

Budget proposals 2023-24

The meeting of the Finance and Grants Committee on 27 October considered the draft budget proposals for 2023-24 submitted by the Council's committees and the Responsible Financial Officer.

The Finance and Grants Committee scrutinised the draft budget proposals and made comments to the budget holders.

All have now done further work to clarify issues raised by the Finance and Grants Committee and, in several areas, have amended their budget proposals. These amendments need to be scrutinised by the Finance and Grants Committee.

The amended budget proposals are shown below. The amendments that have been made since the meeting of the Finance and Grants Committee on 27 October are highlighted in red.

The Clerk will gather your comments, together with the observations made by the Finance and Grants Committee on 27 October in order to compile a short report that will accompany the papers sent to all Members ahead of the Council's budget-setting meeting in January.

PlaCE Committee – budget proposals 2023-24

Project	Budget 2022-23	Forecast expenditure 2022-23	Draft budget 2023-24	Commentary
Town in Bloom	£12,000	£12,000	£14,450	The draft budget proposals include provision for a rate of inflation increase to the cost of employing the project's contractor plus a contingency of nearly £1,500 to cover the costs of theft and vandalism as well as maintenance during the winter months outside the main Town in Bloom contract.
Town in Bloom community involvement	£2,500	£2,500	£3,550	The draft budget proposals include increased support for local community groups and individuals to adopt and maintain floral displays. If successful, it is envisaged that this form of funding will eventually replace much of the central Town in Bloom contract
Shop Local events and activities	£3,000	£250	£0	The budget for 2022-23 included ambitious plans for the Council to organise a number of stand-alone events and activities in Abertillery town centre. None of these events were progressed. The Committee proposes to support existing town centre events in 2023-24 rather than staging its own events and activities.
Halloween event	£5,000	£538	£0	
Car boot sales and Community Council town centre events	£10,000	£0	£0	
Community Council activities at town centre events	£2,000	£800	£3,000	
Grant funding to Ffrindiau Tyleri for town centre events	£2,000	£2,000	£2,500	The number of events organised by Ffrindiau Tyleri has increased from two to four per year.
Allotments	£600	£583	£650	The draft budget proposal takes account of increased lease fees for 2023-24.
Provision of two new community defibrillators	£4,000	£4,000	£4,000	The Council's Defibrillator Policy envisages the installation of two new defibrillators per year for the next four years.
Maintenance of community defibrillators	£2,000	£984	£3,500	Ten defibrillators will require replacement batteries in 2023-24. The warranty on ten defibrillator cabinets will expire in 2023-24. The draft budget proposal includes provision to purchase a replacement cabinet to act as a stand-by in case an existing cabinet malfunctions.
Environmental projects			£10,000	Following the Council's decision to adopt a Community Asset Transfer Policy, the draft budget proposals include provision for the potential greening of small pieces of land, expenditure on and grant funding for other potential environmental improvements and the procurement of a feasibility study into the potential community asset transfer of a mosaic mural in Abertillery.
Community transport			£8,500	The Committee proposes to procure a professional feasibility study into options for a community transport scheme to link unserved communities with the current public transport system and to provide a service after 5pm across the whole ALCC area.
	£43,100	£22,000- £26,000	£50,150	

People and Communities Committee – budget proposals 2023-24

Project	Budget 2022-23	Forecast expenditure 2022-23	Draft budget 2023-24	Commentary
Christmas lights central contract	£30,000	£14,400	£40,000	The Committee will put a new contract out to tender from 2023 onwards which envisages a much-improved and expanded display. The Council has received informal estimates of around £40,000 from two contractors, although actual expenditure may be significantly reduced by competitive tendering.
Christmas lights overhaul and maintenance			£20,000	The Council has received professional advice that the whole electrical and catenary wire infrastructure requires a complete overhaul and repair. Actual expenditure may be significantly reduced once the required work has been fully scoped and subjected to competitive tendering – but the Council has been advised to make provision for a worst-case scenario.
Llanhilleth TRA Christmas lights	£3,000	£3,000	£3,000	Six local community organisations now receive grant funding to arrange their own Christmas lights displays outwith the Council's central Christmas lights contract.
Brynithel Community Centre Christmas lights	£1,500	£1,500	£1,500	
Swffryd Community Centre Christmas lights	£1,500	£1,500	£1,500	
Bournville Community Centre Christmas lights	£1,500	£1,500	£1,500	
Aberbeeg TRA Christmas lights		£1,500	£1,500	
Pentre Tyleri Christmas lights		£1,500	£1,500	
Christmas lights electricity costs	£1,800	£732	£1,800	The forecast expenditure for 2022-23 takes account of the Electricity Price Guarantee. Without the EPG (which is due to end in April 2023) the same amount of electricity would be forecast to cost nearly £1,700 by Christmas 2023.
Events and initiatives connected with Remembrance Sunday including wreath laying, support for the Royal British Legion Poppy Appeal and the organisation and marshalling of parades	£2,500	£275	£3,000	Blaenau Gwent Council has agreed to organise Remembrance Sunday signage and road closures again in 2022. If ALCC takes over these responsibilities in 2023, the forecast cost would be around £2,850.
Development of the Abertillery War Memorial site	£5,000	£2,590	£0	No further development of the infrastructure of the War Memorial site is envisaged in 2023-24.
Maintenance of war memorial sites	£1,500	£2,000	£2,500	The 2022 heatwave meant that actual expenditure in 2022-23 is expected to be £500 more than the original £1,500 budget. After taking account of inflation, similar weather would lead to forecast expenditure of around £2,500 in 2023-24.
Loneliness Project	£5,000		£5,000	The first meeting of this project's partners and stakeholders did not take place until the end of September 2022, so expenditure in 2022-23 has been impossible to forecast. That initial meeting identified seven separate projects that could benefit from grant

