

Slough Schools Forum- Meeting held on Tuesday, 6th March, 2012

Present: Maggie Waller, Holy Family Primary School (Chair)
Julia Shepard, Beechwood Secondary School (Vice-Chair)
Gillian Coffey, Lynch Hill Primary School
John Constable, Langley Grammar
Henry Duffy, Ryvers Primary School
Martin Davis, Colnbrook Primary School
Helen Huntley, Special Schools
Maureen Mallinson, Westgate Secondary School
Charlie McGeachie, Montem Primary School
Jon Reekie, James Elliman Primary School
Mary Sparrow, Wexham Secondary School
Maggie Stacey, St Anthony's RC Primary School
Jo Rockall, Herschel Grammar School
Bea Williams, Slough & Eton Academy

Observers: Lynda Bussley, NUT

Officers: Christina West, Clair Pyper, Wendy Sagar and Rochelle Fearon

PART I

102. Apologies

Apologies were received from Barbara Clark, Robin Crofts, Emma Foy, Jon Reekie and Paul McAteer. Paul had requested that Bea Williams attend as his substitute. Bea left the meeting, the substitution was discussed and formally ratified by the group, and Bea re-joined the meeting.

103. Declarations of Interest

None

104. Minutes of Last Meeting - 26th January 2012

- Teaching School: Gillian Coffey reported that building capacity funding has been granted and the process of a formal application is being undertaken.
- SBC SMT consultation: A formal response on behalf of Schools Forum was submitted and further clarification received back from the Chief Executive just before half term. This was circulated but unfortunately the timing made it difficult for members to respond further. Maggie Waller wrote again to the Chief Executive reinforcing the concerns of Schools Forum before the 20 February deadline. Clair Pyper informed the group that the Chief Executive will be writing in detail to the schools shortly. Clair will be incorporating the views expressed by headteachers into the review of LA services she is currently undertaking
- Transactional services: this is progressing well and the contract is due to be signed this week.

The minutes were confirmed as an accurate record.

105. Response to Consultation on School Funding Reform

A response on behalf of Schools Forum was submitted to the DfE by Slough Borough Council. A briefing paper analysing responses had been circulated with the agenda. Wendy Sagar reported the DfE have indicated that the process will continue to the next stage and further consultation will be issued. However there is no clear indication of when this will be and the forthcoming period of purdah before the May elections could well create a further delay.

106. Education Finance Settlement 2012-13

The DfE published the financial settlement for schools on 14 December 2011. The main aspects of the announcement concerned the DSG, the Minimum Funding Guarantee (GUF) and the increase in Pupil Premium. GUF figure from last year is unchanged and will be **£5,540.04**. The national Minimum Funding Guarantee is also unchanged at -1.5%. From 2012-13 the Pupil Premium will be increased to £600 and eligibility extended to include all pupils who have been eligible for Free School Meals at any point over the past six years. The increase is new money available to schools.

107. Indicative Budgets 2012-13

Indicative budgets have been made available to schools and it is important to note that the key issue for the local authority is the number of schools becoming Academies as this has a huge impact on funding. Headlines include:

- The increase in DSG is due to the growth in pupil numbers.
- School specific contingency and central DSG have been included at 2011-12 levels for planning purposes.
- Available Headroom is currently less at £0.223m though we may be eligible for some on-off amounts of funding in due course e.g. exceptional circumstances grant
- A summary of Formula Factors has been provided in Appendix B of the report circulated with the agenda and these have remained unchanged.
- All resource units have been funded using the Slough formula.
- The LA is working hard to resolve the funding issues affecting Haybrook and the Virtual School and this will continue in collaboration with the Headteacher outside of this meeting
- It should be recognised there are risks around pupil numbers as exact figures will not be known until June.

Wendy Sagar emphasised that these are indicative figures and work will continue on refining budgets. The outcome of this work will be presented to Schools Forum on 28 March. There are also other issues which have been discussed at SSEF and another meeting of that group is scheduled for 12 March. It is also important to note that the outcome of the SEN Review may require some transitional protection funding. It is expected that this can be funded from a one off carry forward from the centrally managed budgets.

Maggie Waller thanked officers for the timely circulation of budgets under difficult circumstances.

108. Schools Budget Monitoring Quarter 3 2012-13

A report outlining the projected financial position after the 3rd quarter was discussed and it was clarified that Appendix A gives the position of schools at the end of December 2011, with a projected year end balance. Some schools are exceeding the level set for the balance control mechanism. Christina West has circulated information where relevant. Christina clarified that it will be made clear in the final position statement which schools hold

'cluster' monies and confirmed that individual plans for projected spend will be requested and made available to the group after year end.

