

Meeting:	Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Sub-Committee
Date:	4 April 2006
Subject:	Annual Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Responsible Officer:	Director of People, Performance and Policy
Contact Officer:	Heather Smith, Scrutiny Officer
Portfolio Holder:	Communications, Partnership and HR
Key Decision:	No
Status:	Part 1

Section 1: Summary

Decision Required

The Sub-Committee is requested to approve the draft Chair's report of the Sub-Committee's work over the past four years for inclusion in the 2005/06 scrutiny annual report.

Reason for report

The annual report will address the requirement placed on the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to report to Council on the work done in the previous year. Additional information on performance in the previous three years is being provided to reflect the end of the current Council electoral cycle.

Benefits

The Sub-Committee benefits from the opportunity to report on its work over the past year, which will include raising the profile of future work areas both within and outside the Council.

Cost of Proposals

This report is not seeking financial resources.

Risks

There are no identifiable risks associated with this proposal.

Implications if recommendations rejected

The Sub-Committee would risk missing the opportunity for its work to be adequately reflected in the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's report.

Section 2: Report

2.1 Brief History

2.1.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is obliged under the Constitution to report to Council on the work done in the previous year and on its annual work programme for the forthcoming year.

2.1.2 This year being an election year, the Annual Report will contain details of the work undertaken since the last council elections in 2002, supported by individual contributions from each of the scrutiny bodies. A draft Chair's contribution for this Sub-Committee is attached at Appendix A for Members' consideration.

2.1.3 Normally, the work programme for the next municipal year (2006/07) would be included within the draft Chair's report as the section entitled "areas of future work". This year, a detailed work programme will not be finalised until after the election, but some preliminary details on issues which have been discussed for inclusion in the work programme are included.

2.2 Options considered
Not applicable to this report.

2.3 Consultation
All of the Scrutiny Sub-Committees are being consulted on their particular draft Chair's report before the inclusion of the section in the full annual report, which will be considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at their next meeting.

2.4 Financial Implications
There are no financial implications arising from this report.

2.5 Legal Implications
Article 6.03(d) of the Council Constitution provides that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee will report annually to full Council on its activities.

2.6 Equalities Impact
None relevant to this report.

2.7 Section 17, Crime and Disorder Act implications
None relevant to this report.

Section 3: Supporting Information/ Background Documents

Appendix A: Draft Chair's report on the work of the Lifelong Learning Scrutiny
Sub-Committee 2002-06

Appendix A: Draft Chair's report on the work of the Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Sub-Committee 2005-06

Introduction

This has been another active year for the Sub-Committee. The main focus of our work this year has been our review of adult and community learning. We have also received items on:

- SEN strategy
- Single status implementation in schools
- Annual performance assessment
- Cultural services inspection report and action plan
- Better outcomes for children in care
- Harrow teachers' centre
- People First Education Budget 2006/07 and Medium Term Budget Strategy
- Children and Young People Plan
- Updates on our past reviews
- 14-19 education reforms
- Children's services (jointly with Health and Social Care)

Scrutiny reviews

Adult and community learning

Our review of adult and community was particularly timely. Nationally, adult and community learning has had a high profile in recent months as services face major future changes in the planning and funding of provision. At the time of writing the report, unknown factors included the funding allocation for 2006/07, the potential for a national redistribution of funding, as well as the construction of a national framework for first step and personal development learning.

A highlight of our review was meeting with adult learners at a variety of Harrow's local centres and talking to them about what had made them decide to undertake courses. Another highlight was meeting with the Chief Executive of the London West Learning and Skills Council. This meeting enabled us to voice some of our concerns. It also helped us to develop a number of recommendations regarding the future development of adult and community learning in the borough.

The review explored ways in which the ACL service in its current form should respond to the national challenges, around the areas of the setting of fees and concessions and communications. The report concluded that the service needs to consider its future direction in a more fundamental sense in order to ensure that it can best meet the needs of local people in the years to come. The key challenge relates to how to fund services that fall outside of the framework set by the Learning and Skills Council, but provide services that local people can benefit from in order to make Harrow a true learning community. The report was welcomed by the Portfolio Holder and Cabinet and the recommendations accepted in full.

Previous reviews

In the course of 2002-2006 we have undertaken a range of reviews:

- Healthy Lifestyles in Schools

- Distribution of SEN statements in mainstream schools
- Recruitment and Retention of School Governors
- Process for SEN statutory assessments, statements of SEN and annual reviews
- 'Phase 3' delegated funding for SEN

We have continued to monitor progress in these areas, culminating in update reports at the last meeting of Sub-Committee in 2005-06. The area of healthy lifestyles in schools in particular has remained a topical issue.

Statutory obligations

There has been evolution in the plans considered by the Sub-Committee in the last four years. The Public Library Position Statement is no longer a statutory plan, but we have continued to receive updates on library service in the borough, including policies to address recruitment and retention of qualified librarians. Plans such as the Youth Service plan and Early Years and Childcare statutory plans are now part of the Children and Young People plan. As this is a rolling three year plan with a wide remit, scrutiny will need to have a continuing role in its future development and monitoring.

