

Creation of Disability Working Group



Report to:	Cabinet
Date:	13 June 2024
Portfolio Holder:	Councillor Dan Swords, Leader of Council
Lead Officer:	Yvonne Rees, Chief Executive (01279) 446004
Contributing Officer:	Natasha Terrell, Assistant Director Governance, HR & Legal (01279) 446022
Key Decision:	No
Forward Plan:	Forward Plan number I017058
Call In:	This item is subject to call in procedures.
Corporate Missions:	Protect our Communities Delivering High Performing Services
Wards Affected:	None

Executive Summary

- A** This report sets out the proposed terms of reference for the Disability Working Group following a motion at Full Council.

Recommended that Cabinet:

- A** Approves the establishment of a Disability Working Group and approves the Terms of Reference and membership as set out in Appendix A to the report.
- B** Approves the Councillors appointed to the Working Group.
- C** Grants the Leader delegated authority to appoint non-Councillor members to the Working Group in line with the terms of reference.

Reason for decision

- A** The Disability Working Group will provide a comprehensive and effective way for the views and experience of disabled people to influence and shape policy development in Harlow.
- B** Terms of reference are a requirement for the operation of the Working Group's report through to Cabinet.

Other Options

- A** To not agree the terms of reference. This would mean the council would not fulfil the requirements of the Full Council motion.

Background

1. The implementation of a new Disability Action Panel received cross party support at Full Council on 2 November 2023. The wording of the motion was:
 - a) This Council recognises that many disabled residents, their families, and carers believe that they do not have a voice and their opinion is often not heard. They are more used to having solutions to issues imposed upon them rather than as a result of consultation. Their lived experience and ideas for a better, more understanding and accessible Harlow should be at the heart of every relevant discussion and decision made by this Council.
 - b) To redress this historic failing, this Council confirms the creation of a new Disability Action Panel, which shall:
 - i) Have the purpose of giving disabled residents a voice and enable them to directly influence the way the Council responds to issues of concern to them;
 - ii) Be chaired by the Leader of the Council;
 - iii) Include cross-party councillors (no more than two from each party);
 - iv) Include, by invitation, representatives from charities and groups who work with disabled people and disabled residents. It shall also invite the MP for Harlow to attend meetings;
 - v) Be able to make, through the Chair, direct recommendations to Cabinet for implementation and approval of expenditure related to recommendations;

- vi) Be supported by appropriate officer support to ensure the Panel meets on at least a quarterly basis;
 - vii) Have its terms of reference discussed and confirmed at the first meeting of the Panel and ratified by Full Council in the scheduled December meeting of Full Council;
 - viii) Be established and first meet within the month of November;
 - ix) Be non-partisan in its recommendations and activities. Any actions taken as a result of such recommendations shall always be reported and presented in a non-partisan manner.
2. Residents were invited to attend the first ever meeting of the Disability Working Group on 8 February 2024.
 3. It was agreed that terms of reference were a requirement of the operation of the panel, discussion points raised at the first meeting included the need to ensure that roles on the panel were defined so it could work closely and collaboratively with disabled residents/residents living with a disability and disability stakeholders.

Issues/Proposals

4. The terms of reference (attached as Appendix A to the report) have been developed to ensure the following aims have been met:
 - a) Providing strategic, expert and impartial advice to the Council on the development, implementation, monitoring and review of policy and policy development and associated action plan(s) or initiatives.
 - b) Championing the needs of Harlow residents with a disability / disability stakeholders and carers of disabled residents and ensure their voices are considered in the shaping of policy or service provision in key areas of council policy.
 - c) Highlight specific issues across the town which disabled residents/ residents with a disability/ carers of disabled residents face across the town for consideration.
 - d) Support the Council to meet their Public Sector Equality Duty, by prioritising accessibility when the Council considers developing or changing a policy, project or service or to support responding to relevant documents and initiatives from other organisations that require consideration by the panel.
5. It is important to have Group members who are people with lived experience of disability whether personally or through a caring and support role.

6. The Group shall consist of a maximum of 12 members:
- a) Four Councillors – two Councillors from both the Administration (one of which will be the Leader) and Opposition groups. The Leader will Chair the Group.
 - b) Two independent volunteers who are D/deaf, disabled people/ people living with a disability or neurodiverse people.
 - c) 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:
 - i) 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;
 - ii) an organisation with a focus on working with children and young disabled people/ people living with a disability;
 - iii) an organisation with a focus on working with people with a learning or neuro-difference;
 - iv) An organisation with a focus on sensory impairment or long term, limiting condition;
 - v) An organisation with a focus on mental health;
 - vi) An organisation with a focus on non-visible disabilities.
7. A list of Group members shall be posted on the Council's website.

Implications

Equalities and Diversity

An Equality Impact Assessment was required and has been completed - E619833118 refers.

Climate Change

None.

Finance

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. Resources to support the Disability Working Group are included within the Medium-Term Financial Plan.

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Governance

Per Article 9 of the Constitution Cabinet may appoint Working Groups.
Author: Julie Galvin, Monitoring Officer and Legal Services Manager

Appendices

Appendix A – Disability Working Group – Terms of Reference including Membership Working Group

Appendix B – Equality Impact Assessment - E619833118

Background Papers

<https://modern.gov.harlow.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=123&MId=2577&Ver=4>
<https://www.harlow.gov.uk/news/help-shape-harlows-disability-action-panel>

Glossary of terms/abbreviations used

None