
SCHOOLS FINANCE FORUM 30/06/15

Present:

Cabinet Members: Councillor Gareth Thomas (Education)

School Heads: Eifion Jones (Ysgol Brynrefail), Alun Llwyd (Ysgol Dyffryn Ogwen), Dylan Minnice (Ysgol Botwnnog), Iona Wyn Jones (Ysgol Bro Cynfal/Ysgol Edmwnd Prys), Menna Wynne-Pugh (Ysgol Penybryn, Tywyn), Gwyn Howells (Ysgol y Gelli).

Governors: Godfrey Northam (Ysgol Llanllechid) – for Item 11

Officers:
Arwyn Thomas (Head of Education)
Owen Owens (Schools' Senior Manager)
Mrs Glynda O'Brien (Members' and Scrutiny Support Officer)

Apologies: Cllr. Peredur Jenkins (Cabinet Member, Finance), Dilwyn Williams (Chief Executive), Iwan Trefor Jones (Corporate Director), Dafydd L. Edwards (Head of Finance), Hefin Owen (Finance Unit Manager), Rhys Williams (Ysgol Cymerau), Sianelen Fleming (Ysgol Llanaelhaearn), Esme Spencer (Ysgol Baladeulyn), Andrew Roberts (Ysgol y Berwyn), Neil Foden (Teachers Union) and Donna Roberts (Ysgol Pendalar).

1. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

Resolved: To re-elect Mr Godfrey Northam as Chairman of the Forum for 2015/16.

2. ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIRMAN

Resolved: To re-elect Councillor Gareth Thomas as Vice-chairman of the Forum for 2015/16.

It was understood that the commencement time for today's meeting was incorrect in the Chair's diary, and therefore in his absence for the majority of the meeting the Vice-chair chaired the meeting.

3. WELCOME

Dylan Minnice, Head of Ysgol Botwnnog, was welcomed to his first meeting of the Schools' Budget Forum following his appointment as successor to Gareth T M Jones.

4. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

No declarations of personal interest were received.

5. MINUTES

The Chairman signed the minutes of the meeting of the Schools' Budget Forum that took place on 26 February 2015, as a true record.

6. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

Item 3(a) – Finance Training for Schools

It was reported that the following dates had been earmarked for finance training for schools, with the time and venues to be confirmed in due course.

13 October 2015

14 October 2015

15 October 2015

Resolved: To accept and note the above.

7. EDUCATION FINANCE WORKING GROUP

A report was submitted by the Head of Education requesting the Forum to confirm the continuation of the Education Finance Working Group in order to hold a discussion in accordance with the Cabinet's decision at its meeting on 19 February 2015, namely:

- (a) To accept the proposals of the Schools' Funding Forum for delivering £952,000 of savings from the schools budget in 2015/16 and comply with the funding promise for schools, using "Model B" to reduce the primary sector teaching staff allocation by £60,131 and to reduce the secondary sector teaching staff allocation by £25,771.
- (b) To request the Schools' Funding Forum to continue to review education services and organisation in order to discover the remaining savings target beyond the £952,000 for 2015/16, and to await its recommendation regarding how the entire £4.3m could be realised over the period from 2015/16 - 2018/19.
- (c) To ask the Cabinet Member for Education to encourage individual school governing bodies to consider how they could use their schools' balances as part of a package to address their financial deficit in a planned way.

Reference was made to the spreadsheet attached to the report that summarised what had been discussed by the Working Group thus far.

In terms of the cuts, a target of £4.3m was set in order to get the Education Service to maximise the efficiency savings that could be squeezed from the education system prior to proceeding to cuts. It was stressed that the line between efficiency savings and cuts was difficult to define in the field of education.

The Forum was requested to confirm the membership of the Working Group and they were reminded of the members from amongst the Headteachers in the secondary and primary sector:

Neil Foden, Alun Llwyd, Eifion Jones and Dewi Lake (Secondary)

Owain Lemin Roberts, Ifan Llŷr Rees, Geraint Evans and Sianelen Pleming (Primary)

It had been suggested to GYDCA that they discussed a nomination to succeed Sianelen Pleming on the Working Group as a result of her intention to retire.

The Head of Education reported that the challenge was to be more efficient whilst working towards the savings of £4.3m. The percentage of service cuts was approximately 6 / 7% compared to some services who were looking for approximately 30%. It would be

necessary for the Working Group to conduct difficult discussions by considering the basic principles and focusing on the best possible provision for children and young people.

The Cabinet Member for Education added that the Council's Cabinet was conducting a series of workshops with all council members to discuss the savings process and the Education Service would be under consideration on 6 July 2015. At the end of the process, it was proposed for transparency to consult with the residents of Gwynedd in September/October regarding the implementation of the possible cuts.

A headteacher suggested that the Working Group would have to look at the complete picture and would it not be better to call it the 'Education and Schools Rationalisation Working Group'.

Resolved: (a) To accept and note the contents of the report.

