

**LIFELONG LEARNING SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE****22 APRIL 2004**

Chair:	* Councillor Mitzi Green	
Councillors:	* Gate * Ismail * Mary John * Jean Lammiman * Lent	* Vina Mithani (1) * Janet Mote * John Nickolay * Marie-Louise Nolan
Voting Co-opted:	(Voluntary Aided) * Mrs J Rammelt Reverend P Reece	(Parent Governors) * Mr H Epie * Mr R Sutcliffe

\* Denotes Member present  
(1) Denotes category of Reserve Member

(Note: Councillor Stephenson attended the meeting at the invitation of the Sub-Committee).

**PART I - RECOMMENDATIONS - NIL****PART II - MINUTES**126. **Attendance by Reserve Members:**

**RESOLVED:** To note the attendance at this meeting of the following duly appointed Reserve Member:-

<u>Ordinary Member</u>	<u>Reserve Member</u>
Councillor Miss Bednell	Councillor Vina Mithani

127. **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.

128. **Arrangement of Agenda:**

Members agreed that item 15 of the agenda be considered as the first substantive item of business. This was to be followed by item 11, after which the original running order would resume.

**RESOLVED:** That (1) the above be noted;

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

<u>Agenda item</u>	<u>Special Circumstances/Grounds for Urgency</u>
13. Update on the Healthy Lifestyles Scheme	The reports were not available at the time the agenda was printed and circulated. Members were requested to consider these items as a matter of urgency.
15. The Harrow Parent Partnership Service	

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

129. **Minutes:**

The Representative of the Secondary School Parent Governors noted that he was present at the last meeting of the Sub-Committee and had not sent his apologies as was reflected in the minutes.

**RESOLVED:** That, subject to the above amendment, the minutes of the meeting held on 20 January 2004, having been circulated, be taken as read and signed as a correct record.

130. **Public Questions:**

**RESOLVED:** To note that no public questions were put at the meeting under the provisions of Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rule 8.

131. **Petitions:**

**RESOLVED:** To note that no petitions were received at the meeting under the provisions of Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rule 9.

132. **Deputations:**

**RESOLVED:** To note that no deputations were received at the meeting under the provisions of Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rule 10.

133. **References from Council and Other Committees/Panels:**

**RESOLVED:** To note that there were no references received from Council and or other Committees/Panels.

134. **The Harrow Parent Partnership Service:**

The Sub-Committee received a report from the Director of Learning and Community Development. Members were reminded of the report on the 'Review of the Distribution of Special Educational Needs (SEN) Statements Mainstream Schools' in April 2003, in which the Scrutiny Review Group recommended additional support and resources for the Parent Partnership Service (PPS). Subsequently, Council agreed to additional funding of £15,000 for 2004/05. It was noted that this additional funding had been welcome in supporting the work of the PPS. The Sub-Committee heard that currently the PPS is located within the Family Centre at the Alexandra Avenue site. In order for the site to be redeveloped over the next 18 months, the PPS would need to be temporarily relocated.

The Chair referred Members to section 10 of the report, which listed the future aims of the PPS. The Chair felt that the Sub-Committee should monitor the aims to ensure that progress was made in satisfying them. A Member queried how long it was expected to take before progress could be reported. It was noted that as the Parent Partnership Co-ordinator was on long-term sickness absence, it would prove difficult to set specific timescales. Members were also asked to consider that a number of Government initiatives had been introduced to support parents that were likely to have an impact on the service. It was noted that co-ordination was needed across services in order to avoid duplication and minimise gaps in service provision. The Sub-Committee agreed that a progress report would be received at the meeting on 12 January 2005.

**RESOLVED:** That (1) the Sub-Committee receive a progress report at its meeting on 12 January 2005; and

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

135. **Portfolio Holder's response to the Scrutiny Review of Recruitment and Retention of School Governors:**

The Sub-Committee received a report from the Director of Learning and Community Development, which detailed the Portfolio Holder's response to the Scrutiny Review of Recruitment and Retention of School Governors. The Portfolio Holder for Education and Lifelong Learning stressed the important role that governors made to the management of LEA schools and added that they received good support. It was added that Harrow had achieved a higher level of governors than neighbouring Borough's and the representation of ethnic minority governors had also been particularly pleasing. The Portfolio Holder for Education and Lifelong Learning noted that introducing independent governors had been encouraged.

