

SCHOOL BUDGET FORUM
21st January 2019
Conference Room 1a, County Hall, Ruthin

Attendees:

MEMBERS:

Karen I Evans(KIE)
Neil Foley(NF)
Dr Paul Evans(PE)
Sue Dick (SD)
Mari Gaskell (MG)
Rona Jones (RJ)
Mark Hatch (MH)
Shannon Gage (SG) (Vice Chair)
Bethan Jones (BJ)
Teleri Llwyd Jones (TLJ)
Gethin Jones
Helen Vernon
Bethan Cartwright
Liz McClean

Head of Education & Children Services
Prestatyn High
Denbigh High
Ysgol Bodfari
Ysgol Llywelyn
St Brigid's – (Chair)
Ysgol Dinas Bran
Primary School Governor Rep
Ysgol Gwernant
Ysgol Borthyn
Ysgol Tremerichion
Bodnant
Ysgol Glan Clwyd
Teachers Union Representative

NON-MEMBERS:

Craig Joyce (CAJ)
Steve Gadd (SGadd)
Cathy Howatson (Minutes)
Laura Poole (LP)
Ian Land (IL)
Geraint Davies (GD)
Catrin Williams
Vicki Cotgreave

School Funding Manager
Chief Accountant
School Funding Officer
Finance Manager – Denbigh Cluster
Planning + Resources
Principal Education Manager
Business Manager – Glan Clwyd Cluster
Ysgol Y Castell

Welcome

Rona Jones (Chair) welcomed group.

14 members were present at the meeting to make it quorate.

1. Apologies

Huw Hilditch Roberts - Lead Member for Education
Lindsay Davenport - Secondary Governor Rep
Rona O'Neill – Ysgol Tir Morfa
Dominic Tobin – Blessed Edward Jones

2. Minutes from 08/10/18. Minutes agreed by forum. Seconded by Neil Foley and Shannon Gage.

Scheme for Financing Schools

CAJ has been updating the scheme for financing schools has now gone for translation. Once returned it will be sent to Schools and Governors for consultation with a hope for it to be introduced before the Summer.

Forward Work Programme – CAJ handed out copies. The FWP is to build the agenda for future meetings. As a group it was decided to add ALN.

3. Budgets 2019/20

The settlement information has been received. A proposal went to the members work shop in January. One small saving has been withdrawn. Proposals will need to be accepted by Cabinet then go to full council at the end of January for approval.

Some headlines from the presentation :-

The settlement is better than we expected. As a County we need to find £10 million savings – £2 million cash savings.

Council tax will increase to 6.35%

County are making savings across several departments.

Schools - £3m will be added to the pot to cover pay and teacher pension increases, however 2% efficiency savings will be applied.

Demographic increase of £650k will be added also.

WG funding the teachers' pay and pensions increase in grant form in 2018/19. We have not yet been told how to allocate this funding.

Pension 7.2% increase - Again awaiting for guidance. The risk will be held corporately as the funding will be allocated schools regardless in 2019/20.

KE- SLT have had discussions regarding the budget going forward. 2020/21 is a concern.

Education and children service have taken less of a hit as they deliver statutory services. The School Support team have already reduced expenditure by £90k. This has an impact on services and the volume of work coming in is getting greater increasing workloads.

Grants do seem to be available but with strict guidelines attached.

The minister has said that schools have asked for this. There seems to be a miscommunication somewhere as it was felt by the group that less restrictions would be an improvement!

SG - The pressure on out of county placements is large.

Pressures have been discussed at ADEW and they will speak to WG regarding funding.

Primary budgets – ready to be sent out but awaiting grant info, CAJ asked group whether to hold on till has information or send out indicatives? KE – send out with the best available information.

Secondary budgets – Working on this week

4. Grants Update

No confirmation has been received regarding grants. We are assuming there will be no cut to the Foundation Phase Grant at this stage.

Post 16 - Assuming again similar to last year, but may be reduced due to falling numbers in Post 16 in Denbighshire.

5. SIFD update

There are currently 16 schools in financial difficulty with a further 3 hovering with a deficit below £5k by the end of 2018/19.

2019/20 there will be approximately 19 schools in SIFD.

CH and CAJ will continue to work with schools.

School Surpluses – SGage asked if schools with large surpluses are being looked at following a discussion from a previous meeting.

A document has been produced but no further discussions on its merits have taken place as yet.

SG – there is a risk to services that schools provide and it isn't fair that some schools are carrying huge surpluses.

MG thinks a framework is a good idea mirroring the SIFD process.

KE would be disappointed if schools were unreasonably sitting on large surpluses and asking County to support projects financially.

KE agreed that a discussion centrally needs to take place regarding the surpluses document.

MG – The school budget is for the children in that financial year.

KE - What are surpluses kept for?

ACTION – KE to discuss the surpluses document.

6. SEN funding allocation

RJ asked for the item to be discussed.

Schools push for statements. Is it time to look at it again? It is felt the ALN team do not put statements through when there seems to be an increased number of pupils with more needs.

KE agreed to that this needs to be reviewed. KE is happy to set up a Task and finish group and the aim is to keep pupils in mainstream education.

MG – The ALN team process and formula need reviewing.

KE will contact the original group members that reviewed it last but requires all the details of issues.

RJ – We need to do right for the pupil. Currently it is not working in best interest of the pupil.

ACTION – KE to set up a working group. CH to send invitations.

7. Pooled Scheme Update

Paul Senior handed out a document and reported on the pooled schemes. They are currently on track not be overspent for 2018/19.

8. Matters Arising from Clusters

At the previous meeting MG mentioned the Rhyl cluster strongly disagree with the catering policy stating it will recharge a school for parent's dinner debts. They asked is it legally correct they can take the money from the school budget as it feels it is fundamentally wrong?

KE was going to feedback concerns with the Head of Service and the Corporate Director.

GD is currently looking at this. A revised draft policy is going to scrutiny in February and Jamie Groves / Karen Evans will need to sign it. It has not currently been agreed.

MG asked if any Heads were involved.

GD - No it is an internal project. It will go out to clusters or be presented at the Heads Conference in February.

GD – The recharge to schools isn't in the proposed draft document.

KE – there is some uncertainty as there is a new model around leisure and strategic services proposed.

The overall dinner debt has reduced to £22k. The key is to recognise the debt early.

PE – it is difficult inheriting the debt from the primary schools when the pupil starts in Secondary. How do they collect the debt?

SGage – it should not be a school debt.

RJ – Are FSM effected by Universal Credit?

SG – Yes there is guidance from Rachel Thomas which she presented to the B&F Managers.

ACTION – CH to circulate the guidance with Heads.

VC – will the proposed new policy be able to go on school websites?

GD – Communication is key, he will ask School meals department whether this is possible.

9. AOB

None.

Date of next meeting – Monday 9th April, 2019 – 10.00am, Conference Room 1a, County Hall, Ruthin.