

SCHOOL BUDGET FORUM

9th April 2019

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)
Shannon Gage (SG) (vice Chair)
Rona O'Neill (RON)
Lindsey Davenport (LD)
Bethan Jones (BJ)
Geraint Parry (GP)
Claire Armistead (CA)
Helen Vernon (HV)

Head of Education & Children Services
Prestatyn High
Denbigh High
Ysgol Bodfari
Ysgol Llywelyn
St Brigid's – (Chair)
Ysgol Dinas Bran
Primary School Governor Rep
Tir Morfa
Secondary Governor rep
Ysgol Gwernant
Ysgol Brynhyfryd
Rhyl High School
Bodnant

NON-MEMBERS:

Craig Joyce (CAJ)
Steve Gadd (SGadd)
Cathy Howatson (Minutes)
Laura Poole (LP)
Ian Land (IL)
Geraint Davies (GD)
Will Jones (WJ)
Vicki Cotgreave (VC)
Paul Senior (PS)
Jane Hughes (JAH)

School Funding Manager
Chief Accountant
School Funding Officer
Finance Manager – Denbigh Cluster
Planning + Resources
Principal Education Manager
Finance Manager - Welsh Cluster
Ysgol Y Castell
Principal Finance & Assurance Officer
System Support Manager

Welcome

Rona Jones (Chair) welcomed group.

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

1. Apologies

Gethin Jones – Ysgol Tremeirchion
Bethan Cartwright – Ysgol Glan Clwyd
Liz McClean – Teachers Union Representative
Huw Hilditch Roberts – Lead Member for Education
Teleri Llwyd Jones – Ysgol Borthyn
Claire Armistead has taken over as representative for the Rhyl Cluster from Dominic Tobin

2. Minutes from 21/01/19 agreed by forum - second by SD and SG

Scheme for financing schools – This will go out to consultation once closedown has been completed.
Surplus school balances document – this is still ongoing. KE is the Lead.

3. DCC ICT

An email has been received centrally from Ysgol Tir Morfa querying how DCC ICT SLA costs are calculated, as they don't feel it is fair they are charged the same as a Secondary school. CAJ handed out figures to discuss the current method.

JAH – all schools receive the same service.

SG worked in DCC ICT and she felt that it was fairly split. It is the costs for the circuits to schools both rural

and none rural.

WJ – Asked how is it funded? By lump sum historically? – CAJ explained that yes this was the case.

GD – Is it fair as it is or does it need looking at?

GP – There are 2 aspects. Some fixed and some variable costs, this would be based on staffing.

KE – We are unable to go back go back 10 years to when it was set up as the information is not available.

The forum needs to consider is this a significant amount to warrant the time and effort to review this, we would also need to consider capacity. None of our head teachers have challenged this.

SG – Should it be allocated on a small and large school?

LD – Most schools have little money. Should the special school just be changed to a Primary school as it would have little effect on other schools financially?

MG – There is a need to provide clarity and be clear on how it is spilt.

KE – We have had 1 single challenge from a school we require a stable response as a forum

RJ – What about Middle schools as there will soon be two?

ACTION working group for one meeting - volunteers – SGage / MG / GP / RO - CH will send invitation.

4. Budget 2020/21

Steve Gadd gave an overview. The start of budgets being discussed will begin in earnest 6 weeks after closedown.

A reshaping the Council board has already been established and will look at savings, however details of the figures are not yet known.

Budgets are expected to be cash flat with increases for inflation and a likely savings target.

DCC are expecting an estimated deficit of £5/6 million and large savings are likely to be required.

Discussions will be had with some services possibly looking at a savings target of 5%.

The decision on the Leisure ADM will be made at the end of May.

SG asked if there are savings expected from the ADM – SGadd confirmed there is and they have been included in the figures.

Schools calculations include inflation, NNDR and pension increases.

KE – The problem looking at cuts to Education is that we have a statutory service to provide. KE is also concerned about the ALN reform and £1.3m cost out of County placements. Cuts to TRAC funding are also a concern.

