

# Minutes

## Newport Schools Forum

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Date: 9<sup>th</sup> January 2020  
Time: 3pm  
Venue: Committee Room 1, Civic Centre, Newport

Present:

Chairperson Nicola Allan (NA), Jo Giles (JG), Jan de Clare (JdC), Gavin Jones (GJ), Kate Knight (KKn), Mark Rowlands (MR), Ann Tai (AT), James Bell (JB), Nick Brain (NB), Kate Guest (KG), Bethan Parry Jones (BPJ)

Officers in Attendance:

Nicholas Lo Turco (NLT), Karyn Keane (KK), Katy Rees (KR), Clare Watts (CW), Charlotte Clegg (CC), Owen James (OJ)

### 1. Apologies for Absence

Dean Taylor, Peter Garland, Annette Daly, Matt Lewis, Andrew Powles, Sarah Morgan, Deb Weston, Caroline McLachlan.

### 2. Minutes of meeting held on 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2019



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The minutes of the previous meeting held 2 December 2019 were reviewed for accuracy. Clarity was sought on the ALN early years top up funding in Item 2. appendix 5 & 6 paragraph 3. It was confirmed that a sum of £50,000 would be distributed to qualifying schools in 2019/20 but that future years funding would be reviewed as part of further formula funding work to be undertaken in 2020/21 and onwards in line with the new ALN act.

The LA confirmed the new lump sum payment of £20k, £30k and £40k, dependant on the size of primary school and agreed for implementation in 2020/21 is in addition to any matrix funding awarded which will allow schools to support any in year movement.

The LA agreed to amend the minutes to read 'pressure' not 'categorisation' in respect of ALN funding under AOB, paragraph 4.

### 3. Matters arising

**Action - CC to contact governor support to request expressions of interest to fill these vacancies.**

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Graham Berry, Governor St Julian's School and Nick Brain, Business Manager Bassaleg confirmed as new members replacing Jon Watts and Robert Lynbeck.

**Action - JG to seek volunteers at NAPHS to take up the position of teacher panel representative on the forum.**

Steve Rayer, Headteacher of Rogerstone Primary to replace Meryl Echeverry as Teacher Panel representative.

**Action – LA to amend wording in table Appendix, item 2 of ALN & Special school funding**

Actioned and is in the formula.

**Action – The LA to undertake an assessment of the pupil categories for each Primary LRB**

Actioned.

#### **4. SRS - SLA and EdTech Programme – Matt Lewis**

LA officer gave a brief update on the EdTech Programme in the absence of Shared Resource Service (SRS) representative.

Welsh Governments (WG) vision is for all schools to use their platform Hwb. Three year funding provided by WG to ensure all schools have appropriate infrastructure to access the platform. A strategic group has been created between the LA, SRS and School representatives to support work to develop the infrastructure and the new SLA.

Baseline assessments of all schools have been completed by SRS and the WG have awarded £2.3m to March 2020 to commence the infrastructure work stream to ensure all schools meet national standard. Funding will decrease in the 2<sup>nd</sup> and third years respectively.

Any schools in the SRS SLA will have work completed by SRS, all other schools will be provided with the equipment but will be expected to complete the work themselves. All schools must meet the national standards before wave 2 funding can be awarded.

SRS are expecting deliveries of equipment during March/April, schools have until 31st Dec 2020 to complete installation and SRS job adverts are currently live.

Where schools are not in SLA and are required to undertake the installation of new equipment there is some grant funding available to support this however the LA are not aware of the value at this time.

The strategic team will need to consider sustainability going forward and SRS are developing a new SLA to replace the STEP model which is no longer fit for purpose. The strategic group will report back to forum.

**Action – KK to request Matt Lewis provides an update at the next meeting**

#### **5. Update on Final Settlement – Owen James**

Newport City Council (NCC) had a better provisional settlement for 2020/21 than anticipated (NCC assumption 1%). This is largely due to an amendment to the data that WG have been using for population. There will be a phased adjustment as the increase is too large to implement in one go.

The increase of 5.4% in the Revenue Support Grant (RSG) equates to £13.7m. Anticipated increase at 1% was £2.1m, the revised increase at 5.4% resulted in an additional £11.6m. Specific grants transferred into the RSG include teachers pay and pension of around £5m. Cabinet will decide where the remaining £7m is allocated.

School reserves have been highlighted to cabinet as a concern due to the level of current overspending which currently stands at £3.1m. Work continues to challenge schools to reduce these overspends and deficits. Cabinet may decide to use a portion of the £7m to support school reserves however they could

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choose use the money elsewhere in other sectors. Cabinet may also choose to take the consultation period into account at the end of January before making any decisions.

