

EDUCATION SERVICE:

MEETING OF CARDIFF SCHOOLS' BUDGET FORUM



Time: 8.30am – 10.30am
Date: 23rd September 2020
Location: Microsoft Teams Invite

DRAFT AGENDA

Ref	Item	Category	Lead
1	Apologies & welcome to the SBF	Standing item	Chair
2	Minutes from previous meeting (10 ^h June 2020) and matters arising:	Standing item (papers to follow)	Chair
3	Covid 19 Financial Implications <ul style="list-style-type: none">· Claims process· Grants· MSF· Maternity leave cover arrangements· ICT· SLAs	Information and Discussion (presentation)	Rob Green, Neil Hardee
4	Budget strategy 21/22	Information and Discussion (presentation)	Rob Green, Neil Hardee
5	Any Other Business	Standing item	Chair

Future meeting dates –

25th November 2020
20th January 2021
17th March 2021
12th May 2021
7th July 2021

EDUCATION DIRECTORATE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF CARDIFF SCHOOLS' BUDGET FORUM



Time: 8.30am – 10.30am
Date: 24th September 2020
Location: Microsoft Teams
Present: Sarah Griffiths - Chair (SG), Cllr Sarah Merry, Cllr Chris Weaver, Rob Green (RG), Neil Hardee (NH), Angela Jardine (AJ), Andrew Skinner (AS), Nic Naish (NN), John Hayes (JH), Marc Belli (MB), Jane Marchesi (JM), Abigail Beacon (AB), Suzanne Williams (SW), Ann Griffin (AG), Jane Setchfield (JS), Mari Phillips (MP), David Silver (DS), Karen Dell'Armi (KA), Kevin Hart (KH), Wayne Murphy (WM), Diane Gill (DG), Louise Bloom – Clerk (LB)

Apologies: Ian Allwood (IA), Nick Batchelar (NB), Cllr Joel Williams (JW), Mike Tate (MT), Richard Portas (RP), David Harris (DH), Ivor Gittins (IG), Sara Allen (SA), Patrick Brunnock (PB), Adrian Dinsmore (AD), Tracey Stephens (TS), Catherine Power (CP), Sarah Parry (SP),

Ref	Conclusions/Actions	Who
1	Apologies and welcome	
1.1	The Chair welcomed members and accepted apologies.	
2	Minutes of the previous meeting and matters arising	
2.2	The minutes of the meeting held on 10 th June 2020 were agreed as a true record.	
2.3	Matters arising Minute 2.3: RG noted Luke Sibieta gave an overview of his report findings at a recent ADEW finance meeting. The final report is due imminently and will be circulated to the forum when received. Minute 6.1: RP will provide an update on work undertaken in schools at the next meeting. Further matters arising will be discussed within the agenda.	RG RP
3	Budget Strategy 2021/22	
3.1	RG gave a presentation, during which it was noted: Council is considering the budget strategy for 2021/22 on 24 th September. Today's presentation summarises the report submitted to Cabinet on 17th September.	

