

Comments of the Schools Forum on the Schools Funding Formula & Scheme for Financing Schools

The Forum supported the recommendation to amend the formula to recognise pupil movement during the year subject to further work being done to agree the criteria to be used when considering payments relating to (i) students moving in from schools outside Powys and (ii) significant in year growth in pupil numbers. It was agreed that Council Officers should work up this criteria with members of the Forum.

The Forum supported the recommendation on the post 16 funding principles and to include a transition year. In noting the Impact Assessment, the Forum wished to stress that as a result of the reduced level of WAG funding for post 16 education, the number and range of courses available for students will continue to reduce and there will be some difficult financial implications to address for most high schools.

In considering the proposals for changes to the scheme for financing schools, the Forum agreed that a more fundamental review of the scheme was necessary to (i) fully take into account the recommendation on financial management in schools in the Estyn report and (ii) make sure it fits in with the developing new vision for education in Powys. The Forum is happy to be part of this fundamental review and to help with the revision of the good practice guide. Against this background the Forum supported the recommendation for some changes to the scheme subject to further work being done to agree the criteria to be used when considering whether the school may repay a deficit over a longer period than three years. It was agreed that Council officers should work up this criteria with members of the forum.

The Forum had a lengthy debate on the recommendation to recognise the omission of the Teacher Learning Responsibility (TLR) allowance from the current formula. Provision for the allowance had been made in the old formula and it was never the intention to remove it. The Forum was very much in support of correcting this mistake which had resulted in high schools not receiving approximately £1.4M to meet these contractual allowances in the current financial year. The Forum was, however, very concerned at the suggestion that this could possibly be funded by a top slice from all schools' delegated funding. This would have a detrimental effect on all schools and, in particular, the larger primary schools and would inevitably result in the already high level of expected deficits to grow even more. The Cabinet agreed a new formula at this time last year and Estyn commented favourably on this in their recent report. Applying a top slice would mean moving away from determining the allocation of funding to schools purely by the new formula.

Against this background while the Forum strongly supported the recommendation to put the TLR allowance back into the formula they were very much of the view that this needed to be funded by adding £1.4M to the schools delegated budget rather than through the top slice.