

Appendices

A democratic
and open
Lewisham



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Appendix A – Engagement with expert organisations

The Local Democracy Review has engaged with a wide range of expert organisations as part of its work.

Informal Exploratory Discussions

- National Endowment for Science Technology and the Arts (Nesta) – telephone call on 24th October
- Local Government Information Unit (LGiU) – telephone call on 24th October
- Democratic Society – telephone call on 31st October
- Local Government Association (LGA) – telephone call on 31st October
- Kirklees Council – telephone call on 7th November
- Local Governance Research Unit, De Montfort University (Professor Colin Copus) – telephone call on 7th November
- FutureGov – telephone call on 7th November
- Goldsmiths, University of London (Dr Simon Griffiths) – telephone call on 9th November
- Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS) – telephone call on 16th November
- Lord Kerslake (President of the LGA) – meeting on 29th November

Facilitated Sessions

The Local Democracy Review Working Group also took part in two half-day workshops (held on 30th January 2019 and 6th February 2019) which were facilitated by LGiU and Kirklees Council respectively. The purpose of these workshops was to review all the evidence gathered in order to inform the development of the final report and recommendations. In addition, the Working Group held a roundtable discussion with the Mayor of Hackney and senior officers from Hackney Council on 5th March 2019, which focused on the key review themes (openness & transparency, public involvement in decision-making and effective decision-making) as well as insights as to the approach and challenges faced by Hackney.

Expert Evidence

Nesta provided the review with a written submission regarding current approaches to digital democracy in January 2019 (Appendix I). In order to set the Democracy Review recommendations in a wider academic context, Professor Colin Copus from the Local Governance Research Unit at De Montfort University was commissioned to undertake a literature review (Appendix B) and Dr Simon Griffiths from Goldsmiths, University of London gave evidence to the review in person (summarised at Appendix J).

Appendix B – Literature Review (Professor Colin Copus, Director Of The Local Governance Research Unit, DeMontfort University)

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Not to be cited without the author's permission.

March 2019

Executive Summary of the Literature

1. Enhancing public engagement and participation depends for its success on the commitment of any council undertaking such an approach to decision-making
2. Resources and organisational and administrative support are required on an ongoing basis to ensure the effectiveness of any method of public engagement
3. Any system or approach to enhanced public engagement must be seen to be legitimate by councillors
4. In current structures of local government effective public participation is achieved through employing approaches and techniques that are congruent with and supplementary to contemporary forms of local representative democracy
5. Effective and enhanced public engagement and participation which leads to improved decision-making can challenge current patterns of political behaviour, especially the primacy of the political party group. Councillors and officers must be prepared for that challenge and to respond positively to it
6. A range of mechanisms exist for citizen participation, such as citizens' panels and juries, but these are often used to inform council decisions rather than transform the nature of local democracy
7. The complexity of contemporary policy problems experienced in local government requires a good mix of participatory mechanisms and methods to draw out the expertise and experiences within communities that can inform policy and decision-making
8. Local Government has long experienced pressure from central government to engage more with local citizens and to provide participatory opportunities and such pressure was particularly acute under the Blair government and the modernising agenda
9. Many central government attempts to structure how local government should enhance citizen participation often misunderstand the nature of local politics and the relationships between local government and citizen and communities.
10. Councils need to create their own approaches and policies towards public engagement that suit local circumstances, rather than be directed into certain approaches by central government
11. There is a danger in any attempt to enhance citizen participation of failing to respond or inadequate responses to issues that arise from communities which simply serve to increase alienation and distance

12. A choice exists for all councils between improving consultation to inform policy-making and a more radical approach to sharing decision-making and deliberative space with citizens and communities
13. Communities are not homogenised units and greater engagement and deliberation will expose differences of opinion and attitude towards particular policy problems. Councils must arbitrate between those views to forge a more consensual approach, rather than take sides
14. If the aim of a council is to empower citizens and communities then that requires that decisions are shared and developed with those communities through a range of practices and approaches before any final decision is taken
15. Ensuring that there is a culture of participation and engagement across all policy domains and departments of the council is a vital ingredient to ensuring effective engagement
16. Local self-identifying neighbourhoods provide a solid base for engagement and participation and the council should be structured to be able to support such communities in identifying problems, developing solutions and taking action within their neighbourhoods
17. Many communities will look to physical and environmental improvements in their areas as a priority to create clean, green and safe urban space and environments.
18. Councils can work with communities to facilitate and support local projects (see 17 above) to develop community capacity, social capital, community cohesion and stronger feelings of neighbourliness
19. Local action by citizens and communities can be fed into a wider policy and decision-making process and used to stimulate greater public engagement
20. Councils need to identify active local citizens and work with them to develop further engagement
21. Successful engagement, leading to improved decision-making rests on links between councils and individual citizens, communities, organised and unorganised groups to stimulate local activity and wider political engagement
22. A strong and vibrant citizenry and set of local communities enhances the quality of local democracy and the quality of local life but will only be successful with political and resource support and a commitment by the council to either using a set of mechanisms to enhance engagement or to a more fundamental change in local democracy and local government which is based on sharing decision-making with citizens and empowering local communities
23. An important decision for any council is to choose which approach (22 above) they are most comfortable with undertaking and then develop a strategic approach to working with citizens and communities and particularly reaching beyond existing networks of citizens and communities to embed that approach in council decision-making

1. Introduction

The purpose of the report is to review the literature relevant to Lewisham Council's Democracy Commission and its investigation into public participation and engagement with the council. The report highlights ways in which the council could strengthen public engagement so as to promote effective decision-making. The report draws on a range of international literature to set out how best to employ the results of research in the field of contemporary public engagement to strengthen local democracy in Lewisham.

While the review conducted for the report does not address specific questions set by the commission the themes that emerge, the pertinent factors identified and the issues explored in the literature on public consultation and engagement, in an international context, provide material of relevance to the commission's inquiry. The literature explores a range of issues related to enhancing and improving public participation and engagement with local government rather than addressing specifically the three main areas of focus for the commission, which are:

- Open and transparent decision-making
- Public participation in decision-making
- Effective decision-making

These concepts are not necessarily linked in literature or in practice and so to provide a sharp focus to the review of the literature attention has centred on material which examines the relationship between public engagement and participation and improvements in local decision-making and the quality of local democracy. Otherwise three separate reviews of three separate areas of literature would be required as each area bullet pointed above is often treated separately in the literature and varying amounts of research therefore exists across the issues of transparency and openness, public participation and effective decision-making and that is reflected in the structure of the report.

To provide a review of value to the commission the report assesses which literature, whatever its focus, best addresses the broad concerns and issues around transparency, public participation and effective decision-making. It does this to draw the links between the three areas and to explore the factors which stimulate and those which hinder the development of a healthy local democracy and relationships between citizen and councils.

The review quickly identified a wealth of material of relevance to the general issues around how to promote effective citizen engagement and how to sustain that engagement over time and a systematic approach was taken to assessing which literature was most appropriate for addressing the three issues that are the focus of the commission's inquiry. The next section briefly sets out the methodology employed in producing the report. The third section looks at the important role of councillors and their attitudes towards enhanced citizen engagement. The fourth section examines the mechanisms and process available for citizen engagement. The conclusion draws out the main findings of relevance to the commission's inquiry into enhancing citizen engagement with Lewisham Council. The report does not include quotes and comments from all the material reviewed in order to keep the document as concise as possible. Rather, exemplar quotes and comments are produced from material which is itself indicative of the general thrust of the findings of the literature and its relevance to the three main areas of focus for the commission.

2. Methodology

The report results from a systematic literature review of the relevant literature on public

participation and engagement with local government. A systematic literature review approach was employed in order to establish the best understanding of the available evidence base. In turn it provides a framework within which decisions about the appropriateness and value of any literature or literature source, to any given set of questions or purpose, can be made. Systematic review methodology is particularly useful where the data is contested, extensive and produced by a variety of sources and therefore is most appropriate to the inquiry by Lewisham Council into effective public engagement and effective decision-making. The systematic review process involves:

1. Establishing a set of questions to be answered
2. Identifying and summarising all relevant literature appropriate to those questions
3. Assessing the quality and value of each item of literature and on this basis filtering out those of poor quality or with low relevance
4. Putting the accepted studies, research and findings in context
5. Drawing conclusions in terms of the original questions or areas of exploration

The systematic review enables an assessment to be made of the generalisability of the material and where material is assessed as not being generalisable the appropriateness of its evidence can however, be analysed. The literature that the review explored has been assessed for its validity, that is its: success in measuring the issue, case or concept that formed the study; and, for its reliability, that is: the likelihood that when repeated, the research would produce the same results.

The stages of a systematic literature review allow for an assessment of how far literature addresses and responds to not only the very specific questions set by an external sources, but also to what extent literature and research is relevant to, and concerns, a broader set of questions and issues.

Such an approach is particularly relevant to the context of the Lewisham review as the inquiry has specific areas of concern and interest which are linked to each other but also set in the broader context of enhancing citizen participation and engagement more generally and therefore can benefit from a range of wider studies in that field.

Such a framework approach is a valuable tool for assessing literature that addresses a range of questions and topics – academic and practical – that are related to but does not address a set of specific questions from a specific source - such as the Commission, in this case. Thus, it allows the reviewers to draw on a wide range of material and therefore to expand on what would otherwise be an unduly restricted source of reference.

In addition, the review also employed the following approaches:

- Contact with international networks of local government researchers and academics based in overseas universities to assess the existence and findings of contemporary studies
- Following-up citations and references from material identified in the review and references received from experts referred to in the bullet point above
- Key-word internet search

The next section sets out the main findings of the review.

3. Enhancing Citizen Engagement in Local Government

Attempts to assess the efficacy of public participation and political protest have taken into account whether those conducting action, of one sort or another, believe their actions to be effective in influencing political decisions (Almond and Verba, 1963). Indeed, Young (1985) describes political efficacy as 'people's expectations of being able to wield effective

political influence'. Approaching efficacy from the perspective of the powerless, or rather those less powerful than holders of political office, has the potential to distort our understanding of the political processes. Such distortion occurs because those attempting to influence representatives may view the effectiveness of political action very differently to the representatives themselves. Moreover, councillors, as holders of political office, have views about participative and engagement activities and the participatory techniques available to citizens, which concern issues of legitimacy. As a consequence, councillors will respond differently to those activities seen to be more, or less legitimate.

Councillors are more likely to respond to public participation conducted in ways seen as congruent with the principles of representative democracy, as they experience and understand it, and congruent with the role of political parties within representative democracy (Mabileau et al, 1989, Game and Leach, 1995, Copus, 2004, Leach, 2006, Egner, et al, 2013). What we see in a range of research project findings on public participation is that it can only be effective if councillors operate in a culture which accepts public engagement as a legitimate part of the decision-making process. Moreover, councillors need to be prepared to share deliberative and decision-making space with the public and, in some cases, devolve decision-making to the public (Sintomer et al, 2007, Medina, 2007, Vetter, et al, 2016, Graham and Wales 2018).

Bohman and Rehg (1997: ix) pose a question of interest to all councillors and indeed all elected officials:

Given the complex issues that confront contemporary societies, is an intelligent, broad-based participation possible? In societies as culturally diverse as our own, is it reasonable to expect deliberating citizens to converge on rational solutions to political problems? Does deliberation actually overcome or only exacerbate the more undesirable features of majority rule?

In the practices of decision-making in local government, the 'majority rule' referred to by Bohman and Rehg can be set in the context of the party politicised nature of local government and the party group system.

Councillors can be seen as 'governors, representatives, or delegates' as well as advocates of the communities they represent (Karlsson, 2013). They are rooted in their communities and are charged with pursuing local interests and concerns and with articulating community opinion to the council from an increasingly assertive community (Batley, 1972, Lambert et al, 1978, Glassberg, 1981, Parkinson, 1985, Parry, et al, 1992, Heinelt, 2013, Lidstrom et al, 2016). As a consequence of the group system, councillors are more and more likely to find themselves faced with the prospect of pursuing a course of action which places them in conflict with the decisions or perceived interest, of their own political party group. The success of public engagement in council decision-making rests on recognising the salience and resilience of the political party group in local political decision-making. Moreover, of equal importance to the success and effectiveness of public participation are the attitudes that councillors hold about political representation, their role as a representative and about citizen participation more generally.

An early lesson of the review is the challenge that enhanced and effective public engagement in decision-making has for current patterns of political behaviour and that the attitude of councillors is essential to ensuring the effectiveness and efficacy of public engagement.

A task for the council's overall review of public engagement is to assess the willingness of councillors to be challenged as public elected representatives, by local citizens. If the

culture of the council does not support enhanced public engagement then a cultural shift will have to take place before any planned changes.

Local Government has long been under pressure from central government to enhance citizen participation but such central pressure ignores the innovative approaches to citizen engagement that has taken place in local government, certainly since the 1960s (see, Prior, et al, 1992, Parry et al, 1992, Burns et al, 1994, Rallings et al, 1994). The Blair government's modernisation of local government focused on enhancing citizen participation, but much of that agenda sought simply to spread practices that were already happening in local government across the country.

Local Democracy and Community Leadership, (Detr, 1998), *Modern Local Government: In Touch with the People* (Detr, 1998), *Local Leadership: Local Choice*, (Detr, 1999), the Local Government Act 2000, and the white paper: '*Strong Local Leadership: Quality Public Services*' (dtlr, 2001), displayed how the Government at the turn of the century was encouraging all councils to modernise local political decision-making and enhancing citizen engagement. Ironically, many of the changes propagated in the modernising agenda had previously been trailed in councils such as Lewisham.

One of the lessons from enhancing citizen participation is that it can be a way of compensating for issues of legitimacy of local decision-making experienced by local government as a consequence of declining electoral turnout (Rallings and Thrasher, 1997). Participation also aims to enhance the citizen's ability to engage with the councils and the councillors that represent them. Indeed, as far back as 1998 councils where: *public participation in debate and decision-making is valued, with strategies in place to inform and engage local opinion* (*Modern Local Government: In Touch with the People* para.1.2.) where seen as exemplars of good practice.

The choice for councillors is about the time they spend engaging with the public or the time they spend on internal town hall matters. Indeed, the idea of the councillor as the conduit of public opinion into the council has been described as an approach where councillors should:

spend less time in council meetings and more time in the local community, at residents meetings or surgeries. They will be accountable, strong, local representatives for their area. They will bring their constituents' views, concerns and grievances to the council through their council's structures. Their role will be to represent the people to the council rather than to defend the council to the people (*Modern Local Government: In Touch with the People*, para 3.42)

Even though the challenge is an old one, it still has a relevance to the current review in Lewisham, as the effectiveness of public participation with the council depends on a shift in the balance within local representative democracy towards participatory democracy. Gyford (1986) notes that a diverse and fragmented society exerts pressure on representative democracy to take on a greater participatory form, in other words the difficulties often experienced in attempts to enhance the diversity of council membership can be compensated for by the skilful development of a strategically aligned public participation policy.

The literature shows that an effective way of responding to pressures emerging from communities for participation and the needs of diverse communities is not to replace representative democracy with a participative variant. Rather, it is to employ a diverse range of participatory, consultative and deliberative tools to provide a flexible and a wide range of mechanisms by which the public can engage with both councillors and officers (Lowndes, et al 2001, Elcock, 2001, 2011, Pattie, et al, 2003, Kersting, 2013).

