

EDUCATION CONSULTATIVE FORUM

26 JUNE 2003

Chair:	* Councillor Bill Stephenson	
Councillors:	* Mrs Bath * Miss Bednell * Ismail (1)	* Janet Mote * Ray * Thammaiah
Teachers' Constituency	Mr R Borman * Ms H Cowgill * Ms C Gembala	* Mr P Large * Ms S Carnan † Ms P Langdon
Governors' Constituency	* Ms H Henshaw	* Mrs C Millard * Ms H Solanki
Elected Parent Governor Representatives	† Mr Epie	† Mr Sutcliffe
Denominational Representatives	* Rev P Reece	* Mrs Rammelt
Arts Culture Harrow Representatives	Mr K Parker	Mr V Gresty

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

PART I – RECOMMENDATIONS**RECOMMENDATION 1: Change to Education Consultative Forum Terms of Reference to allow Appointment of Vice Chair from the Governors and Teachers Constituencies.**

The Chair invited nominations for the appointment of Vice Chair of the Forum for the 2003/2004 Municipal Year from among the Teacher's and Governors Constituencies. The Forum were advised however that the Forum's Terms of Reference stated that 'The Vice Chair of the ECF will be elected from the Councillor participants.' The Chair and other Members informed the Forum that this had not been the intention and that they wished the Vice Chair to be appointed from the non-Council Members. (See also Minute 51). Upon discussion it was

Resolved to RECOMMEND (to Cabinet):

That the Terms of Reference of the Education Consultative Forum be amended to allow the forum to appoint a Vice Chair from among the non- Councillor participants of the Forum.

RECOMMENDATION 2: School Term Dates.

The Forum received the report of the Joint Interim Director of Education outlining proposals to amend the start and end date of the school year for 2004-2005. It was previously agreed to start the school year on 31 August 2004 and finish on 21 July 2005. However on consultation with neighbouring authorities it was found that there was a degree of variance of these dates. Since the Forum had agreed that Harrow aim to achieve consistency in its term dates with its neighbouring authorities, (see also Minute 57) it was

Resolved to RECOMMEND (to Portfolio Holder):

That the School year start on 1 September 2004 and finish on 22 July 2005.

REASON: To ensure as much consistency as possible with neighbouring authorities.

RECOMMENDATION 3: Establishment of a Workforce Agreement Steering Group.

The Forum received a report from the Senior Education Adviser on School

Improvement: Reform of the School Workforce to Raise Standards and Tackle Workload. (See also Minute 59). Upon discussion it was

Resolved to RECOMMEND (to Portfolio Holder):

That the Portfolio Holder authorise the establishment of a Workforce Agreement Steering Group to plan and monitor local implementation of the National Agreement.

REASON: As above.

PART II - MINUTES

47. **Appointment of Chair:**

RESOLVED: To note the appointment at the meeting of the Cabinet held on 20 May 2003 of Councillor Stephenson as Chair of the Forum for the Municipal Year 2003/2004.

48. **Attendance by Reserve Members:**

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

Ordinary Member
Councillor Gate

Reserve Member
Councillor Ismail

49. **Declarations of Interest:**

RESOLVED: To note the following declarations of interest:

(1) that Councillor Janet Mote declared a personal interest arising from her membership of the ATL Union and a prejudicial interest arising from her appointment by the LEA as a governor at St John Fisher RC First and Middle School, but in accordance with Paragraph 12.2 of the Council's Code of Conduct for Councillors, she remained and took part in the discussion

(2) that Councillor Bednell declared a personal interest that she was a co-opted governor of Stanmore College, and accordingly remained and took part in the discussion

50. **Arrangement of Agenda:**

RESOLVED: (1) That all items be considered with the press and public present;

(2) that the School Budget item to be considered under item 10, be taken before item 5.

51. **Appointment of Vice-Chair:**

Further to the discussion outlined at Recommendation 1 it was

RESOLVED: (1) That the Committee Administrator refer the Recommendation to Cabinet and Council;

(2) that the appointment of Vice Chair be deferred. (See also Recommendation 1)

52. **Minutes:**

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 19 March 2003, having been circulated, be taken as read and signed as a correct record.

53. **Public Questions:**

RESOLVED: To note that no public questions were put at the meeting under the provisions of Advisory Panel and Consultative Forum Procedure Rule 15 (Part 4E of the constitution).

54. **Petitions:**

RESOLVED: To note that no petitions were received at the meeting under the provisions of Advisory Panel and Consultative Forum Procedure Rule 13 (Part 4E of

the Constitution).

55. **Deputations:**

RESOLVED: To note that no deputations were received at the meeting under the provisions of Advisory Panel and Consultative Forum Procedure Rules 14 (Part 4E of the constitution).

56. **Schools Budget Update 2003/2004:**

The Forum received an update on the Schools Budget from the Education Financial Services Manager. The Officer informed Members that although schools were experiencing difficulties, all but two had managed to set balanced budgets for the year 2003/2004. She informed the Forum that two schools had obtained a licensed deficit for one year from the Local Education Authority (LEA) and that there were no known staff redundancies.

The Officer reported that the Council was undertaking a staff survey, the results of which were being analysed presently. Two budget review groups had also been established, one in relation to Primary and one in relation to Secondary schools, which were identifying reasons for the hardship. Findings would be reported to the Portfolio Holder and the Schools' Forum as the work was completed. The Officer indicated that the problems Harrow were experiencing were replicated across the country and were part of a national problem. MP's and representatives of the authority were making representations to Central Government on the issue and a meeting had been set up to relay Harrow's position specifically. Ministers accepted that Outer London had specific problems but Harrow needed to present a strong case since it had received one of the best settlements across the country. The Department for Education and Skills (DfES) was working with LEAs on the issue.

