



CABINET

Date of Meeting	Tuesday 20 th February 2024
Report Subject	Council Fund Revenue Budget 2024/25 – Final Closing Stage
Cabinet Member	Cabinet Member for Finance, Inclusion, Resilient Communities including Social Value and Procurement
Report Author	Corporate Finance Manager and Chief Executive
Type of Report	Strategic

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

From July 2023, Members have received regular updates on the Council's challenging budget position for the 2024/25 financial year and the additional budget requirement for 2024/25 has been continuously revised to consider the latest available information.

Cabinet and Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee received an update on the key headlines and financial impacts of the Welsh Local Government Provisional Settlement in January, together with an update on the increased additional budget requirement of £33.187m. At that stage there was a remaining 'budget gap' of £12.946m.

Two Member briefings were also held in January prior to additional cost reduction proposals being considered by specific Overview and Scrutiny Committees in February. Work has continued to review the overall position in conjunction with a recent announcement from Welsh Government on an expected consequential from UK Government.

This work has now been concluded and the outcome is set out in the report.

The report sets out a proposal by Cabinet for the Council to be able to reach a legal and balanced budget position for the 2024/25 financial year. The report also includes another option following the receipt of a proposal by the Independent Group.

This report sets out the Council Tax recommendations for setting local taxation levels for 2024/25. We are also able to propose the formal resolution to Council when it meets later today as we have received notification of the precepts of the Police and Crime Commissioner and all Town and Community Councils within Flintshire.

Cabinet is invited to make final recommendations to Council to set a legal and balanced budget based on the detail as set out in this report.

A full presentation will be made at County Council.

The report includes the following tables:

- Table 1: Remaining Additional Budget Requirement 2024/25
- Table 2: Final Proposed Budget Solutions 2024/25
- Table 3: Proposed Budget 2024/25
- Table 4: School Budget Adjustments
- Table 5: Social Care Budget Adjustments
- Table 6: Medium Term Forecast 2025/26 – 2026/27

RECOMMENDATIONS

1	That Cabinet notes and approves the revised additional budget requirement for 2024/25.
2	That Cabinet approves the final proposals for the cost reductions that will contribute to the budget.
3	That Cabinet recommends to Council a legal and balanced budget based on the calculations and two options set out within this report.
4	That Cabinet notes the significant open risks which remain to be managed in the 2024/25 financial year.
5	That Cabinet recommends an overall annual increase in Council Tax for 2024/25 based on the two options provided.
6	That Cabinet invites Council to pass the formal Council Tax resolution now that we have had notification of the precepts of the Police and Crime Commissioner and all Town and Community Councils within Flintshire.
7	That Cabinet notes the medium-term forecast as a basis for the next revision of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS).

REPORT DETAILS

1.00	EXPLAINING THE COUNCIL FUND REVENUE BUDGET 2024/25
1.01	<p>The Additional Budget Requirement</p> <p>From last July, Members have received regular updates on the Council's challenging budget position for the 2024/25 financial year and the additional budget requirement for 2024/25 has been continuously revised to consider the latest available information.</p> <p>Cabinet and Corporate Resource Overview and Scrutiny Committee received an update on the key headlines and financial impacts of the Welsh Local Government Provisional Settlement in January, together with an update on an increased additional budget requirement of £33.187m for the 2024/25 financial year. At that stage there was a remaining 'budget gap' of £12.946m.</p> <p>Two Member briefings were also held in January, prior to additional cost reduction proposals being considered by specific overview and scrutiny committees in February. Work has continued to review the overall position in conjunction with a recent announcement from Welsh Government on an expected consequential from UK Government.</p> <p>This work has now been concluded and the outcome is set out in the report.</p> <p>The report sets out a proposal by Cabinet for the Council to be able to reach a legal and balanced budget position for the 2024/25 financial year. The report also includes another option following the receipt of a proposal by the Independent Group.</p>
	Additional Budget Requirement - Changes since the January Report
1.02	<p>Homelessness demand</p> <p>The Council continues to experience high and increasing demand for temporary accommodation to meet its statutory obligations to accommodate families and persons that present themselves as homeless and this is expected to continue. The initial budget requirement included an additional amount of £2m, however, this is anticipated to fall significantly short based on current demand levels.</p> <p>The Council is continuing to explore a number of options to provide other solutions which will reduce costs, but it is difficult to predict how much impact these will have during the 2024/25 financial year due to volatility and the impacts of the wider economy. To assist with mitigating this significant financial risk, an additional amount of £0.500m has now been included in the budget.</p>
1.03	<p>Out of County Placements</p> <p>The Council is continuing to experience an increase in the numbers and complexity of children that require support from the Out of County Placement budget. The previous budget requirement included an additional amount of</p>

£0.500m. However, the Month 9 revenue budget monitoring report (also on this agenda) shows a projected overspend of £1.6m so an additional £1m has been included in the budget to reflect current demand levels, bringing the total to £1.5m.

1.04 The changes in the additional budget requirement are summarised below:

Table 1: Remaining Additional Budget Requirement 2024/25

	£m	Paragraph
Remaining Gap - January Report	12.946	
Additional Cost Pressures:		
Homelessness Demand	0.500	1.02
Out of County Placements	1.000	1.03
Revised Remaining Gap	14.446	

Proposed Solutions to meet the Revised Additional Budget Requirement

1.05 **Aggregate External Finance (AEF)**

The Welsh Local Government Provisional Settlement was announced on 20 December and full details were included in the January Cabinet report.

The provisional Aggregate External Funding (AEF) represents a cash uplift of £5.560m over the 2023/24 amount of £251.995m, which is an increase of 2.2%. (All Wales Average is an increase of 3.1% ranging from 2% to 4.7%).

On 24 January, the UK Government announced it would increase funding to local authorities in England by £600m. As a result of this, Welsh Government are expected to receive a consequential sum of £25m.

The Minister for Finance and Local Government has confirmed how Welsh Government will distribute this funding. The anticipated reduction of £10.6m in the Social Care Workforce Grant will now be reversed and the remaining £14.4m will be allocated to the Revenue Support Grant in the final settlement on 27 February.

The basis of allocation to individual authorities is not yet known but is estimated at £0.675m based on our Standard Spending Assessment allocation and it is considered reasonable to now include this amount in our funding estimates.

1.06 **Portfolio Cost Reductions**

Initial options for portfolio cost reductions were referred to a series of specific Overview and Scrutiny meetings which were held during the Autumn together with relevant cost pressures. These initial cost reduction proposals totalled £1.538m. This was subsequently reduced to £1.535m following removal of one of the proposals.

	<p>Due to the scale of the financial challenge facing the Council for 2024/25 and the disappointing provisional settlement, all portfolios were tasked with finding further cost reductions of up to 7.5%.</p> <p>The additional options for cost reductions were considered at Overview and Scrutiny meetings held in February and following specific feedback the following amendments have been made:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Removal of the bus subsidy cost reduction (£0.510m) - Removal of the Food Waste Charging proposal (£0.010m) - Removal of the waste collection frequency proposal (£0.274m) - Removal of cost reductions on Connects Centres (£0.100m) - Removal of Public Conveniences proposal (£0.078m) - Removal of Modern Apprentice proposal (£0.138m) <p>The revised total amount included from the additional portfolio cost reductions is £3.552m.</p>
1.07	<p>Schools – Cost Reductions</p> <p>Given the unprecedented scale of the financial challenge the Council has faced this year there has been a need for all portfolios to make cost reductions, and a reduction will also need to be applied to the delegated budgets of our schools.</p> <p>A 3% reduction on delegated school budgets (at 2023/24 level) will be required and this provides a contribution of £3.273m towards the budget requirement.</p> <p>(Para 1.21 provides further analysis of school budgets).</p>
1.08	<p>Social Care – Commissioning Costs</p> <p>Social Care budgets have been protected in recent years and commissioning costs have increased above average across North Wales for the current financial year.</p> <p>An increase at similar levels is not sustainable due to the Council only receiving an increase of 2.2% in its annual Welsh Government settlement.</p> <p>Therefore, the Council will need to provide a much more prudent uplift in 2024/25 which has been reflected in the estimates and will be subject to negotiation with care providers – this will reduce our cost base by £1.686m.</p>
1.09	<p>Additional Cost Reductions</p> <p>There have been two further cost reductions confirmed since the recent Overview and Scrutiny meetings which have also now been included in the budget.</p> <p>The final North Wales Fire and Rescue Levy provided a further reduction of £0.197m and was verbally referred to at the Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee and there has been a further reduction of £0.010m following a further review of borrowing costs.</p>

1.10 **Council Tax**

The level of annual increase in Council Tax is a decision for Full Council.

Based on the final additional budget requirement of £14.446m an overall annual increase of **8%** is required on Council Tax for Council Services and **1.1%** for additional contributions to North Wales Fire and Rescue Service and the Regional Coroners Service.

This equates to an overall uplift of 9.1% and provides overall additional net yield of £9.072m in 2024/25.

This amounts to an annual increase of £138.44 per annum and brings the Council Tax on a Band D equivalent property to £1,659.77 (£2.66 per week equivalent).

Police Precept/Town and Community Councils

The Police Precept and Town and Community Council Precepts for 2024/25 have all been notified to the Council as the Council Tax collection authority and a separate report on the Council agenda later today sets out the formal resolutions.

1.11 **Table 2: Final Proposed Budget Solutions**

	£m
Revised Additional Budget Requirement (as in Table 1)	14.446
Add back previously reported:	
Council Tax Assumption in solutions	5.431
Adjusted Efficiency from September Options	0.003
Adjusted Efficiency at Final Stage	0.010
Amount Required to balance budget	19.890
Less:	
Contribution from Schools	(4.698)
New Portfolio Cost Reductions (Including removal of pressures)	(3.552)
Commissioning Fees	(1.686)
Reduced Borrowing Costs	(0.010)
Reduction in Fire Levy	(0.197)
Amount Remaining to balance budget	9.747
Council Tax (9.1%)	9.072
Additional Welsh Government AEF	0.675
Amount Remaining	0.000

1.12 **Summary and Conclusions**

A legal and balanced budget for 2024/25 can be recommended by Cabinet to Council based on (1) the calculations and assumptions set out above, and (2) the detailed proposed budget as set out below.

