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Centre for Public Scrutiny

Change at the Council

Independent Review of Governance for the
Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea

Foreword

Jacqui McKinlay, Chief Executive of the Centre for Public Scrutiny

It would be impossible to offer this report without paying tribute to the 72 people who lost their lives in the Grenfell Tower tragedy. We also wish to offer our thoughts for those who have suffered injuries, lost loved ones or were in any way caught up in the terrible events of that night. While our work has not been about the fire specifically, we felt its shadow in everything we did.

The central message from our work over the last few months is one of change.

Partly, this is because change is needed. It is in fact essential if the Council is to rebuild trust and be equipped to understand and meet the needs of everyone in Kensington and Chelsea, now and in the future. Even before the Grenfell tragedy there was clearly a need for things to be different. In our evidence, we heard many times a similar message; that the Council's decision makers should be more outward looking, less distant, more involving.
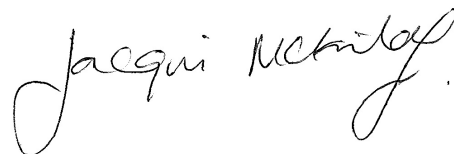
But change is not only needed; it is wanted. The majority of the residents, councillors, council officers and partners we spoke to offered a similar vision of what "good" could look like in future. The Council is in the fortunate position of having vast amounts of experience, skills, expertise, passion and enthusiasm to draw on from all parts of the Borough. A new attitude of wanting to connect with people can only improve thinking and inform better democratic decision-making.

We are not offering this report as a list of tasks. The challenge is more complex and change will take a long-term commitment to shift behaviours and beliefs. There are some practical steps that we have recommended, but we believe that the best ideas and plans for how a new relationship between the Council and its communities will develop need to come from conversations between all those involved with the Borough.

I also want to take this opportunity to thank everyone who shared their views with us, whether face to face or in writing. I also want to thank everyone at the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea (RBKC) who supported us in our work and ensured that all the practical arrangements ran so smoothly. I want to express my appreciation for the team at the Centre for Public Scrutiny, for their hard work and dedication. I want also to acknowledge The Democratic Society for their highly skilled contribution to this project. Finally, I want to thank the Local Government Association for funding this work.

In closing, it is important to say that we heard so many positive ideas and high aspirations that I have no doubt that RBKC can be an excellent example of an outward-looking council in future.

Best wishes, Jacqui McKinlay

Summary

Councillors and council officers recognise that the formal processes of decision-making, and the informal culture that surround them, need to change. While there are many good things that the Council does, it must now look to be outward rather than inward facing.

By talking to a wide range of people and gathering evidence through surveys, desktop research and observing meetings, we have produced a series of proposals that we believe will help the Council improve and be more outward looking. These proposals are intended to reflect the common ground between all those involved. We have also included some suggestions from our own experience of working with councils and other organisations.

At the heart of our report are twelve principles and seven recommendations that we believe should provide the foundations for the way the Council works in future. We also have included a number of options for next steps for the Council to consider once those foundations have started to be put in place.

We recognise that fundamental to how a council works is democratic decision-making and accountability. To bring about change we have focused on councillors' dual role as civic leaders as well as decision makers and scrutineers in relation to strategic and operational decisions. Involvement will be different depending on the circumstance but should be a mindset that sees those affected and involved as central to the way policy is devised and decisions are made.

The balancing of different views means that councillors will increasingly have to make hard choices. Decision-making is difficult. Even where decisions are difficult, it is right that councillors need to formally make those decisions, and it is right that there will inevitably be some people who are unhappy with them. The recommendations and other measures we propose are about confronting this reality and giving everyone the confidence that, even when a decision is made with which they do not personally agree, they understand the evidence that underpins that decision and the rationale for it having been made. In many cases, we expect that people with a stake in decisions will be able to play a role in crafting them as well.

Kensington and Chelsea faces similar challenges here to other public services in finding ways to engage that allows diverse voices to be heard, as well as some more unique challenges around the high numbers of people who only frequent the Borough on a daily basis.

We also recognise the complexity of the current circumstances and that the recommendations we have made will be challenging to achieve. Their ambition reflects what was heard; implementation will need to be realistically planned and communicated by the Council.

Principles

These principles describe what good governance means for the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea. They have been designed using suggestions from residents, councillors, council officers and partners. We believe that they will be useful to guide the Council going forward, and we will set out what each means in the report.

1. **Connecting with residents**
2. **Focusing on what matters**
3. **Listening to every voice**
4. **Acting with integrity**
5. **Involving before deciding**
6. **Communicating what we're doing**
7. **Inviting residents to take part**
8. **Being clearly accountable**
9. **Responding fairly to everyone's needs**
10. **Working as a team**
11. **Managing responsibly**
12. **Having the support we need**

Recommended foundations for improvement

These recommendations are things the Council needs to start doing in the next twelve months to improve its governance. Further details of all of our recommendations can be found in our description of the twelve principles and in the separate technical appendix.

A. Incorporate the twelve principles into the Council's key policies, strategies and partnership arrangements, including the Constitution, organisational, officer and member development programmes, as the foundation for a new and positive culture

B. Hold a Borough-wide conversation to decide the strategic direction and governance arrangements for the Council

C. Establish a citizens' assembly, along with similar "deliberative" process as part of the Borough-wide conversation on the strategic direction and future governance of the Council

D. Establish a "listening committee" for councillors to hear directly from residents in an open format

E. Set up a commission to review how Borough-wide and area governance will work in the future, involving residents and partners to consider options

F. Take practical steps to engage with local government good practice

G. Use the Annual Government Statement as the basis for an ongoing, wider conversation about how governance can be improved

Options for next steps

These are options for things that the Council could start doing over the next two years, depending on the conversations with the community and once the foundations for improvement have started to be put into place.

It is not our expectation that the Council will do all of this in the way that we have set out in our report. Instead, the Council and community should use the framework provided by the citizens' assembly, and other opportunities for dialogue, to decide what the best approach should be. This means that there will be a proper sense of ownership – from the Council and local people – over whatever changes are put in place.

Resident involvement in decision-making

- Publish a statement of the Council's new culture (and new strategic vision) to demonstrate how the Council will work with local people to understand how decision-making ought to be opened up

- Introduce an advisory panel for policy development

- Set up a model of policymaking that involves residents appropriately in the development of policy proposals, including the use of policy commissions

- Redesign the Council website

- Work with councillors and the voluntary sector to foster and support local individuals, groups and organisations to self-organise to influence council decision-making

Councillors working with residents

- Hold development sessions for councillors working with communities

- Focus member induction (and ongoing support to councillors) on a clear understanding of councillors' various roles

- Take action to ensure that officer responses to councillor requests are consistently timely, positive and informative

Lead members and decision-making

- Clarify the different roles of officers and members in the decision-making process

- Redesign the "key decision" process

- Review the governance of the bi-borough and partnership arrangements to ensure they are compatible with the twelve principles

- Publish an accessible general guide to how decisions are made

- Publish in a consistent way the reasons and evidence behind individual decisions

- Introduce "back to the floor" sessions for Leadership Team and senior officers

- Review the way that different voices are balanced when decisions are made

- Direct more policy questions to scrutiny – particularly where answers are unclear

Leadership Team, mirrored by the Council's most senior officers, should create additional opportunities to discuss key policy issues as a group

Scrutiny

- Review and agree scrutiny's role and purpose, and ensure that this role and purpose are well understood

- Prioritise scrutiny work better, informed by scrutiny's role and better use of information by scrutiny members

- Put in place a single work programme for scrutiny that allows scrutiny councillors to focus on the most important issues for the Council and residents

- Clarify the role and responsibilities of lead members in respect of scrutiny to ensure a clear process of holding to account

- Extend the use of co-option to give local people, and local experts, more of a stake in the scrutiny process

- Redesign the governance support function

Council meetings

- Co-design with residents a petitions system to easily allow residents to raise issues for debate at council meetings

- Review the expectations of local people, in terms of their experience of playing an active part at council meetings

Longer-term aspirations

These are ideas that the Council can consider once the foundations and next steps have been addressed. In particular, we think that detailed steps to address the frequency of council meetings and the committee structure can only be addressed after the above recommendations about role, purpose and overall governance have been resolved.

Resident involvement in decision-making

- Map where community and amenity groups exist to make it easier for those groups to self-organise and support each other

Councillors working with residents

- Employ political assistants for party groups

Lead members and decision-making

- Put in place a policy "green paper" or working paper system to share policy challenges at an early stage

Council meetings

- Review the frequency of council meetings and the committee structure – only after other recommendations about role, purpose and so on have been resolved

- Full Council to continue to provide space for the public to address councillors, which places contributions from the public at the centre

About this report
How this study came about

Shortly after the Grenfell Tower fire, a meeting of the Council passed a motion asking for "a full and independent study of the advantages of re-introducing a committee-based system of scrutiny". The scope of the review was later extended by the Council to include:

- The best way to ensure an effective scrutiny and decision-making system for Kensington and Chelsea

- The range of governance options open to the Council

- Community engagement in decision-making

- Ensuring the effectiveness of formal council meetings, including opportunities for public and democratic debate

- The role, function and resourcing of governance, oversight and scrutiny arrangements

In this report, the term "governance" is used often. It refers to the way that the Council makes decisions and who is involved in making those decisions. Good governance means doing the right things in the right way. It is about more than just legal systems and policies. It is about being transparent, accountable, involving people, acting with integrity and having the right support. This is what we call a "culture of good governance".

When the independent Grenfell Recovery Taskforce produced a report in the autumn of 2017, it asked the Council to make sure that the independent study also covered "what good looks like in relation to the behaviours and performance in role of Members".

This report, therefore, looks at not only what is written down about how the Council makes decisions but also how people actually behave in practice. The proposed principles and the detail that sits behind those principles will provide a practical foundation to inform all aspects of member behaviour, and should inform the development of member induction, training and development, code of conduct

and any associated performance standards the Council wishes to develop.

We at the Centre for Public Scrutiny were asked to carry out this work in the summer of 2017. We are a charity that provides advice and support to councils, but also challenges them, on issues relating to governance. We are supported by a grant from the Local Government Association, which is a national body of which most councils (including the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea) are members, and work with councils around the country. The Local Government Association agreed that it would provide us with separate funding to cover this work, at no cost to the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea.

We agreed with the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea that we would carry out this work. Proposals for this study were included in a report to the Council's Executive Services Scrutiny Committee, which met on 18 September 2017. We attended this meeting, which was held in public, and answered questions about how we proposed to do this work. As a result of this meeting we agreed with the Council, and the Local Government Association, that we would carry out our work in the way we describe below.

We then engaged a second independent organisation, The Democratic Society, to support our work in their area of specialism: citizen participation and resident voice. The Democratic Society has a long-standing relationship with local government in the UK, including with the Local Government Association and Society of Local Authority Chief Executives, and has worked on governance and democracy issues with rural and urban councils across England. As an international non-profit organisation, it also understands best practice from beyond the UK. The Society is a non-partisan membership organisation, and constitutionally barred from political alignment or activity.

While the Grenfell tragedy is of course the trigger for this work, our brief was to look at governance across the whole of the Borough, and this is what we have done.

Overall approach

Broadly speaking, our approach has been to focus on what people want to be different in the future, what a good future might look like and what good things are happening already, both inside and outside of the Council. This report, therefore, focuses on positive solutions. Our evidence gathering has of course looked at the past – existing and former practice – to come to a view about the journey that the Council has to take towards improvement.

We believe that it will be councillors, residents and officers working together who will make the necessary cultural change a reality. It cannot happen just by mechanical implementation of recommendations from external experts. Our approach, therefore, has been to listen carefully to what people have told us and to highlight areas where we think there is common ground. What we have suggested in this report are, as far as possible, things that we believe will work in Kensington and Chelsea because they have been suggested by people in Kensington and Chelsea.

We have also made some suggestions based on our work with other councils where we think is helpful.

We believe that the process of change is long term and we see this report as setting out only the foundations. It is, of course, essential to address the foundations before moving on to other things.

Our report makes a range of recommendations, but our focus has been on the following:

- **Developing a set of principles that should form the basis for good governance.** These principles reflect the things that people to whom we have spoken think are most important. They cover the way that the Council acts and behaves when it makes decisions, when it puts together its policies and when it tells people about what it is doing. Signing up to a set of principles like this will be important for the Council – it shows local people that it is prepared to change, and that it understands what that change needs to look like.

- **A Borough-wide conversation that would help local people and the Council to work out together what the Council's priorities should be, and the changes that would need to be made to make those priorities happen.** There are big issues in the Borough for the Council to address. Over the course of the next twelve months, the Council should talk to local people to better understand how it can work with them to tackle those issues together. We suggest some ways in which this might happen.

- **A range of other options that could help the Council improve the way it makes decisions.** Some of these are medium term, with action being taken within the next two years or so. Some are for further down the line.

For all of these issues, action can only start after the local elections in May 2018. The manifestos of the individuals and parties involved, and the election campaign, will provide the foundation for this work.

In our evidence gathering, we have looked at the following key themes that were set out in the Council's proposal for this study:

- General culture
- Resident involvement in decision-making
- Councillors working with residents
- Lead members and decision-making
- Scrutiny
- Council meetings

While the principles we have proposed in this report are relevant across the board, we have listed our recommendations and options against these key themes.

Evidence gathering

Our work has focused on gathering evidence in three ways – from council officers and councillors (through focus groups, interviews and a survey), a review of policies and council documentation, and from residents (through focus groups, interviews and a survey).

We have designed our evidence gathering to reflect the fact that our work is a first step towards a more meaningful dialogue between the Council and local people – a dialogue in which local people take the lead. In this context, our work was not about carrying out a comprehensive consultation exercise or an exhaustive analysis of all aspects of council governance past and present. This is an initial piece of work, and we expect that local people will continue to have conversations – with each other and with the Council – as work to improve governance goes forward.

