

LIFELONG LEARNING SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE**20 JANUARY 2004**

Chair:	* Councillor Mitzi Green	
Councillors:	* Miss Bednell	* Lent
	* Gate	* Janet Mote
	* Ismail	* John Nickolay
	* Mary John	* Marie-Louise Nolan
	* Jean Lammiman	
Voting Co-opted:	(Voluntary Aided)	(Parent Governors)
	† Mrs J Rammelt	* Mr H Epie
	† Reverend P Reece	† Mr R Sutcliffe

* Denotes Member present

† Denotes apologies received

[Note: It was noted that Reverend Reece was absent, as he was engaged in urgent duties of his Ministry].

PART I - RECOMMENDATIONS**RECOMMENDATION 1 (To Council) - Early Years and Childcare Strategy 2004-06**

The Sub-Committee received the report of the Executive Director (People First) which outlined the Early Years and Childcare Strategy for 2004-06. Members were informed that all local authorities were required to have such a strategy, designed to build on the 2001-04 Early Years and Childcare Strategy. Members were asked to note that the strategy was now based over a two-year period, in contrast to the previous strategy, which had a four-year duration. The Early Years and Childcare Services Manager set out the targets which had been achieved within the strategy to date and listed targets for 2004-06. Members were directed to the draft strategy itself and asked for feedback and comments on any aspect of the report.

The Vice Chair drew Members attention to a statement contained within the report which advised that the participation rate as a percentage of the three year-old population would be 75% in 2005-06, and queried what would happen in terms of funding if this estimation was not realised. Responding, the Education Financial Services Manager advised that funding currently received from central government was not dependant on the Council meeting this target of 75%, hence there would be no retraction of funds.

The funding from government was currently based on the provision of funds for 85% of the three-year old population, which is the government's estimate of universal provision. Members were informed that it was likely that the government would replace this funding for universal provision with the actual percentage of the three-year old population in receipt of a place in due course. This may lead to reduced funding in future years if the Council does not meet the government's target of 85%.

The Chair directed Members to the report of the Early Years Development and Childcare Plan Working Party, received at the meeting of the Sub-Committee on 21 January 2003, which examined the Early Years Development and Childcare Plan 2001-04 in detail. The report set out the Working Group's findings and recommendations, which were subsequently endorsed by the Sub-Committee and forwarded to Cabinet in Municipal Year 2002-03. With reference to Recommendation (ii) of this report, the Chair enquired about the publicity campaign that the Sub-Committee had requested to advertise nursery places.

The Early Years and Childcare Services Manager advised that Harrow People, the local press and the web site had been used to publicise the availability of places for three-year olds. Members were informed that children from ethnic minorities were specifically targeted via work with the Ethnic Minority Achievement Service and focus groups (recently held at Stag Lane and Stanmore First and Middle Schools), which emphasised the benefits of early years care and education. The Sub-Committee was also informed that the Early Years and Childcare Service had been working with ethnic minority group leaders and had visited Mosques and met refugee leaders to inform of the childcare provision options available.

A Co-opted Member questioned why some ethnic groups were underrepresented in nurseries. In response, the Early Years and Childcare Services Manager advised that

this was due to the perception of early years and childcare within some ethnic minority cultures. Members were informed that some cultures may hold the view that a three-year old should be cared for and educated within the home, as they view it to be more beneficial for the child.

A Member felt that this view should be respected and that it was important for parents not to feel pressurised into sending their child into an early years and childcare establishment before they are ready to. The Early Years and Childcare Services Manager agreed that it was important for parents to exercise their choice in how best to care for their child but that the role of the Early Years and Childcare Service was to ensure that parents were made aware of the value in pre-school settings and various options in relation to childcare provision, e.g. taking up childcare places two or three times a week instead of five.

The Sub-Committee was informed that childcare provision has been advertised in all Harrow libraries and on the Council's web site, and that the Marketing and Information Manager sought to ensure that all information on the web site is up to date and revised at regular intervals. A Member of the Sub-Committee advised that any articles on childcare provision would be welcome in Harrow People.

The Early Years and Childcare Services Manager gave Members details of the Parents as First Teachers Programme, which is being held at the Hillview Centre and is currently over-subscribed. Members were informed that officers were currently seeking to expand this programme in light of the demand from parents.

