

## **Slough Schools Forum- Meeting held on Wednesday, 3rd July, 2013**

- Present:** Maggie Waller, Holy Family Primary School (Chair)  
Julia Shepard, Beechwood Secondary School (Vice-Chair)  
Barbara Clark, Godolphin Junior School  
Gillian Coffey, Lynch Hill Primary School  
John Constable, Langley Grammar  
Harry Duffy, Ryvers Primary School  
Helen Huntley, Haybrook College  
Paul McAteer, Slough and Eton Secondary 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  
Jean Cameron, Slough Children's Centres  
Jo Matthews, Littledown  
Philip Gregory, Baylis Court Nursery School  
Paul Adams, Slough Grammar School  
Navroop Mehat, Wexham Court Primary School
- Observers:** Lynda Bussley, NUT, Angela Mellish, St Bernards, Eddie Neighbour, Slough Grammar and John Vale, Slough Observer
- Officers:** Robin Crofts, Michelle Perkins, Steve Elson and George Grant
- Apologies:** Virginia Barrett, East Berkshire College and Nicky Willis, Cippenham Primary School

### **PART I**

#### **226. Welcome and Apologies**

Maggie Waller welcomed Navroop Mehat from Wexham Court Primary School, Atul Lad, Principal Accountant from SBC, Paul Adams, Governor from Slough Grammar School and John Vale from Slough Observer who was attending as an observer.

Maggie Waller thanked Julia Shepard for all her support over the years as Vice-Chair of Schools Forum as this was to be Julia's last meeting.

Apologies were received from Virginia Barrett, East Berkshire College and Nicky Willis from Cippenham Primary School.

#### **227. Declarations of Interest**

None.

#### **228. Minutes of Previous Meeting and Matters Arising**

Page 1: Maggie Waller reported that the formula briefing session had taken place on 28<sup>th</sup> June and thanked Steve Elson and Virginia Barrett for their input and the useful papers that were produced.

**Action:** Michelle Perkins will distribute the paper via the gatekeeper to all headteachers and bursars.

Page 2: Maggie Waller confirmed that Sam Ellis, Funding Specialist will be attending for the session on funding formula after the meeting, as discussed previously.

The minutes of 8<sup>th</sup> May 2013 were agreed as a true and accurate record.

## **229. Indicative Outturn 2012/13**

Steve Elson explained the Indicative Outturn paper which outlines the final outturn for the school specific contingency and local authority managed budgets funded by the DSG for 12/13 and recommends the distribution and retention of the brought forward underspend.

Steve Elson confirmed that the DfE has advised that in-year budget adjustments cannot be done and therefore the underspend (approximately £700,000) will need to be ring fenced and added to the budget for the beginning of the next year. He suggested that a forecast of the underspend be brought back to the October or November Schools Forum meeting.

The recommendations detailed in 5.8 of the paper were discussed as follows:

Schools Forum agreed that £780,000 be retained for potential overspend on High Needs and Early Years funding.

In terms of the £80,000 for the Asbestos survey, Schools Forum agreed for Steve Elson to find out what the outstanding list is and bring this back to Schools Forum. In terms of the £198,796 Carbon Reduction Commitment, Schools Forum agreed to await a future paper on how to move forward with this.

It was noted that the Growth Fund and High Needs Block may be subject to potential overspend.

**Action:** Steve Elson and Atul Lad will bring a paper to a future meeting to indicate the underspend and overspend in each area.

Further discussion took place about the need for another meeting of the Task and Finish group for High Needs with input from Headteachers and Maggie Waller. Helen Huntley confirmed that they have set a date of 18<sup>th</sup> July at 2pm at Haybrook College. Paul McAteer and Jo Rockall offered to be involved in this and primary representation is to be included.

John Constable asked about repayment from St Joseph's in the reallocation of headroom in terms of where the money sits and where it will be allocated in the future. Steve Elson confirmed that this is part of the underspend.

## **230. Schools Outturn 2012/13**

Steve Elson presented the paper on schools outturn for 2012/13 and confirmed that schools above the threshold will be written to by the LA to ask what the balances are for. A paper will be brought back to Schools Forum.

Steve Elson confirmed that the information in the appendices is only raw data at the moment and a further paper will be brought to the September meeting.

