

**SLOUGH SCHOOLS' FORUM**  
**12<sup>th</sup> January 2016**

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**Growth Fund 2016-17 – Increased class size funding mechanism**  
**(Directorate of Wellbeing)**

**1 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 To seek approval from Schools Forum for a mechanism for funding additional school places over and above the existing Planned Admissions Number of schools, when requested by Slough to meet Basic Need requirements.

**2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 That the funding mechanism described in section 5.3 is approved.
- 2.2 The funding is contained within the previously approved Growth Fund envelope for 2015-16.

**3 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 Slough continues to have an increasing pupil population from inward migration alongside a rising population from increased birth levels. There are limited places available in most statutory year groups and new arrivals may not be offered a suitable place without schools increasing their class sizes.
- 3.2 Options for creating new bulge classes are all but exhausted. Larger classes can provide flexibility by being created as and when required in the area of the town where they are most required.

**4 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

- 4.1 The proposed mechanism for funding pupils above PAN are based on the principle that costs to the Growth Fund should be minimised as this is a limited fund while ensuring that schools are adequately funded for the extra pupils they admit.
- 4.2 Initially the policy of funding pupils over their PAN was limited to primary schools but this has been extended to secondary schools as there is a similar pressure on places for years 9, 10 and 11.

## **5 SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

5.1 Following a consultation by Slough last year on the option of expanding primary class sizes to 32, it was agreed this was a suitable option for addressing the current pressure on school places. As part of the consultation schools were asked if their school would consider having larger classes and the main feedback from those who were willing was that revenue funding would be required. In some cases capital funding was also requested.

5.2 In response to this feedback a paper was taken to School Forum on 9<sup>th</sup> December 2015 to request approval to provide revenue funding in the form of Age Weighted Pupil Unit (AWPU) for the additional pupils admitted by schools at the request of the Local Authority. Funding was approved and out of the discussion at Schools Forum came a request that the same funding principles are explored for secondary schools.

### **5.3 Funding Mechanism**

Schools will receive AWPU funding at 2015-16 level for 'the period' that they make each 'additional place' available at the request of Slough.

Additional Place – this is a school place that is over and above the PAN for that year group; it is also higher than the number of pupils in that year group as at the October Census for that academic year. This definition avoids double funding pupils, as schools will receive funding for the number on roll reported as part of this Census.

The Period - this will be agreed in units of whole terms as a minimum except in the first term which may already have started. This will allow revenue funding to be provided near the start of each term and avoid the need for claw back.

Agreement – the funding is not retrospective and will only apply where it is agreed by Slough that funding will be provided in advance.

### **5.4 Academies**

There is an issue with funding of academies between April and August as the EFA funds Academies from April to August in arrears. The mechanism for claiming this funding is in January 2016 at budget build time via the APT. Any decisions to create places after this date cannot be recouped from the EFA.

In order to include new places on the APT form, the number of new places and the school names need to be known in advance. At this stage we do not know how many places we need and where we need them, this will be dependent on the rate and nature of applications received going forward.

This issue will be raised with the EFA by Slough Borough Council as this will deter some schools and it will affect Slough's ability to create the places needed to meet our basic need requirements.

#### **5.5 Non-Academies**

As currently happens with bulge classes, the Growth Fund will support non-Academy schools from September to March, thereafter funding is provided via the next School Census in October. This is because Non-Academies are funded April to March.

#### **5.5 Affordability**

Currently there remains £203K available in the 2015-16 Growth Fund for funding further new places. On average each new place created via larger classes will cost:

- £530 to the end of March for both Academies and Non-Academies, assuming a place is available for 2 full months.

### **6 ADVICE RECEIVED FROM STATUTORY AND OTHER OFFICERS**

#### Borough Solicitor

- 6.1 Local Authorities are under a statutory duty to ensure that there are sufficient school places in their area, ensure fair access to educational opportunity and promote the fulfilment of every child's educational potential.

#### 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 School Organisation Group (SOG) and Slough Schools Education Forum (SSEF).

### Method of Consultation

- 7.2 Consultation was emailed to all SOG and SSEF members on 6<sup>th</sup> January 2016 and responses were requested within 2 days.

### Representations Received

- 7.3 Responses were still being received at the time this report was being submitted, a verbal update will be given to Schools Forum on the day.

- All responses received by schools to date were in favour of the mechanism.
- A high number of queries were received regarding the statement that funding would not be provided for academies between April and August, the explanation is included in para 5.4. above.

### **8** Background Papers

None

### Contact for further information

Coral Miller (Principal Accountant, ECS)  
(01753 477209)  
[coral.miller@slough.gov.uk](mailto:coral.miller@slough.gov.uk)

Tony Madden (Principal Asset Manager)  
(01753 875739)  
[tony.madden@slough.gov.uk](mailto:tony.madden@slough.gov.uk)