

EDUCATION CONSULTATIVE FORUM

29 JUNE 2009

Chairman:	* Councillor Mrs Anjana Patel	
Councillors:	* Husain Akhtar (1) * Mrs Camilla Bath * Miss Christine Bednell	* B E Gate * Raj Ray * Bill Stephenson
Teachers' Constituency:	* Mrs D Cawthorne * Ms C Gembala Ms J Howkins	Ms J Lang * Ms L Money * Ms L Snowdon
Governors' Constituency:	* Mrs C Millard * Mr N Ransley	* Mr K Sochall Ms H Solanki
Elected Parent Governor Representatives:	* Mr R Chauhan	* Mrs D Speel
Denominational Representatives:	* Mrs J Rammelt	Reverend P Reece

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

PART I - RECOMMENDATIONS**RECOMMENDATION 1 – School Term Dates 2010 - 2011**

The Forum received a report which detailed the proposed model for Harrow's school term dates, 2010 – 2011. The model had been decided upon following consultation with constituent groups and neighbouring boroughs and the Forum was requested to recommend to the Portfolio Holder for Schools and Children's Development that the new dates be adopted.

A member of the Teachers' Constituency stated that she, on behalf of primary school head teachers in Harrow, supported the proposals.

Resolved to RECOMMEND: (to the Portfolio Holder for Schools and Children's Development)

That the proposed school term dates for 2010 – 2011, as set out in Annexe A of the officer report, be adopted.

PART II - MINUTES128. **Appointment of Chairman:**

RESOLVED: To note the appointment at the Cabinet meeting on 14 May 2009 of Councillor Anjana Patel as Chairman of the Forum for the Municipal Year 2009/2010.

129. **Attendance by Reserve Members:**

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

Ordinary Member

Reserve Member

Councillor Janet Mote

Councillor Husain Akhtar

130. **Apologies for Absence:**

RESOLVED: To note that no apologies for absence had been received.

131. **Declarations of Interest:**

RESOLVED: To note that there were no declarations of interests made by Members in relation to the business to be transacted at this meeting.

132. **Minutes:**
- RESOLVED:** That the minutes of the meeting held on 27 January 2009 be taken as read and signed as a correct record.
133. **Appointment of Vice-Chairman:**
- RESOLVED:** To appoint Ms L Snowdon as Vice-Chairman of the Forum for the Municipal Year 2009/2010.
134. **Matters Arising:**
- RESOLVED:** To note that there were no matters arising that did not appear on the agenda.
135. **Public Questions, Petitions and Deputations:**
- RESOLVED:** To note that no public questions were put, or petitions or deputations received at this meeting under the provisions of Advisory Panel and Consultative Forum Procedure Rules 16, 14 and 15 respectively.
136. **School Term Dates 2010 - 2011:**
(See Recommendation 1).
137. **INFORMATION REPORT - School Reorganisation:**
- The Forum received a report of the Director of Schools and Children's Development which provided an update on the progress of the school reorganisation project which would establish infant, junior, primary and secondary community schools in Harrow in September 2010.
- A member of the Governors' Constituency Group asked the Director of Schools & Children's Development to outline the support that would be made available to first and middle schools in order to help staff manage the changes. He added that changing the age of transfer was likely create new educational needs and, in some cases, staffing issues. In response, the Director of Schools & Children's Development stated that issues were being addressed as they arose and, at present, the Council was focusing on workforce planning, finance planning and site planning. She added that curriculum planning was also being considered in order to help schools cater for younger intakes and that further support would be in line with the needs expressed by schools.
- A Member of the Forum added that, although much support was being offered to schools affected by the reorganisation, staff were used to dealing with new intakes on a yearly basis and would probably be well equipped to deal with changes to the age of transfer. A member of the Governors' Constituency Group stated that separate first and middle schools were more likely to struggle with the new staffing needs and that support should be focused on this.
- Following a number of questions from the Forum, the Director of Schools & Children's Development clarified that:
- the Council was working closely with high schools to ensure that all children could be accommodated following the change to the age of transfer. She added that, though some were concerned about the use of temporary accommodation, the temporary structures were often better than the older permanent classrooms used by schools;
 - the Council had submitted an expression of interest to the DCSF for funding through the Building Schools for the Future (BSF) initiative. This funding would be used to develop high schools, including permanent buildings to replace temporary accommodation.
- A member of the Forum stated that some teachers had expressed disappointment with the temporary classrooms, outlining a number of problems including overheating, plumbing problems and noise. The Portfolio Holder for Children's Services stated that she was surprised to hear about such problems as she had visited schools using temporary accommodation and had been impressed with the facilities. She informed the Forum that she would look into the matter.
- RESOLVED:** That the report be noted.

