

SCHOOL BUDGET FORUM
8th October 2018
Conference Room 1a, County Hall, Ruthin

Attendees:

MEMBERS:

Karen I Evans(KIE)
 Neil Foley(NF)
 Dr Paul Evans(PE)
 Sue Dick (SD)
 Mari Gaskell (MG)
 Rona Jones (RJ)
 Mark Hatch (MH)
 Huw Hilditch Roberts (HHR)
 Shannon Gage (SG)
 Rona O'Neill (RON)
 Lindsey Davenport (LD)
 Bethan Jones (BJ)
 Geraint Parry (GP)
 Dominic Tobin (DT)
 Teleri Llwyd Jones (TLJ) (Vice Chair)

Head of Education & Children Services
 Prestatyn High
 Denbigh High
 Ysgol Bodfari
 Ysgol Llywelyn
 St Brigid's – (Chair)
 Ysgol Dinas Bran
 Lead Member for Education
 Primary School Governor Rep
 Tir Morfa
 Secondary Governor rep
 Ysgol Gwernant
 Ysgol Brynhyfryd
 Blessed Edward Jones
 Ysgol Borthyn

NON-MEMBERS:

Craig Joyce (CAJ)
 Steve Gadd (SGadd)
 Cathy Howatson (Minutes)
 Laura Poole (LP)
 Ian Land (IL)
 Geraint Davies (GD)
 Kevin Mowbray (KM)
 Jamie Roberts (JR)

School Funding Manager
 Chief Accountant
 School Funding Officer
 Finance Manager – Denbigh Cluster
 Planning + Resources
 Principal Education Manager
 Finance Manager - Dinas Bran Cluster
 Business Manager - Dinas Bran

Welcome

Rona Jones (Chair) welcomed group.

16 members were present at the meeting to make it quorate.

1. Apologies

Gethin Jones – Ysgol Tremeirchion
 Helen Vernon – Bodnant
 Bethan Cartwright – Ysgol Glan Clwyd
 Vicki Cotgreave – Y Castell
 Liz McClean – Teachers Union Representative

2. Minutes from 12/6/18. Minutes agreed by forum.

ACTION – CH to resend presentation from Richard Weigh on school budgets at the July Meeting

Scheme for Financing Schools

CAJ has been updating the scheme for financing schools. A meeting has been arranged with Karen Evans and Geraint Davies to finalise. The completed version will then go out for consultation with schools, preferably by December.

3. Election of Chair and Vice Chair

DECISION

Re-elected as Chair - Rona Jones
Elected Vice Chair – Shannon Gage

4. Funding Formula Review

At the last meeting the forum agreed to review the funding formula. A sub group was set up and met in July. Steve Gadd, Craig Joyce, Mari Gaskell, Geraint Parry, Shannon Gage, Geraint Davies, Cathy Howatson (notes) went through each line of the funding formula and agreed to ensure the funding formula is fair, clear and transparent.

Curriculum Lump Sum Top Up - CAJ modelled the lump sums in curriculum allocation if large school increased to >401 instead of >251.

MG - There is no official classification available for a large or small school and advice in future from Welsh Government on this would be long overdue.

CAJ then modelled >351 and this was felt fairer figure for a "large" school.

GD felt there is a need to be clear on the funding and what is it for to be fair and consistent.

RECOMMENDATION TO SBF – INCREASE A LARGE SCHOOL TO >351 FROM >251 FOR THE PURPOSES OF THE CURRICULUM LUMP SUM TOP UP.

The forum agreed the recommendation.

Workload allocation – CAJ modelled Secondary and Special schools receiving £4.6k per teacher for workload lump sum instead of £1.5k (£3k as an average of both in Special). This was in line with the Primary approach – they receive 10% of UPS1 grade per teacher.

A discussion took place around the fairness of the change and it was made known that teachers pay and conditions are the same in all sectors. It was felt this change should be made in the interest of all sectors being the same.

LD worked out the calculations but does not understand how the figures presented have been reached. LD did not see the point of changing the formula as only two gain and three schools lose.

HHR asked if the Welsh language element had to do with it? CAJ explained that it didn't.

SGage – It is fair for all teachers across both primary and secondary sectors.

LD agreed the principal but expressed concerns for Rhyl High as they will be lose funding

MG – felt it is fair for all schools but LD did not agree.

GP – another alternative is to reduce the £4.6k primaries receive so all school get the same? It is all funding towards PPA/Workload. How it is given currently is nonsensical.

DT – Some schools have benefited over the years when maybe they shouldn't have.

KE – The point was to test the formula and moving forward we are all facing difficult times. We need to be confident that the funding formula that drives out the funding to schools underpins the principals. The principle drives the action.

PE asked if it would being place for next financial year. This was agreed it would.

RJ – Pupil numbers with fluctuate which will makes the figures amend.

KE reminded group that DT and MG are both from the Rhyl Cluster and would feed back if their cluster were not happy. MG has not discussed with Claire Armistead until the forum has made a decision.

