
SCHOOLS' BUDGET FORUM
Minutes of a meeting held at Y Ganolfan, Porthmadog
on 20 January 2016 from 9.30 a.m. until 10.40 a.m.

Present:

Mr. Godfrey Northam – Chair

Cabinet Members: Councillor Gareth Thomas (Education)
Councillor Peredur Jenkins (Resources)

Head of Finance Department: Dafydd L. Edwards

School Heads: Eifion Jones (Ysgol Brynrefail), Alun Llwyd (Ysgol Dyffryn Ogwen), Dylan Minnice (Ysgol Botwnnog), Iona Wyn Jones (Ysgol Bro Cynfal/Ysgol Edmwnd Prys), Rhys Williams (Ysgol Cymerau), Esme Spencer (Ysgol Baladeulyn), Geraint Evans (Ysgol Edern)

Teachers' Unions: Neil Foden (Ysgol Friars)

Governors: Llinos Lloyd (y Gader Catchment Area Shadow Body)
Gwynne Pierce (Ysgol Llanbedr)
Gwilym Jones (Ysgol Borth-y-gest)
Dafydd Meirion Roberts (Ysgol Brynrefail)
Michael Sol Owen (Ysgol Glan y Môr)

Officers: Arwyn Thomas (Head of Education)
Owen Owens (Senior Manager Education Resources Service)
Hefin Owen (Finance Manager)
Glynda O'Brien (Member Support and Scrutiny Officer)

Apologies: Iwan Trefor Jones (Corporate Director), Menna Wynne Pugh (Ysgol Penybryn, Tywyn), Gwyn Howells (Ysgol y Gelli).

The Chair welcomed the following to their first Forum meeting:

Mrs Llinos Lloyd, Meirionnydd Area Secondary Governors Representative
Cllr. Michael Sol Owen, Dwyfor Area Secondary Governors Representative

1. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

No declarations of personal interest were received.

2. MINUTES

The Chair signed the minutes of the meeting of the Schools' Budget Forum held on 18 November 2015 as a true record.

3. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

Item 5 (iii) – Education Finance Working Group – Number of posts lost as a result of the cuts

(a) In response to a request at the previous Forum meeting to submit more detailed figures of the number of posts lost as part of the cuts process, the Senior Manager Education Resources Services noted that 25.4 (fte) full time teaching posts had been lost, 8.04 (fte) classroom assistants and 2.16 (fte) ancillary staff. He outlined the number of persons that were affected as follows:

Teachers:

Compulsory (without pension)	Reduced hours	Voluntary (total loss of hours)	Voluntary (reduced hours)	Voluntary (in receipt of pension)	Total
4	5	3	7	23	42

Classroom Assistants, Ancillary Staff etc.:

Compulsory (without pension)	Reduced hours	Voluntary (total loss of hours)	Voluntary (reduced hours)	Voluntary (in receipt of pension)	Total
21	11	5	11	3	51

(b) In response to the information submitted above, it was questioned if the figures were correct as it appeared that the impact was much greater for some secondary schools with an example of one secondary school losing seven individuals.

Resolved: To accept and note the information and request that the Senior Manager Education Resources submits figures annually to the Schools' Budget Forum.

4. UPDATE ON THE ADDITIONAL LEARNING NEEDS AND INCLUSION PROJECT

Apologies were tendered that the Senior Manager Additional Learning Needs and Inclusion could not attend, however, the Senior Manager, Education Resources Services reported on his behalf as follows:

- A report was submitted to the Cabinet at its meeting on 19 January 2016 for approval to the Gwynedd Council Strategy for Additional Learning Needs and Inclusion. At this meeting it was agreed to:
 - Continue to conduct negotiations with Ynys Môn Council to investigate the opportunity of formulating a Common Additional Learning Needs strategy to address the needs of pupils and young people in an effective and efficient way.
 - To approve the strategy taking the above into account
 - To approve the Business Case – namely a one-off investment of up to £1,380,131 to show a permanent annual saving of at least £808,461

It was noted that the additional learning needs integrated service would be established in two main phases:

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- (1) Restructure and establish the Integrated Team to include Educational Psychologists and Specialist Teachers by September 2016
- (2) By September 2017 to include classroom assistants, additional learning needs coordinators as part of the central workforce

It was stressed that they would continue to consult on the various models.

