

Appendix A7

Monmouthshire County Council

Directorate of Children and Young People

Schools Budget Forum Meeting Minutes

Draft Minutes of the Meeting held on Thursday the 16th November 2015
4.30 p.m. Usk

Present:

Messrs: Paul Wilding, Steve Hughes, Mr S. McLester, Mr J. Standerwick

Mesdames: Mrs B. Randall, Mrs J. Wilkie, Mrs M. Harris, Cllr E. Hacket Pain, Mrs A. Holloway, Mrs M. Powell, Mrs N. Sutherland, Mrs A. Waters, Mrs S. Gwyer-Roberts.

Advisors: Mr A. Evans, Ms T. Crane, Miss H. Barnard

Other people in attendance.

Cllr P. Murphy, Cllr P. Fox

1. To receive a presentation on Budget proposals.

Cllr P. Fox began with a summary of budget pressures stating £6.3 million for 16/17 and a further £11 million pressure over the next 4 years. The first public meeting was taking place tonight after the forum. The budget will be set after the Welsh Government evaluation of the comprehensive spending review.

Cllr P. Murphy delivered the presentation on budget proposals, highlighting the comparison per head on the funding with MCC receiving the least. Also noting we are way ahead of other authorities managing to do 'more' with 'less', expressing this will only go so far and if the savings are not made in the priority areas then services may close.

Cllr P. Fox summarised the current mandates for MCC. It was noted that a consultation process is underway to review the current funding arrangements of the Deri View Learning Resource Base.

Cllr P. Fox emphasised the needs of the learner were paramount therefore each child will be provided for. There is a need to do things in a different way, highlighting £920k overspend this year on children's services i.e. placements. Also stated if the current mandates are realised, there will still be a gap of £1.7million.

Mrs S. Gwyer-Roberts thanked Cllr P. Fox and Cllr P. Murphy for their input and delivery of presentation.

Mrs S. Gwyer-Roberts requested input from all members:-

Secondary governors' feedback:

Mr S. McLester suggested looking at services that cross the boundaries, questioning how we can look at this and how fast we can look at this, expressing the need of more support from the authority to do so.

Cllr P. Fox understood and questioned how to redesign services and how to move to more collaborative services. The suggestions were very welcomed and would like to be on the journey to keep a sustainable education service in the current climate.

Mr P. Wilding explained maintaining standards in schools close to the English border creates pressures which emphasises the importance of having good education unless pupils will be lost to those schools over the border.

Mr S. McLester stated there needs to be a balance, which requires ideas and cluster working. Need to avoid reinventing the wheel but not having same outcomes over the 4 clusters.

Mrs S. Gwyer-Roberts noted rationalisation of ICT and maintenance service - budgets with these services could be rationalised. Explained some clusters are operating more effectively than others and this requires open discussion to build on good models. Combining classes is very difficult i.e. in key stages. Happy to work with the cluster heads to work towards this.

Mrs M. Powell stated it was difficult with the size of MCC to amalgamate, maybe some areas i.e. languages could be amalgamated and/or taught online.

Mrs S. Gwyer-Roberts explained Spanish has previously been delivered through video conferencing – this didn't work as the course has to be delivered in person for learning language. Although amalgamation could be done for other topics. There are also impacts to consider.

Mrs A. Holloway stated that within ALN the pressure on staff becoming considerably tight.

Cllr P. Fox questioned the scope for federating? Are there opportunities – general feel for moving the debate on?

Mrs A. Holloway was uncomfortable with this, giving an example with the biggest primary school, that the Head Teacher's out of school time is significant. If we opt down the federation route who is going to do the high level meetings across the federation?

Mrs M. Harris explained cannot federate if you are a church school. Deri View became an alliance and found the time out of school for the Head Teacher was not acceptable. The Alliance was abandoned.

Mr S. Hughes explained the opportunity to utilise Mounton House for out of county placement ASD pupils to be educated in the school. Mounton House could be a big income generator again (as it was before). The future of Mounton House has been an ongoing issue.

Primary Headteacher feedback:

Mrs A. Waters stated many schools already cut to the bone with staff and doesn't see federations as savings in a primary school. We need to raise standards.

Mrs N. Sutherland noted we are compromising and also working hard and collaborating – this incurs costs by having to release staff to attend meetings.

Mr S. McLester stated the need to be led by improvements for outcomes for young people not cost.

Mr J. Standwerwick was in supports Mr S. Hughes from Mounton House, suggesting to maybe look at longer term costs. The EAS business model consortium is another management level over and above our school and county management level. There is a lot of cost and their mode of business is to find problems, criticize and generate more business. This has to be looked at, too many external people costing the education system money.

Mrs A. Holloway stated there have been significant improvements from the EAS service.

Cllr P. Fox explained a school improvement services was now non-existent within the Local Authority, as it is now for the EAS to provide this challenge to schools. The EAS have played a fundamental part of the improvements in schools.

