



LOCAL DEMOCRACY WORKING GROUP

Date: WEDNESDAY, 12 MAY 2021 at 7.30 pm

Venue: Council Chamber

**Enquiries to: Rosalind Jeffrey
Telephone: 020 8314 7093**

MEMBERS

Councillor Kevin Bonavia	L
Councillor Chris Best	L
Councillor Juliet Campbell	L
Councillor Patrick Codd	L
Councillor Colin Elliott	L
Councillor Silvana Kelleher	L

Members are summoned to attend this meeting

**Kim Wright
Chief Executive
Lewisham Town Hall
Catford
London SE6 4RU
Date: 4th May 2021**



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

ORDER OF BUSINESS – PART 1 AGENDA

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Lewisham



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

The public are welcome to attend our committee meetings, however occasionally committees may have to consider some business in private. Copies of reports can be made available in additional formats on request.

MINUTES OF THE LOCAL DEMOCRACY WORKING GROUP

Wednesday 10 February at 7.30 pm

PRESENT: Councillors Chris Best, Kevin Bonavia, Juliet Campbell, Patrick Codd, Sophie Davis and Colin Elliott

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor John Paschoud

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Silvana Kelleher

1. Minutes Of Meeting Held On 23 September 2020

RESOLVED: The minutes of the last meeting were agreed as a true record.

2. Declarations Of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Delivering The Recommendations Of The Local Democracy Review: Programme Update Report

Rosalind Jeffrey (Strategic Transformation and Organisational Development Business Partner) introduced the report, which provided an update on the delivery of the Local Democracy Review's recommendations since the last meeting in September 2020.

The following was noted in discussion:

- Timescales for the delivery of longer-term proposals relating to open data will be fully defined once the new corporate structure and approach for data and insights is in place – engagement with members regarding their open data priorities will be key to this work. The importance of piloting and learning from smaller-scale initiatives was also highlighted
- The Lewisham Data Observatory provided a range of useful information about Lewisham and its people, but is not widely known – more should be done to raise awareness, although the Observatory should not be regarded as the only source of data
- Clear, up-to-date performance information (including how Lewisham compares to other boroughs) should be available on the Council website
- Task & Finish groups are intended to be another tool to support policy development, alongside the continued scrutiny of performance and decisions by non-executive members – the establishment of Task & Finish groups will not be mandatory

RESOLVED: Members of the LDWG noted the work undertaken across the review's three key themes since September 2020 and agreed the next steps outlined in the report, specifically the proposal to hold a final LDWG meeting in March 2021. They also requested that training and support be offered to members in relation to the Lewisham Observatory site.

4. Proposals For Planning (Recommendations #25-#30)

Cllr Davis and Emma Talbot (Director of Planning) introduced the final report on the delivery of Local Democracy Review's recommendations relating to Planning, following the interim report presented to the LDWG in February 2020.

The following was noted in discussion:

- Work to develop proposals following the presentation of the interim report was affected by COVID-19, but officers were able to learn from the temporary changes introduced within Planning as a result of the pandemic
- The proposals presented in the final report cover three key areas – decision making, consultation and engagement and communication – with an overall focus on openness and transparency in the Planning process, particularly around effective decision making at committees
- Appeals against decisions are managed by the Planning Inspectorate so the Council is not able to make changes to this process – officers will ensure that information provided to residents and other stakeholders is clear on this issue in future
- Local councillors are key to effective Planning decisions and will continue to be consulted on all applications in their ward through the introduction of a weekly list of Planning applications
- Officers will need to address data protection issues as part of further developing the approach to the automatic publication of letters of objections

RESOLVED: Members of the LDWG noted the contents of the report and the changes that have already been implemented:

- Use of closed sessions in planning committees for legal advice
- Uploading of PowerPoint officer presentations for planning committee members
- The preparation and use of committee informal protocol notes
- The use of external planning training to support planning committee members
- Permanent changes to the plan making sections of the SCI, following public consultation
- The temporary COVID-19 related planning changes and the learning from those

In addition, they agreed:

- Changes and improvements to the Planning web pages
- Officers progress updates to the Local Information Requirements to require the submission community audit to accompany every major development
- The development of a weekly list of applications for ward Cllrs to replace direct notifications
- The introduction of regular pre-application reviews for strategic cases (virtual)
- Preparation and updating of informal written protocols for how committees are undertaken to aid with public understanding and perception
- Officers develop and set up a programme of member training and engagement
- Greater use of the existing planning IT system to enable the public to monitor planning application progress
- New acknowledgement letters prepared to be emailed when an application is received
- Development of public consultation advice for developers and landowners for publication
- Prepare proposals for a new SCI and any necessary associated changes to undertake engagement with relevant stakeholders including:
 - A period of engagement with community groups as to how best to formally recognise them
 - A period of engagement with Members and the public regarding possible revisions to planning committees

They also agreed the further development by officers of the approach to the automatic publication of letters of objection (to follow the latest legal guidance).

5. Development Of Member Role Profiles (Recommendation #45)

Rosalind Jeffrey (Strategic Transformation and Organisational Development Business Partner) introduced the report, which provided a final update on the development of role profiles for all member positions.

The key points were noted in discussion:

- Member role profiles were useful in providing clarity about what was expected of each position, but they also play a key part in raising awareness of councillor roles and responsibilities amongst residents and Council staff – the final versions of the role profiles will be published on the Council website
- It is critical that the role profiles are updated to reflect changes to legislation and practice – members are key to this process and will have regular opportunities to provide feedback

RESOLVED: Members of the LDWG noted the contents of the report and agreed the draft set of member role profiles, subject to the amendments discussed at the meeting being made. They also noted that the Assistant Chief Executive and Director of Law, Governance and HR would have ongoing responsibility for ensuring that the role profiles are regularly reviewed and updated, in consultation with members.

6. Update On Hybrid (Public) Committee Meetings

Petra Der Man (Principal Lawyer and Deputy Monitoring Officer) introduced the report, which provided an update on the development of proposals to introduce hybrid committee meetings.

The following was noted in discussion:

- The temporary removal of the legal requirement for physical attendance at Council committee meetings comes to an end on 7th May 2021. If there is no change to the current legal position, then Council meetings will have to revert back to physical meetings from this date
- The Local Government Association (LGA) has been lobbying central government for an extension to the May 2021 deadline. If this does not happen, then two professional bodies – Lawyers in Local Government (LLG) and the Association of Democratic Services Officers (ADSO) – are considering court action
- Members again highlighted that, despite some challenges, virtual and hybrid committee meetings have potentially significant benefits for residents and councillors

RESOLVED: Members of the LDWG noted the content of the report, specifically the work to date and next steps outlined in section 6. They also requested that officers provide further information about the different systems currently available to the Council for holding virtual meetings, including the advantages and disadvantages of each option.

Agenda Item 2



Local Democracy Working Group

Declaration Of Interests

Date: 12 May 2021

Key decision: No

Class: Part 1

Ward(s) affected: All

Declaration of interests

Members are asked to declare any personal interest they have in any item on the agenda.

1. Personal interests

1.1. There are three types of personal interest referred to in the Council's Member Code of Conduct:

- Disclosable pecuniary interests
- Other registerable interests
- Non-registerable interests

2. Disclosable pecuniary interests

2.1. These are defined by regulation as:

- Employment, trade, profession or vocation of a relevant person (i.e. the member, their spouse or civil partner, or a person with whom they live as spouse or civil partner) for profit or gain
- Sponsorship – payment or provision of any other financial benefit (other than by the Council) within the 12 months prior to giving notice for inclusion in the register in respect of expenses incurred by you in carrying out duties as a member or towards your election expenses (including payment or financial benefit from a Trade Union)
- Undischarged contracts between a relevant person (or a firm in which they are a partner or a body corporate in which they are a director, or in the securities of which they have a beneficial interest) and the Council for goods, services or works
- Beneficial interests in land in the borough
- Licence to occupy land in the borough for one month or more
- Corporate tenancies – any tenancy, where to the member's knowledge, the Council is landlord and the tenant is a firm in which the relevant person is a partner, a body corporate in which they are a director, or in the securities of which they have a beneficial interest
- Beneficial interest in securities of a body where:

- that body to the member's knowledge has a place of business or land in the borough;
- and either
 - the total nominal value of the securities exceeds £25,000 or 1/100 of the total issued share capital of that body; or
 - if the share capital of that body is of more than one class, the total nominal value of the shares of any one class in which the relevant person has a beneficial interest exceeds 1/100 of the total issued share capital of that class

3. Other registerable interests

3.1. The Lewisham Member Code of Conduct requires members also to register the following interests:

- Membership or position of control or management in a body to which you were appointed or nominated by the Council
- Any body exercising functions of a public nature or directed to charitable purposes, or whose principal purposes include the influence of public opinion or policy, including any political party
- Any person from whom you have received a gift or hospitality with an estimated value of at least £25

4. Non-registerable interests

4.1. Occasions may arise when a matter under consideration would or would be likely to affect the wellbeing of a member, their family, friend or close associate more than it would affect the wellbeing of those in the local area generally, but which is not required to be registered in the Register of Members' Interests (for example a matter concerning the closure of a school at which a Member's child attends).

5. Declaration and impact of interest on members' participation

- 5.1. Where a member has any registerable interest in a matter and they are present at a meeting at which that matter is to be discussed, they must declare the nature of the interest at the earliest opportunity and in any event before the matter is considered. The declaration will be recorded in the minutes of the meeting. If the matter is a disclosable pecuniary interest the member must take not part in consideration of the matter and withdraw from the room before it is considered. They must not seek improperly to influence the decision in any way. **Failure to declare such an interest which has not already been entered in the Register of Members' Interests, or participation where such an interest exists, is liable to prosecution and on conviction carries a fine of up to £5000.**
- 5.2. Where a member has a registerable interest which falls short of a disclosable pecuniary interest they must still declare the nature of the interest to the meeting at the earliest opportunity and in any event before the matter is considered, but they may stay in the room, participate in consideration of the matter and vote on it unless section 3.3 below applies.
- 5.3. Where a member has a registerable interest which falls short of a disclosable pecuniary interest, the member must consider whether a reasonable member of the public in possession of the facts would think that their interest is so significant that it would be likely to impair the member's judgement of the public interest. If so, the member must withdraw and take no part in consideration of the matter nor seek to influence the outcome improperly.

