Slough Schools Forum- Meeting held on Tuesday, 14th June, 2016

Present:Maggie Waller, Holy Family Primary School (Chair)
John Constable, Langley Grammar School (Vice-Chair)
Rachel Cartwright, Slough Children's Centres
Gillian Coffey, Lynch Hill Primary School
Kathleen Higgins, Beechwood Secondary School
Helen Huntley, Haybrook College / PRU
Jo Matthews, Littledown School / 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
Jon Reekie, Baylis Court Trust MAT / Godolphin Infant School
Jo Rockall, Herschel Grammar School
Nicky Willis, Cippenham Primary School

Observers:

- Officers: Robin Crofts, George Grant, Nabila Malik, Coral Miller and Krutika Pau
- Apologies: Virginia Barrett, Sally Eaton, Philip Gregory, Carol Pearce, Debbie Richards and Sharon Scott

PART I

492. Welcome & Apologies

Apologies were noted from: Virginia Barrett, Sally Eaton, Carol Pearce, Debbie Richards, Philip Gregory and Sharon Scott.

493. Matters Arising

Items 481/482 - updated figures for the 2016-17 High Needs Block and Early Years Block had been included in the papers.

With regard to the Early Years Block, Rachel Cartwright drew attention to the mismatch in the centrally retained budgets which do not reflect where the growth has been in the PVI sector as it is based on historical growth. Rachel to discuss with Finance outside the meeting.

Robin Crofts also raised the growing need to look at the Early Years formula; to be discussed by Rachel, Robin and the LA outside the meeting.

An action to provide clarification of the PFI factor and how it is calculated is to be completed.

Item 480: Nicky Willis raised the strong concern being expressed by some schools regarding finance issues. George Grant acknowledged that there were problems with the end of year reports for maintained schools with the move from Oracle to the new Agresso financial system being implemented. Avarto had struggled to meet

expectations and did not have the right level of staff in place. He is working with Avarto and the LA contract team to resolve matters. The end of year reports are out now though there are inaccuracies and there were also delays to Imprest accounts. Schools are being encouraged to set up their own bank accounts. Krutika Pau said that she had brought the concerns expressed at SSEF to the attention of the new Leader of the Council and this is with the Chief Executive. Helen Huntley said that the issue was not just with maintained schools but that Haybrook College was awaiting payment of centrally retained funding. Rachel Cartwright referred to concerns about payments to the PVI settings which are causing cash flow problems.

494. Declarations of Interest

None

495. Minutes from previous meeting 07.03.2016

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.

1. Final Schools Budgets 2016-2017

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.

2. High Needs block proposal 2016-17

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.

3. 2016-2017 Early Years Budget 2016/17

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 PVIs 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.

4. Update on DfE proposals for National Funding Formula

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.

А	Per pupil costs		Basic per-pupil funding				
В	Additional needs	Deprivation		Low prior attainment		English as an additional language	
С	School costs	Lump sum Sparsity		Rates	Premi	ses*	Growth
D	Geographic costs	Area cost adjustment					

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.

5. Growth Fund

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.

6. 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.

7. Schools Financial Value Standard (SFVS)

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 plan.

8. Updates from Task Groups

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.

9. Cambridge Education

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.

10. Academies

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.

14. AOB: School improvement arrangements

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.

Next meeting: Wednesday 11th May, 8.00am for 8.15 am at Beechwood.

496. Election of Chair and Vice Chair

Schools Forum members re-elected Maggie Waller as Chair and John Constable as Vice-Chair

497. Update on 17-18 DFE proposals and consultation for National Funding Formula (verbal update)

Coral Miller updated the Schools Forum on the National Funding Formula. Phase 2 consultation is expected to come out before the summer holiday; it is likely to be a 12-week consultation period. DfE is expected to 'take the consultation returns seriously'.

Coral indicated that de-delegation remains uncertain for the future; the Growth Fund is likely to be based on historical information and the Schools Block will be ring fenced which it has not been to date.

Phase 2 should contain detailed information about proposed funding rates etc. and allow assessment of the impact on individual schools' budgets. The main focus will be on the Schools Block which needs to be confirmed by Jan 2017 to allow time for LA budget setting process.

The Early Years consultation is still expected over the summer.

