6 has offset further over spend.
Adults Services	1,490	Older Adults budgets have seen a dramatic influx of clients requiring services as we move out of the pandemic, with continued pressures from hospitals to discharge patients into the social care sector, and some clients requiring more intense services due to delayed health care during the pandemic. Some in-house services are currently undergoing reviews, with in year savings being used to partially offset over spends.
Additional Learning Needs	720	Due to placement costs outside of our own schools (£313k), a reduction in income from other Councils for out of County pupils attending our schools (£115k), additional support for pupils attending our own schools (£51k), and additional transport cost (£240k).
Housing	1,276	Primarily due to national policy change impacting upon the service and where our housing costs in relation to the needs of the Homeless are not attracting full funding. £1.374m of costs where emergency accommodation placements do not allow the Council to claim full housing benefit subsidy, offset by an under spend of £98k in the cost of provision following receipt of further grant.
MonLife	251	Due to the sections inability to generate the expected income targets in relation to Leisure and Outdoor education services.
Passenger Transport Unit (PTU)	291	Increased pay, fuel and repair costs have meant that operators have handed back contracts resulting in re-negotiated external prices or increased in-house provision required. Receipt of £72k of grant since month 6 has improved the position.
Non-teaching pay award	2,049	An allowance is made within the forecast for the result of pay award negotiations over and above the 3.5% budgeted for. Negotiations have

Pressure/Saving	£000's	Description
		concluded between local government employer's representatives and trade unions which resulted in an overall average award of approximately 6.25%.
Car Parks & Civil Parking Enforcement	266	Parking enforcement fines will not hit budgeted targets and in addition there are over spends in expenditure primarily in transport, premises and software costs.
Markets	127	The number of traders has dropped off considerably since Covid-19 and this has meant the service is struggling to meet income targets alongside increases in waste disposal costs.
Council tax	(437)	Out-performance of budgeted Council tax collection. This has reduced since month 6 as the amount of discounts being awarded has increased.
Net Borrowing costs	(446)	A reduction in net budgeted borrowing costs reflective of a lower than budgeted interest rate environment at the start of the year, and significant capital slippage at the end of 2021/22 delaying borrowing need.
Staff vacancies	(1,420)	Significant staff vacancies being carried in the establishment.
Rental income	(172)	Recovery of the rental of Innovation House from the Ukrainian grant funding scheme.
Property	(322)	Passporting of qualifying spend from revenue to available capital funding creating a £322k under spend.
Solar Farm & Sustainability	(175)	Improved income from our Solar Farm and PV installations caused by the increased market rates for energy.
Neighbourhood services	(200)	Primarily due to the improvement gained from the installation of LEDs in our street-lighting over and above budgeted levels and passporting qualifying costs to capital (£200k), and Grounds maintenance savings of £147k resulting from increased income.

Assessment of identified budget mitigation measures

3.23. The updated budget recovery plan is outlined in **table 3** below and projects that a draw on revenue reserves of £6.06m will now be required to ensure a balanced outturn position is achieved, with this representing an increase of £1.06m in the contribution anticipated to support the budget recovery plan from month 6.

3.24. Alongside the efforts to deliver on the overall service budget recovery plan developed at month 6, it should be noted that the month 9 forecast includes a variety of additional measures that services have identified in efforts to arrest the over spend position and in moderating cost or exploring additional funding. This has resulted in significant forecast savings offsetting the increases in cost.

Table 3: Summary of budget mitigation measures identified at Month 9

Recovery measure	Comment	Forecast usage Month 6	Forecast usage Month 9
Revenue Reserves	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revenue reserves have been replenished by approximately £11m over the past two years, with particular focus at the end of 2021/22 in providing protection against some the budget risks now manifesting (In particular Social care, Homelessness, Leisure income, and Pay). 	£5m	£6.06m

Recovery measure	Comment	Forecast usage Month 6	Forecast usage Month 9
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • However reserve projections based on month 9 and the proposed final 23/24 budget take us to significantly lower position in terms of reserve cover at the end of 23/24 – with the £15.6m projected representing just 8.3% of the revenue budget. • Further to this, £1m of the 15.6m projected reserve balance relates to funds held as sinking funds (Commercial investments, Solar farm) or are held under joint service arrangements (YOS, LRF). 		
Capitalisation directive	<p>Identification of further revenue costs, over and above the £2.65m already budgeted, that can be categorised as enabling service transformation, and that can be legitimately funded from capital receipts under the regulations.</p> <p>This has reduced since Month 6 following a review of the levels of spend in areas which meet the criteria for capitalisation.</p>	£1.27m	£0.76m
Funding	<p>Further unbudgeted grant funding becoming available during the remainder of the year.</p> <p>It is currently estimated based on current trends that there is a possibility that £700k of Social care workforce sustainability grant could be released to aid in budget recovery. This will be dependent upon winter pressures, availability of care provision, and the need for additional care and support to facilitate hospital discharge.</p> <p>There is also potential recoupment of a forecast surplus on the Regional Integration Fund within Social care where it is expected that there will be further slippage around the Winter Programmes planned.</p>	£0.7m	£0.7m
Cost moderation / Reduction in services	<p>Non-pay cost reduction in supplies and services, third party, premises, and transport budgets.</p> <p>A total of £1.83m has been indicated as achievable and is now included within service forecasts at month 9. A list of progress against individual proposals is shown as appendix 4.</p>	2.185m	Now included in overall forecast
Total		9.155m	7.53m

Progress against mandated service savings

3.25. The original 2022/23 budget included mandated service savings totalling £2.129m and the progress against these is summarised in **table 3** below and in more detail in **appendix 2**.

Table 5: Progress against mandated savings

Directorate	2022/23 Budgeted Savings £000	Savings forecast £000	Delayed Savings £000	Savings Unachievable £000	% Achieved
Social Care & Health	(120)	(120)	0	0	100%
Communities & Place	(959)	(959)	0	0	100%
Resources	(300)	(300)	0	0	100%
Chief Executives Unit	(33)	(33)	0	0	100%
Corporate Costs & Levies	(717)	(717)	0	0	100%
Total	(2,129)	(2,129)	0	0	100%

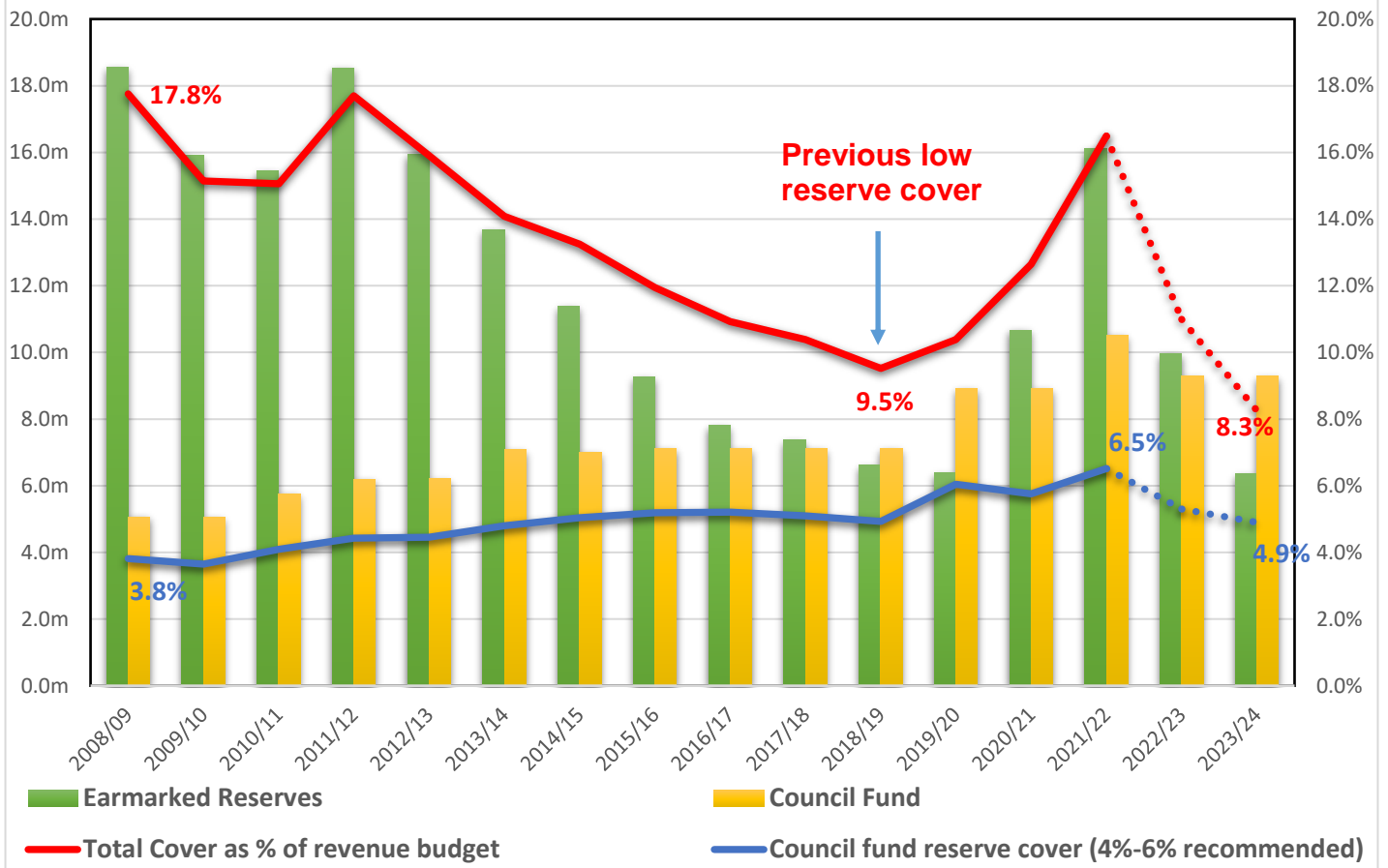
- 3.26. It is pleasing to note the forecast 100% delivery of mandated savings, especially in light of the ongoing challenges faced by services in current operating conditions. Finance officers will continue to work with services to ensure that these mandated savings are fully delivered as well as identifying any further areas of service efficiency which may deliver additional savings.
- 3.27. Budgetary discipline will be paramount as we move through the remainder of this financial year, next year and over the medium-term. Cabinet will expect more regular budget monitoring and scrutiny, and with the deliverability risk of service savings acknowledged, the monitoring and reporting of service savings will need to be strengthened

Usable revenue reserve levels

- 3.28. Usable revenue reserves (excluding schools) have been replenished by approximately £11m over past two financial years and stand at £26.6m at the start of 2022/23.
- 3.29. Reserves have been able to be replenished as above through the pandemic as a result of significant Welsh Government hardship funding and one-off grants. This reversed a continuing trend of depleting balances since 2011/12 through a period of financial austerity and challenging budget rounds for Councils generally.
- 3.30. Reserves are an integral part of the Council's financial strategy and are used to create long-term budgetary stability and act as contingency against known and unknown risks. As well as being available to fund unexpected funding pressures, they enable the Council to manage organisational change without undue impact on council tax payers and can also be an important funding source to support 'invest to save' initiatives designed to reduce the ongoing cost of providing services.
- 3.31. **Chart 1** below outlines the trend in revenue reserves levels over time and includes a projection based upon drawing on £6.06m of revenue reserves as outlined in the above budget recovery plan and allowing for the potential draw on reserves based on the final 2023/24 budget proposals being presented to Council.

Chart 1: Revenue reserve trend and projection

Revenue reserves trend & projection £m's



- 3.32. Despite the replenishment in reserves over the past three financial years, balances remain at the lower end of the scale on an all-Wales comparison when comparing reserve balances as a percentage of the Council's net revenue budget.
- 3.33. If reserve usage continues in line with current forecasts, the level of reserves as a percentage of net revenue budget would fall to 8.3%, or £15.6m by the end of 2023/24.
- 3.34. It is however important to note that £1m of reserves have been set up as sinking funds or relate to joint service arrangements, and when these are disregarded, it brings the level of useable reserves forecast at the end of 2023/24 below £15m. In isolation this could still be considered to provide a sufficient level reserve cover for a Council of Monmouthshire's size, however this needs to be considered within the context of escalating costs and service demand, a trend of budgetary over spends in high cost service areas, and wider economic uncertainty.
- 3.35. The more medium-term consequence of a reduction in earmarked reserves is that any up-front investment required to drive service transformation will likely need to be funded from the capital receipts reserve. Any such investment will therefore need to be carefully weighed against capital investment aspirations, or, more likely, mean that future capital investment aspirations outside of the core programme will need to be met from borrowing.

School balances

- 3.36. From a financial perspective, 2021/22 was another unprecedented year for schools who continued to receive several significant Welsh Government grants to support them and their pupils during and following a period of significant disruption to learning. This resulted in all but one of our schools bringing forward a surplus balance into the 2022/23 financial year, with the vast majority carrying significant surplus balances above those guided by Welsh Government school funding regulations (£50k for a Primary, £100k for a Secondary or Special school).
- 3.37. The Authority requires schools carrying balances above those levels guided by Welsh Government to provide investment plans setting out how they intended to spend the excess balances being held. These plans informed the budget process for 2022/23.
- 3.38. At month 9, the forecast is for an overall contribution from school balances of £4.65m, resulting in a forecast surplus at year-end of £2.3m.

Table 6: Forecast movement in school balances for 2022/23

Cluster	(A) Opening Reserves (Surplus) / Deficit Position 2022/23 £000's	(B) Draw / (Contribution) from / (to) School Balances @ Month 4 £'000	(C) Draw / (Contribution) from / (to) School Balances @ Month 6 £'000	(D) Draw / (Contribution) from / (to) School Balances @ Month 9 £'000	(A+D) Forecast Reserve Balances at 2022/23 Outturn £'000
Abergavenny	(2,145)	1,181	1,272	1,237	(908)
Caldicot	(2,165)	1,570	1,284	1,204	(961)
Chepstow	(695)	863	899	827	131
Monmouth	(1,869)	1,425	1,353	1,211	(658)
Special	(82)	106	91	174	92
Total	(6,956)	5,145	4,900	4,653	(2,304)

- 3.39. The budget for 2022/23 made allowance for a pay award for schools staff up to a threshold of 3%, with any award agreed above this level to be funded from schools balances. The above forecast is predicated upon a further pressure of 2% over and above the 3% budgeted based upon the pay award currently in place. This accounts for £1.2m of the overall £4.65m forecast draw upon school balances this year.
- 3.40. The investment plans enacted by schools look to deliver the best learning outcomes for pupils in line with the purpose of the grant funding provided over the past two financial years. **Appendices 1 & 3** outline the forecast movement in individual school balances for the year, and whilst it is clear that the investment plans enacted will bring many school balances more in line with those levels guided by Welsh Government, it is disappointing to note that a further nine schools are now forecast to move into deficit by year-end.

3.41. There remains significant concern from a financial perspective that the inherent structural budget deficits that led to a significant number of schools being in deficit pre-pandemic in some cases remain. Whilst the current economic climate is severely challenging, school balances are designed to provide a level of financial resilience to mitigate and smooth such risks and are not expected to fund ongoing day-to-day expenditure. Officers will continue to work closely with those schools of concern and look to aid the return to a more sustainable budget plan over the medium term.

Capital outturn forecast

3.42. The capital expenditure forecast detailed in **appendix 1** indicates a net forecast over spend of £183k, with numerous pressures presenting themselves totalling £1.897m as detailed below. These have been offset by the identification of a number of under spends totalling £1.714m which have materialised due to a wide range of reasons.

Scheme Category	Scheme	Over / (Under) spend £000's	Comment
Capitalisation directive	Capitalisation directive	760	A planned measure to mitigate pressure on the revenue budget through identification of further revenue costs, over and above the £2.65m already budgeted, that can be categorised as enabling service transformation, and that can be legitimately funded from capital receipts under regulations.
Development Schemes Over £250k	Crick Road Care Home	151	Additional costs in fitting-out equipment required for resident's privacy. An additional bid has been submitted to ABuHB for additional RIF funding to offset the overspend.
Development Schemes Over £250k	Property Acquisition for Children and Young People with Complex Needs	114	Additional refurbishment costs over and above original cost projection. A bid has been made to the Regional Integration Fund and we are waiting for a decision to offset the forecasted overspend.
Development Schemes Over £250k	Abergavenny borough theatre refurbishment	390	Increase over and above original construction cost projection due to unforeseen lighting costs and over-run charges from contractor. If funding cannot be found within programme, the service will borrow as per Cabinet report.
Infrastructure	Tintern Wireworks Bridge	148	The refurbishment of the Tintern Wireworks Bridge at Tintern in conjunction with Gloucestershire County Council is currently forecast to overspend by £148k, due to the complexity of restoring this listed structure and the increased cost of materials.
Specific Grant Funded	Siltbuster	76	The Siltbuster project is forecast to be £76k overspent due to increased costs. This will be funded from additional borrowing which will be funded by the Highways revenue budget.
Leasing	Leasing	258	Vehicle requirements are above the budget set and will be financed via leasing or borrowing dependent upon the options appraisal towards year end.

Scheme Category	Scheme	Over / (Under) spend £000's	Comment
Development Schemes Over £250k	Usk County Hall J Block Major Refurb	(759)	The scheme of works originally planned has changed following evolving accommodation needs in a post pandemic era.
Disabled Facilities grants	Disabled Facilities grants	(439)	An under spend due to a delay in works over the pandemic period that means the overall budget available is more than can be reasonably carried out given capacity. The increase in referrals since Month 6 has reduced the projected under spend, including a £96k vat adjustment.
Specific Grant Funded	Grant –Match Funding Support Allocation	(300)	A lower than expected requirement to match fund grant bids.
Infrastructure	Penyrhiw Sewage Treatment Works	(100)	Scheme not proceeding in current form.
Development Schemes Under £250k	Access for All	(61)	Under spend - current projections are showing a spend of £200k on access schemes for this year.
Maintenance Schemes - General	School Refurbishment Grant	(55)	Funding to be earmarked for upgrade of Capita One system in 2023/24.

- 3.43. Finance officers will continue to work with the project managers concerned to seek budget mitigation measures for any projected over spends, either through cost reduction measures or through the alternative funding mechanisms identified above.
- 3.44. As outlined in **appendix 1**, numerous schemes are indicating delays, with £8.9m forecast slippage following revisions to project timescales. Previous year's trends would indicate that this will increase substantially as the year progresses, and as more certainty becomes available both in terms cost and contract delivery timescales.
- 3.45. The current economic environment continues to have a significant impact on the overall capital programme with cost inflation and supply chain issues continuing to present a challenge to project delivery. Whilst every effort is being made by project managers to work within the budgetary plans and timescales set, it is inevitable as the year progresses that further cost pressures will materialise. This will in turn limit the scope of project delivery, especially in the areas of property maintenance and Infrastructure works where less schemes can be delivered within the overall budget allocated.
- 3.46. The forecast movement in capital receipts balances for the year is shown below. Whilst overall balances on the face of it are healthy, there remains the risk that forecast receipts receivable for 2023/24 onwards are at comparatively low levels, and combined with the fact that receipts are continuing to be used to subsidise the revenue budget through capitalisation direction means that the scope for further capital investment funded via receipts will be limited.

Table 7: Forecast movement in capital receipt balances

Month 9 update	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27
	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's
Balance as at 1st April	8,773	9,891	7,106	6,009	4,511
Capital receipts used for financing	(3,975)	(1,731)	(1,194)	(1,094)	(1,094)
Capital receipts used to support capitalisation direction	(3,410)	(3,008)	(508)	(508)	(508)
Capital receipts used for redundancies	0	(1,000)	0	0	0
Capital receipts received	7,072	0	0	0	0
Capital receipts forecast	1,430	2,954	604	104	104
Forecast Balance as at 31st March	9,891	7,106	6,009	4,511	3,014

4. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

- 4.1. The report itself covers the resource implications of the entirety of the revenue and capital budget activity during the year. There are no further resource implications as a result of the recommendations in this report.

5. EQUALITY AND FUTURE GENERATIONS EVALUATION (INCLUDES SOCIAL JUSTICE, SAFEGUARDING AND CORPORATE PARENTING):

- 5.1. This report provides Members with information on the forecast revenue and capital outturn position of the Authority and carries no decisions. There are therefore no equality of future generations' implications directly arising from this report.

