

Slough Schools Forum- Meeting held on Wednesday, 16th October, 2013

Present: Maggie Waller, Holy Family Primary School (Chair)
John Constable, Langley Grammar (Vice-Chair)
Paul Adams, Slough Grammar School
Gillian Coffey, Lynch Hill Primary School
Helen Huntley, Haybrook College
Paul McAteer, Slough and Eton Secondary School
Jon Reekie, James Elliman Primary School
Mary Sparrow, Wexham Secondary School
Maggie Stacey, St Anthony's RC Primary School
Virginia Barrett, East Berkshire College
Jean Cameron, Slough Children's Centres
Jo Matthews, Littledown
Navroop Mehat, Wexham Court Primary School

Observers: Eddie Neighbour, Slough Grammar School, Angela Mellish, St Bernards

Officers: Jackie Wright, Steve Elson, Atul Lad and Michelle Perkins (Clerk)

Cambridge Education: Robin Crofts

Apologies: Barbara Clark, Father Kevin O'Driscoll, Jo Rockall, Lynda Bussley, Nicky Willis and Philip Gregory

PART I

252. Welcome and Apologies

Maggie Waller welcomed Jackie Wright who was attending to represent SBC and also thanked Virginia Barrett for her hospitality at East Berkshire College.

Apologies were received from Barbara Clark, Godolphin Junior School, Father Kevin O'Driscoll, St Joseph's School, Jo Rockall, Herschel Grammar School, Philip Gregory, Baylis Court Nursery, Lynda Bussley, NUT and Nicky Willis, Cippenham Primary School.

253. Declarations of Interest

None.

254. Minutes of Previous Meeting and Matters Arising

Asbestos Survey: Steve Elson reported that the surveys will take around 6 months to complete. The consultants will write to schools shortly. The cost is likely to be the full £80,000 that has been set aside.

St Joseph's: Robin Crofts explained that Julia Shepard is providing voluntary assistance to St Joseph's. Interviews for the new head teacher are taking place and

they will be invited to a future Schools Forum meeting to report back on the current financial position if necessary.

Consultation: Steve Elson confirmed that the responses went in to the DfE on 11th October as discussed at the last Schools Forum meeting.

Membership: Maggie Waller confirmed that 1 nomination was received for a Primary Maintained School Governor representative from Hardip Singh, Chair of Governors of Khalsa Primary School. Schools Forum endorsed this and he will be invited to the next meeting.

Maggie Stacey confirmed that Julie O'Brien, Our Lady of Peace Junior School will be a Primary Maintained School Headteachers' representative.

Maggie Waller confirmed that in terms of Academy representation 4 responses were received to endorse Jon Reekie to continue his membership and Nicky Willis to be held for the next available vacancy. No further nominations were received. Schools Forum also endorsed this.

Action: Maggie Waller will write to the Academies again and ask them to formally propose and second this.

The minutes of 12th September 2013 were agreed as a true and accurate record.

255. Quarter 1 Budget Monitoring 2013-14

Atul Lad presented the report which details an overspend of £87K. Atul Explained that Finance are looking to encourage schools to make savings to reduce the overspend and that the purpose of the report is to highlight any particular budget issues. Atul advised that there are no major reasons for concern at this point.

Maggie Stacey raised the issue that their Bursar has not yet received the budget monitoring template and therefore St Anthony's figures are not included in the report (appendix 1). The issue was also raised that carry forwards are not included in the report (also appendix 1).

It was also agreed that for quarter 2 the LA will send out a standard template to all schools and this will also include clarification of carry forward within the figures.

Some members of Schools Forum stated that the figures were incorrect and were not those sent in by schools. Therefore, Schools Forum was unable to note the contents of the table (appendix 1) at this time.

Actions:

- 1) A column is to be added to the table clarifying the carry forward position.
- 2) A standard template for schools to complete is to be produced for quarter 2.
- 3) A timetable for Bursars to know when the figures are due over the next 12 months is to be produced.

256. 2014-15 Budget Process Update - verbal

Steve Elson confirmed that the Task and Finish Group meetings took place and factors were discussed for the 14/15 funding formula. He explained that the Group

had looked at the existing factors and the ones not used. The decision was made to recommend not to use the mobility factor due to the changed criteria and to recommend moving the money into a different factor.

Steve confirmed that a consultation regarding the proposed factors has been circulated to schools and replies are due by 18th October.

The list of proposed factors will then go to Schools Forum members and also to the Chief Executive and Councillor Mann for LA approval.

The deadline to send the list of factors to the DfE is 31st October.

Steve confirmed that two further Task and Finish Group meetings are scheduled to take place on 26th November and 5th December. The focus will be on the unit values using the new data.

The deadline for the final formula detail to go to the DfE is 21st January 2104.

Steve Elson also reported that he is attending a meeting on 17th October with other Finance Officers and the DfE and will report back at the next Schools Forum.

257. Breakdown of DSG Centrally Retained Budgets inc. moving to Cambridge Education

Steve Elson presented the report which informs Schools Forum of the current centrally held budgets retained in the DSG, including those that transferred to Mott MacDonald/Cambridge Education in October 2013. Appendix 1 details the budget code and title, a short description of what it will be spent on and whether it has transferred to Mott MacDonald/Cambridge Education.

Schools Forum was asked to note the details and to raise any questions.

Discussion took place as follows:

Robin Crofts explained that he has raised the issue of accountability for centrally retained funding including any used by schools with Joseph Holmes, AD for Finance. Joseph is going to review this area to look at co-ordinated arrangements whereby the spend can be accounted for and to evaluate its effectiveness and ensure that Cambridge Education fulfil their contract requirements.

Historically, reports on such expenditure would come back to Schools Forum. The information will now come to Schools Forum following discussion at Cambridge Education Operational Board meetings.

