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Safer Stronger Communities Select Committee Supplementary Agenda

Tuesday, 7 November 2023 7.00 pm, Civic Suite Civic Suite Lewisham Town Hall London SE6 4RU

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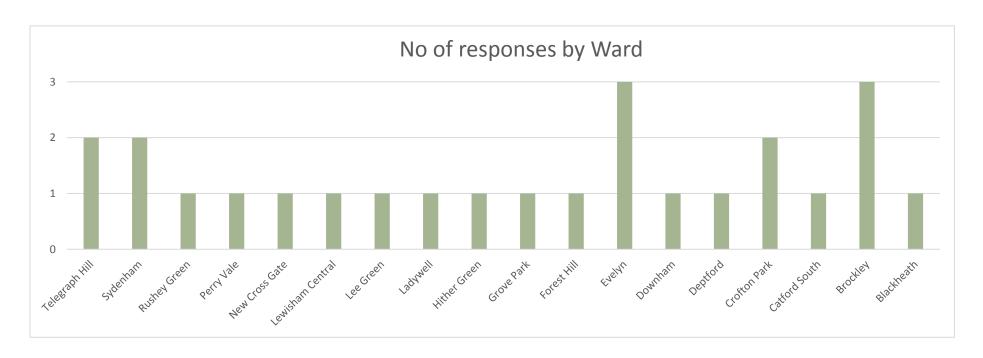
Part 1

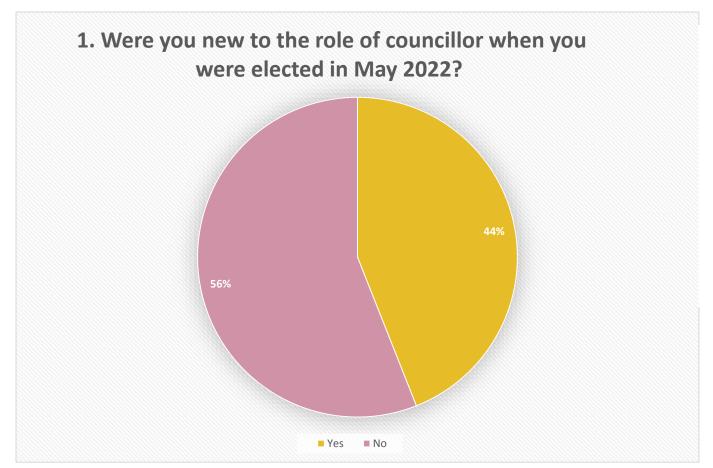
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4.	Local Assemblies Update	3 - 50



<u>Councillor Survey on Local Assemblies – Analysis of Responses</u>

The following is an initial analysis of responses received – a more detailed analysis will be undertaken and discussed with the Cabinet Member for Assemblies to agree key actions for change and improvement.

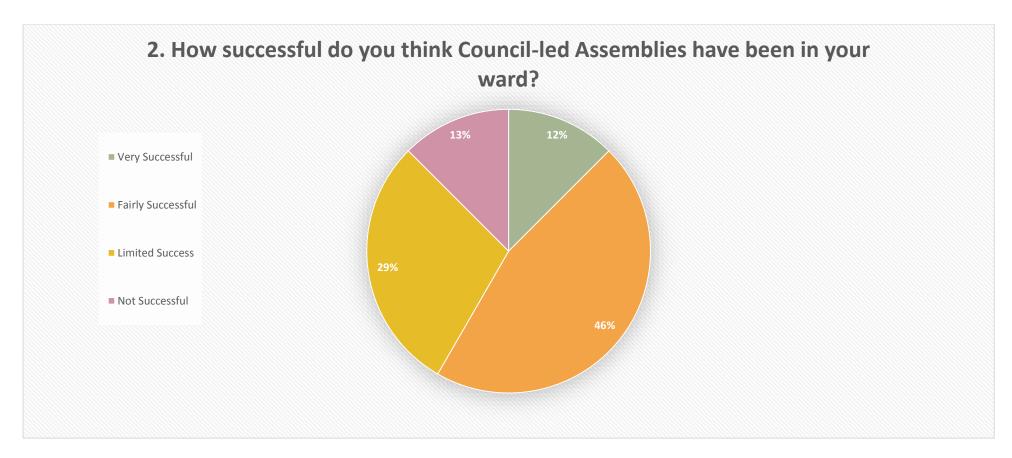




A small majority of councillors responding to the survey were elected before 2022.

In light of overall councillor numbers, there is a relatively equal numerical split of pre and post 2022 councillors across the council.

25 out of 53 Councillors responded to the survey and represented 18 of the 19 wards surveyed. It should be noted that, for most wards, one councillor responded to the survey. However, in each of five wards, two or three individual councillor responses were received. In these cases, we have sometimes had to provide an average of the responses received where a ward level score was required (this is marked with an asterix). However, in some cases, all responses have been included to ensure comprehensive feedback.



A majority (58%) stated that Council-led Assemblies were very or fairly successful in their wards. 29% responded that they were of limited success and 13% not successful.

The comments reflect a range of reasons for why councillors have rated their Assemblies as successful or not. This suggests that more discussion is needed between officers and councillors about what needs to change and improve in each ward to deliver successful Assemblies.



We have had v good attendance for the majority of assemblies, good speakers, and topics and only issue is online - when drops off dramatically. People look out or the topics, community updates etc

Because they have fulfilled, and then built on, the role we envisaged for them since 2006 when they were first piloted We continue to meet in person four times of year supported by the Community
Development Officer. We have been using The Sydenham Centre, a Council owned building, to meet in free of charge. Whilst we have hot topics on the agenda, we also link the meeting to other events such as the Sydenham Fun Palace and the Christmas Tree lighting. We always have community updates on the agenda to keep residents informed as well as a Q&A at the end of the meeting

They are well run, supported by Katie who is fantastic. They are reasonably well attended. However, it seems that those who attend are often (mainly) from groups that we already hear quite a lot from: amenity societies and people who are not shy about coming forwards. There is an over-representation of the white middle-classes and not enough working class or people from different ethnic backgrounds. Katie is aware of this also, and we are trying to get better representation, but so

It has given an opportunity to work with local community groups and people

Good discussion and engagement, but limited turnout and turnout not representative of wards diversity.

Strong attendance and engagement with the agenda

It is a time when we can gather with residents and businesses in our ward.
It is a great way to give updates to residents and for them to hear from
other local organisations.

I feel that due to my ward not receiving any NCIL funding to support Ward Assemblies, we are limited on marketing and hall hiring. Brockley doesn't have many community venues; we are very limited to being accessible

Residents' attendance and level of engagement are high. Discussions are meaningful with follow-up actions that have tangibly led to positive change in the ward. However, residents are often informed with short notice by officers through email lists and the lack of leafleting in our ward with outreach those digitally excluded.

I think even with the cut to funding, the Assemblies have continued to work reasonably well. We have a good coordinator and there have been some good presentations. The main problem, which existed before the cutbacks as well, is that the Assemblies tend to attract the same audience, white, middle-aged, and middle-class. So, it's very much the same, but without the sandwiches!

It's not always easy to mobilise people to come and despite always trying to plan ahead, it can be challenging to secure an engaging and relevant agenda when everyone involved is generally quite time

satisfactory (20+
residents attend a
typical assembly). It is a
good vehicle for active
members of the
community to find out
what is happening
locally. It is also a good
way for residents to
raise concerns.
However, attendees are
not representative of

Need to attract a wider representation from the community.

Need to look at how young people can become involved which may mean looking at joint ward events linked to guidance from the Young Mayors Team or to have Borough wide youth assembly events? Agenda items that come from residents' feedback and views from the Assembly Organising Group which we have in the Ward. Need to look at signing for deaf and hard of hearing residents. Trying to inject a varied agenda with some

Have had a number of dynamic and well attended meetings in public in past (up to say 5 years ago) where there were 'hot issues' and adequate resource to promote community engagement prior to and at the meeting and to do follow-up. More recently (last 5 years) meetings very poorly attended (4 -12 residents), same 'suspects' attend both online or face to face, incl Meet the Mayor sessions.