	<p>The medium term budget gap (until 2024/25) has increased from £73.4m to £97.182m. Funding levels are very uncertain and continued austerity has been indicated. Provisional settlement, normally provided in October, has been delayed to December. Added to this, external funding from WG may be adversely affected due to changes within WG formula and revised data sets.</p> <p>The budget gap of £25.4m in 2021/22 would be addressed via an assumed Council Tax increase of 4.0%, with the balance of £19.3m to be found via savings. Corporate solutions will be explored in addition to directorate proposals.</p> <p>In light of the budget timetable, it was agreed to hold an additional SBF meeting in late February to feed into Council proposals.</p>	LB
4	Covid 19 Financial Implications	
4.1	RG and NH gave a presentation on Covid 19 financial implications.	
4.2	<p><u>WG Claims process</u></p> <p>RG reported £264m further funding has been announced by WG in addition to funding announced earlier in the year. Cardiff schools have claimed a total of £581k from the Hardship Fund to August 2020. Claims are processed on a monthly basis. Currently the scope includes staffing issues, social distancing measures and enhanced infection control. Claims to June 2020, other than ICT, have been reimbursed in full by WG. However, the level of claims for both expenditure and income are expected to reduce throughout the year.</p> <p>Staffing issues/concerns are understood to be the cost of cover arrangements for staff having to self-isolate and staff that are pregnant by 28 weeks or more but not yet due to commence maternity leave. Other examples include local lockdowns affecting childcare and staff therefore not being able to attend work.</p> <p>WG requested local authorities submit claims on lost income, income lost is expected to be offset where possible against savings realised.</p> <p>JS questioned agency costs claimed in June, RG confirmed it was for schools that had agency staff engaged, whom in normal circumstances would have been released.</p> <p>NN pointed out more clarity to schools would be welcomed as his school retained agency staff but did not make a claim. RG explained where schools had already made a commitment to an agency member of staff the expectation was that schools would have budgeted for the staff and would not be able to claim from the hardship fund. Schools successfully claimed where they would have released staff at the end of spring term but were advised not to, staff were retained on the understanding they would be reimbursed.</p> <p>Communications sent out highlighted claims could be made for additional unplanned costs leading to financial hardship. NN requested clear guidelines going forward for what can or cannot be claimed. RG responded that WG broadly outlined what may be claimed, a detailed breakdown has not been provided and is subject to change.</p>	

	<p>NH reiterated that communications sent to schools asked that schools record additional spend so that it may be claimed at a later date. NN expressed an interest in claims made by schools and accepted by WG.</p>	
4.3	<p><u>Grants ALP, Post 16</u></p> <p>RG gave an update on the Accelerated Learning Programme (ALP) Grant for pre 16 pupils. He noted the full allocation of £4.2m (for the full academic year) has been provided to Cardiff schools, further announcements on funding from WG would be to confirm amounts already received. The funding is to be used to recruit additional staff.</p> <p>£600k will be allocated to Cardiff for Post 16 provision. This would be incorporated into the redistribution in autumn, based on pupil numbers.</p> <p>Circa £70k for Cardiff has been indicated for cleaning materials, to be centrally procured and £2.5m (all-Wales) has been announced for face coverings.</p> <p>DG requested clarity on the ALP grant allocation in school budgets over the academic year, and carry-over of allocation into the next financial year. RG confirmed each school would receive their financial allocation (7/12) for September to March in the current financial year, funding for April to August would be provided next year, schools are not expected to carry over amounts for ALP at year-end.</p> <p>A separate communication will be sent to individual schools with a spreadsheet giving clarity on the different grant amounts, what the school would receive this financial year and other elements that would be received on an academic basis. LFM officers will ensure all grants are detailed within their school budgets.</p> <p>NH noted the request from MB that the LA use headteacher contact details for communications to avoid a lag between school admin staff receiving the email and passing the information on.</p> <p>NH reported a number of schools had significant decreases in PDG. CSC has previously allocated money to mitigate a proportion of the losses. Reductions across schools amount to £1.1m, WG has allocated £104k this year to dampen the effect of losses. As the sum was minimal, it was strongly suggested to the Education Management team to retain the sum centrally, for strategic use.</p> <p>KH urged that the most up to date PLASC figures be used for the following year as his school has seen a significant increase of pupil numbers, PDG was based on historic data. This would ensure pupils in school at the time would benefit from the grant. NH confirmed the request would be referred back to WG who decide on the methodology.</p> <p>MB pointed out PDG is a ring-fenced grant and the sum given should be used specifically for the purpose and follow where the children are. NH agreed the amount if held centrally could be used for provision such as FSMs.</p>	<p>RG/NH</p> <p>NH</p>

