



Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol  
**MERTHYR TUDFUL**  
**MERTHYR TYDFIL**  
County Borough Council

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**SCHOOL BUDGET FORUM**  
**Working Group**  
**Tuesday, 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2025**  
**(Civic Centre)**

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**NOTES**

**PRESENT:** Owen Morgan (Cyfarthfa Park Primary)  
Simone Roden (Ynysowen Community Primary) - Chair  
James Voros (Gellifaelog Primary)  
Rhiannon Stephens-Davies (Greenfield Special)  
Anthony Lewis (Head of School Planning, Support & Resources)

**IN ATTENDANCE:** Joanna Lewis (LMS Manager)  
Emma France (Lead Governor Services)  
Chris Jones (Building & Property Services Group Manager)  
Fairyal Pabani (School Catering Manager)

No	Discussion/Action
1.	<b><u>Apologies</u></b> Apologies for absence were received from Alwen Bowen, Sarah Hopkins, Stuart James and Louise Ballinger.
2.	<b><u>Minutes</u></b> Minutes of the meeting held on 11 <sup>th</sup> October 2025 were agreed as a true record.  There were no matter arising.
3.	<b><u>Property Services SLA</u></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Inspections - reports not collated as yet, when work complete CJ will circulate.</li><li>• Link for feedback - work ongoing with IT, will be in place from February when the new Responsive Repairs Contract in place. Following discussion all agreed that if there was no feedback provided CJ to assume work was carried out to a satisfactory level.</li><li>• Invoice trial – pilot can be rolled out to all schools when the new responsive repair contract goes live in February. Need to discuss further with business support.</li><li>• Services - reporting mechanisms, SR highlighted where a fault had been found with the emergency lighting but had not been brought to the attention of school.</li></ul> <p>Agreed protocol moving forward:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Report provided to appropriate LA officer and placed on RAMIS.</li><li>2. Head / Caretaker notified via email report added.</li><li>3. Caretaker to be provided training on RAMIS.</li></ol>

No	Discussion/Action
	<p>Discussion regarding issues with emergency lighting and security sensors. Headteachers to bring to attention of appropriate LA officer. The feedback link should resolve many of these issues.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Compliance checks - schools are RAG rated half termly based on compliance checks, Headteachers to be notified if school rate Red / Amber due to lack of compliance.</li> </ul> <p>Discussion around the possibility of a quote being provided when they complete the report, following an emergency call out. CJ would consider options but may cause delay.</p> <p>Discussion regarding inconsistencies in information provided to schools from different companies and the recourse against the companies for providing inadequate advice, examples provided around Brecon Gate and Comtech.</p> <p>Discussion around the schedule of rates, the hard copy costs £400 per area, per copy, there are 3 areas. CJ / JL to find out if there is an online version that schools could access and how much that would cost.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Services cost - members were provided with a document highlighting how much money was funded to the schools for servicing and how much was spent as an amount and as a percentage of funding received. Large disparity in schools. Way forward CJ / JL to consider accuracy of information and to provide working group with funding models for the January 2026 meeting.</li> </ul> <p>CJ to provide progress update in January meeting.</p> <p>CJ left the meeting.</p>
4.	<p><b><u>School meals SLA</u></b> FP joined the meeting.</p> <p>Members thanked FP for attending meeting.</p> <p>FP was asked to attend meeting as Catering SLA was one of the lowest scoring SLAs in the evaluations. Comments included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of choice.</li> <li>• Other offers in different LAs e.g. salad bars.</li> <li>• High amount of waste, particularly high on certain days.</li> <li>• Children unable to leave certain items off place resulting in them not eating anything.</li> <li>• Portion size across primary age pupils and in Greenfield.</li> </ul> <p>Heads highlighted that due to these elements the most vulnerable pupils not eating at all or still hungry due to portion size, and there is food being thrown out at end of service rather than it be given to hungry children.</p> <p>FP provided the below information:</p>

