

# MINUTES OF THE LOCAL DEMOCRACY WORKING GROUP

Wednesday, 17 July 2019 at 7.30 pm

PRESENT: Councillors Kevin Bonavia, Juliet Campbell, Patrick Codd, Sophie Davis, Colin Elliott, Silvana Kelleher and Sakina Sheikh

ALSO PRESENT: Rosalind Jeffrey and Barrie Neal (Director of Corporate Policy & Governance) and Rosalind Jeffrey (Principal Officer – Policy, Service Design & Analysis)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Chris Best, Salena Mulhere (SGM Interagency, Service Development & Integration) and Kath Nicholson (Director of Law)

## 1. Minutes Of The Meetings Held On 26 March 2019 And 29 May 2019

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: Update Report

Rosalind Jeffrey (Principal Officer – Policy, Service Design & Analysis) introduced the report and the key points to note:

- Summary of the approach for delivering the recommendations of the Local Democracy Review (as agreed by the Working Group at their previous meeting on 29 May 2019)
- Overview of work undertaken since the previous meeting and planned activities between late July and September

Cllr Bonavia then invited each LDWG Champion to provide an update on their thematic area. The following points were highlighted in the subsequent discussion:

### Overview & Scrutiny (Including Council Meetings)

- A series of workshops/roundtable sessions will be arranged in order to consult with members once initial proposals for a new Overview & Scrutiny structure have been developed
- The Working Group highlighted that many elements of the current Overview & Scrutiny approach were effective – the proposals should therefore be seen as an evolution rather than a complete change

### Seldom-Heard Voices

- In order to deliver recommendation #31, officers will work with community organisations to conduct an 'Appreciative Inquiry' (focusing on those who

- are able to facilitate access to less well-established local organisations e.g. Voluntary Action Lewisham) – this will enable proposals for improving engagement with seldom-heard groups and individuals to be developed
- The Working Group discussed opportunities to align these proposals with the potential development of a People’s Panel. More broadly, they acknowledged that work around seldom-heard voices was part of a longer-term recommendation

#### Open Data & Online Communications

- Officers are organising a visit to visit to *Bristol Is Open* (joint venture between Bristol City Council and Bristol University) to explore their approach to Open Data
- Webcasting of Council meetings has been trialled at two sessions of Mayor & Cabinet and is scheduled for a further trial at Full Council on 24 July
- Cllr Bonavia agreed to consider the feasibility of members uploading additional information to their attendance page on the Council Website to demonstrate the range of activities they undertake

#### Effective Engagement (Including Younger & Older People)

- The LDWG Champion has held one ‘off-site’ councillor surgery (at ‘Bring & Fix’ based in PLACE/Ladywell) – based on this experience, it would be useful to consider what practical support will be required when exploring how the current model of councillor surgeries could be expanded (recommendation #17). Any new approach to councillor surgeries should also maintain the privacy of residents, enabling them to have ‘discreet conversations’ with their ward councillor when required.

#### Language & Reporting

- Consideration should be given to developing offline mechanisms for members of the public to provide feedback on the accessibility of reports and publications (in addition to the online form)

#### Planning

- The LWDG Champion had recently attended a Centre for Cities conference with the Director of Planning – the message was that members of the public wanted to be more engaged in decision-making, but lacked trust in the Planning process. There was also a suggestion made at the conference that an audit of the local community be undertaken prior to the submission of large-scale development proposals (‘what is good should be preserved’)
- The Working Group highlighted the large number of Licensing meetings that councillors are currently required to attend – although this issue is not about public engagement (which is the focus of this thematic area), Cllr Bonavia advised this should be considered as part of the recommendations relating specifically to Planning and Licensing

#### Place-Based Engagement

- The LDWG Champion has initially focused on how the allocation of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funds could work in practice and has also met with officers at London & Quadrant Housing Association (L&Q) to discuss their approach to delivering area-based projects

- Rosalind Jeffrey advised the Working Group that Kirklees Council have just launched a civic crowd-funding project and are keen to collaborate in this area

#### Councillor Roles, Responsibilities & Relationships

- Member role profiles should be linked to wider work to develop clearer and more engaging ways for explaining how the Council operates as well as the roles and responsibilities of councillors and officers (recommendation #4)

Cllr Bonavia advised that any proposals presented to the Working Group regarding the delivery of a recommendation must include resource implications. The Local Democracy Review website ([www.lewishamdemocracy.com](http://www.lewishamdemocracy.com)) should also be used to test ideas in relation to specific recommendations.

RESOLVED: Kevin Flaherty (Committee Business Manager) to provide Cllr Sheikh with a further update on the delivery of recommendations within her thematic area that relate to Council meetings

RESOLVED: A draft report for the Constitution Working Party in relation to changing the title of Chair of Council to Speaker (and any other relevant changes) should be presented to the Working Group at their next meeting on 26 September

RESOLVED: An update on the visit to *Bristol Is Open* should be presented to the Working Group at their next meeting

RESOLVED: Cllr Bonavia to discuss progress on recommendation #13 with officers and consider the feasibility of members uploading additional information to demonstrate the range of activities they undertake

RESOLVED: Cllr Davis to provide officers with updates for the Work Programme as appropriate (in relation to her thematic area)

RESOLVED: Issues relating to the length or frequency of Planning and Licensing meetings to be considered as part of the Planning thematic area

RESOLVED: The Working Group to consider at their next meeting whether they wish to make recommendations in relation to specific councillor appointments (once the audit is complete)

The meeting ended at 9.19PM.