

**CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY
SUB-COMMITTEE (SPECIAL)****9 JANUARY 2007**

Chairman:	* Councillor Mark Versallion	
Councillors:	G Chowdhury	* Narinder Singh Mudhar
	* B E Gate	* Joyce Nickolay (5)
	* Mitzi Green	* David Perry
	* Jean Lammiman	* Dinesh Solanki
	* Julia Merison	Jeremy Zeid
Voting Co-opted:	(Voluntary Aided)	(Parent Governors)
	Mrs J Rammelt	* Mr R Chauhan
	Reverend P Reece	* Mrs D Speel

* Denotes Member present
(5) Denotes category of Reserve Member

[Note: Councillors Janet Mote and Paul Osborn attended this meeting to speak on the item indicated at Minute 37 below].

RECOMMENDATIONS - NIL**PART II - MINUTES**31. **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 Yogesh Teli	Councillor Joyce Nickolay

32. **Declarations of Interest:**

RESOLVED: To note that the following interests were declared:

<u>Member</u>	<u>Nature of Interest</u>
Councillor B E Gate	The Member declared a personal interest in that his wife was a nursing practitioner dealing with patients who were school children. The Member would remain in the room and take part in the discussion and decision-making on this item.
Councillor Mitzi Green	The Member declared a personal interest in that her son, who was no longer classed as a young person, had been diagnosed with Asperger's Syndrome. The Member would remain in the room and take part in the discussion and decision-making on this item.
Councillor Jean Lammiman	The Member declared a personal interest in that her son, who was no longer a young person, had Special Needs and was in receipt of a grant. The Member would remain in the room and take part in the decision – making on the items of the agenda.
Councillor Julia Merison	The Member declared a personal interest in that she had a nephew with Special Educational Needs. The Member would remain in the room and take part in the decision – making on the items of the agenda.
Councillor Dinesh Solanki	The Member declared a personal interest in that he had a visually impaired daughter attending a Middle School in Harrow. The Member would remain in the room and take part in the discussion

and decision-making on this item.

Mrs D Speel

The Member declared a personal interest in that a member of her family was on the SEN list. The Member would remain in the room and take part in the discussion and decision-making on this item.

33. **Arrangement of Agenda:**

RESOLVED: That (1) all items be considered with the press and public present;

(2) Agenda Item 8 – Final Report of the Challenge Panel on School Nursing, be considered before Agenda Item 7 – Question and Answer Session with the Portfolio Holders.

34. **Minutes:**

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 18 October 2006 be deferred to the next ordinary meeting of the Sub-Committee.

35. **Deputations:**

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

36. **Appointment of Co-optees:**

RESOLVED: To note the appointment of Mrs D Speel and Mr R Chauhan as Parent Governor representatives at the Overview and Scrutiny meeting held on 21 November 2006.

37. **Question and Answer Session with the Portfolio Holder for People First - Children's Services and the Portfolio Holder for Legal Services and Issues Facing Young People:**

The Chairman welcomed the Portfolio Holder for People First – Children's Services and the Portfolio Holder for Legal Services and Issues Facing Young People to the meeting and the following questions were asked:

Every Child Matters – Be Healthy

Question 1: *There is a growing awareness of the importance of healthier food provisions in schools. What is the Council doing to ensure that schools are practically applying healthy eating principles at lunch and break times?*

The Portfolio Holder for People First – Children's Services responded as follows:-

- The local authority had appointed a dedicated schools' dietitian in 2006 to work with and support schools in meeting the new food-based and nutritional standards;
- The schools dietitian was supporting school catering staff, in those schools with their own catering service, to adapt menus in line with the new mandatory food based standards for school lunches;
- The provision of hot and cold lunches provided by the Council had been improved to meet new food-based standards;
- Gaining the Healthy Schools award would involve ensuring that schools were providing healthy food options throughout the school day.
- Dietetic support would be given to schools to help meet new standards for food - other than lunch, that come into force in September 2007.

In response to a supplemental question, the Portfolio Holder explained that a daily portion of fruit was provided to all children in First Schools and milk was provided to children under 5 years old. There had been a national campaign to reduce obesity through healthy food and exercise programmes. Schools provided drinking water or allowed children to keep drinking water on their desks.

In response to a Member's request that the Sub-Committee be provided with information on how each school was providing drinking water, an officer explained that schools could not be forced to provide such information.

Question 2: *What is the uptake of hot school meals in Harrow? How does the Council envisage providing school meals in the future?*

The Portfolio Holder for People First – Children's Services explained that the average free school meal (FSM) eligibility in High Schools was 19.6% of the total High School headcount, with take-up amongst those eligible for FSMs over 88%. In addition, all High Schools were offering hot meals to all children who were eligible to receive them.

