



Local Democracy Working Group

Delivering The Recommendations Of The Local Democracy Review (Programme Update Report)

Date: 18th December 2019

Key decision: No

Class: Part 1

Ward(s) affected: All

Contributors: Interim Chief Finance Officer

Outline and recommendations

In April 2019, Full Council agreed the 57 recommendations of the Local Democracy Review and approved the appointment of eight councillors to the retained Working Group to oversee their delivery during 2019/20. The first LDWG meeting took place in May 2019, where members agreed that the implementation of the Local Democracy Review should be managed as a single programme of work, with the recommendations clustered into eight thematic areas, each led by a LDWG Champion. A Programme Update Report (outlining work undertaken and proposed next steps across all the thematic areas) was prepared for both the second and third LDWG meetings, which took place in July and September respectively.

As work to deliver the recommendations has progressed, the various projects and activities being undertaken within each of the eight thematic areas have become more closely aligned. These thematic areas have now therefore been grouped under the three overarching themes within the Local Democracy Review's original terms of reference (openness and transparency, public involvement in decisions and effective decision-making). This Programme Update Report (for the fourth LDWG meeting) provides an overview of work undertaken and proposed next steps across these three themes. It also updates the LDWG on other work, such as briefings for members and senior managers at Cabinet, the Executive Management Team (EMT) and the recent Leadership Event and the redesign of the Local Democracy Review webpages on the Council website.

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 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 Working Group collects their evidence into a final report, which identifies 57 recommendations for change

March/April 2019 – Mayor & Cabinet and Full Council agree the report and recommendations

April 2019 to March 2020 – the retained Local Democracy Working Group oversees delivery of the recommendations

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 10th December 2019 because of the pre-election period. The report cannot wait until the next meeting because this was the only suitable date available in the Council calendar in advance of Christmas based on member availability and decisions are required to enable work to progress in advance of the next scheduled meeting.

1. Summary

1.1. The purpose of this report is to provide an update on work undertaken to deliver the recommendations of the Local Democracy Review since the third meeting of the 2019/20 Local Democracy Working Group (LDWG) on 26th September 2019. The report also outlines the proposed next steps for all thematic areas.

2. Recommendations

2.1. The LDWG is recommended to:

- Note the work undertaken to date and proposed next steps
- Note the updated Programme Plan (Appendix A)
- Provide guidance in relation to ongoing/planned activities, timescales and decisions required

3. Policy context

3.1. The recommendations of the Local Democracy Review are consistent with all the

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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 April 2019, Full Council agreed the 57 recommendations of the Local Democracy Review and approved the appointment of eight councillors to the retained Working Group to oversee their delivery during 2019/20.
- 4.2. At the first LDWG meeting in May 2019, members agreed that the implementation of the Local Democracy Review should be managed as a single programme of work, with the recommendations clustered into eight thematic areas, each led by a LDWG Champion. Officers from Corporate Policy, Governance, Communications, Planning and Licensing were also allocated to support individual LDWG Champions with the delivery of projects and activities across their thematic area.
- 4.3. At the second and third LDWG meetings, each LDWG Champion provided an update on work undertaken in their area and proposed next steps, which were agreed by the group (see background papers).

5. Work to date and next steps

- 5.1. As work to deliver the recommendations has progressed, the various projects and activities being undertaken within each of the eight thematic areas have become more closely aligned. These thematic areas have now therefore been grouped under the three overarching themes within the Local Democracy Review's original terms of reference (openness and transparency, public involvement in decisions and effective decision-making).
- 5.2. A high-level summary of work undertaken across these three themes between October and December 2019 and planned activities up until the end of March 2020 is provided below. An updated programme plan is also attached at Appendix A.

Theme 1: Openness and transparency

- 5.3. Openness and transparency are key ingredients in building accountability and trust, both of which are necessary for effective local democracy. Although the recommendations within the two thematic areas below aim to increase openness and transparency in different ways (e.g. improvements to and better use of digital communication channels, ensuring that Council information is more accessible and easier to understand), their alignment under this overarching theme will allow the interdependencies between the various pieces of work to be fully exploited.

