

Learning and Skills Scrutiny Committee

Meeting Venue
By Zoom

Meeting Date
Wednesday, 19 July 2023

Meeting Time
2.00 pm

For further information please contact

**Katharine Flanagan-Jones,
Democratic and Scrutiny Support
Officer**

katharine-maria.flanagan-
jones@powys.gov.uk



County Hall
Llandrindod Wells
Powys
LD1 5LG
13th July 2023

Mae croeso i chi siarad yn Gymraeg neu yn Saesneg yn y cyfarfod. Rhowch wybod pa iaith rydych am ei defnyddio erbyn hanner dydd, ddau ddiwrnod gwaith cyn y cyfarfod.

The use of Welsh by participants is welcomed. If you wish to use Welsh please inform us by noon, two working days before the meeting

AGENDA

1.	APOLOGIES
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To receive apologies for absence.

2.	DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST
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To receive any disclosures of interest by Members relating to items to be considered at the meeting.

3.	DECLARATIONS OF PARTY WHIP
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To receive disclosures of prohibited party whips which a Member has been given in relation to the meeting in accordance with Section 78(3) of the Local Government Measure 2011.

(NB: Members are reminded that under Section 78 Members having been given a prohibited party whip cannot vote on a matter before the Committee.)

4.	MINUTES
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To authorise the Chair to sign the minutes of the following meetings as a correct record:

31.05.2023

21.06.2023

(Pages 3 - 20)

5.	YOUTH SERVICE STRATEGY
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To receive and consider a presentation on the Youth Service Strategy from Helen Quarrell, Inclusion Manager for Integrated Youth Services.

6.	ALN - ADDITIONAL LEARNING NEEDS
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To receive and consider a presentation on ALN (Additional Learning Needs) from Simon Anderson, Inclusion Manager, Schools Service.

7.	SCHOOL VISITS
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Committee to consider and discuss scheduling school visits over the 2023/24 academic year.

8.	FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME
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To note that future meetings of the Committee are scheduled as follows:

(Pages 21 - 22)

Committee Reflection

Following the close of the meeting the Committee is asked to spend 5 to 10 minutes reflecting on today's meeting.

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE LEARNING AND SKILLS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
HELD BY ZOOM ON WEDNESDAY 31ST MAY 2023**

Present: County Councillor Gwynfor Thomas – Chair
County Councillors: Aled Davies, Bryn Davies, David Meredith, Gareth D Jones, Lucy Roberts, Matt Beecham, Susan McNicholas.

Co-opted Committee Members: Margaret Evitts, Sara Davies

Cabinet portfolio Holders in Attendance: Pete Roberts

Officers: Lynette Lovell, Nancy Owen, Eurig Towns, Wyn Richards

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from:

County Councillors Danny Bebb, Glyn Preston.
Co-opted Committee Member Kathryn Chedzoy
Officers: Georgie Bevan, Jane Thomas

2. ELECTION OF VICE CHAIR

RESOLVED that County Councillor Gareth D Jones be elected Vice-Chair for the ensuing year.

3. DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest from Members relating to items to be considered on the agenda.

4. DECLARATIONS OF PARTY WHIP

The Committee did not receive any disclosures of prohibited party whips which a Member had been given in relation to the meeting in accordance with Section 78(3) of the Local Government Measure 2011.

5. MINUTES

- Minutes of the 29th March 2023

The minutes were agreed by Committee Members present as a true and accurate reflection of the meeting and ratified accordingly by the Chair.

6.	FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME
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Action: Items added:

- School Budgets – June / July
- School Transformation Programme – Summer / Autumn 2023
- Admissions Code / Capacity
- Attendance
- School Transport
- ALN to be rescheduled.

7.	EXEMPT ITEM
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Background: To consider passing the following Resolution:

RESOLVED to exclude the public for the following item of business on the grounds that there would be disclosure to them of exempt information under category 3 of The Local Authorities (Access to Information) (Variation) (Wales) Order 2007).