The LA confirmed that another pressure area within the LA was Social Care. Medium term decisions and future investments should be made before reductions to council tax. Schools do need to continue to deliver efficiency even if we got to a balanced position as a result of this funding.

The LA advised that the draft settlement is detailed on the Welsh Government website under budget 2020/2021. Table 7 on the WG draft settlement shows increases in grants however very little detail about what these are for although ALN and PDG are featured heavily. The LA need clarification as to what WG need the LA to do with those grants such as whether or not it can be transferred into ISB. There is no confirmation if these are one-off funding or will be fully funded grants in future years. It is possible that the LA might not get this clarification by the time the final budget settlements figures are published but NCC are pushing for this information as soon as possible.

It is anticipated there will be an increase in the regional consortium school improvement grants but we feel that is due to the curriculum change and will lead to additional work for school staff.

Business Manager (BM) circulated hard copies of a letter addressed to Cabinet on behalf of CONSH regarding the draft budget proposals (see attached).

The LA advised forum that cabinet are not meeting until 12 February to approve the budget for 20/21. Once approved, it is planned that indicative budgets will be prepared and individual allocations will be issued to schools to schools on the 14<sup>th</sup> February, with detailed budget packs to follow.

BM raised that the secondary sector would be £1m short of where it needs to be, the majority of schools will still be looking at being in deficit next year and that one of the key indicators over the years has been the Per Pupil Funding (PPF) rate across England and Wales.

The LA advised the forum that PPF as an indicator was not a reliable comparator due to each LA funding schools differently. Discrepancies arise due to some services being delegated/non delegated and each LA having individual funding formulas.

The LA commented there was a uniqueness in Newport because of the pressure created by the increase in pupil numbers, creating new schools and expanding existing schools has led to greater pressure on budgets. Additional funds have gone into demographic increase but the WG has not kept up with the pace of this increase.

The LA assured forum that on the assumptions made, all school specific grants will go to schools.

In relation to the Post 16 grant, actual allocation not known yet however the proposed reduction was expected to be minimal.



Secondary HT Letter  
to Cabinet.pdf

### **6. Review of School Cabinet Papers – Owen James**

The initial cabinet report includes the funding assumed in the medium term financial plan (MTFP) for 2020/21 as the LA did not know what the draft settlement would be going into cabinet. Cabinet were mindful of the pressures schools are facing and are looking to fund the pressures identified of £4.4m covering areas such as pay award, inflation and new schools. The MTFP assumed that the RSG would include the transfer of school specific grants such as the increase in pensions and pay awards, these

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grants will be transferred in their entirety to schools making the anticipated increase to the Individual School Budget (ISB) for 2020/21 £8-9m.

The LA confirmed that the pressure identified for pay award under 'pay awards and increments' includes incremental drift. Headteacher (HT) raised why the figures in table 1 under 3.12 have reduced. The LA confirmed that new schools are dealt with separately and the pay awards are updated as more information is known. As the 2.75% pay increase was announced late on, current inflation assumptions are for 2% as per the rest of the authority as this figure is used for consistency, this will be reviewed going forward.

BM stated that schools are being appropriately funded moving forward and there would be a flat settlement.

The LA confirmed that the level of schools reserve has been clearly highlighted within the report and that even with extra funding going in, it would continue to be a significant challenge for schools to make the necessary savings to reduce their deficits.

HT stated that in relation to table 2 and 3.14 Special schools, the total funding includes school transport cost of £0.5m. It should not be included as ISB funding and should be excluded. For transparency, pupil growth of 6% should be compared alongside the increase to funding of 11% over the last 5 years as it appears there is more money for schools than there actually is.

LA reassured the forum that Cabinet Members are fully briefed and well aware of the challenges faced by schools.

HT raised the issue that not all FEIA's have been completed/translated. On the consultation page, 4 haven't been completed. One in particular has inaccuracies in it on page 84 about the removal of transport provision for post 16. Gwynllw is not mentioned therefore unable to identify where those pupils are within the system.

The LA suggested HT contact the Senior Finance Business Partner (SFBP) for the appropriate contact to raise those queries.

#### **7. Questions**

#### **8. AOB**

HT advised forum there is an online survey with a letter to all AMs, Welsh Government and the Minister and asked that Secondary colleagues complete the survey.

#### **Next Forum meeting:**

19 March 2020