



Powys Schools Forum

Minutes of a meeting of the Powys Schools Forum held on Tuesday 10th January 2017 at Powys County Hall, Llandrindod Wells.

Present:

Primary School Headteachers:

Linda Crockett, Rhayader C in W School

Secondary School Headteachers:

John Williams, Gwernyfed High School

Special School Headteacher:

Julie Kay, Ysgol Penmaes

Teaching Union Representatives:

Deidre Hanson, JCC (Teachers' Panel)

School Governor Representatives:

Anthony Lancett, Presteigne Primary School

Graham Taylor, Rhayader C in W School (**Chair**)

Councillor Kath Roberts-Jones, Brynlllywarch Hall School

Maurice Thorn, Llandrindod High School

David Malcomson, Builth Wells High School / Irfon Valley Primary School Governor

Diocesan Representative:

No representative

Observers:

Cabinet Portfolio Holders:

No representative

People Scrutiny Committee:

No representative

Officers:

Jane Thomas, Interim Head of Financial Services

Marie James, Schools Finance Manager

Gareth Jones, Senior Manager for Central Support Services (Schools)

Mark McIntyre, Professional Lead for HR Management and Development

Apologies:

Barbara Miller, Mount Street Junior School

Michelle Humphreys, Llandinam Primary School

Sarah Chandler, Llangedwyn / Llansantffraid / Llanfechain Primary Schools

Jim Toal, Welshpool High School

Jackie Parker, Crickhowell High School

Katie Moffat, Welshpool High School Governor
 Ralph Miller, Gwernyfed High School Governor
 Hugh Patrick, Ysgol Maesydderwen Governor
 Martin Nosworthy, Diocesan Representative
 Neil Butler, JCC (Teachers' Panel)
 Councillor Arwel Jones, Portfolio Holder for Education
 Councillor Wynne Jones, Portfolio Holder for Finance
 Councillor David Jones, Chair of People Scrutiny Committee
 Ian Roberts, Head of Schools Service
 Nancy Wozencraft, Finance Business Partner (Schools)

