
SCHOOLS' BUDGET FORUM 06.02.2023

Present: Arwyn Williams (Ysgol Brynrefail) (Chair)

Cabinet Members: Councillors Beca Brown (Education) and Ioan Thomas (Finance)

Head of Finance Department: Dewi A Morgan

School Headteachers:

Secondary: Neil Foden (Ysgol Friars) and Dylan Minnice (Ysgol Botwnnog)

Primary: Iona Jones (Ysgol Edmwnd Prys / Bro Cynfal)

Governors: Councillor Gwynfor Owen (Dwyfor), Councillor Gwilym Jones (Dwyfor) and Carys Fowles (Meirionnydd)

Church Schools: Joanna Thomas (Ysgol y Faenol)

Special Schools: Donna Roberts (Ysgol Hafod Lon)

Diocese: Nobody was present

Union Representative: Clive Thomas (Ysgol Syr Hugh Owen)

Observer: Nobody was present

Officers: Garem P Jackson (Head of Education Department)
Kathy W Bell (Schools Group Accountant)
Ffion Edwards Ellis (Assistant Head of Special Educational Needs and Inclusion)
Rhys M Glyn (Immersion Education System Headteacher)
Dr Diane Pritchard Jones (Assistant Head, Education Services)
Debbie Anne Williams Jones (Assistant Head, Corporate Services)
Einir Davies (Democratic Services Officer)

1. ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR

RESOLVED to elect Donna Roberts, Headteacher of Ysgol Hafod Lon, as Vice-chair of the Forum for 2022/23.

2. APOLOGIES

Apologies had been received beforehand from Dafydd Gibbard (Chief Executive), Richard Jones (Ysgol Garndolbenmaen), Menna Wynne-Pugh (Ysgol Penybryn, Tywyn) and Edward Bleddyn Jones (Governor, Arfon)

Late apologies were received from Aled Williams (Ysgol Ardudwy) and Brian Jones (Governor, Arfon)

3. NEW NOMINATIONS

The Chair welcomed the new members to their first meeting:

Dr Diane Pritchard Jones
Joanne Thomas
Councillor Gwynfor Owen
Carys Eleri Fowles
Brian Jones (in his absence)

4. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

No declarations of personal interest were received.

5. URGENT ITEMS

None to note.

6. MINUTES

The Chair signed the minutes of the previous Forum meeting held on 12 December 2022 as a true record, subject to the following corrections:

Eleri Davies was present at the meeting as a Member and the Chair of the Federation of Primary Headteachers

The name of the school represented by R Jones needed to be included

7. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

The Forum was reminded that a request had been made at the previous meeting for more information about the Invest to Save Scheme, and it was confirmed that the Scheme was specifically for the Council's internal services, although schools were welcome to apply either through the education officers, or directly through the Assistant Head of Education Services.

i. Language Centres

The Head of Education reminded the Forum of the original intention to ask schools to contribute financially towards the immersion scheme, despite the fact that this was not the ideal year to do this. It was confirmed that funding had been found for the 2023/24 budgetary year and that the Department would not now be required to ask schools. The Cabinet Member for Education emphasised her pride at being able to share this news. The Chair noted that this was good news for everyone and asked, following the challenges facing schools, whether it might be possible to be informed about the situation for the years post-2023/2024 as soon as possible?

ii. Service Level Agreements

It was reported that the Service Level Agreements varied, and that the Assistant Head of Education Services was in the process of scrutinising them. It was confirmed that the agreements would normally be adopted by schools in April, but in order to scrutinise

them it was intended to extend the existing agreements for the time being. It was noted that it was hoped that it would be possible to attract more schools to commit to them. It was noted that some Agreements raised questions, some schools had requested a presentation on some Agreements and further details were needed on other Agreements. It was confirmed that the Department would request permission to extend the agreements.

