

REPORT FOR: CABINET

Date of Meeting:	13 January 2011
Subject:	Future Operating Model for School Improvement
Key Decision:	Yes Revenue savings of more than £100,000
Responsible Officer:	Catherine Doran, Corporate Director Children's Services
Portfolio Holder:	Councillor Brian Gate, Portfolio Holder for Schools and Colleges
Exempt:	No
Decision subject to Call-in:	Yes
Enclosures:	Appendix 1 "Harrow Schools' Improvement Partnership" Consultation Phase – November 2010 Appendix 2 Equality Impact Assessment

Section 1 – Summary and Recommendations

This report sets out a proposed future operating model for school improvement that would establish a “Harrow Schools’ Improvement Partnership”, driven and largely funded by schools with the Local Authority as a key partner.

Recommendations:

Cabinet is requested to:

- Agree that the proposed Harrow Schools’ Improvement Partnership should be the future operating model for school improvement services;
- Agree to the development of the “Harrow Schools’ Improvement Partnership” model being operational by September 2011, and;
- Delegate the detailed work and decisions required to the Corporate Director of Children’s Services in liaison with the Portfolio Holder for Schools and Colleges and the Children’s Services Transformation Programme Stakeholder Reference Group.

Reason:

The proposed “Partnership” will support the future improvement of Harrow’s schools by:

- maintaining a relationship between the Authority and its schools;
- building on existing good practice in Harrow where schools are key partners in the delivery of school improvement;
- providing a framework for the Authority to fulfil its remaining statutory functions, and;
- enabling significant efficiencies to be made that contribute to the Council’s budget strategy.

Section 2 – Report

Background

The Local Authority has a strong tradition of working with schools and has contributed to the success of those schools through the work of the School Improvement Service, part of the Achievement and Inclusion (A&I) Service.

Currently the A&I service fulfils the Local Authority's (LA) school improvement statutory functions, primarily through the work of the School Improvement

Partners (SIP), support to Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE) and through the work of Governor Services. It also offers a range of services and training to schools and works closely with the Early Years Team, the Ethnic Minority Achievement Service (EMAS) and the Harrow Tuition Service (HTS) within Schools and Children's Development.

National developments and funding changes mean that the Local Authority's current School Improvement service cannot be sustained.

All Local Authorities are considering how to re-organise school improvement services. A number of possible models have been developed nationally, ranging from the cessation of any school improvement service, developing one from a number of possible partnership arrangements, to outsourcing to a commercial partner. Some of these have been considered locally. Early discussion with a number of headteachers and Chairs of Governing Bodies, individually and collectively, suggested that they neither favoured outsourcing school improvement to a private provider or doing nothing, but that they would wish to consider the possibility of developing a school-led "Harrow Schools' Improvement Partnership". Subsequent discussion with the Portfolio Holder has confirmed this position as a preferred option. A full consultation on the proposal was carried out in November 2010.

1. The current context

This report is written within the context of a wider vision for an Integrated Children's Service.

- 1.1 It also takes account of a rapidly changing national context. The detail of national policy relating to School Improvement is evolving but many questions about the role of the Local Authority (LA) remain unanswered. The Schools White Paper 2010 – *"The Importance of Teaching"* – sets out some expectations about the future role of the Local Authority and its relationship with schools. With regard to School Improvement specifically, the White Paper:
 - (i) confirms the intention to end the requirement for every school to have a Local Authority School Improvement Partner (SIP);
 - (ii) makes it clear that responsibility for school improvement lies with schools – governors, head teachers and teachers;
 - (iii) re-affirms the importance given to schools as key sources of support for each other, and;
 - (iv) encourages Local Authorities to develop their own strategies and innovative projects to support local schools.
- 1.2 The White Paper also increases the responsibilities and autonomy of schools, with regard to, for example, admissions, direct funding, use of the pupil premium, exclusions and supporting other schools. Schools are encouraged to consider what formal or informal partnerships might best support them in discharging those responsibilities

1.3 The proposal for a future School Improvement model is predicated on the White Paper's implication that while Local Authorities will have a strong strategic role as champions for parents, families and vulnerable pupils there is only a minimal residual statutory responsibility for School Improvement in the future, and only in the form of quality assurance and commissioning intervention in failing schools. This statutory responsibility is retained outside the proposed model and would form part of the LA's schools service that would also include:

- (i) provision of advice and support to the council on school and education policy and strategy;
- (ii) school facing services the LA wishes to retain;
- (iii) any remaining or future LA statutory functions closely related to School Improvement, e.g. Governor Services.

