

REVENUE BUDGET 2023 - 2026

CONSULTATION REPORT

FEBRUARY 2023

carmarthenshire.gov.uk

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Carmarthenshire
County Council



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INTRODUCTION

A mixed-methods approach to ascertaining views on the 2023-26 budget took place during the period from 21 December 2022 to 29 January 2023.

In making savings, the Council is concerned to minimise the impact upon service delivery. In meeting the challenge of bridging the budget shortfall of over £20 million, many savings are being made through internal service changes. It is however recognised that some savings proposals will potentially have an impact on service delivery. These are known as 'policy' proposals and 17 proposals (with a total value of £4.8 million) are being considered by the Council in balancing its budget for 2023-26.

There are a variety of legal and policy reasons why the Council must undertake full and meaningful consultation, where service changes are under consideration.¹ Ultimately, a flawed approach can be a means whereby decisions can be challenged through the courts, through a process of Judicial Review. A decision against the Council would prevent the saving being delivered, as well as damage the reputation of Council, at a time when it needs to focus on responding to its challenging financial position.

This report:

1. Outlines the **consultation approach** and the different consultation methods deployed;
2. Describes the **demographic characteristics** of those who took part
3. Summarises the **key findings**;
4. Details the **specific consultation findings** in relation to each of the 14 proposals; and
5. Collates **minutes of meeting** in which the budget was discussed

1) OUTLINE OF APPROACH AND CONSULTATION METHODS

Whilst the settlement provided by Welsh Government was much more favourable than expected, inflation, rising costs, demographic pressures and increased statutory obligations have required the Council to make significant cost reductions, which remains challenging following the Covid-19 pandemic. In response, Council departments identified proposals for making savings and a consultation exercise was undertaken to elicit views on levels of agreement, possible impacts and ways the impacts could be minimised (mitigation).

Councillor involvement

A series of departmental seminars for all county councillors took place over a five-day period: 16th January 2023 and 20th January 2023.² Efficiencies across departments were considered in detail and feedback sought. Bullet points below provide an outlook

¹ The 2010 Equality Act and the Council's Strategic Equality Plan require that 'due regard' be given to the views of designated groups in making decisions. In terms of consultation, a body of case law points to the need for public authorities to properly gather and consider the views of the public in reaching decisions.

² As democratically elected representatives, councillor views are of central importance. This is of course in addition to their decision making role, as Council, in deciding the budget.

of their views and further suggestions on efficiencies. Councillor feedback regarding the public consultation can be found against the relevant proposals.

Alongside councillor engagement, public consultation took place in the following ways:

Survey

The survey provided financial and service information on each of the 17 policy proposals and asked respondents to express a view on the degree to which they supported the proposal.³ Views were also sought regarding the potential impact of implementing the proposal on people and communities.⁴

The survey was administered in two principal ways:

- 1) Electronically via the Council's online consultation page on the website
- 2) Hard copies were available on request in order to maximise the response rate.

A total of **2161 responses** were received from various sections of the community, including individuals, businesses, town and community councils and groups and organisations. A demographic breakdown is provided in section 2.

Insight

Teams from 10 secondary schools across Carmarthenshire have given their views on proposals in the Council's budget as part of an event designed to engage with young people. The Council's annual Insight event is open to all secondary schools in the county and gives pupils the chance to put themselves in the roles of the Council's Cabinet and discuss their opinions on the proposed budget. The aim of the event is to introduce young people to local government and give them an insight into the challenges on a day-to-day basis. It is also an opportunity for Cabinet Members to hear pupils' views and discuss with them directly about issues that matter to them.

This year, pupils from years 10-13 from Ysgol y Strade, Ysgol Gyfun Emlyn, QE High, Dyffryn Taf, Ysgol Gyfun Bro Myrddin, Coedcae, Bryngwyn, Glan-y-Mor, Dyffryn Aman, Ysgol Bro Dinefwr took part in the event on Thursday January 26 at County Hall in Carmarthen.

The results are outlined in Chapter 5.

Other [Email responses received]

5 emails and letters were submitted to the Council during the budget consultation period. These emails have been included in the overall analysis of the budget consultation.

Publicity

Local and regional press and local radio advertisements were used to inform the public how to become involved and obtain further information on the budget consultation. Carmarthenshire County council staff were also encouraged to take part in the Budget consultation via internal newsletter. Information was also highlighted on the council, and on the newsroom throughout the consultation period and generated 2250 views

³ The format of the survey was identical to the previous budget survey, to ensure comparability of results for all 17 proposals.

⁴ The responses are important in establishing the impact of Council proposals on people – a key consideration in undertaking good decision making based on evidence, and a requirement of the 2010 Equality Act.

on the budget consultation page. Relevant information was posted on social media (Twitter and Facebook) which reached 46,116 pages.

In addition, the consultation was publicised through relevant equality groups, including Equality Carmarthenshire, Ageing Well Carmarthenshire and the Carmarthenshire Disability Coalition for Action. In addition, All Town and Community Councils were asked to take part using the online consultation.

The public consultation phase ran from 21 December 2022 to 29 January 2023. In total, 2161 responses were received, only 1 were paper based.

About Average Index Score (AIS). Sometimes known as a 'weighted average', the AIS is a way of distilling the 'balance and strength of opinion' down into one number. Useful for questions with options to 'strongly agree', 'disagree', etc., the technique is used throughout the report. Values range from 2 (*everyone* strongly agrees) to minus 2 (*everyone* strongly disagrees).

Example

10 people are asked whether they 'strongly agree', 'agree', 'have no opinion', 'disagree' or 'strongly disagree' that Wales will win the six nations.

Results...

3 strongly agree (each response worth 2, so=**6**)

3 agree (each response worth 1, so=**3**)

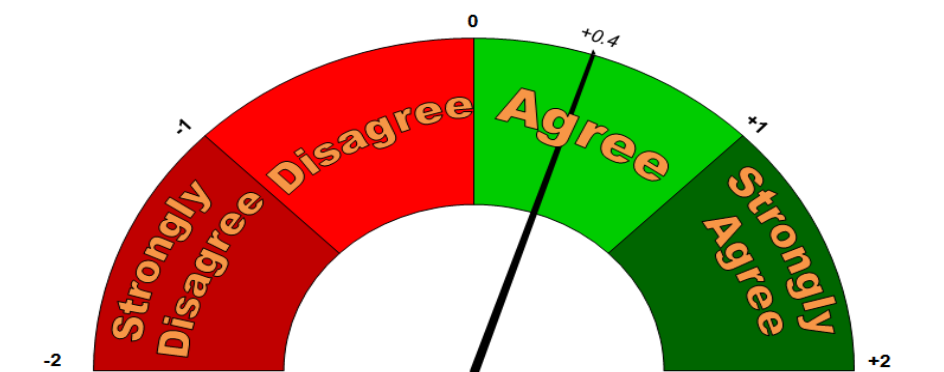
1 no opinion (each response worth 0, so=**0**)

1 disagree (each response worth -1, so= **-1**)

2 strongly disagree (each response worth -2, so=**-4**)

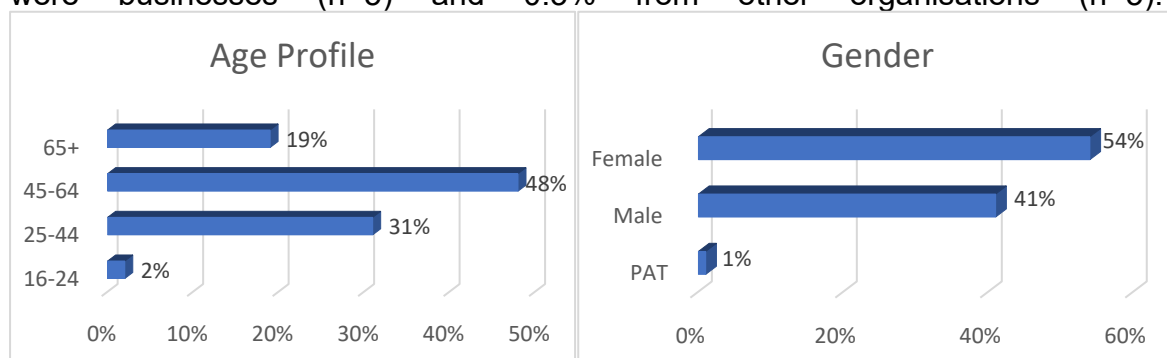
The AIS is calculated by adding all the numbers in bold: so, $6+3+0-1-4=4$;

Then dividing by the number of responses (10 in this case). The average index score is: $4\div 10=$ **0.4** (shown graphically below)



2) RESPONDENT PROFILE

Of the 1949 respondents who gave completed answers to demographic questions: 99% were from individuals, 0.4% from Town and Community Councils (n=7), 0.3% were businesses (n=5) and 0.3% from other organisations (n=5).⁵



Demographic Characteristic	Overall %
Transgender	9%
PNTS	6%
Relationship status	
Single	16%
Married	63%
Separated/Divorced	6%
Widowed	3%
Civil partnership	3%
PNTS	9%
Sexual orientation	
Straight	86%
LGB	3%
PNTS	11%
Religion	
Yes	52%
PNTS	8%
Caring responsibilities	
Yes	21%
PNTS	5%

Demographic Characteristic	Overall %
Ethnicity	
White	92%
BME	2%
Other	<1%
PNTS	6%
Disability	
Yes	13%
No	81%
PNTS	6%
Preferred language	
Welsh	21%
English	82%
Other	1%
Income	
<£15,000	8%
£15,000 – £29,999	22%
£30,000 – £44,999	21%
Over £45000	30%
PNTS	19%

A total of 1,911 respondents included their post codes. These have been grouped into six community areas for analytical purposes. Appendix 1 maps out the community area boundaries and their constituent postcodes.

	Community Area 1	Community Area 2	Community Area 3	Community Area 4	Community Area 5	Community Area 6
% Responses	31%	11%	25%	12%	11%	11%
Number of Responses	592	201	479	229	208	202

⁵ Unnamed Secondary School, Kidwelly Market, BLUE MARBLE REFILL, Corvus inn, St Ishmael Community Council, St Clears Council, Daniel Elias, Ysgol Dyffryn Taf School Council, Llandeilo Town Council, Quicksilver jewellery

3) SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

Headline results – all 17 proposals

The table below shows the results from the budget consultation survey. It shows details of the proposal, then gives results for the question: 'how strongly do you agree, or disagree, with this proposal'.⁶ The table is ranked in order by AIS score. Those proposals with higher levels of support, reflected in higher AIS scores, appear first.⁷

Rank	Ranking	3 Year Saving	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Neither (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)	Average Index Score
1	Commercial charge of Car park use	£10000	50%	35%	6%	4%	5%	1.2
2	Parking permits	£25000	49%	34%	7%	4%	5%	1.17
3	Publications of planning applications	£20000	50%	33%	8%	4%	6%	1.15
4	HWRC	£63000	40%	43%	7%	5%	7%	1.04
5	Music Service	£75000	22%	28%	16%	17%	16%	0.99
6	Nant-y-ci Park and Ride	£40000	34%	32%	16%	10%	8%	0.73
7	School rationalisation	£750000	28%	37%	14%	9%	12%	0.61
8	Charging at 9 car parks	£90000	32%	33%	7%	10%	18%	0.5
9	School crossing patrol	£16000	27%	32%	12%	15%	13%	0.45
10	Countryside access	£15000	30%	28%	12%	16%	14%	0.44
11	Pendine	£180000	28%	29%	15%	15%	13%	0.43
12	St Clears Asset transfer	£75000	21%	30%	22%	10%	16%	0.31
13	Litter bins	£100000	24%	30%	12%	17%	16%	0.29
14	Rising 4s policy	£500000	24%	29%	14%	12%	21%	0.22
15	Close St Clears Leisure centre	£75000	23%	25%	17%	14%	21%	0.19
16	Library services	£64000	22%	29%	12%	17%	20%	0.16
17	Youth club support withdrawal	£16000	15%	20%	16%	27%	22%	-0.2
18	Reduction of Youth workers 0.8FTE	£84000	13%	21%	20%	24%	22%	-0.2
19	Delegated school budget	£2.7mil	17%	22%	10%	18%	32%	-0.25

⁶ The survey itself gave summary information about each proposal to inform the decisions of respondents.

⁷ Values near to zero may indicate no clear consensus or may reflect apathy in relation to the proposal.

4) CONSULTATION FINDINGS – ALL PROPOSALS

Below, all 17 proposals are considered individually, in turn, in order to lay out a *comprehensive summary* of relevant consultation information.

Each summary begins by detailing relevant facts and figures, including the value of the proposal, its average index score (AIS), and its AIS rank against other proposals. It also gives an AIS for selected categories of respondent, for comparative purposes, and also to help meet our Equality Duty of demonstrating ‘due regard’ to equality. It is important to recognise that some proposals will be of specific relevance to people in certain categories. This must be taken in account in reaching decisions.

Views expressed through the public consultation have been considered together and themes identified.

The ‘other relevant information’ section includes information from *specific* sources, such as representations and organisational responses.

The views of councillors, (as expressed through budget seminars or scrutiny committees) are included under the ‘councillor engagement’ heading.

In the AIS charts that follow for each proposal, negative values are highlighted to show where results are, on balance, in opposition.

In order to strengthen the decision-making process, where a proposal has formed part of a previous budget consultation, these results are also included, for comparative purposes.

Information on all Equality impact assessments for each of the 17 proposals are available on request.

1. St Clears Leisure Centre

3 Year Savings: £75,000

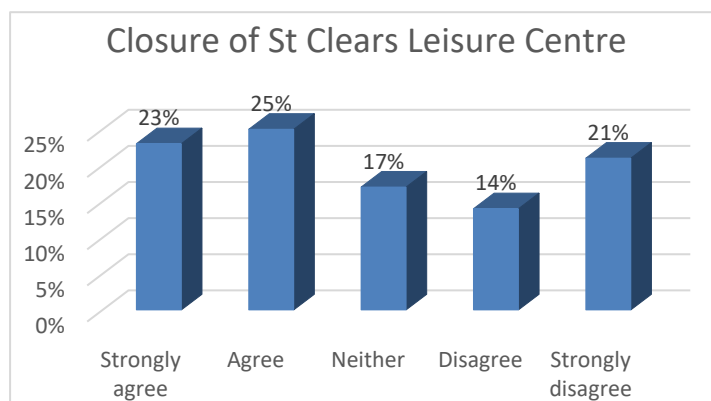
Information on savings proposal:

Based on usage (income/running costs) and its location we are looking to close the St Clears Leisure centre or asset transfer. To mitigate against this efficiency, we will continue to provide a full service at Carmarthen Leisure Centre which is approximately 10 miles away. In addition, there are several private leisure facilities in places such as Whitland, Llangynin and Carmarthen.

Increase in Council Tax if not adopted: 0.07%

Closure of St Clears Leisure Centre

Average Index Score: 0.19
Overall Rank (of 19): 15
Sample Size: 1807



Closure of St Clears Leisure Centre

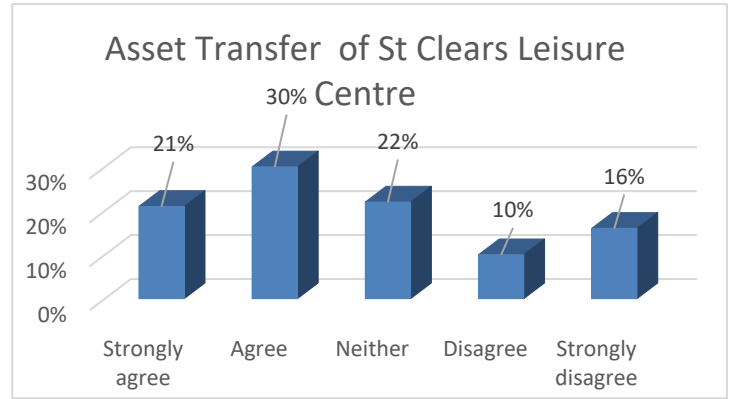
	16-24	25-44	45-64	65+	Pregnant	Mat/Pat	Female	Male	Disabled	Gender Reas.
AIS	0.49	0.14	0.25	0.08	0.3	0.08	0.14	0.24	0.24	0.16
Sample	39	565	868	335	23	13	1001	753	234	165

	Carers	LGBTQ+	BME	Single	Religion	less £20k	£20-39k	£40k+	Welsh Language	Armed forces
AIS	0.19	0.34	0.76	0.14	0.16	0.12	0.33	-0.01	0.2	0.42
Sample	381	59	25	611	902	543	915	344	375	141

	CA1	CA2	CA3	CA4	CA5	CA6
AIS	-0.4	0.54	0.4	0.47	0.67	0.68
Sample	584	196	464	214	201	202

St Clears Leisure Centre Asset Transfer

Average Index Score: 0.31
Overall Rank (of 19): 12
Sample Size: 1807



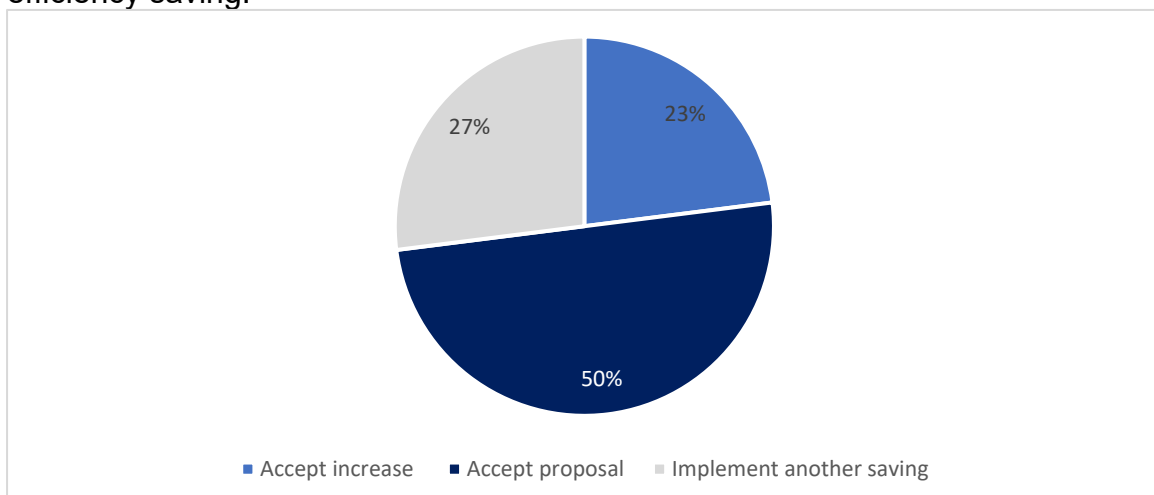
St Clears Leisure Centre Asset Transfer

	16-24	25-44	45-64	65+	Pregnant	Mat/Pat	Female	Male	Disabled	Gender Reas.
AIS	0.54	0.32	0.39	0.3	0.83	-0.15	0.29	0.45	0.27	0.39
Sample	37	558	857	330	23	13	987	742	228	164

	Carers	LGBTQ+	BME	Single	Religion	less £20k	£20-39k	£40k+	Welsh Language	Armed forces
AIS	0.33	0.56	0.44	0.34	0.37	0.3	0.47	0.2	0.42	0.4
Sample	374	57	25	605	893	535	902	340	369	136

	CA1	CA2	CA3	CA4	CA5	CA6
AIS	-0.1	0.61	0.56	0.58	0.77	0.68
Sample	574	192	463	212	204	198

Response to accepting a 0.07% increase in the Council Tax in order to avoid efficiency saving.