Alongside Assembly meetings in public, ward councillors engage directly with local communities of interest incl active attendance at TRA meetings Friends of Tele Hill Park, ward panel etc. Also pro-active in bringing communities in common together e.g., TH Community Network (local VCS groups, Honor Oak Estate Stakeholder Group (bringing together cross sector groups/ agencies to work better / together on the estate/ for local residents).



Assembly meetings are not an effective means of community engagement in 2023 and typically attended by a small, demographically unrepresentative group. Attendees are usually hyperengaged in the local community already. Meetings only attract larger, more representative attendance when topics of local controversy are on the agenda.

Downham, compared to other wards, does not have thriving and well-resourced organisations that are geared to assist with resident participation. Online meetings were fairly pointless as residents would not engage that way, therefore the only meetings with decent number of participations have been those in-person. However, it is debatable how representative 20-30 people are as part of a ward with 12,000 residents. As Councillors, we had to do 90% of the work and even buy our own additional refreshments. We have been lucky to have multiple free locations made available to us by local groups.

The Assemblies in Evelyn have, in the past, been fraught affairs. With weak chairing, serious local issues and some bad fait5h actors the assemblies turned in to what some residents described as pitched battles where nothing got done. Since being elected we have undertaken a full consultation of residents who have previously been to Evelyn Assemblies to understand what they thought worked well and what they thought didn't work well with our assemblies' model. We held two in person and one online event and then an online survey.

Since then, we have produced a report looking at the findings of this, recommending a new community forum model that fed into the assembly, led by residents and actions based. We have now had two in person assemblies, one went well as our first and then the most recent we seemed to be slipping back to the adversarial nature of assemblies, this is something we are working on to resolve. At the moment I do not think the way we do assemblies in

We spent ages
consulting on assemblies
and how they should
function, but I don't think
we got a very good
model.

We haven't managed to make it resident lead

We need a way of getting it to focus on achievable goals Jsual suspects come, ofter quite confrontational

Thinly-attended, little appetite from community groups to step up and share organisation.

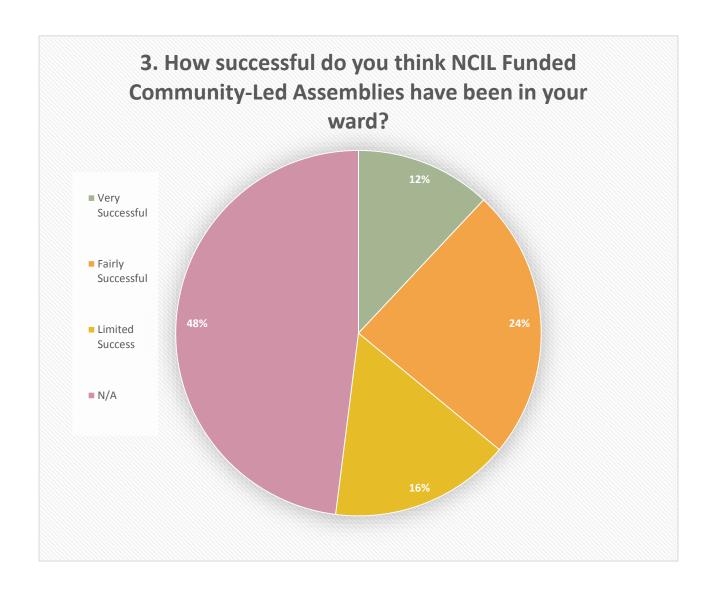
We have very poor attendance, and it is often the same people who turn up. Since the removal of any funding for grants to be chosen by the assembly there has been even less participation. The people who turn up do not represent the demographic of the ward.



Very low attendance

Don't have the time or interest, there are many other groups and when it was successful there was money to pay for venue food and even the secretary now nothing

Anecdotally, assemblies in Evelyn had been difficult in the past - perceived as undemocratic, not centred around community members, inefficient, untransparent. Hence, we as new Clirs did a deep dive into what worked and what didn't after our first assembly, where we came armed with data and updates. In our second assembly, we presented the results of this new mode

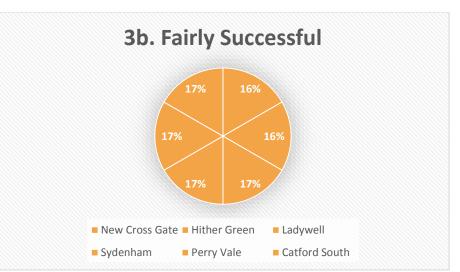


36% felt they were very successful or fairly successful. 16% felt that they were of limited success. (It is important to note that NCIL funded organisations can be successful VCS organisations with a good track record of service delivery, but still struggle with delivery of Assemblies. The possible reasons for this are set out below in the section What worked well and are likely to be contextual factors in each ward)

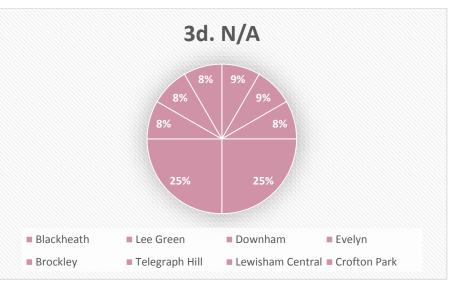
For nearly half (48%) of respondents, NCIL funded community-led Assemblies were not applicable.

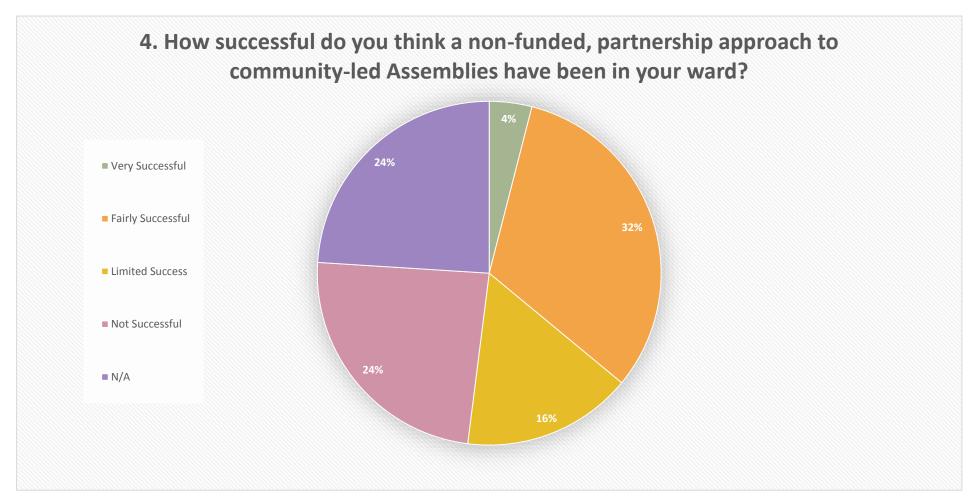
The high rate of "not applicable" is due to councillors answering this question where NCIL was not applicable in their ward.









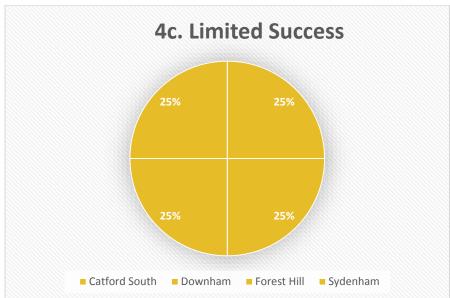


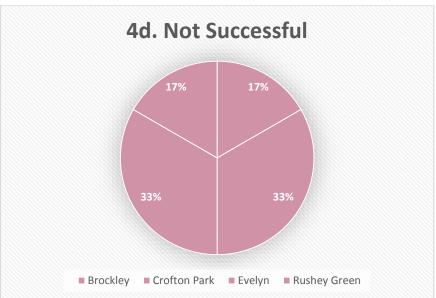
Only 4% of respondents (1 respondent) stated that the non-funded partnership approach to community Assemblies had been very successful. This figure rose to 36% for those rating the approach as fairly successful. However, 40% stated that the approach was of limited success or not successful with an additional 24% stating that this approach was not applicable in their wards.