6. CONSULTEES:

Strategic Leadership Team
Performance & Overview Scrutiny Committee
Cabinet

7. BACKGROUND PAPERS:

Appendix 1 – Detailed outturn forecasts and directorate commentaries

Appendix 2 – Progress against mandated budget savings

Appendix 3 – Forecast movement in individual school balances

Appendix 4 – Progress against service budget recovery plan

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Overall Revenue Position

Table 1: 2022/23 Revenue budget summary forecast at Month 9

Service Area	Original Budget 2022/23	Budget Adjustments	Revised Annual Budget	Forecast Outturn	Forecast (Under) / Over Spend @ M9	Forecast (Under) / Over Spend @ M6	Forecast Variance M6 to M9
	'000's	'000's	'000's	'000's	'000's	'000's	'000's
Social Care, Health & Safeguarding	57,877	680	58,557	64,335	5,779	5,711	67
Children & Young People	58,990	426	59,416	60,343	927	732	195
Communities & Place	23,055	962	24,017	23,410	(607)	586	(1,193)
MonLife	4,556	518	5,074	5,326	251	482	(231)
Chief Executives Unit	3,155	35	3,190	2,965	(225)	(288)	63
People & Governance	4,663	273	4,936	5,014	78	28	50
Resources	7,067	907	7,973	8,308	335	763	(428)
Corporate Costs & Levies	26,207	(2,604)	23,603	25,480	1,878	1,895	(18)
Net Cost of Services	185,570	1,196	186,766	195,181	8,415	9,909	(1,494)
Appropriations	6,652	(720)	5,932	5,486	(446)	(250)	(197)
Expenditure to be Financed	192,223	476	192,699	200,667	7,969	9,659	(1,690)
Financing	(192,223)	(476)	(192,699)	(193,136)	(437)	(503)	66
Net General Fund (Surplus) / Deficit	0	0	0	7,531	7,531	9,155	(1,624)

Table 2: 2022/23 Revenue budget detailed forecast at Month 9

Service Area	Original Budget 2022/23	Budget Adjustments	Revised Annual Budget	Forecast Outturn	Forecast (Under) / Over Spend @ M9	Forecast (Under) / Over Spend M6	Forecast Variance M6 to M9
	'000's	'000's	'000's	'000's	'000's	'000's	'000's
Adult Services	9,548	(67)	9,481	9,178	(303)	(428)	125
Children Services	17,795	17	17,812	22,235	4,423	4,399	24
Community Care	26,111	1,007	27,118	29,144	2,026	2,069	(43)
Commissioning	1,418	(266)	1,151	1,040	(111)	(96)	(15)
Partnerships	436	5	441	441	0	0	(0)
Public Protection	1,910	(18)	1,891	1,756	(135)	(162)	27
Resources & Performance	659	2	662	541	(121)	(71)	(50)
Social Care, Health & Safeguarding	57,877	680	58,557	64,335	5,779	5,711	67
Individual Schools Budget	47,775	380	48,155	48,433	278	222	56
Resources	1,162	34	1,196	1,126	(70)	11	(81)
Standards	10,053	11	10,064	10,784	720	499	221
Children & Young People	58,990	426	59,416	60,343	927	732	195
Enterprise, Housing & Community Animation	2,795	(38)	2,757	2,620	(137)	263	(400)
Facilities & Fleet Management	6,552	4,077	10,629	10,716	87	411	(324)
Neighbourhood Services	11,944	(2,935)	9,009	8,660	(349)	(164)	(185)
Placemaking, Highways & Flood	1,765	(143)	1,622	1,414	(208)	76	(284)
Communities & Place	23,055	962	24,017	23,410	(607)	586	(1,193)
Countryside & Culture	1,101	91	1,192	1,185	(6)	(5)	(1)
Finance & Business Development	2,389	101	2,490	2,449	(41)	12	(53)
Leisure, Youth & Outdoor Adventure	1,067	327	1,393	1,692	298	475	(177)
MonLife	4,556	518	5,074	5,326	251	482	(231)
Policy, Scrutiny & Customer Service	3,155	35	3,190	2,965	(225)	(288)	63
Chief Executives	3,155	35	3,190	2,965	(225)	(288)	63
Communications	239	7	246	268	22	34	(12)
Democratic Services	1,547	142	1,690	1,712	22	22	0
Emergency Planning	158	5	163	182	19	24	(5)
Legal and Land Charges	963	31	994	1,007	13	(7)	20
People	1,756	87	1,843	1,845	2	(45)	47
People & Governance	4,663	273	4,936	5,014	78	28	50

Service Area	Original Budget 2022/23	Budget Adjustments	Revised Annual Budget	Forecast Outturn	Forecast (Under) / Over Spend @ M9	Forecast (Under) / Over Spend M6	Forecast Variance M6 to M9
Commercial, Corporate & landlord Services	1,521	507	2,028	1,697	(331)	(44)	(287)
Finance	2,659	440	3,098	3,877	779	871	(93)
Future Monmouthshire	4	1	5	0	(5)	(5)	0
Information Communication Technology	2,883	(42)	2,842	2,734	(108)	(60)	(48)
Resources	7,067	907	7,973	8,308	335	763	(428)
Precepts & Levies	22,319	312	22,630	22,630	(0)	0	(0)
Coroner's	171	0	171	171	(0)	0	0
Archives	196	0	196	196	(0)	0	(0)
Corporate Management	385	0	385	300	(85)	(37)	(48)
Non Distributed Costs (NDC)	651	0	651	666	15	0	15
Strategic Initiatives	867	(2,917)	(2,050)	0	2,050	2,017	33
Insurance	1,619	0	1,619	1,517	(102)	(84)	(18)
Corporate Costs & Levies	26,207	(2,604)	23,603	25,480	1,878	1,896	(17)
Net Cost of Services	185,570	1,196	186,766	195,181	8,415	9,909	(1,494)
Interest & Investment Income	(100)	0	(100)	(802)	(702)	(549)	(153)
Interest Payable & Similar Charges	3,956	0	3,956	4,585	629	672	(43)
Charges Required under Regulation	6,714	0	6,714	6,667	(47)	(47)	0
Other Investment Income	0	0	0	(1)	(1)	0	(1)
Borrowing Cost Recoupment	(3,520)	0	(3,520)	(3,845)	(325)	(325)	0
Contributions to Reserves	188	0	188	188	0	0	0
Contributions from reserves	(586)	(720)	(1,306)	(1,306)	(0)	0	(0)
Appropriations	6,652	(720)	5,932	5,486	(446)	(250)	(197)
Expenditure to be Financed	192,223	476	192,699	200,667	7,969	9,660	(1,690)
General Government Grants	(77,524)	0	(77,524)	(77,524)	0	0	0
Non Domestic Rates	(34,753)	0	(34,753)	(34,753)	0	0	0
Council tax	(87,309)	(476)	(87,785)	(87,977)	(192)	(300)	108
Council Tax Benefit Support	7,363	0	7,363	7,118	(245)	(203)	(42)
Financing	(192,223)	(476)	(192,699)	(193,136)	(437)	(503)	66
Net General Fund (Surplus) / Deficit	0	0	0	7,531	7,531	9,155	(1,624)

DIRECTORATE – DIVISION VARIANCE COMMENTS

SOCIAL CARE, HEALTH & SAFEGUARDING DIRECTORATE	Month 4	Month 6	Month 9	Outturn
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	5,056	5,711	5,779	0

SOCIAL CARE, HEALTH & SAFEGUARDING DIRECTOR'S COMMENTARY:

Quarter 3 and 9 months into the financial year we are reporting an over spend of £5.779m based on known commitments and expectations against the directorate budget. Since month 6 the over spend has risen by £67K as a result of increasing expenditure within the Children's Services division of circa £1.1m, offset by substantial unbudgeted grants in relation to the newly issued Radical Reform grant (£527k), and Eliminate agenda (£569k).

As part of the last quarter's forecast each directorate was tasked to draw up an in-year savings plan and for this directorate we submitted a plan totalling £800K. As at month 9 the achievement against the saving plan is £467K, with Children's tasked to find £316K of savings for which they have achieved £293K. Adults were tasked to save £270K which has not been achieved, and the remainder of the savings are mostly in staffing by way of holding back vacancies. On a more positive note unmet care need currents stands at 947 weekly hours, a significant reduction on previous months.

The Children's budget is estimating an over spend of £4.423m, with a large proportion due to the increasing numbers and costs of high cost placements, including extremely costly emergency arrangements for children where there is no regulated placement. To quantify placements, we are predicted to spend £9.5m on 100 packages, of which 23 of those packages are individually in excess of £100k and account for 67% of the spend. Another influencing factor is the continued use of agency staffing to fill vacancies and stabilise the workforce within the division, with 14 employed as at the end of December and an additional cost of £250K. This financial year sees the full effect of costs resulting from the removal by Welsh Government of the COVID hardship fund, Social Care Recovery Fund and Social Care Pressures grants. Since month 6 we have been awarded the sum of £527K via the Radical Reform Grant and £569K via the Eliminate grant which has been adjusted for in the reported month 9 forecast, and without which the over spend would have been much higher. As at the end of December the number of Children Looked After decreased by 1 since month 6 to a total of 210, inclusive of 8 relating to Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers.

The combined Adults budget is forecast to over spend by £1.490m, which remains largely within predictions at month 6. As with month 6 the over spend has been as a result of the full year effect in costs to be borne by the budget from the loss of three vital Welsh Government funding streams. Older Adults budgets have seen a dramatic influx of clients requiring services as we move out of the pandemic, with continued pressures from hospitals to discharge patients into the social care sector, with some clients requiring more intense services due to delayed health care during the pandemic. Since the start of this financial year following removal of the COVID hardship grant we have funded an additional 47 care home placements at a net cost of £500K. With non-residential care the weekly care hours provided at the end of December stood at 15,503, of which 18 care packages are 24-hour provision. A few in house services are currently undergoing reviews, with in year savings being used to partially offset over spends. This division is currently benefitting from a number of external grant funding streams, the main one being the Social Care Workforce Sustainability Grant of £1.1m, used to offset the over spend and limit the effects of Winter Pressures.

Public Protection is at present forecasting an under spend of £135k due to savings from vacant posts, which are currently in the process of being recruited to.

Adult Services				
Outturn Forecast	Month 4	Month 6	Month 9	Outturn
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	(355)	(428)	(303)	0

The under spend is largely in the My Day My Life and Budden Crescent services and a review will be commissioned to determine the delivery model moving forward as we exit the pandemic and what is required to meet the future needs of our disability clients.

Children Services

Outturn Forecast	Month 4	Month 6	Month 9	Outturn
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	3,519	4,399	4,423	0

Due to the increasing numbers and costs of high cost placements, including extremely costly emergency arrangements for children where there is no regulated placement. There is continued use of agency staff to fill vacancies and help stabilise the workforce. This financial year sees the full effect of costs resulting from the removal by Welsh Government of the COVID hardship fund, Social Care Recovery Fund and Social Care Pressures grants.

Community Care

Outturn Forecast	Month 4	Month 6	Month 9	Outturn
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	2,081	2,069	2,026	0

This financial year we have made 47 additional care home placements which has added £500k to the over spend. The majority of the remaining over spend is as a result of increased demand for non-residential care (15,503 weekly care hours provided at the end of December), especially for 24-hour care provision for domiciliary care (18 at the end of December) to aid hospital discharge, to meet the challenges of an ageing population and as a result of the pandemic, clients are of a higher dependency due to delayed health care. This division has benefitted from a £1.1m Social Care Workforce Sustainability grant to help offset over spends and limit the effects of Winter Pressures.

Commissioning

Outturn Forecast	Month 4	Month 6	Month 9	Outturn
Deficit / (Surplus) £'s	(74)	(95)	(112)	0

Saving from staff vacancy which is currently planned to go out to recruitment.

Partnerships

Outturn Forecast	Month 4	Month 6	Month 9	Outturn
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	0	0	0	0

No variance forecast.

Public Protection

Outturn Forecast	Month 4	Month 6	Month 9	Outturn
Deficit / (Surplus) £'s	(61)	(163)	(134)	0

Savings from staff vacancies.

Resources & Performance

Outturn Forecast	Month 4	Month 6	Month 9	Outturn
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	(54)	(71)	(121)	0

Savings from vacancies which are currently out to recruitment.

CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE DIRECTORATE	Month 4	Month 6	Month 9	Outturn
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	741	732	927	0

CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE DIRECTOR'S COMMENTARY:

The Directorate's Month 9 position is an over spend of £927k, which is an increase of £195k on the Month 6 forecast. This increase is primarily due to increased ALN transport cost of £241k as all operators were given a % increase due to rising fuel costs. This increase in over spend has been partially offset by savings that were agreed at Month 6 through the CYP budget recovery plan.

Individual Schools Budget

Outturn Forecast	Month 4	Month 6	Month 9	Outturn
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	175	222	278	0

The £56k increase in over spend compared to the Month 6 forecast is due to the following:-

- The 1.25% increase in NI finished at the end of November, so funding was reduced in the ISB Budget, but we were unable to claw this back from schools (£120k)
- Backfill costs for a Headteacher secondment (£55k)
- Staff cost savings for the EST Team, as agreed at Month 6 through CYP Recovery Plan (-£122k)

The remaining ISB over spend of £222k is due to the following, which was not included in the budget:-

- funding of two protected salaries and a Teaching & Learning Responsibility payment (TLR) which falls to the Authority to fund (£45k)
- back pay for staff, which was not included in the MTFP. This was due to the late agreement for the pay award and the budget had already been set (£100k)
- payment for a bespoke home to school transport arrangement to Caldicot School pending a final catchment area review (£20k)
- School Staff Wellbeing Project (£9k)
- back pay for staff (£26k)
- legal costs (£17k)

Resources

Outturn Forecast	Month 4	Month 6	Month 9	Outturn
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	32	11	(71)	0

There have been savings of £82k since Month 6, due to the following:-

- -£89k was released as part of the recovery plan agreed at Month 6
- Pay Award (£14k)
- Capita ONE charges not being recharged to the other cost centres (£25k) – savings shown in the other cost centres
- Capital grant funding the Cloud on-boarding charges (-£30k)
- ICT saving i.e. the Cloud going live in April '23, rather than March '23 (-£5k)
- Unexpected costs regarding Mounton House, Legal Costs & an increase in ACCA course fees (£3k)

The previous £11k overspend, reported at Month 6, was due to the following:-

- several cost centres not being able to meet the 2% staff employee cost efficiency savings target fully (£32k)
- ICT saving i.e. the Cloud going live early in March 2022, rather than July 2022 (-£15k)

- vacancy saving (the position has now been filled) (-£6k)

Standards

Outturn Forecast	Month 4	Month 6	Month 9	Outturn
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	533	499	720	0

The increase in over spend of £221k since Month 6, is due to the following:-

- ALN Transport – all operators have been given a % increase due to rising fuel costs (£241k)
- Vacancy Saving in the Psychology Service (-£22k) and further savings due to ELSA income being used to fund staff costs (£-14.4k) and recognising the funding for the Pay Award (-£5.8k)
- Reduction in ALN recoupment budget, which is the net effect of 1 x pupil moving to Monmouthshire at start of Sept, so unable to recoup and now being able to recoup for an existing pupil, as previously the other LA had been giving the funding to the pupils parents (£7k)
- Reduction in income for Early Years, as was not able to bid for a grant as expected (£25k)
- ALN Management vacancy saving (-£25k)
- Increase in catering costs for Breakfast Clubs (£25.3k)
- Further smaller savings across 9 cost centres amounting to -£10k

The overspend of £533k at month 4, was largely due to ALN, which had seen costs increase due to the following:

- Several pupils have either moved into Monmouthshire or have left a Monmouthshire school to attend a school in their home County, so we are no longer able to recoup the income from other LA's (£68k)
- 2 new pupils attending an independent school (£105k)
- Full year costs for 2 pupils currently at an Independent school, who decided to stay on for Year 14 (were previously leaving at the end of Year 13 / the Summer Term (£60k))
- 1 pupil accessing SALT and Seirrah Therapies (£24k)
- 1 pupil attending MonLife (£30k)
- 3 new pupils attending schools in Blaenau Gwent & increase in costs for an existing pupil (£105k)
- 2 new pupils attending schools in Newport (£17k)
- 1 new pupil moving to a Bristol school (£9k)
- 1 new pupil potentially to attend a school in Torfaen, currently going through Tribunal (£50k)
- Staff costs due to the expansion of Pembroke SNRB (£32k)
- Blaenau Gwent contacted us to advise they had been paying transport costs, that we were liable for, as the pupil is a Looked After Child (£19k)

The remainder of the overspend was due to additional staff costs in the Education Welfare Support Team (EWS) and the EWS and Psychology Service being unable to currently meet the 2% staff efficiency savings.

The £54k reduction in overspend at Month 6 against the Month 4 Forecast, was due to the following:

- 6 pupils no longer attending out of county schools (-£129k), offset by;
- 3 further pupils have left a Monmouthshire school to attend a school in their home County, so we are no longer able to recoup the income from other LA's (£40k)
- 1 new pupil attending an independent school, which has been offset by some smaller savings regarding existing pupil placement costs (£31k)
- Backfill costs for a staff member who is supporting the Deri View Virtual School (SNRB) and Outreach (£27k).

COMMUNITIES & PLACE DIRECTORATE	Month 4	Month 6	Month 9	Outturn
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	616	758	(607)	0

COMMUNITIES & PLACE DIRECTOR'S COMMENTARY:

The Directorate is forecasting a £607k underspend at Month 9.

This is an improved position since Month 6 and the details of these changes are provided within the next sections of this report. Whilst there is an improvement in the overall position of the Directorate, within this period, the costs of the provision of temporary and emergency accommodation for people presenting as homeless continues to increase, similarly, the bus transport sector remains fragile and we have seen the consequential impacts within our home to school transport service with external contracts being handed back to the Authority, increased contract costs and the impacts of inflationary rises affecting the service areas significantly.

Across all services, all eligible costs continue to be claimed against any Welsh Government funding that is made available. Since Month 6 a number of service areas have been able to report an improved position due to additional grant funds being made available e.g. Housing Prevention Grant and Bus Emergency Support funds which has significantly improved the Directorates overall position at this stage.

In addition, we will continue to closely monitor and manage all operational and financial performance to ensure that all possible action is taken to constrain any further costs.

Enterprise, Housing & Community Animation

Outturn Forecast	Month 4	Month 6	Month 9	Outturn
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	337	283	(137)	0

Enterprise & Community Animation is forecasting a £137k underspend at month 9, this is mainly due to:

- **Enterprise Mgt** - £30k over spend – Due to an increase in staff costs over and above available budget and an increase in contribution to City Deal.
- **Housing** - £65k underspend, this can be broken down into these main areas: -
 - **Homelessness** – £98k underspend – Current projections for the year indicate the authority will spend circa £2.433m on B&B accommodation for our homeless (this is a £133k increase from what we thought at Month 6) and an additional £864k (up £176k from M6) on ancillary spend including security and damage repairs in our hostels and leased accommodation, which mainly relates to accommodating those with higher support needs. This cost will be offset by pre-paid Covid-19 grant (£760k), Housing Prevention grant (£1.005m) and Housing Benefit (£1.630m) creating an underspend against budget of £98k. The main reason for this underspend is the receipt of £495k of additional HPG grant in January, which was not known in September, although this has been part used up by the forecast increase in B&B and ancillary spend since Month 6. The £98k underspend will be used to offset the overspend in our Revenues budget (currently £1.236m) within the Resources Directorate caused by the Housing Benefit subsidy cap on B&B accommodation.
 - **Shared Housing & Private Leasing** – Break-even – Improvement of £29k since M6 due to receipt of WG grant that has allowed us to cover maintenance and repair costs.
 - **Strategic Services & Renovation Grants** – net £29k over spend – Mainly due to additional software and subscription costs in strategic services and increased administration costs for renovation grants.
 - **Sewage Treatment Plants** - £19k over spend - due to delays in progressing the plant replacement projects which means the plants have to be emptied until the works are completed to resolve the issues.
 - **Careline** - £13k underspend – Improvement since Month 6 as a reduction in equipment spend has pushed the service under budget.