90 comments were received on the proposal.

Impact

- Many expressed their disagreement with the proposal to close or asset transfer St Clears Leisure Centre, citing it would have detrimental impact on local users and the local community at large
- Related comments highlighted that the leisure centre accommodates a number of active clubs (e.g. badminton, rugby and football) who would be displaced by the closure, with many unable to travel to alternative facilities
- It was noted that alternative provision through private facilities was not comparable and, often, more expensive
- Some respondents pointed to the correlation between leisure and health noting that a reduction in leisure services could undermine the wellbeing of the local population. Concern that rising obesity rates will increase cost and service pressures on the NHS, with the resultant cost outweighing any savings yielded by the proposal
- Some observed that St Clears has a growing population with potential for increased future demand for leisure services owing to current and pipeline infrastructure projects, including housing developments and a new hospital
- Proposal will increase travelling costs and discourage some users from keeping healthy and active. Environmental impacts were also noted
- Recognition that difficult decisions must be made in the current economic climate. Proposal merits consideration if it is not economically viable to maintain the current facilities and there is alternative provision within a reasonable travelling distance
- Reference was made to leisure centres being a non-statutory service

Mitigation

- Co-use of facilities - bringing St Clears library service into the leisure centre could increase footfall and generate efficiency savings whilst maintaining a similar level of service provision
- Some highlighted success stories of community-run leisure facilities
- Others put forward a view that private sector operators are more efficient
- Extend the 'warm places' scheme to the leisure centre
- Deprioritise the Carmarthen Hwb scheme
- Several respondents did not wish to provide comment as they were not users of the leisure centre and instead encouraged further consultation with facility users.

2. Pendine Outdoor Education Centre

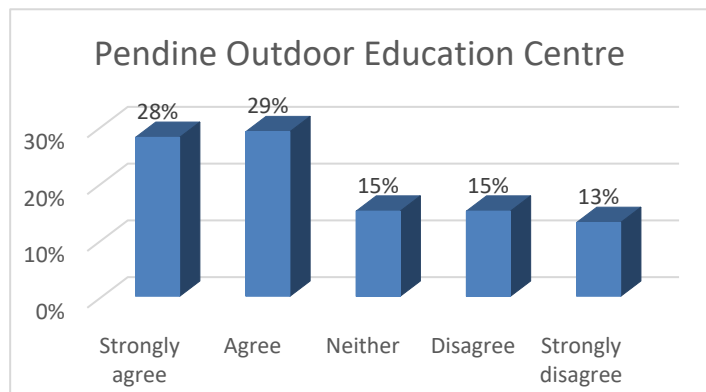
3 Year Savings: £180,000

Description:

The age of the infrastructure on site is of concern for the future and requires continued maintenance which is no longer viable. The proposal is to close Pendine education centre and look at providing an alternative facility within the county.

Increase in Council Tax if not adopted: 0.17%

Average Index Score: 0.49
Overall Rank (of 19): 11
Sample Size: 2029

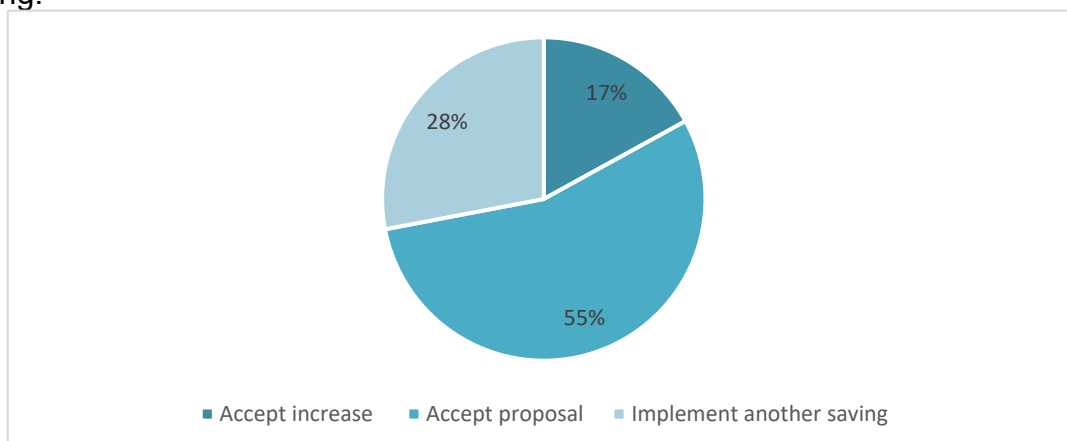


	16-24	25-44	45-64	65+	Pregnant	Mat/Pat	Female	Male	Disabled	Gender Reas.
AIS	0.54	0.32	0.39	0.3	0.83	-0.15	0.29	0.45	0.27	0.39
Sample	37	558	857	330	23	13	987	742	228	164

	Carers	LGBTQ+	BME	Single	Religion	less £20k	£20-39k	£40k+	Welsh Language	Armed forces
AIS	0.33	0.56	0.44	0.34	0.37	0.3	0.47	0.2	0.42	0.4
Sample	374	57	25	605	893	535	902	340	369	136

	CA1	CA2	CA3	CA4	CA5	CA6
AIS	-0.1	0.61	0.56	0.58	0.77	0.68
Sample	574	192	463	212	204	198

Response to accepting a 0.17% increase in the Council Tax in order to avoid efficiency saving.



49 comments related to the POEC proposal

Impact

- A widely held view that outdoor pursuits / residential experiences are crucial to younger people's learning and developmental journey, acquiring important skills and nurturing interests outside of the traditional school environment
- Concern on the impact of the proposal on the health and wellbeing of school pupils
- Economic impact emphasised – loss of jobs and increased spend in other counties (e.g. Llangrannog in Ceredigion)
- Some support for the proposal on the grounds that the Centre is not on par with other outdoor facilities, does not warrant continued maintenance and a replacement facility would improve on the current offering

Mitigation

- Ensure replacement facility is in operation before closing the Centre
- Private ownership or asset transfer

3. Library Service

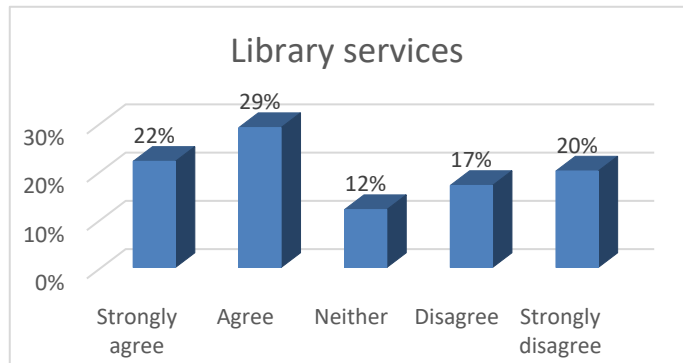
3 Year Savings: £64,000

Description:

Look for opportunities to asset transfer our smaller, least utilised branch libraries. If an asset transfer cannot be found, these branch libraries will be closed but alternative outreach provision will be considered.

Increase in Council Tax if not adopted: 0.06%

Average Index Score: 0.16
Overall Rank (of 19): 16
Sample Size: 2027

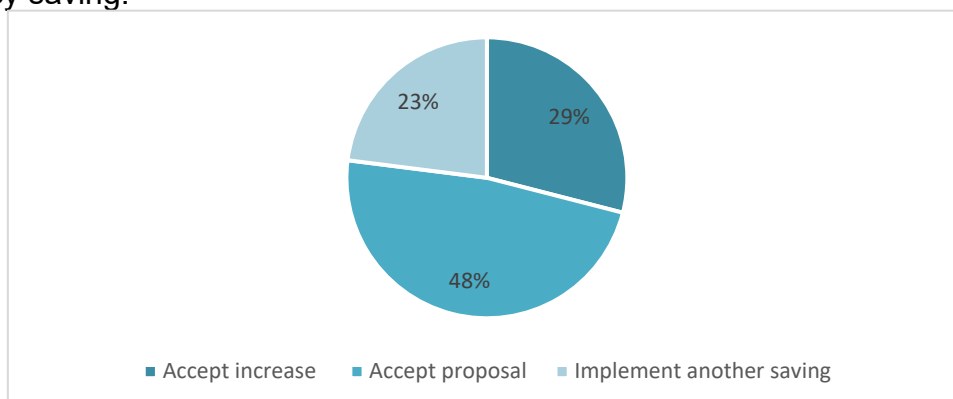


	16-24	25-44	45-64	65+	Pregnant	Mat/Pat	Female	Male	Disabled	Gender Reas.
AIS	0.79	0.28	0.21	-0.09	0.39	0	0.07	0.35	0.17	0.38
Sample	39	558	862	334	23	13	995	749	228	164

	Carers	LGBTQ+	BME	Single	Religion	less £20k	£20-39k	£40k+	Welsh Language	Armed forces
AIS	0.06	-0.05	0.19	0.11	0.22	0.1	0.31	0.01	0.3	0.21
Sample	377	59	26	605	897	540	915	337	370	141

	CA1	CA2	CA3	CA4	CA5	CA6
AIS	-0.02	0.46	0.22	0.21	0.51	0.26
Sample	582	196	462	215	198	201

Response to accepting a 0.06% increase in the Council Tax in order to avoid efficiency saving.



The libraries proposal generated **300** comments

Impact

- A wide-ranging view that the proposal is proportionate given the costs of running and maintaining an underutilised facility during a period of exceptional budgetary pressures. In addition, many were amenable to the proposal if it helped safeguard library services in core (main) facilities
- Proposal is reasonable given the increasing shift to digital media and change in consumption habits
- Some commended the Borrow Box & PORI apps as a means to access library services online
- Proposal will have a disproportionate negative impact on Carmarthenshire's older demographic, rural residents and those who are transport poor
- Libraries are a critical resource, providing access to recreational, informational and educational/developmental resources that play an important role in people's wellbeing
- The 'social' function of libraries was emphasised, providing a designated warm space for users to engage with other people. Also promotes good mental wellbeing and combats loneliness and isolation
- Poor broadband connectivity may discourage people from accessing e-books and media at home
- Many views that the 3-year saving does not warrant the negative impacts that could be brought to bear by implementing the proposal – potential negative impacts are not commensurate to the value of savings the proposal will yield
- Proposal runs counter to the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act
- A number of respondents requested further information on which branch libraries were at risk in order to make a fully informed comment

Mitigation

- Preserve full service offering at core libraries supplemented by an extensive mobile service
- Mobile service will help mitigate the effects for older adults and disabled users
- Maintain less utilised facilities through volunteering and self-service
- Diversification – look at accommodating café/catering facilities
- Pooling of resources to create one multi-purpose community facility with access to key services
- Income generation by offering space/room to community groups
- Consider an annual membership charge for a greater selection of e-books, audiobooks and films
- Rural broadband initiatives to improve connectivity

Other comments relating to Communities Department

Particular concern was expressed in relation to the geographical impact of the proposals with many suggesting that the effects of the budgetary savings will be more pronounced in smaller, rural towns such as St Clears.

Other comments covered:

- the Council's staffing and wage structure
- repurposing of lesser used council buildings
- sale of Council assets to private developers
- need for a longer-term strategic vision for Carmarthenshire to implement more efficient and sustainable cost-saving measures
- a view that proposals are too narrow
- challenges of households meeting any service or council tax increases
- query on whether other council facilities provide value for money – reference made to Dylan Thomas' Boathouse and Y Gat

Members engagement: Communities Department

- Suggest that there is positive engagement with St Clears community on the leisure centre – can it be taken over and/or proven increase in usage otherwise it will need to be closed
- Members felt that greater certainty was needed over the alternative offering for Pendine in order to support closure
- Difficult to decide on library closures without knowing specifically which ones
- Some Believed that Pembrey County Park should not be over commercialised
- Suggestion that season tickets could apply to multiple parks – e.g. PCP and LLO
- Support to introduce car park charges at leisure centres
- Support increased equipment use to reduce domiciliary care visits
- Reduce residential care through use of extra care
- Support for Cwm Aur proposal
- Suggest introducing support for families that are providing care at home to prolong this approach
- Support for supported living approach
- Concern over increased demand for mental health services post COVID
- Belief that more adult services provision is needed in rural areas
- Suggestion that some council house stock could be converted into supported living
- Support for reducing B&Bs for temporary accommodation
- Suggestion that pest control could raise income for the council
- Support for raising Licencing charges
- Suggestion that school kitchens could provide catering for adult services
- Discussion over the viability of Llesiant Delta Wellbeing taking more calls – members reported concerns over existing capacity to respond to current service levels

4. Parking Services - Introduce charging at 9 car parks

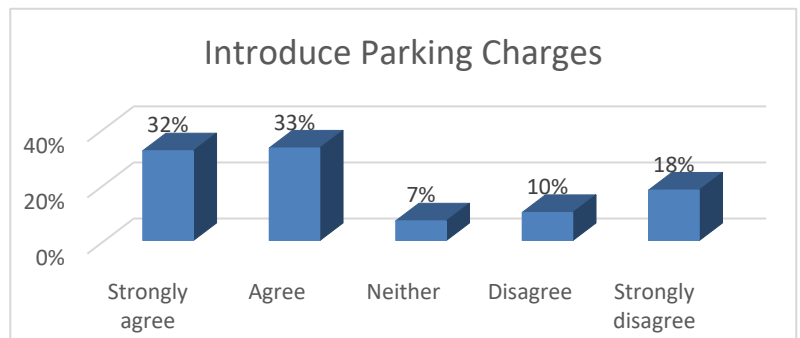
3 Year Savings: £90,000

Description: We are proposing to introduce a charge at 9 car parks which are currently free:

- Pottery Street, Llanelli
- Waunllanyrafon, Llanelli
- Eva Terrace, Ferryside
- Llanybydder
- Station Car park, Burry Port
- Seaview Terrace, Burry Port
- Glanyrafon, Kidwelly
- Station Road, Kidwelly
- Llansteffan.

Increase in Council Tax if not adopted: 0.09%

Average Index Score: 0.50
Overall Rank (of 19): 8
Sample Size: 2062

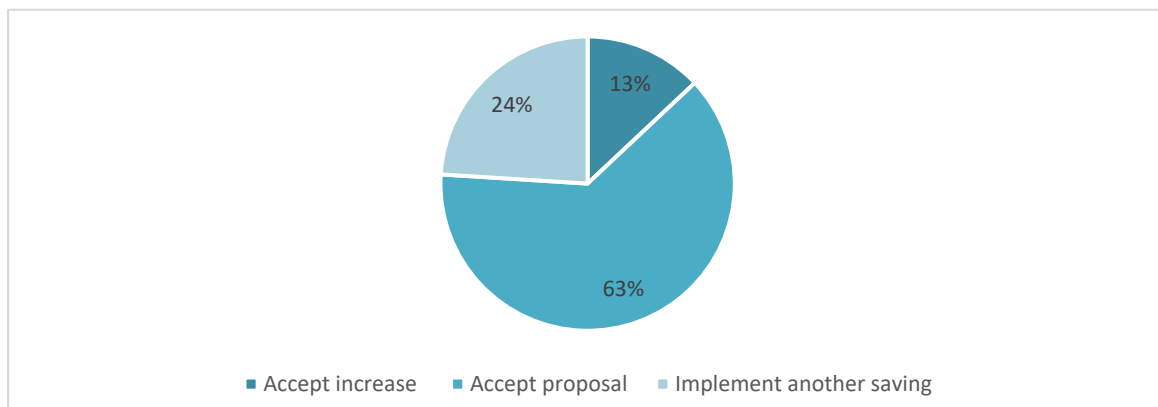


	16-24	25-44	45-64	65+	Pregnant	Mat/Pat	Female	Male	Disabled	Gender Reas.
AIS	1.21	0.61	0.51	0.39	0.74	1.33	0.49	0.61	0.38	0.78
Sample	38	560	875	344	23	12	1006	758	235	166

	Carers	LGBTQ+	BME	Single	Religion	less £20k	£20-39k	£40k+	Welsh Language	Armed forces
AIS	0.41	0.55	0.65	0.58	0.53	0.43	0.69	0.39	0.79	0.32
Sample	387	60	26	616	918	549	924	343	378	143

	CA1	CA2	CA3	CA4	CA5	CA6
AIS	0.85	0.83	0.86	-0.87	0.79	0.54
Sample	579	198	470	228	204	198

Response to accepting a 0.09% increase in the Council Tax in order to avoid



efficiency saving.

37 comments received:

Impact

- Widespread concern that the proposal will impact the health of town centres and independent shops on the High Street at a time when consumer footfall and spend is low
- Proposal will further encourage use of out-of-town shopping centres
- Some highlighted the risk of increased off-road / illegal car parking as a means to avoid paying a parking charge
- Many related the impacts to specific areas such as Kidwelly, Ferryside, Llansteffan and Llanybydder
- Some opposed the blanket approach, upholding that each car park has a different context / use profile (e.g. retail, tourism) and should be assessed individually
- Infrastructure, maintenance and enforcement costs will offset any savings yielded from the proposal
- Comments in favour of the proposal referred to Council's charging policy at other sites across the country, suggesting it would promote a consistent and equitable approach

Mitigation

- Ensure provision of 'all day' car parking (as opposed to a maximum length of stay) and a tapered charge that is reasonable at the lower end. Furthermore, offer more 'shorter stay' options (e.g. 30mins)
- Query on whether there is a role for private / commercial operators
- It was suggested that there should be further consultation on each car park location
- Additional areas were put forward for consideration, including Abergwili.

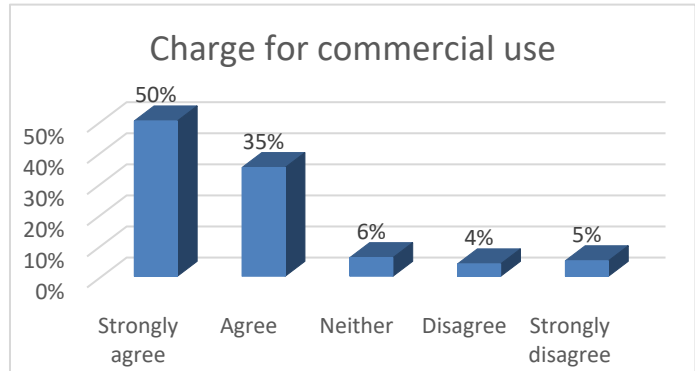
5. Parking Services - Charge for commercial use

3 Year Savings: £10,000

Description: We are proposing a charge for the commercial use of these car parks.

