

SLOUGH SCHOOLS' FORUM
23rd September 2015

School Improvement Savings suggested allocation 2015-16
(Directorate of Wellbeing)

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To inform Schools' Forum that savings of £308k have been identified in the centrally-retained budgets from School Improvement in 2015-16.
- 1.2 To ask Schools' Forum for permission to use £200k of these savings to contribute to the Council's funding of the schools' PFI scheme. Leaving any remainder to go into the 2016-17 budget to increase the lump sum so that all schools receive a share.
- 1.3 To ask Schools' Forum for permission to use £35,000 of these savings to support Our Lady of Peace Infant and Nursery School and Our Lady of Peace Junior School in amalgamating to establish an all-through primary school. The funding would be used as follows:
 - Appointment of a Project Manager to plan and lead on the consultation and amalgamation process
 - Temporary appointment of support to enable the release of the School Business Manager (SBM) from her normal role in order that she can lead on the operational side of the amalgamation
 - Release of Headteacher for half a day a week to liaise with the SBM
 - HR support in the TUPE arrangement for transferring current staff to the new all-through Primary school

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 It is recommended that these savings be used in this way for the following reasons:
 - The Council has made savings of over £31m over the past three years and is required to deliver further savings of 35% of its budget over the next four years. With these planned future cuts it is now making it difficult for the Council to carry on funding this commitment.
 - Each year the LA will continue to come to the Schools' Forum to gain approval for the centrally held items and in that meeting the School Forum can change the proposal. This is therefore a one year commitment.
 - The amalgamation of Our Lady of Peace Infant and Nursery School and Our Lady of Peace Junior School to form an all-through primary school would benefit the schools as follows:
 - Consistent leadership and management across key stages through one Headteacher and one Governing Body
 - Continuity and consistency for teaching and learning and achievement
 - Strengthened 'tracking' of pupil learning and achievement

- Staff retention, recruitment and development opportunities with greater scope for more efficient deployment of staff and resources
- More cost effective use of resources by creating economies of scale with a greater proportion of the School's budget available for teaching and learning
- Improved relationships with pupils, parents and the school throughout their primary education

3 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1.1 The Council is facing significant pressures to balance its budget under the current financial constraint from central Government. Savings are required of £34m over the next four years.
- 3.1.2 The Council has been innovative in reducing its budget in recent years with a variety of transformation and efficiency schemes to deliver savings. However, the 2015-16 budget contained significant disinvestment, and in light of the financial planning assumptions, this will continue over the medium term.
- 3.1.3 Non-ringfenced grants, like the Education Services Grant (ESG), have been reduced year on year by the DfE, as well as also being reduced by Academy conversions. The Council currently does not link education-related spend to the ESG; if it did, there would be significant reductions to education-related support services to Schools.
- 3.1.4 The schools' and Academies' budget has remained relatively stable with a maximum yearly reduction of £1.5%.
- 3.1.5 The Local Authority is asking the School's Forum to assist the Council in achieving its savings plans to ensure as many priority services, including those to Schools, can continue to be delivered.

4 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1.1 Slough Learning Partnership has provided an alternative proposal (see appendix A). The Local Authority feels that if Schools' Forum chooses this option then the budget will be delegated to the Schools via the 2016-17 budget and the SLP can then arrange a trading agreement between the schools directly.
- 4.1.2 An alternative option for the Local Authority is to passport this money to the High Needs Block because in the 2016-17 July guidance, the DfE will no longer have a mechanism for Local Authorities to apply for growth funding for places. Currently the shortfall is approx. £2m. Cabinet has asked that the budget be balanced as the Council is not in a position to subsidise the shortfall.

5 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 5.1 Not applicable.

6 ADVICE RECEIVED FROM STATUTORY AND OTHER OFFICERS

Borough Solicitor

- 6.1 The relevant legal provisions are contained within the main body of this report.

Section 151 Officer – Strategic Director of Resources

6.2 The financial implications of the report are outlined in the supporting information.

Access Implications

6.3 There are no access implications.

7 CONSULTATION

Principal Groups Consulted

7.1 None.

Method of Consultation

7.2 Not applicable.

Representations Received

7.3 Not applicable.

Contact for further information

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