The Monitoring Officer has determined that category 3 of the Access to Information Procedure Rules applies to the following item. His view on the public interest test (having taken account of the provisions of Rule 14.8 of the Council's Access to Information Rules) was that to make this information public would disclose information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

These factors in his view outweigh the public interest in disclosing this information. Members are asked to consider these factors when determining the public interest test, which they must decide when considering excluding the public from this part of the meeting.

Action:

- Proposed and seconded by Members of the Committee.

8.	BENCHMARKING TOOL
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Background:

Committee received and considered a presentation on the Benchmarking Tool for Schools.

County Councillor R G Thomas (Chair)

WORKSHOP

Following the conclusion of the meeting a workshop for Committee Members was held regarding:

- Welsh Government School Improvement Guidance
- School Self – Evaluation Processes

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE LEARNING AND SKILLS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
HELD BY ZOOM ON
WEDNESDAY 21st JUNE 2023**

Present: County Councillor Gwynfor Thomas (Chair)
County Councillors: G D Jones, D Bebb, M Beecham, AW Davies, B Davies, D Meredith, G Morgan, S McNicholas, G Preston, L Roberts
Co-opted Member: K Chedgzoy, S Davies, M Evitts.

Cabinet portfolio Holders in Attendance:

County Councillors:
P Roberts (Cabinet Member for a Learning Powys)
D Thomas (Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Transformation)
J Charlton (Cabinet Member for a Greener Powys)

Officers: Lynette Lovell, Director of Education and Children, Georgie Bevan, Head of Schools Service, Lynsey McCrohon, Strategic Lead for Music and Expressive Arts, Mari Thomas, Finance Manager, Nancy Owen, Finance Business Partner, Sarah Quibell, Service Manager for Education Support Services

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from:
Officer: Emma Palmer – Interim Director Corporate Services

2. DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest from Members relating to items to be considered on the agenda.

3. DECLARATIONS OF PARTY WHIP

The Committee did not receive any disclosures of prohibited party whips which a Member has been given in relation to the meeting in accordance with Section 78(3) of the Local Government Measure 2011.

4. SCHOOLS MUSIC PLAN

Background:

- The National Plan for Music in Schools was published in the Summer Term of 2022
- Delivery to commence Sept 2022
- Investment of £4.5m per annum for 3 years, currently in the second financial year of the Plan.
- Powys do not have a Music Service, therefore the Plan has provided a launchpad, after a number of years of little music within schools.
- Key priorities within the plan are supporting schools and settings, building stronger music learning communities, improving health and wellbeing for all.

- Poverty is not to be a barrier to accessing, taking part, or progressing in music throughout a child’s time in school.
- The key priorities provide challenge to organisations across Wales to work together on the plan, schools, music charities, businesses, colleges and conservatoires and professional ensembles.
- Music development within the schools programme through first and live experiences, teaching and developing music pathways.
- Development of a National Instrument and Resource Library.
- A First Experience is a teacher working with one class, in one school, for 1hour per week, over a 10-week period, teaching the whole class 1 instrument. This has been available to all schools within every clusters over the first 18months of the Plan.
- Options of a ‘team-teaching’ approach that will support classroom and music service tutors’ professional learning available throughout Clusters.
- 981 pupils across 8 clusters have accessed a First Experience within 6 months. Outcomes are that a number of children have signed up for peripatetic music lessons in string, brass, woodwind instruments.
- Free instrumental lessons for EFSM learners with 167 pupils benefitting to date.
- 10 weeks of funded taster sessions on a new instrument for small group of learners, with 150 pupils benefitting.
- Pilot project for breakfast / lunchtime and after school clubs from September.
- Music cafés pilot this summer holiday for instrument and play sessions.
- Since January 2023, 3800 pupils across Powys have experienced a Live performance funded through the Music Plan.
- Plans to create a residency model opportunity within Powys, working closely with the Welsh College of Music and Drama.
- Challenges: - Sustainability, demand and interest is growing yet we do not have the teachers available, there is not a dedicated music service within Powys schools, the Music Grant runs until 2024, with final pieces of work carried out in 2024/25.