- **Business Growth & Enterprise** – £92k under spend – Due in the main to the Strategic Operations Team forecasting a £93k under spend due to staff savings as posts have only been filled part way through the year. In addition, the decision was made to freeze the recruitment of the Strategic Operations manager until the new year as part of the M6 budget recovery plan and is the main reason for the increase in underspend since M9.
- **Community & P/Ships development** - £11k under spend – staff savings resulting from the ability to passport staff costs to UKG Ukraine funding have been part offset by the additional, running costs of the Together Works scheme, these were not known at M6 and is the reason for the £11k reduction since M6.

All other service areas are reporting a balanced budget.

Facilities & Fleet Management

Outturn Forecast	Month 4	Month 6	Month 9	Outturn
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	511	564	88	0

Facilities & Fleet management are forecasting a £88k over spend, due to -

- **Schools Catering** – Break-even – We have seen an improvement in the Schools Catering position since M6 and it is no longer reporting a £128k overspend, this is due to 2 main reasons
1) our original staff number projection to cater for the roll-out has been reduced as we have been able to gain a more accurate understanding of resource requirement as the year has progressed.
2) We have received additional grant funding from WG to help with the administration of the UFSM roll-out and Covid FSM scheme. WG are undertaking a review of the unit price paid for the provision of UFSM, the current rate of £2.90 is likely to result in increased pressures in 23-24 when UFSM rolls out to Key Stage 2 pupils.
- **Passenger Transport** – £291k over spend – Cost of living inflation increases have had a material impact on the service, the additional burden of increased pay, fuel and repair costs have meant that operators have handed back contracts and our in-house budgets are being stretched due to :-
 - **External Commissioning** – £184k over spend due to an increase in external contract prices and contract variations from September. This figure includes the contracts that were handed back and retendered at month 04. The forecast is based on the payment figure as of January.
 - **Internal Operations** – £106k over spend – due to the need to purchase vehicles and employ extra staff to run contracts in-house as a consequence of operator hand backs. This is an £86k improvement from M6 and is due to a receipt of additional £72k BES grant that was not known at M6 plus a small decrease in external contract cost projection of £4k.
- **Car Salary Sacrifice Scheme** – £13k over spend - This is due to a reduction in the number of members of the car salary sacrifice scheme resulting in actual savings falling below budgeted levels. The proposed re-launch of the Tusker scheme will result in Corporate savings being passported to the applicant which will result in continuing permanent reduction in income levels.
- **Fleet maintenance** - £81k over spend – This is mainly due to the effect of inflation increases on fuel & spare parts, in addition employee costs have increased due to the regrading of part of the workforce as a consequence of a job evaluation exercise. This is an £18k improvement from month 6 and is due to the movement of staff costs associated with service transformation to capital as part of the capitalisation directive, this was not factored in at M6.
- **Building Cleaning & Public Conveniences (PCs)** - £95k under spend – this is due to a saving on business rates as we no longer pay them on PC's (£25k) and a £70k underspend in Building Cleaning due to improved turnover through the continuation of in-house contracts and a £25k reduction in expenditure as part of a managed one off reduction in supplies spend to aid with the authority budget recovery plan

- **Decarbonisation** - £202k under spend – due to improved income from our Solar Farm and PV installations caused by the increased market rates for energy (£175k) and staff savings within the de-carb team of £27k due to the delayed recruitment to the Energy Officer post to aid with the authorities budget recovery plan.

Neighbourhood Services

Outturn Forecast	Month 4	Month 6	Month 9	Outturn
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	(227)	(164)	(349)	0

Neighbourhood Services are forecasting to under spend by £349k, this is due to-

- **Highways, SWTRA & Streetlighting** – £202k under spend – all the underspend comes from within our Streetlighting unit and can be attributed to 1) Energy has underspent by £127k - the budget was set at 19/20 consumption levels, this has been found to be too high due to the improvement gained since then from the installation of LEDs, this has meant our actual cost of energy has fallen well below budget. 2) Staff saving of £2k due to the delay in filling a vacant post. 3) A £69k saving in maintenance as we have moved qualifying revenue spend to available capital budget as part of the authority's budget recovery plan and is the main reason for the increase in underspend since M6.
Highways Operations and SWTRA & External Clients are both forecasting a break-even budget. The final outturn for Highways Ops can be affected by adverse weather conditions such as snow events or increased gritting due to continued cold weather. The unit will endeavour to cover these costs within budget but there is a potential for a late year budget pressure.
- **Waste & Street Scene** - £147k under spend – Waste Services continues to report a break-even position, our Grounds maintenance is reporting a £147k underspend due to improved income resulting from an increased draw on commuted sum funding.

Placemaking, Highways & Flood

Outturn Forecast	Month 4	Month 6	Month 9	Outturn
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	(5)	76	(208)	0

Placemaking, Highways & Flood is forecasting to under spend by £208k, this is as a result of -

- **Planning & Building Control** – £44k over spend – Over spend in Planning due to the inability to make staff vacancy savings (£21k), hardware and software costs to update microfiche system (£59k) offset by a net improvement in income of £35k.
- **Planning Policy & LDP** – £94k under spend - due to staff savings from a vacant post and one retirement (£36k) and further delays in the progression of the LDP meaning spend has not occurred as planned this financial year (£58k).
- **Car Parks & Civil Parking Enforcement** - £266k over spend – due to a shortfall in parking enforcement fines of £186k coupled with over spends in expenditure primarily in transport, premises and software costs of £80k.

Highways management & flooding - £424k under spend – income is continuing to exceed budgeted target levels in relation to Road closure and SAB fees, in addition we have received WG flooding grant that is now covering core service costs. The department also has a number of vacancies that is contributing to an under spend in our employee budgets. The under spend has increased by £188k since month 6, the majority of this is due the decision to freeze all post recruitment until the new year as part of the budget recovery plan.

MONLIFE DIRECTORATE	Month 4	Month 6	Month 9	Outturn
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	479	462	251	0

MonLife DIRECTOR'S COMMENTARY:

The Monlife directorate is forecasting to over spend by £251k, the two main areas of focus continue to be leisure and outdoor services, with these areas providing the most significant financial challenges in the current economy. Monlife are completing deep dives of each business unit assessing the best options for future sustainability and the tactics needed to improve performance in these areas. Future development work includes working closely with CYP and Social Services on other programs to reduce our over-spend and ensure the future sustainability of our services. MonLife have seen an improvement of £231k since month 6 this is mainly due to freezing vacant posts, a fantastic annual membership campaign and increase uptake in our residential and re-engage program at Gilwern.

(Monlife) Countryside & Culture

Outturn Forecast	Month 4	Month 6	Month 9	Outturn
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	(3)	(5)	(6)	0

Countryside & Culture is forecasting to under spend by £6k due to a small under spend on third party contracts.

(Monlife) Finance & Business Development

Outturn Forecast	Month 4	Month 6	Month 9	Outturn
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	14	(8)	(41)	0

Finance & Business Development is forecasting to under spend by £41k the variance from month 6 to month 9 relates to freezing vacant posts and increasing project management recovery from our grants as agreed in the month 6 recovery plan.

(Monlife) Leisure, Youth & Outdoor Adventure

Outturn Forecast	Month 4	Month 6	Month 9	Outturn
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	469	475	298	0

Leisure, Youth & Outdoor Adventure is forecasting to over spend by £298k, this is mainly due to: -

Leisure Services - £198K over spend mainly due to the sections inability to generate the expected income targets. Memberships have grown significantly over the past 12 months and recovered to pre-pandemic levels; however, this still falls short of the income target set for the section built on a model pre-pandemic which looked at commercial growth over a 3-year period. Due to the impact of the cost-of-living crisis and Covid-19 this model is unachievable at present, we continue to work hard with teams to mitigate the financial loss the improvement from month 6 to 9 mainly relates to our successful annual membership campaign, which increased memberships by 256 and delivered an additional £64,951 income.

Youth & Education - £119k over spend mainly due to:-

Outdoor Adventure Service - £119k over spend. The sections current income target was derived from a pre-pandemic business model that focused on a 3-year delivery plan first focusing on MCC internal schools and then moving on to commercial focused model. The impact of the pandemic has meant that the delivery of this model has been delayed this has led to a shortfall in income due to schools being reluctant to return to residential model (this is slowly changing). A project working group is set up looking at way to mitigate the financial loss part of this work will involve working closely with schools who show massive interest in the outdoor learning as the new curriculum in Wales is adopted which looks to support creative lessons with real life meaning. The variance from month 6 to 9 mainly relates to increase income due to high engagement in our residential offer and our re-engage program.

Sports Development - £20k under spend due to higher than anticipated grant income.

**CHIEF EXECUTIVES UNIT
DIRECTORATE**

	Month 4	Month 6	Month 9	Outturn
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	0	(288)	(225)	0

HEAD OF POLICY, PERFORMANCE AND SCRUTINY COMMENTARY:

The current under spend of £225k is being achieved by a number of posts being held vacant across the department to help contribute to the in-year budget recovery. It is also aided by some core staffing costs being funded by grant contributions from other agencies. This is not a sustainable long-term position and is dependent on key staff working above and beyond their contracted hours. The forecast is also artificially inflated by the continued delay in purchasing a new telephony system to replace the current end-of-life solution. These savings mask pressures in the Welsh language budget which is demand led and over spending due to an increase in the volume of translations required to comply with the Welsh Language Standards.

Policy, Scrutiny & Customer Experience

Outturn Forecast	Month 4	Month 6	Month 9	Outturn
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	0	(288)	(225)	0

Policy, Scrutiny & Customer Experience are forecasting a £225k under spend at Month 9, the outturn position is made up of a number of under and over spends across the directorate with the main variances being:

- **Partnerships Mgmt** - £19k under spend – The service has been able to fund core staff costs from a WHO grant resulting in an employee under spend (£37k) but this has been offset by an over spend in Community Safety due to a drop off in partner funding of £18k which was not factored in at Month6.
- **Contact Centre** - £20k under spend – the contact centre continues to see employee cost pressures through maternity cover and non-achievable vacancy factor savings, but this is currently being offset by savings due to the delay in purchasing a new telephony system.
- **Equalities & Welsh Language** - £28k under spend – Due to staff savings of £82k due to delay in employing the new Welsh language officer and Equalities post which have been partially offset by an over spend of £54k on external translation costs as demand has increased.
- **GIS Project** - £30k under spend – No change from month 6 - Mainly due to employee savings as we are able to passport core staff time spent on digital innovation to capitalisation directive.
- **Performance & Data** - £34k under spend – This is due to a saving in employee costs as we are able to move officer cost for time spent on Ukraine support against UKG grant funding and posts have been held vacant to aid budget recovery with this work being covered by other staff in the team .
- **Community Hubs & Libraries** - £60k under spend – this is due to employee savings as core staff costs have been covered by the UKG Ukraine grant. This has been part offset by a reduction in income as budget is unachievable since the removal of fines in our libraries. This is a £95k improvement from M6 and is as a result of the Ukraine funding that was not factored in at M6 but formed part of the budget recovery plan.
- **Community Education** - £29k under spend – Under spend due to core service spend being covered by zero carbon and digital grants and good performance against the targets set by Coleg Gwent as part of our franchise agreement
- **Ukraine Grant** – Break-even budget – Current projections indicate that all costs relating to Ukraine will be covered by the UK Government grant. At Month 6 we reported a £200k under spend but this

will now be reflected within other department's outturn figures as we move related costs against the grant. The budget is being spent on housing, temporary accommodation, transport, education, well-being and exercise opportunities for refugees.

Offset by over spends in :-

- **Levies, Subscriptions & Donations** - £15k over spend – membership subscriptions to external bodies such as the WLGA and LGA have increased over and above available budget.

PEOPLE & GOVERNANCE DIRECTORATE

	Month 4	Month 6	Month 9	Outturn
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	0	28	79	0

PEOPLE & GOVERNANCE DIRECTOR'S COMMENTARY:

People & Governance is reporting a £79k over spend at Month 9.

Where gaps can be held and recruitment frozen it is being done with a view to an end of year under spend and important systems implementation is being undertaken to derive efficiencies in the next financial year and improve whole authority efficiency.

Communications

Outturn Forecast	Month 4	Month 6	Month 9	Outturn
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	26	35	22	0

- **Communications** - £22k over spend - due to staff over spends caused by maternity cover and pay band increases plus increases in software licence costs. This has been partially offset by secondment income. The improvement of £13k since M6 is mainly due to savings resulting from staff vacancies that were frozen as part of the budget recovery plan and an improvement in income projection since September.

Democratic Services

Outturn Forecast	Month 4	Month 6	Month 9	Outturn
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	21	27	22	0

Democratic Services is forecasting to over spend by £22k, this is due to -

- **Members Costs** - £22k over spend – no change from month 6, over spend due to cost pressures caused by transition to new cabinet membership structure and software maintenance costs.
- All other services are forecasting on budget.

Emergency Planning

Outturn Forecast	Month 4	Month 6	Month 9	Outturn
Deficit / (Surplus) £'s	0	24	19	0

Emergency Planning - £19k over spend – Over spend in staffing mainly due to duty officer standby costs exceeding available budget. These have reduced since M6 and is the reason for the £5k improvement.

Legal and Land Charges

Outturn Forecast	Month 4	Month 6	Month 9	Outturn
Deficit / (Surplus) £'s	(7)	(7)	12	0

- **Land Charges** - £13k under spend – this is as a result of improved search income and savings from a vacant post. The under spend has reduced since M6 as search fee income has dropped off towards the end of the year so we have reduced our income projections.
- **Legal Services** - £25k over spend – due to increases in legal costs and systems & software contracts (£27k), potential under recovery of fee income (£38k) offset by under spends in staffing due to delays in recruiting posts (£39k).

People

Outturn Forecast	Month 4	Month 6	Month 9	Outturn
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	(39)	(51)	2	0

People Services is forecasting to over spend by £2k at Month 9.

- **People Services** – net £12k over spend – mainly due to net under spends in staffing across the department, we are carrying savings as a result of a senior post retirement that will not be filled along with savings generated by the delay in filling posts when a staff member leaves. In addition we are seeing a saving in Occupational Health due to a reduction in demand. This has been offset by the projected cost of the implementation of a new recruitment system within payroll of £164k, there is a potential for this cost to be capitalised so the in-year position could improve. The adverse swing of £46k from Month 6 is due to additional employee costs where staff resource issues required temporary contracts to be extended or external support procured, this was not known at M6.
- **Organisational Development** – £1k over spend – mainly due to inability to achieve staff vacancy saving.
- **Corporate Training** – £11k under spend – mainly due to savings from staff vacancies.

RESOURCES DIRECTORATE	Month 4	Month 6	Month 9	Outturn
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	756	608	335	0

The Directorate continues to demonstrate signs of budget pressure, albeit it the month 9 forecast position is an improved one. The directorate has successfully delivered the savings required and that contribute to the in-year budget recovery plan.

Departments will continue in their efforts to reduce or contain cost or pressures where this is practicable and does not have an unacceptable impact on core service delivery.

The most significant factor driving the forecast over spend continues to be in relation to Housing benefits where national policy change has brought about increased expenditure required in relation to the housing needs of the Homeless. Whilst the housing placement cost element of this falls to the Communities & Place directorate, the shortfall in housing benefit subsidy claimable on B&B placements is a significant additional cost to the Resources directorate. There are limited options available to the Council to arrest this situation in the very near term, however the Council is currently exploring options for a more permanent and lower cost solution.

There are significant offsetting under spends within the directorate as a result of staff vacancies being held. It is recognised that some of these vacancies have been unfilled for a significant period and that this is not a sustainable or resilient position for many of the service areas in the directorate to be in, and work is now actively ongoing to rectify this with posts starting to be filled.

Finance

Outturn Forecast	Month 4	Month 6	Month 9	Outturn
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	748	871	779	0

Finance is forecasting to over spend by £779k, this is mainly due to -

- **Revenues** - £1.072m over spend, this is due in the main to –
 - **Housing Benefits** - £1.236m over spend - The forecast over spend for emergency homeless B&B placements, for which we are unable to claim full housing benefit subsidy, stands at £1.374m. This has increased by £11,000 since we reported at month 6 and reflects current placement activity. This has been part offset by £137k of administrative funding from Welsh Government for the household support schemes that councils are administering on their behalf and an anticipated under spend against MCC's contribution to the DHP budget, as we look to utilise available grant funding first. Work to find alternative accommodation options is ongoing, although there is no certainty that this will mitigate demand and reduce the pressure on the budget.
 - **Council Tax** - £56k over spend – due to a shortfall in summons income of £33k, to date, half the council tax accounts that are in arrears have been summonsed, with the other half expected before the year end. The remaining over spend is caused by a budget deficit of £23k caused by adjustments relating to the Resources restructure, this has been offset by savings listed within Finance below.
 - **Debtors and Charity relief** - £221k under spend – The forecast under spend is made up of a number of elements. A saving of £126,000 is expected as money set aside for a business rate scheme is unlikely to be utilised this year. Also £88,000 administration grant funding (net of known expenditure) is expected for the various grant support schemes that are being administered on behalf of Welsh Government. In addition, there is a small under spend in Debtors due to reduced printing & postage costs (£5k).
- **Finance** - £166k under spend – There has been a number of vacant posts during the year resulting in a saving against staffing budgets, the majority of these posts have now been filled meaning this under spend will not be repeated next year.
- **Audit** - £83k under spend – This is due to staff vacancies, the improvement since M6 relates to the decision to freeze recruitment of 1 post as part of budget recovery plan.
- **Systems & Cashiers** – £43k under spend – due to:
 - **Cashiers** - £4k over spend - The delay in fully implementing the decision to remove cheques has meant we will be unable to achieve the £20,000 staff saving that was carried over in the budget from 2020/21. This pressure has been partially offset by in year staff vacancies and reduced collection costs for our Security Carrier, bringing the over spend down to £4,000.
 - **Systems** - £45k under spend - The under spend is made up of £14,000 savings due to vacancies within the team at the start of the year, a £24,000 saving against the system programme budget as the anticipated replacement of a purchasing system has been deferred into 2023/24 and £7,000 additional income has been received for the purchase card rebate. The increase in the under spend since month 6 reflects the requirement to hold off the replacement of the purchasing system.

Future Monmouthshire

Outturn Forecast	Month 4	Month 6	Month 9	Outturn
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	(5)	(5)	(5)	0

Staff costs have been recovered from external partners.

Information, Communication & Technology

Outturn Forecast	Month 4	Month 6	Month 9	Outturn
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	(58)	(59)	(108)	0

ICT is forecasting to under spend by £108k at month 9, this is due to:

- **Digital Programme Office** - £37k under spend – due to savings in allowances and subsistence (£2k) and a managed reduction in equipment spend (£35k) as part of budget recovery plan.
- **Shared Resource Service** - £32k under spend – our contribution to the SRS service is currently projecting to be less than budget.
- **Digital Design & Innovation** - £17k under spend - mainly due to savings in staffing where a post has been replaced at a lower grade.
- **Cyber Security** - £22k under spend - due to staff savings as a post was only filled in May and savings on supplies & services.

