



Schools Service – Powys Schools Forum

Minutes of a meeting of the Powys Schools Forum held on Monday 15th June 2015 at the Gwalia, Llandrindod Wells.

Present:

Cabinet Portfolio Holders:

Councillor Arwel Jones, Portfolio Holder for Education
Councillor Wynne Jones, Portfolio Holder for Finance

People Scrutiny Committee:

No representative

Primary School Headteachers:

Michelle Humphreys, Llandinam CP School
Emyr Jones, Ysgol y Bannau
Sue Meeke, Crossgates CP School

Secondary School Headteachers:

Jackie Parker, Crickhowell High School
Jim Toal, Welshpool High School
John Williams, Gwernyfed High School (**Vice-Chair**)

Special School Headteacher:

Julie Kay, Ysgol Penmaes

Teaching Union Representatives:

Christopher Davies, JCC (Teachers' Panel)
Mary Compton, JCC (Teachers' Panel)

School Governor Representatives:

Anthony Lancett, Presteigne CP School
David Eyres, Llanfyllin High School (**Chair**)
David Malcomson, Builth Wells High School & Irfon Valley CP School
Graham Taylor, Rhayader C in W School
Hugh Patrick, Ysgol Maesydderwen
Councillor Kath Roberts-Jones, Brynllwarch Hall School
Maurice Thorn, Llandrindod High School
Ralph Miller, Gwernyfed High School

Diocesan Representatives:

Martin Nosworthy, Diocese of Swansea and Brecon

Officers:

Ian Roberts, Head of Schools Service (Agenda items 7-11)
Jane Thomas, Accountancy Manager
Glyn Morgan, Interim Schools Finance Manager
Nicola Evans, Interim Schools Finance Manager

Gareth Jones, Senior Manager - Central Support Services (Schools)
 Lorna Simpson, Schools HR Manager (Agenda items 8-11)
 Rachel Roberts, Schools HR Business Partner (Agenda items 8-11)

Apologies: Councillor David Jones, Chair of People Scrutiny Committee
 Kath Thomas, Primary Headteacher Representative
 Neil Evans, School Governor Representative
 Neil Butler, Teaching Union Representative

		ACTION
1.	Welcome and Apologies	
	The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies were received as noted above.	
2.	Review of Service Level Agreements	
	<p>Further consideration was given to Service Level Agreements (SLAs) to be offered to schools. Officers confirmed that related funding which was currently held centrally would be transferred to schools' delegated budgets with funding in 2015-16 allocated on a £ for £ basis i.e. there would be no additional cost to schools. It was noted that new charge rates would apply for 2016-17.</p> <p>Consideration was given to the proposal to offer SLAs for the setting up and clearing away of tables and chairs and the provision of drinking water at lunchtime. It was noted that the Authority's Catering Service currently carried out these functions and the costs met from centrally retained funding. Following discussion, it was agreed that there should be no change to the current arrangements.</p> <p>Concern was expressed at the relatively short timescale for governing bodies to make decisions regarding the purchase of SLAs. This was exacerbated by the fact that the impact of anticipated budget reductions in 2016-17 and 2017-18 were currently unknown. In response, officers confirmed that for the primary and special sectors, it was proposed to offer the SLAs as a core package in 2015-16 as was the case at present i.e. there would be no change to the current arrangements. It was acknowledged that the position was different in the secondary sector as there was no alignment between funding and charges. It was explained that although there would be no change to the cost of services in 2015-16, schools would be advised of the impact on a per pupil basis to ensure that full account was taken of SLA charges when school budgets for future years were being prepared. In response to a question, officers confirmed that a breakdown of school meals charges at secondary level was being prepared to provide clarity regarding client responsibilities for those schools who chose to take responsibility for delivering a catering service.</p> <p>The Chair expressed thanks, on behalf of the Schools Forum, for the work undertaken by Service Managers in preparing the revised SLAs.</p>	

