



Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol
MERTHYR TUDFUL
MERTHYR TYDFIL
County Borough Council

SCHOOL BUDGET FORUM
Thursday, 2nd February 2023
(Microsoft Teams)

NOTES

PRESENT:

Keith Maher (Pen Y Dre High) - Chair
Ryan Morgan (Taff Bargoed Learning Partnership)
Sarah Townsin (Ysgol Coed Y Dderwen)
Alwen Bowen (Ysgol Rhyd Y Grug)
David Anstee (Ysgol Y Graig Primary)
Laurence Matuszczyk (Edwardsville Primary)
Mike O'Neill (Pen Y Dre High)
Paul Phillips (Gwaunfarren Primary)
Steve Jones (Chief Officer Finance)
Councillor A Barry (Cabinet Portfolio for Governance and Resources)
Sue Walker (Director of Education)
Anthony Lewis (Head of School Planning, Support & Resources)

IN ATTENDANCE:

Joanna Lewis (LMS Manager)
Gary Winston (Clerk to the Forum)
Ian Kent (Group Accountant)

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:

Stuart James (Afon Taf)
Rhianon Stephens-Davies (Greenfield Special)
Sarah Hopkins (Blessed Carlo Acutis 3-16 School)
Owen Morgan (Cyfarthfa Park Primary)
Garhard Williams (Trade Union Representative)

No	Discussion/Action
1.	<u>Chairperson</u> In the absence of the Chairperson, the Vice-Chair, Ryan Morgan opened the meeting.
2.	<u>Budget Reductions 2023-2024</u> AB: May I apologise for the delay in getting back to you, but the Cabinet has been undertaking a thorough review of our finances for next year and as a result of factors such as additional funding and a lower forecast rate of inflation, we have been able to revise our request to schools for savings and will now ask for £1.5 million savings and not the £2.5 million discussed at the previous meeting. SJ: The reduction is possible as we have found extra savings from other departments, our contingency balance and a Council Tax increase.

No	Discussion/Action
	<p>RM: We are grateful for the reduction and appreciate the efforts made to reduce the cut. No cut is welcome, but can I thank Councillor Barry.</p> <p>PP: Is this just a proposition at this stage as the full Council will need to set the budget and this has not yet happened?</p> <p>AB: It will need to be confirmed by Council, but we have had discussions with Labour colleagues, and they have indicated their support and we are hopeful that it will be agreed.</p> <p>PP: What is the revised percentage decrease?</p> <p>AL: It will reduce from 5.15% to 3.04%.</p> <p>We have two items for consideration today - a ISB reduction of 3.04% for 2023/2024 and to remove the Discretionary Clothing Allowance, this will only impact secondary schools and save £67,000. We are seeking agreement to these proposals in today's meeting and then we will have a two-week consultation exercise with Chairs of Governors. The findings of the consultation will then be included in the report to Council when considering the budget.</p> <p>PP: Are we seeking agreement to the % reduction or to the methodology regarding how this would be found?</p> <p>AL: Agreement was provided in the last meeting for the methodology to apply the reduction and we are now seeking approval for the two proposals to reduce funding.</p> <p>PP: Thank you, but it seems strange to be seeking our agreement to something that Council could turn down.</p> <p>AL: The processes and methodology are agreed as it's a statutory requirement to consult with the Schools Budget Forum on proposals prior to decisions being taken.</p> <p><i>KM then joined the meeting and took the Chair.</i></p> <p>KM: Thank you Ryan for standing in and apologies for being late.</p> <p>AL: If I can ask IK to share the spreadsheet on how the £1.5 million will be achieved.</p> <p>A spreadsheet was shared, and IK explained the impact of the 3.04% cut to school budgets.</p> <p>RM: We mentioned it at the previous meeting but the cut for Greenfield seems high?</p> <p>AL: I wasn't at the last meeting but based on the draft minutes from that meeting the Head indicated that further support from the LA may be required.</p> <p>KM: If we are ready to proceed with a vote on these issues, can I first put forward the proposal to remove the Discretionary Clothing Allowance funding which will save £67,000.</p> <p>Members unanimously agreed to accept the proposal to remove the funding for the Discretionary Clothing Allowance.</p> <p>KM: Can we take a vote on the proposal to reduce the ISB by 3.04% for 2023/2024?</p>

No	Discussion/Action
	<p>Members voted, 10 in favour and 2 against and therefore it was agreed to accept the reduction of 3.04% to school budgets.</p> <p>KM: Thank you, as we have now agreed these proposals, are you able to explain how we are now to proceed as this is likely to have a significant impact.</p> <p>SW: Your Governor Support Officers are working on the budgets and will discuss with Headteachers. If there is a need for staff redundancy, the procedures will be explained, and HR Officers will also be available to advise on procedures for ending temporary contracts or the redundancy process if necessary.</p> <p>PP: It is difficult to see how we can start considering this before the Council has set the budget. We can start considering options, but I would advise not making final decisions in case there is a change in circumstances.</p> <p>SW: You need to start considering your options as soon as possible, redundancy is a long process as your Support Officer, HR, Governing Body and Trade Unions need to be involved.</p> <p>PP: Should schools be feeding back as to the implications of any cuts?</p> <p>SW: As explained by Anthony there is a consultation with all schools and there is an opportunity within this for each school to explain the impact on their budgets and school delivery.</p> <p>LM: What is the situation with voluntary redundancy?</p> <p>SW: You will need to consider your temporary contracts first but there will be a VER Scheme.</p> <p>AL: VER will be in line with the current policy which is at the statutory level which the Council pays and an additional 20% paid by the school.</p> <p>KM: If there are no more points, may I thank the Councillors and Officers for their work and again thank Councillor Barry for helping reduce the level of the cut. Schools will face a difficult time and it will have a significant impact on availability to deliver targets.</p> <p>The meeting was closed.</p>