

HARROW COUNCIL

Meeting:	Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Sub-Committee
Date:	13 October 2004
Subject:	Annual Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2003/04
Key decision:	No
Responsible Chief Officer:	Director of Organisational Performance
Relevant Portfolio Holder:	N/A
Status:	Part I
Ward:	N/A
Enclosures:	Appendix A – Draft Chair’s contribution for the Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Sub-Committee

1. **Summary**

- 1.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Scrutiny Sub-Committees agreed, in the last cycle of 2003/04, the process by which the 2003/04 annual report should be prepared and agreed for presentation to Council.
- 1.2 This process provided for a composite report to be produced which includes an overview of the work undertaken over the past year, supported by individual contributions from each of the scrutiny bodies. A draft Chair’s contribution for this Sub-Committee is attached for Members’ consideration.

2. **Recommendations**

- 2.1 That the Sub-Committee approve the draft Chair’s report of the Sub-Committee’s work over the past year for inclusion in the 2003/04 scrutiny annual report.

3. **Consultation with Ward Councillors**

- 3.1 Not applicable.

4. **Policy Context (including Relevant Previous Decisions)**

- 4.1 The annual report will address the requirement placed on the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to report to Council on the work done in the previous year and on its annual work programme for the forthcoming year.

5. **Relevance to Corporate Priorities**

5.1 The work of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and its Sub-Committees seeks to support all of the Council's corporate and strategic priorities.

6. **Background Information and options considered**

6.1 N/A

7. **Consultation**

7.1 All of the Scrutiny Sub-Committees are being consulted on their particular draft Chair's report before the inclusion of the section in the full annual report, which will be considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 19 October 2004.

8. **Finance Observations**

8.1 This report is not seeking additional financial resources.

9. **Legal Observations**

9.1 Article 6.03(d) of the Council Constitution provides that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee will report annually to full Council on its workings and make recommendations for future work programmes and amend working methods, if appropriate.

10. **Conclusion**

10.1 The Sub-Committee is requested approve the draft Chair's report of the Sub-Committee's work over the past year for inclusion in the 2003/04 scrutiny annual report.

11. **Background Papers**

11.1 None.

12. **Author**

12.1 Heather Smith, Scrutiny Officer, 020 8420 9203, heather.smith@harrow.gov.uk

Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Sub-Committee

Overview of work undertaken

The Sub-Committee has undertaken a wide variety of work of the course of the past year. This has included:

- Items on the early years and childcare strategy, early years SEN and the education and attainment of children looked after;
- Scrutiny of the education budget and the proposed schools' budget;
- Items on the implementation of the cultural strategy and youth service plan (for which a working groups have been appointed), the library position statement and adult and community learning;
- Monitoring of the development of the new People First directorate;
- Scrutiny reviews on the process for SEN statutory assessments and the recruitment and retention process for school governors;
- Monitoring of the Sub-Committee's previous review of healthy lifestyles in schools.

Key areas of impact

Our April 2003 report into the distribution of special educational needs (SEN) statements in mainstream schools in April 2003 recommended additional support and resources be made available for the Harrow Parent Partnership Service. The Sub-Committee was pleased to learn that the Council, in agreeing its 2004/05 budget approved additional funding of £15,000, which we believe will enable the service to provide improved services to residents.

Following on from the above work we have researched and evaluated the SEN statementing processes with a view to improving communications for parents and carers and the criteria for assessment. Members of the review group observed the work of the Assessment and Provision Panel. We held focus groups with parents, SEN co-ordinators, head teachers, Parent Partnership Co-ordinators and educational psychologists. We examined the results of a parent survey and looked at lessons learned and best practice in some other authorities. Our report was submitted to Cabinet in July 2004; the findings and recommendations from the review have been broadly accepted and it is considered that these will help inform further improvements to the service.

For our scrutiny review of the recruitment and retention process for school governors, evidence was gathered through written submissions and an evidence-gathering meeting, which was attended by school governors and the Harrow Commission for Racial Equality (HCRE). School governors were found to be happy with the training and support given by the Local Education Authority and they felt that the role was both rewarding and worthwhile. We made a number of recommendations on ways in which the Council could provide additional incentives and support for governors. The Portfolio Holder has responded positively to the recommendations and has indicated that these will be reviewed as part of the re-organisation of Learning and Community Development where capacity and resources permit.

The Portfolio Holder for Education and Lifelong Learning attended our Sub-Committee meetings on two separate occasions in 2003/04 to respond to three of our recent scrutiny reviews.

The Sub-Committee was also pleased to receive positive feedback from the PCT in relation to the Promoting Healthy Lifestyles in Schools review. Harrow Primary Care Trust welcomed the report's findings as they reflected and supported the PCT's current strategies.

Key areas of planned work for 2004-05

The Sub-Committee is again planning to investigate a wide range of areas. The Sub-Committee has agreed that our main reviews will be pupil exclusions from school and phase 3 delegated funding for special educational needs. The latter review follows on from last year's review of SEN statementing processes, which raised some issues that Members felt needed to be examined more closely. Through the course of the year we hope to examine, through reports to the Sub-Committee, Harrow Teachers' Centre, the autistic spectrum disorder service, library position statement, SACRE and better education for children in care. We are also mindful that our work programme will need to be flexible to enable us to respond to emerging issues such as the Children's green paper, Every Child Matters, which is due to become law in the near future.

Mitzi Green

Chair, Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Sub-Committee