

## Slough Schools Forum – Meeting held on Wednesday, 25<sup>th</sup> March 2015

- Present:** Maggie Waller, Holy Family Primary School (Chair)  
John Constable, Langley Grammar (Vice-Chair)  
Gillian Coffey, Lynch Hill Primary School  
Philip Gregory, Baylis Court Nursery School  
Kathleen Higgins, Beechwood Secondary School  
Helen Huntley, Haybrook College  
Paul McAteer, Slough and Eton C of E Business & Enterprise College  
Navroop Mehat, Wexham Court Primary School  
Angela Mellish, St Bernard's Grammar School  
Debbie Richards, Arbour Vale School  
Jo Rockall, Herschel Grammar School  
Hardip Singh, Khalsa Primary School  
Nicky Willis, Cippenham Primary School  
Jean Cameron, Slough Children's Centres
- Observers:** Sally Eaton, Eddie Neighbour
- Officers:** Samantha Taylor, Coral Miller, Paul Wilson, Nandita Sirker and Joanne Cooke, Robin Crofts (Cambridge Education), Tony Smith (Cambridge Education)
- Apologies:** Jon Reekie, Virginia Barrett, Matt Redwood, Lynda Bussley and Jane Wood

### PART I

#### 396. Apologies

Apologies were received from Virginia Barrett, Jon Reekie, Lynda Bussley, Matt Redwood and Jane Wood.

Introductions were made around the table and Maggie Waller welcomed Sally Eaton to the meeting as an observer, with a view to taking on the role of member representing the PVI's. Maggie Waller also welcomed Joanne Cooke as the new Clerk and thanked Samantha Taylor for her support as Clerk at the last meeting.

Jean Cameron leaves the Forum today and Maggie Waller thanked her for her valuable contributions and support to both the Schools Forum and the Early Years Task and Finish Group over many years and wished her well.

Maggie advised that a new member to represent Children's Centres was being sought. (*Since advised: Emma Slaughter, Interim Head of Children's Centres*).

#### 397. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

398.

### **Minutes of Previous Meeting – 14<sup>th</sup> January 2015**

Maggie Waller informed the Forum that the PFI Task and Finish Group had been cancelled as it was not adding value at this stage. It could be rescheduled at a later date. Kathleen Higgins reported that no meetings with the PFI schools had yet been held.

It was reported that the £500,000 previously removed from the DSG in 2014/15 in respect of PFI has been returned and will be distributed to all schools and academies imminently. The £500,000 for 2015/16, removed in error, will also be returned to schools and Coral Miller will provide more information on this at the May 2015 meeting

Maggie Waller added that The Early Years Group met in February and is due to meet again in June.

Coral Miller informed the Forum that the additional monies nett of pensions had gone out to schools and that academies are getting direct allocations. Paul McAteer mentioned that academy Heads met with representatives from the Berkshire Pensions regarding value for money and it had been clarified that there is no option but to be in this scheme.

Paul McAteer suggested that it would be a useful task for the Task and Finish group to look at the differences between the modelling it used as the basis for recommendations, compared to final academies' budgets. Coral Miller agreed to provide each academy with the information sent to the EFA by SBC. John Constable, Paul McAteer, Jo Rockall and Nicky Willis agreed that they would then look at this against their final budgets and bring their analysis to the next Task and Finish group (in June). Coral also agreed to send this information as a matter of course in future years.

Nicky Willis reported having met with Jo Mathews to discuss the unit cost split between primary and secondary Schools for SEBDOS de-delegated funds. It appeared that SEBDOS funding is currently allocated with two thirds to primary schools and one third to secondary schools. Robin Crofts explained that the allocation of funding had been based in the past on the patterns of work across phases. Helen Huntley suggested that she and Jo Mathews provide a written proposal for the Task and Finish group to inform an equitable split.

Jo Rockall reported that SASH had written to SBC regarding the Looked After Children Pupil Premium and concerns about the retained element of this. She agreed to share the response with Schools Forum members. Nicky Willis reported that Ruth Bagley had attended SPHA and that primary Headteachers supported the SASH response.

The Minutes were approved.

**399. Commissioning of Places in Special Settings**

Paul Wilson presented a short paper on SEN Commissioned Places 2015-16. This included numbers of top ups. It was noted that the data used for the spreadsheet is sourced from DfE. There was some discussion about the accuracy of the figures and Nandita Sinker agreed to check. It was noted that Post 16 places are not funded from the DSG but direct from the EFA.

Paul drew attention to paragraph 3.13 which shows a potential forecast increase in primary of 6% and in secondary of 4% for 2016-2017.