Open data and online communication (Cllr Bonavia/Cllr Davis)

Work to date (Oct-Dec)

- Development of options for a Council-wide Open Data approach, following a visit to Bristol Is Open (a joint project between Bristol City Council and Bristol University) and discussions with the Open Data Institute and the Chief Digital Officer at the Greater London Authority
- Launch of [webcasting](#) for all Mayor & Cabinet and Full Council meetings

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- Ongoing development of a new Communications Strategy and Social Media Strategy for the Council (which will focus on making the best use of resources with a campaigns-based marketing system, maximising the effectiveness of our digital channels and developing meaningful engagement between the Council and its diverse communities, taking into account the specific Local Democracy Review recommendations)

Planned activities (Jan-Mar)

- Finalise options for a Council-wide Open Data approach for consideration by the LDWG
- Finalise new Communications Strategy and Social Media Strategy and provide further detail about the plans for delivery of the specific recommendations encompassed within the strategies (e.g. proposals to redesign existing 'neighbourhood' pages on the Council website)
- Develop and implement a new resourcing structure to support delivery of above strategies (in the wider context of delivering the Corporate Strategy)
- Explore the viability of using existing reporting software for members to record and report their activities/attendance at events other than formal Council meetings (if suitable, then clear timescales and processes/procedures will be developed)

Language and reporting (Cllr Kelleher/Cllr Best)

Work to date (Oct-Dec)

- 'Soft launch' of new report template and practical guidance for report authors (following testing with a small group of officers). This template and guidance has also been circulated to all members (see agenda item 4A)
- Formal communication with relevant services and key officers regarding the expectation that all decisions are published within two working days (guidance note produced to assist staff in improving practice)

Planned activities (Jan-Mar)

- Formally launch new report template and practical guidance for report authors
- Implement online form on the Council website (with a link in the footer of all reports), which will enable residents to provide direct feedback on the accessibility of reports and publications
- Develop a draft set of democratic standards for officers, councillors and residents, incorporating current Council decision-making principles and the behaviours/values outlined in the refreshed 'Lewisham Way'
- Monitor compliance with new timescales for publishing all committee decisions

Theme 2: Public involvement in decisions

5.4. The alignment of these three thematic areas under the wider theme of public involvement will provide an opportunity for the LDWG to collectively review the learning from various projects and activities which have been undertaken to date, enabling them to consider improvements to the Council's engagement approach as a whole and establish a clear position about which proposals should be taken forward.

Effective engagement, including younger and older people (Cllr Codd/Cllr Elliott)

Work to date (Oct-Dec)

- Detailed evaluation of People's Panels (a representative body of local residents who are consulted on a range of issues) and Citizens' Assemblies (a broadly representative body of residents brought together to deliberate on a

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specific issue of local, regional or national importance) undertaken (see agenda items 5A and 5B)

- Engagement with young people about online communications and social media undertaken (focusing on the type of content they are interested in, platforms they currently use and how they might want to be involved in developing the Council's offer)

Planned activities (Jan-Mar)

- Complete engagement and develop proposals for a new approach to online communications and social media aimed at young people (in line with the development of the new Communications Strategy and Social Media Strategy)
- Pilot councillor question time panels in schools (as part of the development of mechanisms for increasing young people's engagement with local decision-making)
- Review the impact of changes to the Council's processes and tools for providing feedback to residents who participate in consultation and engagement activity (e.g. 'we asked, you said, we did' summaries, use of mailing list function as default, improved publicity in Lewisham Life)
- Complete review of publicly available information about Council functions and the roles/responsibilities of councillors and officers (including identifying best practice in other local authorities)

Place-based engagement (Cllr Elliott/Cllr Codd)

Work to date (Oct-Dec)

- Detailed evaluation of the Place Standard tool undertaken (see agenda item 5C)
- Use of Commonplace to help residents and councillors identify priority themes for their ward as part of the allocation of Neighbourhood Community Infrastructure Levy (NCIL) funding

Planned activities (Jan-Mar)

- Test the Place Standard tool as part of the ongoing work to allocate NCIL funding as well as within broader Neighbourhood Development initiatives (to be agreed by the LDWG)

Seldom-heard voices (Cllr Campbell/Cllr Sheikh)

Work to date (Oct-Dec)

- 'Appreciative Inquiry' undertaken with a number of local community organisations (the Front Room Club at St Luke's Church, the Calabash Centre, the Lewisham Refugee and Migrant Network's 'Women Together' project, Lewisham Speaking Up/People's Parliament, Ladywell Baby Hub/Children & Family Centre and Lewisham LGBT+ Forum) in order to gather insights and explore how we can better engage and involve these groups and individuals in decision-making

Planned activities (Jan-Mar)

- Analyse evidence gathered during the 'Appreciative Inquiry' in order to identify the key themes and learning points
- Consider how best to utilise and embed learning from the 'Appreciative Inquiry' to ensure seldom-heard voices are reflected in the Council's wider strategic approach to engagement and routinely sought in an effective way

Theme 3: Effective decision-making

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- 5.5. These three thematic areas are primarily focused on the structure and mechanics of Council decision-making and improving the crucial interface between officers, members and residents – again, their alignment under this overarching theme will allow the interdependencies between the various pieces of work to be fully exploited.

