

EDUCATION DIRECTORATE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF CARDIFF SCHOOLS' BUDGET FORUM



Time: 8.30am – 10.30am
Date: 12th March 2025
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), Nic Naish (NN), Nicola Price (NP), Paul Tucker (PT), Tim Adams (TA), Stuart Davies (SD), David Silver (DS), Sarah Parry (SP), Emma Richards (ER), Nick Alexander (NA), Suzanne Scarlett (SS), Marc Belli (MB), Gareth Rein (GR), Wayne Murphy (WM), Carys Prytherch (CP), Phil Norton (PN), Matthew O'Brien (MO'B), Ivor Gittins (IG), Will Howlett (WH), Brett Andrewartha (BA), Education Management Clerk

Apologies: Richard Portas (RP), Abigale Cuthbert (AC), Jennie Hughes (JH), Alison Poole (AP), Phillip Andrews (PA), Diane Gill (DG), Alison Powell (AP), Catherine Power (CP), Cllr Joel Williams (JW), Suzanne Williams (SW), Geraldine Foley (GF), Patrick Brunnock (PB), Sara Allen (SA), Ann Griffin (AG), Matthew Evans (ME),

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	The minutes of the previous meeting were approved as an accurate record.	
2.2	<p>Matters arising/actions from the previous meeting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> MG noted a project manager for supply work was liaising with WG on supply teacher booking. Policy development will be discussed outside of this meeting. Regarding improved communication mechanism on charges to schools, IA noted SLA charges for executive headships and federations between two or three schools were being reviewed. A small number of SLA charges would be reduced where appropriate. SLAs will be finalised towards the end of March. Action: Financial planning/implementation of the new model of funding for SAOs will be reviewed and discussed at SBF in six to nine months. Changes were made to the formula as a part of budget setting. Secondary headteachers were informed of new funding arrangements for SAOs. NN noted work was underway in clusters, with proposals being discussed for the SLA plan over 2025/26. EA attended headteacher conferences and the Cardiff Governors Association to present financial modelling of the formula and communicate potential changes. Action: IA will provide indications on the difference in figures between the formula methods of 2024/25 and 2025/26, for assurance to SBF members within the next few weeks. 	<p>Clerk For Sept agenda</p> <p>IA</p>

	<p>EA explained energy price deflation (c15% average for Welsh LAs) was achieved by market analysis, with LAs purchasing an energy bundle in advance to provide assurance on price.</p>	
<p>3.2</p>	<p><u>Changes in pooled arrangements since 2024/25</u></p> <p>EA outlined:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pooled budgets had increased. • Special schools delegated budget increase of 10% reflects increased placements and demand. • Funding for SAOs in secondaries was moved from the delegated budget to pooled (+41%). • Primary pooled budgets were reduced (-14%) due to a decrease in pupil numbers and emerging funded demographics. • +£649k was retained to finance growth in SRBs/specialist placements. • c£1,6m was retained to implement the new SAO model (increase in FTE and transfer from delegated). • +£300k PRU/Carnegie – increase in numbers and pay award • c£2m to implement the new Edu Tech model (opt in/out options available to schools). • +£546k, FSM increase in eligibility and take up – primaries/secondaries. • +£825k NI implications pooled budget, to be distributed to schools following resolution of NI funding in late spring/early summer. • +£375k staff suspension pooled resource across primary, secondary and special schools, outside of the MSF, to share risk of funding costs. 	
<p>3.3</p>	<p><u>Grants</u></p> <p>EA noted timeline of grants:</p> <p>By Friday 15th March 2025 EA will send to schools:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2024/25 – additional School standards funding from WG confirmed (c£1.7m for Cardiff schools). • 2025/26 – Full PDG allocation – including smoothing element. • 2025/26 – MEAG contributions (potential to slip to the 22/2/2025) <p>Further allocations to be confirmed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family Engagement Officer - action plan will be agreed by headteachers and the authority. • Curriculum reform schools' allocation - WG allocation to be confirmed. 	
<p>3.4</p>	<p><u>Pooled arrangements and SLAs</u></p> <p>Various communications with sectors on potential Ed Tech reimbursements (standard package c1% of delegated budget, excluding post 16, essential package 1.4% of net budget), to be confirmed by 22nd March.</p> <p>There would be no reimbursement for schools seeking the full package.</p> <p>SAOs require the SLA to be confirmed and signed by clusters to ensure reimbursement of funds reflects the operating model. As part of the budget setting</p>	