No	Discussion/Action
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pilot menu launched in primary/special schools since September, good feedback received so far, survey to be sent out to all Heads and cooks.</li> <li>• Aim to update menus further from April 2026, although the implementation of new regs now delayed until October 2026</li> <li>• Following the introduction of UPFSM many authorities have stopped providing salad bars. Waiting to hear from some LAs and a private company in Newport that provides salad bars. Other issues to consider are mess, staffing, waste and hygiene. Once further information is provided we can consider and discuss further.</li> <li>• In the meantime currently trialling a new salad option in Edwardsville where pupils are able to pick up to 5 salad options. If successful will look to roll out.</li> <li>• Adding bespoke options for schools is not possible with menus in parent pay.</li> <li>• Need to provide pupils with opportunities to try a variety of foods.</li> <li>• Can DRAs be asked to encourage pupils to eat more of their meal, try more foods? Would be good to trial this in some schools.</li> <li>• Need to ensure we meet regulations, need to provide pupils with balanced meal. Moving towards incorporating new regulations for example only 50/50 bread.</li> <li>• Difficult to please all schools, some menu options popular in one school and not another.</li> <li>• Portion sizes are regulated, we go for the middle of the range for portion size.</li> <li>• Children do not have to eat everything on their plate. Pupils are given the choice regarding wet foods like beans, gravy, custard. Salad is served in a separate receptacle but all together.</li> <li>• Parents are able to request a special menu if there are dietary issues with medical evidence. GP letter is sufficient.</li> <li>• Obesity in MT is among the highest in Wales and across Europe.</li> <li>• Pupils are able to have bread should they still be hungry which is the WG recommended way to supplement the meal provided.</li> </ul> <p>Further discussion points raised:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some pupils only get one meal a day, are we saying it is more important for children to have everything on their plate and then not eat any of it and it all go in the bin rather than allowing our children to have some food.</li> <li>• Example given; curry and rice served with vegetables on the side which doesn't go. If vegetables have to be served with the curry could this be in a separate receptacle?</li> <li>• There are trays of leftover food being thrown out when children are telling us they are hungry, is that ethically or morally acceptable.</li> <li>• Food waste is going to recycling but spare food kitchen side could be given to hungry pupils.</li> <li>• Conflict between obesity agenda and poverty agenda.</li> <li>• Children not obese due to school dinners, children obese as they are so hungry leaving school, they just eat unhealthy choices at home to fill up.</li> <li>• Can we look at the days where both hot and cold options are unpopular and change one of them, so children have one option they are able to eat.</li> <li>• If the portion sizes are the median, could we look to amend the sizes, so foundation learning classes have current/lower portion size and juniors get larger portion size.</li> <li>• FP clarified this is to be considered in survey but for some items e.g., protein, the upper end of the range is already being used.</li> <li>• Is providing pupils with several slices of bread really a more nutritional option than providing pupils with additional serving of meal.</li> </ul>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Length of time for pupils to eat very short once they have lined up and been served. Fine / gross motor skills underdeveloped to use cutlery.</li> <li>• Greenfields SS lunch time is a teaching moment supporting by LSAs. Require capacity within your staffing structure to do this.</li> <li>• Every aspect of school life, staff and Governors have to take into account pupil voice, except when it comes to what food is put on their plate. This goes completely against Curriculum for Wales.</li> <li>• Parents have a choice of the meal to select using ParentPay but a lot of parents don't use this or are not discussing with their children</li> <li>• FP offered to come to do tasting sessions within parents' evenings – require notice to arrange staffing and ingredients.</li> </ul> <p>Proposed way forward:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Draft survey prepared which will be sent to all schools before Christmas to collate views regarding menu choices/waste/portion sizes, information will be collated and shared in January.</li> <li>• Portion sizes currently offered to FL/KS2 pupils to be reviewed further in line with the survey feedback – consider offering KS2 the top of the range allowed under guidelines.</li> <li>• Survey will include views of whether Heads want bread offered with every meal as allowed in regulations or only for hungry pupils as is the general practice</li> <li>• Should the trial of salad options in Edwardsville be successful, this can be rolled out to all schools.</li> <li>• Review options to put serving of vegetables with some meals such as curry into separate receptacles to avoid 'spoiling' food on the plate.</li> <li>• AL to speak with SW regarding current practice to serve the whole meal and approach re leftover food at the servery.</li> <li>• Trained F&amp;F staff can use food and fun resources and engage with Pipin to support children attitude to eating</li> </ul> <p>Update to be provided to working group in January.</p> <p>Thanks to FP for attending.</p>
5.	<p><b><u>Any other business</u></b>  Next meeting moved to 12<sup>th</sup> January at 10:00am</p>