1.13 **Table 3: Proposed Budget 2024/25**

Funding	£m
Aggregate External Funding (AEF) / RSG NNDR	258.230
Council Tax	109.679
SSA/Budget Requirement	367.909
Use of Reserves (2024/25 Only)	0.172
Specific Grants (Appendix 6)	45.679
Total Funding	413.760
Expenditure	£m
Base Budget Rolled Forward	395.133
Previous Years Growth/Items Dropping Out (Appendix 1)	0.757
Inflation (Appendix 2)	14.963
Pressures & Investments (Appendix 3)	15.113
Cost Reductions	
Portfolio (Appendix 4)	(4.110)
Corporate Financing (Appendix 5)	(10.763)
Grants	
Less Specific Grants 2023/24	(43.012)
Plus Specific Grants 2024/25 (Estimated Appendix 6)	45.679
Total Expenditure	413.760
Balance	0.000

	Open Risks 2024/25
1.14	<p>Pay</p> <p>The proposed budget includes pay inflation for 2024/25 at 5% for both teaching and non-teaching staff which will still be unknown at the time of setting the budget. Should national pay agreements conclude at a higher level, this would mean the difference would need to be met from Council Reserves in 2024/25, which has been the case for the last two financial years.</p> <p>The outcome of the pay modelling review to address ongoing recruitment and retention challenges represents a further risk which will need to be considered as part of its agreement and prior to implementation.</p>
1.15	<p>Supreme Court Judgement – Harpur Trust and Brazel</p> <p>The potential financial impacts are still being determined in response to the Employment Appeal Tribunal (EAT) decision in the case of Harpur Trust v Brazel. The Supreme Court upheld the EAT judgment in the Brazel case in July 2022 which impacts on the calculation of holiday pay entitlements for staff who work for part of the year (i.e., term time). An approved carry forward from 2022/23 for £0.254m will provide some funding towards these costs.</p> <p>Changes to Holiday Pay from 1 April 2024</p> <p>As a result of the Harpur Trust v Brazel case referred to above, the UK government announced a host of changes to the current rules surrounding holiday pay. The headline changes which will take effect for holiday years commencing 1 April 2024 onwards, include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Re-introducing rolled-up holiday pay for irregular hours and part-year workers · Re-introducing the 12.07% of hours worked calculation method for irregular hours and part-years workers · Changes to the definitions of a week’s pay for holiday pay calculations <p>The impact of these changes are still being determined.</p>
1.16	<p>Homelessness</p> <p>This remains a significant open risk as set out in 1.02 above.</p>
1.17	<p>Out of County Placements</p> <p>This remains a significant open risk as set out in 1.03 above.</p>
1.18	<p>Waste Recycling – Infraction Charges</p> <p>The Council did not meet the statutory minimum target, (64%) in 2021/22, for the percentage of municipal waste which must be recycled, prepared for re-use and composted, as specified in Section 3 of the Waste (Wales) Measure 2010. Welsh Government can therefore take steps to impose a penalty on the Council by way of an infraction fine. A potential penalty of up to £0.663m</p>

	<p>has been confirmed so continues to present a significant financial risk to the Council.</p> <p>Discussions have taken place between Welsh Government and the Council as to the reasons for not achieving the target. The Council has subsequently been instructed by Welsh Government to engage with the Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP) and Local Partnerships to review our waste strategy and develop a new action plan. Depending on the outcome of the review, the Minister will take a decision at that point whether to levy the fine.</p> <p>Unfortunately, the statutory recycling targets have also not been achieved in 2022/23 (non-verified), which means that a further infraction fine could be levied of around £0.470m should Welsh Government choose to do so, and monitoring of the authority's recycling performance for 2023/24 to date shows that the rates of recycling and residual waste tonnages are not improving, which could lead to a further missed target in 2023/24 also. Current total known risk is £1.133m.</p>
1.19	<p>Budget Risk Reserve</p> <p>A combination of continued high inflation, service demand and a much lower than anticipated Welsh Government funding settlement has meant that there is an increased degree of risk in the budget proposals than in previous years.</p> <p>Historically, demand levels for both homelessness presentations and out of county placements have been difficult to predict. A balance needs to be struck between providing a reasonable level of additional recurring base budget provision (taking into account affordability) and ensuring that the Council has sufficient reserves set aside to meet the potentially significant additional costs should they materialise.</p> <p>Based on current demand levels the level of risk in 2024/25 is far greater than in previous years. Therefore, it is recommended that a 'budget risk' ring fenced reserve of £3m is created to mitigate any additional costs in-year whilst a more sustainable solution is established for 2025/26. This funding will need to be ringfenced within the Contingency Reserve.</p>
1.20	<p>Specific Grants</p> <p>We are still awaiting confirmation of some specific grants.</p> <p>The most significant is the Sustainable Waste Management Grant which is still to be confirmed on an all-Wales basis for 2024/25 onwards.</p> <p>Details of the specific grants we are aware of currently are included in Appendix 6.</p>
	<p>School and Social Care Budgets</p>
1.21	<p>Schools' Budget</p> <p>Ensuring our learners receive the highest standards of education in our schools has always, and continues to be, a priority for the Council. The</p>

Council has always sought to protect front line education services (schools' budget) as far as possible.

The school's budget is the largest budget within the Council and given the scale of the challenge in setting a balanced budget this year it has not possible to fully protect the schools budget from reductions.

However, the Council recognises the increasing demands, challenges, and risks that schools are currently facing.

The table below provides the details of an overall increase of 3.5% in funds for schools in 2024/25.

Table 4: School Budget Adjustments

Pressures / Cost Reductions	£m
Teachers Pay Awards (2023/24 & 2024/25)	5.295
Non-teaching Pay Awards (2023/24 & 2024/25)	2.751
NDR Transitional Rate Relief (Schools Element)	0.065
NDR Multiplier Increase 5% (Schools Element)	0.082
Free School Meals (Term Time)	0.615
Inclusion and Progression - Specialist Mobile Classroom Provision	0.167
Total Increase in Schools Budget	8.975
Less:	
Energy (Reduction in cost)	(0.600)
Demography (Reducing Pupil Numbers)	(0.675)
Schools share of the triennial actuarial review of the Clwyd Pension Fund	(0.432)
3% budget reduction	(3.273)
Total Net Uplift to School Budgets 2024/25	3.995

In addition to the above, the Council will not be able to make its contribution of £0.750m to assist schools in deficit in 2024/25. It is anticipated that this will be one off in 2024/25 although this will need to be revisited as part of work on the 2025/26 budget.

1.22 Social Care Budget

The 2024/25 budget includes a 7.44% increase for Social Care to meet the estimates of current demand and the additional costs of commissioned care.

The Social Care sector remains under significant pressure from increased demand and inflationary pressures with costs for commissioned care increasing. The need to support care providers to continue to operate safely and maintain market stability remains a challenge.

Recruitment and retention of care workers within the social care sector and particularly in homecare settings continues to present difficulties. Whilst the Real Living Wage has been adopted for all registered carers in Flintshire the sector does, in terms of hourly pay rates pay below comparable sectors such

as Supermarkets. Homecare is one of the most cost-effective types of social care and service shortages will result in increased pressure and demand on other, more expensive, types of care.

The recruitment and retention of experienced Social Workers is a significant challenge which is resulting in a higher turnover of staff and increasing long term vacancies which will result in an increased use of more expensive agency workers. Should social worker vacancies not be filled, then safeguarding risks will increase for some of the most vulnerable people within Flintshire.

The table below provides the details to the overall increase of 7.44% in funding to Social Care in 2024/25.

Table 5: Social Care Adjustments

Pressures / Cost Reductions	£m
Social Care Pay Awards (2023/24 & 2024/25)	2.668
Social Care Commissioning Costs	3.451
Out of County Placements	1.125
Transition to Adulthood	0.840
Childrens Services Group Homes	0.400
NEWCES Contribution Increase	0.030
Increased Homecare Capacity	0.100
Social Worker Pay Review	0.115
Newydd and EDT Inflationary Pressures	0.130
Less 2024/25 Portfolio Cost Reductions (including removal of pressures)	(1.040)
Social Care share of the triennial actuarial review of the Clwyd Pension Fund	(0.445)
Total Net Uplift to Social Care Budgets 2024/25	7.374

1.23 Reserves and Balances

Earmarked Reserves

The Council holds earmarked reserves which are set aside for specific purposes. Some are restricted in their use by, for example, the terms and conditions of grant where their source is government funding. An update on current projected levels of earmarked reserves shows that the amount is likely to reduce from £12.4m to £9.2m by the end of the 2024/25 financial year as these reserves are 'drawn down' (See Appendix 7).

The Council reviews its remaining earmarked reserves on an ongoing basis, and only those for which there is a strong business case will be retained with the remainder being released for use as part of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy.

1.24 Un-Earmarked Reserves

The Council holds a base level of reserves of £5.769m which is a relatively low level of base reserves and has not been increased for some time. The base level represents the Councils last line of defence in the event of a significant unforeseen financial issue arising.

The current base level equates to only 1.6% of the net revenue budget in 2023/24 which is much lower than most Councils and now too low for an Authority of this size.

The Month 9 revenue monitoring report (also on this agenda) advises that an amount of £3.212m is still remaining from the previously set aside COVID-19 Hardship Fund which was retained to safeguard against ongoing financial risks from the pandemic following the cessation of the Welsh Government Hardship Fund. As there have been no claims in the last quarter it is recommended that the full amount is transferred to Base Level Reserves, increasing the amount to £8.981m (2.44% of the proposed 2024/25 Net Budget).

Levels of unearmarked reserves over and above this figure are referred to as the Contingency Reserve. This reserve is projected to be at £5.108m at year end based on the Month 9 2023/24 revenue budget monitoring report – this will reduce to £2.108m when the Budget Risk Reserve of £3m is taken into account.

The budget proposals within the report also utilise £0.172m of unearmarked reserves to meet the costs of time-limited pressures and to temporarily bridge the gap of a part year cost reduction proposal.

Taking all the above into account would leave a projected contingency reserve remaining of £1.936m.