3.	Update on School Budgets 2015-16	
	<p>Glyn Morgan, Interim Schools Finance Manager, provided the following update in respect of the 2014-15 school outturn position and 2015-16 budget plans:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 23 schools had a cumulative deficit balance totalling £0.9m at the end of 2014-15 • Overall, school reserves had increased to £3.6m against a forecast position of £2.6m i.e. an increase on forecast of £1m • School reserves were projected to reduce to £2m by 31st March 2016 • 27 schools whose balance was greater than allowed as per the Scheme for Financing Schools would be considered for claw back • 84 schools had planned surplus budgets – an increase of 10 schools from 2014-15 • 15 schools were proposing to set a deficit balance in 2015-16 and 6 of these schools did not meet the criteria to be licensed • It was proposed that the Authority’s loan scheme would be withdrawn from 2015-16 onwards, with no further loans being approved <p>Councillor Wynne Jones, Portfolio Holder for Finance, reported that initial indications were that the County Council would be subject to a further reduction in funding in 2016-17 which would equate to a 5% cut across all services, including schools.</p>	
4.	Clawback of projected surplus balances	
	<p>Glyn Morgan, Interim Schools Finance Manager, referred to the requirements in the Authority’s Scheme for Financing Schools regarding the clawback of projected surplus balances and circulated a draft letter to be sent to schools where balances were above the limit. It was noted that schools subject to clawback would be asked to provide a spending plan for consideration by a panel of officers from the Schools Service and School Finance Team. It was suggested that Headteachers should be represented on the panel.</p> <p>Concern was expressed that rules around clawback arrangements were unclear and it was agreed that clear guidance should be produced for schools. Glyn Morgan confirmed that clawback would be discussed during school financial surgery sessions in future.</p> <p>A query was raised regarding the treatment of additional funding which was provided when a Headteacher assumed responsibility for more than one school and whether or not this should be included in any clawback arrangement. It was agreed that the treatment of additional funding provided in such circumstances should be included in the proposed guidance.</p>	GM/NE

5.	Review of the Powys Scheme for Financing Schools	
	<p>Glyn Morgan, Interim Schools Finance Manager, explained that a review of the Powys Scheme for Financing Schools had been undertaken and revisions were proposed in respect of surplus balances, clawback, licensed deficits and the loan scheme. He confirmed that the revised Scheme would be circulated to members for comment in due course.</p> <p>Concern was expressed regarding the proposal that the Authority would no longer provide loans to schools to support major capital projects. Councillor Wynne Jones reported that a decision to withdraw the loan scheme had not yet been made.</p>	GM
6.	Review of the Fair Funding Formula 2015-16	
	<p>Glyn Morgan, Interim Schools Finance Manager, explained that the proposal to establish a Task and Finish Group to review the funding formula had not progressed and Nicola Evans would now take responsibility for the review in discussion with Schools Service officers.</p> <p>Initial consideration was given to the areas to be reviewed and the following were identified:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Premises related costs • Special Schools funding formula • LMS SEN allowance <p>Gareth Jones, Senior Manager: Central Support Services, confirmed that the review would be completed by the end of October to allow consultation on proposed revisions to take place with schools and others by the end of the Autumn Term. Schools would be notified of initial funding allocations for 2016-17 by the end of the Autumn Term and indicative budgets issued to schools by 22nd February 2016.</p>	
7.	Education Improvement Grant 2015-16	
	<p>Ian Roberts, Head of Schools Service, provided an update in respect of the allocation and use of the Education Improvement Grant (EIG) 2015-16.</p> <p>It was explained that the EIG had replaced a suite of grants including Foundation Phase, 14-19, Multi Ethnic Achievement Grant (MEAG), SEG, Induction, Gypsy Traveller and Family Learning. Funding was allocated on a regional basis to support activities at both regional and local level. The total grant allocation to the ERW regional consortium for 2015-16 was £39,978,422. 2% of the overall funding (£881,772) had been retained by ERW for targeted activity and centrally run ERW programmes. £5,072,994 had been delegated to Powys and there was a requirement to delegate 80% of the grant to schools either universally or through a targeted approach. In 2015-16 delegation would be to individual schools rather than to families or groups of schools. It was expected that schools would continue to engage in collaborative activities and increasingly lead the improvement agenda through effective school</p>	