The Sub-Committee discussed the recommendations and comments by the Portfolio Holder that were outlined in the report. In relation to Recommendation 1, Members recognised the importance of Governing Bodies adopting flexible arrangements in order to accommodate the needs of full-time workers. If these needs were accommodated it was agreed that governors with work or other commitments could make a valuable contribution to the Governing Bodies.

The Sub-Committee noted that Recommendation 2 had been implemented through publicity on the Governors newsletter distributed every term. The Chair further requested that details of the DfES Governors Helpline Service be made available on the Council's website.

Whilst discussing Recommendation 3 of the report, Members were advised that nominations for speakers to address community groups would be sought through the Chairs of Governing Bodies. The aim of this initiative was to raise the awareness and knowledge of the role that governors' played. It was added that if governors did not participate in the work of the Governing Body, the political party who made the original nomination should be contacted.

With regard to Recommendation 4, the Sub-Committee heard that it was the responsibility of the individual Governing Body as to whether a mentoring scheme is implemented but added that suggestions and guidance should be made over what constitutes good practice. Officers were due to meet regularly with Governing Bodies and requests would be made to Chairs asking them to mentor incoming Chairs. It was felt more effective if the incoming Chair was given a named mentor as part of a succession plan. Members were also informed that the co-opting process remained unchanged. One option was that if the number of co-optees had reached its maximum, a co-optee, if willing, would be nominated as an LEA governor, which would then make available an extra position for a co-opted member. A Member expressed concern at the lack of training given to governors in relation to the financial aspects of Governing Bodies. The Sub-Committee was informed that training had been provided to governors to make them aware of the financial aspects of Governing Bodies. In order to accommodate as many governors as possible, a three-day evening course was run in addition to a one-day weekend course. It was reported that the course had been well received by those who attended. It was added that the course is due to take place again in the autumn. Members were also advised that officers often visited Governing Bodies in order to provide advice and guidance on these issues, which was believed to be the most effective training method. Members were invited to make suggestions of how to further improve governors' awareness of such issues.

The Sub-Committee were advised that the Mayor's Office had been contacted with a view to accommodating the proposals outlined in Recommendation 6. A formal letter was due to be written to the new Mayor, once in office. A Member stressed the importance of taking into account the accumulative years that governors had served on different Governing Bodies and that as a result their seniority should be recognised.

In relation to Recommendation 7, Members agreed that lengthy reports dealing with complex issues should be distributed to parents via the LEA. It was agreed that the language used in such information should be clear and concise and should avoid using jargon. The meeting was advised that a number of forthcoming consultations revolved around complicated issues and that in order to make the issues more accessible, it was hoped that briefings would be organised for interested parents.

The Chair asked that the leaflet referred to in Recommendation 8, be posted on the Council website, when it became available. The Director of Learning and Community Development advised the Sub-Committee that the leaflet would be available by October 2004. A Member felt that leaflets of individual Governing Bodies were often more effective in explaining the context of that particular school. Governing Bodies were encouraged to make their own leaflets and the more general leaflet would help to direct enquirers to the relevant school. Individual schools were noted as having distributed their own leaflets in various places in the local community, although the ability to do this was largely dependent on resources.

A Member reported that the Publications Advisory Panel had agreed that a separate web page and message board for school governors should be established. In relation to Recommendation 10, a Parent Governor representative enquired as to whether Parent Governors could be represented at the Publications Advisory Panel. Members welcomed the opportunity to receive input from different groups and this was deemed to be an issue that could be discussed outside of the meeting. The Chair requested that the Sub-Committee receive feedback on this issue at the next meeting on 28 June 2004.

