

# EDUCATION SERVICE: MEETING OF CARDIFF SCHOOLS' BUDGET FORUM



**Time:** 8.30am – 10.30am  
**Date:** 20th January 2021  
**Location:** Microsoft Teams Invite

## DRAFT AGENDA

Ref	Item	Category	Lead
1	Apologies & welcome to the SBF	Standing item	Chair
2	Minutes from previous meeting (25th November 2020) and matters arising:	Standing item (papers attached)	Chair
3	Budget Strategy 2021/22	Information and Discussion (presentation)	Rob Green, Neil Hardee
4	School Balances - update	Information and Discussion	Neil Hardee, Rob Green
5	Updates: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• COVID-19 claims</li><li>• WG Hardship Fund</li></ul>	Information and Discussion	Neil Hardee, Rob Green
6	Any Other Business	Standing item	Chair

Future meeting dates –

17<sup>th</sup> March 2021

12<sup>th</sup> May 2021

7<sup>th</sup> July 2021

# EDUCATION DIRECTORATE

## MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF CARDIFF SCHOOLS' BUDGET FORUM



**Time:** 8.30am – 10.30am  
**Date:** 20<sup>th</sup> January 2021  
**Location:** Microsoft Teams  
**Present:** Karen Dell'Armi - Chair (KD), Cllr Sarah Merry, Cllr Chris Weaver, Cllr Joel Williams (JW), Mel Godfrey (MG), Mike Tate (MT), Rob Green (RG), Neil Hardee (NH), Angela Jardine (AJ), Andrew Skinner (AS), Nic Naish (NN), John Hayes (JH), Marc Belli (MB), Ivor Gittins (IG), Jane Marchesi (JM), Suzanne Williams (SW), Ann Griffin (AG), Jane Setchfield (JS), Mari Phillips (MP), David Harris (DH), David Silver (DS), Abigail Beacon (AB), Kevin Hart (KH), Sarah Parry (SP), Catherine Power (CP), Wayne Murphy (WM), Louise Bloom – Clerk (LB)

**Apologies:** Ian Allwood (IA), Sara Allen (SA), Adrian Dinsmore (AD)

Ref	Conclusions/Actions	Who
1	<b>Apologies and welcome</b>	
1.1	NH welcomed KD as the new Chair of SBF, with a term of two years. Apologies were accepted.	
2	<b>Minutes of the previous meeting and matters arising</b>	
2.2	The minutes of the meeting held on 25 <sup>th</sup> November 2020 were agreed as a true record.	
2.3	<u>Matters arising</u>  Minute 3.1 and 8.1: NH and RG will follow up on the draft letter to WG in relation to the school funding in Wales report (Luke Sibieta), including concerns on sufficiency of ALN Band A and B funding. The draft will be circulated to members before Friday 19 <sup>th</sup> February for discussion at the next SBF.	NH/RG
3	<b>Budget Strategy 2021/22</b>	
3.1	RG gave a presentation on the proposed budget strategy for 2021/22 during which it was noted: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A £1m increase in MEAG may offset anticipated reduction.</li><li>• The efficiency contribution required from Schools has been reduced from 1.3% to 1%.</li><li>• School Budgets would increase by £6.545m (2.6%) after efficiency savings contributions of 1% (£2.590m).</li><li>• Central Education would receive significant sums in support of schools, including Out of County Placements and School Transport.</li><li>• Total net growth greater than £10m after efficiency savings for Education as a whole.</li></ul>	

- RCSIG and PDG would remain at the same overall level
- Cabinet will consider the outcome of consultation in early February.
- No new formula changes for 2021/22
- The practicalities of consultation for the school funding formula for 2022/23 would be considered in 2021, particularly in relation to the approaching ALN reform.
- Core ICT budgets would remain centrally retained and increase in line with requirements for the EdTech Programme. The amount of top slice for ICT is being considered.

NH reported an audit of Audio Visual (AV) equipment has commenced in schools, noting significant challenges around AV equipment.

The contract for Wi-Fi connectivity ends in March (2000 children have received Wi-Fi devices to date). Talks are ongoing with telecommunication companies for a new contract for all-inclusive data bundles for children.

Investment of ICT will be carried out on a strategic basis for a consistent approach across every school. 2.5% of school delegated budgets would potentially be retained to meet demands, to sustain ICT in schools and to renew infrastructure on a cyclical basis (five to seven years).

In response to a query from JH, it was noted the Accelerated Learning Programme (ALP) was a one-year commitment until the end of August. WG had announced on 19<sup>th</sup> January that further funds for ALP would be given for support with changes in relation to assessment, for examination years (both GCSE's and A levels) in secondary schools. Cardiff will receive an additional £597,000 for 2020/21. Individual allocations for secondary schools will be sent as soon as figures are known.

KH expressed disappointment around the lack of clarity in the PDG level of funding and which year will be used to calculate distributions. One of the recommendations from Estyn was increased support for vulnerable pupils, those disproportionately affected by the pandemic. Schools are experiencing increased numbers of pupils qualifying for FSMs. He recommended the forum request that pupil figures from the current year are used for grant calculation rather than last year's. He noted the gap with vulnerable children had increased significantly from the first lockdown and anticipated a similar spike after the current lockdown.