A range of mechanisms exist which can be employed to supplement and inform the final decisions made by councillors, or to provide deliberative space in which citizens, citizens and councillors or citizens and officers can meet to explore policy problems and develop local solutions. Use of mechanisms such as citizens' juries, panels and conferences, focus groups, opinion polls, referenda and other mechanisms, can inform councillors in their political activities (these are explored in more detail in the next section).

Effective public engagement rests more on the participatory rather than *consultative* approach, with citizens having enhanced opportunities to inform the political decision-making processes rather than

seeing power transferred from representatives, to communities. Arnstein showed as long ago as 1969, that public consultation can be used to manipulate and misinform and in itself does not provide citizens with the ability to influence or shape local decisions. If the final decision-making power continues to rest with elected representatives and as a consequence with political parties and party groups, which therefore remain the 'aggregator' of local interests, little will have changed no matter how much engagement takes place (Mabileau, Moyser, Parry, Quantin, 1989).

If consultation is enhanced but little deliberation between citizens and the council takes place then what is on offer is more liberal representative democracy, rather than a fundamental shift in the representative nature of local government (see Phillips, 1994).

Yet, despite all this, local government represents very fertile ground for citizen political participation. Indeed, as Parry et al (1992) points out: 'direct involvement of the ordinary citizen is largely limited to the local sphere'. Local government is widely recognised as having far greater potential for effective citizen involvement than its central government counterpart; the strength of local democracy often rests on this assumption. It is an assumption however, which itself rests on citizen willingness to become involved and on citizens' belief in the efficacy of their involvement to influence local affairs (Almond and Verba, 1963, Marsh, 1977, Parry, et al, 1992, HMSO 1967, HMSO, 1986). Effective participation will rest on Lewisham's ability to build on the pools of participatory behaviour that already exist across the borough and support communities in developing their participatory capacity (see next section). Indeed, a vital part of enhancing citizen participation is to identify, within the borough, where such potential for community engagement and empowerment exists.

A number of surveys have considered community assertiveness when communities have been faced with unpopular decisions. These studies noted: a decline in political passivity; growing confidence amongst the electorate in the ability to affect the political process; and, the increasing importance of the local arena for enhanced citizen protest (Young, 1984, Heath and Topf, 1987, Bloch and John, 1991, Young and Rao, 1995). Indeed, councillors were seen as an *effective* focus for protest activity.

Yet, Young and Rao (1995, 109) also report that the majority of citizens 'appear to have a wary cynicism about their councillors, saying that they can be trusted only some of the time'.

More recently, Lowndes et al (2001, pp. 450-451) indicate the existence of very negative views held by citizens about councillors, who were often seen as 'inaccessible and unlikely to be interested' in citizens' concerns. Indeed, amongst those that had contacted a councillor, 'the dominant experience was one of disappointment'. Yet, much local participation occurs when communities are mobilised around matters in which they have an immediate interest, these local issues can rouse an otherwise quiescent citizenry into local action (Batley, 1972,

Lambert et al, 1978, Glassberg, 1981, Parkinson, 1985, Parry, et al, 1992).

Local participation acts as a motivational trigger to further and more sustained citizen participation and here is a clue to widening the pool of participation. Councils which build, strategically and as a deliberate policy, on the experiences of communities in protesting (normally about some council decision) and provide opportunities for citizens to channel that energy into a more on-going engagement with the council, can ensure that such tides of activity do not recede after a local issue has been resolved (Boaden, et al, 1982). Local campaigns, or protest on issues of common concern, are an important part of democratic activity and popular involvement in local government (Cochrane, 1986, Sun and Chan, 2016). But, the effectiveness of popular involvement depends on whether councillors are willing to respond positively or not and whether councils can take community action – often aimed at a single issue – and use that activity to further develop social capital, local capacity and sustained engagement. The next section explores in more detail what the appropriate literature has to say about the range of mechanisms and processes available to achieve those objectives.

4. Methods and Mechanisms of Enhanced Citizen Engagement

Public participation in local government decision-making widens ownership of the policy process, informs decision-making and develops capacity, enhances community confidence which in turn feeds into more public participation, enhances feelings of responsibility for public affairs among communities and engages citizens with a diversity of opinion on local issues (see, Stoker, 2004, Delwit, et al, 2007, Elcock, 2011). The danger is however, that engagement can be limited and have little if any effect on local decisions but only provide information for those (councillors) who make the final decisions (Michels and de Graaff, 2010). Indeed, the literature clearly identifies the dangers of public participation descending into a mere information or intelligence gathering exercise and this has been a long known phenomenon (Arnstein, 1969, Chandler, 2001).

Cuthill (2002) warns of the dangers of ‘tokenism’ in public engagement and stress the importance to effective public participation of citizens empowering themselves to take responsibility for local activities and decisions. Cuthill emphasises the importance of a clearly articulated and defined set of processes which will support and facilitate public engagement, rather than simply declaring a vague commitment to engaging more with the public. Thus, participatory mechanisms may in themselves not result in a participatory democracy. Rather, the use of various ways of engaging the public can result in little more than a means of collecting opinions and views on certain issues and providing a veneer of participation in the policy process.

Carson and Hartz-Karp (2005:122) identify three criteria that are at the heart of successful participation and particularly deliberative participation:

- a. Influence: The process should have the ability to influence policy and decision-making.
- b. Inclusion: The process should be representative of the population and inclusive of diverse viewpoints and values, providing equal opportunity for all to participate.
- c. Deliberation: The process should provide open dialogue, access to information, respect, space to understand and reframe issues, and movement toward consensus.

It is vital that these elements are built into the small number of participatory techniques

which the literature shows are prevalent in local democracy, across Europe, and which are employed with varying degrees of success to engage, enthuse and then empower citizens in tackling local policy issues and developing solutions – few though result in a transference of decision-making power to citizens, or if they do, little real policy power or budgetary power is involved. The mechanisms popular for engaging with citizens are as follows:

- Citizen juries
- Citizen panels
- User panels and user group deliberation
- Opinion polls
- Co-production of policy
- E-democracy
- Neighbourhood forum (with or without devolved budgets or decision-making ability)
- Deliberative events and conferences, polls and forum
- Consensus conferences
- Stakeholder deliberation

(see, Rowe and Frewer, 2000, Lowndes, et al, 2001, Franke, et al, 2007 *passim*, Ozanne, et al, 2009, Evans-Cowley and Hollander, 2010, Kuhlmann and Bouckaert, 2016 *passim*)

Each of these mechanisms have a number of benefits for the public and for any council implementing them as part of a strategic re-alignment to bring the council's decision-making processes closer to the public, as they provide:

1. A structured environment for processing, exploring and deliberating information
2. Opportunities for a wide range of participation across communities of place and interest
3. Multiple environment and forum for the public to experiment with and for individuals to develop a knowledge of those participatory mechanisms that best suit their needs and circumstances
4. Forum for citizens to engage with strategic and operational issues relating to specific services or policy development
5. Opportunities for citizens to deliberate among themselves or with experts, officers and councillors

Effective final decision-making comes from any one council employing a wide range of mechanisms and approaches and providing multiple opportunities for the public to engage with issues of relevance and interest to them. A popular approach is to create a number of forums, within and across an authority area, based on identified geographical communities and to employ all of the techniques above within those areas to collate a sub-authority view of particular issues, or to use such forum as deliberative mechanisms for public engagement.

In their exploration of neighbourhood governance Lowndes and Sullivan (2008) found that four main reasons could be identified that stimulated the creation of sub-authority consultative / deliberative neighbourhood units by parent councils, as follows:

1. the empowerment of citizens and communities (the civic rationale);
2. the development of partnerships to forge an overall vision of the needs of an area (social rationale);
3. as a way of developing new forms of representation and participation within the context of local government (political rationale);
4. the management and improvement of more effective local service delivery and public service transformation (economic rationale).

Each of these particular rationales however, must be backed by the political will of the parent council to pursue the construction a sub-municipal unit as a solution to local civic, social, political and economic issues and to engage citizens and communities effectively in authority-wide decision-making.

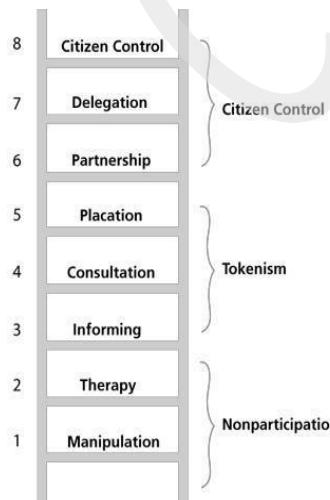
Neighbourhood forum, if skilfully and carefully constructed, resourced and supported provide opportunities for those with expertise within communities and for interested citizens, within communities, to deliberate with councillors and to lend them their expertise and views before final decisions are made. What is provided by such settings more than anything is an opening out of local democracy and participation and the provision of officially sanctioned political space within which a wider group of citizens can engage with the council (Michael et al, 2004, Piotrowski and Van Ryzin, 2007). Community forum, where citizens come together to deliberate and sometimes decide separately or alongside councillors are a fundamental piece of the local political landscape for those councils committed to a strategic approach to public engagement and enhancing the effectiveness of local decision-making (Morlan, 1982, Purdue, 2001, Barnes et al, 2003, Carpin, et al 2004, Smith et al, 2007, Lowndes and Sullivan, 2008, Somerville, 2011, Kleinhans, et al 2015).

The literature provides Lewisham with a number of mechanisms and methods for either engaging the public in deliberation, or providing opportunities for sharing decision-making processes.

The literature also suggests that various forms of sub-authority decision and deliberative settings can be used – e.g. neighbourhood forum – to enable communities and citizens interested in very local issues to engage with the policy process and to link those issues and citizens to more strategic concerns.

The inquiry might want to explore, in some detail, which mechanism for engagement fit with the objectives it has for citizen engagement and how to provide the best methods of engagement to match very local and more strategic policy issues.

A further necessary issue for the inquiry to consider, in the Lewisham context, is how radical an approach towards citizen participation and engagement would suit its needs. Such an issue needs to be addressed to ensure that any new participation policy is strategically located across all policy domains and that methods and mechanisms match the outcomes desired. Arnstein's ladder of participation indicates the difficulty of providing participatory opportunities that the public will accept as genuine and as a consequence be willing to engage with over a sustained period of time.



Arnstein's Ladder (1969)
Degrees of Citizen Participation

While the ladder has been subject to critique and update (see, Connor, 1988, Tritter and McCullum 2006) its original power still lies in the clarity with which it presents policy-makers, and particularly those in local government, with the choices available to them for enhancing and expanding public engagement and the possible consequences of getting those choices wrong. Anything below the top three rungs of the ladder – six, seven and eight – risk alienating the public, generating frustration and anger among stakeholders, damaging future attempts at public engagement and prevents developing community capacity to enhance council decision-making.

The top three rungs indicate the choice the inquiry for enhancing democracy in Lewisham must face: are any new policy approaches to public participation about changing the policy-maker mind or the public mind?

What is clear from the literature reviewed for this paper is that public participation and engagement is something which is under the control of a local authority and that the local authority can, and more often than not does, decided the nature, shape, timing, processes and balance of power within the system that it employs. Another question for any council wishing to enhance citizen participation is: how far are we prepared to go in co-producing a system of consultation and engagement with the public? That question emerges from research conducted across Europe which has explored how the range of participatory reforms of opportunities for the public to engage with local government have expanded and been shaped over time and how citizens have been able to engage in very local and higher level policy issues. That literature identified the following as vital for sustained, effective and inclusive public participation:

1. Free and open access for citizens to information held by a range of public bodies
2. Use of a range of deliberative and decision-making forum, processes and events
3. A willingness by councillors and local leaders to challenge traditional local representative democracy
4. Involving citizens in all stages of the policy and decision-making processes, including the identification of local (or very local) policy problems
5. Citizen engagement having a demonstrable impact on policy outcomes and the existence of clear mechanisms to evaluate and assess the impact of citizen engagement
6. A public statement by the council of the balance between citizen deliberation and citizen decision-making – setting out where citizens and how citizens will decide and where they will deliberate only. In other words the balance between having a say and deciding
7. Resources and support provided to citizens for each deliberative and decision-making process and therefore a continued budget allocation for councils to a strategic policy of public participation
8. Use of new technology and e-democracy to facilitate engagement
9. Recognition of both individual and collective input by citizens
10. Developing community coalitions and cross community interactions to facilitate shared understanding and learning for communities and councils
11. A well-defined, clearly articulated e-democracy / social media policy linked to and integrated with the public participation policy

(see, Kersting and Vetter, 2003, Reyneart, et al, 2005, Denters and Rose, 2005, Vetter, 2006 and 2009, Delwit, et al, 2007, Khulmann, 2009, Smith, 2009, John and Copus, 2011, Hendriks et al, 2011, Krenjova and Reinsalu 2013, Juptner, et al, 2014, Diaz 2014, Harode-Rosario, et al, 2018)

While the eleven points above are by no means an all-inclusive or exhaustive list of conditions required for effective and inclusive public engagement in local deliberation and

decision-making, they do provide the basis on which a sustainable approach to effective public engagement can be developed.

The literature reviewed so far also clearly identifies that the process of citizen engagement must be carefully developed and refined so as to overcome the reluctance of both citizens and councillors to engage together and that low levels of mutual trust can fatally undermine the process. Moreover, that experiments with public participation often only succeeded in providing more opportunities for those already engaged and energised by participatory opportunities, to engage even more, rather than address the need to widen out the public that were engaged. Such a process moves beyond the current concerns with ‘hard-to-reach’ groups and extends the desire to offer participatory opportunities to all sections of the community beyond the already engaged.

A necessary ingredient to effective participation is a willingness on behalf of councils to experiment with new institutional devices. Moreover, there is a need to be innovative in combining participation, direct engagement by citizens in policy development and service delivery, with more traditional notions of local representative democracy and service provision and this is as much about a commitment to explore and maybe fail rather than seek safe but dull methods of engagement.

Some notable experiments with direct public engagement which may suit the long-term and strategic direction of the Lewisham review can be found in the Netherlands. Dutch experiments in developing community capacity and engagement have focused on the development of social capital (see, Putnam, 2000) within and across neighbourhoods to not only involve the public in decision-making but also in empowering citizens to take action and provide services for themselves (Michels, 2006, Van de Wijdeven and Cornelissen, 2007, Hendriks, 2010).

In what is referred to in the Dutch literature as ‘vital citizenship’ the processes of local democracy are merged with policies and actions aimed at improving urban life (Hendriks and Musso, 2004).

Experiments in a number of Dutch neighbourhoods (sub-council level) have been focused on encouraging citizens to move from protesting – a council decision or inaction – to being empowered to make the local changes they wish to see to improve their areas. Much of the participation here involved citizens and citizen groups working closely with officers and councillors to decide on the allocation of certain budgets for local community projects and in working on such projects themselves. Councillors play a central role in the process as gate-keepers to resources and the officer structure of the council, while citizens take positive community action for themselves.

The Dutch approach to ‘vital neighbourhoods’ and ‘vital citizens’ is not just about off-loading council responsibilities and services to groups of concerned citizens. Rather, it is a process of empowering citizens, working with councillors and officers, to improve neighbourhoods, make local decisions, take responsibility for community improvement and to develop social capital, social capacity and community cohesion and integration. It is however, a process driven by citizens rather than a local authority (Van de Wijdeven and Hendriks, 2006 Van Gunsteren, 2018). The approach relies on the existence of a number of active citizens who take responsibility for linking community activity and needs to the council, working with their councillors.

