

Cllr C Weaver
County Hall
Cardiff
CF10 4UW

cc. Cllr S Merry

15th December 2017

Dear Cllr Weaver

Council Budget Proposals 2018/19

I'm writing to formally respond to the Council's 2018/19 Budget Proposals on behalf of Cardiff Schools Budget Forum.

We would like to remind the Cabinet of the vision set out in Cardiff 2020 that "All children and young people in Cardiff attend a great school and develop the knowledge, skills and characteristics that lead them to become personally successful, economically productive and actively engaged citizens." In addition, Cllr Merry wrote in the Education Employment and Skills section of Capital Ambition, "We know that a great education will help everyone in Cardiff to achieve their full potential. This Administration will continue to invest in and improve our schools and to make sure that every child has the best possible start in life". These ambitions and vision will not be achieved unless the Council prioritises investing in schools in this and future budgets. The poor physical state of many schools highlighted the October Cabinet Report "Developing the Education Estate in Cardiff", the need to close the gap in attainment of pupil from low-income families and other vulnerable groups of pupils, the development and the new curriculum, and the increasing demand on ALN provision both in terms of population and complex need are just some reasons why such investment is essential.

The Forum recognises that the Council continues to face significant financial pressure if it is to sustain the current level of services, and that it must close a budget gap of £23m in 2018/19 and £73m over the medium term. We note that the budget strategy includes a cap on schools' growth excluding demographics which will contribute savings of £1.5m to this budget gap. However, we would like to remind the cabinet that this cap comes on the back of similar caps on schools' growth over the past 3 years. As a result, schools will again face difficult decisions when setting budgets which are likely to impact on staffing numbers and provision in the classroom and will inevitably affect teacher workload, staff welfare, pupil and parent satisfaction rates and pupil outcomes.

In considering the implications of the Budget Strategy we would also like to highlight the following

- A lack of clarity over how the £20m cut in the Educational Improvement Grant will filter down to individual consortia and local authorities over the next 2 years. There is real concern that the cuts may be targeted at particular elements of the grant such as the MEAG element for which Cardiff receives £4.5m. This funding is delegated to schools and used to employ staff to work directly with pupils. It is essential that schools continue to receive the funding necessary to continue this provision.
- Current indications on Post 16 funding is that it will be maintained in 18/19 but will be subject to an all Wales cut in 19/20. With pupil numbers beginning to rise in secondary schools it is

essential that Cardiff continues to offer young people excellent education at sixth form level ensuring suitable progression routes for all pupils no matter what their ability. This cannot be done without appropriately skilled staff and resources.

- The need to accelerate the asset renewal program so that the significant maintenance backlog in schools can be addressed in a timely fashion. The £25m of capital investment will result in significant capital finance costs from 18/19 onwards.
- The Forum would urge the Council to use capital receipts and secure support from business to contribute to the Band B programme and improvements to existing school sites in order to reduce the reliance on prudential borrowing.
- Forming an innovation group to develop creative solution to problems rather than continually fire-fighting. This should include the voice of students and parents.
- Reducing the reliance on out of county placements for children with ALN by increasing the ALN capacity within the city and exploring whether charitable status could open up additional sources of funding.
- Recognising that there will be significant costs to schools as they begin to prepare for the introduction of the New Curriculum. Time will be needed for planning and the professional development of staff.
- To look more creatively at the apprentice levy paid by schools and how that can be inwardly invested back into schools.

There is a real danger of underfunding causing a fall back at a time when the LA has only recently emerged from formal Estyn scrutiny and is trying to ensure all schools continue to make progress.

The Forum wishes to remind you that our children get one chance at an education. The Council must ensure that it protects the city's schools by ensuring they have sufficient funding to build on the progress made over recent years otherwise we will not achieve the ambition that "every child in Cardiff goes to a good or excellent school".

Yours sincerely,



Sarah Griffiths
Chair, Cardiff Schools Budget Forum