

Slough Schools Forum- Meeting held on Wednesday, 14th January, 2015

Present: Maggie Waller, Holy Family Primary School (Chair)
John Constable, Langley Grammar (Vice-Chair)
Gillian Coffey, Lynch Hill Primary School
Philip Gregory, Baylis Court Nursery School
Kathleen Higgins, Beechwood Secondary School
Helen Huntley, Haybrook College
Paul McAteer, Slough and Eton C of E Business and Enterprise College
Navroop Mehat, Wexham Court Primary School
Angela Mellish, St Bernard's Grammar School
Jon Reekie, James Elliman Primary School
Debbie Richards, Arbour Vale School
Jo Rockall, Herschel Grammar School
Hardip Singh, Khalsa Primary School
Nicky Willis, Cippenham Primary School
Robin Crofts, Cambridge Education

Observers: Dawn Bailey
Eddie Neighbour

Officers: Samantha Taylor, Coral Miller and Matt Redwood

Apologies: Virginia Barrett, Jean Cameron, Carole Pearce, Lynda Bussley, Joseph Holmes and Jane Wood

PART I

382. Apologies

Apologies were noted from Carol Pearce, Joseph Holmes, Lynda Bussley, Jean Cameron, Virginia Barrett and Jane Wood.

Introductions were made around the table and Maggie Waller welcomed Angela Mellish as a member of the Schools Forum, following many years as an observer. She also welcomed Sam Taylor, the new clerk.

383. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

384. Minutes of Previous Meeting 10th December 2014

Maggie Waller informed the Forum that the PFI Task and Finish group had now been set up [to enable some members to become more familiar with the Local Partnerships report for feedback to Schools Forum] and their first meeting was set to take place on 20 January 2015.

Maggie Waller reported back on feedback she had received from the LA (Joseph Holmes) regarding PFI related matters and the DSG: Joseph Holmes has confirmed that the timescale for returning the £500,000 previously removed from the DSG in

2014/15 will be included in the PFI report coming to Schools Forum shortly (now scheduled for the March 2015 meeting).

Maggie Waller had also received confirmation from the LA (Joseph Holmes) that no monies would be top-sliced from the DSG in future without a request to Schools Forum and their subsequent approval.

Maggie Waller and John Constable fed back on their meeting with Fiona Mactaggart MP which was to brief her as a follow up to Schools Forum's letter to the Secretary of State regarding schools' funding in Slough. Much of the discussion focused on unfunded pupils where schools are rapidly expanding. Fiona Mactaggart was supportive and is seeking support from her colleagues in LAs similarly affected. She was very informed and aware of issues and clearly briefed with lots of background information. John Constable also referred to a debate taking place in the House of Commons regarding grammar school funding. Robin Crofts referred to the engagement of elected members. Maggie Waller and John Constable stated that they are happy to meet with Councillor Mann at any time to brief her and she is invited to every Schools Forum.

The Early Years Task and Finish group was to be re-convened and is currently being rescheduled.

It was noted that Louise Lund was no longer a member of Schools Forum as she is no longer in a PVI setting and therefore not eligible. Rachel Cartwright is seeking a replacement for Schools Forum.

The Minutes were approved

385. Slough Learning Partnership:

a) Slough Learning Partnership update on activity 14/15

There were two elements for the allocation of £160k previously agreed by Schools Forum: £60k to sustain the current viability of SLP e.g. core costs and £100k to grow and improve SLP. Dawn Bailey gave an update. Part of the additional £100k has been used to employ 2 additional staff members.

The funding needed will depend on the level of affiliation. Currently there are 27/48 schools now affiliated – the deadline has passed and schools and staff are following up with schools to find out if they want to affiliate or not. John Constable advised that the venture could not exist on affiliation alone.

SLP is now offering additional CPD e.g. mentor training; NQT assessment support (1 to 1 as well as group support); support for Headteachers new to the area or new to Headship; Headship and Governance toolkits and appeals training. Dawn Bailey referred to some CPD having low uptake and, in some cases, being cancelled, despite having been arranged in response to schools' requests, which was disappointing.

She reported back on the pro-active recruitment drive to raise awareness and attract teachers to Slough. This included attending recruitment fairs. 5 universities have contacted Dawn and there have been 35 enquiries from Plymouth.

It was noted that not all the £100k has been spent. It was suggested that training on 'neglect' would be useful. Helen Huntley said that the Local Safeguarding

Children's Board (LSCB) was planning a training day shortly and suggested SBC may be happy to share the information with Dawn.

Robin Crofts suggested viewing a document called the 'Slough Story'. This can be found at:

<http://static.slough.gov.uk/downloads/the-slough-story.pdf>

Dawn concluded by stating that the impact of the SLP presence at the recruitment fairs raised the profile of Slough as a positive location.

b) Slough Learning Partnership/Local Authority/Cambridge Education joint proposal for school development - 2015/16

It was reported that a joint proposal between Cambridge Education, the LA and the SLP would aim to link LA statutory responsibilities with some of the SLP activity, for example: brokering / commissioning school to school support for all schools and academies; developing school led networks for English and Maths; work with governors; National Leaders of Education (NLEs) etc. This would be funded by centrally held DSG funding for School Improvement. It would be used to support SLP's capacity and to provide schools with some funding for staff release. A formal paper would come to Schools Forum at a future meeting.

386. Centrally Retained DSG - Underspend

Coral Miller presented a paper proposing that the £998k underspend be distributed to schools on pupil numbers nett of any monies owed by individual schools relating to a pensions deficit.

There was discussion about the pensions aspect of this, particularly because it was evident from Members present that the figures for pensions were inaccurate in a number of cases. This included St Bernard's, for example, which should not be on the list as owing any monies as this had already been paid.

