

Slough Schools Forum
Minutes of meeting held on Wednesday, 4th July, 2012
at Beechwood Research and Conference Centre, Slough, SL2 1QE

- Present:** Maggie Waller, Holy Family Primary School (Chair)
Julia Shepard, Beechwood Secondary School (Vice-Chair)
Virginia Barrett, East Berkshire College
Barbara Clark, Godolphin Junior School
John Constable, Langley Grammar
Martin Davis, Colnbrook Primary School
Harry Duffy, Ryvers Primary School
Helen Huntley, Special Schools
Maureen Mallinson, Westgate Secondary School
Paul McAteer, Slough and Eton Secondary School
Charlie McGeachie, Montem Primary School
Kevin O'Driscoll, St Joseph's High School
Jon Reekie, James Elliman Primary School
Jo Rockall, Herschel Grammar School
Mary Sparrow, Wexham Secondary School
Maggie Stacey, St Anthony's RC Primary School
- Observers:** John Dickens, Julian King-Harris, Andrew Patterson and David Warren
- Others attendees:** Rochelle Fearon (Clerk), Philip Gregory, Jo Matthews, Christine Mountford and Angela Mellish
- Officers:** Jean Cameron, Robin Crofts, Rochelle Fearon, Clair Pyper, Wendy Sagar and Christina West
- Apologies:** Lynda Bussley, Gillian Coffey, Julie Evans, Emma Foy and Cllr Natasa Pantelic

PART I

Maggie Waller opened the meeting and welcomed members of the Forum, new members and observers. Introductions were made around the table. It was agreed to defer item 8 on the agenda to last.

134. Declarations of Interest

For agenda item 8:

Kevin O'Driscoll, Chair of Governors of St Joseph's Catholic High School
Julia Shepard, who is currently supporting St Josephs Catholic High School
Maggie Waller, who was involved in the preparation of one free school bid for a new secondary school.

135. Minutes of previous meeting and matters arising

- Schools Forum Constitution will be updated in line with changing regulations.

- Query from Paul McAteer outstanding from the last meeting: Maggie Waller had established that secondary headteachers agreed some years ago that additional Social Deprivation monies would be distributed via the AWPU.
- DfE have decided that mobility can be reflected in the formula as an additional factor. This is very good news for Slough schools.
- The minutes were agreed as an accurate record.

136. Membership - verbal update

This had been dealt with during introductions above and will come back to the Forum in more detail in the next cycle of meetings to reflect any required changes arising from the new funding arrangements.

137. SEN Funding Review Consultation

Wendy Sagar outlined the main points in the report and the recommendations following the conclusion of the review. Wendy confirmed that no school will lose out as a result of the changes in 2012/13 subject to endorsement of the proposed use of headroom. This was agreed.

Schools Forum agreed the banded funding model and proposed changes to be implemented from September 2012. Schools Forum approved £12k as a 'per place' amount of funding for alternative provision for 2012/13 and agreed that Helen Huntley and Jo Matthews will be involved in ongoing discussions for the future.

Clair Pyper suggested that it would be helpful to record for future reference the rationale behind the changes. Officers will take this forward. Julia Shepard asked about the financial implications for schools this year. Wendy advised that two schools will receive protection in respect of their Resource Units. Schools Forum requested that Jackie Wright be thanked for her significant contribution to this review.

138. Schools Outturn 2011-12

Wendy advised the Schools Finance team is reviewing closing balances in accordance with the balance control mechanism. The outcome of the review will be reported back to Schools Forum in September. It was agreed that school balances need to be considered in context and that the future report will include the information gathered from schools regarding commitments and planned spend.

139. Schools Specific Contingency and Local Authority Budgets Funded by the Dedicated Schools Grant - outturn 2011-12

Wendy Sagar advised the Forum that, following closure of SBC accounts, the outturn position in respect of school specific contingency and local authority managed budgets is now available.. Key issues to note include budgets which were unspent at 31 March 2012 as follows:

Speech and Language Therapy: £150k
 Services Supporting Behaviour Project management: £40k
 Current reviews: £40k

Condition surveys: £80k

Schools Forum endorsed the proposal to carry these budgets forward to 2012-13. The underspend arising from the reconfigured School Improvement Service has occurred as it has only operated for part of the financial year. There are a number of budgets supporting SEN placements. The contingency budget was overspent as more SEN pupils were placed within Slough. This was more than offset by reductions in the budgets for placements in independent schools and other local authority schools. Members should note that the £1.5 million underspend on local authority managed budgets will be distributed as Headroom. Clair Pyper referred the group back to earlier important discussions on accountability when considering distribution of these monies.

Robin Crofts clarified that SEN placement budgets were set to ensure sufficient funding for existing and potential placements. This will continue as, it is hoped to continue to support SEN pupils within the authority, the number of such pupils continues to rise. Ultimately all the SEN placement budgets, including the contingency, will sit within the 'High Needs' block.

Helen Huntley asked about distribution of Headroom relating to the Pupil Referral Units (PRU). It was agreed to deal with this under item 8 on the agenda.

Maggie Waller suggested it may be necessary to use some funding for training both new and existing members of Schools Forum in the light of the significant amount of change that is on the horizon.

140. School Budget Plans 2012-13

A revised Appendix B, Summary of Budgets, was circulated to the Forum. Plans submitted by schools show a significant reduction in planned balances during 2012/13. Officers are working with the two schools that have not yet submitted budget plans approved by their Governing Body.