Commercial & Corporate Landlord

Outturn Forecast	Month 4	Month 6	Month 9	Outturn
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	71	(197)	(331)	0

Commercial & Corporate Landlord is forecasting to under spend by £331k, due to:

- **Investment Properties** - £144k over spend, due to:
 - **Newport Leisure Park** - £36k over spend – we are currently projecting to generate a £76k surplus on NLP this year although this is £36k below our budgeted target. The swing from month 6 to month 9 relates to the loss of a tenant who has gone into administration. We continue to market the vacant units and are confident of re-letting in 23-24 which will see a considerable increase in income next financial year.
 - **Castlegate Business Park** - £108k over spend – Castlegate has significantly improved its position with the rental of 3 vacant units this year, which has considerably reduced our landlord liabilities, however the rent free period means we will fall short of our income target and also incur one off agency fees associated with securing these new rentals which was unbudgeted at month 6. The rent-free period is now complete and in 23-24 will see a full year of rental income increasing the income generated next year by £134k.
- **Landlord Services** - £273k under spend – rental income has increased over budget mainly as a result of the recovery of the rental of Innovation House from the Ukrainian Grant Fund (£172k), in addition there are savings from vacant posts that will now not be filled until next financial year and is the reason for the improvement from M6.
- **Cemeteries** - £34k under spend – Position has improved since month6 and is due to income projections now exceeding original forecasts.
- **County Farms** - £11k over spend – income projections are down due to a number of empty farms, but we have received some late windfall income that has helped improved the position by £24k since month 6.
- **Industrial Units** - £37k under spend – Rental income has increased above budget due to a number of new lettings.
- **Markets** - £127k over spend. This is due to the markets still recovering from Covid-19. Whilst rent prices have returned to pre Covid-19 levels we have seen a decrease in the number of traders. The new layout at Abergavenny market has now been implemented and we have seen a small rise in rental income, but we are still £97k under budgeted targets. There is also a net increase in spend of £30k mainly due to an increase on waste disposal costs.
- **Property Services** – £270k under spend – Main reason for the saving is due to a managed under spend on building maintenance as part of the Month 6 budget recovery plan. There has not been a reduction in works just a passporting of qualifying spend from revenue to available capital funding creating a £322k under spend. In addition we are forecasting a £44k saving due to staff vacancies and improved fee income. This has been part offset by a net budget pressure of £96k in

accommodation mainly due to unfunded borrowing costs relating to the refurbishment of J Block (£70k) and an increase in cleaning spend as post Covid-19 requirements have increased costs above available budget (£77k), this has been offset by a maintenance under spend across our office sites of £51k.

CORPORATE COSTS & LEVIES DIRECTORATE	Month 4	Month 6	Month 9	Outturn
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	1,918	1,896	1,889	0
Precepts & Levies				
Outturn Forecast	Month 4	Month 6	Month 9	Outturn
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	(2)	(0)	0	0
No variance forecast.				
Coroners Services				
Outturn Forecast	Month 4	Month 6	Month 9	Outturn
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	0	0	0	0
No variance forecast.				
Corporate Management				
Outturn Forecast	Month 4	Month 6	Month 9	Outturn
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	(2)	(37)	(84)	0
Forecast has increased following notification of the anticipated Crematorium dividend.				
Non-Distributed Costs				
Outturn Forecast	Month 4	Month 6	Month 9	Outturn
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	0	0	15	0
Pension Strain Costs associated with early retirements have now been notified by the Greater Gwent Pension Fund.				
Strategic Initiatives				
Outturn Forecast	Month 4	Month 6	Month 9	Outturn
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	2,017	2,017	2,049	0
The agreed pay award offer of £1,925 for non-teaching staff during 2022/23 has resulted in a pressure of £2.049m for the authority. The overall cost of pay awards are accurately shown within the various service forecasts throughout this report, however a corresponding budget has also been transferred from the Corporate section to services to reflect the pressure over and above the budgeted pay award. This ensures that services are fully funded for the additional pressure and ensure future budgets accurately reflect the expected pay bill.				
Insurance				
Outturn Forecast	Month 4	Month 6	Month 9	Outturn
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	(95)	(84)	(91)	0
The Council has been out to tender for its insurance cover which resulted in premiums payable for 2022/23 being less than anticipated and reflective of a very competitive insurance market.				
APPROPRIATIONS DIRECTORATE	Month 4	Month 6	Month 9	Outturn

Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	(225)	(250)	(446)	0
Fixed Asset Disposal Costs				
Outturn Forecast	Month 4	Month 6	Month 9	Outturn
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	0	0	0	0
No variance forecast.				
Interest & Investment Income				
Outturn Forecast	Month 4	Month 6	Month 9	Outturn
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	(241)	(550)	(702)	0
Continuing Improved returns against the authority's investments due to a further increase in interest rates.				
Interest Payable & Similar Charges				
Outturn Forecast	Month 4	Month 6	Month 9	Outturn
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	191	672	629	0
Expected borrowing levels have reduced since month 6 and reduced overall interest payable.				
Charges Required Under Regulation				
Outturn Forecast	Month 4	Month 6	Month 9	Outturn
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	(51)	(47)	(47)	0
This budget covers the statutory amount the Council is obliged to set aside to fund future loan repayments and the forecast is slightly lower than the £6.7m budget due to slippage in the 2021/22 capital programme that was funded from borrowing (MRP costs start the year after the corresponding expenditure).				
Borrowing Cost Recoupment				
Outturn Forecast	Month 4	Month 6	Month 9	Outturn
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	(325)	(325)	(325)	0
This budget represents a technical accounting adjustment where borrowing costs relating to the purchase of capital assets is repatriated from service budgets to ensure that the full life cost of assets is borne by the end user. The variance to budget relates to vehicles purchased at the end of 2021/22 which were originally anticipated to be financed through a sale and leaseback arrangement, however following an options appraisal were found to be more cost effective to be purchased outright and financed from borrowing.				
Contributions to / from Reserves				
Outturn Forecast	Month 4	Month 6	Month 9	Outturn
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	200	0	0	0
An over spend of £200k was shown at month 4 to match 200k under spend in Planning Policy for reserves no longer required in year. A budget adjustment has since been made resulting in 200k favourable movement which will be matched by a 200k adverse movement within the planning section.				
FINANCING DIRECTORATE	Month 4	Month 6	Month 9	Outturn
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	(542)	(504)	(437)	0

Council Tax Benefit Support				
Outturn Forecast	Month 4	Month 6	Month 9	Outturn
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	(222)	(204)	(245)	0
It remains difficult to forecast the outturn position with any certainty. Caseload is now closer to pre pandemic levels. However, it does fluctuate on a monthly basis, hence the swing between month 6 and 9.				
Council Tax				
Outturn Forecast	Month 4	Month 6	Month 9	Outturn
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	(320)	(300)	(192)	0
Continue to anticipate a surplus in income collected this year, although things have changed since month 6. Generally, the tax base remains strong. However the upward trend noted at month 6 of an increase in discounts being awarded has continued, which has reduced the amount of income likely to be collected this year.				
General Government Grants				
Outturn Forecast	Month 4	Month 6	Month 9	Outturn
Deficit / (Surplus) £'000s	0	0	0	0
Income received to budget.				

2. SCHOOL BALANCES

2.1. A Board of Governors who are responsible for managing the school's finances directly governs each of the Authority's Schools. However, the Authority also holds a key responsibility for monitoring the overall financial performance of schools. Below is a table showing the outturn forecast Schools' balances position based on month 6 projections for each Educational Cluster.

Cluster	(A) Opening Reserves (Surplus) / Deficit Position 2022/23 £000's	(B) Draw / (Contribution) from / (to) School Balances @ Month 4 £'000	(C) Draw / (Contribution) from / (to) School Balances @ Month 6 £'000	(D) Draw / (Contribution) from / (to) School Balances @ Month 9 £'000	(A+D) Forecast Reserve Balances at 2022/23 Outturn £'000
Abergavenny	(2,145)	1,181	1,272	1,237	(908)
Caldicot	(2,165)	1,570	1,284	1,204	(961)
Chepstow	(695)	863	899	827	131
Monmouth	(1,869)	1,425	1,353	1,211	(658)
Special	(82)	106	91	174	92
Total	(6,956)	5,145	4,900	4,653	(2,304)

2.2. Collective School Balances at the beginning of the financial year amounted to £6,956,114 surplus. At Month 4, the Schools forecasted anticipated draw on reserves was £5,145,631, resulting in a forecasted surplus balance of £1,810,483 at year-end. At Month 6, the forecast anticipated draw on reserves had reduced by £246,131 to £4,899,501, resulting in a forecast surplus balance of £2,056,614 at year end. At Month 9, the forecast anticipated draw on reserves has reduced further by £247,136 to £4,652,365, resulting in a forecast surplus balance of £2,303,749 at year end.

(The majority of the surplus balance brought forward into 2022-23 was due to several grants being awarded to schools at 2021-22 year end; Revenue Maintenance, Winter of Wellbeing, ALN New System, Recruit Recover & Raise Standards, Attendance Support & Community Schools, RISG and LA Education Grant).

2.3. The Local Authority budget for 2022/23 made allowance for a pay award for school staff up to a threshold of a 3%, with any award agreed above this level to be funded from school balances. This accounts for £1.2m of the overall £4.6m forecast draw upon school balances this year.

2.4. The movement of individual schools forecast to be in deficit at the end of the year is shown below:

Start of year	Month 4	Month 6	Month 9
Total: 1	Total: 7	Total: 8	Total: 9
Chepstow Comprehensive	Chepstow Comprehensive	Chepstow Comprehensive	Chepstow Comprehensive
	Ysgol Y Fenni	Ysgol Y Fenni	Ysgol Y Fenni
	Archbishop Rowan Williams (CIW)		
	Cross Ash	Cross Ash	
	Kymin View		
	Llandogo	Llandogo	Llandogo
	Pupil Referral Service	Pupil Referral Service	Pupil Referral Service
		Deri View	Deri View
		Rogiet	
		Thornwell	Thornwell
			Llantillio Pertholey
			The Dell
			Overmonnow

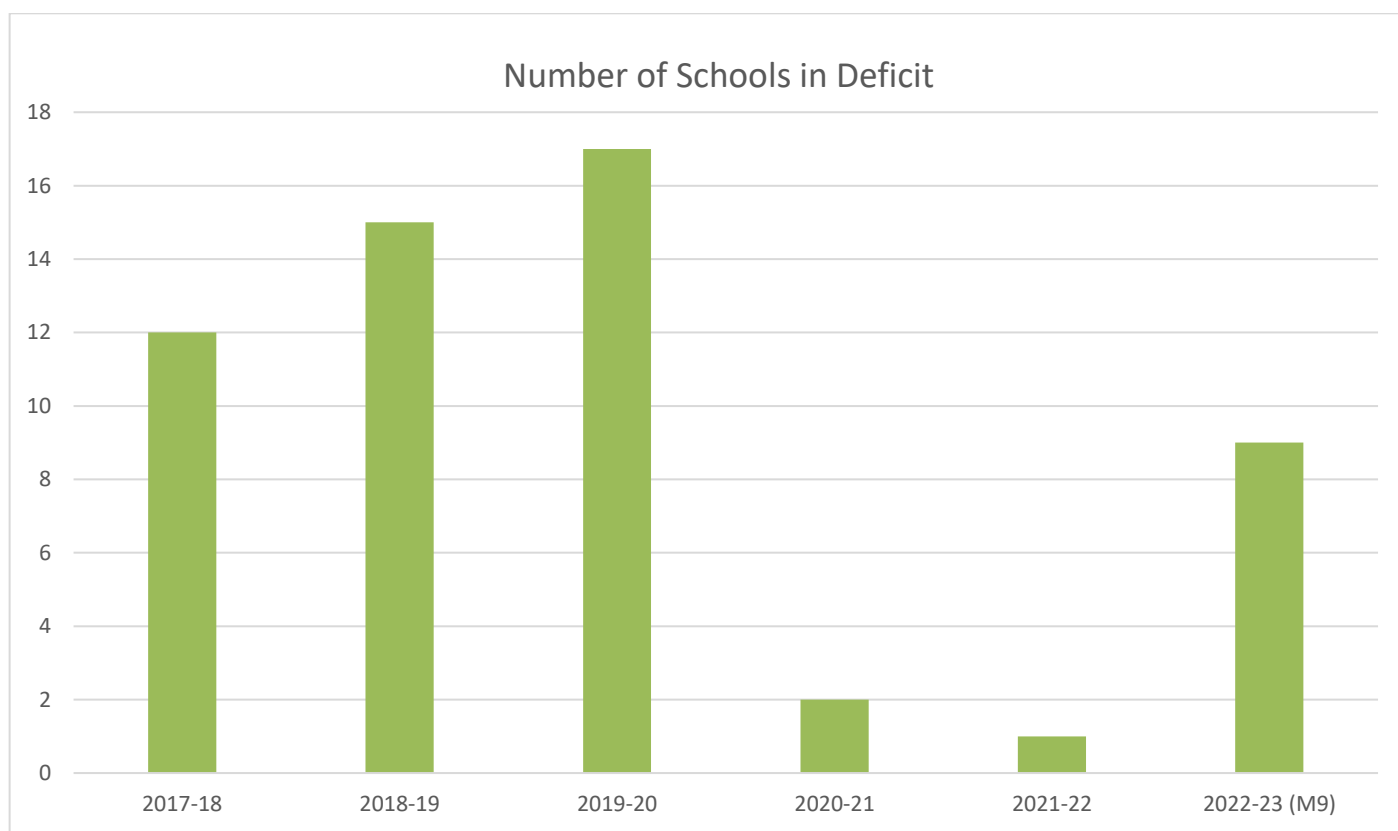
2.5. There isn't a consistent picture of schools' balances. There has been a fluctuating trend for some time with some schools showing a continuing reduction in schools balances, which is of concern, and others a more stable trend. However, as previously advised, grants awarded to schools at 2020/21 and 2021/22 year-ends have resulted in a large increase in overall school balances. Schools have developed grant investment plans in line with the terms and conditions of these grants which informed their 2022/23 budgets.

2.6. The projected return of nine schools into deficit balance by the end of the year is disappointing and points to inherent structural budget deficits remaining in some cases, or a lack of planning for budgetary risks in the current economic environment. Finance officers will continue to work closely with those schools of concern and look to aid the return to a more sustainable budget plan over the medium term.

- 2.7. All schools that do register a deficit balance at the end of a financial year are required to bring forward budget recovery plans. These recovery plans will be confirmed with both the Local Education Authority and each School's Governing Body. Once finalised the schools with significant deficits will be monitored by the Cabinet member for both Children and Young People and Resources on a termly basis.

Financial Year-end	Net level of School Balances
2014-15	(1,140)
2015-16	(1,156)
2016-17	(269)
2017-18	(175)
2018-19	232
2019-20	435
2020-21	(3,418)
2021-22	(6,956)
2022-23 (Forecast)	(2,304)

- 2.8. The increase in school balances during 2020/21 and 2021/22 resulted in a reduction in the number of schools in deficit, as illustrated in the following table. Unfortunately, the current projection is a return of nine schools into deficit balance by the end of the year:-



3. CAPITAL OUTTURN

3.1 The summary forecast Capital position at Month 9 is as follows:

Select Portfolio	Slippage B/F	Original Budget	Budget Adjustments	Provisional Slippage	Revised Budget 2022/23	Forecast Month 9	Variance to Budget
	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's
Expenditure							
Capitalisation Directive	0	2,650	0	0	2,650	3,410	760
Development Schemes Over £250k	13,873	330	3,151	(4,089)	13,266	13,610	344
Development Schemes Under £250k	605	2,360	853	(2,213)	1,605	1,424	(181)
Schools & Education	637	13,681	1,666	0	15,984	15,984	0
Infrastructure	1,357	5,593	30	(262)	6,717	6,785	67
ICT Schemes	552	882	0	(307)	1,127	1,128	1
Property Maintenance	2,686	2,190	0	(245)	4,632	4,304	(328)
Renovation Grants	912	900	0	0	1,812	1,373	(439)
Section 106	1,147	0	0	(733)	414	414	0
Specific Grant Funded	3,679	1,000	8,342	(1,072)	11,949	11,650	(299)
Vehicle Leasing	0	1,500	0	0	1,500	1,758	258
Total Expenditure	25,448	31,086	14,042	(8,920)	61,656	61,839	183
Financing							
Supported Borrowing	0	(2,431)	0	0	(2,431)	(2,431)	0
General Capital Grant	0	(3,593)	0	0	(3,593)	(3,593)	0
Grants and Contributions	(5,494)	0	(21,713)	1,788	(25,419)	(25,684)	(265)
S106 Contributions	(1,854)	0	0	702	(1,152)	(1,152)	0
Unsupported Borrowing	(14,590)	(19,967)	7,671	5,980	(20,906)	(19,658)	1,248
Earmarked Reserve & Revenue Funding	(192)	0	0	13	(179)	(179)	0
Capital Receipts	(3,318)	(3,596)	0	437	(6,477)	(7,385)	(908)
Leasing	0	(1,500)	0	0	(1,500)	(1,500)	(258)
Total Financing	(25,448)	(31,086)	(14,042)	8,920	(61,656)	(61,839)	(183)

3.2 The capital expenditure forecast outturn at month 9 is demonstrating a net over spend £183k, due to the following variances identified:

Scheme Category	Scheme	Over / (Under) spend £000's	Comment
Capitalisation directive	Capitalisation directive	760	Identification of further revenue costs, over and above the £2.65m already budgeted, that can be categorised as enabling service transformation,

Scheme Category	Scheme	Over / (Under) spend £000's	Comment
			and that can be legitimately funded from capital receipts under regulations.
Development Schemes Over £250k	Crick Road Care Home	151	Additional costs in fitting-out equipment required for resident's privacy. An additional bid has been submitted to ABuHB for additional RIF funding to offset the overspend.
Development Schemes Over £250k	Property Acquisition for Children and Young People with Complex Needs	114	Additional refurbishment costs over and above original cost projection. A bid has been made to the Regional Integration Fund and we are waiting for a decision to offset the forecasted overspend.
Development Schemes Over £250k	Abergavenny borough theatre refurbishment	390	Increase over and above original construction cost projection due to unforeseen lighting costs and over-run charges from contractor. If funding cannot be found within programme, the service will borrow as per Cabinet report.
Infrastructure	Tintern Wireworks Bridge	148	The refurbishment of the Tintern Wireworks Bridge at Tintern in conjunction with Gloucestershire County Council is currently forecast to overspend by £148k, due to the complexity of restoring this listed structure and the increased cost of materials.
Specific Grant Funded	Siltbuster	76	The Siltbuster project is forecast to be £76k overspent due to increased costs. This will be funded from additional borrowing which will be funded by the Highways revenue budget.
Leasing	Leasing	258	Vehicle requirements are above the budget set and will be financed via leasing or borrowing dependent upon the options appraisal towards year end.
Development Schemes Over £250k	Usk County Hall J Block Major Refurb	(759)	The scheme of works originally planned has changed following evolving accommodation needs in a post pandemic era.
Disabled Facilities grants	Disabled Facilities grants	(439)	An under spend due to a delay in works over the pandemic period that means the overall budget available is more than can be reasonably carried out given capacity. The increase in referrals since Month 6 has reduced the projected under spend, including a £96k vat adjustment.
Specific Grant Funded	Grant –Match Funding Support Allocation	(300)	A lower than expected requirement to match fund grant bids.
Infrastructure	Penyrhiw Sewage Treatment Works	(100)	Scheme not proceeding in current form.
Development Schemes Under £250k	Access for All	(61)	Under spend - current projections are showing a spend of £200k on access schemes for this year.
Maintenance Schemes - General	School Refurbishment Grant	(55)	Funding to be earmarked for upgrade of Capita One system in 2023/24.

3.2 Capital Slippage of £8.920m is forecast at month 9, as numerous schemes have advised of delays within their project timescales. Previous years trends indicate that slippage will be much higher than this at year-end, especially against a £61.6m overall budget.

- £2.2m for the Asset investment fund as this has been put on hold awaiting a new strategic direction of investments by the Cabinet.
- £2m for Housing homeless provision due to the complex lead time of acquiring properties.
- £1.062m for Match Funding of externally financed Grant schemes which is dependent upon grant availability and timescales
- £670k Trellech Primary Nursery Childcare Scheme delay to start of scheme.
- £640k Archbishop Rowan Williams Primary School Nursery, delay to start of scheme.
- £478k Welsh Medium Seedling Nursery, delay to start of scheme.
- £213k Shire Hall / Museum move as awaiting grant approvals from third parties.
- £188k Wye Bridge Chepstow works - Delay in site works
- £170k SRS Data Hall migration due to delays involving commercial providers
- £124k ICT Desktop replacement budget, delay due to implementation of replacement programme
- £74k Wye Bridge Monmouth works - Delay to final repair works
- £58k Caerwent House Major Repairs - delay in legal process
- £50k Chepstow Leisure Centre – Delay to upgrade to Fitness equipment and Centre alterations.
- £13k Provision of online facilities Revenue's section - Delay in development works
- £10k for Castle Dell Play Area in Chepstow upgrade

Section 106 Schemes

- £366k for Abergavenny Velo Park awaiting planning consent for project delivery
- £102k for Kingswood Gate - Williams Field Lane - Active Travel Path delay to scheme
- £80k for Goytre Playing Field Recreational & Play Facilities upgrade delays around SUDs planning
- £30k for Clydach Ironworks Enhancement Scheme delays in procurement and land transfer
- £28k for Little Mill Trail due to land ownership delays.
- £25k for the Abergavenny Skate Park as delay in appointment of contractors
- £26k for Chippenham Mead Play Area delay to appointment of contractor
- £25k for Children's Voices in Play project has been delayed due to third party issues.
- £20k for Llantilio Pertholey Primary School Pedestrian Access due to contractor delays
- £15k for Off Road Cycling Feasibility Study delayed by planning issues
- £14k for Wyesham Highways Road Safety Improvements due to contractor delays
- £3k for Sudbrook Play Park Equipment due to contractor delays

3.4 Useable Capital Receipts Available

3.5 In the table below, the effect of the changes to the forecast capital receipts on the useable capital receipts balances available to meet future capital commitments are illustrated.

