



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

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**SCHOOL BUDGET FORUM**  
**Thursday, 11<sup>th</sup> January 2024**  
**(Teams)**

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**NOTES**

- PRESENT:**
- Sarah Hopkins (Blessed Carlo Acutis)
  - Sarah Townsin (Coed Y Dderwen)
  - Owen Morgan (Cyfarthfa Park Primary)
  - Rhiannon Stephens-Davies (Greenfield Special)
  - Anna Morris (Heolgerrig Community)
  - Simone Roden (Ynysowen Community Primary)
  - Laurence Matuszczyk (Edwardsville Primary)
  - Paul Phillips (Gellifaelog Primary)
  - David Anstee (Ysgol Y Graig Primary)
  - Sue Walker (Director of Education)
  - Councillor Andrew Barry (Cabinet Portfolio for Governance and Resources)
  - Liam Hull (Chief Officer Finance)
  - Louise Ballinger (Education Accountant)
- IN ATTENDANCE:**
- Joanna Lewis (LMS Manager)
  - Gary Winston (Clerk to the Forum)
- APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:**
- Stuart James (Afon Taf)
  - Keith Maher (Pen Y Dre High)
  - Mike O'Neill (Pen Y Dre High)

No	Discussion/Action
1.	<p><b><u>Welcome</u></b></p> <p>Mrs S Walker welcomed everyone and wished them a Happy New Year and explained that the purpose of the meeting was to receive an update on the budget position for 2024/2025 and explained that Liam Hull would present information.</p> <p>LH: We received our Welsh Government settlement in late December and received a budget increase of 3.4% which was higher than our estimate of 3.1% and it was the fifth highest settlement in Wales. However, the settlement was still significantly lower than the settlement required, and it left a funding gap of £13 million for 2024/2025.</p> <p>This has left the LA with an unprecedented challenge and almost all LAs in Wales were in a similar position.</p> <p>The Education Department required an increase of 8.9% to meet additional demands and the 4.5% uplift would leave a funding gap of £2.7 million for the Directorate. If the ISB was used to determine the school budget cut it would be £2.1 million.</p>

No	Discussion/Action
	<p>SW: There will be a Headteacher Meeting at 3:00pm next Tuesday followed by a Chair of Governors/Chair of Finance Committees Meeting at 4:00pm in the Orbit Centre where we will share this information.</p> <p>AL: To clarify, the percentage cut to the ISB will be about 4% and how we find that will need to be considered at the School Forum Meeting on 23<sup>rd</sup> January. If we can get agreement, we will then consult with individual governing bodies.</p> <p><b>SR: What impact will this have on the LAs ALN budget?</b></p> <p>LH: The Directorate will be considering that this month, the work is currently on-going.</p> <p>SR: If we are looking at cuts, we need to consider areas other than ALN first.</p> <p><b>LM: If the ALN is being considered for cuts, we will need to have an indication of how this will impact the ISB.</b></p> <p>SW: The department is currently looking at what we can propose and we have been asked to consider this by the end of the January.</p> <p>AL: We are currently looking at a £2.1 million cut to schools and £600,000 to the department.</p> <p><b>LM: I welcome the fact that this information is being shared now but as governors we are starting to look at our budgets for next year now. Some schools are going to be in deficit this year and further cuts are very concerning.</b></p> <p>LH: I agree, the timescales for setting budgets by March is very tight, but when we only get the settlement in late December, there is little else we can do.</p> <p><b>LM: When are schools going to get their formula allocations for 2024/2025?</b></p> <p>AL: They are being worked on, we need to have the pupil stats at the end of January and hope to have an indication of the impact of any cuts included with the consultation papers.</p> <p><b>LM: Do we have the estimated pay increases for staff for 2024/2025?</b></p> <p>LH: Its 4% for teaching and non-teaching staff.</p> <p><b>SR: If we are looking for a 4% cut it will just come off the bottom line, is there need for any discussions?</b></p> <p>AL: That is the likely method, but we need to agree how it is calculated to ensure that it is as fair as possible.</p> <p>SW: I appreciate that this is a difficult time, and the news will not be welcomed. The WLGA has written to the Minister to ask for the settlement to be re-considered and I will share this with you.</p> <p>AB: I agree with the comments about the timescales, it is ridiculous that we have to make decisions like this in such a short time. The LA has some brutal decisions to make, and the feeling is that next year could be even worse. With regards to the ALN budget, we will continue to lobby, we are aware of the issues and will pursue that. It's a very difficult time but education continues to have our support and we will try everything to help during this difficult</p>

No	Discussion/Action
	<p>period.</p> <p><b>SR: The decision to provide universal free school meals seems crazy now, do we have any idea of our grant funding for 2024/2025? We need to look at if we getting value for money from services and especially the Consortium.</b></p> <p>SW: Grants will now come directly to the LA, but we have not been given any amounts yet. I have an ADEW Meeting tomorrow and may get more information which I will share next Tuesday.</p> <p><b>SH: Will there be a voluntary redundancy offer to staff in schools?</b></p> <p>AL: The school offer will be in-line with any LA offer.</p> <p>LH: We are still considering our approach, but we know that we cannot achieve savings required without reducing staff costs.</p> <p>SW: I hope that we can provide the additional information requested next week and hope to see you then.</p>