

SUBJECT:	DRAFT REVENUE BUDGET PROPOSALS 2020/21
MEETING:	STRONG COMMUNITIES SELECT COMMITTEE
DATE:	21ST January 2020
DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED:	All

1. PURPOSE:

- 1.1 To present the draft revenue budget proposals for financial year 2020/21 for scrutiny and for the Select Committees to offer their views on the proposals during the consultation period which extends to 31st January 2020.

2. RECOMMENDATION FOR SELECT COMMITTEES:

- 2.1 To request the select committees scrutinise the 2020/21 draft budget proposals within the context of the 4 year Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) and the Corporate Plan and offer their recommendations on the proposals to Cabinet for their consideration.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CABINET:

- 3.1 That Cabinet approves the release of its draft budget proposals for 2020/21 for consultation purposes.
- 3.2 That Cabinet approves that the consultation period, including the opportunity to present alternative proposals that have been assessed for Future Generations and equality implications, ends on 31st January 2020.
- 3.3 That Cabinet receives a verbal update at the meeting on the provisional settlement from Welsh Government, noting that the draft budget proposals are predicated on a 1% increase in Aggregate External Financing (AEF) together with teachers pay and pension increases fully funded by Welsh Government.
- 3.4 That Cabinet recognises unavoidable pressures of some £9.742 million that need to be provided for within the 2020/21 budget.
- 3.5 That Cabinet confirms its intention to fully fund all pay related pressures insofar as they impact schools and to accommodate significant demand pressures caused in particular by increasing numbers of looked after children and pupils with additional learning needs.
- 3.6 That Cabinet proposes a Council Tax rise of 4.95% for financial year 2020/21.
- 3.7 That Cabinet recognises that the budget proposal remains un-balanced at this stage. There is a remaining savings gap of £1.178m to address.

4. KEY ISSUES:

Overview

4.1 It is well trailed nationally that local government funding has been challenged for a number of years. Monmouthshire, in keeping with all other Councils in Wales has had to make significant adjustments year on year to its cost base to ensure that the service offer has remained relevant and appropriate for the citizens of the county. Members of all parties are nonetheless familiar with having to take decisions that they would prefer not to but with this as a context a reasonable and pragmatic approach has been taken. Financial year 2020/21 will continue this approach.

4.2 For some years now the Council has successfully accomodated the ongoing and significant financial, demographic and demand-led pressures. This alongside its commitments to deliver the goals and objectives set out in its Corporate Plan. The Corporate Plan outlines the priorities of the Administration and these, in summary, are illustrated later in the report.

4.3 This budget proposals continue to support the priorities of the Administration. Specifically it seeks to recognise:

- a) All pay and pension related spending pressures in our schooling system
- b) The increasing demand on schools and the Local Education Authority of pupils with additional learning needs
- c) The increasing demand being placed on our children's social services in respect of looked after children and for whom the Council acts as corporate parent
- d) The growing impact of an ageing population and adults with disabilities on our adult social services

The budget proposals see a continuation of our preparedness to challenge all services to sustain themselves rather than to see the closure of services that matter to citizens. There is an acknowledgement that when things close they never return and it is better to scale back rather than absolutely withdraw. This is a feature of a number of proposals for change that make up these proposals.

4.4 The challenges facing the authority now and into the future should not be under estimated. The 2019/20 in-year forecast exhibits significant pressures within and across services. A recovery plan is in place and that will look to arrest the current over spend on services through significant one-off recovery of VAT, additional in-year grant and funding received and flexible use of capital receipts to fund revenue costs associated with service reform.

4.5 For 2020/21 and in overall terms there are some £9.742 million of new unavoidable pressures that need to be accommodated as part of the 2020/21 budget and these are detailed in appendices 1 and 2. The pressures significantly present themselves in:

- a) Adult and children's social care (£5.5m)
- b) Children with additional learning needs (£1.5m)
- c) Teachers pay and pension increases - £1.2m over and above the 1% pay award assumption modelled

4.6 It is never popular to charge for services but the reality is that we need to do so. We are proposing increases in a number of areas. Likewise increasing Council Tax is never popular but with national funding not keeping pace with demands on local authorities, local taxation is by default having to shoulder a greater proportion of our overall funding.

