

## **Slough Schools Forum- Meeting held on Tuesday, 12th November, 2019**

**Present:** John Constable, Langley Grammar School (Chair)  
Peter Collins, Slough & Eton Church of England Business and Enterprise College  
Ray Hinds, Academy Secondary Sector  
Kathleen Higgins, Beechwood Secondary School  
Navroop Mehat, Wexham Court Primary School  
Angela Mellish, St Bernard's Catholic Grammar School  
Eddie Neighbour, Upton Court Grammar School (Observer)  
Carol Pearce, Penn Wood Primary School  
Kathy Perry, Mighty Acorns Day Nursery  
Jon Reekie, Godolphin Infant School  
Jo Rockall, Herschel Grammar School  
Nicky Willis, Cippenham Primary School  
Jamie Rockman, Haybrook College  
Neil Sykes, Arbourvale School

**Observers:** Eddie Neighbour, Upton Court Grammar School

**Officers:** Catherine Cochran, Domenico Barani, John Wood and Cate Duffy

**Apologies:** Philip Gregory, Maggie Waller, Coral Snowden and Michael Jarrett

### **733. Declarations of Interest**

Apologies received from: Phil Gregory, Michael Jarrett (SBC), Coral Snowden and Maggie Waller

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting, in particular John Wood, Interim Service Lead for Inclusion at Slough Borough Council. All those present introduced themselves.

There were no declarations of interest.

### **734. Any Other Business**

Nothing was tabled.

### **735. Update on Membership**

The Clerk informed the meeting that following due process Mrs Coral Snowden, Headteacher at Western House Academy, had been appointed unopposed to Schools Forum as an academy school representative.

It was noted that two terms of office were due to end in January. The members concerned would be approached to establish whether they wished to stand again, and the Clerk would make the necessary arrangements.

### **736. Minutes of Previous Meeting held on 1 October 2019**

The minutes of the Schools Forum meeting held on 1 October 2019 were agreed as a correct record, subject to deletion of a repeated introductory paragraph.

#### **Matters Arising from those Minutes:**

There were none.

#### **8.20am: Angela Mellish arrived at the meeting**

### **737. Update on National/Local Funding Issues**

The meeting was given a verbal update that the teachers' pay and teachers' pension grant contributions would be paid separately from the School Block.

It was understood the pension grant would be for three years but as yet the amount was unknown. The rates were due to be published in spring 2020 and, if available, would be shared at the next meeting of Schools Forum.

In answer to questions from the floor it was noted that teachers' funding for special schools was as yet unknown, as were Pupil Premium rates for the next academic year: however, it was assumed this funding stream would continue.

Members were informed that changes to Sixth Form funding had been announced, with an increase of 4.7% on base rate and an additional £400 for each student taking two or more STEM subjects.

### **738. Growth Fund 2020-21**

Schools Forum was asked to note an update on expenditure for the current year, approve additional underwriting for places at Grove Academy, review the allocation model for 2020/21, and to agree the maximum 2020-21 top slice from the DSG.

It was explained that although the birth rate in Slough was now falling the previous primary 'bulge' was moving through the school system at secondary level.

The allocations were based on AWPU funding, but it was pointed out that that the 2020/21 figures were provisional numbers and yet to be finalised. It was noted that the background information provided in the report had been shared with members in the past and was included for completeness.

Surplus school places were required to allow for intakes to the system, with children moving into Slough on a weekly basis. Where necessary, the LA would approach a school on a termly basis.

With regards to Grove Academy it was pointed out that Schools Forum had agreed, for the past two years, to support 50% of the underwriting. It was confirmed that monies were not returned from underwriting.

With regards to falling rolls, it was acknowledged it was an issue for some primary schools but only those rated 'good' or 'outstanding' schools could be supported through such a fund. It was noted that Marish had opened a bulge class at short notice; although there had been sufficient places in Year 5, there had been a shortage of places in other parts of Langley and this action was to avoid children

having to travel across the town. It was confirmed that no schools had requested falling rolls funding.

Appendix A of the report was highlighted: it was explained there were now fewer primary schools receiving Growth Fund allocations, with currently only Claycots and St Mary's affected but with an increasing number of secondary schools. The 2020/21 figures were estimates, with only Claycots still expanding.

A member asked how many empty places there currently were at primary. It was explained that Key Stage 2 was 'tight', particularly in Year 6 but Key Stage 1 had an increasing number of surplus places. As noted, the birth rate forecast was low; however, there was no need for a reduction programme and the LA was aware. Where necessary, modular buildings had been added at school sites. Inward migration was below its' peak but a number of new dwellings were being built in Slough. It was understood a figure of approximately 5,000 would be accommodated but it was difficult to predict how school places would be affected. It was pointed out that development could have an adverse effect on a school which would be outside their control. Cate Duffy confirmed she would be willing to discuss with any such primary school affected.

It was queried whether the work with the Admissions team would enable schools that were not full to apply to reduce their PAN for a bulge class. It was confirmed such a request would not need to go to consultation but would be referred back to Schools Forum.

### **8.35am: Neil Sykes arrived at the meeting**

It was queried whether there would be a need to consider secondary bulge classes and, if so, which schools: it was acknowledged it was different dealing with bulge classes at secondary level. Further work was required on area-based planning and the pattern of demand across the town had changed.

It was confirmed the LA had agreed principles which needed to be met to attract Growth Fund: good quality schools, popular schools (with capacity) and ideally, schools which any child would want to attend. Schools had not been named.

