



## Local Democracy Working Group

### Evaluating The Potential Options For Planning (Recommendations #25-30)

**Date:** 12<sup>th</sup> February 2020

**Key decision:** No

**Class:** Part 1

**Ward(s) affected:** All

**Contributors:** Director of Planning

### Outline and recommendations

The purpose of this report is to update the Local Democracy Working Group (LDWG) on the evaluation of options to increase the openness and transparency around the planning process, particularly focused on effective decision making at planning committees.

The report sets out the work done to date to respond to the recommendations by looking at best practice, benchmarking and feedback from various parties involved in the planning process. On the basis of the information gathered and outlined in the report the Local Democracy Working Group is recommended to note the progress made and consider the direction of travel regarding three key themes:

- Planning committees
- Consultation and engagement with public
- Communication

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## 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. Full Council tasks the retained Local Democracy Working Group with overseeing delivery of the recommendations during 2019/20

**May to December 2019** – specific engagement activities undertaken in regards to the delivery of Planning recommendations:

- Site visit to LB Brent (Local Planning Authority of the Year 2019, RTPI Awards for Planning Excellence)
- Attending Future of London community engagement forum
- Meeting with Planning officer focus group
- Meeting with agents' forum
- Meeting between Cllr Davis and Planning Committee Chairs and deputy chairs
- Meeting with Strategic Planning Committee
- Meeting with planning lawyers

**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 4<sup>th</sup> February 2020 due to officer capacity and the scale of work being undertaken to deliver the recommendations of the Local Democracy Review. The report cannot wait until the next meeting because members require an update on all matters in order to inform their decision-making.**

### 1. Summary

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to update the Local Democracy Working Group (LDWG) on the progress and emerging options on the delivery of the planning recommendations.

### 2. Recommendations

- 2.1. The Local Democracy Working Group is recommended to:

- Note the work undertaken to date, potential options and next steps

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### 3. Policy context

3.1. The recommendations of the Local Democracy Review are consistent with all the Council's corporate priorities (contained within the new Corporate Strategy 2018-22). Effective decision-making underpins the delivery of every commitment within the strategy and we will continue to work closely with our residents to understand the differing needs of our diverse community. However, the recommendations are particularly relevant under the priorities of:

- *Open Lewisham* – Lewisham is a welcoming place of safety for all where we celebrate the diversity that strengthens us

### 4. Background

4.1. The recommendations of the Local Democracy Review around planning were grouped together under the theme of Openness and Transparency in the final report of the review. However in programme planning the delivery of the recommendations, it became clear that although there were strong elements of openness and transparency and public involvement in the planning process, delivery of them had the strongest links in terms of delivery to the rest of the recommendations grouped under the Effective Decision Making theme. This enables the synergies between the work focused on councillors' roles and responsibilities and various other forms of council meetings to be reviewed by LDWG champions in the round.

4.2. The recommendations state that:

- *'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'* (#25)
- *'Clearer information should be provided to councillors, citizens, applicants and objectors about the role and power of planning and licencing committee and local councillors'* (#26)
- *'The most appropriate way to provide professional support and guidance to councillors responsible for planning decisions should be further explored'* (#27)
- *'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'* (#28)
- *'Ward members should be notified of all relevant applications and decision-making processes in a timely and appropriate manner'* (#29)
- *'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'* (#30)

### 5. Work to date and next steps

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- 5.1. A series of meetings, a site visit, research and benchmarking have taken place over the last 8 months. These activities have included:
- site visit to LB Brent (Local Planning Authority of the Year 2019, RTPI Awards for Planning Excellence)
  - attending Future of London community engagement forum
  - meeting with Planning officer focus group
  - meeting with resident/local amenity groups
  - meeting with Council lawyers who support planning
  - assessment of current ways of working/engagement within Planning (including comparison with other boroughs planning committees and review of website)
  - meeting between Cllr Davis and Planning Committee Chairs
  - meeting with strategic planning committee
  - 'secret shopper' planning objection
  - attending a local Planning meeting
- 5.2. Future actions include attending a community forum meeting, ward assembly and meetings between Cllr Davis, Planning and IT to discuss ICT requirements and communication officers to discuss support requirements

## **6. Emerging options**

- 6.1. There are a number of detailed direct responses and actions to the local democracy review recommendations that have been formed based on the feedback and research to date. These are appended to this report. These tend to fall under three key themes of consultation and engagement, planning committees and IT/website. This report reflects on the emerging options under these broad themes.
- 6.2. In each case, options are outlined as a 'do minimum' and 'do something' approach. Given the intention of the local democracy review, the feedback received and research undertaken, it is not considered that a 'do nothing' approach to retain current working arrangements is an option and this is therefore not proposed.
- 6.3. It should also be noted that the local democracy review process and recommendations are expected to be achieved within existing resources wherever possible (given the Council's ongoing budget savings process). This has influenced the initial options which propose changes to how existing resources (including staff time) are used and when, rather than proposing to retain current practices with additional expenditure.

