

## **Slough Schools Forum- Meeting held on Wednesday, 12th December, 2012**

**Present:** Julia Shepard, Beechwood Secondary School (Vice-Chair)  
John Constable, Langley Grammar  
Martin Davis, Colnbrook Primary School  
Helen Huntley, Haybrook College  
Paul McAteer, Slough and Eton Secondary School  
Charlie McGeachie, Montem Primary School  
Kevin O'Driscoll, St Joseph's High School  
Mary Sparrow, Wexham Secondary School  
Maggie Stacey, St Anthony's RC Primary School  
Jo Rockall, Herschel Grammar School  
Jean Cameron, Slough Children's Centres  
Nicky Willis, Cippenham Primary School  
Philip Gregory, Slough Centre Nursery  
Maggie Waller, Holy Family Primary School (Chair)

**Observers:** Lynda Bussley, NUT (Observer)

**Officers:** Robin Crofts, Michelle Perkins and Steve Elson

**Apologies:** Barbara Clark, Jon Reekie, Virginia Barrett, Councillor Natasa Pantelic, Roger Edwardson and Jo Matthews

### **PART I**

#### **181. Apologies**

Apologies were received from Virginia Barrett, East Berkshire College, Roger Edwardson, SBC, Councillor Natasa Pantelic, Jon Reekie, James Elliman Primary School, Jo Matthews, Littledown School and Barbara Clark, Godolphin Junior School.

#### **182. Declarations of Interest**

None.

#### **183. Minutes of last meeting and matters arising**

Details of the Task and Finish groups were distributed. Robin Crofts confirmed that the action detailed on page 3 regarding concerns from schools is being dealt with. The minutes were approved as a true and accurate record.

#### **184. Services to Schools Review - update**

Ruth Bagley provided an update on progress of the three stages of the procurement process as follows:

### Stage 1 – Expressions of Interest and PQQ (Pre-Qualification Questionnaire).

An advert was sent to invite organisations to put forward the PQQ. 13 substantive proposals were received. A basic assessment of credibility was carried out to look at the quality of information provided. The proposals were then narrowed down to six viable bidders to go forward to stage 2.

### Stage 2 – Invitation to participate in dialogue.

Organisations were provided with a specification of outcomes. A bidders' session will take place on 14<sup>th</sup> December to allow them to find out more and ask questions and to give SBC an idea of how viable the interests are.

The services have been packaged into 4 blocks:

- 1) School Improvement services
- 2) SEN
- 3) Access
- 4) Early years.

Not all bidders will necessarily bid for all 4 blocks.

2 bidders out of the 6 will be invited to stage 3 – the deadline to make this decision is 21<sup>st</sup> January.

### Stage 3 – Competitive dialogue

A full day of detailed discussions with the bidders will take place. This stage in the process will help to satisfy SBC that the bidders have got the necessary qualities to respond to Slough's needs and that the price is acceptable. Roger Edwardson and Ruth Bagley will ask for an 'in principle' commitment from schools, which will be subject to service quality and appropriateness of offer, in the next four weeks before they move to stage 3. July is the preferred contractual date in readiness for September 2013.

Various questions were raised by Schools Forum members as follows:

#### Timing of request for 'in principle' commitment from schools and school Finance Committee meetings already scheduled; the need for Governors to be able to be sure that value for money is satisfied in process in line with sound financial management in school

Ruth Bagley explained that the commitment would be 'in principle' only. Andrew Patterson confirmed that the OJEU process being carried out will provide adequate due process. It was agreed that Audit will send a note to schools to assist Governors in value for money (VFM) assessment, providing a Section 151 view.

#### Whether the same staff would provide the services.

Ruth Bagley explained that there will be a TUPE transfer of staff from SBC with the likelihood of different people at senior management level but there will also be access to additional expertise and specialist activities.

There is an uncertainty regarding whether statutory obligations for delivery for SEN functions lie with the LA or with schools and whether the LA should deliver directly or delegate.

Central government will provide more clarification.

An understanding of this uncertainty has been built into the process.