4.7 This budget proposal assumes a council tax rise of 4.95% for 2020/21 (1% higher than the original modelling assumption signalled in our report of 18th September 2019), and a Council Tax rise of 3.95% for the remaining years of this Council. For a current Band D property of £1,316 (Council only element excluding community council or Police levy), this would illustratively be an additional £65.12 a year or £1.25 a week for 2020/21.

Purpose and Priorities

4.8 Monmouthshire County Council's Corporate Plan sets out the things we will be working on in the medium term. The plan sets out our five Organisational Goals (also our well-being objectives) supported by the 22 commitments to action we will make and the ways in which they will be measured in the run-up to 2022. This plan has been developed and aligned to the direction set in the Public Service Board objectives. The Plan is underpinned by a clear policy framework that sets out in more detail our work to enable the delivery of the plan. The aspiration and objectives set for Monmouthshire by the PSB and Council are:

Purpose: Building Sustainable and Resilient Communities	
<i>Public Service Board Well-being Objectives</i>	<i>Monmouthshire County Council Goals & Well-being Objectives</i>
Provide children and young people with the best possible start in life	The best possible start in life
Respond to the challenges associated with demographic change	Lifelong well-being
Protect and enhance the resilience of our natural environment whilst mitigating and adapting to the impact of climate change	Maximise the potential of the natural and built environment
Develop opportunities for communities and businesses to be part of an economically thriving and well-connected county.	Thriving and well-connected county
	Future - focussed Council

4.9 The budget proposals contained within this report have sought to ensure these key outcomes and priorities can continue to be pursued as far as possible within a restricting resource base. This does not, however, mean that these areas will not contribute to meeting the financial challenges. The aim is to make sure everything is efficient so that as broad a range of service offer, in line with those functions that matter most to our communities, can be maintained. Chief Officers in considering the proposals and strategy above have also been mindful of the whole authority risk assessment.

4.10 In assessing the affordability considerations of the corporate plan, an exercise which is iterative and ongoing, confirmation has been received at this stage that commitments to delivering the Corporate Plan for 2020-21 will either be met from existing budgets or are contained within the draft budget proposals. This work will continue as programmes of work develop and affordability considerations are more clearly understood and considered.

4.11 The following table demonstrates the links at a summary level that have been made with the 5 priorities, Corporate Plan and the strategic risks:

Proposal	Link to Goals and Well Being Objectives in the Corporate Plan	Link to Whole Authority Risk assessment
<p>Schools budgets will see a cash increase and with all pay and pension increases being fully funded.</p> <p>Education and school budgets will see additional resources going into the budget for children with additional learning needs.</p>	<p>Best possible start in life Thriving and well connected County</p>	<p>Budget proposals are mindful of the risk in the register around children not achieving their full potential</p>
<p>Social care budgets will see additional resources going into the budget for Children's and adults social services to meet the pressures in these areas.</p>	<p>Lifelong well being</p>	<p>These proposals seeks to address the risks around more people becoming vulnerable and in need and the needs of children with additional learning needs not being met</p>
<p>The drive for service efficiencies savings has continued and a few focused service reviews have enabled saving to be identified e.g. Household recycling and waste collection review, Myst project and practice change in social care.</p>	<p>Further reviews have enabled frontline services to transform the way they do things whilst still delivering the goals of the Corporate plan and therefore contributing to the creation of sustainable and resilient communities.</p>	<p>Addresses risks around the ability to sustain our priorities within the current financial climate</p>
<p>The need to think differently about what income can be generated has been a clear imperative in working up the proposals. Clear examples are the income opportunities from implementing the Commercial Strategy and the business plans within Tourism, Leisure and Culture.</p>	<p>Being able to generate further income streams responds to the consultation responses in previous years regarding a preference for this compared to services cuts and contributes to the aims of creating a sustainable and resilient communities.</p>	