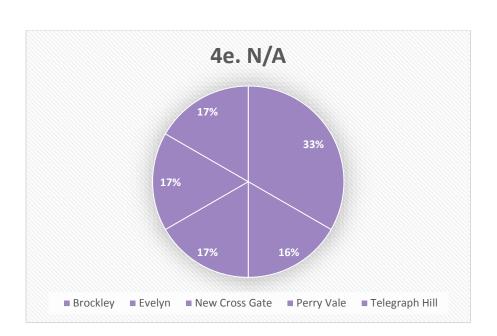
It should be noted that, in a number of wards, it has not been possible to identify non-NCIL funded partners to facilitate assembly meetings and councillor responses are possibly a reflection of this. However, this situation improved as the year progressed, i.e. more organisation have come forward to provide meeting venues.

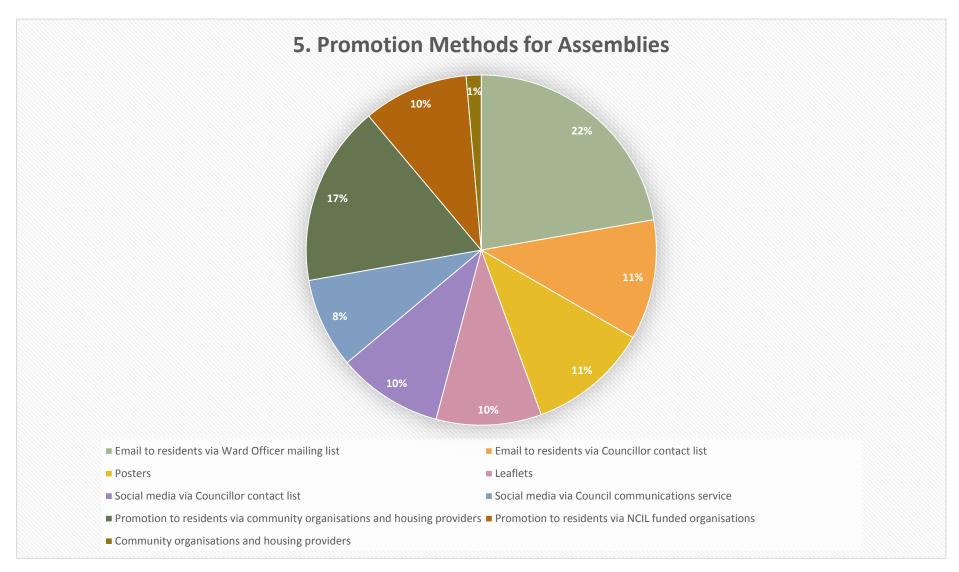






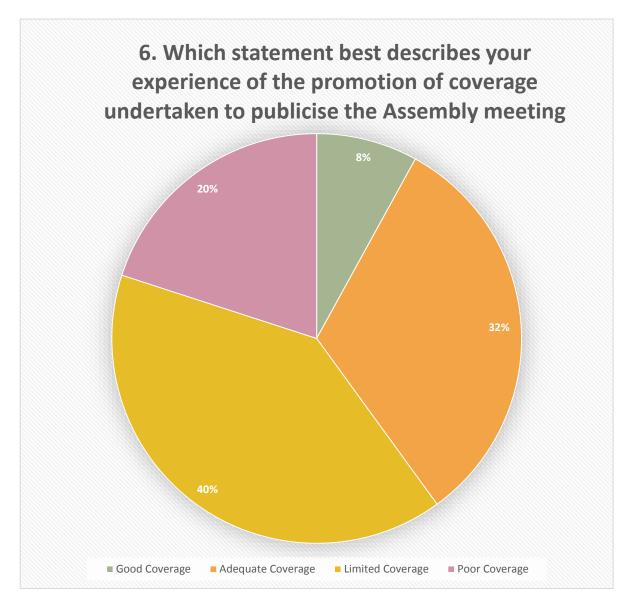






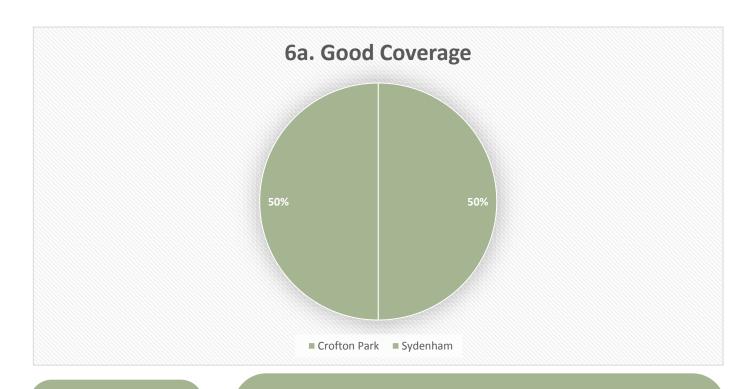
Feedback suggests a range of approaches are used to promote Assemblies – with emails to assembly contact lists and promotion via community organisations being the two most frequently used.

would be useful to undertake further analysis of which approach is most successful at reaching and engaging residents, particularly via feedback from residents attending Assembly meetings (this information is currently being collected through Assembly feedback forms – although response numbers are not high)



The majority of responders (60%) felt that promotion coverage is limited or poor, with only 8% stating that coverage was good.

This is clearly an area requiring further development and closer working with the Council's Communications team. It should be noted that the survey covers the period after the withdrawal of all meeting funds including the funding for the distribution of printed literature to all households across the borough.

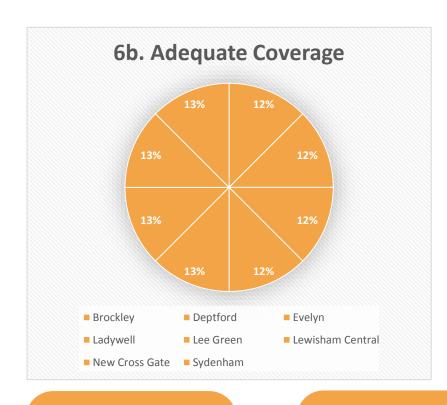


Use the method always used by community officer

I have always been keen on posters and officers have a redesign this year - we normally have 30 x A4 posters printed for distribution in the high street and library. In the past we printed A5 flyers for the coffee shops. I usually distribute the posters myself and put up in the Town

Centre notice board.

We use the eNewsletter to promote the quarterly meetings and use other community organisations' such as the Sydenham Society weekly eNewsletter and quarterly Newsletter plus Sydenham Arts etc and other members of the Coordinating Group to promote the meetings.



Again, due to low resource the promotion is never as good as it could be

Posters and promotion by local community groups (on receipt of info via Ward Officer mailing list) seem to be the most effective means of spreading information

We have had to deliver our own leaflets plus S/N

We are lucky to have developed the Ladywell Live website through the skills of a volunteer from our Assembly Organising Group and post Assembly Info and local / borough /London and all relevant information that would be of interest to local residents

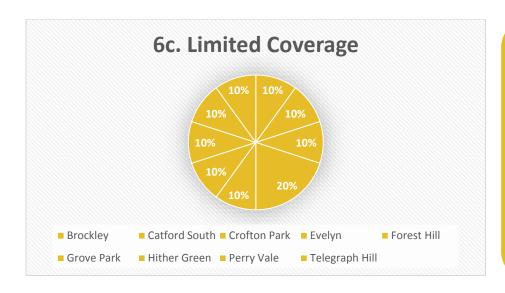
Much of the work is councillor led

We go mainly off of the ward mailing list, which has now changed due to the ward boundaries. We have been left with no other methods of communication due to cuts. We could do more c,llr outreach and via housing providers, but we also simply don't always have the time to do this.

