

REPORT TO THE CABINET

11 MARCH 2025

Cabinet Member: Councillor Nia Jeffreys, Council Leader

Subject: One-off Bids 2025/26

Contact officer: Dafydd Gibbard, Chief Executive

1. Decision sought

1.1 Subject to a decision on the Budget, the Cabinet is requested to approve the one-off bids of £2,057,260 for 2025/26 to be funded from:

- £1,557,260 of additional funding in the final settlement announced by the Welsh Government on 20 February 2025.
- £500,000 from the Council Tax Premium for the purpose of temporary accommodation for homeless people.

1.2 Following the Welsh Government's recent announcement that there will be additional funding for the care area, subject to the details and conditions of this grant, the source will be used to fund the bids in the care area.

2. The reason why a decision is needed

The bids for one-off resources are presented in a separate report to the Budget report, as the allocation of one-off resources does not have an impact on setting our annual revenue budget and is not a consideration when setting the Council Tax rate. This report is submitted prior to the start of the 2025/26 financial year so that it can be implemented from 1 April 2025.

3. Introduction / Background

3.1 Council departments are invited annually to submit bids for one-off resources for matters such as addressing temporary pressures, delivering projects within the Council Plan, transforming services or investigations to examine whether it makes sense to provide a permanent budget.

3.2 Although the departments have submitted several bids, it has been necessary to prioritise and limit the bids to be approved in order to ensure that they can be accommodated within the available funding.

3.3 The one-off bids are normally funded from the Transformation / Council Plan Fund. This fund was used in its entirety last year and therefore this source is not available to fund any bids this year. If one-off bids are to be funded in future, consideration will need to be given to how this transformation budget can be replenished as opportunities arise.

- 3.4 In addition, the Financial Strategy Reserve, which is the only other source of funds not committed for specific matters, has already reduced from £26M to £13.5M this year due to the demands on the fund to address departmental overspends.
- 3.5 As we were preparing to set our budget for 2025/26, we were aware at the time that we were likely to receive additional funding to what was announced in the Local Government draft settlement before Christmas. Therefore, rather than including one-off revenue expenditure in the draft revenue budget which was submitted to the Governance and Scrutiny Committee for scrutiny and then to the Cabinet for a decision, and therefore increasing our financial gap (and as a result pushing the Council tax higher than would be necessary) we left the task of considering how to fund these one-off spending requirements until we received the final settlement.
- 3.6 We have now received confirmation that additional funding has now been allocated by the Welsh Government and therefore this funding is available as a contribution towards the cost of funding the one-off bids contained in this report.
- 3.7 The Welsh Government has also announced that there will likely be an additional grant to assist with additional pressure in the care area in 25 / 26. Details of the amount of additional funds or grant conditions have not been shared so far but if the opportunity arises, it is suggested that it be used to replace the bids in the care area. Funds can then be released for the following year's revenue needs.
- 3.8 This means that our decision not to include these requirements within the draft budget, and as a result to increase the Council Tax requirement higher than necessary, has been responsible and sensible. The additional money has been incorporated into the Budget which will be presented to the Council on March 6th for the specific purpose of funding one-off bids (with a residual sum of around £14,000 placed in a risk fund).

4. One-off Bids 2025/26

- 4.1 The bids received have been assessed by both directors, the Head of Finance and myself. Paragraph 4.2 provides details of the one-off bids recommended to receive financial support for 2025/26.
- 4.2 It is recommended that seven bids are approved, with a value of £2,057,260 as listed in **Table 1** below. The additional funding in the settlement is to be used as a source to fund the value of £1,557,260 of these bids.

Table 1 One-off Revenue Bids 2025/26

| | Bid Title | Amount recommended (£) |
|--------------------------------------|---|------------------------|
| Education Department | | |
| One-off 1 | Education Transport – school buses, taxi transport and trains | 939,160 |
| Corporate Services Department | | |
| One-off 2 | Alcohol and drugs random testing | 6,500 |

| | | |
|--|--|------------------|
| One-off 3 | Establish a staff safety system for lone workers attending high-risk locations | 57,600 |
| One-off 4 | Reconcile equated pay rates | 339,000 |
| Housing and Property Department | | |
| One-off 5 | Homelessness emergency accommodation costs | 500,000 |
| Children Department | | |
| One-off 6 | Additional workers as a result of receiving Asylum Seekers Without Parents as part of the National Transfer Scheme | 115,000 |
| Adults Department | | |
| One-off 7 | Supported Accommodation – Adults with Disabilities | 100,000 |
| TOTAL | | 2,057,260 |

4.3 As has already been explained in this report, our reserves have decreased significantly and it is necessary to try to stabilise them. There were several references to this by the Members of the Governance and Scrutiny Committee as they discussed cuts and the 26/27 budget at their meeting on February 6th, with several suggestions that we should consider using any additional money on top of the draft settlement in order to protect our funds when setting a budget for the coming year. What is recommended in this report is therefore in line with that aspiration.

4.4 That leaves a residual sum of £500,000 for which a funding source will need to be identified. There is a bid for this sum in the homelessness field, specifically to finance overspend on temporary accommodation costs. £3M a year from the Council tax Premium is already being used to fund these costs and therefore it is appropriate to fund the £500K one-off sum from the same source.

5. Conclusion

5.1 Following approval of the bids set out in Part 1 of the report, the funding will be earmarked for the purpose so that Departments can implement their expenditure on services during the 2025/26 financial year.

5.2 When preparing the following year's budget (2026/27) it will be necessary to revisit these areas in order to establish whether permanent provisions need to be made or whether it is possible to release the amount that has been designated this year for other priorities when starting to set the 2026/27 budget.

Local member's views

Not relevant

Views of the statutory officers

Monitoring Officer:

It is noted in the report that the decision sought reflects the final settlement announced by the Government on the 20th of February. The ability to support these bids is therefore subject to the Council's decision to adopt the recommended Budget.

Head of Finance Department:

Officers from the Finance Department have collaborated closely with the author of the report, and I can confirm the accuracy of the figures contained therein. Subject to the decision of the Council on 6 March to allocate the additional settlement funding towards the one-off bids, I am satisfied that adequate resources have been identified, as shown in part 3.5, to finance the one-off bids shown in Table 1.
