

SCHOOL BUDGET FORUM

12th June 2018

Conference Room 1a, County Hall, Ruthin

Attendees:

MEMBERS:

Karen I Evans(KIE)
Neil Foley(NF)
Dr Paul Evans(PE)
Sue Dick (SD)
Bethan Cartwright (BC)
Mari Gaskell (MG)
Rona Jones (RJ)
Mark Hatch (MH)
Gethin Jones (GJ)
Huw Hilditch Roberts (HHR)
Shannon Gage (SG)
Rona O'Neill (RON)
Helen Vernon (HV)

Head of Education & Children Services
Prestatyn High
Denbigh High
Ysgol Bodfari
Ysgol Glan Clwyd
Ysgol Llywelyn
St Brigid's – (Chair)
Ysgol Dinas Bran
Ysgol Tremeirchion
Lead Member for Education
Primary School Governor Rep
Tir Morfa
Bodnant

NON-MEMBERS:

Judith Greenhalgh (JG)
Richard Weigh (RW)
Steve Gadd (SGadd)
Cathy Howatson (Minutes)
Vicki Cotgreave (VC)
Laura Poole (LP)
Chris Speed (CS)
Joanne Moore (JM)
Ian Land (IL)
Will Jones (WJ)
Geraint Davies (GD)
Paul Senior (PS)
Julian Molloy (JM)

Chief Executive
Head of Finance
Chief Accountant
School Funding Officer
Ysgol Y Castell
Business & Finance Manager – Faith
Senior Finance & Assurance Officer
Performance & Business Manager
Planning + Resources
Finance Manager - Dinas Bran Cluster
Principal Education Manager
Principal Finance & Assurance Officer
Senior School Improvement Officer

Welcome

Rona Jones (Chair) welcomed group.
KE welcome Judith Greehalgh to the meeting.

13 members were present to the meeting to make it quorate.

1. Apologies

Lindsay Davenport – Secondary Governor rep
Teleri Llwyd Jones – Ysgol Borthyn (Vice Chair)
Dominic Tobin – Blessed Edward Jones
Craig Joyce – School Funding Manager

2. Minutes from 5/3/18. Minutes agreed by forum.

Primary Governor Representative – Shannon Gage has been appointed to be representative.

Union Representative – Liz McLean will be the representative from the Teachers union.

3. School Financial Monitoring

A. Final School balances – The outturn has been completed and will be presented to cabinet at the end of June. There is a formal list of school balances, schools are currently carrying forward a £343k net deficit. 2018/19 budgets include provision for inflation and demography pressures. £1m deficit predicted for 2018/19. Some confidence going forward as the rise in net deficit largely relates to 3 schools with specific and known problems.

An allocation for maintenance grant has been received and delegated to schools from WG which reduced deficits.

B. Schools in Financial difficulties

There were 26 schools predicting a deficit in 2017/18. This reduced year end to 21 schools and 2018/19 are predicting 16 in a deficit position.

The net deficit has increased due to 3 schools. Finance and Education are working closely with these schools.

WJ asked if there has been any confirmation on teacher pay increase for September. Has it been confirmed if its 1 or 2% increase?

SGadd - we have not been informed would assume 2%.

4. Scheme for Financing Schools

We currently have a scheme for financing schools in place. Audit have said it is out of date and needs to be reviewed. CAJ has been working on it revising the document. The model document was an English one originally and has been updated/amended with Welsh polices etc. We have also consulted with other counties.

There are some outstanding queries, due to technical aspects of school budgets. It is to be included on the agenda in October to be ratified by the SBF.

RJ requested copy to be sent prior to meeting.

ACTION – CH to forward copy to forum members prior to SBF

5. Budget Workshop

KE suggested at the previous SBF to hold a budget workshop. The meeting should have been held few weeks ago but the decision to postpone was taken by KE and RW as they were unable to give a full picture due to changes and financial pressures increasing bringing challenges.

JG – Education part of the corporate plan and agreed challenges are ahead.

School funding has been a priority as well as other areas over the years. We need to work together and give commitment.

RW – Elected members are looking at closing the gap and possibly asking schools to make a contribution to corporate savings by looking at schools budgets and efficiency savings to help council.

RW presented a power point on Denbighshire's financial position. Including history of protection schools. We should find out in October the financial settlement from WG

RJ asked how much how much is paid to GWE by Education? GWE fund courses but would be interested to see what budget goes to them.

KE commented we pay £500k plus fees to GWE. EIG and other filtered through consortium driven out and managed.

There is a need to discuss regionally what is a statutory requirement is. The chief executive predecessor has previously challenged GWE.

