

Meeting:	Cabinet
Date:	15 May 2008
Subject:	Local Involvement Networks (LINKs)
Key Decision:	Yes
Responsible Officer:	Tom Whiting Divisional Director of Strategy and Improvement
Portfolio Holder:	Performance, Communication and Corporate Services (to be confirmed at Annual Council on 8 May 2008)
Exempt:	No
Enclosures:	LINK consultation processes

## Section 1 – Summary and Recommendations

The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act became law in October 2007. The Act requires the establishment of a Local Involvement Network (LINK) in each local area, including one in Harrow. This report outlines the local arrangements proposed for providing LINKs.

### Recommendations:

Cabinet is requested to:

1. Note the proposals for LINKs nationally
2. Note the local progress made to set up LINKs in Harrow
3. Agree that a contract be awarded for a three year period to commence on 2 June 2008 at a cost within the funding for LINKs provided by the Department of Health. To authorise the Deputy Chief Executive to award the contract.
4. Agree to retain 10% of the Department Of Health Grant to fund the additional Council responsibilities associated with LINKs.

### Reason: (For recommendation)

To ensure the Council meets its duty to tender for a contract with a 'host organisation' which will be commissioned to set up and support the Link.

## Section 2 – Report

### Introduction

2.1 In October 2007, the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Bill introduced Local Involvement Networks (LINKs). LINKs will replace Patient and Public Involvement Forums (PPIF) from April 2008.

2.2 LINKs are intended to be wide networks of voluntary and community groups and interested individuals who will represent the views of patients and the public on health and social care issues. The key differences of LINKs from PPIFs are:

- LINKs will have a much larger and wider membership, including groups as well as individuals.
- LINKs will have a remit to look at social care as well as health issues and powers to make recommendations to Adults and Housing Services, Children's Services, PCT and NHS Trusts.
- LINKs will determine their own structure and ways of working, tailored to local circumstances and needs, within basic governance requirements set out nationally

2.3 All local authorities with social services responsibilities are required to make arrangements for LINKs.

2.4 LINKs are supported by what is called a Host organisation, which will be contracted for a period of three years to establish, maintain and provide ongoing support to the LINK.

2.5 In order to establish LINKs across the country, the Department of Health has allocated funding to the local authority for each area. During 2007/08 all Councils received £10,000 to cover the cost of procurement and transitional arrangements.

2.6 Local authorities who do not succeed in appointing a host by 1 April 2008 are required to have transitional arrangements in place. Transitional arrangements are in place in Harrow.

2.7 Ongoing funding for the LINKs will be provided by the Department of Health. For Harrow, the grant is £138,000 in 08/09, 2009/10 and 2010/11 and will be paid through the Area Based Grant arrangements.

2.8 In the course of consultations on setting up LINKs arrangements locally, it has been proposed that 10% of the grant should be retained by Harrow Council to ensure that the additional council responsibilities are resourced.

2.9 The funding will contain four elements:

- Host organisation support function costs
- LINK expenditure
- Harrow Council's contract management costs

- Harrow Council's responsibility to respond to requests and reports from the LINK

2.10 The Host will be accountable to the local authority for its support costs.

2.11 The Council's role, as defined in the Department of Health guidance 'Getting Ready for LINKs: Planning your local involvement network', is to:

- Ensure arrangements are made to procure a Host organisation to provide support to the LINK - initially for 3 years.
- Performance manage the Host against their contract on at least a quarterly basis.
- Work with the LINK and share information where necessary to gather views and experiences of Harrow residents about local health and care services

2.12 The role of Overview and Scrutiny, as defined in the Department of Health Guidance 'Getting Ready for Links: Planning your local involvement network' and 'A stronger local voice', is to:

- Scrutinise how the contracting process was undertaken and ensure best value is achieved.
- Commission the LINK to undertake work on its behalf such as gathering views on a particular issue.
- Respond to referrals from the LINK within 20 working days of receipt and decide whether the service detailed in the referral should be subject to review. It is expected that acknowledgement would suffice during the 20-day period.

These requirements will be built into the Overview and Scrutiny work programme

## **Consultation and Procurement**

2.13 A briefing paper was produced by Scrutiny in August 2007 and presented to the scrutiny lead members for health and social care, raising the awareness of LINKs.

2.14 Stakeholder consultation events took place between December 2007 and February 2008, and a report of the consultation processes and outcomes is appended.

2.15 The procurement process has been underway since February 2008. Advertisements were placed in the Harrow Times and Harrow Observer and two website Regen.Com and Care and Health

2.16 18 organisations requested a Pre Qualification Questionnaire (PQQ), 8 organisations submitted a completed Pre-Qualification Questionnaire.

2.17 4 organisations have been invited to be interviewed by an evaluation panel made up of Councillors, officers and voluntary and community sector representatives.

## **Current Situation**

2.18 The second stage of the tendering process is underway with the evaluation panel timetabled to meet between the 8 May and 14 May 2008.

2.19 The contract will be awarded ten days after the unsuccessful bidders are notified.

2.20 Transitional arrangements will be in place until the Host organisation has been appointed.

## **Implications of the Recommendation**

2.21 The LINK will make a positive contribution to the Council's corporate priorities 'Improving the well-being of adults and children and the care of those who most need help' and 'Improving the way we work for our residents'.

## **Financial Implications**

2.23 There are no financial implications for the Council.

## **Performance Issues**

2.24 The arrangements for performance managing the contract with the appointed host organisation provide for detailed activity reports to be submitted against targets and contractual obligations and will enable the Council to ensure that the host organisation fulfils the expectations raised through consultation and envisaged in the legislation.

2.25 In addition, the LINK will contribute to the at least two of the new National Indicators which are measured by surveys of perception. The National Indicator set includes questions relating to "Civic participation in the local area" and "the percentage of people who feel that they can influence decisions in their locality". While these appear to be similar to questions asked in the Council's current Quality of Life Survey, they are not the same and will not be measured in the same way.

2.26 Performance against the Quality of Life questions has been:

"I get involved in decisions affecting my area" – 21% agreement in 2007/08; 18% agreement in 2007/07 and 18% agreement in 2005/06. These differences are generally too small to be statistically significant. Although this is a very different question to that proposed for the Place Survey, it is the nearest equivalent from the Quality of Life Survey. There is no comparator data available from other local authorities. However, the levels of agreement appear high compared with the turnout at the last local election (41.38%) with more than half of the electorate that voted feeling that they are involved in decisions affecting their local area.

"I feel that I personally can influence decisions of public bodies locally – 14% agreement in 2007/08; 13% agreement in 2006/07 and 19% agreement in 2005/06. These differences are generally too small to be significant. There is no comparator data available to assess these results against other local

authorities. However, it is not unreasonable to consider that these are fairly high levels of agreement with the proposition.

### **Section 3 - Statutory Officer Clearance**

<b>Name:</b> Sheela Thakrar.....	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the Chief Financial Officer
<b>Date:</b> 15 April 2008.....		
<b>Name:</b> Helen White.....	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the Monitoring Officer
<b>Date:</b> 30 April 2008.....		

### **Section 4 – Performance Officer Clearance**

<b>Name:</b> Tom Whiting.....	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Divisional Director (Strategy and Improvement)
<b>Date:</b> 21 April 2008.....		

### **Section 5 - Contact Details and Background Papers**

Contact: Desiree Mahoney (ext 2390)

Background Papers:  
LINKs consultation processes