Month 9 update	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27
	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's
Balance as at 1st April	8,773	9,891	7,106	6,009	4,511
Capital receipts used for financing	(3,975)	(1,731)	(1,194)	(1,094)	(1,094)
Capital receipts used to support capitalisation direction	(3,410)	(3,008)	(508)	(508)	(508)
Capital receipts for redundancies	0	(1,000)	0	0	0
Capital receipts received	7,072	0	0	0	0

Capital receipts forecast	1,430	2,954	604	104	104
Forecast Balance as at 31st March	9,891	7,106	6,009	4,511	3,014

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Disinvestment Matrix 2022-23

REF.	Disinvestment 2022-23	2022/23 Budgeted Savings	Value of Saving forecast at Month 4	Value of Saving forecast at Month 6	Value of Saving forecast at Month 9	Value of Saving achieved at Outturn	Delayed Savings	Savings deemed Unachievable YTD
		£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
	Social Care & Health	(120)	(120)	(120)	(120)	0	0	0
	Communities & Place	(959)	(959)	(959)	(959)	0	0	0
	Resources	(300)	(300)	(300)	(300)	0	0	0
	Chief Executives Unit	(33)	(33)	(33)	(33)	0	0	0
	Corporate Costs & Levies	(717)	(717)	(717)	(717)	0	0	0
	Totals Disinvestments by Directorate	(2,129)	(2,129)	(2,129)	(2,129)	0	0	0

REF.	Disinvestment 2022-23	2022/23 Budgeted Savings	Value of Saving forecast at Month 4	Value of Saving forecast at Month 6	Value of Saving forecast at Month 9	Value of Saving achieved at Outturn	Delayed Savings	Savings deemed Unachievable	Traffic Light based Risk Assessment	Assessment of Progress	Risk of current forecast saving NOT being achieved (High / Medium / Low)
		£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000			
SC10	Fees & Charges 2022/23	(120)	(120)	(120)	(120)	0	0	0	■	On Target	Low
	Total Social Care & Health	(120)	(120)	(120)	(120)	0	0	0			
C&P10	Increase in discretionary Fees & Charges	(13)	(13)	(13)	(13)	0	0	0	■	On Target	Low
C&R4	Waste management savings - Contract & dry recyclates rates	(856)	(856)	(856)	(856)	0	0	0	■	On Target	Low
C&R4	Street Lighting - Energy Savings	(90)	(90)	(90)	(90)	0	0	0	■	On Target	Low
	Total Communities & Place	(959)	(959)	(959)	(959)	0	0	0			
PCEO0003	Reversal of previous pressure - Contact Centre - Additional staff to cope with booking system at HWRC	(33)	(33)	(33)	(33)	0	0	0	■	On Target	Low
	Total Chief Executive's Unit	(33)	(33)	(33)	(33)	0	0	0			
RES 11	Solar farm income increase	(300)	(300)	(300)	(300)	0	0	0	■	On Target	Low
	Total Resources	(300)	(300)	(300)	(300)	0	0	0			
CORP 5	Increase in Capitalisation directive	(442)	(442)	(442)	(442)	0	0	0	■	On Target	Low
CORP 10	Council tax base increase	(275)	(275)	(275)	(275)	0	0	0	■	On Target	Low
	Total Corporate Costs & Levies	(717)	(717)	(717)	(717)	0	0	0			

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	A	B	C	D	A + D
	Opening Reserves 2022-23 (Surplus)/Deficit	In Year position at Month 6 (Surplus)/Deficit	Difference reported from Month 6 to Month 9 (Surplus)/Deficit	In Year position at Month 9 (Surplus)/Deficit	Projected carry forward at year end 2022-23 (Surplus)/Deficit
<u>Abergavenny cluster</u>					
E003 King Henry VIII Comprehensive	(755,570)	389,048	(88,646)	300,402	(455,168)
E073 Cantref Primary School	(254,092)	135,791	(32,818)	102,973	(151,119)
E072 Deri View Primary School	(189,790)	203,791	26,227	230,019	40,228
E035 Gilwern Primary School	(230,955)	116,685	20,472	137,157	(93,798)
E037 Goytre Fawr Primary School	(117,735)	82,308	16,961	99,269	(18,466)
E093 Llanfoist Fawr Primary School	(219,419)	84,124	6,145	90,268	(129,151)
E044 Llantillio Pertholey CiW Primary School (VC)	(109,698)	85,773	26,806	112,579	2,880
E045 Llanvihangel Crucorney Primary School	(136,822)	46,100	11,314	57,414	(79,407)
E090 Our Lady and St Michael's RC Primary School (VA)	(58,649)	32,708	(5,907)	26,801	(31,847)
E067 Ysgol Gymraeg Y Fenni	(72,015)	95,619	(15,967)	79,652	7,636
<u>Caldicot cluster</u>					
E001 Caldicot School	(807,785)	574,327	17,102	591,429	(216,356)
E068 Archbishop Rowan Williams CiW Primary School (VA)	(171,322)	99,221	44,751	143,972	(27,350)
E094 Castle Park Primary School	(159,298)	107,556	(24,464)	83,092	(76,206)
E075 Dewstow Primary School	(358,616)	123,801	(71,351)	52,450	(306,167)
E034 Durand Primary School	(104,979)	73,835	2,401	76,236	(28,743)
E048 Magor CiW Primary School (VA)	(196,816)	55,895	(24,561)	31,334	(165,482)
E056 Rogiet Primary School	(89,223)	104,310	(18,727)	85,583	(3,639)
E063 Undy Primary School	(210,643)	100,617	(1,843)	98,774	(111,868)
E069 Ysgol Gymraeg Y Ffin	(66,783)	44,644	(3,536)	41,108	(25,675)
<u>Chepstow cluster</u>					
E002 Chepstow School	124,934	391,748	(141,012)	250,736	375,670
E091 Pembroke Primary School	(218,667)	126,891	(59,948)	66,943	(151,724)
E057 Shirenewton Primary School	(239,292)	130,154	4,224	134,378	(104,914)
E058 St Mary's Chepstow RC Primary School (VA)	(104,932)	54,376	7,500	61,876	(43,056)
E060 The Dell Primary School	(146,839)	78,736	89,747	168,483	21,644
E061 Thornwell Primary School	(110,622)	117,592	26,832	144,425	33,802
<u>Monmouth cluster</u>					
E004 Monmouth Comprehensive	(814,258)	588,867	(121,401)	467,466	(346,792)
E032 Cross Ash Primary School	(79,755)	83,120	(30,888)	52,232	(27,523)
E092 Kymin View Primary School	(133,714)	112,050	(11,147)	100,903	(32,811)

	Opening Reserves 2022-23 (Surplus)/Deficit	In Year position at Month 6 (Surplus)/Deficit	Difference reported from Month 6 to Month 9 (Surplus)/Deficit	In Year position at Month 9 (Surplus)/Deficit	Projected carry forward at year end 2022-23 (Surplus)/Deficit
E039 Llandogo Primary School	(214)	8,775	8,674	17,449	17,235
E074 Osbaston CiW Primary School (VC)	(93,147)	69,340	9,268	78,608	(14,539)
E051 Overmonnow Primary School	(162,470)	143,262	33,812	177,074	14,604
E055 Raglan CiW Primary School (VC)	(160,593)	46,318	(26,217)	20,101	(140,492)
E062 Trellech Primary School	(153,939)	100,635	(14,628)	86,007	(67,932)
E064 Usk CiW Primary School (VC)	(270,840)	200,575	10,624	211,199	(59,641)
Cluster Total	<u>(6,874,560)</u>	<u>4,808,594</u>	<u>(330,202)</u>	<u>4,478,392</u>	<u>(2,396,168)</u>
Special School					
E095 PRU	(81,554)	90,907	83,066	173,973	92,419
Special School Total	<u>(81,554)</u>	<u>90,907</u>	<u>83,066</u>	<u>173,973</u>	<u>92,419</u>
Overall Total	<u><u>(6,956,114)</u></u>	<u><u>4,899,501</u></u>	<u><u>(247,136)</u></u>	<u><u>4,652,365</u></u>	<u><u>(2,303,749)</u></u>

Service budget recovery plan - Month 9 update

Directorate	Initial target £000's	Initial proposals £000's	Month 9 Forecast	Variance
Children & Young People	217	217	217	0
Social Care, Health & Safeguarding	1,122	800	467	(333)
Communities & Place	457	537	537	0
MonLife	88	97	88	(9)
People & Governance	91	11	11	0
Chief Executives Unit	63	147	129	(18)
Resources	148	377	377	0
Total	2,185	2,185	1,825	(360)

Children & Young People

Indicative saving target: (£000's) 217

Initial options 217 217

Ref	Service	Proposal	Initial target £000's	Month 9 Forecast £000's	Recovery method	Details	Risk Factor	Progress at Month 9
					<i>i.e. Not filling vacant post, reduction in supplies or services, additional income, curtailing service, etc.</i>	<i>A brief description of the proposal including any risks to being able to deliver</i>	<i>Low, Medium, High</i>	<i>Progress against initial saving target</i>
CYP1	Education Psychology	Saving generated by not filling 0.4 FTE of a post	22	22	Not filling a vacant post	Following a recent recruitment process for a full time Education Psychology post the successful applicant has asked to work 3 days leaving 2 days vacant. The service is able to accommodate this.	Low	To be met in full
CYP2	Primary Behaviour support	Due to the delay in being able to recruit to the posts this has generated a saving	106	106	Delay in recruiting to the service	Due to a restructure there has been a delay in recruiting to this service therefore 9 months saving has been made on the budget.	Low	To be met in full
CYP3	Photovoltaic Recharges (Schools)	To release some of the surplus balance to support the recovery plan	89	89	Releasing some of the reserve	Following the installation of photovoltaic panels on at some school the recharges have been put in a reserve to be used for energy efficiency projects, the surplus reserve has been increasing year on year and no projects have been proposed. If agreed this would still leave £136k for projects	Low	To be met in full

Social Care, Health & Safeguarding

Indicative saving target: (£000's)

1,122

Initial options 800 467

Ref	Service	Proposal	Initial target £000's	Month 9 Forecast £000's	Recovery method	Details	Original Risk Factor	Progress at Month 9
					<i>i.e. Not filling vacant post, reduction in supplies or services, additional income, curtailing service, etc.</i>	<i>A brief description of the proposal including any risks to being able to deliver</i>	<i>Low, Medium, High</i>	<i>Progress against initial saving target</i>
SCH1	Children's	Reduce Placement Support Costs	38	38	Reduction in services	We have moved a younger person out of an OWR into a supported accommodation placement and are in the process of reducing the child's level of support	L - the care plan is on track	To be met in full
SCH2	Children's	Placement Cost	20	20	Reduction in services	We have moved a younger person from an OWR onto Skirrid which is now registered as a 2 bed (previously 1 bed). The plan is to move another child into the 2nd placement which will reduce the costs of the 2nd child's placement at £5,700 per week	M - sibling group complex needs, recently come into care, aim for joint March is achievable, pending on successful transition.	To be met in full
SCH3	Children's	Placement Cost	50	50	Changed Supplier	Child in OWR placement requiring agency residential care. A new supplier is now available at reduced cost.	L - change in supplier has already been made	To be met in full
SCH4	Children's	Placement Cost	22	22	Change of Care Plan	Child was rehabilitated to family member, which was not identified in M6 forecast	L - it has already happened	To be met in full
SCH5	Children's	Placement Cost	150	127	Reduction in services	At M6 forecast was based on a 6:1, the current clinical assessment indicates 5:1 moving to 4:1. The child will be moving to bespoke accommodation.	M - £100K is Low risk as this equates to the reduction of 1 carer which is now in place. The further reduction of 1 carer will depend on outcome of clinical assessment following transition to new accommodation.	Substantially met
SCH6	Children's	Recruitment	8	8	Convert agency to T & C	An agency safeguarding TM has been in place, who has now been successfully appointed on T & C	L - successful appointment has been enacted, awaiting checks.	To be met in full
SCH7	Children's	Delay recruitment	12	12	Not filling vacancy	3 day Social Work post in the Children With Disabilities team	L - this is the status quo, so the work / risk is currently managed.	To be met in full
SCH8	Children's	Delay recruitment	4	4	Not filling vacancy	1 day Social Work post Families Together team	L - this is the status quo, so the work / risk is currently managed.	To be met in full
SCH9	Children's	Service re-design	12	12	Changing posts	Convert x2 agency Social Worker posts in the Long Term Support Team to x2 Family Support Workers	M - the risk is whether we are able to recruit in time to realise the savings	To be met in full
SCH10	DMT	Staffing	6	4	Not filling vacancy and releasing agency	0.5 Chief Officer Business Support and use Business Support for Head Of Adult Service instead	L - the post is shared with CO CYP so this may be jeopardised	Slight shortfall against target
SCH11	DMT	Delay recruitment	8	8	Delay recruitment	Delay arrival of Head Of Adult Service by 3 weeks	L - the risk is delay in further development and implementation of the MTFP	To be met in full
SCH12	Information	Utilise a WG grant	40	40	Additional income	An in-year Performance Grant has been awarded which can be used against a reconfigured performance post (to off-set core funding)	L - grant already claimed	To be met in full
SCH13	Information	Utilise a WG grant	50	50	Additional income	An in-year Workforce Development Grant has been applied for which can be used to off-set core funding for recruitment activity that has already been undertaken	M - the outcome of the application process is still pending	To be met in full
SCH14	YOS	Utilise a WG grant	10	10	Additional income	A Ministry Of Justice grant has been awarded to the YOS for prevention which we propose is used to off-set core funding	L - the grant criteria still needs to be worked through	To be met in full
SCH15	Directorate Staffing	Delays to recruitment	50	50	Delay filling vacancies	Delay to 1 data and performance lead, 1 EHO and 1 BS.	L - continues the status quo	To be met in full
SCH16	Directorate Staffing	Delays to recruitment	50	12	Delay filling vacancies	There are currently at least 36 vacancies within the directorate, which can be actively managed to mitigate the pressures.	M - this will require control via any recruitment being authorised by DMT. It will create workforce pressures regarding the unmet need.	Since month 6 we have actively sought not to recruit into posts within the Commissioning and Mental Health teams. In regards to Care at Home where active recruitment is in place this has the added benefit of targeting and reducing unmet need, specifically in terms of reablement, aligning to the principals of the 2023/24 SCH10 savings mandate.
SCH17	Adult Services	POC costs	200	0	Reduction in services	There are approximately 18 24 hour live-in care packages which are not pegged to our Fair Fee for residential care	M - social work time required to undertake the review, query over how much of the care can be safely reduced within this year.	Even though there has been no reduction at month 9 in 24 hour care package numbers and we have now ascertained those care packages are aligned to our residential rate, work is being targeted at reviewing those care packages to determine a strategy to "pull back" care.
SCH18	Adult Services	Debt Recovery	10	0	Additional income	The saving is predicted on targeted reduction of £100,000 in debt, which in turn will reduce the bad debt provision by £10K.	M - Reason for medium is the length and value of debt will be difficult to recover	Overall debt has continued to increase from £1.1M to £1.5M, with any reduction in bad debt provision only being realisable from that older debt, such as long standing difficult non payers. On the positive note, we have had success in recovering debt for newer clients, albeit this has no direct consequence on the bad debt provision.

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Social Care, Health & Safeguarding
 Indicative saving target: (£000's)

1,122

Initial options 800 467

Ref	Service	Proposal	Initial target £000's	Month 9 Forecast £000's	Recovery method <i>i.e. Not filling vacant post, reduction in supplies or services, additional income, curtailing service, etc.</i>	Details <i>A brief description of the proposal including any risks to being able to deliver</i>	Original Risk Factor <i>Low, Medium, High</i>	Progress at Month 9 <i>Progress against initial saving target</i>
SCH19	Adult Services	Means Tested Policy	60	0	Additional income	Ensure social workers discuss means tested charges with clients before care is provided and ensure the financial assessment process has been started.	L - Should be done as its laid down in legislation and the Authority's charging policy and procedures. Challenge is in embedding correct control mechanism	Income from charging remains stable and unchanged since month 6. Attention continues to ensure care practitioners do, from the very outset, inform clients of the fact services are means tested and following the Council's laid down procedure for charging, which aligns to the 2023/24 SCH6 saving mandate.

Communities & Place

Indicative saving target: (£000's)

457

Initial options

537

Ref	Service	Proposal	Initial target £000's	Month 9 Forecast £000's	Recovery method	Details	Risk Factor	Progress at Month 9
					<i>i.e. Not filling vacant post, reduction in supplies or services, additional income, curtailing service, etc.</i>	<i>A brief description of the proposal including any risks to being able to deliver</i>	<i>Low, Medium, High</i>	<i>Progress against initial saving target</i>
C&P1	Street Lighting	Reduction in in-year revenue maintenance spend.	50	67	Passporting qualifying spend to capital budgets	Passporting qualifying spend to capital budgets	Low	Exceed target
C&P2	Grounds Maintenance	Drawing of S106 Commuted sum payment	200	147	Additional income	Further draw on S106 commuted sum - using unspent funds saved up from previous years. One-off benefit.	Low	Below target - S106 funding available is below original estimate.
C&P3	Car Parks	Realisation of Pay & Display income from opening of Severn Tunnel junction car park - Jan-March	10	0	Additional income	New car park coming on line in January. There is a risk around whether this level of income is achievable but this risk is felt to be low.	Low	Risk that saving will now not be made due to delay in car park opening.
C&P4	Highways Traffic Mgt	Further release of potential Road Closure income	41	50	Additional income	Projections show that road closure income will exceed what was included at month 4.	Low	Exceed target due to increased income and further savings from vacancies
C&P5	Highways Dev & Flooding	Freeze vacant post until new financial year	54	54	Temporary hold on filling vacant post	Temporary hold on filling vacant post	Low	Exceed target - recruitment into vacant posts has been frozen but services have also undertaken a managed freeze on supplies & Services.
C&P6	Building Cleaning	Managed reduction in material spend	28	41	Reduction in supplies & Services	Re-assessment of stock levels allows for further budget recovery	Low	On Target - additional income has also helped bottom line.
C&P7	Schools Catering	Staff cost reduction	73	73	Temporary hold on filling vacant posts	Re-assessment of staffing requirement since month 4. The forecast indicates potential slow down in recruitment required in this financial year.	Medium	On Target
C&P8	Schools Catering	Windfall grant	56	56	Additional income	Windfall grant relating to WG Free School Meals and covid grant administration that has been provided. This was not known at M4.	Low	On Target
C&P10	Strategic Operations	Freeze vacant post until new financial year	25	49	Temporary hold on filling vacant post	Temporary hold on filling vacant post	Low	Will exceed original target due to other vacancy savings within service.

