

TO: Dr Kathryn Jenkins, Clerk to Committee, Assembly  
Parliamentary Service. Cardiff Bay, Cardiff CF 99 1NA.

FROM: Irene Cameron, Vice Chair, Newport City Authority  
Schools Forum. 2 Kennett Grange, Llangybi Usk NP151QF.

### RESPONSE TO CALL FOR EVIDENCE

#### THE FUNDING PROCESS.

*What information would you find useful to help you understand the process and why?*

At Newport City Authority we have a very effective and well informed Education Schools Forum. It is constituted properly with the appropriate representation from all sectors - in addition, attended by Chief Education Officer, Senior Education Management Team members, the County Treasurer together with Senior Officers. When various Authority Consultation papers are presented, the Author of the Paper is invited to present the paper and answer questions.

We meet regularly and these meetings are always very well attended. The Schools Forum fills a vital link in communication between the Welsh Assembly Government, the Authority and the Schools.

Any relevant information coming from WAG should therefore be sent to the Chair of the School Forum and we were very surprised and disappointed that the very paper "CALL FOR EVIDENCE" was not addressed to this Body. In fact, no one present, except myself - (a member of Governors Wales Management Committee) - had any knowledge of its existence.

The Proposed Revenue Budget is discussed at length, again, the Schools Forum is in the position to make recommendations to the Full Council regarding Funding.

We are at a loss as to why funding in Wales differs from England. We are also very concerned that the funding from WAG is final yet does not cover the Teachers' Pay Award. In Newport we will have a funding gap which is going to cause great difficulty. No decision has been taken but it is difficult to see, with the very poor level of settlement at 2% ,that the budget can be balanced.

*Access to information including provision on the web.*

Up to date information which can be acted upon is welcomed. This would give opportunities for Head Teachers to plan ahead, so often information is received too late to respond appropriately.

*Additional Funding*

We are sometimes at a loss to know what funding is available, why and exactly what it is to be used for.

Funding becomes available at such short notice sometimes 5-10days which results in a rash not strategic response. These unrealistic deadlines prevent proper consultation, for example, Funding for 14-19 involves cross-authority consultation for SE Wales Bids, yet time prevents proper organisation - this needs to change if finances are to be directed correctly.

Again, funding becomes available but the timescale to respond is too short for a positive response, we have found ourselves unable to qualify through failure to meet date deadlines. The availability of the grants and long-term planning also proves a problem when we are unaware of whether the funds will be available for one/two or three years. Better information is needed.

We also question whether the core funding is being squeezed when peripheries are included?

More transparency is needed between the WAG-Authority-Schools, perhaps the Web information would meet this.

*Investment in School Buildings*

The finance does not meet the needs - if we are to get better schools appropriate for use, then additional funding is urgently needed.

We do need to be clearer on the source and amount on school building programmes.

The WAG need to be informed of the urgent needs and provide enough funding to meet these needs.

*School Budget Forum*

**There is no doubt, that in this Authority, the SCHOOL BUDGET FORUM is a vital link which is making an effective and informed contribution to Education and its Management.**

*Irene Jamason.....*