

EDUCATION CONSULTATIVE FORUM

24 SEPTEMBER 2003

Chair:	* Councillor Stephenson	
Councillors:	* Mrs Bath * Miss Bednell * Gate	* Miles (3) † Janet Mote * Ray
Teachers' Constituency	* Mr R Borman * Ms H Cowgill † Ms C Gembala	Mr P Large † Ms S Carnan * Ms P Langdon
Governors' Constituency	* Ms H Henshaw	* Mrs C Millard Ms H Solanki
Elected Parent Governor Representatives	Mr Epie	* Mr Sutcliffe
Denominational Representatives	† Rev P Reece	* Mrs Rammelt
Arts Culture Harrow Representatives	† Mr Pullinger	Mr V Gresty

* Denotes Member present
(3) Denote category of Reserve Member
† Denotes apologies received

PART I – RECOMMENDATIONS**RECOMMENDATION 1 – Public Library Position Statements**

The Forum received the report of the Library Services Manager on Public Library Position Statements. The Officer informed Members that the Department of Culture, Media, and Sport (DCMS) no longer required the submission of the lengthier Annual Library Plan but now required a more succinct Public Library Position Statement. The Officer drew the Forum's attention to section 3.1 of the position statement that outlined areas where the Council had already met the standards required and areas for which improvement was needed.

A Member of the Governors Constituency noted and commended the detail of the position statement and in particular praised the drive towards improving opening hours and access to all libraries. This was endorsed by a Member of the Teachers constituency who also welcomed the focus on encouraging books for reading, not simply for educational purposes. The Chair thanked the Library Services Manager for his hard work and welcomed the extra funds that had allowed the provision of increase book stock, refurbishment and many of the exciting activities held by the Libraries across the Borough, such as children's activities.

A Member expressed concern that there were no concrete plans for a central Library that had been hoped for. The Member urged that this issue not be overlooked in any major developments emphasising that libraries were often a first point of public contact for Council Services. The Chair advised that there was a hope of a new cultural centre that could house a new library, with an exhibition and performance spaces. Members were also informed that consultants were already working on a new town centre development.

There were a number of queries regarding the provision of books in other languages. Members were informed that this had been addressed in the report and that there was already a wide selection of books available in a wide variety of languages in libraries. In response to a query from the Member, the Library Services Manager agreed to look into the provision and figures of use for Bengali texts in local Libraries. The Officer also confirmed to the Forum that local collections were targeted at local needs.

The Library Services Manager reported that in addition to the I.T facilities currently available for users, a recent initiative 'What's in London's Libraries' had been launched which detailed stock across the capital and advised Members that Harrow would soon also be part of this database. A Member commented favourably on the ability for users to access library catalogues online and renew loans by the end of the year. In response

to a query from a Member, the Chair also advised the Forum that the possibility of Sunday opening for libraries was being investigated and costed. (see also Minute 75)

Following further discussion the Forum endorsed the draft Public Library Position Statement and

RESOLVED to recommend (to Cabinet) the above comments for consideration

REASON: As requested in the Officer report

RECOMMENDATION 2 – School Term Dates

The Forum received the report of the Interim Director of Education. Members were reminded that the Forum consults annually on School Term Dates and that they were now looking at the dates for 2005-2006. Members were advised that the Association of London Government (ALG), were keen to achieve consistency in school dates across the capital and were considering the viability of the standard school year. As a result a consultation was being undertaken by the ALG. Members were asked to consider the establishment of a working group in Harrow which would have two functions, firstly to consult annually on term dates, secondly to consider the principle of a move towards the standard school year.

The Parent Support and Information Service Manager informed the Forum that if the ALG did not achieve a consensus of two thirds or more in its consultation of the London authorities then a working group would be convened to make recommendations on school term dates for 2005/6. The Officer explained that the Standard School year centred around 6 equal teaching blocks with a fixed Spring break, regardless of when Easter actually falls. The group would report to the Forum in February before reporting to Cabinet. Ultimately, each authority retained the right to decide whether it wished to be part of the standard school year, regardless of the outcome of any review. (see also Minute 71)

After further discussion the Forum resolved that a Working Party of 5 Members be established consisting of the following representatives:

Russell Sutcliffe (Parent Governor representative)
Sheila Carnan (Head teacher representative)
Mr Borman (Trade Union representative)
Ms Christine Millard (Governor representative)
Mrs Rammelt (Denominational representative)
Ms Christine Bednell (Councillor)

Resolved to RECOMMEND (to Portfolio Holder):

That a working Party be convened to undertake annual consultation on term dates and to seek views on a standard school year from 2005-2006 onwards and that the composition be reviewed annually.

