
SCHOOLS' BUDGET FORUM
Minutes of a meeting that took place at the Former St Mary's Church,
Tremadog,

on 4 July 2016 from 9.15 a.m. until 10.30 a.m.

Present:

Cabinet Members:

Councillor Gareth Thomas (Education)
Councillor Peredur Jenkins (Resources)

School Heads:

Alun Llwyd (Ysgol Dyffryn Ogwen), Dylan Minnice (Ysgol Botwnnog), Menna Wynne Pugh (Ysgol Penybryn, Tywyn)

Teachers' Unions:

Mr Neil Foden (Ysgol Friars)

Governors:

Godfrey Northam (Ysgol Llanllechid),
Gwilym Jones (Ysgol Borth-y-gest)

Officers:

Owen Owens (Senior Manager Education Resources Service)
Hefin Owen, (Finance Manager)
Glynda O'Brien (Members' and Scrutiny Support Officer)

Apologies:

Cllr. Michael Sol Owen (Ysgol Glan y Môr), Esme Spencer (Ysgol Baladeulyn), Gwyn Howells (Ysgol y Gelli), Rhys Williams (Ysgol Cymerau), Geraint Evans (Ysgol Eder), Andrew Roberts (Ysgol y Berwyn), Dewi Lake (Ysgol y Moelwyn), Llinos Lloyd (Y Gader Catchment Area Shadow Body), Dafydd Meirion Roberts (Ysgol Brynrefail), Arwyn Thomas (Head of Education), Dafydd Edwards (Head of Finance),

Membership: (1) An email was received from Geraint Evans (Ysgol Eder) stating his intention to resign as a member of the Forum at the end of the term and GYDCA would nominate his successor at their next meeting.

(ii) In addition, there was a vacant seat following the retirement of Eifion Jones (Ysgol Brynrefail) and it was noted that Dewi Lake, Ysgol y Moelwyn, had been nominated to serve on the Forum but he could not attend this meeting.

(iii) It was noted that it was necessary to contact the following regarding nominations to serve on the Forum:

The Diocese
Church Schools

(2) Councillor Gareth Thomas, Cabinet Member for Education, took the opportunity to thank the above Headteachers for their commitment and contributions to the Forum's work, and he also thanked all Forum members over the

last few years during a very difficult period with the financial cuts that the Council faced.

1. ELECTION OF CHAIR

Resolved: To re-elect Mr Godfrey Northam as Chairman of the Forum for 2016/17.

2. ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR

Resolved: To re-elect Councillor Gareth Thomas as Vice-chair of the Forum for the year 2016/17.

3. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

No declarations of personal interest were received.

4. MINUTES

The Chair signed the minutes of the meeting of the Schools' Budget Forum that took place on 20 January 2016 as a true record.

5. FINAL SCHOOL ACCOUNTS FOR 2010/11 FINANCIAL YEAR

Submitted, for information, the report of the Head of Education on the above and members were guided through the contents by the Senior Manager Education Resources Service and noted that generally the balances of all Gwynedd schools had been reduced by £159,010 to £3,336,570 during 2015/16 this equated to 4.66% of the final allocation.

He expanded as follows that:

- 16 schools had a financial deficit to the value of £447,692
- 11 primary schools had a total deficit of £96,263
- 4 Secondary schools had a total deficit of £297,238
- 1 Special School had a deficit of £54,191

It was noted that primary school balances had been reduced for the first time since 2010. Concern was expressed that the balances of some schools continued to be high although a plan had been adopted regarding the use of balances and it appeared that 14 primary schools and 5 secondary schools had balances over the £50,000 threshold (primary) or the £100,000 threshold (secondary). However, there was a system to attend to this matter where a consistent pattern of retaining balances was seen and a discussion was on-going with one specific school. In 2016/17 when the financial cuts would hit then it was expected that the balances would be reduced again.

In terms of schools in deficit, it was suggested that a report should be submitted to the next Forum meeting outlining the pattern of trends and action taken over the years with individual schools.

In the context of school balances, concern was expressed regarding those schools that retain balances and accept additional protection.

In response to the above, the Senior Manager Education Resources Service explained that the authority had a system of finding out where the schools' plans in terms of expenditure and schools had quite reasonable and fair plans. What was difficult was when schools did not achieve these plans and it was hard for the authority to challenge them and consequently by the end of the following year they were in the same position in terms of the size of balances.