The evidence we collected for this report included:

- Fifty interviews with residents, voluntary organisations, councillors, council officers and partners

- Five discussion groups and workshops with residents and councillors

- Two surveys, one for residents and one for those connected with the Council, which received 375 and 79 responses respectively

- Desktop research completed by the research team

- Seven meetings attended with councillors and council officers

- Observations of nine council meetings

The evidence we collected reflected views from across the Borough. We spoke to councillors and organisations from North and South. The responses to our survey also reflected the many different communities of Kensington and Chelsea.

The full details of how evidence was collected and analysed can be found in the method statement included as an appendix to this report.

Research team

The work for this report has been done by:

Centre for Public Scrutiny
Jacqui McKinlay, Ed Hammond, Dave McKenna, Sunita Sharma, Elena Konopelko, Ian Parry

LGA peer members
Cllr Ed Davie, Cllr John Riley

The Democratic Society
Anthony Zacharzewski, Mel Stevens, Beth Wiltshire

All inquiries about this report to: info@cfps.org.uk

Change at the Council: An overview

From the evidence we heard it is clear that, while there are many good things in place, the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea is a council, and a Borough, which wants to see major change.

We heard from residents, councillors, officers and partners about a number of practical things they want to be different about how the Council works day to day – the way that it communicates with residents, holds meetings, makes decisions. But we also heard a desire for broader change in the behaviours, attitudes and values that sit alongside these practical activities.

The leadership of the Council is clear that it is now in a different world; that the Council cannot go back. The Council also understands that it cannot move forward without a clear and honest conversation with its residents.

The aim of this governance review, therefore, is to provide the Council and the local community with the foundation they need in order to begin that conversation about how the Council is run.

This is a conversation that needs to have residents, their needs and hopes, at its heart.

While our work happened in the aftermath of the Grenfell Tower fire, the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea's problems are about more than its operational response to that fire. Local people have told us that they have been unhappy with the way that the Council has been run for many years, but the Council has not listened. In contrast, the Council has, with some justification, seen itself as a body that manages public finances well and delivers many well-regarded services. Over many years, these seemingly opposite views have led to frustration, anger and deep distrust among many local people.

Our view is that the Council does have a firm foundation to build on. It has many strengths, particularly in the delivery of services to residents. But the Council is inward facing. As the Council begins to adapt, recognising that it has to change in order to better represent and reflect the needs of its residents, it now needs to move to an outward-facing model – one that welcomes challenge, and is candid and frank about the way that it works. In this way it can draw on the advice and resources of residents, the support of partner organisations and the good practice ideas of other councils. As one person responding to our survey said, the Council needs to: "Give residents a real voice and listen and react to their issues, concerns and complaints". Another said: "More local decision-making. More meaningful consultations that aren't simply a box ticking exercise. Residents being put at heart of decision-making process."

Kensington and Chelsea is also well placed in a second way; it benefits from having many active, well-informed and well-organised residents, and voluntary groups and charities that are active across the Borough. We were impressed with the people we met from right across the Borough, and believe that their energy and commitment hold the key to how the Council operates in future. In response to the survey question: "Why is it important for people like you to get involved with decisions made by the Council?", one resident replied: "So that the Council is helped to be more outward facing and made accountable". It is clear from our evidence that many residents have a realistic understanding of the challenges that the Council faces and are keen to offer support. As another resident said in a survey response: "You only have to ask".

However, the issue of trust is central to what happens next in Kensington and Chelsea.

In our report, we highlight a number of things the Council needs to do. These things on their own will not rebuild trust – the lack of trust is a long-term problem that will take a great deal of time and effort if it is to be fixed.

According to research done by Mayar, Davis and Schoorman (published in 1995), earning trust depends on three things. The first is that you do what you say you will do, the second is showing that you care about the person you are asking to trust you and the third is acting with integrity. We have thought about these things when designing our proposals to ensure that the

principles we have suggested will, in particular, support a longer-term process of building trust.

It is also clear to us that there needs to be a better recognition of the role that councillors play in Kensington and Chelsea. Councillors have a range of connected roles. They make decisions, they sort out local people's problems, they hold the Council to account. They also play a "civic leadership" role – helping others to empower themselves, and strengthening the capacity of the communities which they serve to take action on their own behalf to tackle things that are important to them.

An outward-looking council will put its councillors at the centre of efforts to better involve, engage and empower local people. Councillors, as well as local people, have to be empowered as part of the work the Council is doing to change its culture. Not just lead members but all councillors have an active and critical role to play – holding decision makers to account, taking part in decision-making and policy development, working and supporting people in their wards are just a few of the many roles they have. In relation to our recommendations specifically, councillors should hold the Council to account on its commitment to take forward what we are proposing, and should play an active role in the Borough-wide conversation that we think needs to happen as a first step.

We heard many good examples of councillors who were able to build up meaningful connections with residents in their communities and who demonstrate many of the behaviours needed to gain trust. These councillors need to be supported in what they do and their good practice shared as something that can be repeated across the Borough. Councillors not only provide the public face of the Council but also have a critical role in connecting the needs and aspirations of residents to the decision-making process, whether as advocates for residents' views or as organisers, helping residents to get directly involved.

Of course, councillors also have a role as decision makers, and this involves balancing the needs of everyone across the Borough. While this will always involve making difficult choices, it is through an honest conversation with residents that these choices can be made well and explained well. As mentioned above, residents understand this, and are more likely to accept even those decisions they disagree with if they feel they are informed and involved.

At the heart of this report are twelve principles for good governance. These principles have not been taken "off the shelf" but instead reflect what we have heard from the residents, councillors, council officers and partners we spoke to. While we have checked these principles against more recognised general frameworks, they represent, first and foremost, the aspirations of people living and working in Kensington and Chelsea and the particular circumstances of the Borough. As much as is possible, they reflect the common ground of what people have told us. This is why we think they should be helpful for a conversation about good governance going forward.

Our hope is that these principles can be used as the basis for redesigning the governance of the Council. Nine of the twelve principles reflect the need for the Council to be more outward facing. The remaining three are about how the Council should work behind the scenes.

We believe that these principles will be of interest to other councils that would like to be more outward facing.

Drawing on these principles, and on the evidence we gathered, we have made a series of recommendations for things we believe that the Council should do to achieve a reasonable level of good governance.

In summary, this report sets out what good might look like in future and highlights the steps we think might help the Council, working with residents, to get there.

We can only provide a framework for what the future might look like. We cannot provide a detailed plan. Only the Council and the community can do that.

Good governance principles for the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea

Good governance means doing the right things in the right way.

To capture what good governance means and to represent the common ground of what we heard from residents, councillors, officers and partners, we have designed twelve principles. These are drawn directly from the conversations we have had – they sum up what people in Kensington in Chelsea believe when it comes to the Council doing the right things in the right way. We hope that these principles will be meaningful to everyone involved with the Borough and will support good governance going forward.

The twelve principles are:

1. **Connecting with residents**
2. **Focusing on what matters**
3. **Listening to many voices**
4. **Acting with integrity**
5. **Involving before deciding**
6. **Communicating what we're doing**
7. **Inviting residents to take part**
8. **Being clearly accountable**
9. **Responding fairly to everyone's needs**
10. **Working as a team**
11. **Managing responsibly**
12. **Having the support we need**

While they are not listed in order of importance, the first nine principles are what we would expect from an outward-looking council. The remaining three principles are more about making sure things work well behind the scenes. All of these relate directly to the change in culture that the Council is embarking on – a change to people's behaviour, attitudes and values – which is so crucial in reconnecting RBKC to the people it serves.

These principles underpin our approach. They are about empowering local people; they are also about empowering and recognising the role of local councillors. A focus on the multiple roles of all councillors – not just the decision-making roles of lead members – will be critical in helping the Council to improve. On behalf of

and alongside local people, councillors can work to ensure that these twelve principles begin to be embedded in the way that the Council works.

Our recommendations are focused on building some foundations for improvement. The scale and scope of the challenge RBKC faces should not be underestimated. Change takes time, effort and energy. Local people have a strong appetite for change; but we were told that part of the problem previously was that the Council has taken action without reference to local people. For us, making recommendations that put local people at the very heart of the process – supported by councillors, and the Council at large – had to be a priority.

Conversation and agreement take time, but our suggestions are not about things continuing as they are while a lengthy series of talking shops is convened. We want the Borough-wide conversation that we propose to begin to have immediate effects, as the Council and local people experiment practically with different approaches to decision-making, scrutiny and public participation and empowerment to see what works for local people. This more open approach to trying new things – alongside local people – is part of the cultural change that the Council needs to see. The Council can start by experimenting with some of the suggestions that we make over the course of the rest of the report.

For each of our twelve principles we have made suggestions; options that will follow on from this Borough-wide conversation. Local people, and the Council, will be best placed to decide on how to take these options forward. Many of these options will require the Council to take some kind of final, formal decision to take effect. The evidence we provide, both in this report and especially in our technical appendix, will hopefully go some way to making these conversations easier.

Our recommendations: The foundations for improvement

Our first general recommendation is that **the Council should incorporate our principles into its key policies and strategies.** This should include the Council Constitution (the rule book that sets out how decisions are made), as well as organisational, officer and member development programmes, as the foundation for a new and positive culture. Positively, work has already started to develop a significant organisational development programme for the Council; the principles and this report should inform that work.

As the informal culture is as important as (if not more important than) the formal changes that the Council makes, we wish to underline our support for the development programmes for officers and councillors that we understand are being put in place. In putting the principles into practice, we also recommend that they are used to review partnership arrangements, including those with Westminster Council.

Our second general recommendation is that **the Council should hold a Borough-wide conversation about its strategic direction and future governance arrangements.** While the strategic direction will be determined largely by the May election, we think that there will still be much to talk about in terms of priorities and the details of how things will be done.

While we think that the twelve principles will provide a good foundation for the governance element of that conversation, and that our recommendations are things that the Council could start doing now, we also know that there are more voices to be heard and more ideas that could be considered.

Ideally, we believe **an independent citizen assembly (of which elected councillors would also form a part) or similar deliberative process would not only be helpful in getting to the right results for the Borough-wide conversation but would also send out an important signal about the outward-facing type of council that Kensington and Chelsea wants to be.** An assembly like this would be able to support a wider range of local people to get involved, make their views heard and have their say on the future of the Borough. This would not be a

talking shop – it would be a way for local people to be firmly in the driving seat when it comes to the Borough's future. An assembly would be able to support other local conversations between local people, as they are helped to "self-organise" to make their views heard and understood.

Under the "inviting residents to take part" principle, we recommend that **a "listening committee" should be set up.** Now that the Council has given residents the opportunity to make direct presentations to councillors, it is vital, in our opinion, that there continues to be a mechanism for this to happen – at least while other options are developed – alongside the Council acting as a venue for democratic debate. Such a committee would not just be a space for local people to complain with the Council remaining silent. We would expect that comments, complaints and concerns brought to the committee would provoke the Council into speedy action, and open reporting back to local people on what that action has been.

Certainly, we had a strong sense from our evidence that the principle of residents addressing council meetings is seen as a good innovation and should be continued. The balance between this strongly felt need, and the need for councillors themselves to have the time and space to debate, is something that we cover in the main technical appendix to this report.

During our evidence gathering, we heard calls for decisions to be brought closer to residents to ensure that the Council responds fairly to needs across the Borough. There are a range of different ways that this can happen, including consultancy boards, neighbourhood forums, community interest companies, cooperatives and urban parishes. These are covered in more detail in the technical appendix.

There are also suggestions that decision-making across the whole Borough should change – in particular, that the Council could adopt a model for decision-making based on committees, rather than the so-called "Leader and Cabinet" model that the Council uses now. We do not believe that it is for us to suggest whether any of these options should be taken up, simply

because for any of these options to work they must be chosen and developed by those who will be involved in making them happen.

We recommend, therefore, that **a commission should be set up, including residents and partners, to look at the different options for both Borough-wide and area governance** and to see which best meets the twelve principles we have set out in this report. In our appendix we provide a significant body of evidence about the various options to inform this work. Our technical appendix provides extensive evidence to support the work of this commission.

Our next general recommendation is that **the Council needs to take steps to engage more with good practice across local government.** From our evidence gathering, we observed a limited knowledge and curiosity about what other councils were doing beyond the neighbouring boroughs of Westminster, and Hammersmith and Fulham. If the Council is keen to be more outward facing, which is what we heard in our evidence, then councillors and officers should be more actively curious about what other councils are doing.

From what we heard and observed, we think that the Council needs to regularly reassure itself about how well its governance systems are working and what could be done to improve them. The obvious process for doing this is the Annual Governance Statement, which is reported to the Council's Audit Committee. **We recommend that the Council should invest in this process so that it is a wider annual conversation than is the case at the moment.** The twelve principles should be used to see how decision-making, including the work of Leadership Team and scrutiny, are working and how they might be improved.

The twelve principles: Suggestions for action

These "suggestions for action" are things on which the Council will need to take a firm view in light of the Borough-wide conversation above. Until then, we suggest that (in support of the work of the citizens' assembly, and the other conversations that will be happening in the Borough) the Council might choose some of these suggestions to experiment with – different approaches to formulating decisions, and holding them to account, which local people, councillors and the Council can try out to see what works.

This experimental approach is the most proportionate for a number of reasons:

- It recognises that the Council and local people are not going to be able to build perfect systems for everything straight away. A trial period is necessary.

- Putting in place "permanent solutions" could be seen as more risk – to the Council and to local people. Trialling different approaches means that decisions can be taken later, informed by evidence.

- Putting in place "permanent solutions" could be seen as resource-intensive. Experimental approaches can be trialled and evaluated more dynamically.

- Experimentation helps to manage the challenge of prioritisation – that is, which of these measures to address first. Because a number of these measures are interconnected, setting a priority and order for them is very difficult. Experimenting with different elements of what we propose before taking firm action means that the Council is able to prioritise from a more informed standpoint.

