



Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol
MERTHYR TUDFUL
MERTHYR TYDFIL
County Borough Council

SCHOOLS BUDGET FORUM

Friday, 18th October 2024

10:00am to 12:00pm

(Civic Centre)

NOTES

- PRESENT:**
- Abby Sharpe (Abercanaid Community)
 - Stuart James (Afon Taf)
 - Sarah Hopkins (Blessed Carlo Acutis)
 - Owen Morgan (Cyfarthfa Park Primary)
 - James Voros (Gellifaelog Primary)
 - Rhiannon Stephens-Davies (Greenfield Special)
 - Keith Maher (Pen-Y-Dre High) - Chair
 - Mike O'Neill (Pen Y Dre High)
 - Simone Roden (Ynysowen Community Primary)
 - Alwen Bowen (Ysgol Rhyd Y Grug)
 - Sue Walker (Director of Education)
 - Louise Ballinger (Education Accountant)
- IN ATTENDANCE:**
- Stephanie Davies (Accountancy)
 - Joanna Lewis (LMS Manager)
 - Emma France (Clerk to the Forum)

No	Discussion/Action
1.	<p><u>Apologies / Welcome</u></p> <p>Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Sarah Townsin, Anna Morris, Paul Phillips, Jeff Beard, Anthony Lewis and Gahard Williams.</p> <p>Abby Sharpe, James Voros and Emma France were welcomed to their first meeting of the School Forum, introduction were made.</p>
2.	<p><u>Election of Chairperson</u></p> <p>Keith Maher was elected as Chairperson.</p>
3.	<p><u>Election of Vice-Chairperson</u></p> <p>Simon Roden was elected as Vice-Chairperson.</p>
4.	<p><u>Terms of Reference for Schools Budget Forum</u></p> <p>Accepted with updated dates.</p>

No	Discussion/Action
5.	<p><u>Update on Membership</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> David Anstee resigned from position; James Voros successful in nomination. Laurence Matuszczyk resigned from position; Abby Sharpe successful in nomination. <p>1 vacant position – governor representing special or faith sector. JL to request it is discussed at Governor Association and SH/RSD will seek nominations in next GB meeting.</p>
6.	<p><u>Agree Terms of Reference for Schools Budget Forum Working Group</u> Accepted.</p>
7.	<p><u>Agree membership of the SBF Working Group for 2024-2025</u> James Voros to replace David Anstee.</p>
8.	<p><u>Minutes of Meetings</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 5th March 2024 – Schools Budget Forum 24th September 2024 - Schools Budget Forum Working Group <p>Agreed true record – amend date of meeting on 24th September minutes from 23rd September.</p>
9.	<p><u>Matters arising from the minutes</u></p> <p><u>5th March 2024 – Schools Budget Forum</u> JL update on IR35.</p> <p>DJ will be providing training to all school in November on a cluster basis.</p> <p>KM welcome training.</p> <p>SR requested it be noted that the Forum agreed to recommend the Creditors SLA for purchase based on training being delivered. Training being delivered in month 8 of a 12-month SLA.</p> <p><u>24th September 2024 - Schools Budget Forum Working Group</u> Recommendation around Actual / Average salary will be brought to Forum for discussion next meeting.</p> <p>SW: Has a discussion around the ALNCo been included? JL: Currently been asked by Working Group to provide information relating to current ALNCo salaries.</p> <p>SR: Welsh Government released a statement regarding 5 million pounds additional funding for ALNCo to be paid as leadership.</p> <p>KM: We will receive a recommendation from the Working Group. We will also need clarification that the funding is additional.</p>

No	Discussion/Action
10.	<p><u>Special Tuition & PRU Clawbacks</u> The proposal to clawback the PDG element for eligible pupils who attend either Special Tuition or PRU, in addition to the AWPU.</p> <p>2 options were presented to the working group for consideration:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Option 1 – clawback daily AWPU & PDG rates. • Option 2 – clawback daily AWPU (less 5% for eligible PDG pupils) plus daily PDG rates. <p>5% reduction allows schools to retain an element of funding to support pupils for reintegration.</p> <p>PDG element would be clawed back retrospectively in line with the funding allocation, so that no school would have to be charged prior to receiving funding.</p> <p>Option 2 was proposed by the Working Group, to be presented to the School Budget Forum for recommendation and implementation from April 2025.</p> <p>KM: As schools we need to provide a published plan for PDG spend will the LA / PRU also be required to publish a plan.</p> <p>SW: The PRU will publish a plan.</p> <p>KM: If a pupil is on special tuition for 1 or 2 hours a day or on a part time placement, will this be taken into account when reallocation ISB and PDG?</p> <p>JL: Yes, the funding will equate to the provision received.</p> <p>KM: The principle is fair, and the money would be used to support the provision of the pupils. Does anybody require further information or would like to proceed to vote?</p> <p>All parties agreed to vote on recommendation from Working Group to accept Option 2.</p> <p>Unanimous vote to accept Working Group recommendation for Option 2.</p> <p>KM thanked working group for ongoing work.</p>
11.	<p><u>S52 2024/2025 Analysis</u> Information report shared and content noted.</p>
12.	<p><u>Schools Balances 2023-2025 (Cabinet Report for information)</u> Information report shared and content noted.</p> <p><u>Questions / Observations</u></p> <p>MON: Very worrying picture, tough times for schools across Wales. Schools are reaching crisis point.</p> <p>SW: As an LA we are working with colleagues in WLGA and WG to highlight the situation.</p>

