

WANDSWORTH LINK RESOURCES & GOVERNANCE SUB GROUP

Summary of the meeting of the Resources & Governance Sub Group (R&G Group) on Wednesday 15 October from 2 to 4 pm at WCA offices. All members of the Group were present.

Recommendations to the Interim Executive are in bold type and repeated at the end of the paper.

1. MEMBERSHIP, MEETING FREQUENCY AND PAPERS

R&G is a small group with wide ranging terms of reference but the Group thought the small membership has some advantages.

Barbara Willerton (in the Chair) - also on Chairs' Group and Primary H&SC Group
Del Hosain – also Secondary H&SC
Kurt Schwarz – also Secondary H&SC
Val Moore – MAC representing the Host and providing administrative support and policy resource

The Chair of the IE would be an ex officio member of any sub group set up the IE and so Stefan Kuchur should be added to the membership list although he is unlikely to attend every meeting.

It was suggested that as the Communications & Participation Sub Group are likely to be making substantial demands on the LINK budget that a member of their Group should also be a member of the R&G Group. However the R&G Group decided to stay the same size for now.

It was noted that other WCA Staff and MAC consultants can be called upon to assist the Group and further expert advice could be available from LINK members and other individuals or organisations who have interests in common with LINK.

R&G do not think all Sub Group papers should be circulated to all IE members as a matter of course but only if there is a specific need.

2. TERMS OF REFERENCE

The following are the outline points made in the Sub Group paper B4 which went to the IE in September. They are not necessarily in an order of priority or practicality:

- Responsible for financial and funding matters
- Responsible for budgetary control and in particular reporting on the Disbursement Budget
- Concerned with formal relations with the Host and funders ie the Council and the PCT
- Responsible for liaison with Host on use of in house staff and consultancy services
- Oversight of expenses claims
- Oversight for conduct and governance matters including declaration of interests and monitoring and audit matters;
- Responsible for proposing and implementing membership and election procedures
- Oversight of use of IT and data protection matters

- Oversight of LINK reporting to Secretary of state and other regulators as laid down by statute for LINKs and in line with best practice for public bodies.

The R&G agreed that they did not wish to accept responsibility for the two last items.

2.1. IT Resources

With regard to IT Resources, the R&G Group believes that this responsibility should remain with the Host, with implications for expenditure coming to the R&G for consideration and going on to the IE for approval. The R& G recommends this change to the IE.

The R&G Group also hoped the Host would look further into ways of helping LINK IE members and the wider LINK Membership to use IT resources. Also the use of other technology such as telephone conferencing should be encouraged as an alternative means of communication.

2.2. Relations and reporting

The Chairs Group recommended that the R&G takes responsibility for Relations and reporting to LINK Host, Council and WPCT as funders, the Borough OSC Committees, the Secretary of State and any other regulators such as the Healthcare Commission and the Commission for Social Care Inspection as laid down by statute for LINKs and in line with best practice for public bodies.

Bearing in mind the major governance implications, R&G believes this responsibility should remain with the full IE or be delegated to the Chairs' Group if there are impossible time pressures. R& G recommends this change to the IE.

3. RESOURCES

3.1. Financial Resources

Due to shortage of time between meetings and staff holidays, Jason has not been able to provide an update on the financial resources and staffing resources available to LINK.

Where use of the Disbursement budget is concerned, the R&G Group are responsible for its appropriate use and for budgeting through the year. However the R&G Group are unlikely to be the forum for decisions about the content of the work to be carried out. For this reason it is important the R&G Group membership includes members of the Primary and Secondary H&SC Groups as it does at the present time.

R& G recommend that at each meeting the R&G as well as the IE receive an updated report from Host regarding the funding allocated to LINK by central government, Wandsworth Council and the PCT as well as any other sources. The report will need to provide budgeting information and financial management data for all funds spent under the auspices of Wandsworth LINK whether by the Host and from the LINK Disbursement budget.

3.2. Staff and consultant resources

LINK has the practical and expert support of WCA in its role as Host and although WCA staff are not directly accountable to the LINK or its Executive, their main interest is to develop and support LINKs and help it fulfil the programme of activities agreed by the Executive Committee who are elected by a public meeting of LINK members. As agreed in the contract with Wandsworth Council, WCA are using the consultancy services of the Moore Adamson Craig Partnership as an additional and complimentary resource to their own staff team. It was noted that the decision to use MAC rests with WCA when their fees are paid from the Host budget. However the decision to use MAC rests with the LINK Executive when their fees are paid from the LINK Disbursement budget.

R& G agreed that at all times the use of consultancy services should be based on sound principles of value for money and best resources available.

R&G would like a paper from WCA explaining the WCA Host role, the membership and roles of the WCA staff team and the MAC consultant resources available to LINK.

