



Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol
MERTHYR TUDFUL
MERTHYR TYDFIL
County Borough Council

SCHOOL BUDGET FORUM
Working Group
Monday, 13th January 2025
(Civic Centre)

NOTES

PRESENT: Stuart James (Afon Taf)
Owen Morgan (Cyfarthfa Park Primary)
James Voros (Gellifaelog Primary)
Rhiannon Stephens-Davies (Greenfield Special)
Simone Roden (Ynysowen Community Primary) - Chair
Alwen Bowen (Ysgol Rhyd Y Grug)
Anthony Lewis (Head of School Planning, Support & Resources)

IN ATTENDANCE: Louise Ballinger (Education Accountant)
Joanna Lewis (LMS Manager)
Emma France (Clerk to the Forum)

No	Discussion/Action
1.	<u>Apologies</u> Apologies for absence were received from Sarah Hopkins.
2.	<u>Funding of Teacher's Salaries</u> Following the School Forum Meeting on the 10/12/24 the Working Group had been requested to consider further information on the proposed move to school average salaries from sector average salaries. The Forum had requested the Working Group consider: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Other LA funding models.• Impact on schools funding in 2025/26• Potential tapering model. The Working Group had been provided with the following papers in advance of the meeting: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Response from other LAs on their funding model (9 responses received).• 5-year impact of current model compared to a school average basis• Impact of schools for 2025/2026 and tapering option. SR: I was not in attendance at the School Forum, JR attended in my place. I have received feedback, we unanimously agreed that we would propose a model to the Forum. I understand that some members of the Working Group then voted against the recommendation in the Forum – can I have your reasons for changing your mind on the

No	Discussion/Action
	<p>recommendation?</p> <p>SJ: I have concerns that at this time there will be additional costs for the LA, I had not fully understood the implications and I believe it was the wrong recommendation.</p> <p>SR: What exact implications are you concerned about?</p> <p>SJ: In time of austerity, additional costs to the LA, impact on my school and the ability of other schools to gain from the system.</p> <p>SR: AL, can you provide a response? Will there be additional costs for the LA?</p> <p>AL: No, there will not be additional costs for the LA. I know the argument was raised that appointments had been made based on salary point. As an LA we would always want the best member of staff to be appointed regardless of salary point.</p> <p>SJ: We do still consider value.</p> <p>OM: I can say, in my school, my governing body have always appointed the very best person for the position and not taken into account salary.</p> <p>SR: I fully agree with OM, my Governing Body always appoint the very best staff member to teach the pupils in our care.</p> <p>SJ: Previously we have made a decision based on value.</p> <p>SR: Moving to school average will remove that, so if there are schools appointing on salary point not on the best candidate, moving to school average will ensure that Governing Bodies are always able to appoint the best person which surely will be a vast improvement for education of pupils across the LA.</p> <p>OM: Completely agree with SR the pupils across the LA should have a teacher appointed, based on their ability in the classroom not their salary point.</p> <p>SR: Can we all agree that moving to school average will remove the need for Governing Bodies to appoint based on salary?</p> <p>SJ: I still do not understand how this will not cost the LA more, if all schools appointed on top of salary.</p> <p>AL: Our priority is that all schools appoint the best teacher regardless of salary point, you will have many occasions where there are less experienced teachers who are appointed as they are the better candidate. To answer your question SJ, the pot will not alter, how it is distributed will alter. We currently take average of the school averages to get a sector average and that is then distributed on PTR. This model will see a school average distributed on PTR.</p> <p>SR: From my understanding if a school in the sector currently employs an NQT it will affect all schools in the sectors funding, as it will reduce the sector average?</p> <p>JL: Yes you are correct, if a school has good staff retention and all the staff are experienced and paid at top of the scale they are currently losing out on the funding. Where schools</p>

