

CYNGOR SIR POWYS COUNTY COUNCIL.

CABINET EXECUTIVE

22nd February 2022

REPORT AUTHOR: County Councillor Phyl Davies
Portfolio Holder for Education and Property

REPORT TITLE: Schools Cluster Business Managers

REPORT FOR: Information

1. Purpose

- 1.1 This report presents the outcome of the work carried out by a task and finish group established in May 2021 to review the current model of business support to schools, and to develop a new model based around the clusters of schools.
- 1.2 The overarching purpose being to provide all headteachers and governing bodies with the best possible business support to ensure that Powys schools are managed effectively and sustainably. This will allow headteachers and school leaders to have the time and space to ensure that learners are at the heart of all decisions and to support the ambitions set out in Powys's Strategy for Transforming Education in Powys.
- 1.3 This report outlines the processes followed, options considered and final proposal for agreement.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Authority and its schools have worked on a model of traditional business support with most secondary and all age schools having a dedicated Business Manager to support in terms of financial, HR and estate management. However, their role and level of business and finance support varies considerably.
- 2.2 In contrast, the primary sector has no dedicated support, utilising office staff to help with back office support and financial / HR support through a Service Level Agreement with the Corporate Services.
- 2.3 This has led to many headteachers having to concentrate their time on managing areas such as finance and premises rather than the quality of provision and learning.
- 2.4 Since 2017, there has been a number of trials for Cluster Business managers across the Authority, utilising various grant monies. These trials have varied in structure and mainly focused on the primary schools. Currently, using the Small and Rural schools grant there are four trials in place. Of these, three are across clusters of primary schools and one utilising the substantive Business Manager post of the All age school to support all the cluster primary schools. These trails are due to cease on the 31st March 2022 in line with the end of the current funding streams.
- 2.5 In May 2021 a working group was established to review business support across Powys schools. The group consisted of headteacher representatives from primary, secondary and all age schools along with Local Authority officers from the Schools Service and Finance departments. During the initial fact finding meetings, input was provided by Business Managers and bursars from a range of Powys schools.

2.6 The task and finish group has focused on the following.

- Analysis of current roles in Powys
- Feedback from stakeholders in respect of the current trials in operation
- Feedback from stakeholders who currently have and previously had a cluster business manager
- Other Local Authority models
- Models and costings alongside the Finance Service Level Agreement
- Questionnaire to schools regarding their needs

2.7 The questionnaire was circulated to all schools to ascertain their business support needs. The results of the survey found that 87% of schools that completed the questionnaire would be keen for the Local Authority to explore a partnership model with schools to fulfil their business support needs. In total, 39 schools responded to the questionnaire. Outcomes of the survey were used to shape and evaluate the model of support being proposed.

3. Advice

3.1 Four options were identified and evaluated by the task and finish group. These included:

- Option 1: At the end of the funding streams, revert to the traditional package offer of back office support from the Local Authority via and updated Service Level Agreement. No change in secondaries / All age schools.
- Option 2: Model to include two business support roles for each cluster. One to include a Strategic Cluster Business Manager (in line with the number of secondary / all age schools) and an Assistant Cluster Business Manager (pro rata) per 8 schools. This option to include a scaling back of the Corporate Finance Service.
- Option 3: Continue with the model of a Cluster Business Manager approach for the Primary Sector only, which will allow some scaling back of the Corporate Finance Service
- Option 4: Enhanced Corporate Finance Service offer, increasing tasks that could be performed to support the headteacher and governors.

3.2 Of the four options proposed, participants, including headteachers from the task and finish group and Schools SSMT supported option 2.

3.3 During the latter end of the Autumn Term an update was provided to all stakeholders including headteachers and governors regarding the current position that had been reached in terms of the preferred model.

3.4 Job descriptions have been drafted and an offer document to go to schools, inclusive of an expressions of interest form.

3.5 During January 2022 draft papers have been shared with the Governors Consultative Committee, Schools Forum and Joint Consultative Committee for comment and feedback. Where applicable, adjustments have been made to reflect the comments and feedback received.

3.6 Governors Consultative Committee were broadly in agreement with the overarching documents subject to a few queries around funding. They felt the job descriptions were suitable and provided good career development opportunities for applicants.

- 3.7 Schools Forum were supportive of the principles and welcomed the proposal. However, further clarity was requested to ensure that they understood the financial implications for schools and the success criteria to be applied for cluster applications.
- 3.8 Members of the Joint Consultative Committee were supportive and provided no additional questions or comments to the draft papers shared.
- 3.9 As part of the roll out for option 2, five waves are anticipated with wave one planned to start with 1 or 2 clusters from September 2022 along with an indication from all clusters as to which wave they envisage joining. Wave one will be reviewed and evaluated before proceeding to wave two for September 2023. It is anticipated that future annual waves will involve a steady roll out to all clusters up until the final wave (wave five) in September 2026. The Local Authority recognises the risk that not all clusters may want to go forward with this model.

4. **Resource Implications**

- 4.1 The model focuses on a contribution from both Schools and the Local Authority. The funding of the model is based on Secondary / All age schools contributing their formula funding, primary schools contributing £3k per school, the Local Authority contributing the remainder via a growth bid of £150k and realigning monies from within existing budgets totalling a further £227k.
- 4.2 The table below sets out the proposed budget and suggested profiling that will be required as the cluster model is rolled out over the next six years.

	September start dates						Total
	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	
Estimated No Clusters	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
2	116,802	83,430					200,232
2		103,823	74,159				177,983
3			127,618	91,156			218,774
3				150,327	107,376		257,703
3					138,434	98,881	237,315
							-
Total Cost per year	116,802	187,253	201,778	241,483	245,810	98,881	1,092,007
Secondary Funding	52,323	89,696	89,696	115,857	108,383	37,373	493,328
Primary Funding	24,500	33,250	42,750	43,500	51,750	26,250	222,000
Growth	30,000	50,000	50,000	20,000			150,000
Local Authority Balance	9,980	14,307	19,332	62,125	85,678	35,258	226,679
Total Funding	116,802	187,253	201,778	241,483	245,810	98,881	1,092,007

- 4.3 Growth funding of £150,000 has been requested as part of the budget setting process for 2022-23. This funding is required over a four year period and is subject to approval being given from 2023-24 onwards as identified in the table above.
- 4.4 The local authority contribution includes £120,000 from Finance delivered over 3 years, as the service reduces due to changes in roles and working practices. The balance of the funding has been identified within Education on the premise that this new model will support headteachers to concentrate their time leading on improving the quality of provision, progress, and wellbeing of pupils, whilst supported by the Strategic and Assistant Business Managers to secure sound financial and estate management. Any movements between Education and schools delegated budgets

will be set out within the FRM as part of budget setting over the next few years when the funding requirement is clearer.

4.5 The Head of Finance (Section 151 Officer) notes the report.

5. Legal implications

5.1 Legal: the recommendations can be accepted from a legal point of view.

5.2 The Head of Legal and Democratic Services (Monitoring Officer) has commented as follows: "I note the legal comment and have nothing to add to the report".

6. Data Protection

6.1 There are no data protection concerns within this report and proposal.

7. Comment from local member(s)

7.1 This proposal affects the whole county.

8. Impact Assessment

8.1 This proposal allows headteachers to focus their time leading on improving the quality of provision, progress, and wellbeing of pupils. It also provides sound financial and estate management for Powys schools and additional career development opportunities for applicants.

9. Recommendation

9.1 The contents of this report are noting including the timescale for delivery of this proposal through to 2026.

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