1.25 Budget Options

In addition to the proposals included within the report another option has also been submitted by the Independent Group. Whilst the majority of the information contained within the report is relevant to both options the summary below details the specific proposals.

Proposed Changes	£m
<i><u>Included in both options</u></i>	
Remove Bus Subsidy reduction	0.510
Remove Waste Frequency reduction	0.274
Remove Connects changes proposal	0.100
Remove Public Conveniences reduction	0.078
Remove Food Waste Charging proposal	0.010
<i><u>Not included in other option</u></i>	
Remove Black Bin Fee proposal	0.040
Remove Car Parking Charges proposal	0.038
Remove Compost Charging proposal	0.010
Remove Garden Waste Charging proposal	0.002
Transfer to Reserves	0.436
Overall Total	1.498

	<p>The above proposal requires the utilisation of the additional Welsh Government AEF of £0.675m and an overall Council Tax increase of 9% (7.9% for Council Services and 1.1% for regional contribution for Fire Levy and Coroners)</p> <p>The main difference between the two options is that there is a contribution to Reserves of £0.436m within this option to safeguard against risks, whereby the other option includes an additional £0.500m directly allocated to the homelessness budget.</p> <p>This option also still assumes the cost reduction of £0.138m for Modern Apprentices – adding this back in would require an increase in the Council Tax uplift to 9.1% together with a reduction to the transfer of reserves of £0.026m to £0.410m.</p> <p>It is considered that the above proposal does amount to a valid legal and balanced option although this will be worked through in detail in advance of the meeting.</p>
1.26	<p>Formal Advice of the Corporate Finance Manager</p> <p>Section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003 includes a specific duty on the Chief Finance Officer (for Flintshire this is the Corporate Finance Manager) to report to the Council when it is considering its budget and Council Tax setting on the robustness of the estimates and the adequacy of reserves. The Act requires the Council to have regard to this report in making its decisions on its budget.</p>
1.27	<p>The 2024/25 budget has again been set within the context of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy and during a year which has seen the continuation of relatively high inflation levels and interest rates. The Council has utilised its COVID-19 Hardship Reserve to deal with some of the legacy impacts of the pandemic although the calls on this time limited reserve have significantly diminished.</p>
1.28	<p>For the estimates contained within the budget, all figures are supported by a clear and robust methodology. The cost reduction proposals have all been risk assessed and reported to members as part of the overview and scrutiny process – inevitably the proposals contain a far higher degree of risk than in previous years. The cost pressures are supported by evidenced method statements.</p>
1.29	<p>The Council's Reserves and Balances Protocol sets out how the Council will determine, manage, and review the level of its Council Fund Balance and earmarked reserves, taking into account legislation and professional guidance. An outcome of this protocol was to report to both Cabinet and Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee the level of earmarked reserves held on a quarterly basis. This has been continued throughout 2023/24 through the monthly budget monitoring report, with a detailed challenge of earmarked reserves undertaken throughout the summer which resulted in an amount of £0.898m being released from earmarked reserves back to the general contingency reserve. This process ensures that Members have a good understanding of all the reserves held by the Council.</p>

1.30	<p>I can confirm the reasonableness of the estimates contained in the proposed budget having regard to the Council's spending needs in 2024/25 and the financial context within which the budget is being set. It is clear that there continues to be some significant open risks within the 2024/25 budget proposals, particularly around service demand for homelessness and out of county placements. The increase in our Aggregate External Finance (AEF) for 2024/25 is very disappointing. There are no indicative allocations for 2025/26 and beyond although the fiscal outlook is looking even more challenging than the settlement for 2024/25.</p> <p>Therefore, it is important that, as far as it is able, the Council protects its current level of reserves to safeguard against these risks. Effective and disciplined in-year financial management is essential to ensure that budgets are managed effectively - with prompt action taken to mitigate any impacts should variances occur.</p>
1.31	<p>I recommend that Council should increase its Base Level of Reserves to a more reasonable level from £5.769m to £8.981m – this can be done by transferring the remaining amount in the COVID-19 Hardship Reserve which was always meant to be a temporary measure.</p> <p>Due to the high level of risk included in the budget proposals I also recommend that a separate budget risk reserve of £3m is set aside to safeguard the Council against any significant potential overspends should demand levels not reduce for areas such as homelessness and out of county placements.</p> <p>The projected remaining amount in the contingency reserve of £1.936m provides a further safeguard against other unforeseen expenditure.</p>
1.32	<p>The budget proposals require an appropriate use of £0.172m of unearmarked reserves to meet the costs of time limited cost pressures and to temporarily bridge the gap of a part year cost reduction.</p>
1.33	<p>Formal Advice of the Chief Executive</p> <p>My professional advice complements that of the Corporate Finance Manager, as set out above.</p>
1.34	<p>The draft budget as presented follows the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) adopted by the Council. It has been developed according to the budget setting model which has been adopted by the Council, and our principles and values.</p>
1.35	<p>We have taken a prudent and balanced approach to our annual budget, as required by law and the principles of good governance, whilst protecting the public service duties and obligations of the Council. Our budget-setting process is an intricate one, with all decisions being carefully risk-assessed.</p>
1.36	<p>We have advised Council throughout that this is an extremely challenging budget set in a period of economic volatility, much of this is outside of our control. Portfolios have scrutinised their respective service areas closely and in the context of risk considered these and the wider impacts on the council and the communities it serves. The poor settlement by Welsh Government</p>

	<p>created increased challenge and risk within portfolios and required further work to identify additional cuts, these were reported back to scrutiny in February.</p> <p>There are no further cost reductions or cost efficiencies of scale beyond those reported in the budget-setting process. Our strategy for achieving a legal and balanced budget was heavily reliant on the sufficiency of Government funding for local government and public services; the provisional settlement at 2.2% is disappointing and will lead to an increased risk profile for the Council going forward.</p>
1.37	<p>Looking ahead the outlook remains uncertain with wider global events impacting on inflation and the cost of living. Although the Bank of England forecasts inflation falling throughout 2024, economic growth will remain weak, and the impacts of the war in Ukraine, Brexit and the pandemic will continue to work through the economic systems, as such the future financial position will continue to remain volatile and subject to many challenges through the coming financial years. This position at an all-Wales level is reinforced by future financial projections by the Wales Institute of Fiscal Studies (refer to para 1.40).</p>
1.38	<p>As noted, a number of significant ‘open risks’ remain to be managed and we will again need to adopt ongoing fiscal control in-year throughout 2024/25 particularly in relation to those more volatile services which are generally delivered to those who are in greatest need and most vulnerable within our communities. Our advice on risk management and how it affects setting a prudent budget needs to be carefully heard.</p>
1.39	<p>It is important that we continue to plan for the medium-term and work with Governments on a sustainable funding model for local government avoiding where possible an over-reliance on Council Tax as a form of local income. Positive work on a sustainable funding model does seem to be gaining traction with encouraging signs from within Welsh Government on the funding formula, this is to be welcomed but greater urgency is needed as well as ongoing work. A level of communication with Welsh Government is necessary to ensure the funding landscape for Flintshire is improved.</p> <p>If we are to effectively respond to anticipated future reduced financial settlements, it will require increased emphasis on service transformation and cost reduction. This work will be difficult and impact all services within the Council as many have already been extensively reshaped and reduced, what remains is already incredibly ‘lean’.</p>
1.40	<p>Medium Term Financial Forecast</p> <p>The financial forecast for the medium-term, for the financial years – 2025/26 – 2026/27, have been reviewed in readiness to update the MTFS. A high-level estimate on the major cost pressures predicted over the next two years following this budget is included in Table 6. The forecast includes (1) potential annual pay awards of 5%; (2) commissioning cost pressures within Social Services, and (3) other known cost pressures.</p> <p>The figures below show the minimum budget requirement.</p>

Table 6: Medium Term Forecast		
Cost Pressure Group	2025/26 (£m)	2026/27 (£m)
Pay Inflation	11.172	11.783
Non-Pay Inflation	2.442	2.223
Social Care Pressures	8.490	8.025
Other Pressures	6.147	0.733
Total	28.251	22.764

1.41	The 2024/25 Provisional Settlement excluded an indicative all-Wales revenue allocation for 2025/26. Forecasts from the Wales Institute of Fiscal Studies predict that settlements over the next two years could be less than 1% or cash flat. Therefore, it is essential that the Council prioritises work to address the major differential between its anticipated increases to operating costs compared with anticipated increases in income streams.
1.42	<p>Concluding Advice to Close the Budget</p> <p>Council is able to set a legal and balanced budget for 2024/25 based on the calculations and advice set out in this report and can fulfil its collective legal responsibility.</p> <p>Two options have been included within the report for consideration by Cabinet and Council and both sets of proposals would meet the requirement of being a legal and balanced budget as required by law.</p>
1.43	<p>The timetable for the closing stages of the annual budget setting process is as follows: -</p> <p>20 February 2024 Council Meeting: Final budget-setting decisions including final agreement on the level of Council Tax and the passing of the Council Tax Resolution.</p> <p>27 February 2024: Announcement of the Final Welsh Local Government Settlement.</p> <p>If there are any further minor changes it is recommended that a relevant contribution to / from reserves is included as an adjustment to the budget.</p>

2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	<p>Revenue: the revenue implications for the 2024/25 budget are set out in the report.</p> <p>Capital: there are no new implications for the approved capital programme for either the current financial year or for future financial years.</p>