A Member queried how special educational needs (SEN) provision tied in with early years and childcare provision. The Early Years and Childcare Services Manager advised that the Council would soon be publishing a booklet aimed at accessing these services for children with such needs. Members were informed that Area SENCOS had been appointed and this has led to excellent outcomes for children with special educational needs and that the transition into statutory schooling has become much smoother for many pupils, largely due to the pre-schooling facilities now in place.

In relation to a query from a Member with regard to the Parent Partnership Unit, the Early Years and Childcare Services Manager advised that the Area SENCOS would normally meet with families and facilitate communication between the parents and the early years and childcare provider, and that the Parent Partnership Unit would normally support those families going through the statementing process.

A Member congratulated the Early Years and Childcare Service's partnership with the Job Centre and hoped that the relationship would develop and flourish. The Member also queried whether the service was fully staffed. The Early Years and Childcare Services Manager advised that there was only one vacancy at present, for a Senior Childcare Development Officer, and that there should be no problems in filling this vacancy based on the response rate for previous vacancies.

In response to a question from a Member, the Early Years and Childcare Services Manager advised that transport issues for children with special educational needs were dealt with by the Manager (Assessment and Provision) and the Children Services Manager. Members were informed that the Early Years and Childcare Services aimed to place children as close to their local childcare provider as possible.

The Chair queried whether the backlog of childminder applications had been cleared, as identified in the Recommendation (i) of the Working Group's report (January 2003). Responding, the Early Years and Childcare Services Manager confirmed that there are no longer any delays and that an application currently takes six weeks from start to finish, which is on target, and that since last year OFSTED have visited the Council and held Criminal Record Checks Surgeries, which has sped up the process.

The Sub-Committee agreed that the report be noted and comments referred to Council for consideration.

Resolved to RECOMMEND:

That Council be requested to note the Sub-Committee's comments on the Early Years Development and Childcare Strategy 2004-06.

Reason for Recommendation: To meet the timescale for consultation for Council to agree an Early Years and Childcare Strategy for 2004-06.

[Note: See also Minute 119].

PART II - MINUTES112. **Attendance by Reserve Members:**

RESOLVED: To note that there were no Reserve Members in attendance at this meeting.

113. **Declarations of Interest:**

During the discussion of Item 11 'Progress Report on the Implementation of the Cultural Strategy', Councillor Marie-Louise Nolan declared a personal interest in the item by virtue of being a Governor of Whitefriars First and Middle School. In addition, Councillor Jean Lammiman declared personal interests by virtue of being a Hatch End Ward Councillor and a member on the Board of Harrow Arts College.

RESOLVED: To note the declarations of interest made by Councillors Marie-Louise Nolan and Jean Lammiman in respect of Item 11, and that the Members participated in the discussion and decision on that item.

114. **Arrangement of Agenda:**

RESOLVED: That (1) in accordance with the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985, the following items be admitted late to the agenda by virtue of the special circumstances and grounds for urgency listed below: -

Agenda Item	Special Circumstances / Grounds for Urgency
9. Education Budget 2004 – 2005	Appendix C to this report was not available in the correct format at the time of printing the main agenda. Members are requested to consider Appendix C in conjunction with the officer report and appendices A, B and D, in order to formulate recommendations on the budget to Council.
12. Progress Report on the Implementation of the Cultural Strategy	This report was not available at the time of printing the main agenda. Members are requested to consider the report in order to note the progress on the implementation of the Cultural Strategy.
13. Review of the Recruitment and Retention of School Governors	This report was not available at the time of printing the main agenda. Members are requested to consider the report and make amendments (if any), in order for the final report of the review to be drafted in accordance with the agreed timescale.

(2) Item 11 be taken in advance of Item 9;

(3) all items be considered with the press and public present.

115. **Minutes:**

RESOLVED: That (1) the minutes of the Special meeting held on 11 December 2003, having been circulated, be taken as read; and

(2) authority be given to the Chair to sign the minutes as a correct record following the meeting.

116. **Public Questions:**

RESOLVED: To note that no public questions were received at the meeting.