Points raised by the Committee:	Responses received from Officers or Cabinet Members.
<p>On measuring the impact of Live Experience on pupils, was there any data prior to the start of the project.</p>	<p>Previously, very little data was available. Since commenced in role a data collection for Welsh Government of the amount of musical instrumental lessons, was very poor. The next data collection is due on 31.07.23, which will include information shared today. The Music Plan has shown to schools how live music can make a difference, sign posting to Arts Council Wales to apply for grants to have live music in their schools or pool grants within a cluster.</p>

<p>There is a very clear vision for now and the future but is there sustainability for the future and how would the impact on children be captured.</p> <p>Are there plans to extend this programme through to ALN pupils, as could have a significant impact.</p>	<p>The plan is to collect the pupil voice, a create a showcase for the impact within Powys and share via Social Media.</p> <p>There was a National Music Service meeting earlier today, discussing communications, from September there will be a celebration of progress shared at a more accessible level.</p> <p>The difficulty is that Powys does not have a Music Service, therefore do not have this group of pupils to draw in. Pleas are out to build up networks of peripatetic teachers beyond Powys who are willing to teach here, with the aim that ALN pupils and the Special Schools will have access going forward.</p>
<p>In regard to the sustainability of the music taster session, are there options to work with organisations across county borders? i.e., the Porth y Waen Silver Band provide free tuition and instruments to beginners.</p>	<p>Through the Music Plan, we would be extremely interested to and would welcome making new network links to increase opportunities.</p>
<p>Contact Ystradgynlais brass bands who will lend out instruments through taster sessions</p>	
<p>There is a link to recruitment and retention of staff through music, as per the Armed forces. We have a wealth in of traditional music in Wales which is as important and gaining attention. The Porth Y Waen sliver band have worked with Ysgol Pennant and others over the years. There are also TRAC and Clera groups which may be able to offer support.</p>	<p>Totally agree in respect of music for recruitment and retention of staff, playing / bands etc. within the workplace would bring a community of the workforce together. Folk music was raised during the National Music Service discussion earlier, with a focus on the online platform putting together folk music units for all schools in Powys to access, with a focus within the National Plan for folk music across Wales.</p>
<p>First experiences what age groups are targeted. Highlights the importance of music / rhyme shared through Cylch Ti a Fi.</p> <p>Question for the Portfolio holder and Schools Service, through the Sustainable Powys work will there be contingencies put in place for funding for this exciting</p>	<p>Initially aiming to pitch First Experiences at Yr3 /4, however with mixed aged classes across Powys, some schools have included Yrs. 3 -6. There are currently a small number of freelance peripatetic teachers, therefore string instruments are targeted at older children, and will be</p>

<p>development moving forward, as Powys has been worse off without music highlighted in the curriculum.</p>	<p>establishing a pilot under the Suzuki method for ages 3 and 4 year olds. The key for the youngest children is singing, there are plans to have vocal teachers within schools with mini first experiences of setting up school choirs and empowering class teachers.</p> <p>Sustainable Powys will review all aspects of all services. Would like nothing more than to see funding baselined rather than grant driven. As each service evaluates what would and would not be possible, in the current economic environment, reviewing the value delivery at community resilience, educational benefits and individual child levels, within which levels music scores very highly, the societal benefit would far outweigh the investment required.</p>
<p>How much information has been given to parents relating to this programme, by means of marketing & communication informing that their child has attended or participated in an event. Parents need to understand the provision available across the county.</p>	<p>Bi-lingual certificates for first experience showcases will be issued to children within the next fortnight, on the back is information for parents on opportunities available to pupils. When updating advertisements for peripatetic teachers will consider putting together Comms for the new academic year for parents with contact details.</p>
<p>Raising again the sustainability long term, whilst good to have cross border work and expertise coming into Powys, we really need to have this expertise within Powys, is there a plan to obtain further resource across the county to extend the project further.</p>	<p>The realisation that the link between school and home needs to improve. Currently there is not a Music Service in place in Powys, which means that the long-term job security is not in place when putting pleas out to freelance teachers.</p>
	<p>We now have an individual who can lead the Plan and challenge the status quo around how music is delivered. We referred back to WG, who were positive for Powys to utilise the grant funding in an innovative way to secure this post. It is about sustainability, the Curriculum for Wales puts all of the AOLE's (Areas of Learning and Experience) on an equal footing, and how we provide enough support</p>

	<p>provision around each area. The Music Plan is a key in driving the AOLE, Expressive Arts and we do need to consider how to maintain and further develop it. We can see the difference it makes to our learners and continue to work closely with WG to secure grant funding to enable to use in the most effective way possible in Powys.</p>
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Action:

Committee Members were invited to attend some of the showcase event across Powys during this and the Autumn term.

