

Slough Schools Forum- Meeting held on Thursday, 9th February, 2017

Present: Maggie Waller, Holy Family Primary School (Chair)
John Constable, Langley Grammar School (Vice-Chair)
Helen Huntley, Haybrook College / PRU
Jo Matthews, Littledown School / PRU
Paul McAteer, Slough and Eton C of E Business and Enterprise College
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
Sally Eaton, Private, Voluntary and Independent Providers
Phil Gregory, Baylis Court Nursery

Observers: Valerie Harffey, Ryvers School

Local Authority:

Nic Barani, Tony Browne, Rodney D'Costa, Johnny Kyriacou, Tony Madden, Coral Miller, Neil Wilcox, Theresa Carter (minutes)

Slough Children's Services Trust:

Robert Hardy

547. Apologies

George Grant.

548. Declarations of Interest

No declarations were made.

549. Minutes and Matters Arising from the previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 10th January 2017 were approved as a correct record.

Matters arising

Item 537 – Coral Miller's successor, Nic Barani, Schools' Accountant was welcomed to the meeting.

Item 539 – Schools Forum members noted the letter to the Rt Hon Justine Greening MP and others re schools' funding and it was noted that no response had yet been received. Fiona Mactaggart was meeting with John Constable and Maggie Waller. Jo Rockall advised that she and John Constable had a meeting with Roger Parkin and that he was supportive. It had been suggested that the Local Authority put forward a business case. There has been no update on this. Forum members also noted the response from Edward Timpson MP to the letter sent by Paul McAteer regarding high needs funding.

Item 544 – Updated Schools Forum Membership attached.

Item 545 – Johnny Kyriacou reported that the updated MATs map was now available and he would circulate to the group.

550. Update on National Fair Funding

Coral Miller, Principal Accountant, gave a verbal update on National Fair Funding, having attended a recent meeting where the DfE was represented. A further meeting on 10/02 with a London group and DfE would attend. Most schools in Slough were losing. The DfE intended to use a new primary / secondary ratio of 1-1.29; Slough's was currently 1-1.33. John Constable advised that the 1: 1.29 figure was from the historical national average. The review commissioned by SBC and the Schools Forum and carried out by Tribal work fed into a national review. The results of that national review by LG Futures were inconclusive as it was considered difficult to ascertain cost per school. Secretary of State was interested in why some schools thrive on less money than others.

The DfE was asking Local Authorities to look at moving towards National Funding Formula for 18/19. They were looking at ways to fund Growth Fund with the possibility of lagged funding in the future. There was no update on de-delegation.

DfE was keen for lots of responses to Consultation which closed 22/03/17. The Government's response was expected in August. The Schools Forum working meeting in March was to agree the response to the 5-16 and High Needs Consultations. Stage One had 6000 responses – there were 24,000 schools in the country. Schools Forum urged all Slough schools to respond individually.

Paul McAteer requested information about the impact in both phases, including on Key Stage 2 (KS2), as a result of the changes already made to the primary / secondary ratio in Slough. The Council to do some work on Key Stage 2 Primary; Jo Moxon advised it was difficult to measure year on year but could do some crude measures. It was noted that there would be an impact on both phases and that there had been redundancies in secondary schools.

It was agreed that the LA look at both phases and report back to the May Schools Forum meeting.

All to look at the Consultation before the March meeting.

551. Schools Block Budget 2017-18

Coral Miller gave an update on the draft budget that had been submitted to the DfE. She had made some changes as the business rates were received late and Grove Academy had not previously been included as an all through school.

Appendix A in the agenda pack set out the updated 2017-18 Schools Block Budget and this included the Minimum Funding Guarantee but not de-delegation.

Jon Reekie commented on the reduction for Beechwood School and it was noted that, for example, for Beechwood and Baylis Court there had been no pupil changes but there was a significant negative impact on them. A number of schools were referred to including Wexham School, Wexham Court Primary, Godolphin and others.

The calculations behind the figures were requested. Coral Miller agreed to review the figures and to circulate a spreadsheet to Schools Forum members showing the calculations of the MFG for a range of schools including those mentioned. It was agreed also that a worked example of the MFG be included in all indicative budgets.