The average FSM eligibility in the 27 First & Middle Schools that offered hot meals was 23.7% of the total First & Middle school headcount in those schools. Take-up amongst those eligible for FSMs in the 27 schools was over 94%.

It was reported that the Government had stated that each Local Authority should have a strategy in place, which would demonstrate how the Government targets regarding the quality and sustainability of school food plus the introduction of a hot meals service would be met. As part of this strategy, Harrow was maximising opportunities to increase the availability of hot meals on a phased basis through a range of locally developed initiatives. The strategy was currently being drafted and would be published that month.

In response to a supplemental question, an officer informed the Sub-Committee that no date had been set for all children to have access to hot meals. A Member requested that the strategy be monitored by the Sub-Committee.

Question 3: *What is being done to ensure that meals provided to children are of a high quality? How are complaints about free school meals and packed lunches being monitored?*

The Portfolio Holder for People First – Children's Services replied that where individual schools with delegated budget status had commissioned external third-party suppliers to provide a meal service, the expectation was that those schools would have their own individual processes in place for monitoring complaints. Where the local authority provided a meals service, there was a formal complaints process and procedure in place for responding to and monitoring complaints in a timely manner. In addition, the recently agreed increased funding for FSM packed lunches and hot meals would mean that the new nutrient standards and quality would be improved. The Local Authority was working towards assessing and evaluating monitoring systems as part of the overall School Meals Improvement Strategy to ensure compliance against the new food based and nutritional standards.

A Member suggested that children could be asked to tick a sheet detailing their menu selections for the next day, to reduce wastage. An officer replied that if this was cost effective, third party contractors could consider this.

Question 4: *What work is being done with parents to promote healthy eating/exercise/lifestyles (smoking, sexual relationships) to reinforce the messages being given out in schools?*

The Portfolio Holder for People First – Children's Services responded as follows:

- One of the requirements to become a healthy school was to consult and work with parents in promoting healthy lifestyles and that all schools involved in the programme would be working towards this;
- The specialist schools' dietician had contributed to parents' sessions on healthy eating for 5 schools since June 2006;
- Rooks Heath had hosted a 'Promoting Healthy Lifestyles' evening for their cluster in November 2006 as part of their healthy schools work;
- The specialist schools dietician had linked with the cluster co-ordinators to develop work with parents on healthy eating;
- The Early Years and Childcare Foundation Stage Conference held on the 7 and 8 September 2006 had focused on supporting practitioners to give children the best start by concentrating on health eating and physical exercise. Sally Gunnell from the world of sport and Anthony Worrall-Thompson, well-known chef and writer on healthy eating, attended and enthused around 600

practitioners with ideas and strategies that could be implemented in schools and pre-schools;

- Harrow Early Years and Childcare and Parenting services had provided a pre-school setting in Harrow with the opportunity to undertake a Healthy pre-school award. Approximately 10 settings had achieved this award, which meant they had looked at healthy eating and the physical environment in detail.

In response to a supplemental question about whether the Council's publications were reinforcing the Healthy Lifestyles message, the Portfolio Holder for Legal Services and Issues Facing Young People reported that this was the case, that Harrow People contained stories reinforcing the message and information about events had been placed on the Council's website. Posters promoting the consumption of five pieces of fruit and vegetables per day had been posted in schools.

Question 5: *What percentage of children are participating in weekly sports sessions and what types of activities are these? What is being done to encourage enthusiasm for certain sporting activities?*

The Portfolio Holder for People First – Children's Services responded as follows:

- 72% of 5-16 year olds were participating in PE and School Sport per week according to the Physical Education (PE), School Sport and Club Links Survey published in July 2006;
- Every school in the Borough was part of the Harrow Schools Sports Partnership which meant that the school had a named person responsible for co-ordinating PE in their school;
- Each primary school was linked to a High School with a School Sport Co-ordinator (SSCO) who was released from their timetable two days a week to work with the primary schools. They supported the development and delivery of 2 hours high quality PE and School Sport per week;
- There were a wide range of activities organised and run at Borough, Partnership and School level, including boys and girls football, sports hall athletics (Year 6 and Year 7), dance, tennis, table tennis, swimming, rugby and netball;
- Some of the activities were aimed at 'targeted' children, for example, girls only sessions and sessions for children of particular ages;
- Big Lottery grant of £170,896 over 6 years had helped to support and increase the amount of out of hours learning (OSHL) which was occurring in schools from Year 1-Year 7. The types of activities delivered were driven by the schools themselves;
- Additional Department for Education and Skills (DfES) funding was being used to increase the amount of Key Stage 4 participation in High Schools.