SGadd – Inflation includes out of County pressures and community social care. The board are protecting some services which leaves it harder to find other savings.

RJ – Steve Davies (MP) understands the pressures - is it time for Heads to raise their concerns? Heads and Unions need to get the message across to WG.

KE – Grants need to be discussed with Welsh Government. RJ – Schools are now struggling to deliver a basic service.

MG – Discussions have taken place where savings are made by schools by reducing to a 4 ½ day week, using the ½ day to cover PPA.

Will the new universal credit system will bring a reduction in FSM? MG had a letter from County Catering.

SGadd – FSM should not decrease. He has not seen the letter MG is referring to from the School meals service. Paul Barnes and Rachel Thomas will be asked to clarify.

CA – Conversations had taken place at the Business and Finance network about universal credit.

KE – Would welcome a discussion with Head teachers outside of the forum regarding the B&F model under AOB.

NF- New curriculum - more needs but cut in budgets are not helping people/ young people.

RJ – Is it time to arrange a joint unison meeting?

5. School Balances

PS provided in year school balances. Balance b/f from 2017/18 was £343k deficit with a predicted in year deficit of £776k, totaling a predicted £1.1 million deficit overall by end of 2018/19.

KE – There has been a large swing in predicted balances from period 10 -11 and there are issues with reporting from School Finance Managers.

ACTION – Business & Finance Manager model needs discussion. Sub group set up – CA / HV / SD / PS / GP / GD / IL / CAJ

6. Pooled Schemes

There is an overspend on the sickness scheme of £233k

RJ asked why there is there such a large swing since last reported?

The swing has come in end of year Jan - March when journals have been put through by Finance Managers.

KE – We have received an email from a Head teacher internally querying this.

PS explained the figures.

LP – There are errors in coding by New Directions. New directions attended the Business and Finance network and issued were raised with IL.

MH – Asked has it been shared?

MG – is it Audited?

PS – It is hard to monitor as we cannot know who is off sick as we not based in the schools.

SG – Should schools check? Yes.

KE – Agreement prudent to audit the scheme going forward. Can audit do it? If challenged by corporate governors to account for the swing.

RJ – St B have looked at supply in depth. Lots of work but good to do action going forward.

MH – Are we able to look at the cause of sickness also?

LD – Governors should be doing this and know exactly what's going on.

HV – It is felt that some of the GWE courses run seem to not be usual time management for Heads.

KE – This needs to be discussed including what is relevant to attend and support.

NF – GWE attended cluster meeting in PHS but added no value to the meeting.

PE – What do we pay GWE for their services? – The impact is not good

RJ – This has been raised before previously.

KE – Money come down from KE's Education budget, it has never been topped sliced by schools. It will be detailed next meeting or at Heads day conference.

ACTION – KE to discuss with Audit the possibility of them looking at the sickness scheme.

7. ALN

ALN is not cost neutral and there are concerns going forward that there is not enough funding in the pot.

SBF needs to understand the new ALN bill and its implications – there needs to be a transparent discussion.

SG – There is a concern for pupils who don't have medical need but other problems.

KE – believes that children are not diagnosed. There is a sub group meeting on 9th April to discuss SEN funding allocations.

8. Matters Arising from Clusters

GP – Is the Rural School Grant a recurring grant? The general consensus was that it was.

GD – The reducing class sizes grant - only 2 schools were eligible

SD – Foundation phase entitlement – What is funded? It was decided this will be discussed in the Chair of cluster meetings.

VC asked about when Heads are out of school to representing the cluster is there any money centrally for travel claims? KE will look into it but it is unlikely any funding will be available.

9. AOB

Sustainability – A sub group met to look at the funding of sustainability for Dinas Bran.

ACTION - IL to send out notes from the meeting.

Meeting closed 12 noon.

Date of next meeting – Monday 3rd June 2019, Conference Room 1a, County Hall