117. **Petitions:**

RESOLVED: To note that no petitions were received at the meeting.

118. **Deputations:**

RESOLVED: To note that no deputations were received at the meeting.

119. **Early Years and Childcare Strategy 2004-06:**

Further to Recommendation 1, the Sub-Committee also discussed the following issues.

The Vice Chair commented that, in future, it would be helpful to have a one-page synopsis of the report in future, highlighting the key issues and developments, as it would make the document more user-friendly.

A Member of the Sub-Committee requested details on the number of ethnic minority children in nursery places. It was agreed that the Early Years and Childcare Services Manager would send Members a breakdown of ethnicity figures for children in nursery places.

The Chair commended the Early Years and Childcare Services Manager on a very detailed and comprehensive report and requested that a further update report be received at the respective meeting of the Sub-Committee next year.

RESOLVED: That (1) the Early Years and Childcare Services Manager send Members a breakdown of ethnicity figures for children in nursery places;

(2) a further update report be received at the respective meeting of the Sub-Committee next year;

(3) the report of the Executive Director (People First) be noted.

120. **Education Budget 2004 / 2005:**

The Sub-Committee received the report of the Executive Director (People First) and the Executive Director (Business Connections), which outlined the Education Service components of the People First Directorate Budget for 2004-05, currently out for consultation. The Chair introduced and welcomed the Portfolio Holder for Education and Lifelong Learning and the recently appointed Director of Learning and Community Development to the meeting. Both the Portfolio Holder and the Director had been invited to the meeting to discuss and receive questions in relation to the Education Budget 2004-05.

The Education Financial Services Manager reported that the Schools' Budget, which the Sub-Committee had previously commented on, was included within the report in order to provide a comprehensive overview of the budget. In addition, Members were given details of the proposed changes to the 2003-4 Education Budget. The Sub-Committee was informed that corporate efficiency savings could be withdrawn from the proposed budget but that figures for these savings were unknown at present.

In response to a question from a Member in relation to the teachers' pay award and London weighting, the Portfolio Holder for Education and Lifelong Learning advised that London weighting would be abolished from 1 April 2004 and replaced with an Outer London scale. When asked by a Member whether this new scale was competitive, the Portfolio Holder commented that it was not competitive compared with other similar Boroughs, such as Ealing, and that it remained a major issue, as it would produce a negative impact on the recruitment and retention rate of teachers in the Borough. It was agreed that the Sub-Committee would receive information on any changes to these arrangements.

The Chair drew the Portfolio Holder's attention to the final review report on the Distribution of SEN Statements in Mainstream Schools, specifically the recommendations contained therein, which were endorsed by the Sub-Committee at its meeting on 8 April 2003 and forwarded to the Portfolio Holder for decision. The Chair asked firstly why Recommendation 1 (iii), which requested that officers look into the possibility of increasing the number of Parent-Partnership Coordinators; with a view to increasing by at least 20 hours per week (to be considered in the budget for the next financial year), did not appear in the proposed Education Budget for 2004-05 and secondly why the reason for this exclusion had not been forwarded to the Sub-Committee.

The Portfolio Holder apologised for not reporting back to the Sub-Committee on this matter. He informed Members that, following a subsequent examination into the issue by officers, it was felt that the Parent Partnership Unit was relatively well staffed compared to similar units in neighbouring Boroughs. The Portfolio Holder advised that the Unit had already moved to the Family Centre and was part of the LIFT Project, which provides a greater range of services for parents and will complement and support the Unit's work. In addition, there was financial backing from the Children's Fund for parental support groups and a growth item within the People First Directorate in relation to advocacy, which will also increase the level of support to parents.

A Member expressed concern that the site referred to by the Portfolio Holder was scheduled to be demolished and reconstructed. Members sought clarification on the timescale for these works. It was agreed that there was a need for interim support mechanisms to be put in place. The Portfolio Holder agreed to provide a written response to Members on these matters at the next meeting of the Sub-Committee.

A Member informed the Sub-Committee that Recommendation 1(iii) had been made because many parents, currently going through the SEN statementing process, had expressed their concern to Members and perceived that there were insufficient levels of support at present. The Vice Chair agreed and added that both herself and the Chair had visited officers in the Unit as part of the review who felt that they were overstretched with their current workloads. It was agreed that this matter be re-examined by the Sub-Committee in six months time.

