
SCHOOLS' BUDGET FORUM
Minutes of a meeting held at the Former St Mary's Church,
Tremadog,
on 7 February 2017 from 2.00 p.m. until 3.00 p.m.

Present:

Mr Godfrey Northam (Chair) - Ysgol Llanllechid Governor

Cabinet Members: Councillor Gareth Thomas (Education)
Councillor Peredur Jenkins (Resources)

School Heads: Alun Llwyd (Ysgol Dyffryn Ogwen), Dylan Minnice (Ysgol Botwnnog), Andrew Roberts (Ysgol y Berwyn), Dewi Lake (Ysgol y Moelwyn), Trystan Larsen (Ysgol Rhostryfan), Rhys Williams (Ysgol Cymerau), Llion Williams (Ysgol y Garnedd), Menna Wynne Pugh (Ysgol Penybryn, Tywyn).

Teachers' Unions: Neil Foden (Ysgol Friars)

Governors: Michael Sol Owen (Ysgol Glan y Môr)
Llinos Lloyd (Bro Idris Shadow Body)
Gwilym Jones (Ysgol Borthygest)

Officers: Owen Owens (Senior Manager - Education Resources Service)

Hefin Owen (Finance Manager)
Glynda O'Brien (Member Support Officer)

Apologies: Iwan Trefor Jones (Corporate Director), Dafydd Edwards (Head of Finance Department), Iona Wyn Jones (Ysgol Bro Cynfal and Ysgol Edmwnd Prys), Kerry Parry (Ysgol y Ganllwyd)

The Chairman extended a welcome to Trystan Larsen, Ysgol Rhostryfan, to his first meeting of the Forum as a successor to Gwyn Howells, Headteacher of Ysgol y Gelli, who had recently retired.

1. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

No declarations of personal interest were received.

2. MINUTES

The Chair signed the minutes of the meeting of the Schools' Budget Forum held on 29 November 2016 as a true record.

2.1 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

(i) The Cabinet's decision on 13 December 2016

The Senior Manager - Education Resources Service reminded the Forum of discussions that had been held at the last meeting on the Cabinet Member's decision to present the concern of the secondary sector schools that the total number of pupils would fall in 2017/18 but increase the subsequent two years. A request had been made for the Cabinet Member for Education to consider a bridging scheme to assist schools in difficult financial positions so that individual schools could avoid staff redundancy and having to re-appoint staff within a relatively short period.

The Senior Manager - Education Resources Service drew the Forum's attention to the Cabinet's decision at its meeting on 13 December 2016 as follows:

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- (i) That the Cabinet commissions a plan for inclusion in our 2017/18 Strategic Plan to assess where the protection line should be for the Secondary Sector so as to use this information when setting the budget for 2018/19;
- (ii) Accepting that discussions have started with stakeholders on assessing the problem, it should be underlined that the new Council needs to consider the results of these discussions early on in the Council's lifetime so as to establish a long term sustainable solution for the Secondary sector;
- (iii) So as to buy time for this to happen, that the Cabinet Member for Resources be asked to try and bridge for two years the £298,990 that the Secondary sector is expected to find to be financed from balances;
- (iv) In order to avoid wasting resources through redundancy and re-employment, that the Cabinet Member for Resources also be asked to consider including bridging finance in his budget for 2017/18 for those schools that would lose money because of the reduction in pupil numbers and to also consider the use of individual school balances in any proposed scheme. ”

In response, he noted the appreciation of the secondary sector of the above decision and action that would assist individual schools.

Resolved: To accept and note the above.

- (ii) **Report on research into Ysgol Tywyn's budget and increased financial deficit**

The Senior Manager - Education Resources Service drew the Forum's attention to the Council's decision as outlined in point 2.1 (i) in order to assess the protection line. To this end, it was noted that work had been commissioned on the budgetary positions of Ysgol y Berwyn and Ysgol Uwchradd Tywyn.

Resolved: To accept and note the above.

(iii) Update on Service Level Agreements 2017/18 to 2019/20

The Senior Manager - Education Resources Service reported that all the services had submitted Service Level Agreements for 2017/18 but it was further noted that two services had asked for the service to be extended for a year due to establishing the Area Offices and the appointment of Area Business Officers (namely Education Support Unit [primary] SLA and Personnel, Salaries and support SLA).

In the context of an agreement with the CYNNAL company, the Education Service had succeeded in obtaining a reduction in the price and school allocations would be reduced to reflect this reduction. It was noted there would be no financial impact on schools.

In terms of the Grounds Maintenance SLA, there was a wish to extend the current contract for a year in order to allow the service to identify the needs of individual schools.

A Head teacher noted that it was hoped that the above mentioned service would visit every site to discuss the needs.

In response to an enquiry regarding the services for Ysgol Bro Idris, it was explained that the Education Service was currently in discussions with the Headteacher.

Resolved: To accept and note the above.

3. PROJECTED SCHOOL BALANCES 31 March 2017

The Finance Manager submitted a spreadsheet to the members noting the projected school balances for 31 March 2017 and the actual balance for 2013/14, 2014/15 and 2015/16.

It was explained that the schools coloured yellow had either been in deficit or had balances over 5% during the last three years.

