

**REPORT FOR: EDUCATION
CONSULTATIVE FORUM**

Date of Meeting:	6 April 2011
Subject:	Local Authority's Strategic Role for Education in Harrow
Key Decision:	No
Responsible Officer:	Adrian Parker, Head of Achievement and Inclusion Services
Portfolio Holder:	Councillor Brian Gate, Portfolio Holder for Schools and Colleges
Exempt:	No
Decision subject to Call-in:	No
Enclosures:	Annexe A - Executive Summary of The Schools White Paper

Section 1 – Summary and Recommendations

This report outlines some of the changes to schools and the Council arising from the Education Bill and invites members to comment on the future role of the Education Consultative Forum.

Recommendations:

The Education Consultative Forum is requested to consider the possible future consultative arrangements for education matters

Reason: (For recommendation)

The Education Bill proposes significant changes in the role of the Local Authority and this paper initiates a discussion about the future role of the Education Consultative Forum in this context. Any changes to the role of the Education Consultative Forum would entail changes to the Council's Constitution, which would require ratification by full Council.

Section 2 – Report

Introductory paragraph

The role of the Local Authority and its relationship with schools is changing considerably. There are several drivers including the ending of the National Strategy funding to support school improvement and the new Academies programme.

Harrow has been proactive in responding to these changes. A new operating model for Children's Services has been developed and, subject to Cabinet approval, there will be a consultation and proposed implementation in the Autumn.

Cabinet has agreed to the development of the Harrow Schools' Improvement Partnership (HSIP). Officers are working with schools to develop this model to secure future school improvement support. In response to 7 Harrow High schools announcing their consideration of conversion to academy status, the Local Authority has established a project team to investigate the implications and resolve relevant matters.

In November 2010, the Government published The Importance of Teaching: The Schools White Paper. The overarching themes of the paper include greater autonomy for schools, a focus on improving standards particularly in teaching, and a reduction of bureaucracy. On 26 January 2011 the Education Bill was introduced into the House of Commons and is now in Committee. The Bill is an important step in implementing the Government's education reform programme. An executive summary is at Annexe A.

Options considered

The Education Consultative Forum is invited to comment on the future role of the Council if the Education Bill becomes law to help develop options that can inform a report to Cabinet in May 2011 on the Local Authority's Strategic Role for Education in Harrow.

Current situation

Last year, the Schools White Paper stated that local authorities will have a strong strategic role as champions for parents and families, for vulnerable pupils and of educational excellence.

Their key roles will be:

- To support parents and families through promoting a good supply of strong school places
- Ensure fair access to all schools
- Use their democratic mandate to stand up for the interests of parents and children
- Support vulnerable pupils including children looked after and those with

- special educational needs and those outside mainstream education
- Support maintained schools performing below the performance floor standard
- Develop their own school improvement strategies.

In January 2011, the Education Bill proposes the following changes to the provision of education:

- Introduction of targeted free early years care for children of compulsory school age;
- Changes to school discipline;
- Abolition of five quangos and new powers for the Secretary of State;
- Removal of specific duties on school governing bodies, local authorities and further education institutions, including removal of the duty to appoint school improvement partners;
- Changes to the arrangements for setting up new schools and amendments to the Academies Act to make provision for 16-19 academies and alternative provision academies;
- New measures relevant to school admissions, including removal of the requirement for an admissions forum, school meals, composition of school governing bodies, school inspection, school finance and permitted charges.

In addition, reform of Special Educational Needs is planned and is now set out in the Green Paper "Support and Aspiration: A new approach to special educational needs and disability". This contains plans for parents to have more control over funding, a single assessment process replacing the statement of special educational needs with health, education and care plans, use of voluntary groups to coordinate packages of support and an open market to deliver educational support programmes.

Within the proposed new operating model for Children's Services, the local authority responsibilities for schools would be undertaken by the Education Strategy and School Organisation (ESSO) service.

It is clear that in the future there will be a reduced role for local authorities, which is reflected in the financial settlement and that local authorities are seen in an enabling role, rather than as provider of services.

Whilst more detail will be forthcoming as the Bill passes through Parliament and secondary legislation and guidance is published, it is timely to consider how these wider changes will impact on both the operation of the local authority functions and the current consultative mechanisms.

Why a change is needed

The function of the Education Consultative Forum (EdCF) is to act as a medium for communication between the Executive, teaching employees, governing bodies, other councillors, denominational representatives and other interested parties on general education matters. EdCF provides a forum for questions on the provision and administration of education to be considered

and to advise on questions referred to them by the Executive. Members of EdCF are from the constituent groups.

During the last 18 months EdCF has considered a series of reports on school terms dates, school performance, school reorganisation and place planning. In addition there have been reports on specific matters including Children's Centres, Harrow Schools' Improvement Partnership and changes to post 16 and clothing grants.

In context of the changing legislative framework, it is timely to consider the future role of EdCF and its membership. Given the Local Authority's role as a champion of parents and young people, a formal vehicle for consultation and dialogue would be an essential part of this function, which EdCF could provide. A number of questions arise, including:

- Could EdCF in future be the Local Authority's forum for discussions on all education issues?
- Could EdCF be the forum for discussion on admission arrangements after the requirement to establish an admissions forum is ended?
- Are the current constituent groups inclusive of the local authority's new strategic role?
- Should the interests of early years and post-16 providers be represented?
- If Academies are established in Harrow, how should their view be represented?
- Should the voluntary sector be represented?

EdCF are asked to consider the most efficient approach to take forward the dialogue about the future role of EdCF.

Implications of the Recommendation

There are no immediate implications arising from this report. Any changes to the role of the Education Consultative Forum would entail changes to the Council's Constitution, which would require a decision by full Council.

Financial Implications

There are no financial implications arising from this report.

Risk Management Implications

Risk included on Directorate risk register? No

Separate risk register in place? No

Equalities implications

An Equalities Impact Assessment has not been undertaken at this stage.

Corporate Priorities

These considerations will support the Council's vision Working together: our Harrow, our community and the Corporate Priorities United and involved communities: a Council that listens and leads and Supporting and protecting people who are most in need.

Section 3 - Statutory Officer Clearance

Name: Emma Stabler	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the Chief Financial Officer
Date: 23 March 2011		
Name: Sarah Wilson	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the Monitoring Officer
Date: 23 March 2011		

Section 4 - Contact Details and Background Papers

Contact: Johanna Morgan, Children's Services, 020 8736 6841

Background Papers: The Importance of Teaching: The Schools White Paper 2010.