

LIFELONG LEARNING SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE**10 JANUARY 2006**

Chair: * Councillor Mitzi Green

Councillors:	* Nana Asante	* Jean Lammiman
	* Blann (1)	* Janet Mote
	* Gate	* John Nickolay
	* Mary John	* Osborn
	* Kinsey	

Voting Co-opted: (Voluntary Aided) (Parent Governors)

† Mrs J Rammelt	Mr H Epie
* Reverend P Reece	† Mr R Sutcliffe

* Denotes Member present
 (1) Denotes category of Reserve Member
 † Denotes apologies received

PART I - RECOMMENDATIONS - NIL**PART II - MINUTES**247. **Attendance by Reserve Members:****RESOLVED:** To note the attendance at this meeting of the following duly appointed Reserve Member:-

<u>Ordinary Member</u>	<u>Reserve Member</u>
Councillor Omar	Councillor Blann

248. **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.249. **Arrangement of Agenda:****RESOLVED:** That all items be considered with the press and public present.250. **Minutes:****RESOLVED:** That the minutes of the meeting held on 19 October 2005, having been circulated, be taken as read and signed as a correct record subject to the following amendment:

Minute 237, Paragraph 9 be amended to read, "The Sub-Committee expressed regret that the Director of Learning and Community Development was unable to attend the meeting, however it was recognised that this was due to religious observance".

251. **Public Questions:****RESOLVED:** To note that no public questions were put at the meeting under the provisions of Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rule 8.252. **Petitions:****RESOLVED:** To note that no public questions were put at the meeting under the provisions of Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rule 9.253. **Deputations:****RESOLVED:** To note that no deputations were received at the meeting under the provisions of Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rule 10.

254. **References from Council and Other Committees:**

- (i)
- Children and Young People's Plan:

RESOLVED: That consideration of the reference be deferred to the next Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Sub-Committee which would be receiving a report on the Children and Young People's Plan.

- (ii)
- Review of School Organisation Plan 2003-2008:

RESOLVED: That consideration of the reference be deferred to the Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Sub-Committee in the Municipal Year 2006/2007. At this time the 'Higher Standards, Better Schools for All' would be a Bill rather than a White Paper.

255. **Adult and Community Learning Scrutiny Review:**

The Sub-Committee received a report from the Director of Organisational Performance, which set out the progress made on the review.

Members thanked the co-optees and officers who had contributed to the review. They commented as follows:

- that it was unfortunate that the fees for non-accredited Adult and Community Learning (ACL) provision would be increased;
- that the re-branding of the ACL service was overdue and that the existing brand of REACH (Reaching Every Adult and Community in Harrow) did not clearly communicate the nature of their service;
- that it was important to reach out and support learners with a disability and other 'hard to reach' groups;
- that the issue of supporting learners with a disability ought to be raised by the Council's Chief Executive through the West London Alliance, which would enable solutions to be developed for the region;

An officer explained why the fees for ACL provision had to increase and why this would lead to a more equitable system and suggested that the report be referred to the Cabinet meeting as outlined in the officer report.

RESOLVED: That (1) the report of the scrutiny review group be approved;

(2) the report be referred to Cabinet meeting on 16 February 2006, so that the issues of fees could be considered in conjunction with the report on the revenues budget which would set out the proposed increase in fees and charges;

(3) the publications and dissemination of the report be agreed;

(4) the Sub-Committee receive a progress report of the review at a future meeting.

256. **Question and Answer Session with the Education and Lifelong Learning Portfolio Holder:**

The Chair welcomed the Portfolio Holder for Education and Lifelong Learning to the meeting. The Chair invited Members to put their questions to the Portfolio Holder and stated that they could also ask supplemental questions.

Question 1: *Please would you explain the current structure of the Schools Forum? What changes will the Council consider to ensure its future role is fit for purpose?*

The Portfolio Holder responded that the government had required all local authorities to set up Schools Forums by 2003. He added that details of the Forum were published on the Council's website and that meetings were open to the public. Harrow's Schools Forum had 15 members, with primary and secondary schools represented.

The Portfolio Holder added that all Schools Forums had to be reconstituted in accordance with amended regulations by 31 August 2006. Under the new regulations, a Forum must comprise of at least 15 members, the majority consisting of 'school' members.