CAJ – The data used is last year's September return, as Sept 18 has not yet been finalised.

SD – The forum make the decision and not everyone will be happy.

RJ feels volunteers from group were tasked with the work to look at the formula. There are always winners and losers but the formula has to be fair. The recommendations presented by the sub group should be considered.

HHR – The last time the formula changed there were more winners and losers than on this piece of work.

RECOMMENDATION TO SBF – CHANGE THE WORKLOAD LUMP SUM IN SECONDARY AND SPECIAL TO £4.6K TO MATCH THE PRIMARY SECTOR.

The forum agreed the recommendation

Swimming – CAJ modelled schools receiving a smaller lump sum coupled with a per pupil amount by school. This would increase funding for larger schools and decrease funding for smaller schools. It was noted that several small schools spend less than £1,071 (current lump sum) on swimming whereas some large schools spend >£5k.

CAJ modelled options of smaller lump sums - £250, £500 and £750. For such a small amount and in the interest of fairness and protecting smaller schools, a figure of £750 was agreed.

DT asked if all schools have access to a swimming pool?

MG – Yes all should as it is part of the curriculum.

BJ asked if there are any funding for transport costs? CAJ replied that no there isn't.

RECOMMENDATION TO SBF – CHANGE THE SWIMMING LUMP SUM FROM £1K TO £750 PER SCHOOL WITH THE REMAINDER OF THE POT BEING DELEGATED VIA PUPIL NUMBERS.

The forum agreed to recommendation.

ACTION – CAJ to amend formula for 2019/20 with all agreed recommendations.

5. Delegation / Traded Services Review

The Sub group volunteers were Rona Jones, Mari Gaskell, Sue Dick, Geraint Davies, Craig Joyce, Cathy Howatson (notes)

GD – It was felt that all the Service Level Agreements need to be transparent and clear for schools.

Amendments were made to the SLA documents adding GD as a point of contact and all services have listed risks and benefits of opting in/out of their services. SLA's are not enforced on schools.

RJ – Schools need to consider the staffing in services if opting out.

LD - PHS were told they would not be able to opt out of the catering SLA and would like the SLA's earlier as she felt 2/3 week to makes to decision to opt in or out is not enough time. They need time to look around for other options.

DT said that the process of looking elsewhere can be done anytime, even before the SLA's are sent.

RJ – St Brigid's are not in the catering or cleaning contract which means the schools has to carry any staffing costs pay rises/increases from the school budget. They also take ownerships of all the equipment and repairs. There are risks and benefits to all services.

If schools want to opt out they need a transparent view of what they are actually getting.

LD disagreed and needs a chance to look elsewhere and needs to know the risks.

LD ask if they could receive them in July as they need to go to full governors or at least a few weeks earlier.

LP – Work can be completed around 12 months earlier to look for services elsewhere.

CAJ – The actual SLA's do not dramatically change, possibly some slight amendments year on year and some may increase costs in line with inflation. CAJ was not happy to look at SLA's in April time as that is when the budgets are being prepared to go out. It would also mean a fundamental change in the data used, as currently September data is used.

SGage – If Governors have the SLA's as an agenda item they need to be reviewed continually.

HHR – Schools needs to consider the contracts and manage time on top of opting out.

RJ – This year it is too late as they have not been sent out yet is it possible to send them out earlier next year, end of Sept?

LD has raised the same query before and was told they would be out earlier but they haven't. Can they have 4 weeks to look at them?

CH has met with every service manager and has requested completed copies to send out but unfortunately not all services have yet completed the SLA's.

KE was unable to explain why deadlines have not been met but will not able to commit to specific timeframe as all officers are under pressure to work under strict time frames.

GP – Timescales are irrelevant as you plan for the 12 months in advance.

MG thanked officers for the amount of work that has gone into the SLA's from County perspective.

ACTION – CH to send out SLA's as soon as possible – w/c 15/10/18 is looking the likely week.

6. Sustainability – Dinas Bran

MH presented a business case from Ysgol Dinas Bran which was circulated to the forum.

Issues raised

KE – The business case was for clarity to support the school.

In relation to the Chirk corridor are the same numbers of children attracted to Dinas Bran as in past years? MH said yes but have lost a small number of Y Waen pupils who have gone to St. Martin's. There is an issue with public transport and they do not have any control over that.

Service busses do not have the capacity to bring all of them to the school.

RJ wondered if the school are having conversations with Arriva transport as St Brigid's also had safeguarding issues. MH confirmed they have spoken to them and are in constant dialogue.

DT asked if the funding out right pays for the transport or is it a subsidising some of it? – MH answered that It covers transport costs outright.

RO asked if 70% of pupils are from Wrexham why are they treated differently to others by Wrexham CBC?

MH replied it is hard to engage with Wrexham and was unable to answer the question.

MG – Why do Wrexham pay to transport pupils to England but not Wales? This was because they transport to the 'nearest suitable school' regardless of where this was situated. DCC would pay for a Llangollen child wishing for a Welsh education to be transported on a bus to Morgan Llwyd as it was the nearest suitable WELSH school.