It was noted that academies are no longer subject to restriction in terms of balances. Although the balance control mechanism only applies to maintained schools, academy members present confirmed they are willing to share information about their balances in the interest of working together as a community of schools. There was a general consensus across Schools Forum about this. Steve Elson explained that the LA does not have the statutory right to request this information from academies but Schools Forum can request the information. It was agreed that the Chair would write to academies on behalf of Schools Forum, requesting this information.

### **231. School Budget Plans 2013/14**

Steve Elson confirmed that the paper on Schools Budgets 2013/14 is a collation of all maintained schools' budget plans and contains the same information as item 5. It was noted that closing balances are forecast to decrease with carry forwards having been used to balance budgets for 2013/14.

Schools Forum noted the report for information.

### **232. Scheme for Financing Schools**

Steve Elson shared the report on the Scheme for Financing Schools consultation.

Schools Forum noted the responses detailed in Appendix 1 and agreed that the updated Scheme for Financing Schools be put on the SBC website.

**Action:** Steve Elson will publish the updated Scheme for Financing Schools on the SBC website.

### **233. Schools Funding 2014/15**

Steve Elson shared the report which informs Schools Forum of the DfE's decisions regarding schools funding in 2014/15. Steve informed Schools Forum of some of the key changes which affect Slough as follows:

Different lump sums for primary and secondary if we choose to include these.

Low attainment factor for secondary; this was based on pupils who did not attain Level 4 in English **and** Maths but it is now Level 4 in English **or** Maths.

Mobility factor has been capped at 10% by the DfE. This is defined by children joining at non standard times in the year. This change will mean that only 12 primary schools and no secondary schools will fall within this factor.

The changes will need to be taken account of in the review and planning for 2014/15 and any proposed changes to Slough's formula will need to be included in the autumn term consultation with all schools.

**Action:** Steve Elson and Atul Lad will provide a timetable for the consultation at the September meeting.

Discussion also took place about the need for a Task and Finish group with small, consistent membership which can be put on standby to meet to discuss issues after September.

**Action:** Michelle Perkins will circulate an email to Schools Forum members to find out who is interested in being involved.

#### **234. Two Year Old Funding Formula**

The revised report on Early Years Two Year Old Funding Formula was presented. This supersedes the previous report which was brought to Schools Forum in May 2013.

Jean Cameron updated Schools Forum. The Early Years team are currently working on making sure there are enough providers to meet the commitment for September and ensuring that there is a correct balance of providers. The formula has been revised to put a low risk formula in place and to make the model more flexible. The main changes are that the child minder rate has increased slightly in order to stimulate the market and the PVI rate has been brought down slightly to make the model affordable.

A clarification was sought regarding staffing ratio and Jean Cameron clarified that schools taking children in the term in which they become 3 (i.e. 'Rising 3's'), may legally consider these children to be 3 year olds and may operate to a 1 to 13 ratio. For children younger than this, legislation requires all providers to operate to a 1 to 4 ratio. The proposed formula reflects the different staffing ratios.

Schools Forum endorsed the revisions and agreed the revised paper.

#### **235. Dates for Future Meetings**

Dates for the next cycle of meetings 2013/14 were circulated.

Paul McAteer advised that the meetings scheduled for 2<sup>nd</sup> October and 23<sup>rd</sup> October will need to be revised.

**Action:** Michelle Perkins will circulate the revised dates for the 2<sup>nd</sup> October and 23<sup>rd</sup> October meeting in time for the end of term, along with confirmation of dates and venues for all meetings.

#### **236. Academies Update**

Robin Crofts provided the following update on Academies:

Both nationally and locally there has been a move towards multi-academy / school to school sponsorship arrangements as schools are recognising that it is beneficial to enter into alliances. This is encouraged by the DfE, particularly for schools that are in difficulty. This is likely to continue over the next two to three years at which point there could be five to seven groupings across the 48 schools in the borough. LA boundaries between schools will also become less relevant. There will be a continued positive emphasis on looking for local solutions as schools align themselves with others across the community.

In terms of Slough schools: 1<sup>st</sup> June Colnbrook entered into a sponsored arrangement with Slough and Eton; Foxborough is due to convert shortly and Haybrook and Littledown are aiming for 1<sup>st</sup> September.

Robin Crofts reported that staff at SBC are becoming more adept about the academy transfer process and are achieving deadlines.

Robin explained that, from 1<sup>st</sup> September, Education Services will be provided by Mott McDonald along with sub group Cambridge Education and they are interested in working with academies.