In response to a question from a Member in relation to Youth and Community Services, the Portfolio Holder advised that a meeting had been held earlier that day to discuss an underspend in this area. The Portfolio Holder advised that it was more a case of the government encouraging the Council to put more funding into this service, as opposed to the government retracting funding allocated to this area. Members were informed that the Council would need to tackle this issue and that there may be an impact on the medium-term budget strategy as a result.

The Vice Chair questioned the robustness of assumptions in relation to price inflation and queried whether it was an average figure. In response, the Education Financial Services Manager advised that the rate of inflation used in the Education Budget was the same rate that the Council was using across the board. The Vice Chair also questioned the figures on page 10 of the supplemental agenda, in relation to the Special Educational Needs (SEN) Services, and queried whether the SEN Consortium would provide services for the cost quoted. Responding, the Education Financial Services Manager advised that she was confident that the SEN Consortium would.

The Sub-Committee agreed that, following discussion on this item, the Portfolio Holder could remain at the meeting and take place in discussions thereafter with the consent of the Chair.

RESOLVED: That (1) Cabinet be requested to note the Sub-Committee's comments on the Education Budget 2004-05;

(2) the Portfolio Holder for Education and Lifelong Learning provide a written response to the issues raised in relation to Recommendation 1 (iii) of the Review of the Distribution of SEN Statements in Mainstream Schools at the next meeting of the Sub-Committee on 22 April 2004;

(3) the levels of parental support received from the Parent Partnership Unit and various new initiatives be re-examined by the Sub-Committee at its meeting on 26 June 2004;

(4) the report of the Executive Director (People First) and the Executive Director (Business Connections) be noted.

121. **Report Back on the Meeting Between Members of the Sub-Committee and Parents and Teachers from Shaftesbury High School:**

The Sub-Committee received a verbal update on this matter from the Vice Chair, who advised Members that she had spoken with the Headteacher of Shaftesbury High School and it was clear that he was perfectly satisfied with the current SEN transport arrangements and that there was no longer a need for Members to visit the school to discuss the issue.

RESOLVED: That the Sub-Committee note the verbal update from the Vice Chair and regard this matter as closed.

122. **Progress Report on the Implementation of the Cultural Strategy:**

At the meeting of the Sub-Committee on 10 February 2003, it was agreed that Members would be provided with an annual update on the Cultural Strategy Action Plan 2003-08. The Interim Cultural Strategy Manager highlighted the key areas of progress in relation to the Action Plan, which were: -

- (i) The setting-up of the Cultural Strategy Forum.
- (ii) The organisation of culturally diverse events, including Harrow Arts Festival, Black History Month and the Borough's 50th Anniversary Celebrations.
- (iii) The submission of the "Building Schools for the Future" bid and the partnership application to the Football Foundation.

Potential areas for further development were also noted: -

- (i) The feasibility study of theatre / performance space in the Harrow Town Centre Development and Art in Public Places Policy.
- (ii) The development of the Harrow Arts and Sports Academies.
- (iii) Plans for the diverse heritage of Harrow.
- (iv) The signing of the Leisure Management Contract.

The Interim Cultural Strategy Manager advised that the repositioning of the Council's Arts and Leisure Services into the new People First Directorate had impacted on the progress of the Cultural Strategy Action Plan; however, he felt that staff within these services had coped well with these organisational changes and had progressed many issues within the Action Plan. The Sub-Committee was informed of the excellent multi-agency and cross-directorate communication that had taken place to move the strategy forward.

A Member referred the Sub-Committee to Paragraph 1 of Appendix 1 to the report, which gave details of the following action: "Completion of NOF development of school sites for sport and PE for school and community use". The Member expressed concern that this action was not being completed as stated and gave the example of Whitefriars First and Middle School, which had submitted a bid two years ago for the building of tennis courts and the refurbishment of changing room facilities at the school site.

The Sub-Committee was informed that the process thus far has taken two years and had been overseen by consultants, yet the results were not pleasing; the tennis courts will be built to expectation but the proposed refurbishment of the changing room facilities was below the quality of the original plan, which would have undoubtedly have a negative impact on the promotion of the facilities to the community.

