



Neuadd y Sir / County Hall, Llandrindod, Powys, LD1 5LG

QUESTIONS AT ANY TIME TO CABINET PORTFOLIO HOLDERS

Response by the Cabinet Member:

Thank you for recognising the exceptional circumstances facing schools in light of the cost of living crisis, higher than budgeted wage settlement, and threat of finance cuts to local government as a result of the mini budget.

As you will be aware from the presentation and the recent full council meeting there are significant budget pressures on all of us and we are needing to considering every option regarding potential savings. As stated at the meeting on the 29th of September the suggestions made were only that and there was not a clear directive for schools. As an administration are doing all we can to support schools. The financial toolkit has been prepared and shared with schools as a support tool to prompt discussions between Headteachers and their Chairs of Governors. We are also providing additional support through finance surgeries and looking at budgets in detail, including current spend patterns and suggesting potential solutions. However, ultimately it is the decision and responsibility of the Headteacher and their Chair of Governors regarding the school budget and one size does not fit all.

In response to the questions posed such as children wearing coats and volunteers teaching children this is not what was presented at the meeting. For the past two winters in some instances, a few children have had to wear their coats in their classrooms due to windows being open as part of the covid guidance so this has previously occurred and not because the school could not afford to pay the heating bill. With covid increasing this situation is likely to happen again this winter. Officers suggested reducing the heating temperature by 1 or 2 degrees which could save a significant amount of money with the current cost of utilities which is an unprecedented pressure that is not within the council's control. We did not state schools should turn the temperature down and tell the children to wear their coats.

Your point regarding volunteers teaching children is also an incorrect interpretation and was not stated in the meeting. Officers referred to schools using volunteers to help reduce outgoing costs such as a volunteer to mow lawns rather than paying a contractor. Not at any point would we advocate volunteers replacing teachers to teach our children. The proposal to not fill vacant posts is only for consideration if the work connected to that post can be covered by other staff in the short term, for example senior leaders increasing their teaching load or other teachers under on teaching allocation taking on extra teaching. Again, this is a consideration and other schools have made these decisions as a temporary saving.

We did also suggest the possibility of four-day week; with a fifth day being taught virtually as well as blended weeks of learning as extreme cases for consideration. In the coming weeks schools will need to have Continuity of Learning plans in place to ensure this provision is possible for those extreme cases and guidance for schools will follow. This example was given in advance of the formal announcement of such

plans to illustrate to schools that in exceptional circumstances this would be an option and to promote the idea that schools should consider any and every eventuality. This option could significantly reduce the utilities cost for the schools and lead to a considerable saving. However, it was also reiterated we would still need a venue for the most vulnerable learners like the Hubs in the lockdowns but again this is an extreme consideration but due to the seriousness of the current financial situation all options currently need to be considered.