This LA statutory and council service will be funded directly by council budgets.

1.4 Key national drivers for changing School Improvement responsibilities include:

- (i) significantly reduced or removed national and local funding for School Improvement services from 1 April 2011. Locally this would imply a budget reduction of £450,000 for Harrow's School Improvement Service in 2011/12. From then, local School Improvement arrangements will be largely determined by schools' decisions about what those arrangements might be and how they will be funded.
- (ii) an emphasis in the White Paper on schools having primary responsibility for school improvement, affirming the importance given to schools as key sources of support for each other, known as "school to school support".
- (iii) a limited national School Improvement framework, predominantly provided by the Department for Education (DFE) and the National Leadership College.
- (iv) reduced support to schools from a number of previously existing national advisory and statutory bodies, e.g. Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency (QCDA), Training and Development Agency (TDA), British Educational Communications and Technology Agency (BECTA), General Teaching Council for England (GTCE).

2. Options considered

2.1 **Continue with current service**

Due to a significantly reduced budget and the changed expectations of the Local Authority with regard to school improvement, this option is not considered financially viable.

2.2 **Reduce service to complying with minimum statutory duties**

The White Paper makes clear that in the future schools will be primarily responsible for school improvement and as such the Local Authority could choose to withdraw the non statutory service and leave schools to form partnerships with each other. However, Harrow has a strong foundation of school to school support and partnership working and is an overall highly achieving Authority. This option risks losing the expertise and partnership working that is currently undertaken.

2.3 **Partnership Model**

There is strong support from the schools for a partnership model with the schools having primary responsibility, but with the Local Authority being a key partner. The White Paper has stated that authorities should be free to provide whatever forms of improvement support they choose and that they might choose to offer school improvement as a traded service, including continuing to provide support and challenge to schools that choose it, running improvement conferences, bringing people together to tackle local problems and brokering support from excellent schools to support other schools.

It is recommended that the partnership model should be the future operating model for school improvement services.

3. **The “Harrow Schools’ Improvement Partnership”**

3.1 It is proposed that the Local Authority works with schools to establish a “Harrow Schools’ Improvement Partnership” (HSIP) that will be led and largely funded by schools. The Local Authority would be a key partner in the HSIP. The HSIP would however be a mechanism for the Authority to fulfil many of the Council’s remaining statutory duties relating to school improvement, principally to support less successful schools, on the basis that the Council will provide funding, from council budgets or specific grant to the Council, to commission appropriate activities from the HSIP.

3.2 The areas of work to be taken forward by the Partnership might include:

- (i) establishing a framework for schools to access high quality support including school to school support from within and beyond Harrow;
- (ii) providing leadership, management and coordination of specific initiatives and projects seen to be priorities by schools in Harrow, e.g. Good to Outstanding, Narrowing the Gap, ICT, PE;
- (iii) planning and delivering a comprehensive programme of training, advice and consultancy for schools in Harrow;

- (iv) providing, separately funded by the Local Authority, comprehensive packages of support to Schools Causing Concern (SCC) which secures rapid improvements in their performance and outcomes for pupils.

3.3 It is proposed that the HSIP is fully operational from September 2011.

3.4 In order to function effectively and efficiently, HSIP would need to agree:

- (i) arrangements for governance by way of a partnership board with terms of reference or similar;
- (ii) an organisational structure;
- (iii) a programme of activities and the providers of those activities;
- (iv) a staffing and funding model that enables the agreed programmes to be delivered but is affordable in the light of budgetary pressures in schools and the much reduced Local Authority contribution to the HSIP.

4. Funding the HSIP

4.1 The Partnership would be principally funded by schools. Schools already commit a significant sum to school improvement activities. In 2010/11, this totalled some £900,000.

4.2 In addition, as a partner the Local Authority would contribute the following funding in the first year to comply with statutory functions and to deliver remaining responsibilities.

- (i) £ 300,000 for activities to support less successful schools, to develop aspects of the Early Years Foundation Stage, to support Newly Qualified Teachers in the Authority and to enable programmes that “Narrow the Gap” for underachieving pupils. This funding is planned to reduce by 20% in the third and subsequent years.

- (ii) £ 15,000 for training and development activities for School Governors.

