

## **Slough Schools Forum- Meeting held on Wednesday, 2nd July, 2014**

- Present:** Maggie Waller, Holy Family Primary School (Chair)  
Debbie Richards, Arbour Vale School  
Kathleen Higgins, Beechwood Secondary School  
Helen Huntley, Haybrook College  
Paul McAteer, Slough and Eton C of E Business and Enterprise College  
Jon Reekie, James Elliman Primary School  
Mary Sparrow, Wexham Secondary School  
Maggie Stacey, St Anthony's RC Primary School  
Jo Rockall, Herschel Grammar School  
Angela Mellish, Northampton Diocese  
Jean Cameron, Slough Children's Centres  
Nicky Willis, Cippenham Primary School  
Philip Gregory, Baylis Court Nursery School  
Maggie Waller, Holy Family Primary School (Chair)  
Hardip Singh, Khalsa Primary School
- Observers:** None
- Attendees:** Angela Mellish, Northampton Diocese, Tony Smith (Cambridge Education), Dawn Bailey (Slough Learning Partnership), Eddie Neighbour (Upton Court Grammar School), Jo Matthews (Littledown School)
- Officers:** Ruth Bagley, Julie Pickering and David Banham (for PFI item only).  
Atul Lad, Coral Miller and Rajpreet Johal (Clerk)
- Apologies:** John Constable, Chris Aston, Louise Lund, Barbara Clark, Virginia Barrett, Lynda Bussley, Robin Crofts, Navroop Mehat and Jane Wood

### **PART I**

#### **333. Welcome and Apologies**

Apologies noted from John Constable, Virginia Barrett, Jane Wood, Louise Lund, Robin Crofts, Lynda Bussley, Navroop Mehat and Barbara Clark

Maggie Waller welcomed Ruth Bagley (Chief Executive, Slough Borough Council), Julie Pickering (Interim Assistant Director, Commissioning & Procurement, Slough Borough Council), David Banham (Contracts Manager Children, Young People and Families), Dawn Bailey (Slough Learning Partnership)

#### **334. Declarations of Interest**

None

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

Ruth Bagley advised that the issue of the adverse impact of lagged funding in times of rapid expansion had been raised with the Local Government Association representative.

Atul Lad advised the key dates for the Budget Process 2015/16 have been confirmed. The consultation will go out week commencing 8<sup>th</sup> September with an end date in the first week of October. Formula factors to be submitted to the DfE by the end of October; the final formula to be submitted by January and the Task and Finish group to be reconvened. Rajpreet Johal to email out proposed dates for the Task and Finish group suggesting that the first meeting take place before September with two meetings in December / January.

Paul McAteer noted he has checked minutes of meeting with Jackie Wright in reference to resource base place figures and these were correct.

Paul McAteer also noted that the Slough and Eton 14/15 formula budget allocation was down by £160,000 not £140,000 as indicated in the minutes, despite there being over 40 additional pupils on roll with an overall loss of over £350,000.

#### Page 4

Membership: Maggie Waller reported that Jo Rockall, John Constable and Paul McAteer had all agreed to continue their membership following agreement of academies. As no responses had been received from governors to find a secondary maintained governor member, SASH was asked to find a Headteacher representative. Kathleen Higgins was welcomed to the Forum as that new member. Also SASH endorsed Mary Sparrow continuing as a member.

Primary Head Teachers were asked to nominate a maintained school Headteacher member and a nomination was received instead for a Governor, Carol Pearce, Chair of Governors of Penn Wood School. Maggie Waller had written to maintained primary schools to seek Governor endorsement and Carol will become a substantive member from September.

Barbara Clark is retiring and standing down from Schools Forum. Maggie Waller thanked Barbara for her long and valuable service on the Forum. A replacement will be sought in the autumn term.

Atul Lad reported that the £500,000 PFI contribution being returned to the DSG would be distributed based on pupil numbers to ensure that all schools receive funding. The Forum agreed.

Schools Forum Operational and Decision Making Framework: the updated Schools Forum Constitution was approved.

### **336. PFI**

Julie Pickering provided the Forum with an update on the progress that has been made regarding PFI.

David Banham has located the original Final Business Case and this will be circulated to members of the Schools Forum.

Julie Pickering reported that an initial meeting took place internally with David Banham, the Finance Team and Legal Team to ascertain the way forward. A positive meeting had also been held with QED/Pario (PFI contractor) and the managing agent. A meeting with the Headteachers of the three PFI schools is planned before the end of the summer term.

Julie reported that the DfE has invited SBC to be potentially part of a pilot which could provide pace and additional resources to take forward the review, including legal input. The cost of taking part in the pilot would be met by the LA. And if any of these savings are implemented then DfE are asking for 10% of savings. If successful in being selected the pilot would take place over the next 3 months. Debbie Richards raised concerns re the timing as this is over the summer holiday.

