

## **Slough Schools Forum - Meeting held on Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> October, 2017**

**Present:** Maggie Waller, Holy Family Primary School (Chair)  
John Constable, Langley Grammar School (Vice-Chair)  
Sally Eaton, Private, Voluntary and Independent (PVI) providers  
Philip Gregory, Baylis Court Nursery School  
Kathleen Higgins, Beechwood Secondary School  
Helen Huntley, Haybrook College / PRU  
Navroop Mehat, Wexham Court Primary School  
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:** None

**Officers:** Catherine Cochran (Clerk), Domenico Barani, Cate Duffy, George Grant, Vikram Hansrani, Michael Jarrett and John Voytal

**Apologies:** Jo Matthews, Angela Mellish and Neil Wilcox

### **PART I**

#### **574. Apologies**

Apologies had been received from Jo Matthews, Angela Mellish and Neil Wilcox.

No apologies were received from Tracey Bradshaw, Gillian Coffey or Richard Kirkham.

#### **575. Membership Update and confirmation of Chair and Vice Chair**

John Constable explained that the terms of office for a number of members had ended in the summer or at the beginning of the current academic year. Following a proposal agreed at the July Forum meeting, a letter had been written to the Headteachers and Chairs of Governors of Slough maintained schools seeking their agreement to extend their terms and, as a result, Carol Pearce, Navroop Mehat, Angela Mellish and Maggie Waller had been reappointed as members for a term of two years until July 2019.

A similar letter had been written to academy proprietors and, as a result, Gillian Coffey, John Constable, Helen Huntley, Jo Rockall and Nicky Willis had been reappointed for a term of two years ending July 2019.

Of the three remaining vacancies on the Forum for academy representation, agreement had been received for two of these to be filled by Kathleen Higgins and Valerie Harffey, School Business Manager at Ryvers Primary School. The one further vacancy was open until 20 October, 2017.

One school response had commented that only one of the Forum maintained members was a headteacher. Cate Duffy queried the membership balance as

governor representation was low from the academy sector. It was noted that this was not the case for the maintained sector where, as the number of academies had increased, the current maintained provision had decreased and maintained school members now comprised one Headteacher, one School Business Manager and two governors. John Reekie was also a governor, representing an academy school: all agreed this was an issue to be mindful of.

One academy response also emphasised that having the capacity for full attendance was particularly important given the likely discussions around the impact of the national funding formula arrangements.

It was felt it was important that governors had an understanding of Schools Forum, particularly during this challenging period for schools. Members were asked to encourage their governors to attend meetings of the Forum, in the role of observer.

It was felt there was an issue around communication as emails sent to school general or enquiry email addresses did not always reach their destination. The Clerk would create an accurate list of Headteachers and Chairs of Governors and Cate Duffy indicated that the LA is drawing up an up to date list of academy proprietors.

Due to reappointments, nominations were invited for the position of Chair and, following due process, Maggie Waller agreed to take the Chair until June 2018.

### **Maggie Waller in the Chair**

Nominations were invited for the position of Vice Chair and, following due process, John Constable agreed to take the position of Vice Chair for a one year term.

## **576. Declarations of Interest**

Sally Eaton declared an interest in item number 11 on the agenda.

## **577. Minutes of meeting held Thursday 6th July, 2017**

The minutes of the meeting of the Slough Schools Forum held on 6 July 2017 were approved as a correct record.

Item 562: it was noted that there were still plans to hold regular meetings between the Council and Headteachers, Bursars and Business Managers.

The meeting moved to item number 11 on the agenda:

## **578. Langley Hall Free School - Exceptional Circumstances Business Case**

### **8.25pm: Mr Eaton and Mr Carlton joined the meeting**

George Grant outlined the supporting report, which was a request to consider a change to the local funding formula to include an exceptional circumstances (premises) factor with effect from 2018-19 on behalf of Langley Hall Primary Academy (LHPA).

Members noted the Local Authority (LA) was in a neutral position and it was for Schools Forum to decide the outcome, taking account of a consultation with all schools. .

Mr Eaton introduced himself as Advisor to Governors on Commercial Strategy and Mr Carlton as Chair of Governors of LHPA. The Chair invited Mr Eaton and Mr Carlton to present their case:

Mr Eaton explained LHPA had grown quickly and, in order to meet demand, a business case had been submitted to the DfE to open another site. Approval had been received, with the second site opening to Reception, Years 1 and 2. The annual rent was £271,000 (lease cost for the lower school site of £216,000 per annum and the catering facility lease of £55,000 per annum). The school had been able to meet this at the time of opening but this was now proving difficult.

