

## **Budget Cuts – make your voice heard**

### **Background**

This paper sets out advice that AHDS (Association of Headteachers and Deputies in Scotland) presented to its members in the March edition of its quarterly magazine. The article has been adjusted in places so that other ESHA members may find it easier to adapt and perhaps use in their own country.

### **Introduction**

At the time of writing most local authorities were agreeing the details of their budgets for the next year. We all know that the result will be cuts in expenditure in all local authority areas, the impact will most likely be felt in education as it is in other services – even where local authorities have managed to offer some protection to this core service.

### **Our advice to members is clear - Make your voice heard!**

If local authorities and Councillors do not know your views on the impact of planned cuts and have not heard any suggestions for alternative ways to make the cuts then they will have to take the best decision they can – and it may be the wrong one from your perspective. If you don't express your views then it is reasonable for them to assume you agree with their approach...

While we have had significant cuts already this year it is clear that there will be further, potentially deeper, cuts in the coming years. It is important that we make the voice of school leaders heard in the discussion about where and how the axe will fall. We need to continue to do this at the national level but also in each and every local authority.

### **Here is our five point plan for action:**

- **Arrange a local group meeting** to discuss the cuts, their impact, possible alternatives or alternative ways of implementing the cuts which will cause less harm to the service. The cuts are here, they are real, so the discussion must be solution focussed. If our Association does not have an active local group in your area, start one. Area Officers, the General Secretary and members from existing active groups will be more than happy to help – get in touch with us to talk about next steps.
- **Seek a meeting with your Director** to discuss your suggestions about how cuts can best be implemented – raising any key concerns but presenting constructive alternatives. Even if it doesn't seem like it at times, your Director is as keen as you to make the education service as good as it possibly can be with the budget available to it.
- **Involve Councillors** – These budget cuts are of such a magnitude that Councillors up and down the country are taking a very close interest in them. There are considerable sensitivities about you as school leaders seeking to influence Councillors but it is perfectly legitimate for AHDS to do this so contact your Area Officer or the General Secretary for advice and assistance.

- **Start the process again** – Consider the scale of the cuts likely to face Education in the coming years and develop your thoughts about how these might be achieved then engage with your Director and engage with Councillors through AHDS.
- **Keep AHDS up to date.** Even if you are not involving your area officer or the General Secretary in discussions or efforts to influence spending decisions/implementation of cuts, please do keep us up to date with actions taken in your area. Please e-mail the General Secretary with updates. This will help us understand the picture around the country.