

Council Supplementary Agenda



8. Governance Review Panel (Pages 3 - 276)
Supplementary Evidence Report

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Croydon Council Governance Review

SUPPLEMENTARY
EVIDENCE REPORT
MARCH 2020

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This document includes key evidence and information gathered by the Governance Review Panel.

Please see the main report: Croydon Council Governance Review: Enhancing Democracy, Increasing Participation, March 2020, for the Panel's conclusions and recommendations.

Ref no.	Evidence name
1	Current governance arrangements presentation slides
2	Current opportunities to participate presentation slides
2.1	Opportunities to participate summary handout
3	Engagements overview report Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS)
3.1	Resident survey response report CfPS + resident survey hard copy
3.2	Changing the culture of running the council – resident written submission
3.3	Desktop analysis of resident / stakeholder engagement – summary report and proposed actions CfPS
3.4	Member engagement - findings report CfPS
3.5	Local Strategic Partnership engagement headlines CfPS
3.6	Planning session slides
3.7	MP letter to Chair re planning
3.8	Planning Advisory Service findings report + addendum
3.9	Residents' Associations evidence submissions
4	Governance models comparison brief by CfPS
4.1	Forward plans and key decisions brief by CfPS
4.2	Hybrid arrangements brief by CfPS
5	Sutton visit summary notes
6	Expert session summary notes + speaker presentation slides
7	List of Statutory reports handout
8	Key decision definition and no. of key decisions comparison handout
9	Executive decision making figures handout
10	Localities work presentation by CEO handout
11	Examples of ward forums / area committees handout
12	Councillor questions trends handout
13	Record of all Member discussion about the Panel's draft findings
13.1	Councillor written submission following the Member discussion
14	Further reading + links to Croydon Council's key governance documents

Current Governance Arrangements

Governance Review Panel

Overview

Current model is Executive Leader and Cabinet

Leader and Cabinet Model introduced in May 2001

Executive Leader and Cabinet Model introduced in May 2010

Executive Arrangements

Cabinet consists of Leader and nine other cabinet posts

Ten deputy Cabinet Members

Vast majority of decisions of the Leader are delegated to meetings of the Cabinet

Cabinet open to all Members to participate and papers circulated to all Members

Cabinet Members each publish bulletins at each ordinary council meeting

Briefings on major strategies or contracts are available to Shadow Cabinet Members on request

Executive Arrangements

Delegated key decisions
circulated to all Members

All Cabinet Members hold a
Q&A session at Scrutiny at
least once per municipal
year

Four Executive Joint
Committees:

- Bandon Hill Cemetery
- Croydon and Lewisham
Street Lighting
- South West London Waste
Partnership
- South London Partnership

Executive Arrangements

One formal advisory Committee – TMAC – gives speaking rights to all Members on traffic management issues prior to decisions being taken

Informal advisory panels (all cross party)

- Adult Social Services Review Panel*
- Corporate Parenting Panel
- Cycle Forum
- Public Transport Liaison Panel
- Tenants' and Leaseholders' Panel
- Staff Partnership Panel

Council

Seven meetings per annum

Agrees the budget and policy framework

30 minutes available for public questions

105 minutes available for questions to the Cabinet

Petition debates and Member petitions

Council debate motions

Receives annual reports

Non-Executive Committees

General Purposes and Audit Committee

Ethics Committee

Licensing Committee

- All Members notified of applications in their Ward
- Opportunity for Ward Members to participate

Planning Committee

- Members notified of applications in their Ward
- Member referral rights
- Opportunity for Ward Members to participate

Non-Executive Committees

Appointments Committee

Pension Committee

Health and Well-Being Board

Informal internal advisory panels (all cross party)

- Adoption and Fostering Panels*
- CASSUP
- Members' Learning and Development Panel
- Housing Disability Panel
- Mobility Forum
- Schools Forum
- Sheltered Housing Panel
- SACRE

Scrutiny

Scrutiny

ANNUAL REPORT 2017-2018



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Scrutiny and Overview Committee

Three Sub-Committees

- Children & Young People
- Health and Social Care
- Streets, Environment and Housing

All cross-party with mixed Chairs

Scrutiny

All cross-party with mixed Chairs

Power of call-in (14 Members)

Power to scrutinise public sector partners

Focus on pre-decision Scrutiny

Any Member can suggest topics for scrutiny

Visiting Members normally invited to participate

Make recommendations to decision makers

Champions

- Borough Design Champion
- Senior Citizens' Champion
- Champion for Autism
- Military Champion
- Fairtrade Champion
- Heritage Champion
- Mental Health Champion
- Animal Welfare Champion
- Dementia Champion
- Business Champion
- BAME Champion

Other Areas of Engagement

- Members' Enquiries
- Councillors' written questions
- Consultation and engagement on local issues

Current Opportunities to Participate

Governance Review Panel

CONTENTS

- Current opportunities to participate for members, residents and partners
- Information currently shared with members and available to the public
- Constitutional opportunities currently not utilised

CURRENT OPPORTUNITIES TO PARTICIPATE

COUNCIL MEETINGS

Councillors:

- 1h 45min available for questions of Cabinet Members and supplementary questions
- Can support petition debates and speak in debate motions
- Can present petitions on behalf of residents
- Can ask questions on annual reports

Public:

- Open to the media and public and webcast
- 30mins available for public questions - no notice or attendance required
- Can raise local and borough wide petition debates with low thresholds

Related statistics:

- Council attendance rate of councillors: 95% in the last 7 meetings, since May 2018
- Number of public questions asked in 2018: 97 in total (46 were asked of Cabinet Member for Clean green Croydon)

Agenda prescribed in Constitution based predominantly on local agreement

CABINET MEETINGS

Councillors:

- Open to all Members to participate and ask questions on each item

Public:

- Open to the media and public and webcast

Relevant stats:

- Cabinet attendance rate of councillors: 44% in the last 8 meetings, since May 2018; Cabinet Members, Shadow Cabinet Members and standing attendees have attended almost all meetings

Agenda and format set by the Administration

PARTICIPATION AT OTHER COMMITTEES

Planning

- Ward member referral rights
- Speaking rights at committee and consultation on schemes
- Residents can register to speak at committee meetings
- Webcast
- Over the last year 37 applications were referred to planning committee and sub-committee by members; 32 met the threshold for resident objections, with no member referral; 83 were both member and resident threshold cases

Licensing

- Can make representations on applications
- Can speak on behalf of residents
- Total Licensing Sub-Committees held in 2018 to hear applications – 9 meetings with 3 members speaking

TMAC

- Ward members and public have speaking rights on individual schemes, can register just before the meeting and have 2min to speak
- Councillor appointments to 17 informal advisory bodies and groups

SCRUTINY

- All members can attend and visiting members are invited to participate
- Any member can suggest topics for scrutiny
- All Cabinet Members hold at least one Q&A session; the Leader attends twice a year
- Members have power to call in key decisions (14 members)
- Scrutiny has powers to scrutinise public sector partners
- Cabinet responses to recommendations come back to scrutiny and are tracked
- Meetings are webcasted and open for residents to attend

2018/2019 work programme:

- Scrutiny: 1 call-in (Purchase of Croydon Park Hotel), 6 pre-decision items and 7 thematic items and Question time
 - Streets, Environment and Homes Sub-Committee: 8 thematic items and Question time
 - Children & Young People Sub-Committee: 1 pre-decision and 18 thematic items, and Question time
 - Health and Social Care Sub-Committee: 12 thematic items, Question time
-
- 78 recommendations to cabinet in since June 2018, all accepted (inc. 3 partially accepted)

OTHER WAYS TO PARTICIPATE

Councillors

- Members consulted on local issues such as regeneration schemes and changes to services specific to their wards
- Ward budgets – £8k per member, £560k budget each year, in 2017/18 mostly contributed to school, scouts and youth projects, voluntary led and parks and open spaces related project
- Request for officer briefings on topics such as regeneration schemes, or services specific to a ward member or individual contracts
- Cllr Questions, 131 asked in 2018, most regarding homes & gateway, clean & green and finance & resources
- Cllr Enquiries, 810 since April 2018, 82% resolved within 10 days

Partners and residents

- Various partnerships including LSP, One Croydon, South London Waste Partnership
- Youth mayor, cabinet and forums
- User forums and user engagements
- Consultations and engagements: 25 consultations completed via Get Involved since July 2018
- Get Involved panel membership: 1137 people full registered and 4638 partially registered
- Total of Croydon Council page views in Jan 2019 – 336,934

ACCESS TO INFORMATION

MEMBERS' & RESIDENTS' RIGHTS

- Rights to decision making information and notices enshrined in law
- Constitutional requirements support this in Access to Information regulations (part 4B) and in the Protocol on Member Officer relations (part 5B)
- Constitution also provides details on access to Part B reports, background documents and procedure for viewing restricted documents

WHAT GETS SENT OUT

- All key decisions circulated to all members – 8 made by Cabinet, 18 by Cabinet Members and 1 by an officer since May 2018
- 28 day notice sent out prior to key decisions
- Cabinet Member Bulletins to each council meeting
- Notifications on planning and licensing applications
- Committee papers to committee members and subscribers
- Statutory reports that go to cabinet and council
- Part B papers sent out to Cabinet members and Shadow Cabinet Members and Chair of Scrutiny (and available to other members upon request)
- News bulletins
- Emergency notices
- In wards with lots of regeneration activity there are regular member briefings (at least quarterly) in other areas there are ad hoc engagements when activities are proposed; there is also fairly regular email correspondence to keep members up to date
- Ward Members are notified of all highways schemes, and can comment on those

WHAT IS AVAILABLE

- Cabinet, GPAC, Scrutiny and Ethics forward plans published online
- Key and Executive decisions by Cabinet, Cabinet Members, and officers are published on the website and available on information boards at Town Hall and Access Croydon
- Briefings on major strategies or contracts are available to Shadow Cabinet Members and councillors on request
- All previously asked CQs and PQs, and all responses to petitions are available via Members library access on mod.gov or the website
- Various Council Newsletters Inc. Your Croydon and Croydon Means Business newsletters

OPPORTUNITIES WITHIN THE CONSTITUTION

CONSTITUTIONAL OPPORTUNITIES AND WHAT'S POSSIBLE

- Cabinet sub-committees (Article 7)
- Cabinet advisory committees (Leader's Scheme of Delegation)
- Further Scrutiny sub-committees (Article 6)
- Neighbourhood partnerships, area forums, area committees, focus groups and service or user based consultative groups as part of its community leadership role and in order to aid transparent and accountable decision-making (Article 10)
- Joint arrangements with other Authorities (Article 11)
- Informal advisory panels and groups (outside of the Constitution)
- Format of Council and committee meetings predominantly determined locally

QUESTIONS

Are there opportunities to try out different arrangements and approaches?

Could we propose trialing different approaches, for example for council?

Are there examples we could import from other places where those appear to work well?

Opportunities to participate summary

Forum	Opportunities	Who
Council	1.45hrs available for question to Leader and Cabinet	Councillors
	Speaking in debate motions	Councillors
	Presenting petitions on behalf of residents	Councillors
	Questioning annual reports	Councillors
	Open to the public and webcast	Residents
	30mins available for public questions	Residents
	Can raise local and borough wide petitions with comparatively low thresholds	Residents
Cabinet	All items open for questions from any attending Members	Councillors
	Open to the public and webcast	Residents
Planning	Ward Member referral rights	Councillors
	Speaking rights on applications at Committee	Councillors
	Members consulted on schemes in their Ward	Councillors
	Residents can object or support applications	Residents
	Residents have speaking rights at Committee meetings	Residents
Licensing	Residents can comment on applications	Residents
	Residents have speaking rights at Committee and Sub-Committee	Residents
	Ward Members can make representations on applications	Councillors
	Members can speak on behalf of residents	Councillors
Traffic Management Advisory Committee	Ward Members can speak on schemes at Committee	Councillors
	Residents have speaking rights at Committee	Councillors
Scrutiny	All items open for questions from any attending Members	Councillors
	All Members can suggest topics for Scrutiny	Councillors
	All Cabinet Members attend for Q&A sessions at least once per year	Councillors
	All non-Cabinet Members can participate in 'calling-in' key decisions	Councillors
	Scrutiny makes recommendations to Cabinet and Cabinet's responses are reported back to Scrutiny and tracked	Councillors
	Open to the public and Webcast	Residents
Other	Ward Members consulted on local issues and changes to services specific to their Wards	Councillors
	All Members have a discretionary £8k Ward budget per year	Councillors
	All Members can ask written questions of Cabinet Members at any time of the year	Councillors
	All Members can ask written questions of officers to support them in their role at any time of year	Councillors
	All Members can request officer briefings on issues such as local topics or individual council contracts	Councillors
	Youth Mayor, cabinet and forums	Residents
	Service based user forums	Residents
	Formal consultation and engagement events	Residents
	Get Involved Residents' Panel	Residents

Croydon – Governance Review

Engagement Summary Report

November 2019

Introduction

1. Croydon Council commissioned the Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS) to undertake engagement activities to inform the work of the cross-party Panel established to conduct an independent assessment and review of the Council's governance structure.
2. This report provides details of the approach taken to evidence gathering, the findings and analysis. CfPS would like to thank everyone who took the time to share their views.

Scope and methodology

3. The scope of the Panel's work included: hearing the views of elected members and other stakeholders including, residents, community and voluntary groups, business, MPs and other participants in local democracy.
4. During the course of the review, evidence was gathered from:
 - Residents – via an online survey (also available in paper form)
 - Elected members – via an online survey, workshops and written submissions
 - Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) members – via interviews and written submissions
5. In addition, an analysis was undertaken of existing engagement activities and forums led by Croydon Council. Separate submissions were also received on the subject of planning.
6. A summary of the findings is below.

Summary of findings – Residents

7. An online survey ran from 6 September to 6 October 2019 to gather residents' perceptions of the Council and its decision-making process. The survey was open on the Council's website and supported by a proactive communication campaign, including targeted activity aimed at young people. 1016 people completed the survey.
8. An analysis of the respondents showed:
 - More people in the south of the borough completed the survey than in the north of the borough – meaning that the views of people living in any of the wards in the north of the borough are under-represented. 36% of people who completed this survey describe themselves as living in either Sanderstead or South Croydon.
 - Survey respondents tended to be older meaning that the views of younger adults (aged 25 and under) are under-represented in this survey. Nearly a half (48%) of people who responded and gave their age were aged over 55 years old.
 - People classifying themselves as white were more likely to complete the survey – the views of people who identify as being Black were under-represented in this survey. Only 3% of respondents were black – this is compared to the demographic of Croydon's population (20% of adults in

Croydon overall aged between 25 and 64 identify as being black (according to most recent Borough briefing – June 2019).

- Respondents were generally already engaged with the council – 60% had signed a petition to the council in the last 12 months, 54% were involved in local residents' associations or other forums, and 50% had communicated with a councillor in the last 12 months. 66% had never attended a council meeting.

9. The following were key findings from the survey:

- Information about the decisions the council makes was sourced from a wide range of channels including social media (top at 24%, local press 16% and Your Croydon magazine 15%).
- 92% of respondent felt it was very important to have opportunities to be involved in decisions about where you live, compared to 49% who felt it was very important to be involved in decisions about the borough.
- Planning was a strong theme, with 40% of people living in Sanderstead and Croydon citing it as a concern (compared to 18% of respondents overall). Other respondents cited parking and traffic as a concern.
- There was a high proportion of respondents (478 people) who were motivated to provide additional comments when asked how the council could make it easier to find out about decisions it makes. A number of respondents indicated that finding out the way the council communicates their decisions would be helpful.
- Another theme was the need for tailored information about the decisions that interest them, one person said “A facility to track issues I'm interested in and let the council know my views (before they make a decision). Not just a blanket newsletter / publication covering what the council wants us to hear (usually after decisions have taken place).”
- In terms of how people wanted to be engaged with decisions, there were specific themes which people raised which was around local engagement, local meetings, visits by councillors, MPs etc. A number of people who had mentioned planning issues also mentioned the need for local face to face engagement.
- Another theme was around use of technology, the website and social media to improve engagement. One of the most popular topics mentioned was the website, many respondents cited the importance of the website in communicating about decisions.
- The need for transparency was cited by many respondents and was one of the most popular terms in the comments made. Timeliness of receiving information was mentioned by a number of respondents – people felt they often received information after the decision had been made.

Summary of findings – Elected Members

10. Evidence was gathered via an on-line survey which was open from Wednesday 10 January until Sunday 3 February 2019. In total 60 responses were received. Workshops were also held on Saturday 19 January and Wednesday 23 January and attended by 50 Councillors in total. Four Councillors submitted individual evidence.
11. The excellent response rate to the survey and positive engagement in the workshops indicates that there is a desire amongst members to engage with this topic and many Councillors have views on what needs improvement and how this could happen. The response rate was significantly higher when compared to similar on-line surveys in other councils.
12. The results showed that whilst there were no significant problems raised, members also did not find many aspects of governance to be positive. This analysis applied to many different aspects of governance, with only Council meetings and the need for increased resident involvement in decision-making reflecting a strong view of what needed to be improved. A reason for this could be the fact that the governance review is not happening as a result of a significant governance or service failing which can act as a focus.
13. A strong theme throughout the evidence gathering was the desire of backbenchers to contribute more and be more involved in local and strategic issues. In one workshop this was described by a recently elected Councillor as a wish to be 'more productive' and other members talked about a desire for their local knowledge, insight and experience to be more valued and utilised by the Council.
14. In giving evidence, members regularly talked about the need for a change in culture and behaviours and that this was key to bringing about change. Formal changes to governance to allow for greater involvement and influence of backbenchers were called for by some and both a committee system and area panels were referenced as potential positive solutions.
15. The nature of the political environment was clearly understood and reflected in the feedback. Members discussed the process of decision-making in terms of how it was impacted by politics and distinguished between forums which were cross-party or not.

Summary of findings – Local Strategic Partnerships

16. Members of the LSP were invited to submitted evidence, eight responses were received, via 7 telephone interviews and one written response. Views were sought on the effectiveness of decision-making in Croydon Council, the involvement of residents in decision-making, examples of good practice and where improvements could be made.
17. Overall partners felt that Croydon Council was ambitious for its residents and the place. It was recognised that there is a commitment to operate in a transparent way and the experience of engaging with Cabinet and Scrutiny was positive. Ward councillors were engaged, well intended and keen to do well for their constituents. Some commented that there can be disconnect between officer and councillor communication.

18. There were many examples given where the Council had undertaken engagement activities with residents and communities. It was recognised that they have the platforms and resource to do this and there were established forums that worked hard to engage with specific groups. The move to locality working was seen to strengthen engagement and making it more planned and co-ordinated. Whilst there were examples of good practice, resident engagement was described as basic in terms of being specific to a project or consultation. It was suggested that that better advantage could be taken of partner relations with specific groups, communities, or be better placed to deliver. There were also concerns that consultations are sometimes left too late and not enough time to consider responses and change plans.
19. In terms of improvements that could be made in relation to engagement and decision-making, the following points were made:
- The importance of open and honest dialogue with residents, particularly on contentious issues
 - Improved joint working with partners and cross-borough working
 - Learning from other sectors on how to better engage with residents e.g. NHS
 - Consultation needs to be 'real' and participants trusting that their views will be heard.

Summary of findings – existing engagement activity

20. This was a desk research exercise which considered submitted evidence from different parts of the council following a request via CLT. 96 items of evidence were reviewed. It is recognised that there will be other examples of engagement activity and impact that was not reported.
21. The analysis showed that there is a significant amount of activity in the form of consultation, ongoing dialogue and joint working with residents and other key stakeholders. This engagement is a combination of service/ project specific alongside ongoing forums such as partnership alliances, service-user groups, panels and newsletters.
22. The evidence showed that for particular stakeholder groups, there is a significant amount of engagement with the council. This includes children and young people, adults in receipt of social care, housing tenants, VCS and business partners. The majority of this is focused on service improvement, strategy/ policy development and informing delivery.
23. There is also the required consultation when specific projects are being delivered impacting on communities/ local areas e.g. parks spend and highway changes. In addition, there is evidence of scrutiny engagement particularly when carrying out more in-depth reviews e.g. into the night-time economy.
24. There are plans in place to introduce better co-ordination and use of insight to anticipate and meet customer needs. The locality and social care initiatives also aim to introduce a more equal partnership between the council and stakeholders.

25. It was less easy to evidence:

- how this insight has been used to inform decision-making.
- how engagement is co-ordinated and insight from different sources is collated within the council.
- how residents and others can proactively engage outside of petitions, via members and customer enquiries. The engagement feels very council-led and controlled.
- what these groups feel about engaging and working with the council.

Summary of findings – planning submissions

26. The Chair of the Review Panel received a large number of emails (~400) from residents mostly living in Coulsdon, Kenley, Purley, Sanderstead, Selsdon, Shirley regarding planning concerns.

27. The emails were individually written but covered similar issues summarised below:

- asking the Chair to recommend the introduction of area planning committees, formed of councillors local to the area
- stating inappropriate developments in areas with predominantly family houses which are being demolished or converted into flats
- stating no consideration of impact on the local area with approved developments creating pressures on road traffic, parking, public transport, schools, surgeries - not adequately addressed in granting permissions
- large brownfields and various derelict buildings are not prioritised and should be used first e.g. large buildings in centre of Croydon need to be converted into flats first
- general concerns at how Croydon council runs the planning application process and planning committee meetings
- perception of planning decisions being politically influenced
- believe that resident objections are ignored at planning committee meetings
- need for better public consultation with residents and notifying of land purchases
- mentioning that 90% of applications presented by developers are accepted and residents have only 3 minutes to argue their case
- perception that developers only care about maximising profits meaning that they are building expensive flats and not affordable family homes within the area, and as the developments are mostly under 10 units there is no social housing being included in these small developments
- Croydon, unlike similar boroughs, is encouraging such developments.

Have your say on council's decision making

Survey introduction by the Chair of the Governance Review Panel

Croydon Council's current administration made a manifesto commitment to undertake a review of the way decisions are made in the council (a review of governance). I was asked by the council, as a former local authority Chief Executive, to chair the cross-party group of members undertaking the review.

The council wanted us to consider the opportunities for members of the public to know about and participate in the council's work. We are seeking your views as a resident, or a frequent visitor to Croydon. This short survey should help the panel understand the public's perceptions of the council and its decision making processes.

A number of residents have already been in touch with me. Even if you have already contacted me, we would like you to complete the survey as well. The survey is entirely confidential and individual responses are not available to councillors or to myself but will be summarised by an independent body, the Centre for Public Scrutiny.

I hope you will be able to take the time to complete the survey and thank you in advance for your contribution.



Dame Moira Gibb

Independent Chair, Governance Review Panel

Your connection to Croydon

Before you take part in this survey, it would be helpful to know what connection you have to Croydon. (Please tick all that apply)

*** This question must be answered**

I live in Croydon	[]
I study in Croydon	[]
I work / volunteer in Croydon	[]
I own a business / run an organisation in Croydon	[]
I prefer not to say	[]
Other	[]

If other, please Specify

--

Governance Review - Resident Survey

This survey should take between 2 and 10 minutes to complete. Only multiple choice questions are mandatory to complete, but please do provide your comments in the supplementary, free text questions where possible, as this will help us understand your answers more.

This survey is designed to be anonymous and no identifiable individual responses will be shared with the Governance Review Panel, council or any other body or individual. Only anonymised and summarised survey results will be published. When filling in the survey, please do not include any personal information.

The council's Privacy Notice which details your data privacy rights, can be found here: www.croydon.gov.uk/Privacy

If you have any questions about the survey please email: Democratic.Services@croydon.gov.uk

1: The council has to make many decisions; some big, some small, some that affect a lot of people, some that affect very few. How do you find out about the decisions made by the council? (Please tick all that apply)

* This question must be answered

Council website	[]
Council weekly newsletter	[]
Your Croydon magazine	[]
Watching council meeting webcasts	[]
Your councillors	[]
Communications from council officers	[]
Social media	[]
Local press	[]
Local radio	[]
I don't know anything about council decisions	[]
Other	[]

If other, Please Specify

1.1: How can the council make it easier for you to find out about the decisions it makes?

2: Have you taken part in any of the following Croydon Council decision making activities? (Please answer each row)

	Yes - I took part within the last 12 months	Yes - I took part, but not within the last 12 months	No - I have never participat ed in the activity	I prefer not to say
Voted in a local election				
Attended a council meeting				
Spoken at a council meeting				
Attended one or more of the other council committee meetings				
Spoken at a committee meeting e.g. planning, licensing				
Communicated with a local councillor				
Signed a petition to the council				
Been a member of an advisory group / forum or decision- making group				

	Yes - I took part within the last 12 months	Yes - I took part, but not within the last 12 months	No - I have never participat ed in the activity	I prefer not to say
Attended a public meeting organised by the council				
Responded to a consultation or engagement e.g. filled in a survey (paper or online)				
Taken part in a workshop, focus group or other face to face engagement				
Through involvement with resident associations or other local forums				
Through other involvement in your ward e.g. accessing ward budgets				

If you have taken part in another activity, not listed above, please specify.

2.1 If you have ideas about how to improve resident participation in any of the specific activities listed, please share those below:

3: How interested are you in learning more about how the council operates and makes decisions in general?

*** This question must be answered**

Very interested	[]
Slightly interested	[]
Mostly not interested	[]
Not interested at all	[]
Don't have a view	[]

3.1: If interested, how would you like to find out more?

4: How interested are you in knowing about what specific decisions the council makes and why it makes them?

*** This question must be answered**

Very interested	[]
Slightly interested	[]
Mostly not interested	[]
Not interested at all	[]
Don't have a view	[]

4.1: If interested, what would be your preferred way(s) to find out?

5: How important is it for you to have opportunities to be involved in decisions that are taken about:

*** This question must be answered**

Please answer each row

	Very important	Somewhat important	Somewhat unimportant	Not at all important	Don't know / don't have a view
The area where you live					
The borough as a whole					
Specific services that you receive					
Wider services of the council					

Please explain your answer:

- 6: Do you have any other comments or ideas for how the council could improve opportunities for residents to get involved in decision making?

Demographic information

Thank you for completing the Governance Review Resident Survey. We would also like to ask some questions relating to your demographic background. All these questions are optional so you do not have to answer them.

What is your gender?

Male	
Female	
I prefer not to say	

What is your age group?

Under 15	
16 – 24	
25 – 34	
35 – 44	
45 – 54	
55 – 64	
65 +	
I prefer not to say	

What is your ethnic group?

Asian / Asian British	
Black / African / Caribbean / Black British	
Mixed / Multiply Ethnic Groups	
White	
I prefer not to say	
Other Ethnic Group*	

*** Please Specify**

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Which Croydon ward do you live in?

I don't live in Croydon	
I don't know / I'm not sure	
I prefer not to say	
Addiscombe East	
Addiscombe West	
Bensham Manor	
Broad Green	
Coulsdon Town	
Crystal Palace and Upper Norwood	
Fairfield	
Kenley	
New Addington North	
New Addington South	
Norbury and Pollards Hill	

Norbury Park	
Old Coulsdon	
Park Hill and Whitgift	
Purley and Woodcote	
Purley Oaks and Riddlesdown	
Sanderstead	
Selhurst	
Selsdon and Addington Village	
Selsdon Vale and Forestdale	
Shirley North	
Shirley South	
South Croydon	
South Norwood	
Thornton Heath	
Waddon	
West Thornton	
Woodside	

Thank you for your contribution.

Your input will inform the Panel's final report to Council.



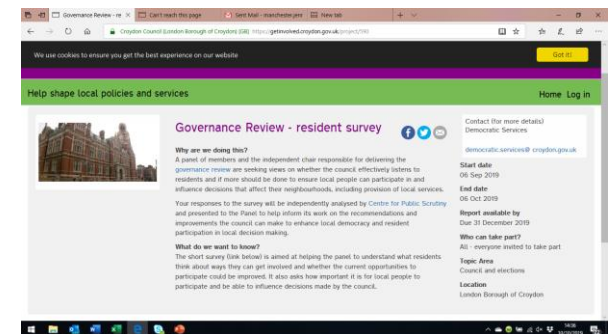
Centre for Public Scrutiny

Croydon Council Governance Review – Resident Survey

October 2019

Survey summary

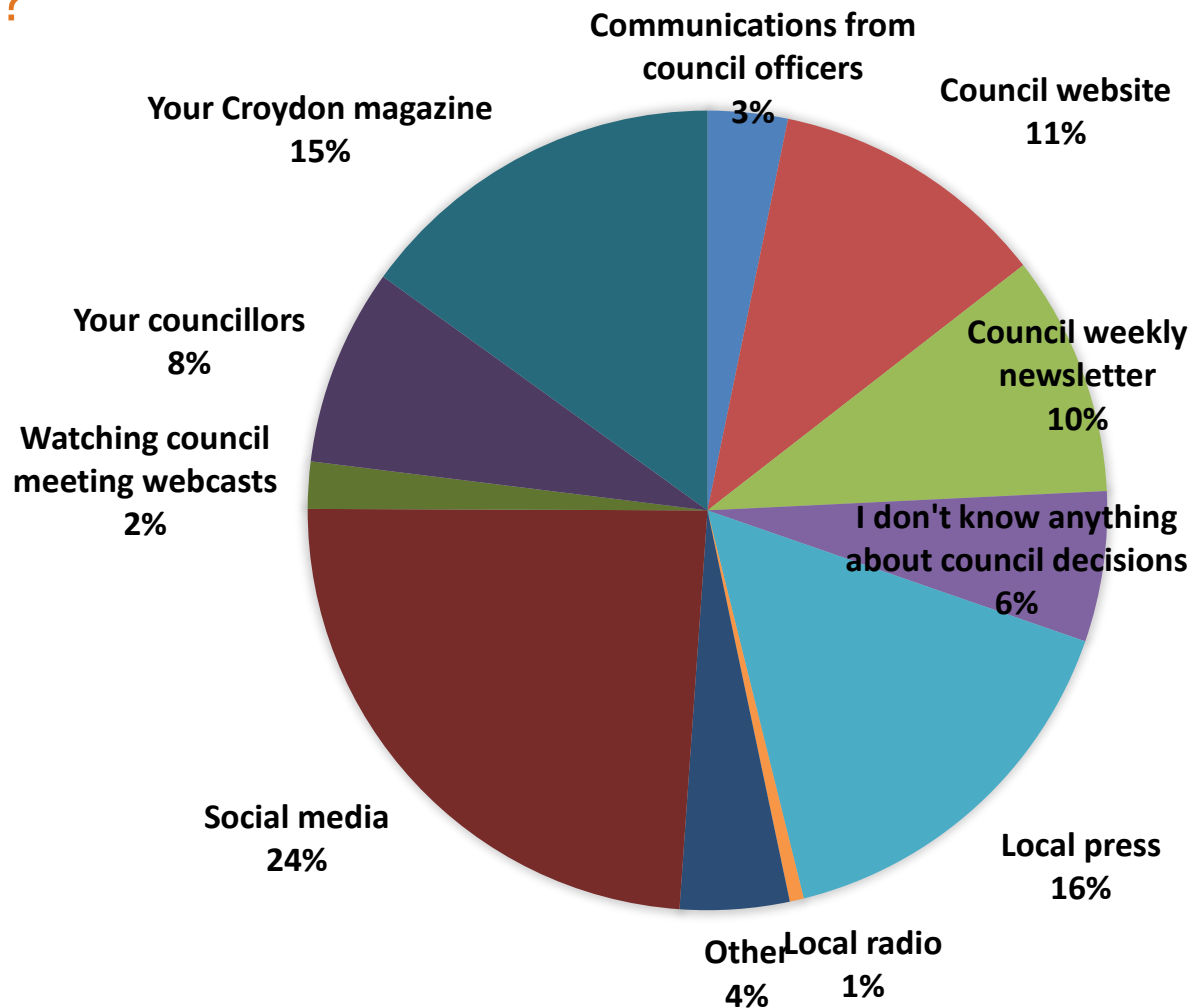
- The aim was to gain an insight into residents or visitors perceptions of the council and its decision-making process.
- It took the form of an on-line survey – open on the Council website and supported by a proactive communication campaign. With the results independently analysed by CfPS.
- The survey was available from September 6 – October 6 2019.
- 1016 people completed the survey and one written submission.



General observations about the survey

- **More people in the south of the borough completed the survey than in the north of the borough** – meaning that the views of people living in any of the wards in the north of the borough are under represented. 36% of people who completed this survey describe themselves as living in either Sanderstead or South Croydon.
- **Survey respondents tended to be older meaning that the views of younger adults (aged 25 and under) are under-represented in this survey.** Nearly a half (48%) of people who responded and gave their age were aged over 55 years old.
- **People classifying themselves as white were more likely to complete the survey – the views of people who identify as being Black were under represented in this survey.** Only 3% of respondents were black – this is compared to the demographic of Croydon's population (20% of adults in Croydon overall aged between 25 and 64 identify as being black (*according to most recent Borough briefing – June 2019*)).

How do you find out about the decisions made by the council?



How can the council make it easier for you to find out about the decision it makes?

Themes from analysis

- 478 people felt sufficiently motivated to complete an additional comment to answer this question – indicating strength of feeling amongst respondents for the council to make it easier to find out about decisions.
- A number of respondents indicated that finding out the way the council communicates their decisions would be helpful. - *“Advertise how to obtain the information. Even our MP finds it difficult to obtain information !”*
- Another theme mentioned by the respondents was the need for tailored information about the decisions that interest them. For example *“A facility to track issues I'm interested in and let the council know my views (before they make a decision). Not just a blanket newsletter / publication covering what the council wants us to hear (usually after decisions have taken place).”*
- When drilling down into the use of different channels by age, social media was used by 50% of all respondents but this was lower in the 55+ age group (17%), and because of the large numbers of respondents aged over 55% (in proportion to Croydon's population) this meant that the overall statistic of 24% may actually be higher if the respondents had been more representative.

How can the council make it easier for you to find out about the decision it makes?

Themes from qualitative analysis (2)

- One of the most popular topics mentioned was the website, many respondents cited the importance of the website in communicating about decisions.
- In terms of which decisions made by the council prompted most interest/ concern – planning was cited by more than 100 respondents who completed this question.
- The need for transparency was cited by many respondents and was one of the most popular terms.
- Timeliness of receiving information was mentioned by a number of respondents – people felt they had no say in decisions because they only received information after the decision had been made, this comment was almost always associated with issues relating to planning decisions.

Have you ever.....?

Numbers of people who took part in these activities: Results

- 62% of respondents had voted in a local election in the past 12 months, 32% had voted but not within last 12 months
- 15% of respondents had attended a council meeting within the last 12 months, 16% had taken part but not within the last 12 months and 66% had never attended a council meeting
- 50% had communicated with a local councillor in the past 12 months, with 23% of people having communicated with a councillor but not within last 12 months
- 64% of people had signed a petition to the council in the last 12 months
- 65% of people had responded to a consultation or engagement in the past 12 months
- 54% of respondents had been involved with local residents associations or other forums but 29% of people indicated that they had never been involved

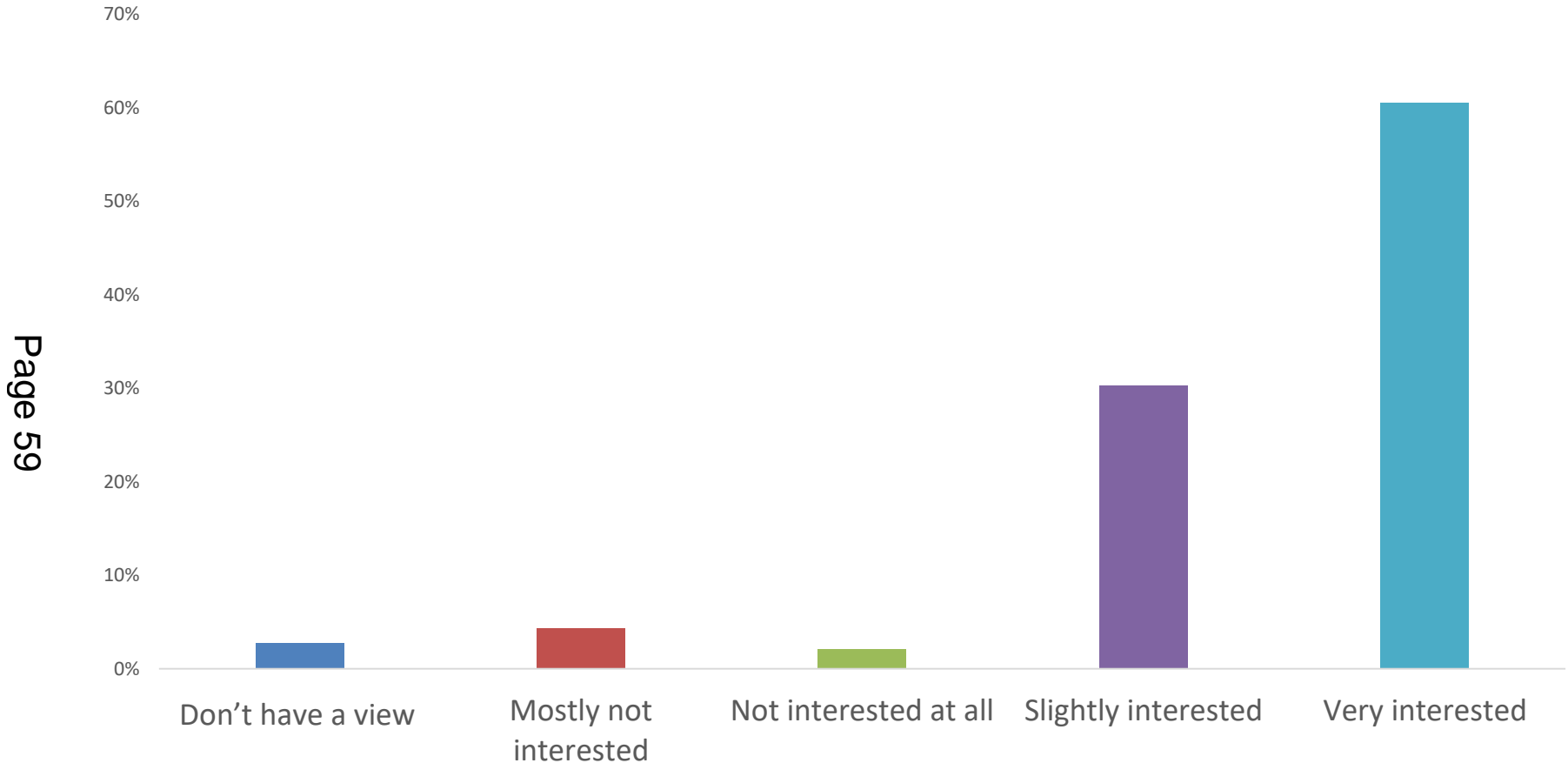
Have you ever.....?

Numbers of people who took part in these activities—analysis

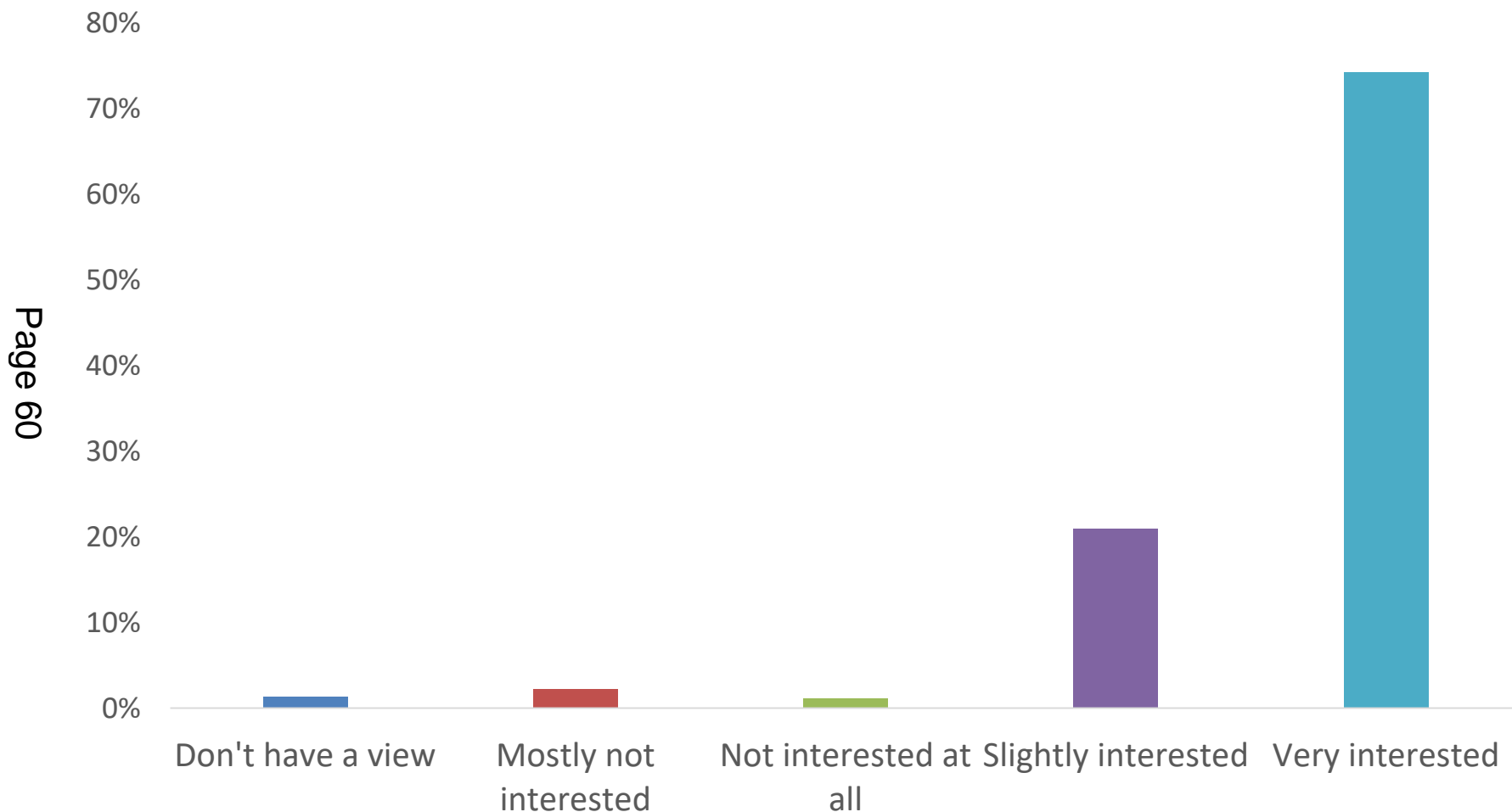
- People who responded to this survey tend to be active and involved in decision-making in their local area.
- The form of engagement which prompts less involvement is council meetings. This is supported by some of the few qualitative comments throughout the survey regarding council meetings specifically which were negative.

