

Budget 2015 – Specific Comments about Savings Proposals

- Remission Policy for Music and Arthog
- Proposal 1 - Arthog increased revenue

1 Received 5 January 2015 via e-mail

Dear Sir / Madam

Formal Response to Telford & Wrekin Council Budget Proposals 2015/16

The power of music lies in its ability to speak to all aspects of the human being – the animal, the emotional, the intellectual and the spiritual. Music teaches us, in short, that everything is connected. - Daniel Barenboim, Everything is Connected

I would like to formally respond to Telford and Wrekin Council's Budget and Savings Proposals 2015/16 which is recommending that the local authority stop funding for remissions for looked after children and free school meal pupils / young people from disadvantaged background for cuts to access music lessons.

I am asking you to urgently reconsider this proposal to withdraw this proposal and instead recommend that the local authority continues to fund the music service particularly the support around looked after children and supporting pupils on free school meals from disadvantaged backgrounds to access music lessons.

All local authorities including Telford & Wrekin receive extra grant funding from the Department for Education through their Education Services Grant to support young people from disadvantaged backgrounds to access music tuition and to make it affordable for all families to access music lessons with regardless of background and ability to pay.

This is such a small amount grant funding with a large impact of young people from disadvantaged backgrounds from across Telford. The number of children and young people from highly disadvantaged background and Council priority wards who are able to learn to play a musical instrument in Telford will be reduced greatly as a consequence of this proposal and the social and academic impacts that go with it around English and maths, self esteem, confidence building, team work etc etc and will have the biggest impact on some of the most vulnerable young people in Telford.

For children to achieve their best, they need to gain an understanding of music as an academic subject from learning in the classroom; they need to develop practical skills in singing and playing instruments; and they need to have their eyes and ears opened to the widest musical possibilities by being given the opportunity to see and hear professional musicians at work.

All Local Authorities are suffering cuts to their budgets and, of course, something has to give. One music teacher faced with redundancy commented, "it is disheartening when you are told by the Council that the work you do, educating children, is less important than filling a pot hole".

Three questions come to mind about this proposal:

1. Has there been a Equalities Impact Review of this savings proposal targeting music lessons for disadvantaged young people and has it been published?
2. Has any formal consultation been undertaken with schools in Telford that they can make up the gap in funding and pay for music lessons and make that commitment to supporting young people, considering that they are budgeting setting at the moment for 2015/16 and face budget pressures of their own? Will the results of the consultation with schools be published alongside this savings proposal?
3. Is the time frame for implementing this change (ie 1st April 2015) realistic and achievable?

I urge you to think again about this proposed cut in funding and ask you to continue your support for the music service and its reach to disadvantage young people of Telford.

2 Received 5 January 2015 via e-mail.

Hello,

Our joint response to Telford & Wrekin Council's budget proposals published today

Why are you making cuts to music lessons for young people who are looked after children or/both on free school meals supporting some of the most disadvantage young people in Telford with a range of complex and additional needs.

The Council gets funding from the Department for Education through the Services for Education Grant for this area of work and does not come out of your core funding/budget. This funding is highly critical in opening up opportunities for significant numbers of highly disadvantaged young people in Telford to access music education such as special needs pupils, looked after children and pupils on free school meals supporting their wellbeing and academic achievement.

The Council is supporting free swimming for over 50's in your budget proposals but not free music lessons for young people who are most in need and cannot afford to pay and costs less to support that the free swimming for over 50's.

- Has any views be gathered from parents, young people and schools on the impact of these cuts?
- Has any other options been looked into to prevent these cuts?
- Perhaps use some of this year's underspend in your budget for 2014/15 reported in the Shropshire Star and support access to music lessons going forward.
- Could Council core funding be used to support music lessons?
- How do you get round the Charges for Music Tuition Regulations 2007?

Cutting our children's creative education now would be a terrible decision in light of the existing and potential economic benefits to our community with very poor timing and very very tight timescale interrupting a child's learning mid way through a school year.

Many of these young people affected by these cuts you our planning will be taking GCSE/BTEC music this coming summer and these cuts to music lessons will have a big impact on their GCSE/BTEC exam preparation and their exam results after their hard work.

Creative and cultural learning supports attainment in all subjects including in literacy and maths research shows that taking part in arts activities at school can make up for early disadvantage in terms of:

- likelihood to progress to further education;
- employment outcomes; and more general benefits, like
- participating in society through volunteering and voting.

Young people's engagement in arts and music is vital in for their sense of community and place. The leaders of our great cities - like Manchester, Liverpool, Birmingham, Gateshead - are in no doubt about the importance of the arts and music to civic identity. And that is why they are so determined to sustain the arts and music in their cities. Albert Bore, the Leader of Birmingham City Council, once said that without the arts, our cities are deserts.

Once lost, music education cannot be recovered, and the inevitable outcome of the actions we are taking now could permanently damage the vital infrastructure supporting music across Telford and supporting vulnerable young people.

We would really ask to have another look at this option and keep funding for young people to access music lessons, this is a really important issue for Telford.

3 Received 5 January 2015 via e-mail

Telford & Wrekin Council Budget Proposal 2015/16

I write with regards to one of the proposals contained in your recent budget plan for next year around cutting support for remissions for music lessons and my opposition to this proposal.

It is **every** child's right to open up and explore their artistic and creative potential which should be a journey which goes on for the rest of their life.

It gives them the opportunity to learn to enjoy, understand and make a rich contribution to every aspect of their lives – social, political, economic, psychological.

A sense of where they've come from historically, a sense of where they're going; and how they may want to change that and take control of their lives.

It helps them in every way to become that unique person that they, and they alone, have the potential to be.

So, that being the case, how, then, can we accept a situation where some get that opportunity and others do not? How can we tolerate cultural exclusion?

Creative and cultural learning supports attainment in all subjects including in literacy and maths.

And research shows that taking part in arts activities at school can make up for early disadvantage in terms of:

- likelihood to progress to further education;
- employment outcomes; and more general benefits, like
- participating in society through volunteering and voting.

Having an appreciation of, and an engagement with, the arts gives a young person what many of you have described to me as cultural capital - which is important in and of itself, but also contributes to social mobility.

Research demonstrates that taking part in arts activities develops social skills like confidence and communication, giving young people wider social networks in school and in their wider community. Some children will find they have a unique talent and want to pursue a career in the arts or creative industries. That's not just the right of each individual, it's important for the talent pool for our artists and creators of the future.

