

EDUCATION CONSULTATIVE FORUM**29 JANUARY 2008**

Chairman:	* Councillor Miss Christine Bednell	
Councillors:	* Mrs Camilla Bath * B E Gate * Mrs Vina Mithani (2)	* Janet Mote * Raj Ray * Bill Stephenson
Teachers' Constituency:	* Mrs D Cawthorne * Ms C Gembala Mr A Jones	† Ms J Lang * Ms L Money * Ms L Snowdon
Governors' Constituency:	† Mr N Rands * Mrs C Millard	Ms H Solanki
Elected Parent Governor Representatives:	* Mr R Chauhan	* Mrs D Speel
Denominational Representatives:	Mrs J Rammelt	Reverend P Reece

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

The Forum observed a minute's silence in respect of the passing of Councillor Dhirajlal Lavingia.

PART I - RECOMMENDATIONS**RECOMMENDATION 1 – School Term Dates 2009 - 2010**

The Forum considered a report of the Director of Schools and Children's Development, which asked members of the Forum to consider the recommendation of school term dates for 2009 – 2010 which were in line with the model provided by the Local Government Association (LGA). The Forum was asked to recommend to the Portfolio Holder for Schools and Children's Development the adoption of the school term dates for Harrow for 2009 – 2010 as set out in Appendix 1 of the officer report.

A member commented that some schools were finding curriculum planning difficult due to religious holidays that were otherwise unaccounted for within school term dates. The member suggested the possibility of two 'flexible' days of the year that schools could choose from to allocate to religious holidays at the beginning of the term. The Chairman agreed that this should be considered with regards to the planning of future dates.

A member asked whether it was possible to bring the holiday dates in-line with neighbouring boroughs. The Director of Schools and Children's Development reported that all London boroughs followed LGA guidelines. Neighbouring boroughs that were not in London could not always be taken into account.

Resolved to RECOMMEND: (to the Portfolio Holder for Schools and Children's Development)

That the proposed school term dates for 2009 – 2010 as set out in Appendix 1 of the officer report be adopted.

[Reason for Recommendation: To fulfil the Council's requirement to determine the school term dates for 2009 – 2010]

PART II - MINUTES68. **Attendance by Reserve Members:**

RESOLVED: To note the attendance at this meeting of the following duly appointed Reserve Members:-

Ordinary Member

Councillor Manji Kara
Mr A Jones

Reserve Member

Councillor Vina Mithani
Ms J Howkins

69. **Apologies for Absence:**

RESOLVED: That (1) apologies for absence had been received from Ms J Lang and Councillor Manji Kara;

(2) resignations had been received from Mr Neil Rand and Ms Heather Henshaw;

(3) Ms J Howkins permanently replaced Mr Alan Jones as a member of the Teachers' constituency.

70. **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.

71. **Arrangement of Agenda:**

RESOLVED: That (1) in accordance with the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985, the following report be admitted late to the agenda by virtue of the special circumstances and grounds for urgency detailed below:-

<u>Agenda item</u>	<u>Special Circumstances / Grounds for Urgency</u>
12. Budget Update	The report of the Director of Schools and Children Development provided the Budget Update. The report was not available at the time the agenda went to print and circulated due to deliberation by the Schools Forum. The Forum agreed to consider the report.

(2) all items be considered with the press and public present;

(3) item 12 - Budget Update be considered before agenda item 10 – School Term Dates 2009-2010.

72. **Minutes:**

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 13 September 2007 be taken as read and signed as a correct record.

73. **Matters Arising:**

RESOLVED: To note that there were no matters arising that did not appear on the agenda.

74. **Public Questions:**

RESOLVED: To note that no public questions were received at this meeting under the provisions of Advisory Panel and Consultative Forum Procedure Rule 16 (Part 4E of the Constitution).

75. **Petitions:**

RESOLVED: To note that no petitions were received at this meeting under the provisions of the Advisory Panel and Consultative Forum Procedure Rule 14 (Part 4E of the Constitution).

76. **Deputations:**

RESOLVED: To note that no deputations were received at this meeting under the provisions of Advisory Panel and Consultative Forum Procedure Rule 15 (Part 4E of the Constitution).

77.

Budget Update:

The Forum received a tabled report of The Director of Schools and Children's Development, which set out the Schools Budget for 2008 – 2009. The officer apologised for the late report and informed the Forum that Harrow was on the first year of a three-year multi cycle of the schools budget.

