

Slough Schools Forum- Meeting held on Tuesday, 8th March, 2016

Present: Maggie Waller, Holy Family Primary School (Chair)
John Constable, Langley Grammar School (Vice-Chair)
Gillian Coffey, Lynch Hill Primary School
Kathleen Higgins, Beechwood Secondary School
Helen Huntley, Haybrook College / PRU
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
Eddie Neighbour, Upton Court Grammar School
Carol Pearce, Penn Wood Primary School
Jon Reekie, Baylis Court Trust MAT / Godolphin Infant School
Debbie Richards, Arbour Vale School
Jo Rockall, Herschel Grammar School
Nicky Willis, Cippenham Primary School

Observers: Dawn Bailey and Ruth Clark

Cambridge Education: Robin Crofts

Officers: George Grant, Tony Madden, Krutika Pau, Sharon Scott and Nabila Malik (Clerk)

Apologies: Virginia Barrett, Sally Eaton and Coral Miller

PART I

477. Welcome & Apologies

Apologies were noted from Virginia Barrett, Coral Miller and Sally Eaton

Maggie Waller introduced Nabila Malik as the new clerk of Schools Forum

478. Declarations of Interest

None

479. Minutes of Previous Meeting

It was noted that Carol Pearce had attended the last meeting but was missing from the list of those in attendance.

Krutika Pau has appointed Sara Kulay as the Senior Commissioner Education & SEND who will be dealing with the de-commissioning of the Cambridge Education contract.

It was noted that an element of the recruitment project funding is being held by Slough and Eton and it was agreed that this be released as soon as possible.

Robin Crofts updated the reference to the Education and Children's Scrutiny Committee meeting: the meeting scheduled for March had been re-scheduled and the item on recruitment would need to be postponed to a later meeting.

It was noted that the raw data from Tribal's Cost of Provision Review had been circulated.

It was noted that, following the January meeting, the de-delegation of the Trades Union budget had been agreed by email by relevant Schools Forum members.

It was noted that Cabinet had agreed the proposed Option 3 for the 5- 16 formula changes at its meeting on 18th January. Since that time, the DfE had raised an issue with regard to capping of the two growing free schools. The 5-16 Task Group had met and agreed a proposal put forward by the LA to deal with this. This had resulted in some change to budgets following the issue of indicative budgets.

It was noted that a breakdown of Wexham School's budget figures had been provided as requested at the last meeting.

Krutika Pau reported that Anne Bunce had been appointed as permanent Virtual Head; Anne is currently in the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead.

It was noted that the updated Scheme for Financing Schools was now on the SBC website.

480. Confirmation of when 2016-2017 indicative budgets will be adjusted to final budgets, where applicable.

George Grant reported that draft budgets had been sent out to maintained schools on 24th February 2016.

A request had been made for the detailed analysis of the Schools' Budget derived from the Authority Proforma Template (APT) and this was tabled at the meeting. This was welcomed by Schools Forum. It sets out the full details of the formula including cash values of the factors. This will also be available on the DfE website in due course, along with these details for all other LAs.

A number of clarifications were sought regarding the APT template.

- The split site factor was included in the template with a value of £102,900. The criteria for the factor had been agreed in December by Schools Forum and it was stated then that two schools would each be eligible to receive the £34,300 allocation: Claycotts and Langley Hall Primary Academy, yet the figure in the APT appears to be for three schools. Clarification of which schools were included was requested.

- A clarification was requested regarding the details behind the PFI factor.
- Clarification was requested of why the primary: secondary ratio is now 1:1.32 not 1:1.33 as agreed by Cabinet.
- Clarification of the 100% scaling factor was requested

It was noted that the Minimum Funding Guarantee is now approximately 3% of the Schools Block, a large increase.

George Grant drew attention to the final part of the report (1.3) regarding the priorities of the finance team. He acknowledged the reasonable views of Schools Forum and headteachers regarding the finance function, takes responsibility and wants matters to improve. The actions over the coming months should evidence this as responding to schools' concerns is key. Communication with schools by individual officers as well as school groups will be addressed to ensure these always meet with the best practice. The Council has individually and collectively spoken with headteachers to understand and act on their concerns. A meeting has already taken place with St. Anthony's and a collective meeting with headteachers is scheduled; this meeting will be attended by the Council's S151 Officer. He stated that he would feed back to Schools Forum on any general concerns.