It was suggested that a strategy was also required for post-16 within the next four years but it was pointed out that the LA did not have the same statutory duties for that age group. It was necessary to make the best use of the provision already available and to note that Arbour Vale was currently expanding its' secondary places. It was pointed out there was a link between growth and population in special schools but it was acknowledged there was a need for a detailed conversation regarding post-16 education.

Clarity was requested about the number of forms of entry at Grove Academy with plans to move from two form entry to four forms in 2020/21, given earlier discussions about falling rolls and surplus places in Reception and Key Stage 1. There was also an awareness of the DfE's requirements, and it was suggested this be raised with both the ESFA and at SASH. The LA acknowledged the situation regarding places had changed since the opening of Grove Academy.

A request was being made for an increase in the underwriting allocation for Grove Academy to £90,000 in the current year as the originally agreed £60,000 would leave a 'tight' carry forward: it was hoped with a carry forward of £58,000 from the current year it would be possible to roll forward approximately £100,000 the

following year. It was queried how the amount of £60,000 had increased to £90,000: it was explained this was due to having reduced the amount the previous year because of uncertainty and members queried how the figure was calculated. Nic Barani explained the mechanism used, which also included a timing issue. It was proposed if approval were given there should be clarification of how the figure was reached. Grove was guaranteed 240 places, with the LA agreeing to underwrite the gap which could be evidenced through the DSG. There also needed to be an understanding of which birth rates had fallen and there was no guarantee places would be needed in perpetuity. It was added that LAs did not have complete autonomy following the introduction of the free schools programme.

It was noted that declining numbers in schools were discussed through Places Strategy and it was suggested this issue should also be considered by the Partnership Board and Phase Groups.

Schools Forum:

**APPROVED** the Growth Fund top slice of £600,000 for 2020/21, giving an estimated underspend of £24000

and,

**APPROVED** the underwriting for Grove Academy 2019/20 at £90,000 (previous agreed value £60,000).

It was agreed that a Falling Rolls fund was not considered necessary at the current time.

The Chair thanked Tony Madden for his comprehensive report and the clarity regarding Grove Academy.

### **9.05am: Tony Madden left the meeting**

#### **739. Proposed Transfer from Schools Block to High Needs Block**

The proposed transfer from Schools Block to High Needs Block had been discussed previously by Schools Forum and the issue had been consulted upon before the Autumn half-term 2019.

Schools Forum **NOTED** the response rate to the consultation which had been good, and that 26 (84% of the response) schools were in favour of Option 2.

The reason for the request made this year was the same as the previous year, in order to reduce in-year pressures on the High Needs Block.

Cate Duffy informed the meeting that if the transfer had not been approved by Schools Forum the LA had planned to apply to the DfE to action the transfer. However, the ESFA had advised of additional funding of approximately £2 million to ease the pressure on the High Needs Block which it was hoped would contain the Block in a balanced figure for 2020-21.

The LA anticipated the High Needs Block overspend for the current financial year would be in the region of £4 million, the following year was predicted to be £3 million, without the additional funding. Taking that funding into account the overspend would be approximately £1 million: these figures would be clearer for the

Schools Forum meeting due to be held in January 2020. It was pointed out there would still be a deficit even with a transfer from Schools Forum.

Schools Forum **REJECTED** the transfer application of 0.5% from Schools Block to the High Needs Block and **UPHELD** the outcome of the consultation.

It was confirmed that the LA would not apply to the DfE for this decision to be overturned.

The Chair thanked LA representatives for the information and explanations provided.

#### **740. Schools Block 5-16 Formula Consultation Outcome**

Nic Barani outlined the other element of the Schools Block 2020/21 consultation. It was explained that although the move towards the NFF was continuing, the ESFA had not given released clear details. It had been necessary to take this into consideration when modelling. The consultation had offered two options, a move to 65% or to 85%. Overall, schools were aware of the situation and had shown appreciation that the NFF was being introduced in stages.

Schools Forum **NOTED** the level of responses to the consultation and **RECOMMENDED** the LA follow the outcome of the consultation and finalise budgets based on an 85% move towards the NFF. LA representatives confirmed that Schools Forum recommendation would be carried forward.

The final APT would be shared with Schools Forum members at the next meeting. It was pointed out that this would still be provisional, but it was felt it would as close to the final figure as possible.

#### **741. Scheme for Financing Schools**

This item was applicable only to maintained school representatives.

Members were informed the LA had received a 41% response to their consultation, all of which had been in favour of accepting the Scheme for Financing Schools 2019/20.

##### **9.15am: Cate Duffy left the meeting**

It was noted that no major changes had been made. A list of amendments could be found in Appendix A, which included the addition of a process for accessing cash advances if a school were facing a deficit budget.

Following a request to present the Scheme for Financing Schools earlier in the year, Nic Barani agreed to review this for the future, dependent on when updates were received from the DfE.

Maintained school representatives, including one postal vote, **APPROVED** the changes to the Scheme for Financing Schools 2019/20, as circulated.

#### **742. Update from Task Groups: 5-16, HNB and Early Years**

The 5-16 Task Group had met since the last meeting of Schools Forum. The Early Years and High Needs Task Groups had not met.

Those interested in information about the Early Years Task Group were advised to contact Michael Jarrett, Service Lead for Early Years and Prevention at the LA.

**743. Academies Update**

There were no academy conversions to report.

**744. 2019/20 Forward Agenda Plan/Key Decisions Log**

Meeting dates within the 2019/20 Forward Agenda Plan were highlighted and the Key Decisions Log was noted for information.

**745. Any Other Business**

Nothing had been tabled.

(Note: The Meeting opened at 8.15am and closed at 9.20am)