

EDUCATION CONSULTATIVE FORUM

MINUTES

27 JANUARY 2010

Chairman:	* Councillor Mrs Anjana Patel	
Councillors:	* Husain Akhtar (1)	† Janet Mote
	* Miss Christine Bednell	* Raj Ray
	* B E Gate	* Bill Stephenson
Teachers' Constituency:	† Mrs D Cawthorne	Ms J Howkins
	* Ms A Drew	* Ms J Lang
	Ms C Gembala	† Ms L Money
		* Ms L Snowdon
Governors' Constituency:	* Mrs C Millard	* Mr K Sochall
	* Mr N Ransley	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 Members
- † Denotes apologies received

141. Attendance by Reserve Members

RESOLVED: To note the attendance of the following duly constituted Reserve Member:

Ordinary Member

Councillor Mrs Camilla Bath

Reserve Member

Councillor Husain Akhtar

142. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillor Mrs Camilla Bath, Councillor Janet Mote, Mrs D Cawthorne, Ms L Money, Reverend P Reece.

143. Declarations of Interest

Agenda Items 9 - 14 School Placing Planning Strategy 2010-13; Pupil Attainment and Progress; School Term Dates Academic Year 2011-12; Machinery of Government Changes – 16 to 19 Education Provision; Draft Revenue Budget 2010-11 to 2012-13; Rules for Meetings of Constituent Groupings of the Education Consultative Forum with Councillor Members

RESOLVED: To note that the following interests were declared:

The majority of the Forum declared personal interests in their capacity as school governors and employees of schools in Harrow. They would remain in the room to take part in the discussion and decision relating to these items.

144. Minutes

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 29 June 2009, be taken as read and signed as a correct record.

145. Matters Arising

RESOLVED: To note that there were no matters arising that did not appear on the agenda.

146. 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 Committee Procedure Rules 19, 16 and 17 (Part 4B of the Constitution) respectively.

RESOLVED ITEMS

147. School Placing Planning Strategy 2010-13

The Forum received a report of the Director Schools and Children's Development, which provided an update on the School Place Planning Strategy for 2010-13.

The report set out proposals to ensure that there were sufficient school places to accommodate the increase in Harrow's population, which would impact on choices and patterns of placings.

Referring to the projected child yield estimates, a Member asked if one or more of the schools in Canons ward would be put under pressure. An officer explained that they had looked at planned residential developments as well as the potential to expand existing schools in the future and that it was difficult to

tell if new families or existing Harrow families would be moving into these new developments.

A Member stated that the statistics and charts in the report had been helpful but that in future he would prefer if they were accompanied by clearer explanations.

A member of the Forum asked if it would be necessary to envisage more schools to maintain the required 5% surplus for 2015-16 and queried whether the surplus might turn out to be higher than 5%. An officer explained that if a surplus of 5% was maintained and the expected numbers of pupils materialised, then it would be necessary to look at existing sites and expand on these. Currently there were no proposals to build new schools.

A Member asked if any calculations had been done regarding extending current schools' facilities. An officer explained that currently there was surplus accommodation in the primary sector, as a result of the change to the age of transfer, however, the priority for schools was to maintain sufficient places.

An officer explained that the properties listed in the report were part of Harrow's housing requirement as set out by Central Government and that any projections included estimated child yields.

A member of the Forum asked if this took into consideration parental preference for the most popular schools, saying that parents might choose to send their child to a more popular school even though it was farther away, adding that if popular schools were expanded then they may become less popular.

An officer explained that their projections had taken into consideration location of growth, site capacity, density of footprint and minimisation of capital expenditure.

A member asked whether the 'bulge' year reception classes of 2009 were a temporary or permanent measure. An officer explained that these 'bulge' year groups were for one year only and would revert back to normal the following year, but that there may need to be 'bulge' years in the future.

A member of the Forum stated that at her school there had been a 'bulge' year and that this, in her experience, had caused considerable stress in terms of staffing, use of space and uncertainty for temporary staff covering these short-term increases.

An officer stated that the 'bulge' classes in 2009 had been unexpected as there had been many late applications. Some parents had applied to both private and state schools in Harrow, as well as to schools out of the borough, which meant that they had over-offered in some schools and that not every place offered had been taken up. She added that Harrow was required by law to offer a school place to every Harrow child and that some schools had volunteered to have 'bulge' years, particularly in view of the change to the age of transfer, and that in the future the Council would negotiate 'bulge' years with schools 12 months ahead.