8. BUDGETARY POSTITION 2023/2024

A presentation was given by the Head of Finance, under the following headings:

The timetable for deciding upon and seeking an agreement on the Budgetary Strategy
 Revenue Budget: The Equation
 2023/24 Overall Budget Projections
 Wage Inflation of £14.2M
 Inflation on Services and Supplies of £11.1m

Reference was made to the Care and Education Demography, noting that Child Care was £32k, and Schools was £229K, i.e.:

Primary Schools	(£135k)
Secondary Schools	£49
Special Schools	£315K

Based on a reduction (primary) / increase (secondary/special) in pupil numbers

Attention was also drawn to the:

Grant Settlement 2023/2024, and Pressure on Services, noting - Permanent Revenue Bids £2.7m - Education Department - provision of Primary, All-through, and Special school meals £285,580

He also referred to headings:

Revenue Bids - Education was £285,580
 Planned Savings Schemes
 Current Budget Projections 2023/24
 2023/24 Equation

He referred specifically to Schools' Savings, noting that:

Discussions had commenced at 6%
 Preparations for 3%
 Some schools were facing compulsory redundancies - but not as a result of the proposed cut
 Special Schools Excluded
 The impact of the protection arrangement for small schools = everyone else must contribute more
 Some schools pushed in excess of the 3%
 Therefore, propose a cap of 3%
 The saving across the sector therefore would be 2.39%
 1.39% and 0.99% over two years

New Savings Schemes

	23/24	24/25	total
Primary Schools	541,600	386,900	928,500
Secondary Schools	605,000	432,600	1,037,600
Special Schools	0	0	0

Total	1,146,600	819,500	1,966,100
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New Savings Schemes 2023/24

Departmental Savings (not including schools)	£3,097,370
School Savings	£1,146,600

New Savings Schemes 2023/24 Central Education was £835,000

He also noted the Council Tax and Projections for 2024/25

The Head of Finance gave thanks for the presentation. The Cabinet Member for Finance expanded on the arrangements that had led to the decision on the proposed cuts, and noted that the Cabinet had tried to be fair, had considered all the Council's departments, and had examined the savings proposals over three days. He noted that some positive matters had arisen, such as the settlement that was somewhat better than anticipated, a sum had been received in relation to the council's method of dealing with loans, and he felt that the Cabinet had done its best on behalf of all Departments. The Head of Education noted that due attention had been paid and that all Heads of Service had been challenged, and that the cuts to education had not been considered lightly.

The Chair noted that nobody was ever enthusiastic about making cuts, and the impact of central cuts on schools was questioned. It was confirmed that any impact on schools had been minimised, and that any impact on GwE would be discussed at Chief Executive level.

At the Chair's request, it was confirmed that the figures dealt with 2023/2024 and 2024/2025 and that the Council tried to plan on a two-year cycle. It was noted that naturally it was impossible to predict future inflation levels, but the Finance Department was working on the basis that these cuts would be sufficient, although this could not be guaranteed. The Head of Education reminded everyone that the % had been split, with the heaviest burden in the first year as the schools had larger balances this year.

RESOLVED to accept the report.

9. INTEGRATION 2023/2024

The Assistant Head of Special Educational Needs and Inclusion summarised the current situation, and confirmed that the existing allocation method was working. She confirmed that the work of organising the data and the recording method was ongoing, and that she was currently waiting for the PLASC for 2023/23.

The Chair enquired about the consequences of this, and it was confirmed that April 2023 was the proposed date, although matters were gradually progressing. It was confirmed that if there were any matters of concerns regarding the data, it would be moved to September 2023. It was confirmed that the guidance for completing PLASC had already been shared, and it was confirmed that a different method of distribution should not have a significant impact on schools.

RESOLVED to accept the report and to receive an update at the next meeting.

10. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Nothing arising.

11. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Date of the next meeting - to be confirmed

The meeting commenced at 3.30 p.m. and concluded at 4.25 p.m.