Age was a key component in how you engaged with these activities so for example out of people who had attended a council meeting whether in the last 12 months or more, 44% were aged 55 or over.

How interested are you in learning about how the council operates and makes decisions?



How interested are you in knowing about what decisions the council makes and why it makes them?

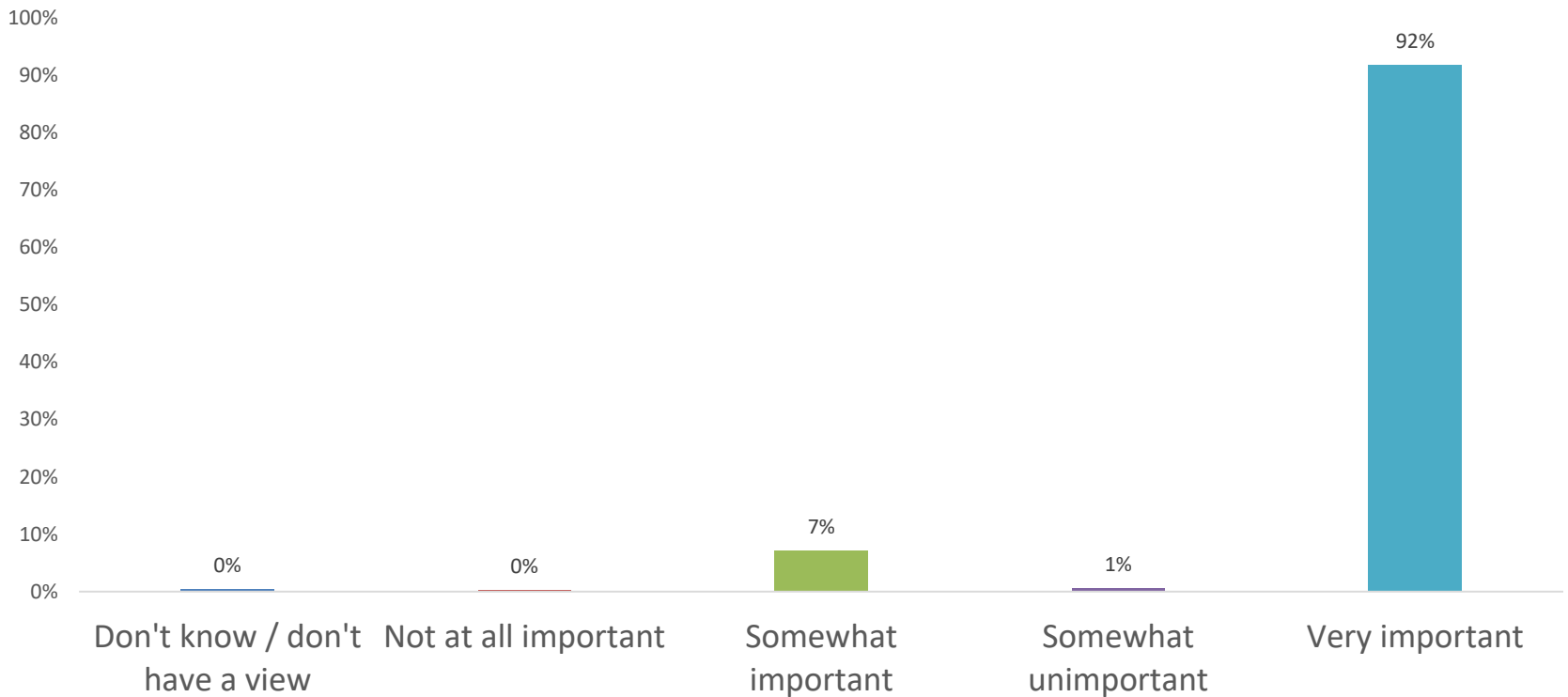


If interested what would be your preferred ways to find out?

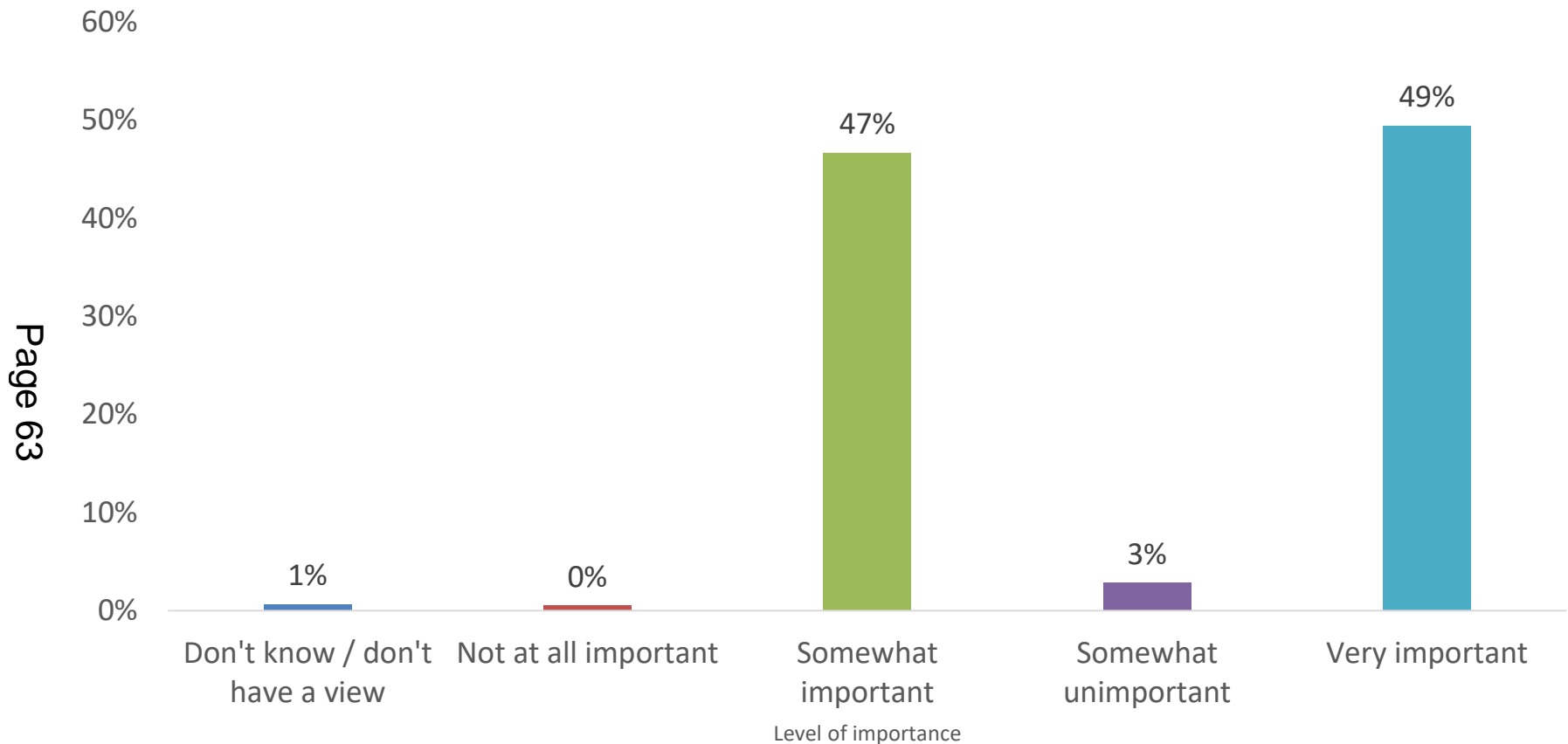
- In this free text answer, the following ways were popular – email, website and newsletters.
- But a number of respondents wanted to know and understand why decisions were made, the channel of communication was almost incidental.
- The council newsletter Your Borough was criticised by a number of respondents, who felt that the magazine was ‘overly positive, not neutral.’
- Another person said they wanted a *‘more transparent process on decision making. Better communications with residents on the most important issues, not just a magazine with a smile telling us that recycling rates are up.’*

How important is it for you to have opportunities to be involved in decisions about where you live?

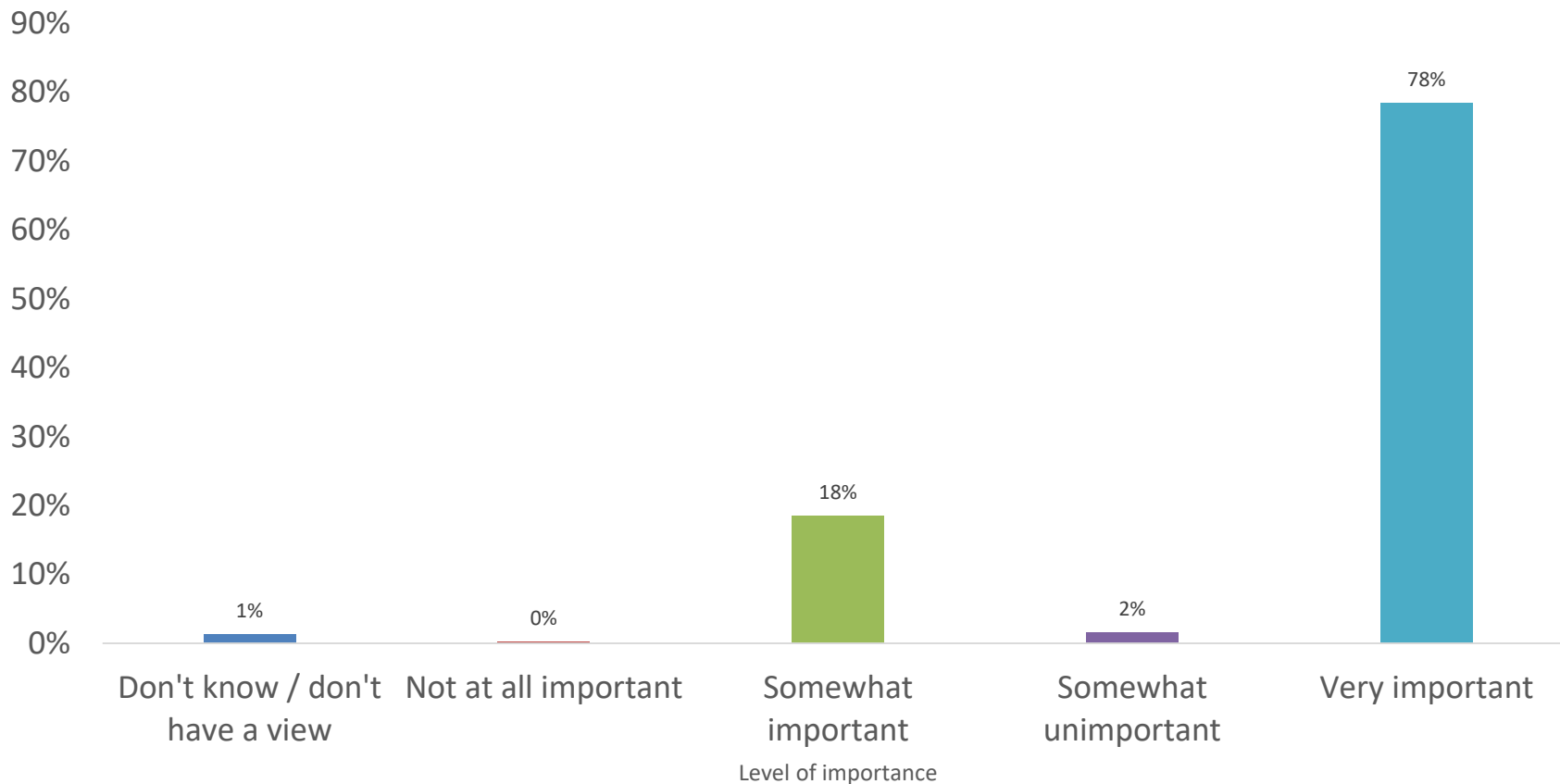
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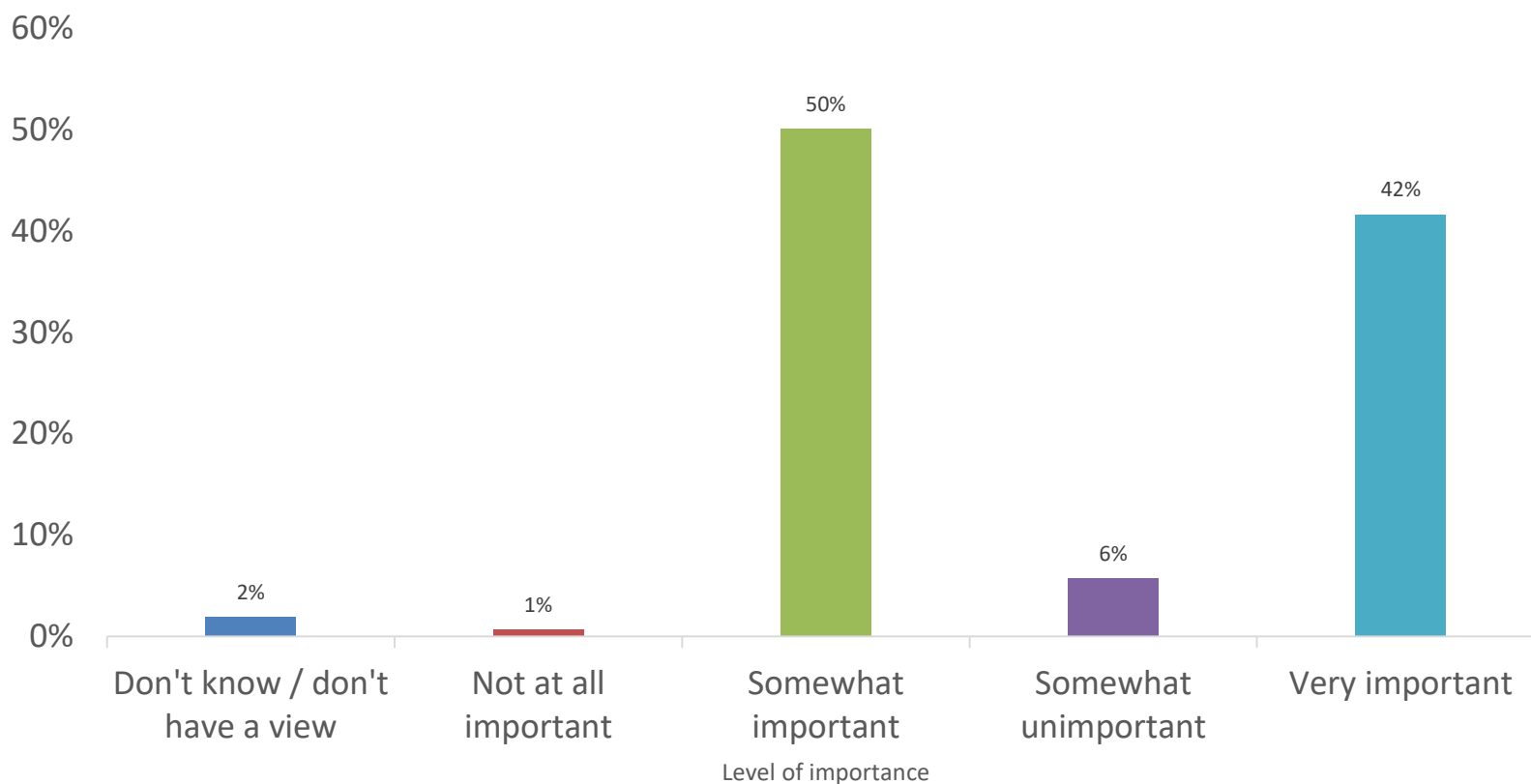
How important is it for you to have opportunities to be involved in decisions that are taken **about the borough**



How important is it for you to have opportunities to be involved in decisions that are taken about specific services:



How important is it for you to have opportunities to be involved in decisions that are taken **about wider services of the council:**



How important is it for you to have opportunities to be involved in decisions – analysis:

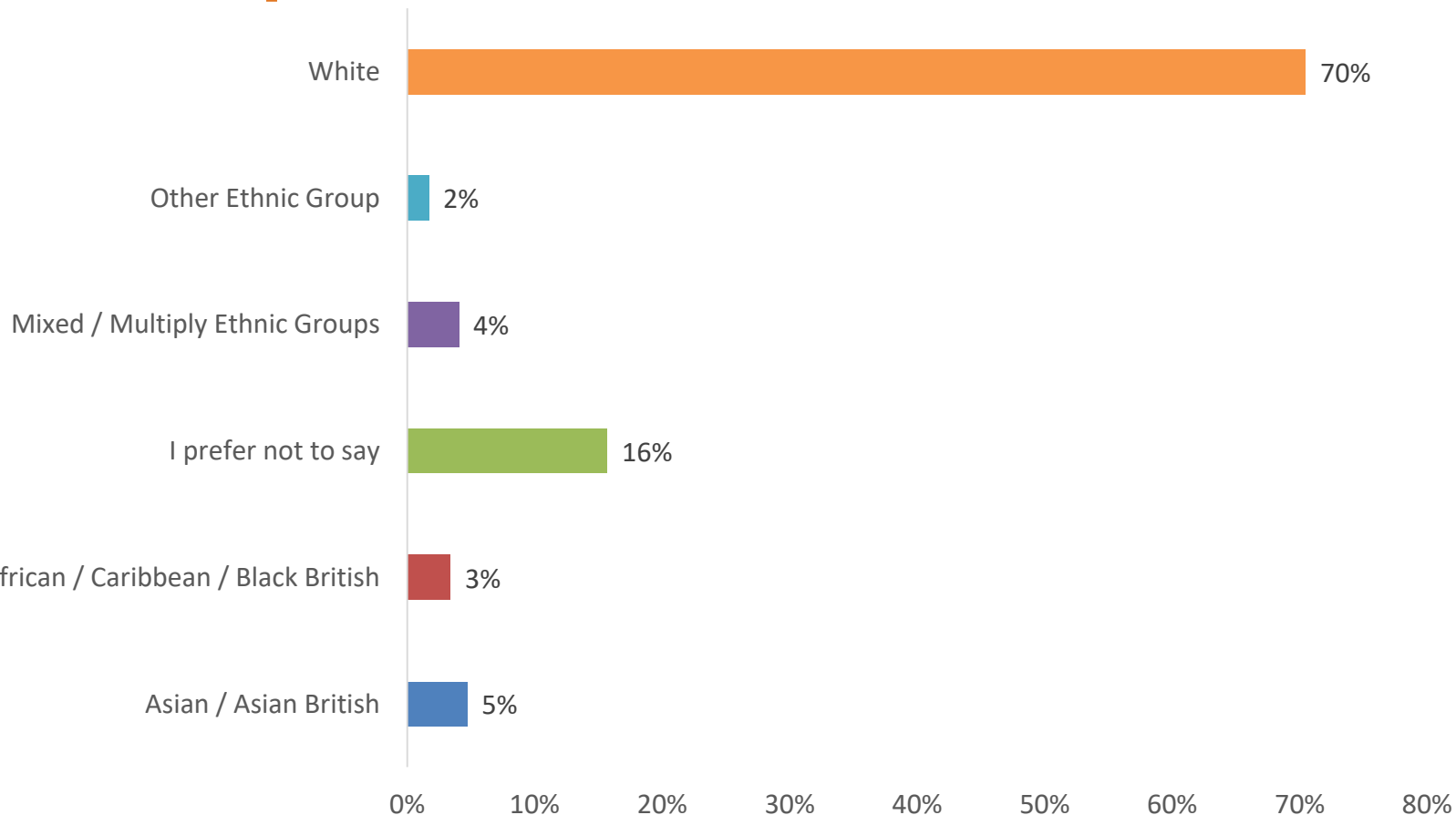
- As you would expect, people motivated to complete this survey tend to find it important to have an opportunity to be involved in local decisions.
- These results demonstrate people's high level of importance attached to getting involved in decisions about **where they live** (as opposed to **wider services of the borough**, although these results are still high).
- This means that opportunities to get involved in decisions should be framed and tailored about the impact of residents' locality (e.g. ward).

Do you have any other comments or ideas for how the council could improve opportunities for residents to get involved in decision-making?

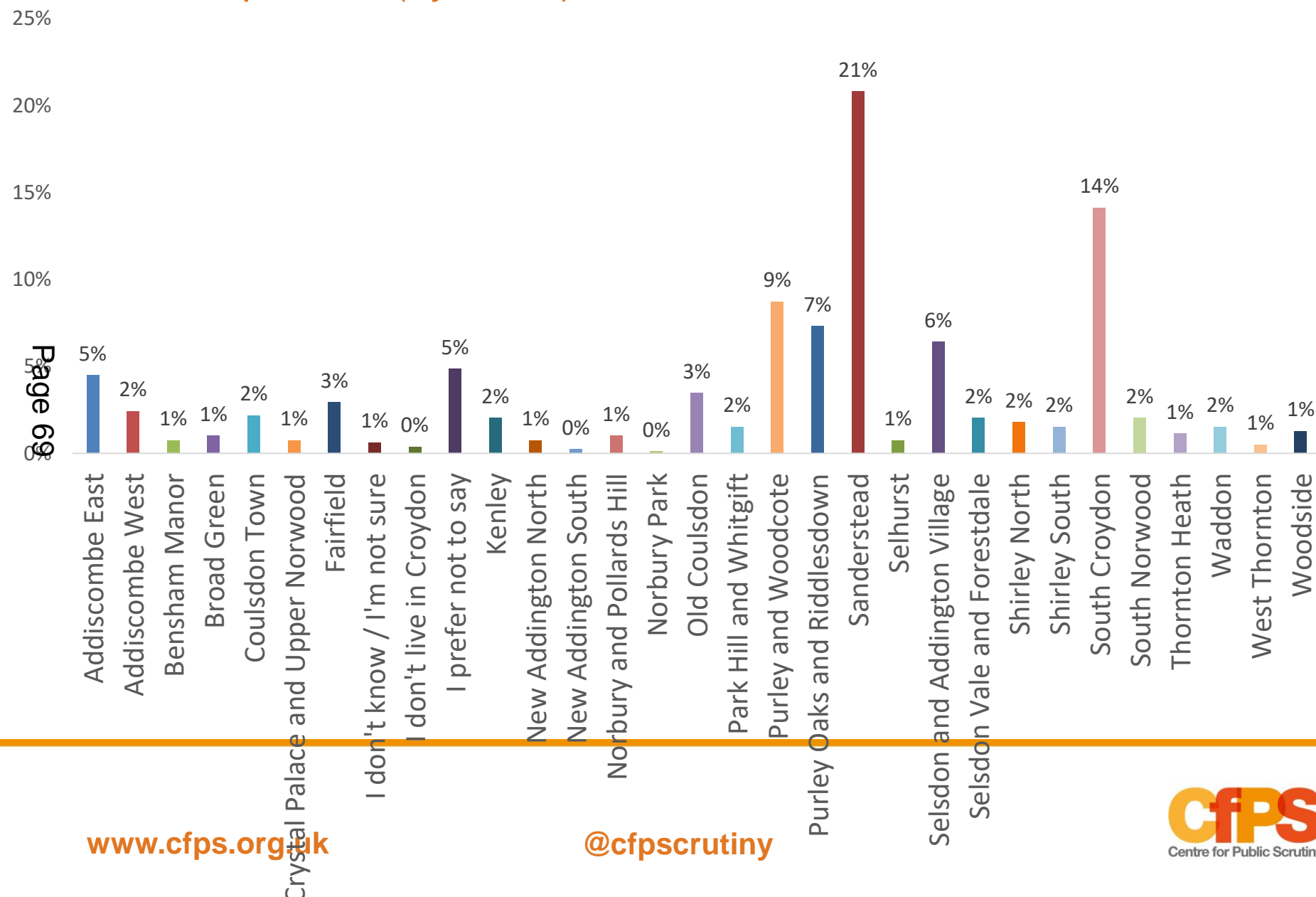
- Planning has been mentioned as a theme throughout, and is underlined by respondents to this question, specifically is a concern cited by people living in Sanderstead and Croydon.
- Planning was proactively mentioned by 40% of people living in Sanderstead and South Croydon in this question who answered this free text question. This compares to 18% of respondents overall.
- Other respondents cited parking and traffic as a concern.
- In terms of how people wanted to be engaged with decisions, there were two specific themes which people raised which was around local engagement, local meetings, visits by councillors, MPs etc. A number of people who had mentioned planning issues also mentioned the need for local face to face engagement.
- Another theme was around use of technology, the website and social media to improve engagement.

Who responded?:

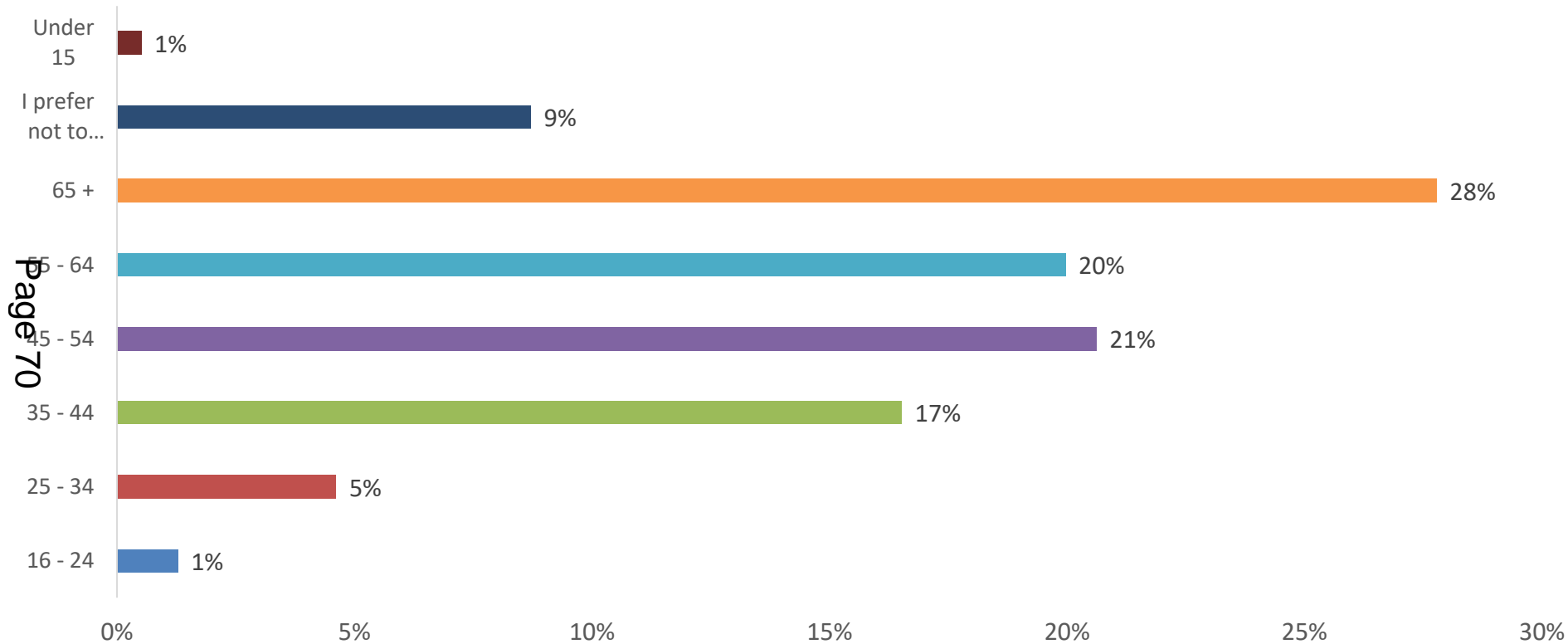
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Who responded (by Ward)



Age of respondents



CfPS key conclusions:

Young adults and people who identified as non-white were under- represented in this survey – suggesting more work needs to be done to engage with younger adults and people from minority ethnic groups to understand more about the opportunities. Linked to this, there is also a lack of representation from people living and working in wards in the North of Croydon.

Potential action - To really understand what people of Croydon think about the council's decision making, more work needs to be done to engage with younger adults and people from minority ethnic groups – who were not sufficiently engaged by this online survey.

CfPS key conclusions:

The way these respondents engage with 'decision making' by the council is through specific issues that they felt heavily impacted on them. Planning issues was a particular 'touch paper' in how they view the way the council involves them in decisions.

Potential actions – Further work to analyse how residents are involved in decision-making with specific areas, e.g. planning compared to the way they feel involved with the council's decision making overall. Consider establishing the standard the council wants to achieve for each type of engagement.

CfPS key conclusions:

People who completed this survey as expected, found it important to have opportunities to get involved in all local decisions. They specifically found it very important to have an opportunity to get involved in decisions about **where they live**.

Potential action: Tailoring opportunities to get involved in council decision making through the perspective of where they live would be helpful when looking at how to encourage people to get involved in decisions which affect the whole borough.



Centre for Public Scrutiny

Croydon Council Governance Review

Anonymised, written resident submission

Introduction

1. The request for residents views for the Governance Review using a survey via the Council's website will mean that a large number of residents will not know about it and therefore not be able to submit their views and their experiences of trying to access Council services, dealing with officers and Councillors, and trying to influence decision making. Earlier this year the Cabinet recognised the problems involved in the digital divide and the inadequacies of its IT systems. It will take time to improve the latter. The Panel will be able to obtain a wider range of views if it holds public meetings across the Borough to seek residents views, and asks community organisations to invite a member to listen to what their members have to say. (For detailed points on aspects of the Digital Divide see Appendix 2)
2. A key element in the way residents can give their views and seek to influence Council decision making is through their local Councillors. It is therefore essential that Councillors are effective at dialogue, listening and representing those views, even if they do not agree with them.
3. This submission discusses aspects of the interaction between Councillors and residents and the effectiveness of Councillors, the Scrutiny process, response to communications, and public consultation and engagement.

Interaction between Councillors and residents

4. Councillors are supposed to be community leaders in their wards. They should also be listening to what residents think, and be able to demonstrate that they are articulating those views to Council officers and to the Leader and Cabinet members. Has the Panel analysed how they are doing this? The answers to the following questions may help to provide the extent to which Councillors are both community leaders, listeners and advocates.
 - (a) How many have circulated regular printed newsletters to every household e.g. every 2-3 months to explain what they have been doing on local issues, and what influence they have had on Council decision making?
 - (b) How many have circulated special leaflets on local issues in small neighbourhoods in their wards or across a number affected by the same local issue?
 - (c) How many have helped initiate the formation of community groups and residents associations?
 - (d) Do they hold regular public meetings?
 - (e) Do they hold 2-3 advice surgeries a month at different venues across their wards?
 - (f) How often do they survey residents opinions on local issues in the ward and on the development of Council policies?

The Effectiveness of Councillors

5. Leaving aside my belief that the majority of Councillors, regardless of party, cannot be effective in the Executive Leader and Cabinet member system of governance, and that there should be a return to the former Committee system so that all Councillors are involved in policy

development and decision making, there are important issues to be asked about the extent to which Councillors are actually or could be more effective.

6. Has the Panel conducted a confidential survey of all Councillors for their views?

Public Image of Councillors

7. In order to maximise their effectiveness and increase their standing with the public, Councillors need to find ways in which they can maximise their effectiveness, but also develop a strategy that avoids the traditional ya-boo behaviour in the Council Chamber which alienates those members of the public who witness from the public gallery, and those who heard it first on Croydon Radio broadcasting and now on webcasts. recent handling of a protestor in her 80s in the public gallery does not help build faith in the Councillors ability to handle criticism. As an individual who has in the past made verbal interventions from the public gallery, I am aware that there are a variety of ways in which protestors can be dealt with without threatening to call the police.

8. Has the Panel explored the following questions?

- (a) how can the style of behaviour in Council and other meetings be improved?
- (b) can the quality of questioning and debate Council and other meetings be improved?
- (c) are Councillors provided with independent training to ensure that they are able to ask and get answers to challenging questions to Officers and the Leader and Cabinet members?

The Value of Independent Advice to Councillors

9. Officers papers often leave out options and detail that does not support their justification for the proposals they are making.

10. Has the Panel asked the following questions:

- (a) How can Committee reports be written so that Councillors can ask questions that enable them to understand the biases in reports?
- (b) How are links being made by Councillors with people who can help analyse the papers, frame questions and provide alternative information?
- (c) If the Cabinet system is retained how can Cabinet and non-Cabinet members seek to amend papers on the basis of comments received on them from members of the public or their organisations?

The Scrutiny Process

11. The Scrutiny & Overview Committee process is very weak. Some major policies are not submitted to the Committee prior to their presentation to Cabinet. It takes a long time for its recommendation to be considered by the Cabinet thereby delaying its influence of initial implementation of policies.

12. Has the Panel examined the following questions.

- (a) How can the Scrutiny process be made to be genuinely investigative?
- (b) Can more non-Councillors with relevant expertise be members?

- (c) Should there be more active encouragement to invite people with expertise and residents to present their perspective on issues under review?
- (d) Why have so few Councillors made use of the mini-scrutiny review process?
- (e) Why are there not more single topic inquiries which might make it easier to involve a wide range of non-Councillors?
- (f) Why are ideas and questions submitted by residents or their organisations on topics under discussion at Scrutiny not officially responded to, as failure to do so suggests that the Committee is not taking these submissions seriously?

Response to Communications

13. There is continual complaint from residents about the failure of Council officers and Councillors either to respond to emails and letters, or send some after the Council policy of the timescale for responses. If everyone had kept a record of the failings in communication then the list would probably run to tens of thousands.

14. An example is this email I sent to the then Cabinet member for Culture on 21 November 2016, copied to the Cahir of Scrutiny:

‘I submitted the attached document to the Scrutiny Committee meeting on 1 November which looked at aspects of your portfolio. I would be grateful if you would provide me with an answer to each question. There are many members of the public who would be interested to know your response.’ The document is appended.

15. I did not receive replies from either the Cabinet member nor the Cahir of Scrutiny.

16. Another example was an email (8 December 2016) on the Digital Divide from me to another Cabinet member - see Appendix 2.

Public Consultation

17. There are continual complaints and cynicism that the Council’s public consultations are bogus, and are simply carried out in order to tick the boxes. Sometimes, as in the case of the Library consultation in 2016 no summary of the views submitted was published, meaning those members of the public had not idea of what was said, and what the Council’s response was. Sometimes where public exhibitions on Borough wide policy consultations are organised with staff present to answer questions they have not been held in each of the places of Croydon as defined in the Local Plan 2018, meaning residents have to travel out of their area, which reduces those who can, especially if it involves changes in public transport or if the venue is in an area where car parking is very difficult.

18. This reduces the ability to the public to express their views, and to seek to influence policy development, implementation and decision making.

6 December 2019

Questions for Scrutiny 1 November 2016

Portfolio

Your portfolio says: 'Promotion of positive partnerships with private and voluntary organisations in the context of developing arts, cultural and leisure facilities and events in Croydon.' Please explain what partnerships you have been involved in promoting since you last appeared at the Scrutiny Committee, and what engagement you have had with the Croydon Arts Network?

Fairfield Halls

While the website on the refurbishment mentioned in the Fairfield Halls report is welcome the url is not given and it does not seem to be found by Google search. What is the url and when will it be made publicly available?

Given the Council is not represented on the Board of Brick by Brick, please explain the detailed brief to it for its involvement in Fairfield Halls, and the monitoring mechanisms of its delivery?

Does the contract with Brick by Brick include penalty clauses for any programme completion delays?

As the contract with Brick by Brick was not tendered, and therefore commercial confidentiality is not an issue, what is the fee or % profit element built into the contract for Brick by Brick to earn?

Parks and Open Spaces

How many staff are currently employed on work involved in the developments in parks and Council controlled open spaces, compared with the end of March 2014?

If you have been able to read the Heritage Lottery Fund report *State of the UK Public Parks 2016*, what issues raised in it do you think need to be examined as part of the parks review?

In order that the uniqueness of each park and open space in Croydon is better known, will you give consideration to ensuring that each has a series of boards about their history, and that key anniversaries associated with them are celebrated.

In view of the different approaches being taken by Lambeth and Wandsworth Councils in developing Co-operative Council ideas for parks are you assessing any lessons to be learnt from them?

Will you ask the Planners to review whether the draft Local Plan Partial Review (Submission) contains sufficient safeguards to ensure that all present and future allotment sites are protected from building development?

Have you asked the officers to identify sites for additional allotments, including land owned by Network Rail.

What role is the Council playing in the Wandle Valley Partnership, and what is it doing to encourage Croydon community groups along the route to become involved in the Wandle Valley Forum?

Apart from the proposal in the Local Plan Partial Review (Submission) to de-culvert Norbury Brook, what consideration is being given to the problems of drainage in parks and open spaces and the potential role for increasing their capacity for water storage?

Will you consider submitting evidence to the House of Commons Communities and Local Government Select Committee Inquiry on the future of parks supporting the need for a national inquiry, the creation of a statutory duty and for adequate public resources?

What is the total acreage of land covered by parks, open and green spaces, and as a percentage of the total land area of the Borough?

What was the current expenditure on parks, open and green spaces in each of the years since 2010/11, and how much on average was spent per acre?

How does the expenditure per acre compare with other local authorities?

Will you propose that the Cabinet agree that it will not authorise the closure and/or sale of any park or green space because of neglect or disuse, or lease them to commercial or schools operators because that would limit public access?

Cultural Discussion

Shortly after you became Cabinet member you held a seminar with local arts and cultural organisations. Have there been any further seminars to discuss the evolving Council strategy and the initiatives being taken by those involved in cultural activities. If there have been who was invited? if there have not been why not?

Public Questions at 17 October Council Meeting

As at 29 October any questions to you as Cabinet member at the last Council meeting have not been posted on the Council website, would you please tell the Committee what were the questions and answers, and provide a printed copy for inclusion in the Committee's minutes?

BMX Track Norbury Park

Please explain why you did not give a proper answer to the question submitted by Sean Creighton at the last Council meeting?

Have you been informed by the officers that the Friends Group for Norbury Park are considering ending their discussions with officers over their ideas for the improvement of the Park because the Council will not shelve the BMX track project which is objected to by over 1,500 residents and the Residents Associations as an inappropriate site, including their alternative proposal for a BMX trail?

What effect do you think being seen to impose a facility on a Park will have on the way in which other Friends or future potential Friends groups perceive working with the Council?

Ambition Festival

Given the decision to cancel this year's Ambition Festival because BoxPark's opening Festival, please explain what has happened to the budgeted money, has it been absorbed back in order to spend on other cultural activities over the next year, or has it been added to the list of financial savings?

Riesco Collection

Is it still official Council policy to sell items from the Riesco Collection?

Will you propose that the Cabinet up-dates policy by approving a resolution that no items from the Riesco Collection will be sold in the future?

Please confirm whether or not the proceeds from the sale of the Riesco Collection are included in the £30m project cost of the refurbishment of Fairfield Halls.

Has there been any consideration given to the re-examining the idea of setting up a Trust to take on the ownership and preservation of the Riesco Collection, or to negotiate a long term loan to e.g. Fairfield Arts Board rather than set up a new organisation?

Local Studies & Archives

Please state what discussions have been going on as to how to make the material on the open shelves in Local Studies and Archives material in its former premises in the Central Library accessible again, rather than as at present having to be ordered and brought down to the ground floor.

What is the programme of special exhibitions planned by the Museum, Local Studies and Archives for 2017 and 2018?

Libraries

When will the report on the Libraries review consultation be publicly available?

How many submissions were made?

Please outline the main views expressed by the public and organisations?

When does the contract for the management of the Libraries come up for renewal, and what plans have been set in motion for the Cabinet to consider whether to (a) to re-tender; (b) take the management back in-house; (c) to explore the creation of a staff mutual?

What was the expenditure on Libraries in 2009/10 and 2013/4 and the projected expenditure in this financial year?

In your answer to a Council question in January 2015 you stated: 'I remain fully committed to a full and professional library service in Upper Norwood and look forward to continue to work closely with the Upper Norwood Library Trust Campaign.' Please up-date the Committee on what you have been doing to ensure this.

On Sunday details of the Gt IT Loud in Libraries music project were drawn attention to on the Upper Norwood Library supporters Facebook. Will you have discussions with the Library management contractor to explore bringing the project into the Libraries?

Music in Schools

What changes of funding have there been to Croydon Music Services since 1 May 2014?