The citizen undertaking the link role with the council is not ad hoc and cut adrift by the council; the citizen has strong personal and working relationships with the local councillors for the area and these are essential to the whole idea of making rapid and demonstrable local improvements. Much of the projects undertaken by citizens in Dutch neighbourhoods

were about rubbish collection or removal, street tidiness, community safety and environmental / physical improvements to local neighbourhoods. The activities are not about citizens simply complaining to the council; rather, they are about councils supporting and empowering communities to solve local problems. But the idea of vital neighbourhoods and vital citizens, in the Dutch context, is also to enable any community based activity to flow into and influence the overall policy-making and decision-making processes of the council.

The experiments carried out in some Dutch neighbourhoods are about improving the quality of local democracy, strengthening local decision-making and increasing the quality of public services (Tops and Hendriks, 2004, Verhoeven and Tonkens, 2013). Some Dutch municipalities have recognised that public decision-making is not an exclusive responsibility for public agencies, such as local government, but is shared between agencies – some elected and some not – and citizens and communities. Three conditions have been identified as important ingredients to the success of the empowerment of citizens and communities in Dutch neighbourhoods:

1. Pressure from communities: The need for improvement and change being articulated and expressed within communities and neighbourhoods. Thus, councillors are a vital element in identifying where such articulated needs exist and working with communities to develop links with the council and take action. The first step however, must come from communities and not the council.
2. Providing space for those citizens who wish to take action: whether it is practical action to improve the neighbourhood, or to bring others together to develop community capacity. The council needs to support and provide space for such citizens to operate effectively within their neighbourhoods
3. Political and administrative support: councillors and officers must provide positive and mutual support for the actions taken by individual citizens so they are not exposed to unnecessary and unfair criticism or are prevented from taking action. Councils need to embed the ‘vital citizen’ ‘vital neighbourhood’ approach in their own administrative and political structures and decision-making (Van de Wijdeven and Cornelissen, 2007)

The challenges to traditional representative democracy and decision-making are clear in the Dutch vital neighbourhood experiments, but the potential to genuinely empower citizens both politically and practically, means that traditional decision-making processes can be greatly enhanced by this type of citizen engagement. It is also clear that such an empowering approach can supplement other approaches to citizen engagement such as citizens’ panels, citizens’ juries and other deliberative techniques while having the advantages of seeing local action taken quickly and effectively by local people and communities.

5. Conclusion

The report set out to review the literature and research as it is appropriate to the inquiry being conducted by the Lewisham Democracy Review and to present ideas, concepts and research findings that would inform the development of a strategic approach to public engagement with the council.

The literature highlights the need for any approach to public engagement to be genuine, well resourced, supported politically, strategically embedded within the structure and processes of the council and demonstrably used to inform and improve council decision-making. Moreover, there is a need to ensure that public engagement is not simply about informing the public of what the council intends to do, or even consulting the public about council policy and proposed policy. Rather it is about ensuring that there is some shared decision-making and shared control between the council and communities and citizens.

The question then arises as to when is it best to engage citizens in the policy cycle? The literature and research suggest that citizen engagement must certainly take place before any decision is taken and ideally takes place to identify issues and problems before any policy response is considered. There is a clear challenge here to traditional patterns of party political activity within local government and a challenge to the primacy of the party group within local government decision-making. Citizens may be given a say in the process, but the next step is sharing some decision-making space with communities and citizens and that requires resources and appropriate structures and processes to be put into place. It also means that councillors may be faced with a different set of priorities and approaches to problems from their own.

The Dutch experiments with creating vital neighbourhoods and empowering citizens in taking action and influencing policy provide some clues to how public engagement may be brought together with the role of the councillor and local representative democracy. As part of their role councillors can work with communities and citizens in identifying local problems, solutions and priorities and empowering citizens to take local action themselves.

The literature shows that the task for any council wishing to enhance public engagement is four-fold:

1. Deciding the purpose of enhancing public engagement
2. Being certain about how far the council wants to go in engaging with the public and decision-making and in sharing policy-making and decision-making space
3. Deciding how to resource and support a participatory strategy
4. Embedding participation and citizen engagement in the structures and processes of the council across all policy domains.

While the benefits in terms of the quality of local democracy, improvements in local decision-making and community cohesion, from citizen participation are many, getting it wrong can lead to disillusionment, distrust and a distancing of citizens and communities from the council. The task of councillors, officers and the council as an institution becomes one of integrating different views of democracy, arbitrating between different opinions across and within communities about how democracy should work and developing community support and resources for community action within the different interpretations of democracy that exist. The literature shows that this is by no means an impossible challenge.

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Appendix C – Evidence From LBL Online Consultation

As part of their evidence-gathering work, the Local Democracy Review Working Group designed a comprehensive public consultation, which could be completed either online or as a paper-based form. This consultation ran from 2nd October 2018 to 27th January 2019, receiving 705 responses in total. The issues and ideas identified by respondents have been summarised and collated under the three themes of the review, together with the quantitative data.

Respondent Profile

- 643 respondents lived in Lewisham
- 202 respondents worked in Lewisham (of whom, 80 worked for the Council and 10 worked for a partner organisation)
- 17 respondents were local councillors
- 21 respondents were school governors
- 64 respondents represented a local community group/s
- The wards with the highest number of respondents were Ladywell (61), Forest Hill (53) and Lewisham Central (49)

Demographics

544 respondents consented for their personal data to be used in order to undertake equalities monitoring:

- The largest group of respondents (14.3%) were aged between 60 and 64 years old
- The gender of respondents was evenly split between male (48.2%) and female (47.2%). Only one respondent stated that their gender identity was different from the gender they were assigned at birth
- A high proportion of respondents (64.5%) identified as White British. 86.2% of all respondents stated that English was their first language
- The majority of respondents (80%) did not consider themselves to be a disabled person. Of those who did consider themselves to be a disabled person, 31% described their disability as physical or mobility-related
- 10.5% of respondents identified as gay, lesbian or bisexual
- Nearly half of respondents (49.6%) stated that they had no religion
- 14.7% of respondents had caring responsibilities - of those, 32.4% provided care for more than 11 hours per week
- 67.8% of respondents owned their own home

Theme 1 – Openness & Transparency

| Quantitative Data |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 55% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement that 'I know about the Council's decision-making processes' ▪ 58% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement that 'I understand the Council's decision-making processes' ▪ 92% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that 'I am interested in how and why the Council makes decisions' ▪ 44% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement that 'the Council makes open decisions in public' ▪ 53% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement that 'it is easy and straightforward to find information about Council decisions' ▪ 89% of respondents felt that local councillors had an important role to play in ensuring the Council's decision-making processes were open and transparent ▪ The most commonly used ways for respondents to access information were: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Council website (78%) ○ Lewisham Life (67%) ○ Accessing information, agendas and papers relating to Council meetings and the decisions to be taken at them (44%) ○ Viewing records of decisions taken at Council meetings (37%) ○ Attending Council meetings (28%) ▪ 29% of respondents described their overall experience of using the Council's current ways of accessing information as 'positive' or 'very positive' (a further 34% did not have an opinion and 4% had not used any of the mechanisms) ▪ 83% of respondents thought that the Council could do more to improve access to information ▪ 54% of respondents had accessed information from another Council |

| Issues | Ideas |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ There was a general lack of awareness about the different ways to access information, including attending Council meetings ▪ Many respondents stated that it was difficult to find information by searching on the website, particularly with regards to Council decision-making. Others felt that accessing some information was relatively straightforward (e.g. refuse collection schedules), but making a query or asking for action was difficult and lengthy | <p><u>Creating a culture of openness, trust and partnership</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Change the Council culture, focusing on public service ▪ Involve staff (particularly lower-graded officers) more effectively in Council decision-making ▪ Ensure performance information relating to Council services is readily accessible (open data) <p><u>Using appropriate communication channels</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Redesign the Council website so that it is more 'visually-appealing', user-friendly and easier to navigate (e.g. better search |

| Issues | Ideas |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ There were also mixed views about Lewisham Life – some respondents found it to be a useful publication for accessing information and sharing local news, others found it ‘more glossy than informative’ ▪ Some respondents had positive experiences with the Planning process, but others did not understand why their application had been refused and/or found the technical language difficult to understand ▪ Many respondents found they had to be very proactive to find information and that it sometimes lacked consistency across different sources ▪ Many respondents felt that important information was not communicated clearly and was difficult for the average person to understand ▪ Some respondents felt there were limited opportunities for people with disabilities or language barriers to engage with the Council ▪ There were mixed views regarding the channels through which information can be accessed: some respondents encouraged the use of digital technology, others found digital channels difficult to access and would prefer to speak to someone face-to-face or by telephone ▪ There were also mixed views about the range of channels available – some respondents felt there were too many and should be centralised whilst others felt that residents should be able to access information via ‘multiple and diverse channels’ ▪ Many respondents felt the decision-making process was complex and did not understand how decisions were made ▪ Some respondents found that the information provided by the Council was incorrect or out of date whilst others had experienced a delayed response to enquiries or no response at all (e.g. social media, complaints) ▪ Some respondents felt that it was easier in other Councils to speak to someone face to face or over the phone and their websites offered more interactivity, such as a ‘chat’ function | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> functionality and clearer links to minutes/decisions made in meetings) ▪ Live-stream Council meetings and publicise decisions made at these meeting on the website and social media ▪ More publicity about the different ways of accessing information ▪ Include information about current planning applications, major decisions (including budgets) and other significant changes in Lewisham Life and/or ward assembly newsletters ▪ Introduce monthly email updates with a (potentially ward-based) summary of Council news and decisions – have a yearly round-up, make hard-copy updates available via Lewisham Life, at stations, supermarkets etc ▪ Introduce ‘information champions’ at Council sites to help residents access the information they need ▪ Provide printed information to all residents about the Council and how to access services (including eligibility, choices and what to do if there is a problem or conflict) ▪ Establish a Q&A Forum led by councillors and officers ▪ Ensure information is available in hard-copy format as well as online (as some people do not have access) and distribute it via community hubs e.g. libraries ▪ Communicate more proactively with residents e.g. an ‘Introduction To The Borough’ pack when Council Tax names change at an address ▪ Tell residents what services they receive from the Council (as opposed to what is being cut) e.g. streetlights, refuse collection, parking etc ▪ Use posters/noticeboards in public places and Lewisham Theatre billboards (e.g. to publicise Q&As from the Mayor) ▪ Use digital technologies to give updates about the Council’s decision-making: ▪ Provide detailed updates to residents about what is happening via a regular email bulletin or social media <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Create a Lewisham Council app or ‘citizens area’ on the Council website that provides local ward information, latest news and issues (with the ability to for residents to leave messages and vote) |

| Issues | Ideas |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ There was a perception among many respondents that Council officers did not willingly give residents information and that residents' suggestions or recommendations were not always welcomed – 'they do not openly release information and make it easy to find' ▪ Some respondents criticised the Council's wider attitude to openness and transparency, particularly in relation to private contractors and developers and staffing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Develop an online chat function on the website so residents can ask questions ○ Install interactive touchscreens in public places (e.g. bus stops) enabling residents to view frequently asked questions, respond to public consultations and vote on key issues ○ Introduce online videos (by the Mayor) outlining what is being discussed at each Council meeting ▪ Undertake a public awareness campaign to encourage residents to get involved and explain how the Council works, who is who etc, focusing on citizenship, democracy and transparency at all levels of Council decision-making <p><u>Democratic standards: language & reporting</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Present information in a more accessible and straightforward way (including the use of visual approaches e.g. graphs, infographics), with face-to-face contact and telephone numbers to call for information ▪ Include a summary at the beginning of all Council reports that condenses the relevant information into several easily understandable bullet points ▪ Use the NHS Accessible Information Standard ▪ Develop a clear and concise step-by-step guide (possibly visual or an animation) for employees and residents to demonstrate the different steps in the decision-making process <p><u>Democratic standards: Planning</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Make the Planning Portal more user-friendly (e.g. easier viewing of planning permission requests, search by address not reference number) |

Theme 2 – Public Involvement In Decision-Making

| Quantitative Data |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 95% of respondents had voted in a local election in the last five years ▪ 53% of respondents had interacted with their local councillor/s in the last twelve months (of, which, 30% were raising an issue or concern) ▪ 49% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement that ‘the Council always seeks to involve the public in decision-making’ (a further 31% were undecided) ▪ 38% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement that ‘all residents are able to get involved if they choose’ (a further 31% were undecided) ▪ 38% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement that ‘public involvement has a genuine impact on Council decision-making’ (a further 30% were undecided) ▪ The most commonly used ways for respondents to get involved in decision-making were: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Responding to a Lewisham Council consultation (63%) ○ Responding to a statutory Planning consultation (38%) ○ Signing or organising a petition/e-petition (37%) ○ Taking part in a Local Assembly (30%) ○ Attending a civic event (26%) ▪ 30% of respondents described their overall experience of using the Council’s current ways of getting involved in decision-making as ‘positive’ or ‘very positive’ (a further 32% did not have an opinion and 11 had not used any of the mechanisms) ▪ 55% of respondents did not feel that their involvement allowed them to have a genuine impact on the decision/s made ▪ 81% of respondents thought that the Council could do more to improve public involvement in our decision-making processes ▪ 74% of respondents had never used another Council’s methods for involving the public in decision-making ▪ 80% of respondents would like their local community to have more influence over some decisions ▪ 23% of respondents were currently involved in decision-making organisations within their local community ▪ 82% of respondents felt that the Council could do more to encourage and support public involvement in community decision-making |

| Issues | Ideas |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The main reasons why respondents said they had voted in the last five years were: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Voting is a democratic right/civic duty ○ Ability to influence policies/decision-making and hold | <p><u>Reaching and empowering seldom heard groups</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provide more information about how the public can get involved in decision-making and why it is important (via different channels e.g. online, Lewisham |

| Issues | Ideas |
|---|---|
| <p>politicians to account, mechanism for their voice to be heard</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ ‘If members of the public don’t vote, then they shouldn’t complain about the outcome’ ○ Register dissatisfaction and oppose current administration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ There was a general lack of awareness about different issues that the Council dealt with and the range of ways that the public could be involved in decision-making. Some respondents felt that the Public Questions process did not allow sufficient time for resident participation. There were also mixed views about Local Assemblies. Some respondents felt that they were useful (especially more informal meetings) and valued their ability to hold councillors and officers to account, but others raised concerns about coordination, accessibility, community representation, opportunities for open debate and ability to influence Council policy ▪ Some respondents did not feel that they had the right skills to make a meaningful contribution ▪ A number of respondents recognised the limitations on public involvement (predominantly that it tends to be led by the ‘same small group of unrepresentative people’ but also the need to balance different opinions, statutory restrictions) whilst others queried that need for increased involvement, stating that ‘the public have given [the Council] permission to make decisions on our behalf’; ‘you just get the agitators and moaners, not reasoned and balanced input’ ▪ Many respondents who had used another Council’s methods for involving the public in decision-making found them broadly similar to Lewisham (in both positive and negative ways), but there was a perception amongst some that other authorities seemed ‘more genuinely interested in what ordinary people though, and keen to take their views on board’ ▪ A few respondents provided positive feedback about their experience of getting involved in decision-making, where their views were heard and/or | <p>Life, posters in schools or GP surgeries etc)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Create more opportunities for (face-to-face) public involvement at convenient times for those who work full-time or have childcare/caring responsibilities (e.g. evening/weekend consultation meetings) ▪ Simplify/shorten consultations and encourage a wider range of people to participate (several respondents cited Southwark Council as an example of good practice e.g. engaging locals at each step of the consultation process for the Canada Water Development Plan, Surrey Quays Shopping Centre) ▪ Create better and stronger relationships between the Council and local media/press ▪ Establish a ‘Town Crier’ to notify residents electronically when their input is required ▪ Use other opportunities to encourage public involvement e.g. door knocking and registering electors ▪ Information about decision-making should be more readily available to residents and staff, including when decisions are to be made, who makes them and the reasons behind them (particularly in relation to budget cuts) ▪ Provide examples of how the decision-making process works (including where the Council changed its mind after consultation, which could encourage greater public participation) ▪ Be honest about the limitations in decision-making and reasons for taking particular decisions even if they are unpopular ▪ Publish feedback from all consultations (including statutory Planning consultations) and demonstrate how the Council used the information gathered to inform decision-making ▪ Provide more clarity about the scope for genuine involvement (i.e. informing or consulting) and engage the public in shaping decisions and options at a much earlier stage (co-production, co-commissioning, joint delivery of services etc) ▪ Improve outreach to under-represented communities and encourage more ‘ordinary people’ to be involved in local |