With the requirement under the Children Act 2004 for a Director of Children's Services and corresponding Portfolio Holder, we recognise that scrutiny will need to develop to reflect these changes.

During the last four years we have continued to monitor action plans put into place post inspection. In 2005/06 this has included the inspection of cultural services and the inspections of the adoption service and children's services (with Health and Social Care). We believe that scrutiny will have a valuable role to play in preparations for the Joint Area Review scheduled for November 2006.

This year the way in which the Sub-Committee has considered the schools budget has changed slightly. In the past we held a special meeting in December to comment on the schools budget prior to its agreement by Cabinet. However, central Government decided to provide ring-fenced funding for schools from the Department of Education and Skills (DfES) to local authorities, rather than general local government funding and council tax. Local authorities retain responsibility for distributing this funding to schools according to local needs and priorities. These changes meant that we commented on the schools budget alongside the People First budget in January rather than separately in December. We believe that close attention will need to be paid to this area in future.

Potential areas for further consideration

This year the Sub-Committee received a reference from the School Organisation Committee requesting that we examine the impact of the white paper *Higher Standards Better Schools for All*. We recommended that this item be considered as part of the development of the work programme for the Sub-Committee for 2006/07.

Following a recommendation from Cabinet that scrutiny be consulted, the chairs and vice chairs of Lifelong Learning, Health and Social Care and Environment and Economy Scrutiny Sub-Committees received a briefing on changes to SEN

transport policy. The chairs and vice-chairs recommended that a further update on progress should be received in 2006/07.

Our review of adult and community learning identified the potential for a review of the council's support to adults with learning disabilities and their carers by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee's Hear/Say community engagement review highlighted the area of the youth service as a potential area for further review. These topics may be areas for review that the Sub-Committee could take up in the new municipal year.

Lessons learned

Over the past four years we believe we have developed our knowledge and strengthened working relationships with all partners. This year in particular we feel we have engaged in a meaningful and constructive dialogue with officers and that this has helped us to develop review recommendations that are relevant and provide a new perspective.

The Sub-Committee has historically received the education service review during the autumn cycle of meetings. However, following the developments of the *Every Child Matters* agenda, the council is required to submit its Annual Performance Assessment (APA) in May. In future years this will feed into the Children and Young People Plan as well as the Joint Area Review of children's services. Our successors should therefore give consideration to receiving a report on the APA earlier in year in order to allow effective scrutiny, which will help the service to improve and prepare for future inspection.

The nature of performance reporting to the Sub-Committee has evolved and developed during the course of the year. We began by considering the relevant elements of the strategic performance reports but as the year has progressed we have realised the importance of developing a greater understanding of when information key information becomes available during the year - for example key stage 3 results - and in future we recommend that performance reporting to the Sub-Committee be tailored to reflect these timescales to ensure that it is examined when it is most pertinent.

Community involvement

Community involvement has been an important part of the work of the Sub-Committee. Over the past four years we have held a range of focus groups and also been on visits to talk to local people experiencing services. A local paediatrician was co-opted two of our special education needs reviews and her technical expertise was invaluable. As part of this year's adult and community learning review we met with wide range of local learners at a variety of local learning centres. Three adults undertaking learning in Harrow were co-opted to the review as community experts and we benefited immensely from their input.

Future challenges

The main challenge the Sub-Committee will face relates to the scrutiny of the *Every Child Matters* agenda and children's services. As the structure stands, this year we have held joint committees with Health and Social Care to undertake scrutiny of children's services. This co-ordinated approach has proved constructive and has been formalised in next year's council meetings calendar.

Consideration will need to be given to the best way to scrutinise children's services as they develop.

The Sub-Committee will also need to balance scrutiny of the burgeoning children's agenda with scrutiny of the other areas falling into its remit including libraries, the arts, leisure, culture and lifelong learning.

Membership

Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Sub-Committee

Councillor Mitzi Green (chair)
Councillor Janet Mote (vice-chair)
Councillor Nana Asante
Councillor Gate
Councillor Kinsey
Councillor Omar
Councillor Mary John
Councillor Jean Lammiman
Councillor John Nickolay
Councillor Osborn

Voting Co-opted Members:

Two representatives of Voluntary Aided Sector: Mrs J Rammelt and Reverend P Reece

Two representatives of Parent Governors: Mr H Epie (Primary) and Mr R Sutcliffe (Secondary)

Adult and community learning scrutiny review

Councillor Mitzi Green
Councillor Janet Mote
Councillor Nana Asante
Councillor John Nickolay
Mr David House (Co-optee; Co-Chair, Learning Disability Partnership Board)
Mrs Chris Greenhough (Co-optee)
Mr Tony Plummer (Co-optee)

Statistical information

Meetings:	4 ordinary, 1 special (joint meeting with Health and Social Care)
In-depth reviews:	1
Review meetings:	9
Visits/other:	4 (exclusions meeting; visit to local learning centres (ACL review); SEN transport briefing; children's services/exclusions briefing with Health and Social Care)
Attendance by Portfolio Holder:	1