

LIFELONG LEARNING SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE**12 JANUARY 2005**

Chair: * Councillor Mitzi Green

Councillors:	* Nana Asante	* Janet Mote
	* Gate	John Nickolay
	* Mary John	* Omar
	* Kinsey	* Anjana Patel (2)
	* Vina Mithani (1)	

Voting Co-opted: (Voluntary Aided) (Parent Governors)

* Mrs J Rammelt	* Mr H Epie
† Reverend P Reece	* Mr R Sutcliffe

* Denotes Member present
 (1) and (2) Denote category of Reserve Member
 † Denotes apologies received

[Note: Councillor Stephenson also attended this meeting in a participatory role].

PART I - RECOMMENDATIONS**RECOMMENDATION 1 - Progress Reports on Reviews - Members' Verbal Updates**

Your Sub-Committee discussed the progress of its review of exclusions.

Members were concerned to note that an external review of exclusions was being undertaken by a consultant in addition to the scrutiny review. They expressed concern that the Sub-Committee had not been made aware of the external review before it had prepared a scoping report for the scrutiny review. The Chair suggested that a recommendation be made to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee requesting the introduction of procedures designed to avoid duplication of work and a further breakdown of communication.

Resolved To RECOMMEND:

That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee explore further procedures to ensure more effective communication between the Directorates and the Scrutiny function.

(See also Minute 193(b)).

PART II - MINUTES**184. Attendance by Reserve Members:****RESOLVED:** To note the attendance at this meeting of the following duly appointed Reserve Members:-Ordinary MemberCouncillor Osborn
Councillor Jean LammimanReserve MemberCouncillor Anjana Patel
Councillor Vina Mithani**185. 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.**186. Arrangement of Agenda:****RESOLVED:** That (1) in accordance with the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985, the following agenda items be admitted late to the agenda by virtue of special circumstances and grounds for urgency detailed below:-

<u>Agenda item</u>	<u>Special Circumstances/Grounds for Urgency</u>
10. Update following the Review on the Distribution of SEN Statements	This report was a late addition to the agenda and was consequently unavailable at the time the main agenda was printed and circulated. Members were requested to consider this item in order to receive an update on a previous review, in line with its request to regularly monitor the number of SEN statemented pupils in the Borough's schools.
12. Travellers' Education Service	This report was a late addition to the agenda and was consequently unavailable at the time the main agenda was printed and circulated. Members were requested to consider this item in line with the Sub-Committee's request to receive a report on the Travellers' Education Service.

(2) item 13 be considered after item 8; and

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

187. **Minutes:**

RESOLVED: That (1) the minutes of the meeting held on 13 October 2004, having been circulated, be taken as read and signed as a correct record; and

(2) the signing of the minutes of the meeting held on 8 December 2004 be deferred until printed in the next Council Bound Minute Volume.

188. **Public Questions:**

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

189. **Petitions:**

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

190. **Deputations:**

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

191. **People First Education Budget 2005/2006 and Medium Term Budget Strategy:**

The Sub-Committee received a report from the Executive Director (Business Connections) and Executive Director (People First), which detailed the proposed People First Education budget for 2005/2006. The Council's total budget was based on a 1.48% increase in Council Tax. The Portfolio Holder for Education and Lifelong Learning explained that consultation was ongoing with the public, through the MORI poll and two public meetings due to be held on 18 January and 3 February 2005. It was added that comments would be welcomed throughout this process.

The Sub-Committee discussed the proposal to introduce Sunday opening for libraries. The Portfolio Holder for Education and Lifelong Learning explained that two libraries would be open for four hours on Sundays. In relation to Community Schools, the Portfolio Holder for Education and Lifelong Learning clarified that the scheme would be rolled out to all schools that wished to take it up, and outlined the funding that would be available to each of the seven 'clusters' of schools.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

192. **Strategic Performance Report:**

The Chair informed the Sub-Committee that the Portfolio Holder for Education and Lifelong Learning had agreed to provide Members with an overview of areas of concern included in the Strategic Performance Report. It was explained that the 2004 figures were only partial results, based on information from 1 July 2004 to 30 September 2004. An officer explained that green meant the target had been achieved, amber meant the Council was within 5% of the target and red meant the Council was more than 5% off

the target. Although there were a number of areas categorised as red, it was noted that the targets set by the DfES did not reflect the Council's current position. An officer added that the targets did not record a 'near miss' and as a result the figures failed to distinguish those areas that had only marginally fallen within the red category.

Regarding targets in general, the Portfolio Holder for Education and Lifelong Learning explained that, in isolation, targets could often be misleading and needed to be considered together within the context of the area that they were measuring. It was noted that targets were beneficial given that a failure to meet them would prompt measures to improve that particular area of concern. As a result the Council would not always expect to meet every target. The Chair added that the Sub-Committee would be keen to be sent the most recent targets, when they had been published.

RESOLVED: That the above be noted.

193. **Progress Reports on Reviews - Members' Verbal Updates:**

- (a) Phase Three Delegated Funding
The Sub-Committee heard that the final report had been agreed. Following approval by the Chair and Vice Chair the report would be referred to Cabinet.
- (b) Exclusions Review
Further to Recommendation 1 above, the Director of Learning and Community Development explained the decision to undertake an external review of exclusions. He reported that the rate of exclusions in Harrow's schools had been very high for too long and that previous initiatives had failed to remedy the problem. The Director of Learning and Community Development reported that the problem was extremely complex and in his opinion would therefore benefit from both reviews.