3.3. Policy and information resources

In addition to calling upon the expertise and advice of WCA and MAC, LINK can seek information, advice, policy guidance and back ground research from a very large number of individuals and organisations in the Borough and beyond. The Council at all levels, the WPCT and its London wide and regional links can all be sources of information to LINKs.

It was noted that R&G Group would be expected to consider any issues relating to paying for information, sharing information on a reciprocal basis or conflict of interest.

3.4. Reimbursement of expenses, reward and recognition

R& G noted and endorsed existing policy and forms for expenses and were content for no changes to be made until a full Executive was elected. It was noted that present policy means that no-one apart from IE members or LINK members carrying out a function specifically on behalf of the IE can claim expenses or recompense for time spent on LINK activities. It was noted that this cautious approach would not create any undue budgetary problems.

However, the R&G felt it would be prudent to begin to consider a wider LINK policy for reward and recognition. Some concern has been expressed that LINK should operate in line with Council and DofH policy about paying for the time of expert/lay people who contribute to the work of LINK. Adopting this kind of policy would have budgetary implications as sufficient money must be available in practice to meet payments that are approved in principle.

The R& G recommend that Host should be asked to prepare a report for the R&G recommending policy based on current best practice with particular reference to the Council and the PCT so the R&G can make recommendations to the IE or Executive Committee for final decisions.

4. GOVERNANCE

The R&G expressed concern that every LINK in the country has to invent the wheel on visiting and conduct and many other aspects of governance and for this reason Wandsworth LINK should not think we are behind in fact we are ahead of most LAs.

4.1. Code of conduct – including specific papers already agreed by IE

Although the R&G did not have time to read the paper in advance of their meeting, they went through it in some detail and noted the position with regard to a code of conduct for LINKs as described by Andrew Craig. The R&G noted that Wandsworth LINK have already agreed many of the policies required including declaration of interests, attendance at meetings, standing orders and recognition and reward. It was noted that together with the seven Nolan principles of public life, the existing policies only need the final addition of a policy paper on Enter and View (see separate item).

R& G noted the paper and agreed it in principle however individual members may wish to say more at the IE meeting.

4.2. Enter & View policy and procedures

It was noted that this area of work was a statutory LINK responsibility and should not be called inspection.

Although the R&G did not have time to read the paper in advance of their meeting, they went through it in some detail and noted the DoH guidance on Enter and View for LINKs and the differences between this new guidance and the previous inspections carried out by PPI forums.

The R&G noted that the Primary and Secondary H&S Care sub groups should be responsible for the content of the visits and for follow up on the outcomes. Whilst it is appropriate for the R&G Group to advise the IE on policy and procedures for Enter and View as part of its governance role, it is recommended that the IE ask the Host to manage training, authorisation, programme of visits, liaison with sites and preparation of reports.

4.3. IE meetings in public – procedures and usual practice

The R&G recognise that public participation and openness takes time and means Committees have to work more slowly however democracy is more important than speed.

R&G noted and endorsed the general procedure and supported any efforts to make ordinary LINK members feel more welcome and help them to understand how they can contribute. The R&G also support any steps that can be taken to help LINK members access paperwork for the meetings and understand the issues under discussion.

4.3. Public meetings – general procedures

R& G wished to stress the importance LINK beginning to explain more widely the purpose of LINK and what is happening in Wandsworth. By the December public meeting, LINK IE must be ready to report back in some detail to its membership and the public at large about what has been done and what is planned for next year.

The R&G group note and endorse the general proposals for holding public LINK meetings. The R&G Group agreed to prepare a report for the December public meeting covering its areas of responsibility and asked the Host to draft this report.

4.4. Nomination to and Election of LINK Executive Committee

The R&G Group noted the papers prepared by Valerie Moore based on original proposals for nominations and elections to the Interim Executive for the June 2008 Public Meeting with appropriate amendments to dates of public meeting, membership and nomination deadlines and length of appointment appropriate to the election of the full Executive at the LINK public meeting on 19 January 2009.

The R&G agreed that although proxy votes are acceptable, no provision has been made for postal votes as this would mean bringing forward the voting deadline which would clash with the Christmas/New Year holiday period.

R&G agreed with all the recommendations in the papers and also agreed that the appointment of all Executive members should be for 3 years. The R&G was particularly keen that the an election should take place at the January public meeting to ensure that no more than 12 people were elected on to the Executive Committee. However it was noted that other LINK members can be co-opted for specific purposes.

5. Other business

Although R&G were not sure if it came within their remit, they were concerned that Independent Living and other aspects of Disability representation was no longer funded by the Council and wanted the LINK IE to consider what could be done to help this section of the community, if only as a bridging action.

VM/JBW 19 October 2008