Question 2: *What training and when will be available to the new members of the schools forum when they are elected?*

The Portfolio Holder responded that new members would receive appropriate induction materials and there would be an induction event for them. Some training would be provided by Harrow Council but members wishing to attend national or regional events would have to use the Schools Forum's budget. In response to a Member's question about whether it was compulsory for Members to attend training, the Portfolio Holder replied that it was not.

Question 3: *What will the position of non-executive Councillors be in relation to the Schools Forum?*

The Portfolio Holder responded that under the new regulations, executive elected members and officers with direct responsibility for strategic resource management could not be members of the Schools Forum. Non-executive members could serve on the Schools Forum either in their capacity as a governor or as a non-schools member.

Question 4: *How will communication of the activities of the Schools Forum be improved when its role is enhanced?*

Question 5: *How will the Schools Forum consult prior to the making of decisions?*

[Note: Questions 4 and 5 were taken together].

The Portfolio Holder responded that there would be little change in communication. The Schools Forum would still consult schools before taking action and the meetings would still be open to the public. Schools Forum minutes would be published on the website.

In response to a comment from the questioner that the Forum operated in a closed environment and that the communication lines ought to be reviewed, the Portfolio Holder responded that the business of the Forum was technical, and that, as a result, a choice would have to be made on what aspects of the Forum's business should be communicated as it would not be possible to communicate everything.

Question 6: *How does the Portfolio Holder see the scrutiny function working with the Schools Forum?*

The Portfolio Holder responded that the Schools Forum could be scrutinised. The Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Sub-Committee would be consulted on the Schools Budget before decisions were made by Cabinet. A Member asked that the Schools Forum report to the Sub-Committee. The Portfolio Holder explained that he did not have the authority to agree this but that the Sub-Committee could invite a representative to attend its meeting.

The officer stated that the new guidance recommended that local authorities produce an Annual Report. She suggested that the Annual Report be submitted to the Sub-Committee.

Question 7: *Could the Portfolio Holder please clarify where the funding for SEN will come from under the new Schools Budget arrangements and how this will impact on SEN provision?*

The Portfolio Holder responded that there would be no change in how SEN was funded under the new school budget arrangements.

Question 8: *What processes will the LEA put in place to ensure schools are able to plan budgets for the forthcoming financial year?*

The Portfolio Holder stated that the training would be the same as in previous years. This would consist of hands-on training with the headteachers and their finance staff in March 2006 and further training would be provided in January and March 2006 on the indicative and final budgets respectively. In addition, there would be a general briefing for governors in January 2006. He added that the school could buy-in additional training.

Question 9: *How will the new funding arrangements affect extended schools?*

The Portfolio Holder responded that the new funding arrangements would not directly affect extended schools. A Member asked how the roll out of extended schools was progressing and the Portfolio Holder informed the Sub-Committee that a report on this matter had been considered by Cabinet in July 2004. He added that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had validated the work of extended schools, particularly regarding

Whitmore and Park High Schools. A bid from Nower Hill was expected in February. The Portfolio Holder explained that there was no guarantee of funding after 2008.

Question 10: *How effective is the implementation of Phase 3 funding proving to be? Have there been any problems and how have they been addressed?*

The Portfolio Holder responded that the Phase 3 funding had only been implemented since September 2005. Since then no problems had been reported. He added that a review would be carried out in February 2006.

Question 11: *Why hasn't the LEA taken responsibility for telling parents that there will be sixth form provision in Harrow?*

The Portfolio Holder responded that six high schools would be making some post 16 provision available from September 2006 under a franchise arrangement with Harrow College. This limited provision was being promoted by the schools and Harrow College and was included in the "Guide to Secondary Schools" that had been published in September 2005. The Portfolio Holder explained that neither the schools nor Harrow College had requested the Council to be involved in the publicity. The schools were currently focusing on attracting pupils from within the schools and would be holding open days and waiting to see what the take up would be. Harrow Council would be submitting a collective bid to the Learning and Skills Council for 16-19 capital funding. If the bid was successful, Harrow Council could be asked to be involved in publicity.

Question 12: *Has the LSC issued its guidance on 16-19 competitions? If yes, what is the competition guidance?*

The Portfolio Holder responded that guidance had been issued. He added that Lord Adonis, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Schools, had said that Harrow Council was at such an advanced stage that there was no need to hold a competition.

