

Fforwm Ysgolion Powys / Powys Schools Forum

Minutes of a meeting of the Powys Schools Forum held on Thursday 8th June 2017 at County Hall, Llandrindod Wells.

- Present:**
- Primary School Headteachers:**
Linda Crockett, Rhayader C in W Primary School
Sarah Chandler, Llangedwyn, Llanfechain and Llansantffraid Primary Schools
- Secondary School Headteachers:**
Jackie Parker, Crickhowell High School
Jane Harries, Llanidloes High School
Jim Toal, Welshpool High School
John Williams, Gwernyfed High School
- Special School Headteacher:**
Julie Kay, Ysgol Penmaes
- Teaching Union Representatives:**
Dee Hanson, NUT
Neil Butler, NASUWT
- School Governor Representatives:**
Anthony Lancett, Presteigne Primary School
Graham Taylor, Rhayader C in W School (**Chair**)
Hugh Pattrick, Ysgol Maesydderwen
Councillor Kath Roberts-Jones, Brynllwarch Hall School
David Malcomson, Builth Wells High School / Irfon Valley Primary School
Susan Hill, Maesyrrhandir Primary School
- Diocesan Representative:**
No representative
- Observers:**
- Cabinet Portfolio Holders:**
Councillor Aled Davies
Portfolio Holder for Finance
- People Scrutiny Committee:**
No representative
- Officers:**
Jane Thomas, Head of Financial Services
Marie James, Schools Finance Manager
John Bevan, Professional Lead - HR Management and Development
Justin Lingard, HR Business Partner (Schools)
Jason Rawbone, Principal Catering Manager

Apologies: Michelle Humphreys, Llandinam Primary School
 Katie Moffat, Welshpool High School Governor
 Maurice Thorn, Llandrindod High School Governor
 Councillor Myfanwy Alexander, Portfolio Holder for Education
 Gareth Jones, Interim Head of Schools

		ACTION
1.	Welcome and Apologies	
	The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies were received and noted as above.	
2.	2017-18 School Budgets	
	<p>Marie James, Schools Finance Manager, provided the following update in respect of school budgets:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As at 31st March 2017, 34 schools had cumulative deficit budgets totalling £2.48m, compared to 18 schools with cumulative deficits of £0.94m at 31st March 2016. • The overall balance held by schools had seen a significant decrease from £2.9m at 1st April 2016 to £0.5m at 31st March 2017. • School balances had increased on forecast by £0.2m and 17 schools had been identified as having balances greater than that allowed for as per the Scheme for Financing Schools and were liable to clawback. • 17 of the 34 schools proposing to set a cumulative deficit balance in 2017-18 did not meet the criteria to be licensed and were considered to be unlicensed, compared to 27 schools that had set a cumulative deficit balance in 2016-17, 8 of which were unlicensed. <p>Jane Thomas, Head of Financial Services, referred to year on year reductions in funding received from Welsh Government to support the Council’s services. However, for a number of years Welsh Government had provided 1% protection for school budgets which had been passported to schools although it was acknowledged that schools had more recently been required to meet growth pressures, particularly around national pay awards and payment of the National Living Wage. Pupil numbers also continued to reduce and this was having a significant impact on school budgets.</p> <p>Jane also referred to the extra £1m which had been provided for delegated school budgets in 2016-17 but pointed out that it would</p>	