Increase in Council Tax if not adopted: 0.01%

Average Index Score: 1.20
Overall Rank (of 19): 1
Sample Size: 2044

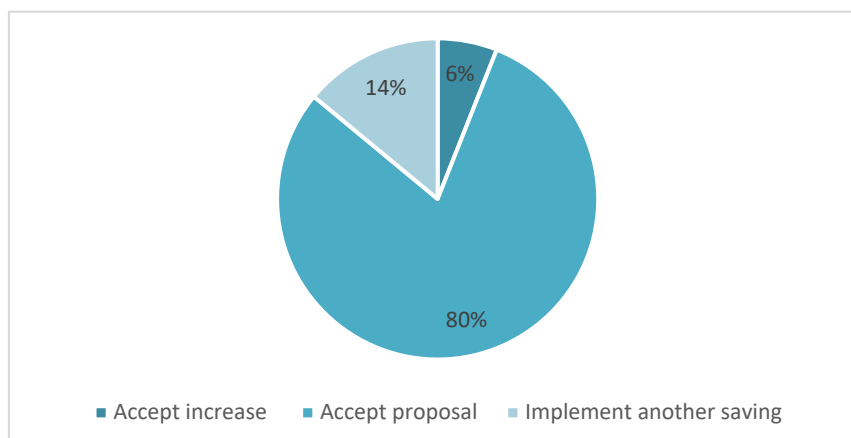


	16-24	25-44	45-64	65+	Pregnant	Mat/Pat	Female	Male	Disabled	Gender Reas.
AIS	1.63	1.22	1.26	1.14	1.61	1.5	1.2	1.31	1.16	1.2
Sample	38	560	872	336	23	12	995	760	233	163

	Carers	LGBTQ+	BME	Single	Religion	less £20k	£20-39k	£40k+	Welsh Language	Armed forces
AIS	1.21	1.34	1.15	1.23	1.23	1.19	1.33	1.14	1.27	1.2
Sample	380	59	26	612	912	547	918	342	378	140

	CA1	CA2	CA3	CA4	CA5	CA6
AIS	1.32	1.1	1.25	1.1	1.4	1.33
Sample	579	197	467	224	201	197

Response to accepting a 0.01% increase in the Council Tax in order to avoid efficiency saving.



7 comments received:

- Broad support expressed through comments
- Proposal will instil a level of equity/fairness between general (car) and commercial users
- Some surprise that the Council doesn't currently charge for commercial use – a 'missed opportunity' to generate income from mobile banks and fairs
- Views on the need for flexibility as to how the charge is applied to ensure that organisations that provide an important community / health service (e.g. screening, mobile banks) are not unduly charged

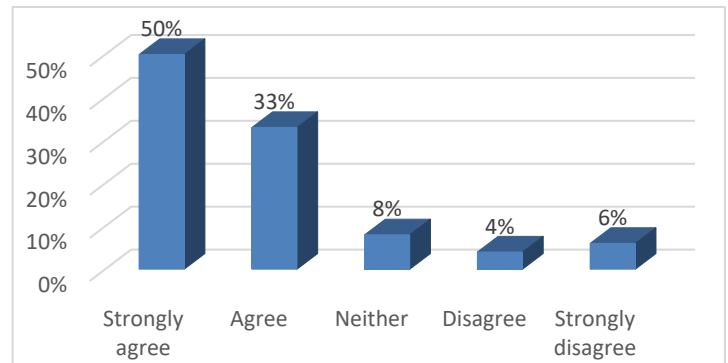
6. Publication of Planning Applications

3 Year Savings: £20,000

Description: It is proposed to stop advertising in the local newspapers and publicise through other methods that are currently undertaken. This can include direct consultations with statutory bodies that include Local Members and Town & Community Council, site notices, and neighbour notifications. A list of registered and determined applications are also published weekly on the Council's website, as well as being available to view in real-time.

Increase in Council Tax if not adopted: 0.02%

Average Index Score: 1.15
Rank (of 19): 3
Sample Size: 2040

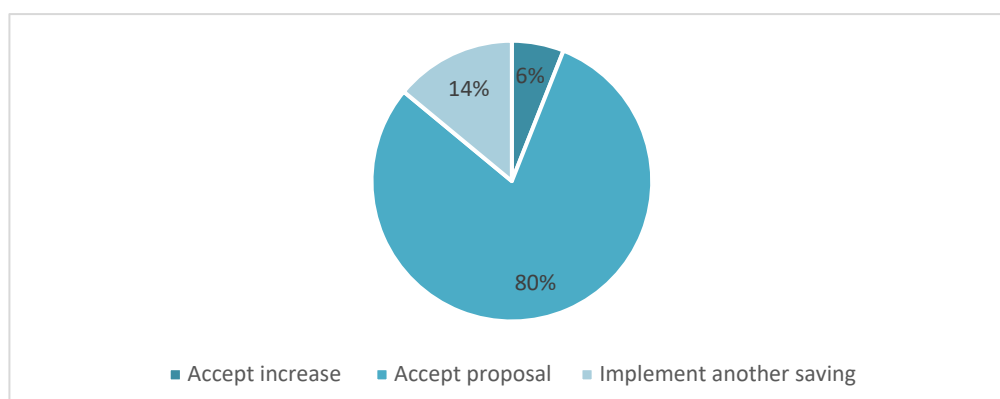


	16-24	25-44	45-64	65+	Pregnant	Mat/Pat	Female	Male	Disabled	Gender Reas.
AIS	1.37	1.3	1.2	0.98	1.48	1.67	1.18	1.23	1.03	1.23
Sample	38	553	868	347	23	12	996	760	235	164

	Carers	LGBTQ+	BME	Single	Religion	less £20k	£20-39k	£40k+	Welsh Language	Armed forces
AIS	1.11	1.03	1.42	1.07	1.17	1.06	1.36	1.05	1.21	1
Sample	381	59	26	615	905	551	914	342	374	140

	CA1	CA2	CA3	CA4	CA5	CA6
AIS	1.13	1.3	1.28	1.08	1.35	1.25
Sample	578	200	468	220	203	200

Response to accepting a 0.02% increase in the Council Tax in order to avoid efficiency saving.



12 comments related to the publication of planning applications

Impact

- Proposal is in keeping with the growing trend to access information electronically
- Newspaper readership / circulation is limited and therefore the cost of advertising no longer provides value for money
- A view that there are inefficiencies within the current planning system resulting in longer applications and poor use of council resources

Mitigation

- Use of social media
- Increase planning application fees to cover promotional costs
- Importance of maintaining site notices highlighted
- A supporting comment that Town and Rural Councils should bear a greater responsibility for publishing and discussing planning applications

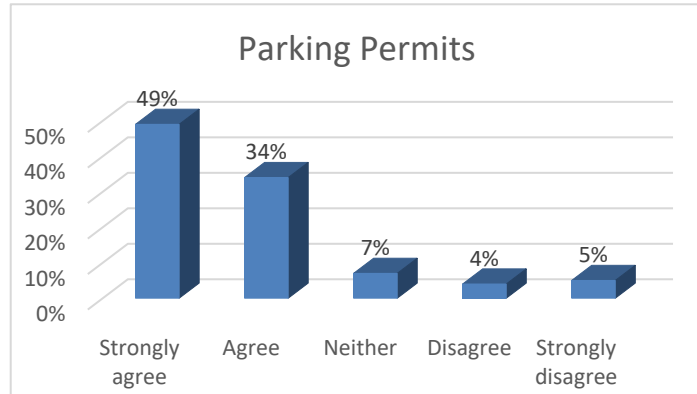
7. Parking Services - Parking permits

3 Year Savings: £25,000

Description: There is an administrative cost in receiving applications for on-street parking permits, checking eligibility and vehicle details, processing applications and issuing permits. There is also a cost to patrolling and enforcing the permit parking areas and maintaining road markings. Residents permits have cost £30 since 2009 and the proposal is to increase on-street permit charge to £40 per year to cover costs.

Increase in Council Tax if not adopted: 0.02%

Average Index Score: 1.17
Overall Rank (of 19): 2
Sample Size: 2031

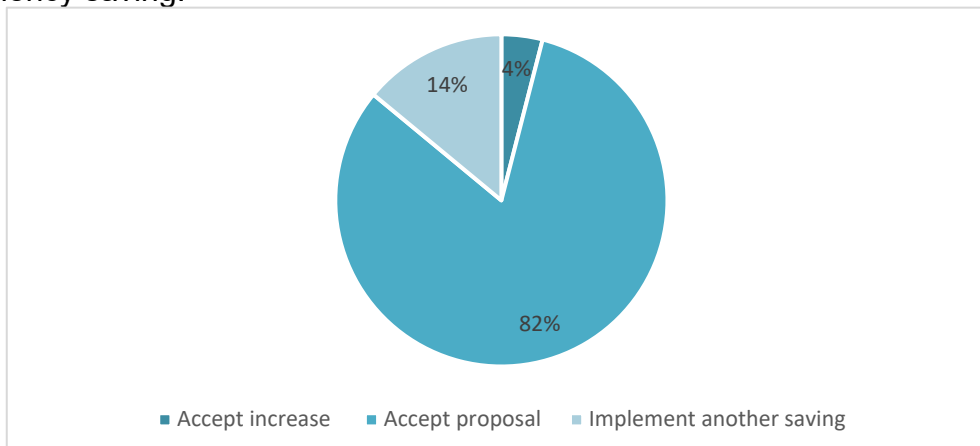


	16-24	25-44	45-64	65+	Pregnant	Mat/Pat	Female	Male	Disabled	Gender Reas.
AIS	1.29	1.14	1.26	1.15	1.22	1.55	1.14	1.28	1.21	1.24
Sample	38	553	867	341	23	11	991	760	227	164

	Carers	LGBTQ+	BME	Single	Religion	less £20k	£20-39k	£40k+	Welsh Language	Armed forces
AIS	1.18	1.32	1.15	1.13	1.22	1.03	1.35	1.14	1.23	1.17
Sample	378	59	26	612	904	545	920	338	375	140

	CA1	CA2	CA3	CA4	CA5	CA6
AIS	1.27	1.29	1.27	1.14	1.29	1.1
Sample	580	197	467	218	203	201

Response to accepting a 0.02% increase in the Council Tax in order to avoid efficiency saving.



4 comments received:

- Limited number of comments
- Proposal is fair as permit costs have been maintained at their current level since 2009
- Brings the service in line with inflationary increases
- A view that the current permit allowance per household does not reflect the variability of parking provision in some areas. Where spaces are limited, this results in residents not being able to park near their property as some households have multiple vehicle permits registered at their address.

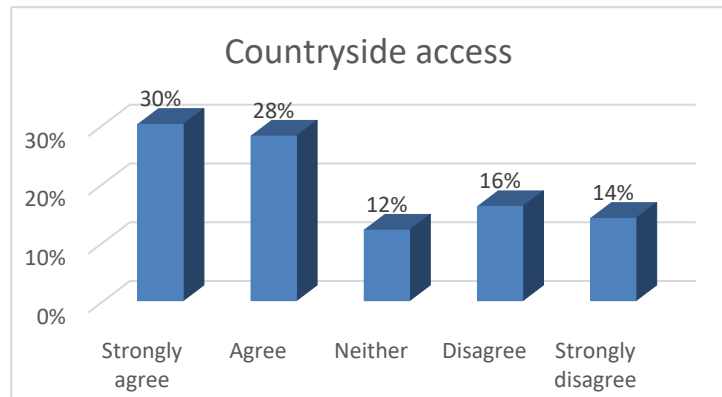
8. Countryside access

3-Year Saving: £15,000

Description: Cease discretionary clearance by Contractors (3 cuts per year) of overhanging and encroaching vegetation on 70% of the promoted PROW network (132km) and engage with landowners to ensure they take responsibility for their encroaching vegetation.

Increase in Council Tax if not adopted: 0.01%

Average Index Score: 0.44
Overall Rank (of 19): 10
Sample Size: 2024

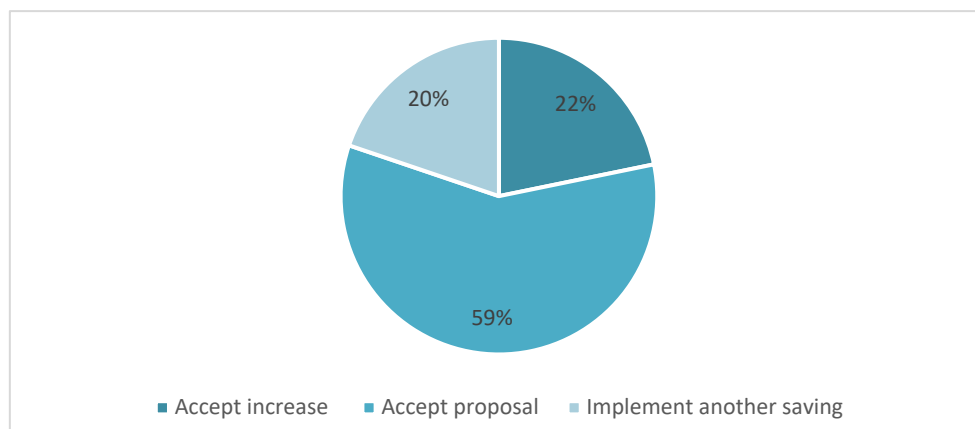


	16-24	25-44	45-64	65+	Pregnant	Mat/Pat	Female	Male	Disabled	Gender Reas.
AIS	1.03	0.42	0.45	0.44	0.3	0	0.43	0.5	0.47	0.39
Sample	38	548	867	340	23	11	987	755	231	162

	Carers	LGBTQ+	BME	Single	Religion	less £20k	£20-39k	£40k+	Welsh Language	Armed forces
AIS	0.37	0.54	0.48	0.46	0.48	0.43	0.51	0.37	0.46	0.42
Sample	380	59	25	608	902	543	912	343	373	142

	CA1	CA2	CA3	CA4	CA5	CA6
AIS	0.34	0.51	0.44	0.27	0.55	0.59
Sample	579	194	463	221	201	200

Response to accepting a 0.01% increase in the Council Tax in order to avoid efficiency saving.



13 comments related to the countryside access proposal

Impact

- The importance of maintaining Public Rights of Way was recognised
- Respondents underscored the social and health benefits of walking/rambling
- Significant concern that countryside footpaths could become inaccessible
- Possible impacts on tourism were emphasised if footpaths cannot be freely and safely navigated. Could give rise to negative perceptions of the county's amenities
- Risk of injury
- Broad agreement as landowners should be responsible for their own maintenance

Mitigation

- Suggestion that landowners should be invoiced for work if they fall foul of their maintenance responsibilities
- Consider alternative schemes such as building raised beds for wildflowers
- Work with community groups to develop a volunteering scheme for maintenance work whilst contributing to the costs of equipment/tools

9. Nant-y-Ci Park and Ride

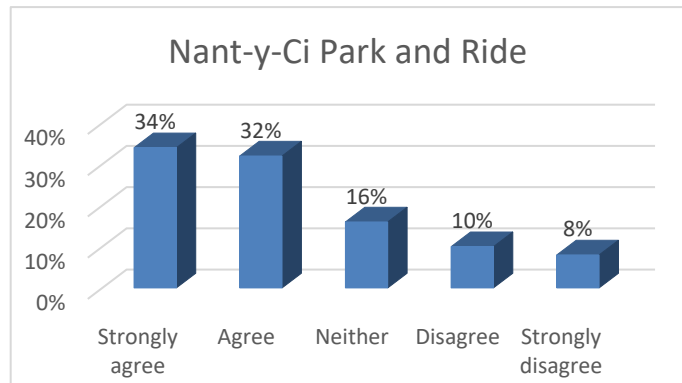
3-Year Saving: £40,000

Description:

Withdrawal of service between Nant-y-Ci, Town Centre and Glangwili Hospital. The service is part funded by Hywel Dda health board and discussions will take place before any service change.

Increase in Council Tax if not adopted: 0.04%

Average Index Score: 0.73
Overall Rank (of 19): 6
Sample Size: 2019

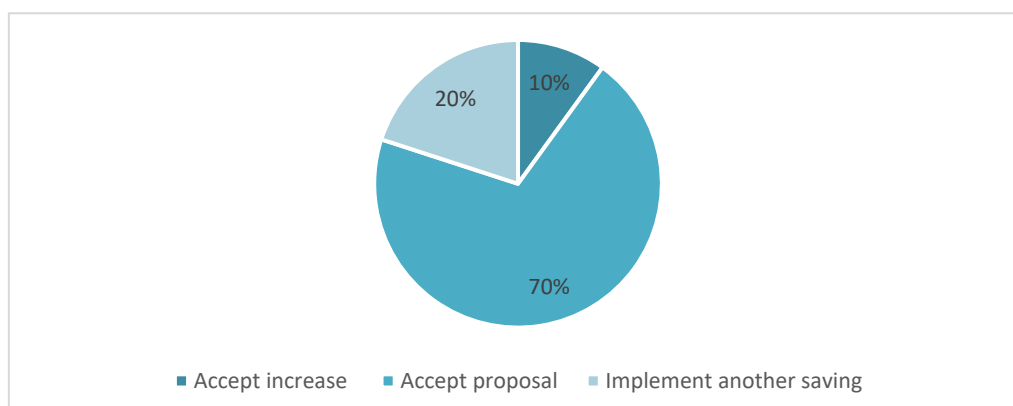


	16-24	25-44	45-64	65+	Pregnant	Mat/Pat	Female	Male	Disabled	Gender Reas.
AIS	0.81	0.81	0.83	0.45	1.22	1.54	0.68	0.86	0.51	1.02
Sample	38	548	867	340	23	13	987	750	232	162

	Carers	LGBTQ+	BME	Single	Religion	less £20k	£20-39k	£40k+	Welsh Language	Armed forces
AIS	0.81	0.84	1	0.69	0.75	0.6	0.92	0.63	0.79	0.69
Sample	378	58	25	608	902	546	910	340	375	140

	CA1	CA2	CA3	CA4	CA5	CA6
AIS	0.61	0.96	0.77	0.85	0.9	0.84
Sample	574	192	471	220	205	200

Response to accepting a 0.04% increase in the Council Tax in order to avoid efficiency saving.



