

LIFELONG LEARNING SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE

8 APRIL 2003

Chair:	* Councillor Mitzi Green	
Councillors:	* Nana Asante	Jean Lammiman
	* Miss Bednell	* Marie-Louise Nolan
	Branch	* Omar
	* Gate	* Versallion
	* Mary John	* Williams
Voting Co-opted:	(Voluntary Aided)	(Parent Governors)
	* Mrs J Rammelt	† Mr H Epie
	† Reverend P Reece	* Mr R Sutcliffe

* Denotes Member Present

† Denotes Apologies Received

PART I – RECOMMENDATIONS - NIL

PART II - MINUTES

54. **Attendance by Reserve Members: RESOLVED:** (1) To note that there were no Reserve Members in attendance at the meeting;
- (2) to note that, at the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 1 April 2003, it was agreed that Councillor Nana Asante replace Councillor Kinsey, as a Member of the Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Sub-Committee; and that Councillor Kinsey be made first Reserve Member for the Labour Group.
55. **Declarations of Interest: RESOLVED:** To note that Councillor Gate declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest in Item 9, Review of the Promotion of Healthy Lifestyles in Schools, arising from his wife's role as a health care practitioner. He remained in the room and took part in the debate thereon.
56. **Arrangement of Agenda: RESOLVED:** That all items be taken with the press and public present.
57. **Minutes: RESOLVED:** That the minutes of the ordinary meeting held on 25 September 2002, the special meeting held on 7 January 2003, the ordinary meeting held on 21 January 2003 and the special meeting held on 10 February 2003, having been circulated, be taken as read and signed as correct records.
58. **Public Questions: RESOLVED:** To note that no questions were received from local residents or organisations under the provisions of Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rule 8 (Part 4F of the Constitution).
59. **Petitions: RESOLVED:** To note that no petitions were submitted by members of the public/Councillors under the provisions of Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rule 9 (Part 4F of the Constitution).
60. **Deputations: RESOLVED:** To note that no deputations were received under the provisions of Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rule 10 (Part 4F of the Constitution).
61. **References: RESOLVED:** To note that no references were received from Council or Cabinet.
62. **Review of the Promotion of Promotion of Healthy Lifestyles in Schools – Final Report:** The Sub-Committee received the report of the Scrutiny Review Group which examined the promotion of healthy lifestyles in schools. The Review Group was chaired by Councillor Mitzi Green and additionally comprised Councillors Branch, Mary John, Jean Lammiman and Marie-Louise Nolan.

The Chair of the Review Group referred to the objectives and scope of the review and the methodology that was adopted, which detailed the frequency of Review Group meetings and also schools visits undertaken. The Sub-Committee discussed the key findings within the report and the Chair encouraged Members to comment on the different aspects of the review.

A Member of the Panel requested that the key finding in relation to the availability of water in schools be clarified. Responding, the Curriculum Leader (PSHE) advised that the majority of primary schools provided pupils with access to water throughout the school day; pupils kept water bottles on their desks during lessons and were able to re-fill their water bottles as and when required. However, in secondary schools, pupils were not generally allowed to keep water bottles on their desks during lessons, as schools felt that it could lead to disruption. Also, pupils expressed dissatisfaction in accessing water via the water fountains.

The Chair explained that Members of the Review Group were concerned that pupils who were used to accessing water freely at primary school would encounter difficulty in maintaining this access upon transferring to secondary school and that this issue needed to be urgently addressed. The Curriculum Leader (PSHE) advised that some secondary schools were currently looking into ways of improving access to water throughout the school day.

A Member of the Panel questioned whether the advertisement of food and drink brands that were 'unhealthy' was being addressed in schools. In response, the Curriculum Leader (PSHE) advised that schools had a resource checklist to use, which detailed acceptable food and drink by category, rather than brand, in an attempt to avoid the promotion of 'unhealthy' food and drink in schools. The Chair added that one school, which was visited by Members, had removed their 'fizzy' drinks machine in an attempt to promote healthy lifestyles.