		ACTION
1.	Welcome and Apologies	
	<p>In welcoming everyone to the meeting the Chair noted the low attendance at both today's meeting and the October meeting, as a result of which the meetings were only just quorate. It was agreed that 2017 meeting dates be re-circulated to Forum Members and that meetings should only be re-scheduled in exceptional circumstances. Regarding headteacher representatives, it was agreed that they should arrange for a headteacher colleague to attend meetings if they were unable to do so.</p> <p>Apologies were received and noted as above.</p>	
2.	Membership	
	<p>It was reported that Martin Nosworthy had stepped down as a member of the Forum and that the Diocesan Authorities were in the process of nominating a replacement.</p>	
3.	2017-18 Budget Settlement	
	<p>Jane Thomas, Interim Head of Financial Services, provided an update on the 2017-18 budget settlement from which it was noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the Council had received a small increase of £170k above the provisional Settlement figure; • although the Settlement was better than expected it was still a reduction for Powys; • Powys plus one other LA had received the highest reduction in funding across Wales; • WG had adjusted its formula to recognise issues facing rural authorities, following meetings with senior officers and members from Powys and other authorities; 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WG had warned of the significant challenges and further funding reductions LAs would be facing over the next 11 years; • Cabinet recognised the challenges facing schools, particularly in meeting increases in staff costs; • The Education Improvement Grant was being rebranded and renamed the Education Standards Grant but with a reduction in funding of around 4%; • Although Cabinet had agreed in 2016-17 that schools delegated and social services would not be expected to make any reductions in funding in 2017-18, they were now having to reconsider this decision; • It was likely that the new Apprenticeship Levy of 0.5% on NI-able pay being introduced in April 2017 would be met from central funding; • Treatment of the following school budget pressures were being considered by Cabinet: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Severance costs as a result of the change in age of admission and other budget pressures • Changes in school roll • Out of county placements • In future, it was expected that reductions in funding would be targeted at specific areas rather than a flat percentage rate applied across all Service areas; • The following timetable for approval of the Council's budget for 2017-18 had been agreed: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 24th January Cabinet workshop • 27th January Council seminar • 7th February Cabinet to approve final budget • 23rd February Full Council to meet to approve final budget • 7th March Council Tax set • The proposed impact on school budgets would be known after 7th February <p>Members raised the following issues:</p> <p>(a) Education Workforce Council registration fee – funding had been removed from the Settlement and it was unclear who would meet this cost in future. As a matter of principle it was agreed that the payment of professional fees for teachers should be treated on the same basis as for other Council employees.</p> <p>(b) WG Settlement and Council spend on education – officers were asked to prepare information showing the comparison between the WG Settlement and SSA and what the Council spends on education, for discussion at the next meeting.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">JT / MJ</p>
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4.	2016-17 School Budgets	
	<p>Marie James, Schools Finance Manager, provided the following update in respect of school budgets:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The overall cumulative deficit balance at the end of the 2018-19 financial year is projected to be over £3.5m; • Between July and December 2016, the number of schools with unlicensed deficits had reduced from 8 to 5 – Llanrhaeadr YM Primary School, Llanidloes High School, Brecon High School, Ysgol Maesydderwen and Ysgol Cedewain; • There are currently 9 additional schools that are projected to be in an unlicensed budget position for the 2017-18 financial year and the Schools Finance Team is working with these schools to bring them back to a balanced budget position; • Although 6 schools had surpluses in excess of the limits set within the Scheme for Financing Schools, in November Cabinet had agreed that, based on revised budget plans, no clawback would be applied; • Cabinet had expressed concern that some school planned deficits had increased in year. 	
5.	Outcome of consultation on proposed changes to the Fair Funding Formula and Scheme for Financing Schools	
	<p>Consideration was given to a report on the outcome of consultation on proposed changes to the Authority’s Fair Funding Formula and Scheme for Financing Schools (copy filed with the signed Minutes).</p> <p>Regarding the proposal to incorporate the current Efficiency Allowance into the Teaching Cost Allowance, it was the view of members that the change had not been supported during consultation because of a misunderstanding amongst respondents of what was proposed and, in fact, this change would be a much clearer way of illustrating the impact of efficiencies on schools.</p> <p>Regarding the possibility of additional funding being made available to schools, Jane Thomas explained that Cabinet may decide how this funding should be allocated.</p> <p>Officers were asked to obtain details of pupil:teacher ratios in other LAs.</p> <p>Following discussion, the following recommendations were made:</p>	MJ