Observations:

Scrutiny made the following observations:

- The Committee welcomed:

The work undertaken to date and enthusiasm portrayed along with the clear vision for the Music Service expressed by the Officers present.

- The Committee remained unconvinced about:

The Cabinet’s commitment to the sustainability of the Music Service going forward.

The use of freelance peripatetic teaching, and whether this would be sustainable in the long-term.

- The Committee expressed concern:

For the future of the Music Service, and request that Cabinet give serious consideration, through the Sustainable Powys work, to ensuring that this valuable service is highlighted within the Curriculum, additional resource, and funding to be mainstreamed rather than grant funded.

Scrutiny Recommendations to Cabinet:

Scrutiny request, for the future of the Music Service, that Cabinet give serious consideration, through the Sustainable Powys work, to ensuring that this valuable service is highlighted within the Curriculum, with additional resource, and funding to be mainstreamed rather than grant funded.

5.	SCHOOLS BUDGETS 2023-2024
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- Review of last year’s position in terms of budget outturn.
- Schools’ budgets submitted for the current year.

- The Portfolio Holder offered thanks to the Finance Team, Headteachers, Chairs of Governing Bodies and Schools Finance committees for the work input to minimise the effect of the energy crisis, that potentially would have hit schools and in managing the staff wage increase. Work undertaken in the last 6 months has set schools in a far better place than was projected.
- Adding there is a recognised pressure within the 2024/25 budget, identifying that fact that we are expecting schools to draw down from their surpluses or incur a slight deficit due to the energy costs this year.
- Table 1 of the report records the movement in school reserves during 2022-23. The columns at the end of the table show what schools had originally planned to draw from reserves and the latest forecast of transfers from reserves as at February 2023.
- The outturn was better than anticipated, some of which was due to distribution of the contingency budget and the ALN retained budget at year end, but also the hard work undertaken by schools in reviewing their budgets to reduce planned expenditure.
- Finance Team will continue to work with schools that showed a marked difference between forecasted and actual budget outturn to understand reasoning, trends, or patterns for future forecasting.
- In the last quarter of 2022/23, we were not in receipt of the influx of grants from WG as per previous 2 financial years, as schools had received grant monies in 2020/21 and 2021/22, they were in a better position to deal with challenges last and this year.
- The budgets for 2023/24 Table 2. Sets out the number of schools submitting surplus budgets, approved under the scheme for financing schools and the number reporting a deficit.
- The number of schools in deficit has increased compared to same period last year.
- Para.4.4 reports the number of schools where the budget set for 2023/24 results in an unlicensed deficit as at 31.03.2024.
- Actions listed by the schools and / or the LA in dealing with the deficit position.
- 16 schools are reported as in unlicensed positions as at 31.03.2024. There are a number of schools forecasting to be in an unlicensed position in future years, picked up in this year's budget submissions.
- Some schools have been asked to submit recovery plans, others asked to consider what actions they will take to avoid or minimise deficits in the future.
- Cumulative deficit balances projected for future years do present a significant risk to the authority, Schools continue to work with the Finance Team through difficult and challenging discussions which have been positive and professional, demonstrating that the team around the school approach is working well.
- Head Of Finance comments in Para 16.3, the volatile inflationary situation requires careful monitoring as does the potential wage pressures.
- Appendix A sets out the escalation process to follow when a school begins to forecast a deficit.
- Appendix B sets out individual school's balances as included in their ratified, submitted budget plans.