11 comments received

Impact

- Limited number of comments
- Concern about the impact on staff and visitor parking at Glangwili Hospital
- Concern that this would have a disproportionate impact on disabled users
- Some were unaware of the service and felt it required better promotion / advertisement

Mitigation

- Consideration should be given to other pick-up points to improve the viability of the service
- Use of County Cars scheme for hospital appointments
- Re-investment of funds to improve car parking at Glangwili

10. Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRC)

3-Year Saving: £63000

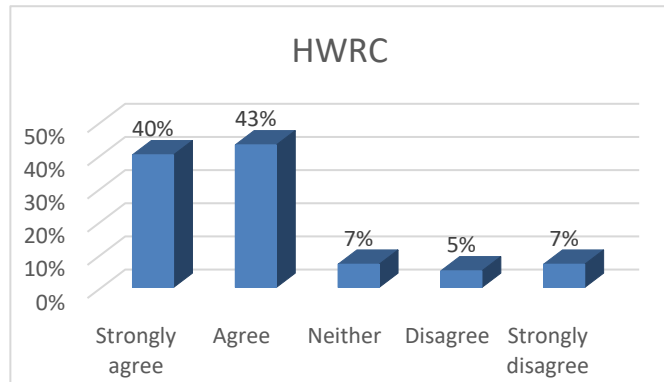
Description: This proposal focuses on the rationalisation of the days and times that the sites are open based upon usage.

1. Change of Whitland opening hours - 10am -4pm all year - £7,500

2. Change Nantycaws and Wernddu to close on one week day based on site usage - £55,500

Increase in Council Tax if not adopted: 0.06%

Average Index Score: 1.04
Overall Rank (of 19): 4
Sample Size: 2030

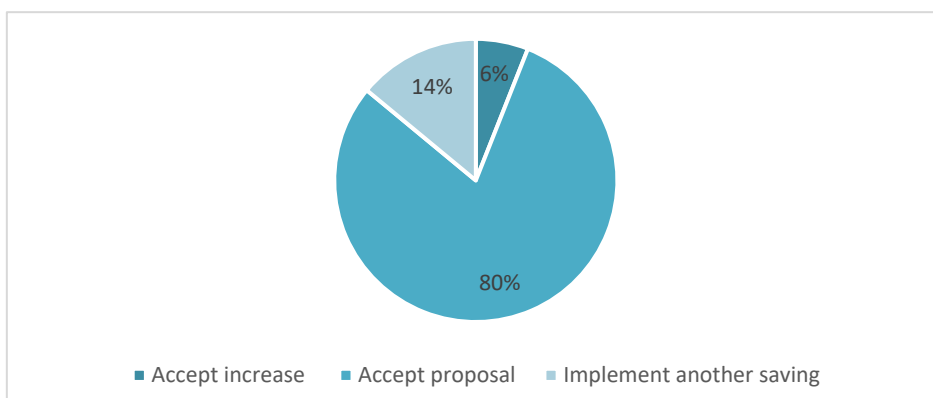


	16-24	25-44	45-64	65+	Pregnant	Mat/Pat	Female	Male	Disabled	Gender Reas.
AIS	1.24	1.11	1.08	0.95	1.35	1.64	1.08	1.07	1.03	1.26
Sample	37	552	870	339	23	10	991	756	233	164

	Carers	LGBTQ+	BME	Single	Religion	less £20k	£20-39k	£40k+	Welsh Language	Armed forces
AIS	1.07	1.12	1.32	0.95	1.06	1.04	1.16	0.86	1.09	1.07
Sample	378	58	25	610	905	544	916	342	378	138

	CA1	CA2	CA3	CA4	CA5	CA6
AIS	0.93	1.11	1.11	1.14	1.25	1.19
Sample	574	197	469	222	204	200

Response to accepting a 0.06% increase in the Council Tax in order to avoid efficiency saving.



11 comments received:

Impact

- A majority view that reduced operating hours would bring to bear adverse environmental (e.g. increase in fly tipping) and economic (e.g. loss of employment / reduced hours) impacts
- A number held the view that reduced operating hours would be unjust on those in employment (i.e. working '9 to 5' roles)
- An alternative view that the proposal would have a minimal impact

Mitigation

- It was suggested that a Sunday closure could realise greater savings
- Extend opening hours during summer and spring seasons

11. Litter Bins

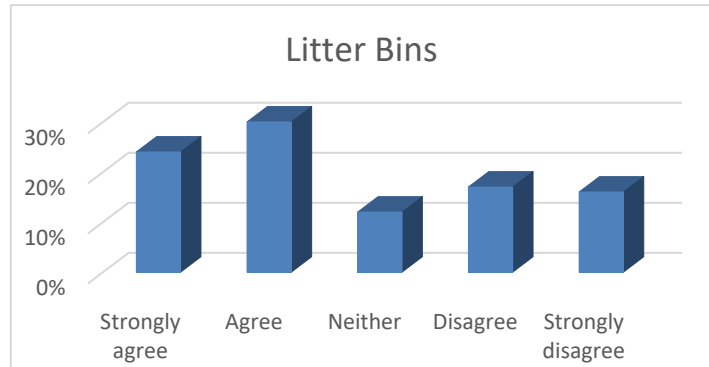
3-Year Saving: £100,000

Description:

We are looking to rationalise up to 20% of litter bins for the County. Following a review, we have seen that bins in laybys are often filled with household waste which is in contradiction to the initial purpose of these bins (i.e., fast food packaging). This rationalisation will deliver savings on Waste disposal charges, operative time and plant costs.

Increase in Council Tax if not adopted: 0.10%

Average Index Score: 0.29
Overall Rank (of 19): 13
Sample Size: 2006

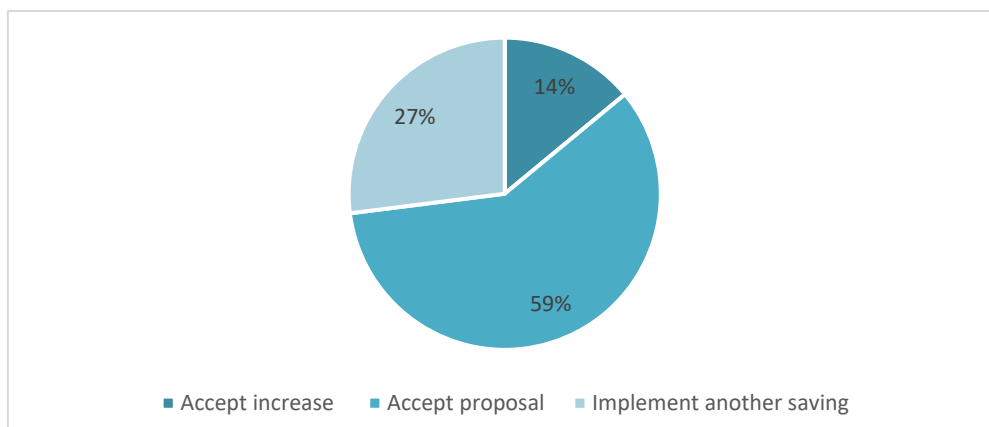


	16-24	25-44	45-64	65+	Pregnant	Mat/Pat	Female	Male	Disabled	Gender Reas.
AIS	0.7	0.3	0.37	0.3	0.7	0.91	0.29	0.42	0.27	0.29
Sample	37	549	860	335	23	11	984	747	231	164

	Carers	LGBTQ+	BME	Single	Religion	less £20k	£20-39k	£40k+	Welsh Language	Armed forces
AIS	0.33	0.37	0.72	0.32	0.36	0.3	0.43	0.2	0.41	0.29
Sample	380	57	25	601	904	538	908	339	374	140

	CA1	CA2	CA3	CA4	CA5	CA6
AIS	0.24	0.36	0.38	0.33	0.37	0.27
Sample	571	194	466	222	202	197

Response to accepting a 0.10% increase in the Council Tax in order to avoid efficiency saving.



This proposal received **44** comments:

Impact

- Concern that the proposal could lead to an increase in fly tipping
- Reference was made to the increased risk of dog fouling
- Some against proposal as it will harm the appeal of the county and therefore its potential for tourism
- Support on the basis that commercial operators (i.e. fast food chains) should contribute to the costs of the cleansing service and it is unfair on tax payers
- Incorrect use of litter bins is better than the alternative of fly tipping / littering
- A view that the proposal is ambiguous

Mitigation

- Bins located within or adjacent to town centres should be prioritised
- Improved enforcement through patrols and CCTV monitoring would lessen misuse of litter bins and reduce incidences of fly tipping
- Consider the design of bins to facilitate the correct disposal of waste
- Apply a 'litter levy' on commercial operators
- Print vehicle registration details on fast food packaging to combat littering
- Public information campaigns to raise awareness of the correct methods to dispose of household waste

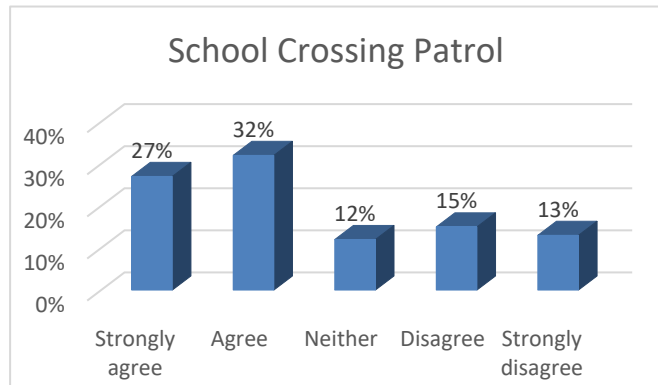
12. School Crossing Patrols

3 Year Savings: £16,000

Description: It is proposed that sites will no longer require a school crossing patrol if they do not meet the national criteria. Notwithstanding this, the home to school journey remains a parental responsibility unless home to school transport is provided by the authority.

Increase in Council Tax if not adopted: 0.02%

Average index score: 0.45
Overall Rank (of 19): 9
Sample Size: 2009

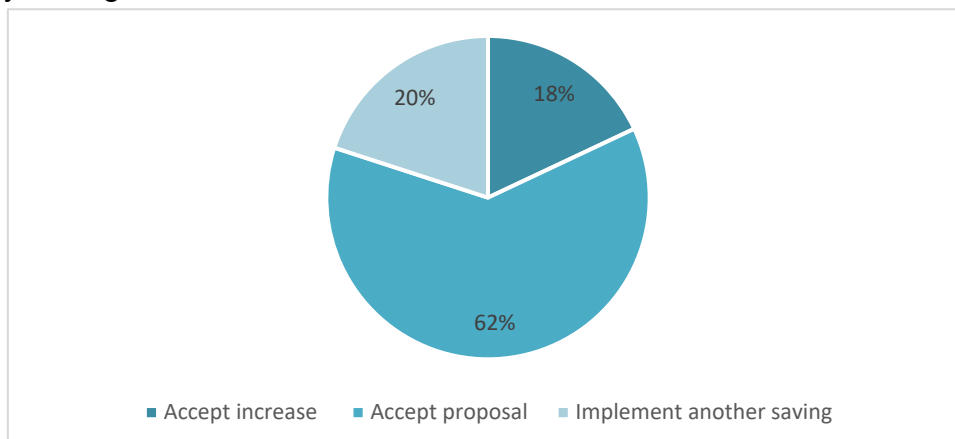


	16-24	25-44	45-64	65+	Pregnant	Mat/Pat	Female	Male	Disabled	Gender Reas.
AIS	0.76	0.33	0.49	0.55	0.36	0.83	0.38	0.56	0.43	0.54
Sample	37	546	862	344	22	12	987	753	234	162

	Carers	LGBTQ+	BME	Single	Religion	less £20k	£20-39k	£40k+	Welsh Language	Armed forces
AIS	0.49	0.57	0.62	0.53	0.48	0.51	0.47	0.47	0.56	0.42
Sample	375	58	26	602	906	544	911	337	371	142

	CA1	CA2	CA3	CA4	CA5	CA6
AIS	0.42	0.63	0.43	0.41	0.52	0.57
Sample	572	197	467	218	201	200

Response to accepting a 0.02% increase in the Council Tax in order to avoid efficiency saving.



The school crossing patrol proposal generated **178** comments

Impact

- Comments suggesting the service should be maintained formed the biggest response category
- A prevailing view that school crossing patrols are critical to ensuring pupil safety
- The risk of a traffic accident, and subsequent impact, outweighs the savings to be realised by implementing the proposal
- A safe environment will encourage children to walk to school – improving health and physical activity
- Proposal may increase vehicular usage around schools if more parents drive their children to school, bringing about environmental health impacts
- Concern that some drivers do not adhere to lower speed limits in school / built-up areas
- Concern that school staff may be required to maintain the service if withdrawn by the Council, placing additional pressures on schools
- Some agreement subject to an individual impact assessment for each affected school site prior to withdrawal of the service
- Reference was made to some schools having both a school crossing patrol and pedestrian crossings (e.g. Pelican crossing)

Mitigation

- Comments suggesting that the responsibility should lie with parents/carers. Similarly, whether the service could be run by parents in a volunteering capacity
- Use of Pelican or Puffin crossings to allow pupils to traverse the road safely
- Enforcement of 20mph speed limits will create a safer environment

Other comments relating to Place and Infrastructure Department

32 'other' comments were received

- Further comments on the imbalance of service provision in urban and rural areas, with rural residents seen to have poorer access to services
- Rationalisation of council buildings in light of agile working arrangements
- Views on the Council's spend on signage (Welcome to Carmarthen)
- Many of the proposals will generate a negligible saving, part of which will be expended when administering their implementation
- Council pay and management structure
- The survey does not set out the probable impacts of implementing the proposal
- Some comments on the structure of the survey

Members engagement: Place and Infrastructure

- Members did not accept a 10% increase to car parking charges
- Wide ranging discussion on 9 new car parks charging – concern that this will impact local shops/businesses – broad consensus that this was not supported, but if it proceeded, it was important that each locality needed to be looked at on its own merits
- Support for NantyCi parking proposal but recognised that NHS agreement was important
- Agreement to raise Residents parking charges, with suggestion that a higher increase to £50 could be considered
- Support to increase charges for commercial car park usage, especially example of banks, but recognise the need for discretion – should not be applied to e.g. blood bank.
- Mixed support for reduction in School Crossing Patrols
- Majority not supporting enforcing landowner responsibility for countryside access
- Strongly against cuts to highways general maintenance and supportive of raising council tax to fund
- Supportive of Camera car
- Strongly against Technical surveys proposal, and supportive of raising council tax to fund
- Broad support for all other highways proposals
- Broad support for all Place and Sustainability proposals
- General agreement for bins rationalisation but suggested local member involvement
- Broad agreement on HWRC opening days, but must be kept open at weekends
- Broad support for all other waste and environmental services proposals

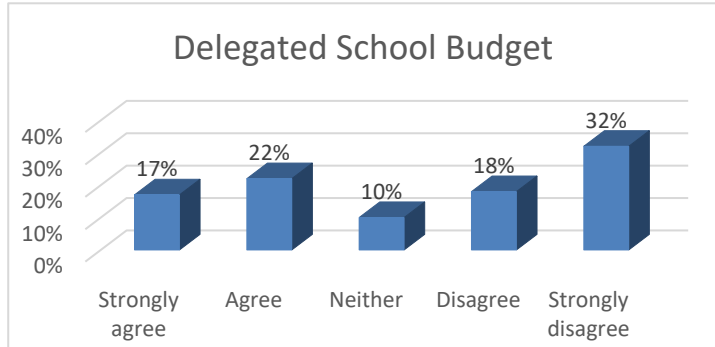
13. Delegated School's Budget

3-Year Saving: £2.7m

Description: While we will continue to provide full funding to meet the substantial increase in energy costs and teacher staff pay awards, we propose that the delegated budget to schools should be reduced by 2.1% in line with all other Council Departments. The management of the overall delegated school budget will be the responsibility of the school's governing body who will have to manage this reduction.

Increase in Council Tax if not adopted: 2.50%

Average index score: -0.25
Overall Rank (of 19): 19
Sample Size: 2006

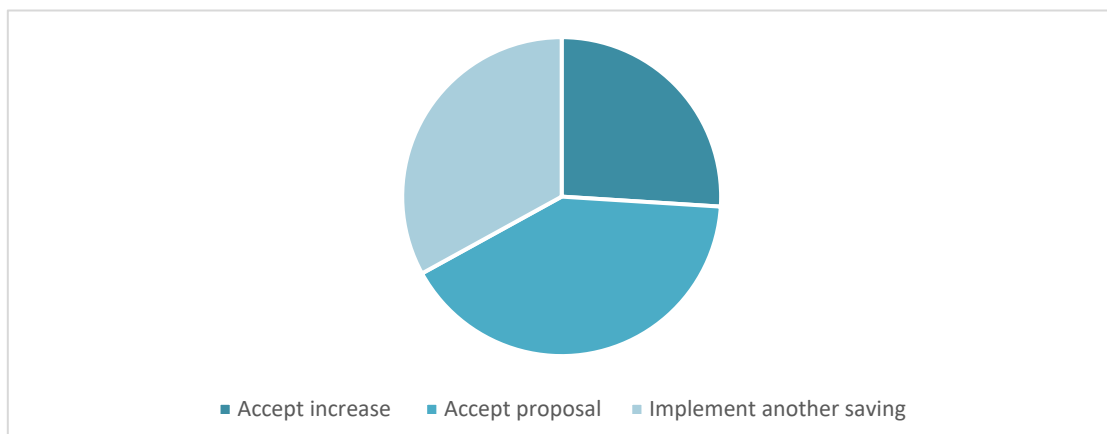


	16-24	25-44	45-64	65+	Pregnant	Mat/Pat	Female	Male	Disabled	Gender Reas.
AIS	-0.97	-0.5	-0.11	0	-0.74	-0.67	-0.37	-0.04	-0.01	-0.14
Sample	38	548	861	339	23	12	988	749	229	161

	Carers	LGBTQ+	BME	Single	Religion	less £20k	£20-39k	£40k+	Welsh Language	Armed forces
AIS	-0.19	-0.1	-0.04	-0.13	-0.2	-0.09	-0.29	-0.24	-0.21	-0.09
Sample	380	58	26	601	905	541	914	338	376	139

	CA1	CA2	CA3	CA4	CA5	CA6
AIS	-0.37	-0.03	-0.19	-0.22	-0.08	-0.15
Sample	569	200	467	217	202	200

Response to accepting a 2.5% increase in the Council Tax in order to avoid efficiency saving.