In response to concerns raised by Members, it was explained that there would be implications on services, from where the post of Group Manager, Sports and Cultural Services Group had been 'frozen', but the impact would be minimised.

In response to a supplemental question, Members were advised that illness or injury would be the only reasons children would not be participating in sport or PE. Most schools were working towards providing two hours PE a week but had to work within the constraints of the National Curriculum. Access to the halls and outside areas was also a consideration. Members were also advised that schools were encouraging children to walk to school through their School Travel Plans, but parental support was required.

Every Child Matters – Stay Safe

Question 6: *Is there a shortage of foster carers in Harrow (as is the case nationally)? If so, what is being done to address this shortage?*

The Portfolio Holder for People First - Children's Services responded as follows:

Harrow, like all other local authorities, wished to increase its pool of in-house carers. In addition, Harrow had a growing Children Looked After (CLA) population. The

Borough's CLA population for 2004/05 was 160, compared to 175 for 2005/06. In light of this, Harrow had developed a Foster Carer Recruitment Campaign.

Work completed:

- For 2 days in May 2006 there had been a recruitment stand staffed by Family Placement Service (FPS) personnel in the St George's Shopping Centre. This co-incided with Fostering Fortnight, to take advantage of the nation-wide coverage in the press and media;
- In May 2006 the role and importance of having local foster carers was publicised in the Harrow Observer newspaper;
- In July 2006 there was a recruitment stand staffed by FPS personnel at the 'Under One Sky' event;
- In April, June and October 2006 there were regular Open Evenings run by the FPS team to provide opportunities for members of the public to learn about the fostering role;
- In November 2005, April 2006 and November 2006 - 'Skills to Foster' preparation sessions took place. All those who successfully completed the course would undergo Form F assessment with an agreed timeframe;
- In September 2006 candidates whose cultural heritage matched the identified gaps in the current group of in-house foster carers were prioritised to attend the 'Skills to Foster' course;
- There had been improved performance regarding approval of new foster carers. In 2005/06, 2 sets of new carers had been approved, in 2006/07, 11 new sets of carers had been approved so far (5 foster carers, 3 kinship carers, 3 family link)

Future Actions:

- In January 2007 there would be the introduction of the new allowances for in-house foster carers, making them the best financially rewarded Local Authority carers in the region;
- The data from the foster carer reviews and the approval status of all carers would inform the foster carer recruitment campaign for future needs;
- By March 2007, the fostering service in partnership with the social care teams would have undertaken an analysis of Harrow's CLA trends in order to identify placement needs and to enable specific and targeted foster carer recruitment to be undertaken.

In response to a supplemental question, the Director of Children's Services replied that Harrow foster carers received payment that was above the London and national average, grants were available to carers, and carers could attend a support group. Harrow was looking to improve communications to aid the campaign. It was reported that there was competition from profit-making agencies but that many foster carers from these agencies were returning to the Council, as it provided a stable income.

Question 7: *How is the quality of foster caring assured? What support is offered to our foster carers?*

The Portfolio Holder for People First – Children's Services responded as follows:

- All Harrow foster carers should have completed their individual Annual Review by January 2007;
- All carers received regular statutory visits from a Supervising Social Worker in line with national regulations. In addition, each child placed with a foster carer was also regularly visited by a Social Worker in line with statutory requirements;
- The 2007/08 training programme for fostering staff and carers would be finalised by February 2007. Specific courses of relevance would include Child Protection, First Aid, Health and Safety, Managing Challenging Behaviour and Valuing Diversity and Difference, Working with Loss and Working with Birth Parents;

- All Harrow carers were members of The Harrow Foster Carers' Association;
- The Harrow Foster Carers' Association held regular meetings for its members and met with fostering service managers on a regular basis;
- The electronic records system enabled managers to monitor workflow and ensure assessments, supervising visits and carers' reviews were adhered to;
- The Team Manager monitored the workflow of each individual member of staff on a monthly basis through the supervision process;
- Foster carers' awards ceremonies were held.