Attention was drawn to section 6.6 of the report. A Parent Governor representative felt that due to the pressure of an increased workload, the LEA Governor Services required extra resources. A recent example was cited, whereby the Parent Governor representative waited for more than 3 months for the LEA Governor Service to acknowledge his re-election as a Parent Governor. The Portfolio Holder agreed that a 3-month delay was not satisfactory but added that a new software system had been introduced, which was designed to solve such problems. The issue of extra funding was to form part of a wider review of the re-organisation of Learning and Community Development. This review was to be submitted to Cabinet and the Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Sub-Committee. The Sub-Committee hoped that a formal Governor Services

Unit would be established following the re-organisation of Learning and Community Development.

**RESOLVED:** That (1) the Portfolio Holder's response to the Scrutiny Review of the Recruitment and Retention of School Governors be noted; and

(2) officers be requested to review the limited capacity and allocated resources provided to support governors as part of the re-organisation of Learning and Community Development.

136. **Report of the People First Portfolio Holders - Key Areas of Responsibility 2004/2007:**

The Sub-Committee received a report from the Education and Lifelong Learning and Social Services Portfolio Holders. The Education and Lifelong Learning Portfolio Holder informed Members that the Chairs of the Health and Social Care and Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Sub-Committees had requested the report in order to inform the Sub-Committees' discussions on their work programmes.

The Chair advised Members that the Portfolio Holder for Education and Lifelong Learning was not in attendance at the meeting to answer general queries or concerns. The Portfolio Holder was due to attend the meeting of the Sub-Committee on 21 September 2004, where Members would have the opportunity to raise general concerns.

The Chair noted that only section 6.3 of the report was relevant to the Sub-Committee. In response to questions about Adult Learning within the Borough, the Director of Learning and Community Development advised Members that the Adult Learning Plan for the forthcoming year was due to be submitted to the LSC shortly. The plan would outline priority groups, which included Adults who lacked Level 1 & 2 skills and older learners.

The Sub-Committee heard that the North West Online Learning Project, undertaken in partnership with Brent, had proved to be very successful. Further funding was being negotiated in order to continue work on the scheme.

**RESOLVED:** That the report from the People First Portfolio Holders be noted.

137. **Work Programme 2004-05 and Annual Report 2003-04:**

The Sub-Committee received a report from the Executive Director, Organisational Development, which outlined the formulation of the 2004/05 Work Programme. The Director of Organisational Performance stressed the importance of focusing the 2004/05 Work Programme on key issues of public importance. It was added that the Strengthening Communities Scrutiny Sub-Committee planned to look at Youth Diversionary Activity as part of its future Work Programme. It was felt that the Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Sub-Committee could liaise with the Strengthening Communities Scrutiny Sub-Committee over this issue. The officer added that the Children's Green paper was about to become legislation. As a result it was suggested that the Sub-Committee would want to receive a report detailing its implications.

The Sub-Committee was referred to section 6.14 of the report on page 26 of the agenda. This section listed areas that Members of the Sub-Committee had suggested for inclusion on the 2004/05 Work Programme. In light of work carried out elsewhere, the Chair felt that a review of the Assessment & Provision Team Service would not be the best use of the Sub-Committees resources.

**Phase 3 Delegated Funding for SEN**

The Chair added that Phase 3 funding for SEN was another issue that the Sub-Committee might want to consider. An officer explained to Members that Phase 1 had moved away from holding resources at the centre and had instead delegated resources to schools, a move which was welcomed by the schools. Phase 2 introduced additional resourcing arrangements. Phase 3 planned to move away from depending on costed statements to a more formula funded model. Although there were no statutory requirements for the authority to adopt these changes, they were being implemented by other local authorities and were also encouraged by the Audit Commission. The statementing process was noted as being bureaucratic, time consuming and not responsive to the needs of children with SEN. At the Cabinet meeting on 17 February 2004 it was agreed that the Phase 3 proposals should be deferred until early 2005 in order to allow for greater consultation and additional time to make the case for a change from the statementing system. A Member advised that many parents of children with SEN felt that statements were the only way of gaining value for money. An officer agreed that this was the perception but not necessarily a fair reflection of the

reality. A letter had been written to Head Teachers, which acknowledged that more time was required in order to explain why the change was taking place and to ease the concerns of anxious parents. It was added that those children with high level needs would retain statements.