Telford & Wrekin Council receives funding from the Department for Education to support access to music lessons for young people on free school meals and children in care.

This has been confirmed by the Department for Education as being the case for 2015/16 back in July 2014. Copy can be found online here: - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/education-services-grant-2015-to-2016>

This Education Services Grant funding has not be delegated to non academy schools in Telford so is wrong to ask Telford non academy schools to make up this funding when the Council has the grant funding and puts non academy schools in Telford at disadvantage to academy schools where this funding has been delegated to them when they became a acadmey.

In 2015/16 according to the Department for Education Telford & Wrekin Council will be getting over £2.26 million through the Education Services Grant only getting a 9% cut in it funding compared with 2014/15 not a 100% cut as this proposal is make to the remissions for music lessons for disadvangted young people.

Why can't such a small percentage of the grant be used to support children in care and pupils on free school meals?

This proposal targets some of the most vulnerable young people in Telford unnecessary and very wrong. Equality of access and equal opportunity has gone out of the window, your own published Equalities Impact Assessment for this proposal highlights this.

How do you get by the government's National Plan for Music Education and the national Charges for Music Tuition Regulations 2007 around making music lessons affordable for all young people? "

The desired outcome is genuine equality of access and affordable tuition for all pupils who wish to continue to receive specialist tuition as part of enrichment activities."

"No charge may be made in respect of a pupil who is looked after by a local authority (within the meaning of section 22(1) of the Children Act 1989(1)). "

Please reconsider this proposal and look at other alternative options

4 Received 5 January 2015 via e-mail

I would like to send in a response to your budget consultation.

I would like to respond particularly to your proposal around cutting all funding support for remissions for music lessons and voice my strong opposition to this idea.

This will hit the most hardest our young people from families who will not be able to afford the cost and real benefits and impacts of music lessons for young people. For such as small cut in the Council's budget and such a large impact on young people lives this is totally disproportionate which your own Equality Impact Assessment notes on your website.

Arts and culture are relatively cheap to support, and bring big returns. The current investment is equivalent to 0.7% of total government spending arts and culture has a positive impact on education. 78% of children who took part in the first year of daily music activity demonstrated improved performance across core subjects according to the In Harmony national evaluation report.

The arts are crucial to imagination, self-expression and creativity in young people and develop skills that improve social mobility and are very important to young people on free school meals and children in care have the biggest impact of all.

Art and culture bring people together; they make valuable contributions to health, welfare and inclusion, reaching out to vulnerable and marginalised communities in hospitals, prisons and through work with older people. They teach empathy, break down barriers and are vital to releasing the talent within our increasingly diverse society.

The Department for Education has set its targets and aspirations for young people and music education in its National Plan for Music Education. That every child should have the opportunity to access music and to learn an instrument and to get rid of the postcode lottery in provision of music.

"Most children will have their first experience of music at school. It is important that music education of high quality is available to as many of them as possible: it must not become the preserve of those children whose families can afford to pay for music tuition.

While music touches the lives of all young people, the disadvantaged can benefit most. Schools cannot do everything alone: they need the support of a wider local music structure."

Secretary of State for Education

There is also support from Councillor Andrew Eade supporting music in schools in Telford and the funding for this:- <http://www.shropshirestar.com/news/2014/01/27/40000-loss-for-t-live-sparks-rethink-call/>

Telford & Wrekin Council receives grant funding from the Department for Education to support this through the Education Services Grant and does not come out of the council's core funding and has been confirmed by the Department for Education for 2015/16. This funding comes to the Council and not to schools. This grant funding has been reduced by 9% next year 2015/16 not the 100% cut Telford & Wrekin Council are planning.

The Music Tuition Charges Regulations also ensures all music lessons must be affordable to access for all young people.

This damaging idea must be dropped and rethought

5 Received 12 January 2015 via e-mail

Good evening, my response to your budget proposal around the removal of remissions support for music lessons from the 1st April

My three main issues with the current proposal as it stands.

- It effects and has a impact non academy schools in Telford and does not affect academy schools in Telford - so unfair / unequal access to opportunities;
- The timeframe you want to make this proposal happen ie. 1st April 2015 - 1 month to make this proposal happen and to get every school in Telford on board and signed up to this proposal.
- National Music Tuition Charges Regulations 2007 - states free music lessons for looked after children and making lessons affordable for all young people where LA's charge for music lessons and must have a remissions policy in place where charges are made for music lessons. To how does this proposal fit with your current LA remissions policy for music lessons and the Music Tuition Charges Regulations?

Possible Solution

Each local authority receives a Education Services grant from the Department for Education to support a range of central education services including music services. The DfE confirmed in July 2014 that the Education Services Grant could be still used by councils to support music services and access to music lessons as it supports the Department for Education's National Plan for Music Education, 2007 Music Charging Regulations and the department's aspirations for every child to learn an musical instrument.

The Education Services Grant Guidance Document 2015/16 states:-

"We believe that every child is entitled to a high-quality music education. We have confirmed music as a compulsory subject for all children from key stage 1 to key stage 3 in the new national curriculum. The new programmes of study for music include an increased focus on the need for activities to be undertaken 'musically' with reference to learning to play a musical instrument and an increased focus on singing."

Last year Councils in England nationally spent £15 million of the Education Services Grant on supporting their local music services and the year before they spent £18 million of their grant on supporting music services. (Source: Department for Education wesite)

The Education Services Grant is worth in 2015/16 2.26 million to Telford & Wrekin Council according to the Department for Education website figures and would be a very small percentage of this grant could be used to help support the remissions policy for non academy schools in Telford. (about 1.5% of the grant it would cost based on your budget proposal figures on your website)

Academy schools get this funding direct from the DfE and I agree totally with you that they should cover their cost of this proposal in academy schools as they get the funding for this and not the LA. So yes agree with this part of your proposal that academy schools pay for their remissions offer. My big issue is the non academy schools in Telford don't get this funding as it held centrally by the local authority and not passed on the non academy schools creating a postcode lottery and impacting on a large number of vulnerable young people across Telford with lack of equal access to opportunities which academy schools in Telford can afford to buy into. Which in my view is unfair. The Education Services Grant is being cut by around 14% next year - so I would make a 14% cut in the funding of the remissions policy for music lessons instead of a 100% cut being proposed by Telford & Wrekin Council - with schools, academy schools, grants, lottery funding making up the difference to top up the funding. Any further cuts in the ESG grant in future years would also be applied to the remissions funding pot and schools taking on a bigger share of the funding for this. This would mean a more staged / realistic approach and managed approach to cutting the funding to remissions, a smoother transition to schools funding a bigger share of this and also all the staff man hours the council will have to use between March (when budget proposals confirmed) and April 1st in getting every school in Telford signed up to this by the 1st April will negate any savings you make on this proposal if it goes ahead in it current form through staffing costs in trying to make this work in such a short timeframe.