George reported that the finance team is being restructured and that internal interviews for the senior permanent role were taking place on 8th March with the intention to go wider if no suitable candidate is found.

George drew attention to the key activities that will be priorities for the finance team including statutory returns, payments and close down (paragraphs 1.3.2 – 1.3.5).

It was noted that the Early Years Budget is based on the January 2016 census. This budget will be revised, when the Department for Education (DfE) verifies the information. This enables the DfE to confirm the final 2016-17 Early Years block budget. This has been scheduled for July 2016.

The High Needs Block Budget is indicative based on children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) provision as at January 2016. This will need to be updated for children in SEN provision from 1st April 2016. It is the Council's expectations that the Trust will have greater responsibilities around the High Needs Block funding and children with SEN in the near future. A report on this will be presented to Schools Forum as soon as more details are finalised.

Sixth Form funding is also indicative and the DfE will confirm numbers in March / April 2016, following which adjustments will be made and schools notified.

Pupil Premium – this budget will be adjusted in July 2016 when the Council receives the actual figures from the DfE. Last year the DfE made further adjustments in October. It is likely that this will occur again for 2016- 2017.

Grants that affect school budgets will be notified to the LA from the DfE in due course. Schools will be informed and their budgets will be adjusted accordingly.

Other grants which are payable to academies will be allocated directly to them by the EFA and the Growth Fund for academies will be paid in May and September.

481. Annual consultation on the 2016-2017 High Needs Block budget including centrally retained items (SBC and Cambridge Education)

The report was to consult with Schools Forum on the 2016/17 High Needs Block.

It was noted that the rationale for the allocation of the High Needs Block is unchanged and that the total High Needs budget is £21.595 million. This includes SBC's PFI contribution of £309k and an additional £380k from the centrally retained Schools' Block DSG as previously agreed by Schools Forum. This was a one -off allocation of £190k previous underspend and an annual change of £190k.

Centrally retained budgets were set out in Appendix A and Appendix B. It was noted that the Cambridge Education items would be operated on a pro rata basis to the end of September. It was clarified that centrally retained budgets identified as being allocated to schools would be for the full year.

It was agreed there would be an item on the Schools Forum October agenda to update further. Krutika Pau reported that the LA is working closely with the Trust and the DfE to ensure a seamless transition at the end of the Cambridge Education contract.

Debbie Richards raised the allocation to SALT. It was noted that an update would come to Schools Forum in July regarding all centrally retained budgets. Robin Crofts mentioned that a review of the High Needs Block was needed including with the Trust to look at pressures.

It was noted that an issue to be raised in the DfE national funding formula (High Needs) was the increasing pressure on budgets and the use of retrospective figures which exacerbates this.

482. Annual consultation on the 2016-2017 Early Years budget

The report was to consult with Schools Forum on the 2016/17 Early Years Block. It was noted that the 2016-17 EYB has been prepared on the same basis as the previous year. The only exception to this was the introduction of a sustainability factor within the early years funding formula to ensure the continued viability of nursery schools.

It was noted that a full consultation / review was not carried out in order to make this change. However, it was agreed that the criteria would be amended to include a reference to education / early years' professional input when considering nursery schools for this funding.

It was suggested that PVI's ought to be included in a future review to ensure that they can respond to the need for increased provision as Slough faces a real challenge in increasing provision

The Early Years Block budget for 2016-17 is £11.367m which includes £150k for Early Years Pupil Premium for 3 and 4 year olds.

Rachel Cartwright made a number of comments on Appendix A (Early Years Block - Indicative budget for 2016-17) and George Grant agreed to amend this and to circulate a revised version with corrections.

483. Update on 2016-2017 DfE proposals for National Funding Formula (verbal)

Maggie Waller and John Constable gave an update having attended a Westminster briefing and based on information released by the DfE in the previous days.

The DfE has now published a consultation on the proposed National Funding Formula (NFF).

