

**Reference from the Meeting of the Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Sub-Committee held on 20 January 2004: Review of the Retention and Recruitment of School Governors**

1. The Sub-Committee received the draft report of the Review Group which outlined key findings and recommendations in relation to the Review of the Recruitment and Retention of School Governors. The Principal Adviser reported that the report did not include all the issues raised at the open meeting and that the collection of data on governor ethnicity and the results of the governor survey were still being compiled. The Principal Adviser also highlighted issues such as resources for governor training, which still needed to be addressed.
2. A Member felt that management should encourage Council employees to take time off to carry out public duties effectively and that this should be supported by officers at the highest level and incorporated into the Council's employment policies. Members agreed that this point should be reflected in the report and requested that it be added as a recommendation.
3. The Sub-Committee discussed the reported statement of the representative from Harrow's Council for Racial Equality (HCRE) relating to the involvement of ethnic minority groups in voluntary work. It was felt that the statement may have been misinterpreted and that the HCRE Representative's statement was intended to highlight the need to encourage ethnic minority groups to carry out voluntary work in the wider community, as well as work within their own communities. It was agreed that the report should be appropriately amended.
4. The Chair informed Members that the Review Group's recommendations mirrored those of the Department for Education and Skills (DfES), which had conducted a similar review. The Principal Adviser advised that he had been working closely with the consultant who had been carrying out the review for the DfES, and had fed some of the Review Group's findings into this national study.
5. Members discussed a possible Mayor's Reception for School Governors. It was agreed that a letter from the Director of Learning and Community Development be added to the welcome pack for new governors and that governors be invited to a reception on a rotation basis, in order to ensure that each governor was invited to the event during their term of office.
6. The Sub-Committee agreed the recommendations, as amended, and requested clarification as to where they should now be referred. The report, as drafted, proposed the recommendations be sent to the Portfolio Holder for Education and Lifelong Learning for consideration. The Senior Solicitor (Education and Employment) advised, having previously consulted with the Education Financial Services Manager during the meeting, that the recommendations arising from the report needed to be costed appropriately. The Education Financial Services Manager had informed the Senior Solicitor that the recommendations were inconsistent with the current or prospective budget frameworks.
7. The Senior Solicitor proposed two courses of action were proposed to the Sub-Committee to assist them to refer this report to Cabinet within the terms of the Council's Constitution; that the report recommendations be identified as a budget pressure and form part of the response to the consultation exercise on the Education Budget or; that the report be identified as being outside of the current policy and/or budget framework. Members were informed that the consequence of these two courses of action would result in the matter being referred to both Cabinet and Council.
8. The Chair stated that neither route was appropriate and Members felt that a costing exercise would delay the findings of their review being considered by Cabinet. The Sub-

Committee therefore agreed to refer the report to Cabinet for consideration with no explanation in accordance with Overview and Scrutiny Committee Procedure Rule 15 (Part 4F of the Constitution). One member commented that the Senior Solicitor's interpretation of the rule was too literal and that the Sub-Committee would never be able to refer reports to Cabinet. In response, the Senior Solicitor further advised that Cabinet could decline to consider the report and that this was a possible consequence of the Sub-Committee's actions.

9. Members requested that it be noted that the Sub-Committee had departed from the advice of the Senior Solicitor and agreed that the report and its recommendations be referred to Cabinet for consideration.

10. **The Sub-Committee resolved, inter alia, that Cabinet be requested to consider the recommendations arising from the Sub-Committee's Review of the Recruitment and Retention of School Governors: -**

- (i) The LEA should encourage Governing Bodies to adopt flexible arrangements in relation to the timing of meetings and input into meetings.
- (ii) The LEA should publicise the availability of the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) Governors' Helpline Service to all Governing Bodies.
- (iii) The LEA should publicise to community groups the availability of speakers to talk to them about the role of a governor.
- (iv) Governing Bodies should be encouraged to establish mentoring schemes for new governors and the LEA consider establishing a pool of mentors for Chairs of Governing Bodies and members with specific responsibility for finance issues.
- (v) The clerking course should continue to be run on a regular basis, as required. The LEA should encourage Governing Bodies to take advantage of this facility. (Some sharing of the course cost (£75 per person) had taken place where a clerk serviced a number of bodies).
- (vi) The LEA should establish initiatives to recognise the valuable work being done by school governors. Options include: -
- (vii) The Mayor be requested to consider holding a reception each year for school governors, with governors being invited on a rotating basis at least once in their terms of office, and appropriate directorial attendance and press publicity also being arranged.
  - Sending a card or letter to recognise 10 years' service.
  - Sending special letters of thanks for long serving retiring governors.
  - Recommendation for honours for long public service.
- (viii) The LEA should provide Governing Bodies with an annual 'forward plan' of forthcoming consultations/major issues. Where complex information is to be disseminated to parents, the communication should come directly from the LEA.
- (ix) The LEA consider the production of a simple LBH leaflet, promoting the role of school governors for distribution with admission letters to parents of rising fives and those transferring to High School.
- (x) Council employees be encouraged to undertake public duties, in roles such as school governors. Also, for Council employees' requests to take time off to carry out these roles be considered favourably in light of the Council's employment policy.

**Reason for Reference:** To improve the recruitment and retention of school governors and, in particular, of governors from ethnic minority communities.

**FOR CONSIDERATION**

Background Papers:

Minutes of the Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Sub-Committee on 20 January 2004.  
Report of the Director of Learning and Community Development (Appendix A of which was the report of the Member Level Review Group).

Contact:

Samantha Johnson, Committee Administrator, Law and Administration Division.  
Tel: 020 8424 1264. E-mail: [samantha.johnson@harrow.gov.uk](mailto:samantha.johnson@harrow.gov.uk)