I would ask you to consider using a small percentage (1.5%/£32k) of the Education Services Grant to support the remissions for non academy Telford schools which is reduced year on year as central funding is further reduced and make a more manageable and less disruption to vulnerable young people access to music lessons, while at the same time providing equal access / opportunities to music lessons for vulnerable young people at non academy Telford schools.

Your head of music service will have a better handle on the figures and data than I and would be better talking to them about the finer details of this and how this may work as a idea going forward. That person will also be better able to talk through the OFSTED requirements for access to music lessons for looked after children and free school meal pupils.

I haven't gone into here the impacts this proposal would have on the vulnerable young people and the disruption it would cause especially to those sitting exams this coming summer and the impacts on their learning. Or the benefits music brings to highly vulnerable young people who benefit the most from music developing academic, social and soft employment skills. You just have to go and see In Harmony at Old Park primary school to see this in action and for real life the impacts it is having across the whole school. This proposal risks make Old Park the only school in Telford to be this beacon.

You do have truly an amazing music service with an In Harmony progamme which is second to none in working and impacting on vulnerable young people and its commitment, drive and passion for young people and I am really staggged by what they do and achieve.

I would just ask that you consider phasing this cut in funding rather than removing it all on the 1st April 2015 and the risks this brings for such a small saving.

Just an idea which may help things.

Many thanks for your time in taking to read this,

Ps. I had a quick chat with my daughter's school head teacher about this today and they weren't aware of this proposal to remove remissions support for music lessons in the budget proposal, have schools be notified about this proposal?

6 Received 13 January 2015 via e-mail

Dear Sir/Madam,

In response to your Council budget proposal to remove support for music lessons through remissions An alternative to removing this support for families and young people is outlined below.

The Education Services Grant from the Department for Education which was confirmed by the Department in Education in July 2014 can be used to support music services by local authorities but Telford & Wrekin Council have used this grant according to a Freedom of Information Request and an article in the Shropshire Star to cover the losses of two T-Live events.

- Shropshire Star article:- <http://www.shropshirestar.com/news/2014/01/27/40000-loss-for-t-live-sparks-rethink-call/>
- Freedom of Information Request:- <http://www.thekooz.co.uk/images/t-live/RS382076.pdf>

Now that you have had two years of developing the TLive and arts events concept spending £75,000 of the Education Services Grant it should not need this level of grant support going forward into 2015/16 from the Education Services Grant and the savings from not covering TLive loses such as through more sponsorship, ticket sales, traded income could be used to support remissions for vulnerable young people to access music lessons across the Borough while allowing still to make a budget saving.

I am a really big supporter of arts events and TLive but think this needs to move to a more commercial traded model after two years of piloting and support should not be removed from some of our most vulnerable young people and families to access music lessons.

Thank you for considering this email,

7 Received 14 January 2015 via e-mail

Dear All,

Further to my email below, my son's primary school have given me this afternoon this independent legal advice fact sheet they had when looking into becoming an Academy School.

Page 3 of this document covers what is funded and supported through the Education Services grant which academies get direct into their budgets and the LA retains for non academy schools.

<http://www.whitingandpartners.co.uk/Pages/DocumentManager/Academy%20Factsheet%20-%20Budget%20&%20Finance%20Factsheet.pdf>

Thanks

8 Received 21 January 2015 via e-mail

To whom it may concern - Budget Proposal on Music Lessons Remissions

Is it possible to use the funding from the Education Services Grant from the Department for Education which for the past two years have filled the losses made by two T-Lives according to the attached Freedom of Information Request and newspaper article below and use this funding to support remissions for vulnerable young people to access to music lessons instead of loss making events?

<http://www.shropshirestar.com/news/2014/01/27/40000-loss-for-t-live-sparks-rethink-call/>

I would also like noted the Telford & Wrekin Council's Scrutiny Review Report of Arthog Remissions (on the Council website) which states:-

"That equalities issues must be considered, and the need to protect people and families in receipt of benefits and minimise the financial impact on people and families on low incomes as far as possible." (page 4 par 6.12)

"The Council operates a Remissions Policy whereby the Council fully subsidises the cost of the course for children of families verified as meeting the remissions criteria (Free School Meals, Income

Support, Working Tax Credits). The purpose of the Remissions Policy is to ensure that no child should be denied access to Arthog because of financial hardship." (page 8)

"Members were very concerned that the introduction of even a partial charge would risk excluding children from disadvantaged families from taking part in the course and that this risk should be avoided." (page 13)

"The desire to protect the most vulnerable and people on benefits. The desire to minimise the impact of any revisions as far as possible. The need to minimise the risk to income streams which would jeopardise services in the long-term" (page 14)

Why is this approach not being made to remissions for music lessons for vulnerable young people? Would it be possible to email me and publish the Equality Impact Assessment and/or any other impact reports you have done /made for this proposal to remove remissions support for music lessons for vulnerable young people?

I would ask the Council to prioritise funding for vulnerable young people over lose making T-Live and find the funding to keep this scheme going.

ii) Arthog Remission

1 to 7 Received 29 January 2015 via e-mail

Dear Sirs,

Regarding Remission Fee Budget

As 'Chairperson' of Telford and Wrekin Primary Head Teachers Forum I have been instructed by the members to bring to your attention their strong views on the council's proposal to remove the Remission Scheme budget, and thus, the access to Arthog Outdoor Education Centre.

The Head teachers accept that budgets must always be reviewed and that, in the current 'economic climate', savings need to be identified. However, in this case the adverse effects will be disproportionately felt by many school children in the Borough.