It relates to the lack of diverse representation at the meetings, as outlined above.

ward assemblies....in our case, it's mostly from the terraces houses behind Lewisham Library. Not a lot of people from the new tower blocks in Lewisham Central (despite one time where we leafleted all the blocks...the effort was deemed not worth it as only one new person attended!). If we had funding, maybe leafletting/direct mail would help

need to encourage more residents who do not usuallv attend



I know we could have promoted it much better. The 2nd time our CDO had had sick leave so some things were missed. I think we are striving to regain credibility and trust in so many ways in Evelyn and sometimes things are not where they should be, because we are still stuck trying to improve or sustain basic matters

Largely reached the usual suspects. Many of those who might be interested in supporting their community are put off by some of the more confrontational (e.g. anti-HMO, anti-LTN, anti-regen) groups

most of the promotion was done via social media which does not include people who don't use social media We are not reaching new audiences generally.

he audience is disproportionately middle class given demographic of ward. Lack of resource and commitment

notification does not reach all communities in the ward and turnout I limited.

Email lists means same contacts invited

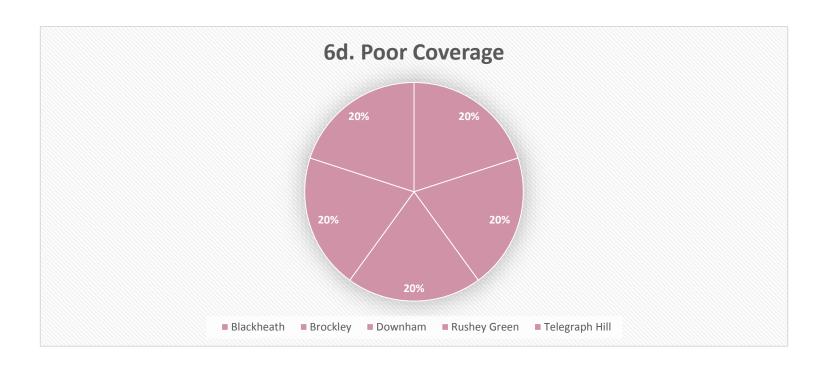
Cllr social media has to be seen; offers opportunity to extend reach but does it in practice?

No (comprehensive) council comms on individual ward assembly meetinas in public

No posters nor leaflet.

Only emails and Council website and Cllrs sending to own contact lists (possibly duplicating as opposed to widening reach). No promotion seen re GP assembly on social media to my knowledge. Apart from the few occasions when we've had NCIL budget for a delivered d2d leaflet, a very small %age of ward residents could be contacted.

Even when we had leaflet drops in the previous administration, they were quite patchy. It's hard to reach out beyond the normal attendees

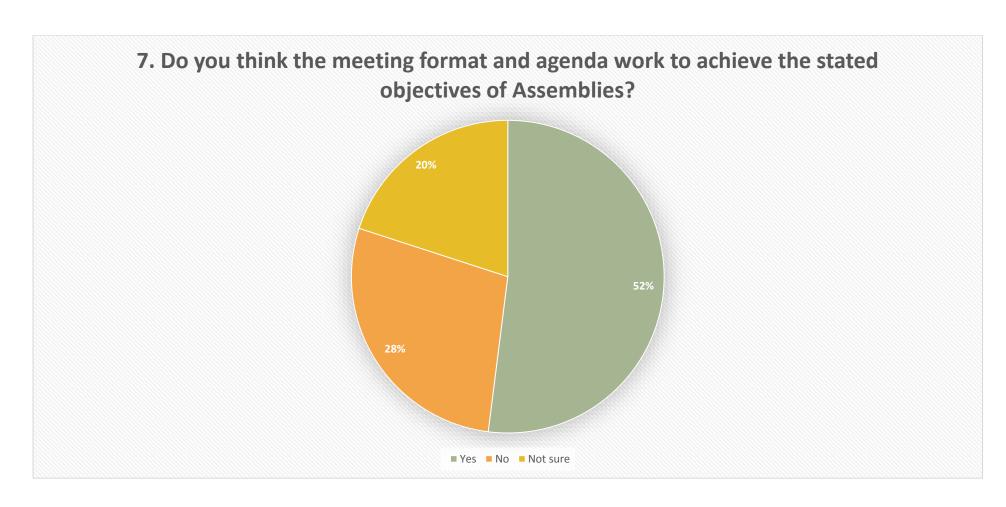


No leafleting, no social media posts by the council account, and the onus being placed on officers' email lists and councillors' own direct contact to residents' limits coverage.

Very limited advertising and mainly targeting local groups and expecting them to cascade messages, which happens with different levels

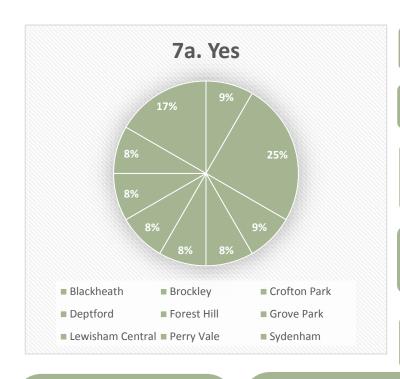
As I previously mentioned, I feel that due to the mailing list being limited to amenity society groups, we are not able to reach the residents who live in social housing or in blocks of flats. Not to mention, just general demographic of those that live in Brockley is not reflected in the meetings.

Due to cost we are relying on social media for promotion, and this is patchy and only reaches people who are already engaged or angry about the activities of the council. Having said this I am not sure that we'd get that many more people coming if we posted out invitations to every door as a lot of people don't really understand or are interested in what is going on in their area. I think what is needed is for active members of different organisations to be contacted and used to spread the word and be engaged as to what should go on the agenda of meetings. Otherwise, we are only ever talking to the same people. The last meeting used local food providers as a lever to get people together for lunch and this was much better, but this takes a lot of organisation and funds.



52% of councillors stated that meeting formats and agenda achieve stated objectives, with a further 28% stating that they did not and 20% stating that they were not sure.

All Assemblies should review the formats of their meetings and agendas and work with cogroup members on a borough-wide basis to identify formats which allow residents to contribute to and engage with discussion.



The format is good

Regardless of the issues, our assemblies lead to fruitfu discussions and have a large buy-in from our residents

We use different formats

Residents do not understand the function of assemblies

Format works well with good time for discussion I was the Cabinet Member that set up the Assembly programme and whilst disappointed with the funding cuts year on year I think NCIL funding has provided a solution where there is a community organisation happy to support the meetings. Some wards have stronger links with the community than others but over the years I have worked with local organisations and faith groups to develop those links. We can do more to engage with our leisure, parks and library building providers, but we have a number of "Friends" groups that contribute at the Sydenham Assembly. We need to work with our community volunteers to bring in fresh faces and ideally a younger age group to give their views.

We have tried to follow Assembly format and provide relevant Council agenda type issues in conjunctior with issues raised by residents

We rotate being Chair as Cllrs and ensure that we work with the Ward Assembly co-ordinating group on the agenda and officer follows up as to topics we recommend, or he suggest, and the group agrees. We do need to get more on to the group, however.

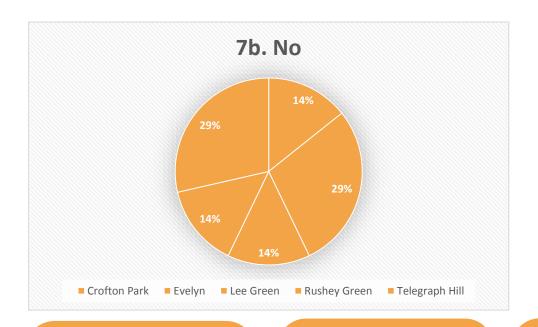
I think the format is fine and the agendas are interesting. But that's from my perspective and I'm probably fairly typical of the type of person who attends.

Maybe thought should be given as to how we try to encourage a wider demographic to attend.