- 5.4. If a non-registerable interest arises which affects the wellbeing of a member, their, family, friend or close associate more than it would affect those in the local area generally, then the provisions relating to the declarations of interest and withdrawal apply as if it were a registerable interest.
- 5.5. Decisions relating to declarations of interests are for the member's personal judgement, though in cases of doubt they may wish to seek the advice of the Monitoring Officer.

6. Sensitive information

- 6.1. There are special provisions relating to sensitive interests. These are interests the disclosure of which would be likely to expose the member to risk of violence or intimidation where the Monitoring Officer has agreed that such interest need not be registered. Members with such an interest are referred to the Code and advised to seek advice from the Monitoring Officer in advance.

7. Exempt categories

- 7.1. There are exemptions to these provisions allowing members to participate in decisions notwithstanding interests that would otherwise prevent them doing so. These include:
- Housing – holding a tenancy or lease with the Council unless the matter relates to your particular tenancy or lease; (subject to arrears exception)
 - School meals, school transport and travelling expenses; if you are a parent or guardian of a child in full time education, or a school governor unless the matter relates particularly to the school your child attends or of which you are a governor;
 - Statutory sick pay; if you are in receipt
 - Allowances, payment or indemnity for members
 - Ceremonial honours for members
 - Setting Council Tax or precept (subject to arrears exception)



Local Democracy Working Group

Local Democracy Review – Report Of The Working Group (Spring 2021)

Date: 12 May 2021

Key decision: No

Class: Part 1

Ward(s) affected: All

Contributors: Assistant Chief Executive

Outline and recommendations

In July 2018, Full Council agreed to establish a Local Democracy Review Working Group consisting of eight councillors. They were tasked with making recommendations about how the Mayor and Council could enhance their openness and transparency, increase public involvement in Council decisions and promote effective decision-making.

Members of the Working Group gathered a wide range of evidence during the review and produced a comprehensive report, which identified 57 recommendations for change. Mayor & Cabinet and Full Council agreed all these recommendations in spring 2019. They also approved the appointment of eight councillors to a retained Local Democracy Working Group.

The purpose of this report is to introduce the draft Report Of The Working Group (Spring 2021), which is attached at Appendix A. This second report provides detailed information about the delivery of the recommendations (overseen by the retained Local Democracy Working Group), including key achievements across the programme, as well as exploring the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the three overarching themes in the review's terms of reference.

The Local Democracy Working Group is recommended to approve the draft report, agree that any amendments required be delegated to the Assistant Chief Executive and refer the report to Mayor & Cabinet and Full Council for approval.

Timeline of engagement and decision-making

May 2018 – Mayor Damien Egan promises to launch a review that will make the Council *'even more democratic, open and transparent'*

July 2018 – Full Council agrees to establish a Local Democracy Review Working Group consisting of eight councillors. They are tasked with making recommendations about how the Mayor and Council could enhance their openness and transparency, increase public involvement in Council decisions and promote effective decision-making

September 2018 to January 2019 – the Local Democracy Review Working Group gathers evidence from a wide range of residents, community groups and local councillors (including an online questionnaire completed by over 700 respondents, workshops at four secondary schools and attendance at over 40 events)

January to March 2019 – the Local Democracy Review Working Group collects their evidence into a final report, which identifies 57 recommendations for change

March to April 2019 – Mayor & Cabinet and Full Council agree the report and recommendations of the Local Democracy Review Working Group

May 2019 to March 2020 – the retained Local Democracy Working Group oversees delivery of the recommendations, with the final meeting postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic

September 2020 – the Local Democracy Working Group is extended so that it can complete its outstanding work and also consider the impact of COVID-19 on the three key themes of the review

Reason for lateness and urgency

The report has not been available for five clear working days before the meeting and the Chair is asked to accept it as an urgent item. The report was not available for dispatch on 4th May 2021 as this date was within the pre-election period. The report cannot wait until the next meeting as this is the final meeting of the Local Democracy Working Group and members need to consider the report urgently so that it can be presented to Mayor & Cabinet and the Council AGM for approval.

1. Summary

1.1. This report introduces the draft report of the Local Democracy Working Group (Spring 2021). It provides detailed information about the delivery of the recommendations agreed by Mayor & Cabinet and Full Council in spring 2019, including key achievements across the programme, and also explores the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the three overarching themes in the review's terms of reference.

2. Recommendations

2.1. The Local Democracy Working Group is recommended to:

- Approve the draft report as attached at Appendix A
- Agree that any minor amendments required to facilitate publication of the report be delegated to the Assistant Chief Executive
- Refer the report to Mayor & Cabinet for agreement and endorsement

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- Refer the report to Full Council for agreement and endorsement

3. Policy context

- 3.1. The recommendations of the Local Democracy Review are consistent with all the Council's corporate priorities (outlined in the Corporate Strategy 2018-22) as effective decision-making underpins the delivery of every commitment within the strategy. However, the recommendations are particularly relevant under the priority of:
- *Open Lewisham* – Lewisham is a welcoming place of safety for all where we celebrate the diversity that strengthens us

4. Background

- 4.1. In July 2018, Full Council agreed to establish a Local Democracy Working Group consisting of eight councillors. They were tasked with making recommendations about how the Mayor and Council could:
- Enhance their openness and transparency
 - Increase public involvement in Council decisions
 - Promote effective decision-making
- 4.2. Members of the Working Group gathered evidence from a wide range of residents, community groups and local councillors during the review (including an online questionnaire completed by over 700 respondents, workshops at four secondary schools and attendance at over 40 events). They also participated in two workshops with the [Local Government Information Unit](#) and the [Kirklees Democracy Commission](#) as well as working closely with other local democracy experts. The Working Group then collated their evidence into a final report, which identified 57 recommendations for change.
- 4.3. In spring 2019, all the recommendations made by the Local Democracy Review were agreed by Mayor & Cabinet and Full Council. They also approved the appointment of eight councillors to a retained Local Democracy Working Group which would oversee delivery of all the recommendations during 2019/20.
- 4.4. At their first meeting in May 2019, the retained Working Group agreed to manage the implementation of the review as a single programme of work, with the recommendations clustered into eight thematic areas. Each member of the Working Group acted as 'LDWG Champion' for a thematic area, supported by a second member (this approach enabled members to focus on their particular areas of interest whilst also providing opportunities for further development). Officers also supported individual LDWG Champions with the delivery of projects and activities across their thematic area.
- 4.5. Regular Local Democracy Working Group meetings took place throughout 2019/20. Each LDWG Champion provided an update on work undertaken in their area at these meetings and officer reports on the delivery of specific recommendations were also presented for consideration.
- 4.6. The fifth (and final) meeting of the Local Democracy Working Group was scheduled to take place in March 2020, but was postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. It was later agreed that the duration of the working group should be extended so that it could complete its outstanding work and also consider the impact of COVID-19 on the three key themes of the review. The LDWG met again in September 2020 and a second meeting was scheduled for December 2020, but this was postponed until February 2021 as a result of the second COVID-19 lockdown.

5. Report

- 5.1. The draft Report Of The Working Group (Spring 2021) is attached at Appendix A.
- 5.2. The purpose of this report is to update Full Council on the activities of the Local Democracy Working Group by:
 - Summarising the work undertaken to develop the review's report and recommendations
 - Providing detailed information about the delivery of the recommendations, including the approach taken and key achievements across the programme
 - Exploring the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the three overarching themes in the terms of reference (openness and transparency, public involvement in decisions and effective decision-making)

6. Financial implications

- 6.1. The Local Democracy Review was delivered with a budget of £10k, primarily by using existing expertise and resources within the Corporate Policy team. No further budget was allocated for the delivery of the 57 recommendations and there was an expectation that implementation would be achieved within existing resources wherever possible, given the Council's ongoing budget savings process. As a result, a significant number of officers within Corporate Policy, plus senior managers in other services (such as Planning and Communications) were involved in managing the overall programme and supporting the delivery of specific projects and activities, in addition to their existing roles and responsibilities. Where required for specific recommendations, detailed financial implications were provided for consideration by the appropriate decision-maker/s as part of a separate report.

7. Legal implications

- 7.1. Some of the Local Democracy Review's recommendations (such as the development of a new report template and guidance) were able to be implemented by the Local Democracy Working Group without a formal decision. Where required for specific recommendations, detailed legal implications were provided for consideration by the appropriate decision-maker/s as part of a separate report.

8. Equalities implications

- 8.1. Where required for specific recommendations, equalities implications were provided for consideration by the appropriate decision-maker/s as part of a separate report, taking into account the priorities set out in the Council's Comprehensive Equalities Scheme (CES) and, subsequently, the Single Equality Framework (SEF).
- 8.2. The Equality Act 2010 (the Act) introduced a public sector equality duty (the equality duty or the duty). It covers the following protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.
- 8.3. In summary, the Council must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:
 - Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act
 - Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not

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- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not
- 8.4. It is not an absolute requirement to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation, or other prohibited conduct, or to promote equality of opportunity or foster good relations between persons who share a protected characteristic and those who do not. It is a duty to have due regard to the need to achieve the goals listed in the paragraph above.
- 8.5. The weight to be attached to the duty will be dependent on the nature of the decision and the circumstances in which it is made, bearing in mind the issues of relevance and proportionality. The Mayor and Council must understand the impact or likely impact of the decision on those with protected characteristics who are potentially affected by the decision. The extent of the duty will necessarily vary from case to case and due regard is such regard as is appropriate in all the circumstances.
- 8.6. The Equality and Human Rights Commission has issued Technical Guidance on the Public Sector Equality Duty and statutory guidance entitled 'Equality Act 2010 Services, Public Functions & Associations Statutory Code of Practice'. The Council must have regard to the statutory code in so far as it relates to the duty and attention is drawn to Chapter 11, which deals particularly with the equality duty. The Technical Guidance also covers what public authorities should do to meet the duty. This includes steps that are legally required, as well as recommended actions. The guidance does not have statutory force but nonetheless regard should be had to it, as failure to do so without compelling reason would be of evidential value. The statutory code and the technical guidance can be found at:

<https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/advice-and-guidance/equality-act-codes-practice>

<https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/advice-and-guidance/equality-act-technical-guidance>

- 8.7. The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) has previously issued five guides for public authorities in England giving advice on the equality duty:
- The essential guide to the public sector equality duty
 - Meeting the equality duty in policy and decision-making
 - Engagement and the equality duty: A guide for public authorities
 - Objectives and the equality duty. A guide for public authorities
 - Equality Information and the Equality Duty: A Guide for Public Authorities
- 8.8. The essential guide provides an overview of the equality duty requirements including the general equality duty, the specific duties, and who they apply to. It covers what public authorities should do to meet the duty including steps that are legally required, as well as recommended actions. The other four documents provide more detailed guidance on key areas and advice on good practice. Further information and resources are available at:

<https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/advice-and-guidance/public-sector-equality-duty-guidance#h1>

9. Climate change and environmental implications

- 9.1. There are no specific climate change and environmental implications arising from this report.

