

Minutes

Newport Schools Forum

Date: 23rd January 2019

Time: 3.30pm

Present: Chairperson Nicola Allan (NA), Bethan Parry- Jones (BPJ), Kate Guest (KG), Carl Sherlock (CS), Jo Giles (JG), Dean Taylor (DT), Jan de Clare (JdC), Nick Brain (NB), Mark Rowland (MR), Joe Wightman (JW), Julie Collins (JC), Cllr John Guy (CJG), Caroline McLauchlan (CM),

Officers in Attendance:

Andrew Powles (AP), Deborah Weston (DW), Martin Dacey (MD), Clare Watts (CW), Charlotte Cregg (CC), Ceri Gibbons (CG), Owen James (AHoF), Meirion Rushworth (HoF) Claire Barber

1. Apologies for Absence

Sarah Morgan, Katy Rees, Gavin Jones, Gail Giles, Annette Daily, Peter Garland, Jon Watts

2. Update of Final Settlement

Updated settlement has increased due to small increase in RSG and change to Tax base equating to £1.1m overall increase on initial settlement. Plus, additional grants estimated at £2m for Social services and Schools

DT queried if all grant money would go to schools or will Cabinet decide.

HoF confirmed £1.5 grant allocated this year, next year £390k will go to schools.

DT queried if a review had been undertaken to identify if the teachers' pay grant covered the actual cost of the pay rise.

HoF confirmed all money allocated to schools. Most grants were one off payments and the pay rise was not anticipated to be supported by the grant going forward into 2019/20.

CC confirmed that an analysis of the cost to each school of the teachers' pay award had been undertaken and the final grant received in 2018/19 exceeded the cost to schools.

NB Queried if the extra teaching costs have been considered.

HoF Acknowledged that funding issued would not cover all costs and confirmed next year's grants will be passed straight to schools.

NB queried if extra funding will be received for pensions.

HoF confirmed it would be for pensions only but potentially not the full amount. It the intention that all grants will be passed to schools.

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AHoF advised it is assumed that other grants will be available but no figures are available yet.

DT advised the group that EAS had implied to Headteachers that grant funding for professional development would be distributed .

JG queried if the professional learning grant was to be distributed by the EAS via Newport Schools

HoF advised that it is our understanding that grants will go through EAS straight to schools.

NB queried if £360k is this the amount to be considered by Cabinet

HoF confirmed that is the amount to be considered.

AHoF gave a brief overview of the Cabinet Report Papers.

NA raised a query regarding page 67 point 3.7 - what is the investment mentioned.

AHoF advised the £2.2m was used for social care and education (SEN) pressures.

ND queried if this investment had been used to pay for OOC placements

AHoF Confirmed it had along with Social Services and other pressure areas.

NA raised a query regarding page 68 5.1 - what is the % in growth of pupils over this time, is the % growth in the pupil population greater than the overall % increase in finance available to schools

AHoF Advised that pupil population is not considered unless new schools are opened. Funding is based on number of pupils in each school not the growth overall.

NA raised a query regarding page 70 – although this indicates a 10% increase in funding from 2013-2018, how does this compare to the increase in pupil population in Newport during the period 2013-2018

Action DW to provide % increase in pupil numbers.

NA raised a query regarding the table on page 75 – Out of County Recoupment Income, is this an investment or money back in?

CW confirmed it relates to a loss of income due to us utilising Newport placements because of local demand and not selling them to other authorities so this is an income reduction.

NA raised a query regarding page 76 - does this point relate to pensions as covered in the opening overview?

HoF confirmed that this does.

NA stated that in relation to page 83 – There were no specific details contained within the distributed papers about the changes to the arrangements with SENCOM and the plans to improve residential care for pupils in Newport for forum to take an informed view.

AHoF advised further details are in additional cabinet papers.

Action Finance to provide links so that School Forum can take an informed view

NA raised a query regarding page 119 &120 Table, are the reductions in independent fostering placement and out of area placements which are predicted a realistic view given the steep rise in demand in recent years and the unpredictable nature of this type of need.

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AHoF Advised that based on the age profile of every child this will result in the decrease JG queried if existing pupils would just replace these.

MR stated it would be useful to have sight of the strategy for reducing Out of County placements costs at future meetings.

AHoF Confirmed this is being looked at by Education currently and future plans are being considered.

HoF will work with Sarah Morgan to look at a way forward.

Action – AP/HoF will discuss with SM.

NA asked that representatives from both Primary and Secondary school share the views obtained from colleagues regarding the letters drafted to the Cabinet Member.

MR gave an overview from CONSH on behalf of secondary schools. Responses received from 8 secondary schools and will be presented once all responses are received. Points raised were:

It's concerning to Secondary Schools that NCC pupils are now the lowest funded in Wales per pupil (WG published figures Budget expenditure per pupil 2018 - 2019).

The proposed budget would leave secondary schools unable to fund current level of staffing and provision. The £3m shortfall in funding identified in the budget paper would require an approx. reduction of 69 teachers (mid-grade) or 99 TA's (grade 3) either through non-renewal of fixed term contracts or redundancy processes.