Question 13: *How far has the LEA gone in submitting a full proposal for the 16-19 capital funding to the Learning and Skills Council?*

The Portfolio Holder responded that the timescale for the bid was very tight and that the Cabinet, at its meeting on 12 January 2006, would be requested to approve a bid for capital funding. In addition, the bid would be monitored by an all party group.

Question 14: *How is the Children and Young People's Plan being developed and how many young people have been involved in its construction?*

The Chair informed the Sub-Committee that this matter would be addressed under the report at agenda item 15 (Minute 254 refers).

Question 15: *What is Harrow's anti-bullying strategy? What statistical information is available on bullying?*

The Portfolio Holder responded that guidelines had been circulated to schools. Different schools had adopted different strategies and were encouraged to share best practice. A best practice document would be produced. It was explained that since 2001, all schools had been required to have an anti-bullying policy. During National Anti Bullying Week in November 2005, anti-bullying initiatives had taken place in schools and an information stand placed in St George's shopping centre.

The Portfolio Holder stated that bullying was taken very seriously by the Council. He added that the Council worked in partnership with schools and shared good practice.

Officers reported that the information stand had been very successful and that the questionnaires would be analysed. They added that:

- all schools were required to have an anti-bullying policy in place;
- OFSTED had reported that all schools in Harrow had a policy;
- bullying was taken very seriously by schools;
- the guidelines and the strategy would be distributed to Members.

It was reported that no statistical information was held except a record of racist bullying. In 2001 the government had acknowledged that it would be very difficult for schools to record every incident of bullying.

Question 16: *What support systems are available to parents/carers of excluded pupils to help them prevent a recurrence of behaviour that led to the exclusion?*

The Portfolio Holder responded that the Danks Report had recommended schools work closely with parents. High Schools in Harrow also had a unique arrangement whereby pupils would be placed in another school. Where exclusions did take place, the phone number of the Advisory Centre for Education (ACE) would be given to parents. Pupil Liaison Officers would work with pupils. Harrow Council was also looking at extending the Parent Partnership Service. An officer explained that it was important to pre-empt breakdowns in relationships between teenagers and their parents and work with both parties to prevent breakdowns from occurring.

Question 17: *Can you expand on plans for a revolutionary school for the victims of bullying that is being planned in Harrow by a charity based school run by the Red Balloon learner centre?*

The Portfolio Holder responded that the organisation had made contact with the Council. He added that the Council would examine any proposals made.

Question 18: *Please would you provide a progress report on the development of the final three extended schools?*

The Chair informed the Sub-Committee that this question had already been answered by the Portfolio Holder.

Question 19: *What is being done to encourage involvement of the voluntary and community sector in extended schools?*

The Portfolio Holder responded that the voluntary and community sector were being encouraged to be involved through the Extended Schools Strategy. There would be increased community access to learning and use of facilities.

Question 20: *How are schools preparing for 2012 and how will they optimise the benefits for Harrow's young people?*

The Portfolio Holder responded that Cabinet had agreed to set up a cross-party, bottom-up task force. A member of the Olympic Committee had addressed schools. There would be a focus on Global Citizenship, including global links with schools and this would complement the Olympic FriendShip concept. The Olympic FriendShip would set sail from the Beijing Games in 2008 and arrive in London in 2012. There would be a website to enable schools to follow and share the learning on the Global journey. There would be interest developing PE and Sport across all our schools to capitalise on the opportunities that the Olympic and Paralympic Games would present.

Question 21: *Is the take-up of modern language falling? If so, what strategy is being employed to address the situation?*

The Portfolio Holder confirmed that there had been a decrease in the number of pupils taking GCSE courses in modern foreign languages over the last four years. He added that modern foreign languages were not compulsory at Key Stage 4. It was reported that there was a government strategy to introduce the entitlement for all pupils to learn a language in Key Stage 2 by 2010. It was reported that a significant number of Harrow primary schools already taught some modern foreign languages within their curriculum and there was a full time Curriculum Leader for modern foreign languages working with both high and primary schools to further develop the quality of teaching and learning in modern foreign languages.

In response to a comment from a Member that languages were very important and that the decline in take-up was of concern, the Portfolio Holder explained that all students were required to study a modern foreign language at Key Stage 3. The Member suggested a report back on the actions being taken to address the decline.

In response to a question from a Member about whether there was adequate provision for children to learn non-modern languages, the Portfolio Holder responded that many schools offered double language options and also minority languages.