4.12 A mid-term review of the commitments in the Corporate Plan is being undertaken to ensure that the aspirations and activity set remain relevant, that they are deliverable with the resources we have available and ensure they reflect the latest thinking on issues of importance to our communities. The mid-term review of the Corporate Plan will be presented to Council in the New Year and ahead of the final budget proposals and the council tax resolution being approved in March. With the need for budget to be policy led, this will afford a further opportunity to assess the affordability considerations of the Corporate Plan for the remaining two years of the administration.

Budget Process so far

4.13 Cabinet received a report on the MTFP and budget process at their meeting of 18th September 2019. The report outlined the assumptions that were being used in the construction of the budget for 2020/21 and the MTFP.

4.14 As a reminder the following assumptions had been used initially for the 2020/21 budget:

- Council Tax – 3.95% for 2020/21, 3.95% for rest of MTFP
- Other external income – 0%, individual services to determine price increases
- Pay inflation – 1% for 2020/21 and the rest of MTFP
- Non pay inflation – 0%
- Vacancy factor – 2% (except schools)
- Superannuation – 24.1% rising 1% for each year of the MTFP
- Teachers superannuation – 23.6%
- Aggregate External Finance – 1% reduction and full funding of teachers pay and pension increases

4.15 The above assumptions and modelling at that time led to a gap of £5.39 million in 2020/21 rising to a gap of £21.07 million over the medium term. Further work was then being undertaken to assess service based pressures both in the current year budget and any new pressures arising. Savings and income generation proposals were also being worked up and reviewed in order to close the gap between available resources and demand for resources.

4.16 It should be acknowledged this year that receipt of the provisional settlement announcement from Welsh Government is delayed until 16th December 2019 with the final settlement now due in early March 2020. This has adversely impacted on financial planning arrangements and where levels of comfort or certainty are needed around core funding from Welsh Government. However, following advice and analysis provided by WLGA subsequent to UK Government's one year spending review announcement, and discussions with other local authorities in Wales, the AEF assumption has been improved from a -1% to +1% which it is felt is prudent based on information received. A verbal update will be provided to Cabinet on the outcome of the provisional settlement when this paper is considered.

4.17 A high level summary of the draft proposals and the resultant budget shortfall of £1.178m still to be addressed is shown below. Pressures of £9.742m and savings of £7.981m are summarised in appendix 1 and each is supported by a detailed mandate in appendix 2.

BUDGET PROGRESS TO DATE	£'000	£'000
Gross Expenditure		231,533
Inflationary Pressures	1,554	

Specific Pressures	9,742	
	11,296	11,296
Sub Total Expenditure		242,829
Gross Income		(231,533)
<u>Inflationary Savings</u>		
Council tax additionality (3.95% original)	(2,136)	
<u>Savings Proposals</u>		
Service efficiencies	(3,832)	
Welsh Government settlement funding implications	(2,080)	
Income generation increase	(1,034)	
Council tax additionality (extra + 1%)	(831)	
Full cost treasury adjustment	(204)	
	(7,981)	(10,117)
Sub Total Income		(241,651)
Savings still to be identified		<u>1,178</u>

Pressures

4.18 The work on pressures has highlighted that a number of significant pressures (£9.74m) need to be taken into account in next year's budget. A summary table of pressures is provided below and further information on the individual pressures is provided in summary in Appendix 1 and in detail in appendix 2. The main pressures principally relate to areas outside of the control of the Authority, and most notably:

- Funding Children's Services looked after children pressures (LAC) – £2.89m
- Sustaining the model of delivery within adult social care, including recent demand pressures with adults with disabilities – £2.47m
- Children with additional learning needs demand pressures – £1.47m
- Teachers pay and pension increases - £1.18m over and above the 1% pay award assumption modelled

4.19 It is noticeable that there are a limited number of pressures identified for years 2 to 4 of the MTFP against service directorates, however it is common for them to be recognised closer to the year in question and this needs to be borne in mind when considering the remaining gap in the MTFP. However, as part of the report presented to Cabinet on 19th September 2019 the provision made for "unidentified pressures" has been increased from £2.5m to £5m per annum and to recognise the level of pressures having to be accommodated as part of the budget process and following a review of such historic pressures.