How many pupils were receiving tuition through Croydon Music Services in 2012/13 and presently?

Have you had any discussions with our Cabinet counterpart as to how the Council can support the schools that remain linked it in developing music provision both as an independent activity and as part of the curriculum?

Cultural Venues

Given the refurbishment closure of Fairfield Halls and the often expressed concern about the lack of a mix of size of alternative venues, have your Officers assessed the range of venues

available and their capacity with a view to seeking the provision of a mix in future new developments, and in seeking to influence refurbishment of suitable properties?

In your answer to a Council question in January 2015 you stated: 'I would very much like to see new artist spaces across Croydon, and will pursue any opportunities that arise.' Please up-date the Committee on what you have been able to achieve since then.

Cultural Funding

Please outline the way in which the Council's relationship with the bodies like the Lottery Fund and the Arts Council has been developing since May 2014?

Pump House & Exchange Square

In your answer to a Council question in January 2015 you stated in relation to the Pump House at Exchange Square that you were 'keen to ensure that there is a wide programme of events and activity taking place to support this area as the emerging Cultural Quarter.' Please indicate what discussions have been had to ensure a cultural offer is part of the new owner's plans.

Bereavement Services

Given the draft Local Plan states that there is a shortage of burial space in the Borough and that it does not appear that a site has been identified in or outside the Borough and with the continuing Government enforced cuts what is your assessment of the challenge to keep bereavement services operating at a high level?

Asset Transfer

What lessons are being learnt from the asset transfer of Stanley Halls in relation to potential future transfers of community centres and public halls?

The Digital Divide

'The progress being made to close the digital divide as reported in the report to Monday's Cabinet meeting is very welcome. There are some issues that arise from reading the report.

(1) The Statistics

Digitally including the 85,000 adults who lack basic skills is an on-going challenge. In relation to C2DE and low income households the high turnover of population in parts of the Borough may make it very difficult to reach those lacking basic digital skills. This turnover is linked to the growing percentage of private sector renting and short tenancies, and the continuing rise in homelessness. As people in these groups move out of Borough, others may take their place who also lack basic digital skills. Ways need to be found to reach the two groups. It may be possible to have information on digital skills support included in the tenancy packs provided by all landlords and their agents who are licensed by the Council.

The continued drive of the Council to become paperless means less and less printed material is given to people, which is a key method of providing information. As yet no strategy appears to have been outlined which improves communication with the digitally excluded while they remain excluded.

(2) **Recycling IT equipment.** A large quantity of IT equipment appears to be thrown into a large container at the Council's civil amenity site at Factory Lane. This means that equipment which could be repaired and recycled is further damaged. Can ways be found to ensure that such equipment is not thrown in the container skips but kept somewhere for collection by the charity the Council is working with?

(3) **Libraries.** Earlier this week a Year 7 pupil expressed disappointment to me that when he went to his local Library on a Saturday, the reduced number of staff were so busy that they did not have time to help him find what he needed for a homework assignment. Staffing needs to include people trained to help people use the computers. If particularly young users find their needs are not being met they will have less reason to remain a library users.

(4) **Twitter.** This has its limits. A number of people have come off Twitter because of abuse that they have received. This led to debate on *Croydon Citizen* last year at

<http://thecroydoncitizen.com/politics-society/croydons-appetite-self-destruction>

<http://thecroydoncitizen.com/politics-society/how-to-spot-a-troll>

For many others Twitter is a pointless means of communicating trivia. In discussing Twitter with businesses the Council may wish to point out that large numbers of people are not on it, and if people start using businesses Twitter accounts to be abusive, they will need to take action to stop it.'

Croydon Governance Review: Resident/ stakeholder engagement Summary note and proposed actions

Key points for consideration:

- Based on the evidence reviewed, the Council is committed to engaging widely with stakeholders in order to improve outcomes for residents.
- There is a significant amount of activity in the form of consultation, ongoing dialogue and joint working with residents and other key stakeholders. This engagement is a combination of service/ project specific activity alongside ongoing forums such as partnership alliances, service-user groups, panels and newsletters.
- It is less easy to evidence:
 - how this insight has been consistently used to inform decision-making.
 - how engagement is co-ordinated and insight from different sources collated and shared within the council.
 - how residents and others can proactively engage outside of petitions, via members and customer enquiries. The engagement feels council-led and controlled.
 - how these groups would rate and describe the experience of engaging and working with the council.
- There are plans in place to introduce better co-ordination and use of insight to anticipate and meet customer needs. The locality and social care initiatives also aim to introduce a more equal partnership between the council and stakeholders.
- To inform the governance review, there would be value in further investigating the council's plans to better engage, co-ordinate and use the insight gathered and also to review how some stakeholder groups perceive working with and within the council.

Methodology:

This was a desk research exercise which considered submitted evidence from different parts of the council following a request via CLT. 96 items of evidence were reviewed, a summary based on stakeholder group can be found at Appendix A. It is recognised that there will be other examples of engagement activity and impact that was not reported.

Evidence considered:

The evidence showed that for particular stakeholder groups there is a significant amount of engagement with the council. This includes children and young people, adults in receipt of social care, housing tenants, VCS representatives and business partners. The majority of this is focused on service improvement, strategy/ policy development and informing delivery.

There is also the required consultation to inform specific projects impacting on communities/ local areas e.g. parks spend and highway changes.

In addition, there is evidence of scrutiny engagement particularly when carrying out more in-depth reviews e.g. into the night-time economy.

From the governance review perspective, the information presented demonstrated lots of activity, but it was less easy to see how this insight had informed decision-making. There were some excellent examples (e.g. staff survey, you said we did area on the website, VCS strategy) but this was not consistent. Some Cabinet reports set out how consultation and engagement had informed the decisions made, but there was not a standard part of all reports.

Aside from Cabinet and Scrutiny reports, there was also limited reference to the role of the elected member in the engagement and involvement activities. This was in terms of their community leadership knowledge and insight, also to inform wider policy development.

There was also limited insight into how stakeholders' perceive their relationship with the council and the experience of 'doing business with the council' – e.g. what residents and stakeholders felt about the way the council involves them, their ability to influence, have their say, if they feel like equal partners and whether they trust the council to act on what they hear.

There was some evidence which provided insight: The Perceptions and Values Research from March 2018 and the Voluntary and Community Sector Strategy development and Small and Medium Sized Enterprise development work but this was limited.

From an employee perspective, whilst the staff survey is a comprehensive exercise, it did not include questions related to working in a democratic environment, how the current governance/ decision-making model works for them or their view of residents/ stakeholder engagement.

Gaps to fill/ actions to consider:

Residents (general):

- The desk research reflected the commitment and intent to engage with residents as reflected in this statement from the Council's Corporate Plan: "Fundamental to the delivery of the key Council priorities, is getting the basics right for residents. We will continue to listen to residents and use their feedback to continually improve the services we deliver".
- There was also evidence that there are some good examples around the council that could be replicated (social care co-design, housing engagement and children and young people) and improvement plans in development through the customer and digital strategies.
- It is notoriously difficult to engage residents in questions relating to governance, although it can be done when framed around 'what is it like to engage with the council/ get your voice heard' etc. Considering the timescales for the governance review, it is not proposed to carry-out a comprehensive research exercise to obtain this information. The following is however proposed:
 - Undertake an online survey which can be promoted via the weekly newsletter, elected members, and other networks. This can be launched in August and

run until the end of September. This will provide residents with the opportunity to take part and the opportunity can also be offered to provide more detailed feedback and talk to CfPS.

- Whilst the Perceptions and Values Research is a year old, there would be value in carrying out a more in-depth review of the findings, particularly alongside the member survey.
- Establish whether the Community devolution and empowerment principles (page 10 of the summary below) have been applied and embedded, if they have the potential to inform wider standards of engagement and involvement in governance.

Residents as service users/ customers:

- Follow-up the desk research, to establish how insight is used to inform decision-making (including democratic decisions) and the plans in place to introduce improved co-ordination of engagement, involvement, resident/ customer insight use and alignment of governance structures (e.g. mayor/ youth cabinet/ locality governance).

Partners

- To fill the gap in understanding how key partners view working with the council and what improvements could be made, it is suggested that telephone interviews are undertaken with key individuals to establish their views on what the council is like to engage with and their view of decision-making. This list of people can be drawn from an agreed list with the council (e.g. health, housing, business, police, VCS, etc) and interviews take place before the end of September.

Employees

- Outside of CLT and those staff involved in the governance review, there is a gap in information related to how employees view governance, decision-making, oversight and the role it plays in enabling them to achieve outcomes.
- This gap could be filled by providing employees with the opportunity to engage with the governance review, this can take the form of:
 - Survey of those in management/ leadership positions.
 - Focus group(s) with key people (heads of service or similar corporate roles) who regularly engage with members or lead engagement activities.
 - Interviews with key people.
- This work can be undertaken in August/ September.

Options for recommendations and next steps:

Improve the way residents and partners engage and participate in decision making:

- Undertake additional evidence gathering as suggested above, to gain further insight into existing work underway and address the existing gaps.
- Create a ward member offer (map and utilise current resource e.g. devolution prospectus), utilise member knowledge and insight in localities.
- Consider governance in the context of options of area-based arrangements, linked to localities work and devolution offer – further piece of work to review and test best approaches; encourage innovation and piloting on a local level to involve people in decision making.
- Align young mayor and youth cabinet structure with council and cabinet.
- Consider the value and resource implications (including capacity) of introducing a coordinated programme of stakeholder engagement – the main purpose being to avoid duplication, maximise and collate the evidence gathered from a range of source, use this to inform decision-making across the council.
- Improve quality of engagements, particularly in relation to providing feedback and demonstrating impact, by setting a corporate standard and guidance, incorporating members' community leadership roles guidance based on best practice such as 'new conversations, LGA guidance to engagements'
- Improve how cabinet evidences that it has used resident and other stakeholder engagement to inform its decision-making through a standard reporting section in cabinet reports.

Croydon resident and stakeholder engagement – evidence review

Category	Description	Impact
Resident – general	The Opportunity and Fairness Commission, launched in January 2015, examined the role that communities should play in Croydon's growth to ensure that all residents benefit. The themes and conclusions of the OFCs final report are the result of one of the most extensive community conversations undertaken in Croydon in recent years. The OFC recognised that continued emphasis needs to be placed on engagement with neighbourhoods, identifying community 'assets' and enabling local innovation, energy and commitment to come forward and contribute to improving the places we live.	No further evidence submitted on impact. Plan was developed – attached to the email
Resident	<p>Perceptions and Values Research – draft report – April 2018</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Wealth of data on perceptions of residents generally on living in Croydon as well as specific to the council <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Council satisfaction o VFM o Speaking about the council o Acts on concerns of local residents o Keeps residents informed o Trust in the council - References 2015 and 2016 surveys - [copy of Londoners survey included – questions only] 	<p>Valuable for the review panel to consider results (if they haven't already)</p> <p>Check how this has been used internally and any plans to repeat</p>

	<p>Corporate Plan – “Fundamental to the delivery of the key Council priorities, is getting the basics right for residents. We will continue to listen to residents and use their feedback to continually improve the services we deliver.</p> <p>“In the delivery of the Corporate Plan, we will develop closer collaborative working with the voluntary sector, public sector partners and business in order to manage and maintain progress. Where there are suitable opportunities for cross-party working, we will pursue this when it is to the advantage of Croydon.</p> <p>One of the central principles to the Operating Model is service design through resident and community engagement. The Council will be engaging residents and local communities in the design and where appropriate the delivery of services that will deliver the Corporate Plan Outcomes, enabling residents to have say in the vision for their local areas.</p>	<p>Clear intent, no performance or impact reports submitted. [Performance report scheduled to go to Sept Cabinet]</p>
Resident/ customer	<p>Work underway to develop a customer services operating model - with insight and engagement at its heart.</p> <p>Also, as part of this programme we've been engaging with customers at the front door as well as analysing the data we have, we've carried out face to face surveys and paper-based ones as well as looking at feedback.</p> <p>Aim is to adopt service standards we will be expecting all services to be engaging with residents and customers as part of BAU to support improvement, as well as when they change the way they deliver. We will also use the expertise of the Service Design people in the Digital team to help.</p>	<p>Recommend following up to see what the timescales and plans are.</p>

Resident communication/ involvement	<p>Weekly Your Croydon Weekly E-newsletter- opportunities to get involved</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Includes link to have your say newsletter link and you said/we did <p>Communications and engagement dashboard – monthly – reporting engagement stats, including for specific campaigns</p> <p>Resident involvement Facebook page - https://www.facebook.com/croydonresidentinvolvement/</p> <p>Resident involvement face to face engagement ‘roadshows’</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resident health and safety advisory group • Performance monitoring and service improvement group • Tenant and Leaseholder Panel (TLP) • Croydon Adult Social Services User Panel (CASSUP) • Sheltered housing working group • STAR survey • Housing scrutiny panel • Local residents’ associations • Mystery shopping • Neighbourhood Voice • Housing complaints panel 	Impact reported on the website, good layout, easy to use. Not consistent reporting for all closed exercises.
Resident – local areas	<p>Devolution pilots (2016- to date)</p> <p>Tree pilots in South Norwood, Purley and New Addington, to further enhance opportunities to enable local community engagement and involvement. These pilots will build upon the good practice from across the Council, including for example the regeneration programme in Thornton Heath.</p>	Cabinet report 14.11.19 – details changes made following consultation in Thornton Heath
	<p>South Norward Community Economic Development Plan (May 2017) – detailed deck setting out plans. We love SE25 branding.</p>	Thorough consultation evidence and insight driven.

	South Norward Town Team – Constitution (7.2.18) –collaboration between We Love SE25 and Croydon Council. Details of how it will run.	
	Community empowerment - Cabinet update report – 20.11.17	Activity report – no impact information included
	Gateway North, Croydon, 8.1.19 Targets support for children and families – references - We will take this opportunity to ensure that <u>all</u> local residents are provided with better information, advice and guidance on the services available to them – particularly in their locality	Member engagement referenced
	Locality Summit – 31.1.19 (primarily a care focus) Objectives <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Create a collective understanding of the relevant locality-based developments planned ▪ Identify the synergies between them ▪ Explore a vision for locality development Includes details of current locality working	No references to engagement plans or impact
	Scrutiny update report on new operating model (4.9.18) – includes details of employee engagement and perception	No reference to wider stakeholder engagement
	Kenley and Old Coulsdon Community Plan which is underway at the moment. We also have established Regeneration Steering Groups in Norbury and Thornton Heath which brings together the local ward members and community representatives on a 6-weekly basis. In relation to other engagement sessions coming up over the next few months, a list of available of those being run in different areas with the community/elected members including Addiscombe, Kenley, Broad Green, Norbury, Coulsdon, Thornton Heath, South Norwood	Activity but no impact reporting.

	<p>Examples of current community engagement consultations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Croydon Talks Parks 2016 survey - Croydon Parks Vision- master planning which included community engagement - Friends of Parks Forum - there are 40+ groups supporting parks and green spaces. - Community Sport & Physical Activity Network- this is a newly formed group that will be meet quarterly and have an independent chair - Outdoor gym – Norbury- community engagement in relation to a new outdoor gym in Norbury Park - Play Investment Programme- We have £300k+ to support three new play spaces in the borough, community engagement with park users/ stakeholders will be undertaken to support the design of the new space - New Addington Leisure Centre- promotion of the new site will be led by GLL and ‘meet and greet’ events will be undertaken to transition 11 community groups from the existing leisure centre to the new leisure centre (community space) - Live Well evaluation- a specification has been drafted to support the review of Live Well an integrated behaviour change service. Stakeholders/ service users may well be engaged with as part of this review. 	
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	<p>Community Devolution and Empowerment in Croydon – prospectus</p> <p>Principles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Member led – Ward members as community leaders; • Local – Responding to local context, need and ambitions; • Understanding and building on the strengths of an area including existing assets (social and physical) rather than focusing on deficits; • Inclusive – Engaging a wide cross section of the community including underrepresented groups, while recognising that not everyone will want to engage or will with one another; • Managing expectations – Ensuring that there is clarity about what can be influenced or changed and what can't; • Evolution not revolution – Building on existing ambitions and initiatives rather than creating something completely new; • Flexible and proportionate – making it easy for people/the community to engage. Balancing accountability with ease of process; • Visible impact – delivering quick wins and feeding back to those involved. <p>Delivering the Croydon Growth Zone – Informed by high street research report Traffic management reports</p>	
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Children and Young people	Youth engagement activities, plus gant chart and analysis/ staffing allocation summary: Issues/areas for improvement identified in the report: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disconnected governance especially in youth voice area • Unrealistic timelines and project ideas • Understanding of funding/resource constraints (e.g. youth hubs/buildings) • Collation and 'use' of youth voice engagement - how to analyse and inform decision making • Lack of capacity around preventative work at levels 1/2 (internal and external) particularly around children and young people who are NEET/risk of NEET and youth crime/ASB in communities 	Document setting out all activities – no details of impact. Informing decision-making identified as an issue but no specific action included in the plan.
	Youth Engagement Strategy and Championing Children in Croydon – October 2017	No impact reporting
	Youth Plan – references implementation in March 2018, 2-year plan, strong evidence base, governance and outcomes.	No references to reporting back impact
	Young people's plan actions – incomplete document, outcomes not included for some	
	Children in Care Council – Spring/ Summer 2018	Details engagement and impact in terms of changing and experience of those involve
	Early Help Strategy 2018-20	Evidence based but limited information on keeping wider stakeholders informed and involved of impact
	Safeguarding Board – Children's takeover day	Evidence of direct involvement, not sure of impact

	Education Commissioning and Youth Engagement Service Action Plan 2018-19	Includes progress update, Aug 18, some impact measures e.g. Combined NEET/not known rate of 6.8% (Jun-18): Improvement from 5 th to 4 th quintile and performance data. Mostly output/ activity.
	First 1000 days, public health report annual report 2018- research based report	No reference to ongoing engagement or involvement
	Children and Young People's Mental Health and Wellbeing Services- Local Transformation Plan (October Refresh 2018) The refresh of Croydon's Transformation Plan is being developed with a range of partners from the Council, health providers, voluntary sector and with input from Children and Young People's Participation Groups. The plan is to be consulted on with young people and community groups. A progress position statement on the refresh will also be confirmed on Croydon CCG's website, alongside Croydon Council and NHS England.	Clear intent, and indication of where progress will be reported.
	STEPS TO SUCCESS OPPORTUNITIES EVENT – 25th JANUARY 2019 - Delivered by the 14-19 strand of the Youth Engagement Team	Targeted engagement event.
	Victims of bullying and crime action plan	Engagement and involvement throughout
	Takeover challenge 2018 – impact report	Summary report of activity day, some evaluation stats based on attendee experience
	Young Mayor Cabinet Report – update on process and engagement (excellent voting turnout).	Engagement of young people in the

		democratic process. Too early for impact?
	Youth congress feedback report 2018 – annual flagship youth engagement event	Feedback on impact of last year's event, what it had influenced and impact of campaign
	Youth employability – scrutiny report - to scrutinise systems in place and update on progress made to maximise youth employability in the borough	Update report
	Ofsted inspection of Children services took place in June – July 2017 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ofsted reports and record of monitoring visits, report communications and press releases. 	Reporting of progress, no opportunity for engagement.
Health, wellbeing, adults	<p>Adult social care:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Engagement - Health and Wellbeing Board, Scrutiny committee, Adult Social Services Review Panel, Croydon Adult Social Service User Panel (CASSUP), Together we can group; Learning Disability Partnership Board, Carers Partnership Board, Autism Board, regular provider engagement events (these are delivered by Commissioning and Improvement division). - The division also has the Adapt transformation programme, within which the majority of future engagement / consultation opportunities sit within a wide range of work streams including – community-led support, active lives, together we can. - One Croydon Alliance -We are constantly engaging with partners in the health and care system through the work of the alliance and have a range of partnership boards set up as part of our governance. Senior leaders across the alliance discussed the subject of public engagement last week, in terms of understanding the engagement that is happening across the alliance and where we might need to strengthen this. - Public health engagement – service delivery 	Activity details, no impact reporting
Business	Small Business Commission Report – September 2017 – independent commission to help inform the council on the best way to work in partnership to create an enterprising culture	Resulted in the year for business 2018 (annual

	Surveyed 1500 SMEs	business survey 2019 to assess impact). Referenced in 19 November 2018 council report.
	Economic Growth Strategy (reported to Cabinet 10 December 2018) – agree the themes and priorities basis of consultation. Inform the final strategy.	
	<p>Evening and night-time economy strategy – scrutiny review – clear evidence base.</p> <p>Report (11 December 2018) – references steering group, whose membership includes the key provider/support stakeholders of the ENT for example business owners; the borough's three BiDs; the Met Police; Council officers; the South End Business Association; Fairfield Halls and Pub Watch. This group has taken part in 8 night-time walks around the borough and commissioned a survey which received over 1000 responses. Findings from this, other desk research and further planned consultation, will be used to support this report and the strategy development.</p>	Progress reporting, worth exploring to see evidence of impact.
	Sustainable Croydon Summit – 27 June 2019	Activity report.
Voluntary and community sector	<p>VCS Strategy 2019 – 23 – inform council's engagement and align partner resource to support the sector. Informed by research and engagement and linked to council priorities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - One Croydon Alliance - Buildings review 	See below.
	<p>Summary of engagement events taking place in January/ February 2019 – report back</p> <p>VCS survey</p>	To inform the development of the VCS strategy
	Scrutiny Report – 11 February 2019 – Development of a VCS Strategy for Croydon Council	Aim is to inform the development of the strategy
	Community fund recommissioning	Evidence of how engagement has

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Engagement sessions to inform how the fund is commissioned and contracts awarded/ monitored/ impact measured. - 	influenced directly reported in slides and back at the next event
Employees	<p>2018 Staff Survey</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Good data and insight - No references to governance/ or connecting with decision-making/ working in a democratic environment <p>Corporate response document</p>	<p>You said, what we are going to do section in the report</p> <p>Corporate response document setting out actions being taken</p>

Croydon – Governance Review

Member Engagement Report

February 2019

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Introduction

1. Croydon Council commissioned the Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS) to design and deliver an independent Councillor engagement exercise. The aim was to provide evidence to a cross-party Panel established to conduct an independent assessment and review of the Council's governance structure.
2. This report provides details of the approach taken to evidence gathering, the findings and analysis. CfPS would like to thank the elected members who completed the survey, attended the workshops and provided evidence individually, for their time, insights and honesty.

Scope and methodology

3. The overall objectives of the Council's Governance Panel's work is to conduct an independent assessment and review of the Council's governance structure and to make recommendations to the Cabinet and full Council on options for improvements to the Council's governance arrangements.
4. To achieve those objectives the scope of the Panel's work includes:
 - i) Hearing the views of elected members and other stakeholders including, residents, community and voluntary groups, business, MPs and other participants in local democracy;
 - ii) Hearing the views and seeking advice from experts on participation in local democracy;
 - iii) Identifying those aspects of the Council's governance that work well and identify opportunities to enhance elected member and other stakeholder participation in the local democratic processes;
 - iv) Benchmarking good practice from areas with higher levels of participation and consider how this can be delivered in Croydon;
 - v) Identifying the cost and value for money implications of any recommendations that it makes.
5. A key focus of the Councillor engagement exercise was to understand elected members' views on the Council's governance structures and culture, including perceptions relating to quality of decision making, Councillor involvement, local democracy and citizen participation. Questions were also asked to seek members' views on what improvements could be made, what was feasible or required significant change and what could get in the way of improvements happening.
6. The evidence gathering took the form of:
 - An on-line survey circulated to sixty-nine Councillors and eight former Councillors.
 - Member workshop sessions – one cross party and two party specific.
 - The opportunity to provide independent feedback
7. The on-line survey was open from Wednesday 10 January until Sunday 3 February 2019. In total 60 responses were received. The workshops were held on Saturday 19 January and Wednesday 23 January and attended by 50 Councillors in total. Three Councillors submitted individual evidence.

8. Elected members were assured of anonymity and the results presented are not identifiable. Data obtained from the survey and other research activities will be stored only for as long as necessary to process the information and deal with any consequent aspects of the review.
9. A summary of the issues raised at the member workshops is at Appendix A. A copy of the member survey results can be found at Appendix B.

Summary of findings

10. The excellent response rate to the survey and positive engagement in the workshops indicates that there is a desire amongst members to engage with this topic and many Councillors have views on what needs improvement and how this could happen. The response rate was significantly higher when compared to similar on-line surveys in other councils.
11. The results showed that whilst there were no significant problems raised, members also did not find many aspects of governance to be positive. This analysis applied to many different aspects of governance, with only Council meetings and the need for increased resident involvement in decision-making reflecting a strong view of what needed to be improved. A reason for this could be the fact that the governance review is not happening as a result of a significant governance or service failing which can act as a focus.
12. A strong theme throughout the evidence gathering was the desire of backbenchers to contribute more and be more involved in local and strategic issues. In one workshop this was described by a recently elected Councillor as a wish to be 'more productive' and other members talked about a desire for their local knowledge, insight and experience to be more valued and utilised by the Council.
13. In giving evidence, members regularly talked about the need for a change in culture and behaviours and that this was key to bringing about change. Formal changes to governance to allow for greater involvement and influence of backbenchers were called for by some and both a committee system and area panels were referenced as potential positive solutions.
14. The nature of the political environment was clearly understood and reflected in the feedback. Members discussed the process of decision-making in terms of how it was impacted by politics and distinguished between forums which were cross-party or not.

Emerging issues

15. The survey results, member workshop evidence and the evidence submitted by individual members provide the Council a wealth of data and insight to consider and reflect upon as the governance review progresses. This report summarises four emerging themes which the feedback highlights, these are:
 - a. The effectiveness of the current approach to decision-making
 - b. Members' involvement in local decision-making
 - c. The desired change elected members would like to see
 - d. What were seen as barriers to success

The effectiveness of the current approach

16. In the survey respondents were asked to score how they viewed the effectiveness of decision-making, 58% scored between 0-5 (zero being not very good) and 42% scored 6-10 (ten being excellent). Most said they are not fully aware when decisions are going to be taken in Croydon (17% are fully aware, 53% partially aware and 30% not aware). This last point was reflected in some of the workshop conversations when members talked about their lack of awareness of the forward plan. A few respondents said they found out about decisions via Council press release after a decision had been made, other sources such as 'Inside Croydon' and Councillor briefings were mentioned.
17. In describing the most important factors which made decision-making effective at the Council, the top three answers were: it is clear who is accountable, decision-makers can evidence why decisions are made and decision-makers are held to account. Most members became aware of Council decisions through attendance at Cabinet (56%) and circulation of decisions by email/online (56%). When asked how they currently participate in the Council's decision-making, the top three answers were: speaking at cabinet/ committee/Council meeting (76%), commenting and/or speaking on a planning and licensing application (70%) and supporting resident petitions (69%). When asked what their preferred way of receiving information was the top answer was updates/ engagement from officers (72%).

Resident involvement

18. The survey asked how members would rate the opportunities for residents to get involved in decisions made by Croydon Council. The majority of respondents (71%) scored between 0-5, and 66% said that the Council should seek opportunities to further increase resident involvement and participation in decision-making.
19. A number of respondents felt that residents are not involved due to concerns about the Council's ability to change a decision or be responsive, some describing how the public have lost faith that their views will be heard. There were also comments that more effort was required to engage with hard to reach groups. Others referenced the role of elected members in representing the views of residents based on the priorities outlined in the manifesto. Suggestions on how to increase resident involvement are detailed in Appendix B (question 6) and include considering regular forums with ward constituents, area forums and wider engagement of young people not involved in youth congress.

Cabinet

20. With regard to the way Cabinet meetings are currently run, 63% of respondents scored 0-5 in terms of effectiveness, 37% scored 6-10. A number of respondents felt that the ability of any Councillor to engage was impaired by a lack of information, openness and transparency. A few respondents commented that the meetings ran effectively and smoothly with papers published in advance. There was some cynicism about the value of involvement in Cabinet and whether it made any difference to decision-making.
21. In terms of what could be done differently, a number of people called for more opportunity for real questioning and debate of options to avoid it feeling like a 'rubber-stamping' exercise. In terms of delegated decisions to cabinet members, 31% fully understood the process, 52% partially and 17% didn't. Most (67%) did not see this working effectively and felt it lacked transparency. Some respondents felt it worked

well allowing agile but transparent decision-making given time constraints. Some felt that the Cabinet model was ineffective and should be replaced by a committee system or similar.

22. In relation to delegated decision-making to officers, 31% fully understood how this worked, 52 partially and 17% did not understand. This was not however raised in the wider evidence gathering as an issue of concern.
23. When questioned about the effectiveness of the formal and informal advisory bodies that influence executive decision-making, respondents commented that some panels were more effective than others and there were limitations in relation to transparency, influence and wider involvement. Some felt that more weight should be given to their advice, several were unsure how the advisory bodies worked and commented that clarification was needed on their roles and remits.

Scrutiny

24. Scrutiny scored similar to other forums in terms of effectiveness (55% - 0-5, 45% 6-10). It did however rate more positively in relation to its role and purpose being understood (23% fully agree, 63% partially agree), the function being member-led (42% fully agree, 42% partially agree) and that the meetings are well-run (27% fully agree, 50% partially agree). 37% of members did not agree that scrutiny is welcomed and has influence and 38% felt there was not a good balance between pre and post decision scrutiny. 57% described scrutiny's relationship with the executive as 'somewhat positive'. Overall scrutiny in Croydon scored positively in relation to national benchmarks.
25. When asked what they would like to see done differently, a number wanted to see pre-decision scrutiny of all the big decisions and scrutiny recommendations to be taken more seriously by officers and members. Others talked about more time on agendas to respond to issues as they arise and more involvement of opposition members in selecting topics. They also wanted to see follow-up of recommendations.

Council

26. Council meetings score the lowest in terms of effectiveness (80% scored 0-5) and a number of respondents felt that debates could be of a higher quality and more focussed on issues important to local residents. A significant number of people felt that the debate at Council was a political show and had no impact on the decision-making process. Words used on the free text responses included 'pantomime, performance art, theatre and pointless'. A few respondents felt that Council meetings achieved what was required of them and were acceptable as there were no better alternatives.
27. When asked about what could be done differently, some people would like to see better quality debating that is outcome focussed, with greater transparency and respect for others. A few want to see high quality questioning and scrutiny of cabinet members. Several people called for more time and opportunity for public questions, more answers to the questions and less time for pre-planned political speeches.

Committees

28. Generally, views are similar to other forums on whether committees are effectively run (52% scored 0-5, 48% 6-10), experiences vary from Committee and some members specifically referenced cross-party examples that were seen to be working well (e.g. children's services related committees).
29. Planning was the committee that members had the greatest knowledge of (92% compared to the second choice of licensing with 56%). Planning was also the most contentious attracting the most negative comments in the survey and workshops, with concerns expressed over transparency of decision-making and trust in the process. There were a number of comments and concerns that planning was too politically influenced and that resident input was not regarded.

Members' involvement in decision-making

30. Members' views are balanced on how effectively they are able to raise local concerns as a part of Council decision-making – 49% scored 0-5 and 51% 6-10. Many did however raise concerns that they are not listened to and were not satisfied with access to information on both strategic and local decision-making (69% scored 0-5 and 31% 6-10). When asked if they were aware of decision-making affecting their ward, most people agreed they were only partly aware of decisions affecting their ward and services they have an interest in.
31. Some felt it was difficult to obtain the information they required, and there was a perception of decisions being made by a small number of Councillors and senior officers. When councillors were involved they felt it was not meaningful or they found out at a late stage. Several respondents felt senior Councillors and officers needed to be more open and transparent. A few were keen to ensure that a decision about a ward was notified to the ward Councillor before the decision is made and suggestions of ward briefings were made.

The desired improvements

32. Throughout the survey and in the workshops, Councillors were asked to suggest and prioritise what they would like to see improved. In the workshops, they were asked whether the change could be achieved within existing 'rules', required Council owned change or was subject to external change.
33. Improvements suggested were:
- a. The importance of cultural change.
 - b. Backbench Councillors want to feel more empowered to represent residents and feel more productive.
 - c. The Council to listen and respond more to residents.
 - d. A more open, transparent way of working and easier access to information to support decision-making.

- e. Formal changes to governance to allow for increased backbench influence, area panels and committee system referenced
 - f. An increased focus on excellent customer service.
 - g. Earlier involvement in decision-making (scrutiny and wider).
34. Councillors believed that the majority of the desired improvements could happen now and was within the Council's control.

Barriers to success

35. When asked what could get in the way of change happening, the main issues described by Councillors were:
- a. Councillor insight and local knowledge not being valued.
 - b. A perception of decision-making being skewed towards the administration and different parts of the borough.
 - c. Polarised politics leading to difficulty in getting consensus.
 - d. There is no incentive to change as a handover of power would be required.

Conclusions

36. The number and variety of comments received suggests that, from a member perspective, the conversation about governance is both timely and welcomed. Members in Croydon have indicated that they want to be engaged, productive and valued - how this works in practice should be investigated further with them.
37. There is a strong theme emerging around the need for a change in culture and behaviours; there is some demand for a new governance model (although not overwhelming when compared to experiences of other Council governance reviews). Where respondents did mention changing to a committee system, it was seen positively as a potential solution.
38. In addition to considering if changes to the governance model will address the issues raised, there is work that could be done to improve understanding of the current decision-making structure and processes and identify improvements.
39. There is an appetite to review governance in a way that improves resident and service user involvement.
40. Most members are clear on the reality of operating in a political environment but want to see more transparency and more involvement in decision-making.

About CfPS and delivery

The Centre for Public Scrutiny is the leading national body promoting and supporting excellence in governance and public scrutiny. Governance and founding members include LGA, CIPFA and LGIU. Our trustee board is chaired by Lord Bob Kerslake.

Our work has a strong track record of influencing policy and practice nationally and locally. CfPS provides training, consultancy and conferences to promote the role and impact of scrutiny in public and private sector organisations.

Established in 2005 and now a registered charity, CfPS are respected and trusted to provide independent and impartial advice.

The Croydon member engagement work was led and carried out by Jacqui McKinlay, Chief Executive of CfPS. Jacqui was supported by Ed Hammond and Fiona Corcoran from the CfPS team.

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Elected Member Workshop Feedback

Elected members were given the opportunity to attend three workshops: a cross-party session and separate sessions for the Labour and Conservative groups. Each workshop was based on the same format and questions. Feedback from the workshops is captured below and forms part of the evidence base for the main report.

Member involvement and influence

In the first exercise councillors were asked to think about types of decisions made by the Council (strategic, operational and local) and the level of member involvement and influence. The feedback included:

General:

- Variations in understanding about the types of decision-making – view that the Council budget/ plan/ Council tax decision does not involve enough Councillors.
- Even when there is extensive involvement, there is little influence.
- Recognise that there are variations in the types of decisions made and Councillor involvement in decision-making will need to be different depending on the circumstances.
- Understanding that the Council sometimes needs to be dynamic in how it makes decisions (bringing the Carillion services back in house referenced) and not everyone can be involved.
- Councillor perceived lack of involvement in commissioning in terms of contract standards and monitoring performance.
- There seemed to be a lack of awareness of the existence and purpose of the forward plan.
- All discussions demonstrated a clear understanding of the political dynamics of decision-making and how this affects the way the Council works. Politically driven decisions do not allow the same involvement.
- Positive references to (non-political) forums such as Cassup Croydon adult social services users panel, Parents, Autism Board that are cross party and work well.
- There will never be a perfect system. Every governance system will need room to allow the Council to think on its feet and change things.

Backbench/ ward matters

- A consistent theme was concerns over the lack of information on ward/ doorstep issues to help them in their ward role.
- Members felt like they are not getting a response from officers when they raise local issues.
- Councillors don't feel productive currently and would like to feel more productive in terms of how they represent and influence decisions.
- Some concerns over a lack of governance of ward budgets and Councillor involvement in how the scheme is run.
- Also, about how members are involved in any decision-making about their support (changes to IT etc).

- Councillor insight and expertise about their local areas is not valued or utilised by officers; especially with current high staff turnover, officer knowledge is lost, and Councillors have often been involved with their communities for years.
- Councillors now lack an understanding of service/ customer experience. Previously they will have been involved in assessments or appeals, this no longer happens.

Cabinet decision-making

- Changes to delegated decision-making has impacted on transparency and involvement.
- Don't necessarily disagree with decisions but there should be more advance notice and an opportunity to access information used to inform decisions.
- Opinion from some is that Cabinet meetings are closed to involvement, there are opportunities but in reality there is not enough information available to allow real questions to be asked and the sessions are stage managed.
- Council doesn't make any important decisions at its meetings, all delegated.

Planning:

- Talk in most sessions how Councillors actively represent residents at some point even if they do not have a planning committee role, for those with committee role e.g. planning, it feels like high input but low impact
- Some planning officers are not sharing notes and some saying that there is too much officer control, and this is impacting on the trust and transparency of decision-making
- Relations between senior directors and some Councillors have deteriorated over the last twelve months.
- Local issues such as planning decisions must be frustrating to residents, as they are to Councillors, resident associations are ignored so are large resident petitions.

Experiencing governance in Croydon today

Members were asked to consider and describe how different groups experienced governance/ the decision-making process in the council:

Resident

- Online interactions improved, residents seem happy they can do business with the Council without a need to come to the Council office.
- Satisfaction with services depends on service area, in certain areas service users and residents might be happy.
- Perception of commitment to collaboration and partnership with residents.
- Lots of willingness to better involve and engage in decision-making.
- Challenge is not just engaging with the same articulate communities and individuals that know how to navigate the Council's processes and engagement channels.
- Council not engaging on local issues such as parking zones (changes to areas surrounding schools where you couldn't park).
- A sense of cynicism and lack of trust from the resident point of view.
- Resident associations should definitely be part of engagements. Barrier between the Council and residents or cllrs speaking on behalf of resident issue.
- Residents feel Council is distant and resistant to providing information and solving issues - residents must feel 'powerless' and that Council is 'unresponsive'.

- Residents might feel that the Council works on a 'one size fits all' approach (blanket approach) – and has no concept of how to deal with areas individually.

Partners/ stakeholders

- Good relations with statutory partners who can access the Council.
- Council is good at relations with new businesses, less so with the established business community.
- VCS sector feel that Council is distant, and favourite organisations benefit.
- People just don't know what the Council does and the impact of austerity.
- Some council engagement boards are a good idea but there isn't enough not genuine discussions and actions (collaboration) and partners stop attending.
- Council is reluctant to let go of control.
- There is a perception that it is difficult for some voluntary and community organisations to get funding, creating two layers of those that benefit and the rest feels removed and ignored.
- With regards to council employees, sense of high turnover as good people leave, particularly at a senior level.

Councillors

- Good examples where ward members are helping to lead engagement on changes in their area.
- Sense that there can be lots of involvement (many meetings) but nothing comes out from those.
- Some officers are very good, but if dealing with political decision there is no response.
- Example of FOI requests as they are not getting answers, are also encouraged to do so by officers.
- Value from the insight, knowledge and value of all Councillors cannot happen under the leader and cabinet model.
- Lack of mechanisms for sharing local issues and seeing if they are widespread across the borough.
- Challenge is managing high expectations in the community. No general appreciation of funding pressures. The Council not communicating what it does well.

What would improve governance – suggestions:

- Area panels - for Councillors and residents to get involved
- Better information provided, financial data provided for scrutiny
- Improve questions to Council: how member enquiries are managed
- Elected mayor – in the far future
- Committee or similar as it has a benefit of receiving upcoming year's work programme to debate, policy would be discussed
- For backbenchers that they are involved in pre-decision conversations
- Councillors sighted on how it feels like to receive services
- Administrative support for members
- Cultural change in how officers engage needed more than additional resources
- Opposition and resident (or similar stakeholder) representation on panels and boards
- Utilise good practice of Tenants and Leaseholder Panel
- Better balance between executive power and other members' involvement

One thing to change

The majority of those who responded said:

- Cultural change, to feel more empowered, have power to represent residents
- Council to listen and respond to residents
- For residents: Council to be open and transparent, when contacted to get feedback
- Empower service users and workers
- Everyone to be proud of Croydon, it's a great place to live and is open for business
- Easier access to information to support decision-making
- Council to focus on excellent customer service, responsiveness
- More information on what's happening in wards
- Earlier involvement in decisions (scrutiny and wider)
- More transparency on how decisions are made

Some people said:

- Formal changes to governance to allow for backbench influence (area panels and committee system referenced)
- Ability to scrutinise before decisions are made
- The ability to influence local decisions or those that have a direct impact on the majority of residents (bin replacement referenced).
- Improve trust by delivering on promises
- Councillors to be better sighted on how services work through involvement in decision-making
- Backbench Councillors want to feel more productive in terms of the contribution they make
- Strong advisory committee around every cabinet member
- Meaningful public meetings forum that help us to improve our town / borough
- More meaningful Council meetings, locality government, improved engagement comms and consultation
- To have a better understanding of the different roles and responsibilities in the decision-making process
- Improve Council meeting – positive debates, inspire public confidence

A few people said:

- Directly elected mayor
- Council meetings in community
- Councillor call for action – make better use of

It was felt that the vast majority of desired change could happen now.

Council owned change would be needed for more formal changes to how the governance works.

Brexit and local government funding are national issues which could impact on the Council's ability to change.

What could get in the way of change?

