

**Minutes of a Meeting of the Ceredigion Schools Budget Forum held at Ystafell
Aeron Fach, Canolfan Felinfach on Tuesday 25 June 2013**

Present: Councillor Hag Harris (Chairman).

Non-schools members: Councillor Ellen ap Gwynn, Messrs. Eifion Evans and Gwyn Jones.

Schools members:

Primary Schools Representatives: Meinir Lewis and Alwyn Ward (Headteachers),
Lodwick Lloyd and Peter Wellington
(Governors)

Secondary Schools Representatives: Anna Williams (Headteacher), Chris Evans and
Derrick Jones (Governors).

Officers in attendance: Chris Macey (DECS – Head of Financial Services), Kay Davies
and Denfer Morgan (Democratic Services).

7.00 pm – 9.00 pm

1 Apologies

Councillor Paul Hinge and Messrs Stephen Cooper, Robert Jenkins and
Steff Jenkins apologised for their inability to attend the meeting.

2 Disclosures of Personal Interest

There were no disclosures of personal interests.

3 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

It was **AGREED** to confirm as a true record the minutes of the meeting held on
28 February 2013.

4 Matters Arising from the Minutes

There were no matters arising from the Minutes.

5 Transformation of the Council's way of working and Budgetary Matters

The Director outlined the new organisational structure which had been
implemented by the Council, including the creation of four strategic directors and
thirteen heads of service, with the aim of securing greater efficiencies and
effectiveness in the delivery of Council services.

Councillor Ellen ap Gwynn, the Leader of the Council, explained that the new
structure would be the vehicle for securing the improvements in service outlined
in the Council's newly adopted Corporate Strategy which outlined the Council's

aims, objectives and priorities for the next four years. Councillor ap Gwynn, however, reminded the Forum that this Strategy was being pursued in a period of an economic recession and against a backdrop of a severe reduction in public spending. The Council was already anticipating having to identify some £12.5m savings during the next three financial years, before receiving information on the impact of the next Spending Review to be announced by the Chancellor of the Exchequer the following day. She stated that difficult decisions would have to be taken and that the education service would need to share the savings needed to be identified in the Council spending during that period.

6 **Primary and Secondary Schools Formula Funding 2013-14**

Consideration was given to the papers providing up-to-date information on the monies designated to the primary and secondary schools in the County in line with the current formulae.

The Forum was reminded of the following recent revisions to the formulae:

Primary Schools

- the revised breakfast club funding arrangements as previously reported;
- the delegation of catering costs to schools. It was stated that every school had entered into an SLA with the County Council;
- provision for both the enhancement and protection elements of the Job Evaluation exercise; and
- provision for a 1% increase in salaries.

Secondary Schools

- the change to the WG post 16 funding arrangements for SEN;
- provision for both the enhancement and protection elements of the Job Evaluation exercise; and
- provision for a 1% increase in salaries.

It was also stated that this would be the first year when the new secondary formula funding – which it had been agreed would be phased-in over a period of three years - was being completely applied.

It was also stated that, with regard to the WG requirement that at least 85% of the annual budget of schools be delegated to them, clarification was still awaited as to whether this had to include transport costs; and that further advice would be provided at the appropriate time.

The Director also advised that, in the context of the future funding of the education service in Ceredigion within the available resources, the pupil-teacher ratio in Ceredigion, at 16:1 on average, was way above the Welsh average of

22:1; and that this may well be one of the factors which would have to be taken to account by the Council when setting its future budgets for the education service.

It was stated that WG was also undertaking a review of the methodology for funding post 16 education and whilst positive news was anticipated in respect of acknowledging the sparsity factor and the provision of bilingual education, the delay in obtaining detailed final guidance was a cause for concern.

It was **AGREED** to note the information provided.

7 School Reserves as at March 2013

Consideration was given to the information provided with regard to the reserves held by individual primary and secondary schools as at 31 March 2013.

It was noted that the Minister had indicated that he recognised no more than 5% of the budget as a satisfactory level of reserves and was considering requiring schools to justify sums being kept over and above that figure, with the balance being transferred to the Council in certain cases.

With regard to secondary schools, the Director reminded the Forum that an SLA was available with the County Council for the provision of financial services and that one secondary school had already benefitted from such support, with a three-year plan in place to address budgetary and financial planning issues. It was **AGREED** to note the information provided.

8 Financial Performance of the Education and Community Services Department 2013-14

Consideration was given to the end of year figures for the Department of Education and Community Services.

It was noted that the Department's spend had come in within budget but that there had had to be virement between services in order to meet demands over and above the original budget which had to be met by certain services, such as leisure centres and special education provision.

It was **AGREED** to note the information provided.

9 School Effectiveness Grant (SEG)

The Director explained the up-to-date arrangements for the distribution of this WG Grant, which had taken the place of the former GEST grant, and stated that for the first time a bid had to be made for the grant on a regional basis and that officers of the six authorities within the mid and south west Wales area – now called ERW – Education through regional working – had coordinated and made

such a bid. The monies received would be administered by Pembrokeshire County Council on behalf of the region. He also stated that the basis for the allocation of the grant monies to schools had changed and that it was now based on the categorisation of the school by the Council and the level of support described in the document which had been provided to all schools.

It was noted that this entailed less resources for the professional development of teachers and placed greater emphasis on peer support and sharing of best practice amongst schools which, it was felt, could have an adverse effect on the best performing schools, who may well have to release staff to provide this training.

It was **AGREED** to note the information provided.

10 **Regional Network Development Plan (RDNP) 14-19**

The Director explained that this was the regional framework for supporting the provision of the range of 14-19 courses required by the 20XX Education Measure. The criteria for allocating this grant, which again would be administered by Pembrokeshire County Council, was under review and its impact on the monies allocated to this Council was unclear at present. It was hoped that the transport costs associated with supporting the coordinated approach to the provision of courses by secondary schools and colleges as established by Ceredigion and Powys would be safeguarded.

It was **AGREED** to note the information provided and to await further developments.

Confirmed at the Meeting of the Forum held on XXXXXXXXXXXX 2013.

Chairman