

Slough Schools Forum- Meeting held on Tuesday, 6th December, 2016

Present: Maggie Waller, Holy Family Primary School (Chair)
John Constable, Langley Grammar School (Vice-Chair)
Rachel Cartwright, Slough Children's Centres
Gillian Coffey, Lynch Hill Primary School
Philip Gregory, Baylis Court Nursery School
Kathleen Higgins, Beechwood Secondary School
Helen Huntley, Haybrook College / PRU
Jo Matthews, Littledown School / PRU
Paul McAteer, Slough and Eton C of E Business and Enterprise College
Navroop Mehat, Wexham Court Primary School
Angela Mellish, St Bernard's Grammar School
Eddie Neighbour, Upton Court Grammar School
Carol Pearce, Penn Wood Primary School
Jon Reekie, Baylis Court Trust MAT / Godolphin Infant School
Debbie Richards, Arbour Vale School
Jo Rockall, Herschel Grammar School
Nicky Willis, Cippenham Primary School

Observers: Kathleen Higgins, Beechwood Secondary School
Anne Bunce, Virtual School Headteacher

Officers: Neil Wilcox, George Grant, Robert Hardy, Johnny Kyriacou, Coral Miller and Jo Moxon, Tony Madden and Nick Pontone (clerk)

PART I

520. Apologies

Richard Kirkham and Sally Eaton.

521. Declarations of Interest

No declarations were made.

522. Minutes and Matters Arising from previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting of the Slough Schools Forum held on 13th October 2016 were approved as a correct record, subject to the addition of Coral Miller and Nabila Malik to the list of those in attendance.

Matters arising

Item 511 – Membership. Maggie Waller confirmed that the Schools Forum Constitution stated that there would be an annual review on the balance of phased membership based on the October census figures. The census data was now available and it was agreed that a report on membership be considered at the next meeting in January.

Item 513 – Early Year Block update. Early years national funding formula allocations for 2017 to 2018 and operational guidance had been published and circulated to the Forum. Rachel Cartwright confirmed that this set the overall rate and further work would now be undertaken to set the differential rate with decisions required by February. The Task Group would be reconvened in January and it was agreed to receive a report on this matter at the next meeting. Maggie Waller asked Rachel Cartwright to write to members confirming what was needed from the Schools Forum.

Item 517 – Cambridge Education update. The standing item could be removed from the Forward Agenda Plan following the transfer of services back to the Council. A standing item on School Improvement should replace this on the Plan.

SBC staffing issues – George Grant reported that an appointment had been made to the vacancy for a schools accountant. He thanked Matt Espley for his assistance in filling the vacancy.

523. Update on National Fair Funding

Coral Miller, Principal Accountant, gave a verbal update National Fair Funding. The Council had met the Department for Education (DfE) on 11th November and the DfE had subsequently published details of local authority revenue funding and operational guidance for 2017-18 on 1st December.

Final allocations for schools and high needs blocks would be confirmed on the basis of pupil numbers recorded in the October census. The minimum funding guarantee (MFG) for schools would be retained so that no school could face a funding reduction of more than 1.5% per pupil in what it received through the local authority funding formula.

The changes also included using a national weighting for secondary low attainment figures and new bandings for the index of deprivation affecting children (IDACI) which may be beneficial to Slough. Local authorities would submit one authority proforma tool (APT) in January 2017. Further work and consultation would be undertaken in the coming weeks and an update would be provided to the Forum in January. The Task Group (5-16 formula) is meeting on 5th January when fully worked models will be available.

524. PFI Update

Neil Wilcox, the Council's newly appointed Assistant Director Finance & Audit gave a verbal update on the Council's revenue budget position and the savings options under consideration to close the budget gap. The Council had a statutory duty to set a balanced revenue budget each year, and the savings requirement for 2017-18 was in excess of £12m from a budget of circa £100m.

A wide range of potential savings were under consideration across the Council, including the £500,000 contribution to the affordability gap relating to schools PFI. Mr Wilcox stated that the Council was seeking to be open and transparent in flagging this matter up to the Forum and that he had already briefed the Chair and Vice-Chair. He provided assurance that there would be full consultation and a clear understanding of the impacts before any decisions were taken early in 2017. He also indicated that a phased approach was likely to be taken if the saving was

progressed and that the Council would come back to the Forum in January once the work on the funding formula and Council budget was further advanced and discussions had been held with the Cabinet.

Maggie Waller and Carol Pearce expressed concerns about the proposal and explained the significant amount of work done on this issue as part of the original PFI pilot. A recent report regarding possible options had been given to Neil Wilcox and this was welcomed. The legislative basis for such action was queried as this would not be a formula redistribution and it was requested that any future paper include clear information on this, any written DfE advice received as well as models of any impact. It was also recognised that the timescales were tight. Maggie Waller requested that the Council update the Forum on its thinking by the end of December.