### **Consultation and engagement**

- 6.4. To aid greater transparency and trust in the planning process, good consultation and engagement with the public is key. Having undertaken the activities in part 5 of this report, it is clear that early engagement is vital along with clear guidance and a meaningful chance for communities to get involved in planning. Many feel that current planning engagement takes place too late in the process and can therefore feel tokenistic. The rationale underpinning the options for improvement are to undertake earlier and therefore more meaningful engagement with the public. This aligns with the emerging findings from delivery of the wider consultation and engagement recommendations that approaches to early and meaningful engagement need to be better embedded across the organisation.

### **Current practice**

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- 6.5. All Councillors are notified of each planning application made in their ward. The public are consulted by letter (or automatically by email if an interest in a particular street is registered on the public access system) and local meetings are offered where more than 10 objections are received to a planning application. Amenity societies are consulted on applications in their area and any applications that they object to are automatically referred to planning committee.

### Options

- **Do minimum** – this option would see a greater emphasis on early engagement by promoting pre-application consultation with local communities, led by applicants/developers in accordance with a Lewisham public engagement protocol. Evidence of engagement and details of feedback would form part of the planning submission and would be a material planning consideration. For all major applications, early engagement would include a pre-application public meeting to undertake public consultation when there is a chance to influence scheme design. This would replace the existing local meetings to ensure that the earlier engagement can be resourced. Improved guidance would be produced for the public and developers. Ward Cllrs would continue to be consulted on all applications in their ward but via a ‘weekly list’ showing the previous three weeks of planning applications. Pre-application planning committee reviews would be undertaken for strategic schemes.
- **Do something** – this would include the ‘do minimum’ plus a new Statement of Community Involvement and review of who is consulted as part of planning applications and when. This would review the role of and relationship with amenity societies and their existing call in powers.

### Planning committees

- 6.6. The majority of planning decisions are made by officers using their delegated powers. For applications where there are three or more objections, those involving the loss of a pub or departures from the development plan, decisions are made by a planning committee.
- 6.7. Having undertaken the actions noted in part 5 of this report, it is evident that Lewisham has one of the highest numbers of planning committees in London (three committees and strategic planning committee) and also one of the lowest triggers for referral through to planning committee. There have been occasions where training has had a low attendance and Members wider roles can make it difficult to make time to undertake a full review of planning reports. Feedback suggests that we need better and earlier engagement with Members who are on Planning Committees. This feedback recognised that this will require greater time commitment from Members and officers who support committees so changes would be needed to the number of meetings and types of applications that are taken to Planning Committee to support that type of change.
- 6.8. As discussed above, Lewisham has four planning committees and 31 Members who are involved in making planning decisions; committees A, B and C and Strategic Planning Committee (SPC). There are no set thresholds for which cases which go to A, B or C versus SPC, but generally the largest scale schemes go to SPC. The local democracy review feedback noted frustration and confusions from both Members and the public about roles, responsibilities and transparency of how decisions are made. In response to this, some immediate changes have been trialled at committees.
- 6.9. The rationale for the options below is to give a greater sense of fairness in terms of

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the type of cases that come to committee and the process of how decisions are made, enable better decision making by ensuring that sufficient time is available for those Members who are on committees for training and ensure that Members still have the opportunity to appropriately advocate for all their communities and effectively fulfil the wider range of responsibilities members have.

### Current practice

- 6.10. For planning committee members, training is held at the beginning of each new election cycle with optional training carried out from time to time. Reports have been refreshed to make them more accessible and greater use is being made of confidential legal advice to Members as required during meetings along with trialling providing electronic copies of all objections/support letter as confidential agenda items. Trials are also underway with providing planning case PowerPoint presentations in advance to members.