- Finally, an experimental approach means that the Council, councillors and local people "own the change", when it happens. People will have had the opportunity to check, review and evaluate the strengths and pitfalls of different approaches – they will understand what they are signing up to and how to make it work.

Connecting with residents

A widely shared view from the people we spoke to was that the Council should be less remote and closer to residents across the whole of the Borough. Time and again we heard about the need for councillors and officers to get out of the Town Hall and to meet residents face to face. At the same time, people want to see a more friendly and informal approach so that they feel more at ease when talking to councillors and officers and attending meetings. People are put off by the bureaucracy that they see in the way that the Council works. We also heard about the need for the Council to be more diverse so that everyone can see that the Council is for "people like me".

There are some examples of the Council connecting with residents that it can build on. City Living, Local Life is an example of the Council helping local people to find practical solutions to the issues in their communities (which links to some of our recommendations on working in neighbourhoods).

Central, though, to the connection between the Council and local people is the role of local elected councillors. In all of their various roles – as representatives of local people, as advocates for those people's interests, as people holding the Council to account both at ward and Borough levels and as decision makers – councillors are critical. On this issue in particular, part of the challenge for the Council lies in ensuring that, as steps are undertaken to better connect it to local communities, councillors play a core role. Their unrivalled knowledge and insight into the communities they serve will help the Council – and local people – to work better together.

A number of councillors are excellent at keeping in contact with people in their wards (we think that the central role of councillors in building and keeping solid links with the community needs to be promoted). We also heard about senior officers who were willing to take time out to meet with residents informally and listen to their concerns.

However, while good examples do exist, they are isolated and do not reflect the way that the Council as a whole has worked in the past – although we understand that concerted efforts

are already being made to change this.

The challenge for the Council is to take some of those good examples, and plans for the future, and to turn them into the normal way of working for councillors and officers.

As a first step, we recommend that councillors are offered development sessions to help them learn from good practice in the Borough and elsewhere. We also recommend that both Leadership Team and the Council's senior officers formalise regular sessions where they go out and about and meet residents. In one interview, we heard the distance between senior managers and frontline staff described as a series of hurdles that made it hard for important messages to get through, and so we would also encourage senior managers to invite frontline staff to take part in their management meetings.

Beyond face-to-face contact, we heard several times about the need to improve the Council's website. We recommend that a major redesign takes place as soon as possible, so that the website meets the needs of residents. The gov. uk design principles provide an excellent starting point, and we would also suggest talking to the LocalGovDigital group if more help is needed.

Focusing on what matters

A common theme from our evidence is that the Council ought to pay more attention to the needs of residents and less to the management and financial needs of the organisation. This was summed up in one survey response as the need to focus on "residents, not reserves".

Both are important – and it is important not to see this as an "either/or" discussion. While the need for strong management and financial prudence remain essential, our evidence suggests that the balance needs to shift. This is consistent with The Chartered Institute of Public Finance & Accountancy's (CIPFA) international framework for good governance, which includes "determining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social, and environmental benefits" as one of its principles.

At the same time, we heard that that more time needs to be spent on the most important issues and less on the smaller decisions. The way that the key decision system is set up means that

lower-level decisions are being automatically fed into Leadership Team and scrutiny meetings without discussion of what needs the most time or what is most important to residents. This is one of the reasons why we think that the key decision process needs to be redesigned.

At the same time, scrutiny needs to take greater control of its own work programme and focus more on the big issues that matter to residents and to the Council. The role of councillor-led public scrutiny will be crucial as the Council moves to change and improve its culture and the way it works. We heard and observed that the work of the scrutiny committees needs to be less dependent on the key decision process and more able to plan topics beyond just the next meeting. Scrutiny – the vital work of backbench councillors holding the leadership of the Council to account – also needs to link in to councillors' wider "representative" role. Councillors can and should be bringing the insight and perspective they get from their ward work to bear on what happens in scrutiny. This is a way of linking in scrutiny work with the area-based, community-led activity we recommend elsewhere.

For these reasons, we recommend that a single work programme is set up that can be managed by scrutiny councillors. This would invite a wide range of views on what scrutiny should be looking at and allows councillors and residents to know what will be coming up well in advance.

The Council has been praised for its service delivery in many key areas such as children's services and social services. The Council now needs to build on this, by developing and pursuing a vision for the wellbeing of the Borough. Once such a vision is in place it will allow Leadership Team and scrutiny councillors to see what issues they should be focusing on in their respective work plans.

Listening to many voices

Many good governance frameworks, for example the CIPFA International Framework, highlight the need for stakeholder engagement to be comprehensive. In other words, it is important to hear from as many affected people as you can before making a decision. Similarly, our evidence showed a desire on the part of both residents and Council officials to hear from a wide range

of people. Good governance for the people we heard from means listening to the North and the South, the rich and the poor, the loud and the quiet. As one person responding to our resident survey put it: "A wide input is required in order to ensure that the decisions which are made are for the benefit of all residents".

The presence of many active resident and community groups in the Borough provides a strong foundation for the Council as it seeks to listen to many voices. The challenge, from the evidence we heard, is threefold. First, the Council needs to ensure that its relationship with existing resident and community groups is as effective as it can be. We recommend that conversations about this with the relevant groups start as soon as possible. Second, the Council needs to take proactive steps to hear from those who are seldom heard. We recommend that the Council establishes a panel of local people to direct its approach on these issues, as one element of its response. In the longer term, a panel like this might be used to debate and discuss Borough-wide issues of importance, in a forum owned and directed by local people. Finally, the Council needs to be confident that it can balance what it hears from different voices when making decisions. We believe that the Council should continue to seek an independent or peer review of this aspect of decision-making during implementation, not only to ensure good practice but also to provide independent assurance to all those who share their views.

The need to speak directly to local people is not about cutting elected councillors out of the loop – in fact, it is about doing the opposite. Councillors have an unrivalled knowledge and understanding of the communities they serve. They, too, are tasked with making difficult decisions, which involving listening to and acting on the different voices in their communities. They can and should be recognised as playing a critical part in these debates and discussions.

Acting with integrity

Following the Grenfell disaster, there have been many calls for the Council to show more honesty, integrity and empathy. Many have pointed to a breakdown in trust between residents and the Council, particularly in the North.

Behaving with integrity means following a set of principles that are seen as worthwhile by those you hope will trust you. To that end, we hope that the twelve principles in this report will be a good starting point.

We make reference here to the Charter for Families Bereaved Through Public Tragedy, proposed by The Right Reverend James Jones KBE in his recently published report on Hillsborough. This charter, recently adopted by the Council, includes the commitment to:

"Ensure all members of staff treat members of the public and each other with mutual respect and with courtesy. Where we fall short, we should apologise straightforwardly and genuinely."

We also want to highlight Nolan's seven principles of public life, which were published in 1995. The principles are: selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership. We think that these are consistent with the principles we have proposed here, but they should always be considered in any discussion of integrity in public bodies.

Another key aspect of trust is the ability to follow words with actions. While trust can take a long time to repair, and sometimes might never be repaired, an important foundation is for the Council to do as it says.

This means not only taking the actions that have been promised but also promising only what can be done – and doing the right things. As an illustration of this point, we heard how residents in the North responded well to officers who got small things done. We also heard from residents that they would rather hear that people did not know, or that timescales could not be given, than be given promises that cannot be kept. Equally, we heard that part of the frustration with the Council has been that it often takes action without properly considering the needs of local people.

The relationship between council officers and councillors is a crucial one when it comes to getting things done for residents. We heard some great examples from councillors of officers who listened, give honest answers and were willing to problem-solve around issues brought to them. We also heard from councillors that

many officers could be more effective in their responses.

We recommend, therefore, that learning how to engage with residents and councillors become a key aspect of officer development.

Involving before deciding

One of the most consistent messages from our evidence is that decision makers need to be involving other people much earlier in the decision-making than is the case at the moment. Many talked about wanting to be consulted before options have been agreed and before the Council had settled on a preferred course of action. Backbench councillors also told us that they should be involved earlier in the process – either through scrutiny or in their ward roles. At the same time, officers felt that they would be able to contribute helpfully to decisions outside of their direct areas if they were asked to earlier.

The Council has many knowledgeable and committed people –residents, councillors and officers – who it can draw on to make decisions. It needs to take steps to involve them early.

As a first step, the Council should publish a statement explaining how it intends to be open to involvement in decision-making. This will be led by our earlier recommendations about local people's wider expectations on governance and decision-making, both Borough-wide and area by area. This should reflect the different types of decisions the Council and councillors make.

We have looked in more detail at the "key decision" system – the way that the Council identifies which major decisions are coming up and how it deals with them. The key decision system has many good aspects and is a process that is well understood by those directly involved with it. We recommend, however, that this system is redesigned to ensure that it fits with the twelve principles and is able to meet the needs of those who use it, whether councillors, officers, residents or partners. Specifically, we believe that there is a need to ensure better prioritisation, early involvement, participation and co-design opportunities for residents.

We also recommend that, as part of redesigning the overall key decision process, the Forward Plan of decisions is also redesigned with the needs of residents, councillors and officers in mind. Specifically, the aim should be to encourage early input and involvement. Longer term, the Cabinet could also look to introduce a policy green paper or working paper system to encourage discussion and involvement.

The Leadership Team should also be seeking to direct policy topics to scrutiny, particularly those where there is no preferred way forward, so that they can be dealt with through working groups. We heard from councillors that these working groups were the most effective aspect of the scrutiny process and so they should be used more. It is, of course, for scrutiny councillors to decide whether the suggested working groups should take place.

Policy development is currently focused on policy boards, which are meetings chaired by lead members, alongside senior council officers. While we do not think that this model is fit for purpose as it currently stands, we do think that lead member and senior officer discussions of policymaking, wherever it happens, have to start with thinking about how the public (and a wider range of councillors) are likely to be involved.

The evidence we have gathered suggests that the approach the Council takes towards how it involves people will need to reflect the fact that different people will want and expect to be involved in different ways in decision-making on different issues. There may be some decisions in which it will be right that the public is empowered to take an active part in decision-making. There will be some where it is right that the Council continues to take the lead. But the Council cannot be the sole judge of this. This is why we suggest that the independent community-led panel we mentioned above should play a part – with councillors, cross-party – in understanding how Council decision-making on critical decisions should be opened up. There is a "matrix" of different kinds of involvement and empowerment that will be appropriate for different types of issue or decision.

Longer term, the Council should experiment with commissions – such as those held by

Hammersmith and Fulham, Calderdale's Health and Flood Commissions and Kirklees Democracy Commission – that seek to involve the public, gathering evidence to consider issues of importance to the Borough.

Communicating what we're doing

Transparency is a cornerstone of good governance. One of the most consistent messages we heard from residents was that they wanted the Council to communicate better. First, residents want to hear more about what the Council is doing. We heard the decision-making process described as a "black box". We heard that there is a tendency to use reasons such as commercial confidentiality as justification for not sharing information when this was not necessary – although it should be stressed that we have seen no direct evidence of this, or of attempts motivated by bad faith to withhold information from councillors or others. Second, residents want councillors and council officers to be better at how they communicate. Many different ways of providing information to the public were suggested to us, as well as the need to ensure the use of plain language. We think the elderly residents' reading group, which checks social services documents, is a really good way of supporting this and should be used more across the Council.

Communication about decisions is not just about communication with residents. Councillors, too, have an active role to play in using information – both to hold the Council to account through scrutiny, and to support local people to understand what the Council is doing and how they can influence it.

We recommend that the Council should take the following steps in order to improve how it communicates about decision-making with residents.

First, a service highlighting key decision-making issues should be designed and set up to allow interested residents to follow council business via email and other channels such as social media. We understand that such a service does exist, and we think this should be refreshed and relaunched, better targeted and with its usage monitored.

Second, the Council should design and publish an accessible general guide to explain to residents how decisions are made.

Third, the extensive network of community and residents organisations in the Borough should be used much more effectively as a communications network (and, in due course, as a source of both support and challenge to the Council). Conversations with the different groups should take place to see how this can best happen.

Finally, the Council should take steps to better explain why decisions are being taken – the evidence that underpins decisions, the options considered and the business cases underlying the Council's approach. The Council has procedures around the preparation and publication of this information, but they are inconsistently applied. Better information can influence and support public input into decision-making. This is an issue that could be picked up as part of a broader redesign of the key decision process, which we have recommended elsewhere, and can work to directly inform the way that member-led scrutiny happens.

Inviting residents to take part

For many of the people we spoke to, good governance meant more than simply listening to residents or taking account of their views when making decisions. They told us that residents should have a direct role in council meetings and be able to express themselves in person.

Since the Grenfell tragedy, residents have been able to speak directly to Full Council meetings and residents' representatives and have been asked to sit on the Grenfell Recovery Scrutiny Committee as members with voting rights. While both of these things have happened in exceptional circumstances, they point to the kinds of changes that people told us they want to see.

For this reason, we support the idea that we heard in our evidence of the Council setting up a "listening committee". The role of this committee, which could be standalone or part of the Council's scrutiny set-up, would be to invite public presentations and to make reports

to Full Council meetings based on what has been heard. The listening committee would also be expected to take what people had told it and coordinate action in response – providing direct accountability to local people. The exact format of this committee should be discussed with residents. In our view, however, the fewer requirements there are for the public to take part, the more effective this committee will be. We recognise that it is not easy to balance the need to involve residents in a meaningful way with the need to ensure the smooth running of meetings. We think that the insight that the Council (and the community) has gained through the difficult experiences at the Grenfell Recovery Scrutiny Committee will help in designing this approach; whatever that approach looks like, the public has to play a central role in designing it. We explain this in more detail in our appendix.

We observed a Planning Applications Committee and thought this showed the Council at its best when it comes to involving residents in meetings. While we have heard people question the length of time allowed for residents to make presentations, the small size of the meeting, the opportunity for residents to sit at the table and clarity in understanding the process, all suggest good practice that could be used in other council meetings.