REASON: To contribute Harrow's views to the ALG consultation process

PART II - MINUTES

61. **Welcome:**
The Chair welcomed all Members of the Forum to the meeting. Introductions were made by all Councillors, Officers, Teacher, Governors and Denominational Representatives. The Chair suggested that it would be useful for names to be displayed on the tables in front of all Members of the Forum.
- RESOLVED:** That a set of name displays be provided at future meetings of the Forum.
62. **Apologies:**
- RESOLVED:** To note that apologies had been received from Councillor Janet Mote, Ms Gembala (HTCC Representative), Ms S Carnan (HTCC Representative), Reverend Reece (Denominational Representative) and Mr Pullinger (Arts Culture Harrow Representative).
63. **Attendance by Reserve Members:**
- RESOLVED:** To note the attendance of the following duly appointed Reserve Member:
- | | |
|------------------------|-----------------------|
| <u>Ordinary Member</u> | <u>Reserve Member</u> |
|------------------------|-----------------------|

Councillor Thammaiah

Councillor Miles

64. **Declarations of Interest:**

RESOLVED: To note that there were no declarations of interests made by Members in relation to the business transacted at this meeting.

65. **Arrangement of Agenda:**

RESOLVED: That all items be considered with the press and public present.

66. **Minutes:**

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 26 June 2003 be signed as a correct record.

67. **Matters Arising:****Minute 51: Appointment of Vice Chair:**

The Forum was advised of the approval by Cabinet of the Recommendation from the Education Consultative Forum to amend the Terms of Reference to allow the appointment of a Vice Chair from the non-councillor participants of the Forum. Members were advised that the Recommendation was due to go to Council in October for final approval.

A Member of the Governors constituency reported that the Teachers and Governors constituencies had now met and agreed a process for appointing a Vice Chair from among themselves, (subject to the approval of the Recommendation by Council). The Vice Chair position would be alternated between the Governor and Teachers constituencies on a yearly basis and the representative, when acting in their capacity as Vice-Chair, would be acting in a neutral capacity. The Forum was informed that Heather Henshaw would be nominated to act as Vice Chair for the 2003-4 Municipal Year.

Minute 56: Schools Budget Update:

A Member of the Teachers Constituency raised concerns that a number of specific points raised at the last meeting had not been included in the minutes or that they appeared in a vague form. The Chair advised Members that the minutes had been circulated to two representatives from both the Teachers and Governors Constituencies for comments. A Member of the Governors Constituency confirmed that these processes were in place and there were opportunities to make amendments to the minutes.

Minute 60: Dates of Future Meetings of Governors Working Party

A Member of the Forum enquired as to whether the HTCC were still meeting or whether they felt the main Forum was meeting their needs. The Chair advised the Member that the Teachers group had adopted an, 'as and when' approach to their constituency group meetings.

RESOLVED: (1) To note the progress of the recommendation and the nomination of Ms Heather Henshaw to be appointed as Vice-Chair of the Forum, subject to the approval of the recommendation by Cabinet;

68. **Public Questions:**

RESOLVED: To note that there were no public questions to be received at this meeting under the provisions of Advisory Panel and Consultative Forum Procedure Rule 15 (Part 4E of the Constitution).

69. **Petitions:**

RESOLVED: To note that there were no petitions to be received at this meeting under the provisions of Advisory Panel and Consultative Forum Procedure Rule 13 (Part 4E of the Constitution).

70. **Deputations:**

RESOLVED: To note that there were no deputations to be received at this meeting under the provisions of Advisory Panel and Consultative Forum Procedure Rule 14 (Part 4E of the Constitution).

71. **School Term Dates:**

The Director of Strategy, (People First) informed Members that the ALG had already undertaken a consultation on the standard school year and were keen to move in this

direction but required the support of the Local Education Authorities. Members were advised that in many respects a move to the standard school year could be seen as a move toward the 6 term year. In response to a query from a Member the Officer confirmed that all religious festivals would be taken into consideration in any consultation and the Chair advised that guidelines existed on leave of absence, which made reference to religious holidays.

The Chair informed the Forum that a number of Trade Union concerns surrounding this issue had now been resolved. Concerns were raised that a holistic approach be adopted to any changes in school term dates to include changes that might have a knock-on effect in this area such as any changes in exam timetables or curriculum. In particular the need to avoid reducing syllabus completion time was emphasised. A Member of the Teachers Constituency also expressed concern that any movement toward a standard school year, be at a minimum a London wide undertaking. The need to synchronise with areas such as Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire was also emphasised.

A Member expressed concern that all issues currently under consideration be taken into account during any consultation of the school year. (See also recommendation 2)

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

72. **Schools Budget Update:**

The Forum received a verbal update from the Education Financial Services Manager on budget developments since the previous meeting. The Officer advised Members that the Secretary of State for Education had now reversed the decision to end Standards Funds from April 2004. The government had committed themselves to finding an extra £400million to finance this over the next 2 years. Consequently Members were informed that there would be additional money in the Harrow medium term revenue budget strategy that had previously been allocated to the financing of the Standards Funds. The Educational Financial Services Manager also advised that there would be a minimum funding guarantee per pupil and that it had been decided to limit funding increases on the central items within the schools budget such as special educational needs, Education out of school and admissions.

