

Slough Schools Forum- Meeting held on Wednesday 7th May 2014

Meeting started at 8.15am and finished at 9.25am

Present: Maggie Waller, Holy Family Primary School (Chair)
John Constable, Langley Grammar School (Vice-Chair)
Louise Lund, Barney Bees Day Nursery
Debbie Richards, Arbour Vale School
Paul McAteer, Slough and Eton C of E Business & Enterprise College
Jo Rockall, Herschel Grammar School
Jean Cameron, Slough Children's Centres
Maggie Stacey, St Anthony's School
Hardip Singh, Khalsa Primary School
Philip Gregory, Baylis Court Nursery School
Navroop Mehat, Wexham Court Primary School
Nicky Willis Cippenham Primary School

Observers: Lynda Bussley

Attendees: Helen Huntley (Haybrook College), Angela Mellish (St Bernard's Grammar School), Robin Crofts (Cambridge Education), Ciran Stapleton (St Joseph's)

Officers: Ruth Bagley, Joseph Holmes, Atul Lad, Coral Miller and Rajpreet Johal (Clerk)

Apologies: Virginia Barrett, Philip Gregory, Jane Wood, Jon Reekie and Mary Sparrow

PART I

274. Welcome and Apologies

Apologies noted from Virginia Barrett, Philip Gregory, Jane Wood and Mary Sparrow.

Maggie Waller welcomed Ruth Bagley (Chief Executive, Slough Borough Council), Joseph Holmes (Assistant Director Finance & Audit, Slough Borough Council), Ciran Stapleton (Head Teacher, St Joseph's) and Coral Miller (Support Officer, Schools Finance).

275. Declarations of Interest

None

276. Minutes of Previous Meeting and Matters Arising

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Maggie Waller reported a letter was sent to the DfE to raise concerns on the impact of no funding being provided to support permanent expansions. Maggie noted a call and draft response had been received from Dugald Sandeman (DfE) who advised the DfE understand the issues however are not minded to move from the lag funding. A copy of the final DfE letter will be circulated with the minutes.

Ruth Bagley reported that about 20 LAs are impacted similarly adversely and could pursue a joint approach.

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St Joseph's have confirmed that there are plans for use of balances with approval from the Governing Body.

Robin Crofts reported the Cambridge Education Service Level Agreements went out at the end of last term. Update to be provided at the next Schools Forum.

2014-15 Budget Process Update:

John Constable and Paul McAteer reported that 14/15 budgets are lower than modelled figures suggested when recommendations were made regarding the primary / secondary ratio with reductions of, for example, £140,000. The Task and Finish group has asked for additional data for budgets over the last 3 years and a clear comparison between the modelled figures and the final 2014/15 budgets across all schools. The assumptions made about the impact of the change to basing secondary low attainment on English or Maths also appear to be flawed and need looking at.

Paul McAteer to check minutes of meeting with Jackie Wright in reference to resource base place figures.

At last meeting Maggie Stacey asked what data is used for primary lower attainment. Atul Lad provided an explanatory paper which was attached in the meeting reports pack.

Growth Fund Outturn – Item is on the agenda for the July Schools Forum meeting. The Task and Finish group will continue to look at this. Local Authority is looking at capital. Nicky Willis asked if there is any flexibility with the 2013-14 capital. Robin Crofts agreed to follow up and suggested that the schools affected should raise this with the School Organisation Group (SOG).

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Membership - Maggie Waller noted there has been a disappointing response from Academies with regard to membership. Those academies that did respond agreed unanimously that Helen Huntley should take up the vacant position. Helen therefore resumes membership as an academy representative.

In addition, those academies that responded agreed unanimously that Jo Rockall, John Constable and Paul McAteer be asked if they are willing to serve a further term of office when theirs end in the summer. They will be asked formally if they wish to do so.

Rajpreet Johal wrote to governors of secondary maintained schools on behalf of the Chair seeking nominations for a maintained school governor representative and no responses were received. This will now go to SASH to find a maintained school member.

Maggie Waller confirmed a joint (LA / Schools Forum) response to the Fair Funding Consultation did go to DfE. Maggie has also received a response on this from the NUT. A copy of the response will be circulated with minutes.

277. PFI

Ruth Bagley presented paper to the Schools Forum on PFI Funding.