Question 8: *What is the Council doing, and in partnership with other agencies, to deter anti-social behaviour especially after the school day and on the way home? Please note the impact of free bus passes for school children.*

The Portfolio Holder for People First – Children's Services responded as follows:

- A wide range of programmes were provided within the Borough for young people, to encourage them to participate in positive activities and avoid anti-social behaviour. These included after school clubs, sports activities (Kickz project, Canons Cricket academy and basketball), youth clubs (residential and outreach projects), and Connexions funded activities (through Positive Activities for Young People - PAYP - funding). Young people were also encouraged to participate in decision making through the Youth Council, Youth Question Time, Student Advisory Group and Operation Empower;
- The extended schools agenda also meant that schools were looking for ways to provide opportunities for further involvement of all ages beyond the school day. The Safer Harrow Community officers worked closely with a number of schools and were present at school gates to deter anti social behaviour, and promote positive citizenship;
- When local residents expressed concern about the large number of young people gathering in Boxtree Park (Harrow Weald) over the summer holidays, the youth service used this opportunity to use outreach youth workers in the park to deliver a six week series of activities, culminating in a youth-led fun day attracting up to 150 local teenagers (aged 13-19);
- During Junior Citizens week, the Watford Football Club manager spoke to children about what footballers ate and the importance of exercise. He was seen as a positive role model for the children;
- Young people had expressed the view that CCTV did not have an impact on their fear of crime. There would be a Member Development event on 6 February 2007 to look at the fear of crime.

In response to a supplemental question about anti-social behaviour at the bus station and members of the public being prevented from using buses by school children with free bus passes, it was explained that steps taken would be to address this matter. The Council was working with the police to reduce anti-social behaviour at Harrow's travel hubs, a three year programme was in place to educate young children, Headteachers of the pupils involved in anti-social behaviour were working together to agree a strategy, after school activities had reduced the number of children leaving school at the same time and the links between community police and schools would benefit young people and the community.

The Portfolio Holder for Legal Services and Issues Facing Young People explained that young people had also raised concern about the level of policing at the bus station.

Question 9: *What advice is coming forward to support parents and make them aware of their children's behaviour both in and out of school?*

The Sub-Committee was provided with the following written answer:

- All schools had asked parents to support them in promoting positive behaviour through a wide range of work such as Home School agreements, the publication of policies and practices, guidance and referral to agencies, drop-in sessions for parents and parenting classes;

- Where a school felt that a young person might be in need of more intensive support they would offer support, advice and access to additional services such as lunchtime clubs, peer mentoring, social skills groups, learning mentors, Kids can Achieve (ADHD), Connexions;
- Schools could also refer a young person to other agencies including the Education Psychology Service, Education Welfare Service if there was an attendance issue, CAMHS, SEN advisory teacher, Secondary Behaviour and Attendance Consultant, Harrow Tuition Service (Specialist support), and, rarely, a referral to the Rapid Intervention Team;
- Any work that schools did with youngsters was always discussed with parents as part of an agreed plan; if a youngster was identified as having SEN this would form his/her Individual Education Plan (IEP) or, where it was indicated that the behaviour might result in an exclusion, a parent would be invited to a meeting at which a Pastoral Support Programme (PSP) would be drawn up.

Every Child Matters – Enjoy and Achieve

Question 10: *How many of Harrow's children are on the Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)? What work is being done to support schools and youth groups to work with children on ASD and access training?*

The Sub-Committee requested a written answer due to the time constraints but in response to a supplemental question, Members were advised that special schools provided support as part of the curriculum for all pupils with a statement of Special Educational Needs. Specific support was provided to individual pupils in mainstream schools through the Sensory and Communication Team and there were plans in the capital programme to provide additional provision at three primary and two secondary schools.

Question 11: *What is the Council doing to help organisations like MIND support and enable children with mental health illness to achieve?*

Members were advised that MIND was an independent charity, which raised its own funds and was not supported by the Council.

Question 12: *How will the Portfolio Holder ensure, in line with the manifesto pledges, that all looked after children have free access to all leisure/sporting facilities in the borough?*

The Portfolio Holder for People First – Children's Services responded that:-

- Children Looked After were entitled to greatly reduced Harrow Leisure cards (£2.50) with additional discount of 20% off the cost of all facilities at the Harrow Leisure Centre and the Bannister Sports Centre.
- Children Looked After were entitled to free swimming at Hatch End Pool.
- The proof required was in the form of a letter from Children Services, which the carers would provide to the Centre.
- Leisure Connection kept the data on the number of concessionary card users.

Question 13: *How does the Portfolio Holder see the future for music tuition in the borough?*

The Portfolio Holder for People First – Children's Services responded that Harrow Music Service provided tuition to schools through a Service Level Agreement (SLA) and from April 2007, schools would be paying the full cost of providing music tuition in schools. The impact of the cut to the Music Service subsidy in terms of schools 'buy back' of the service was, as yet, unknown, as the next year's SLA had yet to be agreed. However, Council officers would be meeting with Headteachers in the coming months to explain the rationale behind the changes to the SLA and to determine the level of commitment from schools in the future.

The Portfolio Holder added that she was optimistic that music tuition in the Borough would continue and stated that the music tuition grant to schools had increased by 6%.