Pressures by Directorate	2020/21 £000	2021/22 £000	2022/23 £000	2023/24 £000
Children & Young People	2,650	0	0	0
Social Care & Health	5,505	141	40	0
Enterprise	764	204	0	0
Resources	245	8	6	5
Chief Executives Unit	221	0	0	0
Corporate Costs & Levies	313	4,666	4,807	5,000
Appropriations	44	381	113	0
Totals	9,742	5,400	4,966	5,005

4.20 Previously agreed savings that have been identified as not achievable have also been recognised as pressures in the model together with significant current year budget overspends that look set to continue into 2020/21 and to the extent that they can't be mitigated. In previous budgets directorates have been asked to manage these pressures within services, however given the level of savings already being delivered by some service areas a decision has been taken to recognise these significant demand-led pressures in the budget for 2020/21 to mitigate this risk.

Saving Proposals for 2020/21

4.21 After several years of taking significant resource out of the budget the means of achieving further savings becomes increasingly more challenging. The significant in-year over spend, whilst being managed via a recovery plan, sees significant pressures carried through into 20/21 and with this already challenging backdrop has made the budget challenge even more acute.

4.22 The draft proposals in total bring forward savings of £7.98m. The notable savings proposals include:

- Assumptions around the increase in core funding (AEF) from Welsh Government, including full funding of teachers pay and pension increases (£2.08m)
- Opportunity taken from revised guidance from Welsh Government that allows the Authority to make flexible use of capital receipts to capitalise revenue costs relating to service reform (£1.15m)
- Income generation resulting from new charges and increases in existing fees and charges (£1.03m)
- A 2% (£830k) saving against Individual Schools budgets, alongside full funding of pay and pension pressures. A loan facility is also being offered to schools to more effectively repay deficit school balances. Schools will still receive a year-on-year cash increase in their school budgets. Support will however continue to be provided to schools to identify opportunities to generate savings.
- An increase in the increase in council tax for modelling purposes of 1% to 4.95% (£509k)
- Resulting from a review of earmarked reserves a planned reduction and release from the Treasury Equalisation reserve (£400k)
- A freeze in the employer pension contribution for the next two years (£370k)
- An increase in council tax income resulting from an increase in the number of housing completions forecast (£322k)
- A reduction in treasury budgets as a result of updates to the MTFP (£204k)
- Savings within Children's Services through reduced legal costs brought about by investment in in-house childcare solicitors (£100k) and resulting from increased and ongoing investment in the Myst project (£250k).

4.23 Work continues to develop ideas and proposals such that they can be brought into the budget once they are sufficiently progressed. The mid-term review of the Corporate Plan being presented to Council in the New Year will also need consider any policy changes needing to be considered to put services on a more sustainable footing for the future.

4.24 All proposals have been considered and tested through an initial process of independent challenge by officers and Cabinet Members. A summary of all the proposals are shown in the table below. The savings proposals are contained in summary in appendix 1 and in detail in appendix 2.