It was reported that the external consultant would provide the opinion of a highly experienced professional. The Director of Learning and Community Development anticipated that the two reports would compliment each other and hoped that the Sub-Committee continued its work on the review. The Portfolio Holder for Education and Lifelong Learning supported the work of both reviews and welcomed an opportunity for all interested parties to meet to discuss a way for both reviews to move forward. It was further explained that the decision to undertake an external review of Exclusions and Behaviour was made before Christmas.

In reply to a question from a Member, the Director of Learning and Community Development explained that the cost of the consultant was expected to be in the region of £8,000. Members were concerned that their work had already commenced on the review in October and the news of the appointment of the consultant had only come to light the previous week. Members expressed the view that the terms of reference for the consultant represented considerable overlap with the scope agreed by the Sub-Committee in October 2004 and were concerned that to continue with the review at this point would be a duplication of effort. The Director of Learning and Community Development accepted that officers should have advised the Sub-Committee of the decision and apologised for the confusion that had followed.

The Chair outlined three options, one of which was to continue the review as planned. Another option outlined was to cease work on the review and view the consultant's report in April. The final option identified was to wait for the consultant's report but in the meantime work on a different area. Following discussions on the Sub-Committee's options, it was agreed that Members would meet with the consultant on 24 January 2005 to consider the draft report. It was further agreed that the Sub-Committee would receive the consultant's final report at its meeting on 19 April 2005. Until such time, it was agreed that the Sub-Committee would cease its work on the exclusions review.

Members discussed how best to use the resources of the Sub-Committee and concluded that an informal meeting would be convened for the end of February to consider areas of the Cultural Strategy. It was added that the Audit Commission would be undertaking a Cultural Inspection in March 2005 and that officers would be primarily focused on achieving a positive outcome for the Council.

RESOLVED: That the verbal updates be noted.

194. **Response to the Recommendations Put Forward by the Scrutiny Review of the Statementing Process for Children with Special Educational Needs (SEN):**

The Sub-Committee considered a report of the Director of Children's Services. The report provided a response to the recommendations put forward by the Sub-Committee's review of the statementing process for children with Special Educational Needs (SEN). The Chair commented that it was good to see many of the Sub-Committee's recommendations being implemented.

A Member suggested that providing a more extensive list of frequently asked questions could reduce the number of telephone calls that SEN caseworkers received. The officers responded by saying that an information booklet was already provided for parents.

Officers explained that the information referred to in Recommendation 13 of Appendix A would be included in the report on the SEN Strategy at the Sub-Committee's meeting on 27 June 2005. The Chair asked for a further update at the Sub-Committee's meeting on 20 September 2005.

RESOLVED: That (1) the report be submitted to the Cabinet Information Circular; and
(2) the report be noted.

195. **Update following the Review on the Distribution of SEN Statements:**

The Sub-Committee considered a report of the Director of Children's Services, which provided a comparison of the position with regard to the number of statements of Special Educational Needs in Harrow's mainstream schools in 2002 and 2004. The Portfolio Holder for Education and Lifelong Learning explained that legislation had allowed parents a greater degree of freedom in choosing which schools their child would attend. It was added that the figures from 2002 - 2004 showed little change. The Chair asked that the Sub-Committee receive the January 2005 figures when available.

RESOLVED: That the Sub-Committee receive the January 2005 figures when available.

196. **Early Years and Childcare Strategy Update Report:**

The Sub-Committee considered a report of the Executive Director (People First), which provided Members with an update on the Early Years and Childcare Strategy. The Chair raised the issue of children starting school without the authorities being aware that they had Special Educational Needs (SEN). An officer explained that there were two area SEN Co-ordinators (SENCOs) that worked up until the end of Reception. It was added that from April – December 2004 there had been 163 children that required support in the years preceding Reception. In response, it was reported that staffing levels would be raised to deal with the workload. Members were advised that pupils often transferred from different Boroughs, which could lead to children not being identified as having SEN at their new schools. It was added that area SENCOs attended transition meetings to ensure that the introduction into school for children with SEN was personalised.

A Member commented that the diagram on page 47 of the report would be of interest to members of other scrutiny committees and that they should be informed of this.

RESOLVED: That (1) the Sub-Committee receive a further update at its meeting on 10 January 2006; and

(2) the report be noted.

197. **Travellers' Education Service:**

The Sub-Committee considered a report of the Director of Learning and Community Development, which outlined the work and role of the Traveller Achievement Service. It was reported that the service aimed to provide sustained support for traveller pupils. Members were referred to page 4 of the second supplemental agenda, which stated that 50% of gypsy and traveller children in the country were listed as having Special Educational Needs and an increased risk of exclusion. Figures for 2002/03 showed that Harrow's schools were below the national average in terms of exclusions for traveller pupils.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

(Note: The meeting having commenced at 7.35 pm, closed at 9.54 pm)

(Signed) COUNCILLOR MITZI GREEN
Chair