

**Minutes of the meeting of the Ceredigion Schools Budget Forum held
remotely via Teams on Thursday, 20 November 2025**

PRESENT: Councillor Wyn Thomas (Chair), Cabinet Member for Schools, Lifelong Learning and Skills; Councillor Bryan Davies, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Democratic Services, Policy, Performance and People and Organisation; Councillor Chris James, Chair of the Learning Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee; Lee Burrows, Head Teacher: Ysgol Cenarth a Llechryd; Carol Davies, Head Teacher: Ysgol Dyffryn Cledlyn; Peter Leggett, Head Teacher: Ysgol Gynradd Rhydypennau; Carys Morgan, Head Teacher: Ysgol Bro Pedr and Dorian Pugh, Head Teacher: Ysgol Henry Richard.

OFFICERS PRESENT: Elen James, Chief Education Officer and Executive Corporate Lead Officer: Schools, Lifelong Learning and Culture; Carys Fowles, Finance Manager: Schools and Customer Contact and Neris Morgans, Democratic Services Officer.

(4.24pm – 4.54pm)

1. Apologies

- i. Mair Hughes, Head Teacher: Ysgol Penglais apologised for her inability to attend the meeting.
- ii. Councillor Bryan Davies, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Democratic Services, Policy, Performance and People and Organisation apologised for joining the meeting late.
- iii. Duncan Hall, Executive Corporate Lead Officer: Finance and Procurement apologised for his inability to attend the meeting due to other Council commitments.

2. Disclosure of personal interest

There were no disclosures of personal interests.

3. To confirm the Minutes of the Meeting held on 5 December 2024

It was **RESOLVED** to confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 5 December 2024 as a correct record.

4. Matters arising from the Minutes

None.

5. Overall Corporate Position

The Finance Manager presented the Overall Corporate Position, highlighting the following points:

- The in year Q2 position - broadly breakeven revenue position overall and Pay awards and Employers NI had been resolved, although some Capital funding challenges continued to be resolved.
- The updated MTFS (2026/27 to 2030/31) was approved by Full Council on 23/10/25 - included key assumptions modelled around pay for next year (2.75%) and Council Tax (modelled at 7.5%) and an assumed £1m of operational savings / income for 2026/27 (no reference to Schools bar invest to save energy). The scenario would result in a £1.4m Budget shortfall for 2026/27.

- The Welsh Government (WG) 2026/27 Provisional Settlement was due on 24/11/25 with a funding floor of 2.3% now expected as announced in WG's Draft Budget. The current working assumption was that funding to cover the full year effect of this year's pay-awards (Teachers and NJC 0.2%) as well as next year's modelled pay-awards would be fully passported to the Delegated Schools Budget; therefore, the financial challenge at an individual school level would predominantly be driven by pupil numbers.
- If savings were required, this would be discussed with schools before Christmas.

It was **AGREED** to note the information.

6. Schools Delegated Budget (School Balances)

The Finance Manager presented information on school balances. The information was in the public domain and would be circulated to the Forum following the meeting. She reported that the actual reserves had decreased from April 2023 to April 2024, before increasing again by April 2025. A decrease was projected by April 2026. All schools were utilising their reserves, with 3 schools in deficit in April 2025. She added that Ceredigion had the fewest schools in deficit across Wales, which reflected the dedication of Head Teachers.

Councillor Bryan Davies stated it was key that the Governing Bodies of the schools in deficit were supportive and provided reassurance that every effort was being made to improve the situation.

The Chief Education Officer explained that a workshop was held in February 2024 for headteachers only with schools with 30 or fewer children and another with 50 or fewer children to discuss budgets. Following further meetings and close work between the schools service and schools, most schools ended the year with a balanced budget. Although the workshops may not take place next year, Officers would continue to work closely with the schools and the Chairs of Governing Bodies.

The Finance Manager noted that permission had to be sought from the Chief Education Officer and the Executive Corporate Lead Officer: Finance and Procurement by the schools in a deficit, and a recovery plan had been put in place as a result.

Councillor Bryan Davies stated that if the recovery plan was not achievable, it was key that schools communicated this with Officers.

In response to a query by Peter Leggett, Head Teacher: Ysgol Gynradd Rhydypennau related to a financial update he had received recently, and that the formula funding would be reduced, the Finance Manager stated she would clarify the position with him following the meeting. She explained that as the aim was to finance the increase in pay, funding should be similar, unless there were significant changes in pupil numbers or the Additional Learning Needs (ALN) of the school.

Dorian Pugh, Head Teacher: Ysgol Henry Richard noted that the school's finances had been relatively healthy, however, finances were tight overall. He added that there had recently been a restructure at the school, and they were increasingly relying on the effort and goodwill of staff.

The Finance Manager stated the concern was echoed by all head teachers, and the Chief Executive, the Leader of the Council and the Executive Corporate Lead Officer: Finance and Procurement were aware of this. In relation to the announcement of £8.2m of funding announced by WG to improve ALN reforms, she clarified that she had sent a message to WG requesting further details. In addition, the proposals to moving ALNCos to leadership pay and conditions as per the recommendation from the Independent Welsh Pay Review Body's (IWPRB) fifth report were currently being consulted upon by WG.

It was **AGREED** to note the information.

7. Formula Funding 2025-26

It was noted that Head Teachers had already received a copy of the information, but it would be circulated again following the meeting.

The Finance Manager noted there had been a written statement by WG on changes to school funding from March 2026 ([Written Statement: Consultation on the School Funding, Budget Statements and Outturn Statements \(Wales\) Regulations 2026 \(20 November 2025\) | GOV.WALES](#)). Any changes proposed would be considered by the Forum at a later date and implemented from 1 April 2027 onwards.

In response to a concern raised by Peter Leggett, Head Teacher: Ysgol Gynradd Rhydypennau on the decline in the number of free school meals despite correspondence and engagement sessions, the Finance Manager clarified WG were aware of the situation. She added that data such as the number of free school meals per school would need to be collated during considerations to any changes to school funding.

The Chief Education Officer added there had been a decline in the number of free school meals across Wales, despite many marketing campaigns. She extended her thanks to the Officers for the work involved with preparing school budgets and for their promptness in responding to any queries.

Carol Davies, Head Teacher: Ysgol Dyffryn Cledlyn echoed the Chief Education Officer's thanks to the Officers for their work and proactiveness.

It was **AGREED** to note the information.

8. Grants

The Finance Manager presented information on the main grants received by schools for 2025-26, which totalled £5,992,011. This information would be circulated to the Forum following the meeting. She explained that the process had changed with grants and WG determined the amount to be provided to each school, which had not been the case in the past.

The Chief Education Officer confirmed that if the local authority received additional grant funding for education, this was passed directly to schools.

The Leader of the Council thanked the Finance and Procurement Service for their diligent work. He explained that a high percentage of the local authority's budget was allocated to schools; however, he was aware of the challenges faced by schools. He added that there was a responsibility on all to ensure funding was used efficiently.

It was **AGREED** to note the information.

9. Any Other Business

None.

10. Date of next meeting

Date of next meeting to be circulated in due course.

The Chair extended his thanks to all school staff and Officers for their work. He wished all present a Merry Christmas.