MonLife

Indicative saving target: (£000's) 88

Initial options 97 88

Ref	Service	Proposal	Initial target £000's	Month 9 Forecast £000's	Recovery method	Details	Risk Factor	Progress at Month 9
					<i>i.e. Not filling vacant post, reduction in supplies or services, additional income, curtailing service, etc.</i>	<i>A brief description of the proposal including any risks to being able to deliver</i>	<i>Low, Medium, High</i>	<i>Progress against initial saving target</i>
ML1	Finance & Business	Freeze Vacant Post - Business Support Team Leader	26	26	Freeze Vacant Post	Post is currently vacant, low risk but adds additional pressure to the business support unit.	Low	To be met in full
ML2	Finance & Business	Freeze Vacant Post - Project Officer	18	18	Freeze Vacant Post	Post is currently vacant, low risk as major projects in MONLIFE have reduced significantly.	Low	To be met in full
ML3	Leisure, Youth & Outdoor Adventure	Outdoor Adventure - Increase income through winter promotions	20	20	Additional Income	Requires school uptake during a period where there has been limited interest previously, the section will look to use promotions to make this period more attractive to schools.	Medium	To be met in full
ML4	Finance & Business	Project Management - Grants	24	24	Additional Income	Recharge core staff to grant projects	Low	To be met in full
ML5	Borough Theatre	Delay staff recruitment until new financial year	9		Temporary hold on filling vacant post	Hold off on filling new structure until we understand future resource requirements.	Low	Not being met - Changes to the employment contracts of the facilities officers in the market. We have needed to appoint an external security contract to open and close the building.

People & Governance

Indicative saving target: (£000's) 91

Initial options 11 11

Ref	Service	Proposal	Initial target	Month 9 Forecast	Recovery method	Details	Risk Factor	Progress at Month 9
			£000's	£000's	<i>i.e. Not filling vacant post, reduction in supplies or services, additional income, curtailing service, etc.</i>	<i>A brief description of the proposal including any risks to being able to deliver</i>	<i>Low, Medium, High</i>	<i>Progress against initial saving target</i>
PG1	Communications	Staff cost reduction	8	8	Staff cost reduction	Temporary saving that will be achieved between staff member leaving and filling of vacant post	Low	To be met in full
PG2	Communications	Staff cost reduction	2.5	2.5	Reduction in staff hours	A mutually agreed reduction in working hours for two staff	Low	To be met in full

Chief Executives Unit

Indicative saving target: (£000's) 63

Initial options 147 129

Ref	Service	Proposal	Initial target £000's	Month 9 Forecast £000's	Recovery method	Details	Risk Factor	Progress at Month 9
					<i>i.e. Not filling vacant post, reduction in supplies or services, additional income, curtailing service, etc.</i>	<i>A brief description of the proposal including any risks to being able to deliver</i>	<i>Low, Medium, High</i>	<i>Progress against initial saving target</i>
CE01	Department wide	Moving qualifying staff costs to Ukraine Funding	115	110	Moving qualifying staff costs to Ukraine Funding	Since M6 report we have identified further staff costs that can be pushed against the Ukraine grant	Low	Original estimate was slightly high
CE02	Department wide	Freeze filling of vacant posts	22	9	Not filling vacant post	Freeze filling of vacant posts until new year	Low	Original estimate was slightly high
CE03	Improvement Team	Decision taken to not purchase MadeOpen subscription	10	10	Reduction in supplies & Services	Curtail purchase of MadeOpen subscription.	Low	Achieved

Resources

Indicative saving target: (£000's) 148

Initial options 377 377

Ref	Service	Proposal	Initial target	Month 9 Forecast	Recovery method	Details	Risk Factor	Progress at Month 9
			£000's	£000's	<i>i.e. Not filling vacant post, reduction in supplies or services, additional income, curtailing service, etc.</i>	<i>A brief description of the proposal including any risks to being able to deliver</i>	<i>Low, Medium, High</i>	<i>Progress against initial saving target</i>
RES1	Property Services	Reduction in corporate Building maintenance	270	270	Make use of spare capital budget to fund maintenance	No risk - using spare capital funding to cover qualifying maintenance repairs from revenue.	Low	To be met in full
RES2	ICT	Reduce equipment spend through to year end	35	35	reduction in supplies & services	Managed underspend on equipment - majority of laptop spend can be pushed to capital budget.	Low	To be met in full
RES3	Insurances	Reduction in professional fees and ICT costs	20	20	reduction in supplies & services	Fees for the actuarial review are lower than budgeted, alongside delaying some further ICT investment	Low	To be met in full
RES4	Investment income	Additional investment income	52	52	Additional income	Additional investment income in light of rising interest rate environment and where we may be able to look at alternative counterparties	Medium	To be met in full

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Performance and Overview Scrutiny Committee

Action List

17th January 2023

Minute Item:	Subject	Officer / Member	Outcome
4	Provide members with further information on the number of housing enforcement actions, including the outstanding numbers	Huw Owen	Response emailed to members
4	That the 22/23 Public Protection report (May/June) include a review of specific lessons learned that can be used to be better prepared for future Covid waves and other crises, as well as improvements that managers and officers would be keen to develop	Dave Jones and team	To be incorporated into the report coming to committee on 21 st June.
5	To enquire as to whether MCC can have an input on a national level towards the Citizenship test having more sensible questions	Dave Jones, Jennifer Walton	The Citizenship Department of the Home Office has been contacted with Members' concerns regarding the relevance of current questions. Officers in that department have been asked if they would like any direct input from Committee Members. Dave and Jen will further advise Members on receipt of a reply.
5	Further information on the issues and actions regarding sub-standard vapes	Gareth Walters	Response emailed to Councillor Bond
5	Any plans for flats regarding application of learning from the Grenfell tragedy	Huw Owen	Response emailed to members
5	Further explanation of the dog breeding project.	Gareth Walters	Response emailed to Councillor Bond
6	For the next Procurement report, to identify, in more	Steve Robinson,	To be incorporated into the next report

	concrete terms, the benefits that joint working gives MCC	Scott James	

Monmouthshire's Scrutiny Forward Work Programme 2022-23

Performance and Overview Scrutiny Committee				
Meeting Date	Subject	Purpose of Scrutiny	Responsibility	Type of Scrutiny
27 th February 2023	Council Tax Premiums Consultation: Long Term Empty Properties and Second Homes	To consider the findings of the public consultation exercise on introducing council tax premiums from 1st April 2024.	Ruth Donovan	Pre-decision Scrutiny
	Month 9 Budget Outturn Report	Budget monitoring report for monthly scrutiny.	Jonathan Davies Rachel Garrick	Budget monitoring
27 th April 2023	Education Achievement Service	To receive the EAS Business Plan and discuss future scrutiny to monitor performance and value for money.	No attendance required	Forward Work Planning
21 st June 2023	Public Protection 2022-23 Performance Report	To review the performance of the service area.	David Jones Paul Griffiths	Performance Monitoring
	*To be confirmed * Welsh Language Annual Monitoring Report 2022-23	To scrutinise the Council's performance in complying with Welsh Language Standards.	Matthew Gatehouse Nia Roberts	Performance Monitoring
	Self Assessment Process	To scrutinise the self-assessment process to inform members' understanding of the council's arrangements and identify areas for further scrutiny.	Richard Jones Hannah Carter	Performance Monitoring

Monmouthshire's Scrutiny Forward Work Programme 2022-23

Performance and Overview Scrutiny Committee				
Meeting Date	Subject	Purpose of Scrutiny	Responsibility	Type of Scrutiny
20 th September 2023				
24 th October 2023	LDP Annual Monitoring Report	To scrutinise prior to Cabinet Member sign off for dispatch to Welsh Government.	Mark Hand	Pre-decision Scrutiny
	Planning Annual Performance Report	Scrutiny of the annual performance report prior to submission to Welsh Government.	Mark Hand	Pre-decision Scrutiny
22 nd November 2023				
30 th January 2024 To be confirmed	Public Protection 2021-22 Performance Report	To review the performance of the service area.	David Jones Paul Griffiths	Performance Monitoring
	Registration Services Annual Report 21/22	To review the performance of the service area.	David Jones Catherine Fookes/Angela Sandles	Performance Monitoring
20 th February 2024	Scrutiny of the Budget Proposals	Scrutiny of the budget mandates relating to the committee's remit.	Peter Davies Jonathon Davies Councillor Garrick	Budget Scrutiny
26 th March 2024				
21 st June 2024				

Monmouthshire's Scrutiny Forward Work Programme 2022-23

Performance and Overview Scrutiny Committee				
Meeting Date	Subject	Purpose of Scrutiny	Responsibility	Type of Scrutiny
To be confirmed	Recruitment and retention	Effect on the Council's performance and ability to deliver.		
To be confirmed	Council and community resilience	To discuss learning following the impact of the pandemic.		
To be confirmed	Use of Reserves	Future proofing and resilience planning as well as supporting long-term strategic priorities.		
To be confirmed	Asset Management Strategy	Long-term strategy for assets where there may be a change of service provision. To seek some assurances on the focus of the asset management strategy and discuss the concept of selling or retaining assets ~ this could feed into early work on the Asset Management Strategy.	Peter Davies	Workshop
To be confirmed	Procurement Performance Review	Review of the joint working arrangements and benefits realised to date.	Scott James Steve Robinson Rachel Garrick	Performance Monitoring
To be confirmed	Welsh Education Strategic Plan	To scrutinise performance against the action plan.	Sharon Randall Smith Will Mclean	Performance Monitoring
To be confirmed	Strategic Risk Register	To agree any future risks for scrutiny.	Matthew Gatehouse	Work Programming

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Committee / Decision Maker	Meeting date / Decision due	Report Title	Responsible Cabinet Member	Purpose	Author	Date item added to the planner
Council	01-Jul-25	RLDP for Adoption	Paul Griffiths - Sustainable Economy	To adopt the RLDP following receipt of the Inspector's report, making it the County's Development Plan as defined by S38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004	Mark Hand / Rachel Lewis	23-Aug-22
Council	01-Sep-24	RLDP submission for examination	Paul Griffiths - Sustainable Economy	To endorse the submission of the Deposit RLDP to the Welsh Government for examination by an independent Inspector. By agreeing, Council will be saying it wants this document to be the adopted RLDP for Monmouthshire.	Mark Hand / Rachel Lewis	23-Aug-22
Council	18-Apr-24	RLDP Deposit Plan endorsement for consultation	Paul Griffiths - Sustainable Economy	To endorse the Deposit RLDP for public consultation and engagement.	Mark Hand / Rachel Lewis	5-Jan-23
Cabinet	10-Apr-24	Adoption of Abergavenny Placemaking Plan	Paul Griffiths - Sustainable Economy	To adopt the Abergavenny Placemaking Plan, co-produced with Abergavenny Town Council, to inform future regeneration priorities and grant bids	Mark Hand / Dan Fordham	3-Oct-22
Cabinet	18-Jan-24	Adoption of Magor Placemaking Plan	Paul Griffiths - Sustainable Economy	To adopt the Magor with Undy Placemaking Plan, co-produced with Magor with Undy Town Council, to inform future regeneration priorities and grant bids	Mark Hand / Dan Fordham	3-Oct-22
Cabinet	18-Jan-24	Adoption of Monmouth Placemaking Plan	Paul Griffiths - Sustainable Economy	To adopt the Monmouth Placemaking Plan, co-produced with Monmouth Town Council, to inform future regeneration priorities and grant bids	Mark Hand / Dan Fordham	3-Oct-22
Cabinet	18-Jan-24	2022/23 Revenue and Capital Monitoring - Month 9			Jon Davies	17-May-22
Cabinet	10-Jan-24	Monmouthshire Destination Management Plan			Matthew Lewis	10-Feb-22
Cabinet	13-Dec-23	Local Flood Strategy	Catrin Maby	To adopt the Local Flood Strategy Plan	Mark Hand / Ross Price	4-Oct-22
Council	26-Oct-23	Appointment of Monmouthshire Local Access Forum		To secure the appointment of members to the Monmouthshire Local Access Forum for its next 3 year period.	Matthew Lewis	18-Jan-23

ICMD	25-Oct-23	LDP Annual Monitoring Report	Paul Griffiths - Sustainable Economy	To endorse the LDP Annual Monitoring Report for submission to WG	Mark Hand / Rachel Lewis	16-Jan-23
ICMD	25-Oct-23	Planning Annual Performance Report	Paul Griffiths - Sustainable Economy	To endorse the Planning Department Annual Performance Report for submission to WG	Mark Hand / Rachel Lewis	16-Jan-23
Council	23-Oct-23	Appointment of Monmouthshire Local Access Forum		To secure the appointment of members to the Monmouthshire Local Access Forum for its next 3 year period.	Matthew Lewis	18-Jan-23
Council	20-Jul-23	Economic Development Strategy		REFRESHING THE MONMOUTHSHIRE BUSINESS GROWTH & ENTERPRISE STRATEGY and action plan in setting the economic ambition for the county and providing a strategic framework that guides future economic	Hannah Jones	9-Jan-23
ICMD	28-Jun-23	Highways Traffic Regulation Amendment Order 10	Catrin Maby - Climate Change and Environment	Agreement to make the traffic order - Exception Orders to identify those restricted roads that will remain 30mph in September 2023 instead of defaulting to 20mph	Mark Hand	3-Oct-22
Council	22-Jun-23	Standards Committee Annual Report		This report is the first annual report from the Standards Committee to Council as required by the change in law set out in the Local Government and Elections Act 2021. It has to report on the discharge of the Committee's	Matt Phillips	10-Oct-22
Council	22-Jun-23	RLDP Preferred Strategy consultation report	Paul Griffiths - Sustainable Economy	To endorse the RLDP Preferred Strategy including any proposed changes arising from the public consultation.	Mark Hand / Rachel Lewis	3-Oct-22
Cabinet	07-Jun-23	2022/23 Revenue and Capital Monitoring - Month 12			Jon Davies	
Cabinet	07-Jun-23	Pavement Café Policy	Paul Griffiths - Sustainable Economy	To adopt the pavement café policy as the basis for making decisions on applications for licences	Mark Hand / Paul Keeble	4-Oct-22
Cabinet	07-Jun-23	Local Transport Plan	Catrin Maby	To adopt the Local Transport Plan	Debra Hill-Howells / Christian Schmidt	4-Oct-22
Cabinet	07-Jun-23	RESERVATION OF GRAVE PLOTS IN LLANFOIST CEMETERY		To seek cabinet approval to cease the provision of reserving grave spaces (not incl cremated remains plots) in Llanfoist Cemetery	Rhian Jackson	7-Nov-22

Cabinet	07-Jun-23	Respite Opportunities for People with Learning Disabilities	Tudor Thomas - Social Care & Safeguarding	To provide an overview of the Review of Respite Services for people with learning disabilities and seek approval for implementation of the report's recommendations	Ceri York	9-Dec-22
Council	18-May-23	Political Balance Report		The Council is required to review at, or as soon as practicable after, the Council's annual meeting, the representation of different political groups on the bodies to which the Council makes appointments.	Matt Phillips	2-Feb-23
Council	18-May-23	Outside Bodies Report		To appoint representatives to serve on outside	Matt Phillips	2-Feb-23
Council	18-May-23	Appointments to Committees		To appoint committees together with their membership and terms of reference in accordance with the Council's Constitution.	Nicola Perry	2-Feb-23
Council	18-May-23	Constitution update		For the Monitoring Officer to bring proposed amendments and highlight changes made over the previous 12 months	Matt Phillips	2-Feb-23
ICMD	10-May-23	Highways Traffic Regulation Amendment Order 9	Catrin Maby - Climate Change and Environment	Agreement to make the traffic order - including Llantrisant 20mph village lane, 40mph through road, possibly Llantrisant (Usk to Wentwood) 50mph; 20mph Gilwern and surrounding villages	Mark Hand	3-Oct-22
Cabinet	03-May-23	Road Safety Strategy	Catrin Maby	To adopt the Road Safety Strategy	Mark Hand / Paul Keeble	4-Oct-22
Cabinet	03-May-23	Socially Responsible Procurement Strategy	Rachel Garrick - Resources	To endorse the Socially Responsible Procurement Strategy	Scott James	22-Aug-22
Council	20-Apr-23	Motion for the Rivers and Oceans update			Hazel Clatworthy	10-Jan-23
Council	20-Apr-23	Chief Officer Children and Young People's Report 2023			Will McLean	14-Feb-23
Council	20-Apr-23	Corporate Parenting Strategy			Diane Corrister	24-Aug-22

Council	20-Apr-23	Gwent Public Services Board Well-being plan		To approve the Public Services Board's Well-being Plan that sets out the steps being taken collaboratively by public services to improve wellbeing in Gwent ahead of approval by the Gwent Public Services Board.	Richard Jones	20-Jan-23
ICMD	05-Apr-23	Welsh Church Fund Working Group - meeting 4 held on 9th March 2023			Dave Jarrett	
Cabinet	05-Apr-23	Adoption of Transforming Chepstow Masterplan	Paul Griffiths - Sustainable Economy	To adopt the Transforming Chepstow Masterplan, co-produced with Chepstow Town Council, to inform future regeneration priorities and grant bids	Mark Hand / Dan Fordham	3-Oct-22
Cabinet	05-Apr-23	Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan	Sara Burch - Inclusive and Active Communities	To agree a plan to transition the delivery of homelessness that minimises the use of and the time homeless applicants spend in temporary accommodation	Rebecca Cresswell / Ian Bakewell	24-Jan-23
Cabinet	05-Apr-23	Transforming Towns Strategic Grant regeneration priorities	Paul Griffiths - Sustainable Economy	To agree the priority projects for bids for WG Strategic grant funding to 24/25	Mark Hand / Dan Fordham	3-Oct-22
Council	09-Mar-23	Pay Policy		To approve the publication of Monmouthshire County Council's Pay Policy, in compliance with the Localism Act."	Sally Thomas	1-Feb-23
Council	20-Apr-23	Community and Corporate Plan		To seek approval of a new Community and Corporate Plan that sets the direction for the council and county of Monmouthshire, articulating the authority's purpose and priorities alongside the steps we will take to deliver these, the	Matt Gatehouse	6-Feb-23
Council	09-Mar-23	Council Tax Premiums			Peter Davies	18-Jan-23
Council	09-Mar-23	Capital Strategy & Treasury Strategy			Jon Davies	17-May-22
Council	09-Mar-23	Youth Council			Jade Atkins	7-Dec-22
ICMD	08-Mar-23	Proposed amendment to primary school catchment area – Llandenny Village	Martyn Groucutt - Education		Debbie Graves	10-Jan-23

ICMD	08-Mar-23	Highways Traffic Regulation Amendment Order 8	Catrin Maby - Climate Change and Environment	Agreement to make the traffic order - including Monmouth Road, Raglan no right turn onto A40; resi permit parking at Exmouth Place, Chepstow and Ross Road, Abergavenny; 3T weight restriction on Old Wye Bridge Chepstow; waiting	Mark Hand	
Council	02-Mar-23	Final Budget Sign Off including Council Tax Resolution			Jon Davies	
Cabinet	01-Mar-23	2023/4 Final Revenue and Capital Budget Proposals			Jon Davies	17-May-22
Cabinet	01-Mar-23	2023/4 WCF/Trust Treasury Fund Investments			Dave Jarrett	17-May-22
Cabinet	01-Mar-23	Month 9 budget monitoring report			Jon Davies	6-Feb-23
Cabinet	01-Mar-23	Monmouthshire ECO Flex 'Joint Statement of Intent and Memorandum of Understanding'			Steve Griffiths	16-Nov-22
Cabinet	01-Feb-23	Tudor Street				9-Jan-23
ICMD	25-Jan-23	Highway Traffic Regulation Amendment Order No 7	Catrin Maby - Climate Change and Environment	Agreement to make the traffic order	Mark Hand	15-Dec-22
ICMD	25-Jan-23	Community Council and Police Precepts - final	Rachel Garrick - Resources		Jon Davies	17-May-22
Council	19-Jan-23	'To determine the name for the new 3-19 School in Abergavenny		'To determine the name for the new 3-19 School in Abergavenny	Cath Saunders	28-Nov-22
Council	19-Jan-23	Council Diary		To confirm the Council Diary 23/24	John Pearson	14-Dec-22

Council	19-Jan-23	Appointments		A report for Council to appoint or ratify a number of appointments to bodies and positions	Matt Phillips	
Council	19-Jan-23	Community and Corporate Plan				
Council	19-Jan-23	Tudor Road Call-In			Nicola Perry	3-Jan-23
Council	19-Jan-23	Council Tax Reduction Scheme			Ruth Donovan	31-May-22
Cabinet	18-Jan-23	Garden Waste			Carl Touhig	21-Dec-22
Cabinet	18-Jan-23	Draft Revenue & Capital Proposals			Jon Davies	
Cabinet	18-Jan-23	Council Tax Premiums Consultation - Long Term Empty Properties and Second Homes			Ruth Donovan	
Cabinet	18-Jan-23	Proposal to establish a Welsh Medium Seedling school in Monmouth		To seek cabinet approval to commence statutory consultation processes to establish a Welsh Medium seedling provision in Monmouth.	Debbie Graves	23-Sep-22
ICMD	11-Jan-23	Clydach Ironworks Enhancement	Sara Burch - Inclusive and Active Communities	To seek approval for the transfer of land associated with the Clydach Ironworks Enhancement Scheme	Matthew Lewis	8-Dec-23
ICMD	11-Jan-23	Welsh Church Fund Working Group			Dave Jarrett	17-May-22
ICMD	14-Dec-22	Council Tax Base report			Ruth Donovan	31-May-22