	<p>Referencing the ALP Grant, JS recommended any additional staff hired are on contract, which may be fixed term, rather than use agency staff. Employed staff would receive benefits, whereas agency staff would not.</p> <p>Referring to the ALP grant, WM highlighted that how grant funding is allocated to special schools does not take into account the specific challenges faced by the sector and needs to be addressed. NH noted a number of head teacher queries on the distribution formula and confirmed the all Wales formula was decided by WG, points made would be fed back with a request that they be taken into consideration for future distributions and possible revision.</p> <p>NH drew attention to a significant rise in FSM applications and eligibility (circa 11,000 to 13,250), which is likely to rise further when the furlough scheme ends on 31st October. How this impacts different schools will be monitored, and incorporated into bids for the 2021/22 budget strategy.</p> <p>Catering has seen significant challenges with Covid 19 and lockdown, thirty-eight kitchens have not yet opened with further adaptations needed. It was noted WG is obliged to provide Free School Meal (FSM) provision for eligible pupils that are self-isolating. A number of options are being explored with food packs being considered. On 24th September, WG announced additional funding for extra costs of FSM such as transport. NH pointed out the six secondary schools in Cardiff, opted out of catering arrangements, need to be mindful that they are still obligated to provide FSM provision to pupils told to self-isolate for a period of fourteen days and continuity would be welcomed.</p>	
4.4	<p><u>ICT (EdTech) Grant Funding</u></p> <p>NH gave an update on ICT.</p> <p>Halted work restarted in September, works are expected to be completed by the end of term. Some out of hours work will be carried out to avoid disruption.</p> <p>WG agreed an all Wales contract to supply Wi-Fi devices to local authorities for distribution to individual pupils. These devices have been delivered. Schools were asked to repurpose or loan out devices held in schools to digitally deprived children. Circa 3000 devices were loaned out by schools, with an additional 3000 sourced by the LA. Schools have received replacement devices. Every teacher in a Cardiff school has now received a device. Additional employed staff will be supplied with a device in the next few weeks.</p> <p>Of the 10,000 further Chromebooks ordered 4,500 are expected in the next few weeks and are to be distributed. All 10,000 would be received by the end of term. The ICT group will be reconvened to decide on a basis for distribution. Charging stations will be procured for schools to manage devices more efficiently. Discussions will be held on funding streams and how many further devices across the city are required for sustainable blended learning.</p> <p>The Chair requested a breakdown of top-slice spend in the financial year. NH confirmed a full analysis would be provided.</p> <p>JS thanked officers for the work carried out to meet the challenge and drew</p>	NH

	<p>attention to digital training needed for staff. Some staff have difficulties with broadband speeds an adequate speed is required. She questioned if staff are required to isolate and teach in quarantine how this would be addressed.</p> <p>NH confirmed Cardiff has been working with CSC to develop further training courses for school staff, the opportunity will be publicised and marketed in the next few months. Training and issues with broadband speeds would be taken to the ICT group for discussion.</p> <p>AJ asked if consideration would be given for school support staff to receive devices. NH responded that although the Council would aspire to devices for all school support staff at present funding does not stretch to additional purchases. A funding model is to be put in place to provide all staff with a fundamental level of kit necessary for the next couple of years. AJ was encouraged by the response, highlighting the importance of professional learning across the board for all aspects of the workforce.</p> <p>MB thanked officers for the speed of delivering kit to schools and asked how schools would ensure work undertaken by students away from school that are self-isolating would be simultaneous to the similar work undertaken in schools, particularly as broadband is slower outside of central Cardiff. He asked officers to consider what training is given for Cardiff schools and how to facilitate, to reduce duplication of resources both centrally and in schools. He suggested that schools be encouraged to share teaching resources across the system to aid teachers and support staff.</p>	
4.5	<p><u>Mutual Supply Fund Considerations</u></p> <p>RG outlined the presentation. A communication to schools will be distributed later in the week.</p> <p>Claims for unavoidable costs not covered by the MSF or other arrangements schools have in place would be made to WG as part of the hardship fund. If claims were disallowed the MSF would then be utilised. If necessary a clawback would be undertaken at the end of year. RG detailed the expectations under which schools would claim from the MSF adding that childcare issues and local lockdowns are included in cover from day 1.</p> <p>AJ voiced concerns that pressure has been exerted on some members to commence their maternity leave early on the basis of affordability with schools and a teacher being required in class. She requested that in the communication to schools it be clarified that it is inappropriate to ask staff to take their maternity leave early, particularly as provisions are available. RG agreed to emphasise the point within the communication and will cc in trade unions.</p> <p>JS questioned whether vulnerable staff, not appropriate to being in school would be expected to take sick leave and if Cardiff were locked down how staff previously shielded would be managed. RG gave assurances that, provided the necessary risk assessments were completed, vulnerable staff would be covered by the arrangement. Occupational health may be utilised.</p> <p>JH questioned whether consideration has been given to flu jabs for all Cardiff</p>	RG