Regardless of the issues, our assemblies lead to fruitful discussions and have a large buy-in from our residents

Well received by the residents (feedback from residents) Meeting format and agenda is flexible and can be defined by the Coordinating Group, to fit the topics people want included

I think the agenda that we do for the Brockley Ward assembly meetings is good. It is just the limitations of venues and reaching out to residents in the Brockley Ward. That is an issue for me

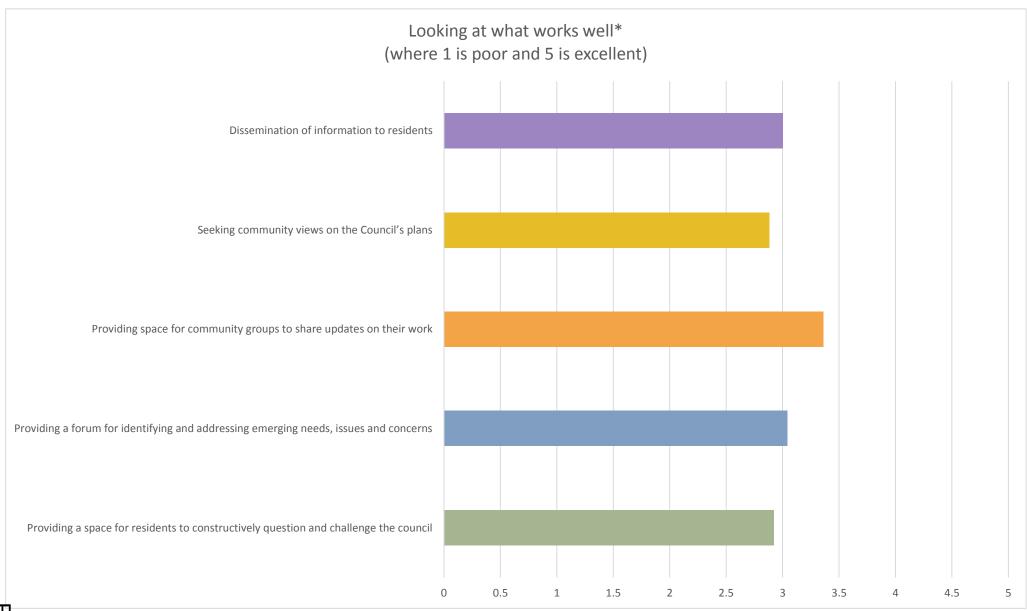


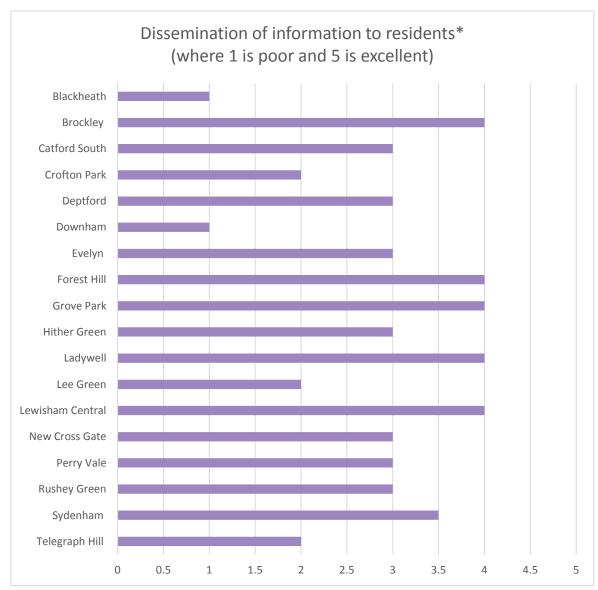
As said before the format can make the assembly a pitched battle, recently our cllr updates took the whole hour and we didn't get to the actual things we wanted to talk about.

The entire premise of Assemblie is out of date

more informational updates, we don't do a lot of decision-making so far, more presentations and Q&A. to be fair, residents really want this information. it just seems we need to use more and more frequent channels of communications. In our defence, we are trying very hard, but we are dealing with a lot of work and historic under- or misrepresentation in Evelyn

The Assemblies were partly set up to distribute the funds we used to have for community groups. Now this funding is no available they have become a talking shop which does not really reflect the needs of the whole community.

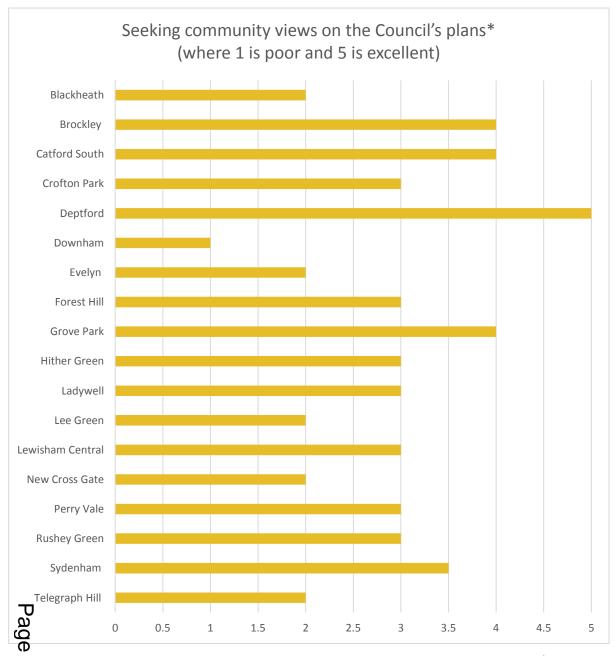




When looking at how effective Assemblies are at disseminating information to residents, a majority (13) of the 18 wards responding scored an average of 3 or more out of 5.

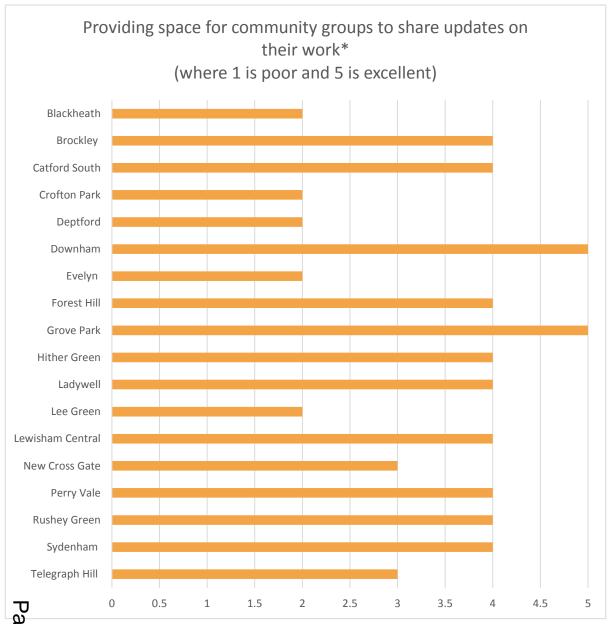
A further analysis of what has worked in this area needs to be undertaken for those wards that have been successful, including sharing good practice. This information needs to be shared and discussed with councillors to see whether they can be implemented in their particular ward. Although it is important to note that the demographics of the population, the level of community infrastructure, previous relationships between the Council and communities, and levels of deprivation all influence the success of democratic engagement at ward level.

*Average scores



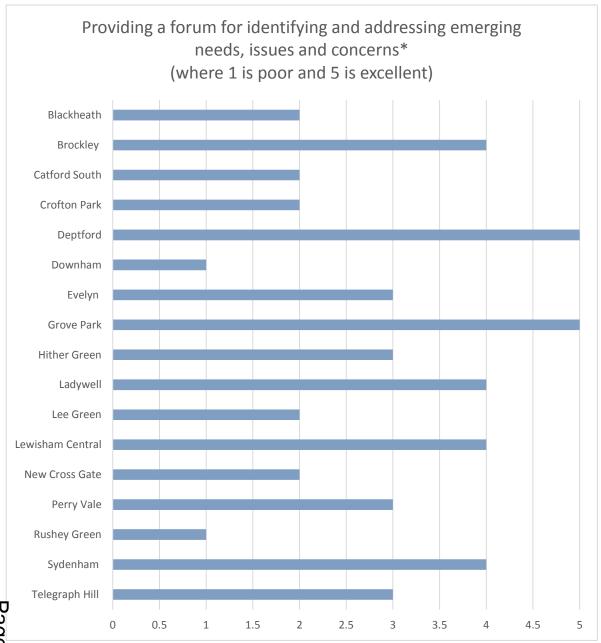
Of 18 ward responses, 12 (66%) scored between three and five on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is poor and 5 is excellent.

