

Committee/Meeting: Cabinet	Date: 13 March 2013	Classification: Unrestricted	Report No: CAB 89/123
Report of: Stephen Halsey, Corporate Director Communities Localities and Culture		Title: Implementing Local Structures – Local Community Ward Forums	
Originating officer(s) Shazia Hussain, Service Head Localisation		Wards Affected: All	

Lead Member	Mayor Lutfur Rahman
Community Plan Theme	One Tower Hamlets
Strategic Priority	Reducing Inequalities Work efficiently and effectively as One Council

1. **SUMMARY**

- 1.1 This paper provides Cabinet with further detail on the content, process and implementation of the Local Community Ward Forums (LCWFs). This expands on the previous report presented to Cabinet on the 8th February 2012, which provided an overview of the new Partnership structures including the introduction of the LCWFs. In consultation with the Executive and lead members of the Partnership the process for delivering the Forums has been further developed and is set out in this report. This report seeks Cabinet's agreement on the detailed delivery of the LCWF meetings.

2. **DECISIONS REQUIRED**

The Mayor in Cabinet is recommended to:-

- 2.1 Approve a yearly programme of 3 x LCWF meetings in each of the Borough's wards.
- 2.2 Agree the detail for each of the LCWF meetings in the yearly programme.
- 2.3 Agree to implement a participatory budgeting process and the allocation of £10K per ward for 2013/14 and 14/15.
- 2.4 Agree the role of the Community Plan Delivery Groups (CPDGs) in co-commissioning services identified through LCWF priority setting.

3. REASONS FOR THE DECISIONS

- 3.1 The Mayor is committed to ensuring greater levels of community engagement, empowerment and accountability across the Partnership. The Council must also ensure that the Partnership continues to align service delivery infrastructure with new government policy seen in a number of landmark pieces of legislation introduced by the coalition government including the Localism Act 2011, the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 and the Health and Social Care Act 2012. The LCWFs will play an important role in meeting this agenda.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 4.1 No Action:
There is currently no localised community partnership structure. Doing nothing would hinder the Council and its partner's ability to engage with citizens of Tower Hamlets and reduce our ability to provide appropriate services for local residents. It would also risk reputational damage and have an adverse impact on our ability to work effectively and in a joined up way with our partners at a local level.
- 4.2 Reduce the numbers of forums:
It would be possible to implement a local partnership structure with fewer local forums. However, this would reduce the accountability of the approach with the potential of creating disproportionate representation in different parts of the borough. Fewer forums would result in a less responsive partnership offer.
- 4.3 Reinstate the Local Area Partnership (LAP) Steering Groups:
The LAP Steering Groups were introduced during the early part of the Partnership's formation, at a time when the local infrastructure for the key public agencies was in its infancy. At the time central government funding was also available to enable and grow local structures that brought about greater local participation with local service providers. However, given the current funding constraints, such a structure would no longer be appropriate or sustainable. There is also an explicit need for citizens to be able to participate in a local structure which is more locally appropriate, publicly accessible and community owned.

5. BACKGROUND

- 5.1 Following agreement on the principles for creating and delivering the local structures this update advises Cabinet on the processes of identifying and addressing ward priorities through the Forums. Forums will be delivering a ward level participatory budgeting programme at the same time as continuing to maximise the roll-out of the Mayor's Community Champions programme and Neighbourhood Agreements.
- 5.2 The LCWFs are part of the revised Partnership structures which were agreed by Cabinet in February 2012. In reviewing our partnership arrangements it

has been critical both to embrace new ways of working and to build on what has worked successfully in the past. The LCWFs will replace the LAP Steering Groups. It has been recognised that the local community want to engage on a more localised basis and the new LCWFs have been designed on a ward level to meet these local needs.

- 5.2 Additionally, the implementation of LCWFs has considered the relationship with other existing and anticipated local groups. For example, as a result of the Localism Act and development of Neighbourhood Planning Forums within Tower Hamlets, discussion between Localisation Officers and Planning Officers has taken place to ensure that the two initiatives are developed efficiently and in a joined up way.

6. BODY OF REPORT

- 6.1. The detailed programme of LCWF meeting arrangements is contained within appendix 1. It is proposed that the LCWFs will have a budget of £10K per ward for participatory budgeting through the 'Mayor Asks You to Decide!' programme for 2013/14 and that this commitment is also made for 2014/15. The checks and balances for the PB process will remain as agreed for previous years PB 'you decide' initiatives and will be the subject of an audit at its conclusion.