- Department/ silo working – queries and complaints get lost
- Tension between members and some officers, too much focus on supporting administration and not on providing good service to residents
- Attitudes get in the way of excellent customer service
- National government decisions
- Officer power
- Perception of north/ south divide in the borough
- Perception of decision-making being skewed towards the administration
- Councillor insight and local knowledge not valued or used effectively
- Funding from the government
- Fear of change or loss of power
- Party political views
- Current structure, people that benefit from it and no incentive to change
- Cllrs wanting a committee system
- Bureaucracy and polarised politics (difficulty in getting consensus)
- Being able to create a meaningful system for more people to get involved and not just the usual few

Appendix B

Croydon Council Survey – survey results with summary of free text

Q1. How would you describe the effectiveness of decision making in Croydon? Please give a score between zero and ten, where zero means not good at all and ten means excellent, explain why you decided on the score.																						
	1		2		3		4		5		6		7		8		9		10		Total	Weighted Average
star	13.21%	7	7.55%	4	13.21%	7	13.21%	7	11.32%	6	11.32%	6	15.09%	8	11.32%	6	0.00%	0	3.77%	2	53	4.79

Summary of free text responses:

A number of respondents commented that decision making is conducted by a small number of senior officers and cabinet members with a lack of openness and transparency. A number of respondents felt there was a lack of communication, genuine inclusion of and engagement with the majority of councillors, particularly backbenchers, and the public. Several respondents believed that local people felt disengaged from the decision-making process and the decision-makers did not show sufficient regard for public views.

Several respondents suggested that cross-party, pre-decision involvement at an earlier stage could contribute constructively to the decision-making process and provide an opportunity to utilise the expertise and insights of back bench Councillors.

A few respondents felt that Cabinet Member involvement and knowledge of portfolio was variable.

A few respondents commented on difficulty in securing answers or information from officers either at all or in a timely manner and the lengthy time-frame around internal processes supporting decision-making.

A few respondents felt the decision-making system, although not perfect, runs smoothly and in most cases officers provide the information that is requested, and the administration are following the manifesto upon which they were elected. One respondent noted that legal and constitutional requirements for publication of Cabinet papers are upheld, providing an opportunity for all councillors and the public to learn of items to be considered for decisions in advance of Cabinet meetings.

Q2. In your view, what are the most important factors which make decision making effective at the Council?
(please limit to three points)

Answer Choices	Responses	
The process is clear and understood.	24.14%	14
There is transparency in the way decisions are made	36.21%	21
It is clear who is accountable.	41.38%	24
Views of key stakeholders are sought and listened	31.03%	18
Scrutiny is valued, has influence and takes place in public	31.03%	18
Formal consultation, when required, is proactive	18.97%	11
There is easy access to relevant information to support decision making	22.41%	13
Decision-makers can evidence why decisions are made	39.66%	23
Decision-makers are held to account	32.76%	19
Other (please specify)	29.31%	17
Answered		58
Skipped		2

Several respondents felt this question assumed that decision-making was effective, and they disagreed and stated that they found this question difficult to answer on that basis.

Q3. How do you become aware of Council decisions as they are made? Please select as appropriate.

Answer Choices	Responses	
Attendance at Cabinet	55.93%	33
Reading Cabinet Member Reports	44.07%	26
Attending Committees	28.81%	17
Through relevant political group meeting	42.37%	25
Circulation of decisions by email/online	55.93%	33
Social media	35.59%	21
Officer briefing	15.25%	9
Other (please specify)	22.03%	13
Answered		59
Skipped		1

Summary of free text

A few respondents said they found out via Council press release after a decision had been made. Other sources such as ‘Inside Croydon’ and councillor briefings were mentioned. Lack of a public forward plan and cabinet reports not being easily accessible online were also mentioned.

Q4. Are you aware when the decisions are going to be taken so you can choose whether or not to participate?

Answer Choices	Responses	
I am fully aware	16.95%	10
I am partially aware	52.54%	31
I am not aware	30.51%	18
Please explain:		33
Answered		59
Skipped		1

Summary of free text:

Several respondents felt they were often only made aware of decisions after they had been made and many decisions were made by a small number of councillors and senior officers behind closed doors.

A few respondents felt they would like clearer information on when and where important decisions were taking place. Some respondents felt they would benefit from access to a schedule of key and non-key decisions (including delegated decisions) for the year and thought that there was not always full information in a publicly available forward plan. One respondent noted that they had only recently learnt that there was a schedule of forthcoming key decisions on display in reception and suggested it should be emailed to all councillors.

There was a comment that Councillors were not notified of decisions taken specifically affecting their local wards.

Q5. Overall in your experience, how would you rate the opportunities for residents to get involved with decisions made by Croydon Council? Please give a score between zero and ten, where zero means not good at all and ten means excellent, explain why you decided on the score.

star Reasons for score:	1		2		3		4		5		6		7		8		9		10		Total	Weighted Average
	25.45 %	1 4	12.73 %	7	18.18 %	1 0	5.45 %	3	9.09 %	5	10.91 %	6	10.91 %	6	1.82 %	1	1.82 %	1	3.64 %	2	55	3.82
																					51	
																					Answer ed	55
																					Skipped	5

Summary of free text

A number of respondents felt that residents are not involved either sufficiently or meaningfully in decisions made by the Council. Some councillors felt there was a lack of public belief in the Council’s ability or intention to change a decision or be responsive to public input. Their view is the public have lost faith that their views will be listened to and therefore not keen to engage. There were also comments that more effort was required to engage with hard to reach groups, as where consultation happened, it was not always inclusive.

A few respondents highlighted the fact that residents participate in Council elections and can make their decision based on manifestos presented. They felt it was right that some decisions should be carried out by elected members in line with the priorities outlined in their manifesto.

There was also mention of difficulty in recruiting co-optees that were suitably representative of residents.

Q6. In your view should the council seek opportunities to further increase resident involvement and participation in council decision making?

Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	66.10%	39
No	6.78%	4
Other (please specify)	27.12%	16
Answered		59
Skipped		1

Summary of free text

Most respondents felt that the Council should seek opportunities to further increase resident involvement in council decision making and suggested the following:

- Regular quarterly meetings with ward constituents to show spending figures on their ward
- Develop opportunities to widen engagement of young people not involved in youth congress
- More involvement of backbench councillors
- Improve neighbourhood consultation
- Consider Area Forums or Town Council's fitting genuine communities. e.g. Crystal Palace and Upper Norwood. The two Norburys, the three Thornton Heaths, the two Addiscombes etc
- It is essential that the points raised by residents are not ignored.

The point was made that ensuring trust in the consultation process is key rather investing in further unnecessary processes.

The importance of ensuring that any public involvement is meaningful was highlighted, as it would not be worth spending money on more 'tick box' consultation processes.

It was also noted that the views of experts should still be considered and carry some weight.

Q7. How easy do you find it to participate in the Council's decision making? Please give a score between zero and ten, where zero means not good at all and ten means excellent, explain why you decided on the score.

star Reasons for score:	1		2		3		4		5		6		7		8		9		10		Total	Weight ed Averag e
	21.57 %	1 1	11.76 %	6	11.76 %	6	7.84 %	4	13.73 %	7	11.76 %	6	9.80 %	5	1.96 %	1	7.84 %	4	1.96 %	1	51	4.25
																					45	
																					Answer ed Skippe d	51 9

Summary of free text

The majority of responses reflected the feeling that decision making was carried out by a small number of councillors and senior officers. When there are opportunities for back benchers and opposition councillors to participate in discussion, they did not feel they could have any influence on the decision making. There was a number of comments around lack of engagement of backbench councillors and lack of opportunity for opposition councillors to meaningfully participate in decision making. There was mention of first becoming aware of forthcoming decisions when the cabinet papers were published but the feeling that by that point the decision had, in effect, already been made.

Q8. What do you currently do to participate in the Council's decision making? Please select all that apply.

Answer Choices	Responses	
Speaking at cabinet/committee/council meeting	75.93%	41
Speaking/writing to cabinet members prior to decisions being made	38.89%	21
Speaking/writing to officers prior to decisions being made	44.44%	24
Participating in a scrutiny call in	50.00%	27
Supporting resident petitions	68.52%	37
Commenting and/or speaking on a planning and licensing application	70.37%	38
Participating in a pre-decision scrutiny	31.48%	17
Other (please specify)	20.37%	11
Answered		54
Skipped		6

Free text summary:

Responses included the following:

- Organising local community to put pressure on council and councillors appropriately
- Social media
- Attend various meetings where officers are presenting draft plans (not available to back bench councillors)
- Seek views from ward residents
- Sit on various committees
- A range of the above but feel frustrated at lack of potential to actually have any influence on decision making

Q9. Overall, how effectively are you able to raise local concerns as a part of Council decision making? Please give a score between zero and ten, where zero means not good at all and ten means excellent and explain why you decided on the score.

star Reason for score:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Total	Weight ed Averag e
	17.65 % 9	3.92 % 2	7.84 % 4	7.84 % 4	11.76 % 6	15.69 % 8	13.73 % 7	9.80 % 5	3.92 % 2	7.84 % 4	51	5.22
											42	
											Answer ed Skippe d	51 9

Free text summary (reasons for score)

Many respondents felt that, although there were opportunities to raise concerns, they were not listened to or acted upon.

A number of respondents felt that lines of communication were clear and easy to follow, with Cabinet members and officers willing to listen to representations and available when needed.

Q10. In relation to undertaking your role as a councillor, please tick all that apply.

	Fully agree		Partly agree		Disagree		Total
I am aware of decisions affecting my ward.	35.19%	19	51.85%	28	14.81%	8	54
I am aware of decisions relating to specific services I have an interest in.	29.63%	16	59.26%	32	11.11%	6	54
I am aware of the Council's strategic direction.	44.44%	24	37.04%	20	18.52%	10	54
I am able to access the information needed to respond to upcoming decisions affecting my ward.	27.78%	15	50.00%	27	22.22%	12	54
Other (please specify)							13
Answered							54
Skipped							6

Summary of free text:

There were a few comments that Councillors are not always aware of a decision until after it has been made, including decisions affecting their ward specifically.

There was mention of non-exec members being advised to submit FOI requests in order to attain information, as councillor questions have the same status as members of the public.

One respondent commented that they were provided with information from junior officers with regard to plans for their ward.

Q11. In relation to the operation of the Council, how would you rate your satisfaction with access to information on matters such as development of new strategies and policies, information about activities in your ward, council's budget and expenditure or performance? Please give a score between zero and ten, where zero means not good at all and ten means excellent and briefly explain your score.

	1		2		3		4		5		6		7		8		9		10		Total
star	15.69%	8	13.73%	7	7.84%	4	5.88%	3	25.49%	13	1.96%	1	11.76%	6	11.76%	6	3.92%	2	1.96%	1	51
Reasons for score:																					35
																					Answered
																					Skipped

Summary of free text

A number of respondents said that it was difficult to obtain the information they required. Some felt information was controlled by a small number of Councillors in the executive and senior officers.

There were comments about the lack of involvement with back bench councillors and that efforts were made to be seen to be involving Councillors, but this was not happening in a meaningful way.

Some respondents said that information was available, but it could be difficult to know what to ask for and some policies/processes/documents were difficult to understand and required clear wording and explanations.

It was mentioned that the answer to this would depend on the role/committee membership of a Councillor and how active they were in seeking out the information they required.

A few Councillors felt that they often found out about decisions/events at a late stage.

It was mentioned that although information may be available on the website, it was difficult to navigate and could be challenging to find the information you required.

Q12. What are your preferred ways of receiving information (top three)?

Answer Choices	Responses	
Attendance at Council, Cabinet, Scrutiny and committee meetings	66.67%	36
Reading Cabinet Member Bulletins	16.67%	9
Through relevant political group meetings	61.11%	33
Updates/engagement from council officers	72.22%	39
Raising questions and enquiring via the councillor enquiry system	42.59%	23
Council website/council communication team	12.96%	7
Social media	20.37%	11
Other (please specify)	22.22%	12
Answered		54
Skipped		6

Summary of free text:

Suggestions from respondents included regular ward briefings, hard copy of key info from relevant departments, meetings with detailed paperwork, one-to-one meetings and receiving evidence from external organisations/groups

One respondent felt that raising questions via the council enquiry system was not working as the timeframe for response is not being adhered to or monitored/managed by officers and the responses from Cabinet did not always answer the question. There was a comment that recently any councillor's question of a factual nature had been sent to the FOI team, increasing the burden on that team and in many cases missing the point of the question.

It was also mentioned that the search facility on the council website is ineffective, making it difficult to find the information you require.

Q13. Are there any improvements the council could make to the way it supports councillors in the decision-making process, including greater access to information, training opportunities or other?

Answered	42
Skipped	18

Summary of free text (text only response)

Several respondents felt senior Councillors and officers needed to be more open and transparent.

A few respondents suggested more access to information, particularly easier to access information online.

A few respondents were keen to ensure that any decision about a ward is notified to the ward councillor before the decision is made and the suggestion of regular ward briefings was put forward.

A number of respondents suggested more and better member training on a range of topics, such as the remit of different departments in the council and who does what/who to contact, complex policy items, budget, legal and statutory requirements. Another respondent highlighted the fact that training events were often unsuccessful unless they were legally required due to the number of Members that had either been a councillor for many years or worked full time.

A few respondents suggested participation of the whole council, including non-cabinet members in decision making at an earlier stage and provision of a schedule of all forthcoming decisions was also suggested.

A few respondents suggested more opportunities for fuller debate and fewer questions and one suggested more opportunities to ask Cabinet about upcoming matters in a non-politically charged environment (i.e. not Council or Cabinet)

Q14. How effective is the way that Cabinet meetings are currently run? Please give a score between zero and ten, where zero means not good at all and ten means excellent and explain why you decided on the score.

star Reaso ns for score:	1		2		3		4		5		6		7		8		9		10		Total	Weig hted Aver age
	24.49 %	1 2	12.24 %	6	8.16 %	4	18.37 %	9	0.00 %	0	6.12 %	3	10.20 %	5	8.16 %	4	6.12 %	3	6.12 %	3	49	4.37
																					41	
																					Answer ed Skippe d	49 11

A number of respondents felt that the ability of any councillor to challenge was impaired by lack of information, openness and transparency. They felt the meetings were more like a briefing with limited debate and decisions had effectively taken beforehand with no opportunity for meaningful input from opposition or back benchers. There were a number of comments suggesting that respondents felt the information provided was not sufficiently clear or in-depth, questions were sometimes dismissed or not fully answered, and the chairing approach did not welcome challenge. One respondent noted that it could be frustrating if the first time a back-bench Councillor became aware of a key decision was at Cabinet as there would not be a meaningful opportunity to input their view at that point.

A few respondents felt that the number of presentations from officers and community groups, although interesting, resulted in limited time for questions and discussion.

A few respondents commented that the meetings ran effectively and smoothly and the fact that papers were published in advance was working well.

Q15. What do you appreciate about how the Cabinet meetings work now and what would you like to see done differently?

Answered	41
Skipped	19

Summary of free text:

A number of respondents would like to see an opportunity for more real questioning and debate with some options/alternatives for the outcome of discussion in order for it not to feel like a ‘rubber-stamping’ exercise, where decisions have really been made in advance of the meeting in private. A number of respondents also expressed a wish for an opportunity for non-cabinet members, including opposition Members to be involved in collaborative decision making.

Several respondents suggested a return to committee system.

A few respondents felt that Cabinet meetings worked well and provided an opportunity to ask questions and discuss policies being implemented.

A few respondents wished to see better attendance from councillors, especially opposition and felt it was important to ensure all councillors were aware that they could attend.

A few respondents felt that a more collegiate and respectful approach from the Leader and Cabinet would be of benefit.

Several respondents said they considered Cabinet meetings to be a ‘waste of time.’

Q16. In addition to decisions being made at the Cabinet meeting, some decisions are delegated to individual Cabinet Members to allow for timely decisions to be taken. In your experience how effective is the process for executive decision making delegated to individual Cabinet Members? Please give a score between zero and ten, where zero means not good at all and ten means excellent and explain why you decided on the score.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Total	Weighted Average
star Reasons for score:	23.91% 11	10.87% 5	6.52% 3	6.52% 3	19.57% 9	4.35% 2	8.70% 4	8.70% 4	2.17% 1	8.70% 4	46	4.52
											39	
											Answered	46
											Skipped	14

Summary of free text:

A number of respondents appreciated the value of the process in terms of timeliness and efficiency but felt it lacked transparency, openness, and opportunity to challenge.

Some respondents felt it generally worked well, allowing agile but transparent decision making which was necessary given time constraints.

A few respondents commented that too many decisions were being delegated to individuals and this could be seen as a way to avoid scrutiny and reduce democratic accountability

Q17. In addition to decisions made by Cabinet (collectively or individually), some decisions are delegated to officers to enable the running of council services. How would you describe your understanding of how delegated decision making to officers currently works?

Answer Choices	Responses	
Fully understand	30.77%	16
Partly understand	51.92%	27
Don't understand	17.31%	9
Answered		52
Skipped		8

Q18. There is also a mix of formal and informal advisory bodies that influence executive decision making. These include Traffic Management Advisory Committee, Corporate Parenting Panel, and Adult Social Services Review Panel amongst others. How effective in your experience are those advisory bodies in the way they are run? Please give a score between zero and ten, where zero means not good at all and ten means excellent and explain why you decided on the score.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Total	Weighted Average
Star Reasons for score:	10.00% 5	12.00% 6	12.00% 6	12.00% 6	10.00% 5	12.00% 6	10.00% 5	20.00% 10	0.00% 0	2.00% 1	50	4.9
											40	
											Answered	50
											Skipped	10

Summary of free text:

Respondents commented that panels were useful but could be limited by the confidence of members and engagement of supporting officers, and the character of the chair can have an impact. Some respondents felt that certain panels were more effective than others and it would be help if more residents were aware of them and the opportunities they provide to engage with the council.

A number of respondents felt that Panels were limited in scope and did not have much impact as they were purely advisory rather than decision-making and advice or consultation was sometimes ‘ignored.’

Q19. What do you appreciate about how the advisory bodies work now and what would you like to see done differently?

Answered 39
 Skipped 21

Summary of free text:

Some respondents felt that more weight should be given to their advice and these bodies should have greater participation in decision making. Some felt that they should be decision making bodies rather than advisory.

Several respondents were unsure of how the advisory bodies work. Some commented on the need for greater publicity of these boards, clarification of their roles and remits, and put more information from these bodies in the public domain.

Several respondents felt they would like to see more community representation on the advisory boards.

Q20. Are there any changes to the way that decisions are currently made which would enable you to be more effective in your role?

Answered	34
Skipped	26

Some respondents felt they would like more local decisions made and better opportunities for residents to input into decisions.

A number of respondents wanted to see more opportunities to question cabinet members and officers and full participation of all members in decision making process, particularly at an early stage.

Some respondents wished to see greater clarity on why decisions are made and the benefits to the wider community, evidence-based decision making.

Q21. How effective is scrutiny overall? Please give a score between 0 and 10, where 0 is not good at all and 10 is excellent, explain why you decided on the score.

	1		2		3		4		5		6		7		8		9		10		Total	Weighted Average
star	6.12%	3	8.16%	4	20.41%	10	10.20%	5	10.20%	5	14.29%	7	12.24%	6	14.29%	7	4.08%	2	0.00%	0	49	4.98
Reasons for score:																					38	
																					Answered	49
																					Skipped	11

Summary of free text:

Several respondents felt that scrutiny was not always able to engage with key or contentious issues in a timely manner due to lack of information provided by officers. A number of respondents felt that items should be brought to scrutiny at an early stage so that pre-decision scrutiny can take place and influence decision making.

A number of respondents felt that it scrutinises well, but recommendations were rarely taken into account and there was a need to track and follow up outcomes from recommendations.

A number of respondents felt that the current chair of scrutiny was good, and that scrutiny runs well and has been moving in the right direction with improvements seen in the last year or two. A few respondents felt there was insufficient time to fully explore each item during meetings and sought more public involvement. A number of respondents felt scrutiny was under resourced at officer level and engagement of members could be variable.

One respondent suggested that Chair of scrutiny should be an independent resident or a member of the opposition party to encourage impartiality and another felt that scrutiny members should not be chosen by the Executive for the same reason.

Q22. In your experience, do you agree with the following:

	Fully agree		Partly agree		Disagree		No opinion
Scrutiny's role and purpose is well-understood	23.08%	12	63.46%	33	13.46%	7	0.00%
Scrutiny is welcomed and has influence	17.65%	9	45.10%	23	37.25%	19	0.00%
The function is member-led	42.31%	22	42.31%	22	15.38%	8	0.00%
The work programme(s) are flexible and responsive	15.38%	8	57.69%	30	21.15%	11	5.77%
There is a good balance between pre and post decision scrutiny	9.62%	5	38.46%	20	38.46%	20	13.46%
Scrutiny uses a wide range of evidence and actively involves key stakeholders	15.38%	8	63.46%	33	15.38%	8	5.77%
Meetings are well-run	26.92%	14	50.00%	26	17.31%	9	5.77%
Recommendations are clear and followed-up	11.76%	6	50.98%	26	31.37%	16	5.88%
Other (please specify)							

Summary of free text:

Some respondents were unsure whether recommendations were followed up or felt they had only recently begun to be followed up in a systematic manner.

Some respondents felt that time constraints impacted scrutiny’s effectiveness and topics selected were too broad so there could be a lack of ‘drilling down.’ There was also a comment that the level of preparation of scrutiny members was variable and, in some cases, insufficient.

Q23. What do you appreciate about how scrutiny works now and what would you like to see done differently?

Answered	34
Skipped	26

Summary of free text:

- A number of respondents wanted to see pre-decision scrutiny of all big decisions and scrutiny recommendations taken seriously by officers and the executive.
- A number of respondents wanted more time to consider items that come up suddenly and more involvement of opposition members in selecting topics. They also wanted to see fewer items on the agenda, but items scrutinised in greater depth.
- A number of respondents wanted to see better following up of recommendations with an expectation that scrutiny feedback would be acted upon or the committee provided with a reason for why it was not.
- There was the suggestion of cross-party chair and deputy, independent chairs and non-councillors on the committee with voting rights
- A number of respondents felt there needed to be a greater understanding and appreciation of scrutiny across the council and with the public.
- Some respondents felt that scrutiny needed more resource to support research needs and opportunities for involvement from members who are not members of the scrutiny committee but are experts in a relevant field.

Q24. How would you describe the working relationship between scrutiny and executive functions?

Answer Choices	Responses	
Very positive	6.38%	3
Somewhat positive	57.45%	27
Somewhat negative	27.66%	13
Very negative	8.51%	4
Answered		47
Skipped		13

Q25. Overall in your experience how effective are Council meetings? Please give a score between zero and ten, where zero means not good at all and ten means excellent and explain why you decided on the score.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Total	Weighted Average
star Reason for score:	33.33% 17	13.73% 7	17.65% 9	7.84% 4	7.84% 4	3.92% 2	7.84% 4	5.88% 3	0.00% 0	1.96% 1	51	3.29
												47
												Answered 51
												Skipped 9

Summary of text:

A number of respondents felt that debates could be of a higher quality and more focussed on local residents. A significant number of respondents felt that the debate at council was a political show and had no impact on the decision-making process. A number of respondents felt the chairing was not impartial and questions were not always adequately answered by the Leader or Cabinet Members. A number of respondents felt that there was not sufficient opportunity to ask questions and those opportunities for the public and members was often curtailed, while cabinet members were given the opportunity to make lengthy speeches. A few respondents felt that council meetings achieved what was required of them and were acceptable as there were no better alternatives.

Q26. What do you appreciate about how it works now and what would you like to see done differently?

Answered	43
Skipped	17

Summary of free text

Some respondents would like to see better quality debating that is outcome focussed, greater openness, transparency and respect for others. This could include less protocol, more honest and open discussion (without party whip).

A few respondents wanted to see high quality, thorough questioning and scrutiny of cabinet members.

Several respondents called for more time and opportunity for public questions, more direct answers to these questions from the executive and less time for pre-planned political speeches.

A couple of respondents wanted councillors to have the power to make genuine amendments at council.

Q27. Do you participate in or have knowledge of operations of any of the below committees? (tick all that apply)

Answer Choices	Responses	
Planning	92.45%	49
Licensing	58.49%	31
GPAC	39.62%	21
Ethics	24.53%	13
Appointments	39.62%	21
Pension	33.96%	18
Traffic Management Advisory Committee	47.17%	25
Health and Wellbeing Board	33.96%	18
Answered		53
Skipped		7

Q28. How effective in your experience are those committees in the way they are run? Please give a score between zero and ten, where zero means not good at all and ten means excellent and explain why you decided on the score.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
star Reasons for score:	12.00% 6	8.00% 4	8.00% 4	12.00% 6	12.00% 6	12.00% 6	14.00% 7	12.00% 6	6.00% 3	4.00%

Free text summary:

Several respondents commented that Licensing, Appointments and TMAC (although with less power than it used to have) were well run. There were mixed comments about Pensions and some respondents felt the HWB was not effective but was starting to pick up again in recent months.

There were a number of comments from respondents to say that Planning was run politically, and members were expected to follow the whip. There were also comments that not all planning cases received the same consideration, and this was not always proportional to the size or significance of the scheme. A couple of respondents mentioned members being bullied into voting a certain way and there were a couple of comments that every application was approved, and resident input not regarded.

Respondents commented that there was a good level of officer support to run the committees effectively.

Q29. What do you appreciate about how the committee(s) work now and what would you like to see done differently?

Answered	32
Skipped	28

Summary of free text:

Respondents suggested appointing chairs based on skills and experience.

Some respondents felt that when committees are open, transparent and rational there is usually a consensus and respect between committee members, but this culture was not always reflected in the Planning committee with politics and individual personalities (including that of the chair) having an impact.

A few respondents wanted to see fewer items on the agenda for planning meetings in order to allow meaningful consideration of each application.

A few respondents wished to move to a committee system.

Respondents suggested allowing time for residents to speak – committees to be more stakeholder oriented and resident and councillor views be taken into account.

A number of respondents wanted to see more cross party working across the range of committees.

Q30. Is there anything else you would like to tell us that may have been missed in this survey?

Answered

26

Skipped

34

Free text summary:

Respondents commented that cross council, councillor and officer working is inconsistent and poor in some areas.

A couple of respondents highlighted that information about Croydon's decision making could be found at the Inside Croydon website which highlighted issues with decision making. These respondents felt that the biggest check on the council was from the Inside Croydon website and that accountability would be better if taking place within the council rather than externally.

A few respondents suggested moving to a committee structure in order to become more transparent in decision making.

A respondent suggested involving service users, staff and trades unions more fully in considering how services can best be delivered.

A respondent commented that the calibre of Cabinet Members was variable, and they should be selected based on skills and competence.

Q31. Please select your role(s) within the authority. Select all that apply.

Answer Choices	Responses	
I am a backbench councillor	56.25%	27
I sit on a scrutiny committee	33.33%	16
I am a Cabinet Member	14.58%	7
I am a Deputy Cabinet Member	12.50%	6
I sit on another committee	45.83%	22
I am a former elected Member	6.25%	3
	Answered	48
	Skipped	12



Centre for Public Scrutiny

Croydon Council Governance Review – LSP engagement

Headline results

October 2019

Evidence gathered via:

- 14 organisations/ individuals invited to submit views via a letter from the Chair of the Governance Review Panel
- Three reminders issued and deadline extended
- 8 responses received: 7 telephone interviews and 1 written response

Areas explored

- The effectiveness of decision-making in Croydon Council
- The involvement of residents in decision-making
- Examples of good practice and improvement that could be made
- Views were also shared on the LSP's effectiveness

Effectiveness of decision-making

- Croydon is seen as an ambitious Council that wants to do well for residents.
- The way they partner, the passion and inspiration in their portfolios is there to see in most areas.
- Ward councillors – excellent, well intended, engaged. There can sometimes however be a disconnect between officer and councillor level communication.
- There is a commitment to operate transparently and engagement with Cabinet and Scrutiny is positive. Some examples where the information considered by scrutiny could be more up to date.
- Can be difficult to establish the boundary between the elected member and officer responsibilities.
- It can take time for the council to move on from a specific difficult issue or challenge in terms of how it works and organisational relationships.
- Striving to be a city, aiming to get the balance with being a village and a community.

Resident engagement

- Many examples where the Council tries hard to engage with the residential population, it has the comms platforms to enable it. Some well established forums that work hard to engage with specific groups.
- Needs improving, some examples of good practice but feels like basic level engagement.
- Examples where residents feel they are not being kept informed (e.g. redevelopment) and trust is damaged.
- Could get more sophisticated in how to engage beyond council vehicles e.g. website, e-newsletter, council-run events, etc.
- Could take better advantage of partner links to specific groups to get more effective engagement.
- Move to locality working has strengthened engagement and made it more planned and co-ordinated.
- Concern that some consultations are brought out too late and there is not enough time given to properly consider.

Good practice and improvements

- Recognising where partner organisations are better placed to lead and deliver change.
- More trust in open and honest dialogue with residents, particularly on contentious issues.
- Improved cross-borough working/ communication and links to partners, particularly for vulnerable residents.
- Believe more in the ability of the VCS and communities in understand and meet community needs.
- Council operates well to meet its local context and specific challenges whilst seeking to learn and apply good practice from elsewhere.
- Could learn from other sectors on how to better engage with residents e.g. NHS
- Needs consultation to be real engagement, it can feel like views are not heard.

LSP effectiveness

- Welcoming, high level of engaging, good attendance at a senior level from the right organisations. Overall seen as a positive experience.
- Benefit in coming together in itself and information exchange, positive relationships.
- Can be difficult to articulate the impact in terms of outcomes.
- Recognition of the pressure the council is under financially and how this can lead to a short-term focus.
- Can be too council-led, information is useful but, for some, it can feel like a talking shop.
- Has the potential to do far more, be more powerful, proactive – big names around the table.



Governance Review

planning session

3rd June 2019

Welcome and Introductions

Dame Moira Gibb
Independent Chair,
Governance Review Panel

Town Planning Involving the Public and Delivering Sustainable Development

Heather Cheesbrough
3rd June 2019

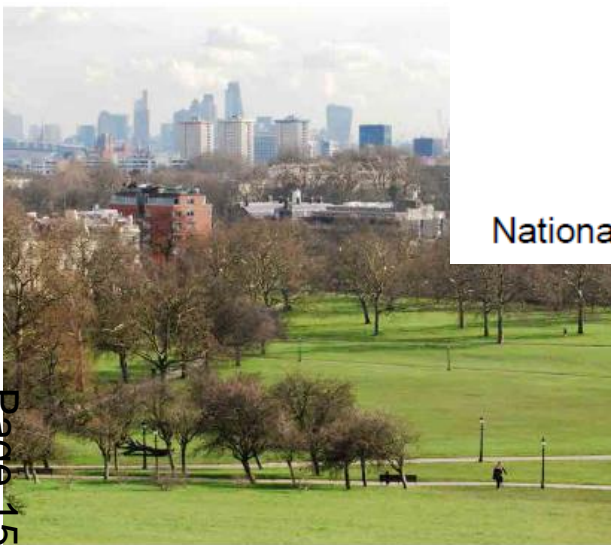
MAYOR OF LONDON



Ministry of Housing,
Communities &
Local Government

National Planning Policy Framework

Statement of Community
Involvement



THE LONDON PLAN

THE SPATIAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY FOR LONDON
CONSOLIDATED WITH ALTERATIONS SINCE 2011

MARCH 2016

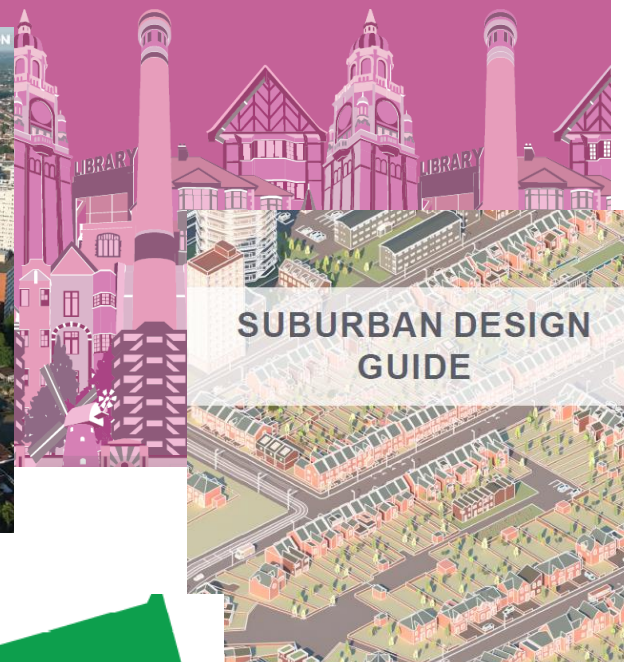


November 2018

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Croydon Local Plan 2018

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MID CROYDON MASTERPLAN

GVA
EAST
RHWL ARCHITECTS
ALAN BAXTER AND ASSOCIATES
BURO HAPPOLD
DAVIS LANGDON

CONSTITUTION OF THE LONDON BOROUGH OF CROYDON

This version of the Constitution was adopted by the Council on 21 May 2012 and amended in July and October 2012, January and July 2014, May 2015, and January, May and September 2016, January 2017 and June 2017.

Delivering Sufficient Supply of Homes

Para 59 of National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

To support the Government's objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes, it is important that a sufficient amount and variety of land can come forward where it is needed, that the needs of groups with specific housing requirements are addressed and that land with permission is developed without unnecessary delay.

Croydon Planning Statistics (2018)

CLG PS2 Data

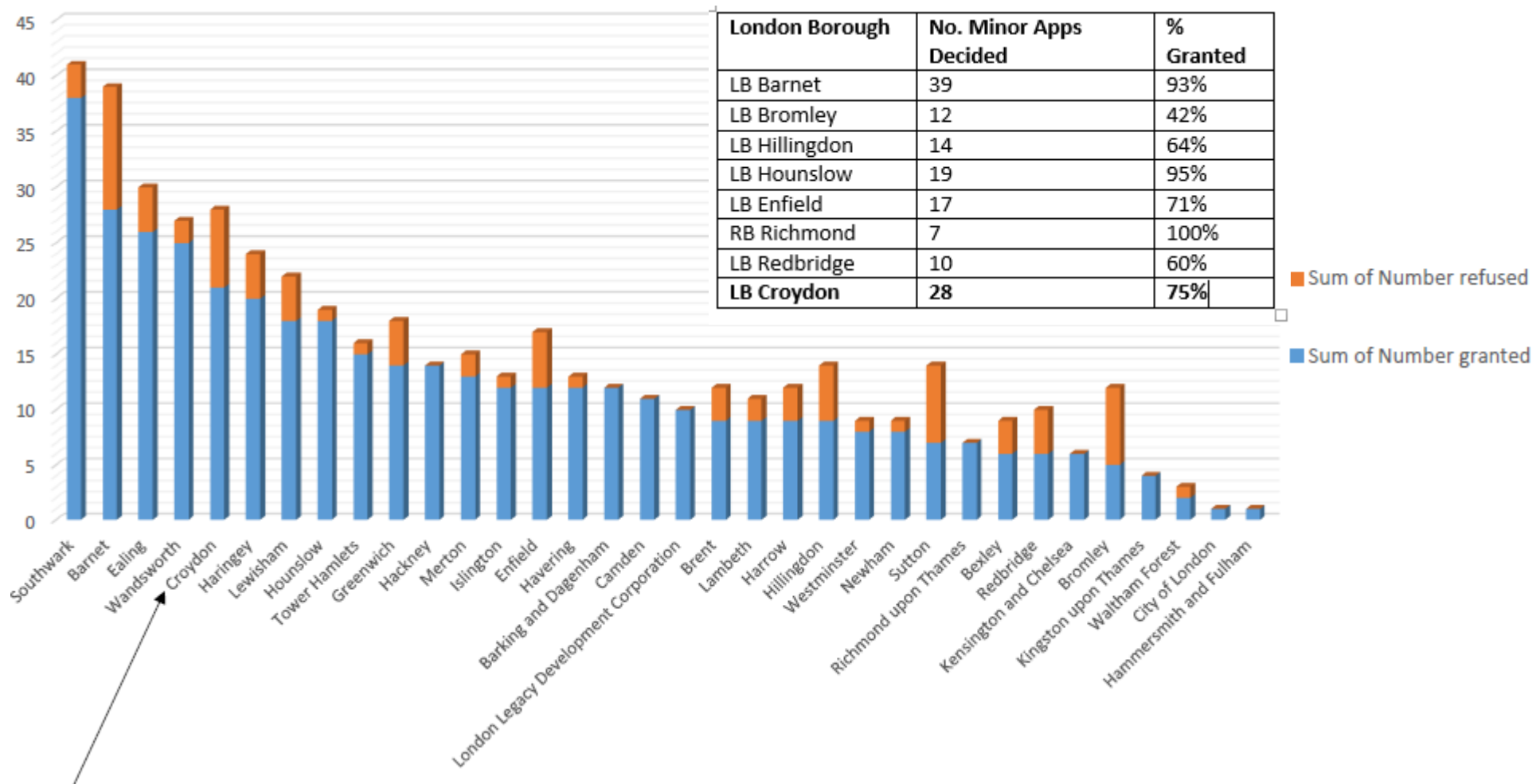
- 2,477 applications received
- 2,274 decisions taken
- 96% of decisions delegated to officers
- 87% of applications granted (overall)
- 79% of “major” applications granted (85% in 13 weeks or agreed timeframes)
- 81% of “minor” applications granted (84% in 8 weeks of agreed timeframes)
- 90% of “other” applications granted (89% in 8 weeks of agreed timeframes)

Croydon Planning Statistics (2018)

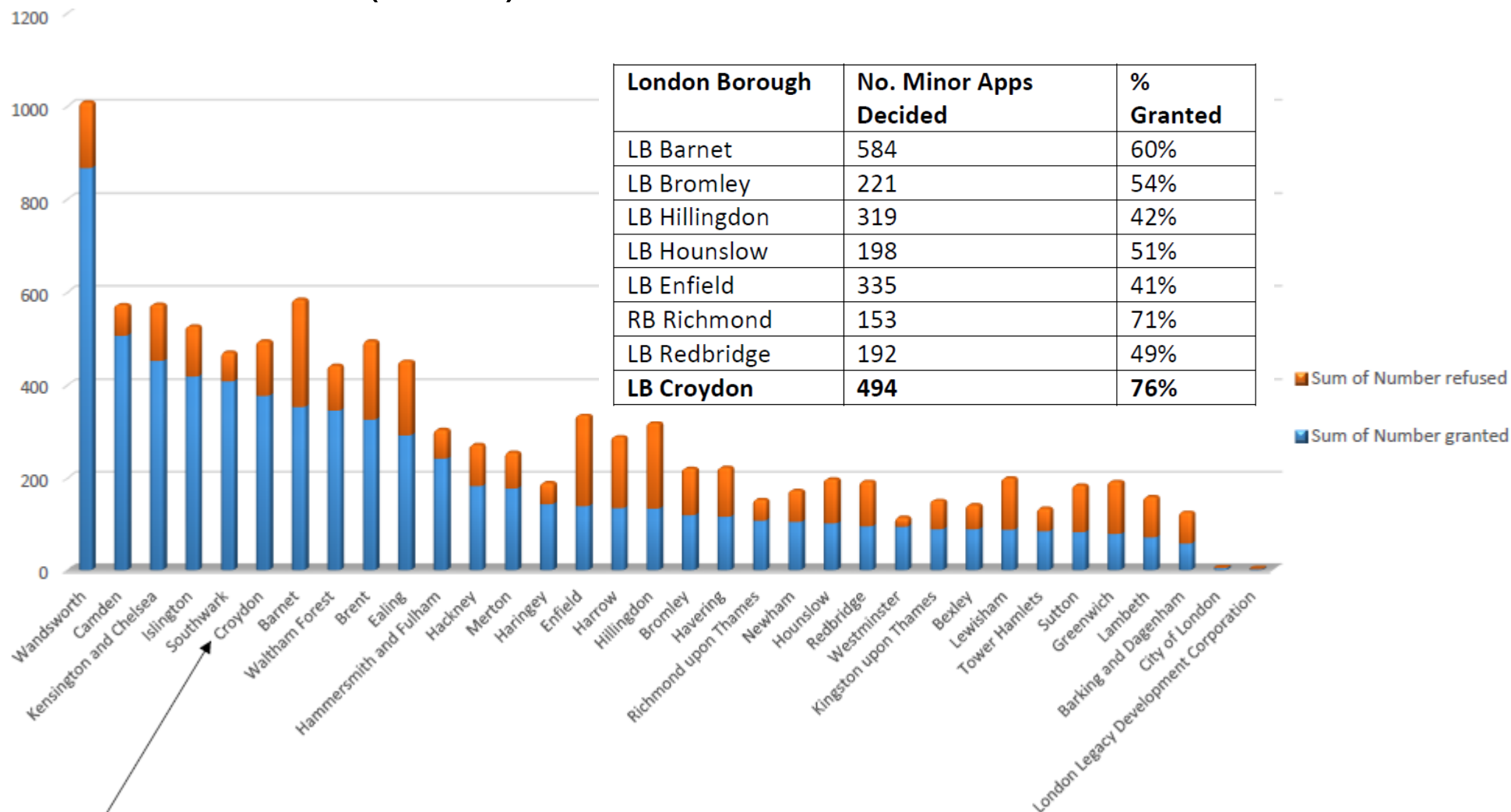
Residential Development CLG PS2 Data

- 75% of “Major” residential developments granted planning permission (89% in 13 weeks or within agreed time period)
- 76% of “Minor” residential development granted planning permission (82% in 8 weeks or within agreed time period)

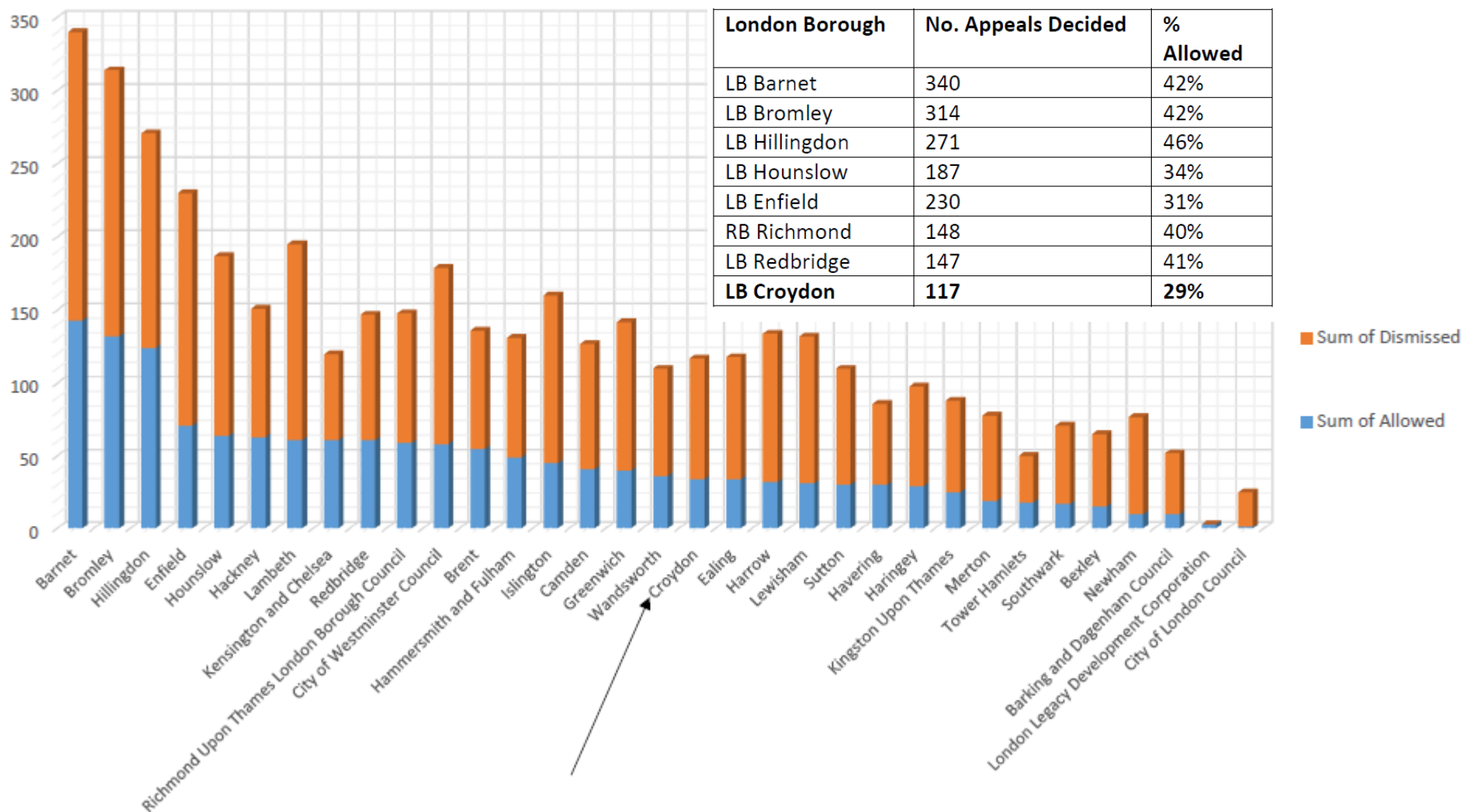
Comparative London Data – Residential “Majors” Granted (2018)



Comparative London Data – Minor Residential Granted (2018)



Comparative London Data – % Appeals Allowed Against Number of Appeals Received (2018)



Statement of Community Involvement

- On line Register – register of planning applications, appeals, planning decisions
- Tracking feature available for residents - email alerts
- Neighbour notifications in accordance with the T&CP (Development Management) Procedures Order
- Widen consultation on a case by case basis
- Site notices on “majors” and development in conservation areas
- Negotiate on planning applications to resolve issues – and to overcome valid resident objections
- Pre-application consultation – encouraging developers and publish pre application responses on-line

Council Constitution and Planning Committee Procedures

What Goes to Planning Committee?

