

EDUCATION DIRECTORATE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF CARDIFF SCHOOLS' BUDGET FORUM



Time: 8.30am – 10.30am
Date: 26.6.2024 2024
Location: Microsoft Teams
Present: Chair - Andrew Skinner (AS), Cllr Sarah Merry (SM), Cllr Chris Weaver (CW), Melanie Godfrey (MG), Helen Williams (HW), Ian Allwood (IA), Eifion Austin (EA), Angela Jardine (AJ), Jennie Hughes (JH), Ivor Gittins (IG), Tim Adams (TA), Matthew Evans (ME), Nicola Price (NP), Nick Naish (NN), Brett Andrewartha (BA), Sarah Parry (SP), Phillip Andrews (PA), Paul Tucker (PT), Diane Gill (DG), Carys Prytherch (CP), Will Howlett (WH), Alison Powell (AP), Catherine Power (CP), Education Management Clerk, Richard Portas (RP), Natalie Stork (NS), Carly Davies (CD), David Silver (DS)

Apologies: Alison Poole (AP), Emma Richards (ER), Stuart Davies (SD), Abigale Cuthbert (AC), Nick Alexander (NA), Sara Allen (SA), David Harris (DH), Karen Dell'Armi, Ann Griffin (AG), Suzanne Scarlett (SS), Marc Belli (MB), Wayne Murphy (WM)

Ref	Conclusions/Actions	Who
1.0	Apologies and welcome	
1.1	The Chair welcomed members and accepted apologies.	
2.0	Minutes of the previous meeting and matters arising	
2.1	<p>Matters arising/actions from the previous meeting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2.2 Discussions on clarity on 2024/25 FRM allocation at Efficiency Boards – MG noted criteria methodology is being developed and will be shared with the Efficiency Boards and SBF-<i>this is now in first draft, MG will share on completion</i>-Action carried forward 3.1 Timetable of notifications of SLA charges to schools to be improved, to feed into SBF earlier and SLA Calculations to be understood to inform next year's charges (2025/26). Action carried forward. 5.1 WM recommended more work undertaken by efficiency boards on the different needs of pupils across special schools, considering how special schools reduce/support OOC placements, to maximise impact at the workshop and efficiency boards. Action carried forward. 8.1 HR to send a weekly communication to schools on all vacancies and quantity available in the redeployment pool, with narrative reminding headteachers of the redundancy and redeployment policy commitment-<i>this has been engaged with and has been good. All schools have been looking at redeployment first. Any concerns to be addressed to IA or ZSB.</i> 	<p>MG</p> <p>IA</p> <p>MG</p> <p>IA</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> TA-We have had a member stressed over this around flexibility of the role. Many Heads aren't reading the policy. IA will feed this back. 	
3.0	Budget Update from Citywide Heads 14th June- Ian Allwood	
3.1	<p>IA presented the slide set as shown by Chris Lee at the Citywide Head's event 14th June.</p> <p>Action: Clerk to share with the group and Heads</p> <p>IA invited questions. The forum was satisfied. AS-Financial sustainability moving forwards is key.</p>	Clerk- complete 27.6.24
4.0	Update on deficits and school balances-Ian Allwood	
4.1	<p>Purpose of report- to provide an update on the aggregated total of school balances for year ending 31 March 2024 compared to year ending 31 March 2023. The report will also look forward to 31 March 2025 and provide the likely number of applications for deficit received approved and compare that to actual number of deficits as of 31 March 2025. Included in the report is the current Schools Deficit protocol.</p> <p>IA talked the group through the paper. The deficit protocol for schools has been revised. Much of the responsibility was on the local Authority and our capacity to micromanage this was not sustainable (and understandably not always welcomed by schools). We are now able to instead focus on specific schools as needed. All that have bought into the SLA are being met with regularly. The question around teacher's pensions needs to be answered, 24/25 was grant funded, 25/26 will be from council settlement.</p> <p>AS-Do we have early indications for March 2025? IA-Worse case scenario could be £10m deficit. The surplus balance has now been wiped out. Projected collective balances show £0.5m deficit. Two schools that are closing are the abnormalities but these will be dealt with. Many secondaries are not balancing in year-this is the next challenge. AS-there is a clear trajectory here? IA-Not just finance. There has been significant leadership support in Education e.g. the appointment of Helen Williams. 44 out of 46 school deficits have been approved (one has been rejected but names will not be shared) We are working with schools on a medium long term plan.</p> <p>ME asked for clarification of the protocol of going into deficit. IA-We only require notification of recruitment. Spends over £500 used to have to be reported but we needed to focus on staffing as opposed to micromanaging. This was unworkable and we need to be able to trust schools. ME-Do we have an easy documented process to follow? Two different schools have very different experiences and different outcomes. It is similar for every school and the principal remains the same but how we react is different because all schools have different challenges. We are able to give a better approach within the context of the situation. There is also confidentiality around how schools are treated. AS- The protocol is in the paper that we are discussing.</p>	