| Issues | Ideas |
|--|--|
| <p>altered the outcome (e.g. Planning applications, car-parking in Lee Green, education inquiry, school governor) – ‘it can be surprisingly satisfying to have one’s voice listened to and respected’</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ However, there was a strong perception amongst respondents that involvement required significant effort on the part of residents, but their views were frequently ignored or dismissed. A large number felt that they lacked information about how specific decisions were made – ‘it’s hard to involve people when they cannot see the direct impact on them to then be able to prioritise their time to the community’ ▪ Some respondents expressed cynicism about the Council’s attitude to public involvement in decision-making, regarding mechanisms (especially consultations) as tokenistic ▪ Many respondents regarded traditional pressure/special interest groups as having ‘too much influence’ and felt that the Council should actively engage with a wider range of community groups (particularly young people, carers, residents with disabilities, those from a BME background or with a language barrier) in more creative ways that better suited their needs. | <p>politics (by encouraging ‘a culture of active citizenship’)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Introduce creative events in shopping areas, GP surgeries, churches, pubs and clubs to capture the views of local people (e.g. using short questionnaires) ▪ Improve support for community and voluntary groups ▪ Develop training in the role & responsibilities of community participation, create community champions ▪ Introduce a weekly or monthly forum on specific local issues, facilitated by the Council but not run by Council officers, where debate is encouraged and everyone is welcome ▪ Encourage the local BME community to set up organisations that are specific to their needs ▪ Work in partnership with local third-sector organisations and community groups in order to involve ‘harder-to-reach/seldom-heard’ residents |

Developing a place based approach to public engagement

- Enhance the role of Local Assemblies (e.g. more outreach, neighbourhood rather than ward-based, increased decision-making powers and funding), vary the times, location and dates of meetings, introduce an independent chair when contentious issues are being discussed
- Use Local Assemblies to give residents more information on important Council decisions that are under consideration as well as reporting back on the results
- Use the expertise of the community by creating more opportunities for participatory democracy/collaborative decision-making (including setting up Citizen Assemblies or other representative ‘resident groups’ to work with officers to assess solutions and help make decisions)
- Consider devolving some budgets and/or decision-making functions to the community where appropriate
- Utilise different democratic tools e.g. public votes, ‘mini referenda’ petitions, Facebook polls, online/text voting, crowd sourcing etc

| Issues | Ideas |
|--------|--|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Letting communities tackle local infrastructure projects or take over vacant commercial premises ▪ Utilise the software used by Madrid City Council (decide.madrid.es) ▪ Introduce pilots for the distribution of s.106 money at ward-level (e.g. via Local Assemblies) <p><u>Young people</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Establish mechanisms for giving young people a sense of place in the community by building intergenerational relationships (e.g. programmes in schools for pupils to volunteer at care homes, help older residents with gardening etc) ▪ Develop a programme to get more people, especially younger people, involved and increase the pool of people available as councillors, school governors, leaders of local voluntary groups etc ▪ Work in partnership with schools and services that have direct contact with residents, young people & communities in order to obtain their views <p><u>Council meetings</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Review the format of Council meetings (e.g. end at 10PM, time slots for members of the public wanting to hear decisions or to make representations, daytime sessions for elderly residents/those who are unable to attend meetings at night) |

Theme 3 – Effective Decision-Making

| Quantitative Data |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The most important features of effective decision-making were: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Have clear aims and desired outcomes (67% of respondents considered this to be ‘very important’) ○ Respect human rights (65% of respondents considered this to be ‘very important’) ○ Have a presumption in favour of openness (62% of respondents considered this to be ‘very important’) ○ Be based on consultation and the taking of professional advice from officers (41% of respondents considered this to be ‘very important’) ○ Be proportionate to the intended outcome (38% of respondents considered this to be ‘very important’) ▪ 73% of respondents felt that the Council could do more to improve the effectiveness of its decision-making |

Qualitative Data

| Issues | Ideas |
|--|---|
| <p>There were clear ideas about what the role of councillors should be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Many respondents regarded councillors as the primary point of contact between residents and the Council, stating that they have a duty to communicate what the Council is doing and explain what decisions have been made and why ▪ Respondents frequently described councillors as their elected representatives, considering it critically important that they understood the needs and views of their electorate ▪ A large number of respondents felt it was vital that councillors were regularly held to account by the electorate (including at Local Assemblies) and also regarded them as having a key role in scrutinising wider Council decisions <p>However, there were mixed views regarding interaction with councillors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Several respondents cited positive experiences of engaging with their councillor, but others raised concerns about accessibility/visibility (particularly between elections) and a few choose not to interact – ‘I have always felt that I was too busy and did not have pressing issues’; ‘I am well aware that their time is valuable and have no desire to take it up with what can seem like trivialities e.g. problems with bins, potholes, bad signage’ | <p><u>Putting councillors at the heart of decision making: roles</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Introduce Proportional Representation/Single Transferable Vote ▪ Review the directly elected Mayor model and consider alternative options e.g. committee system ▪ Full Council should elect cabinet members ▪ Introduce an additional executive body which has powers to overturn decisions – this should comprise one Councillor from each ward, elected by the Council ▪ Provide more administrative support to councillors (not just Cabinet members) <p><u>Putting councillors at the heart of decision making: relationships</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Make sure other political parties within the borough are consulted (where appropriate) ▪ More publicity about councillors’ surgeries and the different ways residents can contact their councillors (use Lewisham Life, but consider developing an app) ▪ Councillors should be more visible, engaging with residents ‘where they are’ (e.g. street surgeries, visiting parks, supermarkets, GPs etc) and using social media more consistently (improve media training) ▪ Improve the recruitment and training of councillors so that they have the ‘skills and experience to manage local infrastructure successfully’ |

| Issues | Ideas |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Some respondents did not know who their councillors were and/or did not fully understand the role of a councillor ▪ A few respondents felt that their councillors were not open and transparent about decision-making or did not put the needs of their constituents first when making decisions – ‘some are in it to help them on a political career journey and we, local residents, are just a step along the way’ ▪ There was also a perception amongst some that the performance and effectiveness of councillors varied across wards ▪ Some respondents described Lewisham as a ‘one-party state’ with no opposition. There was a perception amongst some that a lack of political opposition in the Council could lead to ‘lack of scrutiny’ ▪ Some respondents felt that the current structure of the Council reduced councillors’ influence on decision-making | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Introduce clearer standards for managing casework (including oversight mechanisms) ▪ Councillors should have more powers within the consultation process (e.g. speaking up for residents who are unhappy) ▪ Provide more information about the views and priorities of ward councillors beyond the standard party platform (e.g. publish their voting record) as well as updates about what they have been doing for their community <p><u>Putting councillors at the heart of decision making: responsibilities</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ More pre-decision scrutiny ▪ Ensure Council meetings last no longer than two and a half hours ▪ Move to a ‘task and finish’ model for Overview & Scrutiny ▪ Review the process for choosing chairs of Overview & Scrutiny committees ▪ Ensure councillors are more representative of the local community (e.g. increased numbers of female and BME councillors) ▪ Review special allowances and consider extending them to more roles ▪ Reduce the power of Executive Directors (e.g. decisions on spending should be limited to £100k) |

Appendix D – Evidence From face-To-face engagement

The Local Democracy Review Working Group met with over forty internal and external organisations between October 2018 and January 2019, including:

Theme 1 – Openness & Transparency

| Issues | Ideas |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Many people who live or work in the borough knew little about what the Council did and its impact on their lives ▪ Channels for accessing information are not easy for everyone to use – residents emphasised the importance of face-to-face contact and support to complete forms/applications online (e.g. several people experienced difficulties in applying for blue badges online) ▪ Many residents found the Council website hard to use and that information was difficult to search for/locate (and not always up-to-date) ▪ Some residents had not received Lewisham Life through their door or by email ▪ Generally, people found it difficult to contact the Council (e.g. knowing which department they needed) and a number of them had experienced delays in replies to emails or no reply at all ▪ A number of residents struggled to understand or had limited knowledge of decision-making, citing the use of complicated language and technical terminology | <p><u>Creating a culture of openness, trust and partnership</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Develop a more customer-facing culture <p><u>Using appropriate communication channels</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Communicate more proactively with residents (e.g. a weekly or fortnightly email) ▪ Include information about Council activities on Council Tax bills or in Lewisham Life ▪ Continue Mayor's Question Time, ensuring it is well promoted ▪ Use social media more effectively (e.g. live-tweeting public meetings, digital summaries of key decisions made) ▪ More Council noticeboards in local areas with up-to-date information about open consultations and strategic planning matters ▪ Record, live stream and archive all public meetings ▪ More local Council hubs across the borough <p><u>Democratic standards: language & reporting</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Make Council decisions easier to understand (e.g. by using infographics) |

Theme 2 – Public Involvement in Decision-Making

| Issues | Ideas |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Councillors were encouraged to continue going 'to where people are' and regularly attend community events to gather residents' views ▪ There were doubts about how public engagement and consultation influences decision-making ▪ Some respondents were concerned that residents who already participate in public decisions are not representative of the borough as a whole ▪ There are often accessibility barriers to public involvement ▪ Many people were unaware of the different ways they could participate e.g. | <p><u>Reaching and empowering seldom heard groups</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Write to residents with information about how they can get involved and express their views ▪ Facilitate more public meetings and events to inform and engage residents ▪ More education about how the Council works and how people can get involved ▪ Work with partner organisations (Goldsmiths, third sector organisations, community groups etc) to communicate with and involve seldom heard communities |

| Issues | Ideas |
|---|--|
| <p>some had difficulties finding consultations on the website</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ More borough-wide surveys, such as the Residents' Survey ▪ Residents and those affected by decisions should be consulted earlier on in the process ▪ More communication about how public participation leads to change in order to encourage people to get involved ▪ Use paper-based surveys in addition to an online survey ▪ Utilise the Works Council for Council trade union representatives and councillors <p><u>Developing a place based approach to public engagement</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Devolve more resources to a local level (e.g. a greater budget allocated to Local Assemblies) |

Theme 3 – Effective Decision-Making

| Issues | Ideas |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Many people did not know who their councillors were, what they did or how to contact them. There was also confusion over who makes decisions and when they are made ▪ Some felt that there were physical and behavioural barriers between councillors and staff, but stated that having councillors based in Laurence House was a positive change because they were more visible and staff could see the work that councillors do | <p><u>Putting councillors at the heart of decision making: roles</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Introduce term limits for the Mayor and councillors <p><u>Putting councillors at the heart of decision making: relationships</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Make decisions in partnership with local organisations and community groups ▪ More cross-borough collaboration ▪ Communicate with staff about the Council's progress in delivering the corporate strategy (e.g. an annual or biannual summary) |

Appendix E – Evidence From Schools Workshops

The Young Mayor's Team designed a democracy workshop for Lewisham students, which was tested with the Young Mayor's Advisers. The team (including the current Young Mayor, Adam Abdullah) then delivered this workshop at the following secondary schools:

- Haberdashers' Aske's Knights Academy (27th November 2018)
- Addey & Stanhope (28th November 2018)
- Prendergast Ladywell School (11th December 2018)
- Prendergast Hilly Fields (18th December 2018)

The issues and ideas identified during these workshops have been summarised and collated under the three themes of the review.

Understanding Local Democracy

| Council | Councillors | Rights & Responsibilities |
|--|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Students described Lewisham Council's role as bringing local benefits to people in the area. One student said 'whenever you are in need, [the Council] helps you'▪ Most students lacked awareness about what services are provided by the Council, other than waste and bins, schools, housing and libraries. Some students knew that their parents paid Council Tax which funds local services▪ Students had an understanding of public services but limited knowledge of the Council's role compared to central government or the GLA▪ A minority of students knew what wards were; when shown a map of the borough, students referred to wards as 'towns' or 'areas' | <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Students were able to guess what a councillor's role was when asked, but struggled to name any Lewisham councillors. There was also confusion about the difference between a councillor and an MP▪ Some students described councillors as 'someone who speaks up for you', 'someone who rules Lewisham' and 'a local representative'▪ Very few students recognised the current Mayor, but many were able to name his predecessor. However, most students knew the name of the Young Mayor and were familiar with the Young Mayor's programme | <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Many students recognised voting as an essential aspect of democracy. They also defined democracy in terms of equality and 'everyone having their say'▪ Some students related the concept of democracy to representation, freedom of speech and the sharing of power and opinions |

Theme 1 – Openness & Transparency

| Issues | Ideas |
|--|-------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Nearly all students knew that the Council had a website, but very few students had ever accessed it ▪ Students suggested they would use a search engine to find out information about the Council, go to the Town Hall or use a library ▪ After learning about the role of the councillor, many students said they would write to their councillor to access information | |

Theme 2 – Public Involvement in Decision-Making

| Issues | Ideas |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Students were aware of the issues facing the borough and demonstrated an interest in making changes within Lewisham, offering suggestions about how to improve youth crime, homelessness, housing, transport and the environment ▪ Students were largely unaware of the many ways to participate in decision-making. Many suggested contacting a councillor, the Mayor or the Young Mayor if they wanted to be involved in decision making. Some students said they would go to the Town Hall or talk to teachers, police and community groups ▪ None of the students said they would fill in a consultation, get involved with their Local Assembly, go to a councillor's surgery or attend Full Council/committee meetings | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Many students wanted the right to vote at aged 16 and some went as far to suggest that all secondary school students should be able to vote ▪ A number of students suggested that councillors and officers should run talks and workshops in schools in order to give young people an opportunity to understand, discuss and offer feedback on Council policies ▪ More generally, many students wanted adults to ask young people about what matters to them. Some students suggested ways for the Council to do this: an improved online presence and use of social media, more surveys (online and in places young people spend time) and better publicity about the different ways young people can have their say ▪ Students also wanted more contact with their local representatives to debate policy and ensure their views were heard. Some suggested there should be more opportunities for young people to do work experience or internships at the Council in order to increase their understanding of and involvement in local democracy |

Theme 3 – Effective Decision-Making

| Issues | Ideas |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Students participated in a mini-budgeting activity where they pretended to be councillors deciding the Council budget. However, their 'budget' was reduced by 50% halfway through the exercise▪ Overall, students tended to prioritise education, housing, health and youth services. Most students claimed this activity was challenging, especially after the budget was cut – one student said 'It was difficult because people have different views on things so it was hard to make everyone happy', others asked why they 'couldn't just have more money' | <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Students agreed that decisions should be made by debating and voting. They also valued fairness and the right for everyone's views to be heard. Some students used the word 'responsibly' when describing how decisions should be made▪ There were mixed opinions about referenda: some students thought it was a good idea to have votes on particular issues whilst others used Brexit as a negative example, stating that referenda 'divide' communities▪ Students also enjoyed the budgeting activity and thought that similar activities would be a good way to involve the community in decision making |

Appendix F – Written Evidence Submission From Chair Of Council

Local Democracy Review Chair of Council Submission

20 December 2018

Information

Action

Consultation

Introduction

The Chair of Council has extensive experience of public participation and council decision making in both her current role at full council, but also as a ward councillor and community leader of many years standing. To inform her submission, the Chair has spoken to peers from across London in recent months to gain insight as to how other councils approach public participation in decision making meetings. As a result of her experiences, and the insight from her discussions with mayors, lead members and speakers from across London; the Chair has a number of suggestions she wishes to make for the working group to consider when agreeing its recommendations for change or further consideration.