The Officer informed the Forum that the Government had brought forward the announcement on the Schools Budget to the 31 December. This meant Officers were working to a tight timescale. Councillor Stephenson and Councillor Dighe had already met with Officers to review the situation. The proposed budget would go to December Cabinet. The Officer advised that she would give a presentation on the proposed schools budget to all Members of Education Consultative Forum, the Lifelong learning Scrutiny Committee and the Schools Forum before December Cabinet and the committees would have to meet to refer any comments to Cabinet in the following week. The Director of Strategy (People First) advised that both he and the Director of Education would be available to attend these meetings to gather views and answer questions.

RESOLVED: (1) That the Educational Financial Services Manager give a presentation to all Members of Education Consultative Forum, Lifelong Learning sub committee and the Schools Forum in the week before the December Cabinet meeting and that these groups convene afterwards to make recommendations Cabinet;

(2) that a Special meeting of the Education Consultative Forum be scheduled to discuss the Budget following the above presentation.

73. **Workforce Agreement Steering Group:**

The Forum received a verbal update from the Senior Education Adviser on the Workforce Agreement Steering group. The Officer advised that the requirement of Teachers not routinely carrying out any of the '24 tasks' was now statutory. The 10% planning, preparation and assessment time was not statutory until September 2005 and the reduction in cover time was also not obligatory at this time.

The Local Education Authority had been asked to identify 'early adapters' and 'sure starters'. The LEA had collated the following data on schools where teachers were no longer carrying out the '24 tasks'. Across Harrow there were 26% schools for which the officers had no reply, 11% that didn't have a plan to implement the legislation, 53% that had moved toward implementation and had a plan and 36% where the legislation had been fully implemented. This was a larger number than in other LEAs.

Members learnt that the Workforce Agreement Steering Group had now been established and had met once. The Officer group had met a number of times and all officers were attending training that would enable them to give guidance in this area. A

Member of the Teachers Constituency thanked the Officer for his work and enquired whether there was a similar picture in both Primary and Secondary Education. The Officer responded that it was very similar. In response to a query from another Member the Officer agreed to circulate the membership list of the steering group and confirmed that the terms of reference of the Steering Group included monitoring the implementation and maintenance of standards of staff.

RESOLVED: that the Senior Adviser Education circulate the Workforce Agreement Steering Group Membership to all members of the Education Consultative Forum.

74. **School Re-Organisation and post 16 in Harrow:**

The Forum received a verbal update from the Director of People First Strategy on both possible changes to the age of school transfer and post-16 arrangements in Harrow.

The Officer advised Members that changes to the age of school transfer were subject to a consultation process that had yet to take place. He reminded Members that the previous PFI bid had been unsuccessful and explained that Officers had met with Department for Education and Skills (DfES) to discuss resourcing and the next round of bids. The Forum were informed that DfES priorities for 2005/6 were centred around low performance schools, 'failing' schools and high levels of deprivation and that consequently Harrow may not be successful in a bid given these priorities.

The Officer expressed his disappointment at the failure of the DfES to recognise Harrow's case in 2002/3 but confirmed that there was still the intention to recommend to Cabinet that a bid be prepared for what is available at the next round under each category. The Officer outlined the different rounds of bids available and advised that Harrow were expecting to be allocated a funding year from 2006/7 onwards under the new capital guidelines. The Officer advised that any bid estimate would be adjusted for building inflation each year. The new capital funding year arrangements were welcomed by a Member of the Governors constituency as a more efficient approach.

The Director of People First Strategy outlined progress made on post-16 to date. The Forum learnt that the report on this was going to October Cabinet. This detailed progress in this area following the establishment of a Joint Cabinet and Learning and Skills Council Steering Group. In addition an Advisory Group, chaired by the Executive Director of People First and the Executive Director of London West Learning and Skills Council would advise the Steering Group. The report recommends that the Council proceed with a stakeholder survey to take place between October and January with a report going to February Cabinet to decide what they recommend to the LWLSC as Harrow's choice. The Chair informed Members that Cabinet had adopted a list of principles by which it would judge responses

In response to a query from a Member of the Governors constituency the Director of People First Strategy advised that ultimately the decision on post-16 provision lay with the LWLSC and that Cabinet would need to represent the views of Harrow to them. However he advised the Forum that the London West Learning and Skills Council were working with Harrow on this and there was recognition that there are areas of deficiency of provision in Harrow.

75. **Public Library Position Statement:**

The Forum received the report of the Library Services Manager on Public Library Position Statements. The Officer informed Members that the object of these position statements was to show how English public library authorities intended to shape and deliver their library services. The Plan is to be assessed and verified by external auditors to verify the factual accuracy of the statements following the submission of the position statement to the DCMS and the return of the assessment.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted (see also recommendation 1)

(Note: The meeting having commenced at 7.32 pm, closed at 9.43 pm)

(Signed) COUNCILLOR BILL STEPHENSON
Chair