The Delegated Schools Budget proposal generated **75** comments

Impact

- A majority view that education should be a 'protected service'
- Emphasis was given to the impact on pupils' social and mental wellbeing, educational attainment and longer-term career opportunities
- Widespread concern that the proposal will further compound the effects of Covid on pupils' learning and development, with reference made to challenges around social integration, speech and language and pupil behaviour
- Concern in relation to larger classroom sizes and fewer teachers / teaching assistants, placing additional pressures on schools
- Proposal will undermine the deliverability of the new Curriculum for Wales
- Fear that teachers may leave the profession
- Risk of schools being placed in Special Measures
- Disinvestment in education is penny wise and pound foolish, inhibiting long-term economic growth and prosperity
- Possible impacts on the use and development of the Welsh language were highlighted – implementation of Welsh in Education Strategic Plans (WESPs)
- Some agreement that the delegated schools budget should be reviewed but not to the detriment of smaller, local schools
- An alternative view that the delegated schools budget could be expended more efficiently
- Specific mention was made of Ysgol Heol Goffa and SEN provision

Mitigation

- Review funding to support/ancillary functions such as Challenge Advisors
- Seek additional funding at a national level

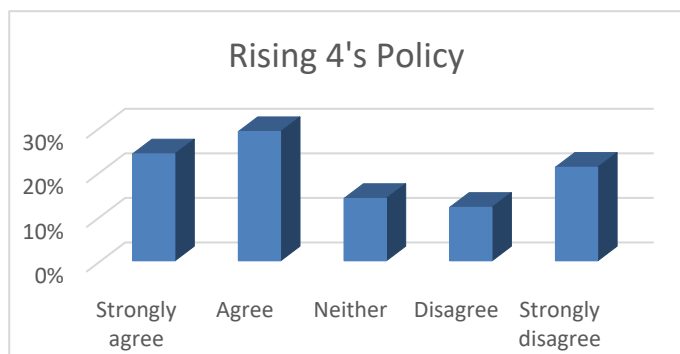
14. Rising 4's Policy

3-Year Saving: £500,000

Description: These non-statutory aged pupils receive a full-time education in a school when funding is available to provide this provision in alternative settings. The childcare funding for Wales provided by Welsh Government provides up to 30 hours free education and childcare for children aged between 3-4 for up to 48 weeks of the year. At a time when revenue expenditure is under extreme pressure, the funding of non-statutory full-time pupils at such an early age could be re-prioritised to fund other statutory functions from the schools delegated budget. Therefore, we are proposing to remove the rising 4's policy.

Increase in Council Tax if not adopted: 0.50%

Average index score: 0.22
Overall Rank (of 19): 14
Sample Size: 1997

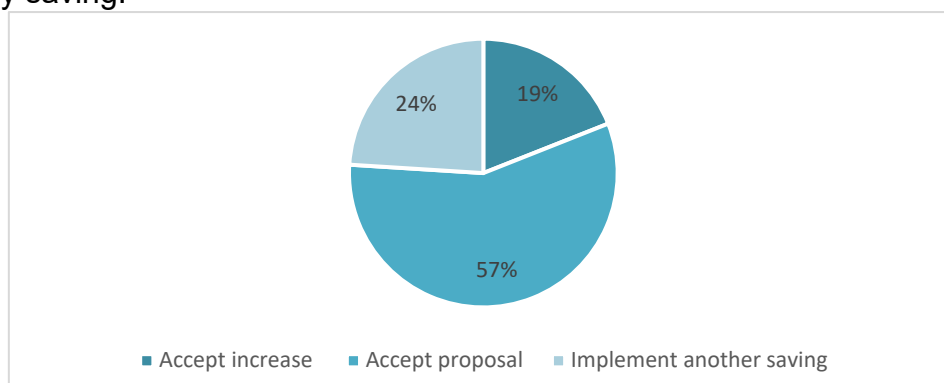


	16-24	25-44	45-64	65+	Pregnant	Mat/Pat	Female	Male	Disabled	Gender Reas.
AIS	-0.88	-0.22	0.43	0.4	-1.04	-0.92	0.1	0.32	0.34	0.22
Sample	34	549	859	338	23	13	986	745	232	163

	Carers	LGBTQ+	BME	Single	Religion	less £20k	£20-39k	£40k+	Welsh Language	Armed forces
AIS	0.36	0.32	0.5	0.19	0.23	0.4	0.07	0.3	0.19	0.39
Sample	376	59	26	602	897	543	911	333	371	141

	CA1	CA2	CA3	CA4	CA5	CA6
AIS	0.19	0.41	0.22	0.16	0.22	0.09
Sample	567	199	466	216	204	200

Response to accepting a 0.5% increase in the Council Tax in order to avoid efficiency saving.



This proposal received **31** comments:

Impact

- A number were against the proposal, advocating that all children should be afforded the opportunity to begin school at 4 years
- Has an important role in preparing young children for education
- Many views that the policy facilitates parents' transition back into the workplace and its removal would place jobs at risk
- Costs of childcare are prohibitive
- Concern that there are insufficient nursery / childcare places to manage the impacts of the proposal
- A comment that the current policy is applied unequally across primary schools in Carmarthenshire and its removal would restore parity

Mitigation

- Funding flexibility – it was suggested that childcare funding for Wales be used to cover the Rising 4's policy at parents' discretion

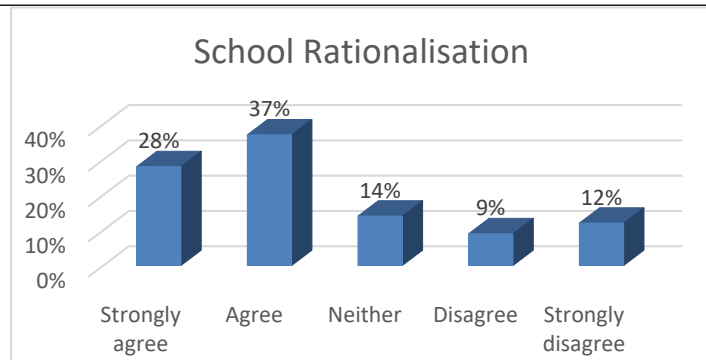
15. School Rationalisation

3-Year Saving: £750,000

Description: These non-statutory aged pupils receive a full-time education in a school when funding is available to provide this provision in alternative settings. The childcare funding for Wales provided by Welsh Government provides up to 30 hours free education and childcare for children aged between 3-4 for up to 48 weeks of the year. At a time when revenue expenditure is under extreme pressure, the funding of non-statutory full-time pupils at such an early age could be re-prioritised to fund other statutory functions from the schools delegated budget. Therefore, we are proposing to remove the rising 4's policy.

Increase in Council Tax if not adopted: 0.72%

Average index score: 0.61
Overall Rank (of 19): 7
Sample Size: 1991

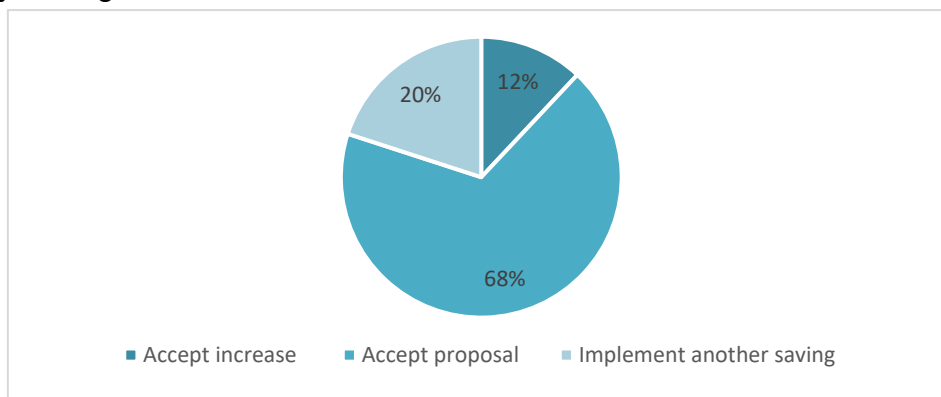


	16-24	25-44	45-64	65+	Pregnant	Mat/Pat	Female	Male	Disabled	Gender Reas.
AIS	0.69	0.42	0.69	0.78	0	-0.55	0.51	0.77	0.61	0.7
Sample	36	540	858	340	23	11	975	753	230	162

	Carers	LGBTQ+	BME	Single	Religion	less £20k	£20-39k	£40k+	Welsh Language	Armed forces
AIS	0.66	0.71	0.84	0.57	0.65	0.61	0.67	0.57	0.65	0.68
Sample	376	58	25	598	897	541	906	335	372	139

	CA1	CA2	CA3	CA4	CA5	CA6
AIS	0.52	0.58	0.78	0.43	0.98	0.52
Sample	565	196	462	218	201	565

Response to accepting a 0.5% increase in the Council Tax in order to avoid efficiency saving.



This proposal generated **53 comments**

Impact

- Comments outlined the negative impacts on pupil wellbeing due to a change of routine, loss of social networks etc.
- Some respondents maintained this would have a disproportionate impact on rural schools
- A view that schools have an important 'community' / 'hub' role in smaller and/or remote areas
- Proposal may fuel urbanisation – pushing families away from rural areas to larger towns with a consequential impact on rural economies
- Some agreement that the consolidation / amalgamation of smaller schools is a necessary and fair measure to reducing operating costs
- Acknowledgment of the age and condition of some school buildings
- Merged schools could provide a better learning experience for pupils with improved access to resources and curriculum opportunities
- Concern that decommissioning schools will cause buildings to fall into a state of disrepair. Respondents requested consideration be given to a longer-term, cohesive strategy for repurposing and/or redeveloping empty buildings
- Proposal is generalised and requires further detail of the impact on specific schools / areas. Some requested the undertaking of an impact assessment for each school

Mitigation

- Open up school buildings on evenings and weekends to generate income
- Give more prominence / weighting to school location and proximity when determining new planning applications
- Respondents cautioned against an over-reliance on school performance statistics as some factors (e.g. staff sickness) may reflect unfairly on individual schools. Consideration should be given to the wider social/community context

16. Youth Support Services

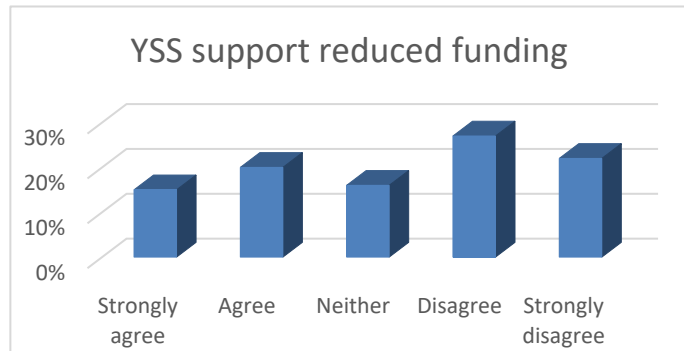
3-Year Saving: £100,000

Description: We are looking to reduce the financing of youth clubs by £16k and to seek alternative possible funding sources. Additionally, we are proposing that we reduce full-time school-based youth workers to 0.8FTE (Full-time equivalent). This can provide schools with the option to either fund the remaining 0.2FTE In addition, we will not be looking to fill vacant posts.

Increase in Council Tax if not adopted: 0.10%

Youth support services reduced funding

Average index score: -0.20
Overall Rank (of 19): 17
Sample Size: 1954



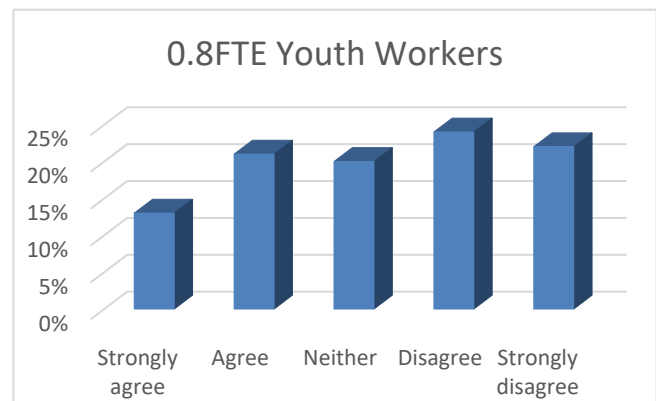
	16-24	25-44	45-64	65+	Pregnant	Mat/Pat	Female	Male	Disabled	Gender Reas.
AIS	0.43	-0.3	-0.12	-0.21	-0.05	-0.82	-0.32	0	-0.02	-0.09
Sample	37	532	842	332	20	11	960	733	230	161

	Carers	LGBTQ+	BME	Single	Religion	less £20k	£20-39k	£40k+	Welsh Language	Armed forces
AIS	-0.08	-0.21	-0.83	-0.12	-0.13	-0.17	-0.16	-0.19	-0.08	-0.26
Sample	371	57	24	600	880	531	888	332	365	138

	CA1	CA2	CA3	CA4	CA5	CA6
AIS	-0.23	-0.08	-0.2	-0.16	-0.03	-0.19
Sample	566	191	461	207	199	197

0.8FTE Youth Workers

Average index score: -0.20
Overall Rank (of 19): 18
Sample Size: 1840

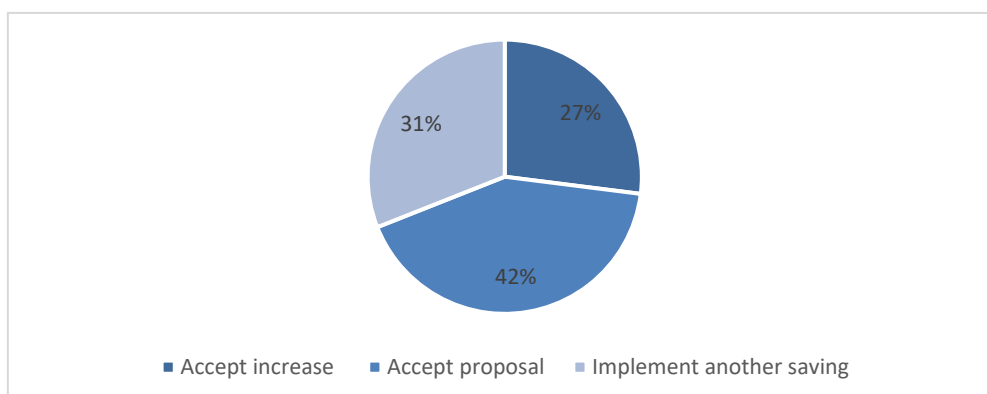


	16-24	25-44	45-64	65+	Pregnant	Mat/Pat	Female	Male	Disabled	Gender Reas.
AIS	0.33	-0.3	-0.13	-0.13	0.16	-0.27	-0.3	0	-0.1	-0.1
Sample	36	522	786	298	19	11	915	681	215	158

	Carers	LGBTQ+	BME	Single	Religion	less £20k	£20-39k	£40k+	Welsh Language	Armed forces
AIS	-0.15	-0.2	-0.67	-0.1	-0.15	-0.19	-0.18	-0.09	-0.17	-0.23
Sample	346	55	24	563	826	496	844	305	338	130

	CA1	CA2	CA3	CA4	CA5	CA6
AIS	-0.23	-0.12	-0.14	-0.1	-0.04	-0.2
Sample	531	181	426	195	182	194

Response to accepting a 0.10% increase in the Council Tax in order to avoid efficiency saving.



50 comments related to the Youth Support Services proposal

Impact

- Youth services provide social, health and cultural benefits
- Widespread view that school youth workers are a valuable asset to children and young people
- Youth clubs have an important 'community' role and provide a creative outlet and safe/trusted space for young people
- Reference was made to the growing numbers of younger people with poor mental health/wellbeing
- Youth services should be preserved against a backdrop of child poverty and increasing socio-economic inequity
- Reduced provision will increase pressure and costs on other services including social care, safeguarding and policing
- A view that the loss of youth support services will be irreversible even if the economic position within the public sector improves

Mitigation

- Explore opportunities for CCC Leisure to support youth services
- Use of volunteers to sustain the service

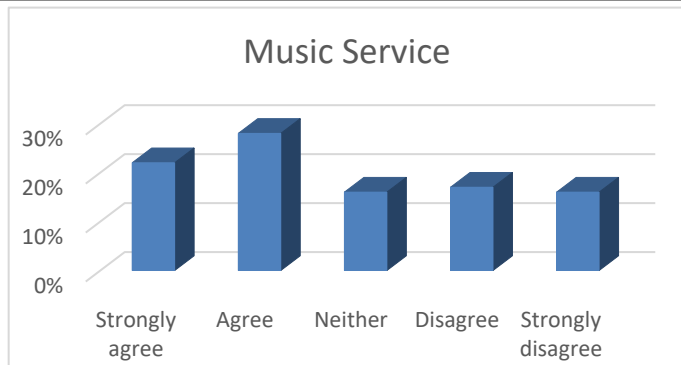
17. Music Service

3-Year Saving: £75,000

Description: We propose to look at all options to reduce costs including staffing and not appointing to vacant positions. We will review the skill set and balance required between staffing who hold qualified teacher status, paid on school teacher's pay and conditions, and those employed on a 'tutor' basis, aiming to meet the needs of schools efficiently.

Increase in Council Tax if not adopted: 0.07%

Average index score: 0.99
Overall Rank (of 19): 5
Sample Size: 1943

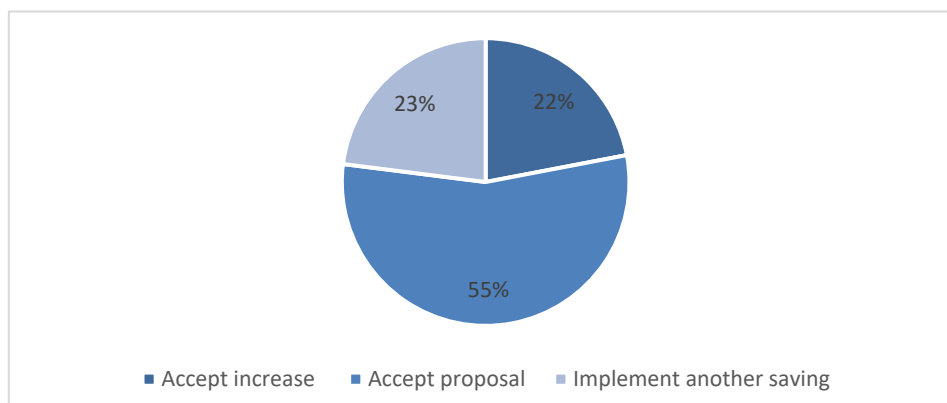


	16-24	25-44	45-64	65+	Pregnant	Mat/Pat	Female	Male	Disabled	Gender Reas.
AIS	1.03	0.91	1	1.13	1.29	1	0.96	1.03	0.96	0.9
Sample	39	524	839	331	21	11	952	733	223	159

	Carers	LGBTQ+	BME	Single	Religion	less £20k	£20-39k	£40k+	Welsh Language	Armed forces
AIS	0.92	1.03	1.13	0.96	1	0.97	1.03	0.91	0.94	0.94
Sample	365	59	24	591	874	529	887	324	365	131

	CA1	CA2	CA3	CA4	CA5	CA6
AIS	1.04	0.99	1.01	0.95	1.01	0.94
Sample	557	192	452	212	200	192

Response to accepting a 0.07% increase in the Council Tax in order to avoid efficiency saving.



