

HARROW COUNCIL

CABINET – 16 JULY 2009

REFERENCE FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 11 JUNE 2009

Scrutiny Review - Extended Schools as Community Resources

The Committee received a report of the Divisional Director of Partnership Development and Performance, which set out the findings and recommendations of the Scrutiny Review of Extended Schools as Community Resources.

The Chairman of the Review Group explained how the light touch review had been conducted, as a result of which it had not been possible for the Group to visit all schools or clusters. The range of clusters that had been visited ranged from good to poor. Those that could not be visited were sent a questionnaire to complete and return. The Review Group had carried out a great deal of desktop work in achieving its findings.

Members were informed that the Review Group had found that extended schools added value, particularly for the vulnerable communities. The appointment of parent ambassadors was welcomed and it was hoped that the practice would spread to other schools.

Members were of the view that it was appropriate for the Performance and Finance Scrutiny Sub-Committee rather than the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to monitor progress of the recommendations. They also agreed that the report should be sent to Cabinet instead of the Portfolio Holder.

The Chairman of the Review Group drew attention to the recommendations of the Review Group and it was

RESOLVED: That (1) the report and the recommendations (set out at appendix 2 to these minutes) of the Scrutiny Review Group on Extended Schools as Community Resources be endorsed;

(2) the Performance and Finance Scrutiny Sub-Committee monitor progress of the recommendations and receive a report in six months' time;

(3) the report be submitted to Cabinet.

(See also Minute 550).

FOR INFORMATION

Background Documents:

Draft Minutes of the Meeting held on 11 June 2009.

Officer Report considered at the 11 June 2009 meeting.

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Scrutiny Review – Extended Schools as Community Resources

Recommendations

Officers ensure that robust systems of support, advice and challenge are in place for all clusters to help develop the knowledge and expertise of each Cluster Co-ordinator and their lead headteacher.

Clusters Co-ordinators and headteachers be encouraged to consider the introduction of the appointment of Parent Ambassadors for hard to reach communities in their local area/cluster to look at whether such a scheme would be beneficial to the community.

That cluster groups develop a termly pro-forma for publicising activities and ensure a copy goes home with each child in the cluster. The information should also be widely available through community venues such as libraries, children's centres, health centres and relevant websites.

Other ways of communicating with the community at large should be investigated so that members of the community not directly involved with schools are aware of the services and activities available.

Elected Members who are also school governors should work to raise the profile of extended schools within the schools they govern, in their individual wards and in the community at large.

Steps should be taken to ensure that strategic working was ongoing to bring together expertise from the clusters and local authority officers together in the integration of Extended Schools and Children's Centres. As further Children's Centres were established and opened full advantage should be taken of working together.

All agencies involved in Extended Schools needed to develop an overall vision of how all schools and cluster groups develop plans for mainstreaming and in turn sustaining extended schools activities across clusters post 2011.

A challenge panel/ further review should be held in 6 months time to address the progress of the recommendations that had been put forward from the review group and to also explore the community lettings and community resources element of Extended Schools.

In line with the recommendation above, schools should be examining services they can provide to the community including making their premises available at a reasonable cost.