### Options

- **Do minimum** – this option would retain all planning committees with written guidance produced explaining roles and responsibilities that could be used by the public as well as Members. The format of committee meetings would be reviewed and any necessary changes (such as to the order of speakers) to aid good quality and transparent decision making would be made. Training for Members would be mandatory and held annually to improve understanding and also help with public perception of good quality decision making.
- **Do something** – in addition to the do minimum, in this option a reduction in the overall number of planning committees and would be made to help facilitate more engaged and trained planning committee members by freeing up time and responsibilities. It is likely that there would be one regular committee and one strategic planning committee. This would bring Lewisham more in line with other Councils in London. Alongside this, committee referral triggers would be reviewed to ensure that planning committee agendas remain manageable (although it is not proposed that councillor call in powers would be removed). It should be noted that in order for this option to be considered, it is considered necessary to undertake the changes to consultation and engagement with the public.

### Communication

- 6.11. The planning system is complex and accessing good quality information is therefore vital to ensuring that the planning process is as transparent as possible. This is important for applicants as well as the public (including interest groups) and includes policy information, information on process and information on individual planning applications. Feedback has been almost universal that the current web pages are difficult to find and navigate and that those who are interested in planning application progress can be unsure of planning application stages and where applications are in the system. The rationale for the options are to provide more and better information that is easily understood and to make the process more transparent. simplifying the website to bring out the key information

### Options

- **Do minimum** – this option would retain the current website pages and order but would see trained planning staff able to update and redraft content as opposed to the communications team. Documents/PDFs giving a greater level

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of guidance would also be able to be uploaded to help give more detail for those who are interested. The planning service IT system would remain but more information would be input in to the existing fields to give more detail about how an application is progressing. Greater use of existing communication methods such as the Council wide twitter feed would be promoted to publicise key planning matters. Letters would be sent to applicants notifying them when their application is received (as opposed to waiting until valid) and this would set out information on the overall process.

- **Do something** – this would include the ‘do minimum’ actions plus a refresh of the entire web planning pages structure, order and customer journey through the website to improve the accessibility of information and simplify the planning pages. The planning IT system is likely to require updating or replacing in the medium to long term. At this stage, the availability of information about the progress of planning applications and ensuring transparency would be a key consideration.

## 7. Next steps

- 7.1. The options presented above require further refinement and consideration. However, in each case it is considered that ‘do nothing’ cannot be an option if the Council is to meaningfully respond to the local democracy review and the clear indication from that that improvements need to be made. The ‘do minimum’ and ‘do something’ options are in some cases dependent on each other – it would not be proposed to reduce overall committee meeting and change thresholds for planning committees being triggered without undertaking changes to ensure earlier planning engagement. The underlying intent of the options outlined is to improve quality and transparency of decision making, ensure the deliverability of the actions and that these can be resourced within current financial implications.

## 8. Conclusion

- 8.1. Recommendations #25-30 of the LDR required that key aspects of engagement with planning process were reviewed with a desire to increase transparency and understanding.
- 8.2. Having undertaken a review of the current process, meeting with various groups who engage with the service, visiting Brent Council to review best practice and undertaking benchmarking, there are a number of potential recommendations. The working group are asked to note an emerging direction of travel which is seeking to make better use of the Council’s website and existing IT systems to provide better and more user friendly advice and information, provide a more front loaded planning process where early (and therefore more meaningful) engagement is sought as opposed to a reliance on meetings during the formal process and changing practices for planning committees to facilitate good, transparent decision making.

## 9. Financial implications

- 9.1. 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 implementation will be achieved within existing resources wherever possible (given the Council’s ongoing budget savings process).

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## **10. Legal implications**

- 10.1. The Equality Act 2010 (the Act) introduced a new public sector equality duty (the equality duty or the duty). It covers the following nine protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.
- 10.2. In summary, the council must, in the exercise of its function, 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 persons who do not share it
- 10.3. The duty continues to be a “have regard duty”, and the weight to be attached to it is a matter for the decision maker, bearing in mind the issues of relevance and proportionality. It is not an absolute requirement to eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance equality of opportunity or foster good relations.
- 10.4. 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/publication-download/technical-guidance-public-sector-equality-duty-england>

## **11. Equalities implications**

- 11.1. There are no specific equalities implications.

## **12. Climate change and environmental implications**

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

## **13. Crime and disorder implications**

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

## **14. Health and wellbeing implications**

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

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## 15. Background papers

15.1. There are no additional background papers for this report.

## 16. Glossary

Term	Definition
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.

## 17. Report author and contact

17.1. If there are any queries about this report then please contact Emma Talbot 020 8314 9051.

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## Appendix A – Action Plan

There were 6 detailed recommendations specifically related to Planning. Planning is also subject to the work being done to deliver the wider recommendations relating to council meetings, roles and responsibilities, engagement and culture change.