- Refusals are managed by officers under delegated powers
- Planning application thresholds – and non referable case-types (NMAs, S.73s, Prior Approvals, LDCs and conditions discharge)
- Triggers for Planning Committee Consideration
- Director's Discretion
- Member Referral Arrangements (RA's MPs GLA Member)
- Report writing - assessing planning merits and material considerations – use of images – proportionate and understandable narrative

Council Constitution and Planning Committee Procedures

Procedures At Planning Committee

- Re-introduction of web casting (2015-16)
- Speaking at Planning Committee (Order and Format Arrangements)
- Adherence to Council Constitution (deadlines and timings)
- Presentations and Questioning of Officers
- Debate and understanding of policy balance
- Pre Application Engagement at Planning Committee
- Place Review Panel – Critical Friend and gateway to Planning Committee Pre App Presentations

Council Constitution and Planning Committee Procedures

Consideration of Policy and Policy Weighting

- Determination in accordance with the development plan
- Debate and consideration of policy (balancing planning issues on a case by case basis)
- Housing delivery is a weighty material consideration
- Reporting performance issues (speed of decision and application/appeal outcomes)
- Member training – scope for further training on specific issues
- Reviewing delivered schemes

Continued Engagement On DM and Spatial Planning Issues

- Developer Forum – Regular engagement with the Croydon's developer community
- Regular engagement with residents associations on topics (North and South Focus)
- Meetings planned with Developer Forum and North and South RA's (Update to Croydon Local Plan)
- Exploring opportunities to engage with hard to reach groups (including young persons)
- Engage with Develop Croydon, Conservation Area Panels and Place Review Panel

PAS Governance Review Interim Report

John Cummins
Croydon 3rd June 2019

www.pas.gov.uk

What is Planning Advisory Service for?

The Planning Advisory Service exists to provide support to local planning authorities in England to provide efficient and effective planning services, to drive improvement in those services and to respond to and deliver changes in the planning system



We need your feedback



Our Focus

- Review the operation of the committee as it is established,
 - Carry out a review of the procedures (constitution, web pages and published guidance), documentation (planning committee reports) and,
 - review 4 web casts of planning committees to check behaviours.
 - The PAS team has also been asked for its views on potential alternative committee formats e.g. area committees.
-

Findings

- **Departmental Organisation**
 - Generally good and inline with best practice
- **Constitution**
 - follow good practice and the scheme of delegation of applications to the planning committee and officers is clear.
- **Officer Reports to Committee**
 - Generally, these are concise and cover the key policy issues

Findings

- **The Planning Committee, including public engagement and transparency**
 - Format of the committee is that of the majority of LPA's in London and England
 - Procedures generally are good
 - Areas of concern include:
 - Introductions of the committee members
 - IT 'glitches'
 - Speaking by ward councillors
 - Questioning of adopted policy

Findings

- Providing fully policy compliant contra motions
 - Giving an impression of having pre-determined applications
- **Alternative committee formats**
 - Need to remember that:
 - Committees should be politically balanced
 - Committees must make decisions on material planning considerations and adopted Development Plan Policies
 - Speed of determining applications is a Government Measurement of performance

Possible points for discussion

- **Introductions by committee members**
- **Format of officer reports and presentations**
- **Speaking by ward members who are either on the Planning Committee or Substitutes**
- **Acceptance of adopted Council Policy**
 - **How policy can be challenged**
- **Moving contra motions fully supported by Policy**
- **Maintenance of order in the public gallery**
- **Pre-determination of planning applications by Member who do not support adopted policy**

Contact PAS

email **pas@local.gov.uk**

web **www.pas.gov.uk**

phone **020 7664 3000**

Chris Philp MP – written submission on planning – letter to Chair (forwarded to Panel Members)

Dear Dame Moira,

It was a great pleasure to meet you in Parliament recently.

As we discussed, there are two particular problems with Croydon's planning committee:

1. It is seen by most residents as ignoring their views and imposing development that is often blatantly contrary to planning policy. This is causing huge anger and frustration amongst residents, who are becoming disillusioned with the democratic process. Over 90% of applications are passed, and developers are now targeting Croydon because Croydon's planning Committee has become notorious for passing pretty much anything (neighbouring Bromley and Sutton councils do not behave this way). At the same time, residents can see many brownfield sites that could accommodate new housing not being developed.

2. The planning committee is heavily politicised, very often voting 6 for (Labour) to 4 against (Conservative) on contentious applications, especially where those applications are in the south of the Borough. This reflects the fact that Labour dominate the north of the Borough and the Conservatives the south. Labour does not need to win any votes in the south of the Borough to win the council and so cheerfully votes through unpopular applications against the wishes of residents and often in contravention of planning policy. They are, needless to say, more circumspect in marginal wards.

One solution to this political polarisation would be a directly elected Mayor – so all votes across the Borough would be equal. But this is not in your mandate to recommend.

The next best solution is to introduce Area Planning Committees. You would divide Croydon up into three Areas – for example, north, central and south. Each Area would have its own Area Planning Committee consisting of say 5 councillors, pro rata to the party representation of the total councillors in that Area. You could add a caveat that if the representation would be 5-0 then the second party in that area would get one councillor on the committee, with four places for the majority party.

For smaller applications – say less than 50 units (or less than 50,000 square feet for non-residential projects) – the Area Planning Committee would hear applications in their Area in exactly the same way the committee does now. For applications over this size, the main committee would still hear the application. You would not have any extra costs: instead of having four full planning committee meetings you would simply have one full committee meeting and then one committee meeting for each of the three Areas – that is, the same number of meetings in total. The operation of the committees and the criteria for coming to committee would be exactly the same as now (i.e. you would not have more total applications heard before committee than is currently the case).

The advantages of this are that it brings decision making closer to the affected area. It will end the current situation where the Labour majority from the north imposes its views on the Conservative south – or vice versa if the positions were reversed. It will also make it less likely that residents get ignored, as is currently the case.

There are a number of authorities that operate similar systems, for example:

- London Borough of Barnet – Has three “Area Planning Sub Committees” as well as the main committee for larger applications (the Areas are: Chipping Barnet, Hendon and Finchley and Golders Green, which are the Parliamentary constituencies in LB Barnet).
- Cornwall County Unitary – three Area committees (West, Central and East) plus a Strategic Planning Committee. The Area committee handles applications up to around 100 units
- London Borough of Kingston has four “Neighbourhood Committees” that discharge a number of functions including planning. They also handle traffic, parking, parks and libraries in their area and consist of all councillors from that area (this may be worth studying more generally). The areas are: Kingston Town, South of the Borough, Maldens and Coombe and Surbiton. Given Croydon’s political polarisation, this model may have wider applicability
- Wiltshire County Unitary – four Area committees (north, east, south and west) and a Strategic Planning Committee. The Area committees handle applications less than 200 units or less than around 110,000 sq ft of non-residential (10,000 sq metres)
- Oxford City council – East and West Area committees. These decide all applications in their respective areas, regardless of size

Planning is the single biggest issue I have as a local MP. Residents feel that they are being ignored and applications contrary to policy are being consented.

I strongly commend this proposal as a huge step towards addressing the alienation and victimisation that my constituents (and I) feel.

Yours sincerely,

Chris Philp MP

Governance Review London Borough of Croydon

June 2019

Final Feedback Report including Addendum -
January 2020

1. Executive Summary

PAS have been asked to carry out a review of the planning committee process based on examining the established procedures, documentation (including committee reports) and review web casts of the planning committees themselves.

In addition, interviews have taken place with the chief officer and the PAS Development Management Tool Kit has been used to assess the direction of travel of the authority in terms of best practice in the areas of the development management process, and this is more fully explained in Section 3 below on the Summary of the Governance Review approach.

An interim report was presented to the Governance Review Panel on the 3rd June and the debate and discussion has helped formulate this final report.

In terms of the work carried out, the operation of the planning committee seems, on the face of it, to be well organised and follows much of the established best practice in running a committee.

In particular, the meeting itself seems well organised and the public seem to be able to understand what is happening at the committee, thanks to the clear guidance of the Chair and the 'web casting' which allows a clear understanding of who is speaking and what their roles are in the process.

Officer presentations seem to follow the conclusions of the reports (something that is not always evident in other authorities), debate and questioning seems to be well organised and respectful of the gravitas a planning committee should have and is displayed in this Council. However, the questioning of adopted policy is of concern, as the role of the committee members is clearly to determine applications in accordance with their council's policy.

The key issue seems to be a challenge by members of the adopted policy of the council with regard to allowing the intensification of residential development.

This is of concern, as all decisions of the committee should be based on their own adopted policy, not a policy that they would like to have. The planning committee is not the arena for policy challenge. This needs to be done via the Development Plans process and, if the will of the Council is to change the policy, this needs to be done through this processes, not by the overturn of planning applications that are policy compliant.

Addendum January 2020

Following a review of the report by the Governance Review on the 23rd January 2020, an addendum has been produced to the report reflecting the working of the committee and changes that have already been identified following a further review of the operation of the Planning Committee in December 2019 and January 2020, see page 11.

2. Summary of the Governance Review approach

The peer team

In this instance, unlike full peer challenges which are delivered by experienced elected member and officer peers, this challenge is professional led and the make-up of the peer team reflected your requirements. Peers were selected on the basis of their relevant experience and expertise and agreed with you.

The peers who are delivering the peer challenge at the LB Croydon are:

- Martin Hutchings - PAS Improvement Manager
- John Cummins - PAS Planning Consultant

Scope and focus

LB Croydon (the council) has asked Planning Advisory Service (PAS) to prepare a proposal for a review by the council's Governance Review Panel.

The review is a snap shot in time looking at if the committee is fit for purpose and meets the needs (current and future) of the Council and its customers. The review will also look at how decision making might be improved whilst allowing for democratic input into the process, relationships between officers and members, and identifying good practice from elsewhere that may be transferable to LB Croydon.

Scope:

The short timescale for the review means that the full PAS approach to reviewing committees cannot be carried out, but, for consistency, the report will reflect on the following broad themes:

- The purpose of the committee
- The format and process
- The 'customer experience'
- Roles & responsibilities
- Quality and improvement

As well as these broad themes, the review will also consider a selection of planning committee reports and reflect on how the information contained in the application files are reflected in the reports and how this supports effective and transparent decision making.

In this case, as agreed, it has focused on the operation of the committee as it is established, and a review of the procedures (constitution, web pages and published guidance), documentation (planning committee reports) and reviewing a number (5) of web casts of planning committees. The PAS team has also been asked for its views on potential alternative committee formats e.g. area committees.

The peer challenge process

It is important to stress that this was not an inspection. Peer challenges are improvement focussed and tailored to meet individual councils' needs. They are designed to complement and add value to a council's own performance and improvement. The process is not designed to provide an in-depth or technical assessment of plans and proposals. The peer team used their experience and knowledge of local government to reflect on the information presented to them by people they met, things they saw and material that they read.

PAS has adapted its traditional peer challenge model to focus specifically on the running of a good planning committee. Like any important council function, planning committee should be periodically reviewed to ensure that it is an excellent 'shop window' for the council.

We believe the best people to challenge a committee are fellow councillors and senior officers/consultants who can provide an external, objective and independent perspective. However, in this case the review was carried out solely by consultants with a wide range of experience of working with Council, officers and councillors.

This report provides a summary of the peer's findings following the presentation to the Governance Review Panel on the 3rd June 2019 and the feedback received at that panel.

The Planning Committee meetings web casts reviewed as part of this assessment, took place on 5th July 2018, 28th February 2019, 21st March 2019 and 29th April 2019. In addition, a number of other meetings, held in 2018, were also quickly looked at to confirm the behaviours identified from the core sample of meetings.

PAS would like to thank the Panel and its Independent Chair for the opportunity to engage in the process and present our views to the Panel in an open and collegiate way.

In presenting this final feedback report to you, they have done so as fellow local government officers, not professional consultants or inspectors. By its nature, the peer challenge is a snapshot in time. We appreciate that some of the feedback may be about things you are already addressing and progressing.

3. Findings

3.1 Departmental Organisation

This seems to follow the principles of best practice with a well-established departmental structure and clearly defined roles of the officers. The key areas of the Development Management Process seem to be staffed in an appropriate way and it is nice to see that planning enforcement is clearly recognised as an important role in the department. This is a key service to assure the planning

committee that conditions imposed on planning applications to make them acceptable are complied with in full.

3.2 Constitution

This appears to follow good practice and the scheme of delegation of applications to the planning committee and officers is clear. Published guidance on the Council's web site builds on this and gives a clear explanation, largely in layman's terms, of the process that is followed and why certain applications are delegated to officers and others are presented to the planning committee. Annual reviews of the scheme of delegation are good and ensure it is kept in-line with best practice.

Following on from the Panel debate, it is clear that the most contentious applications are the 1 to 9 new dwellings. This is where the policy challenge is coming from at the committee, which is not the most appropriate form for this debate.

3.3 Officer Reports to Committee

Generally, these are concise and cover the key policy issues.

However, while some plans are now included, they do not include the full plans pack or photos of the site and it is suggested that, as a minimum, links should be provided to the key documents that support the planning application, and, if possible, the actual presentation that will be given at the committee. This will aid the 'understanding' of the report and allow assessment of the considerations given, within the report to the compliance, or not, of policy. Many councils provide full copies of relevant plans with the committee report in electronic format, Bury Council being a good example.

Following on from the Panel debate, the officer reports could be re-drafted to make it clear where the balance of policy lay in determining the application so that both the Members of the Planning Committee and the public understand as fully as possible the constraints on the planning committee when the debate takes place.

3.4 The Planning Committee, including public engagement and transparency

The planning agenda is well organised and the guidance notes provided clearly the processes which is something other councils could learn from. In particular, the note on Planning Applications for Decision is clear, if a little jargon based. It gives a clear explanation as to the process followed at the planning committee and, in particular, what are and aren't material planning considerations. However, it is not clear if the public do read these and consideration should be given to how this may be better publicised. It may be worth considering reading out a statement at the start of the committee confirming that decisions can only be made on the basis of material planning considerations and in accordance with the policies of the Development Plan.

In addition, the public could be met by suitably trained democratic services or planning staff to explain simply the processes and the key issues that will be debated and, just as importantly, those that cannot be considered.

These staff can then gather feedback at the end of the Committee on the perceptions the public had of the meeting. Doncaster Council are currently developing this methodology and are happy to share their experiences.

The committee introductions are good but there could be some confusion to the public as some members introduce themselves as 'a Committee Member' while some just state the ward they represent. It would be best if there were consistency so that the roles of the councillors as committee members were clear and that they were not acting as ward councillors and that they were there to ensure planning applications were determined in accordance with the Development Plan and material planning considerations.

Officer presentations are good, but do seem to repeat the content of the report. It is good that they focus on the key issues and they may be shortened and given more focus by just concentrating on the material planning considerations and, the balance that has to be made in terms of the application of local development plan policies and national planning policy.

There appeared to be a number of issues with the display of the presentations on screen, and this should be reviewed to make it seamless.

Speaking facilities for objectors and agents are good.

Speaking by Ward Members, who are also substitutes on planning committee, is unsettling. Looking from the public's point of view, they seem to sit at the same table of the committee and could be seen to be in a position of undue and unreasonable influence which could lead to challenge. It may be better if a clear explanation is given as to what role they are taking and if they speak from the 'speakers' position in the chamber.

Debate often strays into trying to amend policy at the committee, rather than in the correct forum of a review of the Development Plan. In every web cast reviewed some members consistently questioned the adopted policies on intensification and / or parking provision.

There is a clear split between Councillors who accept the existing policy base and those who do not, which is a shame and reflects poorly on the Committee. (See Addendum on Page 11)

It is not clear what level of member development there is in terms of training on material planning considerations, and this needs to be reviewed.

Officers have to repeat the policy base for the recommendation, and this is unfortunate, as it gives a feeling of disharmony between the officers and members.

This is of particular concern as the debate often seems to be on the basis of members' pre-determined positions, rather than on the merits of the individual application. (See Addendum on Page 11)

The best planning committees acknowledge concerns about the adopted policy base that they have to use for making a decision, but ensure that the adopted policy is the basis of voting on the application.

When policy is questioned, there may be a role for the council's legal officer and monitoring officer to remind members what they can and cannot take into account when voting on applications and making contra motions.

Motions for refusal and approval are handled well, while clear policy reasons are given for counter motions, but there was no clear explanation of any planning balance or the support that policy actually gives to the counter motion. As an example, while inadequate parking may be a material planning reason for refusal, if the parking standards set out in the Development Plan are met in the application and it is if it is not demonstrable why more parking should be provided, it will not be supported on appeal and could bring the decision making process into disrepute and risk costs applications. Again, the Council's legal officer could help explain what level of evidence there has to be to support a contra motion.

Many councils have an open briefing session for committee members where arguments can be rehearsed about the acceptability or not of an application and the validity of potential reasons for refusal, and or approval. It is considered to be good practice, particularly where there are new, or relatively new, policies in place that need to be adhered to in the decision making process. Recently councils such as Stafford, Eden and North West Leicestershire have introduced these sessions to enable the committee to clearly focus on the policy balance.

The public clearly are passionate about the applications being considered and 'heckling' appears to take place regularly, which is not appropriate for a quasi-judicial committee. The Chair handles these situations well, but consideration could be given as to how the public gallery is controlled and the use of 'meeters and greeters' may help.

The clear split that is demonstrated by members of the committee, in terms of their acceptance or not of the adopted Development Plan, can give credence to the poor behaviour of the public, and members should be mindful of that impression.

It is also of concern that members could hold themselves open to an application of pre-determination of the application, which, should bar them from taking part in the debate and voting on the application.

3.5 Alternative Committee Formats

To make an informed and evidenced judgement on the appropriateness /effectiveness of Croydon's committee model compared to those operated by other councils would require a separate piece of work taking a more fundamental look at the objectives being sought and an appraisal of which committee model is best placed to achieve them. As part of, and within the parameters of this assessment and report, the peer reviewers can make the following observations.

The style of committee adopted by LB Croydon is by far the most popular format across both London and the whole of England. The adoption of area committees has been made by a number of authorities. Greenwich in London and Stockport in Greater Manchester are two that have operated this format for a number of years as it suits the individual planning and decision-making objectives of the respective councils.

In terms of the different formats of committee, it must be remembered that whichever format is chosen decisions have still to be made on material planning matters and, principally the Development Plan. Hence, both area committees or a central committee should always reach the same decision.

It is also important, from a probity point of view, that the planning committee is politically balanced and this can be tricky to achieve when area committees are established.

There are pro's and con's for both committee models and PAS will be setting these out in its soon-to-be-released guide on 'Probity in Planning' for councillors.

However, generally speaking, performance of authorities with area committees, regarding the speed of making decisions, is poor as is the quality of appeal decisions. Area committees also need to have a political balance, which may be difficult, and still need to determine application on the basis of adopted policy, which may not be popular when policy is questioned, leading to dissatisfaction by the public who attend the meetings.

3.6 Key findings

- **It is suggested that the 'Key Note Finding' should become central to any changes adopted by the Council, namely:**
 - *The key element going forward will be for everyone involved with the planning committee process to accept that the policy of the council is a pivotal factor, and that when determining applications, only material planning considerations are taken into account, and that debates on the appropriateness of policy should be kept out of the committee arena.*
 - **Central to this finding is that arrangements need to be formalised to involve the planning committee membership in a review of planning policy**

- Amendments are needed to the introductions by committee members so that all members appear to be 'committee' members not a split of local representatives and committee members
- Amendments needed to the format of officer reports and presentations to make the planning balance clear
- Speaking by ward members who are either on the Planning Committee or Substitutes needs to be done from the speakers' seats, not the committee table.
- The moving contra motions needs to be fully supported by Policy and agreed by the Council's legal officer in accord with Part 4K para 8.8.
- Meeters and greeters should be used to help the maintenance of order in the public gallery
- Members need to be careful that they do not give an impressions of pre-determination of planning applications either for or against an application

4. Recommendations

These are taken for the assessment of the processes of the council and the attendance at the Governance Review Panel meeting on the 3rd June 2019 and based upon current best practice across a number of authorities.

4.1 Member Development

Further sessions should be organised making it clear that in terms of the probity of the decision making process the following of adopted policy is pivotal to making sustainable decisions. Guidance of PAS can assist in this member development process. <https://www.local.gov.uk/pas/pas-support/planning-committee-support/making-defensible-planning-decisions>

4.2 Reports

It is recommended that the conclusion in the report should include a clear assessment of the policy balance that the officers have made in reaching their recommendation. In particular, it should make explicit the weight the policies have and how any policy concerns have been mitigated.

In addition, the report should contain a link to the planning web pages so that the full planning application can be easily accessed to allow a review of the key plans and documents that were submitted with the application and published as a result of the statutory consultations. (see also 5.5 below)

4.3 Committee Engagement

Currently, the Planning Committee spend a considerable amount of time on questions for clarification, which is a little odd and can give an impression that the members do not understand the applications before them. This is because there is little or no engagement of the members in the 'life' of the applications before they see them in the agenda.

It is recommended that all committee members, and their substitutes, should be given a 'heads up' of potential committee planning applications, by email, as soon as they have that status allocated to them, within the Idox back office system. Members should then be encouraged to speak to the case officer to ensure any improvements or concerns they have, are fully considered and a balanced report produced for consideration.

In addition, there is no opportunity for the planning committee to be briefed about the items that are the subject of the committee. Many councils now hold briefings for the full committee, immediately after the publishing of the agenda, so that the members can ensure they are fully aware of the key issues and ask questions about the application that they may not understand.

This means that the members are fully conversant with the planning application when they come to debate them at the committee.

4.4 Involvement of legal officer

The legal officer has a valuable role at the committee and advises the chair and members well about the procedures, particularly when it comes to motions contra to the officer recommendation.

When contra motions are proposed by members, it is recommended that the committee should be reminded, by the legal officer, of the need to comply with the Council's constitution, particularly 8.8 of Part 4K, which states:
'If the recommendation is not supported, before a new motion to either grant or refuse the application is proposed the Committee must first receive advice from the Director of Planning and Strategic Transport, as to what form a new motion could take. That advice will be based upon the material considerations that have been discussed by the Committee and whether there are grounds that could be defended in the event of an appeal or legal challenge. The solicitor advising the Committee will be called upon as necessary to give advice on legal matters.'

The guidance of the legal officer and professional planning officers is also key to ensuring decisions are made in accordance with para 8.12 which also states: *'..that if a decision would be contrary to the Development Plan, such a motion may only contain the Committee's initial view and must be subject to a further report detailing the planning issues raised by such a decision. Further consideration of the matter must be adjourned to a future meeting of the Committee.'*

4.5 Joint Development (Members and Officers)

Policy

It is recommended that a forum of committee members and officers be established to examine the current and developing policy base for the determination of planning

applications. This could then help inform the formal Development Plan's process of the key issues and concerns that are raised at planning committee meetings.

Design

Design is a very subjective matter when it comes to the determination of a planning application, but there are established principles that can be followed.

Many of the planning applications before the committee have been subject to review by 'design' experts and or internal panels of officers.

It is recommended that where this has taken place, it should be clearly identified in the report and where it is the view of the officer, a clear explanation of the acceptability should be given, preferably in 'layman' terms.

It is also recommended that joint development of both members and staff should be initiated in order for a consensus to be established about key design considerations, especially for those types of application that are not automatically subject to a design review.

4.6 Organisation of Planning Committee and feed back

It is recommended that staff should be made available to meet and greet the public who attend the planning committee to ensure they are fully aware of the process that is being followed, and, in particular, what the material planning considerations are that will be taken into account in the decision making processes.

They can also then take 'feedback' so as to see what could be done to make the committee as accessible as possible to the public and what forms of communication would be preferred, be it web based, paper based or on a 1 to one basis.

Ward Members speaking at a Planning Committee should use the 'speakers' chairs/table.

4.7 Scheme of delegation

While the scheme is regularly reviewed, there is an opportunity to look at what applications are presented to the committee.

Many councils now have meetings that only have the key major applications presented or those where there is an important decision to be made on a balance of planning policies, and all applications that are policy compliant are delegated to officers.

It is recommended that at the next review of the scheme of delegation, that the narrowing of the number of applications considered by the committee should be considered so that the committee has a clear focus on applying policy.

Next Steps

We appreciate the Governance Review Panel will want to reflect on these findings and suggestions in order to determine how the organisation wishes to take things forward.

PAS and the LGA where possible will support councils with implementing the recommendations as part of the council's improvement programme and we would be happy to discuss this further.

In the meantime, we are keen to continue the relationship we have formed with the council throughout the review.

We will endeavour to provide signposting to examples of good practice and further information and guidance about the issues we have raised in this report to help inform ongoing consideration. PAS has a range of support available to the council:

<https://www.local.gov.uk/pas/pas-support/councillor-development>

Addendum January 2020

Following the issuing of the report in June 2019, some 7 months have elapsed and changes have taken place in terms of the policy development of the Council.

While the report had been positive about how the committee was run, concern had been expressed about the challenge that had been evident to adopted Council Policy, as identified in paras 4.5 on page 5 of the report and the giving of an impression that Councillors, of all parties, had pre-determined their views on the applications.

As such, it was considered appropriate to review a small number of committees in December 2019 and January 2020 to see if the assessment was still evident.

The additional committees reviewed were those that took place on 5th and 19th December 2019 and 16th January 2020.

It was now found that the challenge and support of Policy took the form of how the policy should be interpreted. Challenge or support, by Councillors, in terms of the interpretation of policy is valid and acts as a test to the soundness of the recommendation of the officers and is wholly appropriate.

The use of support or challenge, in terms of the interpretation of Policy, removes the impression of pre-determination and is welcome. Indeed, there was a clear expression of the acceptance of policy base displayed in the committees reviewed

However, there was still some concern about how a member of the public would view the debate, particularly as it is the practice of the committee to take motions as the debate is being developed.

Well-argued challenges and support of the interpretation of Policy, were given at the meetings, but then motions were made to reject or support the officer recommendation, without the members having heard all of the debate, which could change their mind.

The argument about the interpretation of Policy clearly shows pre-disposition in terms of an application, which is acceptable, but then the immediate moving of a motion to reverse, or indeed support, the officer recommendation, without listening to the whole debate, could potentially be perceived by members of the public (albeit wrongly) to be pre-determination.

As such, it is recommended that the debate should have concluded before motions on the item being debated are taken and voted on, in order to mitigate the risk of the perception of pre-determination of the application.

Submissions from Residents' Associations

Coulsdon West Residents' Association (CWRA)

Coulsdon West Residents' Association (CWRA) thanks you for accepting this role to "assess and review local democracy and community engagement and to take informed and transparent decisions with openness and inclusivity".

Since its formation in the 1930s CWRA has engaged with residents and local authorities to preserve the character and integrity of Coulsdon, a small family friendly town now on the outskirts of Croydon. Recent changes of all kinds have presented us with many challenges but working with our sister RAs (East Coulsdon, Old Coulsdon and HADRA and District) we still endeavour to represent the best interests of our residents.

CWRA considers that an initial flaw in your remit is the 2-party system of governance adopted by the Council, meaning that the dominant party has no need to engage with openness and inclusivity. Whilst we accept that many cabinet members do try to treat all wards of the borough with respect and fairness the same cannot be said of anything connected to Planning, on which I will focus as decisions made by that Committee are the cause of much ill-feeling directed towards the whole Council.

Although accepting that more housing is needed CWRA is disappointed by Croydon's meek acceptance of the London Mayor's housing demands when neighbouring boroughs such as Sutton and Bromley successfully challenged their quotas.

In previous times, developers would meet with community stakeholders including RAs to discuss their proposals which usually resulted in mutual agreement but the adoption of recent planning policies and the interpretation of them by the Planning Committee has resulted in a lack of this community engagement as developers have claimed they can get anything passed and they obviously can.

Our understanding of the Local Plan and SPD2 is that developments should be sympathetic to local architecture, topography, population demographics and consist of high quality, well designed properties of varying sizes with the needs of existing residents being considered.

CWRA is inundated with contacts from members rightly distraught at the destruction of yet another much needed family home to be replaced by the obligatory nine flats – always nine as ten would require one to be "affordable". Many of these homes sit on modest plots so the nine flats are small rabbit hutch sized apartments and although some are claimed to be for families, or suitable for people wishing to downsize, many lack suitable access for the less mobile or for parents needing to manoeuvre pushchairs and there is little or no outside space for children to play. Some owners report being harassed by developers anxious to acquire their properties and cannot be criticised for selling when they need to release equity to cope with the endless rise in the cost of living proving difficult on limited pensions. None of these blocks include adequate and in some cases any parking provision as the Planning Committee preposterously believes that the residents will not have cars. Of course, many will own cars

which they will attempt to park on already congested side roads leading to increased dangers for motorists and pedestrians. These apartment blocks can add up to 39 extra residents who will need medical provision and perhaps school places which Coulsdon will struggle to provide without adequate infrastructure provision, which so far is missing.

More pressure on our streetscape is caused by approval granted for extensions, sometimes doubling the size of the original house and extending to the property boundary which is converting rows of semi-detached houses into terraces. Again, it is understandable that people needing more space will want the largest extension possible, even when neighbours suffer noise, loss of privacy, light and enjoyment of their gardens. Some extended properties are being used as Houses of Multiple Occupancy, but none of this is required to be considered by planning officers.

These problems are not unique to Coulsdon and are being experienced by many communities particularly in the south of the borough, where all green spaces, however small along with Green Belt land are under threat from avaricious developers. Others have identified enough brownfield sites (empty office blocks and retail establishments etc.), to provide thousands of new homes, if LBC had the will to redevelop them.

In conclusion, CWRA would, with respect, suggest that for your review to achieve its aims that changes must be made to the way the Planning Committee conducts itself. Namely: early consultation and liaison with residents and giving due consideration to views expressed and objections lodged: consider how well developments fit with and even enhance the local character; be more honest and transparent and allow proper scrutiny of applications; to be less rude, offensive, and dismissive when residents appear before the Planning Committee and be much more sensible and realistic when considering parking provision.

East Coulsdon Residents' Association

East Coulsdon Residents' Association represents residents on the east side of Coulsdon and on Cane Hill Park along the route of the A23 from Marlpit Lane southwards as far as the borough boundary. East Coulsdon RA is non-political and non-sectarian and is made up of volunteers from local residents who are elected at our AGM each year. The committee members hold a range of individual views, but collectively our aim is to do the best we can for the members and local residents that we represent. We would like to make the following comments on the governance of Croydon Council.

On the system of Governance: Croydon has been using the leader and cabinet model since May 2001. This has been used by the leaders of both political parties. Prior to this the Council used the committee system of governance. The aim of this change was to make council decision-making efficient, transparent and accountable.

In our experience we are of the view that this change has not made the governance more transparent and has resulted in polarisation of the council into two opposite factions. In addition, it has concentrated power in the hands of the Leader and Chief Executive Office. They make initial decisions and pass them down to their side which seem to be diktats rather than as proposals for discussions by the full council or the relevant sub committees. We are also concerned that under the present system the leader has the power to appoint rather than each party groups electing their members to senior positions.

We are of the view that the previous Committee system that was in use prior to 2001 was far more open and transparent and involved all members of the council rather than the just ruling party. In the Committee system there was a clear role for councillors from both ruling and opposition parties.

Members of these committee were elected from the membership of each party. This had the benefit that supporters and voters for the opposition parties at least felt that not only was their voice and that of their elected member heard, but it was actually listened to.

Planning: One of the main functions of East Coulsdon RA is to make representations on behalf our residents and members on large planning applications and other planning applications that we think will have an effect on our area and our members.

East Coulsdon RA has a very good record of looking at these plans and judging them on their merits. We are always willing to discuss plans with both developers and the council. We have over time often be able to suggest changes to appearance or layout of buildings and sites that have been beneficial to both our residents, the developer and the new people that will live in these developments. On balance we have supported as many developments as we have opposed.

Planning Committee: We would also like to express some concerns about the way in which the planning committee operates. Under both major parties the planning committee has consistently voted on party lines with the majority of decisions seeming to be passed 6 to 4 in favour of the ruling party. This gives the impression that the committee is a rubber stamp rather than providing public evaluation of planning applications. A review of the make up of the planning committee should be considered by reducing the difference in numbers between the ruling party and the opposition party. This could be achieved by reducing the ruling party by one or by increasing the opposition party by one.

Increased density of existing areas: This can also be controversial if undertaken wrongly can completely change an area for the worse; done properly it can enhance an area. We do understand the pressure that Croydon Council is under to increase the housing stock within the borough. We are well aware that both the Government and the Mayor of London are applying pressure to the council to increase housing in the borough. We also know that there are difficulties finding suitable sites and location outside the centre of Croydon for new housing.

This leads to the need to replace existing large houses across the borough especially the south of the borough with flats and apartments or the conversion of older houses into multiple occupancy. We understand this and don't in principle object to this. However, we have concerns that if this is not undertaken in an orderly fashion it can lead to the demolition of existing good family homes or the conversion of large older building that are life expired into to multiple occupation.

We have a preference for the building of purpose built new flats and apartments suitable for a range of people from single professional people, couples, small families and older people who wish to downsize. We also ask that there also a mixture of family housing included in some schemes; that the family housing consists of smaller dwellings and not just large 4, 5 or even 6-bedroom houses. Our experience of conversion of older large houses into multiple occupancy is varied and very often after a short while those converted houses can deteriorate in to shabby and unkept properties affecting the neighbourhood. Further, multiple occupancy conversions are generally not suitable for families or people with disabilities.

The Local Street Scene

: What we do ask is that these new dwellings fit in with the existing street scene that has developed over the decades or even the last century and a half. In order that the change to an area is one of evolution rather than brutal transition. We know this can be done as we have had in the past constructive discussion with developers to provide designs that fit in with the location and the area and when complete they do not stand out when you walk past. This need is reflected in the following policies of the Croydon Local Plan, as well as the London Plan.

SP4.2 of The Local Plan requires consideration of local areas state:

"The Council will require development to:

- a. Be informed by the distinctive qualities, identity, topography and opportunities of the relevant Places of Croydon;*
- b. Protect Local Designated Views, Croydon Panoramas, the setting of Landmarks, other important vistas and skylines; and*
- c. Enhance social cohesion and well-being"*

While sections 6.30, 6.42 and 6.50 on Design and Character state

6.30 *"A fundamental part of achieving high quality-built environments is through understanding the local character and the qualities which contribute to local distinctiveness".*

6.42 *"The need to deliver 32,890 homes does not outweigh the need to respect the local character, and amenity and to protect biodiversity"*

While section **6.50** reflects the London Plan on character:

6.50 *The London Plan (in Policy 3.5B) also requires that ‘all new housing developments should enhance the quality of local places, taking into account physical context, local character, density; tenure and land use mix; and relationships with, and provision of public, communal and open spaces, taking account of the needs of children and old people’.*

Policy **DM10.4 a**. *All New Building “Is of high quality design, and enhances and respects the local character”*

However, we believe that the pressure that Croydon is under leads the planning committee to disregard these policy principles in its quest to reach its housing targets.

Preplanning Process: This in theory should work in the interest of the council and the local residents in that only plans that are in line with the council’s policy and comply with the local plan come forward. However, we are concerned with the preplanning process in that Croydon tell us that they advise all developers to consult with local councillors and Residents’ Associations about major plans and developments in their area.

This did used to happen in the past. However, it is happening less and less these days. What we are finding now is that developers only discuss plans with local Councillors and RA if they are approached by the RAs or the local councillors.

In the way that preplanning seems to work is that local residents and RAs only find out about the plan after it has been through preplanning stage and it is then too late to have any influence over the design.

Consistency of decisions and recommendations: We are concerned that there too much inconsistency by planning officer as to what is recommended and what is not recommended. We have cases in the same road where one officer has not recommended an application because it does not fit the street scene and would dominate the area, while another officer has encouraged a developer to submit an application that is completely out of character and would dominate the street scene.

Parking: We understand the London Mayor’s Healthy streets policy of encouraging people to walk, cycle and use public transport policy and are generally supportive of this policy. However, we believe that Croydon interprets this policy to rigidly and does not take into to consideration that areas like ours on the edge of Croydon and London have different needs to that of inner London or central Croydon. It also does not take into consideration the local topography in Coulsdon - a large geographical area spread out across 4 hills two of them being among the highest in London. This means that new dwellings need to have adequate off-street parking especially as Coulsdon already has 2 controlled Parking Zones which suffer parking stress especially at night.

Lower parking standards for social housing: We think it is wrong that the council applies a lower standard for off-street parking to social housing. Our experience is that people in social housing have the same requirements as those in private housing. People in social housing may not own as many vehicles, but they still tend to drive them and frequently drive company vehicles which demand they bring them home. Not providing sufficient off-street parking for them leads to conflict and strife between neighbours and communities in local streets.

The London Plan does seem to recognise this in Table 6.2 *Car Parking Standards* “In outer London areas with low PTAL (generally PTALs 0-1), boroughs should consider higher levels of provision, especially to address ‘overspill’ parking pressures”. However, Croydon does not.

