

SLOUGH SCHOOLS FORUM

SCHOOLS GROUP:

Maggie Waller (Chair), Holy Family Primary School
John Constable (Vice-Chair), Langley Grammar
Philip Gregory, Baylis Court Nursery
Kathleen Higgins, Beechwood Secondary School
Helen Huntley, Haybrook College
Paul McAteer, Slough and Eton C & E Business and Enterprise College
Navroop Mehat, Wexham Court Primary School
Angela Mellish, Norhtampton Diocese
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)

LOCAL EDUCATION AUTHORITY:

Robin Crofts, Coral Miller, Paul Wilson, Krutika Pau and Joanne Cooke

APOLOGIES:

Virginia Barrett, Gillian Coffey, Kate Webb

DATE & TIME: WEDNESDAY, 23RD SEPTEMBER, 2015 AT 8.00 AM
BEECHWOOD RESEARCH AND CONFERENCE CENTRE, LONG
READINGS LANE, SLOUGH, BERKSHIRE, SL2 1QE

Agenda

420. Apologies

Apologies were received from Navroop Mehat, Paul Wilson and Hardip Singh.

Sarah Forsyth, Nigel Bass and Dawn Bailey were welcomed to the meeting as observers.



The Chair thanked Joanne Cooke for her support as temporary clerk.

421. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

422. Minutes for the Meeting held on 6 May 2015

Jo Matthews has produced a report on SEBDOS funding which will be circulated at a future meeting.

The Cost of Provision Review is in its final stages. Members noted that the Schools Forum on 6th October 2015 has been extended to allow for feedback.

The minutes were approved.

423. Slough Children's Services Trust Update

Krutika Pau updated the group on recent developments regarding Education and Children's Services. Slough Children's Services Trust (SCST) have entered into a contract for the provision of children's early help and social care functions along with specific special educational needs services which will now be delivered by the Trust. This follows the issuing of a Direction by the Secretary of State which gives effect to this new operating model for children's services in Slough. Earlier in the year Nicola Clemo was appointed as Chief Executive for the Trust, Eleanor Brazil as the Commissioner and Elaine Simpson as Chair of the Trust.

The Trust will go live on 1st October. Following Cabinet and full Council, all plans were agreed. All the provision of Children's Social Services will be under the Trust but SBC retains the statutory duty. 34 KPIs have been devised and meetings will take place between SBC and SCST on a regular basis to monitor progress. SCST will take over Children's Social Care and SEN Assessment process. Some of this is currently tied up in the Cambridge Education Contract and SBC is working through what this will mean. SBC is not extending the Cambridge Education contract after 30th September 2016. Over the next twelve months SBC, SCST and Cambridge will be meeting to discuss how to complete the transition in the most effective manner.

A Change Programme Board chaired by the Director of Children's Services has been set up. There are three areas that require detailed work: Early Years, SEN and School Improvement and subgroups have been set up to ascertain where things currently stand and what needs to be achieved. Schools will be encouraged to actively participate in the sub groups. The School Improvement sub group would ideally be run by Headteachers. The improvement of Children's Services will continue but SBC will still have the right to intervene over quality and care and reports to Ministers.

Eleanor Brazil's role will continue for a while as Chair of the Quality and Improvement Board once the SCST has gone live, although responsibilities and accountability will change over the forthcoming months.

John Constable asked who the SCST reports to. Krutika Pau explained that the Chair of the Trust, Elaine Simpson is accountable to the Secretary of State but the responsibility of Children's Social Care still lies with SBC. Progress and accountability will be discussed at regular meetings and SBC can raise concerns with the Secretary of State.

Helen Huntley said that it is important to get the SEN sub group right as it has important financial implications. Krutika Pau said that schools will be represented at all three sub groups.

Nicky Willis explained that, as Head of Primary Heads Association, there is an issue with attendance as there are already many meetings and commitments for Headteachers.

