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**SCHOOL BUDGET FORUM**  
**Tuesday, 18<sup>th</sup> March 2025**  
**(Greenfield Special School)**

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**NOTES**

**PRESENT:**

Abby Sharpe (Abercanaid Community)  
 Jeff Beard (Cyfarthfa High)  
 Paul Phillips (Pen-Y-Dre High)  
 Owen Morgan (Cyfarthfa Park Primary)  
 James Voros (Gellifaelog Primary)  
 Rhiannon Stephen Davies (Greenfield Special)  
 Anna Morris (Heolgerrig Community)  
 Keith Maher (Pen-Y-Dre High) (Chair)  
 Mike O'Neill (Pen-Y-Dre High)  
 Simone Roden (Ynysowen Primary)  
 Sarah Townsin (Ysgol Coed Y Dderwen)  
 Alwen Bowen (Ysgol Rhyd Y Grug)  
 Sue Walker (Director of Education)  
 Craig Flynn (Director of Finance)  
 Councillor Gareth Lewis (Cabinet Portfolio for Education)  
 Anthony Lewis (Head of School Planning, Support & Resources)  
 Garhard Williams (Union Representative)

**IN ATTENDANCE:**

Joanna Lewis (LMS Manager)  
 Louise Ballinger (Group Accountant)  
 Emma France (Clerk to the Forum)  
 Gavin Metherringham (Head of ALN & Inclusion)  
 Chris Jones (Building & Property Services Manager)  
 Iain Goldsworthy (Energy Engineer, Property Services)

No	Discussion/Action
1.	<p><b><u>Apologies</u></b></p> <p>Apologies were received from Sarah Hopkins (Blessed Carlo Acutis) and Stuart James (Afon Taf High).</p> <p>The Chair opened the meeting and thanked all for their attendance and thanked RSD for hosting.</p> <p>All parties introduced themselves.</p>
2.	<p><b><u>Minutes of meetings</u></b></p> <p>The below minutes were agreed as true record:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>21<sup>st</sup> January 2025 - Schools Budget Forum</li> </ul>

No	Discussion/Action
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4<sup>th</sup> March 2025 - Schools Budget Forum Working Group</li> </ul>
3.	<p><b><u>Matters arising from the minutes</u></b></p> <p>None.</p>
4.	<p><b><u>Additional Support Delegation</u></b></p> <p>AL presented members with the paper enclosed in pack entitled 'Item 4 Additional Support funding – Proposed delegation model'.</p> <p>Paper had been developed by the ALN Steering Group and School Forum Working Group.</p> <p>AL outlined next steps should the delegation model be approved by the Forum:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consultation period with schools / Governing bodies.</li> <li>Report considered by cabinet week commencing 5<sup>th</sup> May 2025.</li> <li>Schools would receive a budget virement mid-year would not be in FA for 2025/2026 but would be delegated to schools.</li> <li>Delegation would be in FA for 2026/2027.</li> </ul> <p>KM thanked all parties for detailed work on the paper and opened for questions / comments:</p> <p><b>MoN: If the delegation is set for a period of three years would pay awards be reflected?</b></p> <p>AL: Funding each year would be based on a grade 3 LSA salary and would reflect pay awards.</p> <p><b>PP: Question for GM, does this have any implications for the implementation of the ALNET?</b></p> <p>GM: No, this will have no implication for the implementation of ALNET.</p> <p><b>SR: In order for this to be successful we would need to know the colour and the level for each child. We need clear transparency.</b></p> <p>AL: School receives the colour of the pupils.</p> <p>SR: No, we get the names of the pupils and the total number of pupils we get in each colour not the individual pupil colour. For this to work we need full transparency.</p> <p>ST: Yes, we would currently be told you have 1 red pupil and 2 amber pupils for example.</p> <p>KM: Agree for this to work we would need to know the level of support allocated to each child.</p> <p>AL: We can share colour and level for each pupil moving forward.</p> <p>JL: I have looked back at what information is provided, we currently provide a list of pupils who are entitled to support and a summary of the number of pupils in each category but not on an individual basis.</p> <p>AL: We have that information as it's held by ALN and can provide it going forwards.</p> <p>AM: The process for moving a pupil from school IDP to LA IDP is very time consuming. I have a</p>