Council meetings

The Chair feels there are some practical limitations to public engagement at council meetings currently that the review should look to address where possible. The Chair has the following suggestions for the working group to consider:

Public questions at Full Council

The Chair feels that given the limitation of the design of the Council Chamber, the entire PA system should be refreshed and improved with a better sound system and microphones so everyone in the chamber and gallery can clearly hear everything that is said. A static microphone(s) stand should be in place in the public gallery as the current “roaming” mic is intermittent and having to be passed around members of the public can lead to frustration, confusion and wasted time.

The process for managing supplementary public questions should be improved as, with the current process and microphone issues, there are often frustrations, confusions and delays as to who wishes to speak, whose “turn” it is, how long people take to ask a question/make a point and time running out for supplementary questions. The Chair suggests that an alternative process is introduced to attempt to better manage contributions and expectations of those wishing to ask a supplementary question to that which they asked in advance. The Chair suggests that the alternative process should require those wishing to ask a supplementary question to register before the start of the meeting, and be given a number perhaps, and the Chair then be given a list in advance of who wishes to speak, so that there is clarity for all at the start of the meeting of the number of people wishing to speak, the order of speakers and the time available for all/each person with people then able to come to the static microphone in order.

Public Speeches at Full Council

When asking supplementary questions, members of the public are told they can’t make a speech. The Chair would like to suggest that in line with some other boroughs, in addition to the

public question process with the amendments suggested above; the Council also consider introducing a mechanism to allow public speeches at Full Council.

The Chair suggests the working group consider introducing a ballot for making a 3 minute speech to full council on a topic the member of the public wishes to address the Council about (to be specified in the application). The Chair suggests that through the ballot process, one man and one woman are selected in advance of each Council meeting to be invited to make a speech, the subject matter of which must be relevant, appropriate and in line with the usual rules around not inciting hatred etc. People could enter the ballot as many times as they like on as many topics as they like, but to ensure a range of voices are heard, each person can only make a speech to council once each municipal year.

This would enable people to address the Council publicly on a topic they are passionate about without the requirement of raising a petition first, opening up another channel through which members of the public can engage with Council meetings and share their views on issues that matter to them with the Council.

Right to speak at all Council meetings

In addition to Full Council meetings, there are a number of other Council meetings held in public which have a range of responsibilities. All are meetings held in public, not public meetings, at which members of the public are permitted to speak at the discretion of the Chair. Whilst there are currently varying levels of public attendance and engagement with the various meetings that take place, and in practice Chairs always permit requests from the public to address the Committee if received; the Chair of Council feels that more could be done to promote and enable appropriate participation in those meetings where public participation is not already enshrined in Law (Planning and Licensing) and therefore governed by separate processes.

Therefore the Chair suggests that consideration be given to introducing a period of time at the start of every appropriate committee agenda (say up to half an hour) for members of the public who wish to address the committee on any (open) item on the agenda. This would require a clear process and management by the Chair, however members of the public could then address the Committee about any item on the agenda, and raise any points they would like to bring to the committees attention before it considers the item on which it is taking a decision/reviewing to take a view on as part of pre-decision scrutiny. This practice change, if ably managed, communicated and promoted, could enable the council to go further in its aims of openness and transparency and public participation in decision making. It would facilitate the smooth running of meetings, ensure all voices are heard initially rather than be determined by the length of the agenda and who is able to stay till the end of the meeting. It could also assist in preventing interjections and frustrations boiling over on contentious issues.

Chair to Speaker

The Chair also suggests that the title of "Chair of Council" is changed to "Speaker" to better reflect the role in a way that is in line with national political structures in the Houses of Parliament, and also in line the political structure of Lewisham Council. The Chair's role in Lewisham undertakes the civic and dignitary role often assigned to Mayors in other authorities that do not have a directly elected Mayor: changing the name of the role to Speaker would prevent some of the confusion that can arise and be clear about the different role of a Speaker to a Mayor/Leader.

Local assemblies

The Chair feels that the working group should review the purpose, aims, structure and benefits of the Local Assembly programme. It is an important vehicle for local engagement, however some considered scrutiny as to how it works overall and how it is currently working in each

ward would be timely. A lot of flexibility has been shown in developing the approach in each ward, but because of this there isn't a clear "Lewisham structure" to be tweaked for each ward with clear guidance as to the aim and purpose of the programme, which was originally the democratic redistribution of money decided on by local people for the benefit of the wider community within the ward. For example, in Bellingham Ward, the local assembly fund works well in providing small grants to fund small projects for the benefit of the community, often enabling events aiming to bring people together to happen by the provision of some seed-funding/pump-priming for a range of events to benefit a range of residents such as older peoples Christmas lunches, gospel choirs, community events – the same is not true in all other wards. Local groups and organisations are often best placed to understand and meet local needs, and the support of the local assembly fund can help them get going and bring in further sponsorship to events and activities they want to deliver.

The Chair feels that more guidance and uniformity about the purpose of Local assemblies should be developed, along with guidance ensuring that the funding available is used in line with the strategic priorities of the Council, with a clear expectation of bids showing a clear wider benefit to the local community. The Chair feels there should be a refreshed focus on community benefit, social cohesion, tackling exclusion, loneliness and the impact of poverty, ensuring that the local assemblies programme and funding decisions do not inadvertently lead to polarisation. More should also be done to widen participation so that more local assemblies better reflect the local social economic and demographic profile of the area in terms of both attendance and involvement and projects supported.

And finally, the Mayors Question Time is a great initiative and seems to attract more people, and more younger people, to local assemblies both of which are to be welcomed. This should be continued/extended/formalised as the working group think appropriate.

Engaging with people appropriately: ensuring all voices are heard

The Peoples Parliament is run by Speaking Up Lewisham and the Chair attended a recent parliament and witnessed a panel discussion where discussion was in part around engaging with local councillors and understanding council decision making. It is clear to the Chair from this and other interactions over the years, that the council's ability to communicate effectively with people with learning disabilities to inform and involve them, and also to understand and take account of their views is limited and could and should be improved.

This is particularly relevant given the proportion of the council's budget that is spent on

both children's and adult social care, and the ongoing financial challenges the council faces necessitating further cuts which may well directly impact on many people with learning disabilities.

The Chair would like to suggest that a different, more appropriate approach is developed to effectively engaging and involving people with learning disabilities. The council and councillors need to ensure that people with learning disabilities feel that they are given adequate and appropriate information about decisions that might affect them, and opportunities to share their opinions and to be heard. The Chair is keen to work with the working group to test out a method of the council and councillors engaging with people with learning disabilities, building on the peoples parliament, where people can express their concerns about things that affect them, and engage with the Council and its councillors and be heard in a way that facilitates everyone's understanding and everyone's voice being heard.

Engagement with Councillors

And finally, the Chair notes that it feels like some local people have lost the feeling that a local councillor is a local "person down the street" who takes up an issue for them with the council. Councillors are increasingly viewed as a "removed part" of a formal political process that local people are excluded from.

Changing the structure of all meetings as suggested to better facilitate direct public engagement should help in part to address this, however fundamentally all councillors individually and collectively should be proactive at engaging directly with those they represent at places and events that local people are already using (schools, community centres etc) rather than waiting for people to seek them out at a surgery once or twice a month, so that all local councillors are visible, approachable and familiar members of the local community to local people. Notably some councillors do this routinely and have built strong relationships with local organisations and schools so that they are familiar and trusted members of the local community and people feel comfortable engaging with them routinely, but the Chair feels that further clear guidance and expectations of councillors should be developed by the Council that includes making themselves available for regular and routine engagement with local people in times and places that suit local people, to further address the perceived barriers that exist in relation to engaging with local councillors and understanding what their role is and how it forms part of decision making at the Council.

This shift in approach should help with some of the re-engagement that is needed between councillors and local communities and give more opportunities for people to feel that they are heard and their local councillors actively want to hear their views on what matters to them, when it matters to them.

Local Democracy Review: Scrutiny Submission

December 2018

Councillor Bill Brown, Chair of Overview and Scrutiny

The Democracy Review

- The aim of the Democracy Review is to find out how the Council can become even more democratic, open and transparent and let residents, community groups and businesses have a stronger say in local decision-making.
- It is important that the views of those involved in Scrutiny in Lewisham are fed into the review, both in terms of the operation of Overview and Scrutiny, a vital part of open democracy, and also on the wider question of improving democratic participation in the borough.
- Scrutiny Members have fed into this submission in a variety of ways. Two Scrutiny Roundtables were arranged for Members to discuss their experience, views and ideas on open and transparent decision-making; public participation in decision-making; and effective decision-making. Members also provided individual written submissions or met with the Chair of Overview and Scrutiny to outline their ideas.
- This submission presents the comments and ideas heard, starting with views on how Overview and Scrutiny can be even more effective, participative and open; and concluding with comments on the wider question of open and transparent democracy across the board. In most cases the comments have been arranged into two sections: *experiences*, covering current practice; and *ideas*, covering suggestions for the future.

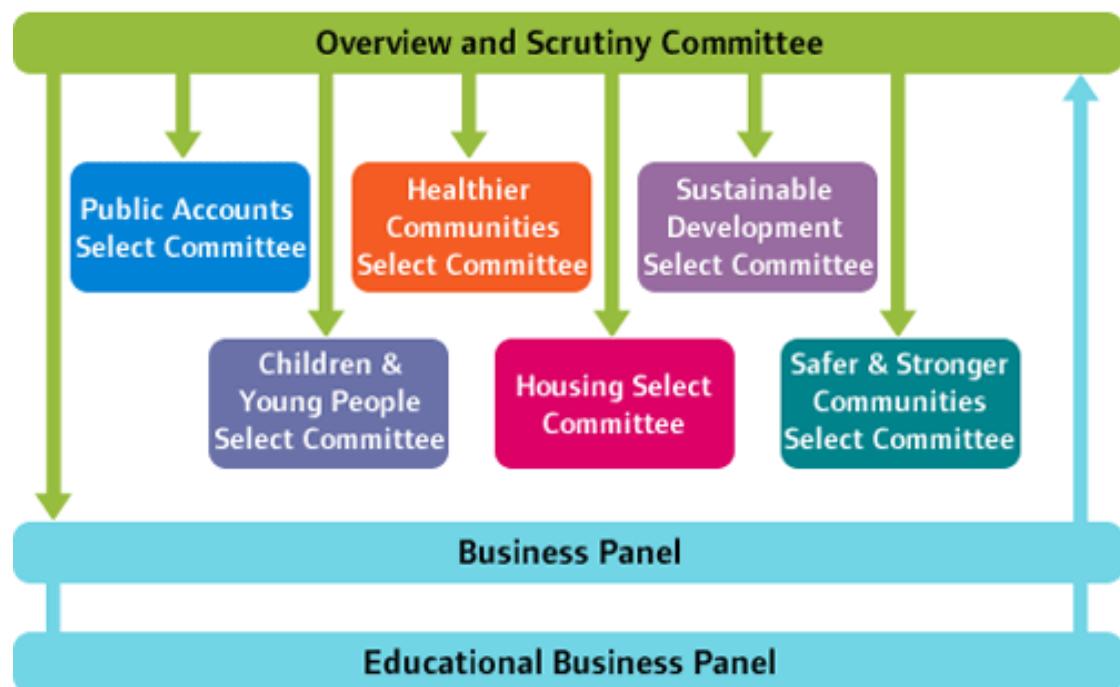
Experiences

Comprehensive coverage

The Council operates an extensive Scrutiny structure with Non-Executive Members engaged in scrutinising the full gamut of Council business as well as many aspects of the business of partner organisations, via meetings that are held in public. The comprehensive nature of the committee set-up provides an assurance that important issues do not 'fall between the gaps' and allows Members the opportunity, as community leaders, to make sure the local community's needs are reflected in the decisions made by the Council and its partners across the full range of local service provision.

Accountability

Having a specific panel to consider executive decisions (Business Panel) provides a clear point of accountability for executive power. This was felt to be particularly important when the Mayoral model was first established, when most decision-making power was concentrated in the hands of a single individual for the first time.



Questioning decision makers

- Some Scrutiny Members feel that they have too little involvement in the decision making process. Although the select committees do engage in pre-decision scrutiny and are involved in policy development, for some Members this is too far removed from the exercise of executive power. Cabinet Members are sometimes scrutinised and questioned but this does not happen consistently across the committees. It is more common for the Officers responsible for implementing executive decisions to be scrutinised. In addition, when Business Panel examines Cabinet Member decisions, it does so via Officers. This means that there is a political deficit as the Business Panel does not have the option of exploring further, with the Mayor or Cabinet Members, the reasoning for a particular executive decision. They are restricted to questioning the Officers responsible for advising on it and implementing it.
- The full Overview and Scrutiny Committee has instituted regular question and answer sessions with the Mayor and Cabinet to begin to remedy this deficit and ensure that decision makers are being transparently held to account. The scrutiny of Executive Members could be extended to Business Panel (post-decision scrutiny) and encouraged further at Select Committees (pre-decision scrutiny). Regular written updates from relevant Cabinet Members to each Select Committee on the matters they are progressing may also assist Scrutiny in effectively holding the Executive to account.
- It is, of course, recognised that Cabinet Members attend Scrutiny meetings at the invitation of the Scrutiny Committees and in the capacity of witnesses – to provide information and answer questions - and they should not, under any circumstances, get involved with committee deliberations, findings and recommendations. It is important to maintain the Executive and Scrutiny separation of powers and this is expected to be re-affirmed in statutory scrutiny guidance due to be published by the end of the year.

Report Accessibility

The reports submitted to Scrutiny (and to other types of committee) can be very long and written in language which is not accessible to Councillors or to members of the public.

Suggestions for making reports more accessible include:

- Ensuring the use of plain English and the minimisation of jargon (using glossaries where appropriate).
- Including a brief executive summary with each report encapsulating the purpose of the report and outlining the options available and the recommendation being made. The summary should be tightly written and informative and allow someone with no prior knowledge of the subject matter to understand the purpose of the report, the key points and what the committee is being asked to do.
- Ensuring that the recommendation(s) make clear exactly what input is required from Members. The executive summary/report must clearly spell out what the committee can influence in relation to the subject matter (the scope that the committee has to effect change) and what cannot be influenced and why.
- Ensuring that alternative options are more clearly spelt out, so members and the public are clear on what the alternatives to the Officer recommendation are.
- Making more use of appendices. It is accepted that a lot of information currently in committee reports is legally required, but this could be appended to the main report.