Resolved: (i) Approve that the Education Department and the Finance Department:

(a) work closely together with schools with a financial deficit in order to ensure that they can clear the deficit as soon as possible.

(b) continue to monitor school budgets

(ii) Request that the Finance Manager submits a report to the next Forum meeting outlining:

(a) the trends and patterns over the years of individual schools that are in financial deficit.

(b) An addition to the above report highlighting those individual schools that have a balance surplus.

6. SCHOOL GRANTS 2016/17

The report of the Head of Education was submitted regarding School Grants 2016/17 and the Forum was guided through the contents by the Senior Manager Education Resources Service.

Reference was made to the individual grants and it was noted:

Pupils Deprivation Grant - £2,203,350 - a grant based on the number of pupils entitled to free school meals in order to improve the standards of literacy, numeracy and also to close the gap between deprived children and their peers.

Education Improvement Grant - £4,171,818 - a grant to raise teaching standards

Sixth form Grant (£3,277,221) - Of the 14 secondary schools, 7 provided sixth form courses with the above grant distributed on the basis of a combination of pupil numbers / number of courses, deprivation, dispersion and Welsh medium education.

It was confirmed that the above grants were not dependent on European funding.

The Finance Manager added that in terms of the EIG that one sum of money was received regionally and was then allocated based on the statistics.

Foundation Phase : specific formula mainly based on foundation phase pupils with a requirement to work towards the ratio of 1:8 adult per pupil in nursery and reception years and a ratio of 1:15 in years 1 and 2. It was noted that

the remainder of the EIG was allocated on the basis of 80% number of pupils and 20% based on the numbers receiving Free School Meals.

Resolved: To accept and note the above.

7. ADDITIONAL ALLOCATION MINIMUM STAFFING PROTECTION POLICY

The Forum was reminded of the change in the Additional Allocation Minimum Staffing Protection Policy in order to reduce the protection allocation to be equivalent to the balances element over 5% of the last year published (balances at the end of 2014-15 in relation to the protection allocation 2016-17).

Letters were sent to schools with a surplus over the threshold and they were invited to submit an application not to reduce the staffing minimum protection for 2016/17. By the Forum date 11 applications had been received with one late application that had not been processed. Out of the 11: 5 schools will receive full protection back with the majority of the funding used for staffing (namely Head/Teacher in each school).

In response to the above, the Cabinet Member for Resources noted his discontent that the situation was not acceptable bearing in mind that all Council Services had to comply with their allocated budgets. He added that they should be firm with the schools and a significant improvement was expected in school balances next year. It was noted that there was a need for every catchment-area to face the reality of the situation with the need to hurry up with the organisation of schools.

The Cabinet Member for Education voiced the same concern and discontent with the situation and it was difficult for him in Cabinet meetings to argue the case of the Schools Service in terms of financial cuts bearing in mind that some schools had fairly substantial sums in balances. It was suggested that the Cabinet Member should express the Forum's discontent at a meeting of GYDCA regarding the use of balances and to implore them to use them in order to alleviate the situation for next year.

Resolved: (a) To accept and note the above.

(b) To approve that the Cabinet Member for Education conveys the Forum's concern regarding the use of balances and to encourage them to reduce them by next year.

8. PHOTOCOPYING AGREEMENT FOR SCHOOLS

The Senior Manager Education Resources Services reported that the Council had a photocopy lease agreement with Konica Minolta and it was suggested that schools could be part of the Council's central arrangements. Heads were encouraged to contact Judith Ann Williams, Assistant Leader Support Services to discuss the details. However, schools should be mindful of the terms of the existing agreement they have in case there might be a cost to withdraw from any contract that may be too large to justify any change in contract for now.

In response to an enquiry regarding how competitive was the Konica Minolta agreement, it was recommended that Heads should make enquiries regarding

the Council's terms and consider the advantages/disadvantages of being part of a central contract.

It was further explained that schools would not receive individual invoices as the centre would receive one invoice and it was assured that the Council would make no profit from the agreement.

Resolved: To accept and note the above.

9. DATES FOR NEXT MEETINGS

Resolved: To request that the Members' Support Officer consults with the Chair / relevant officers to determine dates for the next meetings that will take place mid November 2016, February 2017 and the end of June 2017.

CHAIR