

## **Slough Schools Forum- Meeting held on Tuesday, 4th December, 2018**

**Present:** John Constable, Langley Grammar School (Chair)  
Peter Collins, Slough & Eton C of E Business and Enterprise College  
Valerie Harffey, Ryvers Primary School  
Kathleen Higgins, Beechwood Secondary School  
Ray Hinds, Baylis Court School  
Jo Matthews, Littledown School  
Susan Marsh, Colnbrook Primary School  
Navroop Mehat, Wexham Court Primary School  
Angela Mellish, St Bernard's Catholic Grammar School  
Kathy Perry, Mighty Acorns Day Nursery  
Jon Reekie, Godolphin Infant School  
Jo Rockall, Herschel Grammar School  
Maggie Waller, Holy Family Primary School  
Nicky Willis, Cippenham Primary School

**Observers:** Sharon James, SBC Governor Support  
Eddie Neighbour, Upton Court Grammar School  
Jamie Rockman, Haybrook College  
Neil Sykes, Arbour Vale School

**Officers:** Domenico Barani, Catherine Cochran, Cate Duffy, George Grant, Vikram Hansrani, Tony Madden and Susan Woodland

**Apologies:** Philip Gregory, Carol Pearce, Michael Jarrett, Johnny Kyriacou and Councillor Shabnum Sadiq

**No Apologies:** Richard Kirkham

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting, in particular new members Susan Marsh and Ray Hinds, along with Sharon James, SBC Governor Support, as an observer. All those present introduced themselves.

### **664. Apologies**

Apologies had been received from Philip Gregory, Michael Jarrett, Johnny Kyriacou, Carol Pearce and Shabnum Sadiq. No apologies had been received from Richard Kirkham.

Ray Hinds had advised he would need to leave the meeting early.

### **665. Declarations of Interest**

There were none.

### **666. Any Other Business**

George Grant had one item to table.

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

### **667. Minutes of Previous Meeting held on 10 October 2018**

The minutes of the Schools Forum meeting held on 10 October, 2018 were agreed as a correct record, subject to the following amendments:

The times at which Vikram Hansrani and Navroop Mehat joined the meeting should be amended to read a.m., not p.m.

**Minute 660:** please delete the final paragraph.

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

**Minute 648 (Early Years Centrally Retained 2018-19) refers:** this issue is on-going but being dealt with.

Any other Matters Arising were covered by the agenda for the current meeting.

#### **668. Schools Forum Membership**

Following an invitation to academy proprietors for nominations to fill the three vacancies on Schools Forum, four nominations had been received. In order to retain a balance of membership, Jon Reekie, governor at Phoenix Infant Academy, Susan Marsh, Headteacher, Colnbrook Primary School and Ray Hinds, Baylis Court School had been appointed for terms of two years. Eddie Neighbour, from Upton Court Grammar School had agreed to continue to attend Forum as an observer.

#### **8.25am: Tony Madden arrived at the meeting**

The Chair thanked Eddie Neighbour for his contribution as a member and welcomed all new colleagues.

The Chair reminded the meeting that only members had voting rights but observers were welcome to make contributions. In addition, Schools Forum was an open meeting, which members of the public could attend if they wished.

There remained a need to resolve Special School and PRU representation on the Forum. Neil Sykes and Jamie Rockman were currently observers, with Jo Matthews representing PRUs. The Chair would write to all three academies to confirm representation, with the remaining person welcome to continue attending Forum as an observer.

#### **669. Update on National Funding/Local Funding issues**

There was nothing to report at this meeting.

#### **670. DSG Budget Monitoring Report 2018/19**

The supporting paper for this item had been circulated under separate cover.

The Chair explained that the meeting would consider the DSG position for 2018/19, the Growth Fund outturn for 2018/19, and then look ahead to Growth Fund and the DSG for the year 2019/20.

George Grant explained that SBC was required to update Schools Forum on their DSG budget plan and at the half year point to give an indication of the end of year

figures. The meeting would be taken through each block and supporting information.

A comprehensive view of the DSG allocation had been given, leading to the net budget to be allocated to schools. The total DSG after academy recoupments was just under £69m, with the report referring to adjustments to Early Years.

The current year was highlighted, with the Schools Block and Early Years spending as per their allocations but the High Needs block had an expected overspend of £2m. The Schools Block had a projected surplus of £36,000 but the expected underspend on Growth Fund would be explained under the Growth Fund item on the agenda. Early Years was forecast to balance with any underspend to be recouped by the DfE in the following year.

The High Needs budget had not been adjusted and spend was on items consistent with the spend the previous year. Proposals for managing the in-year High Needs deficit would be made to Schools Forum at their January meeting.

The adjusted variance had improved over that of 2016/17 and 2017/18 but was still a significant issue. The High Needs Block overspend was due to the same issues as the previous year.

The Chair thanked George Grant for his detailed report. There were no questions and Schools Forum noted the report.

#### **671. Growth Fund 2019/20**

Tony Madden explained that this item was presented annually to Schools Forum, with regards to the allocation of school places for the following academic year. The information had also been updated for the current year. It was explained that the allocation criteria were based on the Operational Guide 2019/20. There were no changes proposed to the previous growth fund model and a recommendation had been made to continue supporting bulge classes for academy schools in the second year of operation where appropriate.