Points raised by the Committee:	Responses received from Officers or Cabinet Members.
<p>Concern expressed that that almost every school without exception will be in an overspend position in the 2023/24. Schools are under huge pressure which cannot be sustained, would there be a continuation of in year overspend going forward.</p> <p>Chair commented that the £6m surplus noted in March 2024 reduced to £612k resulting in a deficit of £5.8m in 2025/26</p>	<p>There would have been in year deficit 2023-24 without the budget challenges, when grants came in from WG there was an expectation they would be drawn down from schools reserves over the next couple of years. WG will continue to monitor surplus balances. There were expected in-year overspends with many of the schools with surplus balances, to draw down and utilise for the benefit of the learners in those schools.</p> <p>Most of the reserves are forecast to be used during the next financial year. The Finance Team will monitor on a monthly basis, schools' positions to avoid escalation of in year deficit, reporting to Schools Service Management Team and the Head of Education.</p>
<p>The political decision to remove reserves from the schools service and make an adjustment of £3.8m in last years budget and expecting the schools to make £864k savings (totalling £4.71m)</p> <p>The funding formula is not going to rescue the political decision to reduce the schools budget.</p>	<p>Cabinet Member confirmed it was a political decision due to the external pressures of last and this year which are expected to reduce. The reserves were mainly from grants, which WG expect schools to use within this year. The Cabinet identified a £2m pressure within the budget planning for next year if that is not the case.</p> <p>View taken that for 1 financial year there was scope within the schools budgets and management process and assurances from Officers to take this decision on budgets, rather than keep high balances and offset the burden onto the Council Tax payer.</p> <p>Funding formula review in the Secondary Sector sets a position that the Finance Teams and schools can work together to establish the appropriate levels of delivery with expected impact on the school budget. The Funding Formula will give clarity on what schools should be spending.</p>

	<p>The predictions in years 2 and 3 are not dissimilar to those positions forecast of most of the last 5 years. Forecast figures in year 3 become manageable by year 1. The difference this year is the energy price increase and pressure across the sector.</p>
<p>With regard to the £500k and £2.2m to address energy efficiencies within school, what is happening, potentially if in place now by year end 25/26 could reduce by the projected overspend by 30-40%, savings?</p> <p>Requested assurance on the pace of both £500k and £2.2m. Projects for larger schools had been mentioned, yet according to the budgets before the Committee, all schools are in a similar position. Surely the funds should be targeted across the board, for equality for all.</p> <p>Chair stated that information needs to be forwarded, not only to the Committee as per a caveat at budget setting, but into the school service for Headteachers and Governing Bodies to be consulted on, in particular the £2.2m, as works need to be commenced over the summer period.</p>	<p>Cabinet Member stated that the focus has been on the £500k and expecting to action this over the summer period. The £2.2m to be used on more substantive programmes, and currently with Property Services, awaiting an update from Officers or Cllr Jake.</p> <p>There are also some grant bids awaiting outcomes for projects on larger schools.</p> <p>Agreed that energy efficiencies is where there could be reduced costs in the longer term. At this time, the focus is on schools that have the largest energy costs as a proposition. Across the schools portfolio there are a number of heating mechanisms, with a difference of previous investment. If gave a uniform sum of monies to each school, monies would be given to a brand-new school as well as ones built over a century ago. The plan would be to pass monies on where they would be most effective.</p>
<p>The wage bill will not reduce over time as per energy costs, approximately 90% of the schools delegated budget is used for staffing resources. Concern raised that to reduce the wage bill within schools would be to reduce staff numbers, an assurance given by the Portfolio Holder for Finance that would not happen.</p>	<p>Aware through work completed that natural slippage has been occurring and teachers have been replaced. Schools are now aware of the budget implications of and are reviewing where natural slippage is happening through retirement etc. Schools are working closely with the Schools</p>

