

EDUCATION DIRECTORATE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF CARDIFF SCHOOLS' BUDGET FORUM



Time: 8.30am – 10.30am
Date: 8th September 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), Matt O'Brien (MO'B), Angela Jardine (AJ), Nic Naish (NN), Paul Tucker (PT), Tim Adams (TA), Wayne Murphy (WM), Nick Alexander (NA), Nicola Price (NP), Suzanne Scarlett (SS), Marc Belli (MB), Matthew Evans (ME), Carys Prytherch (CP), Gareth Rein (GR), Ivor Gittins (IG), Will Howlett (WH), Brett Andrewartha (BA), Education Management Clerk

Apologies: Emma Richards (ER), Abigale Cuthbert (AC), Richard Portas (RP), Sarah Parry (SP), Alison Poole (AP), Phillip Andrews (PA), Diane Gill (DG), Alison Powell (AP), Cllr Joel Williams (JW), Suzanne Williams (SW), Geraldine Foley (GF), Patrick Brunnock (PB), Sara Allen (SA), Jennie Hughes (JH), Stuart Davies (SD), David Silver (DS), Ann Griffin (AG),

Ref	Conclusions/Actions	Who
1.0	Apologies and welcome	
1.1	The Chair welcomed members and accepted apologies.	
1.2	The SBF in July agreed to seek an extension to the WG consultation on school funding, budget statement and outturn statements. The extension was granted, providing opportunity to review and submit comments.	
2.0	Minutes of the previous meeting	
2.1	The minutes of the previous meeting were approved as an accurate record.	
2.2	Matters arising/actions from the previous meeting	
2.3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> EA will meet with AC to aid a planning tool for headteachers. Financial planning/implementation of the new model of funding for SAO's will be discussed at SBF in November 2025, following progression of reviews. Clerk to add to the agenda, Phil Norton to attend. The Chair noted indications on the difference in figures between the formula methods of 2024/25 and 2025/26 were not covered whilst considering different formula methods and resulting shift in funding stream during May's SBF. The forum raised no issues. A review on formula changes will be considered by SBF in January 2026. Clerk to add to the agenda Consideration of changes to Lump Sum and AWPU funding will be brought to November SBF. Clerk to add to the agenda 	EA Clerk Clerk EA Clerk
3	Junior Apprenticeship Programme	
3.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clarity was sought on whether the Cardiff and Vale college Junior apprenticeship was funded by LA/Schools/WG/college. ME noted the LA had agreed to continue the programme for year ten this year, how many learners remained in the cohort was unknown. Where funding had been spent was questioned and whether the difference from the 	

	<p>smaller cohort would be re-released back into schools (top sliced from school budgets).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MG noted she and the Chair of secondary conferences met with the college recently to discuss data, learner retention, success and funding. A top slice is held back from schools' education budget to fund the programme, with additional allocation from post 16 organisation MEDR. Schools do not fund in addition to this. • An agreement was reached with the college for the programme to continue. • Officers and the CoC will work with the college and secondary heads to ensure the right pathways are put in place for young people to access vocational courses. • Allocation will be worked through and the Chair of secondary conference informed. 	
4	EdTech SLAs	
4.1	<p>MO'B noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2025/26 SLAs were actioned • SLAs will be reviewed for the next financial year • Retendering for the support service will begin September 2025 • Work will be undertaken with the digital stakeholders' group to identify requirements for the support element of the SLA • The revised support service will commence in September 2026 • The full SLA comprises devices, infrastructure and support • The standard SLA covers support and infrastructure • The light SLA covers cyber security only • Discussions to be held with primary schools regarding 2025/26 provision, schools had been requested to receive the full SLA. • Whether this arrangement would continue for 2026/27 will be discussed at the digital stakeholder group <p>NN questioned why schools were asked to commit to a five-year contract, pointing out finance proposals including EdTech top slice from school's budgets should be brought to the forum for discussion on a regular basis. School governing bodies must understand what SLAs are being bought into and agreed.</p> <p>MO'B explained a five-year plan enabled affordable infrastructure investment with the level of support required by schools.</p> <p>NN noted the contract with the contractor was extended a year without school's being aware and requested further information be shared over the next term for schools to more accurately prepare for the spring term. Greater clarity on school budget spend is recommended to be brought the forum.</p> <p>MG acknowledged the need for routine reports, noting the programme of work was not undertaken in a vacuum, there were many task and finish groups and discussions held at school conferences, with regular communications to the sector.</p> <p>NN requested a clear vision and plan over the next four years, detailing cost, impact and benefit. Confusion arose on whether there was one choice of EdTech or three as choices had changed, the EdTech board had fed back frustration with changing information.</p>	