Robin Crofts mentioned that High Needs will be a future pressure and the Schools Block being ring fenced exacerbates this as we will not be able to move funds to the High Needs Block as we have done recently. Helen Huntley too raised concern e.g. over Alternative Provision funding and High Needs issues not yet resolved; Jo Matthews echoed the concern about the likely increase in out borough expensive placements despite the increase in in-borough places.

It was agreed that the July Schools Forum meeting would be cancelled but the date held for an opportunity to meet to consider the National Funding Formula Phase 2 consultation if it has been published.

498. Growth Fund out turn

It was agreed that the underspend from the 2015-16 Growth Fund of £187k to be carried forward to 2016-17.

It was noted that the 2016-17 Growth Fund will be \pounds 1.287million including the carry forward; the current estimated demand is \pounds 1.169 million.

Robin Crofts indicated that it may be necessary to draw on the increased places (+2 places) from the autumn term.

Nicky Willis noted that, as more maintained schools become academies, there may be an increased pressure on costs.

499. Proposals for the use of centrally retained DSG in 2016-2017

It was noted that Option 6 for the provision of School Improvement was being implemented: a joint approach with Cambridge Education and the Slough Teaching Schools Alliance (STSA).

The Cambridge Education contract will use less of the allocated centrally retained DSG than originally envisaged and the report set out some suggestions regarding the use of underspend:

- Establishing a Schools Portal, including IT and administrative support, to provide a central point of information for schools. John Constable presented some brief information about Enfield's portal and the idea of a Slough Schools Portal was welcomed. Schools' ideas welcomed.
- Developing a process and system for peer review/challenge in consultation with neighbouring LAs and using some centrally retained DSG money to fund peer challenge leader training for headteachers who may wish to take part in this.
- School support fund for use by Slough Teaching Schools Alliance to promote school-to-school support. The approximate cost would be £75k per year for two years.

These were agreed in principle.

500. Slough Teaching School Alliance (STSA)

Slough Learning Partnership (SLP) will be wound down as a separate organisation with the Slough Teaching School Alliance (STSA) carrying forward the school improvement work as part of a joint approach with Cambridge Education.

The Schools Forum endorsed the transfer of SLP's funding reserves (which include some historic funding from DSG underspend) from SLP to STSA to fund staffing costs for two years.

Schools Forum also agreed to support the school support fund (see previous minute) to backfill schools when they are supporting other schools (approximately $\pounds75k$ p.a. for two years).

501. New Centrally Held DSG 2017-18

This report was for information setting out the 2017-18 new Centrally Retained Block (separate from Schools, High Needs and Early Years blocks) which will bring together centrally retained DSG and Education Services Grant (ESG) retained duties. Schools Forum noted the new arrangements.

Maggie Waller asked for clarification about the ESG and it was confirmed that the figures provided were only for DSG centrally retained and the ESG was in addition. It was noted that the ESG is likely to be ring fenced under the new arrangements. Debbie Richards asked about the retained funding for safeguarding and whether it included the costs of audit of safeguarding. This was confirmed to be the case and Krutika Pau agreed to follow this up with the Trust and contact the two Headteacher phase groups.

It was noted that if the CERA funding is not included in future years this will have an impact as SBC has used this for e.g. suitability surveys.

Nicky Willis asked if the LA would identify who is responsible for each centrally retained budget line by line as this would be very helpful. This was agreed as an action.

502. PFI Proposal

LA requested the use of £500k from DSG Schools Block to fund the PFI affordability gap, which is currently paid from SBC's general fund. This request arises from SBC

funding reductions, conversion of two of the three PFI schools to academy status, and the move towards the National Funding Formula.

There was some discussion and a number of questions raised. Officers were asked to define the DfE 'clear advice' referred to in the report and it was confirmed that this was from conversations with LA officers and emails.

Nicky Willis noted that only one of the two maintained 'PFI' schools would convert by 1st September and the other was a later time frame.

It was asked what risk there was to the schools involved if the request was not agreed; this was not clear and was referred to as a 'grey area'.

Kathleen Higgins clarified that the move to academy status makes no difference to the affordability gap and the DfE does not expect the PFI schools to pick up the affordability gap. She stated that fact that they have commenced the process of converting to academy status has not led to this needing to be addressed; this has been an ongoing issue for a considerable time.