				funding or other financial support and several other community groups have since indicated an interest in being involved in the project. The draft budget amount for 2023-24 would enable the Committee to make twenty-or-more small grants or payments in support of activities for otherwise social-excluded members of the community.
Community Council website project	£10,000		£0	Proposals will be brought to Council that this project is taken over by the Community Empowerment Committee.
Community Fun Run	£5,000		£5,000	Progress has been made to establish a local community fun run based in Soffryd organised with the help of Islwyn Running Club. It is planned that the inaugural event will be staged in 2023.
Community summer cinema events	£10,021	£0	£10,000	The Committee plans to organise two cinema events for children each week for six weeks at The Met during the 2023 summer school holidays. The actual events have been costed at £4,500 but the proposed budget includes significant provision for transport, the costs of which may be reduced by competitive tendering.
Party in the Park	£15,000	£15,150	£20,000	The Committee plans to expand the current event to include more participative activities for children and a greater diversity of acts for the main stage, booked through a community-based events organiser. The draft budget proposal also includes provision for greater advertising to increase participation from families beyond Abertillery town.
Musical concerts	£500	£1,000	£1,000	Until this year, a local community carol concert and a St David's Day concert have been hosted for free at St Michael's church. It remains uncertain as to when (or if) St Michael's will be able to host the events again, so the draft budget proposal includes provision for the hire of an alternative venue.
Grant funding to Abertillery Rock and Blues Festival	£2,000	£2,000	£2,000	
Total	£95,821	£50,000- £60,000	£120,800	

Community Empowerment Committee – budget proposals 2023-24

	BUDGET 2021-22	ACTUAL 2021-22	FORECAST 2022-23	PROPOSED 2023-24	
BG DETACHED TEAM	£54,000	£25,567	£35,000	£54,500	18-hour part-time post to become 37-hour full-time post
OFF THE STREETS	£40,000	£38,044	£44,000	£44,244	
YOUTH-LED PROJECTS				£2,000	
TOTAL	£94,000	£63,611	£79,000	£100,744	

The Council currently funds three part-time youth workers on the Blaenau Gwent detached team – 2 x 9 hours and 1 x 18 hours.

A budget proposal to increase funding to support 2 x 9 hours and 1 x 37 hours was approved by Council in January 2021, but provision actually *decreased* in 2021-22 because of Covid restrictions.

The budget proposal for 2023-24 is for the Council to fund the level of provision that it had intended to fund from 2021-22 onwards.

