
SCHOOLS BUDGET FORUM
Minutes of meeting held at Hen Eglwys
Santes Fair, Tremadog,
on 26 February 2015 from 10.00 a.m. to 12.30 p.m.

Present:

Mr Godfrey Northam – Chairman

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

School Headteachers : Eifion Jones (Ysgol Brynrefail), Alun Llwyd (Ysgol Dyffryn Ogwen), Gareth T M Jones (Ysgol Botwnnog), Andrew Roberts (Ysgol y Berwyn), Rhys Williams (Ysgol Cymerau), Esme Spencer (Ysgol Baladeulyn), Menna Wynne-Pugh (Ysgol Penybryn, Tywyn), Sianelen Fleming (Ysgol Llanaelhaearn)

Teaching Unions: David Healey (Ysgol Friars)

Governors: Walter Williams (Secondary Sector)
Gwynne Pierce (Primary Sector)

Officers: Arwyn Thomas (Head of Education)
Hefin Owen (Finance Manager Development)
Eluned Williams (Senior Officer Ancillary Services)
Glynda O'Brien (Members and Scrutiny Support Officer)

Apologies: Dilwyn Williams (Chief Executive), Iwan Trefor Jones (Corporate Director), Dafydd L. Edwards (Head of Finance), Gwyn Howells (Ysgol y Gelli), Iona Wyn Jones (Ysgol Bro Cynfal and Ysgol Edmwnd Prys) and Donna Roberts (Ysgol Pendalar)

1. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

None.

2. MINUTES

The Chairman signed the minutes of the following Schools Budget Forum meeting:

- (a) 3 November 2015
- (b) 15 January 2015 Extraordinary Meeting

subject to amending decision (b) in Item 3 – Schools Saving Target in minutes for 15 January 2015 for scrutiny

(i) **That the Schools Budget Forum agree to implementation of the agreed plans equivalent to £1,894,240**

(ii) **as no final agreement was reached between the sector on any “Model” (A, B, nor C, as presented) for the teaching staff element in the medium term**

(2016/17 – 2017/18), and that “Model A” total for the primary sector and “Model C” for the secondary sector would leave the Working group £541,260 short of the savings target of £4.3m for schools, it was agreed that the working Group should continue to review education services and organization in order to identify the remaining savings target, and recommend that the Cabinet continue to try and identify how best to achieve the entire £4.3m.

(iii) Therefore, for 2015/16, it was noted that if the savings for schools could be limited to £952,000, there was an agreement in the Schools Budget Forum for the Council to temporarily use discretion based on an agreed compromise within the totals agreed upon and recommend that the Cabinet implement “Model B” (with a ratio of around 2.3:1 of the teaching staff savings between the sectors) in 2015/16. That would lead to a reduction of £60,131 of primary sector teaching staff allocation, and a reduction of £25,771 of secondary teaching staff allocation.

3. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

(a) 3 November 2014 - item 3 (a) – Financial training for schools

(i) Apologies were received from the Finance Manager on the lack of progress in organizing schools financial training but this remains a priority.

(ii) The Head of Education added that he had asked Headteachers to list management issue that work well so that consideration could be given to holding a series of workshops for school leaders. To hold workshops and challenge of training with regard to staff’s capacity to do so and that the central staffing structure would require consideration. It is also intended to invite GwE officers to the Management Group in order to discuss human resources and finance arrangements so as to ensure a robust monitoring arrangement.

(iii) In response, the Headteacher noted that a budget monitoring arrangements would be beneficial so that budget projections can be shared.

Resolved to: Approve and note the above.

(b) 15 January 2015 – Item (d) – Accelerate schools organization

The Head of Education reported that it was evident that schools organization required consideration and that discussions needed to be held and particularly address infrastructure. This does not imply closure but various options and conditions that provide robust leadership for the future could be considered. It is accepted that it will be a difficult discussion but a mature approach is required for the benefit of the pupils within the establishments.

It was resolved: To approve and note the above.

