

Minutes of a Meeting of the Ceredigion Schools Budget Forum held at Ystafell Aeron Fach, Campws Felinfach on Tuesday, 21 October, 2014.

Present: Councillor Hag Harris (Chairman).

Non-schools members: Mr Eifion Evans, Mr Barry Rees.

Schools members:

Primary Schools Representatives: Alwyn Ward, Donna Hanly (Heads), Lodwick Lloyd and Peter Wellington (Governors).

3-16, 3-19 and Secondary Schools Representatives: Jane Wyn (Head).

Officers in attendance: Chris Macey (Head of Financial Services), Kay Davies (Democratic Services).

7.00 pm – 8.15 pm

1 Apologies

Councillor Ellen ap Gwynn, Gwyn Jones, Chris Evans and Derrick Jones 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 19th May, 2014.

4 Matters Arising from the Minutes (19.05.14)

5. Formula Funding 2014 – 15 - The Strategic Director for Learning and Partnerships informed the meeting that, currently, changes to the Pupil Teacher Ratio are not included in the budget savings proposals for 2015-16.

5 2014-15 Learning Services Financial Performance

Chris Macey, Head of Financial Services, presented the financial report for quarter 1(to the end of June 2014) and noted that the report for quarter 2 is currently being finalised. He noted that since quarter 1, the budget has been adversely affected by the non-closure of Dihewyd Primary School as they have been unable to achieve the savings had the school been closed. The report also refers to HCT and difficulties which continue to be a cause for concern. The current contract with HCT comes to an end in March 2015 and avenues are being explored as to how to continue this non statutory service from April 2015 onwards. A report will be taken to the Learning Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The fall in income levels for out-of-county placements were

also highlighted as other counties who are also facing financial challenges with reduced budgets send fewer of their pupils to this county.

Chris Macey noted that the lay-out of the report in future will be amended to reflect changes following the restructuring of Learning Services into four main services.

Controlling the budget is proving to be a challenge with the debt having doubled since the last quarter. A report in relation to this will be presented to Cabinet shortly.

It was **AGREED** to note the report.

6 2014-15 Welsh Government Grants Update

The Strategic Director for Learning and Partnerships gave an overview of the budgetary cuts facing the Council for the year 2015-16 due to WG's decision to subsidise the overspend of the Health Service. He noted that grants have since been pooled together to form three grants - the Regional grant, Local Authority grant and the pupil deprivation grant. This will facilitate the auditing process and will be based on outcomes not expenditure. However, the £100k cuts for this year followed by the £200k for next year will have an impact on schools and discussions are taking place as to how to reduce the impact as much as possible. A significant reduction in central staff in order to protect school budgets is the option being examined at the moment.

However, the flexibility in grants will mean that resources will be able to be more targeted.

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

7 Electronic Money Collection

It was noted that the cost of collecting school dinner money is currently £90k. A pilot is to be run at an identified school where an electronic system will be used to collect dinner money. If successful, a decision will be made as to rolling out the system across the county. The system could also be used for other money collections such as school trips and outings.

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

8 2015-16 Budget Update

The Chair and the Strategic Director for Learning and Partnerships provided background information to next year's budgetary cuts of over £9.5m. Public engagement on budgetary cuts has taken place over the summer months and, following this, £6.5m of savings have been identified and currently are being consulted upon. A further £3m will need to be identified before the end of 2014.

Savings from Learning Services may include savings of £1m following a reduction in catering venues throughout the county which may require the schools with state of the art kitchens to maximise their facility and prepare food for other schools. A further £0.5m savings are being sought by charging for post 16 transport and the rationalisation of bus routes.

It was noted that information in relation to school breakfast clubs' cost breakdown can be provided to schools if required.

The Strategic Director for Learning and Partnerships noted that a review into school provision in the Aberystwyth area has been commissioned and includes a brief to examine all aspects of learning in order to put forward proposals for a cost effective curriculum provision across the county. These proposals would then be taken through the democratic process. Commitment would be required from all schools in relation to vocational courses and equity of access for pupils.

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

9 Any other business

The date of the next meeting will be circulated shortly.

Confirmed at the Meeting of the Forum held on xxxxxx, 2015.

Chairman