Strongly performing wards to share good practice with lower scoring wards in approaches they have taken to achieving higher levels of engagement. Again, as above, it is important to note that the demographics of the population, the level of community infrastructure, previous relationships between the Council and communities, and levels of deprivation all influence the success of democratic engagement at ward level.



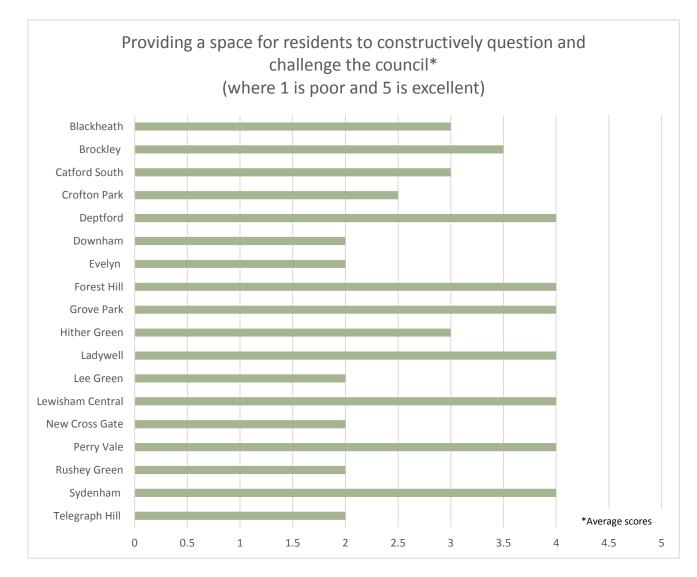
13 wards scored between three and five on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is poor and 5 is excellent in this area.

Good practice needs to be shared in identifying approaches that work in engaging with community organisations.



11 wards scored between three and five on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is poor and 5 is excellent.

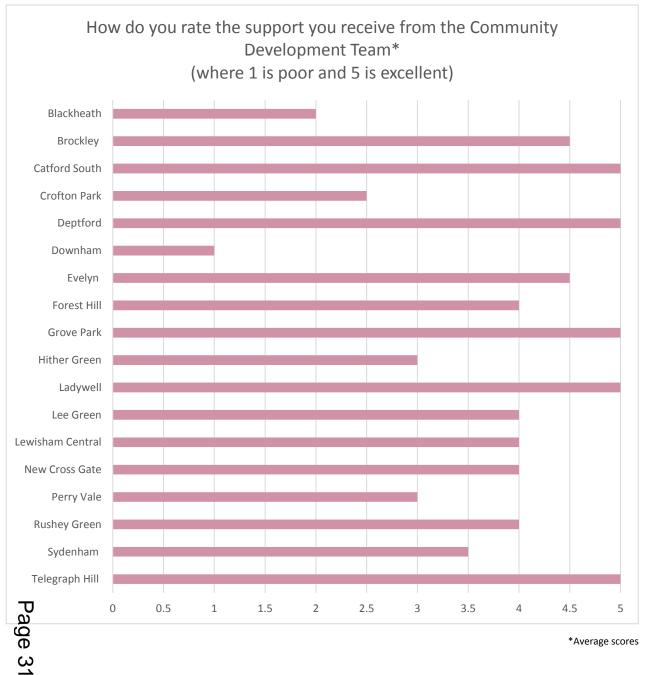
Sharing good practice on how this has worked successfully would help to embed this across all Assembly meetings



11 wards scored between three and five on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is poor and 5 is excellent.

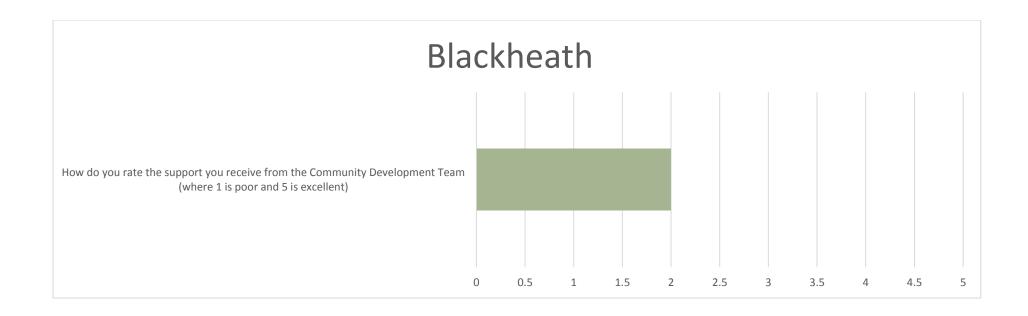
Further work is required to identify subject areas which have provided opportunities for residents to express their views on the council's work and provide constructive suggestions.

Given the variation in responses to how assemblies have successfully achieved across the five areas identified above, we recommend the return to an annual all-ward Co-group and Councillor event that allows sharing of good practice, peer learning and discussion of areas for improvement, and new developments in democratic and community engagement.

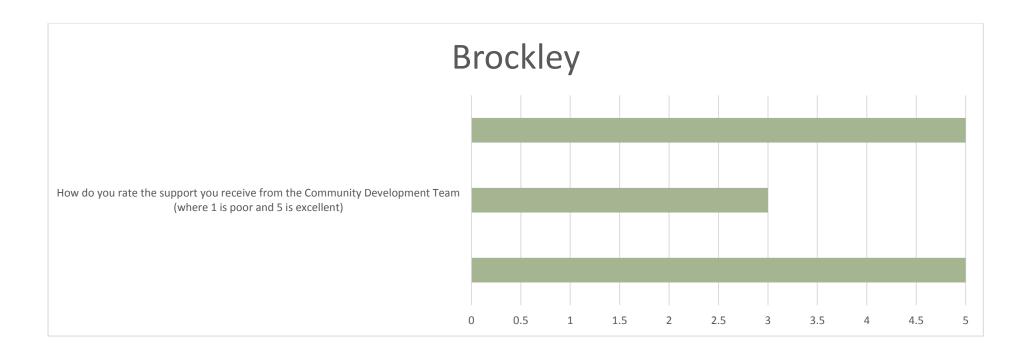


15 of 18 wards scored three or more on the sliding scale of 1 to 5, with five scoring a full 5 (excellent). Sometime councillors have reduced their scores because of lack of capacity of officers and funding rather than because of the quality of support.

A further review is needed of areas where lower scores have been recorded, in conversation with ward councillors.



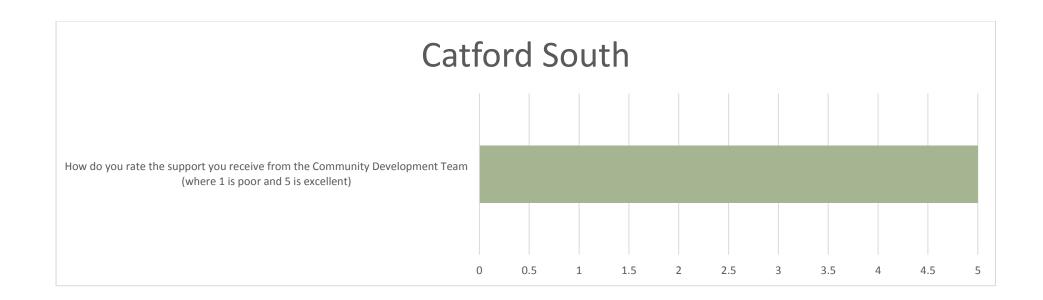
and often in response to our follow-ups to chase matters up.
We also had a change of officer ahead of one assembly, with everything having to be reorganised as no information had been handed over



Katie has been really great accessible by email and proactive

think the help we get from the team, given the budgetary constraints, is excellent