Robin Crofts said there would be an onus on the SCST to attend the Schools Forum. Maggie Waller suggested adding the SCST attendance as a standing item on the agenda. Krutika Pau suggested arranging a meeting with Maggie Waller, herself and Nicola Clemo to discuss School Forum attendance.

Krutika Pau will send a letter out to all School Heads explaining the work of the SCST.

424. 14/15 Early Years Block carry forward and SEN Early Years inclusion fund

Schools Forum noted that the Early Years DSG is currently forecast to be under-spent by £1,492,487. Robin Crofts was seeking agreement from Schools Forum to carry forward this funding for two year olds in order to fulfil statutory responsibilities. The plan is to develop another 200 places to meet the 1000 place target.

Rachel Cartwright gave further detail of how the funding would support adding capacity, driving take up and working with families.

It was emphasised that quality of places is key.

Schools Forum approved the proposed carry forward to ensure compliance with statutory duties through the spending outlined in Appendix A of the report.

425. SEN Early Years Inclusion Fund

Nandita Sirker explained that children are coming into early years provision with significant SEN requirements and with no previous interaction with statutory services to meet their needs. The paper provided to Schools Forum had been discussed with nursery Headteachers and Cambridge Education and is setting the framework to enable statutory assessment to be initiated

and to provide greater clarity. The framework will be trialled and reviewed and the Early Years Task Group will review this after six months.

426. Centrally retained budgets 2014-15 Outturn

Coral Miller presented the report outlining the underspend in centrally retained budgets for SBC and Cambridge Education budgets (appendices to report).

Schools Forum agreed that the 14-15 underspend of £60,010 in the Schools Block be carried forward into the Growth Fund in order to reduce the 16-17 budget top slice for growth.

Schools Forum agreed that the Early Years block underspend 2014-15 of £6,597 should remain within Early Years.

Schools Forum noted that the High Needs Block underspend will be used to fund expected growth in High Needs places and top ups in 2016-17 plus any outstanding prior commitments.

For Cambridge Education underspend it was agreed that proposals would be brought to Schools Forum at the next meeting.

It was noted that the Early Years element had already been agreed in item 4 of the agenda (above).

427. School Improvement underspend

The report (see minutes of meeting on 6th May) identified savings of £308k in the centrally-retained budgets from School Improvement in 2015-16 and a range of options was presented to Schools Forum for the use of this funding.

It was confirmed that any Schools Forum decision would be for one year only.

The LA was seeking Schools' Forum permission to use £200k to contribute to the Council's funding of the schools' PFI scheme and a further £35,000 to support Our Lady of Peace Infant and Nursery School and Our Lady of Peace Junior School in amalgamating to establish an all-through primary school.

Alternative options were included in the report: Recruitment and Retention and support for the High Needs Block.

It was clarified that the alternative option regarding Recruitment and Retention was not a proposal from the Slough Learning Partnership but written by the Vice Chair following meetings of a representative group of Headteachers from both phases. John Constable indicated that the proposal identified a number of areas of focus including marketing and recruitment and that these could be funded in whole or part. He referred to the recruitment approach taken by Krutika Pau and indicated that there could be joint action across the two areas. Krutika indicated that what had worked in Social Care was having a person in post dedicated to recruitment.

There was some discussion about the PFI proposal. Helen Huntley asked whether there was any further update from the work arising out of the DfE pilot on potential savings in PFI and it was noted that no further updates had been provided.

Jo Rockall stated that agreeing to the PFI proposal could only be a one-off and would not solve the problem and would set a precedent.

Maggie Waller stated that, whilst she had had some sympathy for the PFI request there were now clear pressures on direct provision in the High Needs Block.

Robin Crofts confirmed that High Needs is a pressure due to growth: 96 more children have SEN. The LA is seeking to balance this.

John Constable stated that School Improvement funding should be spent on school improvement priorities and there was pressure on schools especially around High Needs and recruitment.