(b) To confirm the Membership of the Education Finance Working Group as follows:

Chair of the Schools' Budget Forum - (Mr Godfrey Northam)

Cabinet Member for Education - (Cllr. Gareth Thomas)

4 Primary Heads (Owain Lemin Roberts, Ifan Llŷr Rees, Geraint Evans and one nomination by GYDCA (Primary))

4 Secondary Heads (Neil Foden, Alun Llwyd, Eifion Jones and Dewi Lake)

Head of Special School (Donna Roberts, Ysgol Pendalar)

Diocese representative (Rev. Canon Robert Townsend)

Observers: Chair of the Services Scrutiny Committee (Cllr. Peter Read)

>><<Vice-chair of the Services Scrutiny Committee

(Cllr. <<Beth Lawton)

(c) That a meeting of the Working Group takes place on 17 September 2015, if this does not conflict with the Secondary Strategic meeting.

8. SCHOOLS' FINAL ACCOUNTS – FINANCIAL YEAR 2014/15

The details of school balances were submitted on 31 March 2015, which outlined that the balances had been reduced by £281,267 during 2014/15 to £3,495,580, equivalent to 4.89% of their final allocation.

It was noted that 15 schools had a financial deficit at the end of 2014/15 to the value of £327,873 compared to seven at the end of 2013/14 to the value of £116,313.

- 9 primary schools had a total deficit of £111,677 (varying between £780 and £52,579)
- 5 secondary schools had a total deficit of £190,742 (varying between £17,943 and £94,128)
- 1 special school with a deficit of £25,454.

There was a substantial reduction in the balances of secondary schools, but an increase in the balances of primary schools.

Members were reminded of the guidance procedure on the use of balances and reference was made to the appendix attached to the report highlighting the financial sums that exceeded the thresholds. It was noted that 18 primary schools were over the £50,000 threshold with 4 secondary schools over the £100,000 threshold.

The Cabinet Member for Education noted that high balances in schools caused him concern especially when trying to defend the schools' budget in the current climate of cuts. The need to implement the guidance plan on the use of balances was emphasised and for schools to present their reasoning for retaining balances exceeding the threshold.

Resolved: To approve:

- (a) That the Education Department and the Finance Department collaborate closely with the schools with a financial deficit to ensure that they clear the deficit as soon as possible.**
- (b) That the Education Department and the Finance Department review the current school budgets monitoring school arrangements.**
- (c) When discussing balances the challenge for the schools to find significant financial savings during the 2016/17, 2017/18 financial years and beyond had to be considered. They should also be an awareness of the financial impact of a projected further reduction in the secondary school pupil number of over £800,000 between 2016/17 and 2017/18.**

9. EDUCATION IMPROVEMENT GRANT 2015/16

Submitted, for information, the report of the Head of Education regarding the 'new' grant that combined the previous 11 grants whilst implementing a cut of 10%.

Reference was made to the financial details that meant that the total Education Improvement Grant for Gwynedd was £6,308,073. Attached to the report was an analysis of the allocations of individual schools based on:

EIG Foundation Phase (specific formula mainly based on foundation phase pupils).
 EIG 14-19 Network (mainly based on specific courses provided)
 Other EIG (80% pupils numbers 20% Free School Meals).

In response to a query, it was confirmed that GwE had sent a template to schools to list a range of grant purposes and had requested that they be completed as part of their planning system to improve the school.

A Headteacher noted appreciation of the work of the Finance Unit with the above arrangements and it was asked if this would be part of the Working Group's discussions.

In response, the Head of Education noted that it was not possible to envisage what the budget would be for next April and which elements would be retained centrally.

Resolved: To accept and note the contents of the report.

10. SCHOOLS' COMPUTER NETWORK

Submitted, for information, the report of the Senior Manager for Information Technology updating Members regarding the grant from the Welsh Government for:

- Providing comprehensive Wi-Fi in the learning areas
- Standardize at an internet speed of 10mbps (primary and special schools) / 100mbps (secondary schools and primary schools > 300 pupils)
- Provision via fibre for future expansion to 100mbps and 1000mbps
- Each contact made part of the public sector's wider network (PSBA)

with the intention that all links would be contracted until the end of March 2017.

It was noted that 5 primary schools continued to await the new provision as there had been some slippage in the programme, and the likelihood that slippage would continue.

Reference was made to further developments with the new telephone system provision in the Council offices that would also be available to schools and this meant opportunities for savings with telephone bills.

It was noted that the Wi-Fi provision was being extended to other offices and centres within the Council, such as libraries, leisure centres, record offices and museums and this meant that pupils and teachers could continue curriculum work in these places.

Resolved: **To approve:**

- (i) That the work done thus far was a significant improvement in the IT infrastructure that supports learning in schools.**
- (ii) To commit to use the new provision and review this before the end of the contractual period in March, 2017.**

11. DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS

Resolved: **To earmark the following dates for the next Forum meetings:**

| | |
|-------------------------|--------------------|
| 18 November 2015 | (9.30 a.m.) |
| 10 February 2016 | (9.30 a.m.) |

12. RESIGNATION

Mr Godfrey Northam noted the wish of Mr Walter Williams, representative of the Arfon Area Secondary Governors, to resign as a member of the Schools' Budget Forum due to other commitments.

The lack of attendance by some Governors who serve on the Forum was discussed further and it was suggested that enquiries should be made with the Gwynedd Governors Association regarding their wish to continue to serve on the Forum.

Resolved: **To request that the Members' Support and Scrutiny Officer contacts the Education Department to make arrangements for the Gwynedd Governors Association to:**

- (i) name a successor to Mr Walter Williams**
- (ii) find out the wishes of the other Governors regarding continuing to serve on the Forum.**

CHAIRMAN

The meeting commenced at 1.30 p.m. until 2.45 p.m.