No	Discussion/Action
	<p>KM: Highly concerning picture, in the medium term all schools in secondary sector facing deficit budget. Within two-year period secondary sector will be 5 million pounds in deficit.</p> <p>We need to be clear that all schools are in a position where staffing and non-staffing budget headings are at the very minimum. To reduce further will put the H&S, safeguarding, curriculum delivery and progress / attainment of learners in jeopardy. Schools will no longer be able to meet their statutory obligations.</p> <p>We are all aware that SW is our biggest advocate in ensuring our budgets are supported. We thank SW for her unwavering support.</p> <p>SR: This is the main reason we need to move towards a funding model for actual salaries not average. With school budgets in such a dire situation we can no longer have winners and losers in the funding of school staff.</p> <p>KM: Agree completely. With different political administration both in Westminster and locally we hope there will be a change in support for education funding.</p>
13.	<p><u>SLA Evaluations</u> Information report provided with summary and detail breakdown of SLA evaluations.</p> <p>Information and comments had been provided to managers of services providing SLAs and managers have been asked to contact colleagues to discuss concerns and how services can be improved.</p> <p>MON: Thanks to JL and colleagues for the report, very pleasing to see how highly rated some of the services are. Where staff have been mentioned for excellent service, I hope they have been recognised.</p> <p>KM: Services raised as concerns including School Meals, Inclusion and Creditors have colleagues around the table been contacted to discuss concerns?</p> <p>JV: I had a general email from LW about the creditors but no further response.</p> <p>SW: Some services require more work.</p> <p>KM: There needs to be an improvement plan with milestones for these service areas.</p> <p>KM: We need to congratulate the high performing SLAs, Payroll, Governing Body, Financial Support, Legal for being recognised for their excellent service and as value for money.</p> <p>SW: Some of the services sit under corporate will raise at CMT. I recognise the need for checks and balances.</p>
14.	<p><u>GDPR SLA</u> Action: JL to bring report to Working Group on GDPR SLA regarding value for money, amount of time staff are used by schools.</p> <p>KM: We require transparency, value for money and assurances the schools SLA are not funding</p>

No	Discussion/Action															
	<p>services for LA functions.</p> <p><i>MON left the meeting.</i></p>															
15.	<p><u>Revenue Settlement & ISB Efficiency Savings 2025/2026 - (SBF Briefing)</u> SD presented members with the attached PowerPoint presentation.</p> <p><u>Questions / Comments</u></p> <p>SR: Why cannot the reserves be used? SD: By law we must maintain a certain level of reserves. Most of the reserves are ringfenced or committed for projects for example capital building programme.</p> <p>SR: If look at last year, you put money back into the reserves, where we cut education budgets. LB: We drew down 5.5 million from reserves, due to underspends we put back in 1.8 million.</p> <p>SR: Why was that money not put back into education? SJ: If revenue allocation is lower than predictions the budget gap will be wider. SD: Yes, as we drew down from reserves last year the savings were required to go back to the reserves.</p> <p>SD: I am unable to give you further information relating to ISB efficiency at the moment, we will have information from WG settlement in December.</p> <p>KM: It is clear public sector is facing crisis point and we need an urgent resolution from Westminster and Welsh Government. The challenges facing schools and social care sector is unprecedented. To reiterate what I said earlier, further cuts to school will put our young people's future at risk which as educational professionals is completely unacceptable.</p> <p>SW: We have a new administration in Local Government Cllr Gareth Lewis and Cllr Brent Carter are fully apprised of the challenges our schools are facing. We have raised with WLGA and WG.</p> <p>SR: We need to ensure as much pressure as possible is applied to the people making decisions and the impact and ramifications long term of their decisions is fully understood.</p> <p>RSD: The impact on our ALN pupils is already significant, the long-term costs associated with providing their needs is significant to the public purse.</p>															
16.	<p><u>Date and agenda for next meetings</u> Schools Budget Forum:</p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td>5th November 2024</td> <td>11.00am</td> <td>ATHS</td> </tr> <tr> <td>10th December 2024</td> <td>11.00am</td> <td>TBC</td> </tr> <tr> <td>21st January 2025</td> <td>11.00am</td> <td>TBC</td> </tr> <tr> <td>18th March 2025</td> <td>11.00am</td> <td>TBC</td> </tr> <tr> <td>8th July 2025</td> <td>11.00am</td> <td>TBC</td> </tr> </table>	5 th November 2024	11.00am	ATHS	10 th December 2024	11.00am	TBC	21 st January 2025	11.00am	TBC	18 th March 2025	11.00am	TBC	8 th July 2025	11.00am	TBC
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	Schools Budget Forum Working Group:		
	19 th November 2024	10.00am	Civic Centre
	9 th January 2025	10.00am	TBC
	4 th March 2025	10.00am	TBC
	13 th May 2025	10.00am	TBC
	17 th June 2025	10.00am	TBC