Nandita Sinker suggested looking into more recent data in more detail. She suggested that a comparison between the figures in the report and work carried out recently by Alex Bowman would be a useful exercise; this information could then be circulated to the Schools' Forum. Nandita noted that there should be an annual review of places. It was agreed that a report would come to the Schools Forum in the autumn with updated figures. Philip Gregory asked that nursery places be included in future.

Nandita Sinker explained that both she and Paul Wilson are interims with SBC and will eventually leave SBC and, in the medium term, they are looking to recruit permanent members of staff to replace them. Whilst the quality of staff is high, Schools Forum expressed concern about the lack of continuity in staffing and the impact this has. Forum welcomed the plans to replace on a permanent basis. It was agreed that the Chair and Vice Chair would write to SBC to express this.

**400. High Needs Block 2015/16**

Coral Miller presented a paper outlining the budget of £21,503,815 which includes a contingency for growth figure of just over £600,000 which was carried forward from 2014. Nandita Sinker said that a business case will be made to the DfE to seek additional funding as there is a higher need than predicted. Coral Miller said that the budget was vulnerable as there is this reliance on carry forward which may not be available in future years. It was suggested that bands may have to be revisited.

Helen Huntley expressed concern of the impact this could have on special settings and their ability to meet needs, particularly in Alternative Provision. There the DfE had raised the base line funding from £8,000 to £10,000 but the top ups have decreased already by the same amount so that there has been no improvement in the funding.

There was discussion about the centrally retained budgets.

Debbie Richards asked why there was no reference to speech and language funding on the breakdown (Appendix A). Nandita Sinker explained that it is within the figure for mainstream support for pupils with sensory needs.

A detailed breakdown of the £206,700 for direct educational support for looked after children and the Virtual Head Service was requested and Coral Miller will provide a breakdown on this.

Maggie Waller asked about the sum of £149,491 labelled as Non Controllable. Coral Miller explained that these are indirect costs for a share of SBC overheads, building costs etc and were the same as last year.

Helen Huntley questioned the figure of £130,995 for Education provision other than at School at Haybrook and said that this does not go to Haybrook. Coral Miller will clarify and provide detail.

Kathleen Higgins expressed concern that monies should not simply be put into contingency but be spent on pupils. Nandita Sirker explained that the contingency fund was there for issues such as tribunals and agreed that how the contingency was spent should be more transparent. Coral Miller will provide a more detailed breakdown.

Robin Crofts is producing a paper outlining the centrally retained funds for Cambridge Education for the Forum meeting in May and it was agreed that additional detail on the SBC budgets also be included in that report.

#### **401. Early Years Centrally Held DSG 2015/16**

Coral Miller presented a paper and two appendices outlining the 2015/16 Early Years centrally held budget and a summary of the whole Early Years block budget 2015/16 including forecast growth.

Nicky Willis asked if the funding for Early Years behaviour support goes to SEBDOS and it was noted that it does. The centrally held budgets were agreed.

Coral Miller explained that the surplus and shortfall figure of -£682,472 on Appendix B – Draft Estimate Early Year Block Budget Reconciliation - is expected to be paid by the DfE in June.

#### **402. Slough Learning Partnership/Local Authority/Cambridge Education Joint Proposal for School Development – 2015/16**

A report was circulated to the Forum entitled School Improvement Provision. This report had been published as a supplementary item for the agenda.

John Constable explained that this was a joint report from the LA, SLP and Cambridge Education. He explained that this paper is for information: providing background; clarifying roles and responsibilities and setting out proposals for the future. There will be a more detailed discussion at the next Forum when Cambridge Education will report specific figures. John drew attention to a number of sections of the report including page 4 which explains proposed support for school

improvement and school development from September 2015 onwards and page 3 which defines both terms.

Tony Smith explained that Cambridge Education is responsible for the LA statutory school improvement service and provides 'intervention' but not support. It was agreed the message should be kept consistent and should be referred to as providing "intervention".

It was noted that any possible reduction in the sum required by Cambridge Education could be redistributed to schools. Robin Crofts erred caution in that any such reduction in central funding cannot be reversed at a later date.

John Constable explained that funding streams for the SLP (page 7 of the report) were based on an assumption of no carry forward from last year and that if there was a carry forward that would minimise the need to come to Schools Forum seeking additional funding.

Maggie Waller said that the report was very helpful in defining the relevant parties' responsibilities and roles and a useful basis for the next report in May.