The Chair agreed a response would be formulated from SBF to send to WG urging that they take heed of the increase of numbers. NH echoed that FSM provision had increased to over 14,000, and is still rising. He recommended undertaking an exercise on the distribution of FSM across the city, comparing to the previous year. MG echoed lobbying WG, showing the effectiveness of the forum. The delay in collection of PLASC data would be problematic as it is used to calculate the formula for allocations. RG drew attention to one of the recommendations from Luke Sibieta being the link between increased funding and attainment for pupils from deprived backgrounds.

In response to a question from NN on 3<sup>rd</sup> party ICT support, NH

KD/KH

NH

	<p>requested schools refrain from securing ICT contracts beyond September 2021. He will meet with corporate procurement early next week to put forward for tender. It has been decided to move away from a central team for primary and special schools in the first instance, secondary schools will be discussed separately. A communication will be sent to secondary head-teachers and governing bodies and a discussion held at secondary head-teacher conferences.</p> <p>MB asked for clarification on issuing devices from schools, noting that some were returned with little usage. NH responded that a pro-forma agreement and guidance on ICT equipment for pupils will be re-circulated. Feedback on devices is welcomed so that devices may be upgraded appropriately. It was noted access to devices before Christmas was very low, usage is monitored for control purposes. Data usage for the full month of January will be considered for a base decision. If a school has devices he recommended the school identifies families that are in need them and provide devices to the families as needed per child, 16,000 additional devices have been distributed to date.</p> <p>DS drew attention to the lack of clarity on 6<sup>th</sup> form funding causing difficulties planning a budget. NH echoed the uncertainty was not helpful, and recommended urging speed of clarity on Post 16 funding, within the forum's letter to WG.</p>	KD/NH/RG
4	<b>School Balances - update</b>	
4.1	<p>A paper was circulated prior to the meeting giving a breakdown of school balances. NH reported LFM officers had projected school balances to 31.03.2021, showing a further increase of surplus balances from those at 2019/20 year end. It was expected that the surplus would be mostly spent in the year; however, with school closures further savings accrued. WG surplus thresholds state £50,000 for primaries, and £100,000 for secondaries/special schools, the local authority threshold states 4% of the budget.</p> <p>WG recently awarded additional grant money of £435k for the teachers' pay award to distribute to schools. Secondary schools would also receive funding of £597k for the ALP grant for exam year pupils; these would further increase projected surpluses.</p> <p>NH noted WG had repurposed grants to assist LA's and schools with additional COVID costs. Collectively to date schools have claimed £1.1m from the WG COVID hardship fund. He urged schools to take heed of the outturn at the end of the financial year in relation to surpluses and claims made from WG for hardship costs. If figures remain the same at year-end, seven schools would be in deficit and forty-six schools over the threshold.</p> <p>MB expressed concerns with the large surpluses but urged against clawbacks.</p> <p>AJ proposed a COVID recovery plan, suggesting surplus balances be allocated for costs such as ICT and staffing. COVID recovery plans would be required for two years or more.</p>	

	<p>JH held the view that circumstances were unprecedented, bringing many crises and to be mindful that this is a unique event. For the previous ten to fifteen years, many schools have struggled to balance the budget. Schools are looking to invest where they have been unable to for a considerable period of time, very little surplus would be carried into next year.</p> <p>Cllr Weaver echoed AJ's thoughts, agreeing investment is needed in a recovery programme, particularly for closing the gap between pupils that have not engaged over the period of time and those that have maintained their level of learning. The recovery plan would give assurances to WG on monies retained. He recommended sharing plans with schools that have excessive surpluses.</p> <p>NH welcomed the comments and suggestions, the LA will work with schools. Officers will meet with individual schools to develop spending plans; ensuring the plans are linked with other developments underway such as ICT investment to benefit from the national procurement scheme.</p> <p>KD welcomed the strategic overview, to be carried out in a fair way with head-teachers and governing bodies' agreement.</p> <p>RG held the view a nuanced approach is required, some primaries have struggled and additional funding has been a lifeline. He asked schools to consider before making any future hardship claims, that costs should be absorbed where possible and he would challenge claims where applicable. Advice and guidance will continue to be included in the monthly COVID update, emailed to head-teachers.</p>	
5	<b>WG Hardship Fund</b>	
5.1	<p>RG noted monthly expenditure, such as additional cleaning and additional staffing costs, might still be claimed, reiterating that schools consider first whether costs can be absorbed within their budget.</p> <p>Quarters one and two of income claims have been submitted, quarter three is being collated.</p> <p>He expressed the view that although schools have large surplus balances there is much uncertainty on funding next year.</p>	
6	<b>Any Other Business</b>	
6.1	<p>NH urged SBF members to provide their individual responses to the Council's budget consultation by 5<sup>th</sup> February. Officers will collate the feedback and send to the Chair for a response from the SBF as a whole.</p> <p>JH thanked officers for their hard work supporting children with the Ed Tech programme and circulation of devices. Remote teaching has proved very successful; giving a great opportunity to show what remote teaching can look like. Members echoed the thoughts.</p>	All
7	<b>Date of next meeting</b>	
7.1	17 <sup>th</sup> March 2021.	