Initial engagement with officers and planning members has taken place (as outlined in actions 1-7) to further inform understanding of current and best practice. There has also been discussion and engagement with officers and members working on delivering the other, wider recommendations. As a result, a more detailed timeline and action plan has been developed for delivery of improvements in planning and licensing. This timeline and action plan are underpinned by the principles that:

- Improved communications, earlier engagement and some changes in practice will lead to better understanding of and engagement with the planning processes.
- These improvements, via the delivery of the majority of these actions over the next 5 months (till March 2020), will facilitate consideration of further potential constitutional changes early in the next municipal year.
- Potential constitutional changes include both procedural and structural changes which could include reviewing thresholds for triggering committee consideration and reducing committees to, potentially, one strategic and one other planning committee.
- The Statement of Community Involvement is being reviewed and the timing of that to best facilitate delivery of the recommendations is being considered.

Ref	Action	Lead	Comments	Target Completion Date/Scheduled Date	Status	Rec #
1	Arrange site visit to LB Brent	Emma Talbot	To inform understanding of alternative/best practice to inform development of action plan to deliver recommendations.	09/10/19	Completed	All
2	Arrange further meeting between Cllr Davis and Planning officers	Angus Saunders	To inform understanding of current practice, legal requirements and support development of action plan to deliver recommendations.	w/c 14/10/19	Completed	All
3	Undertake assessment of current ways of working/engagement within	Emma Talbot	To inform understanding of current and best practice, legal requirements and to inform development of action	31/10/19	Completed	All

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	Planning (to include comparison with other boroughs)		plan to deliver recommendations.			
4	Arrange follow-up meeting between Cllr Davis and Planning Committee Chairs (re: Strategic Planning)	Cllr Davis	Chris Dale to contact Cllr Davis re: potential dates	March 2020	Ongoing	All
5	Arrange councillor-led community meetings	Cllr Davis		March 2020	Ongoing	All
6	Arrange for Cllr Davis to attend local Planning meetings	Chris Dale		TBC	Ongoing	All
7	Roundtable/meeting between Cllr Davis and Planning to develop initial proposals	Emma Talbot/ Angus Saunders		TBC	Planned	All
8	Arrange meeting between Cllr Davis, Planning and IT to discuss ICT requirements	Emma Talbot	To be scheduled now specific actions for ICT have been identified	November	Ongoing	25, 26,29
9	Arrange meeting between Cllr Davis, Planning and Comms to discuss comms support requirements	Emma Talbot	To be scheduled now specific actions for comms have been identified	November	Ongoing	25, 26
10	Greatly improve the information and accessibility of information about planning (and licensing) on our website.	Emma Talbot & Murray James & Gillian Hargreaves (Louis High)	Emma, Murray and Gillian to discuss and agree delivery of a revamp of the information available on the website to ensure it is clear and accessible and the necessary level of detail is available to those who want it, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Key information displayed prominently and clearly on summary pages,</li> <li>• Click through for increasing levels of detail,</li> </ul>	March 2020	Planned	25

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			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Upload of documents to be permitted.</li> </ul>			
11	Use “Operational Transparency” wherever possible	Emma Talbot	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A visual overview of the process to be designed and made available on the website</li> <li>• Better use to be made of automated responses giving overview of process and anticipated timelines, to better manage expectations at applicant and objection stages.</li> <li>• Practice to change to provide initial response including anticipated timelines when applications received by admin team and passed to a manager for allocation</li> <li>• Future system procurement to include accessibility and ability to improve operational transparency as a key factor.</li> </ul>			25
12	Consider approach to early engagement	Emma Talbot	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider rationale and ability to engage residents earlier in strategic planning matters – consider at what stage and for what scale of proposal local meetings could be replaced by pre-app meetings,(with the agreement of the developer if commercially sensitive).</li> <li>• Set out clear guidance for developers as to our expectations of them in terms of early engagement in the pre-app process, including</li> </ul>			25

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			comprehensive community assessments. Develop best practice guidance for based on our own services approaches to this.			
13	Make better use of current communication channels (ie Council Twitter feed)	Emma Talbot & Gillian Hargreaves	Emma to liaise with Comms to agree increased use of twitter as a communication channel in relation to strategic planning and consultations			25
14	Create clear, visual if possible, guidance for the public to support better understanding and better manage expectations.	Emma Talbot	Range of guidance to be created that clearly outlines the role of the Council and Councillors in planning (and licensing) processes. This to include and inform Member Role profiles being created as part of LDR. Guidance as to what to expect if attending a committee meeting to also be created for circulation to those attending.			26
15	Refresh guidance for councillors involved in planning decisions	Emma Talbot & Sophie Davies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To utilise the PAS information for members.</li> <li>To consider approach to, and member engagement with training.</li> </ul>			27
16	Reports to be clearer and easier to understand for members and the public	Emma Talbot / Charlotte Parish	Planning to adopt the corporate report template currently being developed. Links to lengthy background reports, legislation and guidance to be inserted in the reports.			27
17	"Independent" officer advice to be available to members at Committee meetings.	Emma Talbot	Two planning officers at each committee to be trialled: presenting officer and senior officer enabling a			27