A Member of the Panel queried whether there was a service level agreement between the schools and Contract Services, in relation to the variety and quality of the free school meals (packed lunch provision). The Curriculum Leader (PSHE) advised that she was unsure of the exact contractual arrangements between the schools and Contract Services but that the emphasis of the finding was that although the free school meals (packed lunch provision) met the required nutritional criteria, they lacked variety and quality. The Chair advised that this was a view expressed by all the schools that Members had visited and needed to be urgently addressed.

In addition, the Chair advised that she had received correspondence from the Head of Contract Services to the effect that the recommendation to improve the variety and quality of free school meals (packed lunch provision) was an excellent proposal which should be agreed and subsequently implemented. The Vice Chair advised that another aspect which needed to be addressed, in relation to free school meals (packed lunch provision) was the fact that older children received the same quantity of food as the younger children, which was illogical as the older children clearly required larger amounts of food. The Sub-Committee agreed that the free school meals (packed lunch provision) be additionally assessed in order to ensure that the quantity of food in the lunch was appropriate to the age of the child.

The Curriculum Leader (PSHE) informed Members about the National School Fruit Scheme and clarified that pupils participating in the scheme were offered one free piece of fruit per school day and that it was a requirement of the scheme that the fruit was not to be consumed during lunch break. Members were informed that this was to assist in the development of pupils' social skills, as they would be encouraged to eat the fruit together, and also increase their energy levels in a natural way; to enhance concentration levels in lessons.

In response to a question from a Member regarding Recommendation 5, the Chair advised that Members wished for pupils to learn which foods were, for example, 'low in fat' and 'high in fibre' rather than labelling calorific value. A Member suggested that pupils could perhaps devise pictorial examples of the different food groups, as part of a competition to label the different food served in school canteens.

In response from a query from a Member, the Curriculum Leader (PSHE) advised that there were current initiatives within schools that dealt with eating disorders, such as anorexia nervosa and bulimia, and that she had a meeting planned with community dieticians later that week. The Chair advised that Harrow High School discussed with Members ways in which they dealt with pupils with eating disorders.

Following a discussion of the various recommendations, as outlined in the report, the Sub-Committee agreed the Review Group's recommendations, as now amended, and the action arising as set out in paragraphs (2), (3), (4) and (5) below.

Members wished to record their appreciation of the work that Gill Roberts (Curriculum Leader (PSHE)), Brenda Rayson (Senior Adviser, Education Services) and Samantha Johnson (Committee Administrator), had contributed to the review.

RESOLVED: (1) That the Review Group's report be received and the recommendations, as now amended, be endorsed as follows: -

- (i) that the variety and quality of free school meals (packed lunch provision) be urgently addressed. [See Note 1];
 - (ii) that the free school meals (packed lunch provision) be additionally assessed in order to ensure that the quantity of food was appropriate to the age of the child consuming it;
 - (iii) that schools encourage PSHE co-ordinators to attend the termly meetings as well as explore other means for the exchange of ideas;
 - (iv) that all schools be encouraged to consider ways in which water can be made freely available to all pupils throughout the school day without incurring extra financial cost to pupils. [See Note 2];
 - (v) that the Health and Social Care Scrutiny Sub-Committee be requested to work with the PCT to examine ways in which resources allocated to school nurses could be increased. Members felt that the role of the school nurse was very important and it was felt that increased involvement and activity of school nurses with pupils, parents and staff would be highly beneficial to schools;
 - (vi) that ways be explored of explaining the nutritional values of foods served from school canteens; e.g. primary schools' canteens could use pictorial examples, e.g. a skeleton/bones to show that the food was high in calcium, whereas secondary schools could classify the different food groups, e.g. 'low in fat' or 'high in fibre';
 - (vii) that schools be encouraged to actively work with parents in relation to getting the healthy lifestyles message across;
 - (viii) that a copy of the final scoping report on Healthy Lifestyles in Schools be sent to governing bodies in order for governors to encourage healthy lifestyles within their individual schools;
 - (ix) that schools be requested to designate a governor to oversee the promotion of healthy lifestyles in schools;
 - (x) that a report be received at the joint meeting of the Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Sub-Committee and Health and Social Care Scrutiny Sub-Committee, which would outline steps taken to implement the findings of the Scrutiny Review Group;
 - (xi) that specialist colleges be encouraged to continue to share and develop their expertise and facilities with their cluster schools and the wider community.
- (2) that the Review Group's recommendations, as now amended, be sent to the Education and Lifelong Learning Portfolio Holder;
- (3) that the report be placed on the Cabinet Information Circular;
- (4) that copies of the report be sent to the four schools involved with the review along with a letter of thanks to the headteacher of each school;
- (5) that recommendation (v) (above) be referred to the Health and Social Care Scrutiny Sub-Committee.