Without identifying all the effects of removing this budget it may be helpful to rehearse some of the main points:

1. There are three methods of qualifying for attendance at Arthog namely;
 - (a) Payment in full;
 - (b) Remission scheme
 - (c) Schools arranging to support low income parents(possibly using Pupil Premium Grant)
2.
 - (a) Children qualify for *Pupil Premium* if they receive or have received, free school meals.
 - (b) However it only applies to this group of pupils and can be spent on anything which supports the child and not just attendance at Arthog.
 - (c) Unfortunately it does not apply to children of low income families if they are not in receipt of free school meals.
 - (d) Whilst not within the purview of head teachers there is a concern that *Pupil Premium* may not survive a future change of Government.
3. (a) In respect of the *Remission Scheme*, to a greater extent, this is a 'financial safety net' that catches those children whose parents economically fall between those who pay for attendance and those who do not qualify for free school meals. That would include those in receipt of Income Support or, (with qualification) those in receipt of Working Tax Credits.

(b) The *Remission Scheme* is tied to attendance at Arthog. Therefore the Remission Scheme is an important incentive for schools to use Arthog. With the loss of the Remission Budget schools will have a choice whether to send only the children who qualify for Pupil Premium or have the ability to pay. Given the demography of Telford and Wrekin there will be many children who do not qualify for the Pupil Premium but whose parents are in receipt of the identified benefits. In most cases Head teachers will treat all children equal and will not discriminate against a few by refusing them a place at Arthog – from an economic perspective head teachers will have no option other than to withdraw the whole booking. We do not believe it is hyperbole to say that Arthog is the jewel in the crown of Telford and Wrekin”. Indeed this observation was echoed by Councillor Paul Watling on Arthog’s 50th Anniversary. There is strong evidence to show that a child’s early experience at Arthog can lead to renewed enthusiasm to re-engage in educational pursuits and often excel in areas not achievable in the classroom. This is important for those children who are either ‘hard to reach’ or have withdrawn from education. The premise that (in the event of the Remission Budget being withdrawn) schools can use the Pupil Premium is not a sustainable argument. To ensure all children, irrespective of their parent’s income, are given equal access to Arthog, and are not subjected to discrimination, we urge you to retain the Remission Scheme Budget. Yours sincerely,

Received 7 times in total

8 Received 30 January 2015 via e-mail

I am writing to express the views of the staff here on hearing the news that the Arthog Remission Scheme may be withdrawn.

- Pupils from this school have been visiting Arthog for over 10 years
- This school has a **very** high percentage of FSM pupils
- This school also has a number of pupils in low income working families – with parents who **want** to work
- Many pupils have never had a holiday and some have not been to the seaside – cheaper local residential venues do not provide an equivalent experience
- In recent years we have become more and more aware of disadvantage in low income as well as benefit families – we will not be able to support these pupils through Pupil Premium (clear examples of this are hungry children in January when people are paid early before Christmas and poor quality/ not enough food in lunchboxes)
- We use our Pupil Premium effectively (Ofsted Nov 2013) and want to keep using it as we do now
- Arthog is an early year 6 experience this enables the pupils to mature, improves their confidence and emotional health just in time for SATs!

We therefore hope that the Remission Scheme remains

9 Received 30 January 2015 via e-mail

Dear Sirs,

Regarding Remission Fee Budget

I am writing to voice our school's concerns about the council's proposal to remove the Remission Scheme budget, and thus, the access to Arthog Outdoor Education Centre. We understand that budgets must always be reviewed and that savings need to be identified. However, in this case the effects on our children and families will be huge.

The current remissions scheme not only supports children eligible for the pupil premium grant but also children whose parents on low income who are in receipt of working tax credits. This second group are not eligible for the pupil premium grant.

For our group of 30 children who visited Arthog before Christmas, 12 were in receipt of free school meals but a further 7 received remissions due to low income. In previous years there have been even greater numbers than this. If the remissions scheme were to be withdrawn we would find it very difficult to offer our children a residential visit at all.

It is very easy to say that schools can use the Pupil Premium Grant to cover this reduction but the grant is to be used to support a wide range of activities that improve the attainment and progress of disadvantaged pupils. Only this we received a letter from David Laws MP congratulating us on the progress of our disadvantaged pupils over the past 4 years. This has been achieved by providing a wide range of opportunities for all our children. If we had to redirect funds to cover Arthog remissions we would not be able to continue with some of those activities. We also have no idea whether pupil premium will continue in the long term.

Finally, Arthog is a fantastic resource for Telford and Wrekin. It is an exceptional centre that offers very high quality experiences for our children. It would be a great shame if it was lost to the council as a whole and to Telford and Wrekin schools. We urge you to reconsider this proposal and continue to fund remissions at Arthog.

Yours sincerely,

10 Received 30 January 2015 via e-mail

To whom it may concern,

I would like to express my concern regarding the proposed changes to the funding for the Arthog Centre. This is because of the massive impact it will have on the Centre's sustainability. The activities which the centre provides are second to none and children benefit emotionally and socially through the experiences which it provides. I feel that to change the funding system could put the future of this very special place in doubt – which is something which I feel very passionately about. I ask that the council and the centre are given the opportunity to look at different models of funding as a matter of urgency and urge the council to not just cease the remissions funding.

Kind Regards

11 Received 30 January 2015 via e-mail

To whom it may concern,

I was surprised to hear this week that the council are proposing that all remissions are to be withdrawn by Telford and Wrekin. Remissions support low income families to enable children to access music lessons and the outdoor education courses. The principle of this is that no child should be further disadvantaged due to the financial income their family receive. I am surprised that this is the message are council are sending out to our vulnerable families.

Although this is not applicable to many of the families in my community I cannot ignore the moral issues of all educators and council members to support vulnerable families. I am concerned that council members will assume Pupil Premium can be used to pay for Arthog. With the pressure

schools face regarding standards and attainment, pupil premium will always been used in the first place to support interventions in school. For those school who receive minimum pupil premium, resources will be stretched further and it will be highly unlikely that pupil premium can be used to support this valuable addition to a child's education. More importantly pupil premium does not apply to low income families who are not in receipt of free school meals.

Please can I ask that members give careful consideration to the concerns raised by Headteachers.

12 Received 30 January 2015 via e-mail

Please find attached letters written from some of our Y6 pupils, who are appalled at the idea that the remissions policy might be changing.

Our school can only run visits to Arthog, thanks to the remissions policy, as over half of our children need this to enable them to access the educational opportunity. Should this be removed, ALL of our children will be unable to learn the important, and often life-changing lessons that Arthog provides, as the trip will be unviable, given the small numbers that can afford to pay.