10. Crime and disorder implications

10.1. There are no specific crime and disorder implications arising from this report.

11. Health and wellbeing implications

11.1. There are no specific health and wellbeing implications arising from this report.

12. Background papers

- [Local Democracy Review: Report Of The Working Group \(Spring 2019\)](#)
- [Local Democracy Working Group \(All Meetings\)](#)

13. Glossary

Term	Definition
Full Council	Full Council is a meeting of all 54 Lewisham councillors, which is chaired by the Speaker.
Local Democracy Review	The Local Democracy Review was a councillor-led review of local democracy in Lewisham, which made recommendations about how the Mayor and Council could enhance their openness and transparency, increase public involvement in Council decisions and promote effective decision-making.
Local Democracy Working Group	The Local Democracy Working Group is a group of eight councillors who are responsible for implementing the recommendations of the Local Democracy Review during 2019/20. It has now been extended until January 2021.
Programme	A set of related projects and/or activities, which are managed in a coordinated way in order to achieve an overall goal.

14. Report author and contact

14.1. If there are any queries about this report, please contact Rosalind Jeffrey (Strategic Transformation & Organisational Development Business Partner) by email (rosalind.jeffrey@lewisham.gov.uk) or telephone (020 8314 7093).

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Local Democracy Review

Report of the Working Group (Spring 2021)

**A democratic
and open
Lewisham**



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1. Executive Summary

To be completed once the report has been considered by the Local Democracy Working Group.

2. About The Local Democracy Review

The Local Democracy Review was the first comprehensive review of local democracy in Lewisham since the current governance arrangements were established in 2002. During that period, the Council experienced a number of significant changes, including legislative reform and the introduction of new legal responsibilities, such as the transfer of Public Health policy from the NHS, as well as budget cuts of £165m between 2010 and 2018 due to central government austerity measures. The borough's population also increased to over 300,000, becoming younger and more diverse.

We knew that, despite these changes, having a strong local democracy was as important as ever. However, our decision-making processes needed to better reflect and fit our new environment. It was in this context that the Lewisham Mayor Damien Egan pledged in his 2018 election manifesto to launch a review that would make the Council '*even more democratic, open and transparent*'.

In July 2018, Full Council agreed to establish a Local Democracy Review Working Group, which consisted of eight councillors with a range of experience and responsibility across both the executive and non-executive arms of the Council. As a Working Group, we were tasked with making recommendations to the Mayor and Full Council about how we could:

- Enhance openness and transparency
- Further develop public involvement in Council decisions
- Promote effective decision-making

More information about how we conducted the review can be found in our [first report](#).

3. Developing The Recommendations

We wanted the recommendations we made to the Mayor and Full Council to be informed by as many different views and experiences as possible. As a result, our approach to evidence-gathering focused on getting out across the borough and engaging directly with residents. We attended more than 40 face-to-face events, including meetings with local assemblies and voluntary organisations, drop-in sessions at community centres and lunch clubs. We also organised a pop-up local democracy stall in Lewisham Shopping Centre and worked with the Young Mayor's Team to run democracy workshops in Lewisham secondary schools.

Alongside this, we created an online consultation so that people who were unable to attend a face-to-face event would still have an opportunity to share their views. Our consultation received over 700 responses from residents, Council staff and councillors and we also received a number of written submissions from councillors, members of the public and local amenity societies. We also received evidence from several local democracy experts, including Nesta, Dr Simon Griffiths at Goldsmiths, University of London and Professor Colin Copus, Emeritus Professor of Local Politics at De Montfort University. A detailed summary of all the evidence we gathered during the review is available as an [appendix to our first report](#).

To support our all our engagement activity, we launched a dedicated Local Democracy Review website and email address, which provided more information about the review and enabled residents to contact us directly. This website received over 3,000 visits between October 2018 and January 2019.

We then collated and analysed all the evidence we had gathered and used the findings to help us develop a draft set of recommendations. As part of this process, we worked closely with other local authorities and local democracy experts. This included holding workshops with the Local Government Information Unit (LGIU) and Kirklees Council to test our emerging ideas as well as participating in a roundtable discussion with colleagues from Hackney Council.

In our [report](#), we addressed each of the key areas of focus for the review – openness and transparency, public involvement in decisions and effective decision-making – in detail and set out our [57 recommendations for change](#). All of our recommendations were agreed by Mayor & Cabinet and Full Council in spring 2019.

4. Delivering The Recommendations

Our first recommendation was that a Local Democracy Review Working Group of eight councillors should be retained to oversee the delivery of the 57 recommendations made by the review. Six of us who had previously been part of the Working Group were joined by two new councillors.



**Cllr Kevin Bonavia
(Chair)**



**Cllr Sakina Sheikh
(Vice Chair)**



Cllr Chris Best



Cllr Juliet Campbell



Cllr Patrick Codd



Cllr Sophie Davis



Cllr Colin Elliott



Cllr Silvana Kelleher

At our first meeting in May 2019, we agreed that we would manage the delivery of the recommendations as a single programme of work. However, in order to ensure that this approach was practical, we grouped the recommendations into eight thematic areas. Each member of the Working Group acted as a 'LDWG Champion' for an area, with a second member as co-lead to provide support and resilience. This allowed each of us to focus on an area of particular interest and also made it easier to maintain accountability and progress work outside formal meetings.



We held a further four public meetings during 2018/19. At each of these meetings, we provided an update on the delivery of projects and activities in our thematic area and collectively discussed and agreed how we would take the work forward. [All the agendas, minutes and reports from these meetings can be found on the Council website.](#)

Our final meeting was due to take place in March 2020, but was postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In late summer 2020, Full Council agreed to extend our work until March 2021, with an additional responsibility to explore the impact of COVID-19 on the three overarching themes of the review. We held two further public meetings during this period to review our progress and capture our learning and evidence relating to the COVID-19 pandemic.

5. Key Achievements

Theme 1 – Openness and Transparency

Open data and online communications

Recommendations

An open data approach – sharing raw data the Council has so people can interrogate the data and draw their own conclusions – should be explored.

An improved, comprehensive and more joined-up approach to our electronic communications should be developed.

The capacity and accessibility of our website should continue to be developed and improved, informed by the views and requirements of citizens, councillors and officers.

Improved ward pages and information should be developed as part of the improvement of our website.

Expanding the range of channels that people can use to access timely information about decision-making meetings should be explored. A range of methods such as webcasting, pre and post meeting ‘vox pops’ and an increased use of Twitter and social media should be trialled.

The Local Democracy Review website should be retained and used in part to test ideas and recommendations related to online communication in the first instance.

A ‘citizens’ portal’ approach should be investigated, through which citizens can access relevant information and receive targeted communications.

Opportunities for councillors to record and report their activities and attendance at events other than formal Council meetings should be explored and introduced.

Infographics should be more consistently used to effectively convey relevant information about Council performance.

How did we deliver these recommendations?

Whilst the review focused on openness and transparency in relation to democratic processes and decision-making, we found that access to information at a broader level was also a key issue for residents. Many knew little about the responsibilities and services of the Council in general, let alone specifically about how it made decisions and the ways that they could access information about these or be involved in the decision-making process. In practical terms, many residents told us that the Council website was hard to use and they had experienced difficulties locating information or asking for action.

As a result of our findings, a number of recommendations in this thematic area focused on how we could improve our online communications offer. We undertook a major refresh of the Council website in 2019 and, following this, we developed a ‘find my nearest services’ citizen

portal, which allowed residents to enter their address and find targeted information, such as bin collection days and their closest libraries or schools. We also increased our use of tools such as spatial mapping to make information on the website, like the [Building for Lewisham programme](#), more visual and engaging. Alongside this, we introduced targeted Lewisham Life e-newsletters and alerts as well as making better use of single issue emails to promote important issues, such as the Transport for London (TfL) consultation on the Bakerloo Line extension or our Borough of Culture bid. Following specific feedback from young people about our use of social media, we have now introduced LinkedIn as a new channel and developed online videos to promote community events, such as Small Business Saturday. However, we know that we could always do more to improve our online communications, particularly ensuring that our website is designed around the needs of users and accessible to all.

Another key recommendation in this thematic area was around open data, specifically how we could make data we hold about our services available on the Council website for anyone to access, use and share. As part of our discovery work, we found that although – in line with the Local Government Transparency Code – we published some data, such as expenditure over £250, the salaries of senior managers and the value of our social housing assets [on our website](#) as well as on [data.gov.uk](#)¹, our current open data offer was otherwise fairly limited. However, we did find that there were many sources of contextual data² about Lewisham available online, including the [Lewisham Data Observatory](#), Nomis, GLA Datastore and Lewisham’s Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) site. Although it was not strictly open data, we were keen to promote the use of the Lewisham Data Observatory as a single source of information about the borough as we recognised that this was a key building block for embedding evidence based decision-making across the Council. As a result, we have held training sessions with councillors and Council staff to support them in using the Lewisham Data Observatory and merged the JSNA site with the Observatory to ensure that key information is available in one place.