It was noted that Schools Forum makes it clear that no money can be taken from the DSG in future to support such an issue and that this is a matter between schools and the LA. Members of the Forum requested that the arrangements for 2015/16 be clarified and assurances given that this matter would be dealt with differently and that the information provided to schools directly should be clear and timely.

JC stated that the only issue for the Schools Forum was the £998k figure and this was correct and not liable to change.

Schools Forum agreed that the £998k be redistributed along with an indication to the individual schools concerned, which have a pensions liability, that they have such a liability, informing them of the sum (once accuracy is confirmed) and that they will be separately billed for that amount.

CM confirmed she would send a letter out to schools.

387. Centrally Retained DSG 2015/16

Schools Forum was asked to agree the proposed centrally held budgets within the DSG for 2015-16.

This was split into two parts: Cambridge Education (Appendix A) circulated at the meeting and LA retained budgets within the DSG (Appendix B). Robin Crofts explained that the proposed spend profile was similar to that in 2014/15. A number of questions were raised about Appendix A. Jo Rockall asked for clarification of the budget relating to Looked After Children (LAC) and Robin Crofts confirmed that this is a transfer of funding to the Virtual School team to support looked after children in and out borough e.g. in-school support and study support beyond the school day.

Paul McAteer asked that SLP figures be quantified in a future paper.

Helen Huntley asked for clarification about the work of consultants doing work for SBC and Cambridge Education to avoid repetition. Robin Crofts agreed to pursue this and clarify the relationship between the two.

Nicky Willis noted that, whilst the figures remain the same as the previous year, this represents a cut in real terms because of the growth in new schools.

The centrally retained 15/16 budget figure for Cambridge Education was agreed. Further detail is to be brought back to Schools Forum of the allocation of the individual strands of funding and the associated justification for spend.

Coral Miller explained Appendix B and said SBC were asking for £241,034 for the centrally retained budget. Of this amount £53k was to support the Schools Forum but the detail of the remainder was not clear.

The bottom line figure of £241,034 was agreed. However, following further investigation of the detail, Coral Miller is to provide a report for the March Schools Forum of 14/15 anticipated spend and what the budgets are likely to be spent on in 2015/16. This will be a matter for final decision in March.

The £241,034 centrally retained money will therefore be held in reserve and not distributed pending the further report in March.

It was noted that a report on spend under all centrally retained items is on the Schools Forum work programme for July 2015.

388. 2015-16 Budget Process

CM explained the updated budget process timetable. Schools Forum noted the 2015-16 formula factors and timetable.

It was noted that Appendix A includes free schools.

It was noted that the factors and budget pro-forma are predicated on the recommendations of the Schools Forum 5-16 formula Task and Finish group.

The Council will need to ratify this prior to it being submitted to the DfE on 20th January. It had been signed off in draft.

389. 2015-16 DSG Blocks (Schools Block)

Schools Forum noted the Schools Block budget for 2015-16. Coral Miller presented Appendix A comparing schools' budget allocations for 2014/15 and 2015/16 and explained the reasons for variance. Schools Forum noted this and found the comparison table very helpful.

Paul McAteer noted there seemed to be a discrepancy in academy funding where the final budget for the academy differs from the modelled estimates by the LA. Coral Miller explained that this is an Education Funding Agency (EFA) issue as the LA sends the EFA the calculated school academy budget and they then deal with the final budget allocation. She noted that the difference in financial year dates is one reason for variation.

De-delegation: the decision on whether to de-delegate the Trade Union support budget at current unit cost had been deferred from the December 2014 meeting pending further information. Maggie Waller provided feedback on what support Lynda Bussley supplies, having received information from Lynda by email. Lynda had responded that all maintained schools are entitled to access support and all union members had a right to be represented. She deals with 5/6 cases a month, more in the summer term. She supports members through advice, guidance and direct representation and support. She also provides training for accredited school representatives. She had also explained that she is providing support in some academies out of school hours and they do not pay for her time.

Schools Forum maintained schools' members voted by phase on the de-delegation of the Trade Union support budget. A vote was taken and all 3 primary maintained schools' members present voted in favour of de-delegation at the current unit cost. Both secondary maintained schools members present also voted in favour of de-delegation at the current unit cost.

Coral Miller agreed to find out why the unit costs for primary were so much higher than for secondary.

390. 2015-16 DSG Blocks (High Needs Block)

Coral Miller introduced the report and asked Schools Forum to agree to carry forward £600,000 from the previous year. The carry forward figure was approved. It was noted that there were around 650 more pupils.

391. Cambridge Education

Robin Crofts reported that the Cambridge Education contract was now due for review and ran for 3 years plus 1 plus 1. Arrangements were underway for it to be secured following the first year. Robin noted that proposals for the remaining four years would be in the context of financial reductions and therefore there would be a need to modify scope.

The current focus is on preparations for two inspections; the standards agenda and increasing engagement with academies (9 currently involved).

392. Academies Update

Robin Crofts reported there were no academies in the pipeline at the moment; conversion seemed to have slowed down nationally.

393. Work Programme and Key Decisions Log

The Work Programme and Key Decisions Log were noted.

The possibility of cancelling the February meeting was discussed – this has now been confirmed.

394. Looked After Children Pupil Premium

Schools Forum noted a report on the Looked After Children Pupil Premium which went to Cabinet and was reproduced from 15/12/14. Jo Rockall said that this needed to be discussed in phase groups and it was agreed that this would be on the March agenda of Schools Forum following such discussion.

395. SFVS Proposals

Schools Forum noted the additional questions now included in the Schools Financial Value Standard (SFVS) which is completed by schools on an annual basis. Previously the SFVS did not embrace issues around pay – DFE now want to incorporate similar questions to academies.

(Note: The Meeting opened at 8.20 am and closed at 9.45 am)