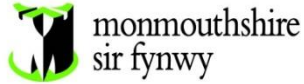


Public Document Pack



Neuadd y Sir
Y Rhadyr
Brynbuga
NP15 1GA

County Hall
Rhadyr
Usk
NP15 1GA

Tuesday, 14 January 2025

Dear Councillor

CABINET

You are requested to attend a **Cabinet** meeting to be held at **Steve Greenslade Room, County Hall, Usk** on **Wednesday, 22nd January, 2025, at 4.30 pm.**

AGENDA

1. Apologies for Absence
2. Declarations of Interest
3. Feedback from Special Performance & Overview Scrutiny 3rd December 2024 1 - 2

- i. **2025/26 DRAFT REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGET PROPOSALS** 3 - 116
Division/Wards Affected: All

Purpose: To set out the draft revenue and capital budget for financial year 2025/26

Author: Peter Davies
Deputy Chief Executive, Chief Officer Resources

Jonathan Davies
Head of Finance (Deputy S151 Officer)

Contact Details: peterdavies@monmouthshire.gov.uk
Jonathandavies2@monmouthshire.gov.uk

- ii. **IMPLEMENTING THE RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE MIDDLE TIER REVIEW** 117 - 126
Division/Wards Affected: All

Purpose: To present members with options to consider a new school improvement model, in response to the Welsh Government's 'Review of Roles and Responsibilities of Education Partners in Wales and Delivery of School Improvement Arrangements'.

Author: Will Mclean, Strategic Director, Learning, Skills and Economy

Contact Details: willmclean@monmouthshire.gov.uk

iii. **DEVELOPMENT OF A SUPPORTED ACCOMODATION PROVISION**

127 -
172

Division/Wards Affected: Abergavenny Area

Purpose: To provide details and seek approval for the acquisition and refurbishment of a property in Abergavenny for the purpose of developing a supported accommodation provision for care experienced young people (aged 16 plus), using existing borrowing headroom.

Author: Jane Rodgers, Chief Officer Social Care, Safeguarding and Health

Contact Details: janerodgers@monmouthshire.gov.uk

Yours sincerely,

Paul Matthews
Chief Executive

CABINET PORTFOLIOS

County Councillor	Area of Responsibility	Ward
Mary Ann Brocklesby	<p>Leader Lead Officers – Paul Matthews, Matthew Gatehouse, Peter Davies, Will Mclean</p> <p>Whole Authority Strategy and Direction Whole authority performance review and evaluation, including DDAT Relationships with Welsh Government, UK Government and local government associations Regional Relationships including CJsCs. PSBs and cross boarder Emergency Planning</p>	Llanelly
Paul Griffiths	<p>Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Development Deputy Leader Lead Officers – Will McLean, Craig O'Connor</p> <p>Economic Strategy Skills and Employment Replacement Local Development Plan Placemaking and the development of market and affordable housing Placemaking and Transforming Towns Car parking and civil parking enforcement Development Management Building Control</p>	Chepstow Castle & Larkfield
Ben Callard	<p>Cabinet Member for Resources Lead Officers – Peter Davies, Matt Gatehouse</p> <p>Finance including MTFP and annual budget cycle Revenue and Benefits Human resources, payroll, health and safety Land and buildings Property maintenance and management Strategic procurement</p>	Llanfoist & Govilon
Martyn Groucutt	<p>Cabinet Member for Education Lead Officers – Will McLean, Ian Saunders</p> <p>Early Years Education All age statutory education Additional learning needs/inclusion Post 16 and adult education School standards and improvement</p>	Lansdown

	<p>Community learning Sustainable communities for learning Programme Youth service School transport</p>	
Ian Chandler	<p>Cabinet Member for Social Care, Safeguarding and Accessible Health Services Lead Officer – Jane Rodgers</p> <p>Children’s services Fostering & adoption Youth Offending service Adult services Whole authority safeguarding (children and adults) Disabilities Mental health Wellbeing Relationships with health providers and access to health provision</p>	Llantilio Crossenny
Catrin Maby	<p>Cabinet Member for Climate Change and the Environment Lead Officers – Debra Hill-Howells, Craig O’Connor, Ian Saunders</p> <p>Decarbonisation Transport Planning including home to school transport Highways and MCC Fleet Waste management, street care, litter, public spaces and parks Pavements and Back lanes Flood Alleviation Green Infrastructure, Biodiversity and River health</p>	Drybridge
Angela Sandles	<p>Cabinet Member for Equalities and Engagement Lead Officers – Matthew Gatehouse, Ian Saunders, Jane Rogers, James Williams</p> <p>Community development, inequality and poverty (health, income, nutrition, disadvantage, discrimination, isolation and cost of living crisis) Citizen engagement and democracy promotion including working with voluntary organisations Citizen experience - community hubs, contact centre, and customer service and registrars, communications, public relations and marketing Leisure centres, play and sport Public conveniences Electoral Services and constitution review Ethics and standards Welsh Language Trading Standards, Environmental Health, Public Protection, and Licencing</p>	Magor East with Undy

Sara Burch	Cabinet Member for Rural Affairs, Housing & Tourism Lead Officers – Craig O'Connor, Ian Saunders Local Food production and consumption, including agroforestry and local horticulture Homelessness, Temporary accommodation, private sector housing, (empty homes leasing schemes, home improvement loans, disabled facilities grants and adaptive technology), Allocation of social housing Broadband connectivity Active Travel Countryside Access and Rights of Way Tourism Development and Cultural Services	Cantref
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Aims and Values of Monmouthshire County Council

Our purpose

To become a zero-carbon county, supporting well-being, health and dignity for everyone at every stage of life.

Objectives we are working towards

- Fair place to live where the effects of inequality and poverty have been reduced;
- Green place to live and work with reduced carbon emissions and making a positive contribution to addressing the climate and nature emergency;
- Thriving and ambitious place, where there are vibrant town centres and where businesses can grow and develop
- Safe place to live where people have a home where they feel secure in;
- Connected place where people feel part of a community and are valued;
- Learning place where everybody has the opportunity to reach their potential

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.

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Special Performance & Overview Scrutiny 3rd December 2024

5. Secondary Schools Leadership Funding

Cabinet Member Martyn Groucott and Nicola Wellington introduced the report and answered the members' questions.

- A member asked how the King Henry VIII primary phase budget relates to other primaries in Monmouthshire. The officer explained that the funding for the King Henry VIII primary phase is equivalent to that of other primary schools of similar size in Monmouthshire. The head teacher and governing body are responsible for structuring the leadership team. While the funding is the same, potential savings could come from not needing two head teachers, as the school can look at its structure to identify any possible savings.
- A member asked about the measures being put in place to ensure that reductions in leadership resources at Chepstow School do not disproportionately impact vulnerable groups, including pupils with disabilities and those from disadvantaged backgrounds. It was explained that transitional funding has been put in place to ensure a staged process into the reduced funding. Chepstow School is looking at ways to support their learners more cost-effectively. The school currently has the largest leadership group among the four secondary schools, and they are working on restructuring to manage the funding changes.
- A question was asked about how the long-term effect of these changes on outcomes is monitored, especially in Chepstow where funding is significantly reduced. The officer stated that the financial aspects of the funding changes will be closely monitored, and the educational outcomes will be overseen by the school improvement team within the Directorate. They will work together to understand the impact of the funding changes and ensure that standards are maintained.
- It was further asked about plans to address the potential risk of leadership burnout, particularly in the light of schools' reduced funding. It was mentioned that leadership burnout is a concern that is frequently discussed with employee services. The impact of the funding changes on leadership burnout is not expected to be direct, but it will be monitored through regular discussions and sickness statistics. A member noted that burnout isn't confined to leadership but applies to classroom teachers as well.

Chair's Summary:

The Chair thanked the Cabinet Member and officers. The report was moved.

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SUBJECT: DRAFT REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGET PROPOSALS 2025/26

MEETING: CABINET

DATE: 22nd January 2025

DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED: All

1 PURPOSE:

- 1.1 To set out draft revenue and capital budget proposals for financial year 2025/26.
- 1.2 To commence a period of consultation on draft budget proposals for a four-week period ending 22nd February 2025.

Page
3

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That Cabinet approves the release of its draft **revenue** budget proposals for 2025/26 for consultation to run until 22nd February 2025.
- 2.2 That Cabinet approves the release of its draft **capital** budget proposals for 2025/26 and indicative capital budgets for 2026/27 to 2028/29 for consultation as set out in **appendix 4**.
- 2.3 That Cabinet note the remaining revenue budget gap of £2.86m at draft budget stage which will need to be resolved in full by the time that the final budget is set by Council in March 2025.
- 2.4 That Cabinet notes the implications and current uncertainties arising out of Welsh Government's provisional Local Government budget announcement as outlined in this report and agree the response to Welsh Government as outlined at **appendix 3**.
- 2.5 That Cabinet recommends the use of capital receipts totalling £3.7m to fund revenue costs associated with organisational change that support the draft revenue budget proposals.

Key frontline services will see increases in funding with Social care & health increasing by 10.6% and for Education by 10.7%

- This includes an **additional £1m investment in local school budgets** to meet the demands that schools are facing in restoring attendance levels and standards following the pandemic period. This investment is above meeting in full all pay and pension related pressures in schools
- There will continue to be a focus on tackling inequalities and to protect the most vulnerable in our society. This means **support for additional learning needs provision will increase**, as will the investment in **specialist resource bases for children and young people** helping them stay in their local schools
- We will be **investing in our Foster carer service** to retain and recruit valued carers and to recognise their essential skills, patience, time, and the resources that it takes to support some of the most vulnerable children in our County
- Whilst hard choices have had to be made to protect services, **the services that are available to residents this year will be available in 2025/26**. Waste collections will remain the same. Leisure centres, recycling centres, libraries and community hubs are all remaining open
- **Total additional capital investment of £2.3m** will be made within some of our key infrastructure, predominantly around **Highways structures, carriageways, footpaths, public rights of way, and our property estate**
- We are committed to protecting our local environment and nature and will **be increasing investment in Flood alleviation measures**, and continue to review our property estate and energy usage **to reduce our carbon footprint**

Welsh Government’s provisional funding settlement represents a very different approach to the funding of local services by both UK and Welsh Government and is an important first step in recognising the increased demands on Council services

- Monmouthshire will receive an increase of 2.6% in core revenue grant in 2025/26. In cash terms, after allowing for transfers of specific grants in/out of core funding and for tax base adjustments, this equates to an additional £5.1m in funding
- Whilst this is a significantly better position than was anticipated following the previous UK Government budget, there remain difficult local budget choices. The increase in grant funding does not cover the cost and demand for all the services we provide in their current form. Total cost pressures being accommodated in this draft budget total £23.7m
- Constructive discussions will continue with Welsh Government about the necessity for a minimum funding floor to be added to the final settlement. It is not expected that any such floor will cover in full the remaining budget gap of £2.86m

To partly fund the increased investment in key services noted above, we are intending to change the way some things operate and increase our income

- The draft budget includes £5.1m of service savings and efficiencies. Our residents will rightly expect us to reduce our costs wherever possible and to ensure we are operating as efficiently and effectively as we can
- We plan to increase income through an indicative increase in council tax of 7.8% and through specific charging for on-demand services to cope with the increased demand and cost of our services
- A cumulative impact assessment has been produced for the draft proposals which enables us to assess the overall potential impact of the budget on residents within our communities, and where any negative impact can possibly be mitigated

Open and robust scrutiny and challenge is an essential part of the budget setting process, and a public consultation process will run from January 23rd until February 22nd

4 Budget context and summary

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Pages

Local Government across the UK continues to face significant financial challenges. It is widely acknowledged that for many years funding has not kept pace with the increased demand for services and increases in the cost of provision. 2025/26 will be no different.

The Council has seen continuing headwinds which are having a severe impact upon the service operating environment:

- The wider and longer lasting impact of the pandemic, both economically and socially, continues to impact the Council, with significant increases in demand for services to support Homelessness, Children's services, Adult social care and Children's additional learning needs.
- The cost of living challenges continue to have an impact on our communities, with a consequential increase in demand for Council services, and impact upon income generating services;
- Whilst headline inflation has fallen, some discrete areas of Council services continue to experience cost pressures on supplies and services, alongside supply chain issues.
- In continuing efforts to combat inflation, interest rates have remained high, with revised forecasts suggesting that they will remain higher for longer than anticipated at the time of setting the budget;
- The Council continues to deal with a shortage of staff resources in some areas;

- 4.3 All the above results in a growing need for supportive Council services, a reduced demand for income generating services, increased risks around debt recovery, and a continued high-cost operating environment.
- 4.4 This ultimately leads to difficult decisions needing to be made to prioritise services most vital to our communities, whilst ensuring the Council continues to operate in a financially sustainable and safe manner.

5 Provisional Local Government Settlement

5.1 On the 11th December 2024, the Cabinet Secretary for Housing and Local Government announced the Provisional Local Government Settlement for 2025/26.

5.2 The headlines of the Provisional Settlement at an all Wales level are:

- On average, Welsh Local Authorities will receive a 4.3% increase in core revenue grant funding next financial year.
- No funding floor protection is currently in place, which results in individual Council settlements ranging from +2.6% (Monmouthshire) to +5.6% (Newport).
- An increase in general capital funding by £20m to a total £200m to support the inflationary increases in capital projects.

5.3 The additional funding provided for public services through both the UK Government Autumn Budget and provisional Local Government settlement is welcomed following the prolonged period of austerity, and a range of economic pressures which have impacted local communities.

5.4 The Welsh Government is expecting multi-year funding settlements at the conclusion of the UK Spending Review during the first half of 2025 which is hoped in due course will also provide much needed certainty for over future indicative funding levels for local government. This will aid in supporting better medium-term financial planning and a less reactive approach to short-term changes in funding and service delivery.

5.5 Welsh Government's provisional settlement represents a very different approach to the funding of local services and is an important first step in recognising the increased demands on Council services. However, it is acknowledged that a prolonged period of constrained public funding cannot be turned around in one budget and it will take time for the public finances to recover.

5.6 Monmouthshire will receive the lowest increase of 2.6% in core revenue grant in 2025/26. In cash terms, after allowing for transfers of specific grants in/out of core funding and for tax base adjustments, this equates to an additional £5.1m.

- 5.7 The below average settlement for Monmouthshire is linked to data underpinning the settlement, most notably within distributional decreases relating to population indicators and pupil numbers. These are partially offset by distributional increases relating to free school meals numbers and benefit indicators.
- 5.8 Total general capital funding will increase by £540,000 or 10.9% to a total of £5,478,000. This funding is not specific to individual capital schemes and will aid in supporting overall capital investment plans for 2025/26, as outlined later in this report.
- 5.9 There is currently no set date for receipt of the Final Settlement, although it is anticipated that this would be no sooner than the publication date of the Welsh Government (WG) final budget which is due on 25th February 2025. This will mean a limited amount of time between the announcement of Final Settlement and the Council's budget-setting meeting on 6th March 2025. Whilst this has generally been the case in recent years, the timing may prove more problematic for 2024/25 due to uncertainties regarding specific grants and other funding as outlined below.
- 5.10 Welsh Government have continued to work to reduce the administrative burden of specific grant funding to Councils. Another three housing grants which were funding core activity have been transferred into the settlement. Work continues in other grant areas to streamline administrative arrangements and ensure that these arrangements appropriately reflect the value of the grants.
- 5.11 The Provisional Settlement provides some details on specific revenue grants. However, information is at an all-Wales level and incomplete at this stage. For those that have been published, this shows specific revenue grants to be almost cash flat on a like for like basis, increasing slightly from £1.078bn to £1.087bn. There are, however, a number of grants where details of indicative levels are still awaited and is therefore an area that will need revisiting once further information is forthcoming.
- 5.12 Of significance, the Sustainable Waste Management Grant is yet to be confirmed (£16.4m in 2024/25 at an all-Wales level) and it remains unclear how that grant may be impacted by the recent indicative allocations of funding to councils from the Extended Producer Responsibility system due to be introduced next financial year.
- 5.13 Three specific Homelessness grants are transferred into core funding:
- **Homelessness No One Left Out Approach: £15m**
 - **Homelessness Discretionary Homelessness Prevention: £5m**
 - **Homelessness Strategic Posts (Reform): £1.32m**
- 5.14 Some of the bigger and more significant reductions in 2025/26 include:

- ***Looked After Children Change Fund Supporting Foster Wales reduces from £2m to £200k***
- ***Local Authority Education Grant - Cymraeg 2050 from £9.8m to £8.6m***

5.15 There are increases in several grant schemes, most notably:

- ***Local Authority Education Grant Schools Standards increases from £160m to £168m***
- ***Local Authority Education Grant Reform increases from £59m to £67m***
- ***Mutual Investment Model Revenue increases from £6m to £12m.***

5.16 There are increases in some specific capital grants, notably:

- ***Transitional Accommodation Capital Programme increases from £53m to £74m.***
- ***Social Sector Medium and High-rise Residential Building Remediation Capital Grant Fund increases from £13m to £27m***
- ***Local Government Decarbonisation increases from £20m to £30m***
- ***Social Housing Grant increases from £47m to £66m***
- ***Coal Tip Safety Grant Scheme increases from £17m to £29m***

5.17 As set out above, the picture in relation to specific grants is challenging and uncertain. Additional clarity will be sought in coming weeks to clarify and understand the impact on service delivery and the ability for services to manage any reductions. The draft budget proposals exclude any impact from the variation in specific grants, apart from the reduction in Homelessness grants notified as part of the transfer into the core settlement. Further details of this are noted in paragraph 6.43 to this report.

5.18 The Council's response to the consultation on the Welsh Government settlement is outlined at ***appendix 3.***

6 Draft Revenue budget

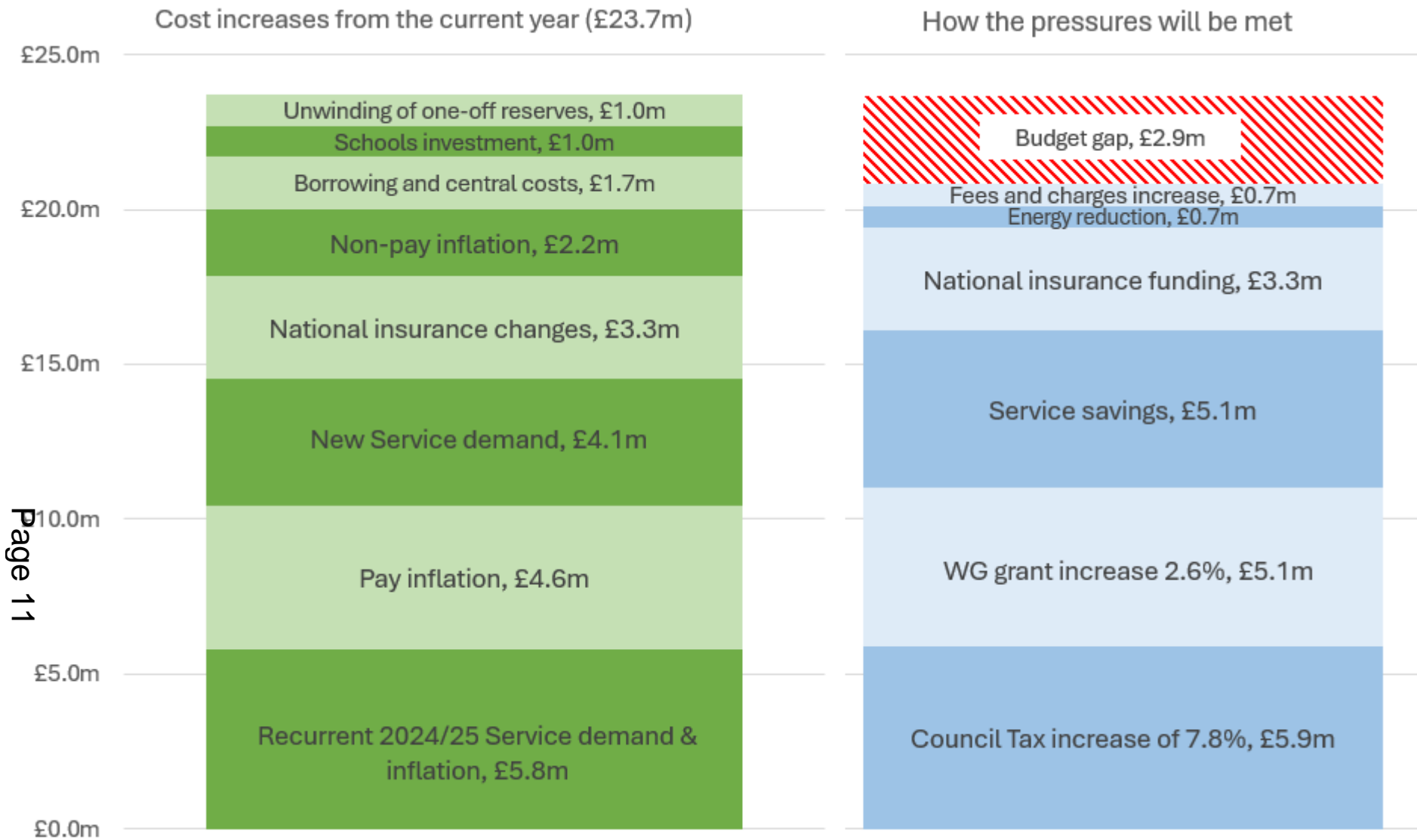
6.1 Cabinet outlined its budget principles for 2025/26 in their report of 16th October 2024 which recognised that the financial outlook in years ahead is challenging, and that the budget for 2025/26 therefore needs to be responsible and sustainable.

6.2 The work undertaken in the current year to address the in-year overspend through a budget recovery plan and strengthened governance arrangements carries itself through to the budget proposals for 2025/26.

- 6.3 Any budget setting means making choices about how and where the Council's resources are spent. This year, despite an increase in core revenue grant of 2.6% the choices remain difficult. The increase in grant funding does not cover the cost and demand for all the services we provide in their current form.
- 6.4 The absolute choice for the proposals is to protect and sustain for now and for the future the services which we know are important to the residents of Monmouthshire without compromising the financial stability of the Council.
- 6.5 Continuing the policy intent to mitigate the impact of the budget proposals on those most in need holds primacy in the draft budget proposals that follow.
- 6.6 This is highlighted through the identification of, and investment made to address pressures in Adult's and Children's Social care, Education, and Children's additional learning needs. When implementing savings in these areas, careful consideration has been given to minimising impact, and prioritising support for those in greatest need. Service offers have evolved and adapted to ensure the best possible outcomes for individuals in these critical areas.
- 6.7 Whilst hard choices have had to be made to protect services, the services that are available to residents this year will be available in 2025/26. Waste collections will remain the same. Leisure centres, recycling centres, libraries and community hubs are all remaining open.
- The draft budget recognises the pressures on key frontline services and increases funding for Social care & health by 10.6% and for Education by 10.7%. However, even these increases will not fully cover the increase in demand and inflationary costs being experienced. So, to fund these services, we are intending to change the way some things operate and also plan to increase income through council tax and through specific charging to cope with the huge pressure on services.
- 6.9 There will continue to be a focus on tackling inequalities and to protect the most vulnerable in our society. This means our support for additional learning needs provision will increase as will the specialist resource bases for disabled children and young people helping them stay in their local schools. Above all we will work with partners and support our communities, providing advice and practical help for those worst hit by the Cost-of-Living crisis, such as community fridges, mental health support, housing and welfare advice.
- 6.10 There is further investment in our Foster carer service to retain and recruit valued carers and to recognise their essential skills, patience, time, and the resources that it takes to support some of the most vulnerable children in our County
- 6.11 In order to conserve an appropriate and prudent level of financial resilience, the draft budget for 2025/26 will continue to avoid any dependency on the use of revenue reserves to support recurrent revenue expenditure.

6.12 Meeting the budget gap

- 6.13 Cabinet published their budget setting process and timetable at their meeting on the 16th October 2024. This highlighted an initial budget gap of £11.4m, made up of gross cost pressures of £15.5m, offset by modelled increases in funding of £4.1m from Council tax and fees and charges for services, alongside a standstill in the level of Welsh Government core grant funding.
- 6.14 The scale of the budget pressures for 2025/26 is again challenging, and particularly following a budget cycle for the current financial year which saw significant service change needing to be delivered across the Council which continues to draw on staff capacity and resources.
- 6.15 Detailed work has continued since October to update the range of planning assumptions and variables that impact the Council's budget planning:
- The impact of the provisional Welsh Government settlement, announced on 11th December 2024;
 - The Council Tax Base for 2025/26 approved by Individual Cabinet Member decision on 18th December 2024;
 - The UK Government budget changes to the rates and thresholds for employers' National Insurance Contributions ("NICs") from 1 April 2025 in the Autumn Statement.
 - Updated economic forecasts including inflation and the impact of the real living wage announcement in October 2024;
 - Review of pay award assumptions in light of most recent inflation forecasts and the outcome of the 2024/25 NJC pay award;
 - The need to address demand pressures as evidenced through in-year budget monitoring.
- 6.16 Taking account of the above updates, the revised additional cost pressures projected for 2025/26, compared to 2024/25 is £23.7m, or 11% of the Council's budget. This is the third successive year that the Council has needed to tackle gross expenditure pressures of £20m+. Whilst the Council has in the past regularly dealt with financial challenges in the order of £5m - £10m in an annual planning cycle, the level of sustained increase in demand for high cost services continues to put a strain on the Council's finances.



6.17 Expenditure pressures for 2025/26

6.18 The Council is facing in-year service expenditure pressures of around £5.8m in the current 2024/25 financial year that are expected to be recurrent for 2025/26. These are predominantly demand driven and centred around the service areas of Social care, Transport & Fleet, and Children’s additional learning needs.

- 6.19 Alongside this, services have indicated that a further £4.1m of new demand and inflationary led service pressures are expected to materialise in 2025/26, with these predominantly being within Social care & health budgets.
- 6.20 Both the recurrent and newly identified service pressures are outlined in paragraph 6.42, and in further detail in **appendix 1**.
- 6.21 The draft budget includes an additional £1m investment in local school budgets to meet the demands that schools are facing in restoring attendance levels and standards following the pandemic period, over and above the full funding of modelled pay and pension increases.
- 6.22 An inflationary uplift of 2% is applied to non-pay budgets which introduces a £2.2m additional cost pressure.
- 6.23 Pay inflation for 2025/26 has been modelled using all-Wales data including evidence provided by the Welsh Local Government Association and feedback from national employers and is anticipated to introduce further budgetary pressure of £4.6m.
- 6.24 The UK Government budget changes to the rates and thresholds for employers' National Insurance Contributions ("NICs") from 1 April 2025 in the Autumn Statement is expected to increase direct staffing costs by around £3.3m. The current assumption is that this will be fully funded by UK Government as per the commitment within the budget statement.
- 6.25 Capital financing costs are anticipated to increase by £1.2m following a review of expected interest levels for 2025/26. Central budgets that cover payments for external levies will increase by £0.5m.
- 6.26 The use of revenue reserves to support one-off items within the 2024/25 budget is reversed, and when set alongside other technical reserve movements, introduces additional budgetary pressure of £1.0m.
- 6.27 **How the pressures will be met**
- 6.28 Cabinet has looked at every mechanism available to meet the funding shortfall including the flexibilities within the grant support from Welsh Government, savings from service efficiencies and redesign, and additional income through raising fees and charges and through council tax increase.
- 6.29 The provisional settlement from Welsh Government provides a funding increase of 2.6% or £5.1m which provides much needed support for services. However this increase does need to be taken in the context of the £23.7m of expenditure pressures the Council is facing.

- 6.30 The Council's energy costs are projected to reduce by £0.7m compared to the current year. Work continues to reduce consumption and work towards Cabinet's objective of reducing carbon emissions and making a positive contribution to addressing the climate and nature emergency.
- 6.31 It is proposed that additional income of £0.7m for 2025/26 will be generated through increases in discretionary fees & charges for services.
- 6.32 Funding via UK Government to meet the increase in employers' National Insurance Contributions ("NICs") from 1 April 2025 is anticipated to provide income of £3.3m.
- 6.33 We will continue to utilise capital receipts up to a maximum of £3.7 million to meet qualifying revenue expenditure that looks to generate longer term organisational change that enables delivery of services more efficiently and effectively.
- 6.34 The remaining sum of £13.9m can only be met through a combination of service efficiencies, service reductions and through council tax increases.
- 6.35 Striking the right balance between council tax increases and the reduction of services that support the most vulnerable in our community is not easy and involves inherent choice.
- 6.36 The draft budget proposes a council tax increase of 7.8% introducing additional income of £5.9m. This equates to an increase of £2.53 per week for a Band D property. We anticipate that 63% of households will meet this charge in full, with the remaining 37% benefiting from a dispensation. The final level of Council Tax will only be decided following the consultation process as part of the final budget proposals.
- 6.37 The remaining shortfall of £8.0m will be partially met by service savings proposals of £5.1m which are set out in paragraph 6.41 and with further information attached at **appendix 1**. An assessment of their cumulative impact is provided at **appendix 2**.
- 6.38 This leaves a budget gap at draft budget setting stage of £2.86m which will need to be resolved in full by the time that the final budget is set by Council in March 2025.
- 6.39 Constructive discussions will continue with Welsh Government about the necessity for a funding floor to be added to the final settlement, although it is not expected that any such floor will cover the remaining budget gap in full.
- 6.40 Whilst further work is also being carried out to identify further levels of service savings, given the degree of service savings delivered over recent years, it is not anticipated that this will fully bridge the remaining budget gap. Therefore the only remaining options open to the Council are to look at its funding through grants, council tax, fees and charges, and reserves.

Draft Revenue Budget proposals
£000's

Net Expenditure Budgets	Adjusted Base Budget 2024/25	Service pressure	Pay inflation	Inflation	Reserves & Corporate Adj	Service saving & Energy	Energy	Fees and charges	Grant income	Council Tax Income	Draft Budget 2024/25	Year on year change %
Learning, Skills and Economy	65,118	2,175	3,324	254		(231)	(496)		1,967		72,111	10.7%
Social Care & Health	68,196	7,166	1,773	1,052		(2,377)		(366)	(40)		75,404	10.6%
Infrastructure & Place	26,695	1,164	1,500	664	245	(981)	(223)	(321)	547		29,290	9.7%
Customer, Culture and Wellbeing	8,205	35	696	58		(482)					8,512	3.7%
Resources	8,284	230	352	110	4	(535)					8,446	1.9%
People, Performance and Partnerships	3,259	70	180	18		(127)					3,400	4.3%
Law & Governance	2,875	38	133	5		(1)					3,050	6.1%
Corporate Costs & Levies	9,216	0	(3,316)	2	422	(350)			111		6,085	-34.0%
Community Council precept	3,608										3,608	0.0%
Gwent Police precept	16,940									1,155	18,095	6.8%
Sub Total	212,396	10,878	4,642	2,164	671	(5,084)	(719)	(687)	2,585	1,155	228,000	7.3%
Borrowing Costs	8,423				1,167						9,590	13.9%
Contributions to Earmarked reserves	833				(140)						693	-16.8%
Contributions from Earmarked reserves	(1,748)				973						(775)	-55.7%
Total Expenditure	219,904	10,878	4,642	2,164	2,671	(5,084)	(719)	(687)	2,585	1,155	237,509	8.0%
Funding Budgets												
Aggregate External Financing (AEF)	(126,019)								(7,685)		(133,704)	
Council Tax (MCC)	(72,582)									(6,044)	(78,626)	
Council Tax (MCC Premium)	(755)									140	(615)	
Council Tax (Gwent Police)	(16,940)									(1,155)	(18,095)	

Council Tax (Community Councils)	(3,608)										(3,608)
Council Fund Contribution	0				0						0
Total Funding	(219,904)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	(7,685)	(7,059)	(234,647)
Total Budget	0	10,878	4,642	2,164	2,671	(5,084)	(719)	(687)	(5,100)	(5,904)	2,861

6.41 Service Pressures and Investment

6.42 Service specific cost pressures and the need for further investment has been subject to rigorous review with a total of £10.878m considered needed to be included as part of the draft budget proposals. A summary table is provided below with more detail provided in **appendix 1**.

Pressures by Directorate	Recurrent 2024/25 Pressure	New pressure / Investment	Total 2025/26
	£000	£000	£000
Learning, Skills and Economy	1,175	1,000	2,175
Social Care & Health	3,525	3,641	7,166
Infrastructure & Place	928	236	1,164
Customer, Culture and Wellbeing	0	35	35
Resources	100	130	230
People, Performance and Partnerships	70	0	70
Law & Governance	0	38	38
Totals	5,798	6,080	10,878

6.43 The most significant areas of cost pressure and further investment are:

Learning, Skills and Economy		
Schools	£1,000,000	Investment to meet the demands that schools are facing in restoring attendance levels and standards following the pandemic period.