Those schools who had received the growth funding were highlighted to members.

The bulge classes at Marish were highlighted, along with the second-year funding for Grove Academy classes. James Elliman had been included but a reduction in their PAN had been postponed. Members were asked to note that Priory should not have been included in the documentation for the second year as it was not funded as an academy. If all agreed, there would be a carry forward of £111,000 at the end of 2018/19.

A DSG top slice for 2019/20 of £900,000 was requested, based on estimated expenditure although the final AWPU allocations for 2019/20 were as yet unknown. The contingency assumed some funding to support Grove Academy in the third year of opening. It was confirmed that SBC aimed to work with a large contingency to avoid requesting funds from Schools Forum mid-year. It was suggested that AWPU rates would be higher than the estimates but only by a small amount.

In answer to a further question as to whether contingency would triple for 2019/20, Tony Madden explained this was standard contingency shown at this time of year, based on junior year groups.

It was noted that £56,000 had been allocated for the Marish bulge and a question was raised as to why there was more funding for the second year. In the first year the standard AWPU rate had been used but the second year was based on estimates, as taken from the October census.

It was queried whether consideration should be given to top slicing a smaller amount from DSG due to the relatively high projected contingency and the current stress on school budgets. It was explained it had been proposed to retain the current top slice and in the third year of National Funding Formula (NFF) there would be less need to top slice.

A query was raised for an explanation of the difference between the underwriting and the bulge at Grove Academy. There had been three bulge classes at the time of original opening, which contained low numbers, the support was in place for the second year in academies due to being paid in arrears. Historically, an agreement had been made by SBC to allow the School to open in a unique set of circumstances.

The underwriting was due to an agreement with the ESFA certain year groups which were not full would have to be underwritten in order for the opening to go ahead. The amount shared with the ESFA was contained within the report. The figures for 2017/18 showed the actual numbers but the 2018/19 numbers, based on the Census showed that the majority of classes outside Reception and Year 7 were not full. The main pressure area was Year 7 which SBC was asked to underwrite, with Schools Forum agreeing to fund £90,000 in 2018/19. It was confirmed that in the figures shared, some Year 7 and 8 classes had been rolled forward in 2018/19. Tony Madden would check the Year 7 numbers.

Schools Forum agreed the criteria for expansion as outlined together with the underwriting of places in the current year at Grove Academy.

It was suggested falling rolls should be discussed first: it was explained there was a timing issue and that Tony Madden would present further details at a future Schools Forum meeting.

It was confirmed that the 2019/20 allocation was the final year for underwriting the places at Grove Academy. In principle, Forum agreed to a maximum of £60,000 or 50% of the cost whichever was the lower.

Tony Madden explained that the £111,000 ten-place contingency had to be retained. It would be approximately £130,000 at the end of the last year, which would be funding for almost two classes.

It was suggested that after all these commitments were taken into account, it would make sense to reduce the DSG top slice to £800,000 to leave an estimated carry forward of approximately £130,000 at the end of 2019/20.

Tony Madden explained that a number of schools were experiencing falling rolls, particularly in Key Stage 1 classes, which was impacting on funding. The allowed mechanism of a 'falling rolls fund' was outlined to the meeting: the purpose of such a fund was to provide a bridge where there was evidence to show there would be growth again in the future. Births were not anticipated to rise to higher levels and schools could not be funded unless they were judged 'good' or 'outstanding'. It was

thought the year likely to be affected would be 2021/22 and it was suggested a supporting paper should come to Schools Forum in the summer. Cate Duffy confirmed that there would be discussions with schools affected with the possibility of addressing the issue through admissions, and a paper would only be brought if it were felt that a falling rolls fund was really necessary.

It was confirmed the plans would be updated based on new builds taking place in the area. Tony Madden added that if current housing rates continued, those plans had been taken into account.

### **9.10am: Ray Hinds and Tony Madden left the meeting**

#### **672. DSG Budget 2019/20**

Four supporting papers had been made available prior to the meeting.

George Grant explained that the figures on Appendix 3 of the report were indicative and would now need to be adjusted to take into account the change in the proposed DSG top slice from £900,000 to £800,000.

A request was made to Schools Forum to approve the re-allocation of funds to the correct blocks in order to correct DfE baseline errors. This included a transfer from the High Needs Block to the Central School Services Block (CSSB).

In the original DfE baseline for the CSSB there was historical funding for the Virtual School. Susan Woodland explained that she had contacted the DfE as to whether these monies could be moved from Historical into Ongoing commitments; this would safeguard the Virtual School funding.

Elements within the CSSB were also discussed. It was explained that the amount allocated to the SBC Local Safeguarding Board was an historical figure, with £30,000 supporting administration and the running of the Local Children's Safeguarding Board, not the meetings alone. It was added that this was a statutory requirement and that other agencies contributed to the costs of the LSCB, the amount shown was not the total budget. It was proposed the figures be clarified.

