

EDUCATION CONSULTATIVE FORUM

MINUTES

27 JUNE 2011

Chairman:	* Councillor Brian Gate	
Councillors:	* Husain Akhtar * Christine Bednell (1) * Zarina Khalid	* Kairul Marikar (2) * Janet Mote Raj Ray
Teachers' Constituency:	† Ms A Drew † Ms C Gembala Ms J Lang	* Ms L Money † Ms L Rowlands Ms L Snowdon
Governors' Constituency:	* Mrs C Millard † Mr N Ransley	† Mr K Sochall † Ms H Solanki
Elected Parent Governor Representatives:	(Vacancy)	(Vacancy)
Denominational Representatives:	* Mrs J Rammelt	† Reverend P Reece

* Denotes Member present
(1), (2) Denotes category of Reserve Members
† Denotes apologies received

42. Attendance by Reserve Members

RESOLVED: To note the attendance of the following duly constituted Reserve Members:

Ordinary Member

Councillor Camilla Bath
Councillor Krishna Suresh

Reserve Member

Councillor Christine Bednell
Councillor Kairul Marikar

43. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillor Krishna Suresh, Ms Drew, Ms Gembala, Ms Rowlands, Mr Ransley, Reverend Reece and Mr Sochall.

44. Declarations of Interest

RESOLVED: That the following interests were declared:

Agenda Item: 10. INFORMATION REPORT - Local Authority Strategic Role for Education in Harrow; 11. School Expansion Programme; 12. INFORMATION REPORT – Update on the Potential Conversion of Seven High Schools to Academy Status; 13. INFORMATION REPORT - SEN and Disability Green Paper; 14. INFORMATION REPORT - Capital Update; 15. INFORMATION REPORT - Department for Education Consultation on School Funding Reform; 16. Consultation on the Changes to the Admissions Framework

Councillor Christine Bednell declared personal interests in that she was a Governor of Vaughan Primary and Whitmore High Schools. She would remain in the room during the discussions and decision making on these items.

Councillor Brian Gate declared personal interests in that he was a Governor of St Dominic's (RC) Sixth Form College and Appointee Governor of St John's Primary School. He would remain in the room during the discussions and decision making on these items.

Councillor Husain Akhtar declared personal interests in that he was a Governor of Norbury, Grange First and Grange Middle schools. He would remain in the room during the discussions and decision making on these items.

Councillor Kairul Marikar declared personal interests in that she was a Governor for Bentley Wood High School and Shaftsbury High School. She would remain in the room during the discussions and decision making on these items.

Councillor Janet Mote declared personal interests in that she was a Governor of St John Fisher Catholic Primary school. She would remain in the room during the discussions and decision making on these items.

Mrs C Millard declared a personal interest in that she was a Governor of Grange Middle, Cannon Lane Middle and Nower Hill High schools. She would remain in the room during the discussions and decision making on these items.

45. Appointment of Vice-Chairman

RESOLVED: That the Appointment of Vice-Chairman be deferred to the next meeting of the Forum.

46. Minutes

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the special meeting held on 1 March 2011 and the ordinary meeting held on 6 April 2011 be taken as read and signed as a correct record.

47. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

48. Public Questions, Petitions and Deputations

RESOLVED: To note that no public questions were put, or petitions or deputations received.

RECOMMENDED ITEMS

49. School Expansion Programme

An officer introduced a report which set out a proposal for a School Expansion Programme as part of the School Place Planning Strategy 2010-2013. He advised that:

- the plan was being devised to meet the projected demand for school places in Harrow;
- three key aspects of the School Expansion Programme were:
 - Permanent places - To expand some existing schools within the borough;
 - Temporary places - To plan bulge classes in existing schools;
 - Contingency Places - To highlight existing schools that could cater for additional bulge classes should they become necessary;
- it was proposed that an additional 6-8 permanent forms of entry would be established in the primary sector by 2016;
- officers would contact Governing Bodies to discuss the permanent expansion of their school;
- a meeting for Chairs of Governing Bodies and Headteachers would be held on 6 July 2011 to discuss the proposals.