Impact

- A broad view that music fosters a more inclusive and diverse curriculum, broadening pupils' interests and transferrable skills outside of conventional academic subjects
- Support expressed for Carmarthenshire's Music Service with some respondents recalling how it has helped further their academic interests at further/high education level, launched careers in music and given rise to national performances (e.g. Eisteddfod)
- Several comments from young people against the proposal noting the confidence building, teamwork and escapism that the music service provides
- Concern that the proposal will limit the exposure of music education to young children
- Provides access to activities and experiences that many children cannot obtain at home
- Further efficiencies will jeopardise the viability and quality of the music service
- The proposal runs counter to the emphasis given to 'Expressive Arts' within the new Curriculum for Wales
- The need to support music because of its cultural significance to Wales was noted
- Concern that schools will be required to fund any deficit in provision
- Unfair on parents who already pay a contribution towards the music service
- Those in favour suggested music is not a core component of the curriculum and noted the wider savings required across education. Reasonable to ask parents to contribute to the cost of lessons
- A view that the remuneration of teachers should reflect the different roles and responsibilities of classroom and peripatetic music teachers/staff

Mitigation

- Suggestions that parents should bear more of the cost as it is a 'desirable' service, with means-tested subsidies offered to those on low incomes to ensure the charge isn't prohibitive
- Offer music tuition in after school clubs
- Learning via YouTube, social media and private tutors

Other comments relating to Education and Children's Services Department

27 'other' comments were submitted within the Education section and related to:

- Parity between Welsh and English medium education funding
- Review of Council staffing and pay structure
- Councillor remuneration
- Spending on infrastructure / capital projects
- Sale of Council buildings, facilitated by accommodating more staff at central locations
- Structure and format of survey

Members engagement: Education and Children's Services

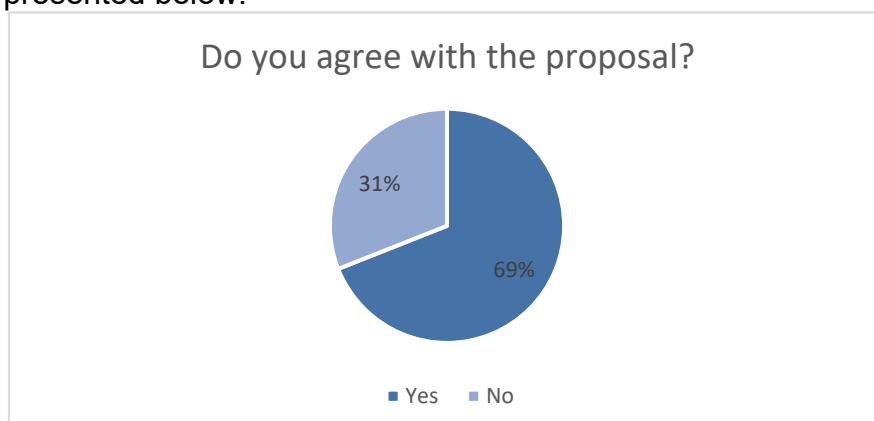
- Some members were not in favour of closing small schools, whilst others recognised the need to look at small school provision, given the scale of the budget challenges, and wider non-financial considerations such as difficulty recruiting staff, leadership issues and maintenance challenges. Recognition that admin etc required for a school was now so significant that for a small school this was too much and it was not fair on the pupils. Recognition that whilst federation could be considered in some areas, this would still mean two school buildings, so minimal savings. The process needs to be carefully managed and transparent, and each case needs to be considered on its merits, including the impact on school transport and safe routes to schools provision. Suggestion that consideration could be given to asset transfer to local or community groups as their could be unforeseen costs of unused assets. Comment made over the possible beneficial role of small schools for ALN
- The 2.1% reduction to delegated schools budget was seen as a necessary evil – “need to be realistic”, with members suggesting that governors may need training to manage budget reductions. There was concern over the negative impact on staff pressure, and that small schools in particular may have little or nothing to cut as the budget was so tight. There was positive recognition that the council was providing funding for energy costs and pay increases, taking some of the pressure off
- Members felt that the current youth club provision did not cover all areas of the county and may not be equitable. Suggestion that Town and Community councils should be more involved in local provision and could possibly access grants (suggestion of police funding). A possible link was made between a reduction in the youth provision and an increase in future offending rates and/or substance misuse, so may not be effective in the long run. Consideration to be given to phasing the savings over 2 years possibly
- Members felt that that any change to the rising 4s policy needed to be equitable, with possibly all children starting in the September term. There was recognition that any change would a difficult impact on schools, particularly small schools. Also this could create some difficulties for working parents, though it was recognised alternative provision would be available. Suggestion that a change of approach could create a safeguarding issue for vulnerable families
- Some Members were not in favour of using more grant funding towards children's services – as a statutory service they felt it should be core funded, whilst others welcomed maximisation of grants available to the service. There was concern that it may not be realistic to cut the budget, as this could result in a risk to statutory duties

which could cost more. Early intervention is both better and cheaper than dealing with potentially more devastating outcomes

- When considering the School Music Service, members questioned whether the new curriculum meant that this should be core funded by Welsh Government. It was felt that it was a service which needs to be provided, it linked to a growing creative industry and was of benefit to pupil wellbeing during the pandemic. Also seen as not the right time given the Urdd Eisteddfod coming to Llandovery this year.
- Members agreed with the proposal to reduce early years non maintained support
- Members were concerned with the practicalities of sharing redundancy costs with schools and how achievable this was, especially if the school was already in deficit. They were however supportive of improved efforts to redeploy staff and avoid redundancies.
- Some members were happy with departmental administrative efficiencies, whilst others were concerned this could have a negative effect on the service received by schools, with existing concerns already over the time taken to provide some information.

Increase in chargeable services

Participants were asked to give their opinion on whether chargeable services such as; green waste collection, leisure services, school meals, car parking, adult social care, and public protection etc. should increase in line with 10% inflation. The results are presented below.



	16-24	25-44	45-64	65+	Pregnant	Mat/Pat	Female	Male	Disabled	Gender Reas.
Yes	68%	71%	71%	67%	70%	67%	71%	70%	0%	61%
No	32%	29%	29%	33%	30%	33%	29%	30	100%	39%

	Carers	LGBTQ+	BME	Single	Religion	less £20k	£20-39k	£40k+	Welsh Language	Armed forces
Yes	69%	70%	77%	67%	70%	65%	75%	64%	71%	71%
No	31%	30%	23%	33%	30%	35%	25%	36%	29%	29%

	CA1	CA2	CA3	CA4	CA5	CA6
Yes	73%	77%	72%	63%	70%	70%
No	27%	23%	28%	37%	30%	30%

A wide range of viewpoints were expressed. Whilst there was broad understanding of the budgetary challenges faced by the Council, a high number of comments received suggested that a **blanket 10% inflationary increase** in chargeable fees across all service areas would not be reasonable. A ‘one size fits all’ approach would, in the views of many respondents, have a disproportionate impact on certain demographic cohorts who rely most upon these services.

In particular, concern was expressed at the current **cost of school meals** against the backdrop of the cost-of-living crisis and the additional pressure that would be placed on families should the costs of this service increase. Furthermore, it was felt that **increases to leisure centre fees** would be counterproductive in light of the upward trend in obesity and physical inactivity, with the subsequent risk of exacerbating demand on the NHS. Respondents emphasised the importance of leisure centres to promoting good physical and mental wellbeing.

A similar sentiment was conveyed in relation to **car parking charges** with numerous respondents stating that increased fees would deter residents and visitors from shopping at town centres to the economic detriment of local businesses. In response, some participants advocated for free car parking to increase town centre footfall.

Many respondents agreed with the principle of the proposal but queried the **affordability** of a universal 10% increase at a time when wages/income/pensions have not kept track with inflation.

In contrast to a blanket methodology, respondents recommended the council adopt a more **flexible approach** whereby the quantum of any increases are tailored to individual service areas based on an assessment of need/impact. Accordingly, this would enable some chargeable services to be increased by a reduced amount (i.e. below inflation) or maintained at current pricing levels.

There was also broad recognition of the need to consider a raise in incoming generating fees to **mitigate against any further increases in council tax** and if all other options for reducing council services have been exhausted. Many respondents indicated that they would be against a rise in council tax and/or would favour an increase in charges over a **reduction in the scope or quality of council services**.

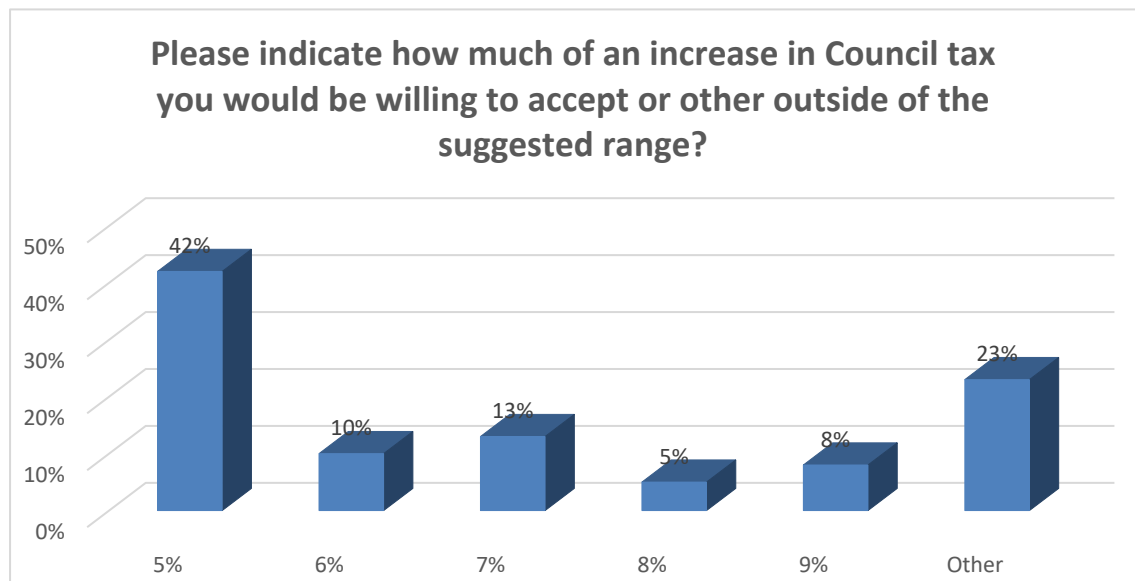
A number of other views were put forward for the Council’s consideration:

- Increased fees will bring to bear negative **social, economic and environmental impacts**
- Increases to **adult social care** fees may make the service inaccessible and unaffordable for those in greatest need. Consequent risk of increasing the pressure on unpaid carers
- ‘**Snowball / domino effect**’ – increased fees could lower the take up of services, reducing their overall viability and quality and placing jobs at risk as long-term demand is reduced
- Ensure appropriate **procurement processes** are in place in relation to school meals to facilitate value for money and local sourcing of foods
- Implement voluntary charging for **breakfast clubs**

- **Variable pricing for leisure services** based on demand / time of day (i.e. charge less during 'off peak' times)
- Council's **staffing and pay structure** should be reviewed
- Comments on **councillor remuneration**
- Use of **council reserves** to minimise cost increases
- Observations that **council protocols** in relation to signage, Welsh language, equalities and planning offer opportunities for efficiency savings
- A review of **current infrastructure projects** was suggested
- A view that residents face a 'double charge' to maintain the status quo - a raise in income generating fees together with a concurrent increase in council tax
- Agreement with the proposal on the proviso that the council undertakes a **regular review of the inflation rate** and is **responsive to any fluctuations**, passing on any reduction to service users without delay
- Views against the **closure of St Clears Leisure Centre** – these are considered on page 12.

Council Tax

Respondents were asked to indicate how much of an increase in Council Tax they would be willing to accept. Results are presented in the bar graph below.



Sample: 1929

Teams from 10 secondary schools across Carmarthenshire have given their views on proposals in the Council's budget as part of an event designed to engage with young people. The Council's annual Insight event is open to all secondary schools in the county and gives pupils the chance to put themselves in the roles of the Council's Cabinet and discuss their opinions on the proposed budget. This year, pupils from years 10-13 from Ysgol y Strade, Ysgol Gyfun Emlyn, QE High, Dyffryn Taf, Ysgol Gyfun Bro Myrddin, Coedcae, Bryngwyn, Glan-y-Mor, Dyffryn Aman, Ysgol Bro Dinefwr took part in the event on Thursday January 26 at County Hall in Carmarthen.

The aim of the event is to introduce young people to local government and give them an insight into the challenges on a day-to-day basis. It is also an opportunity for Cabinet Members to hear pupils' views and discuss with them directly about issues that matter to them. The task involved discussing and determining which efficiencies pupils would like to keep and which to remove, taking into account how it would be managed, its impact and how it would be communicated. As Cabinet Members they were required to compromise and negotiate to ensure that the Council had the right strategy which best suits the residents of Carmarthenshire. Each school group selected a Leader and Deputy Leader which presented the teams recommendations to Cabinet members and senior staff. A summary of the key points raised are presented below.

1) St Clears Leisure Centre

- Majority of school groups felt that this efficiency should be made as there are a number of local alternatives available. Pupils made specific reference to Carmarthen Leisure centre which has better facilities and is in close proximity.
- Some groups noted that the St Clears Leisure Centre building is in poor condition and that the upkeep of the building is becoming unsustainable.
- Dyffryn Aman and QE High noted that St Clears leisure centre could be sold to private leisure facilities to continue to offer leisure facilities in the area
- Ysgol y Strade suggested that an asset transfer could be done with the Town and Community Council using an alternative model. They proposed that no funding should be given in the first year to allow time for the Town and Community Council to demonstrate that it is a viable business. Following this period, funding would be issued in year 2 and reduced year on year.

2) Pendine Outdoor Education Centre

- Most of the schools agreed that Pendine Outdoor Education Centre should remain as an efficiency as the building and facilities are in a bad state of repair and is becoming unsustainable.
- Many schools including Bro Dinefwr, Glan-y-Môr, and QE High noted that alternative provision should be set up elsewhere within the County to accommodate the closure.
- Bro Dinefwr noted that there are other centres within and outside of the County which have better facilities which are better used.
- Many groups including Ysgol Gyfun Emlyn, Coedcae, Bryngwyn noted that the facility is dated and does not generate enough income.

3) Library Services

- There were mixed feelings regarding the Library services proposal. For example Dyffryn Taf, Coedcae and Glan-Y-Môr groups felt that it is a vital asset for smaller, rural communities and is vital to maintain community spirit.
- Dyffryn Taf and Coedcae also noted that libraries are vital for young people and the older generation and more should be done to increase footfall for all ages.
- Dyffryn Taf and Glan-y-Môr also noted that libraries should be changed to provide working spaces and not just have 'books'.
- Alternatively, other groups noted that whilst smaller branch libraries will be a loss, alternative provision is provided through online services with some suggesting that schools could host the libraries in smaller rural areas.

4) Introduce charging at 9 car parks

- The majority of groups agreed with this proposal however some alternative suggestions were made. Specifically, Strade noted that there should be a reward scheme for people parking at the car parks if they are shopping locally whereby, they would have a reduced rate if they have purchased anything in the town/village (e.g., similar to ASDA, Llanelli car park).
- Glan-y-Môr noted that there should be a free time period as customers may use the carpark for very minimal time to 'pop in' to the local shops. Having a charge may drive away customers to areas (such as Retail parks) instead of buying in their local town/village.
- Bro Myrddin noted that areas which are for vocational or leisure use should be charged however areas where the parking is needed for shopping (e.g., Burry Port and Kidwelly) should remain free as there are no alternatives.

5) Charge for commercial use

- Majority of groups agreed with this efficiency. Groups such as Dyffryn Amman noted that Health services (e.g., Blood banks, food banks) should not receive a charge.
- All groups agreed that most commercial companies should be charged for the use of car parks.

6) Publication of Planning Applications

- All groups agreed to keep this efficiency in the budget. Some noted that Social media and digital means should be explored.

7) Parking permits

- All groups agreed to keep this proposal as an efficiency within the budget with some suggesting that the charge should increase if residents have multiple vehicles.

8) Countryside Access

- Majority of groups agreed to retain this proposal in the budget. Some schools such as Bro Dinefwr disagreed and noted that the cutting of vegetation should be done by professionals to ensure that it is maintained properly and there is consistency.

9) NantyCi Park & Ride

- Most school groups agreed to retain this efficiency proposal. Pupils noted that the service is insufficiently used and if HDdHB want to continue to keep the service then they would have to continue funding it.

10) Household waste recycling centres (HWRCs)

- The majority of groups supported this proposal. Closure times should be evidenced based and opening times should also be based on footfall.
- Schools such as Dyffryn Taf and QE High noted that educational campaigns should be held in schools to promote recycling in schools.

11) Litter Bins

- Majority of schools agreed with this proposal on the basis that the bins removed are from laybys and not in areas where they are needed. Many expressed that layby bins should be removed as they are being misused.

12) School crossing patrol

- There were mixed feelings regarding the school crossing patrol proposal. Some schools thought that the efficiency is reasonable and only the 30 areas should be patrolled. Additionally, pupils believed that it is the responsibility of the parent and guardian to ensure that their child arrives to school safely.
- Some noted that removing school crossing patrols could be dangerous and each area should be assessed by the Council.

13) Delegated Schools Budget

- Most school groups disagreed with this efficiency proposal noting that schools are currently under significant pressures. However, a number of schools suggested that the amount deduced from school budgets should be reduced (e.g., Ysgol Emlyn 1%, Dyffryn Amman 1.2%).
- QE High suggested that schools should look to generate income themselves to help the financial difficulties.
- Ysgol Emlyn also noted that during this financial crisis it is important that education continues to be supported as a 'more educated workforce means more people in work'. Further they also suggested combining proposals moving libraries into schools to generate income.

14) Primary Schools Rising 4's Policy

- The majority of school groups agreed to retain this proposal. However, Coedcae noted that this may impact children's ability to socialise and be more comfortable with school earlier. This may have an impact on attendance in future years.
- Some noted that this may have an impact on Welsh language skills as young pupils are starting to learn the language in social environments later.

15) School Rationalisation

- Whilst there were rigorous discussions held in the majority of groups, overall there was an acceptance of this proposal. Some noted that some areas will lose their community as there is no school in smaller towns/villages. However, Ysgol Emlyn noted that there will be a community as the majority of those pupils will attend the same school.

- Bro Dinefwr noted that the reduction of schools would cost less for the Council due to maintenance of older school buildings.
- QE High noted that bigger, newer schools can help educate young pupils and become 21st century schools.
- Bro Myrddin agreed with the proposal and noted that the merging of schools can help educate pupils better as they will be able to pool resources and expertise.