Additional learning needs	£745,000	<p>£400,000 - There are an increasing number of children and young people with highly complex additional learning needs. The presenting needs and the dysregulated behaviours require a highly specialised environment, along with daily access to therapeutic provision. At this stage, this is not possible through our existing specialist resource base (SRB) environments or our mainstream provision.</p> <p>£345,000 - The number of Individual development plans have increased by 84 since the budget was delegated to schools in April 2022, as a result this decreased the amount per pupil delegated, putting pressure on school budgets to support their needs</p>
Specialist resource bases	£300,000	Continued development of MCC Specialist Resource Bases (SRBs) to meet the increasing demand for places for children and young people with complex additional learning needs.
Ed Tech support for schools	£50,000	Existing post to support the roll out of the Ed tech programme for schools and ongoing support. The post has been in place for the last two financial years and has been funded via a mixture of a reserve and as a pressure for the directorate.
Grant shortfall - Childcare	£80,000	Since the introduction of the WG Childcare Offer, more parents are opting to use non-maintained settings. WG stipulates the funding rate for early education and provides a grant towards this cost, but this funding isn't sufficient and, based on current take up indicates a budget shortfall of £80k.
Social care & Health		
Social care provider fees	£3,254,000	A budget pressure is expected from the review of care provider fees across Children's and Adult's social care as part of the yearly fee negotiations. Care providers are facing various pressures, such as the changes in employers NI contributions, the rise in real living wage, inflation, fuel, insurance, and non-care staff pay.
Social care demand & inflation	£3,525,000	<p>£1,863,000 - Increasing demand for both residential care home placements and care at home will continue into 2025/26. Alongside this, there has been difficulty progressing savings from placement and practice change. A further pressure of £375K as WG have confirmed any changes to the care at home weekly charging cap will not be progressed.</p> <p>£1,662,000 - Increased demand, cost and complexity of providing care for children entering the care system.</p>
Foster carer allowances	£387,000	Investment in in-house foster carers to recruit (including encouraging foster carers from Independent Fostering Agencies (IFAs) to convert to the local authority) and retain foster carers and improve placement sufficiency. Achieving this will reduce costs and improve outcomes for children who are looked after (CLA).
Infrastructure & Place		
Solar Farm	£50,000	A shortfall in income due to bad weather and grid outages which is expected to partially continue in 2025/26.

Building control fee income	£60,000	Fee income was impacted by the economy resulting in reduced applications. In addition, the introduction of the Building Safety Act 2022 has increased the amount of statutory non-chargeable works having to be undertaken adversely affecting staff and income budgets.
Housing & Homelessness grant	£236,000	Draft specific grant allocations supporting the service have reduced from 2024/5 levels. This grant is offsetting core expenditure on Homelessness and as such the reduction represents a cost pressure to be managed. Work is ongoing with WG to understand if this position will improve within the final settlement.
Fleet & Transport	£818,000	£200,000 from continuing pressures of parts inflation, supply chain delays, vehicle hire growth, requirement for more EV infrastructure and increased borrowing spend. . £600,000 due to increased demand within passenger transport as pupil numbers have increased, increases in external operator contract costs due to rate increases and a shortfall in public bus service funding. £18,000 due to the Green Car Scheme income target shortfall.
Resources		
Property	£100,000	To recognise the pressure that a delay in progressing some of our building rationalisation savings is having.
Revenues Benefits	£49,000	Increased contributions to the shared revenues & benefits service with Torfaen.
Finance	£41,000	Financial management system upgrade costs.
ICT	£40,000	Staff and licence cost increases for our shared IT resource service.
Other services		
MonLife	£35,000	£10,000 relating to new Communication software, and £25,000 from a reduction in grant levels compared to 2024/25.
Welsh Language	£70,000	Increased demand for Welsh language translations.
Members Allowances	£38,000	The Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales have recommended a 5.9% increase on the basic salary for members which is above the 3.1% existing assumption.

6.44 Service savings and efficiencies

6.45 The draft budget proposals bring forward service budget savings of £5.1m, as well as savings in Energy and additional income from specific fees and charges. A summary of these proposals by service area is shown below with further details outlined in **appendix 1**.

Savings proposals summary	2024/25
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	£000
Learning, Skills and Economy	(231)
Social Care & Health	(2,377)
Infrastructure & Place	(981)
Customer, Culture and Wellbeing	(482)
Resources	(535)
People, Performance and Partnerships	(127)
Law & Governance	(1)
Corporate costs and levies	(350)
Sub total	(5,084)
Energy reductions	(719)
Fees and charging increases	(687)
Total	(6,490)

6.46 A summary of the savings proposals are as follows:

Social Care & Health		
Page 18	Adult social care	£375,000
		<p>£250,000 - Continuation of the practice change agenda – Implementing strategies to manage demand, strengthen oversight, control costs, generate savings and enable practice change in adult social care. These include applying consistent eligibility criteria, reviewing current care packages, pursuing health contributions, re-commissioning services, expanding reablement and direct payments, and aligning with community and housing support</p> <p>£125,000 - A staffing review to consolidate existing vacancies within our home care teams. This can be consolidated into the established budget within minimal service impact because of efficiencies achieved in how care is organised and because there is increased capacity within external care providers.</p>
	Children’s services	£1,887,000
	Community meals	£15,000
	Social care Health – Fees and charges	£366,000
	Public protection	£100,000
		Continuation of the placement and practice change - reviewing children’s care plans in high-cost placements and developing appropriate services and placements to support their long-term needs.
		A part time staff vacancy that the service will release.
		A range of increases across Adult social care, Public health, Trading standards, and registrars.
		The Head of Public Protection retired at the end of September 2024. A review is being undertaken over the next year to consider the most appropriate longer-term arrangements for ensuring leadership of this key area of the Council’s services. Interim arrangements in place allow for the saving to be made in 2025/26.
Learning, Skills and Economy		

Monmouthshire Specialist Teachers team	£40,000	A 0.6FTE specialist teaching post that has become vacant due to a retirement in the service will not be replaced within the structure.
Education Welfare grant	£51,000	An increase in grant funding will allow core staffing costs to be funded
Additional learning needs	£100,000	To bring MCC pupils with ALN currently educated outside of Monmouthshire in maintained and independent specialist placements back into MCC provision at key points of transition.
Capitalisation direction	£350,000	To fund the transformational costs of integrating changes to the Specialist resource bases, and to the Digital roll out in Schools from capital receipts.
School maintenance costs	£40,000	A reduction in maintenance costs at the new King Henry school as warranties remain in place during the initial phases of opening.
Infrastructure & Place		
Infrastructure & Place Fees and Charges	£321,000	£100,000 - Welsh Government proposing to increase statutory planning application fees by approximately 25% - potential uplift for 1st April or 1st October.
		£180,000 – An increase car parking fees in the County by 10%.
		£32,000 – An increase in Building Control Application fees.
		£6,000 - Where vacant seats are available on Home to School contracts these are made available for learners who do not meet the eligibility criteria for free transport. Proposal to increase academic year cost from £488 to £536.
		£3,000 - Introduce an annual membership fee of £10 for Grass routes users.
Home to School transport	£447,000	Reversion to statutory distances of 2 miles for primary and 3 miles for secondary from September 2025 as agreed by Cabinet previously.
Infrastructure & Place	£170,000	Savings in senior management costs as a result of a restructure exercise
Homelessness	£557,000	Savings driven from the reduction of B&B usage and a full year effect of utilising Severn View accommodation
Infrastructure & Place income	£117,000	An increase in income from grant or recoupment is expected to benefit Building cleaning, Youth Enterprise, and Highways external works.
Fleet	£20,000	Reduce gritter fleet by extending the working hours of each vehicle.
Utilities contracts	£719,000	A reduction in the costs of procuring our utilities based on framework projections.
Energy audit	£20,000	Undertake energy audit to identify discrepancies and potential savings
Customer, Culture and Wellbeing		

Borough Theatre	£50,000	Service Redesign and optimisation of space
Community Hubs	£110,000	To realign opening hours at our four hubs to ensure consistency and availability throughout the county, ensuring that any closure days are varied to provide service cover across the week for the whole county.
Youth service	£40,000	Move to a more sustainable operating model by making changes to our youth clubs in the rural parts of Monmouthshire ensuring we retain the youth centre provision in the four main towns.
Leisure income	£150,000	Increase income across the four Leisure Centres
Old station Tintern	£30,000	To cease operations at Old Station Tintern and lease for a period of 3-5 years to a commercial operator.
Markets	£20,000	A review of existing contracts for Waste collection
Management structures	£38,000	Further development of the area management structure down to operational teams
Rights of way & Section 106	£44,000	Appropriate recharge of officer time into capital schemes
People, Performance and Partnerships		
Welsh Translation	£82,000	To amend the way in which Welsh language translations are carried to reduce costs in the face of rising demand, by capitalising on the potential of AI driven translation tools.
Systems & Payroll Automation	£22,000	To deliver increased automation in the way in which staff are onboarded, following recruitment, and paid throughout their career at MCC.
Workforce	£8,000	Implement Apprentice First approach
People, Performance and Partnerships	£15,000	A reduction in subscription fees
Resources		
Insurance	£98,000	Cease our Cyber Security Insurance provision
ICT - Digital, Design & Innovation	£64,000	Management restructure which removes a head of service post
Administration support	£23,000	Reduction in Chief officer admin Support (0.6 FTE)

6.47 Council Tax rate, base and premiums

- 6.48 A Council tax increase of 7.8% is proposed for 2025/26. For a current Band D property this will equate to a charge of £1,818.26 (Council only element excluding Community council or Police levy) and would illustratively be an additional £131.56 a year or £2.53 a week for 2025/26.

Illustrative weekly impact of a 7.8% increase in Council tax rate									
Bands	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
Increase per week	£1.69	£1.97	£2.25	£2.53	£3.09	£3.65	£4.22	£5.06	£5.90

- 6.49 Overall, the Council Tax base calculated for 2025/26 has risen by 0.2% compared to 2024/25. This increase reflects the current level of exemptions and discounts, anticipated changes in dwellings and the inclusion of council tax premiums
- 6.50 Any income generated from council tax premiums (net of administration expenditure) will be transferred to an earmarked reserve to be used in future to further the Council's progress in addressing housing issues in the County.
- 6.51 The estimated total additional income as a result of Council tax base changes, net of premiums and changes to CTRS (Council Tax Reduction Scheme), is £373,000.

6.52 **Budgetary Risk and uncertainty**

- 6.53 **Service budget savings** - The draft budget requires services to deliver a level of savings which will once again require significant service change and commitment of resources in order to be successfully delivered. Given some of the discrete levels of capacity constraints across the Council, coupled with the increased demand being faced, this presents a deliverability risk in 2025/26.

- 6.54 This will be particularly acute within Social Care where savings totalling £2.37m will be expected to be delivered within a service which has a trend of significant over-spends, continues to experience challenging levels and complexity of demand, coupled with significant workforce pressures. This is expected to be mitigated by the fact that the majority of savings proposals in Social care relate to a continuation of the existing programmes of change which are already underway in the service.

- 6.55 **Pay awards** - Uncertainty will remain around the pay awards for local government staff and teaching staff. Actual pay awards will not be confirmed nationally by independent pay bodies until later in 2025 and therefore further consideration might need to be given in-year to adjust pay budgets at that time. Whilst the pay award assumptions factored into the budget are set at a level which is seen as prudent, there remains an unknown risk of the effect of the wider economic and political landscape as we move through 2025.

- 6.56 **Employers national insurance contributions** - The UK Government budget made changes to the rates and thresholds for employers' National Insurance Contributions ("NICs") from 1 April 2025 in the Autumn Statement. Whilst HM Treasury has confirmed it will provide additional funding in the first half of 2025-2026 to the Welsh Government, the quantum and further allocation of this funding to local government remains a risk to this budget.

- 6.57 The consideration of the budget impact of increased NICs costs to third sector and other service providers provides an additional layer of uncertainty. Whilst we have worked closely with our Social care providers to understand the potential impact upon their services, the final impact will be dependant upon many variables yet to be fully established, such as the size and structure of their businesses, their ability to access any reliefs, and their ability to mitigate any increased costs through changes to their service delivery models.
- 6.58 The full impact upon the costs of other commissioned external services remains uncertain with the biggest risk estimated to be in the areas of Passenger transport and Schools.
- 6.59 **Funding** - The Provisional Settlement provides some details on specific revenue grants. However, information is at an all-Wales level and with a number of grants indications still awaited. Of significance, the Sustainable Waste Management Grant is yet to be confirmed (£16.4m in 2024/25) and may be impacted by the recent indicative allocations of funding to councils from the Extended Producer Responsibility system.
- 6.60 **Reserves and Capital Receipts strategy**
- 6.61 Cabinet have been clear in their budget strategy framework for 2025/26 that there is a need to maintain a financially sustainable path for the Council including conserving an appropriate and prudent level of financial resilience.
- 6.62 Reliance on revenue reserves to fund core revenue expenditure should be avoided because they are a finite resource. This means that using reserves in this way immediately creates a gap in the budget for the following year.
- 6.63 The draft budget for 2025/26 will not utilise revenue reserves to fund core recurring expenditure. The budget does include revenue reserve usage of £775,000 which is being used to support one-off expenditure that is required to progress the Local Development Plan, funding the administration of the Council tax premiums, and, drawing on previously allocated funding to support Ukrainian refugees.
- 6.64 The draft budget includes the use of £3.7m of capital receipts to fund the one-off revenue costs associated with organisational change. This approach will need to be reviewed over the medium-term in part or in full as receipt generation reduces. Drawing on capital receipts in this way reduces the balance available to fund any capital expenditure which may consequently increase the Council's need to borrow to fund the expenditure.

7 **Draft Capital budget**

- 7.1 The capital budget strategy was updated and approved by Council in March 2024. Whilst an updated capital strategy for 2025/26 will be considered by Council alongside the treasury strategy at its meeting on 6th March 2025, the underlying principles of the strategy remain fit for purpose and have been used in preparing the draft capital budget proposals.

- 7.2 The capital strategy requires the capital programme to be financially sustainable without leading to borrowing levels that are unaffordable, unsustainable and imprudent.
- 7.3 The draft capital budget proposals for 2025/26 continue to support the priorities of the Council and are wholly aligned with the priorities set out in the Community and Corporate Plan. Notably this includes ensuring that resources are aligned to meet the plans for tackling the longer-term challenges that communities and public sector organisations are facing.
- 7.4 In recent years the capital programme has very much been dominated by the investment in the new Abergavenny 3-19 school which involves total investment of £70m in creating the first operationally Net Zero Carbon 3-19 School in Wales.
- 7.5 Aside from this investment, the current four-year capital programme very much represents a consistent investment into maintaining the Council's infrastructure base through planned investment in:
- Property and county farms maintenance
 - Highways infrastructure & transports schemes
 - Disabled facilities grants & access for all
 - Match funding to leverage external grant opportunities to invest in infrastructure
 - Investment in the Cardiff capital city region deal
 - Funding of eligible revenue costs associated with service reform, to support the draft revenue budget
 - ICT investment
- 7.6 The current Capital programme is impacted by the same external factors impacting upon the revenue budget and outlined in detail earlier in this report. Some discrete areas of inflation, supply chain issues and internal resourcing capacity mean that current capital budgets are being delayed or deliver less for the same amount of budget.
- 7.7 Whilst the current planned investment in the Council's asset infrastructure goes some way in meeting the requirement to maintain the existing estate, there still remains a considerable number of backlog pressures that sit outside of the core capital programme, and this has significant risk associated with it and is being closely monitored. This will be considered more fully in the next iteration of the capital strategy.

8 Capital funding

- 8.1 The provisional settlement outlines that the Council's unhypothecated capital allocation will be £5.478m, which represents a £540,000 increase over 2024/25.
- 8.2 The settlement also includes an additional revenue budget allocation to enable Councils the ability to fund further borrowing to support Highways capital pressures.

- 8.3 Clarification will be required on the specific capital grant funding streams published and where there are initial indications from Welsh Government that these are being removed or consolidated, or that the criteria are being tightened and that may impact on some of the pressures and bids for investment being considered. This may also need further consideration in the final budget proposals.
- 8.4 The additional capital funding allocated by Welsh Government is welcomed as the Council looks to maintain its assets and consider future capital investment that responds to the needs of communities and in allowing the Council to pursue the goals set out in the Community and Corporate plan.
- 8.5 The Council has limited recourse to internal resources in the form of capital reserves and receipts, and any resultant borrowing required to support the capital programme directly impacts on the revenue budget.
- 8.6 In light of the current pressures on the Council's medium-term revenue budget, and the principles on which any prudential borrowing must be taken of affordability, prudence and sustainability, any further use of prudential borrowing will always need to be carefully assessed.
- 8.7 The level of capital receipts anticipated over the next 4-year window has not been increased as the Council awaits the conclusion of the replacement Local Development Plan.
- The Council continues to use the benefit of Welsh Government guidance that allows the Council to make flexible use of capital receipts to meet revenue expenditure associated with service reform.
- 8.9 The 2025/26 revenue budget proposals include the proposed use of capital receipts for this purpose of £3.7m. It is accepted that this is not a sustainable long-term means by which to support the revenue budget but is seen as necessary given the immediate financial challenges.
- 8.10 This support is currently modelled to taper down and be removed for the 2028/29 budget, however this will be very much dependent upon the degree to which the service reform the investment allows generates cashable revenue budget savings over the medium term.
- 8.11 The table below illustrates the forecast balance on the useable capital receipts reserve over the period 2024/25 to 2028/29 taking into account current capital receipts forecasts provided by Landlord Services and revised balances drawn to finance forward indicative budgets.

Forecast Useable Capital Receipts	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
Balance as at 1st April	9,984	4,877	3,217	1,412	307
Less: capital receipts used for financing	(1,556)	(230)	(50)	(50)	(50)
Less: capital receipts used to support capitalisation directive	(3,744)	(3,708)	(2,358)	(1,358)	0
Less: Reserve cover for redundancies	0	0	0	0	0

Capital receipts Received	91	0	0	0	0
Capital receipts Forecast	103	2,278	603	303	0
Forecast Balance as at 31st March	4,877	3,217	1,412	307	257

8.12 The core capital programme does not generally include specific grant funded schemes as a consequence of such funding announcements and grant awards not being confirmed in time to feature in the final budget proposals. These are added to the capital programme during the year.

8.13 Draft Capital budget

8.14 The draft capital budget for 2025/26 and indicative medium-term programme is shown at **appendix 4**.

8.15 At draft budget stage, a number of immediate capital pressures have been identified by services, principally within the areas of urgent health and safety works, and legal and regulatory obligations.

8.16 An initial scrutiny exercise has been carried out of these pressures which has resulted in a small number being endorsed for inclusion in the draft budget for 2025/26, to be funded from the additional headroom provided within the provisional capital settlement, and a small amount of repurposing of existing capital schemes.

8.17 There remain a number of areas of further development of the remaining proposals and risks to establish the capacity of the Council to deliver the works during 2025/26 and the affordability of funding the proposals in light of the associated impact on the revenue budget. These will be progressed over the coming weeks as better information becomes available on the progress of the current year's capital budget, and any flexibility that maybe offered from delays or under spends on existing schemes of work.

8.18 The schedule of immediate capital pressures is shown below with an indication of the decision made on investment at draft budget stage:

Capital pressure	Priority category	Budget requested £000's	Budget Recommendation £000's	Draft budget decision
Highways & Structures	Health & Safety, Legal and regulatory, Addresses major infrastructure investment	1,431	1,431	Recommended - To be funded in full from additional borrowing headroom provided in settlement
Public rights of way – structural repairs	Health & Safety, Legal and regulatory, Addresses major infrastructure investment	415	319	£319k investment recommended

Ash Dieback/Dangerous Trees	Health & Safety, Legal and regulatory	100	70	£70k investment recommended
Road Safety Improvements & Signing Upgrades	Health & Safety, Legal and regulatory	32	32	Recommend in full
Flood alleviation	Health & Safety, Legal and regulatory	19	19	Recommend in full
Property maintenance - Asbestos maintenance	Health & Safety, Legal and regulatory	139	139	Recommend in full
Property maintenance - Door Entry system County Hall	Health & Safety	80	80	Recommend in full
ICT - Network Estate Replacement	Deliver corporate plan priorities, Addresses major infrastructure investment	50	50	Recommend in full
ICT - Cyber Security Software (SOC/SIEM support, Ransomware)	Legal and regulatory	43	43	Recommend in full
Financial management system upgrade – transitional costs	Legal and regulatory	40	40	Recommend in full
Asset management system upgrade – transitional costs	Legal and regulatory	51	51	Recommend in full
Disabled facility grants – increase in budget from £900k to £1.6m	Spend to save transformational works, Deliver corporate plan priorities	700	0	Not recommended – would require a full business case with evidence of outcomes that would be generated
Storm Bert – Damage to carriageways and structures	Health & Safety, Legal and regulatory	1,500	0	Not recommended at this stage – discussion ongoing with WG regarding grant support
Chainbridge Refurbishment Scheme & Route Design	Health & Safety, Legal and regulatory	389	0	Not recommended at this stage – discussion ongoing with WG regarding grant support

New Authority Website	Deliver community & corporate plan priorities	250	0	Not recommended - Further development into a full business case required
Total		5,239	2,274	

8.19 The further capital investment of £2,274,000 will be funded as follows:

Funding stream	Value £000's
2025/26 Capital settlement increase	540
2025/26 Settlement increase - Highways borrowing	1,400
Unallocated budget brought forward	20
Reduction in Laptop replacement budget for 2025/26	134
Laptop replacement budget 24/25 unutilised	50
Revenues - Provision of Online facilities - 2024/25 budget unutilised	13
PCT Estate Replacement - 2024/25 budget unutilised	117
Total	2,274

8.20 The consequential impact of the draft budget proposals on overall unsupported borrowing is an increase of £1,400,000, for which full revenue budget funding has been provided by Welsh Government in their provisional revenue settlement. It is important that the overall affordability of borrowing is regularly reviewed by Members, and this will be a feature of the updated Treasury Management Strategy Statement that will be presented to full Council on the 6th March 2025, which will incorporate a range of prudential indicators that look to ensure that the Council's level of borrowing remains prudent, proportionate and sustainable.

8.21 The draft capital programme will be reviewed prior to final budget setting to establish the suitability of the brought forward indicative capital schemes, and principally:

- Whether all schemes remain relevant to current Council priorities;
- Are current budgets allocated still realistic given factors such as inflation, supply chain issues and internal capacity to deliver;

- Are there any more urgent schemes coming forward as a result of updated information, changes to backlog pressures, or condition surveys that need to displace existing schemes;
- Whether there are any further external funding opportunities;
- Does the capital programme remain prudent and affordable in light of the wider economic pressures and revenue budget gap;
- Does potential slippage from the 2024/25 capital budget provide opportunities to re-purpose existing budgets to allow one-off investment in immediate capital risks.

9 Budget consultation & engagement

9.1 The information contained in this report constitutes the draft budget proposals that are now made available for formal public consultation and member scrutiny, including the requirement to consult businesses. The formal consultation period will run for a period of four weeks ending on 22nd February 2025.

9.2 Cabinet are interested in consultation views on the draft proposals and the underlying budget strategy adopted. This is the opportunity for Members, the public, community groups, and other key stakeholders (e.g. town and community councils) to consider the budget proposals and make comments on them. Cabinet will not however, be prepared to recommend anything to Council that has not been subject to a Future Generations Assessment and Equality Impact Assessment, and therefore a deadline to receive alternative proposals has been set as 22nd February 2025.

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The Council will look to purposefully engage via:

- **Face to face and virtual engagement events – Countywide and targeted**
- **Special Budget page on Council website**
- **Online survey and social media campaign**
- **Council Scrutiny meetings – Jan-Feb 2025**

9.4 Given the broad range of the budget proposals, it is important that the Council reaches out, engages and listens to feedback. This will in turn inform the final budget proposals that are to be considered in March.

9.5 Further information on consultation events will be made available on the Council website [here](#), along with ways for people to engage in and respond during the consultation process.

9.6 Final budget proposals following consultation and receipt of the final settlement will go to the Cabinet meeting on 5th March 2025 and approval of Council Tax and final budget proposals will take place at full Council on 6th March 2025.

10 OPTIONS APPRAISAL:

10.1 Directorates are required to consider and outline the options that have been considered for each of the budget savings proposals and pressures identified in this report. The detail is contained in separate working papers and summarised under **appendix 1**.

10.2 The means of assessing whether the final budget proposals for 2025/26 have been successfully implemented is undertaken throughout the year via regular budget monitoring and periodic reports to Cabinet and then to Select committee for scrutiny.

10.3 Alongside the Community and Corporate Plan, the Council continues to develop and monitor the performance of the Council against service business plans. Taken together these arrangements enable the Council to evaluate its success and progress against its longer-term plans within the resources available.

11 REASONS:

11.1 To agree the draft budget proposals for 2025/26 for consultation purposes.

12 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

12.1 As identified in the report and appendices.

13 WELLBEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS IMPLICATIONS (INCORPORATING EQUALITIES, SUSTAINABILITY, SAFEGUARDING and CORPORATE PARENTING):

13.1 An initial impact assessment has been produced for the draft proposals and is attached as **appendix 2**. This enables us to assess the overall potential impact of the budget on people within our communities. We recognise that the proposals will affect different groups of people in different ways. We evaluate the impact on those people who possess protected characteristics. We also look at the cumulative financial impact of the proposals on households at different income levels. Finally, the assessment also looks at the budget through the lens of sustainable development principle established by the Well-being of Future Generations Act.

13.2 Given the scale of the budget challenge for 2025/26 and the broad range of proposals, it is inevitable that the assessment has identified some negative impacts on some groups of people. Local authorities provide universal services such as highways and waste collections which bring benefits to all groups. However, many of our services such as education and social care are delivered to proportionately higher numbers of disabled people, younger and older people. The assessment also highlights the anticipated positive effects of increasing expenditure on certain groups. For example, the assessment demonstrates the potential positive impact of providing additional funding to

support education and social care which will support younger and older people and disabled people. It also shows some saving proposals in these service areas, and other services such as Transport, could have a potential negative impact on the people with these protected characteristics.

- 13.3 The development of the impact assessment has been an iterative process and has been produced alongside the budget proposals. This means that we have been able to understand the potential impacts and adjust our thinking as we have gone along. As a result, we have been able to amend some proposals or introduce mitigating actions to lessen the impact of some of the difficult decisions we are faced with, on the most vulnerable in our communities.
- 13.4 The nature of the services we provide means that almost any change to a council service will have a socio-economic impact. We know, for example, people on lower incomes will be more affected by increased fees and charges. The assessment models the potential financial cost of proposed increased fees and charges on different household compositions and income levels and sets out what these would have been if we had not developed mitigating actions to reduce the effects. For example, it shows that for a household of two adults, with two dependent children and one older person with an income of £34,000, the mitigations we put in place reduced the potential impact from the increased fees and charges to 1.3% of their total income from a starting point of 4.5% of their total income.
- 13.5 Conducting the assessment alongside the development of the budget has allowed us to identify actions that mitigate the potential negative effects of our proposals on vulnerable people and households on the lowest incomes. It also highlights the anticipated positive effects of increasing expenditure on certain groups. This helps to offset some of the effects. The assessment will be updated to take account of feedback received during the budget consultation.

CONSULTEES:

Strategic Leadership Team
Cabinet

APPENDICES:

Appendix 1	2025/26 Draft revenue budget proposals
Appendix 2	Cumulative Future Generations Evaluation
Appendix 3	Response to Welsh Government's Local Government provisional settlement
Appendix 4	Draft Capital budget summary 2025/26 to 2028/29

BACKGROUND PAPERS

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DRAFT BUDGET PROPOSALS



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Foreword



Cllr Mary Ann Brocklesby
(Leader – Monmouthshire County Council)



Cllr Ben Callard
(Cabinet Member for Resources)



Monmouthshire County Council is publishing its draft budget for the 2025/26 financial year. This budget aims to protect the most disadvantaged people in Monmouthshire, both young and old.

This year, we are prioritising our most valuable neighbourhood services, which play a crucial role in maintaining the quality of life in our communities and preserving our wonderful environment for the future.

Our proposed net revenue budget for 2025/26 is £216million, representing an 8% increase over the 2024/25 budget. 62% of the budget is funded by Welsh Government grant, with the remainder coming from council tax.

The draft budget for 2025/26 safeguards essential services for our residents, including continued waste collection services and the retention of all leisure centres, recycling centres, libraries, and community hubs.

With this funding, we will increase financing for our most vital frontline services: Social Care and Health funding is proposed to rise by 10.6%, and Education funding by 10.7%.

We are committing over £2million of further capital investment into essential infrastructure, particularly our Highways. This will fund improvements to our carriageways, footpaths, structures, and our fantastic public rights of way network here in Monmouthshire. This is in addition to the £1million we allocated last year for investment in these areas.

We will also invest in our foster care service to attract and retain valued carers while recognising their essential skills, patience, time, and the necessary resources to support some of the most vulnerable children in our county.

This increase is made possible by a new positive approach to council core revenue funding from the Welsh Government, alongside support from the new Westminster Government. After accounting adjustments, this results in an additional £5.1 million in cash terms this year.

To sustain this continued investment in our services, we propose an average council tax increase of 7.8%.

However, despite this funding increase, we still face a budget gap of £2.9 million. We are working diligently to cover some of this gap through ongoing negotiations with the Welsh Government, which may secure additional core revenue settlement in February.

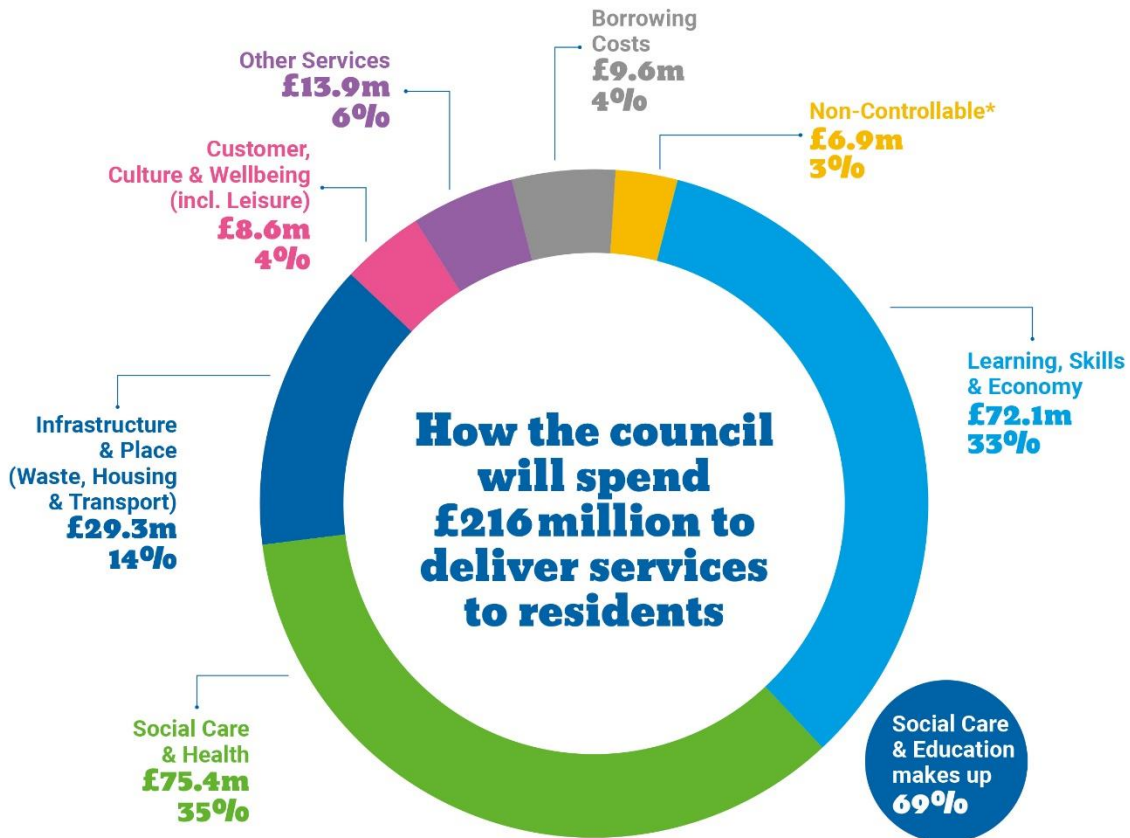
We may also need to consider other strategies, such as changes in how we deliver certain services, ensuring operational efficiency, and implementing charges for on-demand services to fully balance the budget.

