

Response to Scrutiny Working Group report on the Role of Ward Councillors in the Tower Hamlets Partnership

Recommendation	Comments	Date	Update: October 2008
Defining the role of ward councillors in the Partnership			
<p>R1 A job description for 'councillors as community leaders' should be formulated with the involvement of both councillors and the wider Partnership. This would include the community leadership councillors provide through different partnership forums, cabinet, overview and scrutiny and casework.</p>	<p>A role description has been developed and agreed with the Member Training and Development Group. It covers Member responsibilities, activities and sets out the different duties in their role as community leaders, on Cabinet, on Overview and Scrutiny and on external bodies.</p> <p>It will be provided to all councillors in the new Council and is being used as the framework for the Members Induction programme following the May elections.</p> <p>The Job Description includes that Councillors will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attend LAP and LAP Steering Group and other Partnership meetings to which they are invited • Lead and mediate between issues of concern within their LAP • Encourage and develop relationships to make people in the partnership valued, trusted and included, recognising people from different backgrounds. Empowering others to take responsibility. 	February 2007	<p>Under the new Tower Hamlets Partnership governance structures being introduced in October 2008 there is greater emphasis on councillors playing a leading role within the partnership structures. At the LAP level ward councillors are expected to participate fully in LAPs and share the role of leading the LAPs as the LAP steering group chair, at the same time also facilitating the participation of other residents and community members.</p>

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<p>R2 The role of councillors should be recognised in the Tower Hamlets Partnership Charter.</p>	<p>The Tower Hamlets Partnership Charter is agreed for all partners and is seen to apply to all regardless of the agency or sector they represent. To include specific elements of the Charter for councillors may suggest special privilege and this runs counter to a fundamental principle of partnership working generally and the Tower Hamlets Partnership specifically.</p> <p>Importantly, the principles contained in the Charter echo those set out in the role description for councillors for partnership working.</p>	<p>February 2007</p>	<p>Implemented</p>
<p>Developing the capacity, skills, expertise and knowledge of ward councillors</p>			
<p>R3 Learning and development should include greater emphasis on the skills of councillors to engage with their local wards. This would include developing an understanding of accountability, community leadership, public and stakeholder engagement and service improvement.</p>	<p>This was achieved through LAP induction events in June/July 2006. The purpose of the ward based induction was to provide Members with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An opportunity to meet with key ward representatives from the Safer Neighbourhood Team, PCT, and voluntary sector, plus Area Directors, Partnership Support Officers and LAP Steering Group Members • An overview of the LAP including priorities and key issues for local residents • Key facts and data about the ward • Information about LAP action plans; and • An understanding of Members' role in the 	<p>February 2007</p>	<p>A programme of induction is being developed to support the role out of the new governance structures such as the new LAPs and Community plan Delivery Groups, Members will be asked to make the time to participate in these alongside the other participants to help bond the new groups and to ensure that there is a common understanding of the roles</p>

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	LAP		and contributions that different people bring to the table. This is an opportunity for Councillors to demonstrate leadership and the ability to engage with and influence the partnership agenda.
R4 Support to councillors should include a greater emphasis on how to develop their role at LAP level as community leaders – beyond administrative support.	The new organisational structure in Members Services and the review of member's enquiries should improve support to ward councillors. This needs further discussion and exploration with councillors however, particularly with the proposed new powers for ward members proposed in the Local Government White Paper.	February 2007	The new Members' Support structure is now in place and the Members' Enquiries Business process Improvement action plan is being implemented. Support services for Councillors are however subject to further review following the enactment of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 and associated development of the ward councillor role and the Councillor Call for Action.
R5 Ward performance data should be provided regularly to Councillors in an accessible format to enable them to formulate evidence-based	THIS Borough has now been implemented and is accessible to all. Ward-based performance information and data is available through the system. We are currently setting a date within the	February 2007	We are continuing to develop THIS Borough as an accessible portal to information and data about