Thank you for considering both mine, and the pupils thoughts during this consultation.

Yr6 Pupil - Queenswood Primary School and Nursery

If you change the money, less people will be able to go because people who don't have enough, then they won't have enough money to go to Arthog. If they don't have enough, then they won't have enough for food and electric, or a drink or anything! If it's free, more people will be able to go.

I am sure that you would agree with this, if its free, more people would go and when they are older they will make the right choices and self-confidence in life. Which by letting them go for free they will conquer fears and learn how to survive. If they go to Arthog they will learn more reasonability.

If you raise the money a lot schools won't go because then if they there's only 6 people in the class who can pay. It won't be fair to others who can't pay. Like I just said, if people don't go to Arthog it will not go ahead and can't employ the people who work there. If people don't go there they won't learn the skills what we learnt there.

Yr6 Pupil - Queenswood Primary School and Nursery

Dear Councillor

I am writing to you to persuade you not to pay for them people that have free school meals .If you stop pay for them. It is sort of fair in a way. If you close down Arthog people can't not conker there fear, but if you don't close it down they won't stick with that fear for the rest of their life. However the people will achieve new skills like stick ability. Stick ability means that you don't give up on something want to achieve. The people that don't pay won't achieve confidences. They might achieve confidence from staying away from home for a week.

The people that don't pay and have free school meals won't pay to go if you stop people going for free. That means Arthog will lose profit and may have to shut down, so the people that work at Arthog will have to give up their job. If Arthog does close down the people that have to pay will be looking forwards to going to Arthog. Also they won't get any money to get all the equipment and food. They get all the things ready and the schools say they can't come and they will lose their jobs.

It is not fair that the people that pay don't get to go. The poor families should still get more opportunity to go. When the people that don't pay should get punished but everyone else gets punished. Those that do pay miss out on everything. That is so not fair.

Yr6 Pupil - Queenswood Primary School and Nursery

Dear councillor

I am devastated that people with free school meals will be robbed of an experience. Some people will be disgusted; others will be happy. If Arthog shut down they will lose all their facilities due to schools not having enough money. Arthog, which is an amazing place, will not have enough money there for it will be annoying for children of all ages. Also they look after the environment if they don't get enough money they'll close down and it will get messy. Queenswood, which went on the glorious trip, will be affected in the future. A poor family will be home less because of paying the money. Children, who need the survival skills, will never learn the skills they need to. It gives a boost to the shy people so they can come out of their shell. Some people have self-confidence; others don't. Going to Arthog makes you appreciate what you've got.

Arthog, which is a fun place, will die if people don't go. Arthog do night activities including: night walking with a pillow case on our heads following a rope and orienteering in the dark and in the morning as well. They also do multiple day activities including: mountain walking, canoeing, beach clean-up, rope swing, gorge walking and rock climbing such a person like you would be happy for it to close down due to the money problem. Trust me you will regret it if you tell the people that have to pay the large amount of money. It will be hard for other people including my-self will be charging down to your office. What would you do? If I were you I would tell the rest of the company and call it off. It would be heart breaking for Arthog to close down due to your terrible actions. Barmouth beach will be a messy place and possibly kill all the fish in the ocean! I suggest you close it down!

Yr6 Pupil - Queenswood Primary School and Nursery

Dear councillor,

I am aware that you're discussing the fact that free school meals children will have to pay for Arthog.

I am sure that you will agree that children will miss out. It will stop children from conquering their fears. The honest truth is that if this does not happen, children will gain life changing skills like responsibility. They would also gain confidence in trying new things and to learn to believe in themselves.

The problem with stopping funding is if children cannot pay, would then make Arthog close down, which means that people will lose their jobs, this will cause distress because schools won't go. All of the workers at Arthog will lose their jobs, which will put families in a terrible state, and they won't earn money.

This won't be fair because poorer families will miss the opportunity of a lifetime. Obviously this will punish children that don't need punishing. Furthermore, if nobody goes, those who could pay will miss out also. What if you was the parent of one of these children?

Yr6 Pupil - Queenswood Primary School and Nursery

Dear Councillor,

Staying away from home is important to you. It will affect the school. I want you to understand that stopping the money for Arthog would damage the children's confidence. Children learn new things about themselves and want to be good at it.

They do new things but they won't get the confidence they need if they can't go. I found outdoor activities develop their self-confidence.

People will lose their jobs because children can't afford to go. They will not have many jobs and they will be annoyed.

Being poorer should not mean you learn less because the money was going less. If they lose their jobs Arthog may close down.

How would you feel if you were in this situation due to being unemployed and not able to send your child to Arthog?

13 Received 30 January 2015 via e-mail

I am writing to express my objections to the withdrawal of the Remission Budget, which currently enables all children to access education at Arthog.

Whilst I accept that budgets must always be reviewed and that, in the current 'economic climate', savings need to be identified. However, in this case the adverse effects will be disproportionately felt by many school children in the Borough.

There is strong evidence to show that a child's early experience at Arthog can lead to renewed enthusiasm to re-engage in educational pursuits and often excel in areas not achievable in the classroom. This is important for those children who are either 'hard to reach' or have withdrawn from education.

Without the remission scheme, there would be a group of my children who would not be able to attend Arthog. I will always treat all children equally and will therefore not discriminate against a few by refusing them a place at Arthog – from an economic perspective I will have no option other than to withdraw from using the centre.

To ensure all children, irrespective of their parent's income, are given equal access to Arthog, and are not subjected to discrimination, I would like to urge you to retain the Remission Scheme Budget.

14 Received 30 January 2015 via e-mail

Response from Lightmoor Primary School

We accept that budgets must always be reviewed and that, in the current 'economic climate', savings need to be identified. However, in this case the adverse effects will be disproportionately felt by many school children in the Borough and the *Remission Scheme* is an important incentive for schools to use Arthog.

With the loss of the *Remission Budget* schools will have a choice whether to send only the children who qualify for *Pupil Premium* or have the ability to pay.

Given the demography of Telford and Wrekin there will be many children who do not qualify for the *Pupil Premium* but whose parents are in receipt of the identified benefits.

In most cases Head teachers will treat all children equal and will not discriminate against a few by refusing them a place at Arthog – from an economic perspective head teachers will have no option other than to withdraw the whole booking.