ICMD	14-Dec-22	2023/4 Community Council & Police Precepts - draft			Jon Davies	17-May-22
Cabinet	07-Dec-22	Regional Integration Fund		To consider the financial liabilities and implications of the Regional Integration Fund and	Jane Rodgers	21-Nov-22
Cabinet	07-Dec-22	National Adoption Services and Foster Wales Joint Committee			Jane Rodgers	9-Nov-22
Cabinet	07-Dec-22	2022/23 Revenue and Capital Monitoring report - Month 6			Jon Davies	17-May-22
Council	01-Dec-22	Corporate Safeguarding Policy.		For Council to endorse the revised Corporate Safeguarding Policy.	Jane Rodgers	10-Nov-22
Council	01-Dec-22	Governance & Audit Committee Annual Report 2021/22			Andrew Wathan	18-Oct-22
Council	01-Dec-22	RLDP Preferred Strategy	Paul Griffiths - Sustainable Economy	To seek Council endorsement of the new Preferred Strategy for eight week consultation	Mark Hand / Rachel Lewis	25-Jul-22
ICMD	30-Nov-22	TUDOR STREET		To seek a decision regarding the Council's forward use of the property located in Tudor Street ahead of the outcome of the consultation of MonLife	Jane Rodgers	14-Nov-22
ICMD	30-Nov-22	Govilon Section 106 Funding for Recreation & Play	Rachel Garrick - Resources		Mike Moran	8-Nov-22
ICMD	30-Nov-22	Highways Traffic Regulation Amendment Order 5	Catrin Maby - Climate Change and Environment		Mark Hand	3-Oct-22
ICMD	30-Nov-22	Planning Annual Performance Report (APR) Deferred to 30-Nov-22	Paul Griffiths - Sustainable Economy		Mark Hand Phil Thomas	3-Oct-22
ICMD	30-Nov-22	Highways Traffic Regulation Amendment Order 6	Catrin Maby - Climate Change and Environment	Agreement to make the traffic order	Mark Hand	23-Aug-22
Cabinet	09-Nov-22	Implementing Sharepoint online		To secure funding to implement the project	Sian Hayward	13-Oct-22
Cabinet	09-Nov-22	A County of Sanctuary		To set out the reasons why an earlier decision is required due to time restrictions associated with TAN 15	Matt Gatehouse	20-Sep-22
Cabinet	09-Nov-22	SPF Update Report			Hannah Jones	12-Sep-22
Cabinet	09-Nov-22	Revenue & Capital MTFP update and process			Jon Davies	17-May-22
Cabinet	09-Nov-22	MonLife Heritage Strategy (or ICMD)		DEFERRED	Matthew Lewis	10-Feb-22
Council	27-Oct-22	RESPONSE TO URGENT NEED FOR HOUSING ACCOMMODATION		To present a proposal to enable Council to respond flexibly and promptly to the urgent need for housing accommodation, to address the	Cath Fallon	10-Oct-22
Council	27-Oct-22	Community and Corporate Plan		To seek endorsement of the new Community and Corporate Plan setting out the purpose, values	Matt Gatehouse / Paul Matthews	3-Oct-22
Council	27-Oct-22	Outside Bodies Appointment			John Pearson	3-Oct-22
Council	27-Oct-22	Annual Safeguarding Report			Kelly Turner	24-Aug-22
Council	27-Oct-22	Social Care & Health: Directors Report 2021/22			Jane Rodgers	6-Jul-22
ICMD	26-Oct-22	Welsh Church Fund Working Group			Dave Jarrett	14/7/22
Cabinet	19-Oct-22	PSOW annual letter		Present the Public Services Ombudsman For Wales' annual report as required by the letter	Matt Phillips	28-Sep-22

Cabinet	19-Oct-22	Regional Partnership Board - Gwent Market Position Statement		To provide a Market Stability Report produced by the Regional Partnership Board setting out a high	Phil Diamond Head of Regional Partnership Team	22-Sep-22
Cabinet	19-Oct-22	Community and Corporate Plan		To seek endorsement of the new Community and Corporate Plan setting out the purpose, values	Gatehouse / Paul Matt	20-Sep-22
Cabinet	19-Oct-22	22/23 Revenue and Capital Monitoring report - Month 4			Jon Davies	17-May-22
Cabinet	19-Oct-22	Land adjacent to Caldicot Comprehensive School - Housing Development Opportunity		To seek approval of the disposal of land at Caldicot Comprehensive School for the	Nick Keyse	
ICMD	12-Oct-22	Local Development Annual Monitoring Report (AMR)		DEFERRED TO 26 OCT	Rachel Lewis/Cllr Paul Griffiths	23/08/22
ICMD	12-Oct-22	Welsh Church Fund Working Group		DEFERRED TO 26 OCT	Dave Jarrett	14/07/22
ICMD	12-Oct-22	Ending Library Fines		enabling more people to enjoy reading without the worry of incurring a fine if they are unable to return	Cheryl Haskell/Fookes?	20-Sep-22
ICMD	28-Sep-22	Transport Policy			Deb Hill Howells - MG	22-Aug-22
ICMD	28-Sep-22	B4245 speed limit		DEFERRED TO 26 OCT	Mark Hand	18-Jul-22
Council	27-Sep-22	Tackling poverty and inequalities			Nick John	24-Aug-22
Council	27-Sep-22	RLDP Options Report			Rachel Lewis	25-Jul-22
Council	27-Sep-22	Rivers and Ocean			Hazel Clatworthy	9-Jun-22
Council	27-Sep-22	Monmouthshire County Council self - assessment report 2021/2			Richard Jones	23-May-22
ICMD	14-Sep-22	Welsh Church Fund Working Group - meeting 2 held on 21st July 2022 (no meeting/no report -			Dave Jarrett	17-May-22
Cabinet	07-Sep-22	Transport Policy Consultation Update.			Deb Hill Howells	22-Aug-22
Cabinet	07-Sep-22	Cost Of Living			Matt Phillips	25-Jul-22
ICMD	31-Aug-22	MY DAY, MY LIFE SERVICE EVALUTATION			Ceri York	15-Aug-22
ICMD	31-Aug-22	Homeseach Policy & Procedure - Amendments & Welsh Translation Requirement			Ian Bakewell	
ICMD	03-Aug-22	Additional Resources in Educations Strategy		Resources required to develop and maintain schools education systems and the implementatin	Sian Hayward	14-Jun-22
ICMD	03-Aug-22	Designation of Secondary Catchment Areas			Matthew Jones	6-Jun-22
ICMD	03-Aug-22	Welsh Church Fund Working Group - meeting 1 held on 23rd June 2022 - Moved to ICMD 3rd Aug 2022			Dave Jarrett	
Cabinet	27-Jul-22	Wye Valley Villages Future Improvement Plan			Mark Hand	1-Jul-22
Cabinet	27-Jul-22	Regen Three Year Programme			Mark Hand	1-Jul-22
Cabinet	27-Jul-22	Review of Chepstow High Street closure			Mark Hand	1-Jul-22

Cabinet	27-Jul-22	Home to School Transport Policy 2023-24.			Deb Hill Howells	27-Jun-22
Cabinet	27-Jul-22	MUCH (Magor & Undy Community Hall) report			Nick Keys	9-Jun-22
Cabinet	27-Jul-22	Shared Prosperity Fund Local Investment Plan and Regional Lead Authority Arrangements			Hannah Jones	23-May-22
Cabinet	27-Jul-22	Welsh Church Fund Working Group - meeting 1 held on 23rd June 2022 - Moved to ICMD 3rd Aug 2022			Dave Jarrett	17-May-22
Cabinet	27-Jul-22	2021/22 Revenue and Capital Monitoring outturn			Peter Davies/Jon Davies	17-Feb-22
Cabinet	27-Jul-22	Play Sufficiency Assessment and Action Plan 22/23			Matthew Lewis	10-Feb-22
Cabinet	27-Jul-22	Housing Support Programme Strategy (Homeless Strategy)			Ian Bakewell	

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Monmouthshire Select Committee Minutes

Meeting of Performance and Overview Scrutiny Committee held at The Council Chamber, County Hall, The Rhadyr, Usk, NP15 1GA and remote attendance on Tuesday, 17th January, 2023 at 10.00 am

Councillors Present

County Councillor Alistair Neill (Chairman)
County Councillor Peter Strong (Vice Chairman)

County Councillors: Jill Bond, Ian Chandler,
Paul Pavia, Ann Webb, Laura Wright and
Sue Riley

Also in attendance: County Councillor Paul
Griffiths

Officers in Attendance

Hazel Ilett, Scrutiny Manager
Robert McGowan, Policy and Scrutiny Officer
Cath Fallon, Head of Economy and Enterprise
David Jones, Head of Public Protection
Jennifer Walton, Registration Service Manager
Steve Robinson, Head of Procurement
Huw Owen, Principal Environment Health Officer
(Public Health)
Gareth Walters, Trading Standards & Animal Health
Team Leader

APOLOGIES: Councillors Tony Kear and J. Watkins

1. Declarations of Interest

None.

2. Public Open Forum

No submissions were received.

3. Public Protection 2021- 22 Performance Report - To review the performance of the service area

The Chair thanked the team for its extraordinary work during the pandemic, on behalf of the committee. David Jones presented the report and answered the members' questions with Huw Owen and Gareth Walters.

Challenge:

Can 'TTP' be explained in the report? What about the likely Covid peak in March?

Yes, 'Track, Trace and Protect' can be included in the report. Monmouthshire TTP was disbanded as a service last summer – it is now all held regionally at Caerphilly. The service is reduced; they are dealing with care homes, specifically. We still have an interest, particularly with schools that have queries. A potential peak is now for Caerphilly to manage for Gwent, but Dave Jones is involved in the governance and we support Caerphilly through our Environmental Health colleagues.

Are the 2 staff members on secondment coming back?

We encourage secondments when there is a benefit to the service e.g. one of our licensing colleagues is at Welsh Government, dealing with Tax Policy and Licensing, which will be a great benefit to us when he returns.

Is flytipping up because of closed sites? What are the learning and indications to date?

In 21-22 the total number of incidents increased, due somewhat to more accurate recording but nevertheless there was a substantial increase, correlated with more home working and home building during Covid. We take this very seriously. In the last few years, Welsh Government has given local authorities powers to issue fixed penalty notices for those who don't dispose of waste properly – we will target that as best as we can throughout this year i.e. if a household entrusts their waste to someone who then flytips, without having checked that that person was a certified disposer of waste.

Why is Pest Control up? What is the learning from that?

There was a marginal increase. The service provided by Environmental Health on Pest Control is one of enforcement. The discretionary pest control service provided by the Council was removed in 2013/14. The enforcement we administer is in an instance such as someone reporting that refuse is collecting in their neighbour's garden, attracting rats – we would pay a visit and ensure that appropriate baiting is being done. One of the reasons we keep the statistics is to monitor the impact over the years of the pest control service being removed from the council.

Could we have a brief explanation of the Public Spaces Protections Orders for Dog Controls consultation? What's the progress with the public consultation?

Currently, the rule is that an owner must pick up after their dog if it fouls *certain* areas – there has been pressure in recent years to explore expanding the controls.

There was a big public consultation from July-October 2020, with around 1500 responses, which fed into our report to scrutiny in March 2022 with certain recommendations, namely to engage with the main stakeholders to consider the controls further. Around December, we wrote to all town and community councils and major landowners, Brecon Beacons National Park, the major housing associations, etc., to ask what controls they would like in their area. We hope that there will be a mandate that fouling in any public area must be picked up. We are in the middle of that process, awaiting feedback from those stakeholders, and scheduled to report back to this committee in early March on dog fouling and with recommendations for exemptions and dogs on leads areas. We need to produce a draft public protection order to be amended/approved by committee, and then go out to a full public consultation on a draft PSPO.

Environmental checks and monitoring: which are the 4 main towns, are they based on population? Could other monitoring be included e.g. particulates?

Air quality improved over 2021-22, as expected, due to less traffic on the roads. the 4 major towns in which we do monitoring are Abergavenny, Monmouth, Chepstow and Usk. We have two air quality management areas, Usk and Chepstow. The air quality hasn't exceeded the objective levels for Nitrogen Dioxide in Usk for 5+ years, and 2

years in Chepstow. We do particulate monitoring – those levels are also falling in Chepstow, where we monitor, but we will have to keep a close eye as traffic levels pick back up.

Why is Caldicot not monitored, as the third largest in Monmouthshire?

We do some diffusion tube monitoring, and more localised monitoring, in the town. In recent years we have monitored the nitrogen dioxide levels and found that they were well below the objective level. We follow Welsh Government guidance in where to monitor, based on traffic levels.

Why has there been an increase in trading standards complaints and advice?

We are starting to see the cost of living crisis kick in – people are becoming more attentive to what they are spending, value for money, etc. – and therefore we are receiving more enquiries. But there isn't a specific reason. There has also been a large increase across Wales concerning vapes.

This is an excellent report. One concern is the backlog of inspections. Could we have reassurance or an indication of how to catch up, particularly in food hygiene and animal health inspections? Are abattoirs included?

In a typical year, there are 500 food hygiene visits, but dropped significantly due to the Covid response. In 22/23, we expect to have recovered that position – we are on schedule to do that by the end of March. Regarding Animal Health, in recent years we have become intelligence-led and reactive. It is positive to have recently appointed 2 officers. Also, in the previous year, we took away the temporary status of 2 AH officers, so we now have 3 and are able to undertake more proactive inspections. This year, visits have focussed on feed – the Critical Control Point inspections (e.g. markets) are undertaken. There are no abattoirs in the county, except for one small abattoir in Raglan, but our remit ends at the gate, effectively (the turkey plant on the heads of the valleys is covered by the Meat Hygiene Service, an arm of the Food Standards Agency.) However, in recent years, at a national level, there have been concerns about abattoirs and the welfare of employees so we are working with Welsh Government to see how we can improve that, starting in the larger plants with measures such as improved CCTV – hopefully these measures will then roll out to smaller ones.

Following the inquest into mould in Rochdale and the resulting new guidelines are there any implications for poor housing in Monmouthshire and our response?

The role of Environmental Health is to respond to complaints regarding housing conditions, including tenants of social landlords. The three main hazards are damp, excess cold and fire safety. We haven't seen a substantial increase in damp and mould complaints this year. When we do, particularly with the social landlords, we work closely with them to require appropriate works to be done, where needed.

Can you unpack the housing enforcement action, to understand where our level is? What about the number of adults and children mentioned in the report?

We are responsible for looking at the private rented sector and responding to complaints. In the first instance, we try to work with the landlords about the necessary works following inspection of the property; in the vast majority of the cases, the landlords comply within the timeframe, without any enforcement being needed. Measures then available to us include serving an improvement notice (a legal document specifying the works to be completed within a particular timeframe) and, ultimately, a prohibition order. We don't want to serve these and we tend to find that the initial approach to the landlord is successful. We decided a number of years ago that we need to record the numbers of adults and children involved in the properties.

Under the Energy Efficiency Private Rented Property England and Wales regulations, Trading Standards has an involvement in looking at the minimum standards in all rented properties such that they are E or above for energy efficiency – we are therefore identifying all of the properties that are compliant in the county. They might not be properties of immediate concern but could be a concern in future. This work should support the housing enforcement work. We are always working with organisation such as Rent Smart to improve standards generally, not just respond to complaints.

There doesn't seem to be any work with partners to mitigate the air quality issues in Chepstow? How is the information shared with Welsh Government?

There are two air quality management areas: Usk and Chepstow. We provide an air quality report to Welsh Government every year. Air quality in Chepstow is very much linked to the Welsh Government trunk roads. We have Welsh Government attendance to the air quality steering groups each year. Welsh Government is therefore aware of the problems and feeds into the meetings. There are transport studies feeding into the next steps for improving air quality and the transport issues in the Chepstow area, led by Welsh Government working with MCC Highways.

Given the significant backlog, with services trying to return to normal after the pandemic, and budgetary pressures, has there been a request for more resources?

We are considering here the 21/22 year, but in 22/23 there was investment of £223k, which was helpful. This time last year we presented the report as the evidence base for increasing the budget for 22/23; there is a budget mandate now about a restructure, so there is a saving there. 2.4 additional EHOs is a lot for a small team, an additional TSO and extra half for licensing – this will give a boost for 22/23, reflecting in the capacity and wellbeing of the teams.

Is it possible for members to visit the Hardwick Hill Air Monitoring Station in Chepstow?

Yes, we can accommodate this for any members who would like to go. Our next report to committee might want to focus on a particular area of public protection: our report 4-5 years ago focussed on air quality, so we could do that again, if members wish.

Do we have numbers in relation to enforcement actions that have been made: those complied with and those outstanding?

We have the figures but not to hand – they can be provided.

How do you organise things to ensure a good standard of out-of-hours coverage and can this be continued in light of budget pressures?

For out-of-hours, officers can be contacted in the case of an emergency, and senior managers can then be contacted. We are led by intelligence, working closely with the Police, Fire Service, etc., so there is usually an indication of events coming that could be a problem – such as a rave – and officers are therefore made available.

p10 of the report states that services might struggle to take on any more statutory duties – are we aware of any in the pipeline?

Additional responsibilities to the authority: the Public Health Act Wales 2017 includes the Toilets Strategy (which takes officer capacity), minimum unit pricing, and special procedures for tattooists. The cost for those will be recovered via the licensing regime: they will pay a certain amount for a 3 year licence. Generally, if there is any additional burden we look to recover the costs.

Is the increase in notifiable diseases a trend or within normal variation?

Yes, communicable diseases have increased. People might have lost a bit of focus in terms of food safety and the measures learned from Covid, so we will continue to monitor this closely.

4.4 has a reference to 15k+ Covid cases – is that the total number in that timeframe that we know of, or were there others?

That is the number reported, which came through the CRM system, with people notifying that they had had Covid using their phones. This triggered a response from the TTP team to call them. So the number related to TTP and isn't necessarily the total number.

Chair's Summary:

Cabinet Member Paul Griffiths noted how informative today's meeting has been, and will do what he can to take forward the suggestion of how annual reporting could evolve to build in a learning process into future practice.

The committee accepted and moved the report.

It is requested that the 22/23 Public Protection report (May/June) includes a review of specific lessons learned that can be used to be better prepared for future Covid waves and other crises, as well as improvements that managers and officers would be keen to develop – **ACTION**

Officers to send further information to members on the number of housing enforcement actions, to understand the outstanding numbers, particularly – **ACTION**

4. Registration Services Annual Report 21/22 - To review the performance of the service area

Jennifer Walton presented the report and answered the members' questions with David Jones.

Challenge:

Alistair: The Monmouthshire birth-rate reduced significantly in this period – is that an aberration or trend? Does it reflect more widely?

There hasn't been a dramatic drop in births but Monmouthshire residents are now going to The Grange, in Torfaen.

If the birth-rate is now split with The Grange, how do we know what the numbers and trends are?

The maternity services in Nevill Hall have been downgraded with The Grange's opening, so it is midwife-led only. The majority of births in Aneurin Bevan now occur in Torfaen, therefore. The figures are fed into ONS, so those for Monmouthshire can be retrieved at any time, but we only have access for those births that occurred in the county. Also, following Covid, there were times this year when the maternity departments in Nevill Hall had to be closed due to staff pressures.

5.1, Is there information on the development of partnership working? To what extent has it been part of the thinking in the budget process?

We intend that partnership working will expand to include death registrations as well. Currently, a birth can be registered at any office in the Aneurin Bevan HB area, which has proven very popular and helped us to manage the backlog coming out of Covid. The ceremonies programmed last summer were so extensive that we couldn't look at developing the service for death registrations but we hope to begin planning meetings soon, and the logistics are already in place.

