

REPORT TO CABINET

Open		Would any decisions proposed :		
Any especially affected Wards	Mandatory/	(a) Be entirely within cabinet's powers to decide NO		
	Discretionary/	(b) Need to be recommendations to Council YES		
	Operational	(c) Be partly for recommendations to Council NO and partly within Cabinets powers –		
Lead Member: Councillor Adrian Lawrence E-mail: cllr.adrian.lawrence@west-norfolk.gov.uk		Other Cabinet Members consulted:		
		Other Members consulted: The Environment and Community Panel and Members of the Informal Working Group		
Lead Officer: Sam Winter E-mail: sam.winter@west-norfolk.gov.uk		Other Officers consulted:		
Financial Implications YES	Policy/Personnel Implications NO	Statutory Implications NO	Equal Impact Assessment Pre-screening/ Full Assessment YES	Risk Management Implications NO

Date of meeting: 6th September 2017

WEST NORFOLK DISABILITY FORUM

Summary

This report presents recommendations from the Environment and Community Panel on the future operation of the West Norfolk Disability Forum.

Recommendations

1. That Council disband the West Norfolk Disability Forum.

That Cabinet give consideration to :

2. Appointing a Disabilities/Equalities Champion.
3. To note that the Environment and Community Panel is requesting the opportunity to look at the Borough Council's Equality Policy which is due for review.
4. To note that the Environment and Community Panel will request an update on the Equalities Policy on an annual basis.
5. That ways to promote Equality on the Corporate Agenda be investigated.
6. That a page be created on the website to promote the Equalities and Disabilities Champion. An e-form to be created so that Members of the public can report issues direct to the Champion.
7. Extend access to the Disability Awareness e-learning package currently available for staff to Elected Members, funded from the Member Development budget.
8. That the Disabilities Champion be encouraged to hold open forums with members of the public as required.
9. The Disabilities Champion to report to the Environment and Community Panel on an annual basis.
10. That the Opportunity Awards and other events hosted by the Forum be incorporated into other events already organised by the Borough Council.

Reason for Decision

To address concerns from Members of the West Norfolk Disability Forum that the Forum is not productive in its current format and no longer delivered its objectives as set out in its Constitution. The Environment and Community Panel feel that the recommendations will result in an improvement in service.

Background

1. On 15th March 2017, the Environment and Community Panel received a report on the work of the West Norfolk Disability Forum. Concerns were raised about the effectiveness of the Forum and the Panel decided to set up an Informal Working Group to look at the future operation of the Forum. The Informal Working Group presented their recommendations to the Environment and Community Panel on 4th July 2017.
2. Feedback from Members who sit on the West Norfolk Disability Forum included concerns that the Forum was not productive in its current format, the size of the forum, lack of attendance at meetings, managing expectations of external attendees and that the Forum had become a 'talking shop' and no longer delivered its objectives, as set out in its Constitution.
3. The Environment and Community Panel recommend to Cabinet that the West Norfolk Disability Forum be disbanded. The Panel recommend the above alternative ways of working so that Members of the public continue to have a route to report any issues within the Borough Council's control.
4. The Environment and Community Panel agreed with the findings of the Informal Working Group that a lot of the information available at Forum meetings was now available in other formats and members of the public could input into issues by other means, such as public consultation exercises, information in the media and online.
5. The Environment and Community Panel also felt that queries and issues from members of the public and external bodies could be addressed quicker through a Disabilities/Equalities Champion or by individuals contacting the relevant organisations direct, rather than waiting for a meeting of the West Norfolk Disability Forum to raise their concerns.
6. The Environment and Community Panel recommend that the Disabilities/Equalities Champion could hold public forums as and when necessary so that members of the public could raise issues and concerns. The Champion can then report on their work annually at meetings of the Environment and Community Panel.
7. The Disabilities/Equalities Champion could investigate ways to engage with members of the public who do not have access to the internet. Engagement could be carried out by attending meetings of other organisations and promotion via Parish Magazines, press releases or public forums.
8. For information, in 2016/2017, three meetings of the West Norfolk Disability Forum had been held. Details of attendance at these meetings are set out

below. Agendas and Minutes for the meetings are available on the Borough Council's website. Agendas for the meeting are sent to 45 external recipients via email and 30 hard copies are posted out to external organisations/individuals.

Date of Meeting	Number of external attendees	Number of Councillor attendees	Number of Officer attendees
20 th July 2016	12	5	3
25 th January 2017	11	5	2
18 th April 2017	6	2	3

9. The West Norfolk Disability Forum held their Annual General Meeting on 19th July 2017. Four Councillors and four external attendees were present at the meeting. The Forum had also received copies of the Environment and Community Panel report in advance of the annual general meeting.

10. No objections were received from Members of the Forum to the recommendations which were supported by the Environment and Community Panel, but they stressed that it would be important to have a point of contact for members of the public and that annual Forums or surgeries held by the Disabilities/Equalities Champion would be useful.

Policy Implications

None

Financial Implications

Small savings to be achieved from not holding regular Forum meetings, including Members expenses, officer time and room hire.

Staffing Implications

Officer time attending meetings and associated administrative work.

Statutory Considerations

None

Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

Pre-screening assessment attached.

Background Papers

Minutes from the West Norfolk Disability Forum – available on the Borough Council's website
 Minutes from the Informal Working Group and Environment and Community Panel
 West Norfolk Disability Forum Constitution



**Pre-Screening Equality Impact
Assessment**

Name of policy/service/function	Operation of the West Norfolk Disability Forum				
Is this a new or existing policy/ service/function?	Existing				
Brief summary/description of the main aims of the policy/service/function being screened. Please state if this policy/service rigidly constrained by statutory obligations	To disband the West Norfolk Disability Forum and appoint a Disabilities/Equalities Champion.				
Question	Answer				
<p>1. Is there any reason to believe that the policy/service/function could have a specific impact on people from one or more of the following groups according to their different protected characteristic, for example, because they have particular needs, experiences, issues or priorities or in terms of ability to access the service?</p> <p>Please tick the relevant box for each group.</p> <p>NB. Equality neutral means no negative impact on any group.</p>		Positive	Negative	Neutral	Unsure
	Age			x	
	Disability			x	
	Gender			x	
	Gender Re-assignment			x	
	Marriage/civil partnership			x	
	Pregnancy & maternity			x	
	Race			x	
	Religion or belief			x	
	Sexual orientation			x	
	Other (eg low income)			x	
Question	Answer	Comments			
2. Is the proposed policy/service likely to affect relations between certain equality communities or to damage relations between the equality communities and the Council, for example because it is seen as favouring a particular community or denying opportunities to another?	Yes/ No				
3. Could this policy/service be perceived as impacting on communities differently?	Yes/ No				
4. Is the policy/service specifically designed to tackle evidence of disadvantage or potential discrimination?	Yes/ No				
<p>5. Are any impacts identified above minor and if so, can these be eliminated or reduced by minor actions? If yes, please agree actions with a member of the Corporate Equalities Working Group and list agreed actions in the comments section</p>	Yes/ No	Actions:			
		Actions agreed by EWG member:			
Assessment completed by: Name Allison Bingham					
Job title Building Technician	Date 27th July 2017				

Please Note: If there are any positive or negative impacts identified in question 1, or there any 'yes' responses to questions 2 – 4 a full impact assessment will be required.