

School Budget Forum

Date	02/05/2023
Time	9.30 to 11.30
Location	Microsoft Teams
Members	Claire Armistead (CA –Rhyl High), (Chair) Mark Hatch (MH) - Dinas Bran, Helen Vernon (HV) - Bodnant, Colette Owen (CO) – Diocese, Neil Foley (NF) – Prestatyn High, Nicola Griffiths (NG) – Pendref, Rhona O’Neill (RO) – Tir Morfa, Glen Williams – Denbigh High (AW), Dafydd Davies (DD) - Ysgol Twm or Nant, Lindsey Davenport (LD) Vice Chair – Secondary School Governor rep, Cllr Gill German (GG) – Lead Member for Education, Bethan Fell (BF) – Gwernant, Sian Alwen (SA - Ysgol Glan Clwyd)
Non-members	Craig Joyce (CAJ) - School Funding Manager, Cathy Howatson (CH) (Notes), Steve Gadd (SGADD) - Head of Finance
Apologies	Geraint Davies (head of education), Trefor Jones (Brynhyfryd), Leah Crimes (St Brigids), Rona Jones (Emmanuel)

1. Welcome

Lindsey Davenport welcomed the group.

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

2. Matters arising and actions of last meeting

No matters arising. The minutes from the previous meeting were agreed by forum.

3. Budget Update 2024/25 – Steve Gadd

SG attended the meeting. We have uncertainty regarding the budgets and we are currently predicting a large shortfall for 24/25.

We received a better settlement than expecting in 23/24 at 8.2%. DCC could be looking at pressures of up to £37m next financial year.

The pay offer for non-teachers was higher than we budgeted for when we set the budget.

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Energy costs have increased massively and we will be monitoring them closely for schools and use data around September for a true picture of current costs.

High costs in adult and children's services and these costs were not factored.

The pressures for 24/25 could include demography, pay rises, energy prices, children and social services.

Negotiations are currently out for non-teachers pay. There could be significant changes in the pay scales because of the narrowing of the gap between grades because of the potential of another lump sum pay award. A piece of work will need to be carried out concerning this.

There will be external factors with inflation, elections, revenue support grants etc. 1% savings have been requested from schools currently. No other decisions have been made for schools at this point.

Heads of service have been asked to carry out a piece of work for ideas around what savings can be made. These will be submitted by 14th May to cabinet. SG will speak with Geraint Davies regarding schools

SG has produced a paper for cabinet - CH will circulate to the forum after the meeting. CA asked if Leisure have been asked to make savings also or will there be a double impact for schools? SG confirmed they have, yes. We need to look at the SLA and the impact of energy costs. The management fees will be discussed at CET.

Teacher pay offer – we have received grant funding to cover this but at this stage we are not sure if it is enough. We will know in May and have clarity to make the judgment when May payroll runs.

CA feels the if schools are asked to make saving the non-curricular activities that support vulnerable children will the first to be impacted. She asked if a representative can attend Council. SG will speak to GD. It will be added to the secondary Head agenda by MH.

ACTION – CH to circulate cabinet papers

4. Ratification of School Budgets

CAJ – We have not received any grant information as yet and the Post 16 allocation is not final. The forum agreed to ratify the school budgets including foundation phase allocations from 2022/23.

5. Grants

Chris Speed has left his post and Daisy Pierce will replace him. Paul Senior is now in charge of grants but not able to attend today.

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PDG funding to be shared with B&F managers. There are queries around some of the allocations around the FSM total used and transitional protection. Any concerns to be sent to PS.

As soon as we hear allocations we will let schools know.

6. Pooled Schemes

CH circulated a report regarding pooled schemes overspend. It has doubled this year to circa £400k.

There are a few options to discuss – add more to the schemes, change criteria of sickness?

A working group will meet to discuss further and report back to the SBF.

Volunteers - MH, LD, HV, RO – we will approach the finance managers and also ask for 2 additional representatives.

NF asked for the overspend to be looked at for the last 5 years.

LD asked if training can be given to small school's admin for inputting data.

ACTION – CH to send electronic invite to sub group.

7. SIFD and School Balances Update

Schools 3 year balances have been collated. Schools carried £9m into 2023/24 with 3 schools in deficit.

By the end of March 2024 we are looking at 17 schools in a deficit position, with some work this will possibly reduce to around 14. CH is meeting schools to go through the SIFD process.

8. Cluster matters

CA – it is important with any savings the needs of pupils is taken into consideration. Cllr GG will support schools when attending cabinet and will speak to GD and raise the concerns. Each cluster is to put forward an overview of non-statutory provision which Claire Armistead will collate.

NF agrees that the non-statutory work for pupils will be affected.

This will be kept as an item on the forum agenda.

9. AOB

Budgets – there are pressures on the council year on year and budgets are squeezed. NN and NG feels it's hard to set budgets when you do not know what is being allocated to schools and asked to set a budget for the year.

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LD wanted to extend thanks to Mari Gaskell who is leaving county this month for all the help she has provided to the schools.

The meeting ended at 10.52am

Date of next scheduled meeting – Monday 3rd July 2023 – Teams