We heard from many of those we spoke to that the "commission model" of developing policy was something that worked well in other councils, particularly Hammersmith and Fulham. We think this is a really good way for the Council to work with residents on issues of public concern. Based on what we heard from residents, we believe planning policy, and the issues of fairness and equal opportunity, would certainly capture the public imagination if they were to be chosen as policy commissions. We have also suggested elsewhere in this report that looking at options for devolving decisions could be a possible topic for a commission.

We also heard that, before the Grenfell disaster, some of the best moments at council meetings had been the result of public petitions, and some of the better scrutiny meetings had been those that heard directly from the public – although we know that part of a positive experience for the public rests on getting a response to those contributions at the meeting

from council officers and councillors, which is not always possible. Motions brought to council meetings that involved residents in their design had also been effective in bringing people into these meetings. We also observed the public being invited to sit at the table and discuss planning applications with councillors, and we felt this worked effectively.

The challenge for the Council, therefore, is to embed this good practice, along with some of the changes made since the Grenfell disaster, as normal practice across the Council. A revised petition process could allow residents to bring issues to scrutiny and council meetings. While the details should be co-designed with residents, we feel that the thresholds for petitions are unnecessarily high. The Council should look at the work done recently in Rotherham in respect to petitions, council meetings and petition thresholds

The Council should also extend the practice of co-opting residents to all scrutiny committees. This could be done by inviting the representatives of resident or community groups to sit on committees; alternatively, an idea we heard from a councillor was to have a lottery scheme for residents to join committees.

While the Borough benefits from having many active, well-informed and well-organised residents, people from across the Borough still need help if they are to take part in decision-making. As argued by the report of the Kirklees Democracy Commission, the Council should seek to nurture and support citizens and community groups so that they can play an active role.

We think that councillors have a really important role to play and could be given more support to help residents take part. We heard good examples both of councillors letting residents know about what issues were being discussed at meetings and of councillors encouraging residents to submit petitions. We recommend, therefore, that the Council does more to promote, encourage and support this good practice.

We also heard from the voluntary sector that it would be willing to play a bigger role in supporting residents to take part and in helping residents to organise themselves. We also recommend, therefore, that this is something

that the Council discusses as part of its ongoing meetings with the voluntary sector.

Longer term, we suggest that the Council, in partnership with the voluntary and community sector, looks to map out existing resident and community groups across the Borough, as well as interests and concerns, to make it easier for people to self-organise and support each other.

We heard the suggestion that the Council should experiment with participatory budgeting and agree that this is something that should be considered longer term.

Being clearly accountable

As well as being important to residents, accountability is a fundamental building block of any good governance system. Residents should expect decision makers to give clear accounts of what they are doing and why they are doing it. They should also expect to see accountability taking place through a public and documented conversation between decision makers and those who are in scrutiny roles.

In Kensington and Chelsea, there is a good foundation for accountability arrangements. In writing, systems and policies are robust and consistent. However, the way that the Council is "siloed" (with decisions being made department by department, and often not joined up) does make accountability for some decisions complicated. These challenges are particularly acute in relation to cross-cutting issues – subjects that cut across more than one lead member's portfolio, and where "silo working" makes coordination difficult.

From our observations of scrutiny, we conclude that backbenchers' holding to account of lead members needs to be significantly improved. We heard from several interviews that the Council's scrutiny arrangements should be more like parliamentary select committees (which we explain in more detail in our technical appendix), and we agree that this would strengthen accountability in a number of ways. In particular, the need to hold lead members to account needs to be the focus of formal scrutiny meetings. As with select committees, we recommend that lead members only attend when invited by scrutiny councillors, sit at

the witness table when attending and present reports themselves. At the same time, a way of consistently recording the holding-to-account conversation needs to be in place – this could be done through minutes and reports or through letters. Either way, there should a written record of questions and answers.

As a first step, we would like to see a review of scrutiny's role and purpose carried out to ensure clarity and a consistent approach.

We also have a number of further recommendations about how scrutiny should be made more strategic and proactive in the short term, the details of which are included in an appendix to this report.

Additional recommendations for scrutiny are covered under subsequent principles.

Responding fairly to everyone's needs

A common message that we heard from residents was that the Council needed to be better at responding to needs right across the Borough. There is a strong perception that the Borough is run by people in the South, for people in the South. At the same time, we heard from those both inside and outside the Council that councillors and officers needed to more closely resemble people from across the Borough. This would then help the Council to better understand – and respond to – what different people need. If people are to trust their council, they need to feel that they are cared about and their needs recognised.

One way that needs are responded to well is through the work that individual councillors do with residents in their communities. We heard good examples, from all party groups, of councillors dealing with issues and concerns at surgeries and in response to phone calls, letters and emails. Going forward, the Council needs to ensure it supports and encourages this work. First, the corporate casework management system currently being developed needs to be implemented as a priority. Second, induction for new councillors needs to encourage sharing of skills and experiences of ward councillors (new and experienced) from across the Borough in the context of our twelve principles and the new sets of behaviours – attitudes and values to

which we expect everyone to sign up. Third, the way that officers respond to councillor requests needs to be reviewed to ensure a consistent and positive approach.

At the strategic level, the Council needs to take steps to ensure that decision-making takes account of needs across the Borough. In this report (and in our appendices), we have provided examples of ways that the Council can better understand and weigh different views. Councillors have a significant role in this – as representatives, they can understand how local people's needs can be properly taken into account.

Longer term, we know that many in the Borough would like to see a more devolved system that allows more decisions to be taken closer to residents. In our technical appendices we have discussed some options for achieving this. These include consultancy boards, neighbourhood forums, community interest companies, cooperatives and urban parishes. Where it is established, member-led scrutiny should also be linked into area working. We suggest that a commission is set up, including residents and partners, to look at the different options, in light of our twelve principles.

Working as a team

This is the first of three principles that are about the Council's internal systems and processes.

We heard from officers, particularly those who had experience of other councils, that they felt that lead members and council departments would benefit from working more closely together across portfolios and departments. At the time of our research, issues were only discussed by Leadership Team as a whole if they affected more than one lead member's area of responsibility. This means there has, in the past, been limited opportunity for lead members to challenge and contribute to each other's decisions. For this reason, we recommend that Leadership Team should create additional opportunities to discuss key policy issues as a group, and should develop mechanisms that make individual lead members' decisions more visible to their colleagues. For similar reasons, we believe that decision-making would benefit from much more regular meetings of

the directors' team. This would signal a more corporate approach to strategic working to officers, and accessible mechanisms for senior people and teams to engage, network and share best practice.

We understand that the Chief Executive will be instituting regular meetings for his executive directors, and there is also now a weekly meeting of Leadership Team and executive directors. These are positive developments.

At the moment, councillors can and do work well together in some forums, but the influence of party politics – important as it is for local democracy – can be unattractive to local people. We recognise that, as an election approaches, this will be difficult to resolve in the short term. Scrutiny, in particular, should continue to be more constructive. We heard from councillors of all political backgrounds that working groups were good examples of cross-party working. We understand the difficulty of this kind of collaboration in what is a political environment. We think that good work programming can help to identify opportunities and risks around this kind of collaboration, subject by subject.

We also heard that Full Council meetings were at their best when councillors either came together in common purpose or were able to debate motions without party lines being enforced. While it is right that the Council chamber provides a stage for political debate, the public should also have the right to expect to regularly see councillors working together in the public interest.

Managing responsibly

This is the second of three principles that are about the Council's internal systems and processes

In any process of change, it is important that the Council maintains high standards of management and control. This is one of the principles of CIPFA's international framework for good governance: "Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management". The Council cannot expect to function well as an outward-facing council if it does not manage well internally.

Overall, from an audit perspective, we have no reason to think that the Council is anything but well run, although this is not an area we explored in depth in our evidence gathering.

We did hear some suggestions that the arrangements for overseeing risk could be usefully reviewed, particularly to give the opportunity to look at some areas in depth. We are not making this a recommendation but would like to flag up the issue in any case.

Having the support we need

This is the third of the three principles about how the Council's internal systems and processes.

It is council officers that provide lead members and scrutiny councillors with their main source of support and advice. We found that, because decision-making is very much focused on individual portfolios, there is a wide variation in the way that responsibilities are shared between councillors and officers. In some areas, lead members are seen to take what might be considered as operational decisions; in other areas, officers are seen to take the lead in policy. For this reason, we recommend that a conversation takes place about the respective roles of councillors and officers in relation to how decisions are made. In principle, councillors should set direction and policy – a framework for action, driven by their political priorities. Officers should work within that framework, devising solutions that deliver those priorities on the ground. While this is understood in theory, its translation into the way that people actually work is inconsistent and could be improved.

In our evidence, we also heard people describe the need to improve support in two ways.

First, there was a wish to see more support for backbenchers, alongside a perception that the Leadership Team had an unfair share of the resources available.

Second, we heard from a number of people that scrutiny support should be strengthened, made more independent and given a greater policy and research focus.

For these two reasons, we recommend that the governance support function is redesigned to

ensure that it better meets the needs of lead members and scrutiny councillors respectively, beyond simply supporting administration. As well as a greater focus on policy, we heard several times that governance support needed to be better at making the links to outside bodies and residents. In other words, governance support needs to meet the needs of an outwards-facing council.

A third thing we heard was that the Council needed to pull in more external expertise to improve the capacity of scrutiny committees and task-and-finish groups in particular. The contributions of co-optees, both on the audit committee and in scrutiny, is well regarded, and the idea of extending the use of co-optees was supported by many who we spoke to; we go into more detail about the precise mechanics of how this might work in our appendix. In particular, there is the option to use co-optees more systematically to inform the development of policy, especially on the policy commissions that we recommend elsewhere. Similarly, the use of external experts – whether practitioners, academics or representatives of different community groups – was widely considered to be a positive support for the Council as it seeks to widen its understanding of the different issues it faces.

Longer term, the Council could consider giving party groups access to political assistants. Visits to other councils that employ this system of support might be a useful first step.

Thank you
Who we heard from

We want to give our sincere gratitude to all the people and organisations who have contributed to this work. We have been overwhelmed with the energy and commitment of people who have taken part, from giving their time to be interviewed to helping promote opportunities for wider involvement. A big thank you to everyone.

Resident and community groups and organisations we had contact with

We are grateful to residents Mary Gardiner, Sophia Lambert, Michael Bach and Rosemary Baker, who presented evidence to the Council meeting of 6 December 2017. We also spoke to Mary, Sophia and Michael in person.

Councillors we interviewed

- Robert Atkinson (Labour)
- Judith Blakeman (Labour)
- Elizabeth Campbell, Council Leader (Conservative)
- Emma Dent Coad MP (Labour)

- David Lindsay, Lead Member (Conservative)
- Pat Mason (Labour)
- Daniel Moylan (Conservative)
- Bevan Powell (Labour)
- Andrew Rinker (Conservative)
- Robert Thompson (Labour)
- Linda Wade (Liberal Democrat)
- Mary Weale (Conservative)
- Charles Williams (Conservative)

Councillors who took part in discussion groups

- Sarah Addenbrooke (Conservative)
- Mohammed Bakhtiar (Labour)
- Judith Blakeman (Labour)
- Barbara Campbell (Conservative)
- Catherine Faulks (Conservative)

- James Husband (Conservative)
- David Lindsay (Conservative)
- Quentin Marshall (Conservative)
- Daniel Moylan (Conservative)
- Matthew Palmer (Conservative)
- Will Pascall (Conservative)
- Monica Press (Labour)
- Marie-Therese Rossi (Conservative)
- Malcolm Spalding (Conservative)
- Robert Thompson (Labour)
- Linda Wade (Liberal Democrat)
- Charles Williams (Conservative)

Council officers we interviewed

- Nick Austin, Bi-Borough Director of Environmental Health
- Stella Baillie, Tri-Borough Director Integrated Care
- Ray Brown, Director of Customer Access
- Chris Buss, Interim Director of Finance
- Melissa Caslake, Bi-Borough Executive Director, Children's Services
- Richard Egan, Director of Corporate Property
- Robyn Fairman, Director for Grenfell
- Bernie Flaherty, Bi-Borough Executive Director of Adult Social Care and Health
- Graeme Gordon, Strategy Consultant
- Sue Harris, Executive Director of Environment, Leisure and Residents' Services
- Jacqui Hird, Scrutiny Manager
- David Hughes, Tri-Borough Director of Internal Audit
- Monsur Khan, Interim Head of Community Engagement
- Melanie Marshman, Head of Consultation and Partnerships Team

- Debbie Morris, Bi-Borough Director of Human Resources
- LeVerne Parker, Monitoring Officer
- Stuart Priestley, Chief Community Safety Officer
- John Quinn, Bi-Borough Director of Corporate Services
- Sue Seal, PA to the Director of Corporate Property
- Robert Sheppard, Head of Governance
- Mahmood Siddiqui, Bi-Borough Director of Transport and Highways
- Mike Sloniowski, Principal Consultant (Risk Management)
- Graham Stallwood, Executive Director Planning and Borough Development

Partners and co-optees

- Olivia Clymer, Healthwatch
- Mona Hayat, NHS
- Ian Luder, Audit Committee Co-optee
- Lorraine Mohammed, Audit Committee Co-optee
- Louise Proctor, NHS
- Angela Spence, Kensington Social Council
- Spencer Sutcliffe, Borough Fire Commander
- Christine Vigars, Healthwatch

Grenfell Taskforce

- Jane Scott, Grenfell Taskforce Chair

Organisations to whom we spoke

- Blenheim CDP
- Chelsea Society
- Citizens Advice Kensington and Chelsea
- Clarendon Cross Residents' Association
- Community Monitoring Group

- Dovehouse Street Residents' Association
- Earls Court Square Residents' Association
- Edwardes Square Scarsdale & Abingdon Association
- Epic CIC
- French African Welfare Association
- Garden Square News
- Grenfell Tower Community Monitoring Project
- Grenfell Tower Victims Unit, DCLG
- Journey of hope
- Kensington and Chelsea Social Council
- Kensington Society
- Midaye Somali Development Network
- Milner Street Area Residents' Association
- Norland Conservation Society
- Onslow Neighbourhood Association
- Open Age
- St Helens Residents' Association
- St Quintin and Woodlands Neighbourhood Forum
- Volunteer Centre
- Wand UK
- Warwick Rd Estate Leaseholders' Association

14 other organisations spoke to us but had not confirmed their willingness to be listed here as we went to press.