We believe in being fully transparent with our residents about these matters. You deserve to know that we are committed to delivering a balanced budget.

Open and rigorous scrutiny and feedback are vital parts of the budget setting process, and we take these responsibilities seriously as your cabinet representatives. We will hold a public consultation from January 23, 2025, to February 22, 2025, and we welcome your input.

We understand that you expect us to be fair and to make decisions that prioritise protecting the most vulnerable members of our community while ensuring the best value for money.

Budget Overview



**Levies paid to other organisations such as the Fire Service, National Parks, and Drainage Boards.*

The council is proposing an overall net budget of £216million for 2025/26 that it will use to fund local services. How the proposed budget is allocated across services is set out below:

The budget process for 2025/26 is again challenging. It is widely acknowledged that for many years, funding for local government has not kept pace with the increased demand for services and increases in the cost of provision.

We estimate that the cost of providing our services will increase by £23.7million compared with the current year.

The council is facing cost pressures resulting from increasing demand for high cost council services, which are predominantly centred around the service areas of social care and children’s additional learning needs.

Alongside this, our costs will increase from recognising the valued contribution of our staff through nationally agreed pay awards and the changes to employers' National Insurance Contributions.

Our borrowing costs are set to increase to fund our capital programme following increases in the interest rates we are able to access.

The cost pressures and investment are outlined in more detail in **Section 1** of this document.

How we propose to close the budget gap

Even though Monmouthshire is due to receive an increase in Welsh Government support of 2.6% for next year, roughly £5.1million, this needs to be considered against the £23.7million of additional costs the council is now facing.

Funding of £3.3million is expected via the UK Government to meet the increase in employers' National Insurance Contributions from 1 April 2025.

Energy costs are projected to reduce by £0.7million compared to the current financial year. Work continues to reduce consumption and work towards the Cabinet objective of reducing carbon emissions and positively contributing to addressing the climate and nature emergency.

It is proposed that additional income of £0.7million for 2025/26 will be generated through increases in discretionary fees & charges for services.

The remaining sum of £13.9million can only be met through a combination of service efficiencies, service reductions and council tax increases.

Striking the right balance between council tax rises and the reduction of services supporting the most vulnerable in our community is not easy and involves making difficult decisions. The draft budget proposes a council tax increase of 7.8%, introducing additional income of £5.9m. This equates to an increase of £2.53 per week for a Band D property.

It is anticipated that 63% of households will meet this charge in full, with the remaining 37% benefiting from a level of exemption. The final level of council tax will only be decided following the consultation process as part of the final budget proposals.

The remaining shortfall of £8.0million will be partially met by service savings proposals of £5.1million, which are set out in **Section 2** of this document.

Section 1: Service Pressures and Investment for 2025/26

Service specific cost pressures and the need for further investment have been subject to rigorous review, with a total of £10.9million considered needed to be included as part of the draft budget proposals.

Learning, Skills and Economy		
	£	Summary
Schools	£1,000,000	Investment to meet the demands that schools are facing in restoring attendance levels and standards following the pandemic period.
Additional Learning Needs	£745,000	<p>£400,000 - There is an increasing number of children and young people with highly complex additional learning needs. The presenting needs and the dysregulated behaviours require a highly specialised environment, along with daily access to therapeutic provision. At this stage, this is not possible through our existing specialist resource base (SRB) environments or our mainstream provision.</p> <p>£345,000 - The number of Individual development plans have increased by 84 since the budget was delegated to schools in April 2022; as a result, this decreased the amount per pupil delegated, putting pressure on school budgets to support their needs</p>
Specialist resource bases	£300,000	Continued development of MCC Specialist Resource Bases (SRBs) to meet the increasing demand for places for children and young people with complex additional learning needs.
EdTech support for schools	£50,000	Existing post to support the roll out of the EdTech programme for schools and ongoing support. The post has been in place for the last two financial years and has been funded via a mixture of a reserve and as a pressure for the directorate.
Grant shortfall Childcare	- £80,000	Since the introduction of the Welsh Government Childcare Offer, more parents are opting to use non-maintained settings. Welsh Government stipulates the funding rate for early education and provides a grant towards this cost, but this funding isn't sufficient and, based on current take up, indicates a budget shortfall of £80k.

Social Care and Health		
	£	Summary
Social care provider fees	£3,254,000	A budget pressure is expected from the review of care provider fees across Children's and Adult's social care as part of the yearly fee negotiations. Care providers are facing various pressures, such as the changes in employers' NI contributions, the rise in real living wage, inflation, fuel, insurance, and non-care staff pay.
Social care demand & inflation	£3,525,000	£1,863,000 - Increasing demand for both residential care home placements and care at home will continue into 2025/26. Alongside this, there has been difficulty in progressing savings from placement and practice change. A further pressure of £375K as Welsh Government have confirmed any changes to the care at home weekly charging cap will not be progressed. £1,662,000 - Increased demand, cost and complexity of providing care for children entering the care system.
Foster carer allowances	£387,000	Investment in in-house foster carers to recruit (including encouraging foster carers from Independent Fostering Agencies (IFAs) to convert to the local authority), retain foster carers and improve placement sufficiency. Achieving this will reduce costs and improve outcomes for children who are looked after (CLA).

Infrastructure & Place		
	£	Summary
Solar Farm	£50,000	A shortfall in income due to bad weather and grid outages which is expected to partially continue in 2025/26.
Building control fee income	£60,000	Fee income was impacted by the economy, resulting in reduced applications. In addition, the introduction of the Building Safety Act 2022 has increased the amount of statutory non-chargeable works having to be undertaken adversely affecting staff and income budgets.
Housing & Homelessness grant	£236,000	Draft specific grant allocations supporting the service have reduced from 2024/25 levels. This grant is offsetting core expenditure on Homelessness, and as such, the reduction represents a cost pressure to be managed. Work is ongoing with Welsh Government to understand if this position will improve within the final settlement.
Fleet & Transport	£818,000	<p>£200,000 from continuing pressures of parts inflation, supply chain delays, vehicle hire growth, requirement for more EV infrastructure and increased borrowing spend.</p> <p>£600,000 due to increased demand within passenger transport as pupil numbers have increased, external operator contract costs increased due to rate increases and a shortfall in public bus service funding.</p> <p>£18,000 due to the Green Car Scheme income target shortfall.</p>

Resources		
	£	Summary
Property	£100,000	To recognise the pressure that a delay in progressing some of our building rationalisation savings is having.
Revenues and Benefits	£49,000	Increased contributions to the shared revenues & benefits service with Torfaen.
Finance	£41,000	Financial management system upgrade costs.
ICT	£40,000	Staff and licence cost increases for our shared IT resource service.

Other Services		
	£	Summary
MonLife	£35,000	£10,000 relating to new Communication software, and £25,000 from a reduction in grant levels compared to 2024/25.
Welsh Language	£70,000	Increased demand for Welsh language translations.
Members Allowances	£38,000	The Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales have recommended a 5.9% increase on the basic salary for members which is above the 3.1% existing assumption.

Section 2: Service Budget Saving Proposals

Learning, Skills and Economy

2024/25 Budget	2025/26 Draft Budget	% Change
£65,118,000	£72,110,000	+10.7%

The Directorate is responsible for funding, managing, and leading the thirty-four schools in Monmouthshire County Council and economic development. There are approximately 11,000 pupils in Monmouthshire's schools and the Directorate provides funding to its schools to provide a wide and balanced curriculum to its learners. The Directorate is also responsible for supporting schools to provide additional support for learners with additional learning needs and those who need extra help attending school. These services have seen significant growth in demand in the period post pandemic.

Proposal	Reduce 0.6 FTE MoSTS(Monmouthshire Specialist Teachers) team
Saving	£40,000

- **Proposal Overview:** The proposal is not replacing a 0.6FTE (full-time equivalent) specialist teaching post that will become vacant due to retirement, aiming to save costs for the service.
- **Current Structure:** Monmouthshire Specialist Teaching Service has two Upper Pay Scale 3 Teaching and Learning responsibility Teachers (1.4FTE) and 2 Higher Level Teaching Assistants (1.22 FTE term time only). The team has shifted from direct teaching to building school capacity for literacy interventions over the past 2-3 years.
- **Staffing Impact:** The reduction will affect one post, decreasing the total number of full-time equivalent staff by 0.6FTE.
- **Service Impact:** The reduction could lead to longer intervention waiting times and decreased capacity to deliver direct support, potentially impacting pupils' literacy outcomes.
- **Service Value:** Monmouthshire Specialist Teaching Service is highly valued by schools, parents, and pupils for its targeted literacy interventions and support.
- **Potential Risks:** Increased waiting times, reduced service capacity, and potential negative impacts on pupils' literacy skills and engagement.

Proposal	Grant funding increase to meet costs of Education Welfare Service post
Saving	£51,000

Proposal Overview: An increase in grant funding will allow core staffing costs to be funded.

Proposal	Bring Additional Learning Needs MCC pupils from out-of-county back to MCC
Saving	£100,000

- **Proposal Overview:** The proposal focuses on transitioning Monmouthshire County Council pupils with Additional Learning Needs from out-of-county placements to local provision at key transition points, particularly at the start of the new academic year.
- **Proposal Objectives:** The objectives include reducing the number of pupils educated outside MCC, developing an inclusive educational system, ensuring impactful specialist provision, securing appropriate post-16 placements, and reducing pupil travel time.
- **Proposal Budget Impact:** The proposal anticipates a budget change with a current budget of £2,774k, a proposed cash reduction of £100k, impacting the budget from 2025/26 onwards.
- **Potential Risks:** Potential positive impacts include reduced costs, improved capacity within MCC, and better long-term options for school leavers. Potential negative consequences include increased demand for internal Specialist Resource Base provision and risks related to parental preference for out-of-county placements.

Proposal	King Henry VIII 3 – 19 school maintenance costs
Saving	£40,000

Proposal Overview: With the opening of the new King Henry VIII 3 – 19 school through the formula funding, the reactive maintenance budget has been removed due to the warranties in place. The cyclical maintenance budget for statutory maintenance, such as PAT testing, will remain in place.

Proposal	Reduction in utility costs for education estate
Saving	£496,000

Proposal Overview: Reduction in energy procurement costs.

Social Care and Health

2024/25 Budget	2025/26 Draft Budget	% Change
£68,196,000	£75,404,000	+10.6%

The Directorate continues to provide personalised care and support to vulnerable residents, supporting people to live safely and independently within their own homes and communities. We have care and support plans in place for more than 1,500 adults and more than 550 children and families; we provide foster care or residential placements for more than 200 children and support more than 300 adults to access residential placements. Despite a challenging context of high demand across social care and health and inflationary pressure on the cost of care, we continue to maintain good quality services and develop innovative, practice-based solutions to achieving financial sustainability whilst prioritising the needs of our most vulnerable individuals.

Proposal	Community Meals
Saving	£15,000

- **Proposal Overview:** The proposal includes not recruiting for a part-time staff vacancy in 2025/26, resulting in a saving of £15,000.

Proposal	Practice Change (Adult Services)
Saving	£250,000

- **Proposal Overview:** The proposal focuses on reducing the cost of adult social care while ensuring people are safeguarded and their personal care needs are met consistently and equitably.
- **Proposal Cost Reduction Strategies:** Strategies include demand management, strengthened oversight, cost controls, and practice changes to create efficiencies and divert or delay the need for formal care.
- **Proposal Generating Savings:** Savings will be generated by reviewing current care packages, pursuing health contributions, and implementing new commissioning approaches to manage costs and increase capacity.
- **Proposal Enablers:** Key enablers include ensuring enablement approaches, expanding rapid medical interventions, implementing a place-based commissioning strategy, and strengthening partnerships with community-based support.
- **Proposal Delivery Impact:** Potential impacts include changes to existing packages, possible increased pressure on carers, and some potential for limited service disruption
- **Proposal Risks and Mitigation:** There is ongoing increased demand for adult social care, and the cost of care continues to grow due to wage increases and inflationary impacts. Mitigation strategies include consistently applying eligibility criteria in all cases and lobbying for additional funding.

Proposal	Fees and Charges
Saving	£336,000

Proposal Overview: Supported by fees and charges schedule.

Proposal	Workforce reduction
Saving	£100,000

- **Proposal Overview:** The proposal involves keeping the Head of Public Protection position vacant following the previous head's retirement, with a review to determine the best long-term leadership structure for the service. An interim management structure is being implemented.
- **Proposal Impact and Savings:** The proposal aims to make savings by freezing the Head of Public Protection role, with potential savings being consolidated into 2025/26. Options include combining this role with another Head of Service role or expanding its scope to include other service areas.
- **Proposal Service and Policy Impact:** While the proposal protects frontline services, it may have negative impacts, such as a lack of strategic leadership and increased workforce pressure. There is no direct policy impact, and statutory functions will temporarily be assigned to the Chief Officer role.

Proposal	Wedding fees (Registrars)
Saving	£30,000

Proposal Overview: Increase charges for weddings based on current demand.

Proposal	Practice Change (Children's Services)
Saving	£1,887,000

- **Proposal Overview:** The proposal aims to reduce Children's Services spending on external placements while ensuring children's outcomes are met by increasing the availability of suitable council-owned placements and supporting children to stay close to their homes and communities.
- **Current Context:** The children's practice change program aligns with the Welsh Government's policy to eliminate profit from children's care, addressing the rise in costs of for-profit care and the lack of quality placements.

- **Service and Placement Development:** Developments include family support services, in-house foster care, post-16 placements, and new pre-16 registered care homes to reduce reliance on for-profit placements and support care planning.
- **Proposal Risks and Mitigations:** Risks include loss of support services due to funding issues, challenges preparing for high-cost placements and recruitment of foster carers. Mitigations involve negotiations with the Welsh Government, emergency bed provision and increased financial support for foster carers.

Proposal	Holding of workforce vacancies
Saving	£125,000

- **Proposal Overview:** The proposal aims to reduce the workforce within Adult Services to create savings, with minimal disruption to services, by consolidating existing vacancies into the establishment structure.
- **Proposal Budget Impact:** The budget impact includes a proposed reduction of £125,000.
- **Proposal Risks and Mitigation:** Potential risks include delays in care provision and increased costs for commissioned care, but these are mitigated by the fact that the vacancies already exist and care can be commissioned externally.

Proposal	Remove one-off performance & improvement grant funded budget (Transfer in 2024/25)
Saving	

Proposal Overview: This one-off grant was added to the 2023/24 settlement, which will be removed from the Social Care and Health base budget. Superseded by transfer into settlement.

Infrastructure and Place

2024/25 Budget	2025/26 Draft Budget	% Change
£26,695,000	£29,290,000	+9.7%
<p>The Directorate covers services such as waste and recycling collections, planning, highways, public and home to school transport, housing, grounds maintenance and decarbonisation. Despite rising service costs, growing demands, and increasing challenges, it will continue to provide the various services offered to residents. It plans to reduce costs by carrying out proposals across its service areas, such as altering service provision, reviewing delivery models and increasing fees and charges.</p>		

Proposal	Welsh Government proposing to increase statutory planning application fees by approximately 25% - potential uplift for 1st April or 1st October
Saving	£100,000

Proposal Overview: The Welsh Government are hosting a public consultation on introducing the proposed changes to planning fees in Wales (ending 17 January 2025), with the view to increase fees over the next 3 to 5 years to ensure that the service is delivered at full cost recovery.

Proposal	Increase car park fees by 10%
Saving	£180,000

- **Proposal Overview:** The proposal suggests a 10% increase in car parking charges, raising the cost of a 2-hour stay from £2 to £2.20. This aims to balance the needs of businesses, visitors, and residents who depend on private cars for travel.
- **Proposal Budget Impact:** The increased charges are expected to generate additional income of £180,000, which will be reinvested into car parking and highway infrastructure.
- **Proposal Impact and Risks:** The proposal acknowledges the potential impact on the cost of living. It also highlights the importance of safe, accessible car parks for vibrant communities and the need to support a shift in travel modes.

Proposal	Passenger Transport Commissioning - We have adopted the statutory distances of 2 miles for primary and 3 miles for secondary for the provision of free home to school transport.
Saving	£447,000

Proposal Overview: Monmouthshire County Council’s Cabinet has agreed to adopt the statutory distances when assessing eligibility for free home to school transport. The statutory distance criteria will be adopted for all learners from September 2025.

Proposal	Savings in management costs as a result of Senior Leadership Team restructure
Saving	£170,000

Proposal Overview: Net savings generated from the Senior Leadership Team structure changes.

Proposal	Introduce an annual £10 membership charge for Grass routes users
Saving	£3,000

- **Proposal Overview:** The proposal is to introduce an annual membership fee of £10 for users of the Grass Routes bus service, replacing the current one-off household membership fee of £5.
- **Current Service:** The Grass Routes service is a discretionary community demand bus service for Monmouthshire residents, allowing them to book transport to and from their preferred locations. We also provide the service to Newport residents on behalf of Newport City Council.
- **Proposal Justification:** The current £5 membership fee does not cover the administrative costs of the service, which include taking bookings, planning routes, and vehicle/driver costs. The membership fee has not been updated since the scheme's launch in 2004, and the service now operates with paid drivers and vehicles, increasing costs.
- **Proposed Budget Impact:** The proposed change aims to address the budget impact by generating additional income to cover administrative costs and reducing the subsidy required from the council.
- **Proposed Impact and Risks:** While the proposal will not affect service quality, it may reduce the number of users who cannot afford the increased membership fee. If not agreed, the service may need to be reviewed and potentially reduced. Users are unable to meet the new fee and demand reduction, which will be managed by monitoring user uptake.

Proposal	Reduce the Highways Winter Maintenance fleet by extending the working hours of each vehicle
Saving	£20,000

Proposal Overview: Usage records indicate each gritter is being used for approximately 2 hours per shift. If this can be doubled, we can reduce the fleet with an approximate saving of £1k per week per vehicle.

Proposal	Reduction in utility prices for the corporate estate
Saving	£223,000

Proposal Overview: The forecast for utility bills in 2025/26 indicates that the council will benefit from a reduced revenue costs for its operational estate.

Proposal	Undertake audit of utility invoices to identify discrepancies and potential savings
Saving	£20,000

Proposal Overview: Commission a third party to review the councils' utility invoices to identify discrepancies and recover savings.

Proposal	Building Cleaning - Release of recurrent service saving
Saving	£20,000

Proposal Overview: Building cleaning service has historically underspent due to improved service income and staff vacancy savings. The proposal is to reflect this in the budget for 2025-26.

Proposal	Increase Building Control Fees
Saving	£20,000

Proposal Overview: Increase Building Control Application fees by 10%.

Proposal	Homelessness - capturing savings driven from the reduction of Bed & Breakfast usage and the full year effect of the repurposing of Severn View to temporary accommodation.
Saving	£557,000

Proposal Overview: Reduction in Bed & Breakfast accommodation usage for homeless households and the opening of Severn View will save accommodation costs. Removing homeless people out of Bed & Breakfast placements will have a consequential and beneficial effect on the Housing Benefits subsidy. Further targeting of high-cost Bed & Breakfast placements to switch into lease could drive out further Housing Benefit penalty savings.

Proposal	Youth Enterprise - Passport more core service costs to grant funding.
Saving	£45,000

Proposal Overview: Historically, this service area has underspent as we have been able to fund core service costs from available grants. The proposal is to reflect this as a budget saving.

Proposal	Increase the cost of home to school concessionary seats by 10%
Saving	£6,000

- **Proposal Overview:** The cost for a concessionary seat on Home to School transport is proposed to increase from £488 to £536 for the 2025/26 academic year, reflecting a rise in the cost of providing the service, which has increased by 39% from 2020/21 to 2024/25.
- **Proposed Budget Impact:** The proposed increase aims to generate additional revenue, with the Passenger Transport Unit Commissioning Team's current budget at £5,122,000 and a proposed cash increase of £6,000 for each target year from 2025/26 to 2028/29.
- **Proposed Impact and Risks:** The proposal is not expected to impact service delivery or policy but may burden households financially. The risk of decreased take-up due to cost increases is mitigated by allowing payments in instalments.

Proposal	Increase in highways external fee income.
Saving	£52,000

Proposal Overview: Increase fee income to external Highways Service clients to reflect increased service costs.

Customer, Culture and Wellbeing (MonLife)

2024/25 Budget	2025/26 Draft Budget	% Change
£8,205,000	£8,512,000	+3.7%

The Directorate continues to provide a range of highly valued customer experiences to enhance the well-being of the residents and visitors of the county. These services aim to provide highly valued quality customer experiences, contribute to delivering the Council’s well-being objectives and support the local economy and environment. More than 9,000 residents hold leisure memberships. Thousands of children and adults attend structured programmes that support skills, confidence and learning. Our Cultural assets (including Community Hubs and Attractions) receive over 400,000 visitors each year. Our Rights of Way, Green Infrastructure and Active Travel continue to contribute to decarbonisation in response to the climate and nature emergency. To mitigate the effects of the budget reduction and to improve the sustainability and effectiveness of Customer, Culture and Wellbeing, the services continue to explore alternative ways of delivery, such as digital platforms, outsourcing, and working with key partners such as Town and Community Councils, voluntary and community organisations, and funding bodies to enhance its offer and reach.

Proposal	Realignment and reduction of opening hours at four Hubs
Saving	£110,000

- **Proposal Overview:** The proposal aims to realign the opening hours at four hubs to better match demands and needs across the county. This involves ensuring that closure days are varied to provide comprehensive service coverage throughout the week for the entire county.
- **Proposed Changes:** Changes to the opening hours for hubs in Chepstow, Caldicot, Abergavenny and Monmouth are proposed, including closing on certain days and reducing hours on others. A public consultation will be held to further understand the residents’ needs for the services.
- **Supporting Evidence:** The proposal is supported by footfall data analysis; however, this is limited in the detail of the reason for visits, the level of support required and delivered during each interaction. The service will continue to work through any options to improve data collection.
- **Proposal Impact:** Reducing opening hours will impact service delivery, including access to library services, building lettings, and face-to-face services for vulnerable populations.

Proposal	Borough Theatre - Service redesign and optimisation of space
Saving	£50,000

Proposal Overview: The proposal aims to review the service and optimise the space available at the Borough Theatre by aligning theatre performance days to customer needs, reviewing opportunities to maximise usage and utilising the theatre space on non-production days for events and activities aligned with the culture and heritage strategy. The proposal seeks to lower overheads and boost income from additional events, grants and sponsorships for future sustainability. This aligns with the MCC Community & Corporate plan and aims to mitigate risks through planned marketing and engagement with stakeholders and new sponsors.

Proposal	Youth Service move to a more sustainable operating model
Saving	£40,000

Proposal Overview: The proposal aims to reduce the core expenditure budget by £40,000 (5% reduction of the overall service budget) through cost appraisals and to explore collaborations to maintain youth service provisions, including youth centres and clubs. The Youth Service faces sustainability issues due to reliance on grant funding and income generation, which necessitates more reliance on core funding. The service is working towards more collaboration with internal and external stakeholders, town and community councils and third sector to deliver open access provisions, such as community youth clubs. A toolkit has been developed to help communities establish youth provisions, with successful examples like the Magor Hub supported by Magor with Undy Town Council.

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- **Proposal Supporting Data:** Data on youth club attendance and contacts are collected for the annual Wales Audit Office audit, showing figures for various youth clubs and centres.
- **Proposal Staffing Impact:** The proposed savings will impact staffing; however, this change will be managed through reduced hours for some existing post holders.
- **Proposal Service Impact:** The proposal aims to make the youth service more financially sustainable without statutory or legal implications, focusing on reducing staffing commitments and engaging with partners for alternative delivery models.

Proposal	Increase Income budget across the four Leisure Centres
Saving	£150,000

Proposal Overview: To increase the income budget for our leisure services. This adjustment reflects the growing demand for our facilities and programs, which have seen a significant increase in usage. Since the pandemic, leisure centres have worked diligently to increase their income through several key strategies. Staff at leisure centres have shown immense dedication and hard work in adapting to the new normal and ensuring that services meet the community's needs. Significant improvements have been made to the customer journey, ensuring a seamless and enjoyable experience for all visitors. This includes enhancements to the booking process, customer service, and overall user experience. Effective marketing campaigns have been launched to promote the leisure centres and their offerings. These campaigns have been tailored to target specific demographics and encourage more people to visit and utilise the facilities. These efforts have collectively contributed to increased income for leisure centres, helping them recover from the financial impact of the pandemic and continue to serve the community effectively.

Proposal	Review Operating Model for Old Station Tintern
Saving	£30,000

- **Proposal Overview:** To review and consider various options for the operating model of the Old Station Tintern. The options under consideration include:
 - **Sale:** Selling the Old Station Tintern to a commercial operator.
 - **Lease:** Leasing the Old Station Tintern for a period of 3-5 years to a commercial operator.
 - **In-House Delivery Model:** Making changes to the current in-house delivery model.

The changes will not be implemented until after the current season. The savings will be achieved through:

- **Reduction in Returning Seasonal Staff:** Reducing the number of returning seasonal staff.
- **Realigning Staffing Hours:** Adjusting staffing hours to match the operational season.
- **Current Operations:** The Old Station Tintern is a popular tourist attraction in the Wye Valley, offering amenities such as a tearoom, children's play area, locomotive ride, and various heritage exhibits.

Proposal	Change of provider for waste collection at our markets
Saving	£20,000

Proposal Overview: To terminate the current contract for waste collections service and use a new provider that can provide the same level of service and environmental considerations for a reduced cost.

Proposal	Restructure – Phase 2
Saving	£38,000

Proposal Overview: Further development of the area management structure, co-ordinating resources across different services to enhance efficiency. The proposal aims to improve efficiency, collaboration and customer satisfaction by reducing management layers, using data and central resources, increasing local delivery and empowerment and, where possible, creating a single point of contact for each area.

Proposal	Staffing recharge to S106 funding
Saving	£24,000

Proposal Overview: Recharge staffing time incurred through delivering S106 projects to S106 funding.

Proposal	Rights of Way - Staffing recharge to capital
Saving	£20,000

Proposal Overview: Recharge staffing time involved in delivering capital repairs to our rights of way network to capital funding.

Resources

2024/25 Budget	2025/26 Draft Budget	% Change
£8,284,000	£8,446,000	+1.9%

The Directorate provides a range of corporate functions that look to both safeguard the council and in supporting services to adapt and evolve in response to changing circumstances and requirements. The portfolio covers all central finance and revenues functions necessary to maintain oversight and administer the council’s finances. Central teams work with services to drive digital design and innovation, as well as ensuring robust arrangements are in place for information governance and technology. Our Landlord Services teams look to ensure that the council’s land and property portfolio remains fit for purpose. Internal Audit and Corporate Health and Safety fulfil important roles to ensure that controls are in place and operating and that risks are being identified and managed.

Proposal	Cease our Cyber Security Insurance provision
Saving	£98,000

Proposal Overview: The council has invested in cyber security and has well-established and robust arrangements. Cyber security risks cannot be eliminated. Cyber insurance allows for the cost of recovery from a significant cyber attack to be met. On further review of the arrangements that the council has in place, it is proposed that this cover cease from 1st April 2025.

Proposal	Freeze/Remove Head of Digital, Design & Innovation Post
Saving	£64,000

Proposal Overview: The role has been vacant since January 2024. The post was held while a business case was developed around the Digital, Data and Technology (DDaT) collaboration with the SRS and three local authority partners. An aspect of the savings released is currently supported by interim staffing arrangements.

Proposal	Reduction in Chief officer admin Support (0.6 FTE)
Saving	£23,000

Proposal Overview: Removal of post due to retirement.

People, Performance and Partnerships

2024/25 Budget	2025/26 Draft Budget	% Change
£3,259,000	£3,399,000	+4.3%

This Directorate is responsible for a range of support services. This includes Human Resources, Training, Payroll, Policy and Performance, Partnerships, Customer Relations and the council's scrutiny function. We are focused on reducing costs through better use of data and technology.

Proposal	Welsh Language translation
Saving	£82,000

- **Proposal Overview:** The proposal seeks to amend the current Welsh Language translation process to reduce costs amid rising demand, utilising AI-driven translation tools. Four options are being considered: retaining the current model with negotiated price reductions, outsourcing to another local authority, employing translators directly, and a competitive tendering process.
- **Proposal Financial Impact:** The proposal is expected to generate a saving of £16,000 and mitigate a corresponding £70,000 pressure, impacting the budget for 2025/26 to 2028/29.
- **Proposal Service and Policy Impact:** The proposal aims to maintain service delivery without negative impacts while promoting and protecting the Welsh language, culture, and heritage.

Proposal	Automation savings in Systems and Payroll
Saving	£22,000

- **Proposal Overview:** The proposal aims to automate the onboarding and payroll processes for staff at Monmouthshire County Council, reducing the need for manual data entry and checks by creating system connections for automatic data population and validation.
- **Supporting Data:** The payroll team manages salaries and expenses for 4,100 colleagues, ensuring accurate payments to various external bodies and handling numerous data returns.
- **Proposal Staffing Impact:** The proposal could reduce staffing as fixed term contracts end and would be replaced by a smaller number of technical roles.
- **Proposal Service Impact:** If implemented successfully, the proposal should not impact frontline services, though there is a risk to payroll accuracy if staff reductions occur before the technology is proven.

- **Corporate Alignment:** The proposal aligns with MCC's Digital and Data and People enabling strategies to improve operational efficiency and address financial challenges.
- **Proposal Risks and Mitigation:** The potential failure of automation functions and integration issues with legacy systems may require additional consultancy support. Mitigation strategies involve retaining the full staffing complement until solutions are proven and engaging the digital team and Shared Resources Services for support.

Proposal	Implement Apprentice First approach
Saving	£8,000

Proposal Overview: Review all vacancies at Band D and replace a percentage of these with apprentice positions. Each one results in a £4K saving to the department's staffing budget.

Proposal	End membership of New Local from June 2025
Saving	£15,000

Proposal Overview: A reduction in subscription fees following a review of the benefits gained.


Law & Governance

2024/25 Budget	2025/26 Draft Budget	% Change
£2,875,000	£3,050,000	+6.1%

The Law & Governance Directorate is responsible for providing legal advice and support to the council and its departments, as well as providing the democratic services and monitoring officer functions. This includes all aspects of legal work from procurement & contracts, property, civil and criminal litigation, employment law, adult and child welfare and land charges. The Directorate is also responsible for ensuring that the decision-making processes across the council are robust, providing guidance on these issues to elected members and senior officers. Additionally, the Directorate is responsible for overseeing the conduct of elections, managing the council's records, and providing support to the council's committees and meetings.

Proposal	Cancellation of Lawyers in Local Government Training
Saving	£1,000

Proposal Overview: Cancellation of training subscription to Local Government Training, as this can be dealt with in-house.



For more information on how
to engage in the 'draft budget
proposals 2025/26 consultation'
please visit:
www.letstalkmonmouthshire.co.uk

Evaluating the Potential Impact of the 2025-26 Budget

Introduction

This report outlines the results of the impact assessment undertaken alongside the individual budget proposals for the financial year 2025-26. The assessment has two aims:

- to help assess the overall potential impact of the budget on different groups of people within our communities and,
- to identify actions that mitigate against or reduce the potential negative effects of our proposals on vulnerable people and households on the lowest incomes.

The spending proposals for the next financial year – 2025/2026 are informed by the principles set in our Medium-Term Financial Strategy. These include: A citizen facing budget focused on equality and climate change; maintaining reserves of at least 5% of our net revenue budget and only borrowing where it is affordable and sustainable to do so.

Spending on front-line service delivery will rise next year, with double-digit increases in education and social care. Despite this, the growth in the Council's budget will not be enough to keep pace with increasing demand and more complex needs. While inflation has come down, prices are still a lot higher than they were a few years ago. As a result, we are still having to pay more for items such energy and fuel. Our budget is being set within the context of a sustained period of under-investment in public services which means that the base line for this budget process is not ideal.

We have had to take some difficult decisions. These will impact residents in different ways. We recognise, for example, that a reduction in social care could be felt more acutely by older people and disabled people. Increased charges for services, such as leisure centre admissions, will be more of an issue for those on lower incomes. This does not just mean those who are unemployed. People who experience in-work poverty, disabled people or those with protected characteristics may also be affected.

We recognise that there is a correlation between some protected characteristics and an increased risk of poverty. Intersectionality plays a large role; the more protected characteristics a person has, the more likely they are to experience financial hardship.

The development of this impact assessment has been an iterative process and has been developed alongside the budget proposals. This means that we have been able to understand the potential impacts and adjust our thinking. As a result, we have been able to amend some proposals or introduce mitigating actions to lessen the impact of some of the difficult decisions we are faced with, on the most vulnerable in our communities.