The Member felt the need to alert the Sub-Committee to this situation in case it was reflected in other schools within the Borough. It was agreed that the Interim Cultural Strategy Manager would provide Members with a written update on this situation.

Another Member also felt the need to highlight a similar issue in relation to the refurbishment of Hatch End Swimming Pool and raise awareness of wider issues relating to the Leisure Management Contract. The Member commented that Hatch End Swimming Pool served many different sections of the community; for example, swimming clubs, disabled swimmers, ethnic minority groups; and that the refurbishment of the pool and changing areas was unsatisfactory. The Sub-Committee requested that the Interim Cultural Strategy Manager provide Members with a written update on the situation.

With reference to the Leisure Management Contract, the Portfolio Holder for Education and Lifelong Learning informed Members that he had overall control of the development of the Cultural Strategy and was closely monitoring the situation in relation to the contract, which was currently being considered by Legal Services. The Senior Solicitor (Education and Employment) agreed to make enquiries with colleagues in Legal Services and provide a report back on the situation to Members. The Portfolio Holder reported that he would ensure that all parties, including Harrow Sports Council, were properly consulted throughout the process. The Sub-Committee was informed that the launch of the Leisure Card would now coincide with the launch of the Borough's 50th Anniversary Celebrations.

The Director of Learning and Community Development advised that the nature of the report encouraged questions from Members in relation to each aspect of the Action Plan but that officers were not in the position to provide answers to each of these questions in detail at the meeting, as they involved matters which were cross cutting with the Urban Living Directorate.

In light of this, the Chair requested that the Leisure Management Contract issue be referred to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for consideration, as it was a cross-directorate issue. The Chair also requested that consideration be given to establishing a Working Group to consider aspects of the Action Plan in detail and that this be added to the Work Programme for 2004-05. The Work Programme for 2004-05 would be considered at the next meeting of the Sub-Committee on 22 April 2004.

The Chair queried whether the Co-opted Members of the Sub-Committee would be able to attend the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to discuss the Leisure Management Contract. The Senior Solicitor undertook to establish whether there was provision in the Council's Constitution to allow their attendance in a participatory role.

A Member stated that the Harrow Arts College required greater promotion in the local community as a centre of excellence. The Member requested information on how all arts and sports colleges within the Borough were currently promoted. The Interim Cultural Strategy Manager clarified that the Academies for Sports and Art were different to Harrow Arts College, and that the academies would complement the college and other service providers to young people between the ages of fourteen and twenty-one. It was envisaged that the Academies would assist young people back into education and learning and would operate outside of college/school hours.

Another Member requested information in relation to the Grant Centre 'After School' Club, as she was concerned as to what would happen to current provision during the re-development of the centre, as there was apparently no room for the club at Premier House. The Interim Cultural Strategy Manager agreed to provide Members with a written update on this situation.

The Sub-Committee discussed the Cultural Strategy Forum and how the meetings had been useful in moving forward issues within the Action Plan. The Interim Cultural Strategy Manager advised that he was responsible for planning meetings of the Forum. The Portfolio Holder confirmed that the forthcoming meeting of the Forum was being held for those individuals and organisations involved in arts and leisure, and that there was not an open invitation to all.

A Member requested that the Working Group, when it was established, examine the way in which the pavilions in West Harrow Park were currently used, with a view to providing greater public access to users of the park. The Member congratulated the Council on its involvement in the refurbishment of Bannister's Sports Stadium and commented that athletes' performances had been improving as a result of the enhanced facilities.

The Sub-Committee also discussed the feasibility study of theatre / performance space for Harrow Town Centre and Art in Public Places Policy. Members considered using such facilities for educational purposes and community projects, in order to get the best possible usage from the site.

The Chair commented that she was pleased that reading groups within the Borough's libraries had increased and that this was a positive outcome for the Action Plan.

RESOLVED: That (1) the Interim Cultural Strategy Manager provide Members with written updates on the following issues: -

- (i) The building of tennis courts and the refurbishment of changing facilities at Whitefriars First and Middle School.
- (ii) The refurbishment of Hatch End Swimming Pool and changing facilities.
- (iii) The re-development of the Grant Centre and re-allocation of the 'After School' Club.