It appeared that the rental cost of other free school buildings was met by the ESFA, thereby placing the school at a disadvantage. The original business case had indicated the rental cost could be met by the school and, due to this; the ESFA had rejected the school's application for financial support. The site had been completely refurbished and it had been necessary to acquire a further site to provide the catering facilities, all at additional cost to LHPA. Since submitting the original business case GAG funding had been reduced and the financial situation had changed. The ESFA had proved difficult to deal with but the school would continue to press them. It was reported that this issue was impacting on finances although the budget was managed well and the lease represented 9.7% of the budget.

It was asked if the expansion had been part of SBC's strategy at the time and it was not.

Sally Eaton confirmed that LHPA had been the first free school to open in the area and the original business case showed that the school had consulted with SBC, who had been fully aware of the planned expansion. It was understood that other free schools claimed back such rental monies.

George Grant highlighted the impact to schools on the appendix (page 42) which was based on the current formula. Cate Duffy pointed out that the outcome could result in funding being removed and transferred to LHPA. It was agreed the list of schools provided should be checked to ensure that it contained accurate details.

The purpose of the report was to obtain the agreement of Schools Forum to consult with all schools and feed back to the November Schools Forum meeting. It was agreed this issue should be consulted upon.

It was suggested it would be worth establishing what the arrangements were for free schools elsewhere and that there should be a joint approach by the LA and Schools Forum to the ESFA. Cate Duffy proposed the LA could contact both the ESFA and Regional Commissioner and offered to progress this, parallel with the consultation.

It was agreed the consultation should contain reference to the matter being progressed with the ESFA and should include further financial information from LHPA which would be forwarded to Nic Barani or George Grant. The time frame was tight with SASH due to meet the following week.

It was confirmed there was 23 years rental left to run for the main lease. Concern was expressed about the amount of money over 23 years and about revenue funding an essentially capital cost. One member asked who owned the land and it was stated that it was a private landlord.

It was pointed out that a number of schools were now in a deficit position and it was questioned whether LHPA was in a similar situation. Mr Eaton confirmed there had not yet been a need to submit a deficit budget but the school had cut back on educational resources which were all documented. It was stressed that such savings were having to be made by a number of local schools who were already in deficit.

It was noted that the name of the school needed to refer to Langley Hall Primary Academy.

It was agreed that a 'Survey Monkey' survey would be circulated to all schools with the necessary supporting information and that the outcome would be reported back to Schools Forum at the November meeting for decision.

### **9.00am: Mr Eaton and Mr Carlton were thanked for their presentation and left the meeting**

The meeting returned to the running order of the agenda:

#### **579. Schools DSG Outturn 2016/17**

George Grant explained that the supporting report showed an overall surplus of £3.6M, monies which Slough maintained schools had collectively not spent. The budgets were considerably underspent for 2017/18 but the supporting breakdown provided to the LA showed these funds were committed.

Maintained schools appeared to be going against the trend of diminishing balances but it was confirmed these schools were currently carrying significant amounts for planned capital projects and George Grant confirmed that, of the top five, only one had a variance of more than 5% the previous year.

It was agreed it would be helpful to supply Schools Forum with the background information of these school plans and how the funds were to be spent.

The report was welcomed and George Grant was thanked for his work. It was agreed the report would be presented as a regular item at Schools Forum.

#### **580. Early Years Block Funding**

George Grant explained that the report showed how Early Years funding had been spent in the previous financial year.

The year-end variance showed an over spend but there was a carry forward from the previous year which left a close to break even situation. It was confirmed that a surplus of £6,000 was carried into 2017/18.

A proposed timetable of activity had been included in the report for the development of the 2018-19 budget and other key issues.

Michael Jarrett added that the Early Years Task Group was being reinstated. Future meetings dates would be circulated, with the first meeting proposed for Thursday 23 November.

#### **581. High Needs Block**

George Grant explained that the report gave a final outturn in terms of funding and a service update of progress, priorities and plans for the future.

Vikram Hansrani, newly appointed permanent Head of SEND was introduced.

Progress was reported, having transferred SEND back to SBC the week before this meeting. The deadline was 31 March 2018 to have a permanent team in place.

Linda Calverley confirmed that as well as the High Needs Block Group, Task Groups would be created to focus on local provision and banding. It was requested that the Task Groups contain representation across all sectors, to include governors.

A meeting of the High Needs Block Group was scheduled to take place on Tuesday 17 October and would continue the ongoing scrutiny of all budget lines.

It was explained there had been challenges concerning the top up allocation and it was suggested this should be consolidated to be reviewed termly as day to day was not manageable.

It was noted the expenditure line labelled 'PFI contribution' was still subject to clarification.

Helen Huntley queried why £17M had been quoted for income when there had previously been approximately £22M. George Grant requested that these queries be emailed to him before the end of the current week for response.

It was noted that part time places at KS4 were of concern.

It was asked that where there were intentions to expand and capital was available the impact on revenue be considered fully and funding clarified.

