

ABERGAVENNY TOWN COUNCIL

TOWN MAYOR

CLLR TONY KONIECZNY



TOWN CLERK

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Councillor Phil Murphy
Cabinet Member for Resources
Monmouthshire County Council

22nd January 2020

Dear Councillor Murphy

I have been asked to write to you on behalf of Abergavenny Town Council regarding the proposed budget for 2020/21.

At a recent Committee meeting the impact of the proposed cuts on the individual school budgets was discussed. It was agreed that the proposed cut of 2% is unacceptable as this would equate to a cut of £20,000 for primary schools and £75,000 for King Henry VIII School. This level of reduction in the individual school budgets will be detrimental to the education of the young people of Monmouthshire and their future options.

The Town Council requests that the proposed level of cuts is reconsidered in light of the long term impact that such decisions will have and the short term difficulty that schools will have in absorbing a significant reduction in their available budget.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J Lee'.

Jane Lee
Town Clerk



“Believe, Succeed, Inspire, Achieve”
“Credw , Llwyddo , Ysbrydoli , Cyflawni”

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL BUDGET PROPOSALS 2020/21: EDUCATION

To Whom This May Concern

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the above consultation

Background

Raglan CiW VC Primary school is a bright, vibrant and friendly 21st Century School built for integrated learning, with 203 pupils enrolled into its educational care (Sept 2018 – July 2019). It is also one of the 15 schools which started 2019/20 in financial deficit. A five year budget recovery plan is in place, budgets are agreed in line with this strategic aim and are on track, but fragile.

As a school Raglan CiW VC Primary School has worked tirelessly over the past number of years to raise standards in what has been very challenging financial circumstances. The senior leadership team in conjunction with governors year on year have strived to reduce expenditure whilst carefully balancing the needs of the school and its pupils. It has been pleasing to see the growth and development of our school despite the financial challenges it is facing. The governing body and senior leadership team remain eternally grateful for the support it has received from parents and the local community during this difficult period, without their support such progress would have been impossible.

Education Proposal Response

We are pleased to see that the consultation proposal seeks to meet the budget requirements of the additional pension costs and pay awards and we acknowledge that this is alongside the safeguarding of funding used to support pupils with additional learning needs, which we welcome. In 2018/19, 15% of our learners were identified as having additional educational learning needs. However, the governing body of Raglan CiW Raglan Primary School are in no doubt that a real term 2% reduction in budget if approved will have a seismic impact on the school. The detrimental impact will not just be financial but also catastrophic in terms of the pressure it will place on school staff, the impact it will have on the well-being of pupils and the impairment it will have on the schools ability to maintain its current core provision.

There is also no doubt that the proposed budget reduction will detrimentally impact on the schools ability to sustain its 5 year budget elimination plan. The possibility of either a static or increased deficit cannot be disregarded as potential outcomes of the proposed budget reduction. Whilst we endorse the need for schools to be financially prudent and efficient, Raglan has already been through a very difficult budget cutting process. This has included staffing reductions, strained learning resources and a reduction in the funded provision of services to pupils. This has resulted in greater reliance on parents to financially contribute to school trips/activities/experiences to enrich the pupils learning and an increasing reliance on the school PTFA and community grants which may be available to bridge gaps in resources. At this stage of our recovery plan the expenditure savings are now marginal and consequently budget recovery is more fragile than ever. Prior to the announcement of Monmouthshire County





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Councils education budget proposal, as a governing body we had already identified risks in 2020/2021 to the progress of our budget elimination plan, which are beyond the control of the Head Teacher and Governing Body. These concerns have been shared with Nikki Wellington and acknowledged during finance committee meetings.

We are not unique as a school in our financial position and the risk that the 2% reduction may have in terms of a collective impact on Monmouthshire school's deficit position and the overall reserves of MCC should not be underestimated. This risk is already noted in your Revenue & Capital Monitoring 2019/2020 Forecast Out-turn Statement. Such an outcome would eliminate any potential benefits foreseen from the budget reduction (which we believe are unfounded) and furthermore will potentially have a long-lasting damaging effect on individual schools, pupils, staff and the communities which they serve.