We also researched how other organisations have approached open data, which involved meetings with experts at the Greater London Assembly (GLA) and the Open Data Institute as well as a visit to [‘Bristol is Open’](#). We discovered that there were many potential benefits to implementing an open data approach, including greater transparency about and wider scrutiny of service performance and more empowered and engaged residents, which would contribute to our aim of creating a culture of openness, trust and partnership. However, a key learning point for us was that open data is only useful to the extent that it is used³ – we will need to engage with residents and other stakeholders to ensure that any data we publish is relevant and/or interesting to them. Since the review, we have created a new corporate team to improve the way that we use our data, with a focus on performance management and analytical capability.

In addition, we have introduced webcasting for all Council meetings, starting with Mayor & Cabinet and Full Council in October 2019. As a result, residents who are not physically able to attend these meetings can now choose to view them online, either via the live feed or at a time that suits them. Since April 2020, there have been over 35,000 views of our webcasts.⁴ We are also using our existing governance system to pilot an approach for councillors to

¹ A website which aggregates data published by central government, local authorities and other public bodies.

² ‘Contextual data’ in this context refers to information about Lewisham as a place and the demographics of its residents.

³ An analysis of datasets on <https://data.gov.uk> (central Government’s open data library) found that 80% of the datasets published had never been downloaded.

⁴ A view is defined as a contact lasting for more than a minute.

report and record their attendance at non-Council meetings on the Council website, which will ensure that residents have a greater understanding of the different elements of their role.

Language and reporting

Recommendations

A clear set of practical democratic standards should be developed and introduced across the Council. The standards should provide clarity and consensus about the roles and responsibilities of councillors, officers and citizens in decision-making processes.

An improved style guide and template for all officer reports should be developed and introduced to consistently improve the accessibility and standard of reports.

The report template and guidance should require a clear 'plain English' summary and a 'timeline of engagement and decision-making' to be present at the beginning of every report.

Underpinning the development of the improved style guide to improve the accessibility of reports, consideration should be given to utilising appropriate tools such as the Flesch Reading Ease Readability Formula, and also to seeking appropriate support and accreditations such as those offered by the Plain English Campaign and the British Dyslexia Association. This should be applied to all written and online communications.

All decisions should generally be published within two days of the decision being taken, in line with the constitutional requirements for Mayor and Cabinet decisions.

An open channel/portal should be provided for people to provide direct feedback on the accessibility of reports and publications so there is ongoing learning and improvement based on direct feedback from citizens.

A Glossary of Terms should be provided in reports where necessary to explain some of the key phrases used in local government ('jargon' shouldn't be used and reports should be plain English).

How did we deliver these recommendations?

From the review, we learned that the language and format of our decision-making reports meant that people often struggled to understand what decision was being made and the reasons for it. This frustration was shared by many councillors, who found the length, language and style of reports they received to be impenetrable at times.

As a result, we developed and launched a new Council-wide template for all reports, supported by detailed guidance for report writers, which aimed to improve their accessibility, consistency and quality. We undertook detailed research into Plain English and accessibility principles in order to establish a best practice standard. We then designed the guidance and template to support staff in achieving this standard, such as requiring them to include a Plain English summary and a glossary explaining any technical terms as well as providing links to online 'readability' tools. Real-time feedback from councillors and Council staff during the 'soft launch' in late 2019 enabled us to refine the guidance and template before they were rolled-out more widely. [The template is now used for all Council reports.](#)

More widely, many residents told us that important information was not always communicated clearly and was difficult for the average person to understand. To address this, we [created a form on the Council website](#), with a link in the footer of all reports, for residents to provide direct feedback. This feedback is regularly monitored and shared with councillors and Council staff to ensure that we are continually improving how we communicate, both internally and with our residents. We also produced guidance to support Council staff in publishing committee decisions on the Council website within two working days, so that residents can quickly and easily access information about decision-making.

Theme 2 – Public Involvement in Decision-Making

Effective engagement, including younger and older people

Recommendations

Clearer and more engaging ways should be explored for explaining how the Council works and the roles and responsibilities of councillors and officers.

Better online communications with young people should be co-designed with the young mayor and young advisors and then with wider groups of young people across schools and the borough.

Councillors and officers should routinely and regularly be, and provide information in, places that constituents use and meet. This includes making better use of noticeboards across the borough.

The model of councillor surgeries should be expanded to trial the benefits of Council surgeries, Partnership surgeries and virtual surgeries.

The Council needs to better manage its consultation and engagement mechanisms, systems and processes to ensure that people directly and collectively receive appropriate feedback as to the outcome of the consultation exercise they have taken part in.

The introduction of a People’s Panel should be explored reflecting the demographic of the borough.

Effective mechanisms for engagement and involvement of younger people and older people should be co-designed with our local groups and representatives.

Councillors, local schools and parent governors should work together to increase the understanding and engagement between young people and local decision-making that impacts on them. This should include the development of a structure of councillor question time panels being developed in schools.

How did we deliver these recommendations?

We found from the democracy workshops we held with young people that they knew about their local issues and often had a clear idea of how they would like to work with the Council to solve them. However, when it came to understanding of how they could feed their ideas

into decision-making or participate in local democracy, they were largely unaware of how to do so.

One particular suggestion they made to address this was that the Council should improve its online presence and use social media as an engagement tool, rather than just for communication. In order to explore these ideas in more detail, we worked with the Young Mayor's Team to design and deliver a survey with young people, as well as reviewing our current approach to online engagement with them. We found that our existing online channels had a much better reach with older age groups – for example, although the Council website had specific areas dedicated to young people, 18-24 year olds made up only 5.7% of users. Similarly, this age group had a low level of interaction with Council consultations (1.7% of respondents overall) and the Lewisham Life e-newsletter. Although it was a relatively small sample, the majority of respondents to the survey told us that they wanted to hear more about decisions that the Council is making, our response to the climate emergency and information about local charities and voluntary organisations. We have ensured that the information we gathered, particularly in relation to interests and channel preferences, informs the development of our online communications offer.

Another suggestion from the democracy workshops was that councillors should be more accessible in places where young people are, such as schools and youth centres. As a result, we worked with the Young Mayor's Team and staff from the Council's Education Service to design a 'Councillor Question Time' session for secondary schools. This session aimed to strengthen young people's understanding of local democracy by giving them an opportunity to ask questions of and raise issues directly with councillors in a place where they felt comfortable and confident. We successfully piloted Councillor Question Time sessions at two schools in March 2020 and are planning to roll them out across more secondary schools once the COVID-19 recovery is fully underway.

From the review, it was also clear that we need to engage better with older people, taking their needs into account and ensuring that their views are heard. We therefore worked with the Lewisham Pensioners Forum (LPF) and representatives from Lewisham's Positive Ageing Council (PAC) to map all our existing mechanisms for engaging with older people. This exercise revealed that, in reality, there were many well-established groups and networks supporting older people across the borough, but not all Council staff were aware of them. In order to ensure that these mechanisms are fully utilised in future, we updated the Council's engagement guidance with the information we gathered during the mapping exercise and publicised it on the intranet, so that it can be easily accessed by staff when they need it.

More widely, we heard some evidence of cynicism about the Council's attitude to public involvement in decision-making. Some people regarded mechanisms like formal consultation as tokenistic and felt that the rationale for how subsequent decisions were made was not always clearly explained, leading to the perception that their views had been disregarded. In particular, people told us that they had not received feedback from consultations in which they had participated, either in a timely manner or at all. In order to address these issues, we reviewed our current feedback mechanisms and implemented a number of improvements. These included enabling the mailing list function on all consultations so that results could be emailed directly to respondents when they were available, ensuring that the 'we asked, you said, we did' section on CitizenSpace, our online consultation platform, was completed and published for every consultation and using the Lewisham Life e-newsletter to profile consultations. These improvements have enabled us to better demonstrate how resident participation has had a genuine impact on the decision-making process, which we know is key to building trust with the local community.

Similarly, our review found that whilst there was a core group of people who were actively involved in sharing their views, not just through consultations but also regular attendance at

meetings or asking questions at Council meetings, a wider majority did not know how to get involved or chose not to do so. As a result, several of our recommendations focused on exploring the use of engagement tools which could potentially broaden participation and provide a more balanced and representative viewpoint. One such tool was a People's Panel (or Citizens' Panel) which are typically used by local authorities to identify community priorities and consult both service users and non-service users on specific issues. We undertook a [detailed evaluation of the model](#) and identified a number of strengths, including the presence of a readily available group of residents that can be consulted at short notice, the opportunity to target consultation at specific sub-groups, including age, ethnicity or gender, and response rates to consultations which are likely to be higher than with the general public. However, our evaluation also found that there were a number of potential weaknesses with the model, including that in reality panels are rarely representative of the local population, managing a panel effectively takes considerable time and resources and the risk that panels might make recommendations that cannot be delivered. Having considered the findings of the evaluation, we decided not to recommend setting up a People's Panel at that point, but instead explore more bespoke options for involving seldom-heard communities in the business and decision-making of the Council.

Place-based engagement

Recommendations

The purpose and aims of the current Local Assembly model should be further reviewed to improve and expand the engagement and influence over Council policy developed through any ward-based mechanism. In the interim, Local Assemblies should be provided with step by step guidance as to how to utilise their powers to place items on the agenda of Mayor and Cabinet for discussion.

Following on from our current model of local ward assemblies, opportunities for place-based involvement should be further explored and developed as a potential mechanism of further focusing and improving engagement with and empowerment of seldom-heard communities.

As part of further developing a place-based engagement and involvement approach:

- Civic crowdfunding should be developed
- The place standard tool should be trialled
- A model of citizens assemblies should be considered, initially in relation to discussions around the allocation of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funds

How did we deliver these recommendations?

Our Local Assembly programme was established in 2008 to create a forum for residents to discuss local issues and enable councillors and the community to work together to improve their area. Whilst some residents told us during the review that they found Local Assemblies to be a valuable engagement mechanism, many others raised concerns about accessibility, community representation, opportunities for open debate and their ability to influence Council policy. We are currently reviewing the Local Assembly programme and exploring how engagement and consultation with communities at ward level could be undertaken in a more efficient and innovative way through officers working directly with communities, involving councillors and community organisations as needed.

