

## **Slough Schools Forum- Meeting held on Wednesday, 11th December, 2013**

- Present:** Maggie Waller, Holy Family Primary School (Chair)  
John Constable, Langley Grammar (Vice-Chair)  
Louise Lund, Barney Bees Day Nursery  
Debbie Richards, Arbour Vale School  
Paul Adams, Upton Court Grammar  
Gillian Coffey, Lynch Hill Primary School  
Paul McAteer, Slough and Eton C of E Business and Enterprise College  
Jon Reekie, James Elliman Primary School  
Mary Sparrow, Wexham Secondary School  
Jo Rockall, Herschel Grammar School  
Virginia Barrett, East Berkshire College  
Jean Cameron, Slough Children's Centres  
Philip Gregory, Baylis Court Nursery School  
Navroop Mehat, Wexham Court Primary School  
Hardip Singh, Khalsa Primary School
- Observers:** Lynda Bussley, (NUT), Emily Barbour (EFA), Mike Fenton (EFA)
- Attendees:** Kathleen Higgins, Helen Huntley, Nicky Willis, Eddie Neighbour, Ruth Clark, Tony Smith (Cambridge Education), Kate Appleyard (Cambridge Education)
- Officers:** Steve Elson, Atul Lad and Michelle Perkins (Clerk)
- Apologies:** Julie O'Brien, Barbara Clark, Maggie Stacey, Kate Webb and Robin Crofts

### **PART I**

#### **274. Welcome and Apologies**

Maggie Waller welcomed Emily Barbour and Mike Fenton from the EFA who were attending in their observer role.

Apologies were noted from Maggie Stacey, Julie O'Brien, Barbara Clark, Kate Webb and Robin Crofts. Tony Smith from Cambridge Education attended on Robin's behalf.

#### **275. Declarations of Interest**

In terms on item 7 (Growth Fund) it was noted that Philip Gregory is a school governor, although no personal interest was declared.

## **276. Minutes of Previous Meeting and Matters Arising**

### **Page 1**

It was noted that Jo Rockall was present at the meeting on 15/11 as this wasn't recorded in the minutes.

### **Page 2**

Maggie Waller confirmed that the information regarding academy's balances was not available yet. The information will be brought back to Schools Forum once the 12/13 figures have been published.

Jackie Wright will be leaving SBC at the end of January. Clarification is needed as to whether the SEN element of her post has been filled. An update will be brought to the January meeting from Cambridge Education.

### **Page 3**

Operational and Good Practice Guide has been deferred to the January meeting for any questions members may have.

Jean Cameron confirmed that the figures referred to are for 13/14, not 14/15 as stated. The figures will be brought to the January meeting.

### **Page 4**

PFI discussions will be taking place between the LA and PFI schools and this matter will only come back to Schools Forum if a decision needs to be made. Schools Forum members asked to be kept informed of the outcome of these discussions.

### **Page 6**

Tony Smith will remind Robin Crofts to circulate the key contact details for Cambridge Education.

Steve Elson confirmed that the Free School grant has been distributed as agreed.

### **Page 7**

The new Schools Forum Clerk from January will be Rajpreet Johal, PA to Jane Wood, Director of Wellbeing.

### **Membership**

The updated membership table was circulated for information.

Helen Huntley's membership status will be reviewed after January once the pupil numbers are known. It was agreed that she would then be recommended as the representative for Academy Special Schools / PRU.

Maggie Waller has written to all academies to ask for information regarding proprietors to help streamline the election process to Schools Forum.

Nicky Willis is currently a reserve for the next vacancy for academies. It was agreed for Nicky to be a substitute for Gillian Coffey.

## **277. Quarter 2 Budget Monitoring 2013-14**

Atul Lad presented the paper which was to inform Schools Forum of the 13/14 forecasted revenue balances at the end of Quarter 2. Atul reported that all schools presented returns that forecast positive closing balances. Those with balances that exceed the balance control mechanism need to have plans in place. Forecasted expenditure, income and movements in revenue balances are summarised in Appendix A.

Paul McAteer asked about the figure for nurseries which appears high.

Philip Gregory confirmed that at his school this is reserved for a re-build although he cannot speak for the others. Atul Lad confirmed that more information will be provided for Quarter 3.

Schools Forum noted the contents of the paper.

## **278. 2014-15 Budget Process Update**

Atul Lad presented the paper which was to inform Schools Forum of the current position of the budget process for 14/15 and explain the decisions that will need to be made as part of the process. Atul confirmed that the formula needs to be finalised and submitted to the DfE by 21<sup>st</sup> Jan 2014. Census data is needed before any further work can be done.