JG confirmed that it is on the radar, especially with the budget reductions activity.

KE there reduced flexibility WG directive.

HHR – There have been failures in the system but now are in good position to monitor going forward.

SD asked if there would be access to information on GWE funding? HHR said the figures are available on website transparent.

MG – Schools have been looking at efficiency savings for years and are down to bare minimum by reducing staffing and reduced funding. Is GWE being challenged on savings also?

KE agreed and will raise it with GWE and also ask what are the priorities?

Over the years we have built a culture DCC to continually do best with the resources we have.

HHR – If Head teachers feel they are invited to events that do not add value then need to inform HHR to challenge with GWE.

SD – GWE say that we are not collaborative working if do not attend the courses and that schools need to be engaging.

KE feels DCC delivery the very best they can and trust Head teachers decision of what is important and what is not relevant. KE will defend schools.

VC is concerned if losing more staff in Foundation Phase there will a loss on impact. It is not just teaching it is the nurture and social element that schools absorb it. If they lose more staff with cause more social problems.

JG – Suggested that the required saving from schools would be a modest contribution possibly single figures of %.

SG – when in SIFD position however small the percentage will be will have a high impact on a SIFD school.

MG – The national wages increasing has knock on with union and staffing costs.

RW – The County fund core inflation at the centre as well as the cost of living is covered.

HHR – Some Councillors have the perception that education is being protected. This could potentially cause political issues.

LP – Schools are told funding is protected but they need to buy into more services.

KE clarified that Education have funding to protect schools. The delegation DCC gave more in budgets under Leighton Andrews.

Karen felt we need to test the current formula and also look at the delegation of duties and accountabilities MG agreed. We collectively have more knowledge now and can challenge budgets. There is also a knock on of wellbeing of Head teachers and school staff.

SLA to be looked at to see if value for money.

KE will discuss at the Head teachers day.

LP asked if the procurement department look at best deals for schools?

KE suggested Task and Finish groups to look at:-

1. Funding formula – last one only few elements, this one all elements , will mention at Heads day
Volunteers – Shannon Gage, Vicki Cotgreave, Mari Gaskell, Bethan Cartwright

2. Delegation - Look at pooling resources/spending power, not part of formula review
Volunteers – Rona Jones, Mari Gaskell, Sue Dick

3. Policy on surpluses - Policy on surpluses and challenge why have surplus.

MG - SIFD schools would like to talk to the schools about surpluses.

Karen Evans and Richard Weigh will discuss this.

GWE will be taken forward

JM – There is also an ALN internal review.

KE the reviews are timely as they has been a turnover of new Heads.

SGadd suggested there needs to be a set of principles to guide the process and help focus the work. Principles should be agreed at first meeting but, for example, could include and aim to keep/make the formula:

- Fair
- Understandable and transparent
- Simple
- A method of apportioning delegated budget (not funding individual costs)
- Robust / Stable
- Sustainable for each school

Keep it simple as DCC have one of the best formulas in Wales.

KE thanked the group.
JG thanked the group and felt a positive energy in room and is confident we will find a good solution.

ACTION - CH to send copy of presentation out group members

6. EAL Update

JM a consultation has been completed with schools. The WG have now released transition funding which means 1 teaching staff member will be kept on in service. JM has arranged an additional meeting to work with schools on 20th June.

JM will circulate arrangements for next year, there will not be an SLA to go through consultation.

If schools have any comments or feedback before please email JM.

One of the main changes is to include EAL service at inclusion referral level.

MG thanked Jo Moore and queried if there is still a conversation going on in with Wrexham regarding funding?

KE confirmed there have been conversations with Wrexham regarding the WG regional offer. The allocation they received is solely for Wrexham. The Welsh Government are seen to have released additional funding for a level of service this year maintained.

JM - The service will not look the same going forward and there will be a remodeling of the current service.

KE feels it is a positive and we can now look at what we offer and what the core responsibilities of the EAL learners are.

7. Matters arising from Clusters

None

8. Forward Work Programme

A copy of the draft forward work plan had been distributed.

ACTION - Forum agreed the work programme.

9. AOB

PDG access – A statement has been sent by WG re school uniform. CS will email schools more information when he receives it.

SG enquired if it would be applicable for infants going into Junior schools (separate). Only pupils going into Year 7 and Reception will be eligible.

KE would like the SBF to have a discussion on grants and where they sit. We also need to look at what WG are allocating to Authorities. This is to be added as agenda item.

Date of next meeting – Monday 8th October 2018 – Conference Room 1a, County Hall, Ruthin