In response to a question concerning whether parents had been consulted regarding changes to education provision, an officer explained that statutory notices ensured that parents are informed.

A Member, referring to the National Autistic Society report which stated that the numbers of children affected by autism and Asperger's syndrome was on the increase in the London area and that the Minister for Health had advocated increased funding for this, and asked what plans were in place in Harrow and how these would impact on class sizes. An officer stated that there were 18 additional school places and that Alexandra, Shaftesbury and Woodlands school were expanding their provision in these areas.

In relation to class size, current legislation stipulated that classes of more than 30 pupils would require additional teacher support.

In response to questions regarding the financial implications of the current recession on school funding allocation, an officer stated that Dedicated Schools Grant review their funding allocation on the basis of pupil counts and census data and that the funding for 2010/11 had been confirmed.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the report be noted;
- (2) an annual update of the Strategy be submitted to the Forum.

148. INFORMATION REPORT - Pupil Attainment and Progress (Summer 2009)

The Forum received a report of the Director Schools and Children's Development which set out the attainment and progress of Harrow students in summer 2009.

An officer reported that the overall patterns shown in the report were cause for celebration, and that pupils going through the school system in Harrow had made good progress in 2009.

The officer added that some of the figures were unfavourable: the number of pupils who had not achieved any passes was slightly higher than the national average. However, the Achievement and Inclusion team had been working on identifying underperforming pupils and had identified some key groups that required special attention.

The officer stated that the Ethnic Minority Achievement Service team were working to narrow the gap between different social groups and had instituted good practice measures and that some of their work had been written up nationally.

Following a question about whether any success factors had been identified, an officer reported that OFSTED had identified some of the following factors as contributing to the success of a school: the quality of the head teacher, the quality of support staff, and the level of parental involvement. He added that

nationally, intervention programmes and one-to-one programmes had proved successful and that schools had become quite sophisticated at identifying under achieving pupils, and that the inspectors had praised the schools where this had happened. However, the mobility of Harrow pupils was a key issue.

The officer added that the one-to-one tuition scheme worked well, was well resourced nationally and there were plans to expand it. However, there was no guarantee that it would continue after April 2011.

A member of the Forum commented that the gap in the Key Stage 2 Special Educational Needs had been narrowed. An officer stated that it was important to narrow this gap without depressing the figure at the top.

A number of members requested a gender breakdown of the statistics relating to pupil attainment.

Following a question about the Early Years Foundation Stage, an officer stated that this evaluated children between 36-50 months, had nationally agreed expectation bands and that schools in Harrow used similar measures to assess literacy and early stages of numeracy and that there were significant numbers of children in Harrow who fell below these.

A Member said that there was a holistic approach to education in Harrow and that the Schools Team should be congratulated for good partnership work with other health professionals which had enriched the experience of children in Harrow.

A member of the Forum added that children's centres in Harrow worked with very young children and their parents to assist them with parenting skills, which was invaluable.

A majority of the Members acknowledged that it was essential to identify attainment in terms of ethnicity, as it helped to tackle under achievement in schools. A member of the Forum said that not all children in Harrow schools were born in the UK and that it was important to provide them with induction and support with language skills. She added that poverty was also a significant factor in under-achievement.

It was noted that achievements at Key Stage 5 would also be reported in the future

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the report be noted;
- (2) an officer to circulate up-to-date figures about pupil attainment to members of the Forum;
- (3) an officer to circulate a gender breakdown of the pupil attainment figures.

149. School Term Dates Academic Year 2011-2012

The Forum received a report of the Director Schools and Children's Development, which set out proposals for the School Term dates for the academic year 2011-2012.

It was noted that two models had been developed for consideration by the Forum. The variation in the models was the accommodation of the changed date for the Spring Bank Holiday and the proposed Diamond Jubilee Bank Holiday.

An officer stated that the Local Government Authority (LGA) were consulting local councils about their Standard School Year model and hoped to complete this process by the end of February 2010. In response to a question on consultation with examination boards, it was explained that the proposed models did not include any consultation with the examination boards, but it was expected that the LGA's model would.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the report be noted;
- (2) the members of the Forum await the LGA's recommended model and consult with their Constituent groups about this;
- (3) comments be fed back to the Director Schools and Children's Development;
- (4) a final model be proposed at the Education Consultative Forum meeting on 28 June 2010.