The proposed 2% budget cut to our school in addition to the financial pressures already faced is simply unsustainable and if approved will affect staff and pupil wellbeing and our school's ability to supply its core provisions. As a Governing Body we would need to explore which difficult areas of the core provision may be affected. In this consultation we specifically wish to raise concerns in relation to funding for support staff, maintenance of foundation phase ratio's and intervention availability. These are areas where services are already stretched to the bare minimum. Our pupils deserve more than this and as a governing body we strongly believe that our schools focus must always remain on pupil education, wellbeing and to strive for excellence. These attainments must not and should not be governed or impinged by unsustainable budget savings, which is the very real risk imposed by the MCC Education Budget proposals for 2020/2021.

Furthermore we are extremely concerned that the education proposals are not aligned with the Well Being of Future Generations Act. This is critical and flagship Welsh legislation than cannot be side-lined by the council when making such significant budget reduction proposals.

We hope that these comments are useful in your deliberations and urge you to seriously re-consider the education proposals due to the impact that the budget cuts will have on our school and its pupils.

As a governing body we would appreciate being kept informed of any further developments in this area.

Mike Fowler
Chair of Governors
Raglan CiW VC Primary



29 January 2020

Peter Davies
Monmouthshire County Council
Chief Officer for Resources (acting S151 officer)
E-mail: peterdavies@monmouthshire.gov.uk

Dear Mr Davies,

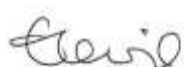
We are writing in response to the MCC budget proposals and, in particular, those for Children and Young People. We recognise the local authority has received the least favourable draft settlement from Welsh Government and, within the budget proposals; there are some helpful elements for schools. However, a proposed 2% reduction in ISB excluding ALN is considered collectively by all secondary schools of significant concern.

As school leaders, we do not agree that the proposed reduction of individual school budgets will protect schools. There is recognition of this within the budget process last year that school budgets were at breaking point. Hence the small uplift in the ISB. The proposed cut this year of 2% will provide a significant challenge to schools and could pose a threat to the provision made available, particularly, for our most vulnerable students. It must be remembered schools are the LAs first line of social care and ALN support. Through our wellbeing provision, we provide the structure to allow our most vulnerable pupils to engage in their education and secure a successful future. The proposed reduction means alternative curriculums, wellbeing and basic skills interventions, will be at risk and may add to the burden on wider services at MCC level such as social services and ALN. As a result, as schools we believe a proposed cut of 2% may be counterproductive. Furthermore, our concern is that this will negatively impact on the life chances of our most vulnerable students.

We understand there are difficult choices to make and understand all public services are important however, the children of Monmouthshire have one go at their education. Therefore, as a group of secondary schools we urge officers to invest further in the children and fully comply with the aim of the MMC Wellbeing Plan to "Provide children with the best start in life". Consequently, we firmly believe that the proposed reduction of ISB by 2% is amended so that there is no reduction.

We strongly urge that the council reconsider this proposal. While officers and cabinet members will have spent many hours reflecting on the options available, we believe these savings can be found in other areas of the overall corporate spend or through further increased council tax. Please be assured, as school leaders, we are committed to ensuring every child whatever their background is able to thrive in school and look forward to a fulfilling future. As a group of leaders, we trust this commitment is reflected in the final settlement to our schools.

Yours sincerely,



Mrs Elspeth Lewis
Headteacher, King Henry VIII



Mr Vaughan Davies
Headteacher, Monmouth



Mr Marc Belli
Executive Headteacher, Caldicot



Mrs Sian Phillips
Chair of KHS Governing Body



Mrs Victoria Smith
Chair of MCS Governing Body



Mr Peter Nurcombe
Chair of Caldicot Governing Body

cc. Will McLean
Paul Matthews
Cllr Richard John
Cllr Peter Fox
Cllr P Murphy