



Local Democracy Working Group

LDWG Programme Update Report

Date: 12th February 2020

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 the delivery of these recommendations during 2019/20. The first LDWG meeting took place in May 2019, where members agreed to structure this work into a single programme, 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 the second, third and fourth LDWG meetings, which took place in July, September and December 2019 respectively. As work to deliver the recommendations progressed, the various projects and activities being undertaken within each of the eight thematic areas became more closely aligned. Prior to the fourth LDWG meeting, these thematic areas were 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 fifth 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 the Local Democracy Review's presence at the all-staff event on 13th January, the development of a programme closure report (to be presented at the final LDWG meeting in March 2020) and legacy planning for the review (2020/21 onwards).

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 4th 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 provide an update on work to deliver the recommendations of the Local Democracy Review since the fourth meeting of the 2019/20 Local Democracy Working Group (LDWG) on 18th December 2019. The report also outlines the proposed next steps for all thematic areas and other activities undertaken during this period in relation to the review, particularly programme closure and legacy planning.

2. Recommendations

2.1. The LDWG is recommended to:

- Note the work undertaken to date and proposed next steps (section 5)
- Note the updated Programme Plan (Appendix A)
- Note the proposed approach for programme closure and legacy planning (section 6)
- Provide guidance in relation to ongoing/planned activities, timescales and decisions required

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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 (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 the delivery of these recommendations during 2019/20.

4.2. At the first LDWG meeting in May 2019, members agreed to structure this work into a single programme, with the recommendations clustered into eight thematic areas, each led by a LDWG Champion. Officers from Corporate Policy, Governance, Communications, Planning and Licensing were allocated to support individual LDWG Champions with the delivery of projects and activities across their thematic area. Two officers from Corporate Policy have also provided programme management support to the LDWG during this period.

4.3. At the second, third and fourth 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). Officer reports on the delivery of specific recommendations have also been presented to the LDWG at these meetings.

5. Work to date and next steps

5.1. As work to deliver the recommendations progressed, the various projects and activities being undertaken within each of the eight thematic areas became more closely aligned. Prior to the last LDWG meeting in December 2019, these thematic areas were 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 from December 2019 to January 2020 and planned activities up until the end of March 2020 is provided below. An updated programme plan (which outlines the current status of each recommendation via a RAG rating system) 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 has allowed the interdependencies between the various pieces of work to be fully exploited.

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

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Work to date (Dec-Jan)

- Detailed report produced for the LDWG, which outlines options for the development of a Council-wide Open Data approach (see agenda item 3A)
- New Communications Strategy finalised, which will support the delivery of the Council's Corporate Strategy priorities and the recommendations of the Local Democracy Review – key objectives are to deliver a strategic and collaborative communication service (e.g. focus on agreed campaign plan for Corporate Strategy priorities, improving the Council's reputation, more effective use of social media and other digital channels, support for organisational transformation), achieve continuous improvement within the service and promote the strategy (including training, support and guidance for staff)
- Improved use of social media (including the introduction of LinkedIn and greater use of Facebook) and the development of new online video content (e.g. refugee week and parking) by the communications service
- Re-launch of [webcasting](#) for all Mayor & Cabinet and Full Council meetings (following suspension during pre-election period), with further training planned for staff so that they are able to independently support future broadcasts

Planned activities (Feb-Mar)

- Prepare to implement agreed option for the development of a Council-wide Open Data approach (as part of the new Digital Strategy)
- Deliver the new Communications Strategy, which will be supported by an improved resourcing structure within the communication service
- Existing reporting software identified as a potential mechanism for members to record and report their activities/attendance at events other than formal Council meetings. The Business & Committee Manager will develop a proposal to implement this approach

Language and reporting (Cllr Kelleher/Cllr Best)

Work to date (Dec-Jan)

- Wider testing of new report template and practical guidance following 'soft launch' – feedback is currently being gathered from members and officers and will be used to further refine the template and guidance
- 'Go live' of 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

Planned activities (Feb-Mar)

- Prepare for formal launch of the new report template and practical guidance for report authors (April 2020)
- 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 has provided an opportunity for the LDWG to collectively review the learning from various projects and activities which have been undertaken to date and consider improvements to the Council's engagement approach as a whole (see the update on the 'seldom-heard voices' thematic area and agenda item 4A for more

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detail).