It was queried where the carry forward to 2017/18 of a £1.5M loss had come from as this figure was a great deal higher than previously predicted. George Grant explained HNB updates had indicated there would be a significant overspend but the figure was higher than anticipated. That amount was to be investigated further and likely to be brought into balance over two years. A Schools Forum member endorsed the approach being taken to analyse the budget in detail at the HNB Group.

Cate Duffy added that the pressures faced by Slough were being experienced by other LAs, who also had significant overspends on HNB. There had to be assurances that the funds were being spent in the most efficient way, that banding and the mix of provision was right. There was a need to put an argument to central government about funding matching need but SBC did not yet have all the evidence necessary to support that. Cate Duffy indicated that she was minded to instruct officers not to seek any transfer from Schools Block to HNB but to take a pronged approach to balancing the budget. Further information was required about the NFF.

It was suggested it would be useful to note in the LHPA consultation that there were other pressures on the Schools Block.

The HNB Group would discuss budget and other issues further.

The report summarised the 2016-17 centrally retained DSG outturn and the reasons for the main variances with the budget. There was currently an underspend of £433,000. It was noted that two substantial amounts had yet to be paid which would bring the account closer to a break-even position.

It was confirmed that a saving had not been made on services supporting behaviour, as these were costs to be paid at a later stage.

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

It was noted that none of these groups had met.

### **584. National Funding Formula (NFF) Update**

It was noted that the National Funding Formula (NFF) would be implemented from 2018/19 with transitional arrangements, with the 'hard' NFF implemented from 2020/21 when schools would be funded directly by the ESFA., Provided in the supporting report were links which detailed changes. John Voytal drew attention to the timetable for development of the budget. This would include the 5-16 Formula Task Group meeting to consider the implications and detailed modelling.

The 2019/20 targets for per pupil funding of at least £3,500 for primary and £4,800 for all secondary schools by 2019/20 were highlighted, showing the transition and impact. It was noted there would be a great deal for the Task Group to work through.

It was suggested by the Chair that the figures stated in paragraph 4.3 for 2017/18 were AWPU (Basic Entitlement) and that the ESFA targets were for total pupil led funding and therefore comparisons were not being made like with like. John Voytal would revise the table and circulate to members of the Schools Forum.

Details of NFF summary changes had been circulated and it was queried whether schools were able to access details of their likely individual funding under the NFF. It was understood the information could be extracted from a DfE spreadsheet but only a notional model was available at this stage at:  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-funding-formula-tables-for-schools-and-high-needs>

### **9.45am: Helen Huntley left the meeting**

### **585. Scheme for Financing Schools**

It was confirmed that the Scheme for Financing Schools was reviewed regularly. A summary of planned changes was highlighted. It was noted that there would be a consultation with maintained schools about the proposed changes and the outcome of the consultation would then be reported to Schools Forum proposing approval of the changes in light of the consultation.

A consultation was to be held with maintained schools highlighting the specific changes proposed within the text. George Grant would email a copy to Schools Forum members.

**586. Schools Improvement and Education Services Grant 2017/18 - Clarification Report**

Cate Duffy explained that funding reports presented to Schools Forum in December 2016 had been inaccurate. The Government had announced the end of the Education Services Grant, to which there were two elements, the General and the Retained.

It had been requested that the Retained element move to the Schools Block and be held centrally.

Cate Duffy had discussed the anomalies with the Finance Department and the table included in paragraph 4.5 had been re-profiled with an accurate picture provided in the table in paragraph 4.7. As a result, funding for School Improvement would be greatly reduced in 2018/19. This was of concern but the report had to amend the error to ensure transparency to Schools Forum. Cate Dufy confirmed there were no further service implications.

Schools' Forum noted the error in the December 2016 reports and the action that the Council had taken to remedy this for the 2017-18 financial year.

**587. Academies Update**

The LA was not aware of any academy conversions at the current time.

It was noted that Arbour Vale was in Special Measures and academisation would be the solution. Updates were awaited on the situation.

**588. Updated Key Decisions Log**

The Chair and Clerk would draw up a new Key Decisions Log.

**589. Schools Forum 2017/18 Forward Agenda Plan and Dates and Venues of Future Meetings**

The Schools Forum received the draft Forward Agenda Plan.

It had been agreed to hold an additional meeting on Thursday 9 November 2017

The dates of the meetings of the Schools Forum, having previously been agreed, were noted:

Wednesday 6 December 2017

Thursday 11 January 2018

Tuesday 6 March 2018

Wednesday 16 May 2018

Thursday 5 July 2018.

All meetings to be held at 8.00am for 8.15am start at Beechwood School.

Nothing had been tabled for discussion under Any Other Business.

(Note: The Meeting opened at 8.15am and closed at 10.00am)