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			second opinion/ further advice to be sought from an officer not involved in making the recommendation.			
18	Introduce the option to go into closed session where appropriate to facilitate advice and discussion.	Emma Talbot	Currently being trialled with Planning A. To be rolled out as practice with the requirements and approach to align with approach used for Mayor and Cabinet Part 2 discussions – communication with applicants, objectors and developers to ensure	January 2020	Ongoing	27
18	Consider practice and procedure at Planning Committee meetings and consider developing additional guidance	Emma Talbot	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To review practice at committee meetings in relation to constitutional requirements, legal requirements and current accepted practice.</li> <li>Consider changing practice if benefits identified, ie order in which objectors/applicants address the committee, length of time given etc, to improve practice</li> <li>Develop guidance note for officers, members and members of the public attending committee</li> </ul>			
20	All relevant documents, including objections to be made easily available to members of committee via Mod.gov.	Emma Talbot	Practice to change to enable this. This will include links to background papers (as per action 18 and report template) as well as un-redacted objections as CLOSED papers for members information.	December 2019	Ongoing	28
21	Relationships with, expectations of and weighting given to amenities societies to be considered.	Emma Talbot	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Level and stage of engagement with amenity societies to be considered, particularly in relation to strategic applications,</li> </ul>			28

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			<p>and early engagement with the Chair.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review recent data in relation to committees and amenity societies</li> <li>• Consider weighting given to amenity societies</li> </ul>			
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Recommendations 25-30	Timescale	Potential Actions
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 (#25)	Medium-Term	
Clearer information should be provided to councillors, citizens, applicants and objectors about the role and power of planning and licencing committee and local councillors (#26)	Short-Term	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Create a visual guide for the public (role of Council/councillor &amp; what to expect from committee – put it on the website and send it to applicant/objectors)</li> </ul>
The most appropriate way to provide professional support and guidance to councillors responsible for planning decisions should be further explored (#27)	Short-Term	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Create a short guide for councillors involved in planning decisions (Constitution, best practice, policies etc)</li> <li>▪ Organise pre-app meetings for planning committee (consider inviting developers and local residents)</li> <li>▪ Simplify reports – in particular, summarise key lines of enquiry at the start and explain the weight accorded to different policies (link to Language &amp; Reporting thematic area)</li> <li>▪ Give Chairs/councillors the opportunity to speak to independent officers if they are considering objecting</li> <li>▪ Re-introduce the option to go to closed session</li> <li>▪ Send comments/objections to members of relevant committee</li> <li>▪ Systematically upload relevant docs to mod.gov and make them easily accessible</li> </ul>

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<p>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 (#28)</p>	<p>Medium-Term</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ For strategic sites, start with an assessment of what's there in partnership with the community (idea from conference)</li> <li>▪ Better encourage developers to engage early (give them best practice examples, work with them on strategy, include asking about consultation process in best practice for councillors – could we have a guide for officers/developers about this?)</li> <li>▪ Consider reversing order of presentations so objectors speak first</li> <li>▪ Limit powers of amenity societies (or require them to do something in return e.g. attend training)</li> </ul>
<p>Ward members should be notified of all relevant applications and decision-making processes in a timely and appropriate manner (#29)</p>	<p>Medium-Term</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Send members a weekly email update about developments in their wards, highlighting changes from the previous week &amp; flagging the most 'important' ones (instead of emails about individual applications)</li> <li>▪ Invite local ward councillors to pre-app meetings (see #27)</li> </ul>
<p>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 (#30)</p>	<p>Long-Term</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Review once we have a list of all other recommendations (that pertain to it)</li> </ul>
<p>All recommendations (#25 to #30)</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Reduce the number of committees/number of councillors who make planning decisions</li> <li>▪ Increase the number of objections needed to reach the committee threshold</li> <li>▪ Improve enforcement (e.g. require applicants to send us a picture when they have put up their notice or appoint local 'champions'/work with amenity societies to notify us when notices aren't up)</li> </ul>

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