In response to a Member's comment that the benefit of speaking other languages would be beneficial for the 2012 Olympics and that distance learning would aid this, an officer responded that distance learning would probably become a huge growth area for learning a modern foreign language.

The Chair thanked the Portfolio Holder for Education and Lifelong Learning for his responses.

RESOLVED: That (1) the Sub-Committee keep a watching brief on the School Forum and that a reference be made to the Constitutional Working Party;

(2) the Annual Report of the Schools Forum be submitted to the Sub-Committee;

(3) the Best Practice document on bullying be submitted to the Sub-Committee;

(4) regular reports on the work of the Olympic Games task force relating to schools be submitted to the Sub-Committee.

257. **People First Education Budget 2006/2007 and Medium Term Budget Strategy:**

The Sub-Committee received a joint report from the Executive Director of Business Development and the Executive Director of People First. The report set out the People First Education Budget. Members were being consulted on the Budget before the matter was considered by the Cabinet and the Council.

An officer explained that this was the first year the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) had been included in the Budget. She added that the provisional settlement for 2006/2007 had been announced in December 2005 and that Harrow Council had received an increase in Formula Grant of 2% which, when inflation and other costs were taken into account, could leave a deficit.

It was reported that schools had fared better than the Local Authority in the new settlement and that Harrow's DSG allocations would be at 6.6% per pupil increase in 2006/07.

In response to a Member's question about whether allocations were made according to Special Educational Needs (SEN) or school numbers, an officer explained that allocations were made on school numbers.

A Member sought clarification on Concessionary Fares. An officer explained that this included Freedom Passes and Taxi Cards and was not connected to the Education budget.

A Member raised concern that there was a problem with extrapolating the schools' budget from within the People First Education Budget, suggesting that this issue ought to be addressed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

RESOLVED: That (1) the report be noted;

(2) that Members' comments be noted.

258. **Strategic Performance Reporting:**

The Sub-Committee received a verbal report on the Strategic Performance Reporting. The 'Attendance Data Summary 2003-2005' and the Harrow LA Key Stage 1, 2 and 3 and GCSE Results for 2003, 2004 and 2005 were tabled at the meeting. The data was based on the "traffic light" approach and showed where targets were being met.

An officer explained that the 2005 Key Stage 2 test results in English and Maths were poor. However, this was being measured against an aspirational rate of 85%, a figure that was significantly higher when compared with that of the neighbouring boroughs. However, Harrow schools were still performing well and were in the top quartile. It was reported that additional support was being provided to schools which were underperforming.

An officer reported that high performance had been maintained at Key Stage 3 (2005) except for ICT TA. She explained why the ICT TA call at Key Stage 3 (2005) was shaded red and was therefore a cause for concern. However, she was confident that the situation would improve in 2006. In addition, she expected the aspirational targets set for GCSE results in 2006 to be met.

The Attendance Data Summary 2003-2005 was also tabled at the meeting. It was reported that Harrow Council had not met the total absence target in primary schools in 2004/2005, but had been making progress each year. Harrow was within the five authorities nationally that had the lowest percentage of unauthorised absences. It was suggested that some authorised absences were due to parents taking children out of school for holidays and visits to their countries of origin.

In response to questions from Members, an officer stated that:

- the data had been tabled at the meeting as the DFES had only recently published the information;
- significant progress had been made in Harrow to improve attendance at schools;
- the Education Welfare Service and the schools worked hard on ensuring punctuality and attendance with incentives offered to pupils;
- that OFSTED required all schools to show that they were addressing both punctuality and attendance.

A Member mentioned that some schools were recording late pupils as being absent from school.

Members were advised that work was being undertaken to map details of the stages during the year when relevant performance information becomes available, with a view to this work informing the development of future work programmes for the Sub-Committee.

RESOLVED: That (1) the verbal report be noted; and

(2) the report be referred as an information item to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

259. **Restructuring of School Development Services:**

The Sub-Committee received a verbal report on the Restructuring of School Development Services. The officer explained that there had been a proposal to move Achievement and Inclusion service area from the Lifelong Learning Directorate into a new directorate. The Sub-Committee was informed that until consultation had been completed and the new structure was in place, no restructuring within the School Development Services could take place. Members were informed that funding had been secured until 2008.

RESOLVED: That the verbal report be noted.

