

## **Slough Schools Forum- Meeting held on Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> July, 2017**

**Present:** Maggie Waller, Holy Family Primary School (Chair)  
John Constable, Langley Grammar School (Vice-Chair)  
Tracey Bradshaw, Arbour Vale School  
Gillian Coffey, Lynch Hill Primary School  
Sally Eaton, Private, Voluntary and Independent (PVI) providers  
Philip Gregory, Baylis Court Nursery School  
Helen Huntley, Haybrook College / PRU  
Eddie Neighbour, Upton Court Grammar School  
Carol Pearce, Penn Wood Primary School  
Jon Reekie, Baylis Court Trust MAT / Godolphin Infant School  
Jo Rockall, Herschel Grammar School  
Nicky Willis, Cippenham Primary School

**Observers:** Kathleen Higgins, Beechwood Secondary School

**Officers:** Nic Barani, Linda Calverley, George Grant, Johnny Kyriacou, John Voytal, Neil Wilcox and Greg O'Brien (Clerk)

### **PART I**

#### **559. Apologies**

Cate Duffy, Jo Matthews, Paul McAteer and Navroop Mehat.

Greg O'Brien was welcomed to the meeting as the temporary clerk.

#### **560. Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

#### **561. Minutes of the meeting- 9th February 2017**

The minutes of the meeting of the Slough Schools Forum held on 9 February 2017 were approved as a correct record.

#### **562. Matters Arising**

Item 549 – The Multi-Academy Trusts (MATs) map had been circulated to Forum members.

Item 552 – The promised paper on the options and affordability of providing additional funding for bulge classes for a second year after opening had been deferred for report to the January 2018 meeting, when all the Growth Fund criteria will be reviewed. The Forum was informed that one-off payments of £60k had been made from the Growth Fund to both Cippenham Primary and Marish Primary, which had each opened two bulge classes in 2015/16. This did not fully fund the places but provided some support and acknowledged the issue with lag funding in the second year of a bulge class where one opens later in the year. It was noted that the first payment that would be required from the Growth Fund, if Schools Forum decided to amend the criteria in order to support bulge classes for two years, would

apply from September 2018. This will be considered when the next report comes to Schools Forum with full costings in January 2018.

Item 553 – George Grant explained that further work was required to clarify why the 2017/18 High Needs budget contained an element of contribution to PFI. He made a firm commitment to bring a detailed report to the October Schools Forum meeting to explain all PFI identified within the DSG, particularly relating to the Council's contribution and to the High Needs Block.

It was noted that Catherine Cochran had been appointed as the new permanent Clerk for the Forum, and would take up her duties with effect from September 2017.

### **563. Review of the Scheme for Financing Schools and Schools Financial Value Standards for Maintained Schools**

Consideration was given to a report about a review of the Scheme for Financing Schools which had commenced, in which it was proposed to review the Scheme over the summer and consult with schools in early September with a view to reporting to the Schools Forum in October to seek approval to any amendments proposed. The review would incorporate a review of the Schools Financial Value Standards for Maintained Schools (SFVS). This requires schools to provide assurance to the Council that they have suitable and effective financial and budgetary control procedures in place to ensure sound financial management.

George Grant indicated that it was important to have a Scheme that was fit for purpose, and was in line with best practice and DfE guidance. The timescale for completing the review was set out in the report.

It was agreed that the Chair and Vice Chair be consulted on the proposed revised Scheme for Financing Schools over the summer period, in advance of the formal consultation with maintained schools. They would circulate to members of Schools Forum.

It was agreed that the date of the review would be shown on the title page rather than the financial year.

Members raised the issue of ensuring that schools receive timely and adequate information from the Council in order to carry out their responsibilities under the Scheme for Financing Schools and the SFVS. It was suggested that the Scheme include a commitment from the Council to provide such information. Officers committed to ensuring schools are better supported in delivering the requirements of the Scheme.

Regular meetings between the Council and Headteachers, Bursars / Business Managers were suggested and Neil Wilcox indicated that he was considering holding such a meeting in September and would look into making these a regular feature (say twice a year). He undertook to consider the detailed arrangements, in consultation with the Chair. Linda Calverley referred to best practice of such meetings with special schools and Helen Huntley welcomed this suggestion.