Coulsdon Town Centre : Due to its location, Coulsdon district town centre has to compete with neighbouring district town centres in the London Borough of Sutton and in both Tandridge and Reigate and Banstead in Surrey who have a more relaxed view of parking. To function adequately and ensure the district centre remains viable Coulsdon needs to have the right mix of public transport and adequate car parking. Again, the London Plan seems to acknowledge this in 6A.4. “Boroughs should take a coordinated approach with neighbouring authorities, including those outside London if appropriate, to prevent competition between centres based on parking availability and charges”.

This is accepted by the business and regenerations sections of Croydon, but not by the planning and development section who continue to apply stricter criteria.

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL): Today this is an important source of revenue for the Council to improve the local infrastructure in Croydon. Unlike a lot of councils and those outside London with Parish councils Croydon does not allocate directly a fixed percentage of the CIL money to the area in which it has been levied. It does allocate £8,000 per year to each councillor to spend their ward. We believe that this is an excellent way of distributing funds to be spent back in the local community. It also promotes involvement of the local councillors and their community with small local projects such as Christmas lights, additional seating etc..

However, there is a feeling that the council is not allocating sufficient money to local areas where the CIL has been raised. We are of the view that the Council should allocate more of the CIL money to the area in which it was raised for larger local projects such repairing and improving the town centre street scene and other issues of public safety such as town centre CCTV. Rather than it being held in a central pot where it is difficult to ascertain where it is being spent.

Summary

We would like to see the following:

- A change from the Cabinet System to Committee system of Governance
- A change to the Planning Committee to allow better and more open scrutiny of planning application.
- Planning committee to consider the existing street scene and the needs of existing residents.
- Better observance of the local and London plan in quality of design.
- More consultation with local residents and councillors on large planning applications.
- Consistency of recommendations by individual planning officers.
- Preplanning to consider the views of existing residents.
- Adequate off-street parking provided in new applications.
- The same criteria on parking applied to social housing as to private housing.
- Adequate parking provision in district town centres.
- A larger proportion of CIL money should be spent in the areas where it is raised

Whitgift Estate (East Croydon) Residents' Association

I am writing on behalf of this Croydon Residents Association which represents some 320 households on an estate of detached houses only a mile from East Croydon Station. Our general feeling under the present governance arrangements of the Council is that the views and wishes of those living in the south of the borough are ignored, and unwelcome policies are imposed on us by councillors from the north of the borough whether we like them or not. As you know, this is a very large borough and there are major differences in the character, in general, of the South from that of the North. I will give you below illustrations of cases where such policies have been decided.

One way of addressing the problem would be to create area committees of local councillors who would have some influence on developments in their respective areas. This could just be confined to planning or it could extend wider. Another way of dealing with it would be to have a directly elected Mayor who would be likely to be more responsive to concerns across the whole borough than is achieved under the present regime.

I will illustrate our unhappiness with the present arrangements under three examples where local views have been ignored:

1. Planning

For some time now, the Planning Committee has been ready to approve almost all applications to demolish family houses and replace them by blocks of flats despite the fact that (a) these all come from speculative developers, and (b) are objected to strongly by local residents. The general feeling is that the Chair of the committee decides what he or she wants to achieve and then forces this through.

The result is that desirable areas which were laid down as coherent wholes are being spoiled by random infilling with blocks of flats. There is no overall plan; one simply gets a block of flats wherever a house owner with a suitable plot agrees to sell to a developer. Moreover community and neighbourly relations are spoiled since it is very difficult to be on normal neighbourly, over-the-garden-fence, relations with a block of flats. These days flats are very often rented and so a block of flats is likely to involve a transient community. This contrasts sharply with estates of detached family houses. On this estate of family houses the average stay is well over 20 years. I have lived here for just under 40 years and my neighbours on each side about the same.

This situation is going to be aggravated by the adoption of planning document SP2 which was passed by the Council on 1st April. To illustrate the way this has been handled I would refer you to the agenda for the April 1st Council meeting at the following link (below). Agenda item 10 gives you the opportunity to open Appendix 1A which gives the summary of the consultation and the council's response. The second section of 7.2 is where you will find the representations reflecting the very strong feeling in the community against destruction of family houses and replacement by flats. This is clearly downplayed in the way the representations have

been summarised, with no indication of their number and strength, and in the way these considerations are dismissed in the responses. In other words, the response document has been tailored to justify the response that the council wanted.

Our own particular part of Croydon known as the Whitgift Estate was planned as an estate of detached family houses in the early 1900's and has been well protected as such by Croydon Council's for 100 years. Recently however the Croydon Planning Committee approved an application to replace a detached family house with a block of 9 flats

(Application Number 18/01353/FUL). The hundreds of objections from local residents were given scant consideration in the Case Officer's report and approval was granted at the Committee following a lead from the Chairman and with absolutely no scrutiny by the Committee members.

<http://civico.net/croydon/meetings/4955>

2. 20 mph speed limits

This is a good example of a case where it was clear from the start that the Council was going to go ahead with the project whatever the result of the consultation. I am giving you the link to the document prepared in response to the statutory consultation on the second area. You will see that it was clearly the product of someone being given the job of writing a refutation to every objection that had been submitted whether it was valid or not. When it came to the last three areas which were being pushed through together the number of objections was so great that they had to be gathered in groups and then, again, dismissed by whatever form of words could be found.

https://democracy.croydon.gov.uk/Data/Traffic%20Management%20Advisory%20Committee/20161005/Agenda/tma20161005_09_02_appendix_1_-_representations4aa5.pdf?cmte=TMA&meet=12&href=/akscroydon/images/att7882.pdf

3. Lloyd Park

The very large open space which is the precious Croydon asset known as Lloyd Park was given to Croydon by the family of Frank Lloyd in two tranches before and just after the Second World War. The Deeds of Gift included a number of provisions to make sure that the uses to which the park could be put were consistent with the intentions of the donors.

Two of these are :-

"under no circumstances shall a charge be made for entry to Lloyd Park except for charitable purposes and then on no more than six days a year"

"no part of the property.....shall be used for any offensive, noisy, or dangerous pursuit or any purpose which shall or may be or may grow to be in any way a nuisance

damage grievance or annoyance to.....the owners or tenants of the neighbouring properties or the neighbourhood"

Despite this, the Council has been allowing major commercial events to take place in the park and in 2019 four such events are scheduled. There are to be two visits from a Fun Fair and two major music festivals with paid entry, one of which is targeting 15,000 customers on each of the three days. Altogether 25 days have been allotted in the summer of 2019 for such commercial events plus, of course, preparation time. Certainly, the noise of such events has become a nuisance and annoyance to neighbours.

Again, there has been no consultation with local residents associations nor with the Friends of Lloyd Park even though there will be substantial impact on the locality and on the normal users of the park. This is despite a consultants' report commissioned by the Council saying, in relation to such events, that demonstrating how revenue generated is accounted for and used to offset maintenance costs will be important to gain the communities' acceptance of such activities. All we have is a couple of sessions when such matters as traffic and crowd control are to be explained.

I hope that I have given you enough examples to show that the governance arrangements need to be changed if any measure of local democracy is to be achieved.

Croydon Governance Review: Governance model comparisons

Briefing note

Key Points for consideration:

- It is difficult to consider the pros and cons to a particular governance option as good governance is more about culture than it is about structure, and local context is a key determinant to what will work best. There is also flexibility within the existing governance framework to introduce significant changes.
- As part of a wider programme to address the culture of an organisation, this kind of structural governance change could, in theory, make a difference. This requires the objectives for the change to be set out clearly at the outset.
- CfPS have suggested that councils in this position establish some “design principles” at the outset – principles that define what they want to improve and make different as a result of governance. Proposals for change can be tested against these principles – and change, once it happens, can be evaluated in the same way.

Governance change options: overview

The Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS) has carried out significant research on governance change in local councils. We have published two major pieces of research on the subject: “Musical chairs” (2013) and “Rethinking governance” (produced jointly with the Local Government Association in 2014). We have provided advice and support to a large number of councils that, since May 2012, have looked into changing their governance arrangements.

Since the election in May 2019, we have received an increase in council’s considering governance reviews which could be linked to an increase in those in no overall control and/or more independent councillors.

Croydon Council currently makes decisions using what is known as the “Leader and Cabinet” system. This means that a Cabinet holds most decision-making powers. Individual lead members are responsible for a “portfolio” – a group of issues and services. Lead members can make decisions on their own (which is usually what happens when a decision relates to a single portfolio area) or together. Some major and important decisions still need to be made by the Full Council (all councillors sitting and voting in the Council chamber).

There are several alternative governance systems. These are:

- **The committee system.** Here, council committees have responsibility for making decisions. Councillors on committees make decisions through consensus and/or through voting. Committees are politically balanced – they reflect the size of the parties in the Council at large. Committees are usually all chaired by a councillor from the largest party on the Council.
- **Mayor and Cabinet.** Here, a directly elected Mayor appoints a Cabinet of councillors from the authority. The Mayor has individual decision-making power, which can be quite broad. Mayoral working is quite popular in London – Hackney, Lewisham, Tower Hamlets and Newham all have mayors.
- **“Prescribed” arrangements.** Councils can bring proposals to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government for a different kind of governance arrangement. We are not aware that any council has taken advantage of this opportunity; there has not been a great deal of thinking in the sector about what different arrangements might look like. We will go into this in a bit more detail in the section on area governance.

Hybrids

While these are now the formal, legally available governance options, they do not exist as standalone approaches. It is best to see governance as a spectrum of different options (see diagram at appendix A) – from systems which concentrate all power in the hands of a single person (a Mayoral system with a weak cabinet, where most executive power is vested in the power of the Mayor) all the way to committee systems with a high level of consensus decision-making. Between these extremes lie a wide range of possibilities.

This is where “hybrid” systems come in. These might share the characteristics of more than one governance option. For example, Wandsworth and Kent councils both legally operate the Leader and Cabinet system, but the way they make decisions looks and operates rather like the committee system. The benefit of adopting a hybrid system is that it does not necessarily involve a formal change in governance, so the rules we set out below around governance change do not apply. In some places operating hybrid arrangements (like Kent), bodies which are legally scrutiny committees are styled as “Cabinet committees”; they review, debate and make recommendations on decisions, before the decisions are essentially “rubber-stamped” by Cabinet.

It is difficult to know how many councils operate “hybrid” systems. A number of councils which we might think operate with hybrid characteristics might dispute this judgement, for example. It is most common for hybrid councils to operate under leader/cabinet but with characteristics of the committee system, as we have described above. But other forms of hybrid working exist – for example, where committee chairs (all of one party) meet in informal session to agree decisions, with voting at committee whipped to reflect this. This approach, which became steadily more prevalent during the 1980s, became one of the drivers for the introduction of the leader/cabinet model in the first place.

Pros and cons

It is not possible to set out “pros” and “cons” of any governance system.

It has been suggested that the committee system is inherently more democratic, more transparent and more consensual than the Leader and Cabinet system. The argument is that the latter concentrates power into the hands of too few people, reduces most councillors to the role of spectators and makes it more difficult to follow and understand how decisions are made.

There are opposing arguments. The committee system can be criticised as slow, unwieldy and inefficient. It can be argued that the Leader and Cabinet system makes individual responsibility clearer, makes decision-making quicker and more responsive and makes it easier for the Council to work with other organisations in the local area.

In some councils, the most prominent calls for change have come from councillors themselves. Nottinghamshire, arguably the most high-profile council to change its governance arrangements in 2012, did so because its Leader at the time considered the committee system to be more democratic and transparent.

In some councils, calls to adopt the committee system principally come from outside the Council. There is usually some kind of catalyst for this – a locally controversial issue that campaigners think would be solved, at least partially, by adopting the committee system. Very often, but not always, this “locally controversial issue” relates in some way to planning. It bears stating here that changing the rules about decision-making won’t make a practical difference to the way that planning decisions are made.

Moving from one model to another: in law and in practice

Since 2011, about 30 councils have moved from the Leader and Cabinet system (or the Mayor system) to the committee system. Some councils have also moved the other way. Far more have shifted their governance model along the spectrum we described above in a way that has not required formal governance change. Councils have to follow a particular legal process to undertake such formal changes, which basically means that a change can only take effect following a council’s annual general meeting in May (three days after, to be precise).

There are three principal ways by which councils can move from one formal governance option to another. These are:

- Council resolution;
- Referendum instigated by the council
- Referendum instigated by a petition

Resolution

Before the formal change takes place a council has to formally resolve to effect that change. This basically allows officers to put all the necessary steps in place for the change to come into effect three days after the next council AGM, as we set out above.

In practice CfPS research demonstrates that about six months is needed between resolution and the “change date”. This accounts for the need to review and change financial procedures, delegations, technical matters relating to the constitution, and the council's broader policy development framework. By definition governance change should be about making these comprehensive, substantive changes, and six months is the optimum timescale for doing so without interfering unduly in day to day business.

Once governance change is carried out by this method, the council is then locked into that governance model for 5 years. This does not mean that no governance change is possible, just that it may not diverge from the overall legal form of the particular governance option that the council has chosen.

As yet, one council that decided to change its governance under these rules, in 2012, has now changed its governance option again (South Gloucestershire, a unitary authority, which moved from Leader and Cabinet to the committee system and back again).

Referendum instigated by the council

A council can bring about a governance change through a local referendum. The Council can decide to hold the referendum itself, or local people can organise a petition. The second of these cases is dealt with below. The exact question asked in the referendum is set out in legislation.

In the case of a referendum, however it is triggered, the council is locked into that governance model for 10 years, and furthermore the council may only change governance model if that proposed change is confirmed by another referendum.

Referendum instigated by local petition

Local people may feel strongly about council governance and collect signatures to compel the council to change its arrangements.

If more than 5% of the local population signs the petition, a referendum is triggered automatically. A petition-led referendum has led to governance change in one place (Fylde Borough in Lancashire). In other areas, petitions have been started, but councils have attempted to pre-empt the process by bringing forward proposals for change themselves.

There is naturally a question about how governance change is resourced. Nearly all councils making a change have explicitly stated as a requirement that such a change has to be “cost neutral” – that is, that the cost of operating a different system must be the same as or less than the one they currently operate. There is certainly no evidence that one governance option is inherently more or less expensive than another. There is, however, an inevitable

cost implication attached to the act of making the change itself – redrafting the constitution, making changes to rules of procedure and financial systems, reworking forward work programmes and so forth. But such internal governance systems are subject to continued review anyway, and one would hope that the identified benefits of governance change would outweigh what is, in the scheme of total council expenditure, a minor expense.

Learning lessons

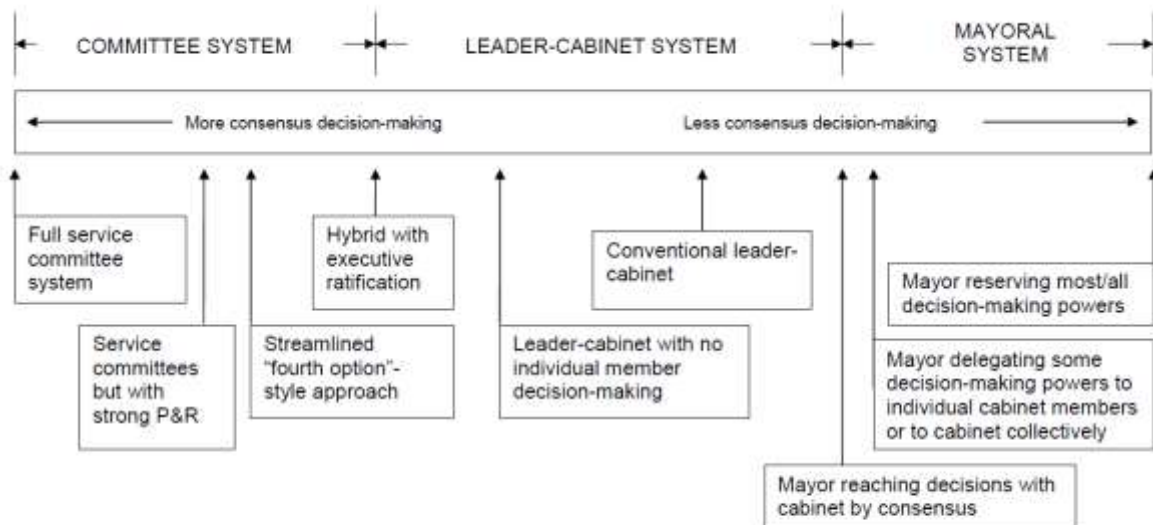
What have councils learned from changing their governance arrangements? Learning is surprisingly difficult to find. Most councils that have done it have not systematically evaluated the difference it has made to their work and their relationship with local people. Our research shows that the difficulty in evaluating lies in not having a clear sense of what specific outcomes sought from a change in governance arrangements. Where they do exist, these objectives are often vague.

This is why the agreement of clear design principles at the outset is so important. Having a common sense of how governance needs to be substantively different helps members and officers to explore more openly how governance needs to change to meet those objectives, rather than starting with the structure and working backwards. A lot of assumptions might be made about what governance change will mean in practice and unpacking those assumptions and expectations at the outset is crucial if the process is to be managed effectively.

A focus on design principles goes deeper than just saying that we want governance that is accountable and transparent. We need to ask: What does that transparency look like? How are decisions made in public, and when? Only then is it possible to talk meaningfully about governance change – however tempting it might be to do it the other way around.

Looking at formal governance change is not something for the short term. CfPS's experience is that structural change of this kind can be a displacement activity for councils that have broader cultural challenges but lack the capacity or reflective ability to effectively tackle those challenges.

Ed Hammond, Director



Croydon Governance Review: Forward plans / key decisions

Briefing note

Key Point for consideration:

- Criteria for Key Decisions (e.g. Financial, geographic or other criteria such as number of service users impacted) – examples included below.
- How Key Decisions can be communicated in a user-friendly way via a website – examples included below.
- How this information informs the Governance Review recommendation and ensure Croydon creates an approach which reflect the objectives to be achieve, local context, and types of decision-making (e.g. including partnerships).

The Forward Plan and key decisions

CfPS published a practice briefing on key decisions and call-in in 2014 on which this section is based.

The nature of the forward plan was changed by the Localism Act. The requirement to publish a rolling monthly “forward plan” no longer exists; councils must however produce a “schedule of key decisions” (in this note termed an SKD for simplicity although councils do not really use this abbreviation) to give adequate notice of such key decisions, which for all intents and purposes has the same practical effect.

Councils’ approach to drafting and publishing their SKDs is fairly consistent. Generally, they are produced as they are a legal requirement and thought does not go into how they might be used by an audience outside the council.

There is inconsistency about what does and does not go on the SKD which derives from poor management (principally by senior officers, but also by governance staff) about how KDs themselves are identified and logged. Poor practice can include:

- Items appearing on the SKD at short notice without the proper notice period or urgency procedures being followed,
- KDs when presented being substantively different to how they might have been described on an earlier SKD,
- Items rolling over from SKD to SKD month by month.

These shortcomings make it very difficult to review and assess SKDs on a desktop basis. Most councils' "look ok" on the surface but this can frequently hide sloppy management and poor oversight.

This can be exacerbated by poor management of how individual key decisions are so classified. Many councils use the standard "financial threshold & geographic threshold" definition (eg, a decision of value above £250,000 which affects two or more wards or divisions) but this definition can often be stretched and/or result in inconsistent results.

For example, it can mean that a strategic decision over a given policy which has widespread implications may technically not be a key decision but the operational decisions to implement that policy could be, which frustrates the purpose of the KD and SKD process. An obvious solution is to adopt a more intelligent approach to the SKD which takes account of the local impact of decisions rather than arbitrary issues such as financial thresholds and geographic scope. To date CfPS is not aware of councils who have teased this issue out and taken action on it.

Notable examples of SKD and KD processes

These are not necessarily "excellent" ones; just ones that give a picture of KD processes in a selection of different London Boroughs.

Southwark:

Key Decisions are:

1. Those which are above a general financial threshold which is anything resulting in the authority incurring expenditure or savings of £500,000 or more.
2. Those which have a significant impact on communities and specifically in one ward or more. In considering whether a decision is likely to be significant, the decision maker is to consider the strategic nature of the decision and whether the outcome will have an impact, for better or worse, on the local amenity of the community or the quality of service provided to a significant number of people living or working in the locality affected.

In deciding whether a decision will have a significant impact on communities in one or more wards the following factors should be taken into account:

the extent of the impact (i.e. how many people and wards will be affected); the likely views of those affected (i.e. is the decision likely to result in substantial public interest); whether the decision is likely to be a matter of political sensitivity; where the decision may incur a significant social, economic or environmental risk; where there is evidence of significant local opposition to any proposals.

Where a decision is only likely to have a significant impact on a very small number of people in one ward, the decision maker should ensure those people are informed of the forthcoming decision in sufficient time to make an input into the decision-making process. Ward councillors should also be informed of the decision to be made.

Officers should always be aware of the issues arising which might mean that a decision becomes a key one (for example, if input, even from a small number of those likely to be affected points to the decision being one which will have a much greater impact than was first apparent).

In addition, there are other decisions which are deemed to be key decisions because of their significance and will be included in the forward plan. These are specifically: The setting of fees and charges; the granting or withdrawing financial support to any external community or voluntary organisation in excess of £10,000 (this would not apply to those organisations from which the council commissions services); the writing off any bad debt in excess of £50,000 per case; the disposal of any council property for less than best consideration; the exercise of the council's compulsory purchase order powers; the consideration of an inspection or reports by the Social Services Inspectorate, District Auditor, Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) and the council's response to any such report; the strategic procurement strategy approval decisions; reports on corporate budget monitoring and performance; the pre-procurement strategic assessment approval decisions in respect of services over £10,000,000 or for other strategically important contracts where requested by the relevant cabinet member.

Where there is any doubt as to the financial value or the significance of the decision, it should be deemed to be a key decision and included in the forward plan.

Lambeth:

Key decisions are decisions about spending or savings above £500,000; decisions requiring an amendment to the Community Plan Outcomes Framework or the Budget and Policy Framework; or which have a significant impact on communities.

Lewisham:

The following executive decisions will be key decisions:

(a) Decisions which will involve expenditure or savings of £500,000 or more (save treasury management transactions taken in accordance with the Council's Treasury Management Strategy as approved by the Council)

(b) Any decision having an impact in two or more wards, whether the impact is direct (e.g. where the decision relates to a road which crosses a ward boundary) or indirect (e.g. where the decision relates to the provision or withdrawal of a service which is or would be used by people from two or more wards. Decisions will still be deemed to affect more than one ward even if one or more of the wards affected is outside the borough.

(c) The Council will also define all executive decisions which relate to matters within the categories listed below as key decisions whatever their financial impact, and irrespective of the number of wards affected by them:

(i) Consideration of any report prepared by an external organisation (e.g. OFSTED) into the performance of the Council whether in general or in relation to a particular case, including the Council's response to it.

(ii) the closure or significant change in the character of a school or other educational facility.

(iii) consideration of any report relating to the possibility of the withdrawal of delegation of budget from a school

(iv) the giving of any statutory notice to a school or other educational establishment

(v) directions relating to the use and occupation of school premises

(vi) decisions relating to schools' admission policy and standard numbers for schools

- (vii) the making of instruments of government for schools
- (viii) policies relating to special needs, attendance and exclusion, awards, charging and remission
- (ix) the Council's scheme for the financing of maintained schools
- (x) closure of, or significant reduction in provision of, any Council service (xi) where the decision is one which will involve a significant change in the manner of Council service provision,
- (xii) the fixing of fees and charges for Council services
- (xiii) granting or withdrawing financial support to any voluntary sector organisation in excess of £10,000 (excluding financial support to any organisation which is funded by government initiatives e.g. European Funding)
- (xiv) writing off any bad debt in excess of £50,000, unless the Council has within the last 3 years already written off debts for the person/organisation concerned totalling that amount in which case any further write off would be a key decision
- (xv) the disposal of any Council property for less than best consideration
- (xvi) the disposal of any interest in Council property with a value of £500,000 or more
- (xvii) the taking by the Council of an interest in land worth £500,000 or more
- (xviii) the granting of any interest in land where the interest is valued at £500,000 or more
- (xix) the exercise of the Council's compulsory purchase powers
- (xx) applications for funding from any external body which if successful would also require Council match funding of £500,000 or more, or entail a revenue commitment of at least £500,000 in total by the Council
- (xxi) consideration of any matter which is to be the subject of a recommendation to full Council
- (xxii) consideration of any matter in which, to the decision-maker's knowledge, the decision-maker (or any member of a committee or sub-committee making the decision) has an interest which ought to be declared. An interest includes a family member, friend, employer, or organisation with which the member is associated
- (xxiii) the award of a contract with a total value of £200,000 or more
- (xxiv) where at least 5 members of the Council request that it be treated as a key decision, provided that in the opinion of the Monitoring Officer, they do so at least 6 weeks before a decision is likely to be taken
- (xxv) where there is evidence of significant local opposition to proposals made by the Council
- (xxvi) where the Chair of Council on advice from the Head of Paid Service and/or Monitoring Officer and/or Chief Finance Officer is of the view that the matter is one which ought properly to be treated as a key decision, and informs the proper officer to that effect at least 6 weeks before the decision is in the opinion of the Monitoring Officer likely to be taken

Barking and Dagenham:

A Key Decision means an executive decision which is likely to:

- (a) involve expenditure or savings of £200,000 or above - this includes proposals phased over more than one year and match/grant aided funding; and/or
- (b) have a significant impact on the local community in one or more wards.

Enfield:

A key decision in Enfield is one that involves expenditure or savings of £250,000 (including grant funding) or more or has a significant impact on one or more wards. There has been consideration, on several occasions, of increasing the amount to £500,000 but members have not agreed this.

Officers are usually advised that if they are unsure of whether it is a key decision it is safer to include it on the list as it saves trouble later in the process.

Many key decisions are taken individually by the Cabinet portfolio holders. They are also signed off by the relevant Executive Director or Director. Operational key decisions have to be taken at Executive Director or Director level.

Camden:

A key decision is a Cabinet decision which is likely:

1. to result in the local authority incurring expenditure which is, or the making of savings which are, significant having regard to the local authority's budget for the service or function to which the decision relates; or
2. to be significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more wards or electoral divisions in the area of the local authority.

Sutton (operating under the committee system):

The Council has a hierarchy of decision-making. Some decisions are reserved to Full Council; some are reserved to standing committees, and some to local committees, some to other committees and panels, and some are delegated to individual employees. All decisions of the Council are made in accordance with the following principles: Proportionality (i.e. the action must be proportionate to the desired outcome); Due consultation and the taking of professional advice from officers; Respect of human rights; A presumption in favour of openness; Clarity of aims and desired outcomes; The Council's Corporate Goals and Action Plans, core values and strategies; Within approved budgets.

Haringey:

An Executive decision is a decision which is likely:

- (a) to result in the local authority incurring expenditure which is, or the making of savings which are, significant (In terms of the first part of the definition set out above, the following shall be key decisions:
 - (i) award of contracts or expenditure estimated at £500K or above except "spot contracts" and contracts for the supply of energy to the Council

(ii) Virements between service area revenue cash limits of £250k or above

(iii) Virements between service area capital budgets. having regard to the local authority's budget for the service or function to which the decision relates; or

(b) to be significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more wards or electoral divisions in the area of the local authority.

Islington:

A decision is key if, in the view of the Proper Officer, it is likely:

(a) To result in the local authority incurring expenditure or obtaining a receipt which is, or the making of savings which are, significant having regard to the local authority's budget for the service or function to which the decision relates. A decision is significant for these purposes if, it involves expenditure or the making of savings of an amount in excess of £1m for capital expenditure or £500,000 for revenue expenditure; or in respect of a disposal of land by the Council, the proposed receipt (or reasonable pre-sale estimate in the case of an auction sale) exceeds £1.5 million and the Executive has not already agreed in principle to disposal of the land; in respect of the acquisition of land or property, the proposed expenditure (or reasonable estimate prior to entering into the contract) exceeds £500,000;

(b) To be significant in terms of its effect on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more wards in the area of the local authority.

The below are examples of (S)KD processes that apply in areas which have active area governance arrangements or have had them in the recent past:

Birmingham:

“Key decisions” must be taken by Cabinet, unless delegated by Cabinet to a Cabinet Member jointly with the Chief Officer or a Chief Officer or Director alone. A decision will be a “key decision” if:

- (i) it is an Executive decision relating to the discharge of an Executive function
- (ii) AND is likely to result in the local authority incurring expenditure which is, or the making of savings which are, significant:
 - in the case of capital projects, if they involve entering into new commitments and/or making savings in excess of £1M; or
 - in the case of revenue projects, if they involve entering into new commitments and/or making new savings in excess of £500,000, (gross value).

Or is significant in terms of its effect on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more Wards in the area of the local authority.

Other Councils' Key Decisions thresholds:

Sunderland:

A key decision means an executive decision which is likely:

- to result in the local authority incurring expenditure which is, or the making of savings which are, significant having regard to the local authority's budget for the service or function to which the decision relates; or
- to be significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more wards in the City 'Significant' in terms of budget means £250,000 or more in the case of capital expenditure, and £100,000 or 1% of the net revenue budget head, whichever is the greater, in the case of revenue expenditure.

Essex:

The threshold for key decisions was reviewed (due to the high volume of key decisions) and increased 18 months ago from £500,000 to £2million expenditure or savings for the life of the project. The criteria for key decisions also includes anything which would have a significant impact on 2 or more electoral decisions, new policy/strategy or changes to the policy framework or budget.

Presentation of forward plans on council websites

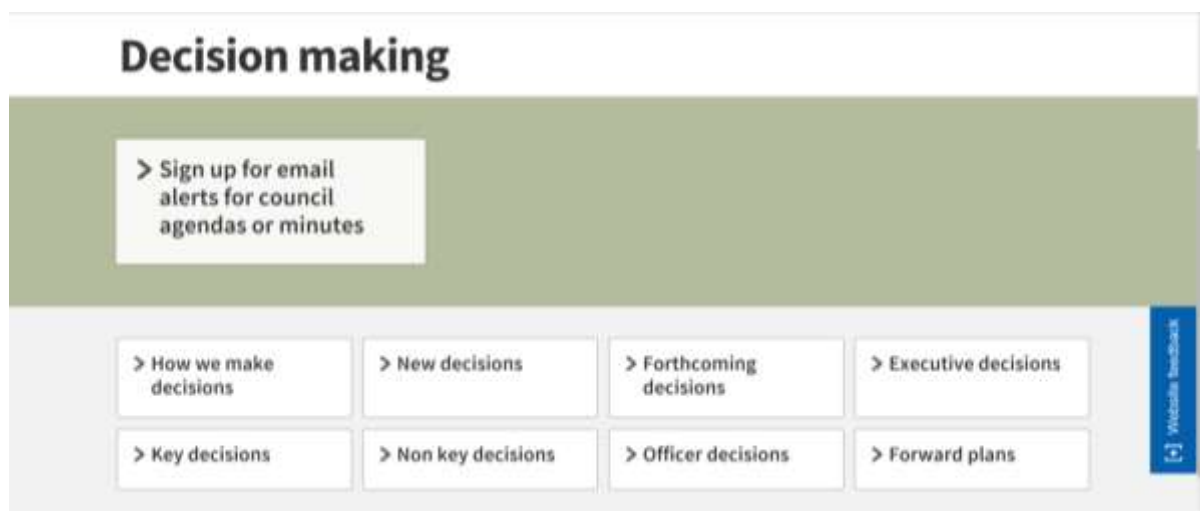
The presentation of forward plans and key decisions varied widely across councils. Below are some examples of how 5 councils from across England lay out their key decisions documents.

Generally, in order to find forwards plan and key decision documents it required a search in the website search bar. Better websites tended to have a dedicated area or "micro-site" on democracy or policy making. Here key terms could be defined and the reader could be funnelled towards what they are looking for.

Once on the key decisions pages, a number of lay outs were used. Some would provide a list of links to PDF documents with all of the key decisions in. Some would have tables with key decisions actually on the web-pages. This was helpful because these had links to relevant information to do with the key decisions. It may be worth noting that some councils used this system with too many links making it very hard to learn much about the actual key decision without going through multiple pages. From an ease of access point of view, this may be worth considering. That being said, links for contact details and relevant meetings relating to key decisions were very helpful.

Bracknell Forest Council - Unitary

This council laid out their key decisions really well. The key decisions page was really easy to find (without having to search the website). Key decisions were found under the heading "Decision Making" which took you to the below webpage:



Under the heading “Forward plans” really useful information was given about the definition of key decisions and forward plans.

A key decision is defined by Bracknell Forest as “one that involves income or expenditure of over £400k or affects more than one electoral ward.”

The council released weekly updates under the link “Executive Key Decisions”. These were available both in a PDF format as a full document and as a table on a web page. The latter was particularly well presented. The list in the table could be filtered by ward and department. The list could also be ordered in various ways.

It was possible to subscribe for updates for any particular key decision. Relevant contact details were available for every key decision. Unlike many other key decision notices, the financial impact was made clear for every decision.

In the PDF document, key decisions were explained using the following sub-headings:

- Title
- Service Area
- Date of Decision
- Purpose of Decision
- Issue Reference
- First Published

These were very informative. This was a really good website.

<https://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/decision-making>

Calderdale Council- Metropolitan District Council

The Calderdale Council key decisions list was found by following links for Council – Councillors and decision making – local democracy – cabinet key decisions list.

For Calderdale Council, Key Decisions can relate to:

- the approval of or changes to the Council's overall budget;
- the approval of or changes to Council policies;

- the approval of spending or savings of more than £200,000 on any one issue;
- the approval of proposals which significantly affect people living or working in two or more electoral wards of Calderdale.

A list is published every month onto their website. The pages were presented as follows:

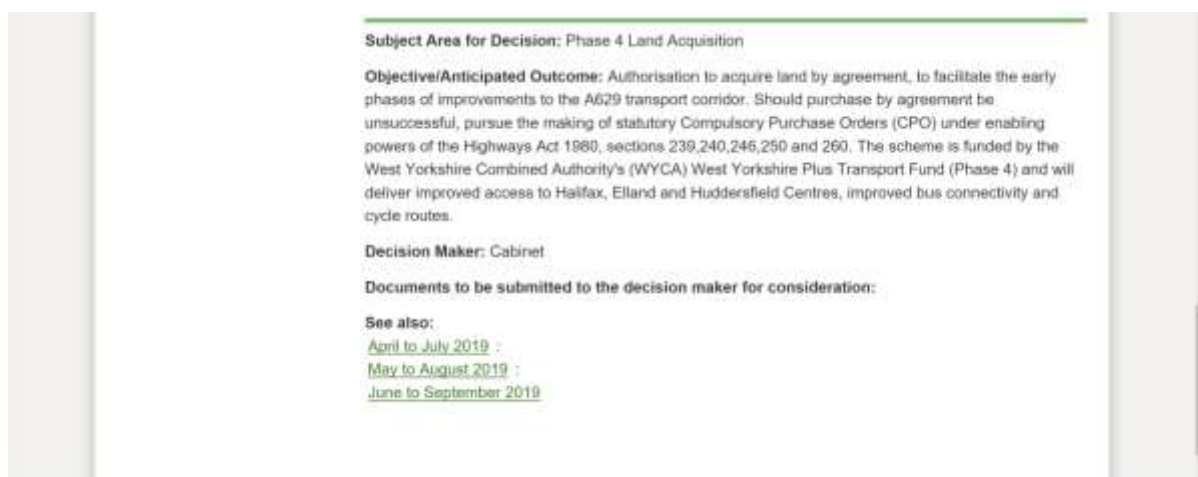
The Key Decisions List is published every month and the publication dates and period covered by each List are as follows:-

Period	Date Published
1st July 2019 to 31st October 2019	3rd June 2019
1st June 2019 to 30th September 2019	1st May 2019
1st May 2019 to 31st August 2019	1st April 2019
1st April 2019 to 31st July 2019	1st March 2019
1st March 2019 to 30th June 2019	1st February 2019
1st February 2019 to 31st May 2019	2nd January 2019
1st January 2019 to 30th April 2019	3rd December 2018
1st December 2018 to 31st March 2019	1st November 2018
1st November 2018 to 28th February 2019	1st October 2018

Following one of the dates, the following was page was presented:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Councils and decision making Local democracy Cabinet Key Decisions List Adults, Health and Social Care Chief Executive's Office Children and Young People's Services Committees Economy and Environment Summaries 	Cabinet Key Decisions List		
	July to October 2019		
	Subject Area for Decision	Anticipated date of decision	Decision taken
	Highways Capital and Revenue Programme	July 2019	July 2019
	Medium Term Financial Strategy 2020/21 to 2022/23	September 2019	September 2019
	Capital Monitoring 2019/20 Overall Position	September 2019	September 2019
	Revenue Monitoring 2019/20 Overall Position	July 2019	July 2019
	Revenue Monitoring 2019/20 Overall Position	November 2019	November 2019
	Capital Monitoring 2019/20 Overall Position	November 2019	November 2019
	Halifax New Leisure Centre	June 2019	June 2019
	Phase 4 Land Acquisition	July 2019	July 2019

You could then follow the link for one of the Decisions:



Again this was easy to use and gave a good amount of information. There was no link to any document with all the key decisions for that month in. This led to it sometimes being possible to get lost by having to go through so many links.

<https://calderdale.gov.uk/council/councillors/democracy/key-decisions/index.jsp>

Kent County Council – County Council

Kent County Council's website was much harder to navigate. It seemed that you had to type into the search bar to find the list of Key Decisions. However they laid out their key decisions really well. Each key decision had a background section which made a really good introduction to the issue. Contact details were available for all relevant people related to decision. There were also links to details of various relevant meetings where applicable.

Other headings included "divisions affected" making it really clear who would be affected by the decisions and also headings for financial, legal and equalities implications. All of this information seemed easy to read.

<https://democracy.kent.gov.uk/mgListPlans.aspx?RPId=115&RD=0&bcr=1>

Mole Valley District Council – District Council

At the Mole Valley District Council, forward plans were only available in PDF form so it was not possible to search for one particular key decision. The decisions were thus sorted by date which may make it slightly harder to find if you're looking for a particular issue.

Interestingly, there were two headings for "forward plan", one referring to the monthly list of key decisions and one referring to the yearly plan produced by the council leader. When searching, only the latter link came up. Perhaps this is call for using the term "key decisions" as opposed to "forward plan".

Key decisions at Mole Valley were defined as:

- decisions likely to result in MVDC incurring expenditure or savings of at least £100,000 and/or

- significant in terms of its effect on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more wards or electoral divisions in the area of MVDC

All key decision documents contained explanatory notes at the start to explain what a key decision is. Key decisions were laid out as follows:

<https://democracy.kent.gov.uk/mgListPlans.aspx?RPId=115&RD=0&bcr=1>

Subject	Report Author	Director/ Corporate Head	Cabinet Member	Decision taker	Decision due date	Consultees
May 2019						
No Scheduled Cabinet Meeting						
June 2019 (Cabinet Meeting Date: 18th June 2019)						
Street Naming and Numbering Policy	Brenda Rogers	Jack Straw	Margaret Cooksey	Cabinet	18 June	Scrutiny Committee 11 June 2019
Culture Report	Jane Heritage / Denise Fletcher	Karen Brinscombe / Nick Gray	Paul Kennedy / Bridget Randall	Cabinet	18 June	
Local Plan – updating the Local Development Scheme	Guy Davies	Jack Straw	Margaret Cooksey	Cabinet	18 June	Scrutiny Committee 11 June 2019
Approval to undertake a detailed feasibility study of the recommended highways options for Leatherhead	Investment and Regeneration Team	Emma Day	Bridget Randall	Cabinet	18 June	Scrutiny Committee 11 June 2019
July 2019						
No Scheduled Cabinet Meeting						
August 2019						
No Scheduled Cabinet Meeting						

Burnley City Council:

Burnley City Council had a dedicated “micro-site” for democratic decision making as shown below. Although the page is too big to be able to screen shot it, here is the link to the page:

<https://burnley.moderngov.co.uk/uuCoverPage.aspx?bcr=1>

Having a dedicated website made it particularly easy to find the “forthcoming decisions” page. Here you could search by date or title of the key decision. This was worth a mention for the design of the site however it did not seem to actually have any plans uploaded. This perhaps reverses the hard work put into the website.

Fiona Corcoran, CfPS Delivery Manager

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Centre for Public Scrutiny

CROYDON: FURTHER ADVICE ON HYBRID ARRANGEMENTS

CfPS has been asked to provide further advice on the operation of hybrids governance arrangements. Below we provide the following:

- A general reminder of how “hybrid” systems are defined by us and a reminder about the presence of a “spectrum” of governance options;
- Commentary on the two most common roles for Cabinet in hybrids;
- Commentary on long term, and short term, pre-decision scrutiny / policy development work in hybrids;
- Commentary on the distinctions between using Cabinet committees or overview and scrutiny committees as the legal basis for this work;
- Commentary on prioritisation of pre-decision scrutiny (including structures and costs).

Hybrid systems and the spectrum of governance options

Rather than three monolithic governance “choices” (Mayoral, or leader/cabinet, or committee) councils have a very wide range of possible approaches to governance to choose from. The three legal options provide a broad framework within which councils may innovate and experiment with different approaches. This experimentation has led in some authorities to the adoption of what we have termed “hybrid” approaches to governance.

We have set out some of the councils which have adopted hybrid arrangements in the paper already distributed. This paper goes into more detail on some of their experiences. Readers should bear in mind two caveats:

- The below is based on a range of both formal and informal conversations that CfPS has said with councils considering and making governance changes. It attempts to use the experience of others who have considered their options in this area to inform Croydon’s approach;
- Because of the informal (and in some cases political) nature of some of those conversations, and the fact that it fed into changes in some councils which may not look much like what was originally discussed and reflected below, we are not setting out examples of specific councils who have made specific changes.