	Human Resources: Any implications for increased/reduced capacity within portfolios are as set out in the report. Any implications for schools would be a consideration for each individual school based on the funding received through the Schools Funding Formula.
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3.00	IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND RISK MANAGEMENT
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3.01	Ways of Working (Sustainable Development) Principles Impact										
	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>Long-term</td> <td>Negative – the absence of longer-term funding settlements from Welsh Government means that sustainable support for service delivery is challenging for the longer term. Sustainable funding from Welsh Government that provides additional funding for Indexation, Service demands, and new legislation will provide a positive and sustainable position for the Council in the longer term.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Prevention</td> <td>As above</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Integration</td> <td>Neutral Impact</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Collaboration</td> <td>Services continue to explore opportunities for collaboration with other services and external partners to support positive impacts.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Involvement</td> <td>Communication with Members, residents and other stakeholders throughout the budget process.</td> </tr> </table>	Long-term	Negative – the absence of longer-term funding settlements from Welsh Government means that sustainable support for service delivery is challenging for the longer term. Sustainable funding from Welsh Government that provides additional funding for Indexation, Service demands, and new legislation will provide a positive and sustainable position for the Council in the longer term.	Prevention	As above	Integration	Neutral Impact	Collaboration	Services continue to explore opportunities for collaboration with other services and external partners to support positive impacts.	Involvement	Communication with Members, residents and other stakeholders throughout the budget process.
Long-term	Negative – the absence of longer-term funding settlements from Welsh Government means that sustainable support for service delivery is challenging for the longer term. Sustainable funding from Welsh Government that provides additional funding for Indexation, Service demands, and new legislation will provide a positive and sustainable position for the Council in the longer term.										
Prevention	As above										
Integration	Neutral Impact										
Collaboration	Services continue to explore opportunities for collaboration with other services and external partners to support positive impacts.										
Involvement	Communication with Members, residents and other stakeholders throughout the budget process.										
	Well-Being Goals Impact										
	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>Prosperous Wales</td> <td>Longer term funding settlements from Welsh Government that provide additional funding for indexation, service demands, and new legislation will aid sustainability and support a strong economy that encourages business investment in the region. The opposite will be true if settlements are inadequate.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Resilient Wales</td> <td>Continuation of services to support communities and social cohesion will have a positive impact. The opposite will be true if settlements are inadequate.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Healthier Wales</td> <td>An appropriate level of funding will ensure that communities are supported and will have a positive impact. The opposite will be true if settlements are inadequate.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>More equal Wales</td> <td>A positive impact with greater parity of funding from Welsh Government for all</td> </tr> </table>	Prosperous Wales	Longer term funding settlements from Welsh Government that provide additional funding for indexation, service demands, and new legislation will aid sustainability and support a strong economy that encourages business investment in the region. The opposite will be true if settlements are inadequate.	Resilient Wales	Continuation of services to support communities and social cohesion will have a positive impact. The opposite will be true if settlements are inadequate.	Healthier Wales	An appropriate level of funding will ensure that communities are supported and will have a positive impact. The opposite will be true if settlements are inadequate.	More equal Wales	A positive impact with greater parity of funding from Welsh Government for all		
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More equal Wales	A positive impact with greater parity of funding from Welsh Government for all										

		Welsh Local Authorities. The opposite will be true if settlements are inadequate.
	Cohesive Wales	Appropriate level of funding will support services working alongside partners. The opposite will be true if settlements are inadequate.
	Vibrant Wales	As Healthier and Cohesive Wales above
	Globally responsible Wales	Neutral impact.

4.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED/CARRIED OUT
4.01	<p>Overview and Scrutiny Committees – all cost pressures and cost reductions have been subject to relevant scrutiny and a summary of feedback has been considered in the preparation of final proposals and is include as Appendix 8.</p> <p>Chief Officer Team, the Finance Team, Cabinet Members, Group Leaders and Scrutiny Committees, School Forums. Workforce conferences have been held for employees.</p>

5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	<p>Appendix 1: Prior Year Decisions Appendix 2: Inflation Appendix 3: Pressures Appendix 4: Cost Reductions - Portfolios Appendix 5: Cost Reductions – Corporate Financing Appendix 6: Specific Grants 2024/25 Appendix 7: Balances & Reserves Appendix 8: Feedback from February 2024 Scrutiny Meetings</p>

6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	<p>The series of preparatory budget reports for the 2024/25 financial year. The series of presentations made to Cabinet and Council for the 2024/25 financial year.</p>

7.00	CONTACT OFFICER DETAILS
7.01	<p>Contact Officer: Gary Ferguson, Corporate Finance Manager Telephone: 01352 702271 E-mail: gary.ferguson@flintshire.gov.uk</p>

8.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
8.01	<p>Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS): a written strategy which gives a forecast of the financial resources which will be available to a Council for a given period and sets out plans for how best to deploy those resources to meet its priorities, duties and obligations.</p> <p>Revenue: a term used to describe the day-to-day costs of running Council services and income deriving from those services. It also includes charges for the repayment of debt, including interest, and may include direct financing of capital expenditure.</p> <p>Budget: a statement expressing the Council's policies and service levels in financial terms for a particular financial year. In its broadest sense it includes both the revenue budget and capital programme and any authorised amendments to them.</p> <p>Revenue Support Grant: the annual amount of money the Council receives from Welsh Government to fund what it does alongside the Council Tax and other income the Council raises locally. Councils can decide how to use this grant across services although their freedom to allocate according to local choice can be limited by guidelines set by Government.</p> <p>Specific Grants: An award of funding from a grant provider (e.g. Welsh Government) which must be used for a pre-defined purpose.</p> <p>Welsh Local Government Association: the representative body for unitary councils, fire and rescue authorities and national parks authorities in Wales.</p> <p>Financial Year: the period of 12 months commencing on 1 April.</p> <p>Local Government Funding Formula: The system through which the annual funding needs of each council is assessed at a national level and under which each council's Aggregate External Finance (AEF) is set. The revenue support grant is distributed according to that formula.</p> <p>Aggregate External Finance (AEF): The support for local revenue spending from the Welsh Government and is made up of formula grant including the revenue support grant and the distributable part of non-domestic rates.</p> <p>Provisional Local Government Settlement: The Provisional Settlement is the draft budget for local government published by the Welsh Government for consultation. The Final Local Government Settlement is set following the consultation.</p> <p>Funding Floor: a guaranteed level of funding for councils who come under the all-Wales average change in the annual Settlement. A floor has been a feature of the Settlement for many years.</p>

BUDGET 2024/25 - COUNCIL FUND REVENUE

Prior Years Growth / Items Dropping Out	£m
<p><u>Central & Corporate</u></p> <p>Minimum Revenue Provision 0.206</p> <p>Private Water Supplies (0.052)</p> <p>21C Schools Band B Borrowing Costs 0.603</p>	
TOTAL - PRIOR YEARS	0.757

BUDGET 2024/25 - COUNCIL FUND REVENUE
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Inflation	£m
<u>23/24 Pay Inflation</u>	
NJC Pay Award Estimate (Non Schools) - 23/24	1.694
NJC Pay Award Estimate (Schools) - 23/24	1.033
<u>24/25 Pay Inflation</u>	
NJC Pay Award Estimate (Non Schools)	4.767
NJC Pay Award Estimate (Schools)	1.718
Teachers Pay Award - Prior Year	1.152
Teachers Pay Award - April to August	1.671
Teachers Pay Award - Sept to March 24	2.472
<u>Service Contract Inflation</u>	
ADM's / CAT's Service Contract Inflation	0.365
<u>Other Inflation</u>	
CJC/Growth Deal Inflation	0.017
Business Systems Inflationary Rises	0.075
TOTAL - INFLATION	14.963

BUDGET 2024/25 - COUNCIL FUND REVENUE
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Pressures & Investments	£m
<u>Central & Corporate</u>	
North Wales Fire and Rescue - Levy increase	0.969
Audit Fees	0.040
Apprentice Tax Levy	0.070
Bank Charges	0.070
Capital Borrowing Costs 22/23	0.058
Coroners Service - Increase	0.058
Croes Atti Extension Borrowing Costs	0.129
SubTotal - Central & Corporate	1.394
<u>Education & Youth</u>	
Joint Archive Borrowing Costs	0.005
Inclusion & Progression - Specialist Mobile Classroom Provision	0.167
Sub Total - Education & Youth	0.172
<u>Governance</u>	
Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales (IRPW)	0.112
Schools Information Management System	0.123
Microsoft Power B1 Licences	0.032
IT Technician Cyber Security	0.037
Microsoft E5 Security Licences	0.137
NDR Transitional Relief	0.131
NDR Increase in Multiplier	0.131
Security, Information & Event Management (SIEM) Solution	0.162
Network Connected Device Compliance & Assurance Solution	0.042
IT Technician Schools	0.032
Sub Total - Governance	0.939
<u>Housing & Communities</u>	
Homelessness Demand	2.500
Council Tax Reduction Scheme (CTRS)	0.480
Sub Total - Housing & Communities	2.980
<u>Out of County Placements</u>	
Out of County Placements	1.500
SubTotal - Out of County Placements	1.500
<u>Planning, Environment & Economy</u>	
Additional Licensing Scheme for HMO's	0.144
Private Water Supplies	0.047
Sub Total - Planning, Environment & Economy	0.191
<u>Schools</u>	
Additional Capacity for Supporting Schools with Safeguarding	0.030
Free School Meals (Term Time)	0.615
EOTAS/Specialist Provision - Estyn Inspection	0.075
Schools H & S Monitoring Officer	0.050

Pressures & Investments	£m
Sub Total - Schools	0.770
<u>Social Services</u>	
Social Care Commissioning	3.451
NEWCES Contribution Increase	0.030
Newydd & Emergency Duty Team Uplift	0.130
Social Worker Pay Review	0.115
Transition to Adulthood	0.840
Children's Services Group Homes	0.200
Sub Total - Social Services	4.766
<u>Assets</u>	
ADM's / CAT's Other Pressures	0.056
ADM Additional Support (One off)	0.024
Sub Total - Assets	0.080
<u>Streetscene & Transportation</u>	
Mayrise Replacement	0.085
Recycling & Compliance Officers	0.133
Assistant Fleet Manager	0.055
ULEV Transition Officer	0.049
Fleet Contract Renewal	2.000
Sub Total - Streetscene & Transportation	2.321
TOTAL - PRESSURES & INVESTMENTS	15.113