16) Youth Support Services

- Most school groups disagreed with the Youth Support Services proposals. Ysgol Emlyn noted that Covid-19 has impacted young people massively and that support should be increased rather than reduced.
- Additionally, Coedcae noted that Youth Services support young peoples' mental health and gives them an opportunity to socialise and destress.
- Dyffryn Amman noted that rather than a blanket approach, each school should be assessed case-by-case to identify need.

17) Music Service

- Most schools agreed that this proposal should be removed. Some schools such as Bringwyn indicated that the service should be enhanced rather than reduced.
- Dyffryn Taf noted that the Music Service and learning to play instruments should be encouraged as it builds character and improves learning. Additionally, they would also like to see more modern, rather than classical/traditional aspects being offered.
- Ysgol Emlyn also noted that learning music is beneficial for pupils wellbeing and many pupils will not have the opportunity to experience this outside of school. In addition, they raised the potential impact on charging low income families to use the Music service and highlighted that the service would not be accessible for all.

6) NOTES FROM BUDGET CONSULTATION MEETINGS

Schools Strategy Budget Forum – 11th January 2023

Aneirin Thomas (AT) Head of Education & Inclusion services
Randal Hemingway (RH) Head of Financial Services
Susannah Nolan (SN), Group Accountant, Education & Children
Gareth Morgans (GM) Director of Education & Children
Peter Evans (PE) Headteacher Bro Banw
Simon Davies (SD) Head of Access to Education
John Jones, (JJ) Headteacher Glanymor
Allan Carter (AT) Schools Transformation and Change Manager
Paul Jones (PJ) Headteacher Bryngwyn

AT welcomed Randall Hemingway and Susannah Nolan to the forum and outlined that this year we will be facing a number of significant challenges.

The current shortfall for the Carmarthenshire County Council falls well below what we were expecting, however the current figure is still substantial. Proposals in terms of meeting the funding gap have already been identified. AT urged colleagues to undertake the consultation survey on the budget as feedback is vital from everybody concerned.

RH proceeded to take colleagues through the corporate picture and how schools fit within this, including the proposals for delegated schools' budget. RH provided an outlook for the year ahead and years two and three and detailed information in regard to pay and energy costs which of course affects all schools.

Welsh Government have taken on board the lobbying by authorities and the budgetary settlement is better. Welsh Government funding represents around three-quarters of the authority's yearly funding. This year, although the settlement is much better than expected, the inflationary increase is unprecedented.

RH proceeded to show colleagues a year-on-year chart of funding awards. All Wales average increase is 7.9%. Carmarthenshire County Council is overall 8.5% increase. Indicative figures are around 3.0% for Year 2. The final Welsh Government budget will be published on 7th March. The authority must set figures for Council Tax by the 10th of March.

In terms of pressure, we have allowed £12 million which will need to cover everything e.g., heating in care homes, school meals. In terms of pay, this is by far the largest budgetary item on every school budget.

The Teacher's Pay award is currently a risk for the LA. The increase of 5% was accepted by Welsh Government but as yet has not been accepted by unions. For next year, we have assumed 5%.

There are some positives e.g., pension fund is performing well and provides a one-off sum to help plug the budget gap. In addition, a move to actual 'Spinal points' for salaries will realise additional funding- this does not directly impact school budgets. Proposal to increase all fees at a rate of 10%.

Energy cost increases have been included and factored for next year.

On Education and Children funding, our approach for schools is a 2.1% reduction. However additional funding will be identified to meet pay, energy and inflation costs. Departmental forecasts for the next years were then divulged to colleagues.

£700,000 available to enable Cabinet to address budget consultation outcomes.

We welcome your views; survey is open until 29th January, and cabinet meetings will commence on the formal budget 13th February.

AT thanked RH for his comprehensive observations.

GM hoped that these details did not come as too much of a surprise. We are looking at offering up around £1.75 million of savings for the Education and Children Services.

We will be looking at making a 2.1% reduction in school budgets. We are concerned about the impact of the £2.7 million cut especially in our smaller schools.

Directors have been asked to identify pressures; our main concerns are allowances we pay our foster parents and managing to keep our learners in Carmarthenshire especially those who require special and additional measures. There is currently a huge ALN demand and our legal obligations in meeting needs. Another pressure is the school meals service and the cost of food.

These are policy proposals.

£2.7 million cut in school budgets, schools may wish to work out the impact that this cut will mean to their individual schools.

Policy proposal for year 2 and 3- a review of school footprint and school improvement requirements. The model of maintaining 112 schools is unsustainable.

Saving around £225,000 across the department in Better Ways of Working, with the reduction of travel time, working from home/hybrid models.

A new way we manage redundancies- there is a central budget for this which needs to be reviewed.

Support for Early Years and non-maintained sectors, looking at how we provide support to these settings efficiently and cost-effectively.

Partneriaeth is partly contributed to by us as an authority. We have negotiated with the Partneriaeth and this year there will be a reduction in our contribution.

Youth Services- in discussion on reducing general costs, travel, etc, and making better use of grant funding.

£250,000 saving against Children Services, Jan Coles is looking at how to make better use of the system we currently have.

These will be challenging and difficult to deliver and will impact indirectly on learners and schools. The Director mentioned that this is one of the most difficult budgets we have ever had to set. Next year, could be even more difficult. These issues will be with us for the foreseeable future. Some of our families are struggling and our schools need to be commended for assisting our schools.

The Director wanted to thank our primary schools in terms of the roll-out of free school meals and there has been a significant uptake of this offer and understands that the funding of this is putting extra pressure on school catering budgets.

The floor was then opened for any questions.

PE asked in terms of the footprint of schools what type of reduction are we looking at.

The Director mentioned a workshop with members in these terms, where we set the stall out around ALN, Leadership, condition of buildings etc. The ultimate decision will lie with the Cabinet in terms of how they wish to proceed. We will hopefully see a decision on this before the end of this academic year. SD mentioned that it all depends what fits for any particular area of schools and age ranges.

JJ asked whether these cuts would have an impact on capital projects as well. The Director mentioned that the capital agenda is a key component for Carmarthenshire County Council, the decision will probably be made to leave the capital monies currently but possibly have to dip into, in the future.

RH mentioned that the draft budget for capital monies is yet to be written up, there is not a huge amount of cash to use.

GJ mentioned that statutory and curricular requirements are obligations every school needs to meet, and some schools may have to set deficit budgets. The Director noted that there is a process of licencing a deficit budget and we collaborate with schools to resolve issues.

AT added that pupil numbers will impact funding and also grant funding, what is important is that we focus on what has worked well in the past in terms of planning ahead.

GJ asked as to when we could expect the figures to set budgets. The Director mentioned that the authority budget will discuss the budget on the 1st of March, SN and team will then get numbers out to schools. They will work on the forecasts, but SN kindly asked if colleagues could get their pupil numbers to the Data Team as soon as they can, this would help matters significantly.

AT, it was noted that SLA costs are yet to be deducted from school budgets. AC reassured colleagues in terms of SLA's that these issues are currently being addressed.

PE asked whether secondary schools still have budget re-runs? SN replied that they do and the reasons for that approach.

PJ suggested the sharing of good practice between primary/secondary and addressing overlap and streamlining services for children. AT agreed and this will be discussed at a future forum.

In conclusion AT wished to ask colleagues that this forum is looking for a new Chair.

Chris Moore (CM), Director of Corporate Services
Randal Hemingway (RH) Head of Financial Services
Rob Young (RY), Lead HR Business Partner
Mark Evans (ME), Unison
Jonathan James (JJ), GMB
Brian Harries (BH), Unite

CM shared the Revenue Budget Strategy that was presented at Cabinet 9th January 2023. CM explained that we have been in austerity for over 10 years and the challenges keep on coming. Raising Council Tax is not an ideal option. Settlement was far better than expected, 8.5% for us where we were predicted 3.6%. Savings target for 23/24 - £9.4m, 24/25 - £6.4m and 25/26 - £4.5m. Final settlement will not come through until March.

The new waste strategy of 3 weekly collections is seen to the public as a cut however it is a push to increase recycling which will actually cost more.

Due to a consequence of inflation and pay awards, there was a £38m gap at the start of the year. Pay rise cost 7.1% - 3.1% extra than budgeted. 4% has been put aside for teachers with an extra 1%, still unsure of outcome, there is no extra money put aside for teachers, WG would have to ask UKG.

If we don't put Council Tax up there will have to be cuts elsewhere. Reiterated that the new Waste Strategy has been put in place to encourage the public to recycle more not a cut on a service.

Due to the performance of the Dyfed Pension Fund, we can reduce employer's contributions, which will offset some pressures by approximately £3m, this does not affect staff's pension.

We have made a saving of £2m on NI contributions.

We have also taken out the 'slack' on spinal point grades so that that budget cannot be used which is a saving.

CM touched very briefly on the fact that our electric and gas costs have increased three-fold.

Comments from Union members:

ME - 8.5% on inflation is still a cut, should not be called a no cuts budget. Unions object to the so-called survey. The proposal's effect people who are already struggling. School cuts directly affect children's education, closing leisure centres impacts on health and wellbeing. Unions have issues with the people making the decisions not the officers. Strongly worded motion does not cut it and using reserves to plug gaps will just make us worse off next year. Also suggested we set a no cuts budget which is not balanced and ask for more money from WG.

CM – Explained that the Council was required by law to set a balanced budget and as Section 151 officer he was duty bound to advise members against setting an unlawful budget.

JJ – questioned why we hadn't hit our waste target?

ME – staff have been led to believe that we have received a fine.

CM / RH – query the fine with the Department, both are unaware of any fine, as we are being seen to work towards the goals set by WG, with regards to changing vehicles etc.

JJ – asked whether we had paid towards the new electric vehicles? Electric vehicles do not work in rural communities, would have been better to spend the money elsewhere.

RH – Confirmed we received grant funding.

JJ – questioned should LA's be pushing back on agenda items such as the new Waste Strategy with WG and asking to use the money elsewhere.

RH – explained that they have raised pushing back on some areas, such as the 20mph limit, no feedback has been received to date.

CM – CJC's pushed back on draft budget from £1.5m to £600k

JJ – With the rise in Council Tax, staff's pay rise will have gone, and members of the public see the rise and service cuts such as waste collection. JJ also raised the validity of using Band D to investigate figures.

RH – Confirmed that $\frac{3}{4}$ of the properties in Carmarthenshire are Band A-D

ME – believes there are inconsistencies regarding the 0% Carbon Footprint agenda, the issue is being transferred to staff working from home using their electric/gas.

JJ – queried whether agency staff had been costed into the budget.

CM – Yes costs have been built into the budget.

RY – confirmed that spend for last year was £2.5m for corporate agency staff and £4.5m for schools.

JJ – Concerns that agency staff are used on a more permanent basis.

CM – During consultation process a Councillor has raised that we should be looking at a pool of teachers within the Authority, dialogue is required.

JJ – Suggested that we should be providing the private sector our services to make income and we should be putting proposals to WG to change this Legislation. JJ

gave an example of ash die back issue, public are paying for private companies to cut them down rather than CCC, when they are already on site. The staff have never been asked their views on how they can make money.

CM – There are certain Governance and Legislation in place that prevent this. CM will feedback the lack of communication to Ainsley Williams.

JJ – Unions want to see the removal of spinal points to allow just 2 and was told there was money available if that's not the case there will be strike action.

CM – the removal of spinal points was not included in the budget the report has not been finalised.

CM closed the meeting by re-iterating that balancing the books is challenging.

JJ said that bringing back working groups to liaise with staff would be good.

CM will take this back to WW.

7) MINUTES OF SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETINGS

CORPORATE PERFORMANCE & RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MONDAY, 30 JANUARY 2023

The Cabinet Member for Resources presented the Revenue Budget Strategy 2023/24 to 2025/26 which had been endorsed by the Cabinet for consultation purposes at its meeting on 9th January 2023.

The report indicated that, after adjustments for Welsh Government identified transfers, the increase in the provisional settlement for Carmarthenshire was 8.5% (£26.432 million). The Aggregate External Finance (AEF) had therefore increased to £338.017 million in 2023/24. Whilst the settlement was significantly above the indicative figure of a 3.4% increase and provided £15.5m more than the original assumption, Welsh Government had recognised that the increased figure would not be enough to meet the inflationary pressures currently facing councils and that difficult decisions would therefore need to be made.

It was noted that whilst significant work had already been undertaken in preparing the budget, the report was only an initial position statement which would be updated over the coming months as the budget was further developed. However, it was reported that due to the delays in the provisional settlement, and the consequential impact on Welsh Government's budget finalisation, the publication of the final settlement would not be published until the 7th March 2023.

In recognising the critical importance of minimising the Council Tax increase for residents during the current cost of living crisis, it was considered necessary to respond to the current risks around this Budget Strategy and the ongoing inflationary backdrop. The Budget Strategy, in line with the Medium Term Financial Plan proposed that the Council Tax for 2023/24 be increased to 7%, which sought to mitigate reductions to critical services. The proposal would be considered as part of the budget finalisation process over the next month or so and when the Authority would receive

further clarification on cost and grant funding with a view to limiting the Council Tax increase as far as possible. Final budget proposals would then be presented to the Cabinet mid/late February, which would allow a balanced budget to be presented to County Council on the 1st March 2023.

Amongst the issues raised during consideration of the report were the following:

- The Director of Corporate Resources agreed to circulate a list of those schools which currently had a budget deficit;
- In response to a concern regarding the proposed 'Reduction in the Hardware Replacement Programme', including staff laptops etc., as a savings proposal the Head of ICT & Corporate Policy expressed confidence that the impact could be minimised;
- Concerns were expressed that the removal of the civic and cabinet vehicles was included as a savings proposal.

RESOLVED to accept the report and endorse the Charging Digest subject to the Cabinet being requested to retain the civic and cabinet vehicles.

PLACE, SUSTAINABILITY & CLIMATE CHANGE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

23 JANUARY 2023

[Note: Councillors A. Davies, D. Phillips and G. Thomas declared a personal interest in this item. They remained in the meeting, took part in the deliberations and voting thereof.]

The Committee considered a report on the Council's Revenue Budget Strategy 2023/24 to 2025/26, as endorsed by the Cabinet for consultation purposes at its meeting held on the 9th January 2023. The report provided Members with the current view of the Revenue Budget for 2023/2024 together with indicative figures for the 2024/2025 and 2025/2026 financial years based on officers' projections of spending requirements and took account of the provisional settlement issued by Welsh Government on the 14th December 2022.

The Committee was informed that the announced provisional settlement represented an average increase of 8.0% across Wales on the 2022/23 settlement, with Carmarthenshire's increase being 8.5% (£26.432mm) thereby taking the Aggregate External Finance to £338.017m for 2023/24. While the settlement was significantly above the initial indicative figure of a 3.4% increase and provided some £15.5m more than the Council's original assumption, the Welsh Government had recognised the increased figure would still not be sufficient to meet inflationary pressures facing councils, pay awards and fuel price increases and difficult decisions would need to be made.

Whilst the budget proposals assumed the full delivery of all savings proposals, it was noted further work would be required to develop the cost reductions for the 2024/25

and 2025/26 financial years to be able to maintain the current Budget Strategy and level of Council tax.

It was noted that given the current risks around the Budget Strategy and the ongoing inflationary backdrop, together with other budgetary pressures, the proposed Council Tax increase for 2023/24 had been set at 7% to mitigate reductions to critical services. In years 2 and 3, the financial picture remained uncertain and, as such, modelled indicative Council Tax rises of 4% and 3% had been made purely for planning purposes and sought to strike a balance with budget reductions. Those proposals would be considered by the Council in setting the Council Tax level for 2023/24 at its meeting on the 1st March 2023. Additionally, as the Welsh Government final settlement figure was not due to be announced until the 7th March, 2023 any amendments required to be considered to the budget strategy as a result of that announcement would need to be considered by Council.

The Committee thereupon considered the following detailed budget information appended to the Strategy relevant to its remit:

- **Appendix A(i)** – Efficiency summary for the Environment and Public Protection Services;
- **Appendix A(ii)** – Growth Pressures summary for the for the Environment Service;
- **Appendix B** – Budget monitoring report for the Environment and Public Protection Services;
- **Appendix C** – Charging Digest for the Environment and Public Protection Services.

The following questions/issues were raised on the report:-

Queries raised on the Appendix Ai (Savings Proposals):

- Reference was made to Traffic Management and the implementation of road safety/speed management schemes. In respect of the efficiency description 'Three-year moratorium on new speed limits not included within 20mph legislation unless overriding safety issue' it was commented that three years was a long time and it was asked if it could be dealt with in conjunction with the roll out of the new 20mph legislation? The Head of Highways and Transportation stated that the change to the default speed limit from 30mph to 20mph which affected all residential areas was a comprehensive piece of work involving a lot of resources. It was reported that the moratorium was realistic in terms of the extensive work required.
- In response to a query raised on the efficiency description - Road Safety Innovation within Traffic Management, the Head of Highways and Transportation explained that a report on Roundabout Sponsorship would be available shortly. The highways team had been working to find ways and approaches to increase revenue particularly following the pandemic and sponsorship was an approach that would provide much needed income.
- In reference to the School Transport and the efficiency description regarding Additional Needs Personal Travel Budgets, clarification was sought in respect of the payment process. The Head of Highways and Transportation explained

that currently pupils with additional learning needs were provided with an option of accessing specialist transportation. In cases where parents have specialist mobility vehicles, a personal travel budget was offered which would be subject to a claim being made by the parent.

In response to a further query, the Head of Highways and Transportation explained that a formal policy would include rigorous validation process ensuring that reimbursements were legitimate and made to the correct person.

- In reference to the Bring Sites, it was asked if there would be a future strategy and if the communities would still be able to use them. The Interim Head of Waste and Environmental Services explained that currently there were a number of bring sites offering glass, textiles and electric recycling which would be retained in the long term. However, the bring sites that offered just glass collections would be mapped against the current demand and the recently launched glass collection service. The results of the analysis would inform the rationalisation of the bring sites over the next 12 months with a view of up to 50% being removed by 2024.

In addition, the Cabinet Member for Resources emphasised to Members that in view of the fact that the Council was liable of a fine of £160k for every 1% below the Welsh Government statutory target that is not met, it was important the public be made aware of the importance of recycling from not only the benefits to the environment but from a financial perspective.