We assessed the impact of our proposals through:

- Part 1 - An overall Integrated Impact Assessment which summarises the effects of all budget proposals which could alter a service or the way that service is delivered. This assesses its potential impact on the national well-being goals and the ways of working enshrined in the Well-being of Future Generations Act and the people and groups who possess the protected characteristics specified under the Equality Act 2010.

- Part 2 - A review of the potential cumulative financial impact on households with different income levels. This helps us particularly understand the potential impact on those experiencing socio-economic disadvantage, in line with the socio-economic duty in Wales.

Many of the proposals have their own stand-alone impact assessments. These have been developed and considered by Cabinet as proposals have been developed. Ongoing feedback has been used to refine the options being put forward for public consultation. We recognise that people are the experts in their own lives and this consultation could result in additional issues being identified which will further enhance the impact assessment. Open and robust scrutiny and challenge is an essential part of the budget setting process and the assessment will be updated following the consultation undertaken in January and February 2025.

You can read more about the legal basis for this work and the underpinning methodology in the appendices.

Part 1: Overall Integrated Impact Assessment

This provides an overview of the impact, both positive and negative, of the budget proposals and the mitigating actions we have identified to reduce the effects on vulnerable groups and those with protected characteristics. These mitigations were developed in line with the principles guiding the budget setting process.

The assessment identifies areas where there is a risk that changes resulting from individual budget proposals may have a significantly greater impact on particular groups when looked at together with other proposals. By doing this, we can identify where we may need to mitigate against negative impacts on certain groups of people. Mitigating actions could include re-shaping services to target them more efficiently at certain groups or communities to reduce the potential of disproportionate impacts on groups with protected characteristics as defined by the Equality Act 2010.

This is the same tool that accompanies specific individual budget proposals. It does not highlight every single issue but reveals some of the key impacts of budget proposals and provides scope for continual learning and improvement as proposals are developed. Further details of the assessed impacts of individual proposals are provided in the full budget papers.



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Integrated Impact Assessment document (Incorporating Equalities, Future Generations, Welsh Language and Socio-Economic Duty)

<p>Name of the Officer: Richard Jones</p> <p>Phone no: 01633 740733 E-mail: richardjones@monmouthshire.gov.uk</p>	<p>Please give a brief description of the aims of the proposal: To deliver a balanced budget while continuing to make progress against the council's longer term aims.</p>
<p>Name of Service area: Chief Executive's</p>	<p>Date: 13/01/25 (version 1.0)</p>

1. 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	<p>Local authorities provide universal services such as highways and waste collections which bring benefits to all age groups. However, many of our services such as education and social care are delivered to proportionately higher numbers of younger and older people and as a result these groups are more likely to experience the effects of any changes to services resulting from the budget.</p> <p>The commitment to providing additional funding to support pupils with complex and highly complex Additional Learning Needs (ALN) (CYP P1 & CYP P4) will help ensure that children and young people with complex ALN are provided with appropriate provision to meet their identified needs.</p> <p>The proposal to bring ALN pupils who are currently in maintained and independent specialist placements outside of Monmouthshire back into Council provision at key points of transition (SCYP 4) will support more pupils within their</p>	<p>A small reduction of 0.6 FTE in the workforce in the Monmouthshire specialist teacher team (CYP S1) could have a negative impact on the support received by children and young people.</p> <p>Concessionary home to school transport is a discretionary service over and above that provided to pupils who meet the statutory criteria or have additional learning needs. Neither of these are affected by this budget. Reducing the subsidy provided for concessionary home to school transport (C&P 22) may mean that some children from low-income families will no longer be able to afford the service. It will continue to be subsidised below market levels.</p> <p>The lack of placement choice and availability within Monmouthshire is having an adverse effect on children requiring social care support. Changes to practice in social care (SCH 7) seek to support children and young people who are looked after, or care experienced, to live closer to home and to be</p>	<p>Families will have the option to pay the cost of home to school transport across the academic year (C&P 22).</p> <p>Individual care planning for children is in place. This takes into account their individual needs and personal outcomes in line with their stage of development. (SCH 7)</p>

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?
	<p>local community which should have a positive effect on their well-being.</p> <p>Monmouthshire is a rural county and the costs of home to school transport is rising. Providing additional funding to meet the increased costs (C&P 3) will ensure that this service can be maintained and children can continue to be provided with transport to school.</p> <p>Monmouthshire has an ageing population. Providing additional money to meet funding pressures in Adult and Children’s Social Care resulting from higher demand and more complex cases (SCHP1 & SCHP4), will ensure that both children and young people and older people in receipt of care continue to be supported, helping them to live independently, access vital services, improve their quality of life and maintain close relationships with family and friends.</p> <p>Providing additional funding to uplift social care provider fees (SCH P5) will increase the likelihood that independent care providers can continue to operate in</p>	<p>appropriately supported to develop their independence.</p> <p>Older people, particularly those with care and support needs, and their carers are more likely to be negatively affected by proposed practice change in Adult Social Care (SCH 3). There will be a renewed focus on assessment and review of care and support needs of individuals as part of the proposal to ensure that the impact on individuals is fully understood and considered.</p> <p>This includes a reduction in the workforce within direct care (SCH10). Existing vacancies in home care teams are being held vacant to minimise the impact on the current workforce. A reduced workforce within direct care will have an impact on older / frail adults with care and support needs and their carers. Often older adults are being supported to remain at home with the support of family members who can themselves be of older age.</p> <p>The charge service users pay for Monmouthshire Meals (sometimes known as ‘Meals on Wheels’) will increase. The service is currently used by 247 people. This could affect users, who are those with an assessed care need, and affect older frail adults and their</p>	<p>There will be a renewed focus on assessment and review of care and support needs for adults requiring social care support. A focus on reablement approaches allows people to maximise their independence that is in line with the requirements of the Social Services and Well Being Act (SCH 3).</p> <p>Existing vacancies within home care teams will be held to minimise impact on the workforce (SCH10).</p> <p>We will ensure the Social Services and Well-being Act charging legislation is adhered to. This ensures that service users are means tested to determine their ability to pay.</p> <p>Increased demand, the fragility of the social care sector and the availability of care staff remain a key risk for Adult Social Care which needs to be considered as part of budget proposals.</p>

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?
	<p>our area, helping the council to secure care for vulnerable people.</p> <p>Increasing funding to increase the fees and allowances paid to foster carers (SCH P6) will aid the council's aim of increasing the number of local authority foster carers in the county. This will mean that fewer children are placed in private placements or residential children's homes which can often be far from their familiar community and more costly than in-house provision.</p> <p>The proposal to charge an annual membership of the Grass Routes demand responsive transport scheme (C&P8) will provide vital revenue to help ensure the continued operation of the service providing transport to residents who require it.</p>	<p>cares. Some people may choose to stop receiving the service. However, there are private providers of community meals type services in the county which could potentially mitigate this effect for some users. We recognise that private providers may not deliver to all geographical areas exacerbating issues of geographical inequality.</p> <p>The proposed charge for the Grass Routes membership scheme (C&P8), an annual £10 fee, will result in a small increased cost for scheme members to use the service. Currently the service is used by 250 people, predominantly concessionary bus pass holders. The significant majority of service users are aged 65 or over. Those who do not wish to join the scheme will be able to access public transport services, albeit they will be less flexible than the subsidised demand-responsive service they currently receive.</p> <p>The proposed reduction in Community Hub opening hours (MLS3) may affect the accessibility and availability of services for residents who use these services, particularly older people. This may have an impact across all protected characteristics. However, the</p>	<p>Current and potential users of Grass Routes transport who do not wish to join the scheme will be able to access public transport services, albeit they will be less flexible than the service they currently receive.</p> <p>Reducing Community Hub opening hours and realigning service delivery will ensure that services can remain open in all towns, albeit with reduced hours. This will protect face-to-face counter service in our largest towns, something we know is valued by many people as hubs provide a vital safety net for vulnerable people alongside the provision of universal services for the whole community. We need to do more work to understand the socio-economic needs of those who access community hubs to ensure our value of fairness is reflected through an equitable service provision. (MLS 3)</p> <p>The main youth centres, based in the four largest towns, will not be affected (MLS 4). If there is any reduction in youth club provision, the young people will be signposted to one of the four youth</p>

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?
		<p>changes will enable the continued operation of a face-to-face service in our towns.</p> <p>A reduction in the Youth Service budget, and service provision means overall, there would be less youth work taking place across Monmouthshire (MLS4). This may be felt across all protected characteristics but particularly younger people. National research shows that youth clubs are successful at reaching the most vulnerable, for example, those directly affected by violence are twice as likely to regularly go to a youth club. However, it is likely that many others, sometimes referred to as the 'missing middle' will be affected by reductions in open access youth services.</p>	<p>centres, in addition to other opportunities in their community.</p> <p>Where any savings result in compulsory redundancies the process will make a determination in an unbiased and un predetermined way and with due regard for the impact relating to protected characteristics.</p>
Disability	<p>Many of our services, such as social care, are delivered to proportionately higher numbers of disabled people.</p> <p>Providing additional funding to support pupils with complex and highly complex Additional Learning Needs (ALN) (CYP P1 & CYP P4) will help ensure that children and young people with complex ALN are</p>	<p>A small reduction of 0.6 FTE in the workforce in the Monmouthshire specialist teacher team (CYP S1) could have a negative impact on the support received by children and young people.</p> <p>Children with more complex needs and disabilities are disproportionately impacted by the lack of suitable placements in Monmouthshire for children requiring social care support. Changing practice in Social Care</p>	<p>Individual care planning for children is in place which takes into account their individual needs and personal outcomes</p>

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?
	<p>provided with appropriate provision to meet their identified needs.</p> <p>The proposal to bring ALN pupils currently educated in maintained and independent specialist placements outside Monmouthshire back into Council provision at key points of transition (SCYP 4) will enable us to support more pupils within their local community.</p> <p>Providing additional money to meet funding pressures in Adult and Children’s Social Care (SCHP1 & SCHP4) will allow those experiencing physical and learning disabilities as well as ill-health, both mental and physical, to continue to receive support, to live independently and access vital services.</p> <p>Putting in place additional funds to uplift social care provider fees (SCH P5) will increase the likelihood that independent care providers can continue to operate in our area, helping the council to secure care for vulnerable people.</p>	<p>(SCH 7) seeks to address this through the development of bespoke services and provision which will reduce the reliance on ‘for profit’ and out-of-county placements.</p> <p>Adults with physical disabilities, and adults with mental health difficulties including dementia, may be negatively impacted by proposed practice changes in Adult Social Care (SCH 3). There will be a renewed focus on the assessment and review of care and support needs of individuals as part of the proposal.</p> <p>As highlighted in the age category, the charge service users pay for Monmouthshire Meals will increase. The service is currently used by 247 people. This would affect users of the</p>	<p>in line with their stage of development. (SCH 7)</p> <p>There will be a renewed focus on the assessment and review of care and support needs for adults requiring social care support. A focus on reablement approaches allows people to maximise their independence that is in line with the requirements of the Social Services and Well Being Act (SCH 3).</p> <p>We will ensure the Social Services and Well-being Act charging legislation is adhered to. This ensures that service users are means tested to determine their ability to pay.</p> <p>Increased demand, the fragility of the social care sector and challenges recruiting care staff remain a key risk for Adult Social Care which needs to be considered as part of budget proposals.</p> <p>There are private providers of community meals services in the county which could</p>

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?
	<p>The proposal to charge an annual membership fee for the Grass Routes scheme (C&P8) will help support the continued operation of the scheme providing demand-responsive transport to residents who require it.</p>	<p>service, including disabled people and their carers. Some people may choose to stop receiving the service. As highlighted in the age category of this assessment we recognise that private providers may not deliver to all geographical areas exacerbating issues of geographical inequality in alternative service provision.</p> <p>The proposed charge for the Grass Routes membership scheme (C&P8), an annual £10, fee will result in an increased cost for scheme members to use the service, Currently the service is used by 250 people. Those who do not wish to join the scheme will be able to access public transport services, albeit they will be less flexible than the service they currently receive.</p> <p>The proposed reduction in Community Hub opening hours (MLS3) may impact on the accessibility and availability of services for residents including disabled people. At present we do not have data to indicate the proportion of service users who have a disability. We do know that they are one of the ways in which Blue Badge applicants access help with their applications. The changes will enable the continued operation</p>	<p>potentially mitigate this effect for some users.</p> <p>Those who do not wish to join the scheme (C&P8) will be able to access public transport services, albeit they will be less flexible than the demand-responsive subsidised service they currently receive.</p> <p>As highlighted in the age category, reducing Community Hub opening hours (MLS3) will enable us to keep these important face-to-face services open. This will protect face-to-face counter service in our largest towns. These services provide a vital safety net for vulnerable people including disabled people.</p> <p>We need to do more work to understand the socio-economic needs of those who access community hubs to ensure our</p>

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?
		benefitting all residents including disabled people. There will be no reduction in the telephone service available through our contact centre enabling people to continue to speak directly to our staff.	value of fairness is reflected through an equitable service provision. Where any savings result in compulsory redundancies, the process will make a determination in an unbiased and un predetermined way and with due regard for the impact relating to protected characteristics.
Gender reassignment	At this stage proposals haven't identified a particular overall impact, either positive or negative, on people who have undergone or are considering gender reassignment.	At this stage proposals haven't identified a particular overall impact, either positive or negative, on people who have undergone or are considering gender reassignment. We know from research, that people with some protected characteristics are likely to be disproportionately represented in the lower income bands. This means they could be proportionality more likely to be affected by any increases in fees and charges.	None identified at this stage. Where any savings result in compulsory redundancies, the process will make a determination in an unbiased and un predetermined way and with due regard for the impact relating to protected characteristics.
Marriage or civil partnership	At this stage proposals haven't identified a particular overall impact, either positive or negative. Same-sex couples who register as civil partners have the same rights as married couples in employment and must be provided with the same benefits available	At this stage proposals haven't identified a particular overall impact, either positive or negative. We know from research, that people with some protected characteristics are likely to be disproportionately represented in the lower income bands. This means they could be	None identified at this stage. Where any savings result in compulsory redundancies, the process will make a determination in an unbiased and un predetermined way and with due regard for the impact relating to protected characteristics.

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?
	to married couples, such as survivor pensions, flexible working, maternity/paternity pay and healthcare insurance.	proportionality more likely to be affected by any increases in fees and charges.	
Pregnancy or maternity	<p>At this stage proposals haven't identified a particular overall impact, either positive or negative.</p> <p>In the provision of services, goods and facilities, recreational or training facilities, a woman is protected from discrimination during the period of her pregnancy and the period of 26 weeks beginning with the day on which she gives birth.</p>	<p>At this stage proposals haven't identified a particular overall impact, either positive or negative.</p> <p>We know from research, that people with some protected characteristics are likely to be disproportionately represented in the lower income bands. This means they could be proportionality more likely to be affected by any increases in fees and charges.</p>	<p>None identified at this stage.</p> <p>Where any savings result in compulsory redundancies, the process will make a determination in an unbiased and un predetermined way and with due regard for the impact relating to protected characteristics.</p>
Race	<p>At this stage proposals haven't identified a particular overall impact, either positive or negative, that will differ by race.</p>	<p>At this stage proposals haven't identified a particular overall impact, either positive or negative, that will differ by race.</p> <p>We know from research, that people with some protected characteristics are likely to be disproportionately represented in the lower income bands. This means they could be proportionality more likely to be affected by any increases in fees and charges.</p>	<p>None identified at this stage.</p> <p>Where any savings result in compulsory redundancies, the process will make a determination in an unbiased and un predetermined way and with due regard for the impact relating to protected characteristics.</p>
Religion or Belief	<p>At this stage proposals haven't identified a particular overall impact, either positive</p>	<p>At this stage proposals haven't identified a particular overall impact, either positive or negative.</p>	<p>None identified at this stage.</p> <p>Where any savings result in compulsory redundancies, the process will make a</p>

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?
	or negative, that will differ by religion or belief.	We know from research, that people with some protected characteristics are likely to be disproportionately represented in the lower income bands. This means they could be proportionality more likely to be affected by any increases in fees and charges.	determination in an unbiased and un predetermined way and with due regard for the impact relating to protected characteristics.
Sex	The council has already carried out a full pay evaluation exercise.	<p>Women make up the majority of both paid and unpaid caring roles. Any reduction in services available for adults with care and support needs will negatively impact on carers; and therefore, the impact will be felt disproportionately on women (SCH 3 & SCH 10)</p> <p>A number of proposals include a reduction on the number of jobs through the release of vacant posts. In some cases, there may be redundancies as a result of the proposals. While each department's staffing mix differs, the council's workforce is 70% female and therefore any reductions in staff numbers are likely to have a disproportionate effect on women.</p>	<p>Existing vacancies with home care teams are being held vacant to minimise the potential impact on the current workforce (SCH10).</p> <p>We will ensure that the Protection of Employment Policy is adhered to at all times. This will ensure that we are able to redeploy staff wherever possible. We are applying stringent checks to ensure only essential vacancies are advertised. This will help minimise any redundancies. Trade Unions will be briefed through meeting of the Joint Advisory Group in January.</p>
Sexual Orientation	At this stage proposals haven't identified a particular overall impact, either positive or negative that will differ according to ones sexual orientation.	At this stage, proposals haven't identified a particular overall impact, either positive or negative.	<p>None identified at this stage.</p> <p>Where any savings result in compulsory redundancies the process will make a determination in an unbiased and un</p>

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?
		We know from research, that people with some protected characteristics are likely to be disproportionately represented in the lower income bands and therefore proportionality more likely to be affected by increases in fees and charges.	predetermined way and with due regard for the impact relating to protected characteristics.

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 Council provides a range of services that support people experiencing socio-economic disadvantage. Any increase in fees and charges for services will have a higher impact on households with the lowest incomes. Many service areas already have mitigations or discounts in place to reduce the socio-economic impact of charges.</p> <p>Uplifting social care provider fees (SCHP 5) will enable those providing social care to continue pay the real living wage to care workers who are typically on lower incomes. This is in line with the commitment made by the Welsh Government.</p> <p>Children who are looked after and care experienced young people often face socio-economic disadvantages and a paucity of support networks. Practice change in children’s services (SCH 7) seeks to provide</p>	<p>As referred to in section one, reducing the subsidy for concessionary home to school transport (C&P 22) may mean that some children will no longer be able to afford the service. We will continue to provide free home-to-school transport in line with statutory requirements. This change affects those who do not qualify for free transport.</p> <p>Adults with care and support needs, and their carers, can often be economically disadvantaged. As highlighted in the</p>	<p>Families will have the option to pay the cost of home to school transport across the academic year (C&P 22).</p> <p>There will be a renewed focus on assessment and review of care and support needs for adults requiring social care support. A focus on reablement</p>

	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?
	<p>the best support for young people as they approach adulthood through the provision of appropriate accommodation, support and services that should have a positive effect on their longer-term social and economic well-being.</p> <p>The case to invest in foster carer fees and allowances (SCH P6) should enable more children in care to remain in the local area. This in turn should contribute towards reducing the inequalities across a whole range of outcomes associated with socio-economic disadvantage.</p> <p>As highlighted in section 1, community hubs provide a safety net for the most vulnerable in Monmouthshire and are a place where people access social networks and support. Reducing opening hours will ensure the services are financially sustainable and can continue to provide face-to-face support in communities. This includes access to training to increase skill levels and support to find jobs. (MLS3)</p>	<p>introduction, there is a correlation between some protected characteristics and an increased risk of poverty. The more protected characteristics a person has, the more likely they are to experience financial hardship.</p> <p>People with learning disabilities and physical disabilities can face barriers in accessing work and are more likely to be on low incomes. Practice change in social care (SCH 3) aims to generate savings through a range of approaches including prevention and early intervention that enables people to maximise their independence. Any reduction in the level of care available to an individual would only take place after a review of their individual needs. However, it is conceivable that a reduction in care could impact negatively on adults and their carers and may increase the risk of socio-economic disadvantage, for example, they may also not be able to afford to pay for any additional care and support. Alongside this a focus on reablement approaches</p>	<p>approaches allows people to maximise their independence that is in line with the requirements of the Social Services and Well Being Act (SCH 3).</p> <p>Charges for domiciliary care are currently capped at £100 per week in Wales. Means testing is also in place so only those who are assessed as being able to afford this will pay. See the Fees and Charges report which is part of the budget proposals for more details.</p>

	<p>Describe any positive impacts your proposal has in respect of people suffering socio economic disadvantage</p>	<p>Describe any negative impacts your proposal has in respect of people suffering socio economic disadvantage.</p>	<p>What has been/will be done to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?</p>
		<p>allows people to maximise their independence.</p> <p>The budget contains a proposal to increase charges for domiciliary care from £20 to £24 per hour. (Fees and Charges report). These are currently capped at £100 per week in Wales, which provides a significant mitigation. A further mitigation is provided in the form of means testing, as only those who are assessed as being able to afford this will pay. There will also be increases in fees for residential care. This will impact on proportionately more older people. These are also means tested providing mitigation to those on the lowest incomes.</p> <p>As highlighted in section one, the price people pay to have Monmouthshire Meals delivered to their homes will increase. Private alternatives are in place for those who cannot or do not want to pay the higher charge. However, we recognise that private providers may not deliver to all geographical areas of our county,</p>	<p>Ensuring that practitioners in social care understand the impact of socio-economic disadvantage on individuals with care and support needs and have the right skills and knowledge to be able to support people in such circumstances (across social care).</p>

	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?
		<p>exacerbating issues of geographical inequality.</p> <p>Increases to car park charges (C&P 3) will have a disproportionate effect on those experiencing socio-economic disadvantage who may have to pay a higher proportion of their income to park near their workplace or when accessing services in town centres.</p> <p>The proposal to change the Grass Routes membership scheme to an annual £10 membership fee will create a small financial cost for residents who wish to join the scheme. The fee will support the continued operation of the scheme enabling those who use it to continue to access a range of social and economic opportunities across Monmouthshire (C&P8).</p> <p>The proposal to reduce the operational hours of the Borough Theatre and reductions in staffing hours may reduce the opportunities for the existing team to be involved in community activities offered to those suffering from socio-economic disadvantage. Concessionary</p>	<p>Those who do not wish to join the Grass Routes scheme will be able to access public transport services, albeit they will be less flexible than the subsidised demand-responsive service they currently enjoy (C&P8).</p> <p>A focused and targeted program of events for residents and visitors will increase footfall and overall income to the Borough theatre. Concessionary rates will continue to be available to those who require them. (MLS1)</p>

	<p>Describe any positive impacts your proposal has in respect of people suffering socio economic disadvantage</p>	<p>Describe any negative impacts your proposal has in respect of people suffering socio economic disadvantage.</p>	<p>What has been/will be done to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?</p>
		<p>rates to the theatre will continue to be available to those who require them helping maintain access to cultural opportunities. (MLS1)</p> <p>The proposals could result in a reduction of youth service in some communities while maintaining youth centres in towns. Where a young person travels to the youth centre, their journey could include having to travel by vehicle including public transport which could be a barrier to access and participation highlighting issues of geographical inequality that exist in rural counties such as Monmouthshire. (MLS4)</p> <p>As part of the proposal to lease Old Station Tintern to a commercial operator it will be made clear to a new operator that they should offer subsidised rates for those who visit that may be on low/reduced incomes, this cannot be guaranteed. (MLS7).</p> <p>Discontinuing or reducing the use of external translators will negatively impact a small number of micro-businesses in the Welsh language</p>	<p>The youth centres are open immediately after school. This means that any young person who wishes to access the provision can do, straight after school, extending their school day into their free time and preventing them having to make the journey home and return to the centre. (MLS4)</p> <p>To specify to any potential new operator for Old Station Tintern that they offer subsidised rates for those who visit that may be on low/reduced incomes to ensure that the site is open and accessible to all. (MLS7)</p>

	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?
		<p>sector. These businesses may struggle to find alternative work. This challenge is compounded by advancements in AI translation technologies, which may already be reducing the demand for their services. (CEO2)</p> <p>An increase in Council Tax will have a financial impact on all households on lower incomes, as any bills will form a higher proportion of their household expenditure. As a result they are likely to feel the impact more acutely. Those who are eligible, are able to apply for a reduction in council tax through the Council Tax reduction scheme which will mitigate the effects of the increase.</p> <p>There is a risk that any budget proposals that increase discretionary charges will have a disproportionate impact on people on low incomes and therefore will widen economic inequality.</p> <p>A number of proposals include reducing staffing, through reducing employment hours, vacant posts or possible redundancies. This will have a socio-</p>	<p>The Council Tax reduction scheme offers some mitigation, council tax is means tested and those who qualify are able to apply for a reduction. Single person households are eligible for a 25% reduction on council tax.</p> <p>We will ensure that the Protection of Employment Policy is adhered to at all times. This will ensure that we are able to redeploy staff wherever possible. We are applying stringent checks to ensure only essential vacancies are advertised. This will help minimise any redundancies. Trade Unions will be briefed through the Joint Advisory Group.</p> <p>It is important to assess and understand the impact of our proposals on those in poverty, especially if there is a cumulative impact from a number of proposals. The evidence in this paper</p>

	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?
		economic impact on those council employees affected.	helps assess the overall potential impact of the budget on different people within our communities and looks to establish the cumulative financial impact of the budget.

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 Effects on the use of the Welsh language, Promoting Welsh language Treating the Welsh language no less favourably.</p>	<p>Welsh medium youth clubs will not be impacted by proposals to reduce the youth service budget and provisions. However, the URDD youth clubs are 100% funded by an external grant. (MLS4)</p> <p>All proposals will comply with the Welsh Language standards applicable to the authority.</p>	<p>Discontinuing or reducing the use of external translators will negatively impact a small number of micro-businesses in the Welsh language sector. These businesses may struggle to find alternative work at the same rate they have been receiving from the council for many years. This challenge is compounded by advancements in AI translation technologies, which may already be reducing the demand for their services. (CEO2)</p>	<p>Ensure collaboration with partners to look at ways of sustaining Youth Service provisions, post grant funding and in the event of a reduction in grant funding. (MLS4)</p> <p>All signage and material arising from budget proposals will be compliant with the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 and Welsh Language Standards.</p>
<p>Operational Recruitment & Training of workforce</p>	<p>We will ensure that new vacancies are assessed and where possible advertised as 'Welsh essential' to increase opportunities for people to engage with the council through the medium of Welsh.</p>	<p>Budget proposals identify potential redundancies. In some instances, these could result in a reduction in the number of Welsh speakers employed and could decrease opportunities for the current workforce to improve their Welsh language skills due to a reduction in staffing.</p>	<p>Ensure that new roles are assessed to determine Welsh language requirements. Active promotion of vacancies in Welsh language publications and websites as well as targeted promotion via LinkedIn.</p> <p>Continue to promote and fund language courses to increase the number of learners in line with the aspirations in our Welsh Language Strategy</p>

			Where there are proposed reductions to staffing hours in Community Hubs rotas will be looked at with a view to reducing risks of losing Welsh speaking staff. (MLS3)
<p>Service delivery Use of Welsh language in service delivery Promoting use of the language</p>	<p>Proposals to employ internal translators or outsource translations to other local authorities will allow the council to establish a more standardised approach to translations across the authority which will have a positive impact on the quality and consistency of translations. Reducing the cost of translation will also enable the authority to prioritise its language budget on training opportunities and language promotion, contributing to the commitments of our Welsh Language Strategy. (CEO2)</p>	<p>Reductions to the opening hours of the Community Hubs could have a negative impact on the face-to-face Welsh language council services. (MLS3)</p> <p>Proposals to lease sites to a commercial operator, to reduce operating costs, could make it more difficult for the council to ensure that bilingual services are being provided. (MLS7)</p>	<p>Ensure that appropriate mitigations are put in place at a service level to mitigate the loss of any individuals on our overall ability to provide services in Welsh.</p> <p>People will still be able to access Welsh language support over the phone during the closure days of the Community Hub through the Welsh language Contact Centre service. (MLS3)</p> <p>Where there are proposals to lease sites to commercial operators, Welsh language requirements would need to be specified in contracts (MLS 7).</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.

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>Overall spending on services will increase as a result of this budget. This will ensure that the council is able to continue to run services that meet the needs of people, communities and businesses contributing to all of the national well-being goals as well as the aspirations of our Community and Corporate Plan for Monmouthshire to be a thriving and ambitious place.</p> <p>There are however a number of downsides as the increase in spending is insufficient to keep pace with higher prices and increased demand for services. A number of proposals involve redundancies, which will reduce the total number of jobs in the county having a potential negative impact on this goal, albeit a very small one when considering the size of the workforce as a whole.</p> <p>Several pressure mandates set out additional resource requirements for specialist education support in order to ensure that young people are able to receive the support they require. This could support their future job prospects.</p> <p>A small reduction in the workforce in the Monmouthshire specialist teacher team (CYP S1) could have a negative impact on the support received by some children and young people.</p>	<p>Wherever possible, posts that are deleted will be vacant posts, reducing the number of compulsory redundancies necessary.</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?
<p>A resilient Wales Maintain and enhance biodiversity and ecosystems that support resilience and can adapt to change (e.g. climate change)</p>	<p>Tacking climate change is one of the biggest priorities of our organisation. This budget recognises the need for increased spending in a number of areas that will enable us to continue this work.</p> <p>As part of the proposal to lease Old Station Tintern to a commercial operator, the potential impact on the biodiversity of Old Station Tintern needs to be considered and requirements of the new operator to have adequate ecological expertise assessed (MLS7).</p>	<p>To specify within the terms of the lease the necessary ecological expertise and understanding of responsibilities for Old Station Tintern (MLS 7).</p>
<p>A healthier Wales People's physical and mental wellbeing is maximised, and health impacts are understood</p>	<p>Our Community and Corporate Plan commits us to taking action to create healthy and sustainable places where the health inequalities that exist within and between communities have been reduced. The budget continues to invest in a wide range of services that make it possible for us to achieve this.</p> <p>A number of proposals which involve redundancies may have a negative impact on the mental health of those staff affected. This may also affect the well-being of remaining staff due to additional workload and pressure. We are applying stringent checks to ensure only essential vacancies are advertised. This will help minimise any redundancies.</p> <p>Reducing some services, for example Borough Theatre hours (MLS1) and youth service provision (MLS4) may also have a negative impact on the</p>	<p>Where staff are put at risk of redundancy, measures will be put in place to help them, such as guaranteed interviews for internal posts for suitable candidates and employment and skills support.</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?
	<p>mental health of the users of those services, as well as staff and volunteers.</p> <p>A number of pressure proposals also require investment in order to maintain existing levels of service in social care and health which will have a positive impact on well-being (e.g. SCH P1, P2, P4).</p>	
<p>A Wales of cohesive communities Communities are attractive, viable, safe and well connected</p>	<p>We are committed to investing in a range of services that contribute to our policy aspirations for Monmouthshire to be a thriving safe and well-connected county where people feel part of their community.</p> <p>Finding ways to ensure that the Grass Routes service (C&P8) remains viable could make a positive contribution towards enabling older people to stay in their homes and communities. Grass Routes is an important way of connecting rural communities with local services.</p>	<p>Changing the opening hours at our Community Hubs will enable us to reduce running costs. This will protect face-to-face counter service in our largest towns, something we know is valued by many people as these services provide a vital safety net for vulnerable people alongside the provision of universal services for the whole community (MLS 3)</p>
<p>A globally responsible Wales Taking account of impact on global well-being when considering local social, economic and environmental wellbeing</p>	<p>Our commitment to tackling climate change by decarbonising our operations is a small part of a wider global effort.</p> <p>A number of service areas will see an additional investment as a result of these proposals. This includes recycling (C&P5) and transitioning to low emission fleet (C&P4), ensuring that services that reduce our climate emissions are able to be maintained,</p>	<p>None identified at this stage</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?
<p>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</p>	<p>As part of our commitment to making Monmouthshire a thriving and ambitious place we are continuing to support Monmouthshire's towns and visitor attractions making them accessible and welcoming where amenities, events and experiences are attractive for residents, visitors and businesses. Sometimes we have to make changes and look to different ways to keep services running but we continue to think differently keep services operating</p> <p>As part of the proposal to lease Old Station Tintern to a commercial operator, the potential impact on the cultural and heritage assets of Old Station Tintern needs to be considered and requirements of new operator to have adequate heritage expertise assessed (MLS7).</p> <p>Proposed reduced Hub opening hours (MLS3) and Borough Theatre opening (MLS1) could both potentially lessen the public's ability to access culture and the arts. Both proposals seek to minimise the impact of reduced hours by using footfall figures and promotion and marketing campaigns, whilst ensuring long term viability of provision.</p>	<p>To specify within the terms of the lease the necessary heritage expertise and understanding of responsibilities for Old Station Tintern (MLS 7).</p> <p>Reducing Community Hub opening hours and realigning service delivery to ensure consistency across each town will ensure that all services can remain open. This will protect face-to-face counter service in our largest towns, something we know is valued by many people as these services provide a vital safety net for vulnerable people alongside the provision of universal services for the whole community (MLS 3)</p>
<p>A more equal Wales People can fulfil their potential no matter what their background or circumstances</p>	<p>Tackling inequalities, working with and alongside our communities is one of the absolute priorities of the council. This is enshrined in the budget principles within the Medium Term Financial Strategy which are the cornerstone of the budget.</p>	<p>Each proposal within the budget is assessed to identify the effects on the most vulnerable in our society. Where we identify changes could have a disproportionate adverse effect on those with protected characteristics or who suffer socio-economic disadvantage we have taken that into account and</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?
	See Protected Characteristics and Socio-Economic Duty sections above for further details.	sought to mitigate the effect by refining the proposals as we have gone along. See Protected Characteristics and Socio-Economic Duty sections above for further details.