Meetings we attended and took part in

- Councillor David Lindsay, Lead Member
- Barry Quirk, Chief Executive
- Scrutiny Chairs
- Scrutiny Steering Group
- Leadership Team

- Labour Group
- Conservative Group
- Council

Sources of further advice and evidence

- Simon Burrall (Involve)
- Perry Walker (Talkshop)
- Justin Griggs (National Association of Local Councils)

Method Statement

Change at the Council

Independent Review of Governance for the
Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea

Method Statement
Contents

This document describes the process of evidence gathering and analysis used by the research team undertaking this review. It covers:

General

The research took place between October 2017 and February 2018.

Research team

The research was conducted by a team of eight: five from the Centre for Public Scrutiny and three from The Democratic Society.

Research topics

The research topics were drawn initially from the July 2017 council report that established the review and later refined following input from the Lead Cabinet Member.

The main topics covered during the research were:

- Opportunities for residents to get involved

- Councillors working with residents

- Cabinet members and decision-making

- Scrutiny process

- The overall decision-making process – formal and informal

- Capacity and capability

Research questions

The broad approach to the research was future- and solution-focused. With this in mind, the following questions formed the basis of the surveys, interview scripts and discussion groups:

1. What do people want to be different? We wanted to know what aspects of governance people wanted to see changed.

2. What does good look like in other areas? As well as drawing on our own experience.

3. What does good look like for Kensington and Chelsea? We wanted to know what good would look like for all those involved.

4. What works already? We wanted to help people notice existing good practice that they can celebrate and build on.

5. What new things could be tried? In particular, we wanted to hear what those with local knowledge thought might work well in Kensington and Chelsea.

Evidence-gathering methods

To cover the research topics and to answer the research questions, we used the following methods:

Survey

We conducted two online surveys using SurveyMonkey. The first, aimed at residents, received 375 responses. The second, aimed at those with direct experience of the Council's governance arrangements, received 79.

The surveys were promoted by a variety of organisations and channels. The residents survey was promoted via two council press releases and social media and shared with organisations grant-funded by the Council. The Council's Community Engagement Team also wrote to around 150 residents' associations in the Borough about the review. Community and voluntary organisations promoted the survey through their networks, including the Kensington and Chelsea Social Council, which also wrote an article in their newsletter. A wide number of residents' associations emailed the survey to their residents and the Kensington Society shared it with its members. Hard copies of the residents survey were also made available to the public gallery of selected scrutiny meetings and some libraries. Leaflets about the review were provided to the public gallery of the Council meeting on 6th December 2017.

Summaries of each survey have been published separately.

Interviews

We conducted 51 interviews, including 11 with residents (residents' groups, voluntary and community organisations), 13 with councillors (including at least one from each party), 21 with officers and 6 with external observers (including partner organisations, co-optees and former councillors).

Potential interviewees were suggested by council officers and through discussion with voluntary and community groups. Final decisions about who to approach for interview were taken by the research team. Everyone who expressed an interest was offered an interview.

Interviews with residents' groups and community organisations were organised by the research team. Interviews with councillors and council officers were organised via officers of Kensington and Chelsea Council.

While the majority of interviews were with single interviewees, a number were with up to four interviewees.

Each interview was semi structured and conducted by either one or two interviewers using a common script. Statements were written up by an interviewer into a separate evidence summary for each interview.

Workshops, meetings and discussion groups

We held 2 workshops with residents and community organisations, attended 7 meetings with council officers and councillors and held 3 discussion groups with councillors.

Evidence statements were written up for each.

Desktop research

A member of the team reviewed relevant documents relating to the Council's governance arrangements.

A report summarising the desktop research is available separately.

Meeting observations

We observed 9 council meetings, including Full Council, Leadership Team and 7 scrutiny meetings.

Evidence summaries were produced for each.

Evidence analysis

All of the evidence gathered has been captured in evidence summaries. Evidence summaries for the interviews, workshops, meetings and discussion groups were coded using QDA Miner.

The coding structure was as follows:

Research topics

- Opportunities for residents to get involved

- Councillors working with residents

- Cabinet members and decision-making

- Scrutiny process

- Council meetings

- General culture / other

TAPIC themes

- Transparency

- Accountability

- Participation

- Integrity (including coherence and effectiveness)

- Capacity (and capability)

Proposals

- Principles (what people want to be different)

- Foundations in place (existing good practice)

- Recommended Improvements (what's needed to meet basic standards over the next twelve months)

- Good practice experiments (Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea good practice that they can do more of, or practice from elsewhere, preferably nearby, which they can trial and develop)

- Aspirational practice (longer-term projects)

Coding summaries were produced as Excel files for each of the research topics and TAPIC themes, and these were reviewed by the research team as part of the report drafting process.

Ethics statement

General

The project followed the Economic and Social Research Council framework for research ethics:

- Research should aim to maximise benefit for individuals and society and minimise risk and harm

- The rights and dignity of individuals and groups should be respected

- Wherever possible, participation should be voluntary and appropriately informed

- Research should be conducted with integrity and transparency

- Lines of responsibility and accountability should be clearly defined

- Independence of research should be maintained and where conflicts of interest cannot be avoided they should be made explicit

Consent

- Research subjects must be informed fully about the purpose, methods and intended possible uses of the research, what their participation in the research entails and what risks, if any, are involved

Confidentiality

- The confidentiality of information supplied by research subjects and the anonymity of respondents must be respected

- Evidence statements, summary notes and coding reports are confidential to the research team

- Evidence made public (for example, in reports) should be not identifiable with an individual unless explicit written permission has been gained

Care for participants

- The emotional wellbeing and emotional needs of the participants is always the most important consideration

- Participants have the option to pause the activity, take a time out or leave the activity at any time – this to be explained at the start

- Researchers seek advice from those providing care and support at the start of the research process

- Researchers are able to signpost sources of care and support when required

Technical appendix

Change at the Council

Independent Review of Governance for the
Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea

Technical appendix
Contents

Introduction and explanation

Our main report focuses on the twelve principles that should underpin the changes the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea (RBKC) needs to make. As we have said in that report, a change in culture is critical if RBKC is going to improve. This process has begun, but we want to make sure it is embedded and continues.

This technical appendix goes into more detail on the steps that RBKC can carry out to embed that culture. The recommendations we make reflect the terms of reference we were given to guide our work, but we have also commented on other issues where we feel that they impact on our task of helping the Council to improve its governance.

It will be for the Council's new administration in May to consider these issues and agree an approach to implementation. However, we do think that the recommendations in our first section, "Foundations for improvement", have to be put in place first.

There are no quick fixes to deliver the cultural change required in RBKC. We anticipate that the recommendations will overall take time to deliver. Local people should, however, expect progress and be able to see it, even if this is slower than they would like. There is already a programme of significant cultural change being developed; public oversight and challenge of this process is crucial.

Foundations for improvement
Recommendations

A. Incorporate the twelve principles into the Council's key policies, strategies and partnership arrangements, including the Constitution, organisational, officer and member development programmes, as the foundation for a new and positive culture

In our main report, we highlight the challenge the Council faces regarding the trust that it needs to earn back from local people.

Trust and honesty are central to a council's ability to properly represent the interests of local people.

There has been a lot of discussion locally about whether the Council thinks it can return to "business as usual" in the aftermath of the Grenfell fire. The top of the Council has sent a very strong message that this can never happen – that a profound change in the way the Council works is now in progress.

Strong statements by people in leadership positions (like the Leader and Chief Executive) are critically important in starting that process of learning and change. Local people – and some external partners – are rightly impatient that the pace of this activity should increase. But the challenge the Council faces is "generational" – it will take many years to overcome. Rebuilding trust is not something that can be done overnight, or even in the next couple of years. The foundation of the distrust in the Council felt by many in the local community goes back decades. Trust cannot be won back easily.

The level of distrust is so bad that we have heard that some residents in North Kensington in particular will refuse to engage with council services (or services provided by third parties and funded by the Council).

This is evidence of the sense of real betrayal that local people feel. This has been shown at a number of public meetings, most notably at meetings of the Grenfell Recovery Scrutiny Committee (GRSC). Some people are firm in their belief that the Council consistently acts in bad faith – that the Council is lying to them, and to the community of which they are part.

We have heard these opinions expressed most strongly in the North of the Borough, but a number of those we spoke to in the South shared them as well – although concerns for those in the South were dominated by issues

relating to planning (albeit not exclusively).

In relation to the Grenfell response in particular, local people have demands and expectations regarding care and rehousing. The scale of the administrative task here cannot be underestimated. Finding permanent homes within the Borough of Kensington and Chelsea for those who need them is hugely challenging. The Council thinks it is doing all it can to explain, discuss and be held to account by local people on this pressing issue. Local people think the opposite. Many do not trust the Council to rehouse people fairly, and some do not trust that "temporary" accommodation offered to those still living in hotels will not become permanent.

RBKC is only now getting to grips with the scale of this challenge and how it affects all its work – not only its response to Grenfell. The only way to overcome it is through its actions. The difficulties that the Council has encountered in trying to manage its operational response to the Grenfell fire show just how much learning and improvement it has to do.

The cultural change that the Council needs to make will be underpinned by a proper understanding of the challenge. The election on its own will not change things – distrust and scepticism will continue. RBKC has to ensure that in everything it does and how it acts from now on that the need to rebuild trust is central, and that it is committed to doing so.

RBKC can begin to evidence this by putting in place our twelve principles and the structural changes we suggest, which are about ceding power to local people and communities – particularly around decision-making.

The twelve principles we set out in our main report are drawn from the conversations we have had with a range of people – councillors, council officers and local people. We feel that between them they reflect the change that the Council needs to make.

It is likely that – as the Council and local people talk to each other – these principles will need to be adapted and refined. For us, now, they represent the starting point for that longer conversation.

Commitment to these principles (and whatever

they evolve into in due course) is about ensuring that they drive action.

The Council is currently developing plans for "organisational change" – improving the way that council officers and the Council as a whole does business. Part of those plans has to be about taking action that will embed these principles – that will make the Council more responsive to local people and their needs. Without this further work to connect the principles to clear actions – on which local people can hold the Council to account – they will not mean anything. Adoption of the principles should therefore be seen as a starting point – not an end in itself.

In parallel, elected councillors will need to adopt these principles in how they work too. "Member development" is the training and development that all councillors need in order to be able to carry out their roles properly – which involves a recasting and re-understanding of those roles in the light of the principles we set out. We know that steps are being taken to put together a member development programme (particularly in light of the forthcoming election).

In the short term, member development will focus on the induction of new councillors. This is an important opportunity to begin to talk about the twelve principles – not only with newer councillors but also with ones of longer standing, who should be encouraged to play an active role in the member induction process. In our view, member induction in May provides the ideal opportunity to begin to discuss, with the new member corps, the twelve principles and what they mean for how members act and behave.

In the medium term, member development will need to focus on the different skills that members are likely to need to operate effectively as the Council changes. In subsequent sections of this appendix, we describe in more detail councillors' varying roles – as decision-makers, as scrutineers and (in particular) as representatives of local people. The nature of these roles is likely to change. The skills that councillors need to carry out these roles may also change. Councillors' assumptions about what their roles are, and how those roles intersect with the roles of others, may well be

challenged. To provide support on all of this, a consistent programme of member development, tailored to individual councillors' needs, will be necessary.

This work will need to focus on members' behaviours, attitudes and values. It is "member culture" – the perspectives and opinions that councillors bring to their various roles – that plays such a strong part in shaping the culture of RBKC as an organisation.

As things stand, we have identified a member culture which has been subject to criticism from a number of those to whom we have spoken. A blurring of the mutual roles of members and officers, shortcomings in the way that the council (and lead members) have taken into account the views of local people in the past, and struggles with accountability through the overview and scrutiny process are all issues which we highlight elsewhere – either in our report or in this appendix. We know from the conversations we have had that councillors are by and large committed to understanding and serving their constituents. Councillors now need to think about how they can challenge their own assumptions and preconceptions about the Borough – what it was in the past, what it is now, and what it will be in the future – in order to play a full part in the "Borough-wide conversation" we describe below.

A programme of support for councillors which is built around the twelve principles will help to make this happen. Our twelve principles have been specifically designed to highlight the need for personal, and professional, accountability, for the organisation and everyone in it. This includes councillors.

We have been asked to review what "good" looks like, in relation to the behaviours and performance of councillors. "Good" looks different from council to council – from councillor to councillor. It is defined by the unique roles that different councillors play in different situations. Behaviours for each of these roles will also need to be different. The kind of behaviour that might be seen as appropriate in the heat of political debate in a traditional Full Council meeting may be unwelcome and unproductive in scrutiny, for example.

An understanding of the way that behaviours –

even (perhaps especially) behaviours expressed in private meetings – influence the way that people think and act is crucial. It is central to the call that the Grenfell Taskforce made to the Council, that attributes of "empathy and emotional intelligence" needed to be placed at the heart of the Council's recovery efforts following the Grenfell fire.

These attributes, and their crucial nature, need to be understood better by the Council, and also by councillors. For this reason, this medium-term approach to member development has to be driven by councillors themselves. It will need to start with a commitment from members to live up to the twelve principles. This may include individual work to explore what the twelve principles mean to each councillor and how it might influence ongoing training and development. Member development will therefore need to be a central element of councillors' various roles – integrated into their day to day activity rather than happening in a classroom. This may involve a shift in mindset for some councillors, and officers. This shift in mindset will involve an acceptance that all councillors, irrespective of seniority or length of service, will need to support, develop and learn from each other – and from those outside the Council – on a continuing basis.