#### **403. Review of Cost of Provision**

A paper on the independent review of the cost of provision in schools and academies was circulated. Carrying out a review had been proposed at the January Task and Finish Group and endorsed by Cabinet. The aim, as outlined in the paper, is to understand the costs of provision across a range of types and size of school and academy in Slough.

Maggie Waller and John Constable met with Ruth Bagley and Coral Miller on Monday, 23rd March. There had been work done to identify potential appropriate providers for such a piece of research e.g. the London School of Economics, an education consultancy and Henley Business College. Nandita also suggested Birkbeck College Research as a possible provider. In addition, the DfE is carrying out a large piece of work to look at costs and efficiencies in schools and Maggie Waller has been in touch to suggest that Slough would be a good place to carry out field work.

The timescale for the review would be the end of April to tender and the work to be carried out in June - July. It was noted that the aim is to have the work complete for the autumn to enable Schools Forum and the LA to be best placed to respond to any future DfE consultations on a national funding formula.

This research will be funded from the Schools Forum budget and it is estimated that the cost should not be more than £15,000.

Maggie Waller explained that the work would be jointly commissioned. However, Ruth Bagley had suggested that this could be done through LA procurement. Nandita Sirker said that she will have a conversation with the Procurement Department. It was noted that, if there was any

potential delay in procurement, Schools Forum could procure through one of its members as has been done previously.

Maggie Waller asked the Forum to consider the paper, which would be circulated electronically following the meeting, and to discuss with colleagues and get back to her by 17<sup>th</sup> April with any comments. Nicky Willis and Jo Rockall agreed to circulate to the two Headteacher phase groups.

Maggie Waller referred to a recent debate by the Association of School and College Leaders (ACSL) at its March conference on the gap in schools' funding between the best and worst-funded schools. Information can be found here:

[http://www.ascl.org.uk/news-and-views/news\\_news-detail.gap-between-best-and-worst-funded-schools-equivalent-to-40-teachers.html](http://www.ascl.org.uk/news-and-views/news_news-detail.gap-between-best-and-worst-funded-schools-equivalent-to-40-teachers.html)

Maggie Waller also referred to the recent publication by the DfE of an analysis of LAs' schools block funding formulae 2015 - 2016. This is useful information allowing members to see how Slough compares to others and how the local formula is made up. This information can be found here:

[https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/schools-block-funding-formulae-2015-to-2016?utm\\_source=EFA%20e-bulletin&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=e-bulletin&mxmroi=2305-13333-21679-0](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/schools-block-funding-formulae-2015-to-2016?utm_source=EFA%20e-bulletin&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=e-bulletin&mxmroi=2305-13333-21679-0)

#### **404. Cambridge Education**

Tony Smith explained that, as Slough has a below average percentage of primary schools that have been identified by Ofsted as Good or Outstanding, Cambridge Education is continuing to work to get schools to a stronger place. He indicated that there is a possibility of scrutiny by Ofsted of School Improvement.

The Ofsted Inspection of Slough Children's Centres in March 2014 was graded Inadequate. Five Ofsted inspectors visited Children's Centres last week and initial verbal feedback was positive. Whilst there is some distance to travel, significant progress has been made since 2014. The formal report will be available in two to three weeks (*now available on the Ofsted website*).

School attendance has been very good over the last eighteen months but with a small drop in attendance in the autumn term in both phases and this is currently being reviewed.

A higher number of families have been allocated their first preferences in the recent admissions process for secondary schools: 72%, up from 62% previously.

Transport costs: contractual arrangements are being reviewed, with the Local Authority and Cambridge Education looking at efficiencies.

**405. Academies Update**

Nationally, there is little activity in terms of conversion before purdah (which begins on Friday 27<sup>th</sup> March). It was noted that the government appears keen to convert a school in Norfolk to an academy prior to purdah but this was unlikely to be possible.

**406. Work Programme and Key Decisions Log**

The Work Programme and Key Decisions Log were noted.

**407. AOB**

Maggie Waller informed the Forum that Schools Forum induction training has been arranged for 17<sup>th</sup> April at 10.00am at Langley Hall Primary Academy. All those who attend Schools Forum and any substitutes that have been approved by Forum are welcome to attend. Anyone who has not notified Maggie Waller that they wish to attend was asked to do so as soon as possible.

Membership: an analysis of pupil numbers in academies and schools had been done following the January pupil census. In order to reflect the higher number of pupils being educated in academies, the Schools Forum vacancies that need to be filled are for 2 primary and 1 secondary academy member. John Constable is to write to academy proprietors seeking nominations.

(Note: The Meeting opened at 8.15 a.m. and closed and 9.50 a.m.)