He reported that currently 45-50% of schools in Slough are academies, with 60% of pupils now attending academies. He anticipates that this will increase to 70% of pupils over the next year and will continue at this pace until the majority of schools have converted. A number of significant, informal discussions are taking place.

Robin also reported that SBC elected members have questions about their limited responsibilities in terms of academies and they are keen to work with all schools across the community to ensure high standards are achieved.

He reported that more academies are moving towards paying their Chairs of Governors and that debate is occurring both nationally and locally about this.

The DfE is keen for the LA to press schools to convert where strong schools can assist schools in difficulty in moving towards a more successful place.

Helen Huntley raised concerns about the financial impact and risk of Free Schools in terms of reduction in pupil numbers for some schools. This would lead to a loss of AWPU funding for secondary schools which would leave them vulnerable. It was agreed that there is a need to ensure this is considered when looking at the formula in the autumn.

Robin Crofts advised that this was discussed at both Heads Termly and School Organisation Group. He noted that secondaries could find themselves with surplus staff as pupil numbers decrease. The possibility of secondment arrangements was discussed. It is thought that the pressures would be around 2-3 years in duration and it would be necessary to look for ways for schools to work together to look for solutions during this period. Schools Forum members expressed concerns about achievement and about relationships with schools on the Slough border. Robin Crofts emphasised the impact of schools working together and not in isolation, the strength of the Slough Learning Partnership and coming together as a complete community of schools.

It was agreed that Schools Forum needs to consider this in terms of the funding formula.

## **237. Membership Update**

Maggie Waller provided an update on Schools Forum membership as follows:

- Paul Adams has joined Schools Forum as an academy governor representative.
- One community primary vacancy has been filled by Navroop Mehat of Wexham Court Primary.

- The new DfE regulations proposed would mean that East Berkshire College would no longer be representing the 14-19 Strategic Partnership but would be a member of Schools Forum as a 14-19 provider which is not a school or academy.
- It was noted that Jon Reekie's term of office is about to end. It was agreed that he continue until such time as a further check on the balance of membership across academies and maintained schools be undertaken by the Chair over the summer. Jon Reekie confirmed that he is happy to continue as a member.

Julia Shepard will be leaving Schools Forum. Maggie Waller thanked her again for her long and valuable service at Schools Forum and in her role as Vice-Chair.

### **Actions:**

Maggie Waller will look at the pupil numbers and academy / maintained schools balance of membership over the summer.

Chair and Vice-Chair elections will be held at the September meeting.

Michelle Perkins to circulate a reminder for Schools Forum members to send nominations.

### **238. Pension Scheme Auto Enrolment - taken out of order**

Kevin Gordon, Assistant Director Professional Services, SBC and Surjit Nagra, HR Business Partner, SBC attended Schools Forum to discuss the implementation of the Pensions Auto-Enrolment Scheme. They wanted to make Headteachers aware of the financial pressures that may arise as more members of staff enter into pensions schemes. Calculations of liability have been made by the LA.

Surjit explained that although this was for Slough to be effective from 1<sup>st</sup> July, the LA has had to defer this date due to IT technical issues with the personnel system. The new date (deferment date) is now 1<sup>st</sup> October. For schools that have SBC as their employer, such as Community and Voluntary controlled schools, will need to comply with this date. For these schools that use SBC's payroll service will not need to send any letters to staff as the LA will do this on their behalf. However, schools that do not use SBC payroll will need to ensure they contact their payroll provider to ensure they comply with the regulations of informing staff. All other schools will need to contact the Pensions Regulator to find out what their staging date is as it may not be the same as SBC's. SBC will continue to communicate on this matter with all Slough Schools and ensure that standard letters etc are available.

Schools Forum were asked to note that staff cannot opt out of the Pension Scheme until the deferment date. After 1<sup>st</sup> October there will be a 3 month window for staff to opt out and any contributions paid can be reclaimed. However, after the 3 month window the monies cannot be reclaimed.

Further details can be found in the letter that was circulated and has been sent to all staff at the LA and schools. Surjit Nagra confirmed that the FAQs will be published and sent to all schools next week and SBC will be communicating with schools via the gatekeeper on what action needs to be taken.

### **239. Key Decisions Log**

This was noted.

(Note: The Meeting opened at 8:15 and closed at 9:40)