



**Caerphilly County Borough Council
Schools Budget Forum
Minutes of Meeting held on 25th April, 2012**

Present: Sandra Aspinall, Tony Maher, Sue Richards, Brenda Thomas, Cllr Mann, Ed Berry, Garry Wells, Belinda Stenner, Pam Ireland, Paul Fowler, Richard Carbis, Tim Crosse, Kerry Davies, Mark Williams, Paul Rossiter, Donna Jones, Geraint Willington, Cheryl Adams.

1. Apologies:

Chris David, Cllr Bevan, Jacqui Peplinski, Simone Williams, Dr. Howard, Richard Parsons, Matthew Gingell

2. Minutes of Meeting held on 8th February 2012– Matters Arising

Minutes agreed as an accurate record of meeting held 8th February, 2012

3. New Invoicing System for Energy Payments (agenda item 5)

PR presented an overview of the new invoicing system for energy payments. The Bulk Bill Checker, being introduced in few weeks, will change current manual system to an electronic system which has the benefit of significantly reducing time the team currently spends checking the accuracy of bills, other benefits include meter reading concurrency, automatic input of new contracts, recalculations, bill validation report.

The Accounts Link will free up school resources as the Energy Management team will make payments on behalf of clients. However e-mail copy bills will be sent to clients who will retain full budget control and the ability to challenge bills.

Other benefits for schools include improved reporting, would cover school holiday periods, early payment benefit, and free up energy team's time to look at other school energy efficiencies.

Currently used by Torfaen. Forum members agreed this was a beneficial project for schools to be involved in.

4. Health & Safety Guidance re Grounds Maintenance Opting out (agenda item 3)

DJ confirmed a circular had been sent to head teachers informing them of the implications and risks of opting out of the Grounds Maintenance SLA. Consideration must be given to the high risk of heavy machinery and chemical usage and ensure adequate insurance is in place as not covered by

Authority. Schools that have currently opted out had been written to personally as responsibility falls on Head teacher and Governing Body.

To forward circular with minutes.

Action DJ

5. 17th Edition Electrical testing (agenda item 4)

DJ received numerous queries from schools following the surveys for the 17th Edition Electrical testing with concerns regarding the cost of carrying out remedial works. Schools received reports last September and there may be insurance implications if Priority 1, 2 & 3 works are not carried out. Priority 4 are recommendations only. After meeting with Bleddyn Hopkins it was agreed that Capital will fund 75% of Priority 1, 2 and 3 with schools contributing 25%. MJ is putting work out to tender and agreed to provide a timeline for schools. Priority 1 to be completed end of August and Priority 2 by end of September. If possible disruptive work to be completed in school holidays or after hours.

TC raised an issue regarding accuracy of surveys as his recommended full rewire when half of his school is brand new. DJ recommended schools, if concerned, to come back to her and seek advice.

PF queried if schools had rectified Priority 1, 2 & 3 works already would they be refunded 75% - DJ confirmed this to be case refund in new financial year. DJ agreed to send out communication to schools.

Action DJ

6. School Effectiveness Grant (SEG) & Pupil Deprivation Grant (PDG)

GW presented an overview of SEG, WEG and PDG for 2012/13. Very much a consortia based grant with an outcomes based requirement. Regional education consortia spending plans to be submitted by May 30th. Proposed formula allocation same as previous 2 years. Recommended delegation rate by WG 75% proposed CCBC delegation model 84.4%

WEG has merged with Welsh Language Grant, purpose is similar to SEG and also a consortia bid. Recommended delegation rate 50% CCBC delegation model 58%. PF commented English medium schools find difficulty in spending WEG and could services be provided that schools could buy back into. SA commented there is a lot of resources in Welsh medium and schools could work together being creative to ensure grant is spent.

SA confirmed help and guidance will be given to schools to make the PDG grant claim as simple as possible with information to be sent out next week. Funding has been predetermined by WG and based on FSM numbers – to be circulated with minutes.

Action EP

7. MTFP proposals

TM presented an update on the MTFP. Authority adopting a proactive policy making savings in advance. Savings have been achieved for 12/13. In 2010/11 all directorates remained in budget with only Social Services currently projected to exceed budget for 11/12, however this would not impact on other directorates.

Pledges of WG to protect schools have been upheld

2011/12	1.58%
2012/13	2.08%
2013/14	1.27%

Compared to other authorities Caerphilly is in a good position. The capital programme is considered a priority by the authority and does not want to cut back on infrastructure. Looking forward to future funding levels trend is not good however key message is that pledges will be honoured.

8. Consortium Update

SA updated position the outline business case has been approved for the Integrated Service. Staff are being met on an individual basis and structure should be put together by end of May. The lead director has been appointed and starts in June and will be speaking to Head teachers in all authorities.

9. Wireless Network Implementation to Schools

Wi-Fi initiative approved 03/04/2012 part funded by authority 25% , work currently underway in primaries with secondary surveys being reviewed hopefully completed by end of next week. KD raised that there was a general feeling amongst secondary heads that 75% is still a significant amount to find in March. SR confirmed that schools in difficulty could opt for three year option to pay. KD queried if estimates came in below current surveys would the budget of 250k still be available for schools. SA confirmed this would be the case however the saving would be distributed fairly over primary and secondary.

10. TSB Update

TM gave an update of previous meeting. The survey results were discussed in detail and action plans were developed to improve services where necessary. The SLAs are now distributed electronically and this has been well received.

11. Delegation Rate

TM presented a report to inform Forum that the delegation rate has increased from 2009/10 to 2012/13. The target of 80% for 2012/13 has been achieved. The target for 2014/15 is 85%. Further delegation of services will be required to meet this target.

12. School Balances Update

SR presented report with an update of current and projected school balances. Balances are predicted to significantly reduce over next three years. Primary predicted to fall to 2.5 m in 2011/12 Secondary to 1.6m. Final balances not available until Year End closure 11th May, 2012.

A policy to claw back surpluses from schools in excess of the recommended £50,000 or 5% of formula allocation is currently being drafted and a summary of the timeline and process was distributed to forum. This is currently being consulted upon and a final draft will be submitted to next meeting.

13. AOB

None

Date of Next Meeting

Proposed date of next meeting 27th June clashes with a Mini Olympic day for school children. Early meeting or change of date to be confirmed.

Cllr Mann extended his thanks to everyone for their attendance and comments and hopes to attend next meeting following elections to continue the good work of the forum.