

A/1 Extract of draft minutes of Adults Select Committee – 21st January 2020

- The social care pressures were discussed in detail. Members noted the grant income received and the committee welcomed the approval to use capital receipts to assist the revenue budget position. The committee remained concerned that the use of capital receipts to support the revenue position was an unsustainable approach to address the underlying budgetary issues already presented at month 7.
- The committee recognised that staff are trying to be creative and think differently and that recruitment in the sector is a major issue. Members were pleased to see that no cost increase had been proposed for the community meals service.
- Members welcomed the new monthly budget monitoring approach which was assisting departments in forecasting overspends and enabling mitigations to be put in place where possible.
- The committee felt strongly that the funding formula disproportionately disadvantages Monmouthshire and supported the Chief Officer's attempts to raise this with Welsh Government and to request a funding floor, which would significantly assist Monmouthshire and several other rural authorities. The committee supported the efforts by the Chief Officer for Resources and the Leader to progress via the WLGA an independent review of the formula and asked that a seminar be held in the Spring.

A/2 Extract of draft minutes of Strong Communities Select Committee – 23rd January 2020

- The committee discussed reasons for the significant pressures in social services, acknowledging this was outside of its remit, in order to understand the context for the budget proposals being presented to them. They scrutinised the proposals within their remit, but made no specific recommendations.
- The committee supported the request made by Monmouthshire to Welsh Government for a funding floor and the need for an independent review, noting that a seminar would be held in the spring. The committee did not discuss the operations proposals which were presented late to the committee and agreed to attend the Economy and Development Select Committee to undertake joint scrutiny of these.

A/3 Extract of draft minutes of Children and Young People Select Committee – 28th January 2020

- The children's services pressures were discussed in detail, the committee understanding the volatility of the service. The committee recognised that officers were attempting to achieve savings through changes in legal services and also piloting projects such as MIST which should assist the service over the longer term position. They had concerns however as to how Children's

Services can be effectively budgeted for and what mitigations could be put in place. Members appreciated that the situation is unprecedented, with increased demand against the backdrop of inadequate funding and they recognised that this is the national picture.

- Questions were asked around schools in deficit and their ability to effect a recovery position. Members in general supported the loan proposals for schools to manage their financial recovery over a longer timescale, but they had concern for the level of interest payable, if inflation were to rise significantly. The committee was particularly concerned at the proposal to reduce Individual school budgets by 2% and sought reassurance from the executive that this would be further examined to ascertain whether this cut to schools' budgets could possibly be avoided.
- The committee supported the Chief Officer's endeavours to progress the settlement through further discussion with Welsh Government and they supported the need for an independent review of the formula.

A/4 Extract of draft minutes of Economy and Development Select committee – 30th January 2020 – also attended by members of Strong Communities Select Committee

- The committee scrutinised its portfolio areas including the operations service area comprising passenger transport unit, street lighting, waste management and there were some concerns around the household waste and recycling centre proposals, but members noted a review will be brought to Strong Communities for pre-decision scrutiny. The proposals relating to car parking were briefly discussed and it was agreed that this will be jointly reviewed by Strong Communities and Economy & Development Select Committees at the appropriate juncture. Commercial development was scrutinised and the capitalisation directive was considered.
- The committee scrutinised some of the pressures outside of its remit – education, Additional Learning Needs, the proposed 2% cut to individual school budgets, social care pressures. Members were reassured by officers that there has been robust consultation with head teachers. The committee supported the loan proposal to offer greater flexibility to schools to borrow money or manage their budget recovery plans over a longer timescale.
- There were concerns for the provisional funding settlement for Monmouthshire and the long-term sustainability of such low level funding. Members supported officers' efforts to recover monies through the Ealing value added tax exemption ruling associated with Mon Life, which will assist the budgetary position to some degree and also welcomed the new ability to use capital receipts to assist the revenue budget.
- No specific recommendations were made, other than to request the seminar in the Spring with the WLGA to discuss the funding formula.

A/5 Extract of draft Minutes of Schools Budget Forum – 30th January 2020

While the additional funding was very welcome, does the rest of the council understand the impact on schools in cutting budgets - for example less support for our vulnerable learners and larger class sizes. Is it also still assumed that schools have too much money and have the ability to make additional savings?

This was acknowledged and Cllr Murphy said that any cuts to schools were a last resort. Cabinet want to protect schools as much as they can but on this occasion there was a requirement to consider school budgets. However it was the first area that cabinet reviewed when additional funding was found.

The finer details of the loan were requested. It was agreed that the finance manager would send these out to schools and would be willing to attend any Governing Body meeting should this be requested.