We learned that, for many people, their 'local area' was much smaller and more focused than a ward, so we needed to explore different ways of supporting engagement and action at a neighbourhood level. For example, we used [Commonplace](#) as part of the Neighbourhood Community Infrastructure Levy (NCIL) funding programme in order to help residents and other stakeholders identify priority themes and rank potential projects. By using this online platform, we were able to reach a broader audience and facilitate open and informed conversations about different neighbourhoods. Since then, we have used Commonplace for a number of projects, including [Lewisham's Local Plan](#) and the [Catford Town Centre framework](#). We are also exploring opportunities, potentially as part of existing regeneration programmes or within the NCIL process, to test the Place Standard Tool, which provides a framework for place-based conversations between local communities, the public sector and voluntary organisations. It asks a series of questions relating to fourteen themes, such as facilities and amenities, public transport and identity and belonging, allowing participants to identify strengths and weaknesses in their area. This evidence can then be used to develop and prioritise actions for improvement. We know from our work with Kirklees Council that they [successfully tested the Place Standard Tool](#) in July 2018 – 240 residents took part in the conversations and 140 Place Standard Tool assessments were completed.

In addition, [we researched civic crowdfunding](#), which is where citizens, often in collaboration with government, propose, fund and deliver projects that aim to deliver public value. A key learning point for us was that, since civic crowdfunding projects do not often provide funders with financial rewards, the feeling of 'making a difference' is an important motivating factor, with people generally investing in projects that will impact themselves and their local community. We found that six Lewisham-based projects had successfully secured £247k of funding from the Crowdfund London programme between 2014/15 and 2019/20. The Council has also used the Spacehive and Crowdfunder platforms to manage our Small & Faith Grant funding process, with the 999 Club raising £20k to fund their first Summer Shelter and Ignition Brewery (a not-for-profit enterprise that creates meaningful jobs for residents who have a learning disability) raised £24k. We have committed to continue promoting and supporting Lewisham-based civic crowdfunding initiatives, working with local voluntary groups to help them access funding.

Finally, we undertook a [detailed evaluation of the Citizens' Assembly model](#), where a small group of residents are brought together to discuss an issue and reach a conclusion about what they think should happen, to determine whether it would enhance our existing place-based engagement approach, particularly in relation to empowering seldom-heard groups and individuals. From our research, we found that Citizens' Assemblies can be useful in drawing attention to a specific issue, providing different perspectives on complex problems and helping to make the case for change to the wider public. However, the process can be complex and resource intensive and it is often difficult to establish a broad, representative group of people. Having considered the findings of the evaluation, we decided not to recommend setting up a Citizens' Assembly at that point, but instead explore how existing borough-wide mechanisms for civic participation could be better utilised routinely, with Citizens' Assemblies utilised when there was a specific issue to be explored.

Recommendations

The Council needs to develop and improve how it attempts to actively engage with seldom-heard groups and individuals to inform decision-making that will impact on them. A further piece of work to consider how best to achieve this, and test out various mechanisms should be undertaken. In the first instance the third sector, faith groups and other public sector partners should be actively involved in shaping and informing this work.

How did we deliver these recommendations?

The majority of recommendations within the 'Public Involvement in Decisions' theme were focused, in different ways, on how we could better reach out to seldom-heard groups and individuals. The evidence we gathered during the review confirmed that we needed to engage more effectively with a wider cross-section of our community, so that more residents felt able to participate in our decision-making processes when they wanted to. However, it soon became clear that we needed to go further, actively prioritising those residents who were not represented in decision-making and tailoring our approaches to meet their needs.

As a starting point, we conducted desktop research into the challenges facing seldom-heard groups and individuals. We found that, according to the Institute for Research and Innovation in Social Services (Iriss), there are many factors which could contribute to people who use services being seldom-heard, including disability, ethnicity, sexuality, communication impairments, mental health issues, homelessness and geographical isolation. The Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE) were a useful resource, having produced several reports exploring the barriers that seldom-heard people have experienced when using social care services. They identified four different types of barriers:

- **Attitudinal**, such as staff treating adults using their services as if they were inferior or had limited potential
- **Organisational**, such as lack of continuity in service provision, emphasis on formal meetings and reliance on digital technology
- **Cultural**, such as concerns about being labelled as a 'service user' or a perception that a particular service or group was 'not for them'
- **Practical**, such as limited access to interpreters, lack of information about rights and services and long, complex documents

We recognised that these types of barriers existed in many areas of the Council. However, the key learning point for us was that people who are seldom-heard do not lack a voice simply because they belong to a particular group or have a certain protected characteristic. They have a voice, but are often not heard due to the assumptions made by people about why and how they should be involved. This is not only reflected in the Institute for Research and Innovation in Social Services' definition of seldom-heard⁵, but also the [social model of disability](#), which states that people with impairments are 'disabled' by the barriers operating in society that exclude and discriminate against them.

⁵ The Institute for Research and Innovation in Social Services (Iriss) defines seldom-heard groups as 'under-represented people who use or might potentially use social services and who are less likely to be heard by social service professionals and decision-makers'.

We built on the desktop research by undertaking an [Appreciative Inquiry](#) with a small number of community organisations to explore how the Council could listen to and learn from seldom-heard voices.⁶ The main themes emerging from this work were:



It was clear from the Appreciative Inquiry that utilising our already strong relationships with Lewisham’s voluntary sector organisations would be key to future work in this area. We held the first of what we hope will be many ‘Seldom-Heard Voices’ conferences, led by the voluntary sector, in May 2021 to explore how we could collectively address the different types of barriers to participation we identified in our research. We know that the next steps will involve further practical work to reshape our approach to engagement, both at a community level and more corporately, as well as using insights and other data from residents at all levels of the organisation in the design and delivery of our services.

⁶ The organisations involved were the Front Room Club at St Luke’s Church, Calabash Centre, Lewisham Speaking Up/People’s Parliament, Ladywell Children & Family Centre/Baby Hub, Lewisham LGBT+ Forum and the ‘Women Together’ project at Lewisham Refugee & Migrant Network. We used local demographic knowledge to identify organisations who would be invited to participate in the Appreciative Inquiry – for example, the Calabash Centre tends to attract older people from a Caribbean background, which is particularly significant in Lewisham as this ethnic group represents nearly 10% of the borough’s population, according to recent GLA projections⁶ whilst engagement with the Lewisham Refugee & Migrant Network reflects the Council’s commitment to being a ‘sanctuary borough’ (welcoming those fleeing violence and persecution in their own countries and protecting the rights of all migrants, asylum seekers and refugees).

Theme 3 – Effective Decision-Making

Planning and Licensing

Recommendations

Communications policies for licensing and planning need to be updated in line with the democratic standards being developed to include effective digital communication. More effective and timely use of electronic communications should be a key focus, including an improved presence on the website and the online publication of notices.

Clearer information should be provided to councillors, citizens, applicants and objectors about the role and power of planning and licencing committee and local councillors.

The most appropriate way to provide professional support and guidance to councillors responsible for planning decisions should be further explored.

A consistent, proportionate approach should be adopted to the provision of submissions and objections to planning and licensing committees. Full provision with suitable redaction should be the standard approach, with summaries also provided where appropriate.

Ward members should be notified of all relevant applications and decision-making processes in a timely and appropriate manner.

If required, the Planning Statement of Community Involvement should be reviewed in line with the democratic standards once developed, and the other relevant recommendations made within this report.

How did we deliver these recommendations?

A key message from residents throughout our review was that information about decision-making processes within Planning, particularly the legal basis on which decisions can be made, was not clearly and widely communicated, leading to significant confusion and frustration.

As a result, we worked closely with Planning staff to undertake a major review of the service. This included assessing current processes and protocols, meeting with local amenity groups and other stakeholders, making a 'secret shopper' planning application, benchmarking our performance against other London boroughs and visiting Brent Council – Local Planning Authority of the Year 2019 – to establish best practice. We also analysed the learning from the emergency COVID-19 measures that we had put in place at the start of the pandemic.

We then used this information to develop a set of options for how the service could work differently in future, which were focused on three key areas – decision-making, communication and consultation and engagement. We discussed these options as a Working Group and confirmed a number of changes, including improvements to the Planning webpages, the introduction of informal written protocols for committees, a revised programme of member training and better use of the current IT system so that residents can monitor the progress of their applications. We will be consulting with councillors and residents about potential changes to the structure of planning committees during the summer

as well as working with amenity societies and community groups to explore the best way of formally recognising their role.

More information about the Planning review can be found in our [report](#).

[Councillor roles, responsibilities and relationships](#)

Recommendations

The Works Council should be better utilised to facilitate direct engagement between unions and councillors.

The role of all councillors, as the representative voice and champion of all of their constituents, should be secured at the heart of all Council communications and decision-making processes and outlined clearly through the democratic standards.

Clarity and consensus should be developed around the roles and responsibilities, and anticipated work load, for the various responsibilities a councillor may undertake.

Building on the excellent work of the Barriers to Politics Working Group: ensuring the delivery of their recommendations should become part of the ongoing responsibilities of the Local Democracy Working Group.

The title of Chair of Council should be changed to Speaker.

The collective understanding of the different roles and responsibilities of officers and councillors needs to be improved. Gaps in understanding and support need to be effectively bridged in a variety of ways to improve understanding, relationships and ultimately decision-making processes. Appropriate and proportionate support for all elements of a councillor's role should be provided.

The Working Group endorses the Mayor's current scheme of delegation and recommends a collegiate approach to decision-making within the Council, utilising the knowledge and talents of all 54 councillors and officers wherever possible.

Opportunities for further diffusing power within the Mayoral model should be further explored through consideration of what further matters could be reserved to Full Council.

An audit of councillor appointments to outside bodies should be undertaken to ensure that they are appropriate, relevant and the responsibilities of the councillor for every appointment are clear and transparent.

Further utilisation of the role of councillor champions, or individual councillor led commissions should also be considered for all councillors, alongside the development of the task and finish approach to policy development to ensure a plethora of ways in which councillors can lead the focus of the Council.

How did we deliver these recommendations?

The evidence we gathered during the review revealed that many residents valued their local councillors and regarded them as an important link between the Council and the wider

community. However, it was clear that a significant number did not understand what councillors did, what they were responsible for or even how to contact them. Internally, we found that there was sometimes a lack of understanding and support between councillors and Council staff in relation to decision-making.