- (iii) £ 7,500 for activities in respect of SACRE, including the periodic revision and publication of the Local Agreed RE Syllabus.

- (iv) £ 50,000 to enhance Ethnic Minority Achievement;

4.3 The HSIP would be responsible for determining the detailed funding arrangements. Additional funding sources could include applications for grants and funding from the Education Endowment Fund for specific projects to drive school improvement.

5. Consultation Response

- 5.1 Following an initial period of research, a formal consultation was carried out with schools, staff, relevant unions and professional associations and Education Consultative Forum to determine a way forward. Details of the proposal (Appendix1) and response forms were distributed to all parties, with a deadline for consultation responses on December 3rd 2010.
- 5.2 Responses to the HSIP consultation have been received from:
- 3 Special Schools (out of 4)
 - 39 Primary Schools (out of 50)
 - 3 High Schools (out of 10)
 - The “*Narrowing the Gap*” Steering Group
- No further responses were received from the other parties.
- 5.3 The three special schools responding wish to go forward to a development stage. The main issues to be resolved would be the provision of appropriate specialised services and the costs of the Partnership to small schools.
- 5.4 The response from primary schools has been almost unanimous in wanting to move to a development stage. Just one school has indicated that it does not wish to do so. The schools that indicated a desire to proceed to a developmental stage indicated that the proposed organisation and activities of the HSIP were broadly acceptable. A number of schools indicated that in the development stage they would wish to consider detailed proposals, particularly issues around the leadership of the HSIP; who or what would provide agreed activities, and; funding issues.
- 5.5 An indicative response from the Chair of the High School Headteachers Executive suggested that the High Schools, as a group, did not wish to proceed to a development stage at this time.
- 5.6 All consultation responses received are available to Members.

6. Implications for the Local Authority’s Current Services

- 6.1 This is a time for considerable change within the Council arising from the Council’s Better Deal for Residents; Shaping Harrow for the Future Programme, and; the Children’s Services Transformation Programme including the Integrated Targeted Services programme.
- 6.2 The HSIP proposal will impact on existing School Improvement staff. In the future, the Local Authority will have a significantly

different, and smaller, school improvement service. School improvement will be delivered to a large extent by school to school support. However it may be that the HSIP will fund some current Local Authority staffing and organisational elements of the current school improvement service.

- 6.3 This will almost certainly require a re-organisation of the current School Improvement and Ethnic Minority Achievement Services in line with the Council's Protocol for Managing Organisational Change, with the resultant risk of reduced staffing levels.
- 6.4 The Local Authority will also have a reduced capacity for working and liaising with schools.

7. Timetable for Implementation

- 7.1 In the event of a decision by Cabinet to support HSIP, an action plan for the implementation of the agreed way forward will be determined, together with the resultant proposals for the required changes to current Local Authority School Improvement services. The detailed work and decisions required to establish the Partnership will be led by the Corporate Director, Childrens Services, with the Portfolio Holder for Schools and Colleges and the Children's Services Transformation Programme Stakeholder Reference Group. The plan will be in line with the Council's "Protocol for Managing Organisational Change".
- 7.2 If agreed, it is proposed that the Partnership would be established as quickly as possible after that agreement, with a view that the Partnership is fully operational by September 2011.

8. Legal Comments

- 8.1 s.13 of the Education Act 1996 provides that local authorities must secure that efficient primary, secondary and further education is available in its area to meet the needs of the population.
- 8.2 s.13A of the Education Act 1996 provides that local authorities must ensure that their relevant education functions and their relevant training functions are exercised with a view to promoting high standards, ensuring fair access to opportunity of education and training and promoting the fulfilment of learning potential by persons under 20 (under 25 if subject to learning difficulty assessment).
- 8.3 s.5 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 provides that local authorities must appoint a School Improvement Partner for every maintained school. This person must provide advice to the governing body and head teacher with a view to improving standards at the school.

- 8.4 The Schools White Paper 2010 sets out fundamental changes to the education system. However until these proposals become law, the local authority must continue to meet its existing statutory functions.