No	Discussion/Action
	<p>current pupil where the process has taken over a year to date and is still not completed.</p> <p>SR: Within the code if a school can not meet the needs of a pupils IDP the process to change to a LA IDP should take 7 weeks.</p> <p>GM: Agreed the current process are too time consuming and the code states it should be 7 weeks. We are currently looking at internal processes.</p> <p>SW: It needs to be noted that the funding of ALN is not adequate across Wales we are all aware of that, what this proposal does is reduce bureaucracy and ensure a fair and equitable system.</p> <p>SR: Agreed this does not address the funding issue but it will ensure transparency, ensure funding is received in a timely manner with less bureaucracy.</p> <p><b>KM: Any further comments? Proceed to vote?</b></p> <p>Move to vote:</p> <p>KM: Vote on two elements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Vote 1 - Agree to move to the proposed funding model as outlined in paper.</b></li> <li>• <b>Vote 2 - Agree to move to three-year review of the delegation model</b></li> </ul> <p>All parties agree to vote:</p> <p><b>Vote 1: Agree to move to the proposed funding model as outlined in paper:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For - 16</li> <li>• Against - nil</li> <li>• Abstain - nil</li> </ul> <p><b>Vote 2: Agree to move to three-year review of the delegation model</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For - 15</li> <li>• Against – 1</li> <li>• Abstain - nil</li> </ul> <p>KM both motions carried on vote.</p> <p><b>C: Concerns that three years is too long.</b></p> <p>AL There would be a review each November of any pupils where there are changes in circumstance.</p> <p>C: Thanks for clarifying would like to amend my vote.</p> <p><b>Vote 2 - Agree to move to three-year review of the delegation model</b></p>

No	Discussion/Action
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For - 16</li> <li>• Against – nil</li> <li>• Abstain – nil</li> </ul> <p>Paper accepted and approved. LA to consult with all Schools and Governing Bodies prior to going to Cabinet.</p>
5.	<p><b><u>Energy Efficiencies – Behaviour change project</u></b></p> <p>IG presented to the group the attach presentation:</p> <div data-bbox="236 584 292 647" data-label="Image"> </div> <p>Item 5. Budget Board Slides.pptx</p> <p>KM thanked IG for presentation and opened for question/comments:</p> <p><b>PP: For context the schools energy usage stated in your presentation is 60% of total authority. What proportion of schools building is LA estate?</b></p> <p>IG: Approximately 70%.</p> <p>CJ: Agree 70%.</p> <p>PP: The schools are therefore function for more efficiently than the other areas of LA. For transparency I think this should have been included in presentation.</p> <p><b>PP: The additional £12,450 plus VAT cost for the consultant, how much has been spent to date and what have the efficiencies been?</b></p> <p>IG: The cost to date has been £120,000 approximately, and the savings have amounted to £120,000, over the period we would need to consider the savings over a longer period to have a true picture.</p> <p><b>PP: Schools and Governing Bodies have been looking for significant cost saving measures which have included energy consumption, have the experiences of the two schools in current programme been shared?</b></p> <p>IG: Engagement has been variable in the programme. Sharing of information would be a positive step.</p> <p>KM: Agree, if all schools could see where the efficiency had been made this would be an appropriate starting point.</p> <p>PP: Agree to pay further consultant costs where we have not fully shared the current results does not seem appropriate.</p> <p>IG: This is also about building capacity.</p> <p>CJ: Not just about savings but need to consider CO2.</p> <p>AL: Two schools' part of the programme, Cyfarthfa High saved approximately £11,000 and</p>