A/6 Extract of minutes of JAG (Joint Advisory Group) – 20th January 2020

The Cabinet Member for Resources, County Councillor P. Murphy, provided a presentation regarding Monmouthshire County Council's Draft Budget Proposals 2020- 2021.

There were several comments around the reduction to school budgets, particularly questioning the logic of asking schools to reduce budgets where they are already in deficit.

It was confirmed that the living wage will be maintained.

It was hoped that the final Welsh Government settlement will be higher than expected

The consultation period will end on 31st January 2020, and budget proposals will go to

Cabinet on 19th February 2020 and Full Council on 5th March 2020.

A/7 Extract of draft minutes of Chepstow Cluster meeting – 15th January 2020

- Objections were raised in relation to the proposed level of council tax rise. Cutting services was advocated rather than trying to continue to do everything, although no specific services were highlighted.
- Perception was put forward that Chepstow more often than not seems to be last in the queue in the county for capital spend.
- Suggestion to impose a fee for car parking at Newport leisure park to generate income and bring it in line with towns in Chepstow for the purposes of fairness

A/8 Extract of draft minutes of Caldicot Cluster meeting – 23rd January 2020

- Support in Caldicot cluster for lobbying Welsh Government for a funding floor

- Consideration needs to be given to sustainable future budgeting, given new housing developments in the county and in the south in particular.

A/9 Extract of draft minutes of Monmouth Cluster meeting – 21st January 2020

There were no specific items of interest raised in relation to the budget proposals from the Monmouth cluster.

The pertinent comments were around the Council's use of language when talking to the public (i.e. potentially jargon-orientated) and of being more open and honest about the commercial element (how we accessed the money to purchase Newport retail park and how we're generating income because of it etc.)

A/10 Minutes of North Monmouthshire Area Committee (extract) – 22nd January 2020

The Cabinet Member for Resources provided a presentation on the 2020/21 budget proposals.

Having received the presentation, the following points were noted:

- In response to a question raised regarding whether extra funding would be made available via Welsh Government to address the deteriorating roads across the County, it was noted that it this would be a matter for the Welsh Government to decide.
- It was noted that there were many retired professionally qualified people living within the County who could be utilised. Monmouthshire County Council currently utilises the services of over 2000 volunteers across the County.

A/11 Summary of Public meeting – Chepstow Library – 14th January 2020

- 6 in attendance - 3 made the point that they were only made aware of the event by chance
- Points made around events being communicated through community groups and associations and also in the press
- It was asked that posters be provided in the future and in advance at public buildings for consultation events
- Questions asked as to why MCC is so poorly funded and what we are doing to challenge WG. The question was responded to as part of the budget presentation.
- Comment made about need for greater NHS and social services integration in order to allow for residents to be kept at home and out of hospitals.
- Question around whether MCC 'protects' pressures in social care - Phil Murphy confirmed that it is Cabinet commitment to fund pressures.
- Point raised around Chepstow train station seeing increased charges when looking to promote rail transport when there is free parking elsewhere. Though

it was understood that there are pressures related car parks not being used in Abergavenny.

- Comments made about congestion along the road running from Caldicot through to Magor and the need for improvements to the road network before more houses were built through the next LDP.
- Question asked about why the Council is making investments and taking money away from services. It was explained that the Council wasn't and that in fact the commercial returns from investments were allowing services to be sustained.

A/12 Summary of Public meeting – Abergavenny Library – 22nd January 2020

Around 60 people in attendance on the night in Abergavenny Library on 22nd January. Cllr Phil Murphy and Will McLean were in attendance. Budget proposals being presented by Cllr Phil Murphy – not decisions at this stage but proposals.

- Consideration of a 4.95% increase in council tax for Monmouthshire. Phil described how “We are trying to strike a council tax balance”.
- There may be a need for schools to help with budget pressure.
- All departments will be thinking of alternative ways to generate income – fees and charges are a way to do that.
- Gap of £5.4M identified alongside £2.1M pressures. Gap of £1.17M still to be met after the proposed budget proposals.
- Cllr Murphy urging Julie James to come up with more money for Monmouthshire when the decision is made on 3rd March
- Schools will be offered a loan facility to help solve deficit positions. Schools can be lent money up to 10% of their annual income in order to manage savings over a longer timescale.

Will Mclean discussed the potential reduction in ISB for schools. When asked for feedback, Will confirmed that children with mental health problems will have different support depending on what stage children and young people are at.