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> <p>Long Term</p>	<p>The requirement for short term financial savings may have an impact on the ability to deliver quality services in the long term. For a number of posts and workstreams across all directorates there is an increasing reliance on grant-funded posts and projects, these are often for fixed term periods in the shorter term. This can be a challenge to their longer-term viability.</p>	<p>Wherever possible, proposals are only reducing service levels (e.g. by reducing opening hours or staffing) rather than closing services. This ensures that core services can still be continued in the long term.</p> <p>The Council has developed a Medium-Term Financial Strategy, this provides the strategic framework to guide medium term financial planning. This will help ensure a focus on the council's long-term policy objectives and its financial capacity.</p>
 <p>Working together with other partners to deliver objectives</p> <p>Collaboration</p>	<p>For many of the budget proposals, partnership working is key to being able to continue delivering services. Some of the proposals will require closer working with partners and businesses to ensure that the proposal is delivered effectively without negatively impacting services (e.g. MLS7 Old Station and CEO4 Systems and Payroll automation)</p>	<p>Clear expectations and communication established with all partners we collaborate with.</p>
 <p>Involving those with an interest and seeking their views</p> <p>Involvement</p>	<p>We are committed to working with and alongside our communities to shape the future of the council and the communities it serves.</p> <p>Individually, some of the budget proposals have been subject to consultation to assess the impact on service users. For other proposals, this engagement has not yet taken place or is planned at the same time as the budget engagement process.</p>	<p>Ensure that proposals and the accompanying Integrated Impact Assessments are updated as a result of any further consultation and engagement.</p>

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?
	Overall, these proposals will form part of the budget consultation and will be subject to a full and extensive public consultation exercise.	
 <p>Putting resources into preventing problems occurring or getting worse</p>	<p>Wherever possible, proposals aim to prevent problems occurring or getting worse (e.g. Children social care (SCH S7) and Adults social care (SCH S3) practice change).</p> <p>With the scale of savings that are needed, some proposals may impact on the council’s ability to maximise preventative work, which may lead to challenges in the future. Examples of this include in social care where high-cost placements or packages of care impact on the services ability to turn resources to prevention and community based enabling support (SCH P1). Also, the small reduction in the workforce in education (CYP S1) could have a negative impact on this service working in a preventative manner with an early intervention focus to supporting children and young people.</p>	<p>Wherever possible, posts that are already vacant are those that are being proposed to be removed, meaning that the impact of the reduction in staffing is lower. However, teams across the council are already under pressure, and not replacing vacant posts could mean the council is less able to be proactive and preventative.</p> <p>Increased demand, the fragility of the social care sector and the availability of care staff remains a key risk for Adult Social Care although some of these issues are outside the Council’s direct control to address. Alongside the budget proposals, work is being undertaken to develop the council’s preventative approach in social care.</p>

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>Integration Considering impact on all wellbeing goals together and on other bodies</p>	<p>The council works across multiple areas and many of these proposals can have positive and potentially negative impacts on one another. It is important that as individual proposals are developed, we seek to balance competing impacts and fully consider the impacts that proposals will have on other organisations.</p>	<p>Use of this Cumulative Impact Assessment will help to identify overall impacts of proposals in an integrated way, as well as assessing specific proposals individually.</p>

6. The council has agreed the need to consider the impact its decisions have 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	Safeguarding is about ensuring that everything is in place to promote the well-being of children and vulnerable adults, preventing them from being harmed and protecting those who are at risk of abuse and neglect. Specific proposals include an assessment of the impact on safeguarding.	Specific proposals include an assessment of the impact on safeguarding, including any potential negative impact on delivering the Council's safeguarding responsibilities.	Specific proposals include an assessment on the impact on safeguarding, including mitigation related to the potential impact on delivering the Council's safeguarding responsibilities. Safeguarding is at the heart of everything the council does. All staff are trained to a level that is appropriate to their role.
Corporate Parenting, Care Leavers and Care Experienced people	The council has a responsibility to children who are looked after. The council has a corporate duty to consider children looked after especially and promote their welfare (in a way, as though those children were their own). Specific proposals include an assessment on the impact on corporate parenting.	Specific proposals include an assessment on the impact on corporate parenting, including any potential negative impact on delivering the Council's corporate parenting responsibilities.	Specific proposals include an assessment on the impact on corporate parenting, including mitigation related to the potential impact on delivering the Council's corporate parenting responsibilities

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

The proposals are based upon a wide range of data and evidence, and this will be contained within the evaluations of specific individual proposals.

Data sources include for example:

- Quantitative data such as user numbers, measuring whether changes have had a positive or negative impact on the number of people using the service, in some cases, such as preventative services less users will be a positive
- Qualitative data that gives people views of the service which includes analysis of complaints.
- Data derived from national sources such as ONS, Census and Stats Wales which allow us to measure the whole population.

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?

Where an individual budget proposal could alter a service, or the way it is delivered, an Integrated Impact Assessment has been completed.

This assessment summarises the headline message from these specific individual assessments where proposals have been identified as having a positive or negative impact on those with protected characteristics, the socio-economic duty, and the ways of working and national well-being goals. The assessment has been updated through the development of the budget proposals. This does not highlight every single issue but reveals some of the key impacts of budget proposals and provides scope for continual learning and improvement as proposals are developed.

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
Existing actions have been identified within individual assessments.	As per budget proposal impact assessments	As per budget proposal impact assessments

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 into equality and future generations considerations wherever possible.

Version No.	Decision making stage	Date considered	Brief description of any amendments made following consideration
0.3	Strategic Leadership Team and Cabinet	Ongoing development of proposals during of	Amendments made within the form
1.0	Draft budget proposals 2025/26	For Cabinet consideration	

Part 2 - The Cumulative Financial Impact

The Socio-economic Duty requires local authorities to think about how their strategic decisions, affect inequality of outcomes for people who suffer socio-economic disadvantage. Monmouthshire has the highest level of income inequality in Wales and we recognise that any increase in fees and charges for services will have a higher impact on households on the lowest incomes. In addition, we know that there are geographical inequalities in our counties, for example the challenges faced by rural communities are very different from those in towns. Assessing geographical disparities is something we do operationally by targeting services such as housing and social care and this is taken into account in the way that services are delivered.

This section looks at the combined effect of increased fees and charges on different household compositions and income levels. We do this because many individual changes can sometimes seem small when looked at in isolation but can add up to a more significant sum when taken together. This is one of the ways we meet our socio-economic duty. It also means we can identify where we need to apply a degree of mitigation to reduce the potential negative impacts of our proposals.

The impact below has been modelled on some of the planned increases in fees and charges. We have used seven different household types, one more than last year. For each household type we have modelled the cumulative financial impact based on different household incomes. The financial modelling does not include an analysis of people by protected characteristics as that is covered by part one of this report. However, we know from research, that people with some protected characteristics are likely to be disproportionately represented in the lower income bands. Research by the Health Foundation has highlighted that disabled people are two percentage points more likely to be in poverty than non-disabled people. Younger households, at the earlier stages of their careers could be more likely to be on lower incomes. The increases in fees and charges modelled to develop this assessment along with further information on the methodology used are shown in Appendix 2.

Cumulative Financial Impact – Before and after mitigating actions.

Household	Income	Forecast Cost after mitigation (percentage of income shown in brackets)	Initial proposed increase before mitigation (percentage of income shown in brackets)	The amount of money our mitigating measures reduced costs by
Household 1 – 2 Adults, 2 Dependent Children, 1 Older Person	£34,000	£424.18 (1.3%)	£1,529.96 (4.5%)	£1,105.78
	£49,000	£489.96 (1.0%)	£1,529.96 (3.1%)	£1,040.00
	£56,000	£489.96 (0.9%)	£1,529.96 (2.7%)	£1,040.00
	£70,000	£489.96 (0.7%)	£1,529.96 (2.2%)	£1,040.00
Household 2 – 2 Adults, 2 Dependent Children	£22,000	£180.18 (0.8%)	£245.96 (1.1%)	£65.78
	£34,000	£245.96 (0.7%)	£245.96 (0.7%)	-
	£37,000	£245.96 (0.7%)	£245.96 (0.7%)	-
	£59,000	£245.96 (0.4%)	£245.96 (0.4%)	-
Household 3 –	£17,000	£114.40 (0.7%)	£245.96 (1.5%)	£131.56
	£22,000	£180.18 (0.8%)	£245.96 (1.1%)	£65.78

Household	Income	Forecast Cost <i>after</i> mitigation (percentage of income shown in brackets)	Initial proposed increase <i>before</i> mitigation (percentage of income shown in brackets)	The amount of money our mitigating measures reduced costs by
1 Adult, 2 Dependent Children	£28,000	£213.07 (0.8%)	£245.96 (0.9%)	£32.89
	£37,000	£213.07 (0.6%)	£245.96 (0.7%)	£32.89
Household 4 – 2 Adults (both aged below 66)	£22,000	£84.18 (0.4%)	£149.96 (0.7%)	£65.78
	£34,000	£149.96 (0.4%)	£149.96 (0.4%)	-
	£37,000	£149.96 (0.4%)	£149.96 (0.4%)	-
	£59,000	£149.96 (0.3%)	£149.96 (0.3%)	-
Household 5 – 2 Adults (both aged over 66)	£22,000	£553.78 (2.5%)	£1,659.56 (7.5%)	£1,105.78
	£24,000	£619.56 (2.6%)	£1,659.56 (6.9%)	£1,040.00
	£37,000	£619.56 (1.7%)	£1,659.56 (4.5%)	£1,040.00
	£49,000	£619.56 (1.3%)	£1,659.56 (3.4%)	£1,040.00
Household 6 – 1 Older Person	£12,000	£244.00 (2.0%)	£1,415.56 (11.8%)	£1,171.56
	£17,000	£244.00 (1.4%)	£1,415.56 (8.3%)	£1,171.56
	£22,000	£309.78 (1.4%)	£1,415.56 (6.4%)	£1,105.78
	£37,000	£342.67 (0.9%)	£1,415.56 (3.8%)	£1,072.89
Household 7 – 1 Younger Person (working age)	£15,000	£18.40 (0.1%)	£149.96 (1.0%)	£131.56
	£22,000	£84.18 (0.4%)	£149.96 (0.7%)	£65.78
	£28,000	£117.07 (0.4%)	£149.96 (0.5%)	£32.89
	£37,000	£117.07 (0.3%)	£149.96 (0.4%)	£32.89

The proposed Council Tax increase of 7.8% will result in an additional monthly cost of £131.56 on a Band D property. If a household is on a low income, they may be eligible for the Council Tax Reduction Scheme which would reduce their Council Tax bill.¹ This is calculated on individual circumstances and the entitlement varies; the model includes reductions of 50% and 100% for certain household incomes. It also includes a 25% single persons discount attributed to some income bands in relevant households. It is unlikely that someone on a low income would be paying for social care and there is a £100 weekly cap for care at home. As incomes rise it would be expected that many households will be living in more expensive properties and would be paying higher rates of council tax. A breakdown of the charges and methodology used to produce the table above can be found in appendix 2.

Household 1 - 2 Adults, 2 Dependent Children, 1 Older Person

For a household with an income of £34,000, the potential impact on their income from the increased fees and charges is an increased annual spend of £424.18 equating to 1.3% of their total income. The mitigations put in place have ensured that this impact has been reduced from a potential figure of £1,529.96 or 4.5% of their total income.

For households with incomes of £34,000, £37,000 and £59,000 the mitigated increased fees and charges equate to 1.0%, 0.9% and 0.7% of their total annual income respectively. The mitigations put in place have ensured that this has reduced from 3.1%, 2.7% and 2.2%.

One of the largest increases would be the possible increased cost of community meals, based on the older person within the household receiving 5 meals a week for a year. Social care charges have also been considered for the older person within the household, modelling a £1,040 annual increase based on 5 hours of care a week. However, the increase in cost will be completely mitigated for those receiving more than 5 hours of care a week due to the weekly cap of £100. The use of a five-hour care package has been used as part of the cumulative impact assessment modelling by this authority for many years and is retained for the purposes of consistency. However, this is below the average care package in Monmouthshire, therefore the numbers of household requiring less than 5 hours of care a week is small – which means the increase across all households will be mitigated for the vast majority of those receiving care.

The proposed £10 annual charge for the Grass Routes membership scheme has also been modelled. A council tax reduction has been modelled against the lowest income threshold, as the model assumes the older person within the household would be receiving pension credit. Other charges modelled for all income bands are: proposed increases in concessionary home to school transport for both children, an increase in car parking charges, and residential street parking permit charges for the household.

Household 2 - 2 Adults, 2 Dependent Children

For a household with an income of £22,000, the potential impact on their income from the increased fees and charges is an increased annual spend of £180.18 equating to 0.8% of their total income. The mitigations put in place have ensured that this impact has been reduced from a potential figure of £245.96 or 1.1% of their total income.

For households with an income of £34,000, £37,000 and £59,000 the increased fees and charges would be 0.7%, 0.7% and 0.4% of their total annual income respectively. There are no changes in costs on these income groups resulting from the mitigations put in place.

It has been modelled that the lowest household income will be eligible for the council tax reduction scheme at 50%, which would mitigate the 7.8% annual increase of £131.56 to £65.78. The non mitigated increase would constitute 1.1% of income for a household income of £22,000. For a household income of £34,000 it would be 0.7%. The percentage of income would be 0.7% and 0.4% for households with incomes of £37,000 and £59,000, respectively.

For this household, proposed increased charges have been modelled for concessionary seats on home to school transport (+£48 per child for a year) as well as proposed increases in car parking and residential street parking permit charges.

Household 3 - 1 Adult, 2 Dependent Children

For a household with an income of £17,000, the potential impact on their income from the increased fees and charges is an increased annual spend of £114.40 equating to 0.7% of their total income. The mitigations put in place have ensured that this impact has been reduced from a potential figure of £245.96 annually or 1.1% of their total income.

For households with incomes of £22,000, £28,000 and £37,000 the increased fees and charges equate to 0.8%, 0.8% and 0.6% of their total annual income respectively. The mitigations put in place have ensured that this has reduced from 1.1%, 0.9% and 0.7%.

Although the income for this household is likely to be less than that of the 2 Adult with 2 Children household, the increases in fees and charges on the household are very similar for the equivalent income bands, with a modelled £245.96 increase in annual costs before mitigations. This equates to 1.5% for a household with an income of £17,000. Whilst households with incomes of £22,000, £28,000 and £37,000 would see increases of 1.1% and below. Lower income bands have been included within the model to reflect the possibility of low-income single earner households.

For those earning £22,000 and under, mitigations have been included in the model due to the likelihood of their eligibility for the council tax reduction scheme. The lowest income band (£17,000) has a 100% reduction that negates the 7.8% modelled increase, whereas the £22,000 income household has a 50% reduction which would see an increased cost of £65.78 rather than £131.56. The higher income bands for the household composition have been attributed a 25% single persons discount (£98.67 increase compared to the full £131.56). The mitigated cost would be 0.7% for the £17,000 and 0.8% for the £22,000 income households, this is similar to the higher income bands, with the £28,000 household seeing a 0.8% rise and a 0.6% increase for households with an income of £37,000. For this household, the proposed increased charges have also been modelled for concessionary seats on home to school transport for both children alongside proposed increases in car parking and residential street parking permit charges.

Household 4 - 2 Adults (working age)

For a household with an income of £22,000, the potential impact on their income from the increased fees and charges is an increased annual spend of £84.18 equating to 0.4% of their total income. The mitigations put in place have ensured that this impact has been reduced from a potential figure of £149.96 or 0.7% of their total income.

For households with incomes of £34,000, £37,000 and £59,000 the increased fees and charges equate to 0.4%, 0.4% and 0.3% of their total annual income respectively. There are no changes on these income groups resulting from the mitigations put in place.

For the lowest income household of £22,000, mitigation has been included in the model due to the likelihood of their eligibility for the council tax reduction scheme.

This household composition is likely to be less affected than other households as they do not have any dependent children and may not require certain services such as adult social care.

Household 5 - 2 Adults (both aged over 66)

For a household with an income of £22,000, the potential impact on their income from the increased fees and charges is an increased annual spend of £553.78 equating to 2.5% of their total income. The mitigations put in place have ensured that this impact has been reduced from a potential figure of £1,659.56 or 7.5% of their total income.

For households with incomes of £24,000, £37,000 and £49,000 the increased fees and charges would be 2.6%, 1.7% and 1.3% of their total annual income respectively.

This is one of the largest percentages in the model. Should the household currently be at the £100 weekly social care cost cap, the model shows a 2.5% increase in costs for a £22,000 income household.

Most of the increase in cost is from the proposed annual increase in social care costs, the model is based on 5 hours care received per week, for 52 weeks a year which equates to a £1,040 increase per year. There is a mitigated cost of a £100 cap per week which would mean that the household is already at this limit if they are receiving 5 or more hours a week and would therefore see no additional increase in cost. An increase of £468 per year could also result from community meal charges – based on an assumption that both members of the household would receive 5 meals a week from the service. The proposed £10 annual charge for the Grass Routes membership scheme has also been modelled for both members of the household.

At the lowest income for this household modelled, £22,000, there is a modelled potential mitigated cost for council tax of £65.78 - which is an example of a 50% discount, which could be provided via the council tax reduction scheme. Alongside the charges noted above, the model includes a full council tax increase of 7.8% for all but the lowest income household, which would be £131.56 based on a Band D property.

Household 6 - 1 Older Person

For a household with an income of £12,000, the potential impact on their income from the increased fees and charges is an increased annual spend of £244.00 equating to 2.0% of their total annual income. The mitigations put in place have ensured that this impact has been reduced from a potential figure of £1,415.56 or 11.8% of their total annual income. This income figure is used as it is broadly in line with the state pension.

For households with incomes of £17,000, £22,000 and £37,000 the increased fees and charges equate to 1.4%, 1.4% and 0.9% of their total annual income respectively. The mitigations put in place have ensured that this has reduced from 8.3%, 6.4% and 3.8%.

The model shows potential mitigations in place for this household, including example potential council tax mitigations of 100% for the two lowest income bands and a 50% reduction for the £22,000 income household (an increase of £65.78 rather than £131.56). The £37,000 household has a 25% single persons discount allocated. This household could incur the increased costs for adult social care, the potential mitigation for the household of the social care cap being reached would limit, or could remove, as modelled, any increase in non-residential care fees. At all income levels the household could incur the potential increased cost for community meals and the Grass Routes membership scheme.

Household 7 - 1 Younger Person (working age)

For a household with an income of £15,000, the potential impact on their income from the increased fees and charges is an increased annual spend of £18.40 equating to 0.1% of their total annual income. The mitigations put in place have ensured that this impact has been reduced from a potential figure of £149.96 or 1.0% of their total income.

For households with incomes of £22,000, £28,000 and £37,000 the increased fees and charges equate to 0.4%, 0.4% and 0.3% of their total annual income respectively. The mitigations put in place have ensured that this has reduced from 0.7%, 0.5% and 0.4%.

All modelled income levels for this household have council tax reduction applied, of either a full or a 50% reduction, or single person discount of 25% applied. The single persons discount of at least a 25% reduction in Council Tax increase would see the 7.8% council tax increase resulting in a £98.67 cost per year rather than £131.56. Proposed increases in car parking and residential street parking permit charges have also been modelled.

Appendix 1 -The Legal Context

Our evaluation is framed by the obligations we have as a council under the following acts.

The Equality Act 2010 protects people from discrimination in the workplace and wider society. It provides a legal framework to protect the rights of individuals and advance equality of opportunity for all.

The public sector equality duty means that local authorities must consider or think about how their policies or decisions affect people who are protected under the Equality Act. We must do this when we design policies, deliver services and make decisions.

The protected characteristics are age; disability; sex; gender re-assignment; pregnancy and maternity; sexual orientation; race; religion or belief; marriage and civil partnership.

The Well-being of Future Generations Act creates a legal framework for better decision-making by public bodies in Wales by ensuring that we take account of the long-term, help to prevent problems occurring or getting worse, take an integrated and collaborative approach, and considers and involves people of all ages.

Together, the seven well-being goals and five ways of working provided by the Act are designed to support and deliver a public service that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

The Socio-Economic Duty came into effect in Wales on 31st March 2021 placing a responsibility on councils to consider the need to reduce the inequalities that result from socio-economic disadvantage. This evaluation is one of the ways we demonstrate our compliance with these duties.

The Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 established a legal framework that imposed a duty on Monmouthshire County Council, alongside other public organisations, to comply with standards relating to the Welsh language. The key principles of these standards are that the Welsh language should not be treated any less favourably than the English language and we should promote and facilitate the use of the language.

Appendix 2 – Cumulative Financial Impact methodology

To model the cumulative financial impact, we have used seven different household types and identified varying annual household incomes for each.

Household composition data from the Census 2021 in Monmouthshire shows for each of the households modelled:

Household 1 - 2 Adults, 2 Dependent Children, 1 Older Person - 2% (689) of all household composition households from Census 2021 were multiple family households with dependent children.

Household 2 - 2 Adults, 2 Dependent Children – 17% (7033) of all household composition households from Census 2021 were single family households (married, civil partnership or cohabiting couple) with dependent children.

Household 3 - 1 Adult, 2 Dependent Children – 6% (2281) of all household composition households from Census 2021 were single family households (lone parent) with dependent children.

Household 4 - 2 Adults (working age) – 13% (5309) of all household composition households from Census 2021 were single family households (married or civil partnership) with no children. 5% (2235) households were noted as being co-habiting couple families with no children.

Household 5 – 2 Adults (both aged 66 and over) – Census 2021 data showed that there were over 11,000 residents in Monmouthshire that lived in a single-family household of this composition.

Household 6 - 1 Older Person – 16% (6534) of all household composition households from Census 2021 were single person households, aged 66 years or older.

Household 7 – 1 Adult (working age) - Census 2021 data showed that 14% (5753) of households were made up of one person households that are working age.

The latest information on income levels, wages, benefits and pension rates were used to inform the income level modeled for each household. This shows:

In April 2025, the full new State Pension will rise by £9.05 to £230.25 a week, which will provide an additional £470 a year. The full basic State Pension will also increase to £176.45 a week, an increase of £6.95 as week and £360 annually.² The annual level of benefit cap for couples (with or without children) or single claimants with a child of qualifying age is £423.46, equating to £22,020 per year.³

Data on income levels will continue to change as wage levels vary, the figures used provide an approximate indication. The National Living Wage is currently £11.44 per hour for those aged 21 and over. For someone working 35 hours per week, this equates to approximately £20,820.80 per year. For someone working 27 hours per week this is approximately £16,061,76 per year. This rate is due to rise to £12.21 per hour from April 2025 for those aged 21 and over⁴. For someone working 35 hours per week, this equates to around £22,222,20 per year. For someone working 27 hours per week, this equates to approximately £17,142.84 per year. Those who are aged 18-20 will be entitled to receive £10.00 per hour, equating to approximately £18,200 per year for those who work 35 hours per week.

As at the financial year 2021-22, 48.2% of lone parents in the UK are employed part-time, and over 3 in 10 are not employed (economically inactive). Women with children are more likely to work part-time, term-time or flexible working hours, compared to fathers or those without children. 47.1% of two parent families have one parent working full-time, and the other working part-time.⁵ Average weekly hours of work for part-time workers in the UK is 16.8 hours.⁶

A person is commonly deemed to be in poverty if their household falls below 60% of the UK median household income. The latest data shows the UK median household income is £34,500 (ONS).⁷ 60% of this equates to £20,700. The (provisional) figure for median weekly earnings per household is £717.90 in Monmouthshire according to the ONS, this would aggregate to an annual income of £37,331.⁸

Fees and charges

Each of the planned increases in fees and charges identified to be used in the cumulative financial impact model are shown in the table below. This does not cover every fee and charge within the budget, these have been selected to provide an indication of potential increases for households. Full details on fees and charges are in the budget papers. This shows the Total (T) and Mitigated (M) increase in cost for those fees and charges modelled.

Fees and charges	Increase	Mitigation		2 Adults 2 Dependent Children 1 Older Person	2 Adults 2 Dependent Children	1 Adult 2 Dependent Children	2 Adults (working age)	2 Adults (both 66+)	1 Older Person (66+)	1 Younger Person (working age)
Council Tax	7.8% (£131.56 for Band D property)	Single persons discount (-25%) or Council tax reduction scheme (100% discount or 50% discount) modelled for each Household (HH)	T	£131.56	£131.56	£131.56	£131.56	£131.56	£131.56	£131.56
			M	£65.78 (for lowest income HH)	£65.78 (for lowest income HH)	£0 (for lowest income HH) £65.78 (for £22,000 income HH) £98.67 (Single persons discount)	£65.78 (for lowest income HH)	£65.78 (for lowest income HH)	£0 (for lower income bands) £65.78 (for £22,000 income HH) £98.67 (Single persons discount)	£0 (for lowest income bands) £65.78 (for £22,000 income HH) £98.67 (Single persons discount)
Concessionary home to school transport	£48 per person	Cost can be spread over the academic year	T	£96.00	£96.00	£96.00	-	-	-	-
			M							
			T	£10.40	£10.40	£10.40	£10.40	-	-	£10.40

Car parking charges	10% for 2 hour stay (£0.20)	Blue badge holders can park for free	M							
Grass Routes bus scheme annual membership	£10 per year	None	T	£10.00	-	-	-	£20.00	£10.00	-
			M							
Community meals	£0.90 per meal	None	T	£234.00	-	-	-	£468.00	£234.00	-
			M							
Non-residential Social care fees	20% (£4 per hour)	Total based on 5 hours of care a week	T	£1,040	-	-	-	£1,040	£1,040	-
			M	£0				£0	£0	
Residential street parking permit	10% (£8 per year)	None	T	£8.00	£8.00	£8.00	£8.00	-	-	£8.00
			M							

The table below lists the rationale followed whilst assigning increased costs and mitigations to the households in the table above. A number of methods have been replicated to be consistent with what has been modelled during previous years cumulative financial impact assessments. Although it is recognised that the rationale may not be applicable to all households within the county, the table is an attempt to model how some residents may be impacted to a greater or lesser extent than others.

Fee and Charge	Increase	Rationale for increase
Council Tax	7.8% (£131.56 per Band D property)	7.8% increase on a Band D property as per budget proposal. Mitigations have been added to some households based on income and composition. These include a modelled 25% discount on the 7.8% increase (single persons discount). Applying the possible eligibility for the Council tax reduction scheme to the lower income households, a 50% or 100% mitigated cost has been applied to some households based on the income levels modelled. This is an example only, the scheme is calculated on individual circumstances and the entitlement varies.
Concessionary home to school transport	£48 per person	Cost has been listed against all households with children
Car parking charges	£0.20 - 2 hour stay	Cost has been modelled for a single 2 hour stay per week per household
Grass Routes bus scheme annual membership	£10 per year	Cost has been applied to the households with older people, with a subscription per older person in the household.
Community meals	£0.90 per meal	Model includes costings for 5 meals per week for 52 weeks. Costs are attributed to households with older people, with the 5 meals per week for every older person in the household.
Non-residential social care fees	£4 per hour	Cost have been modelled for 5 hours of care per week, which is consistent with previous cumulative financial impact modelling. Due to the £100 maximum weekly charge cap, any increase in cost will be mitigated due to the cap being reached - 5 hours at £20 in 2024/25, costs £100 and 5 hours at £24 in 2025/26 would cost £120 which would exceed the cap and therefore the £20 increase would be mitigated.
Residential street parking permit	£8 per year	Cost has been added for a single parking permit per household. Where a household has a grass routes subscription, this charge has not been applied.

¹ <https://www.monmouthshire.gov.uk/home/counciltaxandbenefits/>

² Benefit and pension rates 2025/26 [Benefit and pension rates 2025 to 2026 - GOV.UK](#)

³ Benefit and pension rates 2025/26 [Benefit and pension rates 2025 to 2026 - GOV.UK](#)

⁴ National Minimum Wage Rates [National Minimum Wage and National Living Wage rates - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#).

⁵ Families and the labour market, 2021 [Families and the labour market, UK - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](#).

⁶ Hours worked by part-time workers [Average actual weekly hours of work for part-time workers \(seasonally adjusted\) - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](#).

⁷ Average household income UK [Average household income, UK - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](#).

⁸ Average (median) gross weekly earnings by Welsh local areas and year [Average \(median\) gross weekly earnings by Welsh local areas and year \(£\) \(gov.wales\)](#).

Appendix 3 – Proposed Response to Welsh Government on the Provisional Settlement

Re: Local Government Provisional Settlement 2025/26

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Provisional Settlement announced on 11th December 2024.

On 22nd January 2025, Cabinet published its draft budget proposals for public feedback and review for a four-week period. At the meeting, Cabinet approved this response to the provisional settlement and that reflects the opinions of members.

It is welcomed that the Welsh Government delivered a 4.3% average increase in the local government settlement for 2025/26, significantly better than was anticipated following the previous UK Government budget.

As recognised in your letter of 11th December the Welsh Government's funding was insufficient to meet all of the pressures being faced by local authorities. Difficult local choices still remain in setting the budget for 2025/26, with the Council having to accommodate £23.7m in its draft budget proposals. This represents the third successive year where pressures of over £20m have had to be faced. Nevertheless, our draft budget proposals continue to focus on tackling inequalities and protecting the most vulnerable in our society, seeing increases in funding with Social care & health increasing by 10.6% and for Education by 10.7%.

Monmouthshire received a 2.6% increase in funding, the lowest in Wales which has exacerbated the financial pressures we are facing. We welcome Welsh Government constructive discussions on providing additional support through floor funding or other such mechanisms in its final budget. These being introduced would mitigate any further impact on services as the Council looks to address a remaining budget gap of £2.9m.

The Council is also having to consider raising council tax to avoid more impacts on social care, schools and frontline services.

The Council will now seek to involve stakeholders and the public in various budget consultation events through its website and social media.

In response to the consultation on the provisional settlement we would make the following points:

Core funding considerations

- a) Monmouthshire relies on council tax to fund its services more than any other council in Wales. Council tax will have to go up again in 2025/26 because of the financial challenges facing the council. Striking the right balance between council tax increases and the reduction of services that support the most vulnerable in our community is not easy and involves inherent choice.

The Council therefore welcomes the Welsh Government's continued funding for the Council Tax Reduction scheme that helps low-income and vulnerable households pay their council tax.

- b) The overall Welsh Government Settlement for 2025-26 was more than £1bn higher than it would have been under the previous UK Government. Though we agree that the historic funding constraints on funding cannot be turned around in just one budget and it will take time for the public finances to recover.

We are grateful to Welsh Government in their support to prioritise public services in recent years and for 2025/26. Whilst we carry the same optimism about the future there remains a clear risk about the possibility of further real term reductions in public funding beyond 2024-25 as the concerns around economic growth and stability globally and in the UK continue.

Multi-year settlements for resource and capital being provided at the conclusion of the UK Spending Review later this year are essential to support medium-term financial planning by the Council and public services at large in Wales.

We look forward to Welsh Government in turn being able to provide a multi-year indicative local government settlement budget as part of its next budget.

In the meantime, we urge Welsh Government to make the strongest case possible to UK Government for a fair distribution of funding and further and ongoing support for local authorities and public services in Wales.

- c) As a rural authority Monmouthshire is confronted by particular challenges in offering services like social care, waste collection, transport and highways across a wide area. Indeed, the council looks to recognise these difficulties by sustaining locally accessible services to combat rural isolation.

Monmouthshire calls on the Welsh Government to base funding on a fairer system, acknowledging the particular challenges counties with both significant rural and elderly communities face when providing services across a diverse geography, and where life cycle circumstances lead to disproportionate impacts of demand upon services.