	<p>be for the new Cabinet to decide whether this funding would be provided in the current and future years.</p> <p>David Malcolmson felt it was important to have an understanding of funding in Powys schools compared to other LAs, the funding Powys received and how much of this funding was allocated to schools. Without benchmark data it was impossible to know whether the difficulty schools found themselves in was a Powys issue or a Wales issue.</p> <p>Marie James confirmed that LAs were looking to produce benchmarking data, both at LA level and on an all-Wales basis. The Chair queried whether any information was currently available which would enable such comparisons to be made.</p> <p>In response, Jane Thomas explained:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Powys had seen the greatest reduction in funding across Wales and this added to the pressures on the Council; • Although funding was allocated by formula it was for individual Local Authorities to decide how funding was allocated to individual Services; • There were significant variances in the figures included in individual LA's Section 52 budget statements. These were being analysed and information would be taken to Cabinet in September. <p>It was noted that home to school transport costs were significantly higher for Powys than the majority of LAs but the WG settlement did not take account of rurality issues such as higher than average transport costs.</p> <p>Concern was expressed that a significant number of schools had not submitted their budgets by the deadline of 1st May. In response, it was pointed out that it was difficult to produce realistic budgets when key information had not been received. Jane Thomas encouraged schools to make assumptions based on the best information available and to submit budgets on the basis that they may need to be reviewed when financial information was received.</p>	
3.	Charges for Centrally Provided Services	
	<p>Jane Thomas reported that there were no new proposals to increase charges for centrally provided services which would impact on school budgets.</p>	
4.	Wales Audit Office report on school funding	

	<p>Jane Thomas explained that the WAO report on school funding would be considered by the Council's Audit Committee on 5th July and that the action plan would be shared with Forum at the next meeting. Jane outlined the main recommendations, which related to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring that the Council had the capacity to analyse and evaluate secondary schools' curricular planning; • The need for the Council to work with schools to improve arrangements for the procurement of goods and services; • Developing a consistent template for recording key financial information; • Reviewing the Financial Services SLA to improve clarity and transparency; • Ensuring that data reported to Elected Members was consistent; • The need to increase the pace and scale of change in implementing the Council's Schools Organisation Policy and that 16-19 year olds should be able to access a suitable curriculum in the language of choice. <p>It was pointed out that the recommendations reflected the views expressed by both schools and the Schools Forum for some time.</p>	
5.	Schools Service Major Improvements Capital Programme 2017-20	
	<p>Details of the Schools Service Major Improvements Capital Programme 2017-20 were received and noted. It was explained that the programme was responsible for carrying out a range of improvement, refurbishment and upgrading works to support the School Modernisation Programme and assist the Authority in making its schools fit for purpose as detailed in the Schools Service Asset Management Plan and required by Welsh Government.</p>	
6.	Innovation in Small and Rural Schools Grant 2017-18	
	<p>It was reported that schools' proposals had been evaluated and submitted to WG; the outcome was awaited.</p> <p>School representatives expressed concern at the short timescale for both the submission of proposals and for spending the funding. Jane Thomas confirmed that officers regularly raised with WG the problems caused by late receipt of funding.</p>	

7.	Schools Cashless System Project	
	<p>Jason Rawbone, Principal Catering Manager, provided an update on the Schools Cashless System from which it was noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To date the system had been implemented in 12 high schools and 17 primary schools; • The system would be implemented in the remaining primary/special schools on a catchment basis, commencing with Presteigne/Knighton, Llanidloes and Welshpool catchments by the end of Summer Term 2017; • Full roll out would be completed by 31st March 2018; • The main savings against the project related to the removal of School Cashier posts in primary schools. <p>Headteacher representatives confirmed that the system was working well, with free school meals uptake seeing a small increase in the secondary sector. It was noted that one secondary school had noticed an increase in admin support time required.</p> <p>Overall the picture was positive and Jason Rawbone and everyone involved in the initiative were congratulated on its success.</p>	
8.	Review of the School Funding Formula	
	<p>Marie James, Schools Finance Manager, circulated a copy of the Terms of Reference for the Formula Review Group from which it was noted that the aim of the review was to fundamentally re-work the schools' fair funding formula to create a formula that funds schools in a transparent, objective and measurable way.</p> <p>It was acknowledged that the timescale for review was very short but it was in everyone's best interests to move forward quickly. Marie pointed out that there was no additional funding and the aim of the review was for all schools have a fair share of the available funding. Jane Thomas confirmed that although the allocation of funding was a strategic decision account would be taken of views expressed by the Review Group.</p> <p>Marie confirmed that she would advise nominated representatives of planned meeting dates shortly.</p>	MJ
9.	Delivery of Early Years Provision	
	<p>Helen Stock, Early Years Project Manager, provided an update on delivery of Early Years provision from September 2017, following the decision to change the age of admission for pupils attending schools. The following was noted:</p>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meetings had taken place with providers to ensure that provision was in place across the County; • Information sessions had been held with successful tenderers; • A number of new settings would be in place from September 2017 and officers were working with CSSIW to ensure settings were appropriately registered; • Building works required to enable settings to open in schools in September were being prioritised but a number of settings would not be able to move into school premises until January or April 2018; • The structure of the Authority's Foundation Phase Team was being reviewed to ensure that they were able to meet increased demand; • All children accessing pre-school provision would be included on Teacher Centre (the Authority's management information system); • Training for new settings had commenced and was ongoing for existing settings. <p>Concern was expressed regarding confusion in some schools regarding what was happening. In response, Helen confirmed that some of the delays had been due to the tendering process which was outside the control of the Schools Service. The capacity of the Schools Service to deliver similar initiatives to a tight timeframe in future was queried.</p>	
10.	Schools HR Update	
	<p>John Bevan, Professional Lead - HR Management and Development, provided the following update:</p> <p>Staff Changes Jason Lingard had been appointed HR Business Partner (Schools) Lorna Simpson had been appointed HR Operations Manager wef 19th June 2017</p> <p>Service Level Agreement The SLA would be reviewed over the next 6-8 months with a view to the revised SLA being in place wef 1st April 2018</p> <p>Voluntary Severance Scheme 66 applications had been received 55 applications had been approved – 19 voluntary early retirement / 11 reductions in hours / 25 voluntary redundancies A small number of applications had not yet been processed</p>	