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

Work to date (Dec-Jan)

- Development of proposal for piloting councillor question time panels in schools (as part of the development of mechanisms for increasing young people's engagement with local decision-making) with the Young Mayor and the Director of Education
- Launch of online survey for young people about online communications and social media (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)
- Development of guidance for members and officers about the different mechanisms that the Council has for engaging with older people (based on desktop research and discussions with the Positive Ageing Council and the Lewisham Pensioners' Forum)

Planned activities (Feb-Mar)

- Pilot councillor question time panels in schools (Addey & Stanhope, Bonus Pastor, St Matthew Academy and Sydenham) and develop a detailed report for the LDWG, which outlines key lessons learnt and proposed next steps (potentially including a wider roll-out)
- Finalise guidance for members and officers about the different mechanisms that the Council has for engaging with older people
- 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)

Place-based engagement (Cllr Elliott/Cllr Codd)

Work to date (Dec-Jan)

- Detailed report produced for the LDWG, which outlines options for the development of a civic crowdfunding model for Lewisham (see agenda item 4B)
- Development of a case study on place-based engagement, utilising the recent 'Healthier Neighbourhood' consultation, which will inform future practice (both within this key programme of engagement and more widely)
- Development of a draft scope for a short review of place-based engagement and involvement in decision-making, with a particular focus on improving the value and sustainability of existing civic participation mechanisms (e.g. councillor surgeries, Local Assemblies, neighbourhood development teams) and enhancing connectivity across place-based initiatives (e.g. Mayor's Question Time, Neighbourhood Community Infrastructure Levy, Healthy Neighbourhoods)

Planned activities (Feb-Mar)

- Deliver the review of place-based engagement and involvement in decision-making

Seldom-heard voices (Cllr Campbell/Cllr Sheikh)

Work to date (Dec-Jan)

- Detailed report produced for the LDWG (see agenda item 4A), which outlines

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a new approach to engagement, with a particular focus on reaching and empowering seldom-heard groups and individuals (drawing on findings from the desktop research and Appreciative Inquiry). In order to deliver the suggested changes to current approach, an action plan has also been developed

Planned activities (Feb-Mar)

- Begin to deliver the action plan (incorporating the delivery of the place-based engagement review)

Theme 3: Effective decision-making

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 has allowed the interdependencies between the various pieces of work to be fully exploited.

Planning and Licensing (Cllr Davis/Cllr Bonavia)

Work to date (Dec-Jan)

- Development of interim report on Planning recommendations, including 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 (see agenda item 5A)
- 'Go live' for upgrade to Assure System (which will streamline back office Licensing functions) partially complete
- Development of proposals to undertake externally-delivered refresher Licensing training for committee members (currently liaising with the Institute of Licensing regarding potential dates)
- Completion of benchmarking exercise with other London boroughs (structure and meeting scheduling approach)

Planned activities (Feb-Mar)

- Present final report (including detailed proposals/timescales) on Planning recommendations to LDWG in March
- Consult with stakeholders on the revised 'Statement of Licensing Principles' (from early February 2020)
- Develop proposals for an integrated licensing page on the Council website, which will provide a 'one-stop-shop' for residents (part of wider IT upgrade)
- '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 (Dec-Jan)

- Draft member role profiles circulated to councillors and lead officers for initial feedback, with a particular focus at this stage on those positions to which they are currently appointed or directly support (wider feedback on the full set of draft profiles to be gathered during February)
- Ongoing development of guidance for Mayoral and Full Council appointments (to be included with the member role profiles)

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Planned activities (Feb-Mar)

- Finalise member role profiles and guidance for Mayoral and Full Council appointments (to be considered by the LDWG in March)
- 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 (Dec-Jan)

