
REPORT OF SCHOOL ORGANISATION COMMITTEE

MEETING HELD ON 3 NOVEMBER 2005

Chair:	* Councillor Gate	
Councillors:	* Miss Bednell * Branch * Jean Lammiman	† Anjana Patel * Ray * Bill Stephenson
Church of England:	Mr G Edwards	Reverend P Reece
Roman Catholic Church:	* Mr J Coyle * Mr M Murphy	† Ms M Roe
Learning and Skills Council:	Mr P Holmes	
Schools (Parent/Secondary):	(Vacancy)	
Schools (Parent/Primary):	(Vacancy)	
Schools (Headteachers):	Mr D A Jones * Ms A Lyons	* Mr B A Robertson
Schools (Co-optee and Special)	* Mrs P Langdon	
HCRE:	Mr P Pawar	
Adviser:	* Mr B Leaver	

* Denotes Member present
† Denotes apologies received

PART I - RECOMMENDATIONS - NIL
PART II - MINUTES
75. Appointment of Chair:

RESOLVED: That Councillor Gate, a member of the Local Education Authority group, be appointed Chair of the Committee for 2005/2006 Municipal Year.

76. Attendance by Reserve Members:

RESOLVED: To note that the Chair was notified at the start of the meeting that the following duly appointed Reserve Member would be attending the meeting:-

<u>Ordinary Member</u>	<u>Reserve Member</u>
Councillor Anjana Patel	Councillor Janet Cowan (absent)

[Note: Subsequently, Councillor Janet Cowan did not attend the meeting.]

77. Appointment of Vice-Chair:

The Chair called for nominations for Vice-Chair from non-Council members of the Committee. As no nominations were received, it was:

RESOLVED: That the appointment of Vice-Chair be revisited at the next meeting.

78. Declarations of Interest:

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

79. **Arrangement of Agenda:**

RESOLVED: That (1) in accordance with the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985, the following agenda item 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>
8. Review of School Organisation Plan 2003-2008	This report was not available at the time the agenda was printed and circulated. Members were requested to consider this item as a matter of urgency.

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

80. **Minutes:**

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 18 January 2005, having been circulated, be taken as read and signed as a correct record.

81. **Public Questions:**

RESOLVED: To note that no public questions were put at the meeting under the provisions of Committee Procedure Rule 18.

82. **Petitions:**

RESOLVED: To note that no petitions were received at the meeting under the provisions of Committee Procedure Rule 15.

83. **Deputations:**

RESOLVED: To note that no deputations were received at the meeting under the provisions of Paragraph 15 of the Committee's Constitution.

84. **Review of School Organisation Plan 2003-2008:**

The Committee received a report of the Executive Director, People First, which provided an up-date to the School Organisation Plan for 2003-08, and advised that there was no longer a statutory requirement for a School Organisation Plan. The report stated, however, that, despite this change, there was still a need for the Local Authority to set out its strategic vision, and to show how developments in school place provision would raise standards and improve outcomes for all pupils, and promote good community relations.

Officers advised the Committee to consider the Review in the light of the proposals made by the recent Schools White Paper, "Higher Standards, Better Schools For All", which had been published by the Department for Education and Skills on 25 October 2005, which was after the completion of the Review. It was noted that among the proposals put forward by the White Paper were the disbandment of School Organisation Committees, and a change in the role of the Local Education Authority.

One member of the Committee asked whether, in order to proceed with an intelligent debate on the role of the School Organisation Committee, there was a need for more detail regarding the Government's proposals. Officers responded that the White Paper itself indicated clearly the intentions of the Government with regard to education, but acknowledged that, at this stage, it was difficult to determine the details of eventual legislation.

Several members of the Committee emphasised the benefits that had been offered by co-operation and collaboration between schools in the Local Education Authority, and expressed the concern that, especially in terms of admissions and capital planning, this could be undermined by future legislation. It was also noted that the White Paper was vague on the role of school governors. Despite the uncertainty around the details of future legislation, however, one member stated that, since the well-being of children in the Borough should remain the primary concern of the Committee, much of the School Organisation Plan continued to be relevant.

RESOLVED: That (1) the Review be noted;

(2) a reference be made to the Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Sub-Committee, to examine the impact of the Government White Paper on Harrow's schools.

85. Children and Young People's Plan:

The Committee received a report of the Executive Director of People First, which introduced the Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP). The report stated that the CYPP, as a part of the reforms underpinned by the Children Act 2004, was a new duty of the Council, and must be published by 1 April 2006. The report also explained that the CYPP was an overarching plan which would determine the direction of local services and deliver the new National Service Framework and the Children's Trust Approach. Officers advised that the purpose of the report was to provide information on the CYPP and to invite comments from the Committee, before submission of the final report to Cabinet in December 2005.

In response to some of the issues raised by members of the Committee, officers stated that a large number of individuals and groups had been contacted in the consultation process; although there had been only around thirty responses from the public, officers advised the Committee that these had come from a wide range of groups within the community, and that, considering this was a new strategy, this level of feedback was encouraging. In response to an observation made by a member of the Committee that the CYPP made little mention of children with disabilities, officers explained that this was the case as the focus of the CYPP was primarily on children who were at risk, vulnerable or suffering, while most young people with a statement of Special Educational Needs were currently well catered for.

One member of the Committee raised concerns that, in their view, the CYPP did not show great depth in the strategic dimension, and that it did not cover all the issues with which the School Organisation Committee had traditionally dealt. In response, officers explained that the CYPP was deliberately simple as it was designed to be conducive to public consultation, but that the latest version of the CYPP contained greater detail and was more strategic than the (earlier) version printed in the agenda. Officers also explained that the final version of the CYPP would be supported by a "Professional's Guide" to indicate how the strategic points linked into the new national framework. While the CYPP was a three-year plan, the Professional's Guide would be updated annually. The CYPP would also contain an "audit trail", which would allow informed readers to consult sources and references used in the document. Members voiced some concern that they had not been presented the final version of the CYPP, and in response officers explained that the document was, of necessity, a work in progress, but agreed to circulate the latest version to members of the Committee.

RESOLVED: That (1) the report be noted;

(2) the report be referred to the appropriate Scrutiny Review Group.

86. Any Other Business:

On the subject of membership of the School Organisation Committee, it was noted that Mrs Millard was no longer a parent governor, and was thus no longer eligible to serve on the Committee. Mrs Tushaw had expressed her interest in being re-appointed to the Committee, but was unable to attend the present meeting.

The Legal Officer present advised the Committee of the need to ensure that the Committee was fully constituted.

(Note: The meeting, having commenced at 7.39 pm, closed at 9.03 pm).

(Signed) COUNCILLOR B E GATE
Chair