BUDGET 2024/25 - COUNCIL FUND REVENUE
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Efficiencies - Portfolio	£m
<u>Assets</u>	
Strategic Funding	(0.028)
Rent Review - Commercial Assets	(0.021)
Valuation & Estates restructure	(0.010)
ADM's	(0.065)
Total - Assets	(0.124)
<u>Chief Executives</u>	
Executive Office - promotions	(0.010)
Sub Total - Chief Executives	(0.010)
<u>Education & Youth</u>	
GwE - Reduction in Contribution	(0.099)
Early Entitlement - Reduced numbers accessing Early Entitlement	(0.075)
Adult Community Learning - Income generation	(0.010)
Youth Services - Buildings Asset transfer of some buildings	(0.032)
Business Support Review	(0.032)
School Planning & Provision - Mobile Classrooms	(0.010)
School Planning & Provision - Transition Funding	(0.010)
Inclusion & Progression - Contribution towards PEP Caseworker	(0.020)
Sub Total - Education & Youth	(0.288)
<u>Governance</u>	
RSA Tags	(0.013)
Discretionary Rate Relief	(0.004)
Internal Audit - Removal of Vacant Posts	(0.104)
IT - Equipment reduction in requirements	(0.018)
IT - Mobile Phone contract	(0.094)
Contact Centre - Reduction in budget	(0.010)
Single Person Discount Review 24/25	(0.250)
Cash in Transit	(0.012)
Procurement - Reduction in contribution	(0.009)
HRA Recharging - Management Costs Apportionment	(0.027)
Granicus - GovDelivery	(0.025)
Registration Services	(0.040)
Graphic Design	(0.039)
Sub Total - Governance	(0.645)
<u>Housing & Communities</u>	
CTRS Efficiency from use of reserve	(0.254)
Sub Total - Housing & Communities	(0.254)

<u>People & Resources</u>	
Corporate Finance - Reduction in Staffing	(0.104)
Corporate Finance - Feasibility Study Budget	(0.050)
HROD - Reduction in TU facilities budget	(0.030)
Sub Total - People & Resources	(0.184)
<u>Planning, Environment & Economy</u>	
Increase in planning fee income	(0.295)
Ambition North Wales Contribution	(0.035)
Wales Rally GB	(0.030)
Sub Total - Planning, Environment & Economy	(0.360)
<u>Social Services</u>	
Newydd Cleaning Contracts	(0.100)
Reduce Regional Contribution	(0.025)
Extra BCUHB contribution to Marleyfield	(0.040)
Service Review	(0.075)
Vacancy Management	(0.100)
Increase to Income budget - Older People Commissioning	(0.050)
Disability Day Service	(0.040)
Appointeeship service charging	(0.050)
Additional Contributions for residential care from BCUHB	(0.010)
Efficiencies to Planned Contracts with Third Sector	(0.020)
Grant Maximisation	(0.100)
Reduced NEWCES contribution	(0.010)
Grant funding for Adult Social Services 2024/25 only	(0.100)
Disability services charging for college placements pending financial assessments	(0.020)
Sub Total - Social Services	(0.740)
<u>Streetscene & Transportation</u>	
Part time opening of HWRC's	(0.250)
Increase charge for garden waste collections	(0.002)
Review/reduce service standards - Grass cutting etc.	(0.025)
Review/reduce service standards - Cemetery maintenance	(0.025)
Introduce Night Working	(0.025)
Reduce cleansing standards and enforce zero balance for littering	(0.030)
Charge customers for compost material at HWRC sites	(0.010)
In-house services e.g. weed spraying, traffic management	(0.035)
Increased charging for Car Parking including changes to permit schemes	(0.038)
Full cost recovery for supporting community events	(0.010)
Admin fee for black bins for residual waste	(0.040)
Reduce non essential services on Bank Holidays (x5)	(0.077)
Charging for DIY Waste streams at HWRC's	(0.300)
Remove vacancies for Schools Crossing Patrols	(0.084)
Remove Officer vacancies across the Portfolio	(0.294)

Charge for Trade Waste at one HRC site	(0.200)
Increase fees for Bulky Waste	(0.010)
Reduce SmartClient for Technical Support	(0.025)
Winter Maintenance Review of Weather Stations for 2024/25	(0.025)
Sub Total - Streetscene & Transportation	(1.505)
TOTAL - EFFICIENCIES	(4.110)

BUDGET 2024/25 - COUNCIL FUND REVENUE
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Efficiencies - Corporate	£m
<u>Corporate Efficiencies</u>	
Actuarial Review	(4.000)
Corporate Loans and Investment Account	(1.000)
Fees & Charges review 2023	(0.310)
Fees and Charges Review 2024	(0.050)
Review of External Partners	(0.087)
Additional Income from Fastrack Project	(0.018)
Total - Corporate Efficiencies	(5.465)
<u>Schools Efficiencies</u>	
Utility Costs	(0.600)
School Demography	(0.675)
Reduce Delegated budget for Schools by 3%	(3.273)
Remove Schools Deficit Subsidy for 1 year	(0.750)
Total - Schools Efficiencies	(5.298)
TOTAL - EFFICIENCIES	(10.763)

BUDGET 2024/25 - COUNCIL FUND REVENUE

Specific Grants	Budget 2023/24 £	Budget 2024/25 £	Variance £	Conf (C) or Est (E)
Education & Youth - Non Delegated				
Promoting Positive Engagement (CCG)	196,152	193,106	(3,046)	C
YOT / Youth Justice Board (inc. JAC)	223,448	223,448	0	E
Welsh Network of Healthy School Schemes	101,380	101,380	0	E
Youth Support Grant (Youth Service Revenue Grant)	469,114	469,114	0	E
Free School Milk	245,891	245,891	0	E
Families First (CCG)	1,557,706	1,533,520	(24,186)	C
Pupil Development Grant	5,736,000	3,751,070	(1,984,930)	E
Additional Learning Needs Transformation	34,031	0	(34,031)	C
Adult Community Learning	260,000	273,111	13,111	C
Feminine Hygiene	124,137	143,786	19,649	E
Education Improvement Grant for Schools	6,514,861	0	(6,514,861)	C
Universal Primary Free School Meals ***	1,136,000	2,698,323	1,562,323	E
Recruit Recover Raise Standards - the Accelerated Learning Programme	1,667,000	0	(1,667,000)	C
Transition support for Minority Ethnic & Gypsy, Roma, Traveller learners	417,000	0	(417,000)	C
LAEG - School Standards	0	7,682,840	7,682,840	C
LAEG - Equity	0	940,857	940,857	C
LAEG - Reform	0	2,849,182	2,849,182	C
LAEG - Cymraeg	0	398,258	398,258	C
LAEG - Schools Essential Grant ****	0	660,550	660,550	E
Post 16 - Learner Recovery & Progression ****	0	128,971	128,971	C
Post 16 - Transition Funding ****	0	36,590	36,590	E
Sub Total - Education & Youth (Non Delegated)	18,682,720	22,329,997	3,647,277	
Education & Youth - Delegated				
6th Form Funding (Formally DCELLs)	4,598,000	4,819,841	221,841	C
Sub Total - Education & Youth (Delegated)	4,598,000	4,819,841	221,841	
Housing & Communities				
Housing Support Grant (formerly Supporting People)	7,845,551	7,828,610	(16,941)	C
No One Left Out Approach - Homelessness ***	381,898	381,898	0	E
Discretionary Homelessness Prevention	195,103	121,358	(73,745)	C
Strategic Co-ordinator Post - Homelessness	60,000	60,000	0	E
Sub Total - Housing & Communities	8,482,552	8,391,866	(90,686)	
Planning , Environment & Economy				
Substance Misuse	517,933	517,933	0	E
Domestic Abuse Co-ordinator Funding (VAWDASV)	167,674	177,000	9,326	E
Legacy Fund	52,924	0	(52,924)	E
Communities for Work Plus	812,928	671,410	(141,518)	E
Sub Total - Planning, Environment & Economy	1,551,459	1,366,343	(185,116)	
Social Services				
Social Care Workforce Development Programme	312,069	333,488	21,419	C
Flying Start (CCG)	4,615,694	4,662,647	46,953	C
St. David's Day (CCG)	40,758	40,125	(633)	C
Childcare & Play (CCG)	97,877	142,019	44,142	C
Children and Communities Grant Project Management / Early Help (CCG)	37,359	0	(37,359)	C
Out of Court Parenting Support (CCG)	0	34,457	34,457	C
Early Intervention Parenting Support & Interparental Conflict Grant (CCG)	0	102,725	102,725	C
Childcare Admin Offer	339,762	352,045	12,283	C
Funding to Support proposals relating to eliminating profit from the care of looked after Children	501,212	561,000	59,788	C
Support for the radical reform of the care of looked after children	85,878	85,878	0	C
Sub Total - Social Services	6,030,609	6,314,384	283,775	
Strategic Programmes				
Free Swimming **	60,750	0	(60,750)	
National Exercise Referral **	123,750	0	(123,750)	
Active Young People **	257,000	0	(257,000)	
Over 60's **	30,664	0	(30,664)	
Sub Total - Strategic Programmes	472,164	0	(472,164)	
Streetscene & Transportation				
Concessionary Travel	1,900,000	1,900,000	0	C
Sustainable Waste Management ***	737,209	0	0	TBC
Bus Service Support Grant	557,000	557,000	0	C
Sub Total - Streetscene & Transportation	3,194,209	2,457,000	0	
TOTAL - GRANTS	43,011,713	45,679,431	3,404,927	

*2024/25 Budget including estimated amounts not final

** Grants now paid directly to AURA

*** To be confirmed

**** Not included on 23/24 appendix

BUDGET 2024/25 - COUNCIL FUND REVENUE
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Summary of Council Fund Earmarked Reserves	Est Bal 01/04/24 £m	Est Bal 31/03/25 £m
<u>Service Balances</u>		
Corporate Services	0.496	0.158
Education & Youth	0.060	0.000
Housing & Communities	0.155	0.053
Planning & Environment	0.453	0.262
Social Services	0.155	0.073
Streetscene	0.000	0.000
Total - Service Balances	1.319	0.545
<u>Corporate Balances</u>		
Workforce Reserve	0.820	0.820
General Reserve - Investment in Organisational Change	0.930	0.505
Total Corporate Balances	1.750	1.325
<u>Specific Reserves</u>		
County Elections	0.075	0.075
Warm Homes Admin Fee	0.316	0.000
Waste Disposal	0.041	0.031
Design Fees	0.200	0.100
Winter Maintenance	0.000	0.250
Severe Weather	0.000	0.250
Car Parking	0.088	0.044
Insurance Funds	2.325	2.585
School HWB ICT Replacement	0.790	1.053
Flintshire Trainees	0.524	0.524
Rent Income Shortfall	0.106	0.000
Plas Derwen Wave 4	0.002	0.002
Supervision Fees	0.049	0.049
IT Infrastructure HWB	0.044	0.000
IT COVID Enquiry	0.132	0.000
Schools Intervention Reserve	0.163	0.099
Organisational Change/ADM	0.627	0.627
Solar Farms	0.062	0.062
Employment Claims	0.110	0.000
Community Benefit Fund NWRWTP	0.230	0.220
Grants & Contributions	1.856	1.402
Schools	1.607	0.000
Total Specific Reserves	9.346	7.372
Total Earmarked Reserves	12.415	9.242