	<p>MG confirmed officers will endeavour to provide further clarity, the original offer was withdrawn to mitigate emerging potential cyber security risks to schools. Clarity had been provided on decisions made.</p> <p>MO'B added some adaptations were made following feedback from meetings, headteacher conferences and stakeholder groups.</p>	
4.2	EdTech MIS	
4.3	Rebates for the 2025/26 SIMS MIS invoice would be issued in few weeks.	
4.4	EdTech Telephony charges	
4.5	Telephony scheme charges will shortly be sent to schools signed up to the service, covering a reoccurring licence and additional kit costs to schools where applicable (a singular charge for handsets/port installation).	
4.6	EdTech Staff Devices	
4.7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff devices were rolled out for primary, special schools and high schools within the full system, expected to be delivered in the next week. • The contractor will set up devices at the schools, linking to the school network. • Devices coming to the end of life will be removed from the school network for cyber security compliance. 	
5.0	The School Funding, Budget Statements and Outturn Statements (Wales) Regulations - 2026 Consultation document	
5.1	<p>EA circulated a discussion paper, based on questions posed in the consultation paper. It was agreed for some responses to be provided jointly and others by the LA. The following was noted:</p> <p>1. Do you agree with allowing the merging of federated school budgets to create a single budget across the federation?</p> <p>Points included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further conversation recommended with federations • Possible increased admin burden should individual schools be managed at a local level • Clarification needed on transparency, whether budget reports would be aggregated or individual schools, possibly leading to lack of transparency on individual schools • Individual budgets were recommended, to ensure equity with smaller and larger schools • Changes could obscure how schools move into difficulties • Collaborations may feel pushed into federations <p>Conclusion: Not agreed, due to lack of clarity provided.</p> <p>2. Do you agree with local authorities being required to use the latest January PLASC data for calculating pupil numbers in initial budget share determinations?</p> <p>Points included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uncertainty on transparency and consistency • Uncertainty how pupil adjustments required in the following year/pupil movement would fit in, some matters could not be undertaken within a 	

certain timeframe – PLASC introduces another timescale, the calendar year, in addition to the Fiscal and Academic year.

- Uncertainty on how reports between LAs would be compared
- Reports may become more complex
- National consultation could reduce local responsibilities
- How would learners' performance and metrics be measured
- Risk of less delegated money, adjustment outside the formula adding another layer

Conclusion: caveat there are flaws in use of data for absolute information, that due to PLASC, data is correct at that moment in time. The LA has ability to manage Cardiff school issues which may not be experienced elsewhere in Wales.

3. Do you agree with proposed changes to require the deprivation factor in local authorities' funding formulae to take into account an amount for each pupil in respect of a pupil's eligibility for free school meals (eFSM)?

4. Do you agree with proposed changes to require the deprivation factor in local authorities' funding formulae to take into account an amount for each pupil in respect of a pupil's residency in relation to the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation (WIMD)?

Points included:

- UFSM for primaries does not reflect need, impacting primaries significantly, suggested to adjust to meet school needs
- Not all FSM pupils apply/take up the opportunity
- Substantial sums of money for deprivation but limited accountability and evidence of impact. Concerns raised it could mask schools' underperformance
- PDG recommended to remain separate, the amount set circa ten years prior has not kept pace with today's cost. Dilution was a concern.
- PDG is used appropriately according to staffing required, enabling retention of staff to undertake interventions for pupils with needs and deliver additional support, including support for families
- Suggested not to be added to the formula, a three-year plan recommended
- Tracking performance against expenditure was considered appropriate

5. Do you agree with proposals to amend the existing numerical surplus values at which an authority may direct a governing body in respect of surplus to 5% of the school budget for all schools?

- WG have previously granted permission to move to percentages rather than a fixed threshold. A maximum surplus of 4% was noted by governors.

6. Do you agree with the proposal that local authorities' financial schemes should include a statement setting out how the local authority will monitor the governing body's use of surplus balances?

7. Do you agree that local authorities' financial schemes should contain a provision requiring governing bodies to submit a deficit recovery plan to their local authority for approval?

8. Do you agree that local authorities' financial schemes should include the form, process, persons involved and timings around deficit recovery plans?

- Agreed in principle, the LA will respond separately to question 6,7 and 8.

9. Do you agree that local authorities' financial schemes should contain a list of expenditure descriptions or criteria (from the local authority's Schools Budget) which are not delegated to schools, but are retained centrally by the local authority to spend on schools?