	<p>each cluster was allocated a budget to work within. Pooling was decided due to more clusters seeking to operate outside of expectations.</p> <p>SLA LA services to schools will be uploaded to the schools' portal by 29th March.</p> <p>NN referred to Ed Tech being top slicing to fund the programme and possible reimbursement for standard and essential packages. More clarity on package offers and hwb monies for IT purchases would be welcomed. He questioned whether schools withdrawing from the full package and selecting a standard or essential package would be financially liable for wiring, cable cabinets, servers and hardware etc. Action: MO'B will provide in-depth detail on the SLA, packages and matters the school must arrange outside of the full package, by the end of the week.</p> <p>MB welcomed a LA IT service model that schools could buy into. MO'B noted catalogue figures for procurement would be shared by the middle of next week.</p> <p>Schools opting for the essential/standard package will be investing in teaching and learning, using digital technology with the ability to buy superior specification devices for learners at reduced prices.</p> <p>NN asked whether schools choosing not to buy into the full package would have access to funding. MO'B confirmed they would, discussions will be held with primary schools to consider the essential/standard package and ensure schools have the capability to pick up additional elements outside of the full package. NN noted some schools were in discussion with third party suppliers previously used, clarity on school requirements for each of the packages by Friday would be welcomed for schools to seek assurances from third party suppliers that they could fulfil the additional.</p>	MO'B
4.0	MSF 24/25	
4.1	<p>EA noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current projection of £1.25m overspend in 2024/25, with reimbursement greater than contribution and a significant risk to the MSF balance, c25% overspent. • The first year of splitting scheme by sector/type of absence cover (maternity/parental leave and sickness cover). • Maternity and parental leave consistent overspend across sectors of c20% to 25%. • Disparity between sectors and level of overspend in sickness absence. • Primary and special were each 35% overspent, secondaries were balanced in-year. • Clawback mechanism will be activated following significant overspend. • It was recommended that clawback for 2024/25 will include all schools in the MSF, in-line with sector and absence type of overspend in 2024/25, irrespective of 2025/26 membership decision. • 22.5% clawback on maternity and parental leave contributions additional, per sector. • 35% sickness additional contribution clawback within primary and special schools. • New contribution levels from schools for MSF cover in 2025/26 will be released on 15.03.2025 and assumes in-year 2024/25 clawback. • Contributions would increase by 27% for parental leave per sector. 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sickness would increase by 27.5% for primary, 5% for secondary and 40% for special schools. <p>Questions were invited.</p>	
5.0	Any Other Business	
5.1	EA confirmed dates for governor approved budget setting were stated in the letter. A further communication will be sent in the next two-to-three weeks to arrange follow up sessions and deliver a briefing on process/mechanics for headteachers that may have missed the desktop sessions, or not been through the process previously.	
6.0	Summary of actions from this meeting	
6.1	<p>a. Finance officers liaised with headteachers on tools to assist in their planning. These will be refined following further discussions and brought to the SBF at a future date.</p> <p>b. Financial planning/implementation of the new model of funding for SAO's will be reviewed and discussed at SBF in six to nine months. Changes were made to the formula as a part of budget setting.</p> <p>c. IA will provide indications on the difference in figures between the formula methods of 2024/25 and 2025/26 for assurance to SBF members within the next few weeks.</p> <p>d. EA will provide a briefing paper on changes to the Formula implemented, including examination fees in secondary schools.</p> <p>e. MO'B will provide in-depth detail on the SLA, packages and matters for the school to arrange outside of the full package by the end of the week.</p>	<p>Clerk For Sept agenda</p> <p>EA</p> <p>IA</p> <p>EA</p> <p>MO'B</p>

Acronym Reference

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