In response to questions, officers advised that:

- eight additional bulge classes were established for the current Academic year to cater for the unprecedented demand for school places in the primary sector;
- London Councils estimated that approximately 70,000 additional permanent school places would need to be found over the next four years across London. The reason for the increased demand was

unknown and exceeded any projections. Possible factors included parents choosing state funded schools for their children rather than private funded schools;

- each permanent expansion would have a capital implication. It was anticipated the cost of permanent expansion would be spread over a number of financial years as it will take time for the expansion to work its way through the school;
- the total number of pupils in the borough was approximately 26,000.

Members commented that:

- Harrow was known for its good education;
- the introduction of Academies and Free Schools could complicate choices for parents;
- school place planning was an inexact science. The planning was complex and there were many aspects to it. Some areas could require more permanent places because of new housing developments concentrated in some areas;
- bulge classes may be used to meet demand as it arises, but it was hard for the school to plan long-term.

RESOLVED: To Recommend (to Cabinet): That

- 1) the Forum's comments on the proposal for a School Expansion Programme be noted, and that the following key aspects of the Programme be forwarded to Cabinet for consideration;
 - Permanent places - To expand some existing schools within the borough;
 - Temporary places - To plan bulge classes in existing schools;
 - Contingency Places - To highlight existing schools that could cater for additional bulge classes should they become necessary.

Reason for Recommendation: To ensure that sufficient places are available to fulfil the Local Authority's statutory responsibilities.

RESOLVED ITEMS

50. INFORMATION REPORT - Local Authority's Strategic Role for Education in Harrow

An officer introduced a report which provided the Forum with an update regarding the future strategic role of the Council for education in Harrow. She advised that:

- the Department for Education's (DfE) Schools' White Paper and Education Bill propose to change the need for Admissions and

Consultative Forums for example. It was necessary to examine whether the organisational structure was suitably fit for purpose;

- because there was an ongoing period of change, the annexe to the report was a dynamic document which changed frequently. Officers would keep a watching brief on the progress of legislation changes and provide updates through the relevant channels;

In response to questions, officers advised that:

- no schools were causing concern in relation to Ofsted Reports. Officers were continually striving to improve working partnerships;
- teams designed to support schools with preparations for Ofsted inspections would continue under HSIP;
- HSIP was unique in the country and had attracted a lot of positive attention both nationally and from the DfE;
- nine schools had confirmed that they would be closed due to strike action taking place on 30 June 2011.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

51. INFORMATION REPORT - Update on the Potential Conversion of Seven High Schools to Academy Status

An officer introduced a report which updated the Forum on the conversion of seven High Schools to Academies. He advised that:

- the Governing Bodies of seven schools in the Borough had decided to seek Academy status. These schools were Bentley Wood, Canons High, Harrow High, Hatch End, Nower Hill, Park High, and Rooks Heath College. They were expected to receive their new status on 1 August 2011;
- the terms and conditions of approximately 1,400 staff involved in the transition to Academy Status were protected under Transfer of Undertakings Protection of Employment (TUPE);
- the Council's Legal and Planning departments were working on the transfer of land from the school sites;
- as these schools were the first Academies in Harrow, the emphasis was very much on getting it right and making the transition as smooth as possible.

In response to questions, the officer advised that:

- no primary schools were actively seeking Academy status at this stage, although the progress being made was being monitored very closely by some primary schools in the borough;

- the cost to some primary schools may rise marginally, however the services and quality would improve across all Harrow's schools.

The Chairman stated that the Council was committed to supporting all Academies. Work would be done to ensure that the strong partnership and high standard of excellence in education would be maintained. It was agreed by the Chairman that a letter be drafted to all newly established Academy schools commending them on their new status.

RESOLVED: The report be noted.

52. INFORMATION REPORT - SEN and Disability Green Paper

An officer introduced a report which provided information on the Government's Green Paper titled Support and Aspiration: A new Approach to Special Educational Needs and Disability. He advised that the main proposals contained within the Green Paper included:

- involving parents in the assessment process to grant them more control of funding the support for their child's needs;
- replacing Special Need Statements with a single, more holistic plan;
- abolishing the School Action and School Action Plus system and replacing with a simpler school based category to assist teachers in focussing on raising attainment;
- allowing greater independence from Local Authorities in assessments by investigating whether voluntary groups could coordinate the package of support;
- providing parents with a greater choice of school and allowing parents and community groups the ability to establish special free schools.