	<p>NN expressed concern that over forty schools in Cardiff are in deficit. I appreciate that the meetings are bespoke. It is good to hear that it is being managed and supported but this is a huge task to redress positively.</p> <p>IA-Deficits are a common theme in Wales. We are not alone but the size makes it look worse because it is Cardiff.</p>	
5.0	Efficiency Board Update -Mel Godfrey	
5.1	<p>Three boards have now been established.</p> <p>The immediate focus at the time of budget setting is the transparency of funds (especially via the local authority) There are opportunities to shift monies into schools to mitigate. Rethink, remodel, redesign is the next phase.</p> <p><i>Primary Efficiency Board</i> Will be held Thursday and will include deep dives. Economy of scale is the immediate focus. Bringing elements to life and procurement of services. Economy of scale gives opportunities to collaborate (including secondaries)</p> <p><i>Secondary Efficiency Boards</i> Developing workstreams. Task and finish groups now need to be created.</p> <p>It is key that any work is reported into SBF to have oversight and give ratification. Momentum and pace are key, as are timescales and resources. Next meeting will be a discussion around development of key workstreams.</p> <p>TA requested an update from MG around Supply-Teacher Booker. Not functioning as no one has been placed. Action - MG will look to get an update from Welsh Government.</p> <p>IA- There is concern over this procurement platform that it is not an even playing field because of pension calculations. There is no impact to individuals but talking to schools regarding this they are concerned that some supply providers are not giving complete transparency. Schools need to be able to understand price to price. There's lots of functionality within the framework. The service needs to be fit for purpose. TA-An all Wales platform will win, we have no support for the agencies. AI-The theory is good but not an actual remedy. TA-Many schools are unaware that they can just employ directly. DS to MG-Have we looked at efficiency and partnerships between authorities to provide savings? The Middle Tier Review is currently progressing and is working with LA's around School Improvement Plans. Welsh Government has called for partnership. Education and learner outcomes are key here. IA we are not closed to any solutions. AJ-Efficiency Boards could benefit from a broader membership. This is a good opportunity for TU representation. Specialists are available to utilise. MG-These elements are all in discussion but I will come back to the group.</p>	MG
6.0	Grants Update –	

	<p>Confirmation of 2023/24 Position Update of 2024/25 -Eifion Austin</p>	
6.1	<p>EA talked the group through the paper.</p> <p>ME-Regarding the grants sitting within the authority, do the efficiency boards look at this spend? Are they transparent? We shouldn't be creating a consortium within the authority. Are any elements of Cymraeg 2050 ringfenced? EA-Immersion units are to ensure that they are maintainable. The Middle tier review will look at how we allocate them. MG-Efficiency boards will look at grants and developments. We are able to be more robust. ME-Agree. The plan is no longer sharp enough. Now we have the funding should we revisit the strategic plan for all funding streams? MG-It's good to have a strategy but we need a plan and resources. We need to use the Cymraeg plan to ensure impact.</p>	
7.0	<p>Standing Items: Confirmation of 2023/24 Final Position MSF/Redundancy/Pooled Redundancy-Eifion Austin</p> <p>EA talked the group through the paper and invited questions.</p> <p>ME queried asset repair and funding. EA-The impact sits more in future corporate costs. The Capital budget has a 5-year period of flex. Funds have been used for required asset works such as ALN adaptations etc. ME – So that is an overspend? EA-Some of the spend has to be reactive but they do come into a calculation used corporately to calculate capital requirements. There is enough in the programme to cover this. ME-Does Asset renewal support Band B or vice versa? EA-Corporate Function and background budget supports investment into the school estate. There is a £34m slippage.</p> <p>IA-Asset renewal. We look at capital over the next 5 years. Pressure is often there and then. Additional money is then put in to replace future years. SOP and asset renewal are not funding each other. SOP is a planned route of funding. The way that we fund capital finance is not as individual projects. Asset renewal does not subsidise SOP. The asset renewal allocation has been brought forward and replaced. This would have affected other decisions across the capital yes but it is not a diversion. ME-Resources have then been drawn from other things. IA-We were trying to simplify the reports but it may be easier to keep them separate.</p> <p>MG-Allocation made for asset repair over 5 years. We have spent the money more quickly to meet demand but this has been topped up and additional allocations have gone in. We will look to add this to future papers.</p>	

8.0	AOB	
	AS-We need to begin looking over the summer to plan the forum's work going forward and set new meeting dates. Please email any thoughts or comments to the chair. We look forward to seeing you all at Cardiff Castle next month.	All
9.0	Date of Next Meeting	
	TBC	

Acronym Reference

SBF	School Budget Forum
SB	School Balance
BSR	Budget Strategy Report
DSB	Delegated School Budget
CC	Cardiff Council
WG	Welsh Government
LG	Local Government
LA	Local Authority
TU	Trade Union
HR	Human Resources
NI	National Insurance
FY	Financial Year
CT	Council Tax
Q	Quarter_ (number relating to)
FP	Financial Plan
FS	Financial Services
PA	Pay Award
RWL	Real Living Wage
FSM	Free School Meals
MTFM	Medium Term Financial Management
MTFP	Medium Term Financial Plan
MTBS	Medium Term Budget Strategy
MTFB	Medium Term Financial Budgets
LFMO	Local Financial Management Officer
CCHF/HF	Cardiff Council Hardship Fund/ Hardship Fund
LGHF	Local Government Hardship Fund
MSF	Mutual Supply Fund
CNE	Complex Needs Enhancement
ALN	Additional Learning Needs
SOP	School Organisation Programme
PDG	Pupil Deprivation Grant
SEN	Special Education Needs
ALP	Additional Learning Programme
LAS	Local Authority Settlement
EOTAS	Education Other Than at School
MEAG	Minority Ethnic & Gypsy, Roma & Traveller Learners