7. COMMENTS OF THE CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER

- 7.1 Future costs of maintaining the Local Community Ward Forums will need to be kept under review due to the innovative nature of the initiative and the lack of clear bench marks. The Mayor has set out previously his aspirations to provide £10,000 per Ward for allocation through a participatory budgeting programme. Resource of £170,000 for 2013/14 has been set aside for this purpose and a further commitment of £170,000 in 2014/15 funded from earmarked reserves. The matter is further complicated by the Boundary Commission changes which will impact on the funding requirements for the number of Wards in the Borough.

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

- 8.1 The report proposes implementation of Local Community Ward Forums. Community engagement and supporting a powerful public form one of the cross-cutting principles which underpin the Tower Hamlets Community Plan. The Community Plan sets out the Council's sustainable community strategy within the meaning of section 4 of the Local Government Act 2000.
- 8.2 The Council is subject by section 3A of the Local Government Act 1999 to a duty to involve, which requires the Council to take such steps as it considers appropriate to involve representatives of local people in the exercise of its functions. The detailed arrangements proposed in the report may contribute to the discharge of this duty.

- 8.3 Community engagement through the proposed forums may support discharge by the Council of its statutory functions. By virtue of section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972, the Council has power to do anything which is calculated to facilitate, or is conducive or incidental to, the discharge of any of its functions. This may involve expenditure, borrowing or lending of money or the acquisition or disposal of any property or rights.
- 8.4 If any additional source of power were required, section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 provides a general power of competence for local authorities to do anything that an individual generally can do. The only restriction is that there must be no statutory prohibition against the proposed action. It is considered that setting up consultative forums is something that an individual may do and there appears to be no relevant prohibition on the Council taking such a step.
- 8.5 Before taking the steps recommended in the report the Council must have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful conduct under the Equality Act 2010, the need to advance equality of opportunity and the need to foster good relations between persons who share a protected characteristic and those who don't. Information is set out in the report relevant to these considerations.

9. ONE TOWER HAMLETS CONSIDERATIONS

- 9.1 The Partnership structures and working arrangements are a key means of local public agencies working with local residents to improve services for the communities who live and work in the Borough. The new LCWFs build on our approach of bringing diverse communities together to engage in decision making and empowerment of their public services. These opportunities for strengthening citizen engagement are demonstrated through the LCWFs and through involvement in local decision making, supporting the Council's One Tower Hamlets priority. The community leadership role of our residents is supported by the framework for developing Community Champion Coordinators.
- 9.2 The strong connection between the work of the Partnership and the Tower Hamlets Community Plan objectives is such that work done through the Partnership arrangements is likely to promote equality of opportunity and foster good relations within the meaning of section 149 of the Equality Act 2010. The Community Plan was itself the subject of equality impact assessment prior to being adopted in its revised form by the Council in July 2011.

10. SUSTAINABLE ACTION FOR A GREENER ENVIRONMENT

- 10.1 The refresh of the Partnership and the move of the Great Place to Live CPDG to the Development & Renewal directorate created increased links to the sustainability agenda. This will be further enhanced through the creation of LCWFs and any priorities and opportunities which are identified through them to support the creation of smart and sustainable communities.

11. RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

11.1 Establishing effective LCWFs enables the public services of the Council, Police and NHS to provide more responsive services for residents. It is the intention that the LCWF's are self-supporting necessitating minimal resource from the Council to organise and service. The model is breaking new ground and as such represents a risk. If the Council were required to provide more significant levels of support resource to the LCWF's this may prove challenging to finance in the difficult public sector funding environment currently prevailing.

12. CRIME AND DISORDER REDUCTION IMPLICATIONS

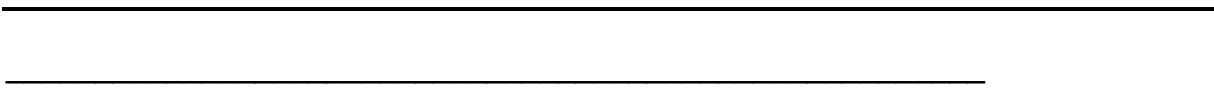
12.1 Opportunities for the Council and our Partners to engage with LCWFs will be capitalised on to ensure that key local issues will be addressed in an increasingly coherent way, reducing duplication and effectively targeting and dealing with crime and disorder.

13. EFFICIENCY STATEMENT

13.1 There are clear benefits with introducing LCWFs into the Partnership structures to ensure that it continues to provide efficient and enhanced service delivery.

14. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Local Community Ward Forums: Structure and Process
Appendix 2 – Equality Analysis Quality Assurance Checklist



Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012

Brief description of "background papers"	Name and telephone number of holder and address where open to inspection.
--	---

None	N/A
------	-----