

EDUCATION CONSULTATIVE FORUM

31 JANUARY 2006

| | | |
|--|--|-----------------------------------|
| Chair: | * Councillor Bill Stephenson | |
| Councillors: | * Mrs Bath * Miss Bednell * Gate | * Ismail * Janet Mote * Ray |
| Teachers' Constituency: | * Mr R Borman * Ms C Gembala * Ms J Lang | * Ms L Money * Ms L Snowdon |
| Governors' Constituency: | * Ms H Henshaw * Mrs C Millard | † Mr N Rands † Ms H Solanki |
| Elected Parent Governor Representatives: | * Mr H Epie | * Mr R Sutcliffe |
| Denominational Representatives: | * Mrs J Rammelt | † Reverend P Reece |

* Denotes Member present
† Denotes apologies received

PART I - RECOMMENDATIONS**RECOMMENDATION 1 - School Term Dates**

The Forum received a report of the Director of Strategy (People First) in relation to school term dates for 2007/08. An officer reminded the Forum that they had requested the working group to consider and present options to determine the term dates for Harrow schools for the academic year 2007/08, which was particularly difficult due to an early Easter. Members considered dates proposed by the Local Government Association (LGA) and the Association for London Government (ALG), which included proposals to separate the Spring break from the Easter Bank holidays in that period. Members were advised that they could defer a decision until further information was available from neighbouring authorities on their proposals for 2007/08 school terms, adopt the LGA proposals or apply the Harrow principles to them. The officer advised that there appeared to be no consensus view from the LGA.

A Member referred to the difficulty of reaching an arrangement that would satisfy everyone and mentioned that linking Easter to the Spring break as set out in Appendix 1 of the report would enable parents to take a break and use less of their annual leave. She added that the working group had tried to abide by the Harrow agreed principles. The concern was expressed that more parents would take their children out of school if the Easter period were in the middle of the term.

Further points were made about lobbying if the Easter bank holidays were not included in the Easter spring break and being out of step with the wishes of voluntary aided schools; the need for the spring break to be two weeks; and that the school term should not start mid-week although it was noted that there was a possibility of using the mid-week days as training days.

After discussing all the possibilities it was agreed that the Spring break should be two weeks and should incorporate the Easter bank holidays. Regrettably this meant in this exceptional year that the summer term would not begin on a Thursday.

The Forum

Resolved to RECOMMEND: (To the Portfolio Holder for Education and Lifelong Learning)

That the following 2007/08 term dates for Harrow schools be approved:

| | |
|--------------|--|
| Autumn 2007: | Monday 3 September 2007 – Friday 19 October 2007 Half Term 22 – 26 October 2007(5 days) Monday 29 October 2007 – Thursday 20 December 2007 |
|--------------|--|

Spring 2008: Thursday 3 January 2008 – Friday 8 February 2008
 Half Term 11 – 15 February 2008(5 days)
 Monday 18 February 2008 – Wednesday 19 March 2008

Summer 2008: Thursday 3 April 2008 – Friday 23 May 2008
 Half Term 26 – 30 May 2008 (Bank Holiday + 4 days)
 Monday 2 June 2008 – Friday 18 July 2008

[REASON: To enable the school term dates for 2007/08 to be published as early as possible to aid future planning for schools, governors, parents and other partners].

RECOMMENDATION 2 - Education White Paper

An Officer introduced the summary of the Education White Paper. The Forum was advised that the Chief Executive and Leader of the Council had received a letter from the Minister for Education, Ruth Kelly, inviting views on the White Paper.

During the discussion on the White Paper summary, the following comments were made:

- More emphasis should be placed on the view that collaboration between providers would lead to increased effectiveness whilst competition between schools could reduce it;
- Concerns about governing bodies that were small in number;
- Concerns about mandatory training for governors, who were, after all, volunteers;
- Most parents merely wanted a good local school for their child;
- Schools should not be forced to take on Foundation status;
- The issue of planning consents and expansion of schools;
- Increased numbers of school places were required to increase parental choice.

In response to a query regarding whether the White Paper could be forwarded to unions, the Chair advised that an amended version, if approved by Cabinet, could be circulated to Heads and Governors. He added that he would suggest to Cabinet that the summary be forwarded to Harrow's MPs.

Resolved to RECOMMEND: (To Cabinet)

That Cabinet be requested to consider the views of the Forum and endorse the summary of the Education White Paper.

[REASON: To ensure that central government received a formal response from the London Borough of Harrow].