We would also highlight that some councils have very high levels of reserves, while Monmouthshire, in common with others, has very low levels of reserves We suggest that this should also be taken into account in the distribution or allocation of specific grants.

- d) The UK Government budget made changes to the rates and thresholds for employers' National Insurance Contributions ("NICs") from 1 April 2025 in the Autumn Statement. HM Treasury indicates it will provide additional funding to Welsh Government in the first half of 2025-2026 to reflect the impact. Whilst this is encouraging the quantum and further allocation of this funding to local government remains a risk to this budget, both in terms of the direct impact and the indirect impact via commissioned services. We support the Welsh Government in making robust representations to UK Government and to ensure

that full funding is received such as to ensure no further impact and pressure on public sector finances.

Our current modelling assumption as part of our draft budget proposals, as with many other local authorities in Wales, is that the direct impact of the NIC increases upon staff costs and services will be 100% funded. We have also in-built based on initial estimates the impact of NIC increases on commissioned services, most notably in social care.

We appreciate the continued work of officials in working with SWT on the detail and timing of this funding.

Service issues and risks

- e) The Council faces ongoing challenges in meeting the needs of the most vulnerable people within Monmouthshire, as it experiences challenging levels and complexity of demand, coupled with significant workforce pressures. The Council is working closely with the Health Board to respond to the 50-day challenge that supports more people safely returning home from hospital and to ease winter pressures on our health and social care system.

The Council will continue to work with the Health Board to identify and progress system changes that allow for improved pathways of care. Notwithstanding this the level of continued and increasing pressure on social care resulting from the health board being supported to enable safe discharge from hospital should be recognized and the strain that it is putting on social care and the Council's finances more widely.

The Council urges Welsh Government to come up with a fully funded plan for social care in Wales, and to work with UK Government to ensure the necessary funding is provided. The Council also calls for more recognition of the role and importance of social care, and more and ongoing collaboration and prevention work with the NHS.

- f) We appreciated the Minister and Welsh Government listening to the calls for increasing the weekly cap on paying for non-residential care from £100 to £120. We were disappointed that a decision was taken not to affect any change as a result of the consultation undertaken. An increase would have helped offset the increasing cost pressures within adult social care.

We urge Welsh Government to revisit mechanisms that allow the cap to be increased annually in line with inflation and given that there are safety mechanisms in place through financial assessment for those vulnerable adults in receipt of such care.

- g) The Connecting Care Social Care business case was submitted to Welsh Government in November 2024 by the WLGA on behalf of local authorities. The collaboration underpinning this business case reflects an unprecedented level of partnership across local government, ADSS Cymru, Social Care Wales, and the

WLGA. All of this to ensure a system solution is procured and implemented and that delivers the immediate and ongoing strategic needs of social care in Wales. The business case outlines the actions required to ensure the continuity of social care services across Wales and calls for urgent endorsement and significant financial support from the Welsh Government.

The collaborative and cluster procurement approach has been followed with shared support arrangements being put in place. Delivering the programme of implementation, caused by the current Welsh Government funded Care Director system becoming unsupported after January 2026, requires significant investment.

We ask that Welsh Government respond with clarification on the funding and financial contribution to support local authorities with implementation.

- h) We fully support the Eliminate agenda as a policy direction that aims to remove profit from the children in care market and improve their outcomes. We welcome confirmation of specific grant funding being maintained for 2025/26. However, the lack of certainty around future funding creates operational and financial uncertainty for local authorities. The operational pressures and ripple effects of this policy continue well beyond that with local authorities having to compete with other strategic priorities for capital monies from the Gwent Regional Programme Board.

We welcome the ongoing engagement by Welsh Government with local authorities and ask that Welsh Government fully recognizes the ongoing support needed for local authorities to enable the transition required.

- i) ALN remains an area of significant pressure and concern. The Council is, as part of its draft budget, investing £1m over and above all pay and pension increases. Regardless of the investment the Council is making school budgets remain under significant strain with schools still having to find wider efficiency savings to respond to pressures.

School balances have been in significant decline both across Wales and in Monmouthshire. A number of schools in deficit are having to instigate budget recovery plans. These challenges are at a time when schools will face significant challenges in delivering the new Curriculum for Wales and the ALN and Tribunal Act, as well as improving standards and supporting vulnerable learners.

It is important that Welsh Government continues to support schools in meeting these ongoing pressures through future core settlement funding and specific grants.

- j) We welcome the fact that Welsh Government is embedding climate change and the nature emergency into everything it does. Our own commitments and ambitions are fully aligned with this intent. Whilst we see an increase in the low carbon heat grant next year, we continue to seek clarification on the significant level of funding needed to support and stimulate the transition to net zero. We ask that Welsh Government continue to press UK Government for the funding needed

and to allow the public sector to make the necessary and significant transition, as well in supporting and enabling communities and businesses to do the same.

More widely it is welcomed that local government has benefitted from Welsh Government seeing an increase in capital funding for 2025/26, leading to an increase in General Capital Funding and £5m of revenue base funding to support highway maintenance expenditure.

We do however raise ongoing concern about the capital funding constraints on the Council's infrastructure assets and the ability to address significant and increasing unfunded capital pressures and to allow us to invest in priority areas. We, along with other councils are continuing to have to react to the potential failure of key highways structures and networks, rather than proactively investing to maintain assets to the required standard.

More recently this extends to the impact of recent flood and storm events that have seen separate representations being made and positive engagement with Welsh Government around additional capital funding being provided not only in respect of the response efforts, but the resultant repair and recovery work needed.

Other Notable Matters

- k) Monmouthshire agrees with the Welsh Government's aim to reduce unnecessary bureaucracy and move grants into the de-hypothecated settlement. The continued commitment to reduce the administrative burden on local authorities is welcomed.

We very much welcome the ongoing constructive dialogue taking place with WG officials and supported by Cabinet Secretaries to entertain and offer flexibility in with grant funding terms and eligibility criteria such as to ensure that policy aims and ambitions of both Welsh Government and local authorities are not hindered and where funding criteria are not always meeting with local circumstances and delivery constraints.

Moreover, early notification of grant awards will go a long way to help with budget planning for next year. Of significance: the Sustainable Waste Management Grant is yet to be confirmed (£16.4m in 2024/25) and may be impacted by the recent indicative allocations of funding to councils from the Extended Producer Responsibility system.

- l) Whilst the pay award assumptions factored into the budget are set at a level which is seen as prudent uncertainty remains around the pay awards for local government staff and teaching staff. Actual pay awards will not be confirmed nationally by independent pay bodies until later in 2025 and therefore future consideration might need to be given in-year to adjust pay budgets.

We urge Welsh Government to engage with pay review bodies and to disclose the anticipated pay offers to local authorities well in advance of budget setting. The current situation leaves the Council vulnerable to further potential pay pressures next year.

- m) Businesses are facing ongoing challenges with risk around economic growth and stability, and inflation and rising costs. The continued support for businesses is welcomed. Both in terms of the NDR multiplier being capped and the investment to support retail, leisure and hospitality businesses with their NDR bills.

The ongoing support for businesses that represent the lifeblood of the Welsh economy is essential. Our primary concern is that without this the impacts are likely to have a lasting damage on the businesses, towns and high streets in Wales.

The Council is buoyed by the improved outlook for public services and brought about by the change in UK Government. Notwithstanding the renewed optimism concerns remain the growing demands and expectations on local council services in Wales will continue to be met. Monmouthshire and all of local government in Wales wants to continue working closely with the Minister to ensure local government finances are put on a sustainable footing and to deliver the services that our communities need.

We share common goals of reducing inequality and poverty, and addressing the climate and nature emergency. There is clear and collective acknowledgement of the challenges faced by residents, businesses and public services and we look forward to working with Welsh Government through the social partnership that binds us together as public services.

Yours sincerely,

Councillor Ben Callard – Cabinet Member for Resources

Appendix 4 - Draft Capital budget 2025/26 and indicative budget 2026/27 to 2028/29

Scheme	Current Year Budget 2024/25	Draft Budget 2025/26	Indicative Budget 2026/27	Indicative Budget 2027/28	Indicative Budget 2028/29
Expenditure		£	£	£	£
Property Maintenance	1,653,357	1,872,357	1,653,357	1,653,357	1,653,357
Property Maintenance Fees	236,194	236,194	236,194	236,194	236,194
County Farms Maintenance	250,773	300,773	300,773	300,773	300,773
Upgrade School Kitchens	39,725	39,725	39,725	39,725	39,725
Decarbonisation surveys	100,000	0	0	0	0
Depot H&S improvements	350,000	0	0	0	0
Asset Management Schemes	2,630,049	2,449,049	2,230,049	2,230,049	2,230,049
Abergavenny 3-19 school	19,456,606	12,232,076	0	0	0
School Development Schemes	19,456,606	12,232,076	0	0	0
Carriageway major works	1,448,540	1,136,540	1,136,540	1,136,540	1,136,540
Carriageways & Structures - additional improvements	2,312,000	2,743,000	1,312,000	1,312,000	1,312,000
Safety fence upgrades	76,181	76,181	76,181	76,181	76,181
Footway Reconstruction	338,453	197,453	197,453	197,453	197,453
Reconstruction of bridges & retaining walls	590,041	449,041	449,041	449,041	449,041
Road safety & trafficman programme	161,508	161,508	129,508	129,508	129,508
Signing upgrades & disabled facilities	38,091	38,091	38,091	38,091	38,091
Street Lighting Defect Column Programme	171,408	171,408	171,408	171,408	171,408
Flood Alleviation Schemes	30,427	30,427	11,427	11,427	11,427
Drainage & Gully works	375,000	375,000	375,000	375,000	375,000
Structural Repairs - Public rights of way	118,091	437,091	118,091	118,091	118,091
Survey's and Closures - Public rights of way	90,000	90,000	90,000	90,000	90,000
Ash Dieback/Dangerous Trees works	200,000	170,000	100,000	100,000	100,000
Grounds and Cleansing PSPO implementation	45,000	0	0	0	0
Depots – Feasibility works - Transport Depot South of County	150,000	0	0	0	0
Infrastructure & Transport Schemes	6,144,740	6,075,740	4,204,740	4,204,740	4,204,740
Capital Region City Deal	0	730,200	730,200	730,200	730,200
Solar Farm development costs	150,000	0	0	0	0
Regeneration Schemes	150,000	730,200	730,200	730,200	730,200
Disabled Facilities Grant	900,000	900,000	900,000	900,000	900,000
Access for all - Schools	50,000	50,000	50,000	50,000	50,000
Access For All	200,000	250,000	250,000	250,000	250,000
Inclusion Schemes	1,150,000	1,200,000	1,200,000	1,200,000	1,200,000
ICT Hardware replacement	150,000	126,000	260,000	260,000	260,000
Network Estate replacement	50,000	100,000	50,000	50,000	50,000
SRS capital reserve contribution	61,000	61,000	61,000	61,000	61,000
Business world upgrade transition	0	40,000	0	0	0
Asset Management software transition	0	51,000	0	0	0
Ransomware & security	42,000	84,500	42,000	42,000	42,000
ICT Schemes	303,000	462,500	413,000	413,000	413,000
Vehicle Leasing	1,500,000	1,500,000	1,500,000	1,500,000	1,500,000
Vehicles Leasing	1,500,000	1,500,000	1,500,000	1,500,000	1,500,000
Capitalisation Directive	3,357,500	3,707,500	2,357,500	1,357,500	0
Capitalisation Directive	3,357,500	3,707,500	2,357,500	1,357,500	0
Fixed Asset Disposal Costs	50,000	50,000	50,000	50,000	50,000
Match Funding of Grant applications	500,000	500,000	500,000	500,000	500,000
Unallocated funding	0	0	560,000	560,000	560,000
Other Schemes	550,000	550,000	1,110,000	1,110,000	1,110,000
Total Expenditure	35,241,896	28,907,066	13,745,490	12,745,490	11,387,990
Funding	£	£	£	£	£
Supported Borrowing	(2,436,000)	(2,432,000)	(2,432,000)	(2,432,000)	(2,432,000)
Unsupported Borrowing	(10,553,533)	(18,068,566)	(4,256,990)	(4,256,990)	(4,256,990)
Grants & Contributions	(16,351,863)	(3,046,000)	(3,046,000)	(3,046,000)	(3,046,000)
Reserve Funded	(253,000)	(103,000)	(103,000)	(103,000)	(103,000)
Capital Receipts	(4,147,500)	(3,757,500)	(2,407,500)	(1,407,500)	(50,000)
Vehicle Lease Financing	(1,500,000)	(1,500,000)	(1,500,000)	(1,500,000)	(1,500,000)
Total Funding	(35,241,896)	(28,907,066)	(13,745,490)	(12,745,490)	(11,387,990)
(Surplus) / Deficit	0	0	0	0	0

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SUBJECT: IMPLEMENTING THE RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE MIDDLE TIER REVIEW

MEETING: Cabinet

DATE: January 22 2025

DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED: ALL

1. PURPOSE:

1.1 To present members with options to consider a new school improvement model, in response to the Welsh Government's 'Review of Roles and Responsibilities of Education Partners in Wales and Delivery of School Improvement Arrangements'.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

2.1 It is recommended that Cabinet agree to extending a partnership with three other local authorities in the Gwent area, namely, Newport City Council, Torfaen County Borough Council and Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council. This partnership will be an extension and deepening of the existing relationship through the Southeast Wales Education Achievement Service (EAS).

2.2 It is further recommended that Cabinet notes that there are still ongoing discussions between the four authorities noted in paragraph 2.1 and Caerphilly County Borough Council and that these discussions, could, see Caerphilly remaining involved in the partnership in some manner. This would not materially affect the options or considerations set out in this paper.

3. KEY ISSUES:

3.1 The EAS was established in 2012, in response to the Education Minister Leighton Andrew's twenty-point education reform plan. The expectation was that all local authorities would participate in joint school improvement consortia arrangements. As of November 2024, the EAS continues to provide school improvement functions across Blaenau Gwent, Caerphilly, Monmouthshire, Newport, Torfaen.

3.2 Governance arrangements are secured through a Company Board which consists of membership from local elected members, a nominated lead Chief Executive and other non-Executive directors. The Joint Executive Group (JEG) is responsible for the service direction of the company and is made up of the five cabinet members for education from across the region.

3.3 In July 2023, the Welsh Government initiated a review of roles and responsibilities of education partners in Wales and the delivery of school improvement arrangements¹. This review was called the Middle Tier Review (MTR).

¹ [Written Statement: School improvement: the role and responsibilities of education partners \(12 July 2023\)](https://gov.wales/written-statement/school-improvement-the-role-and-responsibilities-of-education-partners-12-july-2023) | GOV.WALES

3.4 The MTR was led, on behalf of the Welsh Government, by Professor Dylan Jones with support from the ISOS Partnership. The MTR had the following goals:

3.5 To explore the features of the current system, identifying what works well and less well, and how improvements might be made.

3.6 To understand the breadth of views and experiences from across the system.

3.7 To identify how capacity, collaboration and ways of working can be improved for the benefit of learners and all those who support learners across Wales.

3.8 To help share thinking so that there is a clear approach going forward which is future fit.

3.9 At its conclusion, the MTR removed the previous expectation that local authorities work in partnership with Regional School Improvement Consortia. However, it did set an expectation that all local authorities would continue to work in partnership with at least one other LA, with single LA school improvement services being significantly discouraged by Welsh Government.

3.10 The MTR made recommendations for future school improvement models, and included several expectations:

- A change in culture so school leaders and practitioners feel more empowered and have a greater sense of collective responsibility to lead and develop a local school-led system in support of learners.
- Continued focus on sharing professional learning and practice, through collaboration between schools, beyond schools and between LAs so expertise is shared locally and nationally drawing on as wide a range of expertise as possible.
- More expertise and resource for schools to support each other to avoid taking capacity out of the system wherever possible.
- More transparency over funding with clarity about how much is going directly to schools and how much is being retained by local partnerships and/or LAs.
- A stronger focus on the core national priorities in everything that we do with a renewed focus on how any support makes a difference at a classroom level.
- A focus on reducing workload and burdens on schools and school leaders with clarity about expectations over any reporting locally and nationally.
- Proposals for school and local change will be developed through a process of co-design and co-construction between LAs and schools.
- Impactful and responsive professional learning to support practitioners, and clear development for school leaders and partners.

3.11 Furthermore, it provided guidance on what local partnership structures might look like in practice. This included expectations on schools to collaborate with other schools at both a local level horizontally (schools with the same age range) and vertically (schools with different age ranges), with the aim of building strong and supportive collaborative partnerships, and a focus on providing peer support and challenge for self-evaluation.

3.12 The MTR highlighted that a clear majority of Welsh authorities were in favour of exploring a move away from current regional arrangements to partnerships between LAs which would allow for more localised approaches. It was acknowledged in the report that some authorities have already moved away from a regional delivery.

3.13 In response to the review, the Education Directorates in each of the five local authorities have engaged with schools and the relevant stakeholders; leaders, governors and unions to seek their views.

3.14 In Monmouthshire, engagement activities focused on asking headteachers to share their views on the existing EAS model, specifically the school improvement model, support for schools in need of acute support, governor support, and professional learning opportunities. Headteachers were asked if there were elements that they felt could be delivered closer to the 'frontline'. The core of the request focused on three questions:

- How can school-to-school working best be supported at a local level?
- How can school-to-school collaboration and networking continue to be supported across local authorities and nationally?
- How school improvement should best be supported at a national level?

3.15 The Chief Officer, Children and Young People, attended every cluster (Abergavenny, Caldicot, Chepstow and Monmouth) to have face to face discussions about the nature of horizontal and vertical collaboration in each cluster area. The nature of the discussions focused on the ability of the two sectors (primary and secondary) to effectively provide support for school improvement that had sufficient challenge to ensure consistently high school performance. A key part of this was the ability to effectively challenge and hold to account. On balance, the conversations in Monmouthshire saw a clear value in closer cluster working and in developing this relationship to have greater alignment in curriculum planning and the alignment of school development planning. However, amongst primary sector schools there was a recognition that the relationships in cluster are predominately supportive and were likely to lack some of the harder challenge that is likely to be required to secure the improvements in school performance.

3.16 Amongst Monmouthshire's secondary schools there is an apparent appetite to look at more radical models of collaboration in the horizontal groupings. Throughout the past two years the four schools have established a closer working relationship and there appears to be an opportunity to consider what greater integration could look like in the future. Greater alignment of the curriculum offer, support for vulnerable learners, development of shared support structures are all areas that could be considered.

3.17 A majority of headteachers in Monmouthshire were content with the support and challenge they receive from their School Improvement Partners (SIPs) but for the minority there was not sufficient challenge and there had been a lack of consistency in SIPs. Broadly, the model where SIPs are mainly serving headteachers from across the region is a strong one, and, in addition, the model provides Monmouthshire's schools with an important additional funding stream (£49,700 this year).

3.18 Concerns were raised about some of the current quality assurance measures for SIPs and commented that there was too much variability in the support from SIPs, depending on who the school was allocated. There was also a desire from some Headteachers to see a more holistic offer of support from SIPs to include support in areas including Additional Learning Needs (ALN), attendance and management of behaviours that challenge. This greater alignment of school improvement alongside the development of inclusive practices is in full alignment with the ambitions of the Welsh Government.

3.19 However, at the most recent Headteacher's meeting there was a move against this. Heads were now stating that they valued the specific focus on school improvement and teaching and learning that their SIPs brought them. Nearly all headteachers conceptually liked the model of school-to-school support, however many headteachers felt this could be broadened to include more schools that also have good practice to share. The activities set out in the following paragraphs should allow our local schooling system to more effectively identify effective practice that can be shared.

3.20 In order to create an effective *Local Improvement Community* there are some developments that can be made in the new working arrangements to support and promote greater local

resilience and peer led school improvement activities. The first is that we will begin to use more Monmouthshire Headteachers to be school improvement partners in Monmouthshire schools. We have one pilot arrangement where a Headteacher from the south of the county is supporting a Headteacher in the north. The second is that we will seek to develop further peer working within clusters. In the past we have established 'triads' of schools, within clusters, to focus on specific aspects of school improvement and it is our intention to do this again. This will be more formalised and the schools, the authority and the regional service will identify and agree shared priorities for development. The third, and final, area of work is to look at cross-cluster working to focus on areas of mutual interest where schools across the county face challenges.

3.21 These additional developments will allow Monmouthshire to take an increasingly local approach while retaining the significant benefits of external challenge and brokered support.

3.22 The majority of Headteachers felt that the Governors' Support provided a good service. Generally, headteachers felt that the professional learning offer was appropriate and at times strong, however there was consensus that there was simply too much on offer at times and it would benefit from a greater focus on national and Monmouthshire's priorities.

3.23 In addition to engagement activities with headteachers, there have also been several discussions with the directors of the EAS. These discussions have helped Directors across the 5 authorities to shape proposed models for a new school improvement partnership. All Authorities are required to submit an outline of their proposed plans to the Welsh Government National Coherence Group by 31st October 2024.

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

4.1 The impact of this decision has been considered through the authority's Integrated Impact Assessment. This can be found at Appendix 1. The assessment concludes that this direction of travel will ensure that the impact of the service continues to be positive and does not have any unintended consequences on those with protected characteristics, promotes the Welsh Language and supports the objectives and ways of working of the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act.

5. OPTIONS APPRAISAL

5.1 In considering the future three options were considered:

Option 1

5.2 Remain in a static position with EAS continuing to provide a service to Monmouthshire and other authorities across the region. This would include the governance arrangement remaining static.

- Governance Issues remaining static (Company Board)
- Common regional protocols and processes across all local authorities
- SIPs for Monmouthshire Schools from surrounding local authorities or core SIPs
- Principal SIP from central EAS
- Governors Support Service retained
- Regional Professional Learning offer to continue
- Schools to School Support to continue
- Cluster focus to remain in place
- Regional Headteacher Strategy Group to be led by EAS

Strengths:

- The current model provides many features in common with revised national school improvement guidance.
- There has been a strengthening of the position of Monmouthshire's schools. At the end of the last inspection cycle there were no schools in a statutory category
- There are effective relationships with Monmouthshire's dedicated Principal School Improvement Partner and other members of the EAS leadership team.
- The EAS has always ensured that their practice is reflective of national priorities and educational research and has adapted over time in line with regional requests. There is a good track record of positive change.
- This secures ongoing delegation of funding to schools.

Risks:

- Stakeholder feedback shows a strong preference to move away from the Company Board model and move to a partnership model.
- Not all local authorities currently in the model may remain – this may lead to financial efficiencies needing to be made which may weaken the current EAS staffing structure and resources available for other LA partners.
- MTR recommendations link to bespoke systems and processes to support local issues and ongoing dialogue and collaboration with LAs.
- Headteacher feedback shows that they want changes to the current model, including changes to the professional development offer.

Option 2

5.3 Remaining in a school improvement partnership with EAS staffing. Features of this include:

- The Company is disassembled to create an LA Partnership.
- The Partnership continues to employ current EAS staffing (as much as possible and being mindful of the potential impact if one LA does leave.)
- Overtime further changes are made to ensure school improvement services reflect changing times, educational research, national school improvement and local need.
- Schools delegated funding is secured to allow headteachers to continue to act as SIPs and schools to act as leaders for school improvement themes (Partner Schools).
- Cluster working reinforced.
- Quality assurance processes are developed with school leaders (at all levels) to maximise opportunities to become Partner Schools.
- A mixed economy of core / casual SIPS is in place with greater opportunities for local authorities to directly employ school improvement staff when vacancies and funding allows.

Opportunities:

- A local authority approach may reduce some bureaucracy for the EAS and local authorities.
- Local authorities are likely to have more autonomy over joint school improvement services.
- Working to change and improve over time has less risk of destabilising school improvement and will help to retain high quality staff currently working within the system.
- Schools delegated funding can remain secure.
- Monmouthshire can maximise their income generation for Partner School work.
- Secondary schools have a greater opportunity to work collaboratively and reduce duplication and better quality assure provision for subject specific support.
- Working in a local context can be highly beneficial to understanding Monmouthshire communities, learners, and their similarities.
- Developmental opportunities for school and LA staff are maximised and succession planning is strengthened.
- Monmouthshire leaders will feel an improved sense of collaboration and empowerment and ownership around school improvement activities.
- Better alignment between the school improvement service and advisory staff linked to attendance, GEMS, ALN, Inclusion and Early Years, to provide seamless support to school.

Risks:

- The disassembling of the Company Board is uncharted territory which requires its own considerations.
- This may create a time of uncertainty for EAS staff and schools in receipt of support.
- Potential loss of staff expertise, through EAS staff seeking work elsewhere, at a time of uncertainty.
- Changes in partnership over time may result in destabilisation of a partnership staffing structure over time.

Option 3

5.4 Monmouthshire reverts to a local authority led school improvement serviced and offers to collaborate with other local authority partners on a buy back basis. Some services could be purchased from other local authorities e.g. governor support. The features of this include:

- All school improvement is designed by Monmouthshire and is provided by a Monmouthshire core staffing structure. This would need to include:
 - A Principal School Improvement Adviser (supervision of School Improvement Partners / Professional Development Reviews, Quality Assurance).
 - Head of Governor Support (Professional Development Reviews, Quality Assurance, professional learning of clerks and Governing Bodies, legal advice and reports, bespoke coaching of Governing Bodies, expertise in statutory committees) a Senior Officer and /or a Statutory GB Officer and access to administration support.
 - Sufficient number of clerks to governing bodies to cover both ordinary and statutory committees.

- At least 2 core SIPs to ensure coverage of phase, language and specialism, also to ensure the maintenance of the universal, targeted and intensive support needs overtime.
 - Professional Learning Lead 4 x advisory teachers (bilingual and phase specific service) to lead and manage all aspects of curriculum, teaching and leadership requirements to include: Numeracy, Digital, Literacy, Curriculum for Wales, Welsh 1st and 2nd language, pupil deprivation and wellbeing, PL for all practitioners (e.g. TAs, NQTs), SACRE and RVE, Humanities, Science and Technology.
 - 1 Non-Maintained Nursery Setting Lead and Early Years in schools.
 - Sufficient number of Advisory Teachers for Non-Maintained Nursery settings, to ensure coverage of language and the maintenance of the universal, targeted and intensive support needs overtime.
- The costs associated with an in-house structure would be approximately £1.3m. With full retention of current core contribution and all of eligible Local Authority Education Grant (LAEG) Monmouthshire has approximately £1.3m available. However, this would also see a loss of funding of £792,946 to schools.
 - Governance arrangements link to current local authority systems e.g. Cabinet Member, Scrutiny and Cabinet Reporting.
 - A Joint Monmouthshire Headteacher's Group would remain in place.
 - Core staff have multi-dimensional roles to facilitate the LEAG School Improvement Grant T&C's

Opportunities:

- Staff from the EAS may be able to move to Monmouthshire through the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of employment) process (TUPE).
- Improved alignment between the school improvement staff and advisory staff linked to attendance, GEMS, ALN, Inclusion and Early Years, to provide seamless support to school.
- Monmouthshire would have autonomy over school improvement processes and could be more agile and responsive to local demand.

Risks:

- Financial penalties linked to disassembling a regional partnership.
- The cost of model 3 is beyond the current funding available – this would reduce schools delegated funding.
- Council staffing has also reduced over time. Commencing with limited staffing presents a risk for future capacity.
- Staff absence could not be covered which may reduce support for schools at times.
- Other LA's buying in a service can choose to pull out at any time which can destabilise budgets and resources.
- Prior advertising of school improvement staff demonstrates that there is sparsity of professionals. Headteachers are reluctant to leave their posts. Local authority posts have less favourable pay, terms and conditions. Secondment arrangements are unaffordable.
- Buying in one element of a shared service does not maximise opportunities for efficiency

- Providing services for other local authorities can reduce a local authorities ability to focus as report writing and quality assurance for other local authorities is time consuming.
- Providing a service for another local authority can deplete resources quickly for example a LA moving into Special Measures would need a significant amount of resource which maybe too challenging to find.
- Monmouthshire may be responsible for managing and quality assuring HT SIPs outside of the authority.

6. EVALUATION CRITERIA

6.1 The criteria applied to the three options above considered each option's suitability, feasibility and acceptability. On the basis of this evaluative structure, it is recommended that option two, the reform of the existing structure is taken forward.

7. REASONS:

7.1 This option allows the continued benefits of deep and effective collaboration with other local authorities whilst also allowing the aims and ambitions of the middle tier review to be realised. Through more ambitious local collaboration, the creation of a *Local Improvement Community* will be a key focus for the authority's work in the coming period. Furthermore, option two does not present the financial and organisational risks that option three does. There would be a loss of financial income to schools across Monmouthshire and the Authority would need to take on a greater number of staff to fulfil its statutory obligations. These staff would be grant funded and this is an inherent risk in the Learning, Skills and Economy directorate with c. 50% of staff already grant funded.

8. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

8.1 In March 2024 Welsh Government reassigned school improvement grants to Local Authorities. The EAS have shared information with the 5 LAs to support understanding around the alignment between direct grants awarded to schools and the costs of the EAS to provide their statutory functions, on behalf of LAs.

8.2 Welsh Government grants for school improvement totalled £8,402,614 over 4 strands – Standards, Reform, Cymraeg 2050, and Equity. A proportion of these grants are linked to local authority, central education services including Elective Home Education and ALN implementation (£1,141,829) are delegated directly to schools, as per the terms and conditions of the grant, for example, Late Immersion Grants LEAG Equity.

8.3 £16,557,862 is passported directly to schools and non-maintained settings for areas including Pupil Deprivation and Curriculum.

8.4 The remaining £1,053,950 is added to the LAs annual core contribution of £327,090. This provides a total of £1,381,040 for the EAS to facilitate a school improvement function.

8.5 The current EAS model maximises efficiencies, flexibility and economies of scale Monmouthshire could not afford to pay for these services on their own. Entering into a new partnership agreement will enable these efficiencies to continue to be maximised. However, economies of scale will be reduced if one or more LAs decide to not continue to work in partnership. Cabinet Paper Middle Tier Review Page 9 of 10

8.6 Staffing and structure costs associated with Option 3 would result in this option raising a significant cost pressure for the Local Authority, and it is unlikely that this model could be sustained over a period of time.

8.7 There may be financial penalties linked to disassembling a regional partnership.

9. **CONSULTEES:**

Monmouthshire Headteachers

Learning, Skills and Economy Directorate Management Team

Senior Leadership Team

Cabinet Member

10. **BACKGROUND PAPERS:**

1. The July 2023 Written Statement announcing the review is accessible via the following link:
2. [Written Statement: School improvement: the role and responsibilities of education partners \(12 July 2023\) | GOV.WALES](#)
3. The Original terms of reference for the review stage can be accessed via the following link:
4. [Review of roles and responsibilities of education partners in Wales and delivery of school improvement arrangements: terms of reference | GOV.WALES](#)
5. In December 2023 the review team updated the then Minister for Education on their progress and the key emerging themes and findings. The letter to the then Minister is attached below
6. [*Review of roles and responsibilities of education partners in Wales and delivery of school improvement arrangements: letter to the minister | GOV.WALES](#)
7. Following this, the then Minister agreed that the next stage of the review's work would focus on the detailed design and co-construction of revised school improvement arrangements. This was announced in a Written Statement, accompanied by publishing advice from the review team, on 31 January 2024.
8. [Written Statement: The next stage in the review of school improvement - the roles and responsibilities of education partners in Wales \(31 January 2024\) | GOV.WALES.](#)
9. On 17 October 2024, a Written Statement from the Cabinet Secretary provided an update national arrangements to support school improvement following the [review](#).
10. [Written Statement: School improvement \(17 October 2024\) | GOV.WALES](#)

11. **AUTHOR:**

Will McLean,
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SUBJECT: Development of a Supported Accommodation Provision

MEETING: Cabinet

DATE: 22nd January 2025

DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED: Abergavenny

1. PURPOSE:

To provide details and seek approval for the acquisition and refurbishment of a property in Abergavenny for the purpose of developing a supported accommodation provision for care experienced young people (aged 16 plus), using existing borrowing headroom.

Approval is sought based on a Business Case that is attached as Appendix 1.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- To acquire and refurbish a property in Abergavenny for the purposes of developing a supported accommodation provision for care experienced young people.
- To acquire and refurbish the property through drawing down up to £1.35m from the £3m borrowing headroom agreed at Full Council meeting 18th April 2024 under a 10-year term, subject to an anticipated successful capital grant application.
- To submit an Integration and Rebalancing Capital Fund (IRCF) / Housing with Care Fund (HCF) application to the Regional Partnership Board for the entirety of the capital expenditure associated with the acquisition and subsequent redevelopment of the property.
- To enter into a contract with a suitable external provider to provide the housing-based support for young people residing at the property.