Schools Forum was asked to approve the Task and Finish Group's recommendation regarding the Split Site Factor. The Task and Finish Group have discussed this at length and decided that £34,300 was a reasonable figure at this point.

Schools Forum agreed with this figure.

Paul McAteer raised the issue of the removal of the small schools factor which only affects Colnbrook. Steve Elson confirmed that this has also been discussed at length in the Task and Finish Group but unfortunately they cannot find a way of addressing it. He confirmed that they will look at the lump sum again in January as the DfE does not allow a small schools factor any more.

Steve Elson confirmed that since this paper was written the October pupil numbers have been received which increase the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) by £2.8m. This money will go into school's budgets via the DSG. Nicky Willis asked about the dates of Task and Finish Group meetings. Steve Elson confirmed that he will add them to the timetable included in section 5 of the paper. The December meeting was deferred and the next one is scheduled for 7<sup>th</sup> January where work will be done on determining values.

Maggie Waller confirmed that primary heads are writing to her in terms of the primary/secondary ratio.

## **279. Half Year DSG Forecast**

Atul Lad presented the paper which was to inform Schools Forum of the DSG forecast at the end of October 2013 and recommend a use for part of the forecasted underspend. Schools Forum welcomed the rationalisation of previously unspent

funds. From the forecasted underspend of £871,000 it is recommended that Schools Forum agree to use £500,000 for 14/15 budgets (£400,000 to the schools block and £100,000 for the high needs block). Schools Forum agreed with the figures.

It is also recommended that £300,000 from last year's unspent contingency of £462,912 is added to the Schools Block for 14/15. Schools Forum agreed with the figures.

Schools Forum also noted the £2.8m to be added as mentioned earlier.

Schools Forum noted that the forecasted underspend and unspent contingency is likely to be a one off and not available in future years. Steve Elson referred to the potential risk of one off funding to the ability to fund the Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG) without capping,

Helen Huntley expressed concern about the high needs block in terms of top-up payments. Atul Lad confirmed that the figures could be higher.

Jean Cameron asked whether the underspend includes early years underspend. Steve Elson confirmed that it doesn't as early years is likely to break even.

Nicky Willis asked if the contingency can be used if Schools Forum decides to allocate it to PFI for example. Steve Elson confirmed that if there is money in contingency it could be used.

Discussion took place about money for schools with falling rolls. Schools Forum agreed to keep sight of this for 15/16.

Paul McAteer asked about underspends held by Cambridge Education. Steve Elson confirmed that they would be reported as part of the June/July process.

## **280. Growth Fund Update 2013-14 & 2014-15 Budget**

Atul Lad presented the paper which was to inform Schools Forum of the current position of the 13/14 Growth Fund and request permission to hold a Growth Fund for 14/15.

£385,000 in the current year has gone towards supporting 4 new classes across 3 schools. Additional pupil numbers indicate a requirement for 4 more classes. A £300,000 Growth Fund for 14/15 would support those new classes.

Discussion took place as to whether academies were included in this as Nicky Willis raised that they have additional classes every year and in previous years they had to make a business case to the EFA and then the funding comes out of the LA Growth Fund. Mike Barbour confirmed that business cases are no longer used and it is covered by the Growth Fund which is a Schools Forum decision. Gillian Coffey confirmed that there is a year's lag in academies where they have a class without funding. Mike Barbour clarified that additional pupils starting in September are picked up by the Growth Fund and therefore included in the next year's budget.

Maggie Waller asked Steve Elson and Atul Lad to clarify whether account of academies' extra classes have been included in the £300,000 and what the process is.

Steve Elson confirmed that the Growth Fund is set up for the first year of permanent expansion. Maggie Waller suggested that the criteria for the Growth Fund be revisited.

**Action:** Atul Lad will bring a paper in January.

## 281. Centrally Retained DSG

Atul Lad presented the paper which asked Schools Forum to agree the centrally held DSG items as listed in appendix 1. The paper recommends that all DSG budgets are centrally retained apart from £149,000 for 'Schools Apportionment' (item 18, appendix one) which is recommended to be put back into schools' budgets.

Atul explained that the table in appendix 1 includes details of all the budgets and Schools Forum is asked to agree each of the items as listed. Discussion took place as follows:

**Item 1, Inclusion Management:** needs to come out of Cambridge Education and into the high needs block. Schools Forum agreed item 1. Philip Gregory asked why some of the figures are slightly different from those brought to Schools Forum in October. Steve Elson explained that they are now exact figures as the DSG contribution to the council of £337,000 has been stripped out across the budgets

**Item 6, Roma Community Project:** further details have been included regarding the earlier questions regarding what this budget provides. Schools Forum is not aware of there being anybody in post to provide this service. (The same applies to item 7, Traveller Service).