PART II - MINUTES

196. **Attendance by Reserve Members:**

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

197. **Declarations of Interest:**

In relation to this item, Council Members re-stated the governorships which they each held, as set out in the minutes of the meeting of the Education Consultative Forum held on 15 July 2004 (Minute 110).

RESOLVED: To note that the following interests were declared:

- (i) Councillor Mrs Bath declared an interest in that she was a Volunteer Police Cadet for Harrow and Wembley and that her husband was a Member of the Harrow Family Learning Network.

- (ii) Councillor Gate declared an interest arising from the fact that he was an LEA representative for a school and was also a member of the Management Committee of Harrow's Citizens Advice Bureau.
- (iii) Councillor Janet Mote declared an interest in that she was a teacher at Peterborough and St Margaret's School, that her sister-in-law was employed at an LEA School and that her husband was a Member of the Diabetics Association.

198. **Arrangement of Agenda:**

The Chair indicated that he would be rearranging the agenda to consider the appointment of a Vice-Chair of the Forum.

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 the special circumstances and grounds for urgency detailed below:-

| <u>Agenda item</u> | <u>Special Circumstances/Grounds for Urgency</u> |
|--|---|
| 1.(a) Appointment of Vice-Chair | This procedural matter had been inadvertently omitted from the agenda. Consideration of this item enabled the appointment of a Vice-Chair for the remainder of the municipal year 2005/06. |
| 15. Harrow 14-19 Strategy | This report had not been available at the time the agenda was printed and circulated due to the late inclusion of this item on the Agenda. Members were requested to consider this item, as a matter of urgency. |
| 16. Voluntary Aided Hindu Primary School | This report had not been available at the time the agenda was printed and circulated due to the late inclusion of this item on the Agenda. Members were requested to consider this item, as a matter of urgency. |
| 16.(a) The Realignment of People First Directorate | This report had not been available at the time the agenda was printed and circulated. Members were requested to consider this item, as a matter of urgency as it was due to be considered at Cabinet on 16 February 2006. |

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

199. **Minutes:**

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 22 September 2005, having been circulated, be taken as read and signed as a correct record.

200. **Matters Arising:**

The Chair informed the Forum that he had suggested that the Arts Culture Harrow annual report be submitted to the Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Sub-Committee.

RESOLVED: That the following matters arising from the minutes of the last meeting be noted:

- (i) Minute 186 (i) – Matters arising – Contingency Provision within Schools
The Forum was informed that class figures for January 2006 were available. A report would be submitted to the March 2006 meeting and it would be appropriate to discuss this issue then.
- (ii) Minute 191 – 16-19 Update
The Chair informed the Forum that at a meeting of the Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Sub-Committee, a link from the sixth form website to the Central Consortium website had been discussed.

201. **Public Questions:**

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

202. **Petitions:**

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

203. **Deputations:**

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

204. **Appointment of Vice-Chair:**

RESOLVED: That Ms Jo Lang, from the Teachers' Constituency, be appointed as Vice-Chair of the Forum for the remainder of the Municipal Year 2005/06.

205. **People First Education Budget:**

The Forum considered a report of the Executive Director (People First) and the Executive Director (Business Development) and was informed that the Government had completed its review of the funding formula and that Harrow, like a lot of other Boroughs, had not come out favourably. An Officer advised that the grant increase for 2006/07 was 2% and that the increase for 2007/08 would be 2.7%.

The officer reported that, for the first time, there would be a two-year settlement and that the Government would then move to three-year settlements. Members were advised that the inflation requirements would be 2.95% for pay awards and 1.7% for superannuation contributions, which were considerably higher than the 2% grant increase received. She added that Cabinet was currently consulting on a 2.97% council tax increase, which given inflation and other base budget changes would effectively mean no other growth could be funded without identification of further savings.

The officer advised that the People First Directorate had been summarised in to three areas, namely Children's Services, Adult Community Care and Learning and Community Development. Members were referred to Appendix C of the officer's report, which set out the funding settlement in relation to the dedicated schools grant and detailed that the allocations for Harrow would be increased by 6.6% in 2006/07 and by 6.4% in 2007/08. She added that the appendices detailed the medium term pressures.

In response to a query, an officer clarified that the Government settlement would mean that Harrow would receive the minimum increase in Formula Grant. Governors expressed their concerns in relation to receiving a smaller grant, particularly as settlements would cover a longer period.