During the discussion which followed Members and representatives sought clarification on a number of issues including the origins of the current funding shortfall. The Chair informed the Forum that there had been a miscalculation of the cumulative effect of a number of changes, in particular the incremental drift, which had resulted in both Central Government and LEA's getting the budget wrong. He reminded the Forum that a number of issues they had raised regarding the budget had been taken on board but nevertheless recognised that there had been mistakes and these needed to be addressed.

A Member argued that three of the issues listed in the officer report as contributory factors to the funding problems had been discussed on previous occasions. She argued that although it had not been possible to foresee the exact implications, many of these problems had been foreseen. The Chair acknowledged that some of these issues had been raised but argued there were other factors that they had been unaware of. He also confirmed the LEA had played no role in the funding shortfall. In response to a query from the Governors Constituency the Chair informed the Forum that there was no set timescale for the resolution of these problems though he was to be updated on the matter in early July and again in September. The Chair offered to meet with Primary and Secondary Headteachers and the Association of Harrow Governing Bodies (AGHB).

A Member asked the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Human Resources whether the unexpected additional £1million of Council reserves could be used to ease the current financial difficulties. The Portfolio Holder replied that one of the Council aims was to increase budget reserves in case of emergencies. He informed the Member that individual schools could apply for an advance from the Council but he felt the use of reserves at this time would be imprudent and have a negligible impact when spread across all Harrow schools. The Chair supported this position and emphasised the need for a detailed analysis to show the exact extent of shortfalls and to allow recurrent problems to be addressed. This would also allow them to lobby Central Government with a clearer picture.

A Member of the Teacher's Constituency expressed concern that ultimately teachers had to bear the burden of financial shortfalls. He reported that class sizes had increased in his school as a result of the financial situation and INSET training had been restricted. He also highlighted that although there had been no compulsory redundancies his school had lost 6 full time supply staff.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Human Resources advised the Forum that, whilst there had been an increase in the budget, this had not been enough to meet the increased demand. He added that the LEA were getting a detailed look into school

finance that would be of use in the future and would enable the Authority to analyse the extent of the problem.

The Chair thanked the Portfolio Holder for attending to give his contribution.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

57. **School Term Dates for 2004/2005:**

The Forum received a report of the Joint Interim Director of Education regarding a minor amendment to school term dates for the 2004-2005 year. The Head of Strategy and Resources reported that following consultation with neighbouring boroughs it was proposed to vary by one day the start and end of the school year to achieve greater consistency with Harrow's 5 neighbouring boroughs. (See also Recommendation 2).

58. **School Re-Organisation and post 16 in Harrow:**

The Head of Strategy and Resources reminded the Forum that Harrow's PFI bid for the re-organisation of schools in Harrow had been unsuccessful. The Officer explained that the process had been very competitive with only 15 out of 56 bids being supported. Harrow had not scored enough points in the evaluation to be selected. Feedback from the DfES showed that although the education content of the bid had been highly regarded, Harrow had not had been able to give the same emphasis to underachieving schools and urban and rural deprivation that successful bids had been able to.

The Officer informed the Forum that the next round of bidding closed in September/October. He explained that there was apparently £5 billion for the next round and that the major emphasis would be on Secondary schools and refurbishment. Officers were preparing a bid that would be presented to Cabinet in September/October.

The Head of Strategy and Resources updated the Forum on discussions about post-16 provision in Harrow. Officers had worked closely with Colleges and the London West Learning and Skills Council (LSC) to produce a study that included discussions with Stakeholders. A Paper with a tight timetable was going to Cabinet in July.

A Member of the Teacher's Constituency asked the Officer to remind the Forum of the outcome of the parent consultation in 2002 regarding 11+ change. The Head of Strategy and Resources responded that the outcome of the debate had shown a strong support for change in the age of secondary transfer in addition to more choice in Harrow at post 16, and support for early years enhancement. In response to comments from the Teacher's Constituency, the Chair reminded the Forum that this was a complex issue and that after the review a decision would need to be made on whether the benefits of reorganisation would outweigh the short term disruption it would cause.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

59. **School Improvement: Reform of the School Workforce:**

The Senior Adviser, Education drew the Forum's attention to the fact that local reforms in Harrow were in many cases already beyond the expectations set out in the new national framework. He advised Members that schools were beginning to think through how they might use the new statutory guidelines to make improvements over time. He added however, that currently opportunities were clouded by financial problems.

In response to a query from a Member concerning funding, the Officer assured the Forum that flexibility had been built into the medium term strategy to allow for these reforms. The Forum was also assured that the DfES had already written in money for this project some of which had already been used for a pilot that was being run at Newton Farm First and Middle School in Harrow. A Member of the Teacher's Constituency asked that findings of any consultations be reported to the Forum. He also highlighted concerns that under this initiative individuals without Qualified Teacher Status would be left in sole charge of classes and that planning, preparation and assessment time would be added to the school day. The Chair assured Members that there were no proposals to extend the working day and informed the Forum that this was a genuine attempt to reduce teacher's workloads. (See also Recommendation 3)

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

60. **Dates of Future Meetings of the Governors Working Party:**

RESOLVED: That the following dates be agreed for future meetings of the Education

Consultative Forum Governors Working Group:

Tuesday 4 November 2003
Tuesday 2 March 2004

(Note: The meeting having commenced at 7.37 pm, closed at 9.40 pm)

(Signed) COUNCILLOR BILL STEPHENSON
Chair