Planning and Licensing (Cllr Davis/Cllr Bonavia)

Work to date (Oct-Dec)

- Further engagement between LDWG Champion and members, officers and other stakeholders involved in the Planning and Licensing processes in order to develop detailed action plans for both services
- Site visit to LB Brent to look at other ways of working (Planning)
- Trial of different approaches to meeting management (Planning)
- Briefing held for LDWG Champion on statutory Licensing processes
- Review of Licensing pages on the Council website
- 'Go live' for upgrade to Assure System (Licensing), which will streamline back office functions

Planned activities (Jan-Mar)

- LDWG Champion to attend community meeting (Planning)
- Present interim report on Planning recommendations to LDWG in January 2020 (key findings/learning points and initial options for improving public communication/engagement processes and the provision of professional support to councillors responsible for decision-making)
- Present final report on Planning recommendations to LDWG in March 2020 (detailed proposals/timescales)
- Consult with stakeholders on the revised 'Statement of Licensing Principles' (from early January 2020)
- Refresher Licensing training for committee members (organised through the Institute of Licensing)
- Develop proposals for an integrated licensing page on the Council website, which will provide a 'one-stop-shop' for residents
- Complete benchmarking exercise with other London boroughs (structure and meeting scheduling approach)
- 'Go live' for public-facing elements of Assure system, which will provide an effective web based platform for the public to make applications and representations on Licensing processes and see real time updates on applications in their local areas (April 2020)

Councillor roles, responsibilities and relationships (Cllr Best/Cllr Kelleher)

Work to date (Oct-Dec)

- Development of proposals for a new Works Council approach in liaison with members and Trade Union representatives (led by the Director of HR)
- Development of draft role profiles for all member positions, each containing a role description (covering responsibilities, time requirements and key officer contacts) and a person specification (covering key skills and required learning) (see agenda item 6B)
- Ongoing development of written guidance for all active councillor appointments

Planned activities (Jan-Mar)

- Implement new Works Council approach

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- Consult with members and various lead officers (including the Director of Law) and refine the draft role profiles in line with their feedback
- Finalise written guidance for all active councillor appointments to outside bodies (to be added to the final set of role profiles as an appendix)
- Review current role of councillor champions and explore best practice in other authorities
- Review current arrangements for diffusing power/delegating responsibility for decision-making

Overview and scrutiny, including Council meetings (Cllr Sheikh/Cllr Campbell)

Work to date (Oct-Dec)

- Consultation with members on options for a revised Overview & Scrutiny structure and development of initial recommendations (see agenda item 6A)
- Recommendation that the title of Chair of Council be changed to Speaker approved by Full Council
- Review of best practice/innovation in relation to the role and format of Full Council meetings undertaken

Planned activities (Jan-Mar)

- Develop final proposals for new Overview & Scrutiny structure
- Implement mechanisms for enhancing access to Full Council meetings (e.g. public viewing in the Foyer)
- Develop and test options for a more 'thematic and engaging approach' to Full Council meetings (based on review of best practice)

6. Other activities

- 6.1. Officers responsible for coordinating the delivery of the Local Democracy Review's recommendations have briefed the Mayor and Cabinet, the Executive Management Team (EMT) and presented at a recent Leadership Event in order to brief members and senior managers on progress and facilitate discussions about the strategic activities required to ensure changes arising from the review are fully embedded across the Council. The key areas covered in these discussions were organisational culture (in line with the development of the refreshed 'Lewisham Way' framework of values and behaviours), officer/member relationships and operational practice, particularly in relation to open and effective decision-making and public engagement.
- 6.2. The Local Democracy Review webpages on the Council website have also been redesigned in order to provide residents with examples of the LDWG's current work and act as a platform for testing out various recommendation models and gathering feedback from local residents and community groups.
- 6.3. As part of the delivery of recommendation #46, all Barriers To Politics recommendations were mapped against LDR recommendations and incorporated into the oversight responsibilities of the relevant LDWG Champion. A report outlining how these recommendations have been implemented will be presented to the LDWG in March 2020.