9. Financial Implications

- 9.1 The school improvement service receives over 2/3rds of its current £4.1m funding from specific grants and fees & charges levied for services, mainly provided to schools. It is expected that the majority of the grant funding will cease by August 2011. The proposal to set up a HSIP addresses the reduction in funding and aims to put in place a sustainable operating model going forward. A savings proposal is being considered as part of the medium term financial strategy to reduce the £1,340k council budget by £450,000 in 2011/12 and £50,000 in 2013/14 and 2014/15. The residual council funding will be used to provide limited start up funding to the partnership and to procure the remaining statutory duties as detailed in 4.2.
- 9.2 Initially the HSIP will not be a separate legal entity and will operate as a trading account that would form part of the council's accounts. It will be expected to break even and as such will have to generate income to fully cover expenditure.
- 9.3 Given the reduction in both council and grant funding, the service is planning to reduce costs. This has already started with a number of staff taking voluntary severance, the cost of which has been contained in 2010/11 budgets. It is hoped that HSIP, if it were to proceed, will generate adequate income to fund some of the remaining staff costs. However future income levels are uncertain. The worst case scenario, that the HSIP does not proceed or that it fails to generate income for the current service, would result in approximately 25 redundancies at an estimated one off cost in 2011/12 of £500k. This cost would be met from either current provisions or be factored into the budget setting process for 2011/12.

10. Performance issues

- 10.1 Schools are the key contributors to performance in this area. A range of current indicators suggest that Harrow schools are successful and continue to improve. The HSIP proposal will support all schools in that continued improvement.
- 10.2 From 2012, Local Authority educational targets are no longer required. Local Authorities will continue to collect and submit school level targets to the Department for Education (DfE). It is

anticipated that schools' outcomes will be reported centrally and local authority involvement in this process is not yet clear.

10.3 Although no statutory targets will be set, the Local Authority and HSIP will continue to have a responsibility to monitor and support progress in priority areas; in particular for underperforming groups, special educational needs, Early Years and Looked After Children.

10.4 Guidance continues to emerge from the DfE around the changing relationship between the LA and schools. The performance implications for the LA and HSIP will continue to be tracked as the new model becomes clearer.

11. Environmental impact

11.1 None

12. Risk Management Implications

12.1 The proposed Future Operating Model for School Improvement is monitored by the Children's Services Programme Board (CSPB).

12.2 The CSPB risk register for this project identifies the key risks as:

- A significant number of schools, or a specific group or sector of schools, do not wish to develop the HSIP.
- The Council's Protocol for Managing Organisational Change takes longer than anticipated, resulting in potential employee costs that are not within budget.

12.3 Through full engagement with schools, it is now considered that enough schools will wish to pursue the HSIP proposal, such that a sustainable model can be established.

12.4 The resultant action plan, that would be implemented following the Cabinet decision, will adhere fully to the Council's Protocol for Managing Organisational Change and have full consultation with staff in order to avoid unanticipated delays.

13. Equalities implications

13.1 An Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out in line with the Council's current requirement.

13.2 Reductions in funding for central support, direct but not ring fenced funding to schools and reduced levels of advice and support to schools could lead to a reduced focus on (i) provision

for pupils for whom English is an Additional Language (EAL) and (ii) "Narrowing the Gap" for underachieving pupil groups.

13.3 However, all schools have current provision to meet the learning needs of bi-lingual pupils and many have specific strategies in place to support low and under-achieving pupils. It is expected that schools will maintain and strengthen this work.

13.4 If Cabinet agrees the recommendations, equalities implications will be considered as part of the development, and a further Equality Impact Assessment produced as necessary.

14. Corporate priorities

14.1 The decision will support the Council's priorities to build stronger communities by supporting schools' continued improvement and enabling schools to act as a key element of the local community. The establishment of a Partnership will also enable the Authority to work with schools in meeting the educational needs and aspirations of vulnerable and under-achieving pupils in schools.

Section 3 - Statutory Officer Clearance

Name:	Jennifer Hydari	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the Chief Financial Officer
Date:	23 December 2010		
Name:	Sarah Wilson	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the Monitoring Officer
Date:	22 December 2010		

Section 4 – Performance Officer Clearance

Name:	Alex Dewsnap	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the Divisional Director Partnership, Development and Performance
Date:	23 December 2010		

Section 5 – Environmental Impact Officer Clearance

Name:	Andrew Baker	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the Divisional Director (Environmental Services)
Date:	20 December 2010		

Section 6 - Contact Details and Background Papers

Contact:

Adrian Parker: Head of Achievement and Inclusion Service (0208 736 6506)

Background Papers:

The Schools White Paper 2010 – *“The Importance of Teaching”*
Consultation Responses

Call-In Waived by the Chairman of Overview and Scrutiny Committee	NOT APPLICABLE
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