[Note (1) Members requested that officers in the Council's Contract Services Division be informed of this Recommendation;

(2) that health and safety guidelines, in relation to the accessibility of water during certain lessons, e.g. science, be adhered to].

63. **Review of the Distribution of SEN Statements in Mainstream Schools – Final Report:** The Sub-Committee received the report of the Scrutiny Review Group which examined the distribution of special educational needs (SEN) statements in mainstream schools. The Review Group was chaired by Councillor Miss Bednell and additionally comprised Councillors Branch, Mitzi Green and Jean Lammiman.

The Chair of the Review Group outlined the work that had been undertaken by the Review Group and officers involved in the review and identified the need for additional resources to be allocated to the Council's scrutiny function. In addition, the Chair of the Review Group emphasised that the review purely focused on the allocation of SEN statements in mainstream schools only and that she hoped that Members had found the report and supporting documents interesting and useful.

The Chair of the Review Group advised that Members of the Review Group felt that, in every school visited, staff wished to do their best for SEN statemented pupils but that they felt that they did not always receive the required support (equipment, adaptation, etc) in time. Members of the Review Group felt that schools would be more receptive to SEN statemented pupils if the support that the pupil required arrived on time; the Chair wished to add that the support always arrived eventually.

Members of the Review Group found that whilst the distribution of special educational needs (SEN) statemented pupils was not even, the spread was not unreasonable and that there were justifiable reasons to support the distribution arrangements, e.g. ARMS schools. The Chair advised that, on the whole, schools were keen to support SEN statemented pupils wherever possible.

Members of the Review Group wished to impose a limit on the number of SEN statemented pupils per form but had been advised that SEN regulations did not allow for this type of quota. Therefore, Members requested that the number of SEN statemented pupils per form, per school, be carefully monitored.

The Chair of the Review Group advised that Members of the Review Group were impressed with the work of the Parent Partnership Service and that, following a meeting with the Parent Partnership Co-ordinator, this service should receive additional support, as detailed in Recommendation 3 in the report. The Chair of the Review Group discussed the various recommendations and encouraged Members to comment on aspects of the review.

A Member of the Sub-Committee queried, with reference to Recommendation 6, whether information on the number of SEN statemented pupils in each year group currently existed. The Head of Children and Community Services advised that the information did exist on the system but would need to be collated and presented to Members in a different format to what it was in at present.

In response to a question from a Member, the Head of Children and Community Services advised that there was a larger number of SEN statemented pupils in secondary school due to the fact that pupils with special educational needs were monitored throughout their schooling; statements were issued to pupils with more obvious special educational needs at an early age, whereas pupils with other special educational needs would be identified at a later age, usually in middle school.

A Member of the Panel queried whether there was much cross-borough movement by SEN statemented pupils. The Head of Children and Community Services advised that, following an SEN Tribunal in 1995, there has been an increase in cross-borough movement by SEN statemented pupils and that SEN statemented pupils from other Boroughs frequently move into schools in Harrow, as a result of the expertise that local schools build up.

Following a discussion of the recommendations, as outlined in the report, the Sub-Committee agreed that the Review Group's recommendations and the action arising as set out in paragraphs (2), (3) and (4) below.

Members wished to record their appreciation of the work that Roger Rickman (Children's Services Manager/Principal Educational Psychologist), Michael Bateman (Manager, Assessment and Provision, Education Services) and Samantha Johnson (Committee Administrator), had contributed to the review.