- Completion of Overview & Scrutiny review (including report to the LDWG in December 2019)
- Development of a more 'thematic and engaging approach' to the role and format of Full Council meetings, which has included enabling collective observation from an alternative venue (via public viewing screens in the Foyer), better utilising the Council Announcements and Communications sections of the formal agenda and trialling a pre-registration process for supplementary questions

Planned activities (Feb-Mar)

- Prepare report for Constitution Working Party, develop support structures and guidance in Scrutiny to deliver the practice changes and prepare for the introduction of task and finish groups
- Develop and test options to further improve the role and format of Full Council meetings (based on review of best practice)

5.6. As noted in the previous Programme Update Report, a report outlining how the 'Barriers To Politics' recommendations have been implemented as part of the delivery of the Local Democracy Review will be presented to the LDWG in March 2020.

6. Other activities

6.1. The Local Democracy Review was one of the information stalls at the Council's all-staff event on 13th January 2020. Officers from Corporate Policy provided staff with an update on the review, focusing on the key changes taking place (particularly those with direct relevance to services e.g. the new report template and guidance, consultation and engagement with residents) and how they could help to embed these changes across the organisation. The posters and 'democracy checklist' created for the event can be found at Appendix B and C.

6.2. A programme closure report for the Local Democracy Review (which will evaluate the impact of the review and benefits achieved, including lessons learnt and case studies across each of the three themes) is in development and will be presented to the LDWG in March 2020. It is anticipated that an accessible version of this report will be produced for staff and residents.

6.3. Officers are also undertaking 'legacy planning' for the review – this will involve the development of an approach to coordinate and manage the delivery of key pieces of work (such as the implementation of Planning recommendations) beyond 2019/20 and ensuring that the changes which have taken place are fully embedded (e.g. launching a new LDR intranet site which will enable staff to easily access democracy-related tools, guidance and information; aligning the work of the review with ongoing organisational and cultural change activity, particularly the 'Listen to Learn' improvement programme).

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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 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 have and will continue to 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

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Public Sector Equality Duty and statutory guidance entitled 'Equality Act 2010 Services, Public Functions & Associations Statutory Code of Practice'. The Council must have regard to the statutory code in so far as it relates to the duty and attention is drawn to Chapter 11, which deals particularly with the equality duty. The Technical Guidance also covers what public authorities should do to meet the duty. This includes steps that are legally required, as well as recommended actions. The guidance does not have statutory force but nonetheless regard should be had to it, as failure to do so without compelling reason would be of evidential value. The statutory code and the technical guidance can be found at:

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

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:](#)

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[Programme Update Report \(September 2019\)](#)

- [Delivering The Recommendations Of The Local Democracy Review: Programme Update Report \(December 2019\)](#)

14. Glossary

Term	Definition
Appreciative Inquiry	An engagement approach which uses questions to build a vision for the future, focusing on past and potential future successes. These questions are then taken to the wider community. The focus is usually on what people enjoy about an area, their hopes for the future, and their feelings about their communities.
Benchmarking Exercise	Benchmarking exercises compare the work of a service within the Council with those of other local authorities in order to understand how well it is performing and identify potential improvements.
Civic Crowdfunding	Civic crowdfunding is a way of raising money through an online platform to finance community-focused projects.
Communications Strategy	Lewisham's Communication Strategy sets a clear direction for the communications service over the next three years.
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.
Intranet	A computer network that can only be used by people within a specific organisation (e.g. the Council).
Lewisham Pensioners Forum	A local organisation which aims to improve the daily lives of older people.
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.
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.
Positive Ageing Council	A local group for residents aged over 60, which organises social events for members and provides opportunities for them to have their say about what services and facilities are provided for older people in Lewisham.

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Term	Definition
Programme	A set of related projects and/or activities, which are managed in a coordinated way in order to achieve an overall goal.
Programme Plan	A programme plan typically outlines what work needs to be done across the programme, how and when the work will be done, who will do the work and how much it will cost.
Role Profile	Outlines the key duties and responsibilities of a specific role as well as the skills that an individual would need to undertake this role.
Webcasting	Video broadcasting over the internet, either live or on demand.

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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