Question 14: *How are we monitoring bullying in the Borough?*

The Portfolio Holder for People First – Children's Services responded as follows:

- The Schools Standards and Framework Act 1998 required all schools to ensure that measures were in place to prevent all forms of bullying among pupils. It was a statutory responsibility of all Governing Bodies to have an anti-bullying policy. The Local Authority expected schools to have specific anti-bullying policies and strategies;
- Inspections by Ofsted had shown that Harrow schools had effective anti-bullying policies and practices. A common misunderstanding occasionally existed between schools and parents in the management of complaints around bullying. There was a need to support parents and schools in communicating with one another and minimise incidents of bullying by involving pupils, staff, parents and governors to overcome any obstacles and to ensure that the policies worked on a day-to-day basis;
- At Local Authority level, no statistics were held but Harrow schools had acted to mitigate bullying in schools and current Ofsted reports for the Authority supported the fact that schools had systems in place to deal with bullying;
- The Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) had a multi-agency anti-bullying steering group which took part in promoting awareness during anti-bullying week every November. Children and young people took an active role, for example, by entering a competition for a slogan;
- E-bullying was a relatively new phenomenon, but the LSCB had issued guidance leaflets to parents and children to help raise awareness of safety on the internet;
- The LSCB was working with the Child Exploitation Online Protection (CEOP) to consider working with schools on educational programmes for pupils during 2007-2008;
- The police community safety officers worked with schools and the Council's crime prevention officer on e-safety education.

Other Areas Under The Remit Of Children and Young People Scrutiny Sub-Committee

Question 15: *What progress has been made on the pledges relating to children and young people in the Administration's manifesto? Specific reference to facilities for youth, youth parliament, empowering the youth of Harrow, engaging schools in recycling initiatives.*

The Portfolio Holder for Legal Services and Issues Facing Young People responded that young people would be electing a new delegate to represent Harrow as a Member of the Youth Parliament, with two deputies to support him / her. To date there had been 28 nominees from thirteen high schools, colleges and community groups. Young people who were nominated as candidates, but not elected, would be encouraged to become the Junior Councillors of the Borough and it might be possible to co-opt them onto some of the Council's committees.

It was reported that 40 Harrow schools participated in recycling schemes and that the launch of educational recycling would take place at Marlborough School.

It was explained that Vaughan School had made a request to attend a Council meeting. A Member suggested that the Portfolio Holder might want to consider Members of the Harrow Youth Council shadowing Councillors.

In response to a supplemental question about grants being made available in the current financial environment, the Portfolio Holder explained that the Council was providing as much support as possible and that the government had given the Council a Youth Opportunity Fund, which could only be spent with the approval of the Youth Council and Youth Parliament.

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

(2) Members receive responses to the questions, which were not answered during the meeting due to the time constraint, together with responses to any supplemental questions;

(3) the Sub-Committee receive, at the next meeting, the results from the recent survey of water provision in schools;

(4) the School Meals Improvement Strategy and provision for pupils on the Autistic Spectrum be added to the Work Programme;

(5) the Member Development Panel be made aware of the discussions on anti-social behaviour in the bus station.

38. **Final Report of the Challenge Panel on School Nursing:**

The Sub-Committee received a report of the Director of People, Performance and Policy, alongside a verbal report of the Chairman of the Review Group, on the findings of the Challenge Panel on School Nursing.

The Chairman of the Panel thanked those involved in the Challenge Panel, in particular the Scrutiny officer and officers from the Primary Care Trust and North West London Hospitals Trust. The Chairman also emphasised the need for Scrutiny Members to put pressure on the decision makers to ensure that the necessary funding would be made available.

RESOLVED: That (1) the final report of the Challenge Panel on School Nursing be noted;

(2) the findings and recommendations of the Challenge Panel, as set out in the report, be endorsed;

(3) the report be forwarded to Cabinet for noting at its meeting on 15 February 2007;

(4) the report be forwarded to the Health and Social Care Integration Board for noting.

39. **Any Other Business:**

Members raised concern that scrutiny reports referred to Cabinet were not always considered at the next meeting and Scrutiny Members were not presenting reports to Cabinet.

The Portfolio Holder for Legal Services and Issues Facing Young People informed the Sub-Committee that if specific examples were provided, he would investigate.

RESOLVED: That the above be noted.

40. **Extension and Termination of the Meeting:**

In accordance with Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rule 6.7 it was

RESOLVED: To continue until 10.10 pm.

(Note: The meeting having commenced at 7.30 pm, closed at 10.10 pm)

(Signed) COUNCILLOR MARK VERSALLION
Chairman