In response to a question in relation to the minimum funding guarantee, the Officer advised that this was set by the Government as a per pupil amount and that there was no stipulation as to how the school allocated the money.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

206. **Harrow Sixth Form Collegiate (Bid to the 16-19 Capital Fund):**

The Director of Strategy (People First) introduced the report and advised that the London West Learning and Skills Council (LSC) had extended an invitation to bid for capital funding for 1000 post 16 places at Harrow High Schools. He advised that parents and students had expressed a wish to have greater choice for post-16 education. The Forum was advised that the LSC had a statutory responsibility to fund post-16 education and that a new government fund had been created, which set out a relatively modest amount for 2006 to 2007 but an increased amount from 2008.

The Director of Strategy advised that officers had been working with schools and colleges for a considerable time with a view to increasing parental and student choice post 16. The West London Skills Council had also formed part of the group that oversaw the work done and an accelerated bid had been encouraged. He advised that the fifteen institutions in Harrow had worked hard to put the bid together and that Harrow had been given priority to submit the bid as part of the previous work undertaken. However, the view was expressed that it would be important to consider issues including demographics and demand rather than engaging in internal redistribution.

The Director of Strategy reported that the closing date for receipt of the bid had been 31 January 2006 and therefore the deadline had been tight. The bid would be considered by the West London LSC Board on 22 March 2006 and the Director indicated that stakeholders from Harrow would be invited to give their views on it. Following consideration by the local LSC the bid would be forwarded to the national LSC for determination of the £120m allocation. The result of the bid was expected by end April/beginning of May 2006.

In response to questions from the Forum, the following issues were considered:

- Ministers had been appraised of the work carried out in Harrow;
- the national LSC was aware of the interest of the DfES;
- the success of the collegiate was dependent on the support of all of Harrow's IT institutions;
- the cost of the scheme was approximately £27.5m over 2-3 years and the scheme was dependent upon all the funding being received;
- it was necessary to demonstrate value for money and sustainability;
- the number of students was set at the ceiling of 1000, a target of 500 in 2007 and 500 in 2008;
- Harrow was one of the only boroughs to be fast tracked;
- a delay in the distribution of the relevant guidance had given officers more time to incorporate comments made by the Learning and Skills Council.

Certain caveats had been put in place by the LSC including the requirement of 1000 new places across the Borough and that by 2011, there was a national target of 100% of pupils staying in education post 16.

In response to a query regarding the effect of the Education White Paper upon the Consortium and collegiate system, the Forum was advised that that the complexity of the curriculum would have to be considered and that an increase in vocational areas was expected. There would also be the possibility of students having to study some subjects at another school but a mutually beneficial arrangement could be reached if different institutions cooperated with one another.

The Forum noted that the proposals had cross party support and expressed their thanks to all those involved.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

207.

Bullying:

Members received a report of the Director of Learning and Community Development (People First). An officer advised that Harrow schools appeared to be tackling bullying well, that the guidelines had been refreshed this year and that schools would keep the policies under review. An officer explained that the Harrow Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) had lead responsibility on anti-bullying in Harrow. The officer advised that a survey of pupils in relation to bullying had been conducted and that the Forum would receive the results once they had been analysed.

An officer advised Members that with regards to unauthorised absences in schools, Harrow was in ninth position nationally in terms of good attendance, while in relation to secondary schools it was in fourth position, indicating that Harrow took the issue of truancy seriously. The reasons for unauthorised absences were monitored closely.

The Forum was referred to an article in Harrow People, which had publicised the issues surrounding bullying. The work that had been done in some schools where young people had been involved in mentoring schemes to help other students was commended. In response to a query from a Member regarding statistics on bullying in Harrow and whether the geographic location of schools had an influence upon the extent of bullying, an officer advised that the survey could provide a snapshot only and that the results were dependent upon students (unknown at present) who had chosen to complete the survey.

A Member enquired whether children on a school roll who failed to attend were included in figures defined as missing from education. In response the officer advised

that the child may in fact be attending a different school but this issue was addressed by the authorities.

An Officer advised Members that bullying could go beyond the jurisdiction of the Council when it became physical.

The view was expressed that cultural awareness was important and that schools should undertake to provide some form of training to help parents who were refugees and could be reluctant to deal with various authorities.

A Member commended the work done in schools, including that done by lunchtime supervisors. A Member of the Forum drew attention to homophobic bullying and advised that this required challenging. The Forum acknowledged that often the most difficult part of tackling bullying was evidence.