552. Growth Fund 2017-18

Tony Madden advised that this report was an opportunity to review the Growth Fund criteria included in the paper submitted with the agenda pack and to agree the criteria to apply for 2017 / 18.

Tony Madden referred to item 5.2 on the report. He advised that the AWPU rate was kept at 15/16 as a benefit to the schools. Schools Forum was asked to consider other options and to decide whether to continue or to use 17/18 AWPU, but averaging the Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 rates for secondary. This was agreed by Schools Forum.

The report sets out the circumstances in which the Growth Fund applies. There was discussion about a number of issues. One issue, raised by Cippenham Primary School, was about when pupils are admitted into a bulge class after the October Census e.g. if a bulge class is opened in September with a small number on the roll or if a bulge class opens after the census, as there is a lag in receiving funding.

There was discussion about providing funding for bulge classes for a second year.

Tony Madden referred to item 5.9 which shows two possible options for additional funding.

Tony Madden stated the Local Authority support for the second year if needed.

Schools Forum agreed the principle and would wish to support this this year but it was agreed that funding the second year needed to be costed. Tony Madden to bring back to May meeting. Schools Forum reviews the criteria and all aspects of Growth Fund yearly.

Tony Madden referred to the appendices of the report setting out the proposed growth.

Growth Fund to be added to May agenda.

553. Annual consultation on 2017-2018 High Needs Block

Coral Miller advised this report was to consult with Schools Forum on the 2017-18 High Needs Block budget. The High Needs budget is £22.739m for 2017-18 which was made up of the DFE contribution of £22.130m, the Council's contribution to PFI of £309k and an additional £300k transferred from the Schools Block. This year hard to balance as looking at estimated overspend of £500,000. Coral reported that the Council and Trust were conducting financial reviews on the whole High Needs Block with the aim of achieving a balanced budget as soon as possible as part of a 3 year plan.

Appendix A of the report (page 29) was the indicative January budget. Appendix B set out the draft centrally retained budgets for 2017/18.

Maggie Waller queried what PFI was on Appendix A as this had not been on the budget before. Coral advised she would look into this and advise the Schools Forum and High Needs Group.

Robert Hardy stated that the Academies Place Funding figures need further scrutiny. The number of places was more than advised. Coral Miller stated this may be to do with some schools reverting to academies.

Helen Huntley asked if the place funding for 17/18 could be provided to schools. Coral Miller would send through Gatekeeper.

Paul McAteer asked for some clarification regarding independent special schools. Robert Hardy mentioned that many were driven by the location of social care placements. He advised that 60% of children fostered through Slough were out of borough.

Coral Miller advised that Further Education had been added to funding. She also advised that some lines needed re-badging so they were clearer. She would update these and circulate to the group.

It was agreed that High Needs Block be added to the July Schools Forum agenda.

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

Maggie Waller advised that the 5-16 Task Group had met.

The High Needs Block next meeting was on 28th February at Slough & Eton school. Sally Eaton and Carol Pearce had asked to be added to the group.

Early Years meeting – there had been a delay. Coral Miller advised there were two options to look at – hard formula or differential rates. Phil Gregory expressed some concern about the likely options. The deadline for consultation on the proposed Early Years Formula was 28th February. It was agreed that the Early Years Task Group would meet to have an informed discussion and there would be fed back to the Schools Forum members. The consultation would be carried out electronically.

555. School Improvement Update on centrally retained items

Johnny Kyriacou advised that a secondary specialist has been secured – Diane Osayie – 2 days a week from the end of February until March 2018. The primary specialist and bridging adviser roles are being sought.

Jo Moxon advised that the additional Education Welfare staff had gone out to advert. The safeguarding post had gone out and some good responses received.

556. Academies Update

Jo Moxon advised that the Local Authority was not invited to DfE meetings regarding Multi Academy Trusts and have requested attendance at these meetings.

557. 2016-17 Forward Agenda Plan and Key Decisions Log

The Forward Plan and Key Decisions Log were noted. Coral Miller to update the Forward Agenda Plan.

558. AOB

Coral Miller advised that Schools Finance is aiming to visit all maintained schools regarding the Schools Financial Value Standards and to go through indicative budgets.

Carol Pearce gave apologies for March meeting as she is away.

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