

Slough Schools Forum - Meeting held on Wednesday, 6th May, 2015

- Present:** Maggie Waller, Holy Family Primary School (Chair)
John Constable, Langley Grammar (Vice-Chair)
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, Northampton Diocese
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
Sally Eaton, Langley Hall Primary Academy
Emma Slaughter, Children's Centres
- Observers:** Eddie Neighbour (Upton Court Grammar School) and Beverley Pennekett, Education Funding Agency
- Officers:** Joanne Cooke, Robin Crofts, Coral Miller, Joseph Holmes, Paul Wilson, Krutika Pau and Finbar McGaughey (Cambridge Education)
- Apologies:** Virginia Barrett, Gillian Coffey and Kate Webb

PART I

408. Apologies

Apologies were received from Gillian Coffey, Virginia Barrett and Jane Wood.

Maggie Waller welcomed Krutika Pau, Finbar McGaughey, Emma Slaughter (new Children's Centres' member) and Sally Eaton (new PVI member) to the meeting. She also welcomed Beverley Pennekett from the Education Funding Agency (EFA).

409. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

410. Minutes of the Meeting held on 25th March 2015 & Matters arising

Nicky Willis asked for the paragraph outlining SEBDOS funding to be amended to read "*SEBDOS funding is currently allocated with two thirds from primary schools and one third from secondary schools*".

It was noted that a paper regarding SEBDOS costs would be brought to Schools Forum and that clarification was also needed regarding the primary / secondary split of the Trades Union de-delegated budget.

Coral Miller has sent out to all Academies the 2015-16 budget that she returned to the EFA. Paul McAteer thanked her for this information.

High Needs Block 2015/16

A more detailed breakdown of the allocation of contingency funds was requested.

Commissioning of Places in Special Settings

Maggie Waller had sent an email to Krutika Pau in relation to interim appointments and plans to fill some SBC permanent roles. Krutika Pau had responded to Maggie Waller and John Constable and will keep them informed of future developments in this area.

Review of Cost Provision

Maggie Waller had circulated a specification to members of the Schools Forum for comment. No comments were received and the document would now be published on the South East Business portal.

Maggie Waller, John Constable and a SBC representative will be considering tenders on 22nd May 2015 and the evaluations and presentations by the shortlisted bidders will take place w/c 1st June 2015. Tribal and the London School of Economics have expressed an interest in this process.

The Schools Forum Induction took place on 17th April 2015 at the Langley Hall Primary Academy. Maggie Waller thanked those who attended and also thanked Sally Eaton for her hospitality in hosting the event.

John Constable will be writing to academy proprietors looking for nominees to represent academies on the Schools Forum. Whilst it is for the academy proprietors to nominate and elect, in the past Schools Forum has suggested interested people. Maggie Waller suggested putting forward Eddie Neighbour's name as he has been attending Schools Forum for a number of years as an observer. Jo Matthews was also suggested as she had expressed an interest to Nicky Willis. Any other suggestions, including any interested governors, should be put forward to John Constable.

The minutes were approved.

411. School Improvement Budget 2015-16 Update from Cambridge Education

The subject of School Improvement Provision was raised at the last Schools Forum meeting. Robin Crofts, from Cambridge Education, produced a paper surrounding School Improvement Funding – the DSG funding retained by the Local Authority. Time has been spent reviewing and looking at ways of focusing on activities and funding. Last year there was an under spend so a more realistic budget has been set for the coming year. The revised funding for this year is £932,905 which is a reduction of £310k. The Local Authority will put up a proposal to the Schools Forum of how this money should be utilised and a decision needs to be taken by Schools Forum. Maggie Waller thanked Robin Crofts for producing the detailed report. He will report back on 2015/16 spend and outcomes. It was noted that some work will

be commissioned and this could be allocated to the Slough Learning Partnership (SLP) and other providers.

Navroop Mehat asked if the reduced total funding allowed for supporting schools in category and in need of support and Robin Crofts said that it did with a particular process in place to access this funding which includes detailed evaluation of its usage.