RFO budget proposals 2023-24

	Budget 2022-23	YTD 2022-23 (end Sept 2022)	Forecast 2022-23	Budget proposal 2023-24	Notes
Total salary costs (including National Insurance and pension)					
Post					
1 Town Clerk NJC Spine Point 34/35 (25 Hours per week)				£38,119.00	Includes 3% estimated salary increase 2023-24
1 Deputy Town Clerk NJC Spine Point 23 (23 Hours per week)				£25,879.00	Includes 3% estimated salary increase 2023-24
Totals	£54,453.00	£36,569.00	£69,817.00	£63,998.00	2022-23 forecast incl. 3 x backdated pay increases
Training and subscriptions					
2 Memberships of SLCC	£400.00		£360.00	£449.00	Costs for two staff in SLCC
training budget for officers including conference attendance	£500.00	£300.00	£528.00	£500.00	Forecast includes Chapter 8 training x 2
Training budget for members	£2,000.00	£558.00	£4,687.00	£1,000.00	Forecast includes Chapter 8 training x 6 & Member Training Plan
Totals	£2,900.00		£5,575.00	£1,949.00	
Administration					
Upgrade of IT equipment - 3 laptops @ £750 each with encrypted hard drives	£0.00	£279.00	£279.00	£0.00	
IT equipment for councillors	£13,900.00		£2,195.00	£0.00	Forecast includes laptops for paperless meetings
IT support	£0.00		£114.00	£200.00	
Zoom	£175.00		£120.00	£120.00	
Vimeo - video hosting site	£70.00	£83.00	£290.00	£290.00	
Rialtas accounting system	£250.00	£189.00	£861.00	£1,000.00	
Hosting of cloud-based accounting system - 3 users	£360.00				Included in line above
Bank charges	£400.00	£177.00	£321.00	£400.00	
Insurance	£800.00	£785.00	£1,246.67	£1,300.00	Forecast includes increase for War Memorial & TiB
Professional fees	£10,000.00	£1,740.00	£3,240.00	£0.00	Forecast includes estimated £1,500 for Tomlin Order
One Voice Wales membership	£0.00			£2,600.00	Includes estimated 15% increase on 2022-23 subscription rates
Printing and photocopying usage	£700.00	£226.00	£605.00	£700.00	
Internet and phone (BT)	£500.00	£249.00	£367.00	£550.00	Transfer to fibre broadband
Web hosting - Vision ICT	£250.00		£250.00	£285.00	
Stationery and postage	£750.00	£342.00	£651.00	£740.00	
Accountants	£600.00		£0.00	£0.00	

Information Commissioner	£50.00	£35.00	£35.00	£35.00
Electricity from British Gas (factory unit)	£0.00		£0.00	£0.00
Internal audit	£1,000.00		£1,000.00	£1,200.00
Travel and mileage	£250.00	£59.00	£138.00	£250.00
External Audit (Audit Wales)	£1,000.00		£1,000.00	£1,200.00
Welsh Water (factory unit)	£155.00	£52.00	£106.00	£180.00
Marketing and Publicity (Well-being, leaflets)	£0.00		£0.00	£0.00
Elections costs	£5,000.00		£0.00	£0.00
Other		£244.00	£244.00	£250.00
Totals	£36,210.00		£15,866.00	£11,300.00

Grants and Members Allowances				
Council Grants	£10,000.00	£2,613.00	£6,250.00	£17,000.00
£200 per Member - Ward Grants	£3,800.00	£400.00	£3,800.00	£3,800.00
Chairman's Allowance (IRP Determination 49)	£1,500.00	£0.00	£0.00	£1,500.00
Deputy Chair's Allowance (IRP Determination 50)	£500.00	£0.00	£0.00	£500.00
Specific Responsibilities Allowance (IRP Determination 43) 5 * £500	£2,500.00	£0.00	£0.00	£2,500.00
Members Allowance (19*£150)	£2,850.00	£0.00	£650.00	£2,850.00
Attendance Allowance £30 per member per meeting	£11,400.00	£0.00	£0.00	£12,060.00
Totals	£32,550.00		£10,700.00	£40,210.00

£7,000 + 2 x £5,000

Mandatory

Mandatory

Mandatory

Mandatory

Mandatory

Overall budget

£126,113.00

£101,958.00

£117,457.00

Discretionary budget

£47,910

£37,349

Excludes salary costs and mandatory budget lines

Precept

The Council's budget lays out the level of expenditure that the Council reasonably believes it will incur in a given financial year. The precept is the amount that the Council raises from households in the Abertillery and Llanhilleth Community Council area in order to ensure that it will have enough money to cover the forecast level of expenditure in that financial year.

The Finance and Grants Committee will be asked to consider the level of the precept that it believes it would be reasonable for this Council to set for 2023-24. The Finance and Grants Committee's opinion will be included in the report that that will accompany the papers sent to all Members ahead of the Council's budget-setting meeting in January.

As the financial report below shows, this Council is forecast to begin the financial year 2023-24 with a large amount of money in its current account. It is also forecast to begin the financial year 2023-24 with more money in its reserves than official guidance suggests would be necessary to enable the Council to accommodate unexpected expenditure.

The financial report below suggests that this Council will have so much 'spare cash' at the start of 2023-24 that it could set the same precept (£289,000) as in 2022-23 and still be able to cover the current proposals for a significantly-increased budget of £389,000.

Financial report (As of 31 October 2022)

Reserves:	£107,145
Current account:	£178,010
Forecast income 2022-23 (excluding Solar Farm grants):	£289,000
Forecast expenditure 2022-23 (excluding Solar Farm grants):	£212,180
Forecast reserves 31 March 2023:	£117,000 (target: £95,000)
Forecast current account 31 March 2023:	£163,000 (target: £100,000)
Budget 2022-23:	£339,533
Budget 2022-23 excluding compulsory items:	£302,000
Budget proposals 2023-24:	£389,151
Budget proposals 2023-24 excluding compulsory items:	£373,000
Forecast expenditure 2023-24 based on three-year trend	£282,000