

School Budget Forum

Date	27/06/23
Time	9.15 to 11.15
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), Geraint Davies (head of Education), Lindsay 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), Trefor Jones (Brynhyfryd), Glen Williams(Denbigh High)
Non-members	Craig Joyce (CAJ) - School Funding Manager, Cathy Howatson (CH) (Notes), Steve Gadd (SGADD) - Head of Finance, Paul Senior (Principal Finance Assurance Officer), Ruth Thackray (Principal education manager)
Apologies	Cllr Gill German, Rona Jones (Emmanuel)

1. Welcome

CA welcomed the group.

13 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.

SG reported at the last meeting inflation is high and costs are driven by this, pay increases have an impact.

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With the pay rises our pay grade system will become untenable and we will be looking at losing a number of lower grades from the structure. This could cause issues with the pay gap moving through the grades.

There are pressures from children's services and social care.

In 2019-20 schools had to make 2% efficiency savings, then 1% for the further 2 years and none in 2023/23 but discussions are now being had for 2024/25. The indicative range could be 2% to 5% for schools. SG to speak work with GD and Finance managers to look at assumptions. SG is clear that no decision has been made for this as yet but papers will be submitted to cabinet.

CA asked when will we find out?

SG – Hopefully September. WG should confirm out indicative also. SG suggested that CAJ applies 3% savings to be included when calculating indicative budgets.

Council tax is likely to increase as we a currently one of the lowest across Wales.

Energy – SG is meeting today with the energy team to look at monitoring and costs impacts on schools and leisure services. Reserves were made for energy cost increases.

4. ALN Transition Pot

GD and RT have produced a report for the group. Last yr 13 applications were approved and the total pot was £125k.

ACTION – CH to share report.

5. Pooled Schemes

At the last SBF the pooled schemes report an overspend of £400k. It was agreed to have a working group to look at the costs of the sickness scheme.

The working group has met and agreed more data is required to make any decisions. CH and CAJ will work on this and we will meet again in September to produce findings prior to the October SBF.

6. Terms of Reference

The terms of reference were sent out with the invite to the group for discussion. CH updates members regularly if any changes.

LD asked if the Local Authority members had to be the people who currently attend - CAJ checked the terms of reference and confirmed the council members are the Lead Member for Education, the Head of Education and the Head of Finance (Section 151 Officer).

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7. Chair and Vice Chair

It was agreed by the forum that the current Chair - Claire Armistead and Vice Chair – Lindsey Davenport continue for the next 12 months.

8. Cluster matters

None

9. AOB

None

CA offered late comers to the meeting to stay to go over SG budget update.

The meeting ended at 10.50am

Date of next scheduled meeting – TBC