Comments:

- The council tax banding implies that people are wealthier in Monmouthshire – which they are not.
- The Welsh Government funding comes from Westminster. We want a more equitable situation from Westminster. 10 years of austerity from Westminster has put us in this position. Cllr Murphy replied that it doesn't follow that the money flows down. Cllr Murphy suggested that we need a funding floor to help us and to help with the provisional settlement.
- Question asked about whether the money to cover salaries and pensions for teachers was included in the budget
- Question about whether budget is there for children with mental health issues within schools. Cllr Murphy replied that those pressures are covered

- Are pensions being funded by Welsh Government? Cllr Murphy replied that yes that is included in the funding from Welsh Government
- What proposals have come forward to meet the £800k schools saving or will schools be in even more of a deficit position?
- Why are you taking 2% off schools budgets that are already in deficit?
- Question about whether Chepstow comp is still being updated. Cllr Murphy confirmed that we are doing things to improve the school and the leisure centre.
- Question about whether council tax should go up further Cllr Murphy said that wouldn't be our choice
- What is the decision in relation to holiday homes in the county? Cllr Murphy said that a suggestion has been made in regard to second homes. It's not something we want to do because this may lead to people declaring their second home as a holiday let which would then incur business rates – some North Wales councils have lost money as a result of this.
- MCC has traditionally had a lower amount of funding. Why is that? Cllr Murphy explained the funding formula. The formula represents deprivation – there is the assumption that Monmouthshire does not have deprivation but there is and the formula does not take into account rurality
- Member of the public said that we have some of the highest cost properties in Wales which impacts on the formula. Resident asked how we can help to lobby? Who do we need to go to? Cllr Murphy confirmed work is ongoing with the WLGA to challenge the formula. Cllr Murphy explained that the challenge will be to Welsh Government and Westminster
- We've accepted there's a shortfall in budget coming from Cardiff, so if we were an English County would we be worse off? Cllr Murphy confirmed that we would be worse off again as Welsh Government has protected budget
- We need more notice of these meetings, people wanted to come and they feel very angry because they couldn't come and leave their young children at home. It would be helpful to have more notice.
- Local schools got letter on Monday at 3.30 ready for today that's not enough notice. Cllr Murphy replied highlighting how the various sessions have been promoted
- Addition concerns were raised in regards to the school cuts. Emotional support through projects such as Elsa and Forest Schools that all help with emotional health and wellbeing, won't be able to continue. Will replied that we understand there will be a consequence. We spent time with head teachers talking about this and Will replied that we still want to give children the best possible start in life. Will confirmed that we are seeing unprecedented numbers of looked after children in the system. Placements need to be right and give children the support they need.
- Concerns that we will have a crisis if we don't have early support in schools. Will confirmed that the ideal would be to pay for an Elsa project in every school but we have to find the budget.
- More support is needed to stop children going into social services. We need to produce children who can survive and thrive. Potential that we will have an even worse problem
- Cuts in education mean that some teachers can't cope anymore.
- The children who are most vulnerable will suffer due to cuts on staffing. Time people are spending with children will be cut.

- This is bottom up politics that is now affecting children who have no say in society.
- Question about federation. Will replied that if we ever have a federated school we do it to ensure their prosperity
- Question about what job losses have happened. Will replied no job losses have taken place. We are in a very tight position. The pressure in children's services is unprecedented. Will described that it's a very difficult situation. We have had to make difficult decisions to come up with our proposals. We recognise what is being said and the potential consequences on our children and young people. Welsh Government's influence is challenging but we continue to work on it.
- Schools in a deficit or reporting a deficit shows this will be perpetuating a problem.
- Will there be closures? Difficult to see how rural schools won't close. How can they survive with a 2% cut? Will confirmed that not all schools are carrying significant deficit budgets. The notion of a loan has been positively responded to by some schools.
- Can we talk about the reasons why schools go into deficit? Worried that there's an assumption that schools are fiscally irresponsible. This isn't just about the crisis of looked after children. There are more children with emotional and behavioral problems needing more 121 support and this is placing schools under even more pressure. There are serious reasons why schools go into deficit - it's a result of a series of circumstances to provide for children. Look at the number of exclusions going on in schools which highlights the problem of emotionally and behaviorally challenged children in school. It has not been suggested that it's due to financial mis-management. We are supporting more 121 and small group work in school. We need to find the best way to support. Some schools have had financial challenges for a whole range of reasons.
- This isn't about delivering extra this is about delivering a core provision that will be impacted. The funding needs to be here in Monmouthshire to fund the sixth form in King Henry. Head Teachers can only do so much- concerns that the sharing of Head Teachers does not work. Head Teachers are working for the EAS, not in their schools.
- This is going to destroy children's lives
- There are two savings needed here today. On your job page you are advertising £750k worth of jobs in a commercial environment. "I wouldn't hire those people I'd put that money with teachers". Councilors costs £3/4M to this county. I've saved you £2M by cutting that. Have you gone through the process of looking at where your money is spent? You have 43 people as councilors - we don't need those people doing that.