There is strong evidence to show that a child's early experience at Arthog can lead to renewed enthusiasm to re-engage in educational pursuits and often excel in areas not achievable in the classroom. This is important for those children who are either 'hard to reach' or have withdrawn from education.

The premise that (in the event of the *Remission Budget* being withdrawn) schools can use the *Pupil Premium* is not a sustainable argument.

To ensure all children, irrespective of their parent's income, are given equal access to Arthog, and are not subjected to discrimination, we urge you to retain the Remission Scheme Budget.

15 Received 2 February 2015 via e-mail

Dear ***,

I am writing on behalf of the Arthog Management Committee who met on the 16th January and discussed the 2015-16 budget proposals for Arthog.

We do have some very serious concerns regarding these proposals and I will explain each one in more detail:-

1. **£50,000 savings** – as I stated in my previous letter this is an enormous challenge for the Arthog budget. Over the last few years we have worked hard to try and reduce expenditure and increase revenue to bring Arthog into a cost neutral position for the Council. This has involved reducing costs on salaries and overheads and making the centre efficient financially. Our understanding is that for 15/16 the cost to the council is 17K which is pretty insignificant when you compare that to the overall budget position.

The only way to generate further income for Arthog is through the fees. Our issue is that the income generated to run Arthog comes from the parents who pay for their children to go to Arthog. If the council removes 50K from the budget is this not public money that the parents have paid the centre through the fees? Is this morally right? If we continue to increase the fees we will reach a point, some schools have already done this, when schools will use alternative providers which are of poorer quality but significantly cheaper. If we cannot fill the centre then income will obviously drop and create a significant budget shortfall which inevitably could lead you to consider the long term future for Arthog.

We already charge external users a higher fee and again this has to be balanced against the pricing structure of other providers across the country.

Therefore, at this moment in time we would have to set a deficit budget if the decision is taken to remove £50,000 in “savings”. It is critical that the council understands the impact this would have on the revenue budget for Arthog.

2. **Removal of Remissions** – this is extremely significant for Arthog and again will have a detrimental effect on bookings and income. Pupil Premium does not cover all children who can access remissions currently. Schools only get this funding for children on Free School Meals but children from low income families, who are currently entitled to remissions, are not entitled to pupil premium and schools do not receive funding for them.

Currently, about one third of children who visit Arthog each year are funded through the remissions scheme. If this is removed then schools may well cancel or not book visits because they cannot fund those children who were entitled to a place previously, through remissions. There has been no discussion with Head teachers in Telford to ascertain if they would be prepared to use some of their Pupil Premium funding and by simply withdrawing the remissions without consultation would be a disaster. Many schools make long term decisions about allocating this funding and may not want to or be able to finance Arthog places using it. It would not address the issue of our low income families at all, those children would almost defiantly **not** go to Arthog in the future. We urge the council to reconsider this proposal and start consultation with the Head Teachers to reduce remissions in a planned and manageable way over the next financial year.

If Telford Schools do not use Arthog then the Council would be running an outdoor provision that has no benefit to Telford young people and that would be unacceptable to all of us. We know the Council is highly supportive of Arthog, has invested in it over the years and understands the immense impact it has on our young people. Everyone always remembers their Arthog week as one of the best experiences during their school life and the fact we are fully booked each year indicates that it is highly valued by schools and parents.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss our concerns with you in more detail as part of the current consultation process before final decisions are made. We all want to secure the future of Arthog for many years to come and the committee is willingly to work with the key officers to ensure that the centre is financially viable.

Yours sincerely,

16 Received 3 February 2015 via e-mail

Dear ***

I am writing to you on behalf of the Secondary Headteachers, which form the Telford & Wrekin Learning Partnership. We would like to outline our concerns in relation to recent consultation proposals regarding the removal of remissions from the Arthog Programme. We believe that this related to approximately £132,000 of support for our families and that removal of this funding could seriously impact on the viability of the Centre and its Outreach Programme.

Our figures would suggest that there is a high dependency on this funding at both Primary and Secondary phases in Telford & Wrekin. As we have seen with Academies, who don't have remissions, bookings are being cancelled.

In addition the planned cut of £50,000 to the 15-16 budget would seem to place an impossible challenge on the team. Given that they already operate a budget which has virtually nil cost to the council, finding additional savings would further impact on the viability of Arthog as a whole.

We respectfully request that the decision is postponed until such time as we can have a detailed discussion. It would be a travesty if the Authority, and more importantly our children, were to lose what has become a heritage experience for so many.

Yours sincerely

17 Received 3 February 2015 via e-mail

Can we first express our absolute dismay at the potential thought that Telford and Wrekin and Shropshire Authority are considering removing completely or partially the remissions process currently in place for students attending residential visits at Arthog outdoor centre.

As a Special school, Southall has a 100% population of disadvantaged students. For most it is because of their learning difficulties and associated complex needs and for many it is also because of socio - economic factors. 54 % of Southall students are on the free school meal register.

Because of these factors a large number of our students do not have the opportunities to develop their already limited educational and personal, health, social and emotional experiences outside the parameters of their own family networks. Southall is committed to offering a broad, balanced and enriched curriculum to help our students gain and develop the skills for life in a wide variety of appropriate educational settings.

In recent years it has become more difficult to find and afford residential experiences where highly skilled staff are able to offer an experience that is on one hand challenging, both educationally and personally, yet on the other hand is nurturing, enabling students to flourish emotionally and socially. Only Arthog remains as Southall's annual residential visit provider. Past regular trips to Edale, Paris, and London, as well as various one off ventures have now gone. The experiences from these are not of the same calibre as Arthog and often the cost eliminates so many of the students who really do require the opportunity to have such experiences.

The remissions process also enables students from deprived areas all over Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin to have the Arthog experience. Like the students of Southall, many of these students are 'challenged' due to the disadvantages they face in their everyday life. We know from the many years we have been taking students to Arthog and the friendships we have made with centre staff and with staff from other schools, that Arthog is seen as one of the 'Jewels in the crown' of the Education Authority.

Each school benefits from pupil premium, Southall just as much as most, due to the nature of our school intake. That funding is incredibly important. It can be spent by the school on initiatives the school recognises as fundamental to supporting the learning of its student population. The focus of

this may change from year to year. If the remissions incentive is repealed then schools like ours who want to retain the opportunity for all students to experience a meaningful residential visit may be forced to commit that funding annually to keep that opportunity alive, thus negating the ability to place funding in other essential areas of need.