RESOLVED: (1) That the Review Group's report be received and the recommendations, as now amended, be endorsed as follows:-

- (i) that SEN support (learning support, equipment, adaptations to the pupil's physical environment, e.g. ramps) be in place prior to SEN statemented pupils arriving at school;
- (ii) that the number of SEN statemented pupils in each school year group be carefully monitored to ensure there is no detriment to other pupils;

- (iii) that officers look into the possibility of increasing the number of Parent-Partnership Co-ordinators with a view to increasing by at least 20 hours the number of hours available. (To be considered in the budget for the next financial year);
 - (iv) that officers continue to closely monitor the schools that have rejected or challenged SEN statemented pupils' applications;
 - (v) that schools be provided with more guidance in relation to the new statutory regulations in relation to special educational needs provision and disability;
 - (vi) that the Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Sub-Committee receives a report each year detailing the number of SEN statemented pupils in each year group, in each school.
- (2) that the Review Group's recommendations be sent to the Education and Lifelong Learning Portfolio Holder;
- (3) that the report be placed on the Cabinet Information Circular;
- (4) that copies of the report be sent to the four schools involved with the review along with a letter of thanks to the headteacher of each school.

64. **Scrutiny Annual Report 2002-2003:** The Scrutiny Support Officer advised that, at the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 1 April 2003, it was agreed that the Annual Report (Municipal Year 2002-2003) would include extracts from each of the Scrutiny Sub-Committees. It was envisaged that the extracts would provide an overview of the work undertaken by the Sub-Committees and achievements to date. The Scrutiny Support Officer advised that the Sub-Committee should also seek to include future key areas of work and any issues that the Sub-Committee felt strongly about.

The Scrutiny Support Officer advised that the extracts from each of the Scrutiny Sub-Committees would be devised in a prescribed format in order to ensure that there was a degree of uniformity in the layout of the extracts. Members were additionally informed that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's Annual Report would contain statistical information relating to the Scrutiny Sub-Committees; the frequency of review group meetings; visits undertaken; and documents considered during the reviews.

The Chair requested that Members of the Panel consider which aspects of their work, from Municipal Year 2002-2003, they would like to be included in Overview and Scrutiny Committee's Annual Report to Council. The Chair additionally commented that she wished for the cross-party aspect of the reviews to be noted in the Sub-Committee's extract; in relation to how well all the Members of the two Review Groups had worked together during the course of the reviews.

Following a review and subsequent discussion of the Sub-Committee's work programme 2003-2003, it was

RESOLVED: That the following aspects of the Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Sub-Committee's work be included in the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's Annual Report to Council 2002-2003: -

- (i) The review on the Promotion of Healthy Lifestyles in Schools and the review on the Distribution of SEN Statements in Mainstream School;
- (ii) The cross-party aspect of the reviews; in relation to how well all the Members of the two Review Groups had worked together during the reviews;
- (iii) The work of the Early Years Development and Childcare Plan Working Group;
- (iv) The training session for Members of the Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Sub-Committee, which all Members involved in the work of scrutiny were invited to, as were all officers involved in the work of the Sub-Committee;
- (v) The attendance of the Education and Lifelong Learning Portfolio Holder, to respond to questions from Members regarding Education Services' budget; at the meetings of the Sub-Committee on 21 January 2003 and 10 February 2003;
- (vi) The main education and lifelong learning issues that Members had considered in detail; the Annual Library Plan; Education Services' budget (including the schools' budget); The Local Education Authority (LEA) Inspection Action Plan; and the Harrow Tuition Service.

65. **Youth Service Plan:** The Sub-Committee was requested by the Chair to receive nominations from Members to serve on a Working Group to examine in-depth the Youth Service Plan. It was

RESOLVED: (1) That the following Members serve on the Working Group: -

- (i) Councillor Nana Asante
- (ii) Councillor Mitzi Green
- (iii) Councillor Versallion
- (iv) Councillor Williams
- (v) Mr Russell Sutcliffe;

(2) that Councillor Williams lead the Working Group.

66. **In-depth Reviews for 2003/2004:** The Sub-Committee received a report from the Head of Children and Community Services, which identified three possible areas for in-depth reviews during Municipal Year 2003-2004; Statutory Assessments and Statements of Special Educational Needs; School Governors; and Exclusions Monitoring. Members were requested to choose which review they wished to focus on.