No	Discussion/Action
	<p>who have a high turnover of staff and appoint on Main scale they are gaining.</p> <p>OM: Moving to a school average will safeguard our schools from feeling pressured by budget restraints into employing staff based on salary point. There will be no incentive to do so, all schools will be able to appoint the very best member of staff for their schools. That has to be an advantage to moving to this system.</p> <p>AL: Our aim is to reduce the risk to schools and ensure schools are funded appropriately for the staff they employ during this period of austerity. This piece of work is being carried out under Headteachers request not driven by LA officers. There are significant winners and losers in the current system.</p> <p>SJ: It is clear there are currently winners and losers over a five-year period. I worry it will cost the LA in the long term.</p> <p>AL: No there will be no additional cost to the LA, the 'pot' will remain the same how it is distributed will differ.</p> <p>OM: There are several safeguards built into the system, school average based on PTR will stop schools employing more staff and getting funding for them. If Governing Bodies decide to employ more staff, it will be funded from elsewhere in the budget. By capping the number of SLT funded, it will stop schools taking advantage of the leadership funding. Should a school wish to fund additional leadership that member of staff would be calculated as UPS3.</p> <p>SJ: I have under the number of staff on leadership, so I would just move a staff member from TLR to leadership?</p> <p>JL: Yes, and you can do that in current system.</p> <p>SR: We have already moved to actual salary for LRB staff which we all agreed was the fairest method. We are currently considering enhanced support funding to ensure it is fair. This is the other element that needs to be brought in line. To be clear over the 5-year period my school has received £100,000 more due to current system. Average out, I have gained £20,000 per year over the period. There are currently 5 schools in deficit budget that are losing in this system. They are in deficit budget, cutting staff and resources in their schools to fund my £100,000 that is completely unacceptable. We have been put on this Forum to be objective, think of all schools and more importantly all pupils across the LA and ensure the funding is fair for all pupils, not just be concerned with our school.</p> <p>SJ: Still do not understand how it will not cost the LA.</p> <p>AL: The pot for schools will remain the same it is the distribution that will change.</p> <p>OM: Can I just raise a point, we have a school in the LA who is currently in Special Measures and over a five-year period has lost over £340,000, that school is unable to employ the number of teachers it is funded for and is in a significant deficit budget. On the other hand, we have schools who have gained significantly from the current funding model over the same period. Please somebody explain to me how that is correct.</p>

No	Discussion/Action
	<p>SR: Clearly it is completely unacceptable, and that is coming from a school who is winning in the current system. We can't have a system where some schools benefit because other schools have more expensive staff and the schools employing those staff lose out on funding and get less than what they need to cover costs.</p> <p>RSD: I agree the current funding model does not provide equity for pupils across the LA and must be changed.</p> <p>AB: Agreed, the funding schools have cannot be based on appointment decisions taken by another school.</p> <p>SR: We were asked to consider funding models for other LA's. I understand from the paper we have received 9 responses to the request for information.</p> <p>AL: There is a variety of funding models, Cardiff and the Vale, do sector average but then reduce funding from teachers based on the available budget, some authorities do sector average, some authorities do a spot point with all staff funding at a point. One funds all UPS3 staff and sector average for main scale. One authority does school average and another stated teacher average but did not say if that was school or sector. Two fund based on pupil numbers. We were asked to carry out an exercise for due diligence, which we have it is a mixed bag and there is no silver bullet.</p> <p>JL: It is also important to note, we do not have the background knowledge regarding these funding methods to see if they have the same issue where there are winners and losers. What we do know is there are significant numbers of schools across Wales in deficit budget with more predicted to be going into deficit budget in the 2025/2026 financial year.</p> <p>AL: If we were looking to retain sector average then using a spot point would make it far easier from an LA perspective as there would be less work to calculate in future years but wouldn't address the inequity in the system which the school average model addresses ensuring schools are funded based on their own teaching staff and a consistent PTR.</p> <p>RSD / OM agreed.</p> <p>SR: If we go back to the points raised by the full School Forum:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost to LA has been discussed, AL has reassured the Working Group no additional costs to LA just a redistribution model. • Other LA funding models - received 9 responses mix of models across Wales. • Considered impact to schools. We have received a paper showing the five-year trends and the impact the current model is having as well as the impact next financial year if we move to a school average. <p>SR: JV, you also raised concerns in the Budget Forum regarding the previous recommendation, is there any further concerns you have that we have currently not</p>