Comments made at Overview & Scrutiny Committees whilst considering the Budget 2024-25 Report – February, 2024

Education, Youth & Culture OSC – 1st February, 2024	
<u>RECOMMENDATIONS</u>	
(a) That the Education and Youth Portfolio’s options to reduce budgets be noted; and	
(b) That the proposals for the delegated schools’ budget be noted.	
Education & Youth Portfolio Budget Reductions	
Cllr Andrew Parkhurst	<p>Believe that because of the financial difficulties the Welsh Government (WG) budget has presented Council with each Portfolio has been asked to identify 7.5% of savings in order that Members could then decide which of those potential savings could be accepted or rejected and that Members would have a choice and make an informed decision.</p> <p>There is a potential saving of £303,000 identified within the Education & Youth Portfolio excluding schools, but this does not equate to a 7.5% saving. Could officers please clarify this. Also, when looking at the 8 month outturn for this financial year, there have been £367,000 of savings. How has this been identified as this is more than the savings proposed for the 2024/25 budget.</p> <p>The Chief Officer (Education & Youth) advised that the total efficiencies identified did not equate to 7.5% of the overall budget for the Portfolio but explained that each Portfolio was asked to find up to 7.5% of efficiencies and that this was an aspiring target. Any further efficiencies above those identified would risk delivery of statutory services and risk the Council not being able to meet its statutory functions.</p> <p>In relation to the £367,000 identified in-year efficiencies, the Chief Officer advised that this had come from a moratorium on the reduction or stopping of spend in each Portfolio. One of the reasons for this efficiency was around the provision of 3 year olds and early years education with pupil numbers not coming through as anticipated, which reflected the fall in birth rates in recent times. The Corporate Finance Manager added that the Council does look for recurring reductions in budget as a sustainable way of reducing budget requirements for next year. The moratorium and temporary underspend were not reoccurring in nature but have been put in place to assist with the in-year overspend.</p>
Cllr Gladys Healey	<p>Is there financial provision for any refugees that may settle within the County?</p> <p>The Chief Officer said yes to the best of her knowledge. There had been a number of families who had settled in Flintshire and education provision had been made for them. This was a challenge for all Local Authorities as it would not be made aware significantly in advance when</p>

	<p>the Home Office would direct them to receive families and children to be located in Flintshire. There was a structured process in place to manage this and the Council worked closely with schools which had been demonstrated in recent times.</p>
Cllr Jason Shallcross	<p>Could a further explanation be given on the budget reductions for Youth Services around the asset transfer of some buildings. Believe the Council would incur a yearly cost for renting back space to use within the buildings in future.</p> <p>The Chief Officer explained that the challenge for Youth Services is that it has, under its control, a number of buildings which were not solely used for youth clubs, but by other organisations who pay rent under the Fees and Charges Policy. This was an expensive model. We are looking at appropriate community groups/parents to take over the buildings as an asset transfer and if an affective partnership is developed, the Youth Service can rent back what it needs to create the opportunity for efficiencies which would allow for additional funding of more youth workers out in the communities working with schools and young people to support them.</p> <p>The Chief Executive advised that of the 2 current asset transfers, the one at Penyffordd was quite advanced, so should happen sooner and reduce the risk to the Council in meeting the budget reduction, as shown in the report.</p>
Delegated School Budgets	
Cllr Gladys Healey	<p>A consequence of cutting schools budgets by 3% may result in redundancies. Would the Council be assisting financially with the cost of redundancies.</p> <p>The Leader of the Council advised that the cost of redundancies did not sit with the Council. The Council were there to advise and support schools who maybe in that difficult situation.</p>
Cllr Dave Mackie	<p>Cannot support a 3% reduction in school budgets and would suggest that a 3% reduction in the delivery of education to pupils would take the Council below an acceptable minimal level. Last year the school budgets were reduced by 3% and if the Council thought it acceptable to cut another 3% why not increase this figure last year.</p> <p>There was a lot of evidence that schools need to perform better, and they need improved budgets. If you look at the PETA results this was concerning as Wales were at the bottom across the UK and also information from WG showed that, in relation, to Mathematics, Reading and Science performance levels were below that of 2021.</p> <p>In relation to School Balances, reserves had reduced by £5m meaning that schools has spent their budget allocation and an additional £5m,</p>

	<p>this is not all schools but it shows that schools were already operating at an unacceptable lowest level.</p> <p>The Leader of the Council said that grouping all schools the same was disingenuous and unfair on headteachers, teachers and young people who were working hard to maintain education provision for young people to have the best possible standard of education. Members were aware of the problems this year with the budget, and he was currently working on a response with the Chief Executive and other finance officers to WG which would be robust and strong. Schools needed more budget; the Council needed more budget and WG needed more budget.</p> <p>Where did Cllr Mackie propose that the funding came from? Would he recommend an additional 3% to be added to Council Tax and ringfenced for schools. Nobody wants to be in this position, but schools had the option to apply for a licenced deficit which the Council did not. The Council had to set a balanced budget.</p>
<p>Cllr Andrew Parkhurst</p>	<p>Could you explain what the funding of £1.124m entitled 'Unallocated Schools Budget' related to.</p> <p>The following response was provided to the Committee following the meeting:-</p> <p>£0.983m – employee costs – this relates to historical Added Years pension contributions for schools based staff £0.141m - supplies and services costs which relate to all schools, for example the e-teach contract and copyright licences</p> <p>These budgets are fully committed.</p>

Community & Housing OSC – 7th February, 2024

RECOMMENDATION

That the Housing and Communities portfolio's options to reduce budgets be noted.

<p>Cllr Geoff Collett</p>	<p>Is it sensible to take money from reserves this year when Officers and Members know that next year's budget would be substantially worse. Are we not making things worse for the future.</p> <p>The Strategic Finance Manager said that options to address the issue of homelessness had been approved and it was being suggested that an amount of reserves be ringfenced to give time for some of those options to come to fruition and address the issue. This would be more of a concern if no solutions were in place.</p>
<p>Cllr Helen Brown (Chair)</p>	<p>How confident were you that the solutions identified to address homelessness would work.</p>

	<p>The Chief Officer (Housing and Communities) said that some of the options previously considered by the Committee could be costed, for example, the refurbishment of properties for house share. Confident that options will have an impact but have to consider the increasing demand that continues.</p> <p>The Housing & Prevention Service Manager advised that projections had been developed but that a lot of homeless presentations were people who were homeless on the day. All that could be done as a crisis management service was to respond to what happens day to day.</p>
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Social & Health Care OSC – 9th February, 2024

RECOMMENDATION

That the Social Services portfolio's options to reduce budgets be noted.

<p>Cllr Dave Mackie</p>	<p>Thank you for all the work carried out and extra work done to address budget reductions.</p> <p>As stated in the report, around all Portfolios being asked to revisit their cost base to re look at potential ways of reducing budgets or removing cost pressures to contribute more to meeting the remaining gap, was the Social Services Portfolio set a target for further reducing budget?</p> <p>In relation to the proposed charge for appointee services, how much would be cost be per individual?</p> <p>Also, in relation to the proposed Disability services charging for college placements, what would be charges be?</p> <p>The Senior Manager Safeguarding and Commissioning explained that in relation to the proposed charge for appointee services, the Council had been looking at what other Local Authorities were doing across England and Wales and the proposal would be around £10/£20 per week. This was being investigated at the moment, and officers appreciated it was a sensitive topic so would require consultation with those affected and their families to make sure the charge was fair and equitable.</p> <p>In relation to charging for college placements, the Senior Manager Safeguarding and Commissioning advised that, from initial early work carried out, it was anticipated that this would potentially affect less than 5 people per year and would be for those new to the process and not those with existing college placements. Any proposed charges would be shared with families as part of the decision making process.</p>
<p>Cllr Carol Ellis</p>	<p>What would be affect be of the proposed reduction in Commissioning Care Fees?</p>

	<p>Concerned that the proposed Deferral of Children’s residential budget pressures could impact the Out of County Placements budget which currently did not meet demand.</p> <p>In relation to Domiciliary care, what affect would you anticipate the reduction in budget having on hospital discharges?</p> <p>When would you expect BCUHB to confirm an increased contribution to Marleyfield Older People’s Residential Care Home.</p> <p>The Chief Officer (Social Services) said that, in relation to the Care Commissioning budget, the Council had a proud record in supporting its care sector partners, with the Council last year providing the highest increase of care rates across North Wales. There would be an increase, but it would not be in the order it was last year. Negotiations were sensitive and on-going.</p> <p>The Senior Manager: Children understood the concern around Out of County Placements but advised that the budget proposal did not mean that the Council was stopping its expansion of children’s in-house residential provision. Due to challenges around recruitment, the home planned for 2024/25 would not be operational at the start of the year and therefore there would be a budget reduction for 2024/25 but this would be required as part of the 2025/26 budget. The Council continued to invest in services which would enable children to not need out of county provision in the first place, including working on a significant grant application to expand services to ensure children were safely supported without the need for out of county placements.</p> <p>The Senior Manager - Integrated Services and Lead Adults said that the Council had an excellent reputation in relation to the hospital discharge service, but demand continued to increase. It was explained that by changing ways of working, speaking to patients earlier and working differently it was possible to maintain standards and reduce the budget. Having earlier referrals enabled a thorough discharge plan to be put in place with the Reablement teams involved.</p> <p>In relation to BCUHB’s increased contribution to Marleyfield Older People’s Residential Care Home, the Senior Manager - Integrated Services and Lead Adults confirmed that this was their suggestion and therefore she was confident that this funding would be provided.</p>
<p>Cllr Hilary McGuill</p>	<p>Thank officers for working on putting together budget reductions which I hope do not affect frontline services.</p> <p>In relation to proposed efficiencies to planned contracts with the third sector, when would these be carried out and which third sector organisation would be affected?</p>

