



APPENDIX 5III

SCHOOL BUDGET FORUM

Minutes of the meeting of the School Budget Forum meeting held on Tuesday, 20th November 2018 at 2.00 pm at the Block F, The Pavilions, Cambrian Park. Clydach Vale, Tonypany, CF40 2XX.

MINUTES

PRESENT	<p>Councillor J Rosser (Chair) Councillor A Morgan Councillor M Webber Councillor M. Norris Councillor C. Leyshon</p> <p>Mr R Ellis, Ysgol Gyfun Cwm Rhondda Mr R Jones, Treorchy Comprehensive Ms. L. Bailey, Tonysguboriau Primary School Ms B Cheetham, Y Pant Comprehensive Mr D Jenkins, Ysgol Ty Coch Dr Sue Mitchell. St John Baptist CiW High School Mr Chris Coole, Darren Park Primary Ms J Rees, Cwmlai Primary Ms K. Retallick, Ysgol Nantgwyn Ms Gemma Powell, Headteacher- Caradog Primary Mr C Flynn, Central South Consortium</p>
IN ATTENDANCE	<p>Mr C Bradshaw Mr B Davies Ms C Edwards Ms S Davies Ms E. Randall</p>
APOLOGIES	<p>Councillor G Hopkins Mr M Thomas, Tonyrefail Community School Mr M Jones, Ysgol Gyfun Rhydywaun Mr P Morgan, H Cwmaman Infants and Glynhaford Juniors Mr D Davies, Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Aberdar Ms Marie Claire Hopkin- Park Lane Special School Ms D Gibbins RCTGA Ms G Davies, Director of Education and Inclusion Services Ms C Jones, NASUWT Mr M Cleverley, NASUWT Rep</p>



No	Discussion / Action	Action	By Who
10	<p>WELCOME</p> <p>Councillor Rosser thanked everyone for their attendance and, in light of the forum receiving new membership, Counsellor Rosser asked Members to introduce themselves.</p>		Chair
11	<p>DECLARATION OF INTEREST</p> <p>There were no declarations of interest pertaining to the agenda.</p>		Chair
12	<p>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</p> <p>Apologies for absence were noted.</p>		Chair
13	<p>MINUTES</p> <p>The minutes of the meeting on the 18th July 2018 were approved as an accurate record.</p>		Chair
14	<p>BUDGET CONSULTATION</p> <p>With the aid of a PowerPoint presentation, the Director of Financial Services provided the forum with an overview of the 2019/20 Revenue Budget Strategy Consultation.</p> <p>Members were provided with information surrounding the general approach for 2019/20, the implications of the Local Government Settlement for RCT, the consultation process and the budget-setting timetable.</p> <p>The Director updated Members that the provisional Local Government Settlement for 2019/20 was announced on the 9th October 2018. The provisional settlement figure includes the teachers' pay award agreement (£13.7M) and increased cost of Free School Meals (£7M). Members were informed that specific grants have not yet been finalised and that there is a general capital funding decrease of £0.106M.</p>		BD



The release of a better than expected provisional settlement from the Welsh Government has meant the initial estimated budget gap of almost £17M has been reduced to £5.920M. Whilst this is a better position than initially modelled it is still a real term reduction in resources.

The Director explained that whilst this has had a very positive impact, it was recognised that further measures must be considered to address budget shortfalls for next year and into the medium term.

Members of the forum were informed that the budget consultation would be running from the 5/11/18 to the 17/12/18. The survey asks the public about Council Tax, the Schools Budget, Council priorities and Investment opportunities. Members were told that, to date, over 2,000 residents have responded.

Following on from the presentation, Members discussed levels of council services in light of the budget shortfall;

- Forum Members considered how the Council could continue to maintain services at the current level even if it meant an increase in Council Tax.
- Members questioned what would be a reasonable increase in Council Tax for residents in RCT. Councillor A. Morgan informed Members that the highest rise in RCT to date was 4.5% in 2014. The Director advised Members that a 1% increase would generate £826k of additional income and noted that a 3% increase has been factored in to arrive at the current budget gap. Members considered the balance of increasing Council Tax against how much it will affect residents in the County Borough. Members discussed the increases made by other Local Authorities and agreed that any



increase in Council Tax should not be more than 5%.

- In consideration of the proposal for the Schools Budget to be protected by £2.2M, it was acknowledged that although this is an increase, it is not enough to cover inflationary pressures such as pay award / pay progression and rises in pupil numbers. Discussions ensued around the proposed increase. Councillor A. Morgan informed Members that an additional £660,000 would be available to schools in RCT from the Welsh Government from April 2019. There are also grants for professional development training, although the specifics of these grants are yet to be established. The Director advised Members that funding of increases to teachers' pensions remains a risk.
- Members were updated on the ongoing commitment to invest in schools, play areas, 3G pitches and that education remains a key service in these plans.
- Consideration was given to Council fees and charges. Forum Members felt that priority should be given to school meals and leisure centre membership. Councillor A. Morgan informed the forum that the Council has seen a significant increase in leisure centre membership and income following investment in this area. The
- The Director advised Members that the Council's Corporate Plan (2016-2020) sets out the Council's vision across three priorities (Economy, People, Place) and that the Council is focusing on five key themes to maximise resources and deliver improved services:
 - Digitalisation
 - Early intervention and Prevention
 - Commercialisation
 - Efficiency
 - Independence