No	Discussion/Action
	<p>discussed?</p> <p>JV: For me I looked at the impact on my own school, but I understand the points raised and it needs to be equitable to all. I also wanted to reconsider a tapering effect as I do not think we discussed that properly.</p> <p>SR: Shall we hold a vote first on if our recommendation to the School Forum stands. Do we recommend to the School Forum adoption of the model of school average with cap on SLT?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes: 6 • No: 0 • Abstain: 1 <p>SR: Agreed that we will take recommendation to School Forum.</p>
3.	<p><u>Taper Model</u></p> <p>SR: If we now consider a taper model. AL / JL can you please advise of options?</p> <p>AL: When schools have been losing when changing funding models, we have introduced a taper for example in the last LMS review there was a transition period year 1 33% year 2 66% and year 3 100%.</p> <p>In this case it was felt due to the current conditions that schools who were losing should gain fully in year 1, but there would be a cap applied to schools losing significant amounts. The proposed cap would be £36,000 in year 1 and £72,000 in year 2. The cost of this would be approximately £81k in year 1 and £13k in year 2, circa £94k over the two-year period.</p> <p>SJ: How would this be funded?</p> <p>AL: This would form part of the ISB budget, we would need to evidence it was not growth and could be done within current budget parameters.</p> <p>OM: There would be no cost to schools.</p> <p>AL: No, it would form part of the ISB, this would ensure the schools who have lost over the last 5-year period would have full impact of the proposed change and the schools who are potentially receiving a large reduction have a floor placed on that cut to allow them to prepare over a 1 to 2 year period.</p> <p>SJ: I have a concern about the SLT model and the potential for schools to abuse the funding.</p> <p>JL: The current model can be abused, by capping the funding of SLT we are protecting the system from abuse.</p> <p>SR: Schools can have more SLT and fund themselves where currently all SLT are included in the sector average, so this system is far more open to abuse.</p> <p>OM: To go back to the taper model, I am happy to recommend that to School Forum, as it protects the schools who have been gaining significantly over the last 5 years to have a cap on the losses for a 2-year period.</p>

No	Discussion/Action
	<p>SR: Yes, I agree it will ensure the schools who have been losing receive the correct funding for the staff in their school.</p> <p>RSD: It will give the opportunity for schools, where they have additional staff due to benefiting from the funding model, to make the necessary cuts should they need to over a period of two years. They can continue to fund the additional staff from other budget elements should they have the funding available.</p> <p>SR: I shall call for a vote.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Those who agree to taper the proposals with a £36,000 floor year 1 and a £72,000 floor year 2: 7 • Those who do not wish to include taper: 0
4.	<p><u>Closing / Final Comments</u></p> <p>SR: To reiterate, is everybody satisfied that we have fully complied with the requests outlined in the School Forum to consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Other LA funding models • Impact on schools funding 25/26 • Potential tapering model <p>Agreed.</p> <p>SR: Do we all agree that it is the recommendation from this Working Group to recommend moving to school average with a SLT cap?</p> <p>Agreed</p> <p>SR: Do we all agree that we will recommend a 2 year taper of £36,000 year 1 and £72,000 year 2?</p> <p>Agreed</p> <p>SR: Does anybody have any further concerns they wish to raise before going to School Forum?</p> <p>No.</p> <p>SR: Can I please make a request when we are considering items like this in the future that all papers are anonymised to ensure all members of the Forum are able to decide on a principle and reduce possible bias and ensure impartiality.</p> <p>Agreed.</p> <p>SR closed the meeting and thanked all for their attendance.</p>