**Action:** Tony Smith will clarify whether this person exists.

**Item 8, Inclusion Management:** Steve Elson confirmed he was not sure what this was for and it is likely to end up in the School Improvement budget.

**Action:** Steve Elson will find out further details in time for the next meeting.

**Item 9, Education Resource Services (former LACES):** confirmed that there are specific staff that provide this support.

**Item 14, SEN Transport:** confirmed the figure is part of the budget, the rest (£118,000) is provided by the Council budget.

**Item 15, Haybrook Provision:** this needs to be renamed as it doesn't go into Haybrook. Needs clarification as to what element of EOTAS it is funding.

**Item 16-25:** it was agreed these items can be merged together into the School Improvement Budget.

Clarification is needed regarding whether item 23 (Broadband) is still needed. John Constable confirmed that NQT delivery is now funded by the SLP and is no longer centrally funded.

Agreed item 18 on Apportionment will be taken out.

**Item 26-27:** Agreed.

Steve Elson confirmed that updated figures and further clarification will be included in the June / July outturn paper indicating how much has been spent and what it has been spent on.

Specific items needing clarification will be brought back to the next meeting for Schools Forum to decide whether to retain them or put them back into schools' budgets. The table was otherwise agreed.

## **282. De-delegated Budgets**

Atul Lad presented the report which asked Primary and Secondary maintained school representatives to agree the continuation of the de-delegated budgets for Trades Union and Behavioural Support Services.

In terms of academies, Helen Huntley said that individual SLAs have been agreed for the Behaviour Support Service. Most academies have signed up or agreed to as and when. Mary Sparrow said it's a very valuable service. Schools Forum endorsed this and commended it to academies.

Clarification was sought as to why primary schools are delegated more money as there is such a disparity between primary and secondary. It was explained the existing budgets in 2013-14 were used as a base for de-delegation.

All voted in favour of Behavioural Support Services being de-delegated.

In terms of Trade Unions Lynda Bussley confirmed that it pays for 0.5 post on the JTUC and supporting schools' representatives who go on training courses for Trades Union services. Academies don't buy into the services.

All voted in favour of Trades Union Services being de-delegated.

## **283. Permanent Exclusions**

Atul Lad presented the paper which was circulated for information. Regulations state that the LA re-determines a school's budget share when a pupil is permanently excluded. It also refers to schools taking on excluded pupils.

Schools Forum noted the process for recouping the money.

Steve Elson confirmed that this also applies to academies and will be in place by January.

Helen Huntley welcomed this as an increase in Slough pupils being excluded from out borough schools puts pressure on the 'hard to place; budget and top ups.

## **284. Cambridge Education**

Tony Smith provided a verbal update on Cambridge Education as follows:

The contract started on 1<sup>st</sup> October 2013.

The first objective has been achieved as staff have TUPE'd across smoothly. Services are being reviewed and recommendations need to be made by 31<sup>st</sup> March 2014. Cambridge Education is contractually obliged to do this and seek to change and improve the services.

Tony Smith thanked schools for welcoming Cambridge Education into the strong educational community in Slough.

Maggie Waller asked about how the dialogue between schools, the LA and Cambridge Education is continuing. Tony Smith confirmed that all the usual heads' meetings such as SSEF have continued and they don't anticipate any changes in that.

Tony Smith introduced Kate Appleyard who has joined Cambridge Education in a Finance capacity. They will also employ a HR person for staff who have been TUPE'd.

Tony Smith attended the recent Chairs of Governors conference.

#### **285. Academies Update**

This item was not discussed as Robin Crofts was unable to attend.

#### **286. 2013-14 Work Programme and Key Decisions Log**

Maggie Waller confirmed that the November and December Key Decisions Log will be circulated with the minutes. The Work Programme was noted.

#### **287. Any Other Business**

Navroop Mehat asked whether funding was available to support a Free School application on behalf of Primary Heads. Maggie Waller advised they can put a request forward for funding from the underspend. Jo Rockall confirmed that a decision was due to take place about a possible application at SSEF on 13<sup>th</sup> December where some Schools Forum members would be present. It was agreed that this will come back to Schools Forum if it needs to.

Maggie Waller thanked Michelle Perkins for her time spent as Clerk as this was her last meeting.

Maggie Waller also thanked the EFA observers and advised that any feedback would be welcome.

(Note: The Meeting opened at 8.15 am and closed at 10.08 am)