Krutika Pau stated that although PFI was capital it was School Improvement.

After further discussion the following were agreed:

Schools Forum agreed to allocate £35,000 of these savings to support Our Lady of Peace Infant and Nursery School and Our Lady of Peace Junior School in amalgamating to establish an all-through primary school.

Schools Forum agreed to allocate an initial £70,000 to support the Headteachers' collaborative request regarding Recruitment and Retention.

There was some discussion about who the funding would be allocated to in order to take this forward. John Constable agreed to bring a short outline of how the £70k could be allocated back to the October Forum meeting.

Schools Forum did not agree to support the use of £200,000 of the School Improvement savings to contribute to the Council's funding of its contribution to the schools' PFI scheme.

It was agreed that, following the allocations above, the remaining balance of the underspend would be considered at the next meeting alongside the Cambridge Education underspend discussed in the previous agenda item.

428. Schools Forum Self Assessment Review and Updated Constitution report

The Chair went through the report regarding the self-assessment review of the Schools Forum; the Constitution updated in line with all DfE recent legislation and guidance and changes to membership.

Members of the Forum supported the suggestions for improving practice, as outlined in the self-assessment review (Appendix A), including timely circulation of papers and a brief written report being compiled after each meeting and circulated to schools.

Schools Forum approved the updated Constitution (Appendix B) and commended this to the LA for approval. Sarah Forsyth agreed to take this forward.

Schools Forum noted the changes to membership as outlined in the report. John Constable has written to academy proprietors regarding filling the three vacancies for academy members.

Nicky Willis asked how often the balance of academy members was reviewed and Maggie Waller explained that this was done after each October census and in between when there had been a number of academy conversions.

429. Review of Scheme of Financing Schools Consultation proposal

Coral Miller presented a report outlining three proposed changes to the Scheme for Financing Schools and the result of the consultation with schools on this.

Schools Forum agreed two amendments to the Scheme for Financing Schools:

Schools should make a register of business and other interests publicly available e.g. on a publicly accessible website (2.9 of Scheme)

New wording to clarify borrowing by schools, for example, in relation to financial leases (3.6 of Scheme)

Schools Forum requested that the wording of the proposed change regarding the revenue Balance Control Mechanism be clarified and brought to the next meeting, showing the original wording and the proposed new wording of the relevant section of the Scheme (4.2 of Scheme).

430. 5-16 Formula Timetable

Schools Forum noted the timetable setting out the key dates which underpin the planning and consultation process for the 5 – 16 formula / 2016/17 budget, including the timescales for the Cost of Provision Review report commissioned by the LA in partnership with Schools Forum.

The dates for the LA consultation with all schools during November, prior to Schools Forum in December, were noted.

It was noted that the Task Group dates were being re-scheduled and that this timetable would be reviewed and brought to the October meeting of the Forum.

431. Cambridge Education

Robin Crofts reported that Cambridge Education was in the third and final year of the contract.

He said that Cambridge is strengthening and integrating business support areas from October.

He also reported on attainment. Early Years Foundation stage is up by 8% which is significant progress; there were improvements in phonics at Key Stage 1; a slight dip at Key Stage 2; a slight dip in GCSEs and substantial success at A Level. Attendance figures are improving but persistent absence was slightly up. Exclusions are still low and compare well with other LAs.

432. Academies Update

Robin Crofts reported that there are no impending academy conversions at present.

Eden Girls School (free school) is now open but with no permanent site.

Robin had prepared a map of Slough Academies / Trusts which Joanne Cooke will circulate to the Schools Forum.

433. Schools Forum Forward Agenda Plan

The Schools Forum Forward Agenda Plan was noted.

434. Key Decisions Log

The Key Decisions Log had been circulated to the group for information.

435. Dates and venues of next years meetings

The dates and venues for forthcoming meetings were issued for information.

436. Any Other Business

None