A change in culture in the way that councillors act and behave inevitably also involves accountability for behaviour. There are two main ways for this to happen – through a "formal" code of conduct system (which the Council already has) and through the mechanisms which political Groups operate within the Council.

The Council's code of conduct for members incorporates the Nolan principles (to which we make reference in our main report) and sets out robust expectations for the behaviour that members are expected to uphold. We have not heard any evidence that complaints dealt with through the code of conduct have not been dealt with properly – in-depth analysis of the "formal" aspect of the code of conduct has not been a focus of our work. The "informal" aspect of the Code is, however, important – it acts as a statement both to councillors and to the community and conduct. It should act as a commitment and as a reassurance to both groups. We would suggest that – in due

course – as the Council's member development programme following the May 2018 election progresses, the Council and councillors may wish to review if some of the learning from that development activity might need to be reflected in new wording for the code of conduct.

The role of political groups is also important in promoting positive behaviours. Elsewhere in this appendix we comment on the support for political groups. Political parties are an important source of support and advice for learning and development. We think that Group leaders should play an active role in acting on aligning activity within the Group with the twelve principles. This includes reviewing the operation of "political management", or "whipping", arrangements.

The Council will need to think about how it can help independent councillors, or those from smaller parties (if elected in May 2018) to gain the same level of support and assistance. The Independent Group at the Local Government Association may be able to provide advice here.

This links in to the Council's broader plans for culture change. There is a programme for such change already in development. This programme as a whole should incorporate the twelve principles and take account of the critical role that members play – both in driving culture change itself and in holding the Council to account as it embarks on this process.

This work – to establish a new operating culture – will need to follow on from the work that we talk about below relating to a council's new strategic direction. It will allow the Council to move with more confidence to implement some of the other recommendations we talk about below.

B. Hold a Borough-wide conversation to decide the strategic direction and governance arrangements for the Council

Understanding as much as we can about what priorities the Council has at the moment is important – it helps us to understand how much the Council might need to change.

We have started by looking at what the Council's priorities were before June 2017 (because

since then, they have changed). The more we can understand what these priorities were, the better we can understand the culture that underpins them. By "culture", we mean people's behaviours and attitudes, and how those behaviours and attitudes affect what people think is more or less important.

Councils have to ensure that their time and resources are pushed towards those issues on which they can make the most positive difference to local people. This means the Council's priorities have to be aligned with what is important to those people. Basically, the Council has to understand what local people's needs are, and let those needs direct what it does, within the limits of its resources and legal obligations.

Good governance means that people making decisions must have a clear sense of their aims – what they are trying to achieve and why. These aims have to be understood by others, including local people.

When councils make these decisions, they are likely to sometimes be controversial. Some local people might disagree; there might be local opposition. Councils have to be open and honest in how decisions are made – they have to be trustworthy and prepared to change their minds when they are challenged.

We have gone back through a range of council documents and papers to try to work out the Council's priorities. There is not a single place where the same clear council priorities are set out prior to June 2017.

The material we used to do this was:

- The Council's annual "Report to Taxpayers"

- The Council's annual budget and policy material

- Major policies and other documents that we were able to find in the paperwork of council committees since around 2014

- The targets that made up the Council's "Vital Signs" system for reporting its performance

The Council's overall priorities, it seems to us, have been:

- Excellent management of the Council's finances

- The provision of excellent services to local people

The word "excellence" here means "excellence in the view of the Council". Many of the things the Council has historically measured and reported to support this view seem to be things that are easy to measure and report, rather than things that give the Council a sense of how local people experience the services they receive.

Councils should aim to deliver excellent services and excellent value for money – both go to the heart of the duty that councils have to local people. But many people locally feel that RBKC sees residents as consumers of council services rather than citizens with a democratic right to influence and direct what the Council does. The Council's wider duties to the area and its citizens have not been forgotten. But some at the Council have assumed that the Council being "well run" means that these wider duties are being met automatically.

The Council being well run has been a source of pride for the authority and its members. The Council has used its self-image to demonstrate its differences from other councils – in London and elsewhere in the country. RBKC benefits from, and is challenged by, a mix of residents with a wide variety of needs, as well as a large working population who live elsewhere – which includes many council staff. It is a place with great wealth and a unique history. In the past, this sense of difference has meant that RBKC has been unwilling to draw lessons from the experience of other councils and the local government "community" at large. It still draws on the ten-year-old judgements made by the Audit Commission about its excellence. This strong sense of self-belief has led to some people at the Council thinking its excellent management (particularly management of its finances) means it is insulated from the issues facing the rest of the sector, making it less likely to wish to experiment with different ways of carrying out its work, as other councils are doing. This culture makes change and improvement very difficult.

This culture and self-image define the relationship between the Council and local people. Setting some new priorities will not shift this culture on their own.

Since June 2017, two things have aimed to provide a fresh strategic direction for the authority:

- Speeches by the Leader (principally the speech to Full Council in July 2017, but also more recent addresses)

- An address and report given to the Administration Committee by Barry Quirk, the Council's Chief Executive, in autumn 2017

Both have set out a new direction for the Council; both (understandably) discuss this new direction in light of the Grenfell fire. The overall principles these things set out are going towards formulating a programme of cultural change at the Council. Further context is provided by reports produced by the Grenfell Taskforce – in autumn 2017, and as we finalise this report in March 2018.

The Council has made statements about needing to become a more open, learning organisation. Steps are being taken to begin to translate these into action – but change takes time, and the Council is continuing to grapple with its operational response to the Grenfell fire. This has been accompanied by substantial changes in political and managerial leadership for the Council. Finally, there is a sense that change, when it comes, will need to be directed by whichever party wins the local election in May 2018.

Only after the election can clear effort start to be made to look again at the strategic direction of the Council – its purpose, priorities and role – and its relationship with local people. This will align very closely with the culture change programme that we talked about above, and with the member development work we mentioned in the previous section. The election campaign, and the manifesto of the party that ends up running the Council, will provide the foundation for the conversation with the community that will follow. Inevitably, this has acted as a brake on the Council's ability to act quickly. Another pressing issue that will limit action is the ongoing public inquiry. There is a real risk that the inquiry's vital work will

further delay the future-focused activity that the Council and the community need to engage with.

We recognise the sense of frustration that some local people feel about the lack of progress the Council has made to date. It is likely that the election and the inquiry may mean that progress will continue to be slower than they might like, need and expect. Those frustrations are not unreasonable. They are in fact vital – they provide a direct challenge to the Council to step up its efforts, which the Council should welcome and act on.

The Council needs to have a conversation with local people about what is important to them. The priorities of local people (informed by the manifesto of the party in control of the Council) need to define the priorities of the Council. This should be seen as putting local people in control – giving them ownership of the Council's future direction. In the section below, we provide some examples of how this might work in practice.

The three areas with which this conversation will need to engage are:

- The Council's strategic direction, mentioned above.

- The way that the Council's culture needs to change, and how it can make a practical commitment to that change in the way it makes decisions with the public (a subject we comment on in more detail below).

- The formal governance systems in place for the whole Borough, and those that might apply to individual areas. We cover these issues and the options involved in more detail below.

Opening up debate on these topics represents not only a big departure from how the Council is used to working but also innovations in the way that local government does things. We understand the need for the Council to be able to "walk before it can run" – and the risks inherent in such a conversation if the Council is unable to follow up on its commitments.

However, such a conversation is, we think, the only way to build a foundation on which such change can happen.

This also represents a big ask for the local community, which may be unwilling to engage, given the level of distrust in the Council (discussed below). This is why a sense of ownership by local people in this process – and how it is designed – is so crucial.

C. Establish a citizens' assembly, along with similar "deliberative" processes, as part of the Borough-wide conversation on the strategic direction and future governance of the Council

The local conversation that we talked about in the section above needs to be legitimate – it has to work in a way that involves, engages and empowers all those in the community to take part.

Legitimacy can come from many sources. Representativeness is one source – opinions that derive from a representative sample of people, and/or views reflected by councillors as part of their "civic leadership" role. Another is diversity – large numbers of people having an opportunity to have their say on an equal footing.

Citizens' assemblies provide part of the solution to the challenge of having a representative debate and discussion.

In some areas, citizens' assemblies or juries (appointed at random, or recruited in order to secure a cross-section of the local community) have been explored as a tool to allow local people to understand and tackle knotty and intractable problems.

Citizens' assemblies have a track record in the UK and elsewhere as ways to bring together a representative sample of people to discuss a complex issue. In Iceland, a citizens' assembly was used to develop a new constitution. In Ireland, one was used to review the government's approach to the law on abortion. In the UK, they have been used as methods to look at regional devolution (in Sheffield and Southampton) and Brexit.

An assembly of this type aims to identify and engage a demographically representative cross-section of the local community to come together and discuss an issue or question affecting the area.

Some citizens' assemblies have involved elected politicians. This can help politicians to better understand the views of the public and what is important to them. It can also help citizen members of the assembly to understand the practical limitations of local governance and decision-making. The devolution assemblies mentioned above trialled both approaches. We think that, on balance, an assembly model that involves local councillors would be productive.

Citizens' assemblies by definition only involve a small group of people. We think an assembly would be critical in ensuring that a representative range of people are leading and owning this local conversation – but it would not be the only way for the community to deliberate on the big challenges confronting RBKC.

Other mechanisms could be used to draw in opinions from elsewhere in the Borough and to bring the diversity that provides another source of legitimacy.

We think that a citizens' assembly could produce "discussion kits", which would allow local people to have conversations about the critical issues identified above in their own areas. This highlights the need of the conversation to be driven by local people self-organising to make their voices heard by the Council. The assembly's work and deliberations would provide the catalyst for some of these local conversations.

These local conversations are already happening, and we do not doubt the capacity and willingness of many in the local community when it comes to speaking up. We have already said that the community needs to be in control of this process. But it will need some support in order to do so.

D. Establish a "listening committee" for councillors to hear directly from residents in an open format

Later in this appendix, we make reference to the spaces that exist for the public to hold the Council to account and to provide a "way in" to the decision-making process.

We think the focus of such work should involve the establishment of a council committee specifically tasked with listening to the views of local people – their worries, complaints, concerns and hopes for the future.

This committee would be a place for the Council to better hear and understand local people's concerns, worries and anger, enabling it to reflect on and respond to those issues in due course. For local people, it would provide a separate space in which to hold the Council to account. We would not expect the Council to be able to respond substantively to people's problems then and there. However, we would expect the committee to provoke them to engage more constructively with individuals bringing issues – and by so doing, in due course, the wider community.

This will help the Council to develop and refine its new strategic direction, as well as providing local people with a public space for direct accountability.

We think this committee's work will be time-limited; once long-term arrangements are in place to integrate the public voice into decision-making and other elements of council's work, the need for it will be less keenly felt. But now, and until the citizens' assembly's work is complete, that need is very real. We think lessons can be learned from the operation of the GRSC to make this committee work better – two in particular:

- Ensuring this committee has no "formal business" to transact, other than to listen to and better understand the views of local people (before taking and acting on those views).

- Giving the public a leading role in planning how such a committee should work, meeting by meeting. In our view, this would be led by an independent Chair – someone who can be trusted by the local community.

The idea of a listening committee has come to us from local people. It is a locally developed solution to a unique local challenge. There are no obvious examples from elsewhere to draw on in how it might operate. We recognise that this, and the high-profile nature of such a committee, will make designing and operating it a challenge. This is what drives our sense that design and

operation must, as far as possible, sit in the hands of local people.

This committee would listen but would not just be a talking shop. It would report what it had heard regularly back to Full Council and the Leadership Team so that the views expressed could inform action. It would also provoke officers and lead members to take action on the specific issues that local people want to raise – with the results being fed back to the committee formally at the next meeting. It would aim to problem-solve – seeing solutions as coming not just from the Council, but from the community at large – and would invite public participation in that spirit.

We do not think such a committee would necessarily take over the work of the GRSC; that committee has a particular focus on the operational response to the fire, which deserves additional public scrutiny. But we do anticipate that if the work of the GRSC continues after the election, it will need to operate in a similar way to the listening committee, to feel as though it is "owned" by the local community.

Such a committee should involve the Leader, some lead members and leading councillors from other parties, and it would move around the Borough. It might meet on a six- or eight-weekly basis.

Care would need to be taken to ensure its work does not reinforce the hurt of those directly affected by the Grenfell fire (and others who have had traumatic experiences, whether or not related to the fire). The Council, and independent Chair once appointed, should invite the views of the community about how such a committee, space or forum might be configured to minimise this risk.

E. Set up a commission to review and agree how Borough-wide and area governance will work in the future, involving residents and partners to consider options

The Council and local people need a transparent way of deciding on a new model for governance, both Borough- and area-wide. A commission in which councillors and residents play a part but local people lead would be able to review the options in a reflective and democratic way.

Our work below sets out some of the arguments and options around these issues. However, the "end state" has to be one that has buy-in from the whole community.

Borough-wide

We have been asked to look at the options for introducing a different system for the Council to make decisions across the whole Borough. There have been some vocal calls for the Council to adopt the "committee system", which is a different system for making decisions than that which the Council operates at the moment.

We want to do justice to this important issue, and so we will go into the issues in some detail.

We have also been asked to look at the options for decision-making area by area; more detail on this can be found in the sections below.

A decision about the future governance of the Council can only be made once two requirements have been fulfilled:

- The Council must, with the local community, have decided on its future direction and the cultures, attitudes and behaviours it needs to adopt to follow that direction (essentially, the Council must have addressed the recommendations that precede this one)

- The Council must have engaged in a meaningful debate about its future governance in light of agreement on the above matters

Discussions about future Borough-wide governance will need to happen at the same time as the conversations about area-based governance. Although we have dealt with both separately in this appendix, they are closely linked, and a commission will need to take account of this. For this reason, such a commission would need to see completing the legal task of concluding a "community governance review" as a central part of its work. A community governance review is legally necessary for councils that wish, for example, to establish a parish council (a possibility we discuss elsewhere).

