

**Minutes of a Meeting of the Ceredigion Schools Budget Forum held at
Ystafell Aeron Fach, Campws Felinfach on Monday, 19 June, 2017.**

Present: Councillor Catrin Miles (Chairman).

Non-schools members: Barry Rees (Strategic Director for Learning and Partnerships), Matthew Brown (Head of Learning Services), Councillor Ellen ap Gwynn (Leader of the Council), Councillor Odwyn Davies (Chair Learning Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee), Endaf Edwards (Vice Chair Learning Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee)

Schools members:

Secondary Schools Representatives: Richard Bennett (Penglais School), Chris Evans (Cardigan Secondary School).

Officers in attendance: Chris Macey (Head of Educational Finance & Resources), Kay Davies (Democratic Services).

7.00pm –8.30pm

1 Procedure

The Chairman welcomed all to the meeting and thanked previous chair, Councillor Hag Harris for his chairmanship during the last administration.

2 Apologies

Lodwick Lloyd (Governor), Peter Wellington (School Member), Donna Hanley (Head Teacher Cardigan Primary School), Alwyn Ward (Head Teacher Ysgol T. Llew Jones), Meinir Lewis (Head Teacher Llechryd Primary School), Steve Johnson (Head of Financial Services) apologised for their inability to attend the meeting.

3 Disclosures of Personal Interest

There were no disclosures of personal interest.

4 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

It was **AGREED** to confirm as a true record the minutes of the meeting held on 17 November 2016 subject to the adding the names of Chris Evans and Peter Wellington to the attendance list.

5 Matters Arising from the Minutes

5. School meals. It was noted that further research is to be undertaken to explore the effect of an increase in the cost of school meals on school meal take-up prior to raising the price by 10p per meal.

9. 21st Century Schools. It was noted that progress is being made and information will be presented to Councillors in due course. The Director of Learning Services confirmed that refurbishments to Cardigan Secondary School would be included in a bid for 21st Century Schools funding.

6 Learning Services Financial Performance 2016-17

It was noted that Learning Services was considerably within budget this year even though this had not been originally foreseen. All departments had been asked to restrict their

budget expenditure unless absolutely necessary. However, it was cautioned that the financial situation could change at any time should there be an increase in pupils with additional learning needs (ALN). The meeting was informed that successful ALN placements within Ceredigion have avoided the need to make expensive out of county arrangements.

A review of routes has led to a reduction in SEN transport costs whilst continuing to maintain the provision. A considerable number of short term vacancies and a general reduction in staffing levels has resulted in lower spending levels in many parts of the service. These favourable variances were sufficient to cover expenditure on educational infrastructure which was due to be funded from reserves. Consequently, those resources remain available for future capital development.

It was noted that, sometimes, the expenditure profile for a large project may exceed due to its scale.

The Service's savings are transferred into central corporate savings. Reserves are available to support 21st Century Schools.

Although savings were made the previous year, the budget baseline will remain the same for the next year.

It was **AGREED** to note the information provided.

7 Schools Financial Performance 2016-17

8 School Reserves March 2017

The above two agenda items were considered simultaneously.

Information in relation to schools' budgets, spend and reserve balances had been circulated to Members. The majority of schools demonstrated a fall in their reserves with different reasons for this decrease. Many of the secondary schools face more challenges than the primary schools. Schools have had to budget for the increase in National Insurance contributions.

It was noted that any deficits at the schools closed in Llandysul and its catchment area had now been transferred to the new Ysgol Bro Teifi budget.

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Ellen ap Gwynn informed the meeting that she had met with secondary schools' heads to discuss their financial issues. Penglais school has succeeded to return to surplus. It was noted that Ysgol Bro Pedr are currently undergoing restructuring and are developing a business plan. A strong Human Resources team is in place to help schools with all changes being made.

The meeting was informed that all Council services are suffering with significant downsizing being undertaken. There is no longer provision of staff who have particular expertise in subjects such as Healthier Schools and Eco schools within the Education Service.

Mr Chris Evans noted that there had been a reversal in Cardigan Secondary School, where excellent examination results were achieved last year, and is attracting numerous pupils from Pembrokeshire and especially from Crymch.

It was **AGREED** to note the information provided.

9 Learning Services Budget 2017-18

Members considered the Learning Services budget 2017-18. It was noted that the Learning Services Budget is similar to the previous year and that there is a need to continue to find savings to keep up with increasing costs.

The Chairman informed Members of a sports grant supported by Dame Kelly Holmes which may be available to schools shortly.

It was **AGREED** to note the information provided.

10 Formula Funding Review

The meeting was informed that the formula is reviewed, is as fair as possible and complies with priorities so that the share is fair. The formula used is the same for small schools and larger schools. The Service is currently exploring budget formulas and principles. Meetings have taken place with secondary schools and are shortly to take place with primary schools. The process may be brought in over the next 2- 3 years if the changes are significant for individual schools. It was noted that the timetable appears fairly tight in relation to holding the consultation, an Overview and Scrutiny committee meeting and the approval by Cabinet by early 2018.

The budget formula will be simple and transparent and based on learning principles. The effect on schools will be explored in September before entering the formal process. Local and national priorities will be supported along with the national priority towards increasing access to Welsh medium provision

Further information will be brought to the next meeting.

Members **AGREED** to note the information provided.

11 Educational Improvement Grant 2017-18

It was noted that the allocation of the Educational Improvement Grant from WG, which is distributed via ERW, is being considered and yet to be confirmed. Agreement is required from the 6 leaders as to a fair allocation of the grant.

It was noted that the grant supports improvement of opportunities for young people and that Learning Services work closely with Coleg Ceredigion.

Members noted the information provided.

12 Any other urgent matter

There were no other urgent matters.

13 Date of the next meeting: 20th November 2017

Chair: _____

Date: _____