The right evidence

The data and evidence (including budgetary information) presented in Officer reports can be selective and Officers should be encouraged to provide full data sets to committees as background papers. (More broadly, as will be outlined in the final section, the Council should seek to publish all its data unless legally required not to, in line with open data principles). The Scrutiny Team could work more closely with Chairs and Committees to assess the evidence presented to Members, consider its accuracy, consider whether anything is missing and consider whether other evidence is needed to build a fuller picture.



Communications

- The work carried out by Scrutiny could be more effectively communicated to the public. Scrutiny Members should be encouraged and supported to more pro-actively publicise their reviews and meetings through social media channels and request evidence from the public where appropriate.
- The Communications Team could provide more support in terms of using the Council's social media channels to highlight scrutiny work and calls for evidence; and issue press releases where appropriate. There should be greater parity in the communications support provided to the Executive and to Scrutiny.
- Scrutiny Members, working with the Communications Team, should develop and implement a Scrutiny Communications and Engagement Plan to promote the role of Scrutiny and help facilitate the engagement of local residents and community groups.
- There should be opportunities for the public to contribute to the development of scrutiny work programmes to influence what scrutiny investigates and not just have opinions on the matters councillors have decided to investigate.

Referrals

- The process for receiving an Executive response to a Scrutiny referral can be a long and drawn out process. The referral goes to the next available Mayor and Cabinet meeting, Mayor and Cabinet then request a response from Officers, Officers draft a response, the response goes to the next available Mayor and Cabinet meeting, Mayor and Cabinet consider and agree the response, and then the agreed response goes to the next available Scrutiny meeting. Although the response is expected to be received within two months, this rarely happens due to the timetable of scheduled meetings. A more streamlined process would be welcome.
- Scrutiny Members recognise the importance of ensuring that responses to referrals are scrutinised and followed up, with 6 month and 12 month updates on progress where this is appropriate, for example, in terms of executive responses to in-depth reviews. This does not consistently happen at present.
- When Members receive a response to a referral or to an in-depth review report from the Executive, a senior officer normally presents the response back to the Select Committee rather than the decision maker. A written submission from one of the co-opted Members on the Children and Young People Select Committee highlights the feeling amongst many Scrutiny Members that more engagement with Mayor and Cabinet in relation to in-depth review reports would be welcome: ***"There is then the way in which our reports are fed back to the Mayor and Cabinet – a great deal of time is spent on preparing Scrutiny reports and it would be good – if once in a while, we could meet with the Mayor and some of Cabinet Members – perhaps informally – to explain what we have done and to see how it is received – and perhaps [the report could be] passed to the full Council... a fair exchange of ideas is important".***
- Referrals and scrutiny reports and recommendations arising from in-depth review go to Mayor and Cabinet meetings for a response. If in-depth review reports were also debated at Full Council this may improve the profile and transparency of scrutiny's work.

Visits

- Select committees currently engage in a wide range of visits – engaging directly with service users “on their own turf”. Most members of the public do not wish to come to formal meetings but want more informal interactions with their Councillors. This year, the Children and Young People Select Committee, for example, is carrying out a suite of visits to secondary schools to gather evidence for its exclusions review. Members of the Safer Stronger Communities Select Committee have been on patrol with the Police and will visit MOPAC and KiKIT, a charity based in Birmingham, to gather evidence for their Stop and Search / Prevent review. The Housing Select Committee has visited Hamilton Lodge Hostel to meet residents and service providers and the Healthier Communities Select Committee has visited the extended access and ambulatory care unit at University Hospital Lewisham and a Care Home.
- Some visits are service observations rather than more interactive visits, where this is more appropriate. This year, Members have observed primary and secondary

Fair Access Panels, an exclusions independent review panel and service delivery at the housing options centre.

Consultation

- Where appropriate, Scrutiny engages in consultation, including the holding of focus groups. The Children and Young People Select Committee regularly hears from the Young Mayor and the Young Mayor Advisors; and is currently liaising with school governors with a view to securing their input into its exclusions review. The Committee is also planning to make a second visit to the Abbey Manor Pupil Referral Unit to set up focus groups with Abbey Manor students and parents to hear their experiences. A representative of the Safer Stronger Communities Select Committee has attended the Lewisham Safer Neighbourhood Board Stop and Search Forum to highlight the Committee’s review into Stop and Search / Prevent and arrange for information to be sent out via its email list inviting the submission of evidence. Representatives of the Committee are also attending the next Lewisham Youth Advising Police Group meeting to consult its Members.

Meetings

- Members of the public are welcome to attend Scrutiny meetings and people who have spoken at recent Scrutiny meetings include a pub landlord; library users and representatives of: Voluntary Action Lewisham; The ‘Save Lewisham Hospital Campaign’; Parent Engage; the ‘Build the Lennox’ group; CAMRA; the Fair Pint Campaign; the ‘Save Lewisham Libraries Campaign’; Second Wave; the Lewisham Safer Neighbourhood Board; the Lewisham People’s Parliament; various tenant Scrutiny panels; and the Lewisham Homelessness Forum.
- Members of the public can also suggest items for scrutiny with information on how to do this, provided on the Council website.
- Scrutiny meetings are sometimes held outside of the Town Hall, where resources allow and if an appropriate venue can be found. The Housing Select Committee will be holding a future meeting at the Heathside and Lethbridge Community Centre.



Work outside of formal meetings

Formal Scrutiny meetings are not necessarily the right forum for public engagement as they can be intimidating, held at inconvenient times for certain sections of the public and are generally very time restricted. Most activity with the public should take place outside of formal meetings and be based around the principle of scrutiny coming to residents rather than the other way around. In other words, participation based on the public's terms. The outcomes of any engagement activity undertaken in this way can then be reported to a formal scrutiny meeting as evidence. Scrutiny should look to offer the public different ways to engage at every opportunity.

Rapporteurship

Members of the public often feel more comfortable engaging with an individual Councillor as opposed to a group of Councillors so rapporteurship can be a good way of Scrutiny engaging with the public. Individual Scrutiny Members can lead on defined topic areas, carrying out work and evidence gathering activity, including consulting service users, between meetings. The outcomes of this work and engagement can then be reported to a formal scrutiny meeting as evidence.

Co-option

Whilst this does not accord with the principle of Scrutiny coming to residents rather than the other way around, informal co-option could be considered where there are clearly defined voluntary groups/community organisations relevant to a committee's work. For example, a representative from HealthWatch is invited to every meeting of the Healthier Communities Select Committee and is treated as a committee Member. In considering this Scrutiny must, of course, be mindful not to prioritise those with the loudest voice. This can lead to the views of the silent majority being excluded.

Communications

As outlined in the previous section on open and transparent decision-making, the role and work of Scrutiny must be more effectively communicated to the public if they are to be better involved. In particular, there should be opportunities for the public to contribute to the development of scrutiny work programmes so they can influence what scrutiny investigates and not just have opinions on the matters that councillors have decided to investigate.

Young Mayor and Advisors

The Young Mayor's and Advisors' engagement with Scrutiny has tended to be restricted to work undertaken by the Children and Young People Select Committee. However, there is scope for involving them more widely across the full spectrum of scrutiny work, as their ideas can add value to a more extensive range of topic areas.



The young mayor for 2018–19 is Adam Abdullah and the deputy young mayor is Nike Ajijola

Experiences

External witnesses

Scrutiny has a good track record in terms of engaging external and independent witnesses in scrutiny reviews. In the last administration (2014-18) the committees heard from over 230 external witnesses, which added evidence and weight to the recommendations made by scrutiny bodies.

Relationship building

Having six select committees with clear and distinct remits means that senior Officers in the Council and in partner organisations have clear point of contacts and can build constructive and close relationships with select committee chairs and committee Members. For example, local health organisations (the hospital, CCG, SLaM etc.), housing organisations (Lewisham Homes, RSLs etc.) and emergency services (the London Fire Brigade and Met Police) all have well established and fruitful relationships with the Healthier Communities, Housing and Safer Stronger Communities Select Committees. This improves the quality of scrutiny activity and leads to more effective and informed decision-making.



Focused Scrutiny

The Centre for Public Scrutiny has suggested that Scrutiny should not aim for comprehensive coverage of all Council business but intervene “by exception” where its involvement can specifically make a difference. Scrutiny could focus on fewer issues that are more closely linked to Council priorities to ensure that decision making in key priority areas is scrutinised and more effective. This might be best achieved by changing the scrutiny structure and moving towards a task and finish approach. (See next page)

Confidence

Scrutiny Members, especially new Councillors, need to feel confident to ask simple/obvious questions and challenge jargon; and not be afraid to seek clarification on matters contained within reports. The Chair of the Committee has an important role in setting a welcoming environment and the right tone for the meeting and Senior Officers attending scrutiny meetings also have a role to play in explaining reports clearly and ensuring the meeting has a shared understanding of the topic under consideration.

Support

Scrutiny Officers could more proactively support Select Committee Members by helping draft suggested questions for external witnesses, horizon scanning, providing relevant background papers and research, meeting with individual committee members to go through meeting reports as required and helping Members challenge the assumptions and data in Officer reports.

Structure

A different structure might enable Scrutiny to be more responsive and flexible and focus on fewer issues that are more closely linked to Council priorities. This could take the form of a single committee to co-ordinate reviews, deal with statutory scrutiny requirements (health, crime and disorder, flood prevention etc.) and deal with call in; with time-limited task and finish groups focussing on key priority areas, gathering evidence and making recommendations before disbanding as new task and finish groups are created. Membership of task and finish groups can be based on genuine Member interest in the topic under consideration. Any move to a new structure will need to be properly considered and thought out, including the implications for the Member allowances scheme and special responsibility allowances.

A clearer policy role for Scrutiny

Scrutiny is not systematically involved in policy development or involved at an early enough stage to influence policy development. All major Council policies should have a “green paper” stage – where the relevant select committee is engaged in contributing to policy proposals at an early enough stage as to be able to actively influence their development.

Training for Officers

Training relevant Officers across the Council on the role of Scrutiny and the support it requires could improve the quality of evidence presented to it. This could form part of the currently available training on *working in a political environment* and include training on the full decision making process at the Council, not just the role of Scrutiny. Such training could be mandatory for certain roles that require regular engagement with Councillors.

Data

The Council should seek to publish all its data unless legally required not to, in line with open data principles. In a well-functioning local democracy, citizens should be able to easily find out what their local Council is doing and to be able to freely access its data and information where this is appropriate. Open data encourages participation. Residents often only engage with the Council sporadically, at election time or to make a complaint if their bins aren't collected. By opening up data via the website and proactively encouraging the public to access it and add to it, residents will be enabled to be much more directly informed and involved in decision-making. This will help ensure that residents don't just know what is happening in terms of decision-making, but are able to contribute to it. The [Lewisham Streets Commonplace map](#) is an excellent example of the Council sharing and growing local data through public participation.

Decisions

It might be appropriate for certain elements of some council decisions to be opened up to the public. Breaking up big, complex decisions into smaller more manageable, understandable and clear decisions, might help foster engagement; as it will allow responsibility for making certain decisions, within an agreed framework, to be handed over to the public.

How would you like to see streets improved in your area?

The Lewisham Streets Commonplace map is now closed for comments. The response to the consultation has been brilliant with over 11,000 contributions made to the map.

Our task now is to go through these comments and use them to develop the borough's new Transport Strategy and Project Plans. We promise to use the information to improve Lewisham's streets making them Safer, Healthier and more Usable for all.

Our draft Transport Strategy that your comments have helped to inform will be published as the Local Implementation Plan (LIP). We will provide an update via this Commonplace site when its available to view and comment on, so stay subscribed to the News section for further updates.

The Transport Policy Team at Lewisham Council would like to thank everyone who took an interest and who have contributed to the consultation.

[View map and comment](#)

[Learn more about the project](#)

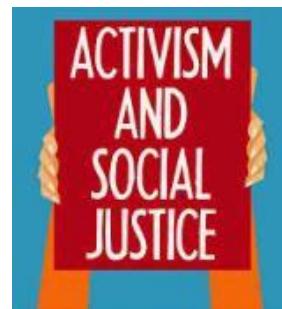


Training

- Planning and Licensing committee meetings are important quasi-judicial meetings where the public expect to see procedures being followed fairly in an accountable and transparent way. These committees are very public windows into the Council's complex and sometimes controversial decision making processes. Membership of these committees and all the preparation and lead-in required for good decision making can be challenging. Training for these committees must be comprehensive and it might be helpful if new Members participated in a mock meeting prior to taking part in their first real meeting, where a controversial real-life application (that has already been decided) is considered.
- Licensing and Planning applicants should be given a clear guide outlining the processes and procedures involved in meetings so they do not waste their time, or the committee's. Planning and Licensing reports should make it very clear to Members the issues that need to be considered that have meant that the application has not neatly fitted into an *approve* or *deny* category, requiring it to be considered at committee. This will enable Members to focus on the issues where they have discretion.
- There should be mandatory training in chairing skills for all Committee Chairs before they take up their post.
- Where appropriate, joint Officer and Member training (or relevant Officers attending Member training) is helpful so that Members can 'put names to faces' and so shared understandings of key issues can develop. In some instances there is a lack of trust between Officers and Councillors and joint events might help foster more positive and constructive working relationships. It is important that Officers and Members work together as one team.
- Mentoring should also be further explored by political parties. It might be helpful for new Councillors to have a mentor from outside their ward as they may feel more comfortable accessing support from someone with whom they don't have an immediate, close working relationship with.

New forms of public involvement

Increasingly, members of the public are engaging with public authority in new ways. Councils are used to dealing with recognised interest groups that engage with it in traditional ways in a polite and orderly fashion. Movements such as #MeToo and the anti-Brexit campaign represent a more challenging form of public participation that is not traditional or conventional and the Council needs to give careful thought to how to engage with this sort of activism in a positive way. If the Council does not respond to its citizens' desire for greater transparency, power and involvement in new and non-traditional ways, then its democratic legitimacy will be eroded. Increasingly people are losing trust in large institutions such as councils, believing them to be too unaccountable and distant from the people they are meant to serve, so it is imperative to build a more participative relationship with the public.



Green Spaces

Lewisham benefits from a large number of parks and open spaces which provide opportunities for communities to come together. However, green spaces are often undervalued as accessible arenas for active citizenship which empower residents, help create a sense of place and encourage democratic engagement. The council needs to consider its approach to green space and how it can engage the community in helping to protect and develop these important spaces.



Local Assemblies

Many local assemblies are very well-attended but further consideration should be given to who attends and how to extend the reach of local assemblies to harder to reach sections of the community. Local Assemblies could also consider doing more outreach work, going to the community rather than expecting the community to come to them.