3. KEY ISSUES:

3.1 Children's Services has identified a property in Abergavenny which is suitable to be developed into a supported accommodation provision for up to 5 care experienced young people aged between 16 – 21 years of age.

3.2 In order to meet the needs of the young people and the identified objectives of the service the property will require repurposing.

3.3 The provision will provide a homely setting for 5 care experienced young people, where 24-hour support will be available to assist the young people to develop their independent living skills. During their stay in the provision the goal is to equip the young people to progress onwards to accommodation with a lower intensity of support or into independent accommodation. In this sense the provision will form the first step in a young person's pathway to independence.

3.4 Alongside of repurposing the property the intention is to seek to commission and enter into a contract with a suitable external provider that has experience of providing accommodation based support to young people. A robust evaluation process and on-going contract monitoring will be put in place to ensure that quality standards are maintained and that young people are provided with the individualised support they require.

3.5 The business case is set out in the context of the decisions made at full Council on 18th April 2024 which set out proposals for the overall development of children's residential and 16 plus supported accommodation placements and increased the available borrowing headroom to £3M for that purpose.

3.6 The Local Authority has a legal duty to provide sufficient and appropriate placements for children who are looked after which includes a range of supported accommodation options for young people who have left, or who are preparing to leave care. At present, the Local Authority has insufficient suitable supported accommodation placements and limited options for young people who have medium to high support needs.

3.7 Insufficiency of placements creates a number of pressures and issues for the service including:

- Financial pressure because of the cost of spot-purchased placements.
- Young people being placed away from their communities and support networks, creating barriers to independence and unnecessary change for young people.
- Variable quality in terms of achieving good outcomes for young people in respect of ensuring that they have been afforded opportunities for skill development.
- Risks of not being able to find a placement for a child / young person resulting in the need to enter into placement arrangements that are outside Welsh Regulations (OWRs).
- Risk of a young person being placed somewhere that is beyond their capabilities.
- Workforce pressure because of children / young people being placed in numerous different locations; the time it takes to source external placements; and the psychological impact of working in a context where placement insufficiency is a day-to-day risk factor.

3.8 The current ambition, as set out in the report presented to Council on 18th April 2024, is to significantly increase the number of all in-house placement types including fostering, residential and supported accommodation placements over the next 1 – 3 years. This will ensure that the needs of Monmouthshire's Looked After Children and those young people who are leaving care are consistently met with increased opportunity to be placed closer to their homes and communities. Increasing the number of placements that are within the control of the Local Authority will also enable increased stability and certainty in our wider care planning for children and young people.

3.9 Our commissioning data and analysis confirms that to ensure sufficiency of appropriate placements for children and young people we must significantly increase the number of all placement types. Specifically, the service has identified that at least 17 further placements that are suitable for young people aged 16 plus are needed, 5 of which would be achieved through the repurposing of the property. This would build on the successful delivery of a similar provision in Caldicot which opened in November 2024.

3.10 In summary, the primary objective of the Business Case is for up to 5 young people to be suitably matched and to be enabled to live comfortably and well in the property for as long as it meets their individual pathway planning needs.

3.11 The business case aims to achieve the following service improvements:

- To increase the number of young people who are placed closer to their homes and communities and in a way that meets their personal outcomes and care planning needs.
- To improve services for care experienced young people through ensuring that there are appropriate placements available to them which enable them to develop their independent living skills in a safe and supportive environment.
- To allow the Council increased autonomy in care planning and matching decisions for all children who are looked after.
- To secure better value for money and the potential to reduce revenue costs associated with the current arrangements.
- To improve welfare considerations and efficiencies for the children’s services workforce due to reduced travel time.
- To support the Council to meet legal and regulatory requirements under SSWBA regulations.

3.12 Acquisition of the property is through the open market from a private buyer. There are some property related risks identified within the business case, resulting in a number of necessary conditions being attached to the offer including full legal due diligence (satisfactory searches etc). Welsh Government have recently refined their requirements in relation to children’s care homes. The proposals for this property will now be classed as changing from a ‘dwelling’ to an ‘institution’, therefore subject to change of use applicable under paragraph 6 of the Statutory Instruments i.e. enhanced safety measures. These requirements are factored into the delivery timeline.

3.13 Implementation risks and wider risks to the Local Authority in running a residential children’s home are set out in the tables below.

Implementation Risks

Risk	Mitigation
Unable to secure a service provider	<p>The Council will be using an Open Procurement Route via Sell2Wales.</p> <p>A previous similar procurement process was successful.</p>
Delays / inability to identify and match suitable young people who need the supported accommodation provision	<p>The service has an in-depth knowledge of individual young people and how they might match.</p> <p>Work is currently taking place to consider the whole cohort of children / young people who are looked after to consider potential candidates for the home.</p>

	MCC will work with the region to offer up potential placements to achieve a good match / avoid voids (should the need arise)
Repurposing costs exceed what is currently provided for.	There is a contingency for unexpected works in the costs and a process for additional grant funding application via the Notification of Event (NoE) process.
Unsuccessful grant application leading to MCC meeting cost of refurbishment.	There has been regular contact with the grant funding team and indications are that the application will be viewed favourably. The return on investment this project represents is positive. Regular and detailed contact with grant funding team will be maintained to ensure compliance with application process. The costs of drawing down on borrowing have been factored into the business case.
Delays in approving the property acquisition will result in identified property being acquired by other buyers.	Maintain strong communication with agents and vendors.

Wider Service Risks

Risk	Mitigation
Commissioned service provider provides poor quality service	Quality of service is heavily weighted within the service specification and evaluation process. There will be ongoing contract monitoring.
There is a 10-year purpose period as a condition of grant award with claw back if it is not used for its intended purpose	Commissioning data and projections of children who need looked after or care leaving services are not expected to fall to the extent that this provision would not be required within a 10 year period.
The property is not required to provide placements for children in the future.	The property could be re-purposed for several different uses. Considered low risk.
Risk of voids	If voids arise, and there are no children identified within Monmouthshire who will need the placement in the short-term, there is potential to 'sell' the placement to another Local Authority.

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

4.1 The business case seeks to increase the sufficiency of appropriate placements closer to home for care experienced children and supports the repatriation of Monmouthshire children back into the county. The provision will enable care experienced young people to develop their life skills and support their pathway to independence so that their future life chances and economic mobility are improved. The provision is designed for care experienced young people who have medium to high support needs, which is currently a gap in provision. This additional stepping stone approach will help vulnerable young people sustain future stable accommodation and tenancies.

4.2 The money currently being spent on this cohort of children includes residential and independent foster care placements, some of which are located out of county. The project will allow the development of provision in county. This will support young people's sense of identity, belonging and connectivity with support networks, as well as providing the opportunity for new jobs and training / career opportunities for the wider social care workforce.

4.3 Planning is required in order to ensure the Welsh language is encouraged within the scheme and community engagement will need to be at the forefront of the development moving forward.

5. OPTIONS APPRAISAL

5.1 An options appraisal is set out in the business case. In summary the council could chose to do nothing and refrain from moving ahead with the scheme. This would avoid any of the implementation or wider risks identified at 3.13. This option is not recommended in that i) it would not fill the gap in existing provision and continue to mean that children preparing to leave care are not provided with the right level of support in keeping with their needs and ii) that the council would lose the potential to generate any savings against the current approximate annual spend of £798,675.80.

5.2 Two minimal options are identified the first being to withdraw from the current property and wait for an alternative property to become available that costs less or requires less refurbishment. This would avoid any property risks specific to this purchase but is discounted on the basis that i) further delay would compromise the Council's ability to secure a capital grant for the acquisition and refurbishment and because ii) suitable properties for development do not come onto the market frequently.

5.3 The second minimal option is to proceed with the repurposing of the property and seek to develop the support element in-house. This option is discounted because i) it is felt that there is strong experience and expertise within the sector providing accommodation-based support and ii) that children's services does not currently have the resources or capacity to undertake the support element and iii) it is likely that a procurement route will be quicker.

5.4 The option as set out within the business case, for the Council to acquire and refurbish the property and seek to enter into a contract with a suitable organisation to provide the support, is the preferred option.

6. EVALUATION CRITERIA

Success criteria for the business case have been identified as follows:

- The property is acquired and refurbished to a high standard.
- A capital grant is received to reduce any borrowing strain on the Council.
- A service provider is successfully appointed and a contract and monitoring arrangements are in place.
- The first cohort of children successfully matched and in-situ.
- Young people achieve good outcomes through their placement in the new scheme.
- Young people are supported to move on to living independently.

7. REASONS:

7.1 In summary, the business case represents an important step in the Council's ambition to increase the overall number of in-house placements for children including supported living accommodation. This will increase the service's ability to appropriately plan and control care pathways for children and young people in keeping with their needs and reduce the Council's dependency on an uncertain provider market.

7.2 The proposed development of the property will meet the wellbeing and safeguarding needs of care experienced young people and provide an affordable means by which the Council can provide good quality support. The business case supports the Council to fulfil its statutory duty to provide sufficient and suitable for children who are looked after and is in keeping with national and local policy direction.

7.3 The business case represents a service development opportunity, to improve outcomes for children, generate savings for the council and maximise potential grant funding.

8. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

Capital Costs of Acquisition and Refurbishment

8.1 The Local Authority has applied to Welsh Government for a £1,316,394.25 capital grant to purchase and redevelop the property via the HCF or IRCF 2024/25 OR 2025/26 funding stream. This would provide a 100% grant funded resource for the development of provision. We will continue to monitor the progress of this application as we progress with this project.

8.2 We have mitigated the risk of the grant application not being approved via our robust partnership and consultation with the Capital Projects Team under the Regional Partnership Board. All indications are that we have a very strong case, and that our application will be successful.

8.3 We require access to the capital borrowing headroom pending the HCF/IRCF grant application being submitted and approved; or in the event that it is not approved.

8.4 In light of the above we have modelled both scenarios i) that the capital scheme is fully funded via a grant and ii) that the capital element is met through prudential borrowing.

8.5 The revenue costs of prudential borrowing are already factored into the Council’s medium term treasury budgets and therefore there are no consequential borrowing cost implications on the Children’s services budget. However, for transparency and to aid in a meaningful like-for-like comparison between the existing model of service delivery and this proposal, an indicative annual borrowing cost has been included within the business case calculation.

Annual Revenue Costs

8.6 To develop a prospective business case an initial group of 6 children have been identified who would benefit from a planned move into the property upon it being available for occupation. These children are currently in either fostering or residential placements that are not best suited to their needs and are assessed as requiring medium to high support needs in a step-down placement.

8.7 The average weekly placement cost for these children is currently £3,071.83 (equating to £15,359.15 for 5 placements or £798,675.80 per annum). These costs are currently met through Children’s Services revenue budget.

8.8 We have used a group of 6 children because, given the project development time and as the wider cohort of young people who are looked after changes, it is unfeasible to accurately pin-down the exact 5 young people identified for the placement until more detailed work is undertaken. The group of 6 provides a reasonably accurate illustration of such young people as might benefit from a future placement at the property and their current associated costs.

8.9 The cost of commissioning the support element of the scheme has been calculated based on an equivalent service model in our Caldicot property (i.e. Local Authority owned property with a 3rd party contract to provide the care).

8.10 Taking into account the varying cost impact of the 2 potential borrowing scenarios as above, we have modelled the revenue costs against a 100% occupancy rate and an 80% occupancy rate. These tables are illustrative because the identified savings / or the impact on savings arising from a void cannot be easily identified due to the variability of existing package of care. Equally, there may be situations where placements result in cost avoidance. This potential saving will provide opportunities to contribute to the overall £1.9m Children’s Services practice change mandate for 2025/26. As the project is scheduled to come online until part way through the 2025/26 year, the full annual savings potential will not be realised until 2026/27.

8.11 80% occupancy is a cautious approach which we have adopted given the importance of matching children and allowing appropriate time for transitions particularly during the early period of the provision.

8.12 Based on 100% occupancy

Annual Revenue Costs	Based on successful HCF application	Based on borrowing to complete the development
	£	£
Service Provider Contract	329,160	329,160
General Maintenance	10,000	10,000
Service Manager 0.5FTE	43,584	43,584

Annual repayment costs (over a 10 year period) set at rates on 19/11/2024	0	168,966
TOTAL ANNUAL REVENUE COSTS	382,744	551,710
ANNUAL REVENUE PACKAGES TO FUND COSTS	798,676	798,676
Based on 100% occupancy POTENTIAL ANNUAL REVENUE SAVINGS	415,932	246,966

8.13 Based on 80% occupancy

Annual Revenue Costs	Based on successful HCF application £	Based on borrowing to complete the development £
Service Provider Contract	329,160	329,160
General Maintenance	10,000	10,000
Service Manager 0.5FTE	43,584	43,584
Annual repayment costs (over a 25 year period) set at rates on 08/05/2024	0	168,966
TOTAL ANNUAL REVENUE COSTS	382,744	551,710
ANNUAL REVENUE PACKAGES TO FUND COSTS	798,676	798,676
Based on 80% occupancy POTENTIAL ANNUAL REVENUE SAVINGS	256,196	87,230

8.14 If voids arise, and there are no young people identified within Monmouthshire who will need the placement in the short-term, there is potential to 'sell' the placement to another Local Authority with a mark up of up to 20% of the weekly cost. A 20% mark-up would equate to £1,767 per bed per week (with HCF contribution) £2,546 per bed per week (without HCF contribution).

9. CONSULTTEES:

- Councillor Ian Chandler, Cabinet Member for Social Care, Safeguarding and Accessible Health Services
- Nicholas Keyes, Estates Development Manger
- Tyrone Stokes, Finance Manager
- Diane Corrister, Head of Children's Services
- Scott Hereford, Residential and Resource Service Manager
- Sam Mills, Regional Project Manager
- Isobel Preece, Project Officer
- Kevin Fortey, Housing with Care Fund Project Manager, Regional Partnership Board

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS:

Council Report 18th April 2024 - Developing children's residential and 16+ supported accommodation placements

11. AUTHOR:

Jane Rodgers, Chief Officer, Social Care, Safeguarding & Health

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ACQUISITION PROPERTY IN ABERGAVENNY TO PROVIDE A REGISTERED SUPPORTED LIVING ACCOMODATION

**SINGLE-STAGE BUSINESS CASE - MEDIUM VALUE AND RISK - (£250K TO £2
MILLION VALUE OF PROCUREMENT)**

Author:

Jane Rodgers

Chief Officer, Social Care and Health



Date (02.01.2025)

Consultees:

- Councillor Ian Chandler, Cabinet Member for Social Care, Safeguarding and Accessible Health Services
- Nicholas Keyes, Estates Development Manger
- Tyrone Stokes, Finance Manager
- Diane Corrister, Head of Children's Services
- Scott Hereford, Residential and Resource Service Manager
- Sam Mills, Regional Project Manager
- Isobel Preece, Project Officer
- Kevin Fortey, Housing with Care Fund Project Manager, Regional Partnership Board

1 INTRODUCTION

Children's Services seek approval to acquire a property in Abergavenny to provide a supported lodgings/accommodation provision for 5 Monmouthshire care experienced young people aged 16-21. This provision would support good outcomes for children looked after and those young people preparing to leave care. Additionally, the resource would support the Council's commitment to work towards the eradication of profit from the care of Children Looked After, in accordance with the Health and Social Care Bill.

Monmouthshire currently has one Local Authority-owned supported accommodation property and requires a further facility to increase the availability of suitable placements for young people in keeping with their individual needs and to reduce our reliance on third party providers.

The property has sufficient space for five bedrooms together with adequate provision for sleeping-in arrangements for support staff. There is sufficient communal space for recreational activity and there is an accessible rear garden that we intend to develop to include outdoor social areas and growing spaces for the young people to use.

The property is located in central Abergavenny, within walking distance of a range of local amenities, employment and training opportunities. Being located within Monmouthshire, the young people living there will be able to have good connections with their families and communities and good access to community-based resources.

The proposed use of the property is to accommodate 5 young people aged between 16-21 for a transitional period to assist in their step-down from more intensive care and support. The provision will provide medium to high level of support in a homely setting, to assist and equip the young people with the skills required to live more independently. The provision will support a young person's pathway to independence.

Alongside of acquiring and repurposing the property, the intention is to seek to commission and enter into a contract with a suitable external provider that has experience of providing accommodation-based support to young people. This will be achieved through an open procurement process and will be evaluated on both quality-of-service provision (65%) and cost (35%). Procuring an experienced post 16 - plus support provider will enable the service to co-develop individualised support plans relevant to the needs of the young people.

Developing a council owned supported accommodation provision managed by a suitable external provider is in keeping with the Welsh Government policy to eliminate profit from children's care and is important next step in the Council's desire to increase overall sufficiency of placements for children.

This business case therefore seeks approval to:

- To acquire and refurbish the property for the purposes of developing a supported accommodation provision for care experienced young people.
- To acquire and refurbish the property through drawing down up to £1.35m from the £3m borrowing headroom agreed at Full Council meeting 18th April 2024 under a 10-year term, subject to an anticipated successful capital grant application.
- To submit an Integration and Rebalancing Capital Fund (IRCF) / HCF application to the Regional Partnership Board for the entirety of the capital expenditure associated with the acquisition and subsequent redevelopment of the property.
- To enter into a contract with a suitable external provider to provide the housing-based support for young people residing at the property.

This business case is set out within the context of the decisions made at full Council 18th April 2024 regarding proposals for the overall development of children's residential and 16+ supported accommodation placements, subject to appropriate business cases and cabinet approval.

It was also agreed that progress against the decisions made by Cabinet will be reported to the Performance and Oversight Scrutiny Committee on a 6-monthly basis. The last update was scrutinised at committee on 8th October 2024.

2 STRATEGIC CASE

2.1.1 Context

Aligned to its Corporate Parenting responsibilities, under Section 75 of the Social Services and Wellbeing Wales Act the Local Authority has a legal duty to ensure that there are sufficient and appropriate placements for children who are Looked After.

There is a national shortage of residential placements for children and young people aged 16 plus. This has been exacerbated by an insufficiency of local authority foster placements, and more recently by the instability of the private provider market following the Welsh Government policy initiative to drive profit out of children's care.

Within Monmouthshire, this lack of available placements applies also to supported accommodation provision which is used to support care experienced young people aged 16 plus who are on their pathway to increased independence.

Such provision that is available, is quickly saturated because of difficulties in securing move-on accommodation given the wider context of housing issues within the county and the shortage of affordable housing. A lack of throughput across the system can mean that young people remain in foster care or residential settings for longer than is in-keeping with their need for increased independence; and simultaneously blocks placements for other children.

The current shortage of and increased competition for available local placements combined with an over reliance on the 3rd sector is creating numerous pressure and risks for the Council including:

- Financial pressure because of the cost of spot-purchased placements.
- Young people being placed away from their communities and support networks, creating barriers to independence and unnecessary change for young people.
- Variable quality in terms of achieving good outcomes for young people in respect of ensuring that they have been afforded opportunities for skill development.
- Risks of not being able to find a placement for a child / young person resulting in the need to enter into placement arrangements that our outside Welsh Regulations (OWRs).
- Risk of a young person being placed somewhere that is beyond their capabilities.
- Workforce pressure because of children / young people being placed in numerous different locations; the time it takes to source external placements; and the psychological impact of working in a context where placement insufficiency is a day-to-day risk factor.

2.1.2 Current Progress

The current ambition, as set out in the report presented to Council on 18th April 2024 is to significantly increase the number of all in-house placement types in various parts of the County over the next 1 – 3 years. This will ensure that the individual needs of children can be appropriately and consistently met with increased opportunity to be placed closer to their homes and communities. Increasing the number of placements that are within the control of the Local Authority will also enable increased stability and certainty in our wider care planning for children and young people and supports enhanced integrated working and quality oversight of the care that is provided.

Over the last year, we have continued to forge excellent relationships with our internal estates team, utilising their skills, knowledge and expertise to ensuring we deliver high quality services. Equally, developing partnerships with 3rd party support provider, particularly for supported accommodation provisions, is supporting the care sector more widely as well as ensuring that the service has sufficient capacity to focus on the development of an in-house residential provision.

Key developments since April 2024

Provision Type	Progress	Cost
Monmouth (4 bed residential children’s home)	Refurbishment works are due to commence early January 2025 will a leading time of 12-	HCF approved grant to cover the acquisition and refurbishment costs

	14 weeks. Recruitment of the workforce has commenced. Anticipated opening is April / May 2025	
Caldicot (4 bed residential children’s home)	Design and technical element currently being finalised. Proposed completion date of late Autumn 25.	The property is owned by Pobl who will apply for an IRCF grant via the regional partnership board to cover the refurbishment costs. The property will be leased to the Council.
Caldicot (5 bed supported accommodation, with a 3 rd sector provider providing the care and support)	Service opened in November 2024.	MCC owned existing asset. Refurbishment works were covered by an approved HCF grant application

Our current commissioning data confirms that to ensure sufficiency of appropriate placements at least 17 further placements that are suitable for young people aged 16+ are needed, 5 of which would be achieved through the acquisition and refurbishment of the property.

Our priorities going forward are to deliver on all of our current projects to ensure that we have a suite of options and services available to meet the needs of our young people as set out within the agreed residential implementation plan.

2.2 Case for Change

2.2.1 Spending and service objectives

The development of the property in Abergavenny as a supported lodgings accommodation is in keeping with the Council’s objective to provide placements closer to home and is aligned to the current Welsh Government commitment to eliminate profit from children’s social care. Equally, the development will promote the service objective to ensure that young people leaving care have the right level of support available to them aligned with their individual needs and care pathways.

The cohort of children transitioning out of care in Monmouthshire have a range of needs that require a variety of accommodation and support options. The care and support plans bespoke to each young person post 16 should balance any safeguarding issues as well as supporting the young person to develop the skills they will need to live successful, happy and safe lives on their own terms as young adults. The type and level of support that each young person requires will be influenced by issues such as what brought them into care; their experiences whilst in care; their exposure to adversity, harm or abuse; their individual learning needs and stage of development; and the opportunities afforded to them to build personal resilience and independence.

For some young people, leaving the relative safety of a child's placement can be a huge step – to help them navigate this change successfully they require the 'stepping stone' of a supported environment. Other young people may well feel they have outgrown a child's placement but not yet have the skills to adapt to living without considerable and specialist support. The additional levels of support that these groups of young people require to achieve independence were not available within the council's existing provision. The new facility in Caldicott now provides an option in the South, however, such a facility is also required in the North.

Therefore, one of the central objectives of the current development is to fill the gap in our existing provision by supporting young people who have medium to high support needs.

Primarily the development will meet the needs of children looked after who are:

- Aged 16+ and transitioning out of residential or foster care and require a stepping-stone to independent living; or
- Aged 16+, and where current models of accommodation / support are deemed unsuitable due to their risk factors or level of support required.

The needs profile of young people will feature multiple needs including but not limited to:

- Trauma / Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)
- Attachment difficulties
- Linguistic barriers
- A limited support network outside of professional support
- Risk taking behaviours
- Vulnerable to exploitation (including risk of domestic abuse, financial, criminal or sexual exploitation)
- Additional complex needs including poor physical or mental health, or substance misuse.

The overall aim of the service is to reduce young people's support needs and prepare them for increased independence. The service will deliver medium to high support to these young people with support workers on site and available twenty-four hours a day. As described, the young people will have a range of support needs, some of which will be complex and require enhanced accommodation-based, transitional support. The support offer will be person centred and outcome focused. The aim will be to develop the young person's capacity to live independently so that they are able to step down to alternative suitable accommodation by the age of 18 when safe and appropriate to do so, and if not at least before their 21st birthday. Supporting skill and knowledge development will include:- developing resilience and problem solving, making informed decisions, practical skills in day to day living and budgeting, pursuing goals in education or employment, managing external interactions and building support networks.

Successful deliver of the project will:

- i) Provide a relatively small-scale provision exclusively for Children Looked After (between 16 – 18 years old) or young people aged between 18 – 21 years old who have previously been looked after. It will provide for a cohort of care experienced children who have medium to high support needs.
- ii) Support a cohort of young people stepping down from residential and /or foster care who may be at risk of eviction and homelessness early into their transition out of care because of not being able to sustain a tenancy, or safeguarding concerns arising due to the support levels not being adequate.
- iii) Allow young people who may not be suitable for the existing provisions to have the opportunity to step down from residential and/or foster care safely as part of their preparation for independence, rather than remain in placements which no longer best meet their needs.
- iv) Allow young people to be given the best opportunity to prepare for independence and increases success of maintaining their tenancy in more independent living arrangements, prior to 18 wherever possible, and if not then at least prior to them turning 21.
- v) Allow a safe movement of children within and through the care system from provisions that are no longer proportionate to their needs, allowing these to be made available for other young people who require this.

Accommodation based support for young people who are aged over 16 does not come under RISCA regulations and therefore there is no requirement for it to be a registered provision. It is proposed that the support element of the service will be provided by via a contract with a 3rd sector provider.

The refurbishment of the property is required in order to provide safe and appropriate accommodation in accordance with statutory frameworks. Each of the 5 young people will have their own bedroom with access to 3 shared bathrooms. The property will have a large kitchen-diner area with a further 2 communal lounges for the young people to utilise. There will be a staff bedroom/office located on the first floor. The intention is to create a homely environment with access to shared facilities and communal spaces for recreational activity and to facilitate positive peer relationships. There is accessible outdoor space with a rear garden that we intend to develop to include outdoor social areas and growing spaces for the young people to use.

The building is situated close to the town centre and within walking distance of a range of local amenities and community-based resources, as well having good public transport links. Being located within Monmouthshire the young people living there will be able to have good connections with their families.

Whilst the aim is to create stability, the nature of the project is that young people will move on at different times and that the make-up of the household will change over time. Each change or move would be planned and matched to ensure that young people would only be placed in the property if it was the right placement both for them and the other young residents already there.

In summary, the primary objective of the Business Case is for up to 5 young people to be suitably matched and to be enabled to live comfortably and well in the property for as long as it meets their individual pathway planning needs.

The business case aims to achieve the following service improvements:

- To increase the number of young people who are placed closer to their homes and communities and in a way that meets their personal outcomes and care planning needs.
- To improve services for care experienced young people through ensuring that there are appropriate placements available to them which enable them to develop their independent living skills in a safe and supportive environment.
- To allow the Council increased autonomy in care planning and matching decisions for all children who are looked after.
- To secure better value for money and the potential to reduce revenue costs associated with the current arrangements.
- To improve welfare considerations and efficiencies for the children's services workforce due to reduced travel time.
- To support the Council to meet legal and regulatory requirements under SSWBA regulations.

2.2.2 Existing Arrangements

All children who are looked after have an allocated social worker and a care plan which sets out their individual outcomes within the context of

- i) why the child needed to come into care;
- ii) the primary purpose and objective for the time that they are in care;
- iii) how their family and community relationships will be maintained and developed;
- iv) their educational arrangements; and
- v) their pathway plan to leave care.

The pathway plan assessment informs the young person's pathway post 16 and sets out what support a young person will receive as part of their pathway to independence. Pathway planning for a child who is in care commences when they are 14 years of age. Pathway planning includes active consideration by the allocated social worker as to what support the child / young person will require to develop age appropriate self-care and independence skills; together with some agreed personal outcomes and wellbeing goals around accommodation options, connection with family and other networks, levels of support, education

/ employment and so forth. From the age of 15½, a child is allocated a Personal Advisor who supports the pathway planning process jointly with the social worker. In some situations, particularly when it is something the young person wishes, pathway planning opens up further consideration as to whether it is safe and possible for the young person to return to live with their families. Where this is not possible there are currently a number of different options available as described below, which vary in terms of the type of accommodation and the level of support provided.

The current accommodation and support models available to care experienced young people (aged 16 – 21 years old) in Monmouthshire are:

- **When I am Ready placements** – this options allows a young person to remain in their previous foster placement. The foster-care receives a payment from the Local Authority and technically becomes the landlord. The model of care can transfer over any time after the young person’s 16th birthday. Given that the young person can remain in the placement post 18, this can provide continuity for the young person. The scheme has not seen a huge take up from foster carers, primarily as it limits their ability to foster.
- **Independent Living** – is when a young person takes on their own tenancy independently, including a local authority or housing association tenancy, private tenancy, accommodation provided by a college or university, and house sharing
- **Low level supported accommodation** - At present the Council has 2 provisions accommodating our Unaccompanied Asylum-seeking Children aged 16 plus. The accommodation and (low level) support element are provided by an external provider and offers floating support Monday to Friday, and access to an off-site house manager outside of this time. There is one 5-bed provision in Newport and one 4-bed provision in Cardiff.
- **Semi-independent / Transitional Accommodation** – this is provided via supported hostels with self-contained accommodation and low to medium support for young people aged 16 – 24 including those with care experience or young people who are homeless. There are three provisions in Monmouthshire that we use for our 16 plus young people.
- **Supported Accommodation** – The Council currently has one facility (situated in Caldicot) which provides a homely setting for 5 young people with 24-hour support that assists the young people to develop their independent living skills. The aim of the provision is to equip the young people to progress onwards to accommodation with a lower intensity of support or into independent accommodation.

As at 12.11.2024 the authority had 66 children/ young people who are currently being accommodated in residential care homes or with foster carers who are 16+ or who will be turning 16 in the next 2 years. Based on an understanding of their current care and support needs, many of these young people will require a step-down provision with medium to high support (such as the current project) to support them with their transition out of a care environment.

This table shows the placement types for the current 14 plus cohort of young people.

Placement Type	Children and Young People Placed in County	Children and Young People Placed Out of County	Total Number of Children and Young People
Monmouthshire Foster Carer	2	6	8
Independent Foster Carer	3	7	10
Monmouthshire Kinship Carer	7 (Includes PWP)	11 (Includes PWP)	18
Residential Care	6	11	17
Semi-independent/Transitional Accommodation	13	0	13
Total	31	35	66

Out of the above numbers 41 young people are already aged 16 or over.

These young people are currently being accommodated in various placements type.

- 13 young people in UASC accommodation provisions
- 2 young people in supported type accommodation provisions
- 9 young people in residential accommodation
- 4 young people accommodated by an IFA.
- 4 young people are with LA foster carers.
- 4 young people are with kinship carers.
- 5 young people are placed with a person with parental responsibility

2.2.3 Business Needs

Where we are now	ESSENTIAL Objectives of Business Case
Monmouthshire does not have sufficient existing local authority owned medium to high supported lodgings placements	To develop a medium to high supported lodgings provision for up to 5 young people
Provider fees for young people in residential or IFA provisions are negotiated on an annual basis	To reduce dependency on external provision and external fee-setting [in the context where a national lack of placement sufficiency is driving costs]
Young people do not always have the opportunity to fully develop independent living skills in an appropriately supportive environment	To offer a stable, consistent environment, so that the young people can be encouraged to build their independent skills

Children are not placed near to their home and communities [being placed away from Monmouthshire leads to disrupted support and family relationships]	To increase opportunities to place children closer to their homes and communities allowing them to develop consistency and stability.
The Council is reliant on external placements to agree matching for children and there is little opportunity for forward care planning across the cohort of children who are looked after	To increase the ability to forward plan and have greater control on matching, placement decisions and oversight on support.
Social care workers are required to travel to different parts of the country to visit individual children	To reduce the amount of travel time for the social care workforce
Children are placed in a range of different organisations which do not support fully integrated working.	To increase opportunities for integrated working to ensure good outcomes for children

2.2.4 Additional Benefits

This business case presents an opportunity for the Council to acquire and redevelop a substantial five-bedroom supported living accommodation utilising full grant funding. This will allow for sustainable improvements to be made to the property and its outside space including energy efficiency. As part of the refurbishment, we will be making every effort to increase the energy efficiency of the property with the aspirational A rating in mind. We plan to install solar panels to the roof and upgrade the current central heating system to air source heat pumps.

The business case is in-keeping with the objectives of the Welsh Government and the Regional Integration Fund Capital programme. This means that there is a high likelihood of the Council being successful in its application for a grant to support the costs. Initial discussions with Regional Integration Fund Capital programme manager regarding the development of the property have been met with positivity, with all indications that the grant application will be successful.

2.2.5 Main Risks

The risks for this proposal fall into two main areas – property related risks and service related risks.

Property Related Risks

Risk	Mitigation
Unknown/excessive project costs.	Engage Property Services to compile detailed schedule of works & property specification and seek competitive quotations.
Availability and capacity of suitable building contractor.	Procure contractor on basis that there is capacity to carry out the works within the required timescale.