It was requested that additional audits be included in the review and Carol Pearce asked that details of the scope, content and timing of Pupil Premium audits be clarified.

There was some discussion about access to documents such as the Scheme for Financing Schools. A number of documents are on the SBC website but are not easy to locate – see link below:

<http://www.slough.gov.uk/council/strategies-plans-and-policies/school-governance-management-and-finance.aspx>

The Forum was reminded that Cate Duffy was involved in work to develop a Schools Portal on the web where a comprehensive range of such useful data could be easily accessed from one point.

#### **564. Update on the National Funding Formula**

The Forum was reminded that the Government consultation about the National Funding Formula had closed in March 2017, since when there had been no information as to changes or proposals that might be brought forward. The Queen's Speech contained a statement that the Government would continue to work to ensure "all schools are fairly funded". Schools Forum will consider carefully as any information emerges.

#### **565. Early Years Formula 2017/18**

The Forum considered a report setting out the details of the process to formally consult early years providers on the options reviewed by the Early Years Task Group for implementing the Early Years National Funding Formula (EYNFF). The Council had implemented from April the hourly rates for 2 year olds and 3 and 4 year olds under the EYNFF and the Forum noted the 2017-18 Hourly Funding Rates for maintained nursery schools, primary schools and PVI providers. Details of the supplements applicable were also reported.

It is a requirement for all Councils to move to full implementation of the new EYNFF, reflecting a universal base rate to be paid for all providers by April 2019. (At present the base rate per hour for Primary Schools of £4.58 is below that applicable to Maintained Nursery Schools and PVI providers of £5.20). The Council will model the impact of this in the autumn and a consultation on 2018/19 will take place as part of the budget process.

It was agreed that dates for any meetings required for the Early Years Task Group would be circulated by the Council as soon as possible.

A number of points arose from discussion and questions:

- For 2018-19, the central retention of the Early Years DSG block would reduce from 7% to 5%.
- Maintained nursery school sector funding has been topped up with a commitment for the life of the parliament, but there has been no indication since the June General Election as to whether this would continue. A consultation is due and concerns were expressed that nurseries are vulnerable, particularly as the reduction of the deprivation rate to £0.47 per hour (previously £1.00) has an impact.
- Deprivation is linked to Free School Meals eligibility and further work will be done to see if there are other ways to arrive at a fairer distribution e.g. through IDACI.

The Forum considered action in the following areas would be very helpful:

- There needed to be meaningful discussions (outside of the Schools Forum) on how best to invest in nursery provision and support. The Early Help Strategy Task and Finish Group had a key role in this and Johnny Kyriacou was asked to contact Rodney D'Costa about appropriate representation on that group.
- Looking ahead to the next year's consultation, it was requested that the Council prepare and issue a timetable for the consultation and approval of the EYNFF to assist with budget preparation in schools and nurseries and to include in that meetings of the Early Years Task Group.

#### **566. Membership Update**

It was noted that there were three vacancies for academy members on Schools Forum and that some expressions of interest had been received. John Constable will be contacting all academy proprietors before the summer break to elect new members.

The terms of office of several existing Forum members are due to expire imminently or in the not too distant future. Given the uncertainty arising from changes that might arise from the review of the National Funding Formula, it was agreed that members continue in office for a further period, pending clarification of the future role of Schools Forum. John Constable will write to schools and academies before the summer break to ask for endorsement of this proposal.

#### **567. High Needs Block Centrally Retained Budgets 2017/18**

The Forum considered a report setting out the progress made with the High Needs Block centrally retained budget for 2017-18. This followed the report to the last meeting at which further detailed clarification and information had been requested regarding the centrally retained budget of £2.433m.

George Grant indicated that while some progress had been made, there remained more work to be done, particularly around the savings required to bring the budget into balance. The revised budget now stood at £2.332m, and Appendix A to the report showed how this was made up (including details of the savings identified to date).