525. High Needs Block and SEN Update

Robert Hardy introduced a report that provided an update on the financial position affecting the SEND elements of the 2017-18 High Needs Block (HNB).

Work on a recovery plan to address the 2016-17 overspend reported to the Forum in October was progressing. The underlying reasons for the overspend remained unchanged – the historic carry over of costs from the previous financial year; a rising number of pupils with Statements of SEN or Education Health and Care Plans (EHP); and the high costs of out of borough placements, particularly at fee-paying schools related to the child's social care needs. A detailed examination of HNB budgets jointly by the Trust and the Council had made significant progress and the projected overspend had been reduced from £800,000 to £300,000, although it was noted the latter figure could still increase. The HNB Task Group would meet again in January and the work undertaken meant that it had a more solid base of information on which to develop the three year recovery plan. It was likely to include a proposal to transfer from the Schools Block to HNB for 2017-18.

The Forum welcomed the rigorous and detailed work underway to address the overspend. Paul McAteer asked why no formal approach had been made to the DfE for additional financial support as stated in paragraph 3.6 of the report. Jo Moxon reported that the issue had been raised in discussions with the DfE but additional support would not be provided, principally as the reasons for the overspend related to the historic backlog and processing of SEN and EHPs. Paul McAteer requested details of the appropriate contacts at DfE to raise this matter with them directly. The Forum discussed the longer term capacity at Special Schools and Resources Bases more generally to ensure there was sufficient capacity locally to meet the educational needs of Slough children.

It was noted that Jo Moxon was challenging Health about contribution to jointly commissioned places.

The Forum agreed to note the projected 2016-17 overspend on the SEND related elements of the High Needs Block and that it was likely there would be a requirement to transfer funding from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block for 2017-18. Further details would be provided to the Forum in January.

526. 2017-18 Centrally Retained DSG requirement

Jo Moxon, Interim Director of Education, introduced a report that set out the new Centrally Retained Budget for 2017-18 and sought agreement to the proposed allocations as at Appendix A to the report. It was noted that some of the proposed allocations were only from April to September 2017. The report was considered in conjunction with the next item on ESG which would be transferred into the School Block from 2017-18 following legislative changes.

The proposals reflected the changes to the delivery of school improvement functions following the return of services to the Council from Cambridge Education in December 2016. The centrally retained budget had decreased from £1,283,706 for 2016-17 to £723,598 for 2017-18. The key items were reviewed including:

- Schools Forum budget;
- Virtual School;
- School Admissions;
- School Improvement Support;
- Education, School Improvement and Raising Standards; and
- Safeguarding Children Board.

The Forum discussed a number of items including the support for the Teaching School Alliance which would help strengthen relationships and partnerships and potentially unlock additional resources from the new national funding streams (Schools Improvement Grant).

After considering the proposals in conjunction with the following paper on ESG, the Schools Forum agreed the centrally held School Block DSG items as set out in Appendix A to the report.

527. 2017-18 Education Support Grant

Jo Moxon introduced a report on Education Support Grant (ESG) proposals for 2017-18. The funding had reduced from £1,369,000 in 2016-17 to £430,000 for the next year. The Government had decided to move ESG into the Schools Block for 2017-18.

The Council proposed to spend £1,036,810 on School Improvement activities as detailed in paragraph 5.4 of the report. This would be comprised of £606,810 of Council funding in addition to the £430,000 ESG allocation. The proposed activities were summarised as follows:

- Education Welfare Service including statutory functions and an education welfare officer placed in the MASH;
- School Improvement Support, including leadership and a small core team, safeguarding and brokering of school to school partnerships.
- Asset Management
- Monitoring National Curriculum Assessment; and
- Statutory and Regulatory Duties including contributions to the post of DCS and business support for school improvement.

The Forum discussed the practical implications of the funding changes beyond 2017-18; the status of the Slough improvement partnership; the posts funded through the school improvement support element and the bridging role which was confirmed to be a separate, bespoke post.

The Forum agreed that the Education Support Grant be retained by the Council to enable it to perform its statutory duties as set out in the report.

528. 2017-18 Draft School block DSG for information only

Coral Miller introduced a report on the current draft DSG for 2017-18. The DSG received in 2017-18 would be £119m, an increase of £272,000 on the previous year.

A detailed summary of the draft DSG was set out in Appendix A to the report which included the centrally held elements totalling £2,431,307 as discussed elsewhere on the agenda. The draft net School Block Budget would therefore be £117,139,947. However, it was noted that this figure may be subject to change arising from potential further demands from the High Needs Block and any additional PFI liabilities.

The report was noted.