4. SCHOOL SAVINGS

The Cabinet Member for Education reported that the Council’s financial strategy for next year have received attention from the Cabinet at its meeting on 19 February and he reported on the Schools Savings Target Working group to implement The Cabinet member for Education stated that the Council’s financial strategy for next year had

received attention from the Cabinet at its meeting held on 19 February and he reported on the Schools Savings Target Working Group recommendation to implement savings plans equivalent to £1, 894,240 and Primary and Secondary Headteachers presentations were presented outlining the likely impact of the cuts on pupils achievements based on reducing the pupil:teacher ratio on no more than Model A for the primary sector (namely -£1,406,480) and no more than Model C for the secondary sector (-£458,023).

The Cabinet for 2015/16 agreed to the Budget Forum's recommendation to limit the savings for schools to £952,000, and that the Council for the time being use discretion on a compromise within the maximum totals agreed upon to act in accordance with "Model B" (with a ratio of around 2.3:1 of the teaching staff savings between the sectors) in

2015/16. That would reduce £60,131 of primary sector teaching staff allocation, and reduce £25,771 of secondary sector teaching staff allocation.

In addition, the Cabinet decided to ask the Schools Savings Target Working Group to proceed with the task to identify the remaining savings target exceeding £952,000 for 2015/16 awaiting their recommendation on how the entire £4.3 can be achieved over the period 2015-16 – 2018/19.

The Cabinet Member has also attended a Secondary sector Chair of Governors Federation meeting that was a beneficial meeting when the size of the school cuts was highlighted and the clear message that emerged from that meeting was that schools organization throughout the County needed to proceed. However, attention was drawn to the fact that a letter had been sent to the press on behalf of the Federation that had slightly hardened the case and that open discussions would have been far much better.

The Head of Education added that further work was required as regards identifying the remaining cuts of £2,405,760 with regard to the A models (primary sector) and C (secondary sector) and identify the gap of £541,260 between both models. It was also noted that central cuts would need to be discussed so as to scrutinize the entire situation and it was obvious that the infrastructure was unsustainable for the future.

The following matters were considered during the following discussion:

- (i) It would be beneficial for the schools if they knew exactly what the three year budget projections are.
- (ii) In response to an enquiry regarding how much discussion was had in the Cabinet on the savings for the schools, the Cabinet Member gave an assurance that a detailed discussion had been held and that the likely impact on schools if the cuts were realized, had been considered.
- (iii) As to the Cabinet Member for Education's concern that the letter had been sent to the press, it was explained that the Federation of the Chair of Governors had unanimously decided to take this step because it was felt that the governing bodies are accountable to parents and that they should be aware of the crisis that schools face.
- (iv) As regards the secondary sector, the cuts equate to loss of 33¹/₂ teaching posts, 17¹/₂ of assistants posts and 16 support staff posts and in essence a medium sized school staff will disappear in the first year.
- (v) Concern that demography was not considered with regard to contribution to the cuts and the whole purpose of providing the presentations on the likely impact of the cuts was to illustrate the critical situation and draw attention to that 100-150 posts in the secondary sector would disappear over the next 3

- years. It would be useful to hold a similar exercise in the primary sector so as identify the total number of posts lost in the primary and secondary sector.
- (vi) When looking at similar schools from the same family, it was emphasized that schools in Gwynedd received less per capita pupil allocation
 - (vii) There was concern that letter 3 had been sent to the teachers and unions and that a similar situation had not previously arisen.
 - (viii) The need to accelerate the County organization agenda.
 - (ix) In response to a discussion with the Union Officers, it was suggested that Headteachers have a discussion with Owen Owens with regard to unions current information at a county level.

In response to the Headteachers concerns, the Cabinet Member said that he had been in post for six months and that education was under a considerable strain with difficult decisions to be taken. It is therefore unavoidable that radical changes to the entire education field be considered and that in the interest of the pupils who are central to any discussions, leadership, safety net, centralization, federalization, etc require consideration.

As regards the County's organization agenda, he mentioned the need to review the strategy including other matters such as the entire education service within the County. It was emphasized that organization was time consuming as regards funding arrangements, business plan and was reliant on the Organization Team's capacity.

The Cabinet Member for Finance said that Cabinet members were governors and that they faced a very difficult decision in implementing the cuts. Whilst sympathizing with school Headteachers, it had been ensured that Cabinet members understood and were concerned about the situation. It was also noted that changing the system and infrastructure was welcome and that this was the crux of the problem and collaboration was sought to resolve the situation.