	<p>(1) That the following proposals be approved:</p> <p>Implementation Date 1st April 2017</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Lump Sum Allowance (Primary) b. Admin Allowance (Primary and Special) c. Welsh-medium Resources (Primary) e. Teaching Cost Allowance / Efficiencies Allowance f. Nursery Age Pupil Funding (Primary) h. Repairs and Maintenance Funding (Aided and Foundation Schools) <p>Implementation Date 1st April 2018</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> b. Welsh KS2 Uplift (Primary) <p>(2) That the proposal regarding Special Schools Funding is approved in principle but that officers review costings when the outcome of the audit is known, with the option of either deferring implementation or introducing transitional arrangements if necessary.</p> <p>(3) That the implementation date of the Split Site Allowance should be deferred to 1st April 2018 or the opening date of any new split site school, to enable further work to be undertaken on the proposal.</p> <p>(4) That the Pupil Counting Date (All Schools) move from the January PLASC date to the October half-term and that schools are provided with the opportunity to verify the numbers taken from Teacher Centre and SIMS in November/December prior to the formula being run.</p> <p>(5) That the proposals regarding the LMS (SEN) Allowance and the Formula element of the ALN Funding (Primary and Secondary) be deferred and further work is undertaken by the Formula Review Working Group during the Summer Term 2017 following receipt of information regarding how ALN is funded in other Authorities. Any revised proposals to include the impact on individual schools.</p> <p>(6) That the proposed revisions to the Scheme for Financing Schools, including the additional changes around Sections 4.9 and 4.3, be approved.</p> <p>The Chair was heartened that the LA had listened to concerns raised by respondents and had amended the Review Group's proposals accordingly.</p> <p>The Forum confirmed that they were content with the proposals, as amended.</p>	
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6.	Energy conservation	
	<p>Gareth Richards, Energy Management Officer, attended the meeting for discussion of this item.</p> <p>Regarding Carbon Reduction Tax (CRT), Gareth confirmed that this cost would be recharged to schools for the next two financial year i.e. 2017-18 and 2018-19. From 2019-20 onwards the CRT would be discontinued and the cost included in the Climate Change Levy, which was a charge for major businesses only. The funding for the old levy would remain in delegated budgets.</p> <p>Regarding energy efficiency works, Gareth explained that the LA had appointed a framework contractor (RE:FIT Cymru) to identify energy efficiency projects in Council-owned buildings, including schools. The initiative accessed EU funding and was supported by Welsh Government. The Council was working with RE:FIT Cymru on a tender specification which should be in place by the Summer, following which a contractor would be appointed. The LA intended to appoint a Project Manager and would be promoting local contractors to undertake works. During the first phase the focus would be on larger schools where there was more scope for savings to be made. 21 schools had initially been identified, based on energy efficiency rating, size and longevity. The cost of any works would be funded via a government interest free loan.</p> <p>Gareth confirmed that it was possible for schools to request that they be considered for participation in the scheme.</p> <p>Gareth was thanked for his attendance and for updating members on these two issues.</p>	
7.	Draft Welsh in Education Strategic Plan 2017-2020	
	<p>Consideration was given to the draft Welsh in Education Strategic Plan 2017-2020, from which it was noted that the Council's main Strategic Objectives during the period of the Plan was:</p> <p>Objective 1 To increase the opportunities for pupils to access Welsh-medium early years provision</p> <p>Objective 2 To establish, and identify opportunities to establish, new designated Welsh-medium provision in the primary sector</p> <p>Objective 3 To provide equitable and sustainable linguistic progression for Welsh-medium pupils from Key Stage 2 into Key Stages 3, 4 and 5</p>	

	<p>Objective 4 To provide improved opportunities for latecomers to transfer to the Welsh-medium sector in all stages of education</p> <p>It was agreed that the Plan be received and noted.</p>	
8.	Council Budget Seminar	
	<p>Consideration was given to the PowerPoint presentation from the Council Budget Seminar held on 7th December 2016 to inform elected members of the key challenges in providing an equitable, efficient and effective sustainable education system in Powys.</p> <p>Members stressed the need for the Council to look at budgets holistically not parochially and questioned how much the failure to do this in the past and take unpopular decisions had contributed to the budget position schools now found themselves in.</p> <p>It was suggested that the presentation be shared with schools and the wider public. Gareth Jones agreed to raise this possibility with Jeremy Patterson, Chief Executive & Director of Education and Ian Roberts, Head of Schools Service.</p>	GJ
9.	Funding for Schools	
	<p>The Chair referred to the exchange of e-mails with Councillor Wynne Jones, Portfolio Holder for Finance, following the discussion at the last meeting regarding funding for schools i.e. the need for a fundamental review of funding to be undertaken and the proposal that schools should not be required to make further savings or meet any increases in staff costs during 2017-18.</p> <p>It was reported that both Primary and Secondary Headteacher representatives had also met with the Chief Executive and Cabinet Members and the clear message was that funding would continue to reduce and class sizes would increase as a result. There had also been discussion around a different model for the delivery of education but without commitment from everyone it was difficult to move forward.</p> <p>The Chair had spoken briefly to both officers and Cabinet Members and it was acknowledged by all that some fundamental changes to the way education was delivered were required.</p> <p>In the short term it was agreed that officers share benchmarking information with Forum Members to illustrate how the LA's funding for education compared to funding provided in other LAs.</p>	JT / MJ