Savings by Directorate	2020/21 £000	2021/22 £000	2022/23 £000	2023/24 £000
Children & Young People	(830)	0	0	0
Social Care & Health	(1,013)	(105)	0	0
Enterprise	(579)	0	0	0
Resources	(321)	(24)	(23)	0
Chief Executives Units	(163)	(1)	0	0
Corporate Costs & Levies	(370)	0	0	0
Appropriations	(1,758)	453	(2)	(241)
Financing	(2,948)	0	0	0
Totals	(7,981)	323	(25)	(241)

Treasury Impact

- 4.25 The draft capital budget proposals and MTFP are being considered as a separate report on this agenda and for the purposes of establishing the revenue impact of the capital MTFP, the current summary position in the capital report has been taken.
- 4.26 The Treasury budgets continue to be closely monitored throughout the year, and any changes in the following will be considered at final budget stage: a review of the current year underspend, the profile of capital expenditure and potential slippage, a review of maturing debt over the medium term and the balance between the level of fixed and variable rate debt in the Council's portfolio. The balance of risk is an important consideration in this review as are the principles of security, liquidity and yield when considering any investment strategies.

Council Tax

- 4.27 The Council Tax increase in the budget has been modelled as 4.95% for 2020/21 (3.95% original MTFP modelling assumption + 1%) and 3.95% per annum across the MTFP as a planning assumption. The Council tax base report was approved via Individual Cabinet Member decision on 18th December 2019 and concluded an assessment of collection rates and growth in properties. Overall, the Council Tax base calculated for 2020/21 has risen by 0.51% compared to 2019/20. This increase takes into account the anticipated changes in dwellings. The estimated additional income of £322k derived from this and changes to CTRS (Council Tax Reduction Scheme) projections has been incorporated within the MTFP as part of the budget process.

Summary position

- 4.28 In summary, the 2020/21 budget gap is now **£1.178m**, if all the savings proposals contained in the Appendix 2 are approved. Clearly there is a gap still to meet and further work is progressing to bring forward measures and further savings proposals to balance to budget if further funding is not made available through the provisional and final settlement.

Services	Adjusted Base 2019/20 £000	Indicative Base 2020/21 £000	Indicative Base 2021/22 £000	Indicative Base 2022/23 £000	Indicative Base 2023/24 £000
Children & Young People	51,215	53,389	53,837	54,338	54,795
Social Care & Health	46,334	51,132	51,546	51,969	52,357
Enterprise	19,881	20,501	20,929	21,323	21,721
Resources	7,648	7,732	7,828	7,956	8,108
Chief Executive's Unit	4,637	4,757	4,824	4,893	4,963
ADM	3,465	3,566	3,677	3,790	3,905
Corporate Costs & Levies	22,112	22,092	26,713	31,485	36,485
Sub Total	155,292	163,169	169,353	175,753	182,334
Transfers to reserves	341	143	195	188	63
Transfers from reserves	(275)	(347)	(302)	(164)	(139)
Treasury	6,436	5,092	5,678	6,032	6,141
Appropriations Total	6,502	4,888	5,572	6,056	6,065
Total Expenditure Budget	161,794	168,057	174,925	181,809	188,398
Aggregate External Financing (AEF)	(93,229)	(93,229)	(93,229)	(93,229)	(93,229)
Council Tax (MCC)	(54,087)	(56,223)	(58,444)	(60,753)	(63,153)
Council Tax (Gwent Police)	(11,779)	(11,779)	(11,779)	(11,779)	(11,779)
Council Tax (Community Councils)	(2,699)	(2,699)	(2,699)	(2,699)	(2,699)
Contribution to/(from) Council Fund	0	0	0	0	0
EBP		0	0	0	0
Disinvestment		(2,948)	(2,948)	(2,948)	(2,948)
Sub Total Financing	(161,794)	(166,879)	(169,099)	(171,408)	(173,808)
(Headroom)/Shortfall	(0)	1,178	5,826	10,401	14,590

Reserves strategy

- 4.29 Earmarked reserve usage over the MTFP period is projected to decrease the balance on earmarked reserves from £5.48 million in 2019/20 to £5.28 million at the end of 2021/22. Taking into account that some of these reserves are specific, for example relating to joint arrangements or to fund capital projects, this brings the usable balance down to £4.5 million. The general fund reserve is sustained at its current level of £7 million. Separate to this locally managed school budgets carry a net deficit balance of £0.23 million.
- 4.30 The previously approved Reserves strategy sought to ensure that earmarked reserves are not used to balance the budget for ongoing expenditure and that they are instead used to the best effect and impact on one off areas of spend to help the authority transform itself within the new resource levels available to it. The final budget report will contain an assessment of the adequacy of reserves, however, at this stage limited use is being made of reserves.