A/13 Summary of Head Teachers meeting – 17th January 2020

- Headteachers raised concerns that they are not able to make the savings required and asked cabinet to consider increasing council tax by an additional 1% to ensure that schools do not need to find this.
- Cllr P. Murphy explained that at the public meetings it was clear that the public did not want any further increase in council tax above what was already proposed. He also added that Cabinet were looking at all options to ensure that this can be reduced or even stopped.

- Headteachers agreed to contact their parents to make them aware of the proposals and to ensure that they responded to the consultation.

A/14 Access for All meeting – 17th January 2020 – Summary feedback

Q1 - Councils should be working in partnership with health. How is this taking place in Monmouthshire?

- In Monmouthshire we have integrated social care hubs across the county, for example in Abergavenny. Mardy Park is a very vibrant community hub and an asset. Various community groups use their grounds for projects to help mental health and wellbeing and some of the building is used as clinic spaces. In Monmouthshire we are very advanced in recognising how the community can benefit from shared spaces.
- Savings – this year we have been renegotiating the way we work.
- Fees and Charges - WG set the charge. People are assessed to look at how much people pay for support on a sliding scale of fees. We looked at the profile of some of our areas. One thing we have is the ability to pool money – through section 33. Looking at what we contribute and health contributes, we have seen that Health owe MCC money.
- We are trying to be as creative as possible to access more funding - this may be from gaining income from sources such as the health board. We have a very good relationship with health Integrated Service Partnership board. This works really well and is well developed in Monmouthshire.

Q.2 At what stage would I have to sell my house in order to get help if I wanted to move into a residential home?

- You don't need to sell your house while you still live in your home. In Monmouthshire we aim to keep as many people at home as possible. If the time arises when you can't live at home and need extra support from a care home, we make an assessment whereby legislative requirements need to be taken in to account. We work with the individual to see what is best to allow people to adjust to the change in their life.
- Government set the amount of £50,000 that the resident can keep if they need to sell their home. Anything above £50,000 is taken into account. Rate - £750-£1000 a week to stay in a care home. Anything below £50,000 LA will contribute.

Q3. Disabled Facility Grants - what is the uptake in Monmouthshire since the amount was increased from £300,000 to £600,000?

- A Disabled Facility Grant is for residents who need adaptation made to their homes. It is an area of growth and for people of all ages, people are also doing things for themselves. A report is going to Select Committee to look at the

current situation. The period of funding has lengthened which enables more residents to benefit. Now secure £600,000 this may rise to £900,000

Q4. 2% charge for schools – Pay and pensions will it be already taken out?

- Yes, it will not affect staff. 2% is the last resort.

Q5, Empty shops in Abergavenny - will the rates be reduced?

- This is a Welsh Government decision. Some shops may be able to get some help. It's out of our control. Maybe we can lobby WG on behalf of retailer.
- 'Abergavenny is a tourist town and there are more and more shops closing.' We are looking at buying old shops and regenerating them.

Q6. Are disabled toilets still going to be supported?

- The Toilet Strategy will provide more light on this and it is available on the website.

Issue with the nature of housing that is being built in Wales. They do not take into account people with disabilities. They are often not able to access public transport. They do not build 2 bedroom houses which are perfect for people who are downsizing. Planning Teams need to be aware and exercise more authority with big.

A/15 Summary of Youth Conference – 24th January 2020

During the Youth Conference, young people were asked to hold up different colour cards to demonstrate which statements they agree (green) or disagreed (red) with or were undecided (amber):

- “MCC gets the least funding per head of population compared to the rest of Wales” – all red cards, young people in Monmouthshire do not feel that this is fair
- “More funding put in to support for Adult Services, to help and support our growing older population.” – mostly amber, Monmouthshire’s young people are undecided about this
- “More investment in our schools to help you reach your full potential. We will continue to support the needs of children with Additional Learning Needs.” – all green, Monmouthshire’s young people support this
- “We will review how children with Additional Learning Needs travel to and from school. We are looking to see if some pupils could share transport rather than getting individual taxis to school.” – mostly amber, Monmouthshire’s young people are undecided about this
- “We face huge fines if we do not recycle waste properly. Black bags are containing more food waste and lots of items that can be recycled. We propose to carry out checks at our Household Waste and Recycling centres to check what people are throwing away and what could be recycled.” – mostly green, Monmouthshire’s young people support this