The budget paper outlines 10% cash increases over a 5-year period for school – The increase over this period for secondary schools is only 2.72% against NJC support staff increase during this period of between 15.1% to 38.2% and increases for teaching staff of 9.2% to 14.4%.

School balances have been eradicated by most secondary schools to meet previous cost pressures.

The impact of the proposed level of cuts would be:-

- Increased class sizes to 35 – 40.
- Reduction in curriculum offer – likely that the practical and creative subjects will be hardest hit.
- An inability to fund and update digital and ICT resources which will impact significantly on developing learners.
- We anticipate negative parent and learner feedback.
- Changes to inclusion provision and reduction in alternative provision would undoubtedly be required. Reducing the number of learning coaches and TAs would increase numbers accessing the Bridge Achievement Centre (and similar provisions), aligned to central cuts to EWO and EPS services, our most vulnerable pupils are those worst affected.

Secondary Schools require LA assurances re: the Council meeting any shortfalls in non-funded WG pension costs and also rate increases which have not be included in the figures presented to Cabinet.

Whilst Secondary colleagues are acutely aware of the financial pressures faced by the Council, it asks Cabinet to prioritise funding to a level that ensures that the young people they and we collectively serve, receive the very best standard of education to maximise their future potential.

CS Read out the letter from NAPHS on behalf of primary Schools. Main Points were:

Primary colleagues recognise the pressures currently being placed on Newport City Council and the challenges it has to deliver front line services within the budget settlement it receives from Welsh Government.

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Significant concerns have been raised on the ability to continue to operate our schools effectively and safely with current levels of funding.

During 2018/19 49 schools in Newport have significant in year deficits totalling approximately £3.3m (Secondary Sector - 2.2m, Primary Sector 1.2m, Special Schools Sector 184k and Nursery Sector 28.5k) with an estimation that 45 schools will move into an overall deficit budget over the next financial year 2019-2020.

Many Primary schools have already taken measures to keep surpluses positive up to this point and there are very few options left to explore.

A number of scenarios have been identified that include options such as closing schools for half a day each week to core PPA time, increasing class sizes, removal of interventions etc. if proposals go ahead.

Many budgets supported by additional grants which are often used to 'prop up' budgets by covering existing staff wages thereby painting a 'rosier' picture of the funding shortfall.

The proposed increase funding for schools by £3m, falls significantly short of the expected pressures of £6.4m. It has been estimated that this would require around 69 teachers or 99 teaching assistants to be made redundant or lost through non-renewable contracts.

Cuts to vital central services have been proposed including a reduction in the numbers of Education Welfare Officers and Educational Psychologists. Children and families are arriving at schools with greater and more complex needs at a time when it is proposed that capacity to support them should be significantly reduced.

Cuts to SPLD and Children and Young People's Services have impacted schools negatively, school staff are having to support families who are affected by the lack of more specialist services once available to them.

Primary sector asks that funding for schools is increased to meet and exceed all additional pressures to ensure Education in Newport supports and drives the 'resilient communities and aspirational people' corporate priorities

AP Advised that this letter should be sent directly SM to discuss with the CM.

MR Asked at what level are the current levels of council balances and asked if NCC are the point where The Council run with a lower balance.

HoF Advised that the reserves are at the minimum level with the majority earmarked for specific use.

ND raised a query regarding the £2m of invest to save reserve identified on P.14 of the papers.

HoF Advised this is used to fund one off costs.

KG Queried if it was now appropriate for Schools to use this reserve.

HoF Advised the Invest to save is for one off costs only i.e. redundancy costs.

AHoF Stated the reserve is currently being used to balance budgets.

DT Stated that Education budgets across Wales are in crisis. Headteachers do not know how they will continue.

DT asked that forum look at how nurseries are funded as the costs of staff to run nursery provision is significantly in excess of the funding received. DT indicated that he received £42k of funding and the cost of running the nursery provision in his school was in excess of £70k.

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DT gave his views regarding the lack of funding and encouraged all to use the forum to make these views heard.

JG Asked that there be clarity in presentation between income that schools were generating through external works with Estyn, EAS and through lettings and the actual budget received. The forum member expressed concerned that there were occasions where schools appeared to be managing a budget or were in surplus a result of income generation and this was not clearly expressed in the presentation of the budgets.

NB Asked if the extra funding recently released by WG give an in accurate bottom line balance to school budgets when reviewed by the Cabinet Member.

CS asked if Finance could provide an analysis of how much each schools costs to run, and what is the income for each school

HoF Confirmed this information is already available to each school

MR Asked for clarity regarding dates for draft budgets.

CC Confirmed indicative budgets we will aim to issue by 14 February with final budgets confirmed during June.

3. AOB

CW reported that following the meeting this am regarding the SLA agreements, feedback at the meeting was positive and detailed packs will be issued next week and signed SLA's should be returned in March. NA brought the meeting to a close and thanked all for attending.

Next Forum meeting(s):

19 February 2019
3.30-5.00pm Committee Room 1