I understand that they are limited,
but I really feel that we as
councillors are doing a disservice
to the residents of the Brockley
Ward by not doing better
marketing regarding the assembly
meetings

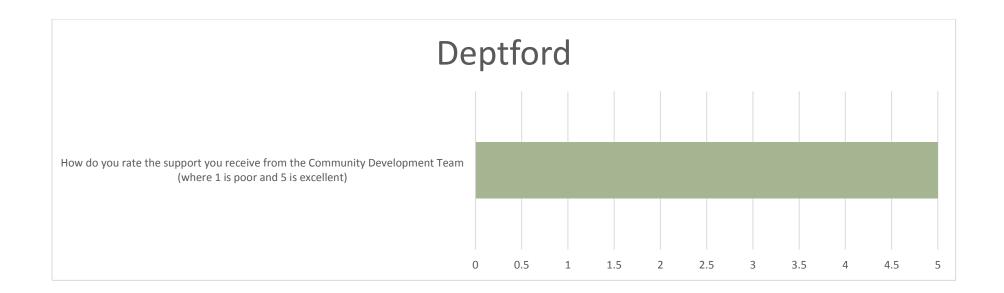


Lucy Formolli is great approachable, transparent, and trustworthy.

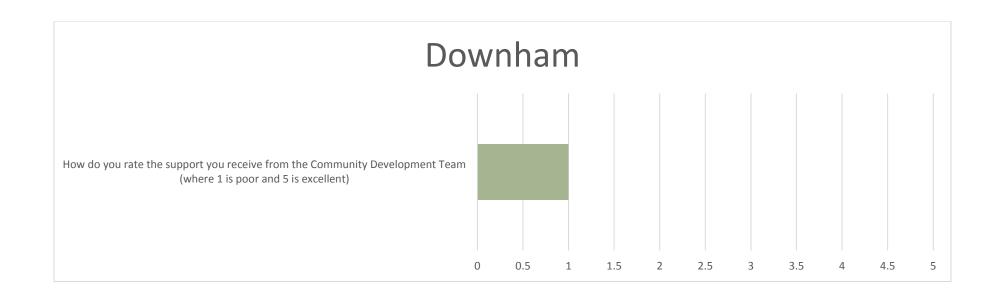


There's a limit to what the team can do if there is limited engagement from community and councillors

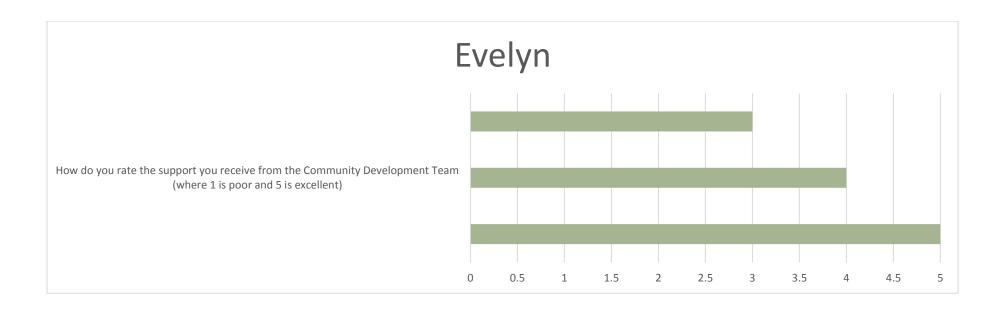
They are overworked and staff
number have been so reduced it is
impossible to get the help and
support as much as they are so
wanting to help and support, they
can only do so much



Sarah Lang is excellent



clear job description and responsibilities of the officers would make our work with them a lot easier and better

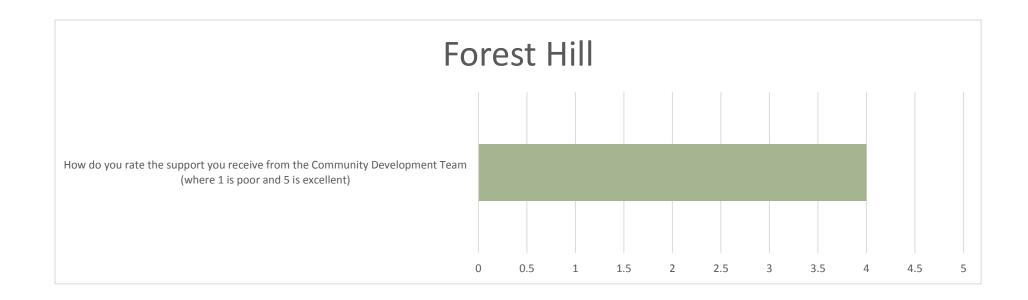


Our community development officer is absolutely wonderful and does an extremely good job in very difficult circumstances

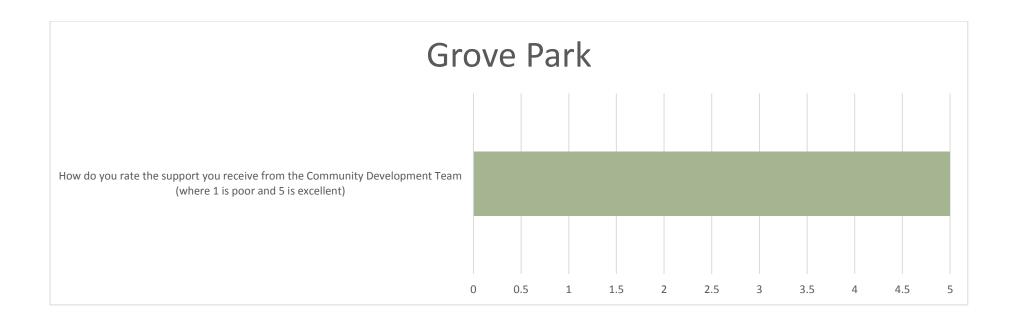
Officer is great to work with and thorough, caring, and attentive.

I'm not sure how strategically the assemblies are managed so it feels the support and guidance the officer gets is limited.

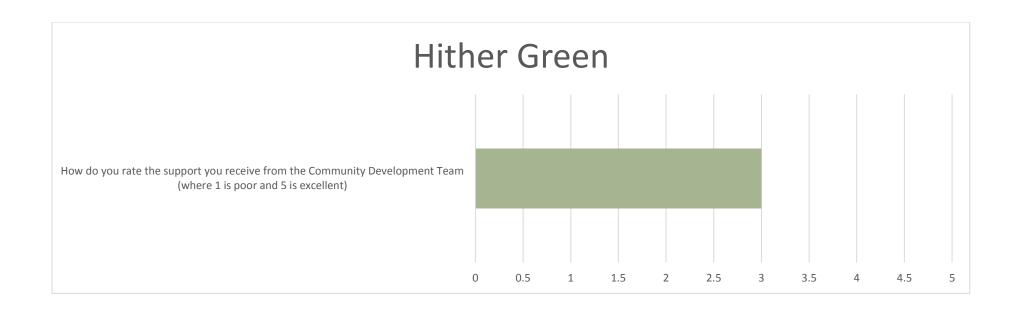
Katie is excellent, but we would like maybe 1 more of her, to ensure the bes experience for Assemblies. She is very hard working and well connected plus works closely with other CDOs. She did say she accrued 100 hours of TOIL once over an assembly during COVID which goes to show how unsustainable the work for 1 person is



Our CDO is very hardworking and constructive but has limited resource and capacity to plan and promote assembles



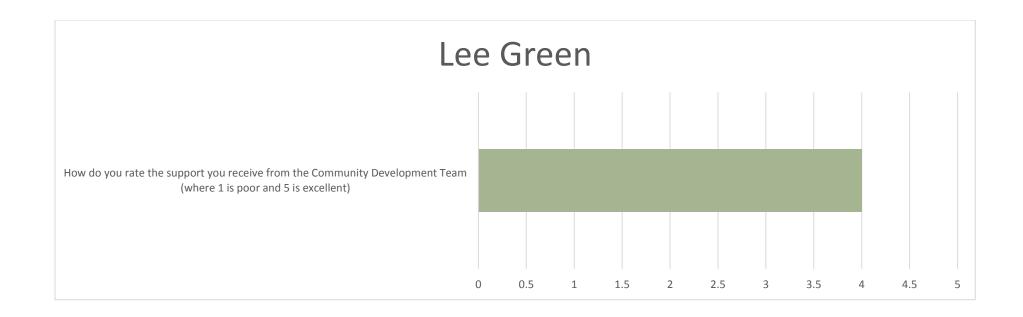
Our officer is excellent, very helpful and reliable - shout out to Paul Gale



