

EDUCATION CONSULTATIVE FORUM

MINUTES

7 MARCH 2012

Chairman:	* Councillor Brian Gate	
Councillors:	* Husain Akhtar * Mrs Camilla Bath * Janet Mote	Raj Ray Zarina Sheikh * Krishna Suresh
Teachers' Constituency:	* Ms A Drew Ms C Gembala Ms J Lang	* Ms L Money Ms L Rowlands * Ms L Snowdon
Governors' Constituency:	* Mrs C Millard * Mr N Ransley	* Mr K Sochall Ms H Solanki
Elected Parent Governor Representatives:	† Mrs A Khan	
Denominational Representatives:	* Mrs J Rammelt	* Reverend P Reece

- * Denotes Member present
- † Denotes apologies received

82. Attendance by Reserve Members

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

83. Apologies for Absence

An apology for absence was received from Mrs A Khan.

84. Declarations of Interest

RESOLVED: To note that there were no declarations of interests made by Members.

85. Minutes

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 25 January 2012 be taken as read and signed as a correct record.

86. Public Questions, Petitions and Deputations

RESOLVED: To note that no public questions were put, or petitions or deputations received at this meeting.

RECOMMENDED ITEMS

87. Proposals for Constitutional Changes to Education Consultative Forum

The Forum received a report of the Corporate Director Children's Services which set out proposals for constitutional changes to the Education Consultative Forum. An officer advised that:

- the Education Act 2011 had initiated changes to the role of the Local Authority with regard to schools and these changes were reflected in the proposed changes to the scope, function and composition of the Forum;
- following a suggestion from the Education Consultative Forum at its 25 January meeting, further consultation of key stakeholders had been carried out with regard to the proposed changes to the Forum's composition and admissions functions;
- the results of the consultation had been incorporated into the recommendations in the report.

The officer outlined the following proposed changes:

- that the Education Consultative Forum (EdCF) be renamed Education Strategy Consultative Forum (ESCF);
- ESCF would not be a decision-making body, but would be an advisory body and would make recommendations to Cabinet;
- ESCF would also consider cross-cutting issues, including revenue and capital funding and strategic issues relating to the provision of education and schooling in Harrow, educational excellence and provision for vulnerable children;

- membership of ESCF would be widened to reflect its extended scope and would include representation from academies and the private and voluntary early years sector;
- the role of the Harrow Admissions Forum would be subsumed into ESCF, subject to approval by Council.

Following questions and suggestions from Members of the Forum, an officer stated that:

- the two support staff representatives could be recruited through Unison and GMB and a letter could be sent to all schools inviting prospective representatives to come forward;
- there would four denominational representatives, one from each denominational provider in Harrow (Hindu, Roman Catholic, Church of England and Jewish);
- the two parent governors representatives would be sought by writing to schools and through publicity in Harrow People, parent-teacher associations and schools' newsletters;
- the paragraph relating to the composition of the Governor constituency would specify that it would consist of six non-Councillor members and the representative for post-16 providers would be from a college in Harrow;
- it was proposed that representatives from independent schools in Harrow not be invited at this time, but that established relationships between maintained schools and independent schools in Harrow be further developed. He added that this proposal was not inconsistent with inviting representatives from the early years private and voluntary sector providers to the Forum, because there was no state provision for children under five, whereas there was state provision for children over five years of age;
- this policy of not inviting representation from independent schools in Harrow be reviewed in March 2013.

Several Forum Members expressed the view that representatives from independent schools in Harrow would benefit and enhance the work of the Forum and this would be in keeping with recent government initiatives to create better links between the independent and the state sector.

Resolved to RECOMMEND: to Cabinet, via the Constitution Review Working Group

That

- (1) the Education Consultative Forum be renamed the Education Strategy Consultative Forum (ESCF);