3 recommendations were put to the Schools Forum as follows:

- The Forum expresses a view on how the immediate payment of the reserve of £500k should be distributed whether on the basis of the formula or in some other way.
- The Forum agrees to support a review of the overall PFI charge.
- The Forum participates in a consultation on the redistribution of the PFI funding gap to achieve a significant reduction to the figure of £810k on a phased basis.

Maggie Waller welcomed the return of the 13/14 funding to the DSG and suggested that it should be distributed to all schools through the formula as the funding for all schools for 14/15 had been top sliced.

Maggie Stacey suggested that it be used to fund retrospective funding for the Growth Fund in 13/14. Jo Rockall noted that all schools have been top sliced already to provide £1.2 million to the 14/15 Growth Fund.

Helen Huntley asked about special schools and the PRUs if the money went out to all schools via the 5 – 16 formula and it was clarified that the Council's funding for PFI (£300k approx.) is already in the High Needs Block and the £500k is separate.

1st Recommendation:

Forum agreed to vote on the first recommendation above.

- 8 members of the Forum in favour of the 500k being returned through the formula.
- 2 members of the Forum in favour of going through the Growth Fund for 13/14.

The decision was therefore to distribute the £500k to all schools via the 5 – 16 formula.

2nd Recommendation:

It was noted that the total cost of the PFI charge is £2.3m with contributions from the DfE, the 3 PFI schools, the DSG (savings on out borough placements) and the Council's agreement to closing the affordability gap with approximately £800k.

Ruth Bagley noted that there is pressure from Treasury to review PFI contracts and therefore there is government support. She also referred to renegotiations of contracts by other LAs and Jo Rockall asked how successful these had been. This was not known.

Schools Forum supported the recommendation that the Council review the contract with the PFI contractor with a view to renegotiating and reducing the overall cost. It was noted that this would need the engagement of the 3 PFI schools. Debbie Richards and Kathleen Higgins noted the need to be cautious about expectations.

Page 10 of the Schools Forum report pack refers to an original business case. Paul McAteer asked if this was available. Ruth Bagley reported that the Final Business Case had not been located in the Council as yet but would be sought out.

Ruth Bagley referred to the SBC Contracts Manager who would progress this. It was agreed that an initial look at the contract would be done before the next meeting of the Forum in July and a report brought back at that time with options.

3rd Recommendation

This recommendation asks the Forum to participate in a consultation on the redistribution of the PFI funding gap.

The Forum agreed to discuss this again when a further report would come back to the July meeting with modelling included.

Kathleen Higgins asked whose decision it would be regarding any reduction in the Council's PFI contribution. Ruth Bagley indicated that this would be a Cabinet Decision. It was also noted, however, that any decision to take on any further liability within the DSG would be a Schools Forum decision.

278. Schools Forum Operational and Decision Making Framework

Ruth Bagley presented a report on the functioning of the Schools Forum which included a flow chart regarding the operational process and tables setting out the roles and responsibilities of the Schools Forum.

Appendix A shows the roles and responsibilities and Appendix B is the latest version for 2014/15.

Schools Forum noted the process and Maggie Waller agreed to update the Schools Forum Constitution to include the relevant appendices. The Constitution will then be circulated.

279. Cambridge Education

Robin Crofts provided a verbal update:

Further to the review that was undertaken, a stakeholder day has taken place. The review findings will be taken to the Cambridge Education/Local Authority Strategic Partnership Group on 15th May to seek endorsement of the recommendations emerging from the review process. It is hoped to implement recommendations for September 2014.

Robin reported the Local Authority has indicated there may be some issues which need to go to Cabinet.

Cambridge Education is looking to develop traded services.

280. Academies Update

Robin Crofts provided a verbal update:

Parlaunt Park has applied for academy status which has been agreed by government and is sponsored by Langley Academy and is likely to take effect on 1st July 2014.

Nicky Willis reported the Business Manager for Cippenham Schools Trust had attended the recent Academies Show where there were discussions about the impact of Multi Academy Trusts and the possibility that this could lead to more than one member of a Trust on the Schools Forum.

Forum membership was discussed and Robin Crofts agreed to look at Portsmouth set up where this may have had an impact already.

281. 2013 – 14 Work Programme and Key Decisions Log

Noted

282. Any Other Business

July Schools Forum meeting time to be extended to 10.30 as there is a longer agenda.