No	Discussion/Action
	<p>Ysgol Rhyd Y Grug £4,500. The engagement could have been better but there has been saving of £15,500 over two schools. This replicated could save significant amounts of money over the LA.</p> <p>AL: There is a LMS reserve of approximately £40,000 to spend £12,450 to work with 5 schools could be three primary, one comprehensive and a special school. These lessons could then be shared. We could reduce this to two or three schools and reduce costs.</p> <p><b>PP: This has already been done in two schools why are we not sharing what has been learnt now?</b></p> <p>SR: What do the savings include if it is in schools purchasing new technologies, need to be aware of the longevity of the products and the servicing and maintenance costs.</p> <p>IG: Most of the savings have been found in people and processes rather than technology.</p> <p><b>KM: Savings are made with current school equipment?</b></p> <p>IG: Yes.</p> <p><b>PP: Why do we need a consultancy firm to do this, can't it be done with the current expertise and learning from what has been done on other sites?</b></p> <p>IG: We find schools and staff will engage far more if there is an external consultant.</p> <p>PP: I am sure if the other schools were able to share what had been done, engagement would not be an issue in current financial climate.</p> <p>SW: Most, if not all schools, have eco committees, the best way to change school practice is to have it driven by the pupils. WFGA is clear to put the young person voice at the centre will have the greatest impact. If we empower the school's pupil voice / eco committee to make changes that is when we will see the biggest and most long-lasting change.</p> <p>IG: Initial pilot covered many different types of building, not education focus.</p> <p><b>KM: Why can't the experiences of the schools in pilot be shared first?</b></p> <p>IG: We do not have the capacity within the team.</p> <p>SW: AB, Headteacher of Ysgol Rhyd Y Grug is a member of Forum; I am sure she would be happy to share what has been done.</p> <p>AB: Essential to have an Energy Champion for us, that was our caretaker, we made many small changes, putting sensors on lights, not putting lights on until teachers came into class. Small changes but added up.</p> <p>AM: I am not sure why we need a consultant at this point, can we not first learn from practice in other schools and work with eco committees etc. I am guessing you will find many of the processes are already happening in schools. I have asked your team to come out to my school and it has not happened.</p>

No	Discussion/Action
	<p>IG: It is a very small team with capacity issues. We can see waited energy with night-time use high etc.</p> <p><b>AM: Have you passed that information on?</b></p> <p>IG: I can arrange for that.</p> <p>SW: All schools have a climate charter, but it ended there, I suggest IG, or your team come to a Headteacher meeting and share experiences of the schools who have made savings and engage with our young people through the Eco committee. Not employ JPR at this point but see what can be done internally with current expertise.</p> <p>AL: Concerned this may be a missed opportunity to use expertise of consultants and build on current practices with an education specific focus.</p> <p>KM: Thanks for all the views I propose we go to a vote.</p> <p><b>1 - IG come to next Headteacher meeting, and we share practices and engage our pupils.</b>  <b>2 - Proceed with consultants at a cost of £12,450 + VAT.</b></p> <p>Vote results:</p> <p><b>1 - 16</b>  <b>2 - Nil</b></p> <p>Vote for IG to attend next Headteacher meeting and Headteachers' share current practices and engage pupils through ECO committee.</p> <p>Thanks to IG for attending.</p>
6.	<p><b><u>Property services SLA</u></b>  Item refers to papers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Item 6a. Repairs and maintenance School-LA responsibility</li> <li>Item 6b. Responsibilities for R&amp;M Appendix 4 fair funding scheme</li> <li>Item 6c. Review Group meeting 140215</li> <li>Item 6d. Property services SLA 24-2007 v3.</li> </ul> <p>KM: If we take item 6a first. There are 8 recommendations within the document, suggest we take questions and comments first and vote on the recommendations as 1 item. Agreed.</p> <p>AL outlined the contents of the paper and the recommendations:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Responsibility/CIPFA doc to be updated to include that tank cleans are an LA responsibility.</li> <li>Responsibility/CIPFA doc and SLA to be updated to reflect that monthly testing is an LA responsibility.</li> <li>Responsibility doc to be updated to reflect that works arising from Legionella risk assessments</li> </ol>