Kathleen Higgins asked for more information on the pilot for members of the Forum and Julie agreed to circulate the information to the Forum.

Julie noted the deadline to confirm to the DfE is the 4<sup>th</sup> July.

The recommendations were:

- The Forum noted the progress made since the last meeting
- The Forum noted that, once any savings have been realised, the remaining affordability funding gap will need to be found on a phased basis from 2015/16. This was noted but with no assumptions about the sources of that funding at this stage e.g. no assumptions about implications for the DSG.
- The Forum confirmed support for SBC participating as one of DfE pilots if successful in being selected.
- Agreed that further updates are provided to the Forum as progress is made with the next updates scheduled for the autumn term: September and October meetings. To be noted on the forward plan.

### **337. SEBDOS**

Jo Matthews introduced the SEBDOS report. The report was brought for information as the service is part funded by de-delegated funding.

Jo advised that the report looks at the charging mechanism that is in place for the provision of the SEBD Outreach Service to schools and academies and provides a proposed change to the fee structure from September 2014. Every school will be provided with information regarding the suggested new SLA. The service will not change but the charging will be fairer and the model will also give an opportunity to sell the service beyond Slough.

Jean Cameron raised the impact on Early Years and it was noted that Jo Matthews is meeting with Early Years regarding the impact on the early years block.

Paul McAteer urged caution in relation to the service trading beyond Slough and the need to ensure that this means no dilution of service.

It was noted that the service is a good quality, multi-disciplinary service.

Helen Huntley referred to the Strategic Support Group and asked Headteachers to let her know if they wish to join.

Schools Forum thanked Jo for bringing the report and it was duly noted.

### **338. Schools Outturn 2013-14 and 2014-15 Budget Plans**

Atul Lad presented the report to update members of the Schools Forum on:

- The balances held at the end of 2013-14 financial year
- The comparison between balances held at the end of the 2012-13 and 2013-14 financial years.

Appendix A of report shows information on schools' outturn. Atul reported that the figures show a decrease in balances of 17%. There had been some amendments made to the figures since the report had been published so an amended Appendix A is to go out with the minutes of this meeting.

Appendix B (Balance Control Mechanism) shows those schools carrying balances which are surplus to the threshold (final column). Discussions are being held with schools regarding plans for these balances and an update will be provided at the September Schools Forum.

Appendix C shows the summary of budgets and how balances are planned to reduce over the year.

Appendix D compares schools' outturn 13/14 and budgets 14/15. It shows expenditure increasing by 6.2% and income only by 1.9%. It was noted that this reflects the reality of pressures on schools' budgets despite government claims that education funding is 'ring-fenced'.

Paul McAteer reported that the Slough and Eton Governing Body is writing to the Chief Executive of the Education Funding Agency (EFA), Peter Lauener to raise concern regarding dropping funding levels despite pupil number increases and when budgets are supposedly ring-fenced.

It was suggested that the Schools Forum should also write to relevant people and bodies: DfE, EFA, local MP, Trades Unions and Leader of the Council. Paul agreed to share the Slough and Eton letter and to draft a letter. Maggie Waller agreed to liaise with Paul on this and to sign the letter on behalf of Schools Forum.

Kathleen noted it needs to be repeatedly stated that schools cannot fund PFI shortfall in the short term.

With regard to balances, Nicky Willis noted that, as more schools become academies, the figures become imbalanced as the report only covers maintained schools. Nicky asked if Schools Forum can ask academies to supply their figures. Forum supported this in the interest of overall transparency. It was agreed that this would be raised at the two Headteacher phase groups in the first instance. Nicky Willis and Paul McAteer agreed to liaise with Atul Lad to clarify exactly what information would be requested as academies' accounts are presented in a different way. It would be necessary to clarify, when asking academies, that the information was being requested to present alongside maintained schools' balances and that this request had the support of academy members of Schools Forum.

### 339. Central Outturn 2013-14

Atul Lad presented report to the Forum on the final outturn for the LA managed budgets funded by the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) for the 2013-14 financial year.

Appendix A show details of each block and has been split out across SBC and Mott Macdonald.

Appendix C shows that there is a £2.9 million underspend but £500,000 needs to be taken out to meet a pensions deficit. It was unclear what the pensions deficit was to fund and Atul Lad will clarify and bring this back to the Forum in September as part of the discussion regarding distribution of the final underspend.

Atul outlined the commitments already in place against the underspend leaving an unallocated amount of £1.3 million.

Coral Miller confirmed that DfE has confirmed that funding can be distributed in-year.

Paul McAteer asked if any further funding was expected to be returned by St Joseph's. It was noted that the original allocation had not been a loan but that substantial amounts had been repaid. Atul Lad is to follow this up.

A number of priority areas were discussed including ensuring that adequate contingencies are built into the three blocks; an element of the funding being distributed to all schools and school improvement, as agreed by Headteachers, as a priority area.

It was agreed that any of the funding later agreed to go to all schools should be distributed based on pupil numbers.