The officer confirmed that:

- due to an increase of 4.5% in the Dedicated Schools Grant from the previous year, £5.7million would be allocated for Harrow Schools;
- there would be a further 3.6% and 3.5% rise in years 2 and 3 respectively;
- with a raise of 2.1% of the minimum-funding guarantee (£3 million) taken into account, £2.7 million headroom was left to be allocated;
- £331,000 would be allocated for Ministerial Priority;
- £490,000 would be allocated for Special Educational Needs Higher Costed Statements;
- £395,000 would be allocated for extra places at Special School;
- £885,000 would be allocated for Central Items Growth;
- in year 2 of the cycle more funding would be dedicated for autism within mainstream schools;
- the 2009 - 2010 and 2010 -2011 budgets were estimates were based on inflation increases.

A Member expressed concern that the information contained within the report was not detailed enough. The Member requested information concerning the cuts in budget of Education Psychologist Service (EPS), Education Welfare Service (EWS), Extended Schools Funding, and the Achievement and Inclusion Service. In response to the Member's queries, the Director of Schools and Children's Development confirmed that:

- not all information available with regards to the budget was known at the stage;
- the School Forum had decided not to secure funding for the EPS and the Extended Schools Funding;
- the EWS was still operational but with reduced funding;
- Harrow had a good track record in dealing with children with a wide range of learning difficulties;
- figures for the provision of special units within schools that dealt with autism did not reflect the whole year's costs but merely the start-up costs.

The Chairman commented that savings had been achieved through improved efficiency and organisational changes. The Chairman further commented that she would be attending a rescheduled meeting with one of Harrow's Members of Parliament and the Chief Executive to discuss school funding and that the Forum's meeting had taken place at a problematic time because decisions concerning the budget were still under consideration.

In response to questions the Chairman reported that there were three special units being developed within schools that had experience and qualifications in dealing with autism.

A member asked whether it was possible to have the future meeting dates published within the agenda. The Director of Schools and Children's Development replied that dates for the future three meetings could be forwarded to members.

RESOLVED: That (1) the report be noted;

(2) the Chairman liaise with the other Members in order to arrange future meetings of the Forum that would allow for more effective consultation on the Budget.

78. **School Term Dates 2009 - 2010:**
(See Recommendation 1).

79. **School's Amalgamation Policy:**

The Forum received the report of the Director of Schools and Children's Development, which set out the context for the Amalgamation Policy, and invited the Forum to consider the impact for schools in the context of a change in the age of transfer from primary to secondary education.

A member expressed concern that the report came across as biased towards amalgamation and that the Forum had not had enough time to be consulted. The member asked for the reasons against amalgamation.

The Director of Schools and Children's Development stated that the report was only concerned with detailed amendments to a longstanding policy. The Director confirmed that such amendments were required due to concerns about the clarity of the policy, and changes in, legislation, and that the report merely highlighted the issues needing attention for schools already in the process of amalgamation. It was noted that although the deciding body should consult with stakeholders, they did not have to reflect their views within their decision. The Chairman stated that schools were not forced to amalgamate and that Head teachers and Governors had been thoroughly consulted over the policy.

In response to questions, the Director of Schools and Children's Development reported that:

- no schools had amalgamated under the new policy;
- a pack containing a 'map of the process' was being compiled for governors;
- an analysis of how amalgamation affected the performance of schools would take place and the findings circulated.

A member commented that it would be helpful for an 'attached advisor' to work closely with schools going through the amalgamation process, thus reducing upheaval which might have a detrimental effect on children. Another member commented that schools going through amalgamation might lose the 'personal pastoral commitment'. There could also possibly be issues over the use of playground space and the loss of the feeling of 'growing up' by not moving to a different building.

The Chairman noted that such issues would be dealt with by proper administration and organisation by the schools themselves. A Member added that most schools already had separate buildings and playgrounds, and proper school management could tackle any problems caused by amalgamation.

A Member expressed her thanks towards the Director of Schools and Children's Development for the clarity of the report.

RESOLVED: That (1) the report be noted;

(2) officers consider the above comments.

80. **Date of Next Meeting:**

RESOLVED: That the date of the next meeting, the 19 March 2008, be noted.

(Note: The meeting having commenced at 7.37 pm, closed at 9.24 pm)

(Signed) COUNCILLOR CHRISTINE BEDNELL
Chairman