

Committee Overview & Scrutiny Committee	Date 5 May 2009	Classification Unrestricted	Report No	Agenda Item No 7.1
Report of: Assistant Chief Executive		Title: Development of Pan Disability Panel		
Originating Officer(s) Michael Keating, Service Head, Scrutiny and Equalities Saffron Romero, Tower Hamlets Pan Disability Panel development		Wards Affected All		

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report informs Overview and Scrutiny of the Tower Hamlets Pan Disability Panel (THPDP) and seeks support and feedback for the proposed model. The THPDP model structure is set out in Appendix 1.

2. RECOMMENDATION

Overview and Scrutiny Committee are asked to

- 2.1 Note the work to develop the Tower Hamlets Pan Disability Panel
- 2.2 Agree to link with it by (i) inviting the THPDP to report on its work as part of the Diversity and Equality Action Plan (DEAP) six-monthly monitoring, (ii) involve the THPDP in review work when appropriate and (iii) include within the 2009/2010 work programme a scrutiny challenge session to help ensure that the THPDP can contribute to the ongoing work of the Council and Partnership.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT, 1972 SECTION 100D (AS AMENDED) LIST OF "BACKGROUND PAPERS" USED IN THE PREPARATION OF THIS REPORT

Brief description of background papers: Name and telephone number of holder and address where open to inspection

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 At the Overview & Scrutiny Committee meeting, 13th January 2009 a representative from the Disability Coalition addressed the meeting on behalf of the Disability Coalition, and advised that there was a need for the Council to engage with local 3rd sector organisations and ensure that the outcomes of its reviews were implemented. Members of the Committee had asked a number of questions in relation to the type of problems faced by Tower Hamlets' disabled residents particularly, preferred methods of engagement, and working in partnership.
- 3.2 Michael Keating, Head of Scrutiny and Equalities, continued by outlining how the Council has worked with the Disability Coalition and other third sector groups and advised that the Council was currently establishing the Tower Hamlets Pan Disability Panel (THPDP). As well as consultation on broad questions there would also be specific focus groups established when required to deal with particular issues.
- 3.3 The THPDP is designed to improve engagement with the local disabled population - by increasing the actual numbers the Council talk to and the methods in doing so. The previous Disabled Access Group had been in place for a number of years and although it did make a significant contribution to the work of the Council it was increasingly becoming dysfunctional. Following discussion with the members themselves, there was overwhelming agreement to disband the Group in April 2008.
- 3.4 The development of the THPDP aims to provide a cohesive mechanism for community engagement with disabled people across all impairment groups. The outline for the new model arose from discussions with the Scrutiny and Equalities Team and Consultation & Involvement Team in the Partnership (CandI Team) about how to improve the quality of consultation and involvement with disabled residents. The structural and operational aspects of the model have been further developed in recent months to reflect the views of local disabled people and those with an interest in disability issues.
- 3.5 Tower Hamlets Council and the Primary Care Trust are the main drivers behind the establishment of the THPDP. Once established, the THPDP will provide cross directorate and partner organisation benefits by providing a variety of ways to access the views of disabled people. The THPDP has a key role to play in ensuring that disability equality is delivered in multiple services across the Council and the services of partner organisations.

4. DEVELOPMENT

- 4.1 A process of internal and external engagement with stakeholders has been carried out since December 2008. This has taken place in order to:
 - Review and develop the proposed structure of the THPDP
 - Encourage internal and external feedback on how it would work in practice
 - Review what disability related forums/consultation mechanisms already exist in the borough and how they could work in partnership with and strengthen the work of the THPDP.
 - Gain a sense of the desired membership of the subgroups and how members should be selected.

The process was also an important part of building relationships with key local disability networks and raising general awareness of the THPDP. The organisations visited or

contacted have represented a wide spectrum of impairments and have included carers and older people.

4.2 There are 3 main components to the overall THPDP. Please confer Appendix 1

General Pan Disability Panel – around 500 members mainly consulted by post, phone and email. Focus groups can be drawn together for specific targeted consultations/involvement exercises.

Community Plan Themed Subgroups (5 subgroups) – to meet approximately 2-3 hours per month – each group having members with local community links and feeding into Council and partner governance structures. There is additional recommendation for a stand alone transport subgroup.

Pan Disability Panel Steering Group – chairs of subgroups meet with council officers (meet 3 – 4 times per year) – challenge/strategic role in relation to monitoring of Disability Equality Scheme

Links to governance structures are shown in Appendix 1 as an indication of how the THPDP could feed in and link to, for example, the Tower Hamlets Partnership on a more strategic level. Not all activities of the THPDP will require this strategic level of involvement. The THPDP lead officer and secretariat will work with key Council and partner stakeholders to progress the subgroup actions and recommendations arising from the subgroup work programmes.

4.3 The engagement process raised a number of concerns in relation to the shaping of the THPDP. The relevant areas included for this report are summarised;

- How the work of the THPDP feeds into relevant Council and partners decision making processes and structures
- The support arrangements for the THPDP subgroups
- How does the THPDP develop links with the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet and the wider equalities agenda?