In order to promote greater awareness of councillor roles and responsibilities, both within the Council and amongst residents, we developed role profiles for all the different positions that a councillor could hold, from elected member to Cabinet Member. We used information from the Constitution, committee terms of reference and the Members Information Site as well as best practice from the Local Government Association and other local authorities to complete these role profiles. However, we also gathered detailed feedback from councillors, particularly those who were currently undertaking the role, to ensure that the role profiles reflected real-life practice and experience rather than being based solely on desktop research. As part of our work to create clearer and more engaging ways of explaining how the Council works and encouraging residents to stand as councillors, we will redesign the relevant sections of our website, which will include making the role profiles publically available to all.

We changed the title of Chair of Council to Speaker in October 2020 to make it easier for residents to understand the responsibilities of the councillor appointed to this role. We also undertook a benchmarking exercise with other London boroughs to gather comparative information about councillor champions. We will use the learning from this benchmarking exercise to explore ways in which we could further develop the councillor champion role.

In addition, we reviewed all Mayoral and Full Council appointments, using information in the Constitution and on the Council website as well as engaging directly with organisations who had councillor appointees. We created an online survey at the start of the review so that these organisations could easily provide information about the responsibilities of their councillor appointee. It also ensured that the information we captured was comprehensive and standardised. As a result of this work, we were able to identify out-of-date appointments and have now formally updated the list of organisations to which councillors can nominate themselves or be appointed to by the Mayor.

Given their similar focus on councillor roles and responsibilities, Full Council agreed that the ongoing delivery of the 31 recommendations made by the Barriers to Politics Working Group in November 2017 should become part of our work. More information about how we supported the delivery of these recommendations can be found [here](#).

Recommendations

A mechanism for the community to deliberate and set the focus of select committee investigations should be explored.

Mayor's Question Time should take place routinely both around the borough and virtually. This should be enshrined within the constitution.

The role and format of Full Council meetings should be reviewed where possible and a more thematic and engaging approach developed, utilising the announcements section of the formal agenda and maximising the opportunities for contributions from the public.

When reviewing the format of Full Council meetings, further consideration should be given to ways to:

- Ensure maximum possible attendance in the meeting room
- Enable collective observation from an alternative venue if necessary
- Explore a pre-registration process for supplementary questions to ensure more questioners have the opportunity to speak within the allotted timeframe

All Mayors should be limited to a maximum of two terms only.

A further review should be carried out to identify the best structure and approach for overview and scrutiny to increase its impact and effectiveness whilst reducing the current comprehensive time commitments for all non-executive councillors. This should be inclusive of a greater focus on policy development through 'task and finish' in-depth review work, and should give consideration to the separation of policy development from scrutiny of performance and decisions; not all non-executive councillors should be required to be on a scrutiny committee to allow a greater flexibility of approach and focus, and a fairer distribution of the workload across all councillors various roles and responsibilities. The revised structure should be ready for implementation at the Council AGM in 2020.

Whilst the review of Overview and Scrutiny structure and approach is underway, Overview and Scrutiny should operate within its current constitutional arrangements but with a greater focus on early and pre-decision scrutiny and community engagement where possible.

A wider range of topics that are not part of any party programme should be debated at Full Council with the absence of the whip.

Meetings should be better planned and managed so that they conclude their agenda effectively within two hours, being extended by half an hour only in exceptional circumstances.

How did we deliver these recommendations?

During the review, we heard from some of our scrutiny colleagues that they did not feel their important role was always as valued, understood or supported as it could be across the organisation. In particular, some felt that they had too little involvement in the decision-

making process. We also heard that councillors were expected to attend a large volume of meetings, limiting the time available to get involved in their community and making it difficult for them to maintain oversight of all matters.

As a result, we conducted a comprehensive assessment of our current approach to scrutiny, which included reviewing statutory guidance, identifying examples of good practice and benchmarking our structure against other London boroughs. We used this information to establish six key principles for a new scrutiny structure:



We then developed three potential options for our new structure and held a number of consultation events with councillors in order to identify their preferred option, which was to retain the current scrutiny structure, but also introduce Task & Finish Groups. These groups will be responsible for undertaking in-depth reviews of key local issues in order to support policy development. Following agreement by the Constitution Working Party in October 2020 to amend the Council’s Constitution, the Overview & Scrutiny Committee is now able to agree the establishment of up to three Task & Finish Groups each year. We anticipate that the first Task & Finish groups, if formally agreed, will begin work in summer 2021.

We also made changes to our wider scrutiny processes. This included reducing the number of members on each Select Committee to six (except for CYP Select Committee), reducing the number of meetings per year for each Select Committee to five, restricting agendas to a maximum of two or three items and developing a regular information digest, including performance information, for use by all committees.

Alongside this, we reviewed how Full Council meetings operate in other London boroughs to understand how we could make our meetings more accessible and encourage more residents to participate. We made some initial changes to the format of our meetings in early 2020 as a result, including the introduction of public viewing screens in the foyer of the Civic Suite and a pilot pre-registration process for residents who wanted to ask supplementary questions at the meeting.

6. Exploring The Impact Of COVID-19 On Local Democracy

Theme 1 – Openness and Transparency

During the pandemic, there was an increased recognition about the need for and importance of a localised response to COVID-19, not just in relation to Public Health. Local authorities were close enough to the most vulnerable to understand and respond to their needs and geographically best placed to work with anchor institutions, critical infrastructure providers and businesses to revive local economies. Regular [resident satisfaction surveys](#) undertaken by the Local Government Association (LGA) have shown that, at a national level, public trust in local authorities grew dramatically during the pandemic. In June 2020, 71% of respondents to the survey said that they trusted their local council ‘a great deal’ or ‘a fair amount’.⁷ When asked who they trusted most in relation to local decision-making, 73% of respondents said their local council. Although these figures were slightly lower in the latest survey conducted in February 2021 (66% and 71% respectively), it is apparent that public support for local government remains strong.

We knew from the review that transparency and open communication were key factors in building and maintaining public trust, as well as a crucial mechanism for managing COVID-19 effectively. Our communication with residents during the pandemic took many different forms, including the Mayor’s weekly e-newsletter, online public health campaigns, targeted engagement by Council services and practical support via our Incident helpline and inbox. Research undertaken as part of our borough-wide resident engagement exercise (‘Voices of Lewisham’) has shown that, overall, the public response to our efforts was positive. However, we know that during the early stages of the pandemic, some residents experienced challenges accessing information or understanding our messaging, which may have increased their anxiety. These challenges were not limited to local authorities and were particularly acute for more disadvantaged groups. For example, Lewisham Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) highlighted the lack of information in appropriate formats for patients with learning disabilities. Whilst many of these issues were the result of rapidly changing circumstances and national guidance, it is clear that we still need to do more to improve our knowledge and understanding of the communities we serve.

The report by Lewisham CCG also highlighted another feature of the pandemic, which was the prevalence of misinformation about COVID-19. We realised that, in order to ensure important public health messaging reached the right people, we had to move beyond simply using different channels, such as social media for young people, and reach out directly to communities. As a result, we developed a COVID-19 Community Champions programme to provide clear and trustworthy information about the pandemic to Lewisham residents. Over 100 volunteers from a range of backgrounds, including voluntary and community sector groups, BAME community groups, staff groups, health providers, business owners, local councillors and faith leaders, participated in the programme. This ‘trusted individuals’ approach, which we explored as part of our Appreciative Inquiry with seldom-heard groups and individuals, will be developed further as part of our strategic communications offer.

The COVID-19 pandemic has also accelerated the use of digital technology. Like other local authorities, we used technology to ensure that essential public services, including schools and housing, could continue and our staff were able to work from home. We knew from our review that, although some residents preferred telephone and face-to-face communication, many encouraged the use of digital technology as a quicker and more convenient way of accessing services. However, given the nature of the pandemic, the vast majority of

⁷ This was the first time that positive responses to the question about trust in local authorities had reached 70% (since polling began in 2012).

activities, information and services (both within the public sector and society as a whole) have moved exclusively online, without offering offline alternatives or with offline alternatives limited or restricted. This has placed those without digital access at even greater risk of exclusion than before the pandemic.

We explored the concept of digital inclusion in our first report, recognising the need to balance the financial benefits of digital services and people's changing expectations with the needs of more vulnerable residents. Our focus then was broadly on people who were not 'digitally literate', meaning they lacked the ability, confidence and skills to use digital devices and the internet. Digital literacy was still an issue during the pandemic – a report by Lewisham Speaking Up, a charity for people with learning disabilities, highlighted the need for training and tailored personal support to enable its users to access online services. However, research by the Centre for Ageing Better, a charitable foundation working on behalf of older people, reveals that groups who may have traditionally been reluctant to use technology have started to adapt. For example, 75% of 50-70 year olds said that they were making video calls more often during the pandemic.⁸ Instead, evidence gathered by the 'Voices of Lewisham' engagement exercise has revealed stories of people who were unable to afford broadband relying on expensive phone data and of families struggling to home-school their children with only one device in the entire household. COVID-19 has demonstrated that digital inclusion is as much about accessibility and affordability as it is about skills – if the future of Council services and, more widely, local democracy (in the form of public participation and decision-making) is digital, then we need to ensure that everybody is able to participate.

Theme 2 – Public Involvement in Decisions

According to [research by Involve](#), a leading public participation charity, COVID-19 has contributed to a process of 'local democratisation' in two key ways. They suggest that the first example of this is in helping to 'normalise the participation of local people in the governance and management of services... that are important to them'. We have certainly seen strong evidence of community action in Lewisham during the pandemic. For example, 2,400 residents registered to volunteer for Lewisham Local (a 'hub' organisation who worked with the Council and other partners to coordinate support for vulnerable people who were isolated due to the COVID-19 pandemic), with many more volunteering within local faith institutions, community groups and foodbanks. There were also many examples of mutual aid groups, businesses, individuals and employers responding to calls for help with food and money. However, this phenomenon, which New Local have called the '[community powered approach](#)' to public services, was not just about collaboration within communities, but also between communities and public bodies. For example, 60 Council staff who are not employed in critical service areas are currently working for our COVID Action Team (at its peak, there were 140 staff), taking on a number of roles, including supporting shielding residents, delivering the test and trace system and distributing PPE. We also worked together effectively across shared boundaries with key partners and organisations in the borough, as demonstrated by the evaluation of Lewisham Local undertaken by Goldsmiths, University of London.

