

Meeting:	Overview And Scrutiny Committee
Date:	Monday 29 January 2007
Subject:	Harrow Teachers' Centre
Key Decision: (Executive-side only)	No
Responsible Officer:	Anita Luthra-Suri Group Manager Lifelong Learning & Acting Group Manager Community Development Team
Portfolio Holder:	Councillor Christine Bednell
Exempt:	No
Enclosures:	None

SECTION 1 – SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This report sets out to describe the current budget position of the Harrow Teachers' Centre budgets together with the potential management realignment that could take effect from 1st April 2007.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

To note the future actions proposed to improve the financial position of the Harrow Teachers' Centre.

SECTION 2 - REPORT

Brief Background

The Harrow Teachers Centre provides a range of services. It is an office base for over 100 People First staff; with 14 meeting/training rooms it is a training and conference centre, the only site, dedicated to providing staff development for Harrow staff; has a hall and gymnasium that is shared with Whitefriars School that is used for sports and community use outside of school hours as a community venue for weddings, family gatherings, cultural, religious and performance events; is an Examination Centre for National Council for the Training of Journalists, Guildhall, RSA, OCR, CLAIT; and houses a range of resources and collections for Harrow.

A Best Value Review of Harrow Teachers' Centre started in 2002. As part of the Best Value process, Cabinet approved the change of funding from a Service Level Agreement with Schools to a "pay-as-you-go" system for room use that commenced on 1st April 2004. This change in policy, together with prudent budget management, enabled a projected overspend of £72k reported to the Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Sub-Committee in October 2004, to result in a break-even budget for 2005/2006 with a total annual income of over £625,000.

In partnership with stakeholders, the site has significantly invested in improving facilities such as disabled access and fire safety.

Issue to be determined

Budget

The financial pressures on the Teachers' Centre budget that were reported in September 2006 came from a variety of routes including Non-controllable budgets (e.g. utilities and single status salaries) £49k; Reduction of room bookings by major users including Conference and Community Events £95k; Harrow Saves – Catering £43k; Brent & Harrow Education Business Service relocation £5k. In September 2006 the total predicted shortfall in year from all these areas was £215K.

Since September 2006, additional pressures have been identified that include costs associated with the implementing the closure of the Teachers' Centre Library of £8k for staff payment.

Options considered

Steps were taken to deal with the budget shortfall for this year and then look at potentially realigning the Harrow Teachers Centre and its management structure for the future.

Short-term measures included:

- Increasing desk rental charges were significantly so that they more accurately represented utilities and other overhead charges. Despite this

increase, the rates are very competitive and remain below the cheapest local comparators.

- Maintaining the volume of room rentals and the income, there has been a reduction of bookings made by internal customers. This has a knock-on effect on income to Teachers' Centre budgets. Negotiations with major customers who have block-booked in advance have resulted in an agreement to honour these charges for this financial year. Reducing controllable expenditure costs by reducing non-essential grounds maintenance, window cleaning, building maintenance, furniture, postage, equipment and books.
- The combined effects of these actions has reduced the overspend predicted in September 2006 of £215k to a prediction of £115k overspend in 06/07. This overspend will be contained the Lifelong Learning & Cultural Services Department

Longer term options:

Potential Realignment of the Teachers' Centre Management and Budgets

Discussions are taking place with the Childrens' Services Department to transfer the management of the Teachers' Centre so that it becomes part of the Achievement and Inclusion Group.. The Teachers' Centre management and budgets are currently located within the Lifelong Learning Services Group of the Lifelong Learning and Cultural Services Department. By reducing duplication and incorporating the Teachers' Centre team functions within the Achievement & Inclusion Group, the Corporate Priorities of improving efficiency, making savings, tackling waste and giving real value for money will be supported. This action will provide a framework for managing the 2007/2008 budgets successfully by maximising resources and reducing some pressures on the budget whilst maintaining robust staffing resources that will be used more efficiently to maintain a high level of customer care. The proposed move will have implications for two staff that would not transfer with the centre; the manager of the Teacher's Centre - SM Resources & Business Manager Lifelong Learning Services and the Group & Project Support Assistant. The latter post will transfer to the Lifelong Learning Services Team. Allocation of resources and responsibilities for the post of SM Resources & Business Manager Lifelong Learning Services will be confirmed as part of the negotiations.

In September 2005 the Achievement & Inclusion (A&I) team relocated to the Teachers centre, as a result over 85% of the staff permanently located at the Teachers' Centre, as well as most of the training/meeting bookings, are located within Children's Services. There are some training/meeting activities on site organised by Lifelong Learning Services. Additionally, Children's Services, through the Achievement & Inclusion Group, have and will fund the majority of recent and current internal refurbishments. Although there is excellent communication and co-operation between the two administrative teams sharing the site, there is significant duplication of some functions. The Teachers' Centre team is relatively small and the administrative team currently numbering 4, was reduced in September 2006 by 2 following the relocation of Education Lettings to

the Civic Centre. This reduction has had a significant impact on the team and the quality of first line service. Negotiations are in progress to merge the Teachers' Centre team with the larger team of Achievement & Inclusion from 1st April 2007. From that date the Achievement & Inclusion Group will manage the budgets and functions formerly managed by the Teachers' Centre team.

New Learning Centre. The Achievement and Inclusion Group will set up a new unit at the Teachers' Centre for pupils at risk of exclusion. Essential refurbishment to create fit for purpose accommodation will take place and the new unit will open later in the year. This alternative use of the accommodation will attract new income. Staff currently using this accommodation, as an office base will be offered alternative space at the Teachers' Centre or elsewhere.

Rationalisation of accommodation. Alongside the alternative use of the ground floor, media resources and library accommodation, a review is being carried out of other accommodation to meet current and future needs linked to maximising the potential to generate income.

Other Considerations

Currently, committee rooms and other venues at the Civic Centre can be booked free of charge for internal users whereas in contrast, the Teachers' Centre is obliged to charge as it is a traded service. This anomaly means that the Teachers' Centre is at a considerable disadvantage. It may be the ideal venue for an event, but the organisers are able to book the Civic Centre venue at no charge.

As a result of this anomaly, in March 2004, the Best Value Panel resolved that:

'A review of the Civic Centre committee room booking system be undertaken.'

This review has yet to take place. In light of the increased pressure on budgets, this review takes on an even greater urgency.

SECTION 3 - STATUTORY OFFICER CLEARANCE

Chief Finance Officer	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Name:... Paula Foulds
		Date:15.1.07.....
Monitoring Officer	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Name:Sharon Clarke
		Date:15.1.07..

SECTION 4 - CONTACT DETAILS AND BACKGROUND PAPERS

Contact:

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Background Papers: *None*

IF APPROPRIATE, does the report include the following considerations?

1.	Consultation	NO
2.	Corporate Priorities	YES
3.	Manifesto Pledge Reference Number	4