PE – Y Faenol is a feeder for DHS but parents pay for transport or go they go to Emrys Ap Iwan.

SGadd asked the forum not to make the decision on the finances alone and to look at it educationally. There would likely be no savings made as there would be a demographic adjustment applied and the sustainability lump sum would in all likelihood be taken as a saving. Welsh Government funding to DCC would also reduce as there would be less pupils in the Authority.

Mark Hatch / Jamie Roberts / Kevin Mowbray and Steve Gadd left the meeting as there was a conflict in interest. The remaining members discussed the business case.

TLL arrived at 3.30pm

RJ – In principle the funding is fine but how many other schools have pupils from out of County?

KE – 2 / 3 years ago we looked at the transparency of sustainability. The Chirk corridor has a small number of pupils. Relationships have been maintained from the old Clwyd County. Is the principal right?

Some pay for transport and need to consider the transport policy. How much would the cost impact be on the budget?

IL – It is good to have conversations around sustainability. There are a big number of discrepancies and a two tiered approach to fairness.

MG – Agreed good to discuss and supports them. Do they need to come every year with a Business Case? Would it be better they presented bi-annually?

LD - Dinas Bran is a successful school has no choice in this matter so why are we discussing it?

GP thought that the funding should be revisited every year.

KE - Wrexham CBC need to be considered when making the decision. The school are putting a case forward to justify reasons to agree the principle but have not explored parent pay.

SGage – Is it possible pay for yr 7/8/9 and 10/11 pay themselves?

KE - The impact of a removal of the sustainability element has not been considered within the context of an overall reduction of the number of pupils on roll.

HH – Dinas Bran are in band B of the modernising education programme which could take 6 years before it is actioned.

GP – if results were to drop then numbers would fall. The funding should be given for 2019/20 but then possibly look at a managed reduction in funding in future years.

K.E – a managed reduction will need a large piece of work by the LA and open evenings have already taken place in schools for next September.

HH thought the forum should agree to the funding this year with more work to be carried out.

KE will look at arranging a group to look at the case. It will consist of Officers from DCC, Legal, SBF reps and a rep from the school.

Action - KE to email information.

MH/JR/KM returned to the meeting. RJ read back the decisions made by the forum

The proposals: -

- The budget forum approves the continuation of sustainability funding for the school for the financial year 2019-20. - **The Forum agreed the funding for the next financial year but not onwards of 2019/20.**
- That sustainability funding for "out-of-county" for the school is maintained within the formula from 2019-20 onwards. **As above.**
- That the school budget forum agrees that this will be reviewed if and when costs exceed £275k. **The Forum feels work needs to be carried out going forward. KE will meet with MH separately. The school will need to attend the Forum annually to present their case.**
- Projected cost for 2018-19 is £222,712 but this won't be known for definite until April 2019. The school was

allocated £220k in the funding formula. The funding required for 2019/20 is likely to be of a similar level.
Forum agreed the funding for the 2019/20 financial year.

7. Pooled Scheme Update

Paul Senior was unable to attend meeting. CAJ reported on the pooled schemes which were on track currently to not be overspent. Large fluctuations can take place though so this was to be treated with caution.

DECISION – The Forum agreed to leave the pooled schemes contributions as they are for 2018/19 at this moment.

8. Matters Arising from Clusters

MG – The Rhyl cluster strongly disagree with the catering policy stating it will recharge a school for parents dinner debts. The school budget is to educate the pupils. Is it legally correct they can take the money from the school budget? MG feels it is fundamentally wrong.

KE – The policy does not sit within the Education and Children Services department. It is currently being looked at by the Corporate Director for Communities after recent events. KE will feedback concerns to the Head of Service and the Corporate Director.

GP also raised concern that the debt passes onto the Secondary from Primary. He didn't feel this was correct.

LD – There may be more changes with the new Universal Credit replacing tax credits.

ACTION – KE to relay concerns.

9. AOB

Budget Update

SGadd – County are expecting the draft settlement on the 09/10/18. DCC is already factoring in pay increases and inflation plus pressures are going in for a £1.8m pensions increase. It is not know yet how this will be funded by Welsh Government for 2019/20.

Final settlement will be received in December.

Assuming demography figure of +£790k to be added to school budgets, however final figure will be based on September PLASC data. 1% savings are already built into indicative budgets.

At the last meeting the Chief Executive mentioned we need to find more savings from schools.

The proposal may be an additional 1% savings for schools (2% in total) – an extra £660k.

The Council has a funding gap of £4.7m.

KE – has met ADEW, it looks like grants will be restored. Any additional funding will go into schools. There are regional discussions about global cuts and what the impact on schools is going to be. Need to look at the policy to claw back surpluses. The work on this has already begun.

Date of next meeting – Monday 21st January, 2019 – 9:30am, Conference Room 1a, County Hall, Ruthin.