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Members agreed that digitalisation would generate savings and that this should be an area of focus for the Council. ➤ Members then considered the Council Tax Reduction Scheme (CTRS). Forum Members considered whether 4 weeks was a reasonable period to continue paying Council Tax Reduction when someone returns to work (extended payments). Members were informed that the estimated amount of CTRS paid in relation to extended payments for 2018/19 is £29,500. The Director advised Members that the scheme provides discretion for the Council to extend the period to support the transition to the Universal Credit system. The Council can also backdate a claim for up to three months. Members were in agreement with the current extended period and backdating period applied by the Council. ➤ Discussions ensued in relation to the CTRS and consideration was given as to whether it is reasonable for the Council to continue to disregard War Disablement and War Widow's Pensions income when assessing entitlement to the CTRS. Members agreed that the Council's approach was reasonable. <p>The Chair thanked the members and officers for their comments and spoke of the difficult position the Council would potentially be facing in meeting the budget gap before them, and reiterated that investing in schools was still a priority for the Council.</p> <p>Following discussion, Members RESOLVED to note the 2019/20 Budget Consultation.</p>		
15	<p>CLUSTER BUSINESS MANAGER</p> <p>With the aid of a PowerPoint presentation, the Head of Treorchy Comprehensive provided Members with a comprehensive review of the advantages and</p>	<p>Further information to be provided to Members at</p>	<p>Mr Rhys Angell-Jones Head of Treorchy</p>



disadvantages of employing a Cluster Business Manager (CSBM).

To begin, Members were informed that Treorchy Comprehensive school employed a CSBM in July 2017 through applying for a Welsh Government Grant. The Head of Treorchy outlined the advantages of having a CSBM;

- Workload management
- Increased time for teaching and learning
- financial efficiencies – effective procurement / contract negotiation
- effective deployment of resources
- community cohesion.

Further benefits to be achieved include;

- further analysis of individual and collective expenditure
- greater financial and time efficiencies
- Development of new cluster working methods.
- Safeguarding issues have become more effective such as identifying child protection risks much earlier
- Engagement of families/communities to support improvements.

The Head of Treorchy concluded the presentation by informing Members that the ability of the school to employ a CSBM in September 2019 will depend on the ability of the Local Authority to fund the position.

Following on from the presentation queries / comments were raised by Forum members in respect of:

- Covering the costs of the CSBM; The Head of Treorchy informed Forum Members that they are able to cover the cost and he reminded Members that the CSBM reduces the workload of Head Teachers and this cannot be measured in financial terms.

the next SBF Meeting



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ End of year evaluations; The Head of Treorchy informed Members that evaluations are done on a quarterly basis and the review is done by balancing financial costs against savings in time management ➤ Financial efficiencies; The Head of Treorchy gave an example of where the CSBM can negotiate the instalment of CCTV at a competitive price. ➤ Managing the CSBM; The Head of Treorchy informed Members that the CSBM manages his own workload and distributes his own time accordingly. ➤ Improved collaboration between Comprehensive Schools and Cluster schools. It is a cost effective model for other Comprehensive schools to use. <p>Members were pleased with the success of employing a CSBM. Following discussion, Members. RESOLVED to consider the funding for September 2019 subject to further information being provided by the Head of Treorchy at a future School Budget Forum meeting specifically on the cost / benefit of the post.</p>		
16	<p>SCHEME FOR FINANCING SCHOOLS</p> <p>The Head of Finance – Education & Financial Reporting presented a report to Forum Members in relation to the updated Scheme for Financing Schools (<i>this is brought forward from the last SBF meeting</i>)</p> <p>The purpose of the Scheme is to define the financial relationship between the Local Authority and its maintained schools.</p> <p>Members were asked to comment and approve the revised Scheme. Members were referred to Appendix 1 of the report, which refers to the Scheme for Financing Schools 2018.</p>	Members to email comments/ amendments to the Head of Finance: Education and Financial Reporting.	SD



	<p>The Head of Finance- Education & Financial Reporting asked Members to email any comments/amendments that they may have to her directly.</p> <p>It was RESOLVED to note the revised Scheme and to approve the changes subject to the Head of Finance incorporating any amendments received from Forum Members.</p>		
17	<p>PROPOSAL TO REMOVE CHEQUE BOOK SCHEME IN PRIMARY AND SPECIAL SCHOOL SECTORS</p> <p>The Head of Finance – Education & Financial Reporting presented a report to Forum Members outlining the difference between schools that operate a “cheque book” facility for school budget accounts and those that do not and to recommend progressing to a consultation on the removal of the cheque book scheme.</p> <p>The Head of Finance- Education & Reporting provided Members with the relevant background information;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Many schools have voluntarily opted to give up the cheque book and have their payments administered by the Local Authority. Only 28 out of 98 schools (29%) are remaining as cheque book schools. ➤ Benefits of removing the cheque book scheme include; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ no need to maintain SIMS FMS ○ no need to write or authorise cheques ○ no need to run VAT reports ➤ Making Tax Digital for VAT will come into effect from April 2019. From that point, the Local Authority will need to keep records digitally. Compliance will be more effective with the detail of all transactions in the Council’s financial System rather than in satellite systems such as SIMS FMS 	To progress to a consultation and report the results back to the SBF at the end of the consultation period.	SD



	<p>➤ RCT has more than the average % of cheque book primary/special schools at 29%. RCT appear to be in the minority compared to other Local Authorities</p> <p>Following discussion, Members RESOLVED to approve the proposal and to therefore progress to a consultation on the removal of the cheque book scheme.</p>		
18	<p>DATE OF NEXT MEETING</p> <p>The Chair advised that the next meeting of the forum was the 12th February 2019 at 2pm.</p>		Chair

The meeting closed at 4:05 pm

Cllr J. Rosser
(Chair)