5. FUTURE WORK NEEDED

5.1 The success of the THPDP will require a clear intention and commitment from the Council both in terms of accountability to the THPDP and links made with relevant decision making and review structures. Further clarification on the accountability and links with governance structures within the Tower Hamlets Partnership, such as the Partnership Board and LAP Steering Groups requires development. How the THPDP links into the Adults Health and Wellbeing Physical Disabilities, Learning Disabilities, Mental Health and Older People's Partnership Boards also needs further clarification. Further work is required around linking the work of the THPDP and the additional equalities strand forums, into the work of the Consultation and Involvement Team.

5.2 The THPDP has the potential to benefit a whole range of cross Council activities and provide the Council, when acting in its capacity as a public authority, the opportunity to fully consider any implications for disabled people. The secretariat for the themed subgroups and overall coordination of the work of the THPDP will be key factor in its establishment and long term success. The provision of secretariat for the subgroups has been a requirement raised by community organisations. Consideration should be given

by the Corporate Management Team to provide cross directorate funding for a full time Support Officer post.

6. WORKING WITH OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY

- 6.1 There are considerable benefits in developing links between Overview and Scrutiny and the THPDP. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee aims to look outwards and involve communities and stakeholders. The views and ideas of service users (and non-users), service providers and organisations with an interest in an equalities area under review are all essential for effective scrutiny. The linking of the work programmes of the THPDP and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee could provide two way opportunities for both Overview and Scrutiny to include the views of disabled people on a wide range of issues in its work and for the THPDP to raise specific issues with the Committee. The development of these links can be achieved through reporting to the Committee as part of the DEAP monitoring, involving them in review work when appropriate and/or a scrutiny challenge session/review. These areas of work would help ensure that the THPDP can contribute to the ongoing work of the Council and Partnership and further demonstrate the commitment Overview and Scrutiny have to being accessible, relevant and the wider promotion of its work.

7. CONCLUSION

- 7.1 Tower Hamlets continues to face big challenges in terms of inequality and the establishment of the Tower Hamlets Pan Disability Panel will further enhance the Council's capacity to both respond to and incorporate a wide range of disabled people's views.

8. CONCURRENT REPORT OF THE ASSISTANT CHIEF EXECUTIVE (LEGAL)

- 8.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is asked to receive information about the Council's work on the Tower Hamlets Pan Disability Panel and agree to involve the Panel in the work of overview and scrutiny.
- 8.2 The Council is required by section 21 of the Local Government Act 2000 to have an overview and scrutiny committee and to have executive arrangements that ensure the committee has specified powers. Consistent with this obligation, Article 6 of the Council's Constitution provides that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee shall have a number of functions, including: reviewing and scrutinising actions taken in connection with discharge of the Council's functions; and considering any matter affecting Tower Hamlets or its inhabitants.
- 8.3 The report outlines how the work carried out in relation to the Tower Hamlets Pan Disability Panel relates to the Council's goal, expressed in the Community Plan, of achieving One Tower Hamlets. Having regard to the Community Plan is necessary if the Council is to rely on its power under section 2 of the Local Government Act 2000 to do anything which the Council considers is likely to promote the social, economic or environmental well being of Tower Hamlets (the well being power). The power may be exercised in relation to, or for the benefit of: (a) the whole or any part of Tower Hamlets; or (b) all or any persons resident in Tower Hamlets.
- 8.4 More specifically, the Council has legal duties under section 49A of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 to eliminate discrimination and harassment in relation to disability, to promote equality of opportunity, to promote positive attitudes toward

disabled persons, to take account of disabled persons' disabilities and to encourage participation by disabled persons in public life. The Council's work in relation to the Tower Hamlets Pan Disability Panel may be viewed as supporting the discharge of these duties.

9. COMMENTS OF THE CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER

9.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. Equalities issues should be embedded into service delivery, and they are taken into account when budgets are set. This report does however raise the requirement for cross directorate funding for a support role providing secretariat for the THPDP. At the current time funding for the support role has not been identified, but funding will need to be found from existing directorate revenue budgets.

10. ONE TOWER HAMLETS CONSIDERATIONS

10.1 The THPDP represents an important step in progressing the Council's commitment to building One Tower Hamlets as a place in which people live together and where they are treated with respect and fairness regardless of their differences. The THPDP aims to bring together key stakeholders to work together to provide and improve services for local disabled people, their families and Carers. The THPDP brings local people to the decision making table in a variety of ways; from the very local level through to borough-wide initiatives, it helps to ensure that services are not only offered to the highest of standards but also offer the best value for money possible.

11. SUSTAINABLE ACTION FOR A GREENER ENVIRONMENT

11.1 Efforts will be made to ensure that in delivering the commitments of the Tower Hamlets Pan Disability Panel the impact on the environment is kept to an absolute minimum. This includes the use of recycled paper in any documentation, and careful consideration of the methods used to engage with local communities, partners and staff.

12. RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

12.1 The Council is seeking to implement an ambitious diversity and equality agenda in the context of changes in national legislation and standards. Progress to date has been very positive, but there is still much to be done if all the Council's targets are to be achieved and all the new legislative requirements are fully complied with. Any slippage could potentially undermine this.

12.2 Diversity and equality performance indicators will help keep the focus firmly on delivery and outcomes. The emphasis on consultation and involvement will mean that the Council's performance in this area will be judged by the experiences of service users on the ground.

12.3 A greater emphasis will be given this year to communicating the progress that is being made to the wider community and to staff, including greater use of existing communications media such as East End Life, local communications networks and Pulling Together.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Tower Hamlets Pan Disability Panel model April 2009