10.	Appointment of Director of Education	
	<p>Councillor Kath Roberts-Jones did not participate in the discussion as she informed members that she would Chair the Appointments Panel.</p> <p>Mark McIntyre, Professional Lead for HR Management and Development, explained that the closing date for applications had been the 9th January with interviews planned for the 8th and 9th February.</p>	
11.	Voluntary Severance Scheme for Schools	
	<p>Mark McIntyre, Professional Lead for HR Management and Development, reported that 41 applications had been received during Phase 1(a). Applications from 10 teaching staff and 24 support staff had been agreed; 1 support staff application had been declined by the Governing Body and 6 applications had been deferred for further information. Of the applications that had been agreed:</p> <p>9 were for voluntary early retirement and redundancy 16 were for voluntary redundancy 10 were for a voluntary reduction in hours</p> <p>It was explained that applications during Phase 1(b) needed to be with HR by 27th January. Schools would also be advised that if they were not able to achieve savings via the Voluntary Severance Scheme they would need to initiate the compulsory redundancy process. If voluntary severance was subsequently approved the school could stop the compulsory process.</p> <p>Although 120 applications had been anticipated across all schools the actual number was projected to be significantly higher than this.</p>	
12.	Schools Cashless Project	
	<p>Nicola Williams, Programme Delivery Manager, provided the following update in respect of the Schools Cashless Project:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The system was now live in 13 schools (9 secondary (10 sites) and 4 primary) • The remaining 3 secondary schools in the North of the County were due to go live by 9th March • The system would be rolled out to primary schools on a catchment basis in the same order as it had been rolled out to secondary schools • Implementation will be completed by 31st March 2018 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There had been excellent support and co-operation from schools • There had been excellent take up from parents, with 90%+ accounts activated • There had been a lot of positive feedback from pupils and parents • Risks from handling and storing cash had reduced • There had been an 8% increase in take up of free school meals between January and December 2016 <p>In response to a question, Nicola reported that the maximum debt had been set at 2 days per pupil.</p> <p>Nicola was thanked for her update and asked to keep the Forum informed about further progress and, in particular, the realisation of the key benefits of the Project.</p>	NW
13.	ICT Repairs & Maintenance Service Level Agreement	
	Gareth Jones, Senior Manager: Central Support Services (Schools), explained that the ICT Repairs and Maintenance SLA was under review. It was noted that funding associated with the SLA would continue to be held centrally for 2017-18 but was likely to be considered for delegation to schools for 2018-19. Gareth confirmed that the draft paperwork would be brought to the Schools Forum for comment when available.	
14.	Rubbish and Recycling Collection	
	Gareth Jones, Senior Manager: Central Support Services (Schools), referred to the proposal for a joint school and canteen contract for rubbish and recycling collection. The proposal was supported in principle, particularly if it would result in savings for schools, and officers were asked to bring further information to the next meeting. In the meantime it was agreed that Mary Salmon, Procurement Specialist, contact schools to seek expressions of interest in participating in the joint contract.	GJ
15.	Tendering Process for Early Years Provision	
	Gareth Jones, Senior Manager: Central Support Services (Schools), explained that the tender for early years provision had gone live on 20 th December and the closing date for receipt of tenders was 31 st January. It was anticipated that contracts would be awarded by the end of February.	

	It was noted that CYPP's commissioned Childcare Business Support Services (Cymryd Rhan) had carried out 3 tender support sessions and would also be running CSSIW registration/re-registration sessions for successful contractors.	
16.	Minutes of the meeting of the Schools Forum held on 18th October 2016 and any matters arising	
	The minutes of the meeting held on 18 th October 2016 were confirmed as a correct record.	
17.	Any Other Business	
	No items were raised under Any Other Business.	
18.	Dates of Future Meetings	
	The following meeting dates during 2017 were agreed: 9.30 to 12 noon on Thursday 6 th April 2017 1.30 to 4.00 p.m. on Thursday 8 th June 2017 10 to 12.30 p.m. on Monday 12 th October 2017	

**Graham Taylor
Chair**