- Reference was made to Property Maintenance. In terms of the energy efficiency measures, it was raised that a neighbouring Authority were seeking to make a reduction in the temperature of offices to 19 degrees in order to save £26k. Considering this, it was asked if this Authority was looking at a similar efficiency? The Cabinet Member for Climate Change, Decarbonisation and Sustainability stated that Powys County Council similar to Carmarthenshire County Council were committed to reach Net Zero by 2030. Members were reminded that as stated in the Net Zero Plan, presented earlier this year, the Authority to date made a 34% carbon reduction, however on closer analysis it was apparent that the electricity had reduced by 21% and gas (heating) had only reduced by 11%. He added that whilst significant effort had taken place to reduce carbon, one of the challenges was that this Authority, like many Authorities had many old buildings which were difficult to zone. Data in terms of energy use would continue to be collected in order to inform where interventions would be needed.
- Reference was made to Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRC). It was suggested that the Authority should be considering alternative options eg. cross border working or introducing a charge to utilise them. In addition, in commenting that the opening hours at HWRC's seemed to be too restrictive for the public who work 9-5 weekdays, it was suggested that the operational hours be re-considered at all the HWRC sites. It was further commented that currently agency staff were employed at the HWRC sites and that the use permanent staff could be more cost effective. The Interim Head of Waste and Environmental Services explained that currently HWRC's offer free services to householders and residents of Carmarthenshire and that previously charges for trade waste customers were in place which presented significant issues in

terms of queueing and creating undue delays for residents using the HWRC sites. In response, trade waste was diverted to the trade waste facility at Nantycaws, Carmarthen. It was highlighted, that a consultation was currently underway and that any suggestions and feedback relating to the operations and hours would be gratefully received through the consultation process. In terms of staffing implications, the Interim Head of Waste and Environmental Services stated that he would seek further clarification from Cwm Environmental Ltd.

- Reference was made to Parking Services. In respect of the efficiency description to introduce charging at 9 car parks, which currently were free to park, it was suggested that each car park should be looked at on a case-by-case basis. It was felt that by introducing a charge on the free car park would have a detrimental impact upon and undermine the viability of nearby businesses. In raising concern, it was asked if the income would be more than the cost of implementing a charge and if any research or survey's done to back up the proposal? The Head of Highways and Transportation explained that all car parks with exception of Llansteffan car park would be consistent with the rural towns which an income profile had been mapped. It was highlighted that whilst there would be a short-term capital investment to introduce the car parking changes there would be a long-term revenue gain.

It was formally proposed that in regard to the proposal for the introduction of parking charges at the 9 car parks, as stated in the report, be reviewed by the Cabinet Member on a case-by-case basis. This was duly seconded.

- In response to a concern raised regarding the proposal to rationalise up to 20% of litter bins, the Interim Head of Waste and Environmental Services stated that the rationalisation would be in the main include litter bins located on laybys along the trunk road network and non-amenity areas. Research suggested that where litter bins have been removed the litter in that area had improved. Bins in high footfall areas would remain in situ. The rationalisation would be a managed process.

It was asked, prior to the removal of a litter bin, if the appropriate ward members could be consulted upon? The Interim Head of Waste and Environmental Services stated that a list would be provided to ward members. Comments were made in agreement that bins often attract rubbish and acknowledged the need to rationalise and strategically place rubbish bins.

Queries raised on the Appendix C (Charging Digest):

- Reference was made to the proposal to increase in the Residents Parking Permit Admin Charge. It was observed that the proposal stated that it was being increased by 10% however, that proposed cost increase in the report was from £30 to £40 which was more than the 10%. It was suggested to increase the charge to £50, which would equate to less than £1 per week for residents. The Cabinet Member for Resources stated that the rationale behind the £10 increase was that an increase had not been made since 2009.
- Reference was made to the Fixed Penalty Notices (FPN). The Cabinet Member for Climate Change, Decarbonisation and Sustainability explained that the charges were outlined in Appendix C for Members however, offered the Scrutiny

Committee additional time should they wish for the Task and Finish Group undertaking the review on the management of flytipping in Carmarthenshire to consider the charge of the FPN prior to agreement. The Chair in thanking the Cabinet Member, stated that the Task and Finish Group would ensure that the charge in respect of the flytipping FPN would be considered as part of the review.

- In response to a query raised in regard to the Buy with Confidence Scheme, the Head of Homes and Safer Communities in offering to circulate the exact membership numbers to the scheme to Members following the meeting, confirmed that the scheme was being actively promoted.
- In response to a general query raised in regard to the budget impact and the Net Zero targets, the Cabinet Member for Climate Change, Decarbonisation and Sustainability stated that budget constraints would naturally challenge the ambition to reach Net Zero carbon by 2030, however a toolkit had been introduced which enabled different scenarios to be modelled informing the best approach in how to reach the target of being Net Zero by 2030 in the most effective and efficient way.

RESOLVED that:-

- 5.1 the 2023/24 to 2025/26 Revenue Budget Strategy be received;**
- 5.2 the proposals for delivery of efficiency savings as identified in Appendix A(i) be received;**
- 5.3 the Charging Digest for the Environment and Public Protection Services, as detailed in Appendix C to the report, be endorsed;**
- 5.4 the proposal for the introduction of parking charges at the 9 carparks as stated in the report be reviewed by the Cabinet Member on a case-by-case basis.**

HEALTH & SOCIAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

TUESDAY, 24 JANUARY 2023

The Committee considered the Council's Revenue Budget Strategy 2023/24 to 2025/26 which provided a current view of the revenue budget for 2023/2024 together with indicative figures for the 2024/25 and 2025/26 financial years. The report was based on officers' projections of spending requirements and took account of the provisional settlement issued by Welsh Government (WG) on 14th December 2022.

It was emphasised that whilst significant work had already been undertaken in preparing the budget, the report represented an initial position statement which would be updated following the consultation process. Accordingly, Members were reminded that the report had been considered by the Cabinet at its meeting on 9th January 2023 and members of the Committee had attended recent consultation

events which had provided an opportunity to analyse and seek clarification on various aspects of the budget.

The Committee was advised that the final budget proposals would be presented to the Cabinet mid/late February, which would enable a balanced budget to be presented to County Council on the 1st March 2023. It was however noted that due to the delays in the provisional settlement, and the consequential impact on Welsh Government's budget finalisation, the publication of the final settlement would not be published until the 7th March 2023.

The report indicated that, after adjustments for WG, identified transfers, the increase in the provisional settlement for Carmarthenshire was 8.5% (£26.432 million). The Aggregate External Finance (AEF) had therefore increased to £338.017 million in 2023/24. Whilst the settlement represented a significant increase to the indicative figure of 3.4%, the financial model forecasted a requirement for £20m savings over the three-year Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) period.

It was highlighted that an additional £7.9m funding had been announced for Health, Social Services and Education and apportioned to Local Government resulting in an increase share of 8.5% for the Authority.

It was noted that inflationary pressures were heavier than they had been in decades and that the inevitable cost rises would result in budgetary reductions. WG also issued all Wales level specific grants alongside the provisional settlement. These were broadly similar in cash value to previous years. However, with the rise in inflation and the pay awards at the current level there were real term cuts.

The Ministers letter stated that funding had been provided to cover the living wage increase and that all funding had been allocated. The full cost of future pay awards would need to be accommodated locally. In constructing the budget this had been challenging as the adjusted pay and inflation assumptions to provide departments with funding wasn't sufficient.

Members were reminded that when the budget was previously set, the agreed pay increase was 4% which was prudent at the time. Pay increase for most staff was agreed at a flat rate of 2K (equating to an average of 7.1%) across the workforce. An additional 3.1% 'catchup' would need to be factored into next year's budget. Reference was made to the 5% increase for all Teachers which had been agreed by WG; however, it was acknowledged that the National Education Union (NEU) members had voted in favour of industrial action in a bid for a 12% pay uplift. Committee noted that the draft budget included the 1% 'catchup' to 5%, however any further increases would be unfunded and represent an additional financial pressure of approximately £1m for every 1% increase in pay. In total, the assumption on pay would add £19m to the Council's budget next year

It was noted that the strategy over the previous years had been to increase fees and charges in line with the prevailing rate of inflation and the draft budget proposed a 10% increase where possible. Residents had been invited to submit their views on this as part of the public consultation.

The Committee was advised that Appendix C showed a £12m toward the increase in departmental pressures identified by departments and were inescapable if the Authority was to continue to deliver services at the current level.

Appendix Aii showed substantial inflationary increase in the cost of provisioned care, demographic growth as well as increases in fostering allowances. It was noted that Adult Social Care had pressures which had already been constrained to what the Director considered to be operationally deliverable given the current workforce pressure experienced across the entire sector.

The Committee thereupon considered the following detailed budget information appended to the Strategy, relevant to its remit:-

- **Appendix A(i)** – Efficiency summary for Health and Social Services
- **Appendix A(ii)** – Efficiency Summary for Health and Social Services
- **Appendix B** – Budget monitoring report for Health and Social Services
- **Appendix C** – Charging Digest for Health and Social Services

On behalf of the Committee the Chair extended her appreciation for the work the team had undertaken in producing the draft budget and for hosting the recent Budget Seminar where the Committee had been afforded the opportunity of asking questions.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that:

- 6.1 The 2023/24 – 2025/26 Revenue Budget Strategy Consultation be received;**
- 6.2 The Charging Digest detailed in Appendix C to the report, be endorsed.**

COMMUNITIES, HOMES & REGENERATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

THURSDAY, 26 JANUARY 2023

(NOTE: Councillors H. Shepardson and R. Sparks having previously declared an interest in this item redeclared that interest and remained in the meeting)

The Committee considered a report on the Council's Revenue Budget Strategy 2023/24 to 2025/26, as endorsed by the Executive Board for consultation purposes at its meeting held on the 9th January 2023. The report provided Members with the current view of the Revenue Budget for 2023/2024 together with indicative figures for the 2024/2025 and 2025/2026 financial years based on officers' projections of spending requirements and took account of the provisional settlement issued by Welsh Government on the 14th December 2022.

The Committee was informed that the announced provisional settlement represented an average increase of 8.0% across Wales on the 2022/23 settlement, with Carmarthenshire's increase being 8.5% (£26.432mm) thereby taking the Aggregate External Finance to £338.017m for 2023/24. While the settlement was significantly above the initial indicative figure of a 3.4% increase and provided some £15.5m more

than the Council's original assumption, the Welsh Government had recognised the increased figure would still not be sufficient to meet inflationary pressures facing councils, pay awards and fuel price increases and difficult decisions would need to be made.

Whilst the budget proposals assumed the full delivery of all savings proposals, it was noted further work would be required to develop the cost reductions for the 2024/25 and 2025/26 financial years to be able to maintain the current Budget Strategy and level of Council tax.

It was noted that given the current risks around the Budget Strategy and the ongoing inflationary backdrop, together with other budgetary pressures, the proposed Council Tax increase for 2023/24 had been set at 7% to mitigate reductions to critical services. In years 2 and 3, the financial picture remained uncertain and, as such, modelled indicative Council Tax rises of 4% and 3% had been made purely for planning purposes and sought to strike a balance with budget reductions. Those proposals would be considered by the Council in setting the Council Tax level for 2023/24 at its meeting on the 1st March 2023. Additionally, as the Welsh Government final settlement figure was not due to be announced until the 7th March, 2023 any amendments required to be considered to the budget strategy as a result of that announcement would need to be considered by Council.

The Committee thereupon considered the following detailed budget information appended to the Strategy relevant to its remit:

- **Appendix A(i)** – Efficiency summary for the Regeneration, Leisure, Place and Sustainability and Non HRA Housing Services;
- **Appendix A(ii)** – Growth Pressures summary for the for the Place and Sustainability Services, - none for the Regeneration, Leisure and Non HRA Services;
- **Appendix B** – Budget monitoring report for the Regeneration, Leisure, Place and Sustainability and Non HRA Housing Services;
- **Appendix C** – Charging Digest for the Regeneration, Leisure, Place and Sustainability and Non HRA Housing Services;

The following questions/issues were raised on the report:-

- With regard to the recent budget seminars held for county councillors, it was confirmed no changes had been made to the Strategy following the seminars. However, the outcome of the formal budget consultation exercise, that included the Council's Scrutiny Committees and the public, would be collated and incorporated within the budget consultation report to Cabinet and Council as part of their considerations on the Budget Strategy.

RESOLVED THAT IT BE RECOMMENDED TO THE CABINET/COUNCIL THAT: -

- 4.1 The 2023/24 – 2025/26 Revenue Budget Strategy Consultation be received.**
- 4.2 The Charging Digests for the Regeneration, Leisure, Place and Sustainability and Non HRA Services, as detailed in Appendix C to the report, be endorsed.**

EDUCATION, YOUNG PEOPLE & THE WELSH LANGUAGE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MONDAY

23 JANUARY 2023

[NOTE: Councillors L.M. Davies and A.C. Jones, having earlier declared an interest in this item remained in the meeting during its consideration. Furthermore, at this point, Councillor B.W Jones declared a personal interest on the basis that her son was employed as a Headteacher in a school within the County. Councillor B. Jones remained in the meeting during consideration of the item].

The Committee considered the Council's Revenue Budget Strategy 2023/24 to 2025/26 which provided a current view of the revenue budget for 2023/2024 together with indicative figures for the 2024/25 and 2025/26 financial years. The report was based on officers' projections of spending requirements and took account of the provisional settlement issued by Welsh Government (WG) on 14 December 2022.

It was emphasised that whilst significant work had already been undertaken in preparing the budget, the report represented an initial position statement which would be updated following the consultation process. Accordingly, Members were reminded that the report had been considered by the Cabinet at its meeting on 09 January 2023 and members of the Committee had attended recent consultation events which had provided an opportunity to analyse and seek clarification on various aspects of the budget.

The report indicated that, after adjustments for WG, identified transfers, the increase in the provisional settlement for Carmarthenshire was 8.5% (£26.432 million). The Aggregate External Finance (AEF) had therefore increased to £338.017 million in 2023/24. Whilst the settlement represented a significant increase to the indicative figure of 3.4%, the financial model forecasted a requirement for £20m savings over the three year Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) period.

Committee's attention was drawn to section 3.5 of the budget strategy whereby an overview of the schools' delegated budgets was provided to Members. It was noted that many service-specific grants would remain at a broadly similar level (cash value) to previous years which would, in reality reduce outputs given the impact of pay awards and general inflation. The Cabinet Member for Resources was however pleased to report that the Additional Learning Needs Transformation Grant and the Pupil Development Grant had been enhanced, and furthermore, WG funding had been provided to flatline the Recruit Recover Retain Standards (RRRS) grant, instead of the planned reduction, and this would enable schools to continue with their post-covid recovery activities.

Reference was made to the independent pay review body's recommendation of a 5% increase for all Teachers which had been accepted by WG; however, it was acknowledged that the National Education Union (NEU) members had voted in favour of industrial action in a bid for a 12% pay uplift. Committee noted that the draft budget included the 1% "catchup" to 5%, however any further increases would be unfunded and represent an additional financial pressure of approximately £1m for every 1% increase in pay.

The Committee thereupon considered the following detailed budget information appended to the Strategy, relevant to its remit:-

- Appendix A(i) – Efficiency summary for the Education & Children's Services Department.
- Appendix A(ii) – Growth Pressures summary for the Education & Children's Services Department.
- Appendix B – Budget monitoring report for the Education & Children's Services Department
- Appendix C – Charging Digest for the Education & Children's Services Department

The Committee was advised that the final budget proposals would be presented to the Cabinet mid/late February, which would enable a balanced budget to be presented to County Council on the 1st March 2023. It was however noted that due to the delays in the provisional settlement, and the consequential impact on Welsh Government's budget finalisation, the publication of the final settlement would not be published until the 7th March 2023.

The issues/observations raised by the Committee were addressed as follows:-

In response to a query regarding the utilisation of school reserves for 2022/23, the Director of Corporate Services confirmed that it was possible for the end of year position to be more favourable than forecasted, due to the timings of the grant funding being confirmed by Welsh Government. In this regard, it was clarified that any school-specific grant funding received would be accommodated into the school reserves, should the grant's terms and conditions allow.

Concerns were raised regarding the potential reprofiling of smaller schools whereby it was expressed that further information was required before efficiency savings could be supported in this regard. The Director of Education and Children's Services clarified that the review of the Carmarthenshire's Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme was underway and was expected to be concluded by the Summer 2023.

It was noted that the results of the review would be considered by the Cabinet in due course.

The Director of Corporate Services, in response to a query, confirmed that any Industrial Action undertaken by the NEU members would result in a direct budgetary saving for the Local Authority. Furthermore, it was clarified that no further budget provision would be made in respect of Teacher Pay Awards until the settlement had been finalised.

Following a request for further information regarding the schools which showed a deficit budgetary position as at March 2022, the Director of Education and Children's Services highlighted that myriad of reasons could contribute to a school being in a budget deficit, though the main expenditure for schools related to staffing costs. Furthermore, it was explained that smaller schools would not have much flexibility within their budgets to meet unexpected costs. An assurance was provided to Committee that regular communication and support was provided to schools in an endeavour to address budgetary challenges.

Concerns were expressed in respect of the impact of the proposed elevation in the cost of school meals set out in the Charging Digest, which could lead to a lower uptake in the purchasing of school meals and result in a further deficit to the budgetary position. It was confirmed that the concerns raised by Committee would be fed back to the Cabinet as part of the consultation process prior to the final budget being set by Council on 7th March 2023. The Director of Corporate Services clarified to the Committee that the Cabinet Member for Education and Welsh Language was responsible for reconciling the fees and charges for the Education and Children's Services division.

In response to a query, the Director of Education and Children's Services explained that an element of the Council's budget would be delegated to schools to manage redundancies and discussions were ongoing to enable schools to better understand the impact of redundancies and become more cost effective. In this regard, Members highlighted that the Governor Training programme would need to be updated to reflect the additional requirement.

A discussion ensued on the current process in place regarding school redundancies and it was reported to Committee that there was no information to indicate a change to Welsh legislation to follow the Scottish model whereby teachers were employed centrally to facilitate the effective management of the workforce in terms of staff movements to meet the needs of schools.

A concern was expressed in relation to the proposed budget reduction for youth support related services. The Head of Strategy and Learner Support confirmed that the Shared Prosperity Fund would provide some financial support for youth support services. The Council was also exploring different ways of providing youth support services in an endeavour to minimise the impact of budgetary reductions on frontline services.

Reference was made to the proposed review of primary schools' footprint to derive efficiency savings of £200k for 2024/25. A Member enquired as to the methodology for selecting schools for closures, together with the potential number of school closures that would be required to achieve the efficiency savings. The Director of

Education and Children's Services clarified that the figure noted was indicative at this stage, pending the outcome of the review; it was however confirmed that savings in the region of £75k - £80k could be generated from each school closure as a result of the premises and running costs.

RESOLVED that:

5.1 The 2023/24 – 2025/26 Revenue Budget Strategy Consultation be received;

5.2 The Charging Digest detailed in Appendix

8) APPENDIX 1 – MAP OF COMMUNITY AREAS

