

Cllr G Hinchey

County Hall  
Cardiff  
CF10 4UW

Cc. Cllr S Merry

14<sup>th</sup> December 2016

Dear Cllr Hinchey

### **Council Budget Proposals 2017/18**

I'm writing to formally respond to the Council's budget proposals on behalf of Cardiff Schools' Budget Forum.

The Forum is aware of the financial pressure that the council is under due to a potential shortfall of £24m for 2017/18 and £75m over the medium term. We note the continued financial planning assumption of a 30% cap on schools' growth excluding demographics contributing £1.9m to the budget reduction requirement. We wish to state that this will continue to increase the pressure on schools already stretched budgets possibly resulting in some schools being forced to make further redundancies.

In considering the implications of the Council Budget strategy for the 2017/18 financial year the School Budget Forum would also highlight the following;

- The continuing significant increase in energy and exam costs, including the significant implications of the new Welsh Baccalaureate examinations, which have fallen upon school delegated budgets.
- Continuing concerns over post-16 funding and the urgent need for a strategy to address this potential volatility of WG funding.
- The impact that the ending of Challenge Cymru grant funded programme will have on the 6 Cardiff secondary schools involved. Each school have received significant amounts of funding in addition to their delegated budgets which has led to positive impacts in pupil attainment. The Forum is keen to learn how will the city support these schools going forward and ensure that improvements gained through the programme are not lost.
- The Forum supports the proposal to reduce the LA contribution to the Central South Consortium by 5% particularly as the Education Directorate has identified savings target of 15.5%.
- The continuing uncertainty over any reduction in the WG EIG funding for 2017/18 and the impact this will have. For example, there is a rising demand in the city for support for pupils with English as an additional language for which Cardiff received significant MEAG funding, which is now included in the EIG funding.
- Concern over the impact of another increase in the price of school meals particularly on families who are part of the 'working poor' or who have been affected by the recent benefit cap. We would welcome an opportunity through the School Budget Forum to explore alternative models for school meals provision.

- A need for greater assurance over the value for money of bought in services and we would urge the council to ensure that it obtains the best prices for utilities.
- Continuing concerns over the value for money of services such as that provided by Buildings and Facilities Management.
- The forum has received representations from VA schools' representatives in relation to some additional financial pressures they must bear which other maintained schools don't. For example, buildings insurance costs. Historically the formula has generated less for buildings and maintenance costs for this sector than for other maintained schools. The systems that justified this position have been dismantled by Welsh Government.

The School Budget Forum would also urge the Council to consider investing some of the revenue generated from traffic enforcement to address improving road safety schemes near schools and supporting post-16 students traveling between schools to access shared courses.

Finally, the School Budget Forum wishes to remind you that "education should not be regarded as a cost but as an investment in the future". The Council must ensure that it safeguards the City's education system to ensure that all the children of Cardiff have the opportunity to fulfil their potential. There is a real danger that recent outcome improvements achieved through greater stakeholder engagement, alignment, accountability processes and investment recognised by Estyn could be undone, and the highest aspirations and expectations of all, not realised. Cardiff as a capital city should have an education system which delivers 'Cardiff 2020 - Aiming for Excellence'.

Thank you for seeking the views of the School Budget Forum on your budget proposals.

Yours sincerely,



Sarah Griffiths

Chair, Cardiff Schools' Budget Forum