

2nd February 2022

Dear Ian

As Chair of Cardiff Schools Budget Forum, in response to the Budget Strategy Consultation, I note the following:

- Cardiff has the second highest uplift in provisional settlement figures (10.7% vs average 9.4% across Wales) so thank you to Officers for ensuring our interests are well represented nationally
- Of course, this is offset by the discontinuation of the Covid Hardship Fund, RLW for the Care Sector and no further in year grant allocations for teachers pay award next year, so a cautious approach is welcomed as we cannot accurately predict the cost to the LA and individual schools, especially around future Covid mitigations
- School leaders will require further clarity on specific grants and earlier notification (accepting we are dependent on Welsh Government timescales to a large extent) to enable more accurate and effective financial planning and having the right staff in place for the start of each academic year
- We have concerns around the sustainability of grant funding – most notably PDG given the introduction of free school meals for all primary aged children from September. This also raises the question of how eligibility criteria will change and the impact this will have for the LA and individual schools. We would appreciate your best endeavours to input into these discussions and keep us updated. Also, childcare and sustainable waste grant
- Concern that for indicative future settlements the increase drops to 3.5% for 2023/4 and 2.4% for 2024/5 meaning a bleaker picture in the medium term, especially at a time of rising price inflation
- Prudent budget modelling presents an indicative resource surplus of £8.999M overall. However, this is offset by risks including: uncertainty of WG grant allocations in some areas; financial impact of supporting the real living wage; employee pay awards; any new WG grant awards supporting new initiatives and Covid-19 and the high risk of rising energy prices
- Modelling is based on nil use of reserves which we support given the longer-term outlook; modelled increase in Council Tax of 4% which we understand is subject to consultation and may change; budget savings (a 1% efficiency) within education of £2.566M
- However, our members questioned the need to maintain efficiency savings of 1% given the predicted high level of reserves and uncertainties regarding grants and Covid-19 mitigations (especially in light of the next point)
- We are heartened to see the Ask Cardiff Survey results identifying Education and Youth Services as the number one priority, followed by supporting vulnerable children and their families in second place and patently this supports Cardiff 2030 and Child Friendly City initiatives as well as moving further towards UNCRC and WBFGA requirements
- On a LA level, members had questions around how Cardiff fared comparatively to other LAs in terms of Covid claims – asking for benchmarked comparative data to be provided

- Further clarity is required from the LA regarding aspects of Covid -19 mitigation the LA will provide versus what schools are individually responsible for (eg: PPE, cleaning materials, hand sanitiser)

In light of the points above, we would not support any increase in efficiency savings asked of schools for 2022/2023. We would urge you to carefully consider the need for maintaining the 1% efficiency saving - whilst we understand that in future years it will again be essential and from 2023/2024 onwards may even need to increase slightly.

We would welcome continued timely communication once WG announcements are made regarding grant allocations. We are grateful to Officers for the extensive work involved in collating the Education Grants spreadsheet and look forward to sight of the collated work as soon as it is finalised. Next steps are to risk assess for sustainability and keep lobbying WG colleagues for more advance communication to aid schools in their financial planning. And a seat at the table regarding future deprivation measures and associated resource allocation.

You would be most welcome to attend any School Budget Forum meeting and if you require any further input into the Budget Strategy Consultation, please do get in touch with me at:

All the best

Karen Dell'Armi

Karen Dell'Armi
Chair, Schools Budget Forum

Cyf/My Ref.:

Dyddiad/Date: 24 February 2022

Karen Dell'Armi
Chair, Cardiff Schools Budget Forum

Annwyl / Dear Karen

Draft Budget Proposals 2022/23

Thank you for your letter dated 2 February 2022 and the useful comments raised. I can assure you that Cabinet was able to reflect on the points raised prior to our meeting on Thursday 24 February 2022.

As in previous years, I would like to thank the School Budget Forum for the work it undertakes and for its effectiveness in bringing matters of financial concern to the Cabinet's attention. I can confirm that both myself and Councillor Merry, as regular attendees, as well as the wider Cabinet, place great value upon having direct input from school leaders and governors.

I am grateful that you acknowledge that whilst the settlement from Welsh Government is positive for 2022/23, there are additional pressures that must be funded and risks that need to be mitigated. I am though pleased that when Cabinet considered its budget deliberations it determined for the year 2022/23 not to proceed with any budget efficiency ask from delegated school budgets.

I have asked officers to continue dialogue with WG officials and ensure constructive dialogue on the impact of grants and the introduction over the forthcoming period of universal free school meals. I have also asked officers that they continue to engage in early dialogue with the School Budget Forum on issues such as deprivation and resource allocation.

As reported in the last School Budget forum, any decisions on individual school surplus balances will consider the context within which schools currently operate in terms of ability to spend, late receipt of grants, recovery from the impact of the pandemic and a look forward to the medium term. I would anticipate school surplus balances to be considered sympathetically across the City, but the Council will reserve the right to intervene in exceptional cases where a school surplus balance does need to be immediately addressed.

I hope that this letter captures all the points raised in your letter. I want to thank you once again for your support in the budget process and look forward to future discussion and debate with the School Budget Forum.

Yours sincerely,



Y Cynghorydd/Councillor Christopher Weaver
Aelod Cabinet dros Gyllid, Moderneiddio a Pherfformiad/Cabinet member for Finance, Modernisation & Performance

GWEITHIO DROS GAERDYDD, GWEITHIO DROSOCH CHI

Mae'r Cyngor yn croesawu gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg, Saesneg neu'n ddwyieithog. Byddwn yn cyfathrebu â chi yn ôl eich dewis, dim ond i chi roi gwybod i ni pa un sydd well gennych. Ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

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The Council welcomes correspondence in Welsh, English or bilingually. We will ensure that we communicate with you in the language of your choice, as long as you let us know which you prefer. Corresponding in Welsh will not lead to delay.



cc Councillor Huw Thomas, Leader, Cardiff Council;
Councillor Sarah Merry, Cabinet Member for Education, Employment & Skills;
Chris Lee, Corporate Director Resources;
Ian Allwood, Head of Finance;
Melanie Godfrey, Director of Education & Lifelong Learning
Mike Tate, Assistant Director, Education & Lifelong Learning
Neil Hardee, Head of Services to Schools