- Transparency has improved, greater transparency across LAs on pooling is recommended for consistency, maximising opportunities
- Savings made suggested to be evidenced where centrally retained
- Work on budgets delegated to schools, non-delegated and pooled would continue
- Some elements currently in delegated school budgets where schools have no control could be reconsidered and perhaps removed
- Pooled budgets would remain delegated but not dispersed to individual school budgets, within the agreement of the phases of schools

10. Do you agree with proposed changes requiring local authorities' financial schemes to be published on their website, with an electronic copy being provided to the governing body and headteacher of each school it maintains?

- The funding formula is published in the SBF
- Guidance for non-specialist suggested
- Recommended to reflect on broader use of information, to whom and for what purposes.
- Ensure information that is published is easily accessible and readily understood.
- Risk in over-simplifying complex information, particularly comparison of twenty-two authorities and sectors within. Reports may need to be recreated, although investment in the initial stage could be later simplified.

11. Do you agree with proposed changes requiring local authorities' school funding formulae to be published on their website?

- WM headteachers were invited to email a response to EA.

12. Do you agree with the proposed amendment to Schedule 1 to the 2010 Regulations (the classes or descriptions for the Non-schools Education Budget, previously known as the Local Authority Budget) to include nondomestic rates?

- Agreed to proceed

13. Is there anything you think should be added to or removed from Schedule 1 to the 2010 Regulations?

14. Is there anything you think should be added to or removed from Schedule 2 to the 2010 Regulations?

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LA to respond, requires robust definition and clear guidance to ensure standardisation. • Consistency is key particularly with school transport and out of county/non-LA maintained schools' education spend (i.e. independent placements). <p>17. Do you agree with our proposed amendments to Part 1, as set out in Annex A?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requires clear guidance and confirmation of delineation - what is ALN delegation and what is Core delegation. • This may lead to risk of misinterpretation and lack of consistent practice, increasing complexity of implementation. • Many ALN changes are currently underway <p>18. We've set out proposed amended notes to accompany Part 1 in Annex A. Do you agree with the proposed notes to Part 1?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LA to respond. • Lack of robust detail to be meaningful. Greater detail required in various schedules – what is Core delegation/non-delegated and ALN delegation? <p>19. Do you agree with amendments to Part 2 and Part 3, as set out in Annex B?</p> <p>20. We've set out proposed amended notes to accompany Part 2 and Part 3 in Annex B. Do you agree with the proposed notes to Part 2 and Part 3?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Robust definitions required and an understanding of how linked to Part 1 and new designation of core delegation, discretionary delegation and ALN delegation. <p>21. Do you agree with proposed changes that the deadline for outturn statements to be submitted to the Welsh Government is amended to 31 July?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Questions regarding Welsh language and equality were invited, the forum provided no feedback. <p>23. Are there any other costs, benefits or risks associated with the proposals?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benefits, risks and drawbacks were noted throughout the meeting. • WG are recommended to act on the information provided promptly to reduce time drawn away from educating. <p>The Chair will liaise with EA to submit a response based on these comments to the consultation by 12th September 2025.</p>	
6.0	Any Other Business	Chair
6.1	Pay assumption 2025/26	
6.2	<p>IA noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-teachers' pay award was settled at 3.2%, below c4.1% (according to grade) assumed and included in the budget • £915K over provision to schools would not be clawed back • Figures will be fed into 2026/27 non-teaching assumptions 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers pay award was agreed at 4% WG agreed to pay LAs the difference between the planning assumption (3%), funding for the difference is expected 3.5% had been provided to schools 	
6.3	NI confirmation	
6.4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Confirmation on NI from WG was received, with no shortfall Budget assumptions to schools were honoured WG will provide £218k support for NI impact with the post 16 grant, finance will discuss with the schools and agree an allocation method 	

Acronym Reference

ADEW	Association of Directors of Education in Wales
ALN	Additional Learning Needs
ALP	Additional Learning Programme
AWPU	Average Weighted Pupil Unit
BSR	Budget Strategy Report
SBF	School Budget Forum
CC	Cardiff Council
CCHF/HF	Cardiff Council Hardship Fund/ Hardship Fund
CNE	Complex Needs Enhancement
CoC	Chair of Conferences
CoG	Chair of Governors
CSC	Central South Consortium
CT	Council Tax
DSB	Delegated School Budget
EOTAS	Education Other Than at School
EIG	Education Improvement Grant
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
NoR	Numbers on Roll
PA	Pay Award
PL	Professional Learning
PDG	Pupil Deprivation Grant
PLG	Professional Learning Grant
Q_	Quarter_ (number relating to)

RLW	Real Living Wage
RSG	Revenue Support Grant
SAO	School Attendance Officer
SB	School Balance
SBF	School Budget Forum
SEN	Special Education Needs
SLA	Service Level Agreement
SOP	School Organisation Programme
SRB	Special Resource Base
TU	Trade Union
UFSM	Universal Free School Meals
WG	Welsh Government