138. **INFORMATION REPORT - Building Schools for the Future:**

The Forum received a report of the Director of Schools and Children's Development which provided an update on the BSF initiative and the progress that had been made by the Council. The Chairman informed the Forum that in 2008, the DCSF had invited local authorities to submit an Expression of Interest for BSF funding and that Harrow was currently placed 52 out of 70 other local authorities yet to enter the programme. She added that the Council was still hopeful that it would secure funding but that, in the current economic climate, nothing was certain. The Chairman stated that the Council would only proceed if funding was secured.

Following a number of questions from members of the Forum, the Director of Schools & Children's Development clarified that:

- schools entering wave one of the programme would be expected to support the process by contributing towards the cost. The remaining £2.4 million funding gap, as detailed in Annexe A of the report, would be covered by the Council over a period of three years. However, these funds would only be provided if the Council was invited into the programme and no money would be committed prior to this;
- the Council's Expression of Interest to the DCSF identified a total of 10 schools to receive funding. Of these, 4 had been allocated to Wave 1 (priority project) and the remaining 6 to Wave 2 (follow-on project);
- if Harrow was accepted into the programme, the Council could expect to receive £84 million during Wave 1 and £125 million in Wave 2. However, due to the current economic conditions, the way in which funding was provided could change;
- whilst there was a desire to use the BSF programme with other initiatives to allow schools to provide local services and reduce the need for stand alone facilities, such utilisation would be subject to a comprehensive business case being put forward, demonstrating that there would be no additional operating costs incurred by the Council.

A Member of the Forum stated that the BSF programme had the potential to promote local enterprise and requested that the report be updated to consider such possibilities. The Director of Schools & Children's Development agreed to look into the matter.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

139. **INFORMATION REPORT - School Exclusions Data 2007/08 Academic Year:**

The Forum received a report of the Director of Schools and Children's Development which set out the number of permanent and fixed term school exclusions for the academic year 2007/08.

The Director of Schools & Children's Development informed the Forum that the Council had been working increasingly closely with schools to combat exclusion and that a Rapid Intervention Team (RIT) had been established to improve the support available to pupils at risk of exclusion. She added that a disproportionate number of exclusions occurred in year 7, possibly as some pupils felt they had 'outgrown' middle school. It was therefore hoped that the change to the age of transfer might help reduce the number of exclusions occurring.

Speaking in regards to the increased number of permanent exclusions occurring in primary schools, the Director of Schools & Children's Development informed the Forum that this was most likely due to a change in exclusion procedure. She explained that, in the past, primary schools would give final year pupils longer fixed term exclusions to ensure they finished the school year. However, such practices were no longer allowed.

The Director of Schools & Children's Development informed the Forum that, in order to reduce the number of exclusions occurring in high schools, seclusion units were being used to deter pupils from behaving badly. Rather than giving pupils fixed term exclusions, schools were being encouraged to isolate badly behaved individuals from other students whilst ensuring that they remained in fulltime education. However, the Director of Schools & Children's Development stated that the Council supported schools' rights to exclude pupils when necessary.

Following a general discussion, the following points were raised by members of the Forum:

- high numbers of exclusions were not necessarily indicative of under performing schools but, in contrast, demonstrated that schools took action when necessary;
- Ofsted reports regularly praised Harrow's Schools for their good standards of behaviour;
- exclusions were only used as a 'last resort' and that schools had a number of support systems in place to deal with bad behaviour;
- the needs of well behaved pupils had to be taken into account as often their education was disrupted by bad behaviour in the classroom;
- the Marlborough Project was being rolled out to schools and had been set up to target children whose mental health was affecting their ability to achieve their learning potential. The project provides specialist support to pupils and their families.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

140. **Date of Next Meeting:**

RESOLVED: That the next meeting of the Forum take place on 10 September 2009.

(Note: The meeting having commenced at 7.36 pm, closed at 8.44 pm)

(Signed) COUNCILLOR ANJANA PATEL
Chairman