Mrs S. Gwyer-Roberts agreed Mr J. Standerwick made a valid point in looking at value for money.

Mrs B. Randall explained that the Pupil Referral service role is about building capacity within schools.

Cllr E. Hackett Pain acknowledged this as a worthwhile debate and discussion. Within a cluster model there is more work that can be done in this area and needs someone to drive this forward. With regard to Federations, although not favourable, it is fit for purpose, although we need to establish where the saving would be with it. Would like a different approach to looking at Mounton House, stating also that the EAS is still evolving. Once Estyn inspection is complete, would like to undertake the strategic review of education, which will be a working group.

Mrs S. Gwyer-Roberts expressed the need to consider the type of people on these working groups.

Cllr P. Fox again thanked the members for the time given and offered to return to start deeper conversations.

Mrs S. Gwyer-Roberts wished Cllr P. Fox well with the Estyn inspection.

2. To receive and agree consent for apologies

Apologies for absence were received and consent accepted for Mrs S. McGuinness, Mr S. King, Cllr P. Clarke, Mr M. McCormick (Mr S. Hughes sent as a substitute), Mr J. Piper, Mr S. Linton, Mrs N. Wellington.

3. To approve the minutes of the meeting held on the 17th September 2015, draft copy attached.

The minutes were approved and signed as a true copy.

4. Matters arising.

Gwent Music – Mr A. Evans shared the individual levels of subsidy by school. It was noted that 16/17 was the third year of three where the service had been tasked to make £50k efficiencies, and that they had worked extremely hard with the Local Authority to date in order to make the required savings. In order to maintain the same level of service in 16/17, however, there were two options for the Forum to consider: we top slice the ISB and passport the £44k directly to Gwent Music; or schools to pass that level of cost onto parents.

This was debated and Mrs M. Harris explained that a high percentage of Deri View parents could never fund this if the charges were passed on.

Mr A. Evans explained that for the current level of subsidy to continue there would be an impact on other areas of the formula in order to compensate.

Mrs A. Waters stated it will be down to priority at individual school level.

Mr P. Wilding and Mr S. McLester both noted that unless we top slice, the future of the music service will be threatened.

The Forum therefore agreed to top slice so that schools would retain their level of subsidy.

5. To receive consultation responses for proposed formula changes.

Mr A. Evans informed members that only 9 replies were received.

Funding of teaching staff - all of those who responded were in favour. The forum therefore agreed for this element to be taken through the political process for approval and implementation.

Top up element for primaries – all of those who responded were in favour. The forum therefore agreed for this element to be taken through the political process for approval and implementation.

Funding of free school meals at primary school level – 8 responses yes – 1 no. Misunderstood the consultation and thought the FSM was being removed completely. Mr A. Evans explained that the matter had been clarified with the governing body concerned and it was noted that the governing body would have reversed its response if it had fully understood the proposal from the outset. The forum therefore agreed for this element to be taken through the political process for approval and implementation.

Mrs S. Gwyer-Roberts requested that we add an agenda item to a future meeting to discuss how we engage others in order to get a higher rate of response to consultation in future.

6. Proposed changes to formula change for Mounton House – permission to consult.

Mr A. Evans explained that Mounton House school has capacity to host 42 residential places – historically funding the school at that level. Proposal to fund on actual number of places, with a saving of £250k per annum. CYP Finance have already opened discussions with the school with regard to finding these efficiencies. Permission from the forum was requested in order to consult on this.

Mr S. Hughes explained that this is a dramatic cut to the school budget, impact on the ability of the school to retain its residential capability.

Cllr E. Hacket Pain explained how the ALN review had started and how it was developing.

Mr P. Wilding said that ALN needs to be reviewed as a whole.

Cllr E. Hacket Pain explained that this is stage 3 of the overall review.

The forum agreed to give permission to consult.

7. Quarter 2 financial update.

Mr A. Evans gave an update on the Q2 position for schools and central CYP. It was noted that the central CYP budgets were forecasted to be overspent by £197k but that the directorate was working extremely hard to close that gap by exploiting any options for efficiencies to be made. This was an improvement on the Q1 forecast of £77k and the directorate had been tasked with formulating a recovery plan to balance its budget by year end.

Members were reminded that, at the beginning of the 15-16 financial year, collective balances for all schools stood at £1,140k, and the number of schools in deficit had reduced to 5. The Q2 forecast indicated that collective balances are to reduce to £683k, this is an improvement of £105k to Q1, but that the number of schools predicting to be in deficit at year-end has risen to 6.

8. AOB

Mr S. McLester highlighted the pressure that Monmouth School were facing in 16/17 and beyond.

Mrs A. Holloway gave apologies for January meeting.

9. **Date of next meeting** – 14th January 2016
17th March 2016
16th June 2016

All at 4.30pm and all in Magor.

The meeting came to a close at 6.30pm.