	<p>school staff to reduce staff absences. NH confirmed the Council for all groups of staff is considering it, he will refer to Nick Batchelar and Mike Tate to take to corporate meetings. NN echoed the request, DG noted she arranged flu jabs for staff last year but was unable to book this year due to capacity in pharmaceutical services and welcomed the Council making arrangements.</p>	NH
4.6	<p><u>SLAs</u></p> <p>NH noted the 2020/21 SLAs would be uploaded to the portal by the end of September. Due to the financial position, and to preserve services, schools are proposed to be auto-enrolled into SLAs purchased last year, unless they have signalled their intention to withdraw from an SLA. NN supported the initiative.</p>	
4.7	<p><u>School Trips</u></p> <p>NH noted a number of secondary schools were impacted by cancelled school trips due to Covid 19. Companies have not yet refunded schools for the cancellations. It was strongly suggested for schools to refund parents by private funds if available. A loan from the school's delegated budget may be given to the school to reimburse if needed, to be repaid from newly generated private funds over a period of time.</p> <p>JH thanked officers for their solution to the issue and asked the procedure to be followed is circulated to schools.</p>	NH
4.8	<p><u>School Budgets and Balances</u></p> <p>RG noted consideration would be given to the disproportionate financial impact on hub schools during Covid 19. To ensure equity between hub and non-hub schools and rebalance finances, LFM Officers will coordinate an exercise to identify where savings may have been made across all schools. A close view will be kept on school balances, both surplus and deficit.</p> <p>AS welcomed the exercise as hub schools serving the community should not be dis-benefitted. NN echoed AS thoughts and expressed interest in the variances and expenditures of hub and non-hub schools.</p>	
5	<p>Any Other Business</p>	
5.1	<p><u>Defibrillators</u></p> <p>DH had asked whether the LA would support funding for Welsh Hearts, discounts are available for schools to purchase defibrillators and be available for their communities. Schools would have access to a grant of £200 and free CPR/Defibrillator training for the school.</p> <p>The Chair asked forum members for their views and asked for feedback to be given when considered.</p>	
6	<p>Date of next meeting</p>	
6.1	<p>25th November 2020.</p>	



Budget Strategy 2021/22
School Budget Forum
23rd September 2020



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1. General background
2. Budget Reduction Requirement for 2021/22
3. Areas of sensitivity/risk
4. COVID-19 considerations
5. Council approach to Budget Reduction Requirement
6. Timetable



1. General Background and Context

- At the time of setting the 2020/21 budget, the Medium Term Financial Plan reflected a budget gap of £73.4m until 2024/25.
- There are now numerous uncertainties being grappled with, in light of the ongoing response to the COVID-19 pandemic. These include:
 - Economic uncertainties – e.g. impact upon future funding levels, pay, inflation, interest rates, impact of increased unemployment (post-JRS).
 - Impact upon service delivery – e.g. continuing impact upon public services of health measures, changing demographics and demand for services (including paid for services).
- There is also the impact of Brexit (and a potential no-deal) to be considered.
- The position will need to be continually reviewed in light of changing circumstances.