Selection

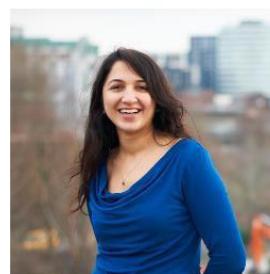
- Councillor selection is key to ensuring an accountable, representative democratically elected body of Members. Political parties need to give further thought to candidate selection and how to encourage sections of the public who do not normally stand for office, to consider standing.
- Some Members feel that the process of selecting which Members serve on which committee needs to be re-considered to ensure that there is a better distribution and balance of skills across the select committees. Political parties may wish to conduct skills audits to help them have a clearer understanding of the balance of skills within their teams.
- Some Members feel that, within the majority party group, all Members should be involved in the selection of Cabinet Members. An informal way of ensuring that the views of all Members are taken into consideration could be developed, or selection by an open vote (one Member, one vote) could be considered.
- Role profiles covering the key roles that Members can undertake (Select Committee Chairs, Cabinet Members, Planning Committee Chairs etc.) could be developed so that expectations around Member roles are clearly set out and understood. The profiles could cover the key responsibilities, knowledge and skills required for each role. Support and training should be provided to help Members fill any gaps and keep up to date with changes in legislation and good practice.



Could I be a councillor?



What do councillors do?



How do I?



Your Council

Communication channels

Whilst the financial benefits of going ‘digital by default’ are recognised, many Members of the public still want to be able to ring the Council and speak to someone who can deal with their enquiry – or at least be sympathetic and helpful. Automation can build a barrier between the public and the Council, so the various interfaces between the public and the Council need to be carefully considered.

In particular, the website’s design and functionality is a key element in ensuring open and transparent democracy, as is customer care training for receptionists and call centre staff.

Communications

Ward councillors are the elected representatives of local residents and an important link between the Council and the communities it serves. They need to be recognised as visible advocates of effective public services and actively engaged in the council's activities to engage directly with the public.

Although the Mayor should be the **primary council spokesperson**, proactive involvement in external communications should not be the sole preserve of the Executive.

The Council could be more pro-active in terms of the ways in which it engages with residents. This should include more clearly explaining the reasons behind Council decisions (e.g. austerity and budget cuts). Digital noticeboards in key locations across the borough may be an idea worth exploring.





The number of meetings

Members are expected to attend a large volume of meetings, limiting the time available to get involved in their community. The number of committees and the number of times they meet each year should be comprehensively reviewed with the aim of reducing the amount of time Councillors spend in Council meetings. Imposing strict time limits on the duration of meetings should also be considered.

Full Council

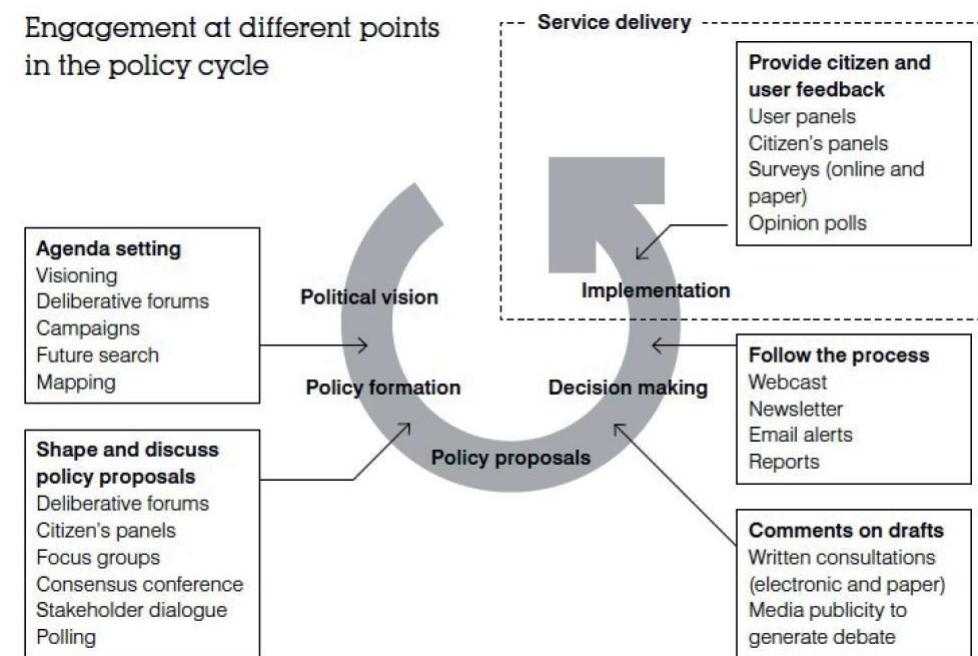
Consideration could be given to changing the Chair of Council's title to "Speaker" as has been done in a number of other Mayoral authorities including the London boroughs of Hackney and Tower Hamlets.

Allowances

The allowances paid to Members should be reviewed, including the posts that attract Special Responsibility Allowances (SRAs) and the level of those allowances. SRAs should seek to accurately reflect the responsibilities attached to certain posts and the impact that fulfilling the associated duties has on the post holder (for example, if holding the post would result in a potential loss in earnings). In some cases it may be more appropriate for certain post holders to claim expenses rather than receive an SRA

Innovation in Democracy

Scrutiny would like to suggest that the Council applies to participate in the [innovation in democracy](#) programme. Our participation in the programme would help demonstrate our commitment making the Council even more democratic, open and transparent and enabling residents to have a stronger say in local decision-making. The programme involves opening up a Council policy decision to citizen deliberation through a Citizens' Assembly process, complemented by a digital strategy to extend the reach, transparency, and accountability of the process. Up to £60,000 is available to cover costs and other advisory support is available.



<https://tinyurl.com/ycsgou58>

Appendix H – Summary Of Additional Written Evidence Submissions

The Local Democracy Review Working Group also received written evidence submissions from the following individuals and organisations:

- ‘New’ councillors (individual submissions from councillors elected in 2018 were initially summarised by the Vice Chair of Overview & Scrutiny)
- Blackheath Society
- Lewisham resident (Lewisham Deptford CLP and Lewisham LCF member – evidence submitted in a personal capacity)
- Lewisham resident (evidence submitted anonymously)
- Lewisham Liberal Democrats (late submission received on 28th February 2019)

The issues and ideas they identified have been summarised and collated under the three themes of the review.

Overall

| Issues | Ideas |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ A concern was expressed that the Local Democracy Review Working Group (composed of eight Labour councillors) did not include members from other political parties in Lewisham and other local groups | <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Commit to creating a Challenge Panel in order to provide independent input to the review |

Theme 1 – Openness & Transparency

| Issues | Ideas |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ The Council’s website should be the ‘primary vehicle for rapid citizen communication’ but the design is not currently fit-for-purpose – it is too focused on service delivery and does not tell citizens what is happening (and what will happen) or keep residents up-to-date with progress against plans▪ The Council needs to improve its communications to reach more of its residents in a more timely, reliable, targeted, consistent and accessible way by multiple channels and to explain their rights, obligations, opportunities and choices▪ The Planning process tends to be dominated by people who are long-term homeowners and have the resources (in terms of time, networks and expertise) to object to new developments. People who may be in favour (e.g. renters, workers, people with young families) are often not well-established in the borough and do not have the time to campaign or attend evening meetings▪ The Council needs to change attitudes and culture to encourage a ‘spirit of engagement and openness’ | <p><u>Creating a culture of openness, trust and partnership</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Develop a more customer-oriented culture▪ Publish a regularly updated organogram of the Council’s structure▪ Provide periodic updates on contentious areas of service (e.g. trade refuse collection in Blackheath Village) <p><u>Using appropriate communication channels</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Redesign the Council website (to include customer services & case work monitoring and a planning/housing portal)▪ Greater use of IT and social media alongside traditional methods of communication▪ More local public meetings and other events to inform, explain and consult with residents▪ More targeted communication to allow residents to receive information about what most interests and concerns them <p><u>Democratic standards: language & reporting</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ More timely, reliable and consistent communication that meets legal and |

| Issues | Ideas |
|--------|--|
| | <p>service targets in an appropriate and accessible way</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Acknowledge all written approaches (especially via generic email boxes) and tell people when they are likely to receive an answer ▪ Engage with complainants in a positive and constructive manner <p><u>Democratic standards: Planning</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Give more than the strict statutory notice for planning consultations and meetings wherever possible and use email/first class post for statutory notices ▪ Maintain regular and effective engagement with interest groups and amenity societies ▪ Keep objectors regularly informed about progress on planning cases as they progress through later stages ▪ Keep the public and commenters regularly informed on the progress of formal consultations ▪ Produce the Planning Annual Management report in a more timely way ▪ Reinstate a Planning Helpline for simple, quick inquiries ▪ Commission polling or surveys to establish broader attitudes to new developments in specific neighbourhoods ▪ Review the role of amenity societies or neighbourhood associations, particularly in cases where they oppose social housing developments ▪ Allow residents to lodge qualified support for a planning application (e.g. to say they back a proposal if certain design/building measures are met) |

Theme 2 – Public Involvement In Decision-Making

| Issues | Ideas |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ There was a recognition that whilst it is for officers to advise in their areas of expertise and for councillors to make final decisions and be answerable to their electors, it was also highly beneficial to involve citizens as much and as early as possible in decisions that will affect and sometimes shape their lives ▪ It was felt that Local Assemblies could, with suitable democratic and governance improvements and safeguards, involve citizens more in the issues that affect them both locally and across the borough. However, some felt that they were not currently operating effectively –practice | <p><u>Reaching and empowering seldom heard groups</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Actively reach and engage a broad spectrum of citizens to see what they want and think ▪ Alert citizens early to approaching issues and problems and get their help in addressing them ▪ Tell citizens regularly what the Council is doing and prioritising (and indeed what it is not or cannot do) and seek regular feedback <p><u>Developing a place based approach to public engagement</u></p> |

| Issues | Ideas |
|--|---|
| <p>between Assemblies differed, membership of co-ordinating committees was not open and published, not all Assemblies had up-to-date lists of priorities/projects and there were no clear rules about quorums or voting arrangements</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Give Local Assemblies more power and influence (once they have established consistent basic procedures and adequate resources to ensure openness and guard against abuse by pressure groups) ▪ Introduce community juries/citizen assemblies to ensure issues are thoroughly debated by a properly representative group <p><u>Council meetings</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Make greater time for a public contribution at meetings |

Theme 3 – Effective Decision-Making

| Issues | Ideas |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ There were specific concerns about the structure of the Council – the Mayoral model could potentially concentrate too much power in one individual and reduce councillors' influence on decision-making. Some felt that scrutiny had limited ability to change decisions, the allowance scheme could have a detrimental impact on the range of people selected as councillors as well as offering unhelpful financial incentives in the existing model of Overview & Scrutiny ▪ Ward boundaries need to be kept under review in the light of changing populations and constantly changing levels of affluence/deprivation/need to ensure the system is fair and effective for all citizens ▪ There was a recognition that the workload of a councillor is extremely onerous and very difficult to do if working full-time. In addition, some councillors found it difficult to keep oversight of all matters with issues spread across so many committees and arising from widespread ward and community engagement | <p><u>Putting councillors at the heart of decision making: roles</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Review the directly elected Mayor model and consider a return to a committee system ▪ Introduce term limits for the Mayor and councillors ▪ Allow councillors to elect cabinet members ▪ Review the remit of current cabinet portfolios ▪ Councillors should take on a role for a year at a time ▪ Provide councillors with secretarial and administrative support ▪ Rotate the role of chair around planning committee members ▪ Rotate cabinet member roles to give all members the opportunity to become familiar with a wider range of Council services and exercise closer influence in policy and decision-making <p><u>Putting councillors at the heart of decision making: relationships</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Review the councillors' code of conduct (including how they deal with casework and engage with Local Assemblies) ▪ More openness about the relationship and reporting structures between the officers and those committees that scrutinise their area of responsibility <p><u>Putting councillors at the heart of decision making: responsibilities</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Introduce a Compliance Committee and Council Ombudsman |

| Issues | Ideas |
|--------|---|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Greater community involvement in the work of scrutiny committees ▪ Change the scrutiny structure – fewer chairs with SRAs, more focused investigations/task & finish groups, reduced number of committees and fewer meetings, more responsibility (and allowances) for vice-chairs, align the scrutiny structure with the cabinet portfolios, divide responsibilities on select committees so that each member has a specific area of focus ▪ Meetings should be restricted to two hours (or two and a half hours at the most) and standing orders should not be extended beyond half an hour |

Appendix I – Written evidence submission (Nesta)

The rise of digital democracy

Thanks to digital technologies, today we can bank, read the news, study for a degree, and chat with friends across the world - all without leaving the comfort of our homes. But one area that seems to have remained impervious to these benefits is our model of democratic governance, which has remained largely unchanged since it was invented in the 20th century.

The lack of change wouldn't matter if democracy was clearly working well. But many argue that this gap between the way in which citizens go about their daily lives and the way in which politics and democracy are carried out has contributed to declining trust and confidence in democratic institutions. Large minorities in the US and Europe no longer see democracy as a good system of government.¹

Over the last two decades, there have been thousands of experiments. In some areas, such as campaigning or monitoring the actions of MPs, there is a rich field of innovation, with myriad apps, platforms and websites gaining significant numbers of users. Petitions sites, for example, can be found across much of the world in one form or another.

Other experiments have focused on areas such as participatory budgeting, opening up the problem-solving process for a range of social issues, to a focus on how digital can enhance the more traditional activities of parliamentary and democratic work, such as voting or case management.

But not all of these experiments have lived up to early hopes and expectations.

Although campaigning tools have mobilised hundreds of millions of people to influence parties and parliaments, the tools closer to 'everyday democracy' have tended to involve fairly small and unrepresentative numbers of citizens and have been used for relatively marginal issues. Part of the reason is that the controllers of democracy effectively have a monopoly on whether new ideas or methods are adopted – a pattern very different to consumer markets.

The reformers have also made mistakes. Often they have been too linear and mechanistic in assuming that technology was the solution, rather than focusing on the combination of technology and new organisational models.

¹<https://www.eiu.com/topic/democracy-index>

Some of the experiments have also run into the same problem as social media - a tendency to polarise opinions rather than bridge divides, as people gravitate towards others who share their political affiliations, as false information circulates, and dialogue hardens against opposing positions rather than helping people to understand different views.

The potential for local authorities

In response to these challenges, Nesta's research on digital democracy², smart cities³ and digital transformation in local councils⁴, has attempted to seek out and summarise the best practice in digital democracy from across the globe.

Amid all the experiments that we have encountered, some of the most promising developments are happening at the local level. This is partly because the decisions taken by local authorities have direct and visible impacts on people's lives, which in turn improves motivations for people to get involved. It is also because city leaders have been more willing to take risks in running local experiments than politicians at the national level.

From our research it seems there are three distinct activities that digital tools enable: delivering council services online - say applying for a parking permit; using citizen generated data to optimise city government processes; and engaging citizens in democratic exercises. In *Connected Councils* Nesta sets out what future models of online service delivery could look like.⁵

Here we will focus on the ways that engaging citizens with digital technology can help city governments deliver services more efficiently and improve engagement in democratic processes. We frame our response under four broad recommendations for how councils can run more successful digital democracy experiments:

Resist the urge to build an app

This can be tempting - the majority of people who live in your local authority probably have a smartphone. But first, take a look at the download stats for a few city government apps on the Google app store - they're not pretty. Apps

²<https://www.nesta.org.uk/report/digital-democracy-the-tools-transforming-political-engagement/>

³<https://www.nesta.org.uk/report/rethinking-smart-cities-from-the-ground-up/>

⁴<https://www.nesta.org.uk/report/rethinking-smart-cities-from-the-ground-up/>

⁵<https://www.nesta.org.uk/report/connected-councils-a-digital-vision-of-local-government-in-2025/>

are also expensive to develop and maintain. The city governments around the world that we talk to often feel like pioneers in the citizen engagement field. This may be because, unlike areas like the environment and data sharing, there aren't many good global networks on citizen engagement in the digital age. But there are many examples of cities that have used digital technologies to engage citizens, both internationally and in the UK. Before you call in the app developers, contact the city governments and civic minded organisations that have already done what you're planning to do, to see if you can cooperate and build on their experiences.