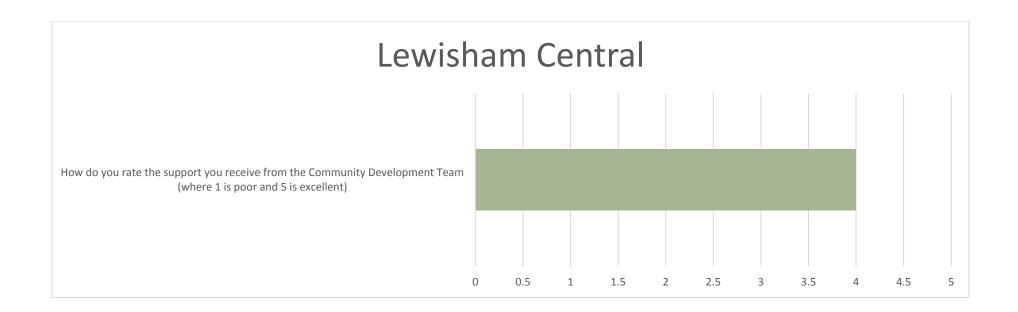
Support has been reasonable



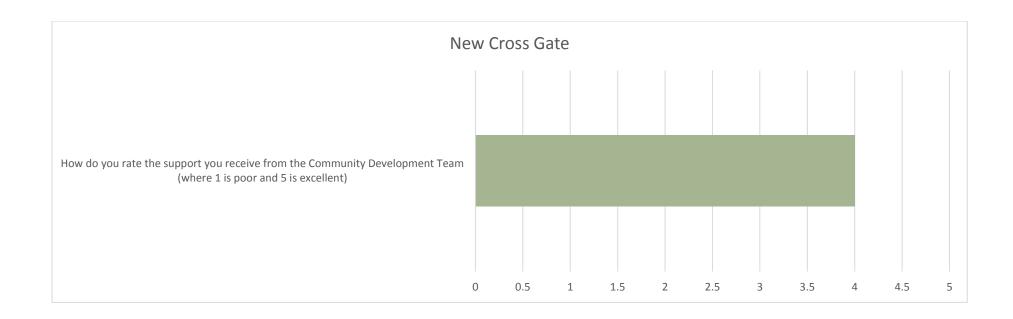
Ade Joseph has been excellent in supporting us in Ladywell with agenda planning / her contacts within the community / general guidance/ Officer contact



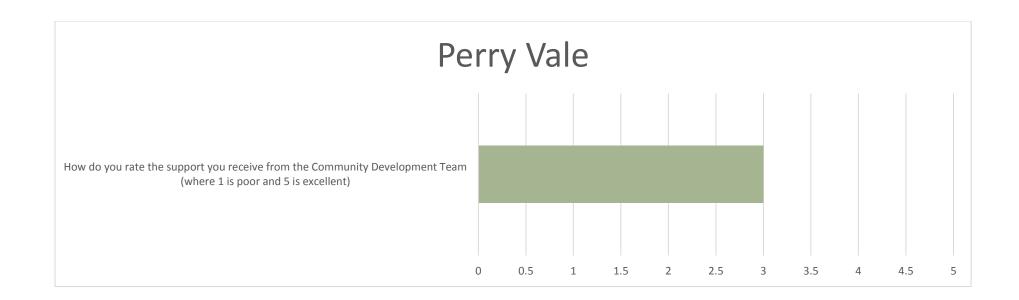
Our Ward Officer is excellent and goes above and beyond to make
Assemblies work as well as they do



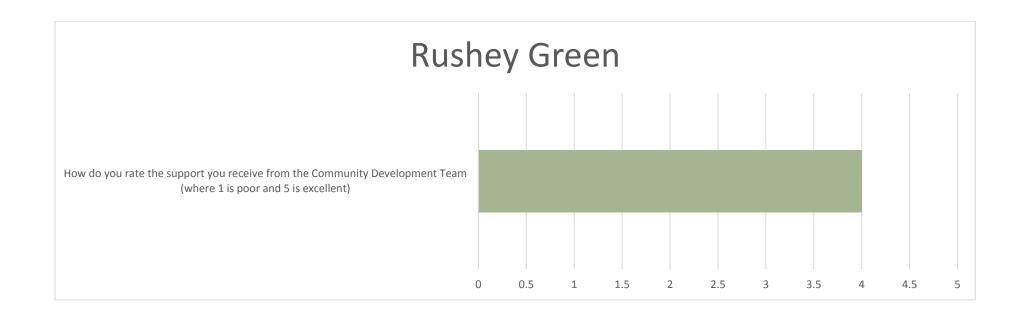




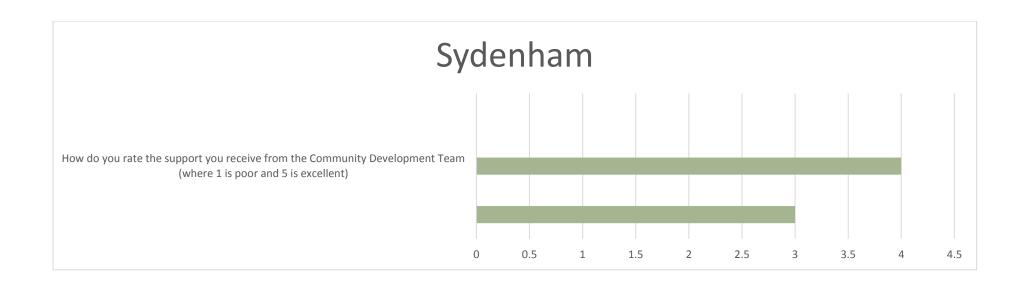
The CD Team is excellent but it is clear that resource is an issue which is why I am not giving them a 5



Staff are willing and helpful, and know their jobs, but they have hardly any resources to work with



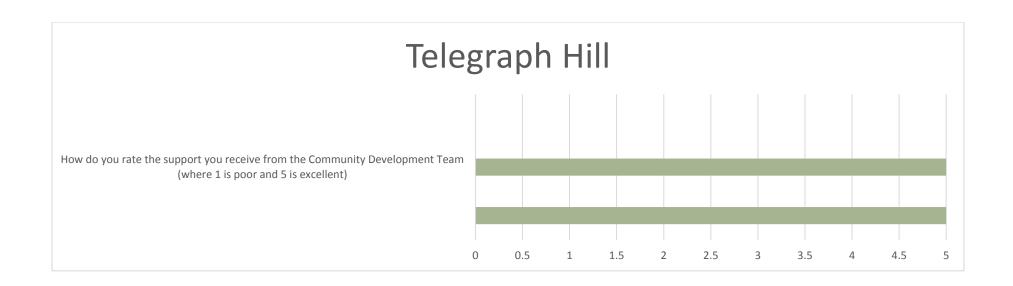
I think they are doing their best invery difficult circumstances. Their organisation and communication with me has been excellent



Our support officer is excellent, and her support far exceeds the support other wards receive.

However, much of the prep work is councillor led. More support from officers would be helpful. This is likely a capacity issue

The Community Development
Officer supports the Co-ordinating
Group meetings online and
attends the quarterly Assembly
meetings in person. The CDO
provides the agenda and
community updates as well as
taking the notes. We have an
experienced officer with good IT
skills



We have an excellent officer proactive, creative, responsive,
amicable, professional - and we
have always found the response
from other team member to be
positive and supportive. They are a
team which needs more
recognition for the work they do
supporting community
development and engagement

Sarah Lang is great, always

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