Atul Lad to provide confirmation on final position for September Forum meeting.

It was noted that the underspend on Early Years (two year old funding) was substantial as numbers have not materialised at the rate they might have done but this is changing. Jean Cameron asked that this be given consideration in the discussions going forward. She agreed to provide a paper on this for the September meeting as part of this item.

Tony Smith referred to the year having been atypical since expenditure in the first half of the year had been under auspices of the Council which had been circumspect given the prospect of outsourcing. Expenditure in the second half of the year was Cambridge Education's responsibility. He confirmed, the aim for Cambridge Education was to maximise delegation to schools.

Both Headteacher phase groups will discuss and feed back their priorities for deploying the underspend .

It was agreed that any relevant area (e.g. school improvement and Early Years) should provide a business case for the consideration of Forum at the September meeting and that these should be sent to Atul Lad.

A member asked about support for free school applications and it was noted that the initial support for these had been a one off.

#### **340. Revised Growth Fund 2014-15**

Atul Lad presented report to Schools Forum on the 2014-15 Revised Growth Fund.

Appendix A shows the position for 2014/15 budget, taking account of any underspend and including having received some additional funding from the DfE for academies. This means an underspend of £375,940 available to carry forward into 2015/16.

Appendix B shows estimates for the growth fund allocation for the next three years based on worst case scenarios if responsibility for free schools' growth shifts to LAs instead of the EFA. Concern was noted regarding this and clarification needs to be sought as this estimate suggests that not only expansion above full capacity in free schools might fall under growth fund, but also growth as the free school builds to full capacity from opening. Maggie Waller and Coral Miller to discuss and Coral to confirm.

It was noted that the Growth Fund is currently being deployed in primary as this is where the growth is but the fund was established for both phases and the criteria would apply in secondary as the growth works through.

Schools Forum agreed the recommendation in the report that the underspend of £375,940 be carried forward into the Growth Fund for 2015/16.

#### **341. Confirmation of Final DSG Allocations 2014-15 (subject to DfE notification date)**

Report informs the Schools Forum of the Final DSG allocations. Early Years has still to be updated.

It was noted that the figures are always likely to change in year e.g. because the DfE recoups from the DSG for schools that become academies in year. Updates will be provided to the Forum.

#### **342. Review of Scheme for Financing Schools**

Coral Miller presented a report to Schools Forum. 5 schools responded to the consultation on changes to the Scheme for Financing Schools and there are two adjustments that schools want to make on 2.10 and 2.15 of the Scheme.

A re-drafted paragraph 2.10 was tabled and agreed and this will be included in the final Scheme. This paragraph is simplified to state more clearly what schools must do in respect of purchasing, tendering and contracting.

2.15 of the report has been amended to include a reference to the Headteacher being notified first regarding any potential Notice of Concern.

Cora Miller will also include a reference to guidance regarding fraud which has recently been circulated by Audit.

It was noted that Appendix B to the Scheme needs updating to ensure that it is an accurate and up to date list of maintained schools only. Coral Miller to do this.

Schools Forum formally agreed to the Scheme for Financing Schools being amended as above and as set out in the changes included in the consultation.

Coral Miller will place the final document on the SBC website and the link will be circulated to Schools Forum members.

### **343. Cambridge Education - review of outcomes and financial implications**

Tony Smith provided a verbal update.

- Tony reported that Chris Aston is on sick leave and cover arrangements are being put in place.
- Cambridge Education is reviewing services and responding to Ofsted inspections with the improvement process underway.
- The Early Years team has moved to The Centre for 18 months.
- Integrated support services is being reviewed.
- Access: a review of SEN transport is underway and Debbie Richards and Helen Huntley are involved.
- There may be a School Improvement inspection at any time.
- School Improvement: there has been a meeting with the Chairs of both phase groups regarding a voluntary scheme for monitoring and challenge for academies and this will go to phase groups in September.
- Next Strategic Partnership meeting is scheduled on 14<sup>th</sup> July. Mary Sparrow is representative.
- Mary Sparrow noted concern regarding appeals (resource units) and Tony is to follow up.
- Tony indicated that Cambridge Education is not anticipating higher funding from the LA.

### **344. Academies Update**

Tony Smith reported that Parlaunt Park Primary School became an academy on 1<sup>st</sup> July

### **345. Dates of meetings 2014-15 academic year**

Future meeting dates were noted as outlined on the work programme. The dates are set in line with the financial cycle. Agreed 6<sup>th</sup> May 2015 for the May date.

### **346. 2014-15 Work Programme and Key Decisions Log**

Key Decisions Log is updated after each meeting. Maggie Waller is to put together a new log starting from the September meeting. Nicky Willis noted that her full membership confirmation has not been noted on the log. The updated log will be circulated with the minutes.

**347. Any Other Business**

None

(Note: The Meeting opened at 8.15 am and closed at 10.20 am)