	<p>Feel more assured around the proposed reduction in Commissioning Care Fees, having listened to the response from the Chief Officer that the Council would remain on par with neighbouring Local Authorities.</p> <p>In relation to the Disability Services charging for college placements, the charge would be on par with what other parents contributed when their children go away to college, but the introduction of this charge needed to be handled sensitively.</p> <p>Whilst the increased contribution from BCUHB was welcomed, this was a significantly small amount in comparison to the money the Council was savings BCUHB on an annual basis.</p> <p>MST and Mockingbird have saved the Council thousands and pleased to see that this was now beginning to have a knock on effect financially for the Council. Like reassurance on whether the Council would be able to reap back financial contributions next year?</p> <p>If the reduced budget proposals were supported, how quickly could these decisions be reversed if they had a negative effect on front line services.</p> <p>The Senior Manager Safeguarding and Commissioning advised that as part of commissioning, the Council undertook a review of efficiencies of contracts and how well they were utilised. The efficiencies identified were small but by reengineering the way services were commissioned it enabled the ones with great value to those that access them to continue.</p> <p>In relation to the proposal to charge for college placements, the Senior Manager Safeguarding and Commissioning that all placements would be financially assessed to ensure that the costs families faced were evenly distributed and that the costs were not detrimental to those most in need.</p> <p>The Senior Manager: Children referred to the continued impact of MST and Mockingbird and explained how the benefits were being seen in Education and Schools with an increase in children and young people presenting with complex and challenging behaviour and needs. The success of the MST service had seen 91% of children continue to remain at home. The service was seen as cost avoidance rather than a saving but was really important.</p> <p>Information was provided on the 3 Mockingbird hubs which had been inspected by CRW fostering services which had identified the positive impact that this had on children in fostering care.</p>
<p>Cllr Gladys Healey</p>	<p>Thank you to all officers for the report.</p> <p>Mental health in children is increasing, would not like to see cuts to funding for mental health services for children.</p>

	<p>Agree with increasing in-house support to children who need out of county placement. Would not like to see further budget reductions in out of county placements.</p> <p>In relation to Domiciliary Care, have you looked at pay in Wrexham which is higher than in Flintshire.</p> <p>Agree with previous comments that the Council save BCUHB a great deal of money and the Council should be looking at how much they are saving them.</p> <p>The Senior Manager: Children explained how the early intensive timely support for children and parents/families with mental health problems was very important. He spoke about the Council's continued investment in its own services in relation to reducing the budget pressure around out of county placements.</p>
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Corporate Resources OSC – 8th February, 2024
Continued discussion from previous agenda item *Revenue Budget Monitoring 2023/24 (Month 9) and Capital Programme Monitoring 2023/24 (Month 9) relating to Section 1.10 of the report – Carry Forward Requests – Governance £0.210m.*

Cllr. Richard Jones	<p>Sought clarification on values £156K and £60K.</p> <p>The Chief Officer (Governance) advised that it was to extend the posts for 2 years. Attempting to give individuals a degree of uncertainty to prevent them looking elsewhere as on temporary contracts.</p>
Cllr. Alasdair Ibbotson	<p>Whilst agreeing with comments, these are difficult financial times – every penny needed for critical services.</p> <p>The website does need improvement – but to what extent does investing this money in the website lead to increase in income? Not apparent that this would enhance income – therefore only providing a limited return.</p> <p>To what extent is this a critical service? Has to weigh up whether this is more or less important than his own priority of bus service subsidies? Believes this is not as important – Move to recommend that C/f request is rejected.</p> <p>However, did suggest that there may be a way to avoid and redundancies as a result. Reserve of '<i>Investment in Organisational Change</i>' balance at end of year is forecast to be £930,138. Unlikely that reserves not related to Digital Strategy will be spent so could some of this be moved to maintain the Digital Strategy Reserve for 1 year.</p>
Cllr. Linda Thew	<p>Agree that money needs to be spent on website. Does not agree with streamlining processes to be dealt with at Connects. They cannot cope with the current processes so to add more does not seem right.</p>

Cllr. Bill Crease	If not for financial situation, then would support investing in improvements. However, on the one hand we are proposing investing in enhancements yet at the same time proposing to cut / close Connects centres in Connah's Quay and Holywell. Seems counterproductive.
Chief Officer (Governance) in response to the above:	<p>Difficult to argue that the posts help raise income. However, there are a number of things that are dependent on them:</p> <p>1 - £25K saving suggestion to use Facebook and lose GovDelivery software. This is reliant on the 2 Digital Officer posts. Without them, this would not be achievable.</p> <p>Transformation programme is intended to generate savings. Having capacity to digitalise services is essential for its success.</p> <p>These are temporary posts. Reserve money is not base-budget so it is only a one off amount that could be used as a temporary reprieve for other things over 12 months or until monies had been spent.</p> <p>The breakdown of costs per post could be provided to Cabinet for them to determine which, if any, they want to agree to keep.</p>
Cllr. Richard Jones	<p>Sought to clarify whether it was the whole amount of Carry Forward or just for Governance.</p> <p>Cllr. Ibbotson advised that he was only referring to the amount for Governance not Planning, Environment & Economy.</p> <p><i>The Committee recommends to Cabinet that the carry-forward figure for Governance is rejected and requests that Cabinet commissions a risk assessment of rejecting the Planning, Environment & Economy carry forward.</i></p>
<u>Council Fund Budget 2024/25</u>	
<u>Report RECOMMENDATIONS</u>	
<p>1 Review and comment on the Corporate Services options to reduce budgets.</p> <p>2 Review and comment on the Assets Service options to reduce budgets.</p> <p>3 Review and comment on the Governance Portfolio's options to reduce budgets.</p>	
Corporate Services – Budget Reductions	
Cllr. Richard Jones	<p>How many trainees does the figure relate to?</p> <p>Only 3 or 4 – not a large amount.</p>
Cllr. Andrew Parkhurst	Trade union support budget – how much is the budget and what are the statutory requirements for it.

	Budget total is £130K. Will need to check whether it is a statutory requirement. However, it does help to have positive working relationships with TU's, particularly around organisational change.
Cllr. Richard Jones	Is the £50K Fees and Charges Review amount in addition to the £310K that have already been included? The £310K is the full year figure from October 2023. The £50k relates to the review for 2024 and is an estimate of the part year figure from October 2024.
Assets Services – Budget Reductions	
Cllr. Richard Jones	If reductions are made for 3 rd sector funding, it could potentially put pressure back onto our own services.
Governance Portfolio – Budget Reductions	
Cllr. Alasdair Ibbotson	If c/f request removed and therefore we couldn't operate the Facebook page, and the full amount of the efficiency for GovDelivery was also accepted – what would be the service impact? Comms would be via Twitter and website only. Significant plank of comms would be lost.

In considering the recommendations, the following were agreed:

Recommendation 2 – Cllr. Richard Jones moved. Cllr. Bill Crease seconded. Voted unanimously to accept.

Recommendation 1 & 3 – Taken together with the following agreed wording which was moved by Cllr. Alasdair Ibbotson and seconded by Cllr. Richard Jones. At the vote it was accepted unanimously.

The Committee expresses provisional reservations and reluctance in accepting the proposed reduction of £138K in the Flintshire Trainee and additional £40K Connects – reduction in budget, but expresses a provisional willingness to accept the removal of Granicus GovDelivery Software even if the carry forward figure of £210K for 'Digital Strategy Reserve' from the previous item is not approved, pending the consideration of the effects and risks for each.

FEEDBACK FROM ENVIRONMENT & ECONOMY

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE BUDGET MEETING 6 February 2024

(Part 2 item)

Questions & Comments	Responses
Planning, Environment & Economy – Budget reductions	
Cllr Richard Lloyd asked regarding the current level of fees for planning applications.	The Chief Officer advised that the fees are currently applied on a sliding scale based on the size and type of the application.

Questions & Comments	Responses
<p>Cllr Mike Peers referred to the report presented to the Committee in October and suggested that another column should be put in future reports showing the October and February figures with a running total.</p> <p>Cllr Mike Peers asked if any vacancies had been removed within the portfolio.</p>	<p>The Finance Manager welcomed this positive suggestion.</p> <p>The Chief Officer referred to the additional capacity report that went to Cabinet in Sept 21 and agreed to circulate the link. (Completed 7/2/24).</p>
<p>Cllr Alan Marshall asked if there was potential for officers to suggest a positive outcome during a planning advice request so that fees could be collected.</p>	<p>The Chief Officer gave an assurance that officers approached pre-planning applications in a professional way and that this would not happen.</p>
<p>Cllr Alan Marshall noted that if planning applications are not approved within 6 months the fees are refunded to the applicants. He asked if there were enough staff to process applications.</p>	<p>The Chief Officer advised that he was confident there are enough staff within the team to ensure this would not happen and that extensions of time to determine applications would be agreed with the applicants whenever possible.</p>
Streetscene & Transportation – Proposals for budget reductions	
<p>Cllr Chris Dolphin expressed concern at the proposal to close all remaining public conveniences. He referred to Mold Market; the stall holders and visitors and asked where they would be accommodated. He also referred to Holywell market and the vision to increase footfall. In relation to Talacre he felt it was vital that public conveniences were provided in the summer holidays at the very least due to the influx of visitors to this premier tourist destination in Flintshire.</p>	<p>The Highway Network Manager referred to the problems with vandalism and repair costs and advised there was no statutory duty to provide public conveniences. He added that Community Asset Transfers have been offered to the communities affected.</p>
<p>Cllr Mike Peers referred to the cost pressure in the October report of 2.79 million. He referred to car parking charges, bus subsidy and the Flexi bus which appeared to be parked up in Buckley at times. He asked if the bus subsidy supported any main bus routes in Flintshire. He acknowledged vandalism of public toilets was also a problem for Town Councils citing Buckley as an example.</p>	<p>The Regulatory Services Manager advised that a review of footfall at car parks was currently underway. The aim was to keep charges in line with inflation as far as possible. The Transport Manager agreed to look at the data for the Buckley Flexi Bus. He added that potentially Arriva Wales Services would be impacted by the withdrawal of bus subsidies.</p>