What access do residents have to registrations and records?

Any resident can put in a request for a historical certificate, any details they have they can submit and we will search the records for them. The records are kept in a temperature-controlled strong room so we don't generally allow public to view them themselves but anyone can submit a request and we will do our best to track down the information.

Customer feedback is good, though anecdotal – will digital feedback allow more quantitative information about residents' views on these services and whether we can improve?

Customer feedback is generally fantastic, especially as we're often dealing with people who have experienced a bereavement, for example. But we can quantify it better, yes. We are hopeful that the digital service will make a difference and that it will get underway soon.

Is there a way of baselining or relating the feedback to other areas, and is there any learning there?

The Register Office publishes monthly Performance data across England and Wales, so we can see our rank against everyone else, and we have regular visits from the compliance officer, who will raise any concerns with us based on the figures.

Are Marriage Registers now obsolete?

Over a long period of time there were discussions about trying to include mothers on marriage entries, as well as fathers; the solution reached was to dispense with the marriage registers altogether. Previously, the registrar took a register to the wedding, in which everyone wrote and signed. There is now a 'Schedule', a piece of paper with all of the information, checked and signed by all parties, but this is not the legal document – the registration is completed when taken back to the office and logged on the system. We store the previous registers but everything going forward will be on the database.

The team is comprised of 11 casual workers and 7 others?

This is a mistake in the report: there are 6 in the office and 11 casual workers.

Because of the new system, people aren't getting marriage certificates as quickly as they would like – what is being done to speed that up?

There is a learning curve, and next year's report will show that the numbers have gone up significantly. We are conscious of needing to allow more time and resources so that the certificates go out more quickly. We have regular meetings with the Superintendent of registrars across Wales, in which we have discussed whether something can be produced for the couple to have on the day – we can look to do this in the future, but the advice has been not to do so for now, in order to avoid confusion. The aim now is to work on getting the certificates out within a few days.

Can we, as a Council, make an input at a national level to the Citizenship Test? Some of the questions seem outdated or irrelevant, are we able to provide feedback?

Officers can enquire as to whether MCC can have an input on a national level towards the Citizenship test having more sensible questions – **ACTION**

Chair's Summary:

The committee accepts the report and thanks the officers and their team. It is always good to see areas for improvement in the report – we would encourage considering the ways that they can be built in.

5. Procurement Performance Review - Review of the joint working arrangements and benefits realised to date

Steve Robinson presented the report and answered the members' questions with Cath Fallon.

Challenge:

Q7+8, concerning expectations for people, and a softer behavioural understanding, is identified as a gap – do the actions go far enough? Do we need more of the ‘how’ than the ‘what’?

Yes, culture is one of the key enablers. There is no one thing that will achieve it. The strategy itself is important: as well as setting the direction of travel, it communicates the priorities for the authority and how we go about delivering them. The key focus is the MCC Community and Corporate Plan; we will doublecheck that we have a strong alignment with it after it goes to Cabinet tomorrow. We spoke yesterday with Communications about how to communicate the broader messages, assuming there is council approval in March. We recognise that sometimes the way in which we try to inform and educate officers could be better. We are developing a programme supported with online material to get key messages across as simply as possible – Comms is supporting that process as a critical friend. We need to better use technology such as SharePoint. For Buying Responsibly, we are building the proof of concept in Cardiff, looking to roll out later across the other authorities.

More information about the partnership with Atebion would have been good. It would be good to know more about procurement savings and look at the social value of procurement spend – how much of the procurement spend stays in Monmouthshire? Without the survey methodology the numbers are a bit meaningless. It’d be good to see this come back with more numbers and detail. Are we able to identify, in hard terms/improved value terms, what joint working gives us?

We’ve been trying to build from the ground up, from the basics – getting these right has been our primary focus. We have looked to baseline the current position around spend kept in Monmouthshire. In our strategy we have practical steps to take to improve that, looking at changes to our working practice, working with partners, etc. It has taken a lot of steps to enable to arrive at a position where we start to see value coming through. The market conditions are now a challenge when looking at savings; in many cases, we might now be looking at cost avoidance rather than a reduction. Value is a broad agenda for us.

Chair’s Summary:

The Committee moved the report. For the next Procurement report, it is requested that officers identify, in more concrete terms, the benefits that joint working gives MCC – **ACTION**

6. Performance and Overview Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme and Action List

The 23rd February meeting needs to move to 27th or 28th February – officers will confirm with members, subsequently.

7. Cabinet and Council Work Planner

Note the Extraordinary Meeting of Council on 2nd March.

8. To confirm the minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes were confirmed and signed as an accurate record, proposed by Councillor Neill and seconded by Councillor Strong.

9. Next Meetings:

25th January 2023 at 10.00am – Special Meeting (Budget).

23rd February 2023 at 10.00am – Ordinary Meeting.

The meeting ended at **12.05 pm.**

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Monmouthshire Select Committee Minutes

Meeting of Performance and Overview Scrutiny Committee held at Council Chamber, County Hall, The Rhadyr USK on Wednesday, 25th January, 2023 at 10.00 am

Councillors Present

County Councillor Alistair Neill (Chairman)
County Councillors: Jill Bond, Ian Chandler, Paul Pavia, Peter Strong, Ann Webb, Laura Wright, Sue Riley, Phil Murphy, Jan Butler
Also in attendance County Councillors: Rachel Garrick, Sara Burch and Paul Griffiths

Officers in Attendance

Hazel Ilett, Scrutiny Manager
Robert McGowan, Policy and Scrutiny Officer
Paul Matthews, Chief Executive
Peter Davies, Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Officer, Resources
Frances O'Brien, Chief Officer, Communities and Place
Jane Rodgers, Chief Officer for Social Care, Safeguarding and Health
Matt Phillips, Chief Officer People and Governance and Monitoring Officer
Matthew Gatehouse, Head of Policy and Governance
Jonathan Davies, Head of Finance
Ian Saunders, Chief Operating Officer, MonLife
Nikki Wellington, Finance Manager
Stacey Jones, Senior Accountant
Dave Loder, Finance Manager
Mark Hand, Head of Place-making, Housing, Highways and Flood
Carl Touhig, Head of Neighbourhood Services

APOLOGIES: Councillor Tony Kear

1. Apologies for Absence

Tony Kear, Phil Murphy as substitute. Councillor Murphy was elected as vice-chair for the meeting, nominated by Councillor Chandler and seconded by Councillor Bond.

2. Declarations of Interest

Councillor Strong declared a non-prejudicial interest as Chair of The Friends Of Caldicot Library, and Secretary of the Gwent County History Association.

3. Public Open Forum

No submissions were received.

4. Budget Scrutiny: Scrutiny of the Budget proposals for 2023/24

Cabinet Member Rachel Garrick delivered the presentation and answered the members' questions with Peter Davies, Jonathan Davies, Jane Rodgers, Nikki Wellington, Matt Phillips, Cabinet Member Sara Burch and Cabinet Member Paul Griffiths.

Challenge:

There are concerns about levels of confidence in delivering the proposed savings, the risks involved, and the cross-collateral impacts e.g. in SCH5, reducing staff in Adult Social Care, what impact might that have on SCH6, with an increase in staff? There isn't a sense of how the two go together? What is the ability to deliver the redesigns in SCH5, when there is no head of Adult Social Services in post?

There is no denying that there are significant challenges in the mandates put forward for adult social care. We spent a lot of time thinking of the best way to generate savings without creating undue risk for individuals. Following the pandemic response, we are now at the point of regrouping and getting back to strategic priorities, particularly early help and prevention, ablement and reablement, and partnership working. We must get back to supporting practice to enable people to live as independently as possible with minimum reliance on expensive packages of care, and ensuring that every penny is spent in the most cost-effective way by expanding the type of care provision. We need to review and assess people already receiving care, and those due to come in. We won't compromise on safeguarding but we will challenge ourselves as to whether we are enabling that person to the best effect, so that we can reduce some of the care costs. It will be important to join up with health partners and use all of our collective resources. We will look to support people to avoid going into hospital or to get out quickly, and continue with innovation – we have many ideas.

Regarding an increase of £1.4m in fees and charges in the summary paper, there is no breakdown of where this will come from?

Within the budget papers, there is a detailed breakdown of the fees and charges, split out first by Directorate and then by the services for which we are charging. Within the Social Care mandates there is a separate mandate for social care charging that goes into detail. The main bloc of information is in Appendix 1, with links through to the full schedule of fees and charges totalling the increase of £1.4m.

The £1.4m social care increase doesn't have a further breakdown in the top-level paper.

We tried to make the paper more concise but we can definitely take that feedback.

Residents are already raising concerns about savings coming from service delivery. What is the explanation and justification to residents that few savings are proposed in other areas?

Much of this is due to the number of savings previously delivered in those areas, leaving many at a base level already, and risks about what is needed: the more people are pared back, the harder it will be to deliver an adequate and competent service in those areas.

How much are the 'back office' costs compared to frontline services? And how does that compare to other authorities?

The lion's share of costs is taken up by schools and social care, then a plethora of other services, including the 'back office' ones that keep the council running smoothly: leisure, libraries, etc. We also have to meet treasury costs – the ongoing cost of borrowing to support our capital programme – and levies to pay police, drainage boards, etc. These are fixed costs imposed by statute. Within the core, there are teams to oversee governance and the good running of the organisation, including paying bills and recovering income. Each local authority will have a similar breakdown of costs.

Is there a more 'resident friendly' way to communicate the budget?

We refer back to Councillor Garrick's initial response, and as covered in the presentation. We have made significant savings each year since 2010, and in comparison with others we are incredibly lean, and unique, and given our funding base have always had to be resourceful in maintaining frontline services. All services have had to bring forward proposals for savings. Those back office functions are incredibly lean and we have to be very careful in maintaining the safe running of the organisation.

Would it be clearer to residents for us to say 6% for the council tax increase? Neighbours are consulting on 5%, 3%, 2% etc – what are your thoughts in being on the higher end, and by some distance? How can this be justified to residents?

A 0.05% increase equals £30k. We could go to whole percentage points – that doesn't seem unreasonable.

To what the extent has the idea been explored of potentially protecting services offered in communities by developing ownership of community assets e.g. hubs and libraries, to run them for maintained or extended hours through voluntary individuals/groups?

There is community ownership in various areas, such as Drill Hall in Chepstow. It's difficult to place in a budget, in terms of assessing the risk. It's unlikely that there will be an instant saving, as groups in the community need to be sought and the idea worked through – it is a very unstable saving. It is certainly something that we can continue to look to, but can't rely on as an in-year saving for planning the budget. There are many partnerships between community organisations and this council. Our challenge is to ensure the appropriate mobilisation of volunteers, understanding where we need to be provider and where an enabler. We have to be mindful of the difficulties faced by these organisations in heating and lighting the village halls, getting enough bookings, etc.

If we are making cuts to services, they should be set out clearly – obscuring behind difficult language opens up potential criticism e.g. Gwent music subsidy 'this' year? 'Fairer' prices when we mean higher prices?

We are asking residents to pay a fair price for their services. No-one in the county should think that 'fair' means anything other than an increase, given the cost-of-living crisis and levels of inflation. The language is completely adequate.

What will be the impact on businesses of substantial parking charges? And Pavement licences? What about business rates?

Welsh Government is putting together a central fund for business rates. We have scheduled a full car parking review across the county for next year which will take into account the needs for each area and the impacts on them, including businesses. There is currently a significant difference between areas – a hangover from the 60's – where there are different parking approaches e.g. the west of the county has free parking but the east tends to have charges.

Post-16 transport increases and breakfast club increases could have a large impact on families with several children. How were the impacts assessed? And what about the links between those i.e. for a family that will be subject to all of the increases?

Regarding breakfast club impacts, we would point to what we're providing in that. It is rare to see a family with several children using a breakfast or after school club. We are providing very low-cost wraparound care: £6.95 for an evening session, we are looking at around a third of that, at £2 a session.

What is the realisation: are we raising thresholds or rationing care in Adults Services? In Children's Services, what is the impact in terms of decision-making with high-cost placements and risk? What does it mean to our engagement with Care Inspectorate Wales?

For Children's, a lot of work is ahead of us in rebalancing our use of placements so that the majority of children are placed with in-house Monmouthshire foster carers – if that can be achieved, we will make the required savings. With Adult Social Care, this is about getting consistent approaches, using all of the mechanisms available, ensuring that we are working with people through a strength-based approach, where we do have to provide care for those with complex needs we are making maximum use of existing digital technologies, and expanding our options to get the best possible value for money.

Regarding what Bank of England and OBR are saying about inflation, will we see a fall in inflation over the next year? What assumptions are being built in to take pressure off the budgets?

The OBR forecasts are in the medium-term financial planning. Education savings are incredibly firm, there is a huge reliance on individual schools budgets. Education is one of the areas with the lowest risk of realisation. We are ensuring that with this year's targets we are avoiding mistakes previously made e.g. consultant-led targets being put in place for car parking, which led to significant losses. We are also realistic about things like the uptake of Monlife membership.

Some schools that are already in deficit might tip back into deficit?

7 schools are in deficit. Next year's forecast at the top level indicates two primaries would need to find a £14-17k saving for this. Based on the balances we currently have, we don't foresee any more schools going into deficit.

For a resident's benefit, what do mean by 'unmitigated' budget risks?

When we use the word 'unmitigated' it means that the risk isn't hard-baked into the budget as it stands: the level of risk changes through time so we will keep assessing it. The budget will evolve on a daily basis so we include our best estimates and assessment of risk when bringing it together, Cabinet will take some considered positions around that when finalising its proposals, then we move to next year. We will assess the level of reserve cover needed against those known/unknown risks

£3m of reserves are earmarked as contingencies for risk, which seems low. On what basis is the £3m calculated and how realistic is it?

Realistically, with a £26m shortfall and £11m of savings nothing in this budget is 'enough'. £3m is largely driven by the availability of reserves. This year's pressures that have come upon us are in-built and feature significantly in the £26m cost pressure; pressures have increased since reporting to Cabinet in the Autumn, so we have incorporated those updated considerations. The £3m reserve cover will be reassessed. Peter Davies as the Council's Section 151 Officer is required to undertake the assessment of the budget process's robustness and the adequacy of the reserves level. We need to strike the right balance between the best understanding of that risk and how robustly the budget process has accommodated known risk. We won't speculatively lay further cost pressures into the budget that will have significant impacts. The £3m is mainly against the deliverability risk that we carry. Social Care is the area where it sits highest, as it is a volatile and dynamic environment, hence the proposed changes.

Regarding operational risk, taking homelessness as an example, the cost escalation is due to an increasing number of homeless people and housing them in expensive provision. Bringing down the cost per person relies on some ambitious plans, set out in the community and corporate plan. Even if we are successful, there is the possibility that the economic and local housing market situation means more people will become homeless. We have similar challenges in social care.

How is Council tax determined and assessed to reach 5.9%? Do we start at the price point and work backwards or build up from the pressures?

Yes, it has been an informed piece based on where the pressures are, and where savings can be made. We have also taken into account what we believe our residents could countenance in terms of a very difficult cost-of-living crisis. Some councils are looking at higher percentages, others at lower; the latter are doing so by looking to reserves that we don't have to the same level. As a minority administration, we are reliant on what every member of the council would be prepared to accept.

Regarding the forecast to 26-27, in compound terms it is a 20% increase in council tax (5.9% this year, then 3.95% for the following 3 years). How does that place us at the end of that period, as a council? Are we injecting enough positive strategy into the broader shape of the medium-term plan?

We have followed austerity under-funding of councils to now having a bumper year of inflation. 3.95% is the standard input for the medium-term financial plan; it is likely to be

adjusted at each year-end and move into financial planning with greater clarity of our position.

Can the involvement of town and community councils be considered, particularly in relation to village halls? They have a precept and aren't capped. Some community councils lack a full understanding of what the precept is.

Thank you, we will take that on board.

What measures are we considering to get the indicative base for 26-27 of a £23m deficit to a more break-even figure?

The further we go, the more uncertainties there are around inflation, interest rates and wider pressures on services, so we make allowances in the model for those unknown pressures, based on experience and trends. In the work on service redesign, we hope to see a lower level of pressure come through towards the end of the medium-term financial plan, delivered by the work at the front end. There is confidence that inflation will fall but there are uncertainties in things like pay award.

Clarification: fig.5 in 6.2 of the paper is more of a worst-case scenario, than a forecast?

We will have a medium-term financial strategy off the back of the community and corporate plan, and will identify ways of addressing that gap. It is based on realistic estimations at this point in time but will change month to month and year to year as we go through. We are reliant on the forecast from UK Government and then Welsh Government of what funding will be made available in future years. 'Worst-case scenario' is sometimes accurate, as the Treasury won't commit itself beyond the minimum that is possible, and we work from that projection. But there will be movement, as there was this year. We have learned from the pressures that built up this year. We must change our service delivery over a period of time.

Could any staff vacancy after 6 months be removed, to reduce future pressures?

No. Thinking of a pinch-point area such as domiciliary care, there will be a number of posts advertised at any one time as that's where the demand lies. It would be unwise to take those as vacancies, given the impact on service delivery. It places the focus on how we recruit, and asking what is our competitive advantage? The answer includes what Welsh Government is doing nationally. We will always look at redeployment and retraining, where roles are potentially going. Apprenticeship and graduate roles are very important. Our recruitment process needs to be better, we have procured a new e-recruitment system and a learning management system that will allow us to invest in and develop our people, which enables retention and improves productivity.

A big part of the capital budget is the new school. Where does the risk sit in terms of cost overrun?

The risk of price increases rests with the contractor, and the nature of how the contract has been put together. The level of contingency budget has been appropriately factored into what is a very significant capital scheme.

Is the schedule still on track?

Yes, in terms of construction being completed on time and the school opening.
The sort of thing that could come back is excess asbestos in pulling the old building down?

We have experienced that with Caldicot and Monmouth builds. The assessment of the level of contingency held took that into account, based on those experiences.

Which English councils have announced bankruptcy?

There have been several high profile examples, with the information available in the public domain, but not to hand. The Chief Officer People and Governance has data to provide to the committee outside the meeting – **ACTION**

Chair's Summary:

The Committee undertook thorough scrutiny of the budget proposals for 2023-2024, during which the following key issues and questions were raised:

- Concerns about levels of confidence in delivering the proposed savings, the risks involved, and the cross-collateral impacts
- Clarification of the breakdown of the £1.4m social care increase
- Justification to residents that few savings are proposed in areas other than service delivery
- The comparison of 'back office' costs to frontline services
- Possible ways of communicating the budget in a more 'resident friendly' way
- Comparison of our rate of council tax increase to other authorities, and whether it would be clearer to round up to whole percentage points
- The possibility of developing community ownership of assets such as hubs and libraries
- The clarity of language used e.g. 'fairer' prices, rather than 'higher' prices
- The potential impacts on businesses of substantial parking charges and pavement licences
- The effects on families of multiple increases e.g. post-16 transport increases and breakfast club increases, and how the impacts have been assessed
- Whether we are raising thresholds or rationing care in Adults Services
- In Children's Services, the impact in terms of decision-making with high-cost placements and risk, and our engagement with Care Inspectorate Wales
- Whether there will be a fall in inflation over the next year, and what assumptions are being built in to take pressure off the budgets
- Whether some schools might tip back into deficit
- The meaning of 'unmitigated' budget risks
- On what basis the £3m of reserves earmarked as contingencies for risk are calculated and how realistic they are
- How the Council tax increase is determined and assessed to reach 5.9%
- Where the compound increase in council tax to 27-27 of 20% places the council, and whether we are injecting enough positive strategy into the broader shape of the medium-term plan

- Involving town and community councils, particularly in relation to village halls, noting that some community councils lack a full understanding of what the precept is
- The measures being considered to get the indicative base for 26-27 of a £23m deficit to a more break-even figure, and clarification of whether this is more of a worst-case scenario, than a forecast
- Whether any staff vacancy after 6 months could be removed, to reduce future pressures
- Where the risk sits in terms of cost overrun for the new school, and whether the schedule is still on track
- Clarifying which English councils have announced bankruptcy

5. Next Meeting

This meeting has changed to Monday 27th February 2023 at 10:00am.

The meeting ended at **12.09 pm**.