- (2) the function and objectives of the Education Strategy Consultative Forum be:
 - (i) to act as a forum for communication between the Executive, school employees, governing bodies, other Councillors, denominational representatives, parents and other interested parties, other than in regard to matters of a personal or individual school specific nature;
 - (ii) to promote and encourage interchange of opinion on questions relating to the provision and administration of education, in the London Borough of Harrow and to assist the Executive on all such questions;
 - (iii) to consider and report or advise (as required) upon all questions referred to them by the Executive;
 - (iv) to encourage and foster a wide interest and responsibility for education, in the London Borough of Harrow;
 - (v) to provide facilities for the full consideration and utilisation of experience and ideas of schools and education providers;
- (3) the ESCF consider all matters relating to the provision of education and schooling in Harrow in the following three broad policy areas:
 - (i) School Organisation and Admissions – securing the supply of sufficient school places, including nursery to 19 provision in an increasingly autonomous context with a range of providers, and ensuring fair access for admission to school;
 - (ii) Education Excellence - fulfilling the role of the local authority to promote high standards in education and tackling underperformance through School Improvement and Intervention;
 - (iii) Provision for Vulnerable children - including those with special educational needs and disabilities, exclusions and alternative provision, children missing education in the context of the changes to local authority central services and changes to admission arrangements;
- (4) the ESCF receive reports on the allocation and expenditure of revenue and capital funding, with particular reference to impact on the three policy areas above;
- (5) the ESCF be composed of a range of constituent groupings as follows:
 - (i) a Member constituency with seven Members (politically proportionate).

- (ii) a school employee constituency of six members (to be nominated by unions) comprising a primary phase head; a secondary head, two teachers and two support staff representatives. At least one representative be from an academy school. The primary phase school representatives to contribute to the representation for the early years foundation stage. The secondary headteacher to contribute to the representation for post-16 provision;
 - (iii) a Governor constituency of six non-Councillor members (to be nominated by the Association of Harrow Governing Bodies) comprising two governors from secondary schools, two governors from primary schools, one governor from a special school and one governor from a voluntary aided school;
 - (iv) two elected parents;
 - (v) a denominational representative constituency comprising one representative for each denominational provider, currently Roman Catholic, Church of England, Hindu and Jewish;
 - (vi) an Early Years Private and Voluntary Sector Provider;
 - (vii) a representative for post-16 providers from a college in Harrow;
 - (viii) each of the above constituencies appoint a nominated person with whom the Chair of the ESCF can liaise between meetings;
- (6) a proposal to establish any subsidiary body of this Forum be subject to its prior referral to and approval by the Executive;
- (7) the following shall apply in relation to meetings and attendance:
- (i) the Chair be appointed by the Executive and be a Councillor / Portfolio Holder;
 - (ii) the Vice-Chair of the ESCF be elected from the non-Councillor participants of the Consultative Forum;
 - (iii) each member of a constituent group appointed to ESCF have formal voting rights when making a recommendation to the Executive;
 - (iv) any member of the ESCF may request an item relevant to the work of the ESCF to be placed on the agenda, but the agenda will be at the discretion of the Chair;
 - (v) each constituent group nominate an individual who can liaise with the Chair to place items on the agenda. Each political group may also have a nominated Member for this purpose;

- (vi) all constituent members of the ESCF may nominate a list of reserves to attend meetings in their place;
- (vii) the members of the ESCF to hold office until the appointment of their successor by the relevant nominating body, for example, Council, the Association of Harrow Governing Bodies. Any casual vacancy be filled as and when it may arise;
- (viii) any individual being a member of the schools constituent group of ESCF ceases to be a member if he/she shall cease to work at a school in the London Borough of Harrow;
- (ix) any individual being a member of the governors' constituent group of ESCF shall cease to be a member if he/she ceases to be a governor in the London Borough of Harrow;
- (x) any individual being a member of the Councillors' constituent group of ESCF shall cease to be a member if he/she ceases to be an elected member for the London Borough of Harrow;
- (xi) the constituent groupings within the ESCF may meet separately with the Member constituency on the Forum as laid down in the 'Rules for meetings of constituent groupings of the ESCF with Councillor Members';
- (xii) except where the views of the Consultative Forum have been requested by the Executive/another Committee, no recommendation or reference to the Executive or another Committee shall be made unless it is agreed by a majority of the elected Councillors.

Reason for Decision: To ensure the provision of strategic policy development in the provision of education and schooling in Harrow in accordance with the requirements of the Education Act 2011.

RESOLVED ITEMS

88. School Place Planning

An officer presented a report of the Corporate Director Children's Services which provided an update on School Place Planning issues, including the outcome of the statutory consultations about the proposed programme of school expansion.