If a child did not attend school for 4 weeks, their name would be removed from the roll. The Forum was advised that different services worked together to collate relevant information, for example, Education Welfare Services and Social Services followed up cases where a child failed to turn up to school without specified reasons.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

208. **School Term Dates:**
(See Recommendation 1).

209. **Children and Young People's Plan:**
An Officer introduced the report of the Director of Children's Services which updated the Forum on the process of drafting the Children and Young People's plan (CYPP). The Forum was advised that the plan would incorporate the 14-19 Strategy and the Local Area Agreement Children's Block priorities. The Forum was informed that many people had been consulted regarding the plan, including voluntary and statutory agencies, schools and colleges, and that an open meeting for members of the public had taken place.

In response to a query regarding whether other Authorities' plans had been considered, the Forum was informed that York's and Cornwall's had been viewed.

RESOLVED: That (1) the report be noted; and

(2) that the Forum's support for the first edition of the Children and Young People's plan be noted.

210. **Education White Paper:**
(See Recommendation 2).

211. **Harrow 14-19 Strategy:**
The Director of Strategy (People First) introduced the report and advised the Forum that the strategy incorporated the strategic framework for 14-19 developments in Harrow and that an Action Plan would be finalised once the outcome of the bid to the 16-19 Capital Fund was known.

The Forum was advised that Cabinet had already approved the Strategy in principle but formal approval by key partners should be obtained in early 2006. The Director of Strategy advised that a cross-party steering group would oversee the development of the Strategy and that a 14-19 Advisory Group consisting of key partners' representatives met regularly to advise the steering group of available options to increase choice at post 16.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

212. **Voluntary Aided Hindu Primary School:**
The Director of Strategy (People First) introduced the report and advised that Harrow had the largest percentage of Hindu population in its area of any local authority in the country and that the Council had considered two proposals, the Sai School of Harrow and the I-Foundation. A bid had been made to the Department for Education and skills for allocation from the Targeted Capital Fund following Cabinet's decision in May 2005.

The Forum was advised that officers were considering issues including admissions procedure, governance and the curriculum with the I-Foundation, who were keen to undertake a consultation to explain the school's aims. In response to a query, the Director of Strategy clarified that it was expected that students would be enrolled from

both within and outside of the Borough and from nursery age upwards, although the admissions procedure was still being formulated. The Forum was also advised that DfES funds were dependent upon the I-Foundation submitting plans with site proposals. The Director of Strategy advised that the I-Foundation were keen to be seen as a community resource. He noted the concerns raised that the site of the school might affect primary provision.

A Member queried whether students would be enrolled upon a sibling basis and the Forum was advised that the school would be part of the Harrow system and that further information would be available once the site was secured. A Member also enquired about the effect of the site upon which the school would be on other schools in the area and was advised that it was unclear at the moment due to uncertainty about the location of the site.

The Forum welcomed and supported the proposal for a voluntary aided Hindu primary school in Harrow.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

213. **The Realignment of People First Directorate:**

The Executive Director (People First) introduced her report and advised the Forum that the establishment of the two Statutory Officer posts of Director of Children's Services and Director of Adult Community Services necessitated the review of the People First Senior structure. She advised that in addition to clarifying lines of accountability and responsibility, streamlining the People First structure would also help ensure joined up working across different departments.

In response to a comment from a Member regarding a shortage of staff in Urban Living, the Executive Director advised that some areas within Urban Living would be incorporated within People First. She informed Members that the structure would be monitored and that there would be a review of the proposals contained within the report in six months time. In response to a comment from a Member in reference to the realignment procedure having started three years ago, the Chair commented that progress had been made since then and that new developments had taken place.

RESOLVED: To note:

- (i) the proposals to realign the departments within the People First directorate;
- (ii) the timetable and proposals for populating the structure of the Directorate;
- (iii) the proposals in relation to the statutory and non-statutory Director posts;
- (iv) the transfer of some sectors of Urban Living to People First.

214. **Termination of the Meeting:**

In accordance with the provisions of Committee Procedure Rule 14 (Part 4B of the Constitution) it was

RESOLVED: At 9.58 pm to continue until 10.15 pm.

215. **Date of the Next Meeting:**

RESOLVED: To note that the next meeting of the Forum would be held on 22 March 2006.

(Note: The meeting having commenced at 7.39 pm, closed at 10.10 pm)

(Signed) COUNCILLOR BILL STEPHENSON
Chair