Alongside this, it is also a good idea to support the development of open source technologies. Examples of this include the [D-CENT](#) toolkit, including [Consul](#) which has now been adopted by almost 100 governments worldwide. The idea is to build a shared library of digital tools that city governments can add to when they want to run a new citizen engagement exercise, rather than start from scratch each time by building proprietary software. This is also something that respected global bodies like UNICEF think [is worth putting their money behind](#), with their \$9m fund to develop open source civic technologies.

Case study: Decide Madrid, Spain

In 2015, Decide Madrid, a platform for public participation in decision-making, was launched by Madrid City Council. Decide Madrid has four main functions: proposals and votes for new local laws; debates; participatory budgeting; and consultations. Decide Madrid allows any resident to propose a new local law which other residents can vote to support. Proposals which gain support from 1 per cent of the census population are then put to a binding public vote. The Council has one month to draw up technical reports on the legality, feasibility and cost of successful proposals, which are published on the platform. Registered users can open and contribute to debates, vote for or against motions, or provide additional comments. Debates do not trigger a specific action by the City Council but are a useful way of gauging public opinion.

The platform - which is based on open-source software called Consul – also enables suggestions, discussions and an annual participatory budgeting programme, which allocated €60 million in 2016. Decide Madrid benefitted from dedicated PR and communications support which raised its public profile. €200,000 was spent in 2016 to promote the participatory budget, equivalent to €4 per voter. The nature of

participatory budgeting means that citizens can easily see the benefits of participating as direct financial investments are made in their chosen projects, and a user-friendly website design seamlessly integrates the different opportunities for participation open to citizens in one platform.

Think about what you want to engage citizens for

Sometimes engagement is statutory: communities have to be shown new plans for their area. Beyond this, there are a number of activities that citizen engagement is useful for. When designing a citizen engagement exercise it may help to think which of the following you are trying to achieve (note: they are not mutually exclusive):

Better understanding of the facts

If you want to use digital technologies to collect more data about what is happening in your local authority, you can buy a large number of sensors and install them across the city, to track everything from people movements to how full bins are. A cheaper and possibly more efficient way for councils to do this might involve working with people to collect this data - making use of the smartphones that an increasing number of your residents carry around with them. Prominent examples of this included flood mapping in [Jakarta](#) using geolocated tweets and pothole mapping in [Boston](#) using a mobile app called StreetBump.

Generating better ideas and options

The examples above involve passive data collection. Moving beyond this to more active contributions, city governments can engage citizens to generate better ideas and options. There are numerous examples of this in urban planning - the use of Minecraft by the UN in [Nairobi](#) to collect and visualise ideas for the future development of the community, or the [Carticide platform](#) in France, which residents can use to indicate changes they would like to see in their city on a map.

It's all very well to create a digital suggestion box, but there is evidence to suggest that deliberation and debate lead to much better ideas. Platforms like [Better Reykjavik](#) include a debate function for any idea that is proposed.

Based on feedback, the person who submitted the idea can then edit it. Every month, the 15 highest-voted proposals on the site are officially processed and the City Council provides a formal response to each one.

Better decision making

As well as enabling better decision making by giving city government employees, better data and better ideas, digital technologies can give the power to make decisions directly to citizens. This is best encapsulated by participatory budgeting - which involves allowing citizens to decide how a percentage of the city budget is spent. Participatory budgeting emerged in Brazil in the 1980s, but digital technologies help city governments reach a much larger audience. '[Madame Mayor, I have an idea](#)' is a participatory budgeting process that lets citizens propose and vote on ideas for projects in Paris.

Case study: Madame Mayor, I have an idea, France

In 2015 Paris launched Madame Mayor, a participatory budgeting process with total of €500 million over five years. All proposals are generated by Paris residents. The process has five phases: proposals are made, then refined through deliberation. There follows a period of public review, checking the ideas meet minimum criteria such as public benefit, and technical and budgetary feasibility. The shortlist of ideas is selected by an elected Committee made up of representatives of political parties, the City Administration, civil society, and citizens. Support is provided for projects to assist people in promoting and campaigning for their idea. There follows a vote, either online or in person. Successful proposals are included in the December budget and work begins the following year.

In 2015 over 5,000 ideas were proposed, whittled down to 624 which were then put forward for a public vote. In the final stage 67,000 votes (+/- 3 per cent of the population) were cast and 188 projects accepted.⁶ In 2016, participation rose dramatically with 158,964 people voting on a final selection of 219 ideas, from an initial 3,158 proposals.⁷ The experience has found that raising awareness and achieving participation is hard, and so is the process of managing and processing

⁶ https://budgetparticipatif.paris.fr/bp/jsp/site/Portal.jsp?document_id=2228&portlet_id=159

⁷ <https://budgetparticipatif.paris.fr/bp/plugins/download/BP2016-DossierDePresse.pdf>

thousands of ideas. Over the last year the Paris team has responded by increasing the size of the team working on citizen engagement, strengthening relations with civil society, and continuing to invest in offline and online promotion of the programme. They also slightly restructured the budget to reserve a proportion exclusively for the most deprived areas of the city.

Remember that there's a world beyond the internet

As smartphones and apps proliferate, it is understandable that someone would think that engaging residents online means setting up a website and waiting for people to come and use it. But the most successful examples of digital citizen engagement rely on traditional media to promote the initiative. My Ideal City, an initiative designed to crowdsource ideas for the redevelopment of the city centre in Bogota, used a daily one-hour radio show to promote the project. As a result, 10,000 suggestions were submitted to the platform.

It is also important to note that digital technologies are best at reaching new audiences, and so should be used to supplement traditional participatory processes rather than replace them. The main participants in the Estonian city of Tartu's 2013 online-only participatory budgeting pilot were 30 to 36 year olds. While this was a success in terms of reaching a demographic that does not usually attend community meetings, it shows that traditional methods of community engagement cannot be abandoned.

Do not forget that even if online tools theoretically could reach a huge audience, in reality, they often function best as a new channel for those that are already adept at engaging with city government. See research from mySociety for more on this.⁸

Pick the right question for the right crowd

You have worked out what you want from residents, chosen the right tool, then launched your campaign, hopefully doing a good deal of promotion through more traditional channels. Why are you still getting hardly any response? This is probably because you have picked the wrong question for the wrong crowd.

⁸<https://www.mysociety.org/files/2014/12/manchester.pdf>

"How can I consult all the X million people in my city?" is a question we have been asked a number of times when talking to city government officials. Our immediate response is often, why would you want to do that? If you were to ask local residents, you would find that most people have not engaged in a meaningful way with their local council, other than voting and filling in forms online.

It is worth thinking about the relationship between representative and direct democracy here, and how new digital tools fit into this picture. What new digital tools enable is a strengthening of representative democracy, not a return to the days of Athenian direct democracy. Most people, most of the time just want the politicians they elect to do a better job, they aren't looking to be involved in the day to day business of government.

So when you are trying to crowdsource ideas, think about which segment of the crowd you are trying to engage. If you're looking to come up with a better alcohol management policy for the city, to take one recent city government crowdsourcing initiative as an example, the general population probably is not the best crowd to consult on this, as they lack the expertise to deal with the question. See the blog written by Nesta's Chief Executive Geoff Mulgan for more on this.⁹ In this case, digital tools might be most useful in helping you access a wider pool of experts.

The crowd sometimes might also mean city government employees or suppliers. The Boston StreetBump example, in which an app was used to map potholes in the city, was largely used by city government employees, not citizens.

However, there may be times when you want to engage a large number of residents - people know a huge amount about their cities, the problems faced in daily life, and this knowledge, or collective intelligence, can be of huge value to city governments. Here are two things to consider:

- You need to choose something that people care about. In Jakarta, researchers are able to map flooding via Twitter because this is an issue that costs lives, every year, in the city. Flood mapping via Twitter in Lewisham wouldn't, I suspect, lead to the same outcomes as it isn't as important to local residents in London as it is to Jakartans. Find out what issues people in your city care most about and engage them on that.

⁹ <https://www.nesta.org.uk/blog/designing-digital-democracy-a-short-guide/>

- Secondly, people need to know that their engagement is going to be valued. Tempting as it is to set up a digital suggestions box, if people feel that their contribution is going to be ignored, they will find it hard to engage. This is where things like participatory budgeting help as people know that there is a chance their idea will be put into practice. But even if you don't have a budget, making clear what will happen to suggestions will prevent misunderstanding and disappointment.

Case study: Better Reykjavik, Iceland

Better Reykjavik, launched in 2010, is a platform which enables citizens to suggest, debate, rank and vote on ideas for improving their city. It was developed by a civil society group called the Citizen's Foundation, but the project is notable for the level of support it has gained from Reykjavik City Council, who have agreed to process 15 of the top ideas made on the platform every month. Between 2010 and 2017, 1,045 ideas were considered by the City Council, with 220 approved, 289 rejected and 336 still in progress.

More than 70,000 people have visited the site since its creation. Anyone can post an idea on the Better Reykjavik platform, or comment either 'for' or 'against' an idea. Ideas, as well as the related individual comments, can then be up- and down-voted by the rest of the community.

The platform benefits from its clear link to decision-making processes, including clear feedback on why final decisions are made. This incentivises engagement and makes people feel their contributions have value. Take-up has been encouraged through social media advertising. One future challenge relates to investigating how citizens can be encouraged to post ideas for addressing some of the more complex issues that the city faces.

When we talk to city governments and local authorities, they express a number of fears about citizen engagement: Fear of relying on the public for the delivery of critical services, fear of being drowned in feedback and fear of not being inclusive - only engaging with those that are online and motivated. Hopefully, thinking through the issues discussed above may help alleviate some of these fears and make city government more enthusiastic about digital engagement.

Growing the field of digital democracy

Though most digital democracy initiatives are undertaken in response to the perceived failure of current ways of doing things, or in the hope of further improving the legitimacy and quality of democratic decision-making, very few innovators are actively evaluating how well their use of technology is achieving these aims.

We therefore conclude with a call for all practitioners to consider a simple set of evaluation criteria from the outset. This means going beyond using the number of participants as the only measure of impact. Other, more difficult questions, need to be asked, such as: who participated and why? Did the process inform citizens about important political issues? Did it succeed in improving public trust, or propensity to engage in the future? These questions will help our understanding of the effect participation is having on citizens' attitudes to democracy.

A good example to look at here is Open North, a Canadian non-profit that has developed an interactive online consultation method called Citizen Budget. Open North is using a mixed methods approach to understand the project's impact on local communities. After 5 years of implementation they conducted a blind observational / longitudinal study, tracking public meetings and documents (in particular related to budgetary deliberations). They have also established a framework to understand tangible impacts (qualitative evidence, policy decisions, reports and plans, policies, new institutions , new processes) and intangible impacts (participant empowerment, social learning, willingness to participate in the future, increased understanding and trust in government, and so on). Overall they have found positive impact, though the results are still ongoing, and measuring more intangible outcomes (e.g. 'increased trust') has proven to be challenging.¹⁰ Other useful guides for designing and measuring impact in digital engagement include The World Bank's detailed framework.¹¹

A more rigorous approach to evaluation won't always easy and there will be inevitable tensions between wanting to lower the barriers to participation (and hence limiting the amount of data you can request from participants) and wanting to measure the impact achieved. Honest discussion around failures can also be difficult for projects seeking adoption in an already reluctant political environment. However,

understanding what does and

¹⁰ <https://digitalsocial.eu/images/upload/29-Digital%20democracy.pdf>

¹¹ <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/23752/deef-book.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>

doesn't work is essential to developing the field of digital democracy
and demonstrating the role it has to play in our societies.

Appendix J – Summary Of Oral Evidence Submission: Dr Simon Griffiths, Senior Lecturer in Politics at Goldsmiths, University Of London - 5th March 2019

Rise Of Anti-Politics

Much of the recent debate around democracy has focused on the rise of ‘anti-politics’ (Clarke et al) or at least a crisis in representative democracy. Examples include:

- Voting – low point in 2001 (59% voted in general election – it was 70-80% during the post-war period) and local elections are even lower (e.g. 33% in 2016), although turnout has risen recently in general elections and has been relatively high in referendums. Overall, turnout is lower among BME groups and younger people
- Party membership – the Conservatives had a membership of 3 million and Labour had 1 million in the 1950s. Labour has seen a massive revival since 2015, but only to the post-war consensus average. The Conservative Party membership has fallen to around 124,000 (est. by 2018). Only around 1.6% of the electorate were members of political parties in 2018
- Attitudes – in 2001, 30% of people were ‘dissatisfied’ with the Westminster parliament. By 2009, this had risen to 63%. Rise in populism and support for those who reject ‘mainstream politics’ – Trump, Farage, Corbyn and Syriza

Two explanations for the rise of anti-politics:

1. It's the fault of elected officials/the system/the “political class”

This covers a variety of different explanations:

- Voters feel powerless (e.g. Power Inquiry, 2006) – what difference does involvement make, given the system we have? The Power Inquiry called for local democratisation and electoral reform
- Voters are turned off by the process (e.g. the rhetoric of conflict)
- Voters feel disconnected from the existing political parties (e.g. they no longer fit the society they were set up to represent)
- Voters don’t believe traditional democracy can ‘perform’ (i.e. traditional political structures are no longer able to solve the most pressing problems)
- In modern society, government can only ‘steer not row’ (Osborne and Gaebler) – local democracy can’t do much
- Local government has become ‘hollowed out’ (Rhodes) by the pressure to contract out services and by cuts
- Proficiency – Westminster politicians aren’t good enough to solve our problems

2. It's the fault of voters: social capital theory - we're increasingly ‘bowling alone’

Putnam argues we have become increasingly disconnected from family, friends, neighbours, and our democratic structures. He talks of a decline in social capital (both the ‘bonding capital’ that links us to our local communities and the ‘bonding capital’ that links us to others not necessarily like us – authority figures, including politicians)

However, there are plenty of arguments that there is not a rise in ‘anti-politics’, merely a lack of faith in traditional, representative democracy. We now do politics differently e.g. activism, pressure groups, volunteering (Colin Hay, 2007).

It's also worth noting, as Stoker and Crick have done – ‘in defence of politics’ – politics is an innately disappointing activity. It's about compromise. In a world where we act like consumers who expect to get what we want, of course the compromises of politics are disappointing.

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Openness & Transparency

Need to build trust (O’Neil, 2002) – trust doesn’t come from openness and transparency. It comes from scrutiny and accountability: ‘enthusiasm for ever more complete openness and transparency has done little to build or restore public trust. On the contrary, trust seemingly has receded as transparency has advanced … if we want a society in which placing trust is feasible we need to look for ways in which we can actively check one another’s claims’

Public Involvement In Decision-Making

Go where voters are (place-based decision making)

Effective Decision-Making

Providing clarity about the role, workload and responsibilities of a councillor. Link this to debates about why women and BME citizens are less likely to put themselves forward (Rosie Campbell).

Conclusion

- Politics is being done differently.
- Need to reach out to alienated groups, respond to technological changes and go to where people are.
- Limits to what can be done. Many of the problems are structural and need democratic reform.
- Build new structures where you can – in local communities etc.

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