

EDUCATION CONSULTATIVE FORUM

1 FEBRUARY 2005

Chair:	* Councillor Stephenson	
Councillors:	* Mrs Bath * Miss Bednell * Gate	* Ismail * Janet Mote * Ray
Teachers' Constituency:	* Mr R Borman * Ms C Gembala * Ms J Lang	* Ms L Money † Ms L Snowdon
Governors' Constituency:	* Ms H Henshaw * Mrs C Millard	† Mr N Rands † Ms H Solanki
Elected Parent Governor Representatives:	Mr H Epie	* Mr R Sutcliffe
Denominational Representatives:	* Mrs J Rammelt	* Reverend P Reece
Arts Culture Harrow Representatives:	(Vacancy)	(Vacancy)

* Denotes Member present
† Denotes apologies received

PART I - RECOMMENDATIONS - NIL**PART II - MINUTES**

152. **Minute's Silence:**
The Forum observed a one minute silence in memory of the victims of the tsunami in Asia.
153. **Attendance by Reserve Members:**
RESOLVED: To note that there were no Reserve Members in attendance at this meeting.
154. **Declarations of Interest:**
In relation to this item, Council Members re-stated the governorships which they each held, as set out in the minutes of the meeting of the Education Consultative Forum on 15 July 2004 (Minute 110).
RESOLVED: That the Declarations of Interest now made by Council Members be noted.
155. **Arrangement of Agenda:**
RESOLVED: That (1) all items be considered with the press and public present and,
(2) agenda item 11 be taken before item 9.
156. **Minutes:**
RESOLVED: That, having been circulated, (1) the minutes of the meeting held on 23 September 2004 be taken as read and signed as a correct record; and
(2) the minutes of the Special meeting held on 7 December 2004 be taken as read and signed as a correct record, subject to the amendment of the attendance details to reflect that Councillor Janet Mote and Mrs J Rammelt had sent their apologies to the meeting.

157. **Matters Arising from the Minutes:**

Drug Testing Pupils:

It was agreed that the next meeting receive an update on drug testing in schools.

Implementation of the Joint Single Status Agreement:

A Forum member expressed concern that the letters to Headteachers and Governing Bodies regarding the Single Status implementation options for schools had only been received in January, and queried why these had not been sent out earlier.

In response, the Chair stated that the Council had preferred a thorough consultation with schools and governors to a speedy implementation, to avoid any misapprehension concerning the process.

RESOLVED: That an update on drug testing in schools be made to the next meeting of the Forum.

158. **Public Questions:**

RESOLVED: To note that no public questions were received at this meeting under the provisions of Advisory Panel and Consultative Forum Procedure Rule 15 (Part 4E of the Constitution).

159. **Petitions:**

RESOLVED: To note that no petitions were received at this meeting under the provisions of the Advisory Panel and Consultative Forum Procedure Rule 13 (Part 4E of the Constitution).

160. **Deputations:**

RESOLVED: To note that no deputations were received at this meeting under the provisions of Advisory Panel and Consultative Forum Procedure Rule 14 (Part 4E of the Constitution).

161. **People First Education Budget 2005/2006 and Medium Term Budget Strategy:**

The Forum considered a report of the Executive Director, Business Connections and the Executive Director, People First, which set out the People First Directorate's budget relevant to Education.

Officers reported that Harrow's provisional Formula Spending Share (FSS) for 2005/06 had been increased by 5.5% this year which was higher than the national average. It was noted that the budget for Youth and Community, which was included in the Local Education Authority's FSS, had been significantly increased, reflecting government priorities. In addition to a significant investment in Children's Services and Learning and Community Development, a number of corporate efficiency savings had also been identified which would impact upon the People First budget as outlined in the report.

In response to a question from a Forum member regarding the estimated savings from a reduction in sickness absence, officers replied that the Council expected to achieve the savings by introducing new ways of combating absence which would reduce spending on overtime payments and agency staff.

In answer to a further query regarding reductions in Special Education Needs (SEN) transport, officers explained that SEN transport would be integrated into an overall People First transport budget which, along with the appointment of a Transport Co-ordinator, was intended to lead to the identification of efficiencies and reduced costs in future years.

In response to Forum members' concern that the budget for asylum-seeking children over 16 would not rise over future years, officers advised that the total number of children was not anticipated to increase, although this would need to be kept under review.

It was noted that a glossary of the terms used in the report could be provided for future years.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

162. **Contingency Provision Within Schools Budget:**
The Forum received a report of the Executive Director, People First regarding the proposal to set the contingency provision within the Individual Schools Budget for 2005/2006 at a lower level than previous years. Governors had requested this report to ensure that the benefit of the proposal outweighed the risks.
- Officers reported that as schools would only budget for an already confirmed income, a larger contingency could lead to unnecessary under budgeting in schools. A smaller contingency would increase the sum distributed to schools at the beginning of the financial year. The proposal had received the support of the Schools Forum after it was agreed that the extra funding would be distributed on the basis of pupil numbers.
- RESOLVED:** To note the report.
163. **School Term Dates for 2006/2007:**
The Forum considered an information paper which provided an update on the Association of London Government's (ALG) proposed School Term Dates for 2006/2007.
- Officers reported that there was an expectation that Local Authorities across London would adopt the ALG proposal, although early indication was that some Boroughs might be looking at minor variations to the proposal. It was felt that the proposed model would be more of an issue when setting the Term Dates for 2007/2008 and that further consultation might be required.
- RESOLVED:** That the Working Group be reconvened to consider the options available, with a view to making recommendations on term dates, including any need to consult further, to the next meeting of the Education Consultative Forum.
164. **Operation of the Fines System for Non-Attendees:**
The Forum received a written statement from the Interim Education Welfare Service Manager which provided an update on the statutory implementation of the Penalty Fines System in Harrow.
- The Director of Learning and Community Development explained that the policy had come into effect on 1 January 2005, although it was unlikely that any penalty notices would be issued as school non-attendance in Harrow was very low. It was advised that information regarding the fines system had been sent out to parents through schools. It was stressed that the legal responsibility for issuing the notices would lie with the School Attendance Panel and the Senior Education Welfare Officer and not with schools.
- In response to a question from a Forum member on whether the letter to parents was available in different languages, officers gave an assurance that parents with children with a high non-attendance would be contacted prior to legal action being taken. It was stressed that the issuing of penalty notices was a last resort and that other ways of addressing the problem would be preferable.
- The Chair undertook to make enquiries in the People First Directorate about the corporate policy regarding translations of Council material.
- A Forum member asked that a corporate policy regarding information to communities with high rates of illiteracy be brought to the attention of the Directorate as well.
- RESOLVED:** That the above be noted.
165. **Date of Next Meeting:**
It was noted that the next meeting of the Forum was due to be held on 23 March 2005.
- (Note: The meeting having commenced at 7.35 pm, closed at 8.35 pm)

(Signed) COUNCILLOR BILL STEPHENSON
Chair