As the issue of Phase 3 delegated funding for SEN was still in the process of being developed, it was thought to be a particularly important area to examine further, rather than reviewing a decision that had already been made. Therefore this area was identified as an example of where the Sub-Committee could be pro-active rather than reviewing services and decisions retrospectively. It was also an area where the Sub-Committee could apply policy support and development to the authority in practice. It was agreed that at the next meeting of the Sub-Committee on 21 September, Members would be selected to have an in-depth look at this issue.

#### Harrow Teachers' Centre

A Parent Governor representative raised concern that he had been unable to find annual finances for Harrow Teachers' Centre (HTC) in light of the recent decision by Cabinet to introduce a 'pay as you go' charging system. The representative therefore believed that the finances and the decisions concerning the financing of HTC was an issue worthy of the Sub-Committee's attention. The Portfolio Holder for Education and Lifelong Learning noted that following a recommendation from the Best value Advisory Panel, Cabinet had agreed to a 'pay-as-you-go' charging system, partly in order to avoid serious financial difficulties for HTC and also to maximize the potential of HTC in future. The new system of charging, due to be introduced on 1 September 2004, was felt to be fairer than the SLA (Service Level Agreement) scheme whereby a school's use of HTC facilities was not always proportionate to the amount paid under the SLA. The Director of Learning and Community Development added that it was not usual practice for the accounts to be made publicly available.

The Sub-Committee was made aware that many schools had been concerned at the recent financial changes at HTC. To compound these fears, Members were reminded that HTC had been under threat of closure in previous years and that the staff needed to be told clearly the situation facing HTC. The Director of Learning and Community Development reported that all steps had been taken to reassure staff and that no serious problems had yet arisen. Members were also advised that Cabinet had agreed to a review of the internal room booking system to ensure that HTC faced a level playing field in its competition. The Chair proposed that the Sub-Committee would want regular reports and an action plan on HTC rather than a full review. Members were advised that a report would be submitted to the Sub-Committee at either the meeting on 28 June or 21 September 2004.

#### Autistic Spectrum Disorder Service

Members queried whether the 2004/05 Work Programme would include work on the apparent low levels of satisfaction with the Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) service. An officer advised that while the satisfaction levels were low, they were lower when compared to the Sensory Services for children with visual and hearing impairments. It was added that the levels were not significantly low and the problems experienced at the time the survey was carried out had since been addressed, primarily staff shortages. A survey was due this summer, after which a further report would be submitted. The Chair requested that the measures taken to address the problems at the ASD service be detailed in the report at the next meeting of the Sub-Committee in June 2004 and that the results of this summer's survey to be reported back to the Sub-Committee on 21 September 2004.

#### Exclusions

As a result of the previous work undertaken by the Sub-Committee, Members agreed to look at the issues surrounding exclusions. It was further agreed to make exclusions the main focus of the work programme. Members anticipated that a scoping report would be ready for the meeting on 21 September 2004.

#### Library Position Statement

A further item that the Sub-Committee wished to be advised on was the Library Position Statement. The Director of Learning and Community Development advised Members that the recently released Best Value Performance Indicators had produced pleasing results for the Council. Harrow libraries had moved from fifteenth to eighth position in London and had witnessed a 4.5% increase in library visits.

#### Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE)

A Parent Governor representative felt that within the work programme, the Sub-Committee should assess the effectiveness and importance of the activities of SACRE. It was added that SACRE, which was undergoing a review of its constitution, should be

playing a more active role in advising schools of their obligations and responsibilities, particularly as it was an area that OFSTED inspected and an area that has a significant bearing on the assessment of a school. As resources were limited, it was agreed that Members would receive a report on the work of SACRE on 21 September 2004 rather than undertaking a full review.

Better Education for Children in Care

Members were made aware of a document called *Better Education for Children in Care*, published by the DfES. It was felt that the Sub-Committee would be keen to look at the action plan and recommendations, when they were made available.