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judgments.	<p>Members' Learning and Development programme for training around this system.</p> <p>Presentations of ward based information were developed for each LAP Steering Group to inform Local Area Action planning. These are available via the THIS Borough system. The ward data report is also currently being updated and will be disseminated to ward councillors and the Partnership more widely.</p>		the localities in Tower Hamlets including at ward level. Further training in use of the system for members can be provided if required.
Improving linkages between the Partnership and ward councillors			
R6 The five scrutiny leads should have a standing invitation to the relevant Community Plan Action Groups and be encouraged to attend and participate.	CPAG papers are circulated to the relevant Scrutiny Leads to inform their work. The CPAG meetings are open meetings and the Scrutiny Policy Team incorporates the CPAGs into the activities of the Scrutiny Leads.	February 2007	Scrutiny Leads will continue to have access to the Community Plan Delivery Groups as a forum to test out the conclusions and recommendations from Scrutiny work relating to different service areas and issues. They will be invited to attend appropriate meetings.
R7 The accountability arrangements for Area Directors should be clarified to enhance the working arrangements of LAP steering	The Local Management Team, which the Area Directors form a part, is accountable to the Excellent Public Services Community Plan Action Group, with management reporting currently	October 2006	The Local Management Team, including Area Directors, is now within the span of responsibility of the

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groups.	<p>through Chief Executive Directorate of the Council.</p> <p>Following the Partnership Review, we need to further promote the links between the different parts of the Partnership. As part of this, we will clarify the role of the Area Directors and how they can act as a bridge between the LAPs and the wider partnership structures.</p> <p>We have been awaiting the publication of the Local Government white paper to consider how best to link area based working with the wider Partnership within the latest policy framework. This will now be considered as part of the Council's and Partnership response to the white paper and its implementation.</p>		<p>Corporate Director of Communities, Localities and Culture.</p> <p>Area Directors continue to deliver an important bridging role between the different elements of the Partnership, particularly at the local level, by providing local knowledge and an understanding of the barriers and issues that can constrain progress in local areas.</p> <p>A further review of local management and arrangements for accelerating local delivery is scheduled to take place in early 2009.</p>
R8 The Partnership Support Team should play a key part in the Member induction programme.	The Partnership Support Team was part of the Corporate team that planned and delivered the Member Induction programme. This included LAP induction sessions and information on the partnership role of being a councillor.	February 2007	This element will also be built into the planning process for the Induction programme of Members following the 2010 Council elections.
R9 A major role of the Partnership	The Partnership Support Team is continuing to	February	As stated above there will be

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<p>Support Team should be to enhance the skills and capacity of LAPs, including councillors. This would develop their ability to make the links between their work as ward councillors with the work of the wider Partnership.</p>	<p>support and provide development opportunities for the LAPs (including councillors). The new role description places considerable emphasis on the councillors duties to not only attend Partnership events but to act as an advocate for the Partnership within their wards and other work.</p> <p>The Partnership Support Team organises four development sessions a year. These are informed by both the Partnership awaydays and discussions with LAPs. For example training on advocacy and questioning has been provided.</p> <p>It is important to deepen all councillors understanding of both the Partnership and the different agencies and organisations that contribute within it, so that they can maximise their contribution to the Partnership and act as advocates for the Partnership within their ward and other work.</p> <p>The formation of the Communities and Localities Directorate will help to increase the responsiveness of services with place, as outlined in the Local Government White Paper, and will strengthen the links between the Local Area Agreement and the wider Partnership.</p>	<p>2007</p>	<p>further programmes of capacity building designed to extend the skills and knowledge of LAP steering group members including councillors.</p>
<p>Developing the involvement of ward councillors in the Partnership through Overview and Scrutiny</p>			

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<p>R10 A LAP based scrutiny project should be piloted which could include how 'choice and personalisation' of public services is being delivered in a local area.</p>	<p>The Local Government White Paper has changed the context for this recommendation. There are significant new powers for Scrutiny including the Community Call for Action. This is being explored, including a planned session with Scrutiny members, to consider how best this can be implemented.</p>	<p>February 2007</p>	<p>As part of this year's Scrutiny Work programme the Scrutiny Lead for Living Well is undertaking a review on tackling anti-social behaviour focusing on specific ward based data as well as piloting the 'Councillor Call for Action' model. This could be used as model to roll out ward based scrutiny projects.</p>
<p>R11 The monitoring of the Local Area Agreement through LAP-based performance indicators by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee should be developed.</p>	<p>A progress report on the Local Area Agreement was considered by Overview and Scrutiny Committee in December 2006. This will be developed further as part of the consideration of first year's performance.</p>	<p>February 2007</p>	<p>THIS Borough will be enabled to deliver up to date information on progress on the LAA target areas. This will assist the OSC to monitor more regularly.</p>