Discussion took place around the size of Slough schools' balances which continue to increase against a backdrop of falling levels nationally. Schools Forum needs to be assured that monies are allocated for planned spend. Referring to the paper circulated Mary Sparrow proposed the addition of a column indicating what balances are being earmarked for. Christina confirmed that schools' plans are reflected in this way in the final report at year end. Any proposals for implementation of the balance control mechanism will be discussed at SSEF and Mary Sparrow sought an assurance that relevant headteachers will be involved. Clair Pyper and Maggie Waller both gave an unqualified assurance that this would be the case.

109. SEN Review - Funded Banding Model

1. Membership of the Task and Finish Group has been updated and work is moving forward. Schools Forum is requested to validate the principles for the direction of the review. Schools Forum endorsed the principles.
2. Wendy Sagar clarified that the aim is to complete the review within the existing funding envelope but recognised that any changes may well require transitional funding arrangements to be made.
3. Clair Pyper highlighted the rising number of vulnerable pupils which is disproportionate to the increase in school population, especially in the areas of ASD and children moving towards a higher level of need. It is vital we undertake relevant forecasting work.
4. Helen Huntley expressed concerns that there is no indicative budget for the PRU which makes planning difficult. Wendy acknowledged this and advised that work is continuing with Helen to ultimately reach a position where long term the PRU is funded on a per pupil basis. Interim arrangements would be put in place in the interim.
5. Bandings are being worked on by the Review Group and schools will be consulted. Mainstream delegation is being discussed and will possibly be left until April 2013, with work continuing prior to September 2012.
6. Helen Huntley and Charlie McGeachie expressed concerns over the increasing pressure on Haybrook and Littledown. Clair Pyper advised that a report on the rebuilding programme is going to SBC Cabinet next week and linked to that will be the charging mechanism for Academies. Clair made it clear that Haybrook funding is a separate issue from the SEN Funding Review.
7. Charlie also raised the question of the £40k allocated for funding Services Supporting Behaviour which has not progressed. Clair reported that Julie Evans has been on leave and the matter will be resolved when she returns.
8. Clair Pyper and Helen Huntley will discuss Haybrook funding outside of Schools Forum in order to resolve the situation as quickly as possible. Julia Shepard gave examples of, and expressed concerns about, anomalies and unresolved funding within different areas of provision relating to previous financial years. Depending on the national funding formula for 2013-14, the Forum discussed the danger that these anomalies could be 'locked in'. Clair Pyper suggested that identifying the most significant areas was key and it was agreed, for example, that ongoing work by Jackie Wright is already making progress.
9. Maggie Waller predicted that some difficult decisions will be required in the future once the principles have been discussed and agreed.

110. Academies Verbal Update

10. A draft charging policy has now been prepared. The policy will be brought to the next meeting of Schools Forum prior to implementation for Academies from 1 April 2012.
11. Existing SLAs will continue with unchanged prices and terms and conditions rolling forward from 1 April.
12. Clair highlighted the significant and complex amount of work the LA has to undertake linked to schools adopting Academy status. There are no additional LA staff available as no support has been forthcoming from the DfE, plus the LA is also losing funding from

those schools. Clair has raised the issue at a national level but has received a negative response and only one of the schools involved has offered any financial contribution. Currently three schools will become Academies on 1 April, two on 1 June and one in September. There are a further four in the pipeline.

13. Lynda Bussley expressed concern that Slough Borough Council has taken a politically passive stance to the development of Academies within the town. This was felt to be an issue to raise with elected members and not the Schools Forum.

111. Forward Plan Revisions

- Centrally managed budgets 2012-13
- Schools specific contingency 2012-13
- Final Schools Budget 2012-13
- Accountability
- Charging policy
- Update on SEN Funding Review

Please note that since the meeting the provisional date of 28 March meeting has been cancelled and rescheduled for Wednesday, 18 April

Following that meeting further meeting dates are:

Wednesday, 16 May 2012

Tuesday, 4 July 2012

112. AOB

Maggie Waller proposed that a review of membership be undertaken to ensure the widest representation of all parties.

The meeting closed at 0940 with thanks to staff at Beechwood School for their continued support and hospitality.

(Note: The Meeting opened at 8.15 am and closed at 9.40 am)