	<p>to school support, working towards a self-improving system. There would be no requirement for individual school level spending plans but reference to the way in which the EIG would be used to improve learner outcomes must be included in School Development Plans. Challenge Advisers would support and challenge schools to ensure SDPs appropriately reflected their improvement journey and that expected outcomes were in line with the terms and conditions of the grant. Schools would be held to account for outcomes and Estyn would also evaluate the use of grant as part of routine school inspections.</p>	
8.	Pupil Deprivation Grant 2015-16	
	<p>Ian Roberts, Head of Schools Service, provided an update in respect of the Pupil Deprivation Grant (PDG) 2015-16.</p> <p>It was explained that the purpose of the PDG was to make a lasting impact on outcomes for disadvantaged learners. Funding would be allocated on the following basis:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An allocation of £1,050 for each child aged 5-15 who was eligible for free school meals according to the PLASC January 2014 return; • An allocation of £300 for each eligible child aged 3 to 4, calculated on the number of 3 and 4 year olds multiplied by the proportion of 5 year olds who were eligible for free school meals in the school <p>The grant would be delegated to schools at a rate of 100% and a requirement of the grant was that schools must publish their PDG allocation on their website together with an outline of their plans for use of the funding. Schools did not need to prepare a separate PDG spending plan but should outline how they would use the funding in their School Development Plan.</p> <p>Regarding identifying pupils eligible for free school meals, it was explained that the LA had introduced a range of initiatives to increase the number of parents/carers applying for free school meals, with the Schools Service working closely with the Authority's Income and Awards Team to identify families who may be eligible for free school meals. It was anticipated that implementation of the school cashless system would result in an increase in the number of pupils accessing free school meals although feedback at a recent Youth Forum session indicated that take up was influenced as much by the quality of the food available as the anonymity of pupils in receipt of free school meals.</p>	
9.	Update on School HR Issues	
	<p>Lorna Simpson, Schools HR Manager, introduced Rachel Roberts who was providing maternity cover for Rachel Hudson, HR Business Partner.</p> <p>Lorna provided the following update in respect of redundancies for the period January to May 2015:</p>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 14 teaching staff redundancies had been concluded (10 voluntary / 2 compulsory / 1 resignation / 1 combined voluntary/compulsory) • 5 non-teaching staff redundancies had been concluded • 6 joint teaching/non-teaching staff redundancies had been concluded • 7 redundancies were ongoing • Support was being provided for a further 21 potential redundancies • A total of 42 schools were involved in the redundancy process. <p>In response to a question, Lorna confirmed that schools received regular reminders regarding the timescale for redundancies.</p> <p>Training – the Schools HR Team was undertaking an online survey regarding training offered and the different ways training could be provided e.g. e-learning.</p> <p>Newsletters - termly HR newsletters which contained key updates on a range of staffing-related matters were being produced for schools.</p> <p>Staff Intranet - the Schools HR Team had developed a new section on the intranet specifically for schools</p>	
8.	<p>Minutes of the meeting of the Schools Forum held on 9th March 2015 and any matters arising</p>	
	<p>The minutes of the meeting held on 9th March 2015 were confirmed as a correct record.</p> <p>Matters arising:</p> <p>Cashless System – An update was provided on progress with procurement of the cashless system. It was the view of members that all schools should be included, irrespective of size.</p> <p>Sports Facilities – It was noted that leisure facilities would be managed by Freedom Leisure from 1st July 2015.</p>	
9.	<p>Any Other Business</p>	
	<p>(a) Schools Transformation Programme – Ian Roberts provided a brief update on the schools transformation programme and explained that regular updates were available via the public website. Regarding Whitton Primary School, it was reported that the Education Minister had decided that the school should close but the final closure date had yet to be identified.</p> <p>(b) Transfer of cleaning to schools – Gareth Jones provided an update on consultation sessions held with staff and headteachers/governing bodies on the proposal to transfer line management responsibility for staff to schools. A number of queries had been raised during the sessions and it was now unlikely that the new arrangements would be implemented from 1st September 2015.</p> <p>(c) Agenda Items – A protocol for placing items on the agenda was requested.</p> <p>(d) Thanks – The Chair thanked Glyn Morgan for his work with schools and the support he had provided to the Schools Forum.</p>	

10.	Future Meeting Dates	
	<p>The following provisional meeting dates during the 2015-16 school year were noted:</p> <p>10.00 to 12.30 on Thursday 15th October 2015 10.00 to 12.30 on Wednesday 9th December 2015 10.00 to 12.30 on Monday 7th March 2016 10.00 to 12.30 on Monday 13th June 2016</p>	