In terms of primary, a significant reduction from £2,479,441 at the end of March 2016 to approximately £2,000,500 in March 2017 was projected (a balance reduction from 6.91% to 5.5% in percentage terms), with the secondary falling from £791,815 to £656,993 in March 2017 (a balance reduction from 2.37% to 2.0% in percentage terms). They were confident that in June of this year a report could be submitted on the actual balances and in November the national information would be submitted to provide comparisons with the school budgets of other authorities in Wales.

The general reduction in the balances of primary schools was welcomed.

Resolved: To accept and note the projection.

4. CONSULTATION ON CHANGING THE WORDING OF THE SCHOOLS' FUNDING SCHEME IN RELATION TO THE TRANSFER OF THE BALANCES OF CLOSING SCHOOLS

- (a) Submitted – a report by the Senior Manager - Education Resources Service on a consultation on changing the wording of the schools' funding scheme in relation to the transfer of the balances of closing schools.
- (b) It was noted that 27 responses had been received from the schools, namely 20 from the primary sector and seven from the secondary sector, with each school, with the exception of one, in favour of changing the wording of clause 4.8 to read:

“When a school closes any balance (whether surplus or deficit) reverts to the LEA; it cannot be transferred as a balance to any other school, apart from when that other school has been established as a result of the closure. In such a situation the balance will transfer to the new school under the provisions of the School Funding (Wales) Regulations 2010.”

Resolved: To accept and note the contents of the report and approve the Cabinet to change the wording of clause 4.8 of the Schools Funding Scheme in accordance with the wording in (b) above.

5. ON-LINE PAYMENTS SERVICE

- (a) Submitted – a report by the Senior Manager - Education Resources Service outlining the proposal and the engagement that had taken place regarding a plan that would enable parents to use on-line services to pay for school dinners at primary and special schools within the County.
- (b) Eight schools had responded and it was noted that there was no objection to the plans. However, some concerns were raised with regards to the impact on the jobs of dinner money clerks.
- (c) In response to the schools' observations, it was noted that:
- The schools would need to see the impact of the system on the school's practices before making any decisions regarding the work of the clerks and that this would be a local matter.
 - It would be possible for families without computers to make electronic payments at "PayPoints" (as seen in shops to pay for gas and electricity).
 - Also, it would be possible to use mobile phones / tablets to make the payments.
- (ch) In terms of the secondary sector, it was explained that discussions had been held but that the situation was slightly more complicated in terms of

menu choices and the need for a separate system for the "till". However, before moving on with the secondary, there was considerable work to be done to establish the system in the primary sector first. It was further noted that discussions were continuing with the new Head of Ysgol Bro Idris in terms of the primary model of collecting the money.

(d) It was noted that six schools worked as part of a pilot scheme for the system and there were advantages of being able to pay for school trips, milk, musical instruments, etc. and in the smaller schools it was a way of reducing the amount of cash kept on the school property.

(dd) The Head of Ysgol y Moelwyn noted that the school used the system and it was an advantage to families, especially after the bank in Blaenau Ffestiniog had closed.

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

5. SIXTH FORM GRANT 2017/18

The Finance Manager reported that the grant was approximately £195,000 more than had been anticipated in the financial projections. The number of sixth form pupils in our schools had declined somewhat, however, the number of pupils being funded by Welsh Government had increased. Nevertheless, Welsh Government's funding method continued to fund fewer sixth form pupils than we had in our schools, and this had been consistent across the last four years since the new funding method had begun. The information would be released to those schools in the coming days.

In response to the above, a Member noted that an explanation was needed of the under-funding, and suggested that the Finance Manager could undertake research work to find the reason why.

Resolved: To ask the Finance Manager to submit a report on his findings to the next meeting of the Forum in June.

6. PUPIL DEPRIVATION GRANT 2017/18

The Finance Manager reported that thus far he had not received confirmation of the Deprivation Grant.

Resolved: To accept and note the above.

7. EDUCATION IMPROVEMENT GRANT 2017/18

In relation to the Education Improvement Grant, it was noted that information had reached a North Wales level that it included a 0.7% cut. It was currently unknown what the priorities of the GwE Management Board would be for the grant in 2017/18.

Resolved: To accept and note the above information.

8. NATIONAL GRANT OF £100 MILLION OVER THE FIVE YEARS OF THIS ASSEMBLY 2016-2020

The Finance Manager reported that no information regarding the above had been received from Welsh Government to date, that the grant was for a

number of the Government's priorities, for example the issue of classroom sizes and an article was read out regarding the matter and he noted that he would sent the information to the Forum members.

Resolved: To accept and note the above.

9. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

One member noted his dissatisfaction with the primary funding formula as it was not correct or fair. During the ensuing discussion the following points were highlighted:

- That the formula appeared to be unfair especially for schools with approximately 60 pupils.
- That an independent consultation had been completed approximately 3/4 years ago to amend the primary funding formula
- There was a reminder of the need to hold training for governors on the allocation formula

In response to the above, the Finance Manager pledged that he would explain the funding formula to the governor and if he was not satisfied with the explanation the matter would be placed on the agenda of the next meeting of the Forum in June 2017.

Resolved: To ask the Finance Manager to present an explanation to the governor and if needed to include the matter on the agenda of the next meeting of the Forum in June 2017.

CHAIR