This paper focuses on leader/cabinet hybrids – that is, councils operating under the leader/cabinet system whose governance arrangements share some features with the committee system. What most such councils have in common is the presence of mechanisms by which a larger group of members have an active involvement in decision making than would usually happen in a standard leader/cabinet system. This is usually through a different dynamic between Cabinet and other council committees.

The role for Cabinet in hybrid systems

Under leader/cabinet executive arrangements, Cabinet must exist to make those decisions which it is specified in legislation that it must make. For councils wishing to adopt a more

distributed and/or more consensual, more committee-based model, this can present a challenge.

There are two potential roles for Cabinet:

- Still as a decision-making body but with its powers curtailed in other ways;
- Entirely as a rubber-stamp.

Cabinet remaining as a decision-making body

Some councils operate a system whereby Cabinet retains its powers in a legal and practical sense. Committees may provide advice and recommendations to Cabinet under these circumstances but Cabinet reserves the right to make decisions independently.

Cabinet might, under these arrangements, be so organised as to provide more assurance that decisions will be made by consensus. All Cabinet decision-making could be consensus based, for example, with no individual cabinet member decision making. Cabinet could be multi-party, proportionate to the overall makeup of the council.

Cabinet entirely as a rubber stamp

This is the model in a few “hybrid” councils but it has drawbacks.

Under this model decisions are developed and “made” in committees. When committees “make” decisions, those decisions are expressed as recommendations to Cabinet. When Cabinet meets, it effectively ratifies whatever decision has been made at committee.

The “de facto” decision-making point is in committee; legally, the decision is made at Cabinet.

This system rests on political assurances from the majority administration. For this to work, the administration must say, “we commit that whatever decisions come up from committee, we will implement”. Cabinet here deliberately fetters their discretion to act and acts to support the practical fiction that committees are the true decision making bodies. But because they still hold the legal power, a change of administration, or a simple change of mind, could result in an instant switch back to a Cabinet system where Cabinet reserves power back to itself.

Using different types of committee: cabinet committees vs scrutiny committees

Under a hybrid system a lot of meaningful, substantive debate about forthcoming policy decisions happens in committee, although committee is not the place where decisions are actually made.

The committee work we talk about in this paper can be carried out by two different kinds of forum.

Cabinet committees

These are committees of Cabinet. They might be chaired by the Cabinet member, or another councillor.

If pre-decision scrutiny or policy development are carried out by Cabinet committees there remains a need for a separate scrutiny function (leader/cabinet councils must have at least

one scrutiny committee). This might be place to carry out statutory scrutiny functions (see below).

Overview and scrutiny committees

Pre-decision work of the sort described above could alternatively be carried out by an overview and scrutiny committee. Under these kinds of hybrid arrangements, what are legally still overview and scrutiny committees are called something else, because their functions are quite different to the standard O&S functions in a typical leader/cabinet council. They might be called “Policy Development Committees” or similar.

These committees cannot be chaired by Cabinet members (by law) so a model that sees overview and scrutiny committees repurposed as policy development committees would need to involve committees and Cabinet members working closely together to develop an effective work programme that will “feed” Cabinet with decisions in a timely manner. This is explored in more detail in the section below on prioritisation.

Maintaining statutory scrutiny functions

There will still be statutory scrutiny functions to transact under this model (relating to health, community safety and flood risk management).

Other statutory powers – such as the power of call-in – need to be considered. If members on a committee have had an opportunity to review and feed into a decision before it comes to be made, will it be appropriate for members to have the unfettered right to call such a decision in? For decisions which have benefited from significant prior input the council might want to consider how call-in would be managed.

There is also the need for councillors to oversee in-year performance and finance issues, as well as ongoing delivery more generally. How these efforts intersect with the council’s decision-making arrangements will need to be considered carefully. Councils adopting hybrid arrangements have realised that it is not possible for councillors to be involved at every stage in most key decisions, alongside carrying out statutory scrutiny roles and other corporate duties.

Long and short-term pre-decision scrutiny

The role of committees (whether they are legally cabinet committees or scrutiny committees) in hybrid councils can take one of a number of forms.

Immediate input into decision-making prior to Cabinet

Three or four weeks before Cabinet, near-final decisions can be brought to committee for consideration. Members will consider officer reports, hear evidence from officers and others, and make recommendations to Cabinet. Under this model committees may take multiple Cabinet decisions per meeting in a way that will look familiar to those who worked in and around the pre-2000 committee system.

Policy development might be carried out by Cabinet members and chairs of committees together, in more informal spaces.

Input into policy some time before Cabinet

This kind of input looks and feels a little more like traditional “overview and scrutiny” style work, but is more directed. The Cabinet and council should know some months in advance

on what matters decisions are proposed to be made in the medium term and can draw committees into discussion on those matters. So, rather than being debate on decisions coming to be made, it is debate on the issues sitting behind those decisions.

The benefit of this is that it draws member insights into the design of decisions in the first place, but it is still Cabinet who is involved in shaping and making the final decision, in a way that looks and feels much more like conventional leader/cabinet working.

Implications for decision-making under delegation

When member-level decisions are made in a different way, this has implications for the way that certain decisions are delegated. We noted above the prospect that under certain models, hybrid working involves no direct delegation to individual Cabinet members. But whatever happens, some form of delegation to officers will still be necessary.

Every council's scheme of delegation is different. Depending on the role that councillors play in the development of policy and the making of decisions, members might be comfortable with less or more delegation decision-making. But this will need to be done in a way that reflects an overall policy framework set by members.

Prioritisation of pre-decision scrutiny

Adding the opportunity for significant consideration of forthcoming decisions has the potential of increasing workload on councillors and officers. Thought needs to go into whether committee work will be prioritised.

For example, it would be difficult for committees both to carry out detailed policy development work and also to consider in-year performance issues across all council services as well.

Members may be involved in all of this work – but not necessarily in committee. Where committee work focuses on immediate pre-decision scrutiny, for example, earlier and later work might be carried out more informally – through member briefings. But this could be seen as cutting out some councillors, or reducing transparency.

The approach taken towards prioritisation and focus has, therefore, to be systematic. Councils adopting hybrid arrangements have had difficulty in making this work; where it has operated successfully has tended to be in smaller councils. But as a general rule of thumb the rule adopted in many places has been that member involvement is proportionate to the importance of the issue under discussion.

So for the most important issues – maybe one or two critical issues per year which affect the whole borough and which are of significant political contention – there could be active, ongoing and visible formal member involvement at all stages. For slightly less important issues, policy development committees could take forward member input with other work carried out by Cabinet in a more conventional way; for the least controversial decisions, matters could be reserved to officers.

This, however, requires a way for members to determine what is “important” and what isn't. Different members are likely to have different views, but agreeing a clear framework for making these judgements is perhaps the most important part of making a system like this work.

Structures

There is no “right structure” for member input under hybrid arrangements. Some councils establishing such arrangements have quite light committee structures – some have more committees, and more committee meetings.

Generally speaking councils have tried to establish arrangements which are cost neutral, and that are neutral in the sense that the number of meetings overall is no higher than in the previous system. Obviously, though, this raises challenges in the event that more councillors want to be involved in more committee meetings (with a view to making more decisions consensually).

While ongoing arrangements may be cost neutral, the transition from one governance approach to another is obviously not. Estimates of costs vary substantially, primarily because councils have taken different approaches to understand what lies inside and outside the scope of governance change as a project.

Eh 12/11/19

Summary of Visit to London Borough of Sutton

Key points from discussions with a selection of Members of the administration and opposition and Officers.

- No executive, individual decision making or key decisions under committee model
- All policy committees stand on equal footing e.g. any committee consider contract awards in their area of responsibility
- The committee structure is not aligned directly to the Council's officer structure, with individual directorates often covering multiple committees
- System involves delegations to Officers
- Policy Committee decides the overall policy, level of expenditure and who's responsible for delivery – implementation and detail of delivery delegated to officers
- Like all local authorities Sutton is required to have a constitution and scheme of delegation, but is not required to have a published forward plan or separate scrutiny committee - Sutton opted for having both
- Committee model seen as giving the opposition a legitimate role by debating and votes in Committee meetings and through in task and finish groups, that can result in modification to policy where cross party agreement exists
- Backbenchers have an active role in committees and can develop expertise in their committee area
- Committee members (including the opposition) can propose amendments to recommendations at committee to be voted on
- Committees ranged in size, from around 10 to 15 Members. Committees met approximately four times a year. Agendas were focused on decision making items and performance monitoring
- Procedure rules also allow members to propose an item to committee (right to request) which they are given 4 minutes to present
- Issues can be referred to the Audit and Governance committee and Scrutiny, each standing committee also considers performance data.
- Scrutiny Committee tends to focus on statutory scrutiny functions such as health and flood risk management. However, also considers other items such as Committee Chair Q&A and specific review work, for example looking at how the council runs consultations
- Scrutiny meets quarterly / 5 times a year
- Task and finish panels provide an effective tool for scrutiny within the committee model
- Local committees have some delegated powers in regard to highways, public realm funding, grant funding allocation, engagement, public questions, wider consultations; they provide a link with the public; local committees were also in place pre transition to committee system; planning is not area based though was in the past.
- Local committees work well with very little overlap with other committees; mostly focussed on public realm

- Local committees took decisions on highways, around £30-50k of public realm funding and around £10k of community grants. They would also each have a forward plan of local issues. In addition to local councillors, they had standing invitees that included community, voluntary and business representatives. These committees were seen as an important consultee in the decision making process and two were chaired by opposition councillors.
- All committees are chaired by the administration other than some local committees
- In general the positives of the committee model were seen as: members feel more involved, having the opportunity to scrutinise at each committee meeting; hearing the independent and opposition view improves the decision making process
- Members find that access to information is straight forward; can contact officers and learn via committee forward plan (one month notice before decision taken, notifications 10 days ahead) - can request briefing from officers on the back of the forward plan
- Forward plan is believed to be the most effective tool for opposition members, lead members keep up to date through agenda planning
- Coordination between committees is also straight forward, no big examples where plans of one committee contradicted other committee; each committee has a defined portfolio and committees can't make a decision outside of budgetary and policy framework;
- Joint working across committees happens occasionally when identified by chairs, with task and finish group set up including members from both committees, but decisions are always made by one committee; there is no cross referrals or joint decisions
- Good governance is culture based
- The scheme of delegation had been streamlined – if a decision is not specifically reserved to a committee it is automatically delegated to officers
- Committees can take a decision normally delegated to Officers if the issue is politically sensitive
- There is a requisition process where members can call a decision up to Full Council, this pauses the decision making process and council decides whether to accept the committee resolution
- In a similar way to other Councils an administration's manifesto is generally translated into a corporate plan. Each committee is required to be appointed to on a proportionate basis so the majority group has a majority of seats on each committee. The committee structure provides the opportunity for input and challenge from the opposition groups
- Members received a weekly bulletin to summarise information previously sent by email. It contained links to the latest planning applications, licensing applications, upcoming committees and Member training materials.

Governance Review Panel: Expert Witness Session summary

21st May 2019

Session focus

- 1. Role of councillor** – views on how to involve and support Members; officer – member relationships; different roles of Members: decision making, policy development, scrutiny
- 2. Good governance and accountability** – views on good practice in local decision making (including delegations) and local democracy, including wider resident and stakeholder participation
- 3. Culture and structures** – is culture more important than structure? Can structures change culture? How does culture impact on performance? Can hybrid or committee models create more inclusive cultures?

Summary notes

Barry Quirk

Chief Executive at Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea and formerly Lewisham

1. Councillors can make the role what they want to, though they are continuously required to wear different hats and are held accountable in many ways.
2. Part of the challenge of being a councillor is recognising the difference between the political and the managerial and maintaining the balance between the two.
3. It requires mature relationships between officers and Members to avoid perceptions of officers 'stealing decisions' and Members 'meddling in management'.
4. Given that a council delivers a broad range of services, often delivered by different managers and overseen by different elected Members, the challenge is how do all members, who are all held accountable, participate in and scrutinise decision making, and ensure that all of the brains of the organisation are best used.
5. The culture around decision making was also an important question. Moving away from personalised, negative fault finding was challenging in an environment where people are held accountable.
6. The way Members and Officers conduct inquiries, question and deal with issues shape the culture of the organisation, both in terms of its management and its politics.
7. Strong decision making arrangements identify dysfunctions and worst practice and root those out. They identify what is not working well in both the Member and officer sides of decision making and tackle the absence of trust and fear of conflict. They take a productive approach to conflict and the people involved are committed to moving things forward.

8. A common theme in challenging decision making arrangements can be both officers and Members seeking to avoid accountability, so ensuring that there is clear line of sight is a key factor in strong decision making.
9. Successful councils are outward looking, externally focussed and they attain results for their residents. It is important that there is a collective view of how to frame the problems that communities face to allow the focus to be on resolving those problems rather than on process, procedure and continuous redefinition of the issues.

In response to questions

10. In health checking decision making at a local authority, it is helpful to look at the advice that decision makers receive. The advice should come from a range of sources and address the multiple perspectives of the whole council to allow for decision makers to be collectively accountable for the Council's decisions.
11. It is a good idea for decision makers to receive an explanation of what has preceded a decision being taken. This can help reinforce the council's policies and also allow decision makers to see the range of sources for the advice they are being given.
12. That the advice that officers give should as far as possible be given consistently, irrespective of which Member is asking for the advice. It is an organisational weakness for Members to see officers as functionaries and officers should ensure that there is integrity in the advice that they give. Officers should not advise to flatter the decision maker.
13. That the question of whether a council is a member or officer led is a false dichotomy. A local authority is not like the civil service that advises about things, local government officers actually do things. Therefore it is critical that there's a coalition and 'concert' between politics and management at the broadest level.
14. Given the large number of relationships between the management team and seventy elected councillors in Croydon, 2450 different ones in theory, it is imperative that the organisation works on trust in order to avoid becoming dysfunctional.
15. Officers should be trained and developed in political astuteness and political understanding. Not in order to use politics, but to help them understand what is expected and what the political landscape is. This will allow officers to broaden the range of sources giving advice to decision makers and encourage wider and more holistic views to be taken.
16. Clarity of roles between politicians and different officers is essential to ensuring that there is leadership rather than supervision. This will reinforce the culture of decision making and allow Members and officers to root out negativity and focus on delivering positive outcomes.

Dame Jane Roberts

Leader of Camden Council from 2000 until 2005; chaired the DCLG Councillors' Commission

17. The findings of the Councillors' commission, though ten years old, still held and had continued to be endorsed by subsequent studies.
18. Councillors have a very challenging role in the current climate of funding cuts and increasing demand. It is important to recognise that local government is about place, and place shaping is key.
19. Some people may say that women are less interested in politics, but they are interested in the closure of a playground; why a development is taking place there; or why there are parking restrictions there and so on. All of these relate back to place and, while most people have many overlapping roles, most people still don't move or move within only a few miles, so the role of Councillor in each place is very important.
20. The challenge for Councillors is to reconcile the many different views in that place, and if it is impossible, to balance and judge – and the challenge is the means by which councillors do that, the skills they need and how they do that. This task is more challenging because councillors are required to represent the many different views of people in that place into decision making, as well as explaining those decisions back outward.
21. This requires clarity about what the key challenges are in Croydon, what really needs to happen over the next ten or twenty years. That clarity, combined with political values, is translated into a strategy for that place and how the authority can improve the quality of life for those who live, work and play in that place.
22. Whether it is a small or large decision, it will affect the people that live in that place and it is important that councillors can hear the views of their residents even if they can't do everything that residents ask for. At the very least, residents should be able to understand how a decision came to be taken, even if they don't agree with it.
23. The culture is very important to this – does it recognise the importance of being curious, being open to different views, empathy, and humility and so on.
24. The Councillors Commission found that: local authorities are key to promoting local democratic engagement; promoting a sense of efficacy (ability to influence) is key to better engagement; councillors are most effective if they have similar life experiences as their constituents; relationship between councillors and their constituency is important to allow effective representation; it should be less daunting to be a councillor, with more support for elected officials, to enable those with busy lives to be councillors.

In response to questions

25. That in other countries, such as France, there are far higher numbers of elected representatives, though in England, successive governments had suggested that there are too many local councillors.

26. Support that had been provided to councillors in Camden included childcare and being supported to go out into the community and speak to residents at least once a week on council activities.
27. That it was very difficult for councillors to give up office because they often had status, income, colleagues friends and a social network based on the role, and this led to a risk of councillors no longer sharing the experiences of those they represent if they remain in office for extended periods.
28. That Camden had previously had a local custom to time limit how long any councillor could chair a specific committee and this encouraged positive democratic rotation.

Paul Martin

Chief Executive at Wandsworth and Richmond and formerly Sutton

29. Councils are very similar to families, in that they look similar on the outside, but are entirely different on the inside. Most councils have scrutiny committees, but the number of issues being considered by them varies significantly from council to council. There will be different levels of delegation to individual members and officers. So councils can look similar but be very different in practice. None of these systems are right or wrong, but there are advantages and disadvantages to each.
30. In 2014, Kingston and Richmond announced their intention to share services. While both councils looked similar from the outside, the reality was that the concept of working together didn't materialise because the culture of the organisations was very different. By the end of 2014, Richmond had approached Wandsworth to look at sharing services. While the geography and structure of the organisations were different, they were able to agree a method of co-operation and the shared service was implemented in 2016, with all staff serving both councils.
31. The Local Government Act 2000 that introduced executive and scrutiny structures hadn't been requested by local councillors and most local authorities made efforts to adapt the new statutory structures to their preferred ways of working. This is why we often refer to hybrid models, even though there is no mention of hybrid models in any of the Local Government Acts or regulations
32. In Wandsworth, there is pre-decision scrutiny of all executive decisions. The scrutiny committees are where public representations can be made and they are very similar to old fashioned committees. When the executive meets, it is very brief and it considers recommendations from the scrutiny committees. The scrutiny meetings are very long.
33. Wandsworth has a very active opposition group, but the system allows for almost all executive decisions to be read, debated and contested by the opposition in depth at scrutiny committees before going on to cabinet.
34. Wandsworth is currently considering introducing a guillotine for committee meetings, to allow people to have an expectation that meetings won't go on for more than two and a half hours.

35. Committee papers in Wandsworth are all signed off by a director team. This was part of bedding in the new arrangements but also to ensure that there was a high standard of quality control over the recommendations being put to Members.
36. The most controversial or significant decisions would inevitably be debated at meetings of the full council, primarily as debate motions.
37. In Richmond, there had been an administration manifesto commitment to return to the committee system, though it was felt that both parties in Richmond felt that the old system hadn't been working for them.
38. In practice, it was a hybrid model that had been adopted, following a study of Sutton and Kingston councils' systems.
39. It shouldn't be forgotten that working with members through a change in system is a very human process and should be handled with care.
40. The formal decision making process is entirely dependent for its success on the informal process.
41. The informal process normally sits with the majority group. The flight path of a report would be from the department management team to the directors' board, then on to a fortnightly briefing with the leader and his senior colleagues. So draft working papers are debated by senior councillors before they are published for pre-decision scrutiny.
42. Opposition councillors receive frequent briefings from their relevant director, but very rarely from their opposite number in the administration.
43. Predictability and dependability are essential, so that councillors, residents and officers can understand how things work.
44. Governance needs to work well for members, officers, and the public. The needs and views of all three need to be heard and where necessary reconciled.

In response to questions

45. That the volume of scrutiny papers meant that while decision making was scrutinised, there was little opportunity for thematic or policy overview scrutiny. This meant that Members could sometimes be overly focussed on the recommendations in front of them at the cost of reviewing strategy.
46. That opposition members in Wandsworth were able to have a high degree of participation in their current system and were not in favour of suggestions to streamline it.
47. Wandsworth and Richmond treated guillotine procedures slightly differently for council meetings. Wandsworth had a presumption that a meeting would just continue unless the guillotine was formally moved; Richmond has an automatic guillotine unless it is moved to extend the meeting.
48. Both councils published a forward plan and officers were always mindful of what issues Members would want to discuss and debate.
49. Though it was rare, individual councillors could initiate papers going on to committee agendas.
50. That committee chairs did go on to become cabinet members in the hybrid model in Richmond and Wandsworth. As Richmond is a Lib Dem council, all

majority group appointments are made collectively by that group, rather than the leader making individual appointments.

51. That senior councillors being clear what they want makes it clearer for officers in helping them to deliver their ambitions. Decision making was more effective when councillors were clear about what they want and the hybrid committee system meant that officers had more exposure to members and could better understand what they want and ensure that reports and recommendations reflect what is important to councillors.

Carl Whistlecraft

Head of Democracy at Kirklees Council

52. The Kirklees democracy commission started with a very narrow focus that was driven by the funding cuts. It initially looked at changing the electoral cycle, reducing the number of councillors and if a change in decision making model could all deliver savings.
53. As the discussion began on these issues, it became clear that as the organisation was looking at how to deliver services differently and there was a need to discuss local democracy more widely. From that, an independently chaired, cross party working group was established.
54. The group expanded the focus to include generational and cultural factors affecting local democracy and citizen engagement took place right across the borough. The group focused on:
 - The changing role of the councillor and the next generation of councillors
 - Elections and the electoral cycle
 - Governance, accountability and decision making
 - Democracy in a networked society
55. Possibly the most important area of the group's work was looking at 'active citizens'. This included considering both the role of the citizen and what the council's changing goal with citizens was in the context of financial pressures.
56. One of the findings of the review was that the council and councillors had to rebalance their relationship with residents. The funding cuts had led to the council treating citizens as customers, who then behaved predominately as customers. This led to a more transactional relationship which diminished the ability to co-produce, and councillors often found themselves stuck in the middle of that relationship.
57. Similarly, local identity was incredibly important to residents, who generally held a strong view about the area that they belonged to as opposed to Kirklees which is an artificially created boundary.
58. The review also found that residents had become tired of being consulted because they felt that everything had already been decided by the time they were being asked. Kirklees citizens wanted genuine and ongoing engagement.

59. The final report included 48 recommendations and a cross party working group is leading on their implementation.
60. Kirklees is focussing on developing genuine engagement, built on local identity that treats residents as citizens rather than customers. The council has agreed citizen engagement principles and all engagement is now planned and managed through a reference group. . This involves local partners, thus ensuring a more systemic approach.
61. The council has also adopted a place standard tool, developed by the Scottish Government that helps local authorities have conversations with residents about places based on both the physical and social environment. This is allowing Kirklees to speak with residents in a place based way, rather than just about a narrow single service.
62. Councillors are placed at the heart of these conversations as well as at the heart of service design, work in wards, decision making and so on. This flowed from a recognition that the council is a democratic organisation and that representatives of communities need to be involved more in the thinking rather than towards the end of the process.
63. The review also found that Councillors had received reduced support as a result of delivering austerity savings, particularly in engaging with communities around place shaping and place fixing. Members had also lost a lot of officers that had a strong track record of working effectively with councillors.
64. The review had benefited from looking at what wasn't working, rather than starting by looking at the formal decision making structure. Structural changes are being considered as part of that piece of work and following the outcome of an LGA peer challenge in July.
65. An outstanding area of the review was reaching satisfactory conclusions on how to lighten the load for councillors.

In response to questions

66. There were five different opposition parties and group culture became harder and sharper through the period of funding cuts.
67. Having looked at the relationship between officers and councillors, both sides felt that there was benefit in more engagement. A shared understanding was developed and now over 600 staff have been trained on working effectively with councillors, and councillors are involved in delivering that training.
68. Councillors are now involved in the design and undertaking of place based engagement and are supported by council officers, as well as local community groups that are trained up to support local engagement.

Governance Review

expert witness inquiry session

21st May 2019

Croydon Council Governance Review: expert witness inquiry session

- **Barry Quirk:** CE of Lewisham (1994 to 2017); CE Kensington & Chelsea (2017 to present). Worked as an officer in Tower Hamlets, Bexley, Lambeth, Newham, Lewisham and K&C; and an elected as a Labour Councillor (1982-6) in Southwark. PhD in political geography. Presents annually at the Leadership Institute at ICMA in the USA. Author of the Solace guide to decision making and the art of giving advice (2008); Re-imagining Government (2011); and High Performing Councils: recipe not alchemy (2015, for the Wales Assembly); and *Community Action & Civic Dialogue*, in Tam H (2019) Whose Government is it?
- Experience of working in local government committee systems, leader and cabinet systems and directly elected mayor models. English local government is unusual in its functions, its financing and its form - and it is rarely right sized.
- **Role of elected councillor:** involves bringing political convictions to bear on public challenges and choices. Members have a unique role and a democratic mandate (albeit contested) for community leadership. But once won this mandate needs re-energising daily, weekly and monthly. Members' core purpose is to promote local interests while fostering civic purposes. Formally, elected members are one of another: i.e. the body corporate, not simply the individual, the ward, the party, the faction, or the caucus.
- Representative democracy is in turmoil in many liberal democracies and is challenged by direct, associative and deliberative approaches to expressing democratic voice. National government is often portrayed as being consumed by borders and populism; while local government is more focussed on community bonds and the realities of pluralism.
- When it comes to **institutional governance**, "there's no right way, but plenty of wrong ways". The Anna Karenina principle is that, "all happy families are alike; each unhappy family is unhappy in its own way." It follows that rooting out bad practice and dysfunction is arguably more important than chasing "best practice" and ideal types. In 2015, Pope Francis wrote of the 15 maladies of leadership: such as, "petrification" or losing contact with people while only attending to bureaucratic matters. This applies equally to public sector professionals who lose connection with citizens while getting lost in process.
- For the future, we need Councils that ...
 - focus on public risks and harms is as needed as much as a focus on generating public goods and interests
 - centre their civic virtues around empathy, ethics and efficiency
 - are relevant to dynamically changing needs and demands will be required (liquid and frozen)
 - enable critical challenge in the public domain; while avoiding captiousness
- **Successful Councils:** are focussed on the challenges facing their communities, not simply their internal operational challenges. Successful Councils are open, curious, focused and they relentlessly pursue better public value. They need to be good to do good.
- Decision making should foster **collective ownership** amongst members. Scrutiny should be involved prior to "problem framing" and also in the choice of likely solutions. Widespread delegation to individual councillors should be avoided as it splinters ownership.
- **Member-officer relations** work best when they are based on mutual respect, integrity and role clarity. Beware the false dichotomy of being Member-led or officer-led?

relationship maths

when relations become relationships

$$\frac{n \times (n-1)}{2}$$



"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed people can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."

Margaret Mead

41

29

$$7 \times 6 = 42 \div 2 = 21$$

$$10 \times 9 = 90 \div 2 = 45$$

$$29 \times 28 = 568 \div 2 = 284$$

$$41 \times 40 = 1,640 \div 2 = 820$$

$$70 \times 69 = 4,830 \div 2 = 2,415$$

Croydon Governance Review Panel

Dame Jane Roberts
21 May 2019

Principles for effective representation (Representing the Future, DCLG 2007)

- Local authorities are key to promoting local democratic engagement
- Promoting a sense of efficacy – the feeling that an individual is able to influence the democratic process and the course of events – is key for better engagement
- Councillors are most effective as local elected representatives when they have similar life experiences as those of their constituents
- Key to effective representation is the relationship and the connections between councillors and their constituents
- It should be less daunting to become a councillor, better supported once elected, and less daunting to stop being a councillor.

Croydon Governance Review Panel

Paul Martin

Chief Executive

London Boroughs of Wandsworth & Richmond

21st May 2019



Three golden rules of council governance

- Councils are like families – similar on the outside, entirely different on the inside
- The formal process depends for its success on the informal process
- Predictability and dependability are essential



Richmond • Wandsworth Shared Staffing

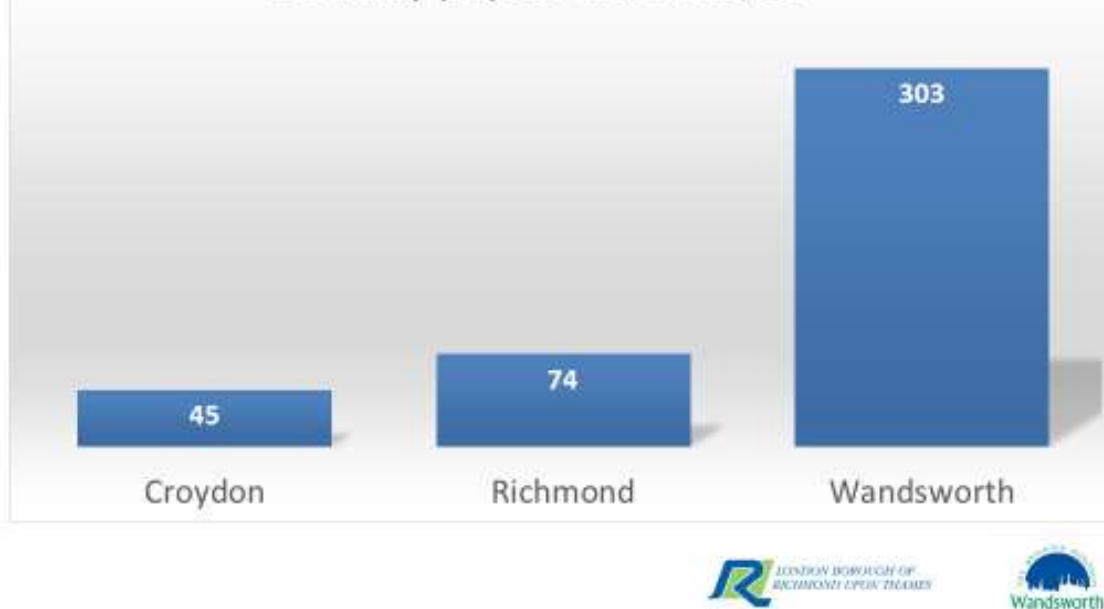
2018/19 municipal year



12

Richmond • Wandsworth Shared Staffing

Scrutiny papers for 2018/19



11

Different folks, different strokes

- Richmond and Wandsworth similarities – a little bit, but not a lot
- Culture, rituals, ways of working
- One staff group but significant variability in governance arrangements



13

Wandsworth – a hybrid Executive/Scrutiny system

- Six OSCs which meet 4 times a year annually, each cycle followed by brief Executive meeting and finally full Council
- Over 300 papers to committees in 2018/19, driven by pre-decision scrutiny of all Executive Decisions as well as over 200 papers to other committees such as Planning and Standards
- All public representations and the heat of the debate is in the OSCs
- The OSCs look like old fashioned committees, walk and talk like committees...
- All OSCs always attended by a Director and the relevant slate of Assistant Directors
- No individual Cabinet member decisions



14

Merits of Wandsworth system

- Highly detailed, transparent, accountable, “town hall democracy”
- Generally supported by Majority and Minority Groups (although not necessarily the decisions!)
- Most papers are considered by my Directors’ Board first – high level of quality control
- Escalation of issues – ultimately to full Council – provides a ladder of escalation
- All members of the Council participate fully in the life of the Council



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Deficiencies of Wandsworth system

- Looks a bit old fashioned. Highly formal
- Perpetuates a culture of paperwork and sometimes obscure detail
- No scope for “scrutiny reviews” – members focus largely on recommendations in front of them
- Doesn’t provide much scope for reviewing strategy



16

Richmond – adopting a new committee system

- Majority Group Manifesto commitment in May 2018
- Replaces a scrutiny system widely seen as ineffective
- New constitution adopted at Annual Council last week
- First “new style” committee met last night

Richmond – transition and process to a new system

- In 2018/19, the Council adopted a hybrid Executive/Scrutiny model
- Far more effective member involvement
- Cross party working group on the new constitution, chaired by the Leader
- Research into other councils practice (Kingston, Sutton)
- New committee chairs reflect last year's Cabinet
- New members' allowance scheme needed careful handling

The informal process – what's not on the website!

- Directors and lead members – relationships and teamwork
- Directors' Board engagement in all policy development
- Private, regular, clockwork meetings of lead members with Chief Executive
- Opposition briefings with officers (can be a balancing act)

Final thoughts

- Governance needs to work well for members, officers, and the public
- The needs and views of all three need to be heard and where necessary reconciled
- The comprehensive approach to open decision making is the hallmark of Wandsworth
- The openness of change and improve is the hallmark of Richmond



Growing a stronger local democracy, from the ground up



Carl Whistlecraft, Head of Democracy for Kirklees Council

'Democracy
in Kirklees'

www.democracycommission.org.uk
#kirkdemocracy

'Join the
debate'

Statutory Reports Presented to Councillors for Decision Making

Reports Presented to Council

1. Equality Strategy.
2. Health and Well Being Strategy.
3. Sustainable Community Strategy.
4. Community Safety Strategy.
5. Children and Young Persons Plan.
6. Initial Local Implementation (Transport) Plan.
7. Annual Council Budget.
8. Licensing Statement.
9. Gambling Strategy.
10. The Admission arrangements for Community schools.
11. The plans and strategies for planning, development and conservation in the Borough comprising the Croydon Plan and other approved and adopted development plan documents and supplementary planning documents which make up the Local Development Framework for Croydon.
12. Plans, Policies and Strategies which together make up the Housing Strategy.
13. Youth Justice Plan.
14. The Making or revising of a Council Tax Reduction Scheme.
15. Exercise of the power to determine further discounts for certain dwellings and set higher amount of council tax in respect of long term empty dwellings under sections 11A and 11B of the LGFA 1992, as amended.
16. The Budget Framework, namely the allocation of financial resources to different services and projects, proposed contingency funds, setting the Council Tax and decisions relating to the control of the Council's borrowing requirement.
17. Housing Land Transfers, namely to authorise applications under Section 135 of the Leasehold Reform, Housing and Urban Development Act 1993 to the Secretary of State to include a qualifying disposal in the disposals programme or to dispose of land under Section 32 or 43 of the Housing Act 1985 where the specific consent of the Secretary of State is required.
18. The conferring of the title of Honorary Alderman or Alderwoman or granting Freedom of the Borough.
19. Appointing a Leader of the Council and the Mayor.

Executive decisions

1. Consideration of and response to Scrutiny recommendations
2. London Council's grant scheme
3. Education estates strategy
4. Education Admissions Policy
5. Parking Charges
6. Planning application fees
7. The exercise of functions, powers and duties of the Council as Traffic and Highway Authority in relation to Traffic Management issues
8. Supplementary planning guidance
9. Statement of community involvement
10. Community Infrastructure Levy Monitoring Report

Key decisions information

June 2019

Croydon Council definition of key decision

Part 4.B - Access to Information Procedure Rules

13.2 Types of decision

(d) Key Decisions: Subject to the provision that a decision taker may only take a decision in accordance with the requirements of the Executive Procedure Rules and in compliance with the provisions of the Access to Information Procedure Rules set out, respectively in Part 4 of this Constitution, a Key Decision is an executive decision which is likely to:

(i) result in the Council incurring expenditure, or making savings, of more than £1,000,000 or such smaller sum which the decision-taker considers is significant having regard to the Council's budget for the service or function to which the decision relates; or

(ii) be significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more Wards in the Borough.

Croydon number of key decisions:

	May 2017 – May 2018	May 2018 – May 2019
Key decisions made at Cabinet	17	15
Key decisions delegated to Cabinet Member	24	26
Key decisions delegated to Officers	1	1

(Information on decisions made in previous financial years and non-key decisions made at Cabinet can also be made available, however more work would need to be done to collate that information)

Lambeth number of key decisions (for comparison):

	May 2017 – May 2018	May 2018 – May 2019
Key decisions made at Cabinet	30	30
Key decisions delegated to Cabinet Member	60	222
Key decisions delegated to Officers	1	0

Executive Decision Making over the last twelve months

Sept 2019

Headlines

- A total of 224 Executive decisions were taken in the last twelve months
- 22% of those were key decisions
- 62% of all decisions were taken by Members
- The one decision taken by the Leader related to the reletting of floors in BWH and was taken

Decision Maker	Total	No. of key decisions	%age of Total Decisions Taken
Leader	1	0	0.4
Cabinet	82	20	36.6
Cabinet Members (under one-off delegations)	6	0	2.7
Cabinet Members (under scheme of delegation)	50	23	22.3
Executive Officers (under one-off delegations)	9	6	4
Executive Officers (under scheme of delegation)	76	0	33.9
Total	224	49	99.9

in August this year.

Notes:

- Figures include those planned to be taken at Cabinet on 19.9.19
- Standing delegations to Cabinet Members are predominantly related to contracts and highways schemes.
- Contract decisions taken under delegated powers by Members are all reported publicly to Cabinet. Contract decisions taken under delegated powers by officers are reported to Cabinet when they are over £100k.
- Decisions relating to Highways schemes taken individually by the Cabinet Member are predominantly considered by TMAC who make recommendations regarding the decision to be taken.
- Breakdown of decisions taken by officers under the scheme of delegation is as follows:

Dept	Total
Resources	29
Place	26
Traffic Management	18
Children's*	3
Adults	TBC

* Children's Dept figure is this calendar year only

Information Routinely Provided to All Members

- 28 Key Decision Notice
- Key Decision Notices
- Cabinet Member Bulletins
- Notices of Planning Applications
- Notices of Licensing Applications
- Notices of Highways Schemes
- Member briefings on Regeneration Activity (Note: not blanket coverage across whole borough)
- Emergency information
- Ad hoc briefings from the Chief Executive
- Your Croydon
- All press releases
- Various annual reports – corporate parenting, public health, GPAC, scrutiny etc.
- Section 106 Balance sheet (provided quarterly)
- Officers attend Group meetings on request
- Officers regularly support policy and strategy discussion at PDMs (only relevant to Labour Members)
- Briefings from senior officers are available to Members on request (though this is rarely taken up outside of Shadow Cabinet)

Opportunities for all Members to participate:

- All Members have a £8k ward budget, with the total budget being in excess of £0.5m.
- Almost all Council meetings are open to all Members to attend and contribute
- Members have specific rights to contribute at Council, Planning, Licensing and TMAC
- All Part A Council papers are available to all Members
- Scrutiny Members have additional rights to Part B papers and any Member can request access if there is a 'need to know'
- Written questions to Cabinet Members at any time of year (131 asked in 2018)
- Councillor Enquiries email to officers at any time of year (810 in 2018/19 financial year)

Gateway North Croydon – Latest position and proposed next steps

Governance review panel

Recap of ambition in relation to localities



What we know about the area?*

- **Deprivation** - Some of the most deprived LSOA's in Croydon
- **Employment** - High youth unemployment
- **Housing** – Highest level of homelessness approaches
- **Health & Wellbeing** - 60% of the ward are from the “Caution” ACORN Wellbeing segment with behaviours that create health risks and may result in lifestyle related ailments in time

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Service demand: High need for our services across the board

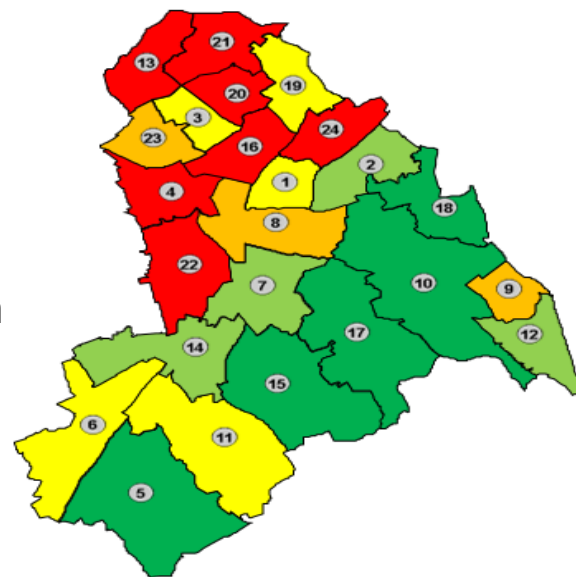
Children's Services: Relatively large cohort of children 'in the statutory system' – Child in Need (CIN), Child Protection Plan's (CP), Looked After Children (LAC)

- **Demographics:** Large non White British population and significantly younger than the Croydon average
- **Assets:** Lots of activity taking place within the locality – council, partner and voluntary and community sector
- **Conclusion:** the key priority in the area is to focus on those children and families that we know may require support - to help them achieve the best possible outcomes in life. Right Help, Right Time

Why a focus on vulnerable children & families?