At the moment, the Council makes decisions using what is known as the "Leader and

Cabinet" system. This means that a Cabinet (which RBKC currently calls the Leadership Team) 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).

This system has been in place since 2000. The suggestion has been made that it would be better for the Council to be run using the "committee system" instead. Under the committee system, separate council committees have responsibility for making decisions (so, prior to 2000, councils had housing committees, education committees, social services committees and so forth, all making decisions relating to those issues). The committees under a committee system are politically balanced – they reflect the size of the parties in the Council at large. They are usually all chaired by a councillor from the largest party on the Council.

Most councils were forced to stop using the committee system in 2000, when the Leader and Cabinet system was created. In 2011, a law was passed that allowed those councils to adopt it again.

There are a number of other governance options available, although we will cover them in less depth:

- **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.

- **A "hybrid" system.** A hybrid system 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 is not 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), scrutiny committees are styled as "Cabinet committees"; they review, debate and make recommendations on decisions, before the decisions are essentially "rubber-stamped" by Cabinet.

Since 2011, about 25 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. Councils have to follow a particular legal process to change their governance arrangements, which basically means that a change can only take effect immediately following a council's annual general meeting in May.

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. If more than 5% of the local population signs the petition, a referendum is triggered automatically. The wording of the referendum question is set out in law and cannot be changed. 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.

Making a governance change locks a council into its new governance system for five years. If that change was confirmed in a referendum, the lock lasts for ten years. 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).

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.

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.

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.

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.

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 (as we have noted above in the case of Nottinghamshire).

In brief, these are the lessons we have learned:

- Good governance is more about culture than it is about structure (which informs the conclusions in our main report).

- As such, there are no clear pros and cons to a particular governance option. Above, we have set out some of the opposing arguments – but none of the arguments for or against any system really stand up to proper scrutiny. More comes down to the personal attitudes and behaviours of those who work in that system. So, the committee system is not, by definition, more transparent and democratic – plenty of research shows it is quite possible for committee chairs to cobble together decisions between them, especially where they are all from a single party. Equally, the Leader and Cabinet system is not, by

definition, quick and efficient. And in any case, should speed and efficiency be characteristics by which we judge democratic decision-making?

- As such, moving to a different governance option won't resolve any issues on its own.

- However, as part of a wider programme to address the culture of an organisation, this kind of structural change could, in theory, make a difference. But this requires that the objectives for the change are set out clearly at the outset. We 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.

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? We need, in short, to ask and answer many of the questions that we pose throughout this report. Only then is it possible to talk meaningfully about governance change – however tempting it might be to do it the other way around.

In RBKC's case, we think the design principles have been provided in the form of the twelve principles that form the basis of our report.

In many ways, formal governance might represent the ultimate end of some of the other improvements we have talked about, both in our main report and in this appendix. But it may be that the changes many in the Borough want to bring about can happen without a formal change of governance option.

Looking at formal governance change is not something for the short term. Alongside the structure of council committees, the frequency of meetings and other structural components of governance, the time will come when the Council is able to review them – but doing that now will risk taking attention away from the importance of cultural change. We recognise the strong feeling in the local area (and among

a number of sitting councillors) that governance change will go a long way towards shifting the culture and expectations about how the Council works – that it could kickstart a process of change. This may be the case, but the fact that RBKC's prevailing culture focuses on structures rather than culture means there would be real risks of this approach not working.

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. We think this would particularly be the case in RBKC – notwithstanding the temptation to make a change now.

Once the Council has undertaken its work on culture change, once the citizens' assembly has had an opportunity to lay out its views on the strategic direction for the authority (and the Council has chosen to endorse that direction), then the "design principles" for the Council's approach to governance can be confirmed, and a commission (again, led by local people and their needs) can be convened to review the options and chart a way forward.

Area-wide

We have been asked to look at what systems for making decisions could be adopted to cover particular areas within Kensington and Chelsea. In the near future, there is seen to be a pressing need to rethink how local people are empowered, in their own neighbourhoods, to make decisions that affect them.

Some of the drivers for Borough-wide and area-wide governance are likely to be similar, which is why we recommend that the two be considered together.

Whatever the solution looks like, the answers to RBKC's questions about how its formal decision-making systems work and are organised will be found by thinking about the connection people feel towards their environment at the most local level.

It is likely that this will come up against professional and political assumptions about representative democracy and the role of councillors. We know that sometimes "representative democracy" (decision-making

by councillors, for example) is seen as working against more participatory forms of decision-making (which might include the kind of community action we are talking about). This is why area- and Borough-wide governance need to be looked at together.

In thinking about this issue, we assume that local, area-based governance is about a space existing for community action – for local people to come together to talk about the challenges they face and think of collective ways to resolve those challenges. However, this assumption will need to be tested with local people. They may have different ideas of what local governance and decision-making means for them. In the options we provide a little later in this report, we try to take account of what these different objectives might lead to in practice.

The first – and most important – point to be made about area-based governance, community action and local decision-making is that none of these things should happen with only the approval of the Council. By definition, these things are all "bottom up". Kensington and Chelsea benefits from an extremely vibrant and well-developed range of individuals and organisations committed to agitating on the behalf of local people. Sometimes people come together in traditional residents' groups and amenity groups – sometimes relationships are looser. But none of these arrangements require council approval to happen. Nor should they. In thinking about these issues, the Council should be guided and driven by what local people say they want and need – not the other way around.

The second point is that "asymmetry" in area working arrangements is not necessarily something to be avoided. Asymmetry is the idea of having different ways of working in different areas, so certain things will be decided differently in different areas. In theory, a consistent approach works best – it is more efficient and more understandable. However, if local people want to take a different approach – an approach that is better aligned to their needs and places them in the driving seat as experts on their local community – this should not be a problem. In Westminster, for example, the formation of a new parish of Queen's Park has not led to significant governance problems elsewhere. Neither has partial "parishing" in

other parts of the country presented too much of a problem.

We have looked at a number of different approaches. Success, for any local scheme, seems to depend on:

- **Clarity of powers, responsibilities, duties and accountability:** Everyone must understand a new local governance system, what it is there to accomplish and where its accountabilities lie.

- **Local leadership:** What happens must be driven by local people and their needs, rather than professionals or others. We think there is a clear role for local elected councillors to play, although they should not lead the process.

- **Sustainability:** What is put in place must be able to be supported locally in the long term, in terms of the time and capacity of people in the local community.

- **Funding:** Ensuring that finances are in place to deliver the duties and responsibilities.

Importantly, a clear role for locally elected councillors is critical for all of the above. Even in the case of parishes, which hold their own elections and so have their own democratic mandate, councillors of the so-called "principal" authority (RBKC, in this case) still have a valuable role to play. They can advise, support and take an active part in area working. They can liaise between area and Borough-wide discussions and decisions. Local people can use these structures to hold their own councillors to account. Where local people are empowered to take action themselves – and have the resources and support to take that action – the role of the Councillor at ward level may well change for some. This links back to the first bullet point above on clarity of responsibilities.

All of this has to be fed by a commitment to "civic dialogue" – giving local people the space and information they need to reach independent and locally supported solutions. This is very different to a council-run "consultation exercise". Instead, we are talking about putting the tools in the hands of local people and stepping back to allow conversations to happen (while still engaging in those conversations).

Civic dialogue can, for example, help to resolve the kinds of problems that some may think is significant.

One of these is the challenge of geography. It is not necessary for political leaders to draw lines on a map; those leaders have a subordinate role to local people in deciding how those communities will be organised.

Another may be the perceived threat of this dialogue being "captured" by people who may use it to progress their own interests, rather than the interests of the wider community. Dialogue certainly needs to take into account the very real nature of structural inequalities (such as race, gender, income and disability), which might make it more difficult for certain people to engage in those conversations and easier for certain people and groups to dominate those conversations. It also needs to take into account disagreements about who, in the local area, "represents" the interests of local people – especially where local groups exist with different mandates. Officers in the Town Hall are unlikely, on their own, to be able to come up with reasoned solutions here. Local councillors can help to mediate in these disagreements – with the support of local people. Ultimately, the issue of "capture" can only be dealt with on an area-by-area basis as part of the way that area working is designed. There is no easy Borough-wide solution.

In any case, the people who know local communities the best are those that live in them. The Council's sense about what "capture" looks and feels like might be very different to the views held by local people about a certain individual or group with a prominent role. Local people will also understand the barriers that some local people might experience in engaging in this debate and will be able to take action to eliminate these barriers.

This is one of the areas where the role of councillors can be so valuable. Civic dialogue requires civic leadership. Councillors can exercise this role in leadership – not in directing conversations, but in ensuring that local people are empowered to take an active part in those conversations, and in the decisions that follow.

The concerns expressed by local people through this dialogue feed directly into the aims and objectives for local governance. The needs for a purpose, an aim and some "design principles" for Borough-wide governance also apply to governance at an area level. Only then is it possible to intelligently understand and evaluate the different structural options available. Again, we have already noted that the design principles would be the same as the twelve principles we have identified for the Borough in our main report.

There could be a number of different objectives and tasks for area structures, such as:

- Giving people more of a voice on local planning issues (RBKC does provide guidance on its website for people keen to use the neighbourhood planning systems established in the Localism Act)

- Giving local people direct responsibility for certain aspects of service delivery

- Giving local people responsibility for supporting the Council's development of policy

- Ensuring that any local solution is self-organised rather than imposed from above

This may also help to identify and deal with "red lines" – aspects of local governance with which some people might be especially unhappy. For example, a feature of some structures is the ability for local bodies to issues precepts – raising money from local people. Some people may feel it is unfair for them to bear the costs for local governance structures – especially when such structures are being brought in because of the perceived remoteness of a local authority.

There is a particular interest in area governance for the North of the Borough. It is important to understand how the lack of trust (which we talked about above) links into calls for area governance. The two are closely linked, and the nature of that trust deficit will significantly influence the nature of the "civic dialogue" we just talked about. As such, they influence how the Council engages in that dialogue.

There are a number of options for how area governance might look. Some of these might end up co-existing in the Borough at the same time, highlighting the comments we made above

about "asymmetry". Options include:

- **Establishing area-based consultancy boards:** We go into more detail on Borough-wide "consultation" and empowerment on decision-making below, but there are area-based options too. Depending on the model the Council adopts to develop and refine policy, local boards (which might either be set up by the Council or formed through agreement with local people) could provide local space for those policies to be discussed. This would be a way to bring "strategic" policymaking down to street level, and to ensure that Borough-wide policies could be refined to reflect the needs and concerns of people at local level.

- **Establish neighbourhood or area forums:** Many councils operate traditional area forums or "locality boards" – bodies usually establish on a ward basis and often chaired by a local councillor. Area forums often provide a space for the discussion of "clean and green" issues, planning matters and other issues of local importance. Other models are available; for example, under neighbourhood planning arrangements, such bodies could play a more active part in planning decision-making. Potentially, budgets can be devolved to forums to spend on issues deemed to be a priority by local people.

  In some councils, these boards or forums are defined and controlled by the Council itself, with the Council setting the agenda and approach. In some councils, these forums can even take the form of formal council committees. Sometimes, these kinds of forums have no real power and are seen as talking shops. We think instead that there would need to be clear rules, incorporated into the Council's decision-making rules of procedure, setting out publicly where neighbourhood forums would be empowered to make decisions. Different neighbourhoods might have different expectations on this point. It would be for the Council and local people to decide how to balance the need for the efficiency that comes from Borough-wide services with the need for a focus on local needs.

In some places, forums have been set up to develop and agree "neighbourhood plans" – formal council planning documents used to make decisions on planning applications under the Localism Act. We have been told that planning is a significant issue and concern for many in the Borough, and we comment on this in more detail below. Of course, neighbourhood forums that focus only on planning may be too narrow – although in some communities, discussing planning may be a good way of fostering the "civic dialogue" we mentioned above.

In Wiltshire, eighteen area boards have been established to give people a driving role in tackling issues of local importance. They meet every eight weeks and, between meetings, task groups made up of councillors and local people get together to look at certain issues in more detail, which cover a wide range of local public services. The work of the boards is supported by a dedicated Community Engagement Manager. This links the work of the boards to the broader work of the Council as the Council has other conversations with local people. The boards have powers to make grants, particularly for things that involve young people. This model – of boards established by a council but doing work which is defined by local needs and interests, and controlled by local people – could be one for RBKC to investigate further.

- **Support the establishment of a Community Interest Company, co-operative or other kind of local formal body for community action:** In the recent past, RBKC has assisted with the establishment of a Community Interest Company, Epic CIC. This model provides a way for local people to deliver services to their neighbours and to tackle the issues that are important to them. This would help local people to work together to tackle local social problems – although the contract-based model for delivery under which this work would probably be undertaken might be unattractive to local people. Its attractiveness would depend on the willingness of people in the local community

to be part of an organisation that might well end up delivering services "on behalf of" (i.e. funded by) the Council.

■ **Support the establishment of an urban parish (or parishes):** Since 2011, it has been possible to establish new parishes in urban areas. The most high-profile examples of this have occurred following community action in Sutton Coldfield and Queen's Park. Queen's Park, of course, shares a border with parts of North Kensington. Usually, steps to establish an urban parish should be preceded by a community governance review, which would be informed by the kind of civic dialogue we discussed above.

The option of a formal urban parish begs the questions of the overall role of such a body. "Urban" parishes benefit from the same powers as any other parish council, although the challenges and opportunities they face are likely to be quite different. Parishes' work has traditionally focused on "clean and green" issues, but newer parishes in urban areas have seen their role as broader than this. They can cover support for the arts and local community work (which might include grants), youth services and certain issues relating to the safety of the local community (such as street lighting).

Public decision-making, by elected people, on issues important to local people, close to where they live, will help to make decision-making more accountable. It is not guaranteed, but empowering people to take ownership of the spaces in which they live may help to rebuild trust with RBKC as the "principal council".