No	Discussion/Action
	<p>are a schools responsibility (except) for tank cleans.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. Responsibility/CIPFA doc to be updated to reflect that air handling rooftop units are a school responsibility.</li> <li>5. Responsibility/CIPFA doc and SLA to be updated to reflect that TMVs are a school responsibility.</li> <li>6. Add line back into Responsibility / CIPFA doc stating school responsible for fire alarm servicing/inspection.</li> <li>7. Responsibility / CIPFA doc to be changed to reflect Lightening Conductor replacements LA / servicing Schools rather than showing all costs as schools.</li> <li>8. A review of the Responsibility/CIPFA document to reflect new technologies and a review of the formula funding for R&amp;M to reflect servicing costs/new technologies required in different buildings, to be carried out for implementation from April 2026.</li> </ol> <p>No Questions or Comments.</p> <p><b>Vote - Agreed to accept recommendations 1-8 as outlined in paper 6a:</b></p> <p><b>Yes - 15</b>  <b>No - nil</b>  <b>Abstain - 1</b></p> <p><b>Vote carried to accept recommendations 1-8.</b></p> <p><u>SLA - Review</u>  As part of the SLA review of Property Services the Forum had requested feedback on the below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 10% sampling - results / actions.</li> <li>• Pilot of school receiving invoices prior to payment to raise queries and concerns about work carried out.</li> <li>• Customer service survey.</li> </ul> <p>CJ provided the following updates</p> <p><u>10% sampling - results / actions</u>  CJ advised that Stuart Bowen (SB) had carried out the sampling on the responsive repairs, I have received the information, but it is not in a format for me to interrogate or share currently. Will be able to provide further update in summer term.</p> <p><u>School receiving invoices prior to payment</u>  Process has been agreed with schools being sent invoices and having 5 days to query charges or work completed prior to payment. In a position to pilot with three schools.</p> <p>AM/SR/ST volunteered to be the pilot schools.</p> <p><b>SR: Can we pilot the school paying the invoices directly?</b></p> <p>Discussion around, contract with LA not school, employers tax for sub-contractor and IR35. Would also increase bureaucracy for schools. Pilot to go ahead as proposed.</p>

No	Discussion/Action						
	<p><u>Customer Service feedback</u></p> <p>Current questionnaire in three pages long and do not get many responses.</p> <p>Amend to a Microsoft office form with three questions including a star rating.</p> <p>CJ requested completed for good work as well as concerns to allow a full picture of work carried out.</p> <p><b>KM: Any further question / comments?</b> Nil.</p> <p><b>Vote on if Forum will recommend Property Services SLA to Governing Bodies for the 2025/2027 period:</b> <b>Yes - 16</b> <b>No - nil</b></p> <p><b>Vote carried forum recommending property services SLA.</b></p>						
7.	<p><b><u>Date and Agenda for next meetings</u></b></p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td>Schools Budget Forum</td> <td>8<sup>th</sup> July 2025 11.00am</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Schools Budget Forum Working Group</td> <td>13<sup>th</sup> May 2025 10.00am</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Schools Budget Forum Working Group</td> <td>17<sup>th</sup> June 2025 10.00am</td> </tr> </table>	Schools Budget Forum	8 <sup>th</sup> July 2025 11.00am	Schools Budget Forum Working Group	13 <sup>th</sup> May 2025 10.00am	Schools Budget Forum Working Group	17 <sup>th</sup> June 2025 10.00am
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8.	<p><b><u>Any other business as directed by the chairperson</u></b></p> <p><b>SR: Now we have agreed to consult on delegated model for ALN, can we please have assurances that should the schools not face further cuts the ALN funding will not be included. Currently the cut is placed on all delegated money including School Meals SLA and Breakfast Club SLA.</b></p> <p><b>AL:</b> We would not be able to give those assurances. You are asked to find an amount of money. That amount would not change if it was only factored against certain elements of funding.</p> <p><b>CF:</b> Those assurances cannot be given; we are not in a position to say any element of delegated funding will not be considered in future cuts. We have not asked the schools for additional saving for the 2025/2026 financial year, and we hope to be in that position for the following year although there are no guarantees.</p> <p><b>KM: If the budget was held centrally, would it be protected from cuts?</b></p> <p><b>CF:</b> No, it would not.</p> <p><b>SW:</b> We are all aware of the issues facing ALN funding not a local issue and we are raising it at a national level.</p> <p>The Chair closed the meeting and thanked all for their attendance.</p>						