	<p>John agreed to provide a breakdown of the split between primary and secondary schools</p> <p>Reference was made to the timeline provided and the difficulties caused for schools when this was not adhered to. John acknowledged that delays had occurred, mainly as a result of a lack of staff able to deal with quite complex issues. Dee Hanson referred to the extreme pressure union representatives were under and requested that the facilities time for union representatives be reviewed.</p> <p>In conclusion, Forum Members asked for realistic deadlines to be set and adhered to in future.</p> <p>Complaints John Bevan reported that although the Schools HR Team was under additional pressure because of an increased workload caused by the change agenda very few complaints had been received; schools understood that officers were providing as good a service as possible within the resources available.</p>	
11.	<p>Minutes of the meeting of the Schools Forum held on 6th April 2017 and any matters arising</p>	
	<p>The minutes of the meeting held on 6th April 2017 were confirmed as a correct record.</p> <p>Matters arising:</p> <p>(a) ALN Provision Officers were requested to provide an update for schools on provision from September 2017.</p> <p>Members were reminded that the criteria for admission to special schools was changing which would result in more children being admitted to mainstream schools. The new Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Bill would also increase demand on mainstream schools.</p> <p>Headteacher representatives referred to a recent meeting of Headteachers and Governing Bodies at which increasing issues with behaviour schools were having to deal with was raised. The need for primary schools to have a clear strategy and funding to support SEN was mentioned.</p> <p>(b) Staff Changes Simon Anderson had been appointed ALN Manager for Vulnerable Learners with a Specialism in ALN/SEN A replacement for Dawn Lush, ALN Co-ordinator, had been appointed wef 1st August 2017</p>	

	The Senior Manager for ALN and Inclusion post was due to be advertised shortly.	
12.	Any Other Business	
	<p>(a) Communication It was agreed that ways of improving communication between the Schools Service and schools should be explored.</p> <p>(b) Capacity The Chair referred to the continuing financial pressure schools were under and the capacity of the Schools Service to respond to new initiatives. As the Cabinet Member for Education and Ian Budd, Director of Education, were responsible for driving change it was agreed that they be invited to the next meeting.</p> <p>(c) Powys Governors Conference Members were reminded that the Annual Powys Governors Conference was being held on 15th June. Kirsty Williams, Minister for Education, was the key note speaker.</p>	
13.	Date of Next Meeting	
	It was noted that the next meeting would be held at 10.00 a.m. on Monday 12 th October 2017.	

Graham Taylor
Chair