The second example cited by Involve is that the experience of the pandemic has 'further developed a trend toward more direct, inclusive and open public engagement in institutions'. Whilst traditional approaches to public engagement have been difficult to sustain during the pandemic, virtual engagement tools have made innovative and direct participation more possible. For example, both Camden Council's [Health and Care Citizens' Assembly](#) and Lancaster City Council's [People's Jury on climate change](#) moved online at the start of the

⁸ <https://www.ageing-better.org.uk/publications/experience-people-approaching-later-life-lockdown-impact-covid-19-50-70-year-olds>

pandemic, holding virtual evidence sessions and participant-led discussions in order to identify priorities and develop recommendations. In Lewisham, we held an online residents' information session about the Lewisham & Lee Green Low Traffic Neighbourhood (LTN), which was led by the Mayor and Chief Executive. As councillors, we have also engaged with our constituents in different ways, with some of us using digital technology, such as Zoom video calls, to hold virtual surgeries.

The COVID-19 pandemic has also had a vastly disproportionate impact on different communities, exacerbating many existing inequalities. A [report by Public Health England](#) found that risk of dying among those diagnosed with COVID-19 was higher in those living in more deprived areas and for people from BAME groups. This is reflected at a local level, with non-UK born residents comprising 48% of all COVID-19 deaths in Lewisham (currently, 34% of our population is non-UK born) and those living in the most deprived areas of the borough having considerably higher rates of death. A national event hosted by the Ubele Initiative in April 2020 explored issues facing BAME communities, with three recurring themes highlighted – lack of access to emergency resources, a need for community voices to be included in the development of solutions and high food insecurity, with a particular need for culturally appropriate food.

However, we have also needed to consider other economic and social inequalities resulting from COVID-19, such as financial insecurity, mental and physical health crises, homelessness and food poverty, which have affected people who we would not normally see as 'vulnerable' or disadvantaged – for example, the number of residents claiming welfare benefits rose by more than 12,500 between March and November 2020 and foodbank usage has increased dramatically. As a Council, tackling health and socio-economic inequality is a key part of our Single Equality Framework, which sets out our ambition to achieve equality for every resident irrespective of their background or life experience. It has also prompted us to think more about the language that we use in relation to our residents. For example, evidence from Council staff who had volunteered for the Shielding Programme found that many shielding residents objected to the description of themselves as 'clinically extremely vulnerable', associating it with notions of victimhood and dependency whilst other residents welcomed the term, seeing it as a form of protection.

Theme 3 – Effective Decision-Making

At the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, the government temporarily removed the legal requirement for local authorities to hold public meetings in person. This meant that local authorities had the power to hold public meetings remotely by using video or telephone conferencing technology. Since March 2020, we have successfully held all our public meetings remotely. This has included virtual Planning Committee meetings, which have a high level of public participation and sensitive decision-making. We found that although such meetings were resource intensive, requiring additional support from Council staff and required changes to practice, it was possible to retain the same quality of decision-making.

The Local Government Association (LGA) undertook a ['temperature check'](#) of local authorities in relation to remote public meetings in March/April 2021. All of the 243 authorities who responded said that they had made use of these powers to hold public meetings remotely. Nearly all respondents described virtual meetings as having worked well throughout the pandemic and as positively benefitting local democracy. These benefits included more transparency and overall visibility in the decision-making process, increased public interest in and participation with the democratic process and a reduced carbon footprint through no longer travelling to meetings. Respondents also noted that the greater accessibility of remote meetings could encourage candidates from under-represented groups to stand as councillors. Remote meetings were seen as particularly beneficial for existing or

prospective councillors with other commitments, such as caring responsibilities, employment or health issues as it made it easier for them to attend and participate.

The LGA 'temperature check' also asked local authorities how likely they would be to use legal powers, if they had them, to hold remote and/or hybrid meetings once the pandemic was over. 83% of respondents said that they would be 'very likely' or 'fairly likely' to conduct meetings remotely whilst 79% said they would be 'very likely' or 'fairly likely' to hold hybrid meetings. As a Working Group, we have been overseeing the development of an approach to hybrid committee meetings since our work resumed in September 2020. Following the government's decision not to extend the May 2021 deadline, all local authorities must now hold physical committee meetings – as a result, we have now implemented this approach.

In addition to their important political leadership roles, the COVID-19 pandemic has reaffirmed the importance of councillors' civic and community leadership roles. As local councillors in Lewisham, we have focused on supporting residents 'on the ground'. This has involved using our local knowledge to understand and represent the needs of our local communities, providing a forum for people to raise their concerns and feeding them back to the Council and also representing the Council in our communities. We have also acted as a first point of contact for residents and as a focal point for those seeking help, advice and support during the COVID-19 pandemic.

7. Next Steps & Conclusion

This second report of the Working Group marks the formal conclusion of the Local Democracy Review.

We were aware that delivering the 57 separate recommendations presented in our first report within a single year would be extremely difficult, even without the onset of COVID-19. Although some recommendations were 'quick wins', such as changing the title of Chair of Council to Speaker, many others have involved transforming existing structures and ways of working or testing out new approaches and ideas. As a result, there is still more to do to implement some of these changes. The pandemic has also presented new challenges and opportunities in relation to local democracy, including how we build on our renewed local leadership role and increased levels of trust, use digital technology to reshape engagement and decision-making and retain the ethos of community action and collaboration. Cllr Bonavia, in his role as Cabinet Member for Democracy, Refugees & Accountability, will therefore continue to oversee the delivery of ongoing work and liaise with other members of the Working Group in relation to specific areas, such as Planning.

At its heart, the Local Democracy Review has always been about the culture of local democracy, not just the infrastructure. We know that the changes we have made in delivering the recommendations of the review have started to shift our organisational culture to one that encourages collaboration, creativity and leadership at all levels, with residents and councillors at the centre of what we do. However, fully embedding this culture change, as the borough begins its recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, will need to be the responsibility of the organisation as a whole, together with our partners and residents.

Appendix – Overview Of Recommendations

Ref	Recommendation	Thematic Area	Status
1	A Local Democracy Working Group of eight councillors should be retained to oversee the delivery of the programme of work recommended within this report.	n/a	Complete
2	The Local Democracy Working Group should provide the structure and support through which the recommendations are further developed and tested where appropriate. They will take account of relevant guidelines for effective local democratic processes.	n/a	Complete
3	We need to work collectively to build further trust and confidence in our democratic processes. We need to change our language and behaviour to influence a culture change that embeds the idea of the citizen at the heart of all we do.	n/a	In Delivery
4	Clearer and more engaging ways should be explored for explaining how the Council works and the roles and responsibilities of councillors and officers.	Effective Engagement, Including Younger/Older People (Cllr Codd/Cllr Elliott)	In Delivery
5	An open data approach – sharing raw data the Council has so people can interrogate the data and draw their own conclusions – should be explored.	Open Data & Online Communications (Cllr Bonavia/Cllr Davis)	Complete
6	An improved, comprehensive and more joined-up approach to our electronic communications should be developed.	Open Data & Online Communications (Cllr Bonavia/Cllr Davis)	Complete
7	Young people should be actively engaged in informing the Council's wider approach to communication on social media.	Effective Engagement, Including Younger/Older People (Cllr Codd/Cllr Elliott)	Complete
8	The capacity and accessibility of our website should continue to be developed and improved, informed by the views and requirements of citizens, councillors and officers.	Open Data & Online Communications (Cllr Bonavia/Cllr Davis)	Complete
9	Improved ward pages and information should be developed as part of the improvement of our website.	Open Data & Online Communications (Cllr Bonavia/Cllr Davis)	Complete

10	Expanding the range of channels that people can use to access timely information about decision-making meetings should be explored. A range of methods such as webcasting, pre and post meeting 'vox pops' and an increased use of Twitter and social media should be trialled.	Open Data & Online Communications (Cllr Bonavia/Cllr Davis)	Complete
11	The Local Democracy Review website should be retained and used in part to test ideas and recommendations related to online communication in the first instance.	Open Data & Online Communications (Cllr Bonavia/Cllr Davis)	Complete
12	A 'citizens' portal' approach should be investigated, through which citizens can access relevant information and receive targeted communications.	Open Data & Online Communications (Cllr Bonavia/Cllr Davis)	Complete
13	Opportunities for councillors to record and report their activities and attendance at events other than formal Council meetings should be explored and introduced.	Open Data & Online Communications (Cllr Bonavia/Cllr Davis)	In Delivery
14	Infographics should be more consistently used to effectively convey relevant information about Council performance.	Open Data & Online Communications (Cllr Bonavia/Cllr Davis)	In Delivery
15	Better online communications with young people should be co-designed with the young mayor and young advisors and then with wider groups of young people across schools and the borough.	Effective Engagement, Including Younger/Older People (Cllr Codd/Cllr Elliott)	Complete
16	Councillors and officers should routinely and regularly be, and provide information in, places that constituents use and meet. This includes making better use of noticeboards across the borough.	Effective Engagement, Including Younger/Older People (Cllr Codd/Cllr Elliott)	In Delivery
17	The model of councillor surgeries should be expanded to trial the benefits of Council surgeries, Partnership surgeries and virtual surgeries.	Effective Engagement, Including Younger/Older People (Cllr Codd/Cllr Elliott)	In Delivery
18	A clear set of practical democratic standards should be developed and introduced across the Council. The standards should provide clarity and consensus about the roles and responsibilities of councillors, officers and citizens in decision-making processes.	Language & Reporting (Cllr Kelleher/Cllr Best)	In Delivery