141. Consultation on draft Schools Forum Regulations 2012

Draft regulations have been distributed by the Education Funding Agency (EFA). The report circulated with the agenda outlined the proposals. Schools Forum currently functions in accordance with many of the proposals but it is important to note that in future the EFA will be granted observer status to Schools Forum meetings.

Maggie Waller had concerns over the proposed new arrangements for Academy representation which seems to suggest that all Academy representatives should be elected by Governing Bodies. Whilst this is appropriate for Governor representatives, in Slough Academy Headteacher representatives are agreed through the phase associations. This seems a good way to work and Wendy will submit an appropriate comment in response to the consultation.

NfER Executive Summary: A best practice review of the role of Schools Forums – this document had been circulated with the agenda and is extremely useful. Maggie Waller felt it was a positive report nationally which emphasised the valuable influence Schools Forums have over funding decisions and reported that they

provide a platform for strategic discussion. The way we run Schools Forum in Slough compares favourably. However, training and communication are areas for development in Slough both for new and existing members and more regular involvement/active engagement of elected Members would be very welcome. Clair Pyper suggested that she and Robin Crofts take this back to the local authority (LA) and that possibly not only the Lead Member for Children's Services but also the Lead Member for Finance could be involved. Clair also felt collaboration between schools in Slough is of a high standard and should be capitalised on.

Ways to improve links with governing bodies were discussed. Jon Reekie had attempted to operate a governor association which had failed over time through lack of support. Jon suggested that perhaps the Slough Learning Partnership could be the conduit for issues as they arise, targeting matters of high importance and possibly developing an annual conference. John Constable supported this. A good deal of information is passed through to governing bodies but often through clerks and not Chairs. Julia Shepard felt it important to note that there are some outstanding governors within the town who share good practice and that often it is time commitments that limits involvement. Charlie McGeachie suggested earlier notification of meetings / training would be extremely useful. It was agreed this item would be brought back to the September meeting and Robin agreed to pursue this with the Slough Learning Partnership and Jon.

142. Draft Work Programme 2012-13

The Forum considered the draft work programme for the Academic Year 2013-14. It was noted that the work programme will be kept under review. For example, Balance Control mechanism Review will be added to the programme in September.

143. Summary and Distribution of Headroom

Item 8 – taken out of order – Summary and Distribution of Headroom

The proposals had all been discussed at Slough Schools Education Forum (SSEF) and were now being presented to Schools Forum for detailed discussion and agreement. Wendy Sagar drew members' attention to Appendix A which provided a summary of both the source of headroom and priorities. She informed the group that the Standards Fund money available was as a result of Slough receiving a late payment in respect of 2011-12. Recommendations at 2.2 were discussed:

- £1,000,000 distribution to schools and the PVI through the current formula: discussion took place around whether this money should be distributed via the AWPU. Although a concern was raised at the impact of fixed sums on the distribution, primary and secondary headteacher representatives advised that schools supported distribution through the formula. It was noted that the formula excludes funding for 6th forms. Academies will receive a share of this money. It was also discussed and agreed that both Haybrook and Littledown PRU would be allocated additional funding based on their devolved budgets.
- £190,000 allocation to Slough Learning Partnership (SLP): (£150,000 SLP funding to December 2013 and £50,000 for Broadband). Schools Forum had previously agreed to fund SLP for one year, with a potential for a second year after which it would become self funding. John Constable explained the

situation relating to Broadband provision under which secondary schools have been subsidizing primary schools. Primary schools will receive a transitional grant as schools move to paying the actual cost for broadband services within this particular contract .

- £150,000 (one off) and £230,700 (ongoing) allocation to Haybrook College to support alternative provision places: The one off amount covers the 2011-12 deficit previously discussed and the ongoing allocation, when added to the current devolved budget, will fund the agreed 92 places @ £12k per place. Academies and other schools will also contribute to funding PRU provision at Haybrook and Littledown.
- £253,000 (£393,000 ongoing) retention to support the implementation of the SEN Review: This had already been discussed and agreed.
- £613,000 retention to fund places in new resource units: This had already been discussed and agreed.
- £1,000,000 allocation to support St Joseph's Catholic High School's three year finance and development plan: Julia Shepard said that this issue had been discussed in great detail by several groups. Clair Pyper felt it was paramount to ensure that pupils at the school continue to receive high quality and effective education. Maggie Waller advised that there had historically been situations where schools in exceptional difficult financial circumstances were supported. John Constable confirmed the secondary Headteachers had supported the proposal and Charlie McGeachie confirmed the same for the primary Headteachers.
- £30,000 allocated to develop new secondary school provision in Slough: Clair Pyper advised that the DfE had recently sought her opinion on the situation. There are currently 3 free school bids in progress – one from the Slough Association of Secondary Headteachers (SASH), one from Lynch Hill and one from the Sikh School. The timing of an announcement is unclear and may not be until September. This matter will require further discussions at Schools Forum. It is feasible that the DfE could approve all three applications and therefore more funding will be required in excess of £30k. Conversely if no applications are accepted then there will be an extremely serious situation concerning the shortage of secondary places that will need to be addressed. Julia Shepard concluded that partnership working in this area would be vital to making progress.

The proposals listed above were endorsed and approved by Schools Forum.

Maggie Waller then presented Clair Pyper with a small gift to mark her last meeting prior to her leaving the Council in September. Maggie thanked Clair for her huge contribution to the work of Schools Forum and in response Clair told everyone how much she had enjoyed her time in Slough. Maggie also thanked Beechwood School and staff for their continued hospitality. The meeting closed at 0945 and was followed by a session led by Wendy Sagar on the far reaching changes to school funding arrangements from 1 April 2013.

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