In response to questions, the officer advised that:

- Shaftsbury High School had been involved in discussions surrounding transferring to Academy status, but had decided not to pursue this course of action at this stage. As one of only four Special Needs Schools in Harrow, there was concern over the potential future conversion of the school as the Borough was highly dependent the service they provide;
- the establishment of Hillingdon Manor, an independent school which provided specialist education for children with Autistic Spectrum Disorders, demonstrated that free schools devised for a special educational purpose could be beneficial for the borough;
- a response to the Green Paper would be circulated to Members of the Forum once finalised.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

53. INFORMATION REPORT - Capital Update

An officer introduced a report which outlined progress in the 2011/12 Capital Programme for Schools. She advised that:

- several business cases, including amalgamation and rebuild projects, had been approved and signed off by all relevant parties;
- all current projects were on target, with critical projects due to be completed over the summer period;
- the Capital Strategy for Harrow was currently under review. A new regime for Council Capital was due to be established which could provide greater access to Capital funding for schools projects.

Members commended the officer and her team for the work they had undertaken, in particular the progress made with the potential expansion of Marlborough Primary School.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

54. INFORMATION REPORT - Department for Education Consultation on School Funding Reform

An officer introduced a report which updated the Forum on the proposals contained within the Department for Education (DfE) consultation document regarding the introduction of a new national school funding regime. She advised that:

- the school funding regime would apply to all schools including maintained, academies and free schools;
- the first of two consultation documents focussed on underlying principles. The second, which would detail more complex areas such as Special Educational Needs, was expected later this year;
- proceeding with a national funding system for schools would decrease the responsibility for Local Authorities with regards to funding. This raised particular issues surrounding the future of the Schools Forum, which was not addressed in the consultation paper;
- it was envisaged that the new funding regime would be implemented by 2014. More information would become available later in the year.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

55. Consultation on the Changes to the Admissions Framework

An officer introduced a report which provided a draft response to the Government's consultation on the changes to the Admissions Framework. He advised that:

- the consultation commenced on 27 May 2011 and was due to close on 19 August 2011;

- the Government intended to publish its response to the consultation by the end of September 2011, with a view to the revised Admission Code and Admission Appeals Code coming into practice in 2012;
- the Government stated that the intention was to simplify the Codes and make them easier to understand.

In response to questions, officers advised that:

- once agreed, the new Admissions Code would need to be strictly adhered to in terms of the minimum distance requirement. Parents would have the opportunity to be placed on waiting lists for their preferred schools or could appeal against the decision to refuse their child entry. If the Authority's decision to refuse a child entry resulted in an Appeal, it would be a decision for an independent Education Admissions Appeals Panel to determine whether the decision to refuse entry was unreasonable, or whether a mistake had been made in applying the criteria;
- a distance criteria of up to two miles applied to in year school applications. The decision would be taken to a Fair Access Panel if this distance was exceeded;
- Harrow continued to adopt the sibling link criteria. The decision to adopt this criterion would be a decision for each Academy, and not the Authority.

In response to questions contained within the consultation paper, Members stated that:

- although increasing Published Admission Numbers for 'popular' and 'successful' schools could have a positive short-term impact, fears were raised that the opinion of parents concerning the popularity of schools had the potential to change over time;
- the Pupil Premium for England was set at £430. This did not take into account the higher cost of living in certain areas of the country.

RESOLVED: That the response to the Government's consultation on changes to the Admissions Framework be noted, and the Forum's comments be considered for inclusion in the final response.

56. Date of Next Meeting

RESOLVED: That the next meeting of the Forum would take place on 7 November 2011.

(Note: The meeting, having commenced at 7.32 pm, closed at 9.20 pm).

(Signed) COUNCILLOR BRIAN GATE
Chairman