The officer advised that:

- increased demand for school places, particularly in the primary sector, would be met through the permanent expansion of nine schools in the south west planning area and the introduction of temporary bulge classes;

- 8 bulge reception classes had been agreed for September 2012, with two further classes planned. The admissions service had received 1,969 applications for Year 7 places for 2,200 places in total;
- initial analysis of the consultation results indicated that there had been positive feedback about the proposals. However, there were concerns regarding funding commitments and possible impact on traffic and parking in the vicinity of schools. Any issues arising from the consultation would be addressed in a report to Cabinet in April.

Following questions and comments from Forum Members, an officer advised that:

- officers would ensure that schools received the appropriate level of guidance and support during the process of expansion;
- the preferred location for the Free School was Harrow, however, the proposers for the Free School, Avanti House, would not be able to enter into a funding agreement until a suitable site had been identified. He added that officers were assisting Avanti House in their search for a viable site. He added that Harrow Council were represented by an officer on the Avanti House School Steering Group;
- the school planned for the Kodak site had been earmarked for those families who would be living in the new developments planned around the site and would not be a suitable location for the proposed Free School.

The Chairman thanked officers for their hard work on the school expansion programme.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

89. Reviews of Brent and Harrow Education Business Service and the Ethnic Minority Achievement Service

The Forum received a report of the Corporate Director Children's Services which set out a review of the Brent and Harrow Education Business Service (BHEBS) and the Ethnic Minority Achievement Service (EMAS). An officer stated that the review was being carried out jointly with Brent Council with a view to informing decisions on any future provision of both services. The officer added that:

- state funding for BHEBS and EMAS would cease from 1 September and the future of both services would depend on whether schools in Brent and Harrow chose to buy into their services;
- a consultation of key stakeholders about the future of these services was being carried out as part of the Council's Protocol for Managing Organisational Change;

- the main work of BHEBS consisted of finding work experience placements for high school students;
- although the majority of employers signed up to the BHEBS tended to be from Brent, cross-border work placement of pupils was not uncommon;
- much of the EMAS' responsibility and funding had increasingly been delegated to schools. One aspect of EMAS' responsibility had been to meet the educational needs of children of traveller communities.

A Member stated that the government was increasingly taking a more integrated approach to education funding and schools were being asked to expand their provision to include areas such as work experience, work placements and career guidance. He added that the phrase 'Ethnic Minority' in the EMAS title could cause confusion as it was no longer relevant in view of the changed demographics in both Brent and Harrow.

Following questions and comments from Forum Members, an officer advised that:

- in his experience, employers preferred to deal with a single point of contact rather than individual schools when offering work placements to pupils;
- currently the BHEBS operated as a joint service offered by Brent and Harrow. Its future would depend on responses to the consultation and an assessment of whether its services were considered viable, and these may need to be reduced or become more specialised.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) Forum Members consider and comment on the review papers, and;
- (2) encourage their constituencies to respond to the consultation by 26 March 2012;
- (3) the report be noted.

90. Special School/Special Educational Needs Placements Strategy

The Forum received a report of the Corporate Director Children's Services which set out proposals to develop a Special Schools/Special Educational Needs (SEN) Strategy. An officer advised that the proposals were being developed in response to increased pressures on Special Schools in Harrow, a general increase in SEN demand in the population, and increasing financial pressure in the context changing government policy. The officer added that:

- SEN provision covered a wide spectrum of needs;

- the Strategy being developed would identify current and future demand and work with a range of stakeholders, which included officers in Adults and Housing to formulate future SEN policy and provision;
- proposals regarding future SEN provision would be submitted to Cabinet in July 2012 with further reports being submitted to the Forum.

Following questions from Members of the Forum, the officer advised that:

- Harrow's Academy Schools were considering how to accommodate SEN children in their schools;
- It was now possible for Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) in Harrow to convert to Academy status. Children in PRUs often had complex needs beyond educational needs, in the areas of health and social care. The work of PRUs was closely linked to many local authority services. One implication of PRUs converting to Academies may be that local authorities would retain responsibility for a small group of pupils with complex and challenging needs;
- officers were carrying out a review of out-of-borough SEN placements, and the officer undertook to circulate information about the type, number and cost of these placements to Forum Members at a later date;
- officers were taking a more holistic approach to SEN provision, for example, officers were working with paediatric services to help formulate SEN policy and strategy; Children and Adult Mental Health Services (CAMHS) would now be located within Children's Services; and Children's Services were considering the possibility of co-locating health services in schools.

