

Appendix 5 – Specific Responses to Budget Proposals

UNISON

Newport City Branch welcome the Councils approach to funding to offset the shortfall in the current and historical shortfall of funding from Westminster and the impacts of increases in energy prices and the impacts of price increases across the board.

It is a pleasant surprise to not to have to sit in on so many consultations where staff are being given the news of potential compulsory redundancy or having to look for voluntary redundancies.

We also acknowledge that whilst the level of proposals and the impact is reduced there are still vacant posts and some potential redundancies which will impact on the workload of the remaining staff.

The Potential proposal around closure of the Civic Centre does concern us that it has not been fully considered and there may be impacts on staff services and the democracy of the council.

- How will staff in cctv continue in their role on the days the civic will be closed will they need building heating to be on do they have separate options for heating their work area aside from the civic?
- Are there enough agile working locations for staff who choose not to work from home?
- Will there be a priority of staff able to work from staff sites?
- Are there enough suitable locations for the many meetings to take place that cannot and shouldn't be held via Teams?
- Impact on staff working hours (NCC and Norse) any potential redundancies we appreciate that Norse staff are not an NCC concern, but some were previously NCC staff.
- The impact on local democracy must be given further consideration. The Civic Centre is a landmark building where the public who pay for it should be able to access it. Our fear is that this could lead to total closure in the future.

We ask that this proposal be given further review before implementation or if implemented it be reviewed in a timely manner with the option of returning to opening on a five-day basis.

We also note the amounts set aside for potential pay increase and would suggest that would fall short of where we as a trade union would expect to see potential staff pay increases especially at the same time, we are seeing the 8.5% increase in council tax and other rises in services a pay settlement of 4% is not keeping up with the cost of living but is actually a pay cut. Their standard of living will fall. This is after years of staff working to higher volumes of work. Doing more with less while trying to maintain the highest quality of work that is their standard.

We appreciate that councillors do not take up their roles with the aim to cut services and outsource council services and options available to present a balanced budget are finite but we ask them to consider how long staff good will can be relied on in schools, social services, housing, community safety wardens, flying start, highways and city services, waste site staff and all of the rest of services provided by this council staff group. They are working beyond their job descriptions whilst seeing their standards of living dropping.

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NASUWT

BUDGET CONSULTATION AND POSITION STATEMENT ON NEWPORT'S FUNDING OF SCHOOLS

NASUWT Newport is appalled by Newport City Council's funding of schools.

Children here are valued less than they are elsewhere in Wales. This is backed up by multiple statistical analyses. And the situation is getting worse year on year.

Schools budgeted expenditure per pupil in Newport for 2023-24 was the lowest in Wales.
(Local Authority Budgeted Expenditure on Schools: 2023-24, Welsh Govt Statistical Bulletin)

Schools budgeted expenditure per pupil in Newport for 2022-23 was one but lowest in Wales.
(Local Authority Budgeted Expenditure on Schools: 2022-23, Welsh Govt Statistical Bulletin)

When challenged about its lack of funding of schools, Newport points to complexities with the budget. Unfortunately, this is just hiding behind the fact that education is not a priority for Newport City Council.

The impact of years of underfunding at Newport schools is being felt by teachers and learners across the City:

- Class sizes are too high here and it is commonplace to see classes in excess of 30 students. Years of redundancy windows have left our schools with pupil-teacher ratios that are detrimental to progress.
- Learners are being taught by unqualified teachers or cover supervisors for part of their provision. These colleagues, however esteemed, are no substitute for a qualified teacher.
- Many teachers are having to teach subjects they are not qualified to teach in order to save money and absorb staffing cutbacks.
- School buildings are falling into disrepair.
- Damaging TLR restructures have been carried out in order to save money, with the Classroom Teacher picking up the work.

NASUWT Newport urges Newport City Council to do what is right. Put children here first. Not last.

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CONSH

February 2024

Re – Response to Budget Consultation

Annwyl Beverly Owen, Chief Executive, Cllr. Jane Mudd, Cabinet Member for Economic Growth & Strategic Investment and Cllr. Deb Davies, Cabinet Member for Early Years & Education

I firstly wanted to thank you, on behalf of CONSH for facilitating a very purposeful discussion prior to the Christmas break; we are most grateful for the opportunity to continue to engage in dialogue with you about matters impacting our schools so significantly. To this end, in receipt of your kind invitation to return to the Civic for discussion, we hoped we could schedule a date sometime in March when each of us are in a far better position to be able to speak with greater detail about our own budgets and collectively how this has impacted on Newport schools. I would be very grateful if you could provide us with suitable dates perhaps towards the end of March.

In regard to eliciting views as part of the overall budget consultation, although we welcome the proposed cash increase of £9,454,000 and acknowledge the very challenging financial position in which the council finds itself, the proposed increase only seems to cover new pay related pressures and as such will not alleviate the significant budget pressures we have raised over the past twelve months.

We know that you will be fully aware through our ongoing correspondence, that many Secondary Schools have needed to restructure, not appoint into substantive vacancies, end fixed term contracts and increase class sizes to align with the funding distributed via the ISB, as well as making use of historic school budget reserves. The lack of additional funds into the Education budget will result in these trends continuing; as raised at the meeting, we are particularly concerned about the lack of investment to ALN in Secondary Schools with so many of the pupils coming from LRBs and one to one support in the Primary Sector having to manage the challenge of no support within a much bigger mainstream setting.

Another major concern is that without additional funding; we are not able to manage requirements of the curriculum; a pertinent issue which was raised in our most recent dialogue in regard to not being able to run Engineering and Construction courses because of not being able to maintain the cost of the equipment and general environment. With a suite of new VCSEs on the way, pathways that we wholly advocate as being integral to best support the needs of our learners; our concern is that we simply will not have funding capacity to even consider offering them.

We are currently in consultation with Finance colleagues at the LA in respect of funding for Examinations. We raised this as an issue in April 2023 and whilst we welcome the consultation that has since taken place, the proposal which basically moves funding from one area of the ISB to another, does not really solve the underlying issue. You will be aware that Secondary School funding in Newport is over £1,000 per pupil under the Welsh average which continues to significantly impact on school development and pupil progress, especially for example when being compared to the performance of each of our families of schools.

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We acknowledge that further details in regard to the proposed £9,454,000 cash increase will be shared at the relevant forums and communicated to all schools in due course; we hope that indicative budgets will then provide clarity on how the high level pay assumptions/funding, distribute through the ISB and impact individual schools, hence our request to perhaps meet later in March. It would be useful to have clarification on the Teachers' Pension amount. It is currently included in the £9,454,000 but if separate WG funding is received the actual amount allocated to schools from the Welsh Government Revenue Support Grant would be £6,035,000 so further clarity on this would be helpful.

In summary, we look forward to working together over both the short and medium term to address the significant challenges we continue to face. We look forward to continuing this dialogue in the coming months.

Cofion cynnes

Victoria Lambe

Headteacher, Bassaleg

Chairperson, CONSH

Lucy Purcell – Headteacher, Caerleon

Julia Fitzgerald – Headteacher, Lliswerry

Mark Tucker – Headteacher, The John Frost

Jackie Jarrett – Headteacher, St Josephs

Dean Curtis – Headteacher, St Julian's

Gill Lee – Headteacher, Newport High

Damian Lawlor – Headteacher, Llanwern

Eirian Jones – Headteacher, Gwent Is Coed