The Head of Children and Community Services advised that officers had previously met with the Chair, Vice Chair and nominated Members of the Sub-Committee to examine the three scoping reports and possible methodologies. Members were informed that, due to resource constraints and past experience, it was advisable to undertake one review at a time. The Sub-Committee proceeded to discuss each scope individually.

A Member of the Panel informed Members that the Sub-Committee should build on the work that had already been undertaken in relation to special educational needs by scrutinising the statutory assessments and statements of special educational needs. The Member advised that Councillors often received complaints from schools and parents in relation to how the process worked and felt that there needed to be some clarification of the process. Members were informed that pupils with special educational needs needed to be identified at an early stage in order for intervention to take place and that the bureaucratic element of this process of identification and intervention needed to be removed; highlighted in the OFSTED report. It was agreed, by Members of the Sub-Committee, that the in-depth review would focus on statutory assessments and statements of special educational needs.

The Scrutiny Support Officer proposed that the Sub-Committee receive consultancy support in setting up this in-depth review with a pre-scoping session in order to assess the primary objectives and scope of the review, agree a suitable methodology for carrying out the review and provide examples of effective key findings and recommendations. Members agreed that consultancy support would be beneficial and instructed officers to proceed down this route. The Chair advised that she envisaged that there would be a pre-scoping meeting in May 2003 and that the in-depth review be completed by the meeting of the Sub-Committee on 20 January 2004.

The Chair discussed the possibility of conducting the in-depth review, regarding school governors, in the style of a select committee, as was being used by the Health and Social Care Scrutiny Sub-Committee in their review of Mount Vernon Hospital. The Chair advised that the review could take place at one of the schools in Harrow and that school representatives, governors representatives and national representatives be invited to the review to give evidence to the select committee.

Members were informed that there would need to be a planning meeting of the Sub-Committee; in order for Members to devise questions and plan the management of the review; then the actual select committee style review in a school; and finally, a meeting would need to be held to discuss the findings of the review, during which time recommendations would be formulated. The Chair envisaged that the select committee style review would take place in the autumn and that governors would be invited to the review via their regular mailing, therefore there would be no financial implications for the Local Education Authority (LEA) in this respect. Members agreed that the planning meeting for the review be held on 11 June 2003 at 7.00 pm.

A Member of the Panel nominated Councillor Miss Bednell as the Chair of the in-depth review into school governors, as she had a wealth of expertise in this area. The Sub-Committee agreed this nomination. The Chair requested that Members of the

Sub-Committee receive a breakdown of the demographical information held by the LEA on school governors. A Member of the Panel also requested that the retention rates, in relation to school governors, be provided to Members of the Sub-Committee, as this was an area that needed to be urgently addressed.

RESOLVED: (1) That the in-depth review focus on statutory assessments and statements of special educational needs;

(2) that officers be instructed to arrange consultancy support for the in-depth review;

(3) that a pre-scoping meeting, with consultancy support, be arranged for May 2003;

(4) that the in-depth review be completed by the meeting of the Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Sub-Committee on 20 January 2004;

(5) that the Sub-Committee hold a select committee style in-depth review regarding school governors in autumn 2003;

(6) that a planning meeting be held prior to the school governor in-depth review and that a meeting be held following the review to discuss key findings and recommendations;

(7) that the planning meeting for the review be held on 11 June 2003 at 7.00 pm;

(8) that Councillor Miss Bednell be the Chair of the school governor in-depth review;

(9) that Members of the Sub-Committee receive a break-down of the demographical information held by the LEA on school governors, e.g. vacancies, gender, ethnicity, turnover;

(10) that the report of the Head of Children and Community Services be noted.

67. **Review of Schools Admissions:** A Member of the Panel queried whether the Sub-Committee would consider scrutinising the Council's schools' admissions policy and procedure. The Chair advised that the Sub-Committee did not have the capacity to undertake this review at present and that it could be added onto the list of possible reviews for the future. The Senior Lawyer (Lifelong Learning) advised that the Sub-Committee could refer the issue to the Harrow Admissions Forum to consider.

68. **Date of the Next Meeting:** **RESOLVED:** To note that the next meeting of the Lifelong Learning is on 30 June 2003.

[Note: The meeting, having commenced at 7.35 pm, closed at 8.58 pm].

(Signed) MITZI GREEN
Chair