2. Budget Reduction Requirement for 2021/22

Components of 2021/ 22 Budget Gap	Feb 2020 £000	Updates £000	Revised £000
Employee Costs	9,586	1,934	11,520
Price Inflation	3,366	1,600	4,966
Capital Financing	1,717	0	1,717
Commitments	712	432	1,144
Current Year Risk / Monitoring Analysis	0	5,500	5,500
Demographic Pressures	7,863	(1,757)	6,106
Financial Pressures	3,000	(1,500)	1,500
RSG Differential - assumes +1.5%	(7,036)	0	(7,036)
TOTAL	19,208	6,209	25,417

Changes since February 2020 include:

- Updated information on pay awards.
 - Inflation includes allowance for potential increases on contracts to be re-let.
 - Emerging, non-COVID 19, issues within the Month 4 monitoring position.
 - Reduced demographic pressures relating to LDP schools and primary pupil numbers.
 - Reduction in financial pressures figure due to some issues being captured against other lines.
 - Continual review required in terms of RSG assumptions.
- **The revised medium term budget gap is now £97.182m.**



3. Areas of sensitivity/risk

- There are a number of factors to be monitored and updated, which could impact upon the overall budget gap:
 - Funding levels - Provisional Settlement in December 2020 (impact of potentially reduced NDR, austerity to continue, impact of AEF funding formula changes)
 - Any changes in grant funding streams
 - Pay awards
 - In-year monitoring position
 - Council Tax Base 2021/22
 - Pupil numbers on roll – September 2020
 - NLW announcements and revised contract prices



4. COVID-19 considerations

- There are a range of potential COVID-related risks that could impact upon the Council's budget planning. They include:
 - Failure of businesses/unemployment – e.g. CTRS pressures, increased bad debt, FSM eligibility increases.
 - Public health measures – e.g. PPE requirements, enhanced cleaning regimes, school catering model, longer term income loss.
 - Behavioural shift – e.g. new transport norms (loss of parking income), office and ICT requirements, greater emphasis on outside space.
 - Demographics – e.g. change of demographic profile for Adult Social Care, increased family breakdown, changing homelessness requirements.
- **There is no guarantee of WG financial support beyond 2021/22.**



5. Council Approach to the Budget Strategy

- Budget gap of £25.4m in 2021/22 to be addressed via an assumed Council Tax increase of 4.0%, with the balance (£19.3m) to be found via savings.
- Work to identify directorate efficiency savings has already commenced, partly in response to the emerging COVID-19 issues.
- Greater need for transformational proposals compared to 2020/21, where efficiency and income proposals formed the majority of savings proposals.
- It is expected that income generation proposals will be more challenging to identify in light of the current challenges in this area.
- Corporate solutions will be explored, as well as directorate proposals.



