

Meeting:	Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Sub-committee
Date:	17 th April 2007
Subject:	Teachers' Centre – Transfer of Responsibility
Key Decision: (Executive-side only)	No
Responsible Officer:	Paul Clark – Director of Children's Services
Portfolio Holder:	Janet Mote – Portfolio Holder for Children's Services
Exempt:	No
Enclosures:	Harrow Teacher's Centre – background paper

SECTION 1 – SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This report sets out the arrangements for the transfer of responsibility for the Teacher's Centre From Lifelong Learning Services to Achievement and Inclusion and highlights the benefits of this transfer

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Committee is requested to note the report

REASON: the reason for the report is in response to a request from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee as set out below:

RESOLVED: That (1) the actions proposed to improve the financial position of Harrow Teachers' Centre be noted;

(2) in the event that Harrow Teachers' Centre was transferred to the Children's Services Department, the Children and Young People Scrutiny Sub-Committee be the body responsible for overseeing its future;

(3) the proposed changes to the access arrangements and the proposals to rationalise the accommodation at Harrow Teachers' Centre be submitted to the Children and Young People Scrutiny Sub-Committee.

SECTION 2 - REPORT

Brief Background

The Harrow Teachers Centre: is an office base for over 100 council; 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, including use 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 is a Resource Centre housing 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, has 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 implementing the closure the Teachers' Centre Library of £8k.

Options considered

Steps were taken to deal with budget shortfall for this year and then look at 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.

Longer term options:

Realignment of the Teachers' Centre Management and Budgets

It is proposed that the management of the Teachers' Centre be transferred to Children's Services department and be part of the Achievement and Inclusion Group from 1st April 2007. 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.

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 accommodation 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.

Progress

Since the process of transfer has only just been agreed the detail of how the management of the centre will be organised in the long term is part of the wider council review that will undoubtedly bring other new responsibilities into Children's Services.

We are in the process of setting up a Business Unit for the service, which will manage the administration of both the Teacher's Centre and the Traded Services of Achievement and Inclusion.

Interim Management will rest with Adrian Parker, Principal Adviser and day to day running of the site rests with Dawn French as Site Manager and Kay Scott as Business Manager.

We are about to start work on the development of the ground floor as a base for pupils at risk of exclusion and this will involve some re-designation of existing accommodation.

Once this is complete we will carry out a fundamental review of staffing and facilities to ensure that they represent value for money as well as making the Teacher's Centre an attractive base for staff and venue for training.

We hope through this process to significantly reduce running costs and increase income thereby ensuring the viability of the centre for the future.

SECTION 3 - STATUTORY OFFICER CLEARANCE

Chief Finance Officer	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Name: Donna Edwards Date: 26 th March 2007
Monitoring Officer	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Name: Jill Travers Date: 26 th March 2007

SECTION 4 - CONTACT DETAILS AND BACKGROUND PAPERS

Contact: Heather Clements GM+ Schools and Children's Development 020-8736 6502

Background Papers

IF APPROPRIATE, does the report include the following considerations?

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