The following points arose from questions and discussion:

- The High Needs Block Group was continuing to work to achieve clarity for each budget line and a balanced budget.
- It was noted that the centrally retained PFI clarifications referred to earlier in the meeting are relevant here as well as the item of PFI expenditure also listed within the High Needs Block.
- Linda Calverley reported that the Children's Services Trust proposed to redefine the 'support for children with SEN' lines within the centrally retained budget, including the SENCO network budget.
- Clarification was sought about the proposed estimated cost of £100k for developing the SENCO network and Linda Calverley stated that this was a generous estimate and likely to be less. Jo Rockall suggested that holding meetings and events in schools would minimise costs.
- It was confirmed that the SENCO network 100k was part of the overall SEN budget line not a separate item.

- It was suggested that there should be scope for savings in the budget of £235k for support, advice and training for schools through advisory teachers, since the specialist teams that previously provided this no longer existed.
- Linda Calverley indicated that any changes proposed would be supported by an options paper with a business case and would be subject to formal consultation.
- Nicky Willis asked what the process would be if any changes were proposed to 'top ups'. Linda Calverley confirmed that a process of consultation would take place over a full financial year. She added that Slough's banding appears complex and could be simplified without reduction.
- Information was requested about the numbers of children for whom out of authority placement was sought compared with those placed in Slough and the respective costs. The Forum supported the efforts made to continue to place the highest number within the borough.
- Linda Calverley mentioned that Cate Duffy is planning a conference event with schools for September, looking at wider inclusion.

In conclusion, the Forum noted that the Officers and the High Needs Block Group would carry out further work to review the budget in order that a revised report (with updated Appendices A and B) could be presented to the Forum for consideration at its meeting in October 2017.

#### **568. Update from Task groups: 5-16, HNB and Early Years including HNB Group Terms of Reference**

The meeting received an update from the Task Groups, noting the 5-16 Group had met to submit a response to the consultation on the National Funding Formula. Linda Calverley introduced revised Terms of Reference for the High Needs Block Group, a copy of which had been circulated with the agenda.

The Forum noted and endorsed the revised terms of reference, which focused on ensuring consistent and appropriate decisions and transparent consultations.

Members requested that dates of meetings for the Task Groups for the year ahead be planned and circulated.

#### **569. School Improvement update on centrally retained items**

Johnny Kyriacou reported on the following matters:

- Rachel Gallyot had been appointed as Senior Standards and Effectiveness Officer, to work 4 days per week from September 2017, specialising in primary standards.
- The Senior Education Liaison Officer link is to be filled by Rachel Cross, on secondment from St Mary's CE Primary School on two days per week. The link role is between the LA and the school-to-school support strand of the Slough Teaching School Alliance now in place.
- A local School Improvement Fund had been set up with a budget of £150,000, with access to the fund via a bidding process. The aim is to provide fair access to funding for as many schools as possible.
- A national Strategic School Improvement Fund had been initiated, inviting large scale bids demonstrating, where possible, collaboration between teaching school networks and Local Authorities. With a deadline for first round bids of 23 June 2017, a bid had been made to support middle

leadership development in around 50 - 60 schools across Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire which met the strict eligibility criteria. Six Slough schools had been included. A DfE decision on the bids was awaited.

**570. Academies update**

There was nothing to report on Academies at present.

A question was raised about maintained nurseries becoming academies, an option envisaged in the Conservative manifesto. There was no information as to whether this would be brought forward.

**571. Updated Key Decisions Log**

The updated Key Decisions Log was received.

**572. Schools Forum 2017- 18 Academic Year Forward Agenda Plan and Dates and Venues of Future meetings**

The Forum received the draft Forward Agenda Plan.

The dates of the meetings of the Forum needed to be fixed for the year ahead; the following dates were approved:

Tuesday 10 October 2017  
Wednesday 6 December 2017  
Thursday 11 January 2018  
Tuesday 6 March 2018  
Wednesday 16 May 2018  
Thursday 5 July 2018

The date of the next meeting will therefore be Tuesday 10th October, at 8.00am for 8.15 am at Beechwood School (venue tbc).

**573. AOB**

The Chair thanked colleagues for all their work over the last year.

The Chair thanked Paul McAteer, who is about to move on to a new role outside of Slough, for his support and contribution to the Forum over many years, always focussing on the needs of children and young people.

It was mentioned that the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead was currently going through a SEND inspection and Linda Calverley asked colleagues for an early update of the results if any information became available.

(Note: The Meeting opened at 8.15am and closed at 9.45am)