Funding in special schools is recognised by the Local Authority as being one of the highest pressures in education budgets. Special schools simply do not have the funding to support trips like this from their budget as remissions made up nearly 80% in 2013/2014. The school has already made savings in procurement and contracts and our three year budget projection identifies significant overspends in all years moving forward. As a school that spends 82.1% of its budget on staffing the loss of these remissions for our students would have a significant impact on the safety and wellbeing of students and staff.

Arthog is a thriving outdoor establishment offering a range of educational experiences in a variety of curriculum subjects. There is vast amounts of knowledge and experience amongst a well established staff. This must not be underestimated. It has taken years for this to have come about. The remissions scheme has incentivised authority schools over the years to use Arthog Outdoor Education Centre, when the trend for many years has been to look beyond and use organisations such as PGL. Having gone down that route myself previously, I can honestly say that students and staff alike get 'an experience' but it is detached, meaning there is little direct link to the educational needs of the students and little meaningful nurture of individual students. Visiting school students get far more than just 'an experience' at Arthog. The centre staff know you, and know your students from past visits. Staff build upon the students previous experiences, they develop further their relationships with students, fostering team spirit and trust. They work closely with school staff on understanding individual student needs and vulnerabilities to ensure that the experience and the exposure to challenge is personalised so that each student feels that they have achieved and had a positive experience. In Southall's observations a good number of our students have had 'light bulb' experiences at Arthog which has initiated significant strides forward in their personal and social development.

I stress the importance of this because I am afraid that should the remissions initiative be removed, this will ultimately result in dis-incentivising local authority schools to use their Local Education run centre. This in turn may ultimately lead to a running down of the centre, risking the loss of experienced staff and the investment of necessary capital to continue to run a diverse programme of activities.

The implications of the removal or reduction in remissions for Southall would probably be profound. At present students clamber to get onto the annual Arthog trip. In future it may be hard to fill the required places, and those that do go will be from the more 'financially privileged' backgrounds and not necessarily from those who would benefit most from such an experience. There is even the possibility that Arthog could with rising costs, which would not be subsidised, go the same way as the other residential trips have gone at our school, and disappear from the curriculum altogether. Should this potential scenario be echoed county wide, then Shropshire and Telford and Wrekin Local Education Authority will have lost their 'jewel in their crown'.

The current remissions scheme in place for Arthog allows opportunities for all students regardless of socio-economic implications and regardless of physical and learning ability. This 'front line' cut would be anti educational, anti equal opportunities, which flows massively against the grain of the ethos of any Education Authority.

All schools want the remissions process to remain as it is.

As it appears that the process will be affected in future, may I suggest two further potential solutions which can be discussed at the consultations.

1. For there to be a reduction but not full removal of remissions for all authority schools.

2. What ever reduction is decided upon or should there be a full removal of remissions, for Special Schools in the Authority to be considered separately and the following applied:
 - For remissions to remain fully, in the case of a reduction.
 - For at least a 50% remission be granted, if completely removed.

Yours sincerely,

18 Received 30 January 2015 via e-mail

I am writing to you on behalf of the Secondary Headteachers, which form the Telford & Wrekin Learning Partnership. We would like to outline our concerns in relation to recent consultation proposals regarding the removal of remissions from the Arthog Programme. We believe that this related to approximately £132,000 of support for our families and that removal of this funding could seriously impact on the viability of the Centre and its Outreach Programme.

Our figures would suggest that there is a high dependency on this funding at both Primary and Secondary phases in Telford & Wrekin. As we have seen with Academies, who don't have remissions, bookings are being cancelled.

In addition the planned cut of £50,000 to the 15-16 budget would seem to place an impossible challenge on the team. Given that they already operate a budget which has virtually nil cost to the council, finding additional savings would further impact on the viability of Arthog as a whole.

We respectfully request that the decision is postponed until such time as we can have a detailed discussion. It would be a travesty if the Authority, and more importantly our children, were to lose what has become a heritage experience for so many.

Regards,

19 Received 30 January 2015 via e-mail

Good Morning,

I would like to respond to the proposed budget cut to the Arthog remission funding. As a Headteacher group the Primary Heads Forum have clearly stated why the argument that schools already receive funding through pupil premium is not one that can be used in isolation. As you will also be aware Pupil Premium funding is not an additional funding stream for schools it is just funding that we already received from the previous government dressed up in a different name.

The Arthog Centre quite rightly has been described as the 'jewel in T&W's crown', and as a forward thinking 'Cooperative' Council I would urge you to look at this issue again. It is something that Telford and Wrekin should be proud of - that you are one of the few LAs that actively support outdoor education and see the tangible, but sometimes not measurable benefits, that this type of opportunity provides for children, particularly those from our most disadvantaged families. Having been to the centre many times and seen the impact that 'high quality' outdoor education can have on children's lives it is madness to think that the centre could be under threat.

Cutting this amount of money in one tranche of spending cuts could have devastating consequences on the centre. Is there not some half way house that could be agreed, for example a phased reduction in funding from the LA to ensure we maintain the strong links between T&W and Arthog and ensure its future sustainability?

Many thanks for taking the time to consider my views. I do hope some kind of half-way house solution could be agreed.

20 Received 30 January 2015 via e-mail

I would like to raise my concerns about any funding cuts to Arthog Outdoor Centre that might threaten its future viability.

I co-ordinate a teacher training programme based in Telford schools. At the end of the one year programme our trainees achieve Qualified Teacher Status and a Post Graduate Certificate in Education.

A key theme to the programme is outdoor learning and all the trainees attend Arthog as part of their training.

The loss of the centre would significantly diminish the quality of the programme we offer.

21 Received 30 January 2015 via e-mail

With the proposed withdrawal of the remissions payments for Telford and Wrekin places at Arthog I fear that the Arthog centre may be unable to continue to operate. This would deny future children the opportunity to experience the benefits of high quality outdoor education. The outdoor activities develop personal skills and self-esteem that other physical activities cannot achieve.

Arthog outreach have provided Leadership Academy training days and KS1 activity days for the TW School Sport Partnership. Again engaging children in activity that otherwise would not. Children's lives have been changed by these experiences.

I urge the T&W Council to reconsider their proposal of removing the remissions funding for Arthog places. Investment in our children is priceless and monies must be cut from other areas of the councils budget to protect this.