Jo Rockall referred to the last line of paragraph 4.4: With the EFA's new way of working they would require that all schools' costs and budgets are within the DSG School Block Budget. She asked what evidence there was of this given that the DSG is revenue funding. David Johnson referred to the PFI itself being capital but the gap between the Revenue Support Grant (RSG) was revenue.

Angela Mellish asked where the requested £500m would come from and it was confirmed that this would reduce the DSG.

John Constable referred to headteachers understanding the financial position and pressures for SBC but also referred to increased costs and the budget pressures for schools requiring headteachers to put the interests of their schools first.

Maggie Waller was sympathetic to the pressures faced by SBC but referred to the commitment given to schools at the time the PFI was undertaken that there would not be an adverse impact on schools.

The first phase of the DfE consultation on the National Funding Formula included a question about PFI and this has not been concluded so that this request seems premature.

The proposal was rejected as Schools Forum felt it was unwise to agree to any reduction in funding available for school budgets given the uncertainties about future funding.

503. Schools Forum Membership (verbal update)

Given the uncertainty about the future of Schools Forum, the proposal is to ask all those whose membership is coming to an end over the next 12 months if they are willing to remain in post until August 2017 year to provide continuity.

Name	Term of office ends
Navroop Mehat	July 2016 (maintained)

Virginia Barrett (Kate Webb)	July 2016 (East Berkshire College)
Gillian Coffey	August 2016 (academy)
Maggie Waller	August 2016 (maintained)
Philip Gregory	August 2016 (nursery) remain
Debbie Richards	November 2016 (special) remain
Nicky Willis	March 2017 (academy)
Helen Huntley	May 2017 (academy)

If people are willing to extend their term of office the proposal that this be implemented will be put to headteachers, chairs of governors and academy proprietors.

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

There had been no meetings of the Task Groups and meetings will be arranged as necessary to respond to the National Funding Formula consultation and the implications for modelling budgets.

Robin Crofts reported back on the new arrangements for SENSOG. There had been a previous temporary combination of the High Needs Task Group and SEN SOG. SENSOG has been moved across to be part of the monthly SSEF meetings. The remit is to discuss school places and SEN place provision. There is a broader range of representation within SSEF now including nursery representation

505. Cambridge Education

Robin Crofts updated on Cambridge Education (CE). matters The current CE contract comes to an end on 30 September 2016.

- Early Years & Children's Centres will move to Slough Children's Services Trust from 30 September.
- School services (Integrated Support Service, Education Psychology, SEN, School Improvement, Access, Admissions etc) revert to Local Authority
- In discussion with LA about revised 2-year contract arrangements for school improvement, statutory services and support services for SEN and educational psychology provision.

506. Academies update

The national picture has changed slightly with the government not driving academy conversion for all schools through legislation but encouraging all schools. There are currently about 6000 academies. Where an LA is no longer in a position to support its maintained schools they will be driven to convert and also where an LA is not performing well. The Regional Schools Commissioner is driving academisation of underperforming schools.

In Slough, 17,572 out of 29,540 pupils are now in academies – about 60%.

Robin Crofts also referred to recent updated guidance on schools causing concern which includes the changing role of the LA and the RSC; it can be found at:

507. 2015-16 Forward Agenda Plan and Key Decisions Log

The forward plan for 2016-17 academic year proposes six School Forum meetings spaced to deal with the budget cycle and also to take account of implications of the National Funding Formula. It was agreed that members wished to retain the start time of 8.00 a.m. for 8.15 a.m. but that the meetings would be held on a variety of days of the week.

The venue will remain as Beechwood School's Conference Centre.

There is a Schools Forum meeting scheduled for July 6th 2016. It was agreed that this July Schools Forum meeting would be cancelled but the date held for an opportunity to meet to consider the National Funding Formula Phase 2 consultation if it has been published.

Please see details below for full listings of meeting dates for 2016/17.

Next meeting: Thursday 13th October, 8.00am for 8.15am at Beechwood.

Date	Time	Venue
Thursday 13 th October 2016	8am	Beechwood conference centre
Tuesday 6 th December 2016	8am	Beechwood conference centre
Tuesday 10 th January 2017	8am	Beechwood conference centre
Tuesday 7 th March 2017	8am	Beechwood conference centre
Thursday 18 th May 2017	8am	Beechwood conference centre
Thursday 6 th July 2017	8am	Beechwood conference centre

(Note: The Meeting opened at 8.00am and closed at 11.00am)