19	An improved style guide and template for all officer reports should be developed and introduced to consistently improve the accessibility and standard of reports.	Language & Reporting (Cllr Kelleher/Cllr Best)	Complete
20	The report template and guidance should require a clear 'plain English' summary and a 'timeline of engagement and decision-making' to be present at the beginning of every report.	Language & Reporting (Cllr Kelleher/Cllr Best)	Complete
21	Underpinning the development of the improved style guide to improve the accessibility of reports, consideration should be given to utilising appropriate tools such as the Flesch Reading Ease Readability Formula, and also to seeking appropriate support and accreditations such as those offered by the Plain English Campaign and the British Dyslexia Association. This should be applied to all written and online communications.	Language & Reporting (Cllr Kelleher/Cllr Best)	Complete
22	All decisions should generally be published within two days of the decision being taken, in line with the constitutional requirements for Mayor and Cabinet decisions.	Language & Reporting (Cllr Kelleher/Cllr Best)	Complete
23	An open channel/portal should be provided for people to provide direct feedback on the accessibility of reports and publications so there is ongoing learning and improvement based on direct feedback from citizens.	Language & Reporting (Cllr Kelleher/Cllr Best)	Complete
24	A Glossary of Terms should be provided in reports where necessary to explain some of the key phrases used in local government ('jargon' shouldn't be used and reports should be plain English).	Language & Reporting (Cllr Kelleher/Cllr Best)	Complete
25	Communications policies for licensing and planning need to be updated in line with the democratic standards being developed to include effective digital communication. More effective and timely use of electronic communications should be a key focus, including an improved presence on the website and the online publication of notices.	Planning & Licensing (Cllr Davis/Cllr Bonavia) / Open Data & Online Communications (Cllr Bonavia/Cllr Davis)	In Delivery
26	Clearer information should be provided to councillors, citizens, applicants and objectors about the role and power of planning and licencing committee and local councillors.	Planning & Licensing (Cllr Davis/Cllr Bonavia)	In Delivery

27	The most appropriate way to provide professional support and guidance to councillors responsible for planning decisions should be further explored.	Planning & Licensing (Cllr Davis/Cllr Bonavia)	In Delivery
28	A consistent, proportionate approach should be adopted to the provision of submissions and objections to planning and licensing committees. Full provision with suitable redaction should be the standard approach, with summaries also provided where appropriate.	Planning & Licensing (Cllr Davis/Cllr Bonavia)	In Delivery
29	Ward members should be notified of all relevant applications and decision-making processes in a timely and appropriate manner.	Planning & Licensing (Cllr Davis/Cllr Bonavia)	In Delivery
30	If required, the Planning Statement of Community Involvement should be reviewed in line with the democratic standards once developed, and the other relevant recommendations made within this report.	Planning & Licensing (Cllr Davis/Cllr Bonavia)	In Delivery
31	The Council needs to develop and improve how it attempts to actively engage with seldom-heard groups and individuals to inform decision-making that will impact on them. A further piece of work to consider how best to achieve this, and test out various mechanisms should be undertaken. In the first instance the third sector, faith groups and other public sector partners should be actively involved in shaping and informing this work.	Seldom-Heard Voices (Cllr Campbell/Cllr Sheikh)	In Delivery
32	The Council needs to better manage its consultation and engagement mechanisms, systems and processes to ensure that people directly and collectively receive appropriate feedback as to the outcome of the consultation exercise they have taken part in.	Effective Engagement, Including Younger/Older People (Cllr Codd/Cllr Elliott)	Complete
33	The introduction of a People's Panel should be explored reflecting the demographic of the borough.	Effective Engagement, Including Younger/Older People (Cllr Codd/Cllr Elliott) / Seldom-Heard Voices (Cllr Campbell/Cllr Sheikh)	Complete

34	A mechanism for the community to deliberate and set the focus of select committee investigations should be explored.	Overview & Scrutiny, Including Council Meetings (Cllr Sheikh/Cllr Campbell)	Complete
35	The Works Council should be better utilised to facilitate direct engagement between unions and councillors.	Councillor Roles, Responsibilities & Relationships (Cllr Best/Cllr Kelleher)	Complete
36	Mayor's Question Time should take place routinely both around the borough and virtually. This should be enshrined within the constitution.	Overview & Scrutiny, Including Council Meetings (Cllr Sheikh/Cllr Campbell)	Complete
37	The purpose and aims of the current Local Assembly model should be further reviewed to improve and expand the engagement and influence over Council policy developed through any ward-based mechanism. In the interim, Local Assemblies should be provided with step by step guidance as to how to utilise their powers to place items on the agenda of Mayor and Cabinet for discussion.	Place-Based Engagement (Cllr Elliott/Cllr Codd)	In Delivery
38	Following on from our current model of local ward assemblies, opportunities for place-based involvement should be further explored and developed as a potential mechanism of further focusing and improving engagement with and empowerment of seldom-heard communities.	Effective Engagement, Including Younger/Older People (Cllr Codd/Cllr Elliott) / Seldom-Heard Voices (Cllr Campbell/Cllr Sheikh)	In Delivery
39	As part of further developing a place-based engagement and involvement approach: - Civic crowdfunding should be developed - The place standard tool should be trialled - A model of citizens assemblies should be considered, initially in relation to discussions around the allocation of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funds	Place-Based Engagement (Cllr Elliott/Cllr Codd)	Complete
40	Effective mechanisms for engagement and involvement of younger people and older people should be co-designed with our local groups and representatives.	Effective Engagement, Including Younger/Older People (Cllr Codd/Cllr Elliott)	In Delivery
41	Councillors, local schools and parent governors should work together to increase the understanding and engagement between young people and local decision-making that impacts on them. This should include the development of a	Effective Engagement, Including Younger/Older People (Cllr Codd/Cllr Elliott)	Complete

	structure of councillor question time panels being developed in schools.		
42	The role and format of Full Council meetings should be reviewed where possible and a more thematic and engaging approach developed, utilising the announcements section of the formal agenda and maximising the opportunities for contributions from the public.	Overview & Scrutiny, Including Council Meetings (Cllr Sheikh/Cllr Campbell)	Complete
43	When reviewing the format of Full Council meetings, further consideration should be given to ways to: - Ensure maximum possible attendance in the meeting room - Enable collective observation from an alternative venue if necessary - Explore a pre-registration process for supplementary questions to ensure more questioners have the opportunity to speak within the allotted timeframe	Overview & Scrutiny, Including Council Meetings (Cllr Sheikh/Cllr Campbell)	Complete
44	The role of all councillors, as the representative voice and champion of all of their constituents, should be secured at the heart of all Council communications and decision-making processes and outlined clearly through the democratic standards.	Councillor Roles, Responsibilities & Relationships (Cllr Best/Cllr Kelleher)	In Delivery
45	Clarity and consensus should be developed around the roles and responsibilities, and anticipated work load, for the various responsibilities a councillor may undertake.	Councillor Roles, Responsibilities & Relationships (Cllr Best/Cllr Kelleher)	Complete
46	Building on the excellent work of the Barriers to Politics Working Group: ensuring the delivery of their recommendations should become part of the ongoing responsibilities of the Local Democracy Working Group.	Councillor Roles, Responsibilities & Relationships (Cllr Best/Cllr Kelleher)	Complete
47	All Mayors should be limited to a maximum of two terms only.	Overview & Scrutiny, Including Council Meetings (Cllr Sheikh/Cllr Campbell)	Advisory recommendation
48	The title of Chair of Council should be changed to Speaker.	Councillor Roles, Responsibilities & Relationships (Cllr Best/Cllr Kelleher)	Complete

49	The collective understanding of the different roles and responsibilities of officers and councillors needs to be improved. Gaps in understanding and support need to be effectively bridged in a variety of ways to improve understanding, relationships and ultimately decision-making processes. Appropriate and proportionate support for all elements of a councillor's role should be provided.	Councillor Roles, Responsibilities & Relationships (Cllr Best/Cllr Kelleher)	Complete
50	The Working Group endorses the Mayor's current scheme of delegation and recommends a collegiate approach to decision-making within the Council, utilising the knowledge and talents of all 54 councillors and officers wherever possible.	Councillor Roles, Responsibilities & Relationships (Cllr Best/Cllr Kelleher)	Complete
51	Opportunities for further diffusing power within the Mayoral model should be further explored through consideration of what further matters could be reserved to Full Council.	Councillor Roles, Responsibilities & Relationships (Cllr Best/Cllr Kelleher)	Complete
52	An audit of councillor appointments to outside bodies should be undertaken to ensure that they are appropriate, relevant and the responsibilities of the councillor for every appointment are clear and transparent.	Councillor Roles, Responsibilities & Relationships (Cllr Best/Cllr Kelleher)	Complete
53	A further review should be carried out to identify the best structure and approach for overview and scrutiny to increase its impact and effectiveness whilst reducing the current comprehensive time commitments for all non-executive councillors. This should be inclusive of a greater focus on policy development through 'task and finish' in-depth review work, and should give consideration to the separation of policy development from scrutiny of performance and decisions; not all non-executive councillors should be required to be on a scrutiny committee to allow a greater flexibility of approach and focus, and a fairer distribution of the workload across all councillors various roles and responsibilities. The revised structure should be ready for implementation at the Council AGM in 2020.	Overview & Scrutiny, Including Council Meetings (Cllr Sheikh/Cllr Campbell)	Complete

54	Whilst the review of Overview and Scrutiny structure and approach is underway, Overview and Scrutiny should operate within its current constitutional arrangements but with a greater focus on early and pre-decision scrutiny and community engagement where possible.	Overview & Scrutiny, Including Council Meetings (Cllr Sheikh/Cllr Campbell)	Complete
55	Further utilisation of the role of councillor champions, or individual councillor led commissions should also be considered for all councillors, alongside the development of the task and finish approach to policy development to ensure a plethora of ways in which councillors can lead the focus of the Council.	Councillor Roles, Responsibilities & Relationships (Cllr Best/Cllr Kelleher)	In Delivery
56	A wider range of topics that are not part of any party programme should be debated at Full Council with the absence of the whip.	Overview & Scrutiny, Including Council Meetings (Cllr Sheikh/Cllr Campbell)	This recommendation is the responsibility of political groups
57	Meetings should be better planned and managed so that they conclude their agenda effectively within two hours, being extended by half an hour only in exceptional circumstances.	Overview & Scrutiny, Including Council Meetings (Cllr Sheikh/Cllr Campbell)	Complete