

Appendix A

Disability Working Group – Terms of Reference

Accessibility

If you would like this letter or information in an alternative format, for example large print or easy read, or if you need help communicating with us, please let us know on 01279 446655.

We provide a text relay service for people who are D/deaf, hearing impaired or have a speech impediment.

Our offices have audio induction loops, or if you contact us before your visit, we can arrange a British Sign Language (BSL) interpreter.

What is expected from Disability Working Group members?

- support Harlow District Council to meet their Public Sector Equality Duty, by prioritising accessibility when the Council considers developing or changing a strategy, policy, project or service.
- help Harlow District Council understand the experience of any barriers faced by disabled people/ people living with a disability / people living with a disability.
- advise on potential solutions to removing barriers which might be found during the strategy, policy, project or service change development and implementation.
- highlight gaps in provision for D/deaf, disabled and neurodiverse people across all Harlow District Council departments, so that the gaps can be addressed by the strategies or policies that affect the towns life cycle.
- proactively offer guidance on how best to consult, engage with and involve disabled people/ people living with a disability / people living with a disability in developing and reviewing strategies or policies that have a wide-reaching impact on the town or potential disproportionate impact on disabled people/ people living with a disability / people living with a disability or their carers.
- advise Harlow District Council on the monitoring and reporting framework that should be set up to effectively implement strategy change or policy implementation.
- be prepared to voice their lived experience, but not be focused solely on a single issue, as group members are expected to speak for a range of disabled people/ people living with a disability / in the community.
- accept that once a particular issue has been sufficiently explored, it will not be revisited unless for a critical reason. respect confidentiality and not share confidential information outside the Group (including within their organisations, in the press or on social media, without prior written permission from Harlow District Council): this applies both during and after the Group Members' term of appointment.

In its work the Disability Working Group must recognise it does not have the authority to:

- expect their views wholly or in part, to be accepted and acted upon by the Council
- commit or expend resources on the Council's behalf
- commit the Council to any actions
- consider any matter outside its specific areas of activity
- direct Council employees in the performance of their duties
- represent the Council in any communication with the public or media
- act in the name of the Group outside the remit of the Group.

What is expected of Harlow District Council?

- ensure that the Disability Working Group's expertise is used at the strategic level.
- consult the Group at all appropriate points of the strategy, policy, project or service change that affect the town's life cycle.
- provide a reasonable amount of time for the Group to undertake its work on any specific issue.
- adjust the way the Group runs to ensure it is fully accessible to Group members.
- report back to the Group on how their input has been incorporated and what actions or outcomes have been achieved as a result.
- provide a response to issues raised and discussed by the Group in as timely as possible a way, ensuring a clear feedback loop.
- give due reference to the Disability Working Group, wherever appropriate, in either the Community Engagement or Equality Impact Assessment sections of HDC committee reports
- facilitate a wider reference group of D/deaf, disabled and neurodiverse people's organisations to provide support and subject matter expertise to the Group

How the Group will operate

1: Introduction

The Disability Working Group is a key component in the effective development and delivery of Harlow District Council's (HDC) strategies or policies that affect the town. It ensures that D/deaf, disabled people/ people living with a disability and neurodiverse people and their organisations are centrally involved in the development and implementation of this strategy.

2: Role of Group

The Group is created by the council for the purpose of providing strategic, expert and impartial advice to the Council on the development, implementation, monitoring and review of the Strategies or policies that affect the town and associated action plan(s).

3: Principles

The following principles of good governance will guide the functions of the Group:

- Participatory;
- Respectful;
- Accountable;
- Transparent;
- Responsive;
- Effective and efficient;
- Equitable and inclusive;
- Ethical;
- Abide by the Nolan principles ¹

4: Conduct and Confidentiality

Group members will need to declare any conflicts of interest and must adhere to HDC's policy and procedure in this respect.

5.Information

Group members may be given access to information not yet in the public domain or which is policy under development. This information must not be shared outside the Group, including within their organisations, in the press or on social media, without prior written permission from HDC. This applies both during and after the Group Members' term of appointment.

¹ [The Seven Principles of Public Life - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)

6: Membership and Term

It is important to have Group members who are people with lived experience of disability whether personally or through a caring and support role.

The Group shall consist of a maximum of 12 members:

- Four Members – two Members from both the Administration (one of which will be the Leader) and Opposition groups. The Leader will Chair the Group.
- Two independent volunteers who are D/deaf, disabled people/ people living with a disability or neurodiverse people
- Six representatives volunteering from six varied organisations /charities who represent and support D/deaf, disabled people/ people living with a disability and/or neurodiverse people. The organisations on the Group shall include:
 1. a disability organisation with a broad role of delivering and supporting disabled people/ people living with a disability within the town from a range of ethnic and cultural backgrounds;
 2. an organisation with a focus on working with children and young disabled people/ people living with a disability;
 3. an organisation with a focus on working with people with a learning or neuro- difference;
 4. An organisation with a focus on sensory impairment or long term, limiting condition;
 5. An organisation with a focus on mental health;
 6. An organisation with a focus on non-visible disabilities

A list of Group members shall be posted on the Council's website.