(b) In response to the above, several Headteachers expressed the following concerns:

- Whilst welcoming the review, it was necessary to consider the financial position thoroughly and clarity was required regarding the reduction in the 3* statement budget for the 81 schools where the finance had not been devolved.
- That the cut was substantial and may have a huge impact on schools especially in the secondary sector
- That there was much less discontent amongst parents when the funding was devolved to schools
- What would happen to classroom assistants if the funding was transferred and used flexibly
- From what source did the funding for redundancies come
- Whilst accepting that establishing a workforce from a central pool would lead to reducing the element of bureaucracy to fund the system, there was concern if the provision would be as good as what was already available at the schools
- There should be compromise but without taking funding out of school budgets.

(c) The Head of Education responded to the above concerns and noted:

- that discussions would take place regarding the budget and the intention was for schools to be self-sufficient
- the Forum was reminded that the budget in question had overspent in the past
- whilst agreeing that schools had more flexibility and the element of bureaucracy would be reduced, it was stressed that the central Team would provide and support expertise for a purpose
- that a further discussion in this Forum would be welcomed to air the financial implications following open consultation and discussion with the stakeholders.

Resolved: To accept and note the above.

5. EXTENDING THE SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENT - MAINTENANCE OF BUILDINGS

The Senior Manager, Education Resources Service made a request to extend the Service Level Agreement for the Maintenance of Buildings for a year under the conditions of the existing budget in order to present a range of new agreements during next year.

Resolved: To approve the above application.

6. UPDATE ON THE 2016/17 BUDGET

(a) A verbal update was presented by the Head of Finance regarding the 2016/17 budget and he noted that over the four year period from April 2014 to March 2018 plans were made on the grounds that:

- The **grant** from the Welsh Government to the Council would be **reduced by £21m**, and
- **inflation** and an increase in the **demand** for services would **add £29m to the costs**, and could create a

- **Financial gap of £50m** which had to be found.

Over the same four year period (2014 - 2018), it was planned to **increase Council Tax by 3.5%** per annum (a little higher in 2015/16) which meant a reduction of **£9m** in the gap, leaving **£41m to be found**.

Efficiency savings to the value of £26m had been identified and implemented by some Council central departments facing a reduction of 30%.

The schools' £4.3m was part of the £26m 'efficiency savings'.

Of course it may be argued that the difference between **"efficiency savings"** and **"cuts"**, was rather vague, but in the strategy the schools' £4.3m was 'efficiency savings'.

In addition to the 'efficiency savings' of £26m, it was planned to undertake a further £8m efficiency savings, without requesting more from schools during the four year period up to 2018. .

Unfortunately, this would not be sufficient to address the gap of £41m.

With the gap remaining, it was identified that the Council would need to realise £7m in cuts, the subject of the Gwynedd Challenge consultation.

Following the local government conditional grant settlement, and further work on 2016/16 expenditure requirements, cuts of around £5m were sought over the next two years rather than the £7m that had been planned.

This would not mean avoiding any part of the £34m 'efficiency savings'. Therefore, there would be no change in £4.3m contribution from schools.

It was explained that the 2016/17 local government conditional settlement showed a reduction of 1.4% on average to local authorities in Wales, with a reduction of 1.7% for Gwynedd, which was close to what Gwynedd had predicted, namely a reduction of 2%.

Regarding safeguarding some of the school budgets, it was noted that there were conditions attached to the accounting exercise, these included -

- financial impact of any increase or reduction in the number of pupils,
- increase or reduction in devolvement,
- contribution of £2m in 2016/17 from the £4.3m efficiency savings,
- specific grant transfers to the settlement, and
- borrowing costs to invest in school property (linked to the 21st century schools programme and school organisation) .

Of course, the Council will as usual provide an additional budget for -

- pay agreements,
- minimum living wage,
- increase in teachers' pension cost contributions,
- substantial increase in national insurance costs etc.

(b) In response to comments made, the Head of Education noted the following points:

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- it would not be required for schools to contribute towards the cuts of £5m between now and 2018 and the contribution from the schools would be £4.3m
- that a focus would be required on joint-organisation following 2018 and the forecast following this date appeared to be disastrous.

Resolved: To accept and note the above.

7. EDUCATION IMPROVEMENT GRANT 2016/17

The Finance Manager reported that unfortunately, thus far no information had been received from the Welsh Government.

The Head of Education stated that there was inequality in terms of finance especially for the rural authorities who were losing money on the grant allocations compared with urban authorities especially as three quarters of the schools were part of the Challenge Wales project.

Resolved: To accept and note the above.

8. 6TH FORM GRANT 2016/17

The Finance Manager reported that no further information had been received from the Welsh Government since the meeting that took place with the officers of WG and some 6th form heads back in November 2015. However, using the information received at the meeting it was proposed to release the 2016/17 to 2018/19 forecast soon. .

Resolved: To accept and note the above.

CHAIRMAN