Next Steps

- 4.31 The information contained in this report constitutes the draft budget proposals that are now made available for formal consultation. Cabinet are interested in consultation views on the proposals and how the remaining gap may be closed. This is the opportunity for Members, the public and community groups 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 31st January 2020.

- 4.32 Public consultation (to include the formal requirement to consult businesses) and Select Committee Scrutiny of Budget proposals, will take place between the 20th December 2019 and the 31st January 2020.
- 4.33 In the past extensive community engagement had been undertaken around the budget. However, such a large scale public engagement will not be undertaken as budget proposals that see substantive or material service developments will have undergone their own consultation process.
- 4.34 There will however be an opportunity for the community to provide consultation responses via meetings with various consultative fora outlined below and via the website and social media where details of the proposals and consultation events will be published.

School Budget forum – 16th January 2020
Head Teachers conference – 16th January 2020
Unions Joint Advisory Group (JAG) – 20th January 2020
Youth Conference – 24th January 2020
Abergavenny 50+/Access for All group – date to be confirmed
Evening events in north and south of the county – dates to be confirmed

Town and community council cluster meetings:

Chepstow– 15th January 2020
Monmouth – 21st January 2020
Caldicot –23rd January 2020
Usk – 28th January 2020

North Monmouthshire Area Committee – 22nd January 2020

- 4.35 The scrutiny of the budget proposals are key areas of this part of the budget process. The following dates have been set for Select committees:

Adults – 21st January 2020
Strong Communities – 23rd January 2020
Children and Young People – 28th January 2020
Economy and Development – 30th January 2020

- 4.36 Final budget proposals following consultation and receipt of the final settlement will go to a special Cabinet on 19th Feb 2020 and approval of Council Tax and final budget proposals will then take place at Full council on 5th March 2020.

4 OPTIONS APPRAISAL

- 4.1 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 the Appendices.

5 EVALUATION CRITERIA

- 5.1 The means of assessing whether the final budget put in place for 2020/21 has been successfully implemented is undertaken throughout the year via regular budget monitoring and periodic reports to Cabinet and then to Select committees for scrutiny. In

addition regular monitoring of the performance of the Council against service business plans and the Corporate Plan takes place. Taken together these arrangements enable the Council to evaluate its success and progress against its longer term plans within the resources available.

6 REASONS:

6.1 To agree budget proposals for 2020/21 for consultation purposes

7. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

7.1 As identified in the report and appendices

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

8.1 The future generation and equality impacts of the savings proposals have been initially assessed per budget saving mandate in appendix 3. An overall future generation and equality impact evaluation of the all the proposals has also been undertaken and is contained in appendix 4. This overall evaluation is an early one, applying to budget proposals only at this pre-consultation, pre-decision stage. This analysis will continue to evolve and be updated throughout public consultation and scrutiny.

8.2 The impact on services has been kept to a minimum. Some negative impacts have been identified and a number of mitigating actions are in place or have been identified. Consultation requirements have been identified and are ongoing.

8.3 The actual future generations and equality impacts from the final budget report's recommendations will also be reviewed and monitored during and after implementation.

9. CONSULTEES:

SLT
Cabinet
Head of Legal Services

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS:

Appendix 1: Summary of budget savings and pressures
Appendix 2: Directorate savings and pressure proposals
Appendix 3: Future Generations Evaluations
Appendix 4: Future Generations Evaluation for the overall budget

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