Questions & Comments	Responses
<p>Cllr Dan Rose asked if Community Asset Transfer for public toilets would continue to be an option once facilities had been closed. He added it would have been useful to see the list of subsidised routes prior to the meeting.</p> <p>Regarding the flexi bus would welcome seeing the flexi bus data. He asked if flexi buses could be used on more rural routes.</p> <p>He asked how many car parks would be affected by the proposals and if there were any opportunities to benefit from paid adverts on the parking app.</p>	<p>The Highways Manager confirmed that CAT's would continue to be an option.</p> <p>The Transport Manager confirmed the data would be shared and that in principle flexi bus services could be used more on rural routes.</p> <p>The Regulatory Services Manager said that as many as 30 car parks could be affected. She would look into the possibility of paid adverts on the parking app.</p>
<p>Cllr Allan Marshall asked for clarification regarding Eligible and Non-Eligible pupils in relation to free school transport. He also referred to the impact on pupils going to schools that were not their nearest one. The potential effect on school transport budget was also an area of concern.</p>	<p>The Transport Manager provided a brief overview of eligible and non-eligible pupils in relation to the school transport policy, however, he agreed to speak to Cllr Marshall outside the meeting if further clarification was required.</p> <p>The Transport Manager explained that any eligible pupils affected by the reduction in local bus services would still need to be transported by the Council which would have an impact on the school transport budget, however, the extent of which would only be known once the procurement exercise and identification of services that are to remain has been concluded. He went on to explain that any non-eligible pupils that were affected by the changes would also require transport for a period of 12 months as required by the school transport policy.</p> <p>Figures in relation to current eligible and non-eligible school pupils could be provided, however, as explained, it would be impossible to determine how many pupils (either eligible or non-eligible) would be impacted, until such time as both the procurement exercise and determination of services going forward is concluded.</p>

Questions & Comments	Responses
<p>Cllr David Coggins-Cogan asked what did the 20p increase achieve. He also felt that more promotion should be given to increase the uptake of parking permits. He added that all car parks should be chargeable.</p> <p>The Chair agreed that all car parks should be treated equally.</p>	<p>The Regulatory Manager agreed to provide the breakdown following the meeting. She referred to a review of the permit scheme and agreed that further promotion of the permit scheme was required.</p>
<p>Cllr Coggins-Cogan felt there should be no cuts to bus subsidies as this could have devastating effects on communities. He added that public transport provided vital social network opportunities for residents and prevents isolation.</p> <p>He added that closing toilets was a public health and human dignity issue for many people suffering from health conditions.</p> <p>Cllr Coggins-Cogan felt that the Council needed to be honest with Flintshire residents with regard to the cuts.</p>	<p>The Transport Manager acknowledged Cllr Coggins-Cogans' concerns and understood the importance of local services to the residents of Flintshire.</p> <p>The Highways Manager referred to the outcome of the consultation of the outcome of the adoption of the Local Toilet Strategy which would be considered at the March meeting.</p>
<p>Cllr Dave Healey referred to the Ring & Ride scheme and was concerned that this could be in jeopardy. He added that it is a valued service that enables people to attend medical appointments.</p> <p>He added that whilst none of the cuts were palatable, the Council have got to take action in order to set a balanced budget. The alternative would be that Commissioners would come in to run the Council in the event of not being able to balance the budget.</p>	<p>The Transport Manager confirmed that the Ring & Ride service falls within the local bus budget and therefore, should the budget be reduced, then this would have a detrimental affect on the ability to run all services funded via this budget. The Transport Manager reiterated the requirement to prioritise services in accordance with available budget once known, for which the requirement for medical appointments would be given due consideration.</p>
<p>Cllr Ian Hodge asked if consideration had been given to geographical location in additional to available data.</p> <p>He asked whether it was the intention to designate one HRC site for trade waste.</p>	<p>The Streetscene Service Manager advised that no decision had been made and this would be a date driven exercise to identify changes, with consideration given to geographical and impact on domestic waste and potentially infraction charges.</p>

Questions & Comments	Responses
<p>Cllr Dan Rose referred to providing services in-house rather than contracting them out and welcomed the proposal.</p>	<p>The Streetscene Service Manager advised that there is a small team in house and that some equipment has been provided as a result of a biodiversity grant from Welsh Government. The team were in a position to take on this area of work.</p>
<p>Cllr Chris Dolphin referred to the Greenfield HRC site which he considered to be one of the premier sites in Wales. He hoped it would stay open. He added that Okenholt would be a suitable site for trade waste or closure, as he felt it was in the wrong place.</p>	
<p>Cllr Vicky Perfect replied that the site at Oakenholt was well used and must not close.</p>	
<p>Cllr Mike Peers felt it was inappropriate for the Committee to be identifying any HRC's for closure. This would need to be discussed properly with the appropriate within a report. He suggested that perhaps Tuesday/ Weds and Thurs would be the best for consideration and that staffing levels should also be considered going forward to maximise efficiency.</p> <p>He agreed with reducing essential services on bank holidays but queried why pot hole work may be required.</p>	<p>The Streetscene Service Manager advised that pot holes are RAG rated and on occasions need to be dealt with on the day. He added that a review of the HRC strategy had resulted in changes to the rota of staff and a reduction in agency staff and overtime.</p>
<p>Cllr Hodge emphasised the need for HRC sites to be reviewed on both a geographical and data driven basis. He added that fly tipping could increase.</p>	
<p>Cllr Mike Peers asked regarding school crossing patrols and the safety implications of the proposed cuts.</p>	<p>The Transport Manager advised that the 15 historical School Crossing Patrol vacancies had been vacant for a significant period of time (averaging between 1 and 5 years). He added that work was ongoing with the delivery of a permanent crossing facility infrastructure</p>

Questions & Comments	Responses
<p>Cllr Richard Lloyd also questioned the safety and the need for permanent crossing infrastructure in some locations.</p> <p>Cllr Coggins Cogan asked regarding how long vacancies had remained unfilled in the 'remove officer vacancies category'. He felt this category should be a red RAG status rather than amber.</p>	<p>programme where required following the undertaking of an independent review.</p> <p>The Regulatory Services Manager advised that Streetscene had introduced a new role of Environmental Improvement Coordinator two years ago which focused on the prevention of environmental crime. She added that the purpose of this was to educate Flintshire communities on the correct way to dispose of their waste thus reducing environmental crimes and therefore the demand of the enforcement team. She referred to the enforcement officer posts and advised that there would undoubtedly be an impact on service delivery.</p> <p>The Transport Manager advised that recruitment was continuing for permanent replacements for both the positions of Integrated Transport Manager and Transport Strategy Manager vacancies.</p>
<p>Cllr Mike Peers referred the 20 mile/hour speed restrictions which must have helped and questioned the need for school crossing patrols.</p>	<p>The Transport Manager agreed that whilst the reduction of speed limits on restricted roads has reduced average speeds, recent surveys highlight that recorded speeds are still well in excess of the new 20mph speed limit and hence, there remained a high level of non-compliance. The transport Manager went on to explain that whilst speed data is indeed important, there are a number of other factors taken into consideration when deciding upon whether a crossing facility is warranted.</p>
<p>Cllr Ian Hodge referred to the Safe Access to Schools work that had been undertaken which should be taken into consideration.</p>	
<p>The Chair commented on the reviews being undertaken by neighbouring authorities regarding replacement of black bins. He asked</p>	

Questions & Comments	Responses
how many bins had been replaced over the last 12 months.	The Regulatory Manager advised that almost 2,000 black bins had been replaced over the last 12 months.
The Chair asked regarding data relating to bulky waste collections.	The Regulatory Manager agreed to provide the data required.
The Chair referred to Monthly bin collections and communal collection points, flats, terraced houses etc and the challenges of 4 weekly collections.	
<p>Cllr Lloyd agreed regarding communal collection points.</p> <p>He added that bins are sometimes damaged when going into the vehicle. He welcomed the trade waste suggestion, but wondered how trade waste and DIY waste could be differentiated.</p>	<p>The Streetscene Service Manager suggested Trade Waste & DIY Waste may be at a specific site. This would free up space at other sites, and there would be no need to differentiate between trade & DIY waste.</p>
<p>Cllr Coggins-Cogan felt that modernisation of systems regarding bookings needed to be considered and referred to Conwy CC & Denbighshire CC who both operate booking systems. He asked regarding the cost of a black bin to the authority.</p>	<p>The Regulatory Manager advised that the cost of a black bin was £20.</p>
<p>Cllr Peers referred to black bins being swallowed by the lorries and also how wear and tear was taken into account. Regarding small amounts of DIY he asked how the Council would quantify the charge.</p> <p>Cllr Peers emphasised the need for appropriate scrutiny to take place in relation to restriction of residual waste collections to monthly due to the significant impact on residents and the lack of consultation. He urged the Officers to bring back a report to a future scrutiny committee and proposed that Number 9 should be removed from the list of budget savings. He also suggested that a pilot should have been undertaken to see if it worked.</p>	<p>Cllr Johnson referred to the 4 week bin collection proposal and the budget workshops, with no comments being made at the workshops in relation to the 4 weekly bin collection. He added that the shortfall of 274k would have to be found from somewhere.</p>
Cllr Dan Rose asked regarding the warranty period on bins.	The Regulatory Manager agreed to provide the information.

Questions & Comments	Responses
<p>Cllr Chris Dolphin referred to kerb side collections that were introduced in 2003 and that introducing 180l bins rather than 220l was a big mistake. He added that decision making is about due process; the committee had started looking at budget proposals at the October meeting; it wasn't discussed during November, December or January and appeared on the agenda for the first time within the papers for the meeting. Cllr Dolphin felt the proposal needed to be properly scrutinised with facts, detail and figures as it was a big and emotive subject.</p>	
<p>Cllr Peers proposed that Efficiency Proposal No 9 (Restrict Waste Collections) be removed.</p> <p>Cllr Roy Wakelam seconded the proposal which, when put to the vote, was carried.</p>	