<p>Within the schools delegated budget what is the percentage attributed to energy costs.</p>	<p>Service to ensure that they can offer the curriculum they need to</p>
<p>Request from Committee for how many subjects or courses will be delivered in Sept 2023 within each school through both Welsh and English mediums from Yr7 -Yr13. Which subjects are provided at the base school, virtually or off base and reasons why. For effective scrutiny request for data covering the previous year's 2020/21, 2021/22, 2022/23 & 2023/24.</p>	<p>In depth financial reviews have been undertaken with Secondary Schools at their request, where this detail has been looked at, to make sure that the curriculum offer is broad and if not, what are the challenges. One of the expectations under the Curriculum for Wales is that the AOLE's are being held up at the same level, but there is now the combination of subjects where specialism are required at Key stages 4 & 5.</p> <p>We do not know the individual subjects that are being taught in each school as can change year on year, as Key Stage 4 & 5 options are purely based on the straw polls by the pupils on what they want to learn.</p> <p>The challenge at times is whether specialist teachers are available, it is within each schools gift to design their own curriculum and meet the needs of their learners. We do acknowledge where there are occasions pupils do not choose particular subjects, resulting in teachers teaching out of their subject area, to fill timetable gaps. There are another 4 schools that have requested deep dives, we also have the challenge of a number of UPS (Upper Pay Scale) teachers in Powys, which brings specialisms and experience, which our learners are entitled to, but also additional challenge. When working with individual schools, in whichever language medium of learning, the curriculum offer is looked at in detail to make sure that there is the capacity to grow and broaden the offer across Powys.</p> <p>The Director of Education advised following the meeting that information will be gathered as requested by Committee on subject options, most likely over the summer period.</p>

<p>Appendix A, Potential Deficits, Stage 1 identifies a potential budget, schools act will the utmost prudence freezing all appointments, is every school in Powys with a deficit budget therefore freezing all appointments.</p>	<p>This is being taken on a case-by-case basis, taking account of each schools unique circumstances and the accumulative rather than the in-year deficit. It is the expectation that a review is taken on whether an appointment needs to be made or are there alternatives whereby needs can be met within budget. Escalation of stages is dependent on what actions schools take.</p>
<p>There is huge concern around the mental health and emotional well-being of Head Teachers and staff, in regard to the pressure of deficit budgets, even if in-year deficit.</p> <p>Chair added that there has been a huge swing towards a deficit situation within the Primary Sector.</p>	<p>Reassurance given to the Committee that the Schools Service and the Senior Management Team are working closely with Head teachers regarding wellbeing, offering support and potential solutions with the pressures they are facing.</p> <p>There are regular meetings with the Head Teacher Development Group, we have given over the area meeting time to Head Teachers for such discussions and will have the Head Teacher Conference at the end of this term to discuss the issues, challenges and potential solutions that have been raised.</p>
<p>The effect that a swing from a surplus to a deficit budget has on both the Head Teacher and the Chair of Governors has been immense. There are a number of school indicating they are subject to a Recovery Plan.</p> <p>Whilst pleased that Secondary Schools can offer as broad a curriculum as possible, however this also needs to be extended to Primary Schools, we must have a curriculum that is right for the children in our care who deserve as broad an education as possible to meet their needs.</p>	<p>Cabinet Member felt the report was comprehensive and included matters of concern, which have come to the fore in these difficult times and gave some mitigation.</p> <p>It was important that Cabinet Members are present to listen and take feedback to the Cabinet who would then be better informed when considering Recommendations submitted by the Committee.</p> <p>Clarity offered on the budget set for this year, the previous year's baseline budget was £79.5m, added a pay award inflation for 22/23 of £1.1m, a pay award for 23/24 of £2.7m and a non-pay inflation for 23/24 to mainly cover utilities of £3.879m.</p>

	<p>The actual delegated budget for schools was almost £84m, acknowledging the discussion around £3.8m taken out from reserves and not from the delegated budget, all monies from WG were passported to Education Service. The reason for the £3.8m being taken from reserves, was because they were over-inflated due to award of grants late in the year during the Covid Pandemic which were not required.</p> <p>It is correct that most schools are showing an in-year deficit, however if refer to the cumulative surpluses for 23/24 and 24/25 the majority of schools are still in surplus.</p> <p>It was accepted that going forward this cannot continue as surpluses would eventually deplete and has to be addressed, schools with historic deficits are subject to recovery plans.</p> <p>It was re-iterated that the budget set for Education for 23/24 would not create redundancies. Where schools have falling numbers, or surplus teachers to the curriculum offered at a school, there has to be some adjustments made, which may include redundancies.</p>
<p>With regard to the Cabinet Members remark on positive news economic situation, if inflation and energy costs reduce, what support would the LA be able to provide to Education in 24/25.</p> <p>Under transformation the vacancy rate, even schools that are operating at a high capacity are entering an in-year deficit position especially in year 3, what effect does the Cabinet envisage the pressure of school places and the vacancy rate will have going forward.</p>	<p>Sustainable Powys' review of services is as a direct result of concern of the projected fiscal position in 24/25 and onward. The funding forecast from WG remains a significant concern as indications are would not keep track with inflation.</p> <p>Through the catchment review earlier in the year the Authority has numerous buildings due to the geography, but without the pupils numbers. Modelling suggests that there would be 800 fewer primary aged pupils over the next 6 years, with increasing secondary pupil levels over the next 18months, and the challenge will be</p>