(2) the Senior Solicitor provide Members with a report detailing issues relating to the Leisure Management Contract will be resolved;

(3) consideration be given, at the next meeting of the Sub-Committee, to establishing a Working Group to examine aspects of the Cultural Strategy Action Plan in detail and that this be added to Work Programme for 2004-05;

(4) the Leisure Management Contract issue be referred to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for consideration;

(5) the Senior Solicitor establish whether the Co-opted Members of the Sub-Committee could attend a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in a participatory role;

(6) the report of the Director of Learning and Community Development be noted.

123.

Review of the Recruitment and Retention of School Governors:

The Sub-Committee received the draft report of the Review Group which outlined key findings and recommendations in relation to the Review of the Recruitment and Retention of School Governors. The Principal Adviser reported that the report did not include all the issues raised at the open meeting and that the collection of data on governor ethnicity and the results of the governor survey were still being compiled. The Principal Adviser also highlighted issues such as resources for governor training, which still needed to be addressed.

The Chair questioned whether officers could provide a copy of the Council's policy in

relation to time off for employees to carry out their duties as governors. The Principal Adviser reported that the Council's policy on this matter was to allow employees time off to carry out their public duties and that no specific limit on this time was stated, as it was at the discretion of management. The Chair requested that this policy be circulated to Members.

A Member felt that management should encourage employees to take time off to carry out public duties effectively and that this should be supported by officers at the highest level and incorporated into the Council's employment policies. Members agreed that this point should be reflected in the report and requested that it be added as a recommendation.

The Sub-Committee discussed the reported statement of the representative from Harrow's Council for Racial Equality (HCRE) relating to the involvement of ethnic minority groups in voluntary work. It was felt that the statement may have been misinterpreted and that the HCRE Representative's statement was intended to highlight the need to encourage ethnic minority groups to carry out voluntary work in the wider community, as well as work within their own communities. It was agreed that the report should be appropriately amended.

The Chair informed Members that the Review Group's recommendations mirrored those of the Department for Education and Skills (DfES), which had conducted a similar review. The Principal Adviser advised that he had been working closely with the consultant who had been carrying out the review for the DfES, and had fed some of the Review Group's findings into this national study. The Chair requested that the report by the DfES be circulated to Members of the Sub-Committee.

Members discussed a possible Mayor's Reception for School Governors. It was agreed that a letter from the Director of Learning and Community Development be added to the welcome pack for new governors and that governors be invited to a reception on a rotation basis, in order to ensure that each governor was invited to the event during their term of office.

The Chair and Vice Chair, on behalf of the Sub-Committee, thanked all those who had taken an active part in the review and requested that letters be sent to those individuals who had directly contributed.

The Sub-Committee agreed the recommendations, as amended, and requested clarification as to where they should now be referred. The report, as drafted, proposed the recommendations be sent to the Portfolio Holder for Education and Lifelong Learning for consideration. The Senior Solicitor (Education and Employment) advised, having previously consulted with the Education Financial Services Manager during the meeting, that the recommendations arising from the report needed to be costed appropriately. The Education Financial Services Manager had informed the Senior Solicitor that the recommendations were inconsistent with the current or prospective budget frameworks.

The Senior Solicitor proposed two courses of action were proposed to the Sub-Committee to assist them to refer this report to Cabinet within the terms of the Council's Constitution; that the report recommendations be identified as a budget pressure and form part of the response to the consultation exercise on the Education Budget or; that the report be identified as being outside of the current policy and/or budget framework. Members were informed that the consequence of these two courses of action would result in the matter being referred to both Cabinet and Council.

The Chair stated that neither route was appropriate and Members felt that a costing exercise would delay the findings of their review being considered by Cabinet. The Sub-Committee therefore agreed to refer the report to Cabinet for consideration with no explanation in accordance with Overview and Scrutiny Committee Procedure Rule 15 (Part 4F of the Constitution). One member commented that the Senior Solicitor's interpretation of the rule was too literal and that the Sub-Committee would never be able to refer reports to Cabinet. In response, the Senior Solicitor further advised that Cabinet could decline to consider the report and that this was a possible consequence of the Sub-Committee's actions.