529. 2017-18 De-delegated items

Coral Miller introduced a report on the 2017-18 de-delegation requirements and sought approval from the Mainstream Primary and Secondary representatives to fund this from the maintained schools' budget share.

The summary of estimated costs in paragraph 3.3 of the report was reviewed. This included £5,329 for trade union staff supply cover costs and £207,312 for Behaviour Support (SEBDOS). The Forum discussed the purpose of the trade union de-delegation amount and considered the information provided in section 5 of the report, although it concluded that the reasons to support this element of the de-delegation were not sufficiently clear. It was further noted that there were separate arrangements for academies.

The Mainstream Primary Representatives (Maggie Waller, Carol Pearce and Navroop Mehat) voted to approve the Behavioural Support element, but did not approve the trade union de-delegation.

The Mainstream Secondary Representative (Angela Mellish) voted to approve the Behavioural Support element, but did not approve the trade union de-delegation.

530. 2017-18 Growth Fund

Tony Madden, Principal Asset Manager, introduced a report on the Growth Fund 2017-18 that sought approval from the Forum for a topslice of £900,000 from the Schools Block. This was reduction of £110,000 from the previous year. A paper

summarising the possible scenarios for bulge classes in primary schools was tabled and it was agreed that this would be circulated electronically following the meeting.

Slough continued to have an increasing school population due to inward migration alongside the significant increase in pupil numbers already working their way through the primary sector. Funding for either bulge classes or increased class sizes would only be provided following written confirmation from Slough Borough Council in advance. The target was to have 60 surplus places per year group for new arrivals and unexpected growth, however, there were currently less than 60 places available across every primary year group. Plans were either agreed or well advanced for 2017-18 and discussions were underway with schools about potential expansion in the two following years. Further expansion was forecast to be required in 2020-21 but the schools had yet to be identified.

There was a discussion about the Growth Fund criteria (applicable to both primary and secondary schools) which it was noted had been approved by the Forum in March 2016. It was agreed to review the criteria and that a report should come to the next Forum meeting if required. A number of specific issues were raised including the process for agreeing class size increases; the list of new classes set out in Appendix A; and the detailed funding profiles relating to academies and non-academies. It was agreed to pick up these issues with Tony Madden outside of the meeting.

At the conclusion of the discussion, the Forum agreed a topslice of £900k for the Growth Fund for 2017-18. It was noted that the carry forward from 2016-17 was to be confirmed.

531. Virtual School Headteacher's Update with KPIs

Anne Bunce, the Virtual School Headteacher, introduced an information report that set out the progress made by the Virtual School in the past year.

The Forum was reminded that the Slough Virtual School had been criticised by Ofsted following the inspection at the end of 2015, however, significant positive progress had been made over the past year which was detailed in the report. The Headteacher began the role in June 2016 and a staff restructure is out for consultation..

There had been a big improvement in Personal Education Plans (PEPs) and it was anticipated that 100% of children would have a PEP by the end of term. Hearing the voice of the child was central to the PEP and children had PEPs per year which was more than many other virtual schools. All social care and designated teachers had been trained.

A new policy on Pupil Premium Plus had been introduced following consultation with schools. NEET figures had reduced significantly from 26 in June 2016 to 5 in November 2016. Raising aspiration was a key priority which included a range of activities on employability and higher education. Forum members were asked for their support and ideas on improving work experience. The targets for 2016-17 were summarised and schools were thanked for their support to the Virtual School which had helped contribute to the progress achieved over the past year.

The Forum warmly welcomed the positive and detailed update and the progress made and the report was noted.

532. Update from Task Groups: 5-16, HNB and Early Years

As discussed elsewhere on the agenda, the HNB Task Group and the 5-16 Task Group would meet again in January 2017 and the Early Years Task Group is also to be convened. Maggie Waller requested that as much notice as possible be given of the meeting dates.

533. Academies Update

It was confirmed that St Joseph's, St Anthony's and St Ethelbert's had converted to academies on 1st December 2016.

Khalsa Primary was awaiting an Academy Order

534. 2016-17 Forward Agenda Plan and Key Decisions Log

The updates to the Forward Agenda Plan agreed earlier at the meeting were noted. For the next meeting on Tuesday 10th January 2017 there would be additional reports on Membership and Growth Fund criteria (if required), and the Cambridge Education update would be replaced by a Schools Improvement update.

Next meeting: Tuesday 10th January 2017, 8.00am at Beechwood conference centre

Date	Time	Venue
Tuesday 10 th January 2017	8am	Beechwood conference centre
Tuesday 7 th March 2017	8am	Beechwood conference centre
Thursday 18 th May 2017	8am	Beechwood conference centre
Thursday 6 th July 2017	8am	Beechwood conference centre

(Note: The Meeting opened at 8.16 am and closed at 10.20 am)