	<p>how to deal with the situation using the model that best fits the criteria.</p>
<p>During previous meetings it has been noted that there is a £80m maintenance backlog, have funds been factored into the budget, if it applies to the information presented, as need to examine the root cause and act.</p>	<p>Maintenance falls mainly under Property Services remit however, the backlog figures are a combination of condition surveys and an agreed formula from WG, stipulating how to estimate works required on the condition of a school.</p> <p>The service is looking at increasing the number of conditioning surveys undertaken but there are cost implications. In the wider budget, rather than schools, there is a major improvement programme, which includes budgeted amount for school fencing as a safeguarding issue. Bids for grant funding for specific pieces of work are submitted through Property Services.</p> <p>The Transformation programme has dealt with some of the buildings issues in the past i.e., the new Brecon high school as its predecessor building had major issues.</p>
<p>Mention must be paid to the exceptional work undertaken by the Officers in supporting Headteacher, Business Managers etc.</p> <p>As a Committee we also need to find solutions to the problems, i.e., Business Manager appointments in certain schools has proved difficult to recruit to HT, trials were undertaken for a Cluster Business Manager role, the remuneration package was not deemed attractive, we are currently expecting our head teachers to perform in a role for which they may not have the specific business or financial qualifications. If the correct package and offer were advertised and successfully recruited to, this would relieve our Headteachers of so much stress and pressure to the ultimate benefit of our learners.</p>	<p>We have put in place network meetings for Business Managers around the role and training for the secondary sector. We have identified the need to revisit the original proposal and explore it further as said there are those challenges for Head Teachers which they have cited around property and business management, also Headteachers in small rural schools have a significant teaching role to undertake.</p>
<p>Chair raised concern of the projected deficits for Bro Caereinion in 25/26 of</p>	

<p>700k, Llanfyllin reserves of £500k to £55k, Ysgol Calon Cymru figures look desperate, with these schools in their infancy.</p> <p>All of these schools would have been subjected to rigorous staffing changes yet in this desperate situation where they cannot fund their schools, and here we are squeezing life out of the schools, looking at possible staff reductions, reducing the curriculum on offer which will result in Head Teachers and Business Managers not wanting these roles.</p>	
<p>Savings can only be found through reduction in staff and the courses available lessen, the attractiveness of our schools would suffer with a possible further exodus of Post 16 education across borders as a real consequence.</p> <p>Point raised earlier by the Cabinet Member that COVID grants were not required, those grants, towards the end of 21/22, came with specific criteria for the use advice notes from WG.</p> <p>Requesting again for sight on these at Committee.</p> <p>Committee do not recognise the comment made that there are surplus teachers sitting doing nothing in our schools or that schools are over staffed. The contact time by teachers, specifically in High Schools, is up to the limit. If reductions are made to staffing resources, the inevitable consequence is a reduction in courses offered. Difficult decisions which will have far reaching significant challenges to the detriment of our learners, have to be made, however some of those course reduced will be through the Welsh medium.</p> <p>Requiring assurance that the funding at the very end of 21/22 were spent in the correct manner that WG expected funds to be spent.</p>	<p>Reference should have been to the COVID period not COVID grants.</p> <p>WG lay down definitions to deliver the curriculum which meets the number of pupils. Where a school has a Welsh Medium school additional funding is attached</p>