It was noted that recruitment for schools is a growing national issue. Robin Crofts suggested meeting with schools and taking a focussed, collective approach. He reported that there is also an Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Committee meeting with elected members in July about the challenges around recruitment.

Recruitment is one priority but other priorities also need to be considered. This item is on the Slough Schools Education Forum (SSEF) meeting on Friday, 8th May 2015. John Constable in conjunction with head teacher colleagues will consider a proposal and Finbar McGaughey and Robin Crofts offered support if required.

Krutika Pau asked about the school governance aspect in Robin Crofts' paper. Robin Crofts has gone through the national statutory requirements and the local contractual requirements between the Local Authority and Cambridge Education and looked at what needs to be put in place to enhance the current offer. Supplementary local provision will be delivered over and above the current support available that many schools get from the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead (RBWM) and elsewhere. Local support is available in conjunction with Slough Learning Partnership.

Beverley Pennekett will discuss School Meals Funding with Maggie Waller outside of this meeting.

The next step is for Schools Forum, at the July meeting, to decide which priorities it would like to fund from the proposals put forward by the Local Authority for the use of the £310k relinquished by Cambridge Education. A paper will be brought to the Forum outlining all the priorities identified.

It was agreed that priorities for spend need to be put forward in business cases. It was agreed that phase groups would look at this and contact John Constable as Vice Chair with any proposals.

412. PFI 2015/16

Joseph Holmes presented the PFI 2015-16 paper to the group. SBC currently contributes £809k annually to the PFI Unitary Charge. The Council is looking to reduce this and took part in the Local Partnerships / DfE pilot. Joseph Holmes explained that SBC has implemented a strategy to review the outcomes of the report and develop a programme of work to take forward some of the options. SBC has appointed consultants to help undertake this task and to look at ways to reduce costs. A variety of strands are being looked at (see page 14 of the report). There will be a future report to Schools Forum as this work progresses.

Also SBC is currently addressing an error of the £500,000 (part of the PFI contribution for 15/16) that was not added to the DSG and given to schools previously (see Appendix A – School Block Budget 2015-16 – page 17 of the

meeting pack). Appendix A notes that the £500k will be part of the future budgets whatever decisions are made.

Beverley Pennekett (EFA) explained that regulations state that once schools have their budgets they cannot be re-determined in-year and this would need to be distributed next year. She said that if adjustments are required to the Schools Budget an application can be made to the Minister to dis-apply this regulation. It was agreed that this would be done and that a joint letter would go from the LA and the Schools Forum seeking to re-distribute this year. It was also noted that the budgets would be re-determined using the formula but Schools Forum had wished to allocate according to numbers on roll so that all schools (and academies) benefited (as those on Minimum Funding Guarantee or capped would otherwise not receive any of the allocation). It was therefore agreed that the request to distribute on numbers on roll should also be included in the letter to the Minister.

It was agreed that Joseph Holmes, Maggie Waller and John Constable would follow up the application to the Minister.

Nicky Willis asked if SBC gained interest on the £500k and Joseph Holmes explained that it had been part of the LA cash flow and invested accordingly with little interest accrued due to the low interest rate position at present.

413. PFI School Improvement Savings

Paul Wilson presented a report that showed savings of £308k have been identified in the centrally-retained budgets for School Improvement in 2015-16. The report was brought to this meeting to ask Forum's permission to use £200,000 of these savings to contribute to SBC's funding of the School's PFI scheme in 2015-16. SBC is asking the Schools Forum to assist them in achieving SBC's savings plans to ensure that their services, including those to schools, continue to be delivered.

Jo Rockall asked if the decision could be deferred to the July meeting where a business case could be put forward as this was the only proposal put forward at this time for the use of this saving. This would enable an informed decision to be made. Maggie Waller agreed that this was a good proposal.

Nicky Willis asked if this was an ongoing commitment to these monies and it was confirmed that this was a one-off commitment and that Schools' Forum made such decisions a year at a time.

Joseph Holmes confirmed that the aim of SBC is to eliminate the ongoing £500,000 contribution in future, maintaining the remaining £309k commitment. He referred to the options for reducing the £500,000 set out in the previous report, including any future DSG implications being phased. Kathleen Higgins asked what the status of the recommendations was in the previous report as consultants had not yet explored in detail where savings could be made. Joseph Holmes said that the options in the report were the likely options.