22 Received 4 February 2015 via e-mail

Dear Councillors

I am writing to wholeheartedly stand alongside the concerns raised by primary school headteachers in the attached letter from *** **. I also fully agree with the concerns raised by *** ** in the attached email.

My further concerns are that:

- I have no record or recollection of being actively consulted about the education-related cuts that are proposed (as specified on page 8 of the covering report presented on 8/1/15). Please accept my apologies if there was active consultation and I have missed it.
- On page 13 of the report, it is stated that 'we will **ensure** that all pupils are able to fulfil their potential, whatever their background' and 'we are working ... to **ensure** that young people are ready for work by developing a skills passport focussing on soft skills...'. I believe the proposed cuts to remissions run contrary to those statements. If Telford & Wrekin Council wanted to **ensure** those things, it would take steps to guarantee important opportunities, like Arthog, music tuition and swimming.
- On page 14 of the report, two of the Council's priorities, adopted in 2011, are: 'Put our children and young people first' and 'Improve the health and wellbeing of our communities and address health inequalities'. Again, I believe the proposed cuts run contrary to those priorities.
- On page 50 of the report, mention is made of the freeze in Pupil Premium payments to schools. I know that headteachers of all schools have invested considerable time and resources into carefully planning and evaluating strategies for using the Pupil Premium Grant (PPG) funding. If remissions for Arthog, music and swimming were to be cut, with an

expectation that PPG funding be used to replace the council spending, headteachers would have to halt proven, effective practice, in order to use PPG to pay for what the council would cease paying for. The purpose of PPG is to close the achievement gap for disadvantaged pupils.

- In the 2012 report of the Cooperative and Communities Scrutiny Committee, it seems that extensive consideration was given to the question of whether to maintain the practice of offering remissions for children's visits to Arthog. The following people were all present and agreed that it was important to continue to offer remissions: Angela McClements, Stephen Bentley, Nathan England, Kevin Guy, Tracy Hope, Amrick Jhawar, Jackie Loveridge, Karen Tomlinson and Lynda Baker-Oliver. I wonder if those people have changed their minds, what has caused them to change their minds.

With best regards

23 Received 6 February 2015 via e-mail

Colleagues

I am writing to all schools in my capacity as the primary school representative on Telford and Wrekin's Arthog Management Board and the School Sports Board.

Telford and Wrekin have made several proposals as part of the consultation process for budget setting for 2015.2016 that will impact significantly on Arthog Outdoor Education Centre.

The first is a 50K budget savings target. As Arthog is already covering all of its operational costs and is cost neutral to the LA this savings target is in fact an income target and the money will go back into the Leisure Portfolio

The second issue could put the very future of Arthog in doubt. All remissions are to be withdrawn by Telford and Wrekin. Remissions support low income families to enable children to access the outdoor education courses. (This withdrawal of remissions will also impact on music tuition.) A significant proportion of Arthog's revenue comes from this remission scheme. It is to Telford and Wrekin's credit that they have, up to this point, had a remission scheme to ensure our most vulnerable children have access to this valuable residential outdoor education experience.

The School Sports Board is very concerned about the threat to the Arthog Centre of these two proposals. Outdoor education is known to be a hugely positive factor in children and young people's physical and emotional health. They will be writing to Telford and Wrekin to express their concern.

The management committee appreciate the need to make budgets balance, but we know that the team at Arthog have worked very hard to achieve a position where the centre is busier than ever and is effectively cost neutral to the LA. Fees are set to cover costs, not generate a profit. The second issue could be catastrophic for the future of Arthog. We feel that Arthog Centre and Telford and Wrekin need time to consider other proposals. This will allow them to amend or adapt the funding models to ensure the future of the Arthog Centre.

We are asking as many headteachers as possible to make their views known as part of the consultation through the following yourviewsmatter@telford.gov.uk

24 Received 30 January 2015 via e-mail

I am writing to you as Headteacher at St George's C of E Primary School and the primary representative on the Arthog Management Board

Two proposals within the budget consultation have caused many colleagues in Telford great concern.

The first is a 50K budget savings target. As Arthog is already covering all of its operational costs and is cost neutral to the LA this savings target is in fact an income target and the money will go back into the Leisure Portfolio

The second issue could put the very future of Arthog in doubt. All remissions are to be withdrawn by Telford and Wrekin. Remissions support low income families to enable children to access the outdoor education courses. (This withdrawal of remissions will also impact on music tuition.) A significant proportion of Arthog's revenue comes from this remission scheme. It is to Telford and Wrekin's credit that they have, up to this point, had a remission scheme to ensure our most vulnerable children have access to this valuable residential outdoor education experience.

The management committee appreciate the need to make budgets balance, but we know that the team at Arthog have worked very hard to achieve a position where the centre is busier than ever and is effectively cost neutral to the LA. Fees are set to cover costs, not generate a profit. The second issue could be catastrophic for the future of Arthog. We feel that Arthog Centre and Telford and Wrekin need time to consider other proposals. This will allow them to amend or adapt the funding models to ensure the future of the Arthog Centre.

I would appeal for a delay to both these decisions within the 2015.2016 budget setting process. This will allow greater consideration of these issues to enable Arthog to continue to move forward at Telford and Wrekin's outstanding outdoor education provider.

25 Received 30 January 2015 via e-mail

Please think about saving Arthog, it provides a fantastic facility for children to develop as a whole person. It would be a real shame to lose it.

26 Twitter comments made to #tfbudget

- *** Have spoken to our head teacher & have sent a response against the music lessons cuts proposal #Tfbudget hits the wrong people
- *** Also sent in my response to #tfbudget proposal to cut music lessons last week don't agree with it at the moment needs to be looked at again
- *** 'Arts education can be every bit as rigorous as rest of the school curriculum' Nicky Morgan <http://ow.ly/HXkix> #Tfbudget
- *** It is every child's right to explore their artistic and creative potential. Labours current arts policy <http://www.labourartsalliance.org.uk/policy> #Tfbudget
- *** what really gets me is that this proposal hits non academy telford schools but not academy schools unfair really #Tfbudget
- *** #Tfbudget 40% of children from lower social grades had no opportunity to learn an instrument at school ABRSM Report 2014
- *** Sent in my response to cutting music lessons for vulnerable young people spoken to my son's schools is against this proposal too #tfbudget