<p>The Local Authority finished 22/23 in a surplus, when discussing school budgets and wholesale deficits, some further investments could have gone towards the schools budgets.</p>	<p>The budget set did achieve a surplus, discussions earlier pointed to the significant pressures through pay awards. Cabinet made the decision to place £3m of the surplus to help cover increase costs incurred towards an unknown level of pay award for teachers and other staff, trying to invest and protect schools. Some of the surplus placed back into Capital budget to reduce borrowing costs, part of which will be invested in the Schools transformation programme.</p>
<p>If the focus were on education, rather than buildings and locations progress could be made, which in turn would improve the financial situation. The review of 13 sites for Secondary provision in Powys undertaken previous needs to be re-visited. That system was designed in 1870 and is now not appropriate. We need consolidation and fewer schools, not necessarily on current sites. We need a level playing regardless of the medium pupils are taught through, dual stream schools should be moved rapidly along the language continuum, there is everything to be gained by having Powys children fully bi-lingual.</p> <p>We need pressure from the Council onto schools and training for Governors to understand the bilingual educational outcomes. Can we have a long-term strategy, how many secondary schools are needed in Powys. North Powys are already operating a “TrYsgol” effectively 3 schools sharing resources which can be used more effectively if we only explain a good education system to the public designed for the future.</p>	

Observations:

Scrutiny made the following observations:

- The Committee welcomed:
That Secondary Schools are offering as broad a curriculum as possible, given the current financial restraints, however this has to be right for the children and young people of Powys who deserve as broad an education as possible to meet their needs.
- The Committee noted:
The backlog of maintenance works (£80m) has not been factored into budgets presented.
Recovery plans are in place in a number of schools across the Sectors.
- The Committee requested that:
A review of the 13 sites be undertaken for Secondary Schools including and increasing the provision of bilingual schools rather than dual stream.

Cabinet relook at school budgets and address the situation with so many schools going into deficit. Schools with longstanding deficit need to see improvement.

- The Committee remained unconvinced about:
The pace of transformation within the Education Sector.

Sustainable Powys work in reviewing the fiscal position in Education for 24/25.

- The Committee expressed concern:
That virtually every school is in or possibly heading into an overspend position, with the prospect of very little or no surplus budget remaining in the next financial year.

Of possible redundancies in schools due to the current financial position and the lack of progress on the grants awarded for Energy Efficiencies.

Of the effect deficits in schools budgets is having on the mental health of Headteachers, staff and those on the Governing Bodies.

Of the impact on the quality of education within the Primary Sector which has seen a huge deficit swing.

Scrutiny Recommendations to Cabinet:

- 1. A review of the 13 sites be undertaken for Secondary Schools, to include and increase the provision of bilingual schools rather than dual stream.**
- 2. Cabinet relook at school budgets and address the situation with so many schools going into deficit.**

3. Transformation within the Education needs to gather pace with immediate effect.
4. Grant monies to be released to Education at the earliest opportunity and prior to the finalisation of budgets.

6.	FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME
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Actions: WESP update to be added for Autumn 2023

County Councillor R G Thomas (Chair)

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Learning and Skills Scrutiny Committee
 Forward Work Programme
 July 2023 – Dec 2023

19-07-23 14.00 – 16.30	Committee - Public ALN Youth Strategy	Simon Anderson Helen Quarrell
Sept 13/09 2pm -5pm	Performance and Risk Q1 Schools Transformation (Date to be confirmed)	James Langridge – Thomas Marianne Evans
Sept 18 th 10am	PRE-MEET	
20-09-23 14.00 – 16.30	Committee - Public Update on Early Years Provision Curriculum for Wales Secondary Schools Improvement Strategy Progression and Learning Admissions Code / Capacity Attendance	Eurig Towns Lynette Lovell / Georgie Bevan Cressy Murphy Lynette Lovell / Georgie Bevan
30 th Oct 2pm	PRE-MEET	
01-11-23 14.00 – 16.30	Committee - Public School Budgets Finance Post 16 WESP - Update Cluster Business Support Model – Closed Workshop	
11 th Dec 2pm	PRE-MEET	
13-12-23 14.00 – 16.30	Committee - Public	

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