The Chair reminded Members that they needed to leave a certain degree of leeway in the 2004/05 Work Programme in order to accommodate important emerging issues, such as the Children's Green Paper, which was due to become legislation in the near future.

**RESOLVED:** That (1) the Sub-Committee's draft work programme, as amended to include the items outlined above, be agreed; and

(2) the proposed process for the preparation and publication of the annual report for 2003/04, be agreed.

138. **Establishment of a Working Group to examine the Cultural Strategy Action Plan:**  
Members were reminded that the Sub-Committee received an update report on the Cultural Strategy at the meeting on 20 January 2004, at which it was decided to form a working group to examine the action plan. It was suggested that a selected group of Members meet with the Interim Cultural Strategy Manager on a regular basis to discuss the areas that had been labeled as requiring further development. A Member enquired as to the timeframe for achieving progress and objectives in the development areas and expressed concern that they were open ended. The timeframe was deliberately open ended so that Members could determine it. It was agreed that the working group would meet quarterly and report back to brief the Sub-Committee and raise any outstanding issues at the meeting on 19 April 2005.

**RESOLVED:** That a working group be established comprising the following Members of the Sub-Committee:

- (i) Councillor Jean Lammiman
- (ii) Councillor Mary John
- (iii) Councillor Gate
- (iv) Councillor Ismail
- (v) Co-opted Member, Mr R Sutcliffe (Observer)

139. **Update on the Healthy Lifestyles Scheme:**  
The Sub-Committee received a report from the Executive Director, People First, which provided Members with an update on Healthy Lifestyles in Schools. Members were referred to page 3 of the supplemental agenda, which detailed progress made on the recommendations made by the Review Group on Healthy Lifestyles in Schools. It was reported that the spring 2004 meeting for primary co-ordinators was well attended and there had been pleasing demand for the PSHE courses and working groups during the 2004 spring term. It was reported that many primary schools offer water for pupils throughout the day. Progress was also being made in order to raise the availability of water for pupils in secondary schools during lesson times.

Members were referred to page 4 of the supplemental agenda, which outlined additional information relating to the healthy lifestyles agenda. Thirty-nine Harrow schools were noted as being involved in the Brent and Harrow Healthy Schools Programme, with more schools expected to become involved in future. Members also heard that there had been 100% take-up of the National School Fruit Scheme by Harrow's first and middle schools. Members were further informed that a successful PSHE Activity Day for Year 9 pupils had been held in March 2004, which aimed to engage pupils on health issues. The two themes that were chosen by the pupils were Relationships and Crime and the Community.

A Member noted that the Council's health partners had been impressed with the 100% take up of the National School Fruit Scheme. The meeting was referred to heading number 7 on page 4 of the supplemental agenda, which updated Members on the progress made on obesity. It was felt that this was closely linked to the work on heart disease being undertaken by Harrow Primary Care Trust (PCT). The PCT were due to hold an event on heart disease on 24 May 2004. The Member was pleased to see that the Council was working with its partners at the PCT and the Northwest London Health

Authority. It was agreed that the LEA bulletins to Headteachers and Governing Bodies should be used to highlight the PCT's on-line Choosing Health survey and encourage schools' participation in the initiative as part of the Healthy Lifestyles agenda. It was also suggested that it be included on a link on the Council's website and on the weekly bulletin.

**RESOLVED:** That the update on Healthy Lifestyles in Schools be noted.

140.

**Any Other Business:**

The Chair informed the Sub-Committee that Samantha Johnson, the Committee Administrator who had assisted in the work of the Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Sub-Committee since its inception, had left the Council for a position at another organisation. On behalf of the Sub-Committee, the Chair wished to thank Ms Johnson for all her efforts. It was further proposed that a letter of thanks be written on behalf of the Sub-Committee.

**RESOLVED:** That the above be noted.

(Note: The meeting having commenced at 7.36 pm, closed at 9.40 pm)

(Signed) COUNCILLOR MITZI GREEN  
Chair