It was noted that the initial consultations on the Schools Block and High Needs both opened on 7 March 2016 and close on 17 April. The consultations can be found at:

<https://consult.education.gov.uk/funding-policy-unit/schools-national-funding-formula>

Some points emerging at this stage include:

'Hard' school-level national formula being introduced in 2019-20; in 2017-18 and 2018-19 LAs receive funding according to new national formula with distribution to schools using existing local formulae.

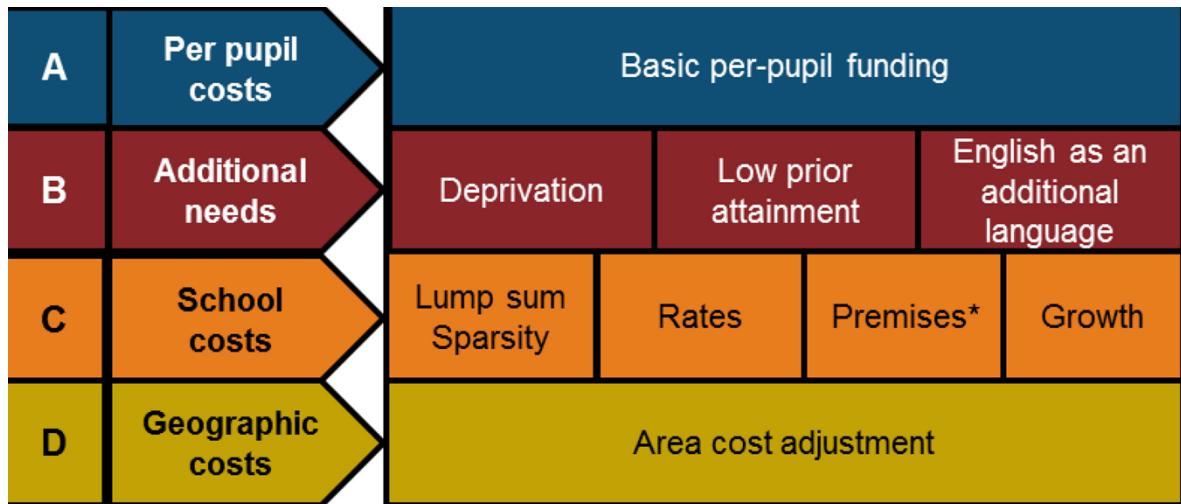
NFF detail likely to come out after London mayoral election, as London may be a significant loser.

It was noted that it is very important that all schools make individual responses to the consultation because all responses, whether individual or collective, are weighted equally.

It was agreed that the Schools Forum Task Groups would meet to draft a response and this would be circulated to all schools as it may be helpful for individual schools in formulating their own responses. It was suggested that copying the response to the local MP would be useful.

The government has stated that budgets will be protected in 'real terms' which means 'flat cash'. It was also noted that schools have been predicted to face 8% – 12% cost pressures over the life of the parliament at the same time as budgets remain at flat cash values.

The chart below sets out a summary of the principles set out regarding possible factors and it was noted that this initial consultation is about this level of principle. The real detail of the likely impact will not be known until the next stage when models are developed.



Concern was raised that the mobility – ‘churn’ - of pupils in Slough schools would not be addressed if this was the basis.

John Constable mentioned that LAs were likely to have no role in school improvement longer term. Sharon Scott mentioned that the proposed LA responsibilities are set out in the consultation document. It was noted that a new central block is proposed.

Helen Huntley referred to the need to consider that Slough is a small authority where vulnerable families are known and there was a need to have cross Directorate conversations e.g. involving Health and Social Care. Krutika Pau agreed and that with the Trust in place this was the right time to do this.

484. Growth Fund Criteria (for formal agreement - brought forward from January 2016 meeting)

The report sought approval from Schools Forum to the funding mechanism and criteria for the Growth Fund for 2016 /17 (a budget allocation of £1.25m was agreed previously for 2016-17).

It was clarified that funding would be based on the Basic Entitlement (AWPU) values in place for 15/16.