#### Whether schools will be told who the personnel will be before they make an 'in principle' commitment.

Ruth Bagley confirmed that there will be a provisional TUPE list but that the LA would need to find out whether this information can be shared with schools. There will be a series of presentations to schools and to SBC staff.

Ruth Bagley clarified that we can pull out of a preferred bidder if substantive reasons are given prior to the contract being signed.

It was agreed that a simple guide would be given to schools / governors to help clarify understanding of the process and clarify the commitments requested from schools at various stages of the process.

**Action:** Ruth Bagley will ask Joanna Anderson (Procurement) to action this.

Whether providers can be asked to keep systems in place that are working well in schools e.g. the Educational Psychology Service.

Ruth Bagley confirmed that we can give strong indications about what we think is beneficial but also take their ideas on board. It was asked whether a developmental component can be built in to suit changes over time. Ruth Bagley confirmed that this is built into the procurement process and the contract.

Concern was raised that the consensus of secondary heads had been to exclude SEN from the process. Ruth confirmed the SEN element can be taken out at a later date. Helen Huntley agreed to meet Ruth Bagley with a mainstream colleague to discuss further.

Concerns were also raised about continuity of care and being able to ensure that vulnerable children are not lost in the system – preserving integration of services.

Broader concerns were raised. Issues relating to Avarto and SBC internal finance are to be addressed outside the meeting.

**Action:** Maggie Stacey has compiled a list of concerns from Primary colleagues following the November Schools Forum which she will share with Ruth Bagley and further discussions are to take place outside the meeting.

## **185. DfE Funding Reform Progress**

Steve Elson provided an update as follows:

Arising from the submission to the DfE : Slough's primary/secondary ratio is 1:1.43. This differs from the national average of 1:1.28.

Steve Elson has modelled a number of different ratios and the Task and Finish group will review in detail, looking at the balance between sectors and between basic entitlement and allocations driven by need. Ruth Bagley clarified that the work that Steve Elson has done to date is not intended as a proposal but to model the impact. Paul McAteer referred to the Education Funding Agency having made clear that the information about the primary /secondary ratios have been issued, not as guidelines but because there are concerns that recent changes to the formula may have led to imbalance between sectors.

Concerns were raised about whether needs-led analysis is taking place and concerns about benchmarking against the average as Slough is not an average authority. Heads are to assist in informing the Task and Finish group about this. The Chair asked whether the information about the other authorities can be brought to

the Task and Finish group. Steve Elson knows about 5 of them and confirmed he will bring these to the Task and Finish group. SBC are looking at their statistical neighbours from a demographic point of view and taking into account authorities with a similar system of selection. Schools Forum members confirmed that this is a very significant factor.

Criteria for growth fund and split site factor will be worked on further in the Task and Finish groups.

Maggie Waller thanked Steve Elson for his valuable work so far.

Robin Crofts will be able to bring concrete proposals back regarding early years to the January meeting to look at implementation from April. Proposals will also be brought back regarding the High Needs block.

#### **186. Academies - update**

Robin Crofts provided a verbal update as follows:

Willow is due to convert on 1<sup>st</sup> February, James Elliman on 1<sup>st</sup> March and Foxborough on 1<sup>st</sup> April, although the latter may be possibly later.

Robin Crofts explained that the role of the LA is changing with regards to academies. The LA will continue to be involved with safeguarding, assessment, SEN and possibly School Improvement in the future.

Ruth Bagley raised a concern in principle about whether central government will give the funding back to local authorities to go with these responsibilities.

#### **187. 2012/13 Work Programme and Key Decisions Log**

Concerns were raised that budget monitoring has been deferred.

**Action:** Maggie Waller and Robin Crofts are to discuss the Work Programme outside of Schools Forum.

It is likely that the agenda for the January meeting will change.

It was agreed that the date of the January meeting would be brought forward to **Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> January.**

**Action:** Michelle Perkins will circulate the revised date.

Indicative budgets – LA has been given the date of 19<sup>th</sup> December for the annual LA budget to be declared and Steve Elson aims to provide actual budgets to schools by the end of January .

**Action:** Communication is to be circulated to schools regarding this as they need clarification about when to expect the information.

(Note: The Meeting opened at 8.05 am and closed at 9.55 am)