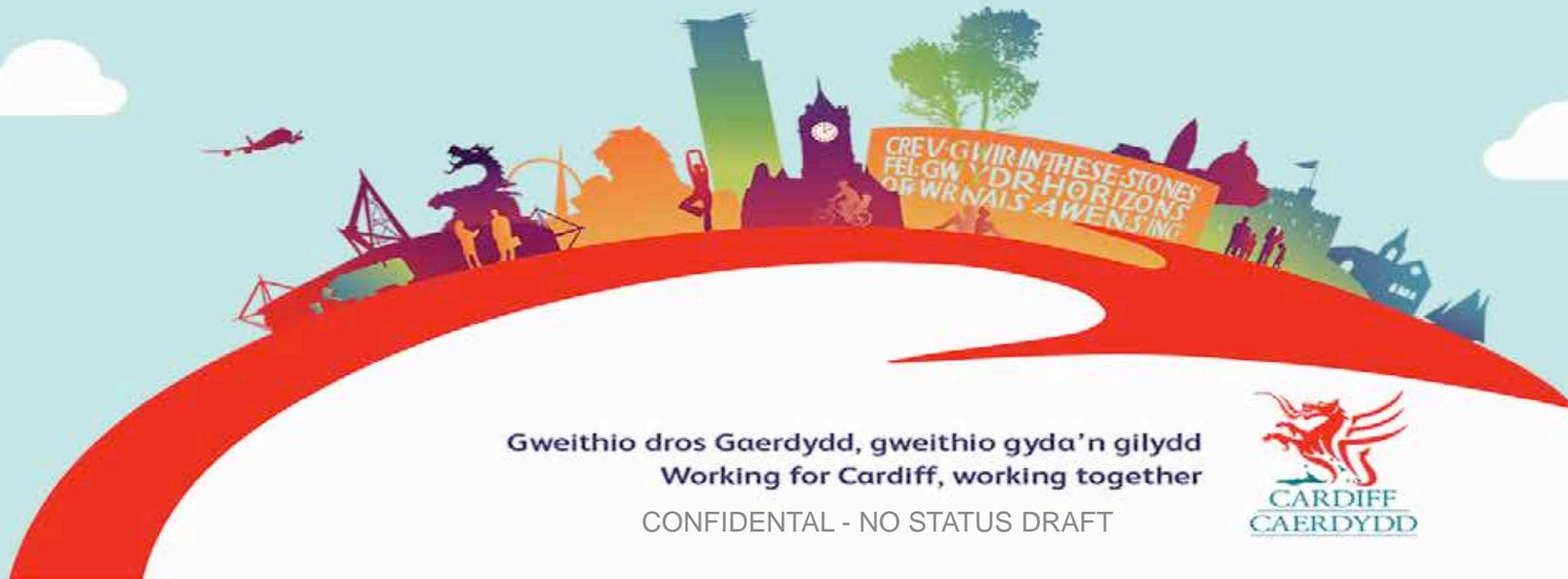
6. Timetable

Month	Work Required
September – November	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Budget Strategy Report considered at both Cabinet and Council. • Work to develop savings proposals to continue – early implementation of efficiency proposals where possible and appropriate. • Scrutiny of proposals by Senior Management and Cabinet Members. • Review of UK Budget announcements in the autumn to identify potential impact on key assumptions.
December	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provisional Local Government Settlement received • Cabinet approval of 2021/22 Council Tax Base. • Consultation on draft 2021/22 savings proposals.
January	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fine tuning of budget proposals following consultation feedback • Further review and consideration of MTFP
February	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approval of Council 2021/22 budget.
March	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final Local Government Settlement received.





COVID-19 Financial Update School Budget Forum 23rd September 2020



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2. Grants – ALP, Post-16
3. ICT (EdTech) Grant Funding
4. Mutual Supply Fund Considerations
5. SLAs
6. School Trips
7. School Budgets and Balances



1. WG Claims Process

- WG recently announced further funding of £264m for local authorities, in addition to that announced earlier in the financial year. However, certain amounts will be ringfenced within that total (including £25m for school cleaning) and not all will be available as general financial support.
- WG Hardship Fund claims process has continued throughout the summer, with the most recent claim (for July & August in the case of schools) being submitted on 15th September.
- It is anticipated that the monthly claims process will continue throughout the remainder of the financial year, although there is the risk that this could change.



1. WG Claims Process cont.

- Cardiff schools have claimed a total of £581k from the Hardship Fund, including that claimed for July and August.
- All claims (Apr to June) have been reimbursed by WG (50% for ICT), although there was greater challenge to the June claim, in relation to agency costs.
- WG's challenge in general relates to the link to COVID-19, whether or not costs are genuinely additional and also the ability of local authorities (and, therefore, schools) to absorb costs within their budgets or offset against savings made during the year.
- WG have also reduced the scope of the Hardship Fund and disallowed expenditure relating to resources, postage and printing.
- The current scope includes staffing issues, social distancing measures and enhanced infection control.



1. WG Claims Process cont.

- As well as expenditure, WG have asked local authorities to submit claims in relation to net income losses during Q1 of 2020/21.
- Cardiff schools, collectively, reported net income losses of £323.5k, not including out of school childcare income or school catering operations.
- To date, WG have not provided a full response to the Q1 income claim, although school catering losses have been reimbursed already.
- It is not clear whether or not there will be an opportunity to claim for lost income during Q2 or whether, if there is an opportunity, WG will reduce the scope of the fund.
- The expectation from WG is that, in general, the level of claims will reduce throughout the year, both in terms of expenditure and income.