7. Financial implications

- 7.1. The Local Democracy Review was delivered with a budget of £10k, primarily by using existing expertise and resources within Corporate Policy. No further budget was allocated for the delivery of the 57 recommendations and there is an expectation that

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implementation will be achieved within existing resources wherever possible (given the Council's ongoing budget savings process). If additional financial resources are required for the delivery of a specific recommendation, officers will provide a separate report with detailed financial implications for consideration by the appropriate decision-maker.

8. Legal implications

- 8.1. Some of the Local Democracy Review's recommendations (such as the use of infographics to convey information about Council decisions) can be implemented by the LDWG without a formal decision. If a formal decision is required for the delivery of a specific recommendation, officers will provide a separate report with detailed legal implications for consideration by the appropriate decision-maker.

9. Equalities implications

- 9.1. A full analysis of equalities implications will be undertaken for all recommendations requiring a formal decision, taking into account the priorities set out in the Council's Comprehensive Equalities Scheme (CES).
- 9.2. 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.
- 9.3. 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
 - Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not
- 9.4. 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.
- 9.5. 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.
- 9.6. 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

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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>

9.7. 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

9.8. 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>

10. Climate change and environmental implications

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

11. Crime and disorder implications

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

12. Health and wellbeing implications

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

13. Background papers

- [Local Democracy Review: Report Of The Working Group \(Spring 2019\)](#)
- [Delivering The Recommendations Of The Local Democracy Review: Proposed Approach \(May 2019\)](#)
- [Delivering The Recommendations Of The Local Democracy Review: Programme Update Report \(July 2019\)](#)
- [Delivering The Recommendations Of The Local Democracy Review: Programme Update Report \(September 2019\)](#)

14. Glossary

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Term	Definition
Appreciative Inquiry	An Appreciative Inquiry is an engagement mechanism which uses questions to build a vision for the future, focusing on past and potential future successes. The focus is usually on what people enjoy about an area, their hopes for the future, and their feelings about their communities.
Commonplace	An online tool to help communities plan their neighbourhoods, co-design solutions and analyse the social impact of new developments.
Corporate Strategy	Lewisham's Corporate Strategy sets out the Council's overall vision and priorities for the next four years (2018-22).
Full Council	Full Council is a meeting of all 54 Lewisham councillors. It is chaired by the Speaker, who also maintains a ceremonial role. It is run according to formal rules of debate known as 'standing orders' as set out in the Council's Constitution. Full Council's decision making responsibilities include agreeing strategies and plans, setting budgets and adopting and/or changing the Constitution. It is also a forum for debate on policy issues.
Lewisham Life	Lewisham Life is the local magazine for residents and businesses. It is distributed four times a year to every home in the borough. There is also a weekly e-newsletter.
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.
Neighbourhood Community Infrastructure Levy	The Neighbourhood Community Infrastructure Levy (NCIL) is a community funding programme that uses money collected from developers.
Open Data	Open data is data that anyone can access, use and share. It should be both legally open (i.e. placed in the public domain or under minimal restriction) and technically open (i.e. published in accessible electronic formats).
Overview & Scrutiny	Overview and scrutiny is the way in which Mayor and Cabinet (the 'Executive'), officers and external organisations are held to account for the decisions that they make. It is led by councillors who are not members of the Executive. They also influence policy development and investigate issues of local concern, making recommendations for improvement.
Place Standard Tool	The Place Standard tool is a way of assessing places. It allows users to think about the physical elements of a place (for example its buildings, spaces, and transport links) as well as the social aspects (for example whether people feel they have a say in decision-making).
Programme	A programme is a set of related projects and activities, managed in a coordinated way in order to deliver an overall goal.

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Term	Definition
Programme Plan	A programme plan typically outlines what work needs to be done, how the work will be done, when the work will be done, who will do the work and how much it will cost to do the work.
Social Media	Social media includes various forms of electronic communication (such as websites for social networking and micro-blogging) through which users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages and other content (such as videos).
Trade Union	A trade union is an organisation with members who are usually workers or employees. It looks after their interests at work by negotiating agreements with employers on pay and conditions, discussing members' concerns with employers and attending disciplinary and grievance meetings with members.
Works Council	The Works Council is a forum for consultation and negotiation between the Council and trades union officials, who represent Lewisham employees.

15. Report author and contact

- 15.1. If there are any queries about this report, please contact Salena Mulhere (SGM Inter-Agency, Service Development & Integration) by email (salena.mulhere@lewisham.gov.uk) or telephone (020 8314 3380).

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