Members requested that it be noted that the Sub-Committee had departed from the advice of the Senior Solicitor and agreed that the report and its recommendations be referred to Cabinet for consideration. It was further agreed that the Scrutiny Unit liaise with the Communications Unit to ensure that the report of the Review Group was available on the Council's web site and that an appropriate press release be issued. The Chair requested that an update on the recruitment and retention issues relating to school governors be added to the Work Programme for 2004-05.

RESOLVED: That (1) Cabinet be requested to consider the recommendations, as amended, arising from the Sub-Committee's Review of the Recruitment and Retention of School Governors: -

- (i) The LEA should encourage Governing Bodies to adopt flexible arrangements in relation to the timing of meetings and input into meetings.
- (ii) The LEA should publicise the availability of the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) Governors' Helpline Service to all Governing Bodies.
- (iii) The LEA should publicise to community groups the availability of speakers to talk to them about the role of a governor.
- (iv) Governing Bodies should be encouraged to establish mentoring schemes for new governors and the LEA consider establishing a pool of mentors for Chairs of Governing Bodies and members with specific responsibility for finance issues.
- (vi) The clerking course should continue to be run on a regular basis, as required. The LEA should encourage Governing Bodies to take advantage of this facility. (Some sharing of the course cost (£75 per person) had taken place where a clerk serviced a number of bodies).
- (vii) The LEA should establish initiatives to recognise the valuable work being done by school governors. Options include: -
 - The Mayor be requested to consider holding a reception each year for school governors, with governors being invited on a rotating basis at least once in their terms of office, and appropriate directorial attendance and press publicity also being arranged.
 - Sending a card or letter to recognise 10 years' service.
 - Sending special letters of thanks for long serving retiring governors.
 - Recommendation for honours for long public service.
- (viii) The LEA should provide Governing Bodies with an annual 'forward plan' of forthcoming consultations/major issues. Where complex information is to be disseminated to parents, the communication should come directly from the LEA.
- (ix) The LEA consider the production of a simple LBH leaflet, promoting the role of school governors for distribution with admission letters to parents of rising fives and those transferring to High School.
- (x) Council employees be encouraged to undertake public duties, in roles such as school governors. Also, for Council employees' requests to take time off to carry out these roles be considered favourably in light of the Council's employment policy.

(2) the Publications Advisory Panel be requested to consider establishing a separate web page and message board for school governors;

(3) the Publications Advisory Panel be requested to explore the promotion of governors' role on the web site and in 'Harrow People' and to consider the provision of some of the web site information in ethnic minority languages;

(4) the statement of the HCRE Representative in the review report be appropriately amended;

(5) the Council's policy in relation to time off for employees to carry out public duties be circulated to Members of the Sub-Committee;

(6) the report by the DfES on school governors be circulated to Members;

(7) letters of thanks be sent to those who had actively contributed to the review;

(8) the Scrutiny Unit liaise with the Communications Unit to ensure that the report of the Review Group was available on the Council's web site and that an appropriate press release be issued;

(9) an update on the recruitment and retention issues relating to school governors be added to the Work Programme for 2004-05;

(10) the report of the Review Group be noted.

124. **Members' Verbal Progress Reports on Reviews:**
Review of Statutory Assessments and Statements of Special Educational Need (SEN)

The Chair informed the Sub-Committee that in relation to the Review of the Statutory Assessments and Statements of Special Educational Needs (SEN), the Review Group had undertaken a desktop research session of information available on SEN and had held two meetings to discuss issues so far. The Chair commented that the meeting with SENCOS had been poorly attended and would be re-scheduled but that the meeting with parents of children with special educational needs had been very positive.

RESOLVED: That the verbal update from the Chair be noted.

125. **Termination of the Meeting:**
In accordance with Paragraph 22.2 of the Executive Procedure Rules in the Council's Constitution, it was

RESOLVED: (1) At 10.00 pm to continue until 10.15 pm;

(2) at 10:15 pm to continue to 10:20 pm.

(Note: The meeting having commenced at 7.32 pm, closed at 10.16 pm)

(Signed) COUNCILLOR MITZI GREEN
Chair