It was agreed that this proposal would come back to the Schools Forum meeting in July along with any other proposals (supported by a business case) for consideration and decision. This would include, for example, the issues mentioned in Minute 411 above.

414. Growth Fund Outturn 2014-15

Coral Miller presented the paper on the Growth Fund, including information on the 2014/15 outturn, confirming the available carry forward figure and providing information about the funding to schools. SBC recommends that the 2014-15 under spend of just over £400,000 be carried forward to 2015-16 in full. This figure was higher than expected (£312,000 was agreed in Dec. 2014). This was because of building delay at one school.

There has been an increase in the Slough school population of 695 new pupils since last year, excluding new schools, which is higher than the 652 anticipated, hence the future need for the Growth Fund. This increase is partially related to the movement of families from the London area to Slough.

Nicky Willis asked if bulge classes could be shown separately in future.

Schools Forum agreed to carry forward the additional £88,000.

Coral Miller confirmed that the 2015/16 total Growth Fund was now approximately £1.25 million.

415. High Needs Block Centrally Retained 2015/16

Robin Crofts introduced the paper: High Needs Block 2015-16. The two appendices set out the centrally retained sums for SBC (Appendix A) and Cambridge Education (Appendix B).

Maggie Waller stated that the detail was very clear. She asked for clarification about the retained SENASS service mentioned in the SBC Appendix A and Robin Crofts explained that this was for SEN assessment and not specialist support teachers.

Robin Crofts explained that much of the funding set out in Appendix B (Cambridge Education) is allocated to schools, with some services delivered centrally.

Debbie Richards said that the funding for Speech and Language was under discussion with SBC as the budget figure is low in comparison to spend.

Nicky Willis asked how schools are advised about how to access services. Robin Crofts explained that there is a service level agreement (SLA) sent to schools to explain what services are available and how to access them. This Cambridge Education SLA is about to come out to all schools and academies.

416. Cambridge Education

Robin Crofts mentioned that there had been a Business Services Review in Cambridge Education in 2014 in terms of focussed service delivery, admin support and financial aspects. Proposals will be implemented in the autumn of this year resulting in greater efficiency.

The recent Ofsted Inspection report for Slough Children's Centres has been published and the outcome has moved from 'Inadequate' (2014) to "Requires Improvement". Robin Crofts stated that they are pleased with the progress that has been made yet there is still plenty which needs to be done to achieve good and outstanding. A new action plan will be drawn up and will include looking at how to advance working across the network of Children's Centres and engaging with schools to advance action plans.

Robin referred to the SLA for support for vulnerable groups which would be issued imminently and will include looking at the Psychological Service arrangements with schools as contractual arrangements finish at the end of August.

Cambridge Education is 18 months into the contract period and is in consultation with SBC as to expected achievements and identification of savings within the 3 year contract period. Any that could impact on schools would be brought to Schools Forum.

417. Academies update

Robin Crofts reported that there has not been much movement regarding academies in the last few months with the forthcoming general election. The Conservative manifesto reflects an interest in converting more schools to academies.

Nicky Willis asked if there was a map of academies and membership of Trusts in Slough. Robin Crofts will draft a paper and circulate this to the group.

418. Work programme and Key Decisions log

Maggie Waller explained that the Work Programme and Key Decisions Log had been updated since the last meeting.

Joanne Cooke to liaise with Coral Miller, Maggie Waller and John Constable regarding setting draft dates for Schools Forum meetings for the 15/16 academic year. These will be brought to the 1st July meeting for consideration.

419. AOB

It was noted that there was a need to consider including a 'falling rolls' fund. This would be where 'good' or 'outstanding' schools had temporary surplus places. This and other issues will be brought to a meeting of the 5-16 formula Task and Finish group. Coral Miller will set up a Task & Finish Group for the end of June (before the meeting of the Schools Forum on 1st July).

(Note: The Meeting opened at 8.30 am and closed at 9.35 am)