<p>Time delays in project completion due to unforeseen circumstances, project scheduling, changes in scope, or external factors beyond the project team’s control.</p>	<p>Complete detailed monitoring of the project through each stage from inception and planning to completion of works.</p>
<p>Property Title is assumed clean, free of any restrictions or encumbrances. Assumed property is registered with H M Land Registry as freehold with title absolute.</p> <p>Condition of Property not fully known.</p> <p>Structural works may be required - Assumed free from defect.</p> <p>Services - Detailed investigations of the property’s services have not been undertaken, however there is no change proposed to the existing. It is assumed that the services and associated controls are in working order and free from defect.</p> <p>Planning – Existing use is C3 dwelling houses. (see below for building regs requirements)</p> <p>Contamination and Hazardous Substances (i.e. Asbestos)</p> <p>Building Control requirements –Welsh Government have now refined their requirements in relation to children’s care</p>	<p>Legal due diligence to be carried out.</p> <p>Property Services have carried out an inspection of the property to assess its general condition and structural integrity. The property requires improvement works as part of the proposed refurbishment but no major concerns have been identified.</p> <p>MCC Building Control to be contacted for comment if proposed structural alterations are required although none are proposed. An initial inspection by a structural engineer has been carried out. Structural calcs to be obtained if required.</p> <p>The property is connected to mains services including electricity, gas, water, and drainage. The need for any survey work to be assessed and carried out accordingly.</p> <p>COU is not required. Certificate of Lawful Use obtained confirming proposed use is permitted development with change to C3(b).</p> <p>A full R&D survey will be carried out prior to works commencing. No high risk asbestos assessed to be present on first inspection.</p> <p>Building Control applications will be submitted. The amended timeline allows for these works.</p>

<p>homes. The proposals for this property will now be classed as changing from a 'dwelling' to an 'institution', therefore subject to change of use applicable under paragraph 6 of the Statutory Instruments i.e. enhanced safety measures (fire suppression, ventilation, acoustics upgrades, etc).</p>	
<p>Off-Market Acquisition – Risk of paying more than market value as asking price not tested on open market.</p>	<p>Condition of grant funding is the approval of valuation by the District Valuer Service to ensure the acquisition price is not inflated.</p> <p>Capital expenditure over the DVS value will be non-compliant and therefore incurred by authority.</p>

Implementation Risks

Risk	Mitigation
<p>Unable to secure a service provider</p>	<p>The Council will be using an Open Procurement Route via Sell2Wales. The previous similar procurement process was successful.</p>
<p>Delays / inability to identify and match suitable young people who need the supported accommodation provision</p>	<p>The service has an in-depth knowledge of individual young people and how they might match.</p> <p>Work is currently taking place to consider the whole cohort of children / young people who are looked after to consider potential candidates for the home.</p> <p>MCC will work with the region to offer up potential placements to achieve a good match / avoid voids (should the need arise)</p>
<p>Repurposing costs exceed what is currently provided for.</p>	<p>There is a contingency for unexpected works in the costs and a process for additional grant funding application via the Notification of Event (NoE) process.</p>
<p>Unsuccessful grant application leading to MCC meeting cost of refurbishment.</p>	<p>There has been regular contact with the grant funding team and indications are that the application will be viewed favourably. The return on investment this project represents is positive. Regular and detailed contact with grant funding team will be maintained to ensure compliance with application process.</p> <p>The costs of drawing down on borrowing have</p>

	been factored into the business case.
Delays in approving the property acquisition will result in identified property being acquired by other buyers.	Maintain strong communication with agents and vendors.

Wider Service Risks

Risk	Mitigation
Commissioned service provider provides poor quality service	Quality of service is heavily weighted within the service specification and evaluation process. There will be ongoing contract monitoring.
There is a 10-year purpose period as a condition of grant award with claw back if it is not used for its intended purpose	Commissioning data and projections of children who need looked after or care leaving services are not expected to fall to the extent that this provision would not be required within a 10 year period.
The property is not required to provide placements for children in the future.	The property could be re-purposed for several different uses. Considered low risk.
Risk of voids	If voids arise, and there are no children identified within Monmouthshire who will need the placement in the short-term, there is potential to 'sell' the placement to another Local Authority.

2.2.6 Constraints

If the development is supported by a grant, there will be a ten year restriction on title in favour of Welsh Government as per the conditions on the grant funding. In addition the property must be utilised for the use stipulated in the application for a period of ten years to avoid claw back. Following this period, the property can be repurposed if required, in line with strategic priorities at that time. Failure to meet grant funding conditions can result in claw back of funds.

2.2.7 Dependencies

Operational delivery is dependent on approval of a suitable provider via the authority's procurement framework.

3. OPTIONS ANALYSIS

3.1 Critical Success Factors

- The property is acquired and refurbished to a high standard.
- A capital grant is received to reduce any borrowing strain on the Council.
- A service provider is successfully appointed and a contract and monitoring arrangements are in place.

- The first cohort of children successfully matched and in-situ.
- Young people achieve good outcomes through their placement in the new scheme.
- Young people are supported to move on to living independently.

3.2 Main Options

Summary of Options Appraisals

OPTION 1	Do Nothing
Description	The Local Authority does not develop any further in-house supported accommodation placements and continues to spot-purchase from the external market
Net Costs	£0 however, the council would lose the potential to generate any savings against a current spend of £798,675.80 per annum based on an illustrative cohort of children currently in spot-purchased provision.
Advantages	The Council will avoid any of the implementation or wider risks identified above.
Disadvantages	Leaves the Council dependent on the external market to provide supported accommodation placements for young people.
Conclusion	Not recommended
OPTION 2	Do Minimal
Description	Do not proceed with the acquisition and refurbishment of this property and seek alternatives.
Net Costs	£0 however, the council would lose the potential to generate any savings against the current spend of £798,675.80 per annum based on illustrative cohort of children currently in spot-purchased provision.
Advantages	The council would not utilise its current borrowing headroom, which would then be retained for an alternative, potentially more suitable / less costly property.
Disadvantages	On-going searches for potentially suitable properties within Monmouthshire have been undertaken and are on-going. Suitable properties for development do not come onto the market frequently. Delay in pursuing a suitable property such as this would delay the opportunity to develop a residential provision by an indefinite, potentially extended, period.
Conclusion	Not recommended
OPTION 3	Purchase and redevelopment of the property with 3rd party service delivery
Description	The Local Authority proceeds with the acquisition and development of the property and seeks to commission a suitable partner to provide the support

Net Costs	Based on similar models, the weekly anticipated cost for an external provider would be £1,266. per week per bed, equating to an annual revenue cost of £329,160. Based on a 100% occupancy for a full year, this represents a potential saving of £415,932 per annum without capital repayments or £246,966 with capital repayments (over 10 years) and taking into account property maintenance costs and direct service manager support costs
Advantages	This option would mean that the delivery and implementation risks are shared with another organisation who are experienced in the delivery of post 16 housing based support and will enable us to appropriately match children based on the level of support required.
Disadvantages	A partnership arrangement would reduce the level of autonomy that the council has in terms of care planning and matching.
Conclusion	Recommended
OPTION 4	Purchase and Re-develop the property and provide the support in-house
Description	Proceed with the acquisition and refurbishment and look to provide the support element in-house
Net Costs	As per Option 3
Advantages	Children’s services would retain full autonomy and decisions about the provision would be made entirely by the service. There would be no requirement to procure a service or for contract monitoring. The service would be required to build an inhouse workforce which could be scaled up if required. This fully supports the wider strategic aims of the council in terms of developing in-house / regional sufficiency.
Disadvantages	This would not support our strategy to maintain a mixed service delivery model in order to build-in resilience and choice. There is strong experience and expertise within the sector providing accommodation-based support. Given this, we have prioritised recruitment for our residential children’s home provision as it is less likely that we could successfully procure a residential workforce via a not-for-profit organisation.
Conclusion	Not recommended

3.3 Recommended option

Option 3 is the recommended option.

4. PROCUREMENT ROUTE

Acquisition of property will be through the open market with a private buyer and subject to planning permission for change of use if required.

Works for the refurbishment will be procured through normal council arrangements utilising framework contractors.

A robust and thorough procurement process will be carried out for the commissioning of the support provider, in partnership with our internal commissioning team.

5. FUNDING AND AFFORDABILITY

Capital Costs of Acquisition and Refurbishment

The Local Authority has applied to Welsh Government for a £1,316,394.25 capital grant to purchase and redevelop the property via the HCF or IRCF 2024/25 OR 2025/26 funding stream. This would provide a 100% grant funded resource for the development of provision. We will continue to monitor the progress of this application as we progress with this project.

We have mitigated the risk of the grant application not being approved via our robust partnership and consultation with the Capital Projects Team under the Regional Partnership Board. All indications are that we have a very strong case, and that our application will be successful.

We require access to the capital borrowing headroom pending the HCF/IRCF grant application being submitted and approved; or in the event that it is not approved.

In light of the above we have modelled both scenarios i) that the capital scheme is fully funded via a grant and ii) that the capital element is met through prudential borrowing.

The revenue costs of prudential borrowing are already factored into the Council's medium term treasury budgets and therefore there are no consequential borrowing cost implications on the Children's services budget. However, for transparency and to aid in a meaningful like-for-like comparison between the existing model of service delivery and this proposal, an indicative annual borrowing cost has been included within the business case calculation.

Annual Revenue Costs

To develop a prospective business case an initial group of 6 children have been identified who would benefit from a planned move into the property upon it being available for occupation. These children are currently in either fostering or residential placements that are not best suited to their needs and are assessed as requiring medium to high support needs in a step-down placement.

The average weekly placement cost for these children is currently £3,071.83 (equating to £15,359.15 for 5 placements or £798,675.80 per annum). These costs are currently met through Children's Services revenue budget.

We have used a group of 6 children because, given the project development time and as the wider cohort of young people who are looked after changes, it is unfeasible to accurately pin-down the exact 5 young people identified for the placement until more detailed work is undertaken. The group of 6 provides a reasonably accurate illustration of such young people as might benefit from a future placement at the property and their current associated costs.

The cost of commissioning the support element of the scheme has been calculated based on an equivalent service model in our Caldicot property (i.e. Local Authority owned property with a 3rd party contract to provide the care).

Taking into account the varying cost impact of the 2 potential borrowing scenarios as above, we have modelled the revenue costs against a 100% occupancy rate and an 80% occupancy rate. These tables are illustrative because the identified savings / or the impact on savings arising from a void cannot be easily identified due to the variability of existing package of care. Equally, there may be situations where placements result in cost avoidance. This potential saving will provide opportunities to contribute to the overall £1.9m Children’s Services practice change mandate for 2025/26. As the project is scheduled to come online until part way through the 2025/26 year, the full annual savings potential will not be realised until 2026/27.

80% occupancy is a cautious approach which we have adopted given the importance of matching children and allowing appropriate time for transitions particularly during the early period of the provision.

Based on 100% occupancy

Annual Revenue Costs	Based on successful HCF application	Based on borrowing to complete the development
	£	£
Service Provider Contract	329,160	329,160
General Maintenance	10,000	10,000
Service Manager 0.5FTE	43,584	43,584
Annual repayment costs (over a 10 year period) set at rates on 19/11/2024	0	168,966
TOTAL ANNUAL REVENUE COSTS	382,744	551,710
ANNUAL REVENUE PACKAGES TO FUND COSTS	798,676	798,676

Based on 100% occupancy POTENTIAL ANNUAL REVENUE SAVINGS	415,932	246,966
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Based on 80% occupancy

Annual Revenue Costs	Based on successful HCF application £	Based on borrowing to complete the development £
Service Provider Contract	329,160	329,160
General Maintenance	10,000	10,000
Service Manager 0.5FTE	43,584	43,584
Annual repayment costs (over a 25 year period) set at rates on 08/05/2024	0	168,966
TOTAL ANNUAL REVENUE COSTS	382,744	551,710
ANNUAL REVENUE PACKAGES TO FUND COSTS	798,676	798,676
Based on 80% occupancy POTENTIAL ANNUAL REVENUE SAVINGS	256,196	87,230

Revenue Generation (if applicable)

If voids arise, and there are no young people identified within Monmouthshire who will need the placement in the short-term, there is potential to ‘sell’ the placement to another Local Authority with a mark up of up to 20% of the weekly cost. A 20% mark-up would equate to £1,767 per bed per week (with HCF contribution) £2,546 per bed per week (without HCF contribution).

6. DELIVERY ARRANGEMENTS

Key milestones and indicative timelines

- Submit HCF application November 2024
- Complete property purchase by March 2025
- Detailed design by July 2025
- Procurement and appointment of contractor by September 2025
- Commencement of Works October 2025

- Completion of Works March 2026
- Provision becomes operational April 2026

Task	Persons Responsible	Time frame	Reports to
Purchase of Abergavenny Property	Nicholas Keyse	31 st March 2025	Peter Davies
Project management for refurbishment and improvement	Property services Nicholas Perry	April 2025 onwards	Nicholas Keyse
Service specification and procurement process with Service Provider	Scott Hereford Craig Williams	April 2025 – Jan 2026	Diane Corrister
Appoint Service provider	Craig Williams	Jan 2026	Jane Rodgers Diane Corrister
Care planning and transition arrangements for young people who are identified as suitable to be placed in the new provision	Lupupa Nshimbi Scott Hereford	Jan 2026 onwards	Diane Corrister
On-going contract monitoring	Craig Williams	Quarterly from April 2026	Jane Rodges Diane Corrister
Oversight of Children placed in Property	Lupupa Nshimbi	April 2026 onwards	Diane Corrister

Contingency Plan

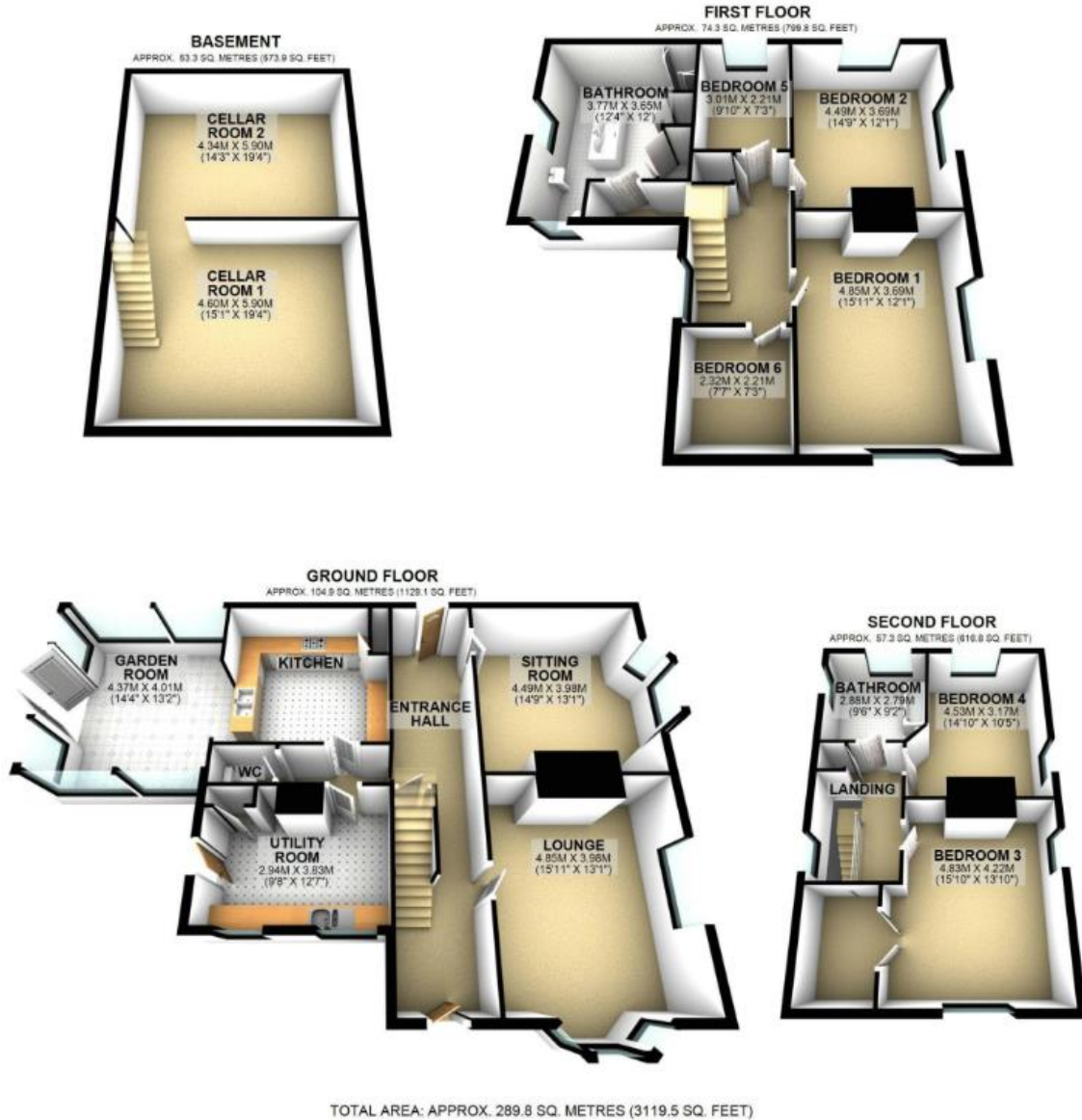
The need for a contingency might arise if it becomes clear that the redevelopment of the property won't be achieved, a suitable provider cannot be commissioned or no suitable young people are identified to move in.

In this case contingency options will be considered follows:

- The council will review the specification and re-tender for either the works or the support element.
- The council will look at the option of developing the support element in-house
- The council will seek to sell individual residential placements to neighbouring Local Authorities.
- The council will liaise with the regional partnership board to seek a change of use for the property in keeping with the objectives of the council and the overall objectives of the capital programme (to avoid claw back).

- The property could be re-purposed for several different uses; a business case and options appraisal would be undertaken.

PROPERTY DETAILS



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Integrated Impact Assessment document

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

<p>Name of the Officer Jane Rodgers Chief Officer, Social Care, Safeguarding & Health</p> <p>Phone no: E-mail: janerodgers@monmouthshire.gov.uk</p>	<p>Please give a brief description of the aims of the proposal</p> <p>This assessment will consider the impact of the redevelopment of a 5-bedroom supported accommodation provision in Abergavenny</p>
<p>Name of Service area</p> <p>Social Care and Health Directorate, Children's Services</p>	<p>Date</p> <p>Jan 2025</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	This development will positively impact our young people, specifically those who are looked after, by ensuring that they have increased opportunities to get the support they need closer to their homes and communities.	None identified at this point	None identified at this point
Disability	There is no evidence to suggest that the proposal will positively or negatively impact on people who share the protected characteristic	There is no evidence to suggest that the proposal will positively or negatively impact on people who share the protected characteristic	There is no evidence to suggest that the proposal will positively or negatively impact on people who share the protected characteristic

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?
Gender reassignment	There is no evidence to suggest that the proposal will positively or negatively impact on people who share the protected characteristic	There is no evidence to suggest that the proposal will positively or negatively impact on people who share the protected characteristic	There is no evidence to suggest that the proposal will positively or negatively impact on people who share the protected characteristic
Marriage or civil partnership	There is no evidence to suggest that the proposal will positively or negatively impact on people who share the protected characteristic	There is no evidence to suggest that the proposal will positively or negatively impact on people who share the protected characteristic	There is no evidence to suggest that the proposal will positively or negatively impact on people who share the protected characteristic
Pregnancy or maternity	There is no evidence to suggest that the proposal will positively or negatively impact on people who share the protected characteristic	There is no evidence to suggest that the proposal will positively or negatively impact on people who share the protected characteristic	There is no evidence to suggest that the proposal will positively or negatively impact on people who share the protected characteristic
Race	.There is no evidence to suggest that the proposal will positively or negatively impact on people who share the protected characteristic	There is no evidence to suggest that the proposal will positively or negatively impact on people who share the protected characteristic	There is no evidence to suggest that the proposal will positively or negatively impact on people who share the protected characteristic
Religion or Belief	.There is no evidence to suggest that the proposal will positively or negatively impact on people who share the protected characteristic	There is no evidence to suggest that the proposal will positively or negatively impact on people who share the protected characteristic	There is no evidence to suggest that the proposal will positively or negatively impact on people who share the protected characteristic
Sex	There is no evidence to suggest that the proposal will positively or negatively impact on people who share the protected characteristic	There is no evidence to suggest that the proposal will positively or negatively impact on people who share the protected characteristic	There is no evidence to suggest that the proposal will positively or negatively impact on people who share the protected characteristic

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?
Sexual Orientation	There is no evidence to suggest that the proposal will positively or negatively impact on people who share the protected characteristic.	There is no evidence to suggest that the proposal will positively or negatively impact on people who share the protected characteristic	There is no evidence to suggest that the proposal will positively or negatively impact on people who share the protected characteristic

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

The business case seeks to increase the sufficiency of appropriate placements closer to home for care experienced children and supports the repatriation of Monmouthshire children back into the county. The provision will enable care experienced young people to develop their life skills and support their pathway to independence so that their future life chances and economic mobility are improved. The provision is designed for care experienced young people who have medium to high support needs, where the council does not currently have sufficient provision. This additional stepping stone approach will help vulnerable young people sustain future stable accommodation and tenancies.

Bringing young people closer to their families and support networks will ensure there are reduced socio-economic barriers for parents and guardians to engage with their children.

The development of accommodation close to community resources will reduce the economic impact on the young people when accessing Education, employment and training, with transport infrastructure becoming more accessible.

There is no evidence to suggest that the proposal will have a negative impact on people who are socio-economically disadvantaged.

Placement of young people closer to home and communities to improve longer term social and economic outcomes for young people. Ensuring the project is close to schools, employment opportunities, youth and health services to enhance the opportunities for supporting our young people to achieve their personal wellbeing outcomes and become more independent.

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
Policy Making Effects on the use of the Welsh language, Promoting Welsh language Treating the Welsh language no less favorably	The proposals will be neutral in relation to opportunities to use the Welsh language and will not treat the Welsh language less favorably than the English language. The proposal will ensure young people remain in Wales and enable them to maintain connections to the Welsh language.	There is no evidence to suggest that the proposal will have a negative impact on the Welsh language.	All supporting documents, information and surveys are available in Welsh upon request
Operational Recruitment & Training of workforce	All adverts and tender specifications will be available in Welsh and will be advertised via the Sell2Wales procurement website. We are not currently implementing an authority led operational delivery team, therefore there will be no formal recruitment linked to this project.	There is no evidence to suggest that the proposal will have a negative impact on the Welsh language.	Any future recruitment will be undertaken through the medium of English and Welsh and all documents displayed bilingually on the council website and social media channels. Applicants will be invited to apply in Welsh if that is their preference.
Service delivery Use of Welsh language in service delivery Promoting use of the language	Welsh language and reference to Welsh culture will be actively encouraged in the home, this will be stipulated with the service provider at award of contract. Non-Welsh speakers will be encouraged to use incidental Welsh in everyday communications.	There is no evidence to suggest that the proposal will have a negative impact on the Welsh language.	Development of bilingual policies and procedures to be available on request.

	All policies and procedures implemented within the home will be available in Welsh on request.		
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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?
A prosperous Wales Efficient use of resources, skilled, educated people, generates wealth, provides jobs	Utilising local property related services and contractors in the refurbishment of the home boosting local economy.	This proposal will also provide new jobs for supported accommodation staff.
A resilient Wales Maintain and enhance biodiversity and land, river and coastal ecosystems that support resilience and can adapt to change (e.g. climate change)	We aim to increase the properties EPC rating to A, reducing carbon emissions and ensuring sustainability is at the heart of the development. Examples include the installation of an air source heat pump and solar panels. We intend to install planting areas in the garden to encourage sustainability and support biodiversity. Young people will be encouraged to develop their environmental awareness.	Close proximity to public transport links will reduce the reliance on private transport, reducing the carbon footprint. Using framework contractors who are compliant with environmental legislation in relation to materials and the disposal of waste
A healthier Wales People's physical and mental wellbeing is maximized, and health impacts are understood	Children and young people will be living in their communities and close to support networks, thus improving their sense of identity and general wellbeing. The support provider will ensure the mental and physical health of the young people is monitored and supported	The proposal will contribute to the improved emotional wellbeing of young people, who have access to local services and maintaining links to their family and community. Bringing our children looked after back to Monmouthshire will mean we can work more closely with our local partner's where good relationships have

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>where necessary, encouraging them to be active and eat well will be at the heart of this.</p> <p>Young people will be supported to engage with activities which increase self-esteem and confidence, leading to better mental health and sense of purpose.</p>	<p>already been built to ensure that the young person has the best access to services and their physical, emotional and mental needs are being met.</p>
<p>A Wales of cohesive communities Communities are attractive, viable, safe and well connected</p>	<p>Our young people will be able to connect with their local community and benefit from the excellent community support on offer. They will be supported to positively engage in their community and contribute where they can, to promote cohesive community links.</p> <p>This can be achieved by engaging with education, employment and training, joining community clubs and groups and taking pride in where they live.</p>	<p>Bringing our young people closer to home to maintain connections with families, communities, and school placements. As they grow and develop into adulthood, there is a greater possibility that they will remain in Monmouthshire as adults.</p> <p>Close collaboration with neighbourhood groups, police and community groups will ensure we maintain cohesive and positive relationships and address any concerns in a proactive and empathetic manner.</p>
<p>A globally responsible Wales Taking account of impact on global well-being when considering local social, economic and environmental wellbeing</p>	<p>Living inside of Monmouthshire and Wales will enable our young people to take ownership for their future and contribute to the development of Wales.</p> <p>By repurposing an existing building we are minimising the requirement for new materials and reducing the carbon footprint associated with their production and transportation. It also helps to prevent urban sprawl, as repurposing existing buildings means we can make better use of the space we already have, rather than building on greenfield sites.</p>	<p>This proposal will keep young people in county and in country. It will promote links to families and communities.</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?
<p>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</p>	<p>Children and young people are enabled to live and grow in communities which represent their own language and culture. Use of the Welsh language and reference to Welsh culture will be encouraged by the service provider.</p>	<p>Welsh language and reference to Welsh culture will be actively encouraged in the home.</p> <p>Non-Welsh speakers will be encouraged to use incidental Welsh in everyday communications.</p>
<p>A more equal Wales People can fulfil their potential no matter what their background or circumstances</p>	<p>The creation of this provision will provide the young people with a supportive environment which will provide the young people the skills that are required to step down into supported accommodation with a lower intensity of support and ultimately into independent accommodation provision. This provision will provide stability and structure for the children and ensure their life experiences do not inhibit their development and progression.</p>	<p>Regular reviewing of progress linked to mutually agreed targets with the young people. These will relate to developing their skills, knowledge and qualities with the intention of becoming self-sufficient and responsible adults.</p>

4. 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>Long Term</p> <p>Balancing short term need with long term and planning for the future</p>	<p>Significant emphasis has and will continue to be placed on the long-term care and pathway planning and reviewing arrangements for these children and young people. Utilising the momentum of the Welsh Government manifesto pledge to ‘eliminate’ profit from children’s social care by April 2027.</p>	<p>None identified</p>
 <p>Collaboration</p> <p>Working together with other partners to deliver objectives</p>	<p>During the redevelopment process we have and will continue to engage with a number of local contractors to deliver the desired objectives.</p> <p>Collaboration with the service provider will be fundamental to the success of the home. This will be an on-going and tightly monitored relationship.</p> <p>In addition, collaboration with the Gwent regional partnership board will be a key collaboration in coordinating the HCF funding application.</p>	<p>None identified</p>
 <p>Involvement</p> <p>Involving those with an interest and seeking their views</p>	<p>The transitional arrangements for these young people will be managed in detail. Key internal stakeholders have been engaged in the design and inception of the provision including property and planning colleagues. All council governance has been adhered to, to ensure all members are briefed on proposals. Specific Ward Members will be consulted further and kept abreast of all developments.</p> <p><i>Who are the stakeholders who will be affected by your proposal? Have they been involved? Do those people reflect the diversity of the area which is served?</i></p>	<p>Continued dialogue with children, home visits, managed transitions into education, training and employment</p> <p>Public engagement events with neighbours and community groups to ensure a harmonious and positive inception to the project and continued local support.</p>

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 data-bbox="152 560 293 587">Prevention</p> <p data-bbox="344 320 506 619">Putting resources into preventing problems occurring or getting worse</p>	<p data-bbox="546 256 1312 496">Children Services works to the earliest possible intervention, preventing problems occurring or getting worse. The introduction of the 'Going home staying home' team in Monmouthshire highlights the focus on this. Where appropriate in-house placement can act as a stepping stone to support a child or young-person to leave care in a planned way.</p> <p data-bbox="546 533 1323 683">A 24 hour support provision will provide the daily support for the young people. Ensuring their needs are met on a proactive basis, identifying any issues as they arise, preventing escalation and incident.</p>	<p data-bbox="1352 256 1688 284">None identified at this point</p>
 <p data-bbox="152 963 293 991">Integration</p> <p data-bbox="344 727 517 986">Considering impact on all wellbeing goals together and on other bodies</p>	<p data-bbox="546 727 1312 967">The proposal allows children and young people to become integrated into the local community, they will be encouraged to engage in community activities such as Mon life and Mon Sport. They will have access to local education, employment and training as well as statutory healthcare facilities. These measure will ensure they are integrated into the community.</p>	<p data-bbox="1352 727 1711 754">None identified at this point</p>

5. Council has agreed the need to consider the impact its decisions have 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	Safeguarding will be at the heart of developing this provision for our young people. The home will be quality assured via the service provider's governance arrangements, will be subject to review and scrutiny from Childrens Services and will have detailed safeguarding arrangements in place.	The proposal will not bring a negative impact to safeguarding.	None identified at this point
Corporate Parenting	By developing this supported accommodation provision we are enhancing the council's corporate parenting role by providing a local authority scheme specifically for our young people. This will enable improved care experiences for young people and will allow good oversight of the individualised support that is provided.	The proposal will not bring a negative impact on corporate parenting.	None identified at this point

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

Commissioning Data

As at 12.11.2024 the authority had 66 children/ young people who are currently being accommodated in residential care homes or with foster carers who are 16+ or who will be turning 16 in the next 2 years. Based on an understanding of their current care and support needs, many of these young people will require a step-down provision with medium to high support (such as the current project) to support them with their transition out of a care environment.

This table shows the placement types for the current 14 plus cohort of young people.

Placement Type	Children and Young People Placed in County	Children and Young People Placed Out of County	Total Number of Children and Young People
Monmouthshire Foster Carer	2	6	8
Independent Foster Carer	3	7	10
Monmouthshire Kinship Carer	7 (Includes PWP)	11 (Includes PWP)	18
Residential Care	6	11	17
Semi-independent/Transitional Accommodation	13	0	13
Total	31	35	66

Out of the above numbers **41** young people are **already aged 16 or over**. These young people are currently being accommodated in various placements type.

- 13 young people in UASC accommodation provisions
- 2 young people in supported type accommodation provisions
- 9 young people in residential accommodation
- 4 young people accommodated by an IFA.
- 4 young people are with LA foster carers.
- 4 young people are with kinship carers.

- 5 young people are placed with a person with parental responsibility

Financial Data - including the costs associated with a representative group of young people; revenue costs of running the scheme and borrowing costs to undertake the proposed renovations to the property. This has allowed us to undertake financial modelling on both 100% and 80% occupancy levels.

7. 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?

.This section should summarise the key issues arising from the evaluation. This summary must be included in the Committee report template

Positives

Our project proposes to repatriate Monmouthshire children. Bringing our children back into our communities where they can access local education, employment opportunities and youth services that will support their social development and increase their social and economic mobility.

The ability to create a bespoke provision that meets the needs of the young people, moving them forward in their development in a supportive environment, until they are ready to transition into more independent accommodation.

Safeguarding for our young people will be improved with increased oversight of the support being delivered. MCC will have the opportunity to have full design of the support delivery specification.

Bringing young people closer to their families and support networks will see reduced socio-economic barriers.

This proposal will represent a financial saving, with the redistribution of revenue currently being spent in the private sector and out of county being redirected to our service. This proposal will also provide new jobs in the community with the procurement of a service provider to manage the home.

The proposal will contribute to the improved emotional wellbeing of young people, having greater access to local services and maintaining links to their family and community.

Negatives

Preparation is required in order to ensure the Welsh language is present and encouraged within the home. Welsh language and culture development may be needed for both young people and staff.

Community engagement will need to be at the forefront of the development moving forward as this may represent a barrier if not managed correctly and communities are not well informed.

8. 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
Engagement with local community	May / June 2025 (tbc)	Jane Rodgers

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.

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Version No.	Decision making stage	Date considered	Brief description of any amendments made following consideration
1	Cabinet	22nd Jan 2025	