The Chairman stated that, currently, healthcare, social care and education were all differently funded. In the future, he hoped to see greater partnership working between these providers, with child-centred budgets.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) officers circulate information about the type, number and cost of out of borough SEN placements to Forum Members;
- (2) the report be noted.

91. Post-16 Transport Statement

An officer presented a report of the Corporate Director Children's Services, which set out proposals to amend the criteria for funding for transport for students without a Special Educational Need, who travelled out of borough to a post-16 educational setting to study. The officer advised that:

- the grant from central government that provided transport costs for students without a SEN or disability through a locally determined scheme, ceased on 31 March 2011;
- most students in Harrow were well supported through arrangements offered by Transport for London (TfL);
- the scheme funded students aged between 16 and 19 from low income families, currently living within the London Borough of Harrow taking courses which were not available at one of Harrow's schools or three Colleges and where the location travelled to was not covered by TfL's free travel scheme for students;
- the fund was limited and the number of pupils affected was small. Furthermore, there was no strict obligation to provide this support and few other urban local authorities offered it;
- if pupils were not eligible to receive the fund from Harrow, then they might be eligible for a bursary or discretionary grant from the institute where they were studying.

A Member questioned why the eligibility criteria for the fund was retrospective with regard to the receipt of free schools meals and stated that this could have equalities implications. The Officer responded that the intention is to provide the grant where young people are eligible and would make the adjustment (subject to the consultation outcomes). Following further discussions, Forum Members requested that the eligibility criteria be amended.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) having considered the proposed criteria, the Forum Members recommended that the eligibility criteria be amended, subject to the consultation, as follows: 'You must have been in receipt of, or have been eligible for free schools meals (FSM) while a Year 11 student in a secondary school or Academy, or be deemed to be eligible for free schools meals (FSM) at the time of application';
- (2) Forum Members encourage their constituencies to respond to the consultation by 2 April 2012;
- (3) the report be noted.

92. Information Report: Update on Harrow Pupils' Attainment and Progress Summer 2011

The Forum received a report of the Corporate Director Children's Services, which set out the attainment and progress of Harrow students since the previous report to the Forum in November 2011. An officer advised 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. However, some of the figures were unfavourable. The EMAS team and others had been working on narrowing any gaps and raising attainment levels and that this was a Council priority;

- standards had improved in Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) for the last five years in the borough and Harrow was now close to the national average. However, the gap in performance of the lowest performing 20% of children was still cause for concern;
- standards at Level 2+ in reading and writing had improved since 2008 and Harrow was ranked 19th and 17th nationally;
- there were improvements in standards at Key Stage 2 in English and maths and there was progress in English and maths from Key Stage 1 to the end of Key Stage 2;

Following questions from Members of the Panel, the officer stated that:

- for maths at Key Stage 4, Harrow ranked 27th last year and 16th this year, and for English, Harrow ranked 14th last year and 10th this year, both of which were a demonstrable improvement;
- the teaching of Maths at EYFS was based largely on experiential learning and this had yielded consistent improvement in pupils' attainment.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

93. Information Report: Raising the Participation Age

An officer presented a report of the Corporate Director Children's Services which set out information about the duty on local authorities to promote Raising the Participation Age (RPA), which would come into force in June 2013. The officer advised that:

- the Education and Skills Act (2008) placed a duty on all young people to participate in education or skills training until their 18th birthday. This would come into force from the Summer of 2013;
- RPA did not necessarily mean remaining in school beyond the age of 16, but included apprenticeships, part-time education, training or volunteering;
- Harrow had among the lowest numbers of young people who were not in education, employment or training (NEET) after the age of 16;
- officers recognised that different young people engaged and participated in education and training in different ways. He added that there would be appropriate information, advice, guidance and targeted intervention through schools, Academies and services such as connexions to ensure young people in Harrow engaged with RPA.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

94. Date of Next Meeting

RESOLVED: To note that the next meeting of the Forum would take place on 27 June 2012.

(Note: The meeting, having commenced at 7.33 pm, closed at 9.22 pm).

(Signed) COUNCILLOR BRIAN GATE
Chairman