2. Grants

- In response to the ongoing crisis, WG have announced new grant funding streams, mainly centred on accelerated learning for pupils that may have fallen behind during the period that schools were closed.
- The main grant is the Accelerated Learning Programme (ALP) Grant, which is for pre-16 pupils. The total amount of funding announced is £29m, however this only covers the September-March period, with further funding to be confirmed for April-August 2021.
- Schools have been provided with their full academic year allocations which amount to £4.2m in Cardiff.
- This funding is to be used to recruit additional staffing capacity.
- In addition, just over £600k will be allocated to Cardiff in connection with Post-16. This will be distributed as part of the autumn redistribution exercise.

2. Grants cont.

- As well as the ALP and Post-16 allocations, grant funding has been indicatively confirmed for the acquisition of face coverings and cleaning materials.
- The cleaning materials allocation amounted to circa £70k for Cardiff and was to be used to centrally procure cleaning supplies to provide a stock, should the supply become affected during the winter period.
- In addition, £2.5m (all-Wales figure) has been announced for face coverings. This funding is unlikely to be allocated to individual LAs (and, therefore, schools), with the intention being that it will be used to fund an all-Wales procurement of face coverings.



3. ICT (EdTech funding)

- Phase 1 – infrastructure project (switches, access points, some servers/cabinets) – delayed start due to lockdown – now started and aim to finish by end of term –
- Phase 2 devices;
 - All teachers supplied with laptop, bag and headset
 - All pupils identified as 'digitally deprived' provided with device and potential Wi-Fi connectivity – circa 6,000 devices (**need to determine sustainability of Wi-Fi connectivity**)
 - All devices loaned out by schools to be replaced with a new device (most done, small number outstanding) – circa 3,500
 - Further devices ordered through EdTech – 10,000 Chromebooks due in before end of term – **need to determine how to distribute**
 - **Need to determine how many more devices required & funding streams**

4. Mutual Supply Fund Considerations

- There are a number of COVID-19 staffing considerations that schools are currently responding to.
- These include, but are not necessarily limited to, women who are 28+ weeks pregnant, staff who need to self-isolate or quarantine and staff who test positive or are unwell with COVID-19.
- Schools will receive a communication outlining the Council's intentions regarding the financial impact of these issues.
- The current plan is for unavoidable costs (that cannot be funded from elsewhere) to be submitted as part of the monthly claims to WG.
- If WG were to disallow these claims, or reduce the scope of the Hardship Fund, the intention would be to utilise the MSF to cover these costs, for those schools that are members of the fund. A year-end clawback would be undertaken, if necessary.

4. Mutual Supply Fund Considerations cont.

- If the MSF is called upon to cover these costs, the cover would work as follows:
 - COVID-related sickness absence - as per the current sickness cover arrangements
 - Self-isolation – cover from Day 1
 - 28+ weeks pregnant – cover from the point at which the staff member cannot attend work
 - Quarantine following holiday – linked to overall Council approach – i.e. if a staff member has to take unpaid leave then financial cover will not be provided (as the saving would cover the cost of the cover)
- Schools will need to claim for the additional cost incurred only – automatic reimbursements will not be processed, although triangulation with Digigov will occur.

5. SLAs

- There has been a delay in the SLAs being uploaded to the portal for 2020/21.
- Because of the need to preserve services, the intention is to auto-enrol schools into SLAs that they have previously purchased, unless they have clearly and previously signalled their intention to withdraw from an SLA.

6. School Trips

- A number of school trips were cancelled due to COVID-19 restrictions.
- Schools unable to claim refund from travel companies or insurers.
- Parents chasing schools for repayment.



7. School budgets and balances

- There are a number of considerations to be made regarding the overall financial position of schools in Cardiff, in light of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The first of these is the fact that non hub schools may have benefitted from savings made during the period of closure earlier in the year, whereas hub schools may have not had the same benefit. Therefore, there is a consideration as to whether action needs to be taken to ensure equity.
- As well as this, there will be a need to closely monitor potential school balances at the end of the financial year.
- An exercise will be coordinated by LFM Officers to identify where savings may have been made across all schools.
- In addition, detailed outturn positions will be compiled by LFM officers to give a projection of the level of school balances at year end.
- Close monitoring of schools at risk of in-year deficits will be undertaken.