The role of the Leader as Chair of the Disability Working Group will be to:

- lead and chair Disability Working Group meetings;
- determine the agenda for Group meetings;
- represent the Group in a wider Council context where required;
- Act as a conduit for other organisations not on the Group to ensure their views and ideas are heard within the Group.

The term of membership for individuals shall be two years with a right to reappoint for a further year. Individuals may serve for up to a maximum of three years.

Organisational membership will be reviewed every two years by the Council to ensure they remain representative of the sector.

Recognition can be in variety of forms including but not exclusively training, development, opportunities to group members.

A person or organisation ceases to be a Group member if they:

- resign;
- are no longer a Councillor or in a relevant Member position e.g. Leader/ Portfolio Holder/ Leader of the Opposition/ Shadow Portfolio Holder
- are absent from two consecutive meetings without notification or valid reason; or
- fail to follow these Terms of Reference.

Any member may resign by giving written notice to the Group's Chair.

To ensure consistency there is an expectation that organisations are represented by one nominated employee member throughout the term of membership, and that if need be one proxy is nominated to attend.

The Group may, at its own discretion, decide to co-opt members on to the Group to work on short projects or to bring a specific expertise/lived experience to an issue. Anyone co-opted on to the Group will be a member for an agreed timeframe and purpose. In addition, any co-optee will agree to work within these Terms of Reference.

The Group will be supported in its work by a Wider Reference Group consisting of disabled persons' organisations (DPOs), whose remit will be to support and inform the work of the Disability Working Group, providing further targeted expertise on specific disability issues as subject matter experts.

7: Recruitment

Vacant individual positions on the Group will be proactively promoted via D/deaf, disabled people/ people living with a disability and neurodiverse people 's organisations, stakeholders, advocates and community organisations with a call for Expressions of Interest. Additionally, the vacancies will be promoted through a range of other channels which may include:

- social media;
- HDC website; and
- disability sector networks.

D/deaf, disabled people/ people living with a disability and neurodiverse people from diverse backgrounds will be encouraged to apply.

Applicants will be requested to express their interest in being on the Group by addressing the selection criteria which will be articulated in the promotional material.

A group made up of the Chair of the Disability Working Group, at least one other member of the Group and at least one senior HDC employee will oversee and determine the process for selection. Where more suitable people have expressed an interest than seats available on the Group, a recruitment exercise will be undertaken. If the same number of suitable people express an interest as seats available, these individuals may be directly appointed to the Group.

In the setting up of the Disability Working Group, adjustments will be made to the recruitment arrangements to ensure access requirements are addressed.

8: Selection Criteria

An assessment of applicants' suitability will be undertaken against the following selection criteria:

- have demonstrated direct or transferable skills or experience in being part of a committee or advisory group;
- live, work or study in the HDC area;
- have a lived experience of disability whether personally or through a caring and support role; and
- demonstrated knowledge, experience or an interest in providing independent and/or strategic advice on disability access and inclusion issues that will support one or more of the focus areas of the strategy.

9: Meeting Administration and Protocols

The Group will be convened by its Chair or their nominee. The Council will provide administrative support including:

- scheduling meetings of the Group and provide virtual meeting links where appropriate
- compiling and circulating agenda and attachments to all members
- taking and distributing minutes
- coordinating other meeting arrangements and ensuring the accessibility of meeting procedure and materials

The Group will meet a minimum of four times a year on dates and at places to be set out in advance for each year. However, additional meetings can be called and must be advised at least 10 working days before the scheduled date.

Where applicable and advised by Group members, adjustments will be made for all members including adjustments around communications and correspondence and business, for example, a sign language interpreter, printed material in alternate formats, audio captioning services, water bowl for guide dogs, narrative information regarding design plans, PowerPoint presentations prior to meetings and/or any other requirements.

10: Reporting, Monitoring and Evaluation

Make, through the Chair, direct recommendations to Cabinet for implementation and approval of expenditure related to recommendations.

Activities of the Group will be reported 6 monthly to HDC.

A formal evaluation with the Group will take place in the last meeting of the year and reported to the Cabinet as part of updates on the Strategies or policies that affect the town.

11: Disputes

Where disputes within the Group occur, it will be the role of the Chair to seek resolution within the group. Where this is not possible, the involvement of the Council Lead for the Disability Working Group will engage with the Chair (and wider Group if appropriate) to determine the most appropriate resolution to the issue.

HDC reserves the right for the Council Lead for the Disability Working Group to follow the process laid out in section 12 of these Terms of Reference and move to dissolve the Group if they deem this is the most appropriate course of action.

12: Dissolution

If the Group becomes unable to meet these Terms of Reference or the Council Lead for the Group determines it is no longer fit for purpose, HDC reserves the right to dissolve this Disability Working Group. It may be replaced in an alternative format or may not be replaced at all.