It was noted that the criteria for the Growth Fund has only been applied to primary schools thus far as this was where the need was, but the funding is not phase specific and there is now a pressure on places for Years 9, 10 and 11. Criteria for planned growth or bulge classes and additional pupils above PAN are applicable for both primary and secondary schools.

It was also noted that funding for academies spans two Growth Fund years and that, where possible, children would be placed in maintained schools to avoid higher costs.

It was noted that there is an issue with funding of academies between April and August as the Education Funding Agency (EFA) funds academies from April to August in arrears. The time to claim this funding is January each year at budget build time via the APT. Any decisions to create places after this date cannot be

recouped from the EFA. Therefore, the Growth Fund would also fund this period for academies.

The criteria, as set out in paragraph 5, were approved.

It was agreed that Tony Madden would circulate an appendix to the report setting out the financial details.

485. Children's Services Trust Update

This item was brought forward on the agenda.

Debby Rigby, interim Virtual School Headteacher gave an update.

A permanent Virtual School Headteacher has been appointed by the Children's Trust: Anne Bunce, coming from RBWM, so she is familiar with the area.

Debby Rigby tabled a paper on the proposed use of the one off £47k funding for strengthening safeguarding training in schools, agreed in January 2016 in principle. This would include a conference in June 2016, further training, and consultancy support to audit all schools' safeguarding documentation and procedures.

There was some discussion. It was suggested that governors should be involved in the half day visits to schools. It was agreed that the proposal would also be discussed at SSEF and at phase groups. Members of Schools Forum with any further views were asked to let Debby know. The funding was agreed pending further development and clarification of the details.

Debby also updated on the three proposed options for the use of the Pupil Premium funding for Looked After children. These are proposing a greater proportion of the funding going direct to schools. It was agreed that these options would go through phase groups for consultation.

486. Schools Financial Value Standard (SFVS) update paper - work programme for maintained schools.

Schools Forum noted the report setting out the action plan regarding the Schools Financial Value Standard.

It was noted that maintained schools and nurseries need to return completed SFVS forms by 21 March. Returns will be checked in line with SBC's internal audit action

487. Update from Task Groups: 5-16, SENSOG and Early Years (verbal)

It was agreed that dates would be set for meetings of the High Needs and 5-16 groups to draft the responses to the National Funding Formal consultation.

It was noted that Early Years would be the subject of review later in the year.

488. Cambridge Education (verbal)

It was noted that it is 'business as usual' for Cambridge Education whilst preparing for the transfer to the LA / Trust at the end of the contract.

An update will be given by Krutika Pau at the next Schools Forum meeting regarding options after the end of September 2016.

489. Academies update (verbal)

It was noted that a number of schools are planning to convert to academy status, mostly looking at creating or joining Multi Academy Trusts – local solutions.

490. Strengthening safeguarding in schools (centrally retained Schools Block 2016/17)

Sharon Scott left the meeting at this point.

Krutika Pau reported on the work that Sharon Scott had carried out, looking at potential options for the delivery of school improvement after the end of the Cambridge Education contract. Her report has been circulated to schools and is to be discussed at SSEF. The initial scope of her work was school improvement but headteachers had raised a range of issues and these were included in the report.

The report contains robust messages for the LA, a number of which had been referred to earlier in this meeting in respect of the SBC finance team and the positive response was noted.

Following feedback from the initial report a final report will be drafted.

Whilst the school improvement aspects are longer term, beyond the Cambridge Education contract, the LA is keen to move ahead. Krutika Pau proposed that Sharon Scott continue for up to three months for four days a week to implement some of the actions, pending the permanent recruitment of a Head of Education Services. She proposed that SBC funds two days and that centrally retained funding previously agreed by Schools Forum be used by the LA to fund the other two days a week, as there is some slippage in that budget.

Kathleen Higgins asked if the full £20k previously agreed by Schools Forum to fund the initial work had been used in full and asked what the maximum cost of the proposal would be. It was stated that the £20k had been used and it was agreed that the maximum cost would be circulated as soon as possible.

The proposal was agreed.

491. 2015-16 Forward Agenda Plan and Key Decisions Log

Noted

(Note: The Meeting opened at 8.15am and closed at 10.15am)