150. INFORMATION REPORT - Machinery of Government Changes/16-19 Education Provision

The Forum received a report of the Director Schools and Children's Development setting out the main changes that would take place as a result of the Apprenticeship, Skills, Children and Learning Act (2009).

An officer explained the main changes in 16-19 education provision, adding that after 1 April 2010, this responsibility would be passed from the LSC to local authorities, and that this new responsibility would bring with it significant funding for schools and colleges. These funds would be allocated to Harrow, Stanmore and St Dominic's Sixth-form Colleges, to the Harrow Schools Collegiate and voluntary sector providers.

The Chair and other Members requested Finance and Commissioning training be arranged for both current and new Members after May 2010.

Following questions about the Quality Assurance processes for the 14-19 Strategic Group, an officer stated that the Forum may wish to contribute to this process and any group overseeing this process could become

accountable to the Forum, adding that currently there was no agreed process and may need to be discussed at Cabinet.

The officer added that there had been a two year transfer process in Harrow. A separation between quality assurance and commissioners would be the structure adopted in Harrow. Funding provision for children with additional needs would also require examination. A Member stated that the colleges had been through some major changes. Funding and Quality Assurance were pulling in different directions and ought to be provided from once source only.

A member of the Forum stated that the School Improvement Partners would be responsible up to GCSE level, and this may be extended to age 19.

Members of the Forum asked for clarity about inter-borough dialogue and any informal arrangements between them. An officer stated that this dialogue covered current and future provision for 16-19 year olds.

An officer added that the post-16 population were a transient group and that in cases where 16-19 year olds had chosen to study out of borough, there was a need to ensure that they were accessing high quality courses as well as a need to obtain data about 16-19 year olds coming into the borough. A Member requested figures about projected take-up of these courses.

An officer explained further that information, advice and guidance would have to be provided to enable learners to access those courses, much of which could be done online, and that the London Regional Planning Group would be addressing the issue of vocational courses and that all providers could bid for growth.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the report be noted;
- (2) additional information required by Members be provided;
- (3) provision of training for Members be made through the Member Development Panel.

151. INFORMATION REPORT: Draft Revenue Budget 2010-11 to 2012-13

The Forum received a summary of the Council's draft budget plans for 2010-11 to 2012-13, as reported to Cabinet in December 2009. It was noted that comments were being sought from a variety of stakeholders including the Forum.

An officer outlined the three changes proposed to the schools funding formula, in order to take account of changes to the age of transfer, nursery funding and the provision of additional reception classes, also known as 'bulge' classes, due to an increase in pupil numbers. She added that there would be additional funding available to cover 'Bulge' classes.

A member asked if any efficiency savings had been identified from the budget for Central Items, such as Admissions, Special Education Needs (SEN), and Early Years.

In response, an officer stated that the efficiencies had been built in to the projected figures.

In response to a question about the funding of the expansion of Whitmore High School, an officer clarified that the £1.25m allocated from the Council's budget was only to fund the community elements of the project. The school build is being funded from the Education budget. The officer responded to a question in relation to the £550k allocated to fund the expansion of special school places, including the new category of behavioural support, and explained that all the special schools in Harrow were included in this provision, including Shaftesbury, Kingsley and Woodlands.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

152. Rules for Meetings of Constituent Groupings of the Education Consultative Forum with Councillor Members

The Forum received a report from the Director Legal and Governance Services regarding the rules for meetings of constituent groupings of the Education Consultative Forum with Councillor Members.

A Member stated that these rules had never been invoked and moved that the rules be deleted. This was duly recorded.

RESOLVED: That the rules for meetings of constituent groupings of the Education Consultative Forum with Councillor Members set out in the Constitution be deleted.

153. Date of Next Meeting

Members noted that the next meeting would fall on St Patrick's Day.

RESOLVED: That the next meeting of the Forum be held on 17 March 2010.

(Note: The meeting, having commenced at 7.33 pm, closed at 9.15 pm).

(Signed) COUNCILLOR ANJANA PATEL
Chairman