It was resolved to: (a) Give approval to the Schools Savings Target Working group to continue the work.

(b) That the Education Department required transparency and to present 3 year projections soon to schools, including facts about allocations for 2015/16 to include the impact of the cuts:

- **Demography**
- **Integration**
- **Education improvement grant**
- **6th Form Grants**
- **Cognition and learning (schools who buy in)**

5. SCHOOLS EDUCATION IMPROVEMENT GRANT (SEIP) 2015-16

The Finance Manager reminded members of the Welsh Assembly Government's aim to combine 11 Education/Schools Grant to one grant entitled "Schools Education Improvement Grant" that implied that these grants reduced by £156.7m in 2014/15 to £141.0m in 2015/16, a reduction of £15.7m or 9.5% (and in real terms by at least £17.3m or 10.9%). One amount of the grant is disseminated at North Wales level (6 consortia LEAs) and following discussion, an allocation of £6.4m is envisaged for Gwynedd that equates to a reduction of £640,000. Officers were in the process of modelling the allocations and an allocation of £3.9m is envisaged for the

Foundation Phase and that an internal discussion would have to be held as obvious opportunities need to be taken and will impact individuals.

The Head of Education stated that further discussions would need to be held on grant expenditure and that the Welsh Government had not finalized terms. These represented further Government cuts and that it was unavoidable that some of these which are paid from the grant would have to be terminated.

It was resolved: To accept the above information, noting concern about additional cuts, especially for the primary sector.

6. CONSULTATION ON COGNITION AND LEARNING

The Head Of Education mentioned the consultation that is proceeding regarding changes to arrangements for ALN pupils to create a more efficient system and robust multi-agency arrangements. Further discussions would need to be held so as to develop the school's collaborative role with multi-agency partners.

The following comments were made during the subsequent discussion:

- (i) It was asked what was happening to the provision that has already been put in place and funded by the schools
- (ii) That there is already good provision in schools and that it was being taken from schools
- (iii) That some schools had not committed to the cognition and learning SLA with many pupils receiving support from schools and there was concern as to what would happen to the staff and support for the pupils if the funding ended at Easter.
- (iv) That the LEA had monitored the service provided for the ALN pupils and had acknowledged that it was of high quality
- (v) A request was made that any cut be made from September instead of from April so as to provide schools with time to make relevant arrangements.

In response to concerns, the Head of Education explained that if full information from the consultation is obtained, the system will provide schools with the means to use funding flexibly. In the past, individuals at the Foundation Phase had a specific supporting role but now the Government's legislative changes would provide schools with flexibility. It was also stated that 8 schools were making their own arrangements and that hopefully by the summer term, expectations of the resources can be clearly defined as there is currently too much administration involved. The Head of Education gave an assurance that everything will be taken into consideration to ameliorate any concerns and schools who have withdrawn from the SLA will receive instructions.

It was resolved: To approve and note the above requesting the Head of education to consider (v) above.

7. ALLOCATION FORMULA: SCHOOLS NETWORK FUNDING

The Development Finance Manager's written report had been presented that outlined schools network funding allocation formula. The Forum was reminded that the Information Technology and Transformation Senior Manager had given a presentation to the Forum at its meeting held on 3 November 2014. 113 of schools were consulted and 4 responses were received namely:

- 1 school confirmed that it supported the allocation method/formula.
- 2 schools felt that it was fair that some of the costs be shared based on numbers, but that it appeared that there was an element of unfairness for some schools with the cost of “circuits” hire exceeding the average possibly due to location. Concern that a precedent was set to charge more for services in the outermost rural areas of the county rather than sharing the total cost between all schools. Propose that the “circuits” element be shared proportionately between the schools rather than on true cost per site.
- The third school’s focus was not on the basis of the formula, but instead on the weaknesses of the service.

On behalf of a primary school, a Governor asked what the reaction would be if the school withdrew from the SLA due to the intention to discuss with the owners of Llanbedr Airfield who have already received fast broadband.

In reply, the Finance Manager noted that the above comment would be sent to the Information Technology and Transformation Senior Manager and that this could be further discussed at the next Budget Forum meeting held in June when the SLA will be presented.

It was resolved: (a) Approve the adoption of the allocation proposed in the report.