- Relatively large cohort of children 'in the system' – CIN, LAC, Child Protection Plan's – with over 334 children who are in contact with Social Services
- Children in Need
 - 162 have an active Child's Plan (CIN)
- Child Protection Plans
 - 71 on a Child Protection Plan
 - 15.5% of all Croydon's children on a Child Protection Plan (Oct 18)
- Looked After Children
 - 99 who are Looked After Children (LAC) originated from this area
 - 20.1% of all Croydon's looked after children - with a full Croydon postcode – (Oct 18)
- CSC Assessments
 - 18.7% of all Croydon's completed CSC Assessments (with a full Croydon postcode) (Jan to Nov 18)

CSC Assessments
January 2018



Strategic context for children and families (1)

- New Partnership Early Help Strategy has been agreed and is being rolled out
- Forms a key part of children's improvement plan
- Locality intensive Early Help Teams (Best Start Family Solutions) which is now live, 3 teams – north, central and south
- Partnership early help offer also based on these 3 localities
- Children and Young People are a cross-cutting priority for the LSP
- Priorities for early help with children, young people and their families to support the reduction in demand and impact on statutory services for 2018-2020 are to focus early help in the localities where the predominant issues are:
 - Domestic Abuse
 - Parental mental ill health
 - Parental substance misuse
 - Violence in the community affecting children and young people
 - Emotional and mental health issues with children and young people
 - Children at risk of exclusion from school or excluded from school
 - Child neglect and abuse
 - Housing and welfare supports for families
 - Social Isolation

Strategic context for children and families (2)

- A number of priorities for Children and Young People form key elements of the Health and Well-Being Strategy
 - Fewer Croydon children will be living in poverty
 - More Croydon Children will have a good level of development socially, emotionally and cognitively when they start school
 - More Croydon children will be a healthy weight
 - Fewer Croydon children will suffer respiratory complications requiring hospital treatment.
 - A focus on the first 1000 days – Annual Public Health Report

Proposed Approach:

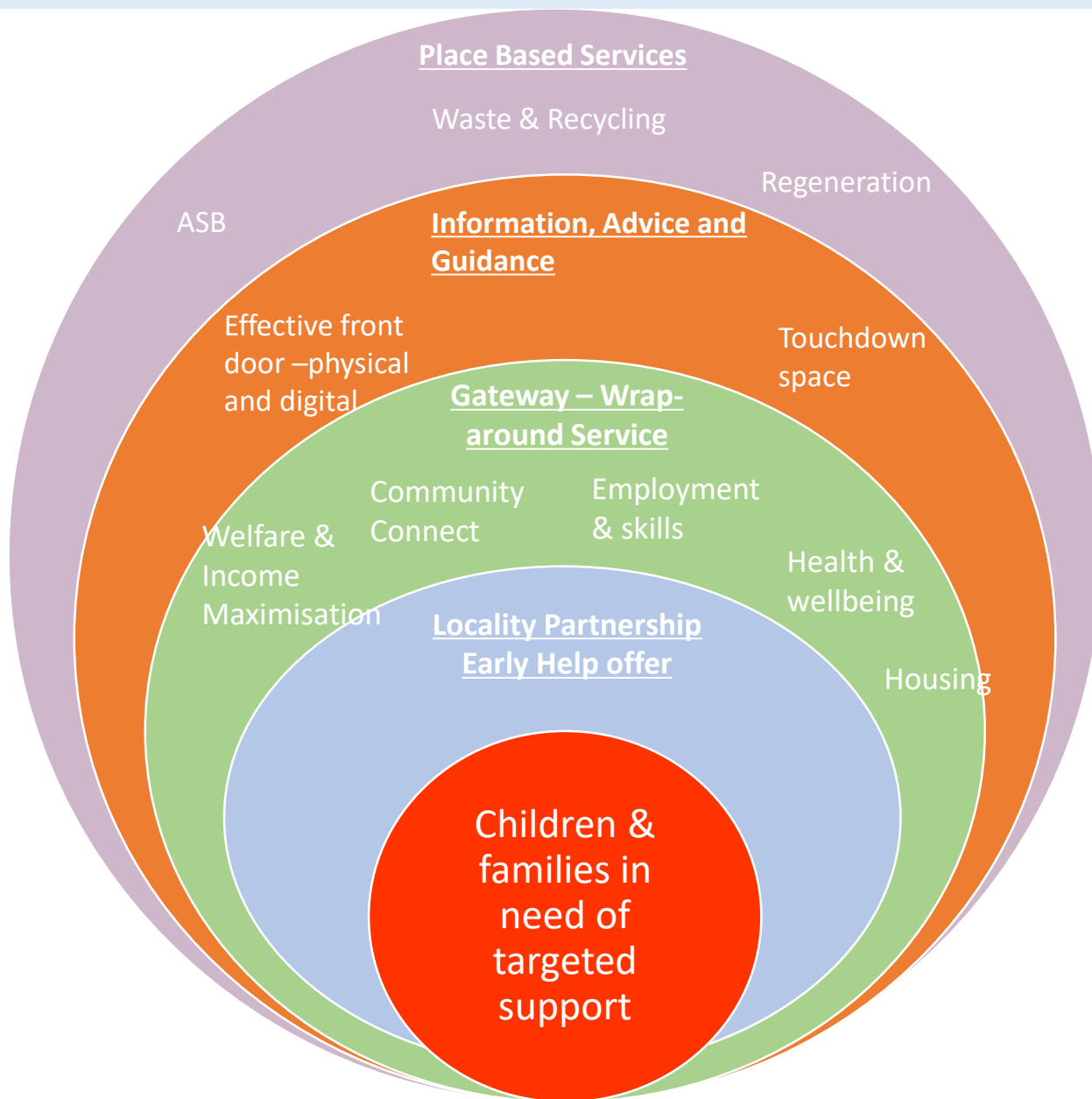
Targeted support for Children & families in North Croydon

- In North Croydon, we are developing a preventative offer focussed on those children and families that we know may require support to help them achieve the best possible outcomes in life and to provide the Right Help at the Right Time
- At the heart of this approach is a robust Partnership Early Help offer that is accessed locally and delivers the support those children and families require

We will also ensure that the wider needs of the family are met in a joined-up way – focussed on:

- Welfare and income maximisation
 - Skills and employment
 - Health and Wellbeing
 - Housing
- We will take this opportunity to ensure that all local residents are provided with better information, advice and guidance on the services available to them – particularly in their locality
 - Connect this into the wider Place based activity

Gateway North Croydon: Revised Proposal for January – Targeted support - with Children and Families at the heart



January Launch for Gateway North Croydon – Three Key Components



Gateway North Croydon – Key Asset Map

Assets near Thornton Heath 2018



Asset List

Type of Asset

- Community (7)
- Leisure (1)
- Library (3)
- Operational (8)
- Partner Agency (6)



Key Site

- 1, Norwood Grove Mansion
- 2, Stanford Road (Harlow Hall)
- 3, Northwood Road, 40
- 4, Woodvale Avenue (Waterside Centre)
- 5, Chamwood Road (St. Columba's Hall)
- 6, Willis Road (no. 14)
- 7, Cromwell Road (no. 47A)
- 8, High Street, Thornton Heath Leisure Centre
- 9, Norbury Library
- 10, South Norwood Library
- 11, Thornton Heath Library
- 12, Beulah Family Church, Beulah Crescent
- 13, Winterbourne Youth Centre
- 14, Zion Road Strand House
- 15, Dagnall Park - Selhurst Early Years Centre
- 16, Selhurst Road (Heavers Farm Centre)
- 17, Whitehorse Road, 89 - Community Resource Centre
- 18, Grenaby Avenue (Gingerbread)
- 19, St. James's Road, 171 - Cherry Orchard Centre
- 20, Age UK
- 21, Job Centres Plus
- 22, Salvation Army
- 23, Croydon Voluntary Action
- 24, Parchmore Church
- 25, Auckland Road Surgery

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Children's Services - Early Help Locality Teams

- A network of multi-disciplinary and multi-agency staff – working together in North Croydon to coordinate pathways of care and support
- Practitioners know the children young people and families and share knowledge and expertise
- Focus on child and their family and their individual strengths to build resilience and enable families to identify their own solutions through early help
- Mobilise support from others when needed without referral
- All needs will be considered e.g. health and wellbeing; housing; welfare; siblings, poverty, risk of domestic abuse; substance misuse
- Practitioners across the partnership will implement the guidance of “Effective Support ‘Right Help, Right Time”

Locality Early Help Offer

Service Area	Long Term Vision / Aim	Potential offer from January
Universal offer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The locality universal services are working well and enabling children and families to live independently. - When a need is identified, early support will be provided and if needed, will be supported to access targeted services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Health Visiting sessions - Promotion of existing children centre activities
Targeted Support with vulnerable children & families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Range of locality targeted services area in place for children and families, which include short intensive support aiming to deal with root cause. - When the needs have been met they will be supported to access universal services or if needs escalate they will be stepped up to specialist services. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Launch of Early Help Centre in Winterbourne Community Centre - Substance misuse sessions - Housing support services for vulnerable young people
Specialist Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Where thresholds for specialist services are met, children and families will receive statutory intervention. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Workers using touchdown space and meeting clients in the locality, encouraging join up and access of wider services

Gateway - Wraparound Support for Families - summary

Service Area	Long Term Vision / Aim	Potential offer from January
Employment & Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Targeted employment support for those who need it - An increase in the number of residents in North Croydon who secure employment, are in receipt of a good wage and with the opportunity to progress in their careers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Gateway employment support – casework to help individuals to be 'job ready' at which point they are ready for the support from Croydon Works - Croydon Works – Jointly run job club (library) - Work and Health Drop in Clinic (library) - Employment support for 14-19yr olds – monthly - (CPFC) - CALAT Drop-in at TH Library to engage with potential learners
Welfare & Income Maximisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lower levels of families and children living in poverty - Residents are supported to receive the benefits they are entitled to 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Parchmore Church Community Food Stop - Personal budgeting support (various locations) - Drop in sessions with benefit advice teams (library) - Welfare rights outreach sessions (various locations) - Income Collection Teams (tbc)
Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - - More existing homes are decent and meet people's needs - - Standards are improved in the private rented market 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Drop in sessions with housing register and advice teams (library) - Community Connect – housing options advice
Health & Wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Happy, healthy, and independent lives are lived by as many as possible, for as long as possible - Better health outcomes – including lower levels of smoking, lower levels of obesity, increased uptake of exercise and improved diets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Integrated Care Networks – a core team of multi-disciplinary professionals who work as a virtual team in each GP network area - Social Prescribing Service - Complex Care Support Service - Cherry Orchard Centre - Live Well Advisor Clinics (JustBe) - Healthy Eating Clinics - Holiday Hunger Programmes

Information, Advice and Guidance

Theme	Long Term Vision / Aim
Information, Advice and Guidance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A 'single view' of all resident focussed activity taking place across the borough – council and partners • Available digitally to residents and staff • Staff and partners can easily and effectively signpost residents to appropriate services / activity • Staff and partners can engage with residents in a way that identifies potential support requirements • The offer is regularly reviewed for uptake, quality and impact
Effective Front Door	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Residents can access a broader range of council services closer to where they live • A higher number of transactional services can be completed locally – with fewer journeys to BCH
Touchdown Space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council and partner staff can access touchdown space in Thornton Heath Library • Create opportunities for staff working in localities to understand activity taking place and share intelligence • From closer collaboration – increasingly join-up the existing provision

Proposed High Level Timeline

- November - Agree vision / focus of the approach
- November – Agree timescale for the cosmetic refresh of the Library
- Early December - Finalise service offer for January – through individual SRO / Director discussions
- Early December – Agree staffing model and recruit to posts for January
- December – Confirm measures to define ‘what success looks like’
- December – Refresh of the Library
- December – Internal comms – including Member Briefing Pack and Member Ward Walks
- December – External comms and partner discussions
- January - Targeted awareness raising of the offer to cohort groups
- End January – ‘Go live’ with additional clinics / services / locality hub manager

Examples of area committees / ward forums

- **Brent – five Brent connects forums** public events, meeting four times per year. At each meeting local people are able to ask questions and comment on services provided by both the Council and partner agencies in Brent. Chaired by a local councillor and assisted by a lead manager, each area is always held during a weekday evening in an accessible venue central to the community. Agendas are determined prior to each forum meeting. Local people, the forum chair and lead manager, other local councillors, partner organisations and council officers are all invited to participate in the agenda setting process.
- **Cambridge – four area committees** provide the opportunity for residents to give views and ideas for improving community life in the neighbourhood. The committees meet four times a year and have a say in the decision making on the use of developer contributions. Developer contributions give more choice about improvements to community and sports facilities, open spaces and play areas.
- **Hounslow – five area committees (forums)**, each committed to providing clear, accountable, community leadership and tackling the unique challenges and needs of their area. The forum monitors and reviews services delivered by the Council and other agencies in that area. The committees are made up of local Councillors with extensive knowledge of the area and allow for local consultation and discussion, providing a forum for local decision-making on a wide range of matters. Meetings are open to the public.
- **Merton – five community forums** are open to anyone with an interest in the local area. They are chaired by local councillors. Issues raised are referred to the responsible organisation to follow up and report back on how problems are resolved. The council web page also lists **an online community forum**: Colliers Wood Community Forum Facebook page.
- **Southwark – five community councils** provide a forum where local people, elected Councillors and council officers can meet to discuss anything of interest to the local community, and enable individuals and groups to ask questions, make suggestions, and consult upon proposed decisions affecting their neighbourhood. The meetings are open to anyone who lives, works or studies in the cc area, and are an important part of the council's consultation and decision making process. Each has elected councillors as voting members who all attend the five public meetings that are held in venues across the community councils' area each year.

- **Lewisham – eighteen local assemblies** that meet in each ward up to four times a year. A ward councillor chairs the assembly meeting. Anyone who lives, works or learns in the ward can attend. Each assembly has a set of priorities focusing on improving the ward. These are reviewed regularly. Every assembly gets a small amount of money every year known as the Local Assembly Fund. This is to help tackle these priorities. The assembly works with the voluntary sector, the police, the wider community and others to make real change happen.
- **Barnet – three resident forums** providing an opportunity for any resident to raise local matters to the Council except for matters relating to specific planning applications. Two Councillors (the Chairman and Vice-Chairman) are in attendance to consider issues that are raised. **Four area committees** with responsibility for, inter alia, all constituency specific matters relating to the street scene including parking, road safety, transport, allotments, parks and trees, matters raised at Residents Forums to determine how they are to be taken forward, the allocation of Community Infrastructure Levy. **Three area planning committees** with the work of the Committee consisting mostly of determining planning applications within the boundaries of their areas. This excludes the functions reserved to the Planning Committee.
- **Hackney – nineteen ward forums** run by local Councillors and residents as a way to improve the local area together. The Councillors help residents to agree the key things that need to get done in the area, whether that's improving local facilities, or finding a new community space to use. In some cases these will be things that ward forum participants can lead on: examples of this from other parts of the country have included decorating a community hall, or starting a project to help vulnerable neighbours. In other cases there will be priorities that the Council might be able to help with, like finding ways to increase recycling or using local facilities at different times. Also, where there are successful community projects happening already, the new Ward Forums can be used as a way to link them together, and to the Council where needed.
- **Ealing – twenty-three ward forums** led by ward councillors, feature joint problem solving on local concerns, including discussions on issues such as community safety, traffic and transport schemes, parks and street improvements. With an annual budget of £30,000, each forum combines the collective local knowledge of residents and ward councillors to recommend local improvement projects to benefit their ward. Information on council services, forthcoming consultations and events that affect your ward are also provided. Open to all Ealing residents, meeting at least twice a year in informal and accessible local venues.

Councillor Questions trends

On 23rd May 2016 the Council agreed changes to the Council Question system. The broader changes to improve council meetings and enable greater public participation, included:

- Enabling Councillors to question all Members of the Cabinet at every ordinary council meeting;
- Removing the requirement for Councillors to give written notice of their questions to Cabinet Members at Council meetings; and
- Increasing opportunities for residents to participate in the meeting, through public petition debates, an extended public question time and the removal of restrictive requirements to give notice well in advance of meetings.

Municipal Year	Number of Oral Questions asked in Council meetings	Written Council Questions
2010-11	105	612
2011-12	152	531
2012-13	137	533
2013-14	154	700
2014-15	158	593
2015-16	95	549
New Constitutional Arrangements		
2016-17	134	176
2017-18	129	124
2018-19	106	131

Governance Review: Summary of Member discussion – 30 January 2020

Panel's written response and clarification following consideration of the Member comments and questions detailed in the table below.

The Panel was pleased with the overall reception of the recommendations and reflected that the discussion points raised in the meeting were broadly covered in the report.

The Panel has updated its report to clarify that the Panel's recommendations set out the key areas of focus for the Council and that the proposals and suggestions outlined within the report are not final versions of the changes that will take place if the Council approves the recommendations.

The Panel's proposals aim at conveying principles and contexts that the Panel found important to capture. The proposed Member-led implementation Working Group will be tasked with finalising those in consultation with officers and through further testing with Members to reach cross-party agreements. As such the Panel will ensure that comments and ideas captured in this document form part of the Working Group's considerations.

As stated in the meeting, the Panel's report is a guiding document for Members and officers. The Working Group will provide the necessary continuity to consider ongoing feedback and ensure Member agreement on detailed changes.

The order in which the recommendations will be delivered will aim to align with Member priorities informed by officer feasibility. It is however clear that some recommendations will need to come before the others. For example, a forward plan is imperative to the successful operation of the new advisory committee meetings.

Some recommendations represent a need for long-term, continues improvements; others require one-off efforts to introduce a new process or a way of working. The Panel's report is not prescriptive in the methods and does not rule out perusing additional improvements, it is however mindful of the need to prioritise and create an effective feedback loop, to ensure the improvements are sustainable and deliver the agreed outcomes.

Member discussion

Theme 1 - An open, transparent and engaging council	
Comments and Questions (Q/C)	Panel's response at the meeting
Q/C1 Reducing Public Question Time (PQT) in Council meetings (from 30min to 15min) does not seem open and transparent; PQT at an advisory committee may carry less weight	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• On PQT the Panel had different views at different times, but cross-party there was an agreement that this should be considered as an option• There was a view that PQT at cabinet advisory committees could have more impact, residents would be more likely to influence, to be listened to and responded• There was a 'ritual' at Council of asking questions for effect, but residents would not usually receive a follow up or a possibility of real discussion around the questions – which could happen at cabinet advisory committees

	<p>Dame Moira Gibb:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whilst considering PQT is important, Theme 1 is about thinking consistently about the council, not just about the democratic process but also about service engagement with the public, and making sure the most is gained from the process in terms of understanding resident needs and concerns • We were also told that people are interested in decisions about their neighbourhoods, and council's governance is centralised; if localities work progresses the council should consider if a governance response would be needed to bring decision making closer to residents • The objective here is to consistently inform and engage the public and wider Members, and the recommendations are designed to support that
<p>Q/C2 There used to be Cabinet road shows, which weren't about politics and generated real conversations with residents; The council should consider reintroducing those because it meant that councillors were held to account and were positioned to deal with difficult questions</p> <p>Q/C3 In terms of more localised and neighbourhood based decision making what can we expect happening by the end of this year to allow residents to engage in a more tangible way</p> <p>Q/C4 Residents in places such as Sanderstead, Selsdon, Kenley do not recognise the new localities work as an operating model they can feed into; currently things are happening only in few strategic locations and not on the ground level (in each Ward); more work needs to be done to enable some of the reports suggestions in neighbourhoods;</p> <p>Q/C5 The council's endorsement of open data is not obvious to the</p>	<p>Dame Moira Gibb:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On Q/C3, it is unlikely much will happen by the end of this year, some recommendations are for Council to work on long-term, and there is recognition that prioritisation will need to take place, and the Council will need to decide which recommendations it wishes to implement the soonest as all have a resource impact • The other comments reinforce what the panel said in its report; • Panel has not been prescriptive but is signalling that things such as neighbourhood engagement is a gap, whilst recognising that each Ward is potentially different with different level of engagement; if the council is investing in decentralised approaches, governance needs to support this; • Council needs to both: performing for its residents to show that it is doing its business and help residents make sense of it, and being out there, in communities, understanding residents and bringing this back to the town hall; though difficult (for Members, the administration and officers), the panel endorses doing both, rather than going one or the other; • It is true that finding information is seen as difficult and the findings suggest that the council has not maximised the use of technologies and processes to provide timely information; this has again been a challenge and flagged in the report to focus on improvement <p>Panel's response:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Slides do not themselves showcase the full considerations that are expressed in the report and the Panel's context to arriving at those; but Theme 1 is seen as the most important; • Under the committee model, there was extensive report writing and councillors had a good understanding of council's decisions, even if there are varied views on their level of influence; The Executive model did bring needed efficiency, but both residents and members lost sight of council's business; the political culture shifted, with the ability to 'hide' information in reports and expecting backbench members to find it if queried; this had been an issue for the last 20 years; • The Panel says in its report that they endorse the Council's commitment to open data; this doesn't mean that it thinks the council is exemplary, but that the direction of travel is the right one and having information to hand is important in aiding all members and residents

<p>public; especially in terms of financial information; the council should be more open about large scale projects such as Fairfield, to help residents understand what was spent, how and why it's important</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In terms of PQT, though important, this raises a concern that we jump into structural issues of the council rather than considering what it means to be an open and engaging council • On Q/C2 the report doesn't rule out Road Shows or any other forms of more neighbourhood based engagements; • The Panel Member view was that the Council is in the middle of its journey and the report establishes principles and provides guidance on how to better work in the Chamber and be more open and transparent; if down the line there is resource and desire to for example reintroduce road shows, that could happen; political choices will need to be made and priorities established; • Q/C3 Is the question the Panel struggled with the most, some people want structures in localities; council had such structures in the past, which were a formal approach, it could be argued road shows are more of a flexible approach; both legitimate approaches; the report emphasises the need to work towards a consensus of how a political structure should work in locality • In regard to Q/C3 and recommendation 2, there is also work around community empowerment and devolution that's flagged in the report; the panel didn't find one model that it thought was particularly beneficial and should be introduced, but it's been reinforced that in finding the models right for Croydon it is important to recognise that different localities and communities have different issues and varied levels of engagement
<p>Q/C6 Report mentions the Wigan deal as an example of good practice and saving money; can Croydon learn from this?</p> <p>Q/C7 Did the Panel consult the digital team as the website will be key to delivering many of Panel's recommendations?</p> <p>Q/C8 If Leader and Cabinet Model is retained, and key decision definition reviewed, then Scheme of Delegation (SoD) should also be looked at; was this covered in the report and is there a commitment that this is going to happen?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitoring Officer in response to Q/C6; Yes, Croydon is taking part in LGA peer review that commences at the end of March, and CEO of Wigan is invited as part of the assessment group • The Panel's proposal is to reposition the current cabinet model to a collective cabinet model, which better reflects how decision making is done in practice; in terms of the Constitution and SoD the understanding, and commitment from officers, is that the Constitution would need to be rewritten, including parts relating to SoD or access to information; it's a large piece of work, but aims at ensuring greater transparency; the proposal of a new forward plan with upcoming decisions being indicated 6 months in advance, should be a key part of this and reflected in protocols • Chair asked the Panel to note Q/C7 in terms of engagement of the digital team.
Theme 2 - The right political and organisations culture	
<p>Q/C9 Having a clear, collective understanding of behavioural standards is important, but how will be Council ensure those are upheld and what happens if they are not?</p>	<p>Dame Moira Gibb:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A proposal on how the council should ensure standards are upheld is not included in the report, but this is a good example of a recommendation that requires Member involvement in designing the solution; Wigan is very impressive as everybody owns it and is involved in design of it, including residents; • It is important that behaviour standards should be designed and owned by people that will be held accountable to performing against them; the formal system in terms of

	<p>local government standards is not robust; the emphasis in here is wanting to agree the expectation that the council has in terms of how everybody will behave, building it as a positive rather than focusing on how people will be punished</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitoring Officer - the idea is to have a collaborative approach to setting the standard across both groups and then holding each other to account
<p>Q/C 10 Question for the Monitoring Officer - It appears that many officers do not understand the role of elected Members; What training do officers receive to ensure they understand a Ward Councillor role; are we looking to expand that?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A fair feedback and observation, and the area we are looking to enhance for that reason; the current model does mean that fewer officers have direct contact with members and that has been flagged in terms of how the council can be better at ensuring wider exposure of officers to Members and their roles, not just to Cabinet members; it was also flagged that officers felt that members didn't fully understand officer roles, statutory and otherwise <p>Panel response:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This works two ways, Members also need to understand the council business, inc. what different services do and what pressures they experience, so that Members understand that there are processes and certain pressures and genuine issues that may sometimes prevent officers from responding within expected timelines or with the level of detail; there is a level of disconnect between member and officer that the panel is trying to address in its recommendation
<p>Q/C 11 Officers are under a lot of pressure; will officers be put under additional pressure to deliver the recommendations?</p>	<p>Dame Moira Gibb:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> When the report is accepted, it definitely puts officers under more pressure; understanding the importance of prioritisation and appreciation that not everything can be done at once will be needed; there will be different views of what should come first and this should be done in consultation with officers; the panel also noted in a number of places that there is a lot of officer activity and streamlining might be necessary, where removing some of the silo'd working would help; there is always however the cost of transition and difficulty in effectively introducing new things and how this changes the way the council worked previously; A spirit of recognition and support for officers in their efforts to put this all in place is important, especially in terms of realistic timescales
<p>Q/C12 How will cabinet advisory committees address issues that are cross-cutting? Ensure clarity; e.g. climate emergency cuts across 4 Cabinet portfolios; priorities are becoming more complex and require cross-cutting solutions; how will the culture of the new structures support those?</p> <p>Q/C13 Officer culture, currently more tokenistic, where communications happen too late in the process; this</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Panel would like the Council to deliver quick wins first, so for example addressing issues around Ward consultation; more detailed work needs to be done to determine what recommendations can be delivered first; even if certain recommendations seem simpler to implement, in reality they might turn out to be more complex Panel's recommendations are about having spaces and culture where issues, such as mentioned disability issue, can be not only raised but also discussed

<p>would need to change; it is not only about Cabinet Members engaging meaningful, but also about officers</p> <p>Q/C14 On the Planning Committee, and the officer narrative around not being able to do more for disabled residents, beyond ensuring separate accessible areas; this narrative should change to appreciate that disabled residents may want to be more integrated within communities and not separated</p> <p>Q/C15 Does the Panel has a view on the order in which the Council should implement the recommendations?</p>	<p>with a view to reach solutions; how this is done in practice needs to be considered but this is an aspiration to pursue</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ward member engagement is frustrating, and better ways need to be found, this has been seen as a priority cross-party • Cultural changes will be the most difficult to achieve, because this requires people changing how they do things; the principle is about making all Members people of importance within the council; • If successful in changing the culture, the proof will be visible in two to four years, by asking councillors if they see themselves as legitimate, respected, informed members that know about things in advance; it requires political and council leadership to implement and ensure the council doesn't revert to its old ways
Theme 3 - The right Member support	
<p>Q/C 16 There is no clarity in terms of where complex member enquiries should be directed – members enquiries only answers certain questions and does not direct who to contact on others; Members need an equivalent of 'Contact the Council'.</p> <p>Q/C17 Some authorities have political advisors to help; not necessary or cost effective, but for the minority group there should be somebody within member services who can support finding out information</p> <p>Q/C18 Culture of openness is not only about top-down information sharing (officers informing members) but also about how collaborative and proactive people are in sharing information, and using tools such as social media to share learning; this links back to having the right culture</p> <p>Q/C 19 Directory or online contacts library would be invaluable; so Members can find what department and divisions exist, what they do and who works there; so that Members don't have to reach out to directors only;</p>	<p>Dame Moira Gibb:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is difficult for the councils to use less top-down methods of communicating but there are definite opportunities with technology; • The Panel discussed the issue of political advisors, and decided that we shouldn't recommend it; we did however agree that there is a need for more coordinated officer signposting for members, especially new members, to understand how the council works; the panel will take the comments made in this session away to consider if those need further explanation or clarification in the report <p>Panel response:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Panel spent time on considering member support and the need that exists for such support; it was apparent that issues with resolving Member enquiries exist and it's important to improve in this area; there is a degree of resource issue, but officers are looking at how this could be reconfigured • Information does exist but is often detailed and difficult to extract or explain by officers; the role of the advisory committees is to improve this and have a space where information can be presented, discussed and followed up on • Chair asked the panel to note comments, for their considerations •
Theme 4 - A structure that supports participation	
<p>Q/C20 On the four cabinet advisory committees grouping, Member was not convinced how those were split in terms of not bringing the</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In terms of the presentation slide, a clarification was made that retaining a 'strong leader and cabinet model' featured on the slide as only accurate in terms of the legal

<p>children and adults together; the greatest synergy is between those two areas as the transition from childhood to adulthood is a big issue; a potential reason might be that those have the two biggest budgets, but this reason was seen as unsatisfactory</p>	<p>definition, whilst the report is moving away from the strong leader to collective cabinet; this is a shift in governance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In terms of proposed grouping, this is the first attempt and a decision on how to group the cabinet advisory committees will come later on; same question (Q/C20) came up in scrutiny 20 years ago, it was not however about the budget but about ¾ of the council working in those areas; if there are 4 committees given similar weighting, one committee trying to oversee a business of 75% of the council would not allow it to have the time and space for it to consider important issues; it could be proposed that this committee meets more frequently than others;
<p>Q/C21 Observation was raised that the council has devolved decision making; and decisions are not signed off by the Leader and issues are discussed collectively by Cabinet; the report was seen as potentially revolutionary because it empowers all 70 Members; opportunity for the committees to look a policy in advance and influence it in terms of how policy is shaped is something to be embraced</p> <p>Q/C22 Public services and delivery of them is changing radically; e.g. One Croydon is looking at shared and joined up budgets, this will mean different way of delivering services and overseeing those; First meeting of the Citizens Assembly was very positive and there is an opportunity to roll this out in other policy areas, to enhance contribution from not only Members but also from representative groups of residents</p> <p>Q/C23 The test will be the credibility of the new committees and how and if the recommendations change the way the council works;</p> <p>Q/C24 Did the Panel consider with the Cabinet the different decisions made in the last 2 years, and which ones would benefit from a discussion at one of the committees; did we look at how many decisions there were per Cabinet Member to decide how they might be allocated to the committee to achieve balanced workload;</p> <p>Q/C25 How will the new advisory committees operate alongside scrutiny; for example, the budget, which traditionally goes to scrutiny committee, will that still be the case or will this go to Finance Advisory Committee, or both;</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scrutiny is important in terms of the budget, but what will be possible through all cabinet advisory committees is to have some early thinking about options, which can inform the budget proposals that go to scrutiny, cabinet and full council; it's about early thinking and additional input; • Whatever way the cabinet advisory committees are grouped, there will be cross-cutting issues, issues where cabinet advisory committees might want to come together to look at an area • In terms of structural changes, those are a set of indicative proposals, not the final version, and all comments will be reflected on, certainly in terms of the comments of how the committees should be grouped; • In terms of relation to scrutiny, scrutiny has certain legal powers which advisory committees do not; most effective scrutiny looks at early decision making, undertakes Q&As, has right to scrutinise external bodies and with the new forward plan, will have much earlier notifications of review of strategy and policy to do so; the advisory committees will be influencing actual decision making where proposals are more firmly drafted; scrutiny takes on earlier, upstream issues and is non-political; the council makes hundreds of decisions and the thing that will make it work would be the chairs of scrutiny and advisory committees agreeing each year where papers should be taken to avoid duplication
<p>Q/C26 To ensure synergy between children and adults committee, it was suggested that a chair or some members</p>	<p>Dame Moira Gibb:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Panel recognised that this is a significant increase in number of committees, and result in increased complexity; CfPS provided

<p>of one committee could also sit on the other committee; this is to ensure an ongoing dialog</p> <p>Q/C27 Looking back at the original mandate and manifesto commitment, there was a big emphasis on enabling the local communities to have more say into how local services in their areas are run and that the Panel consider how to ensure this;</p> <p>Q/C28 Panel asked to consider the terms used to describe the committees; in the select committee process it is possible that the committees come together as an initiative of the council as a whole, rather than being appointed by the Executive;</p>	<p>evidence of how other hybrids work and how important it is to clearly direct decisions in terms of what goes where as well as being willing to test and change</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Panel recommended that there is a review in due course, when the committees are up and running; testing their effectiveness is extremely important; the review is also to see if some of the many meetings could be followed into those committees, whatever they are called • The Panel is not wedded to the committee names, it's for Members to agree what to call them
Council meeting	
<p>Q/C29 On PQT, there is a proposal to reduce length at Council but no corresponding proposal / explanation of how PQT would work at cabinet advisory committees;</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Panel is still developing the advisory committee proposals, more time needs to be spent on considering agreeing the detail; the idea would be to have committees in place and clarity of how PQT operates in those before a reduction of time at the Council meeting takes place
<p>Q/C30 On use of announcements, it was unfair that time would come out of backbench time or question time to accommodate those; announcements should be directed towards the report, rather to take up time</p> <p>Q/C31 Will cabinet advisory committees have specific recommendation time at Council</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advisory committees are advisory to Cabinet Members, as such recommendations will go back to Cabinet collectively or Cabinet Member • In terms of announcements, need to work towards a compromise that accommodates those and ensures time for questioning; could work towards empowering Shadow Cabinet to respond to ensure more political debate and have a more nuanced system • It was recognised there will be different views on this across the room
<p>Q/C32 How would backbench contributors be chosen</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Used to have Ward Matters, there is mixed views on those, but the Backbench Matters is principally about giving backbench Members a greater opportunity to be actively involved in the Council meeting; how it would be done has not been finalised; • For the Panel it would be interesting to know if Members are interested in having such a slot, or would rather not have it
<p>Q/C33 Who gets called could be at a discretion of the Chair; currently choreographed and the meeting would possibly benefit from a bit of spontaneity; a more radical approach would for the council to elect its own speaker to protect the interest of backbencher</p> <p>Q/C34 Backbench Matters would be a good opportunity to share particular campaigns, and</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Backbench Matters was one of the more recent proposal that the Panel considered; the Council proposals are also more recent and need further consideration, as the Council is the most contentious; it is not necessarily wrong that there is a lot of energy at the meeting but things as the issue of chairing are also about how the political parties operate rather than the council, and how they decide to approach the meeting; over time both sides professionalised the meeting (becoming quite scripted)

<p>give a platform to some positive work that backbenchers do outside of Town Hall, for Members and residents to get better understanding of what is going on outside of the Chamber</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The proposal downgrades debate motions, so that recommendations can be discussed; in terms of Backbench Matters, was there a need for a formal Cabinet Member response or could Cabinet Members respond in writing • The Panel was told that backbench members had not much to do in the Council meetings • Feedback would be useful to know if backbench members would feel more engaged in the council meeting and whether it would improve the overall feeling of the meeting
<p>Q/C35 Could few people make speeches and few people make immediate responses in the Backbench Matters</p> <p>Q/C36 No mention of the role of the Mayor in the proposals; is there room for discussion about electing a Mayor from the opposition for at least one year; the administration to have the first year and last year;</p> <p>Q/C37 It was seconded that there doesn't appear to be a need for a formal Cabinet member response to Backbench matters speakers; this is about informing and educating and the more backbench contribution, the better;</p> <p>Q/C38 Spontaneity of the meeting is taken away by the need to submit a question a week in advance; it could be up to the Mayor to adjudicate and pick questions from each side; so if backbench member has a question they didn't think of two weeks in advance they can ask it;</p> <p>Q/C39 Debate Motions do not achieve anything even if enjoyable; could the time be extended in pools by reducing or abolishing debate motions</p> <p>Q/C40 On Council Debate Motions, a lot of councils use different models, and a lot of them are proposed from the backbench and ask for the council to adopt a certain policy or proposal</p> <p>Q/C41 If debate Motions are not retained, to consider what would replace this to ensure the council has a process for passing statement of intent for direction of policy such as climate emergency</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Straw polls were suggested • On Backbench Matters, Members were mostly in favour • On Cabinet formal response to backbench matters in the meeting, Members were mostly not in favour • On retaining Debate Motions, slightly towards not in favour but split • On Opposition Mayor, the vote was more or less evenly split, though it was noted that members did not vote solely on party lines

Concerns on new governance arrangements following 30th January 2020 meeting

Too many committees

This adds to the many overlapping committees that we already have. Clarity of purpose and scope for each, and coordination of their activities is the only way this has a chance of working.

My experience so far of coordination between the committees we already have has not been good. There are many involved in Children's Services and they seem to jealously guard their autonomy rather than embrace collaboration. There is a high risk of creating work for both Councillors and Officers whilst reducing effectiveness.

Scrutiny

There seems to be a view that Scrutiny should move to more early stage examination of decisions. I am not averse to someone doing this but there are high risks.

Council officers and the ruling party (I have no doubt it was the same when the Conservatives were in power) have great reluctance to share the decision making process. I fear we will see very light papers, mostly Powerpoint and a non-committal presentation. Scrutiny committee members may get to indulge themselves in some blue sky thinking but that is not scrutiny in my opinion.

I would also like clarity on who is going to scrutinise whether the organisation is delivering. The failure of Children's Services came out of a clear blue sky. I think we need a definition of how delivery will be scrutinised. There are various ways of doing this. We must decide which to pursue.

Open data

Transparency and sharing trot lightly off the tongue. The reality is very different. There is a very strong reluctance to share anything. When information is shared it tends to be very late indeed or not at all. I can give examples if you wish. These are worthless words unless we have clear definition of what is and is not shared and confidentiality rules. I favour a definition of what information has a presumption of sharing with justification required of when it should not be shared.

Training and skills

As is shown in the report, the training budget is underspent and attendance by Councillors at training is poor. I suggest even these figures are over-stated. Longer serving Councillors have been poor attendees. Where attendance was recorded it was not uncommon for people to show up towards the end to sign the attendance sheet without burdening themselves with attending.

Training has also been largely about statutory responsibilities. Making a complicated inter-related committee system work is hard. It requires skills like strategy development, decision making especially under high uncertainty, risk analysis, effective meeting management and more. There has been no such training; when I have mooted the idea there has been no interest.

Councillors (Officers too) must raise their game. To fix this requires leadership. Tony Newman and Tim Pollard need to agree what training and skills are needed and then show up themselves. That is the only way.

Language and Jargon

A good point was made that the report was written in better English than we are used to seeing. It is not just a problem of officer-speak, it is using several words when one will do. Adding more words is seen as giving weight to the argument, and possibly used to muddy the waters. I suggest a style guide and someone assigned to monitor performance for a period.

Further reading

Title	Link
Change at the Council: Independent Review of Governance for the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, CfPS, 2018	https://www.cfps.org.uk/change-council-independent-review-governance-royal-borough-kensington-chelsea/
Changing to a committee system in a new area, LGiU briefing, 2014	https://lgiu.org/briefing/changing-to-a-committee-system-in-a-new-era/
Councillor workbook: councillor/officer relations, LGA, 2018	https://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/11.141%20A%20councillor%207s%20workbook%20on%20councillor_x3A_officer%20relationships_v03.pdf
Councillor workbooks, LGA	https://www.local.gov.uk/councillor-workbooks
Creating a challenge culture? New statutory guidance on overview and scrutiny, LGiU, 2019	https://lgiu.org/briefing/creating-a-challenge-culture-new-statutory-guidance-on-overview-and-scrutiny/
Local Governance Review, Scottish Government & COSTA, 2019	https://www.gov.scot/policies/improving-public-services/local-governance-review/
Financial sustainability of local authorities 2018 visualisation	https://www.nao.org.uk/other/financial-sustainability-of-local-authorities-2018-visualisation/
Governance Review of Cornwall Council	https://www.cornwall.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/councillors-and-democracy/governance-how-council-decisions-are-made/2016-governance-review-of-cornwall-council/
Governance, culture and collaboration, discussion paper, CfPS, 2019	https://www.cfps.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Governance-and-Culture-2019.pdf
How Councils Work, series of reports, Audit Scotland, 2010 – 2016)	https://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk/our-work/how-councils-work
How Councils Work: an improvement series for councillors and officers, Audit Scotland, 2010	https://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk/uploads/docs/report/2010/bvrm_100826_councillors_officers.pdf
How Councils Work Follow-up messages for councils Roles and working relationships in councils - Are you still getting it right? Accounts Commission prepared by Audit Scotland, 2016	https://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk/uploads/docs/report/2016/hcw_roles_followup.pdf
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Local Government Governance and Accountability, House of Commons Committee of Public Accounts, 2019	https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmpubacc/2077/2077.pdf
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Rethinking governance Practical steps for councils considering changes to their governance arrangements, CfPS, 2014	https://www.cfps.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Rethinking-Governance.pdf
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The 21st Century Councillor, University of Birmingham, 2016	https://21stcenturypublicservant.files.wordpress.com/2016/07/21st-century-councillor.pdf
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The Voice of the Councillor, De Montfort University and Municipal Journal Councillor Commission, 2017	https://www.dmu.ac.uk/documents/business-and-law-documents/2017/the-voice-of-the-councillor-2017-final-version-cc-rw.pdf

Croydon governance and decision making – key document links

Constitution of the London Borough of Croydon	https://democracy.croydon.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=287&MId=2084&Ver=4&Info=1
Part 5.A – Protocol for Decision Making	https://democracy.croydon.gov.uk/documents/s17236/22%20Part%205A%20-%20Protocol%20for%20Decision%20Making%2002.2019.pdf
Part 5.B – Protocol on Staff – Councillor Relations	https://democracy.croydon.gov.uk/documents/s17967/23%20Part%205B%20-%20Protocol%20on%20Staff%20Councillor%20Relations%2008.2019.pdf
Part 5.I - Members' Code of Conduct	https://democracy.croydon.gov.uk/documents/s17243/Part%205I%20-%20Members%20Code%20of%20Conduct.pdf
Leader's Scheme of Delegation	https://democracy.croydon.gov.uk/documents/s17246/Leaders%20Scheme%20of%20Delegation.pdf
Croydon Council Current Committee Structures	https://democracy.croydon.gov.uk/mgListCommittees.aspx?bcr=1
Key Decision Notices and Statements of Executive Decisions	https://www.croydon.gov.uk/democracy/dande/policies/notices-statements
Corporate code of governance	https://www.croydon.gov.uk/democracy/budgets/corporate-code-of-governance
Annual Governance Statement 2018/19, Jul 2019, Report to GPAC	https://democracy.croydon.gov.uk/documents/s16864/Annual%20Governance%20Statement%20201819%20Appendix%201.pdf

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