260. **Children and Young People Plan:**

The Sub-Committee received a verbal report on the progress of the Children and Young People Plan. The officer reported that consultation with young people had been indirect and indicated that there was a need to ensure that the voice of the young people was heard. However, the Plan included many points that young people had wanted to raise. It was reported that the second draft of the Plan was on the website and was open for consultation. Notices had been sent to schools and parents, inviting them to comment. The second draft of the plan was tabled at the meeting.

The officer explained that the Plan was for three years and that it would be reviewed annually. Following consultation, there would be an option of redirecting or refocusing the Plan. It was explained that the final version of the Plan would go to Cabinet in February 2006 and thereafter to Council as it had to be published in May 2006.

Members expressed concern that they had not received the Plan prior to the meeting. This had not given them sufficient time to read and then make comments. The officer explained that this was due to the second draft having only just been completed.

The officer informed the Sub-Committee that, for the future, a timeline would be produced indicating when certain documents would need to be approved so as to coincide with the meetings of the Council.

RESOLVED: That (1) the verbal report be noted;

(2) the Children and Young People Plan be submitted to the Joint Meeting of Lifelong Learning and Health and Social Care Sub-Committees on 18 January 2006 in order to allow Members to make comments on the second draft;

(3) the final document be submitted to the Sub-Committee at its meeting on 4 April 2006 to enable Members to comment on it before the plan is submitted to Council for final approval.

261. **OFSTED Arrangements:**

The Sub-Committee received a presentation on the inspections carried out by OFSTED under the new arrangements. Members were informed that five schools in Harrow had been inspected under the new arrangements. Under these arrangements there was an emphasis on the schools undertaking regular self-evaluation under the School Evaluation Framework (SEF), with governors, parents and pupils being involved.

The Headteacher from St Teresa's School informed the Sub-Committee of her experience. She explained that governors and Headteachers needed to be proactive and that inspectors would look for evidence to support the self-evaluation of the school and check that the self-evaluation process was itself robust. The Headteacher informed the Sub-Committee that the inspection took two days, with the inspectors providing a verbal report at the end of the second day. She reported that each part of the inspection was graded and an average was produced. It was important that SEF was evidence based rather than prescriptive. The school had felt that the inspection had been constructive and positive. It identified areas for improvements. Members made the following comments:

- that teamwork was essential;
- that it was important to ensure that the schools and the agencies which delivered the services were proactive;
- that good practice ought to be adopted by all schools.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

262. **Countries of Origin Project Linked to Support for Study on Extended Visits:**

The Sub-Committee received a presentation on Harrow's 'Countries of Origin' Project. Members were informed of the visit to the Indian cities of Delhi and Bangalore in February 2005. The visit had been carried out by officers of the Council and teachers from schools in Harrow. It was reported that India had been chosen for the visit because 20% of the community of Harrow could trace their origins back to India. An officer who had been on the visit reported that one aim of this project was to offer a professional development opportunity to staff developing their understanding, sensitivity and response to the needs of the Indian community in Harrow. Other aims were to establish links for Harrow schools and to identify appropriate partners and initiatives in order to establish relations for future link projects.

The Headteacher of Roxeth Middle School related his experience. In India, whilst tradition and culture was being maintained, English language was recognised as the language of opportunity. The "Each One Teach One" project involved pupils educating the local community, particularly women. It showed a sense of what the schools owed to the local community.

An officer explained that there would be a further visit to India in February 2006. The visit would be to the city of Ahmedabad in Gujarat state. The visit would focus on sustainable development and ICT links.

The booklet that had been produced following the February 2005 visit was tabled at the meeting. It was pointed out that the booklet contained a list of post-visit actions.

A Member asked how the visits were being funded and an officer explained that funding was provided by the Achievement and Inclusion Division and schools.

RESOLVED: That (1) the report be noted;

(2) following the visit to Gujarat in February 2006, a report be submitted to the Sub-Committee setting out details of the costs of the visits and how these had been funded, including proposals to visit other countries.

263. **Any Other Business:****Adult and Community Learning**

RESOLVED: That there would be a brief update on the Adult and Community Learning review at the Sub-Committee's meeting on 4 April 2006.

264. **Extension and Termination of the Meeting:**
In accordance with the provisions of Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rule 6.7 (ii) (b),
it was

RESOLVED: At 10.00 pm to continue until 10.30 pm.

(Note: The meeting having commenced at 7.40 pm, closed at 10.34 pm)

(Signed) COUNCILLOR MITZI GREEN
Chair