

**CYNGOR SIR POWYS COUNTY COUNCIL**

**County Council  
15<sup>th</sup> July 2015**

**REPORT AUTHOR: County Councillor Wynne Jones, Portfolio Holder for Finance**

**SUBJECT: Question from County Councillor David Price**

**Can I ask the Portfolio Holder for Finance, what steps are being taken to improve the accuracy of school budget documents prepared by the authority? The school where I am Chair of governors has noticed a 3% difference between the estimated and actual figures at end of year, on an annual basis. This inaccuracy of figures is not helping schools at a time when they require complete accuracy to assist them in making difficult decisions regarding staffing levels.**

I thank the Member for raising this issue and it is an area where schools and school Governors have been communicating their concerns for some years. Although the authority has improved its performance in this area, there seems to still be some issues and some further improvement needed. Whilst I was Chair of People Scrutiny and Lead Member on the Education Scrutiny Working Group, this issue was raised with us on many occasions.

I do fully agree with Cllr. Price, that in these times of financial difficulty, with many schools having difficulty in balancing budgets and having to consider difficult staffing issues, it is imperative that Governors have accurate and up-to-date information on which they can make decisions.

I have previously discussed this issue with Cllr. Arwel Jones, Portfolio Holder for Education, and he is also aware of similar issues that have been raised by schools and we have jointly agreed that the matter needs looking into, to see what are the problems and to try and bring about an improved service for our schools. It was my intention to take forward a piece of work around the issue of school budget reports a few weeks previous, but due to circumstances, I have not progressed this matter as I would have liked to and I can only apologise for this. However, I have met with the Schools Finance Officer and agreed to actions to identify where in the system improvements can be made. We have agreed to meet again during August to discuss the outcome of the review and to decide on what actions need to be taken in order to improve the situation. The improvements will also be discussed with the Head of Schools and Head of Professional Services

We are also interested to work in partnership with schools so any improvements they would like to see in the format of the budget reports can be delivered..

I will of course be taking this matter forward working closely with Cllr. Arwel Jones, as well as the Head of Professional Services and Head of Schools and will bring a report forward at the conclusion of the work, which I will make available to Scrutiny and to the Membership in general.