(b) Hold a further discussion at the next Schools Budget Forum meeting with regard to those schools who wish to withdraw from the SLA.

8. INCLUSION SERVICE REVIEW

The Head of Education requested that Headteachers nominate in the geographical representative catchment-areas of the three areas to establish a Task Group to model the inclusion provision due to the need to hold a service review and make it fit for purpose. It was mentioned that the requirements of Arfon, Dwyfor and Meirionnydd differed and that new models would have to be considered by September through re-defining the service to cater for Gwynedd’s requirements and match it to Europe funding.

In response to an enquiry from the Headteacher about devolving the service, the Head of Education noted that the aim was to keep children in the mainstream as far as possible, as it had to be borne in mind that the mainstream does not suit certain individuals and that which model would be appropriate could be considered. It would also provide an opportunity to consider the Welfare Officers role and establish inclusive support.

Decided to: Approve and note the above.

9. INTEGRATION BUDGET

The Head of Education said that because 24 schools had not responded to the request for a provision map so that the above budget could be allocated, there was inadequate information to proceed and decide. Primary Headteachers were asked to

send a message to the catchment-areas, that the information was immediately required to reconcile the entire information to obtain a full picture and safeguard the budget so as to ensure effective modelling for next year. No budget cuts would occur this year but there would be frustration if schools did not collaborate in presenting the provision map.

In response, the Head of the Secondary Sector noted schools frustration due to overspend on this budget. The schools received the money and they did not spend more than their allocated amount and they were punished - that meant another cut on top of all the other cuts.

Decided: To approve and note the above.

10. PRESENT SLA's 2015-2018

Schools Service Level Agreements for School Catering and Cleaning were presented.

The Senior Support Services Officer reported that the school was now part of the Primary and Special Schools current Cleaning Agreement as Ysgol Eifion Wyn had signed up to it following several years with a Private Company.

The following principal changes in the Agreement were mentioned:

Primary

- (i) That the agreement was with the Education Department rather than Catering and Leisure
- (ii) That the cleaners and caretakers job descriptions had been added to to assist the Headteachers workload such as placing orders for soap, toilet paper and hand drying paper, test fire alarms, test taps, showers and water fountains; work with Biomass boilers if applicable.
- (iii) Up-date on DBS and Level 1 Protection Training

Secondary

- (i) That 9 schools had signed up to the current agreement
- (ii) 5 schools have self-management Friars, Y Berwyn, Moelwyn, Y Gader and Ardudwy
- (iii) As regards changes to the agreement:
 - That the agreement is with the Education Department rather than with Catering and Leisure
 - Up-date on DBS and Level 1 Protection Training

Primary and Special Catering

- (i) Every school have signed up to the current agreement
- (ii) Principal changes:
 - Agreement with the Education Department rather than with Provision and Leisure

- New Acts on Healthy Eating in Schools bill (Wales) 2009 and the Healthy Eating in Schools Regulations (Requirements and Standards of Nutrition (Wales) 2013
- Scoring Food Hygiene Act (Wales) 2013
- RIDDOR 2013
- Healthy Eating in Schools (Wales) Bill and Healthy Eating in Schools Regulations (Nutrition Requirements and Standards (Wales) 2013 to replace "Appetite for Life"
- DBS and Level 1 Training and Protection

Secondary Sector Catering

11 Secondary Schools have signed up to the agreement

3 Secondary schools are self-managing – Ardudwy, Y Gader and Moelwyn

Principal changes as outlined above to Primary and Special.

As regards cost of the agreement, the Education Department pays the Catering Service's costs on behalf of the school and then transfers the costs to the school monthly and claim the management fee – a percentage of up to 7.5% of the entire costs. The management fee in 2015/16 is **5%**.

Forum Members gave the following comments:

- (a) As regards Educare training (cleaning and kitchen staff), that the staff require support and that some of them could not complete it in an hour due to their lack of computer skills. It was also felt that the fourth part of the training involved a management field.
- (b) Would it be possible for the management charge to be 5% for every school for the three years.

Decided: To approve and note the report's and SLA's contents.

11. NEXT MEETING

It was resolved to: (a) Hold the next meeting of the Schools Budget Forum around mid/end of June

(b) Ensure that written reports will from now on be sent promptly to Members.

CHAIRPERSON