The underspend from SENASS was referred to as an example and it was noted that this will come back into the DSG at the end of the year.

However, it was noted that it is important to have an agreed framework for Schools Forum for reporting and monitoring to enable any recommendations or decisions to be made in a timely way. A process needs to be agreed and put in place with timescales and a framework of how it will work throughout the financial year for next year and beyond.

Robin Crofts reported that the review process had started in Cambridge Education and this will involve schools in terms of a re-consideration of needs in these particular areas and of the financial relationship. The review should be completed by December or January. Going through to next April there are likely to be underspends in the various cost centres. As it is DSG money, Schools Forum will be involved in the process of re-distributing the money.

Action: A process is to be built into the Work Programme and Steve Elson confirmed that he will bring a timescale back to the next Schools Forum meeting.

Action: Jackie Wright will raise the issue of how Schools Forum will be involved in the process at the forthcoming Operational Board meeting with Cambridge Education and ask for clarity on who has the decision making powers for the various budget lines.

Some of the cost centres in Appendix 1 were discussed as follows and various issues were raised:

- It was noted that some cost centres are incorrectly named, re-naming and clarification is needed.
- Roma Community Project and Traveller Service – Robin Crofts confirmed that the spend is on a member of staff at Willow commissioned for home education visits.
- Extended schools sustainable – needs serious review about how to use the money in future as it has remained unspent.
- Robin Crofts discussed residual sums of money that have come through core funding or central government. This is partly associated with spend on admin support.
- Paul McAteer requested clarification of the 2.5% overhead cost of running the Cambridge Education contract and where that sits

Action: Steve Elson will bring back clarification on the various cost centres and underspends to the December Schools Forum meeting, including a revised version of appendix 1 which will include a forecast for each cost centre. Robin Crofts reported that Cambridge Education is appointing a Finance Officer who may be able to support with this work. Steve Elson will also provide a position statement in December on the various blocks of the DSG.

Action: Clarification regarding the 2.5% overhead cost of the Cambridge Education to be provided.

Action: Robin Crofts will check which schools are still using the Speech and Language service which relates to the cost centre titled 'Vulnerable Children'.

Action: Robin Crofts will check which schools use Skills Force

258. High Needs Financial Sustainability Policy

Atul Lad presented the report and asked Schools Forum members to approve and adopt the High Needs Financial Sustainability Policy which arose from the High Needs Block Task and Finish Group meetings where concerns were raised about the vulnerability of special schools and schools with resource bases.

The Policy was drafted to provide them with a safety net if the situation arose where, for example, 'a school has lost pupils unexpectedly and in a short space of time and their support adds up to the cost of two members of the teaching staff' (see page 19).

Helen Huntley explained that it is the new arrangements which give a base amount per place and then top ups which have created this problem. It is currently only a potential problem and is unlikely to be a huge concern as resource units at special schools are currently full. The potential problem is the unexpected, sudden departure of high top up funded pupils.

Jackie Wright explained that there is a particular issue in terms of funding for Looked After Children (LAC) i.e. when they are placed in a different LA/area their funding goes with them.

It was noted that there is an issue around seeking to provide potential places in special schools for Slough children when there may be requests from other LAs. Jackie Wright agreed to look into this.

Paul McAteer explained that a contingency is required in some form.

Robin Crofts said this needs to be evaluated at a later date to check whether the policy had to be implemented and to inform future decisions about setting money aside.

Paul Adams suggested that a timeframe be added into the policy under point 6 (see page 20).

Schools Forum otherwise endorsed the policy.

Steve Elson has made the necessary amendments and a revised version of the policy has been circulated with these minutes.

Action: Steve Elson will look at where the money could sit and some form of annual reporting.

Action: Jackie Wright to consider the issue of providing potential places in special schools for Slough children when there may be requests from other LAs.

Action: an annual report on the policy's operation should be provided for Schools Forum.

259. Carbon Reduction

Atul Lad presented the report, the purpose of which was to ask Schools Forum to approve payment of the Carbon Reduction Commitment for 2012-13 via the potential in year DSG underspend for 2013-14. The amount is £114,168.94.

Schools Forum endorsed the payment.

Action: Robin Crofts will send a note out to all schools to inform them it is being paid in this way and that schools will not be invoiced direct.

260. Cambridge Education - verbal

Robin Crofts confirmed that the transfer to Cambridge Education took place as planned on 30th September.

Consultants have been appointed to undertake review work in the four areas:

- 1) School Improvement
- 2) SEN
- 3) Access
- 4) Early Years

Heads and Governors will be involved in the review and recommendations will be made by Christmas.

The Operational Board meeting between Cambridge Education and SBC is due to take place next week.

Jackie Wright confirmed that the review will also determine who will be the LA Rep to sit on groups such as Schools Forum. Jackie will be attending Schools Forum in the meantime.

Cambridge Education is to remain a standing item on the Schools Forum agenda going forwards.

261. Academies Update - verbal

Robin Crofts provided an update as follows:

Montem is set to transfer on 1st December pending settlement of some legal issues. Foxborough is likely to transfer on 1st January.

Various other schools are also considering transfer.

The Labour Government is supportive of Parent-Led Academies which have all the features of Free Schools.

Maggie Waller confirmed that she will write to academies regarding their balances as agreed at Schools Forum on 12th September.

262. 2013-14 Work Programme and Key Decisions Log

Schools Forum noted the Work Programme and Key Decisions Log.

The Work Programme is to be amended to reflect the change in the date of the November Schools Forum meeting which will now be on the 15th November at 8am at Beechwood conference centre.

Advance apologies for the November meeting were received from Maggie Stacey and Jackie Wright.

(Note: The Meeting opened at 8.17 am and closed at 9.57 am)