It was noted there was a need to transfer £500,000 from the High Needs Block to Schools Block as a starting point for the current financial year, to correct a baselining error; this was a repeat of the request made the previous year.

The third report concerned the outcome of the consultation on the 5-16 formula. Two options had been put to schools (status quo, and a move to 75% of the NFF values) and responses had been returned and noted. Schools had responded but the outcome had not been clear due to the low response rate and an even split between the two options. The Task Group had therefore proposed a move to 65% of NFF as this was effectively halfway between the two models. The resultant school budget shares had been highlighted to members in the report.

The fourth part of the report was a proposal by SBC to transfer 0.5% from the Schools Block to High Needs Block to support funding issues and relieve the ongoing pressure on the High Needs Block. This proposal had been subject to a consultation; of the schools had who responded, 24 had voted against the top slice, one had supported and 3 had made late submissions. It was noted that a split could be produced to show the numbers of primary and secondary schools.

The Chair thanked George Grant, Nic Barani, Susan Woodland and the Task Groups for all their work on this issue.

### **9.25am: Kathy Webber left the meeting**

There had previously been discussion about PFI and it was queried whether there would be a further paper to clarify the PFI contribution. George Grant explained this had come from the High Needs Block and would be evidenced in the January 2019 report to Schools Forum, confirming there would be implications for the Schools Block.

A member asked if comments from the Schools Block consultation had been shared: it was explained that the majority of schools responding had not made comments. It was queried why the response had been so low when schools had been so vocal about their budgets. The importance of engagement with schools was stressed and that such issues should be discussed in Headteacher groups and through feedback to Chairs of Governors and their boards. It was suggested that the timing of the consultation had possibly influenced the low response.

Following discussion, the various recommendations in the reports were considered together, with the following outcomes:

- Schools Forum agreed to transfer £264,566 from High Needs Block to CSSB
- Schools Forum agreed to transfer £500,000 from High Needs Block to Schools Block
- Schools Forum agreed to re-allocate Virtual School funding of £100,000 from Historical commitment to Ongoing commitment within the CSSB
- 5-16 Task Group had recommended a move from 50% to 65% NFF in 2019/20 formula in view of inconclusive consultation outcome. Schools Forum endorsed the recommendation which was accepted by SBC
- Schools Forum rejected SBC's proposal to transfer 0.5% (approximately £650,000) from 5-16 Schools Block to High Needs Block, based on the outcome of the consultation with schools. SBC would not challenge the decision. It was hoped this outcome could put pressure on central Government: members were sympathetic to SBC but could not justify the request.

### **673. Banding (High Needs top-up funding) Working Group update**

A supporting paper had been circulated, outlining the work of SBC and school leaders in recent months. The task had been to develop a transparent banding model, ensuring the correct amount of money was allocated to the right child and the appropriate support was in place for those in a mainstream setting. Vikram Hansrani added that a number of support agencies had also been involved in this exercise.

A workshop had been held, from which two main issues had been raised: whether the model reflected those with the most complex needs and where funding for therapeutic needs would come from. It was noted that, unfortunately, the workshop had not been attended by any secondary Headteachers.

Vikram Hansrani demonstrated an example of how the banding would operate. Jamie Rockman added that the proposals made banding clearer and had worked well for examples of some PRU pupils. However, members stressed that further modelling was required to ensure pupil needs were met. Vikram Hansrani explained that further discussion were also required with colleagues in CCG as there had to be equity, whilst trying to provide a spectrum of support.

In answer to a query, Vikram Hansrani explained these proposals were notional and would apply to new Educational Health Care Plans, not those already placed in mainstream schools until they reached phase transfer. It was noted there would be some children with a high level of need who would be in mainstream.

It was further noted that consultation workshops would be held between December and February 2018. Modelling would continue to be tested during that period, with final proposals presented to Schools Forum in March 2019. Training would also be made available to officers and school SENCOs.

Members agreed there was a great deal of detail and this was a positive way forward. It was hoped all feedback from schools would be noted, as there were concerns about the weighting mechanism and the possible negative impact on special school budgets.

Any members with comments or queries were asked to contact Vikram Hansrani directly.

#### **674. Resource Base Update**

A paper had been circulated to members under separate cover. It was suggested members read the document in full and direct any comments or questions directly to Vikram Hansrani. Any issues raised would be addressed under Matters Arising at the next Schools Forum meeting.

#### **675. Update from Task Groups: Early Years, High Needs & 5-16**

**Early Years:** had not met.  
**High Needs and 5-16:** as discussed.

#### **676. Academies Update**

Neil Sykes confirmed that Arbour Vale School had converted to academy status on 1 November 2018.

#### **677. 2018/19 Forward Agenda Plan/Key Decision Log**

The Forward Agenda Plan 2018/19 and Key Decisions Log were noted.

#### **Any Other Business**

George Grant informed Schools Forum that this would be his last meeting as he was leaving SBC.

On behalf of Schools Forum the Chair thanked George Grant for his support, particularly over the past two years, acknowledging that his hard work had given

much needed clarity and transparency to the financial decision-making processes. The previous Chair seconded these sentiments.

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