Parishes also have a representative role, particularly on issues such as planning, where they are required to be notified by the local planning authority of any planning application covering that area. Parish councils' representative role (in this and other areas) provides a strong voice for local people.

Proper checks and balances are required – local elections provide this, but the new parish would need to conform with a wider regulatory regime. Establishing a

parish would probably also take longer than some of the options above. There is also a challenge around funding. Usually, parishes are funded by a precept – a charge made to local people, which is billed as part of the council tax bill for people living in the relevant area. Some people (especially those in the North of the Borough) might think it is unfair that they would have to cover the costs of an "enhanced" local governance system themselves.

Despite this, parishes benefit from independence – over budgets and priorities – which is formalised in law. This formal distinctiveness might well be attractive to local people. The fact that parishes are under separate democratic control – directed by parish councillors – might also be attractive. However, we know that some local people in the community want to see the implementation of systems that are more radical, and that involve broader community involvement, than one that might be seen as repeating a "traditional" council model at a more local level.

As part of our investigation into locally led area governance, we have looked at national and international examples of area arrangements – ways that local people can participate while also securing a place for representative democracy.

A model that could help to resolve some of these concerns is one that has operated in the city of Auckland, New Zealand, since local government reforms there in 2010.

The changes saw two-tier governance abolished and a single Auckland Council created, replacing a handful of smaller authorities and the territorial government. Alongside the Council sit 21 local boards. Local boards share responsibility with the Council's "Governing Body" (loosely equivalent to Full Council). Local boards reach agreement with the Governing Body over funding and plans (which operate on a three-year cycle). Local boards by and large have responsibility for community-facing facilities, but the planning process involves the boards and the Governing Body entering into a negotiation over which powers will be allocated. This is subject to an independent dispute resolution mechanism.

Once the local plan (with its associated

allocations of responsibility) has been agreed, the local board has full autonomy within the framework of that plan (and within the law) and is accountable directly to local people for its implementation.

Funding is allocated according to a transparent formula agreed as part of the Council's long-term plan. Additional funds are also made available – for example, the local transport authority ring-fences NZ$10 million, allocated according to population, across the local boards for local transport projects.

The arrangements that govern the relationship between the city council and its local boards act as both a guarantee of independence for the boards and a way for the city council to work with them. This presents a way to secure the maximum possible local devolution while falling just short of total independence. It could be a halfway house towards the establishment of an urban parish – or an end in itself, if the right procedural framework can be developed to make it work to everyone's satisfaction.

There was controversy at the time of these moves; local boards were seen not to have sufficient autonomy, and the fear was that local democracy would suffer, with big decisions being made at a remote city level.

Overall, putting in place area working will help to resolve some concerns – especially those relating to the sense that decision-making in the Town Hall is too remote.

But there is also a sense that Town Hall decision-makers have a simplistic view of the North Kensington community in particular, and that this makes it difficult for them to make decisions in their interests. Local people (particularly in light of the Grenfell fire) feel they are wrongly portrayed as living on "sink estates", that they are universally deprived and that the reason they agitate for better services and care is because they are ungrateful. This concern predates the Grenfell fire; many feel they have been forgotten over the course of many decades. More local governance will not be a panacea for these deep-rooted concerns and angers. Both the Council and the community have to be realistic in considering what it can achieve. Area working – empowering local people to make decisions on issues that affect them – will

provide some of the answer, but only alongside wider cultural change.

F. Take practical steps to engage with local government good practice

RBKC should also rebuild its links with local government nationally – with its neighbouring councils in London and with the Local Government Association (LGA). This will help the Council to get the perspective it needs from fellow councillors and professionals, and to break down its sense that it is somehow an exceptional and unique council. The challenges RBKC faces are in many ways deeper than those of its neighbours – but it can still learn from other councils and communities, across the capital and further afield.

In particular, we would suggest that the Council take up the opportunity of an LGA Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC). A CPC brings a team of councillors and officers from other parts of England into the Council to look at the Council and its work. These people are chosen on the basis of their experience and expertise. They would be able to make independent suggestions for change. Taken as part of the wider steps we set out in our report and appendix, this could help – in due course – to cement the improvements the Council needs to make. We think this kind of engagement with the wider local government sector – although it is, of course, starting immediately – would serve best as a check to the Council once it has had a chance to put in place some of our more immediate recommendations.

Finally, it has been suggested that the Council's challenges are so significant that it requires more sustained intervention from central government. Some have suggested that the Council be placed in "special measures" (which we have assumed means the appointment of external commissioners).

"Commissioners" are unelected people who can be appointed by the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government to run a council instead of locally elected politicians. There is a legal framework for doing this in the Local Government Act 1999. Under central government control by commissioners,

RBKC's councillors (of whatever party) would have no role in making decisions until the Secretary of State decides to return those powers to them.

Nothing in the evidence we have gathered supports this view. The Council's main challenges are about rebuilding its links with local people and putting in place a vision and plan to make this happen. Bringing in commissioners would, in our view, harm and delay this process. While it might seem attractive (particularly to those locally who do not hold any trust in the Council), in the medium to long term we do not think it would lead to quicker or more sustained improvement than would happen otherwise.

The experience of other councils demonstrates that there will be no "moment of catharsis" – a point at which tension and distrust will start to ebb away and relationships can begin to be rebuilt. There is no clear roadmap or comforting words that people at the top of the Council can use to make improvements "just happen". Organisations in this position simply have to work to ensure that everything they do – every interaction, every promise, everything they deliver – is steeped in the new culture of the organisation. This is the culture we talked about at the start – the open, frank and candid culture that admits to mistakes and tries to make things better. People will, and should, still be suspicious. But this is the only way.

It would be easy to see this as the Council doing penance, or self-flagellation. It would also be easy to say that penance and self-flagellation are two things that the Council should be doing more of. In truth, what we are talking about is neither. It is simply a well-adjusted council prepared to do what is right by its people.

G. Use the Annual Government Statement as the basis for an ongoing, wider conversation about how governance can be improved

Councils are obliged to produce an Annual Governance Statement (AGS). This document is usually procedural and technical in nature.

At RBKC, the AGS should be used to inform an annual conversation about governance, transparency, decision-making and local people's involvement in all of this. Providing a means to reflect on how decision-making happens on a regular basis will be important in sustaining the Council's improvements to governance. How the Council produces and provokes discussion on the statement is up for debate. In the sections below, we suggest a number of different models and structures that could "own" this process. It could well be led by local people, who could use the opportunity to present robust challenge to the Council on how it is living up to the twelve principles. Whatever happens, the review process would need to be seen as independent from the Council's leadership.

Options for next steps

Our recommendations, above and in the main report, are about providing the Council and local people with a framework within which a substantial local conversation can happen on major issues around governance and decision-making.

The result of those conversations will define what follows. Local need and appetite for various different approaches to governance, decision-making, policymaking and oversight will all influence what the Council, with local people, finally agrees.

We present our suggestions here as options – not because we think that addressing these points is optional, but because it is right that local people and councillors should engage with and discuss what is likely to work, based on the Borough-wide conversation we propose above.

These "suggestions for action" are things on which the Council will need to take a firm view in light of the Borough-wide conversation above. Until then, we suggest that (in support of the work of the citizens' assembly, and the other conversations that will be happening in the Borough) the Council might choose some of these suggestions as things with which to experiment – different approaches to formulating decisions, and holding them to account, on which local people, councillors and the Council can try out to see what works.

This experimental approach is the most proportionate for a number of reasons:

- It recognises that the Council, and local people, are not going to be able to build perfect systems for everything straight away. A trial period is necessary.

- Putting in place "permanent solutions" could be seen as more risk – to the Council and to local people. Trialling different approaches means that decisions can be taken later, informed by evidence.

- Putting in place "permanent solutions" could be seen as resource-intensive.

- Experimental approaches can be trialled and evaluated more dynamically.

- Experimentation helps to manage the challenge of prioritisation – that is, which of these measures to address first. Because a number of these measures are interconnected, setting a priority and order for them is very difficult. Experimenting with different elements of what we propose before taking firm action means that the Council is able to prioritise from a more informed standpoint.

- Finally, an experimental approach means that the Council, councillors and local people "own the change", when it happens. People will have had the opportunity to check, review and evaluate the strengths and pitfalls of different approaches – they will understand what they are signing up to and how to make it work.

Resident involvement in decision-making
Recommendations

Publish a statement of the Council's new culture (and new strategic vision) to demonstrate how the Council will work with local people to understand how decision-making ought to be opened up

We have been told by some that the Council sees engagement, involvement and dialogue with local people as a risk. We have heard that there is a preoccupation with "managing" the way that the Council and local people talk to each other, which has driven the continued focus on traditional consultation, which some local people think is unsatisfactory. We have seen some recent "consultation" activity that backs up this view. We have also seen evidence that this has historically affected the way that the Council engages with the local media, although this does now appear to be changing.

We think the Council needs to do more to publicly explain first that it understands what benefits the public can bring to decision-making, and second that it is prepared to put steps in place to cede power to local people to make this happen. At the moment, it is not clear that the Council (corporately) understands this – although we know that examples exist of better working at a more local, operational level.

This inconsistency, and the feeling that they are being ignored, has contributed to local people's justified frustration. This is part of the cultural challenge that we identify elsewhere.

The way that power is distributed and used will need to be different to suit the needs of different issues, challenges and parts of the Borough. We discuss this in more detail in the section on how the Council makes "key decisions".

There is huge capacity, expertise and skill in the local community, which can be brought to bear on the challenges facing the Council and the area. Local people deserve a public commitment that demonstrates the Council's recognition of this fact and shows how the Council will work with local people in future in a spirit of partnership.

Introduce an advisory panel for policy development

Historically, the Council has operated a residents' panel, but this appears to have been in abeyance for some time. We have been unable to determine when, and in what capacity, it was active. Residents' panels were generally set up by local authorities in response to the Comprehensive Performance Assessment regime in the last decade.

In other councils, residents' panels were used for consultation and surveys. They were (as far as possible) a broadly representative sample of the local population. They varied in size quite significantly.

Used well, residents' panels have the potential to be more than just a talking shop. We think the potential exists to restart the panel and use it as one of a number of ways to draw members of the public into the decision-making process.

We think there are a number of roles that such a panel could perform.

First, it could highlight and encourage links between residents and communities in the North and South of the Borough.

Second, it could take on some of the work and recommendations of the citizens' assembly. The citizens' assembly would be set up on a time-limited basis specifically to engage with the challenges we identified at the start of this report. A panel made up of local people would be able to take some of this work forward.

Third, it could help to formulate and oversee a "matrix" of different involvement, engagement and empowerment techniques and approaches for a range of different services, issues and outcomes. We explain this in more detail below.

Fourth, it could provide a way (within this matrix) for particular policies to be deliberated and refined. The precise role would depend on the broader governance decisions that we have suggested the Council make elsewhere.

It could be that such a panel could be facilitated and supported by the Council but organised and managed from the ground up. The form and approach taken by such a panel is something that could form part of the discussions we suggest happen elsewhere on area governance.

Set up a model of policymaking that involves residents appropriately in the development of policy proposals, including the use of policy commissions

Some of the people we spoke to suggested that the Council convene commissions (which might incorporate councillors and members of the public) to direct and develop policy. This idea may go together with the residents' panel option highlighted above. These commissions might be given broad terms of reference by the Council to tackle a particular challenge or issue, reporting back with refined proposals after a set time. They would be empowered to gather evidence from council officers as well as local experts.

We think these commissions could be given independence by being organised by the Council's overview and scrutiny function rather than the leadership. They would not be the same as scrutiny "working" groups – their work would be more intensive and consciously public-facing, and would require more support.

This would complement the operation of scrutiny. It mirrors the approach that councils in the Netherlands operate. The Netherlands has a long history of consensus decision-making. It operates a "Mayor and Aldermen"-style Cabinet system at local level. There are two models for municipal governance in the Netherlands: the programme model (where the membership of the "Cabinet" is made up exclusively of members of the majority party) and the mirror model (where membership reflects the political proportionality of the authority at large) – a bit more like a traditional Policy and Resources committee under the committee system. The key feature of this system (and the Dutch approach to government more generally) is its dualism – the Mayor and Aldermen are not actually members of the Council; the Council is a legally distinct entity. With the advent of dualism in local government in the Netherlands,

the separation increased. The nature of coalition politics in the Netherlands means that even programme-based executives are multi-party; the weekly Mayor and Aldermen meetings (which take place in private) are therefore a critical space for consensus building, debate and discussion.

For us, this highlighted the challenge of when it might be appropriate for these kinds of commissions to be established – and who makes the decision on establishment.

Open policymaking is important but will not be appropriate (or feasible) for every council decision. There has to be a way of ensuring that transparent methods for debate, discussion and decision-making can be applied consistently, and in a way that is fair to everyone. Importantly, those methods, and how they are applied in relation to council decisions and policies, have to be owned by both the Council and local people.

In the section below on lead members and decision-making, we note the Council's "diamond" system of identifying where decisions are likely to be of particular importance. We comment that this could be used to support a system that involves the "variable" involvement of local people.

A system that provides consistent and well-understood mechanisms for local people to get involved in decision-making at different stages, and in different ways, is a critical part of making sure decision-making is open, accessible and accountable.

This kind of approach rests on understanding the expectations of local people.

Some people (local people and elected councillors) want to play a role in the formal act of decision-making. To meet these ends, we suggest changes to the way the Council manages its "key decisions" below. For others, a direct role in crafting and shaping those decisions from the earliest stages is a priority. How this works in practice will ultimately be defined by the decisions that local people and the Council end up making about Borough and area governance, as well as by the role of scrutiny (which we discuss below). But in advance of those decisions being made, we

think that experiments can be taken in opening up decision-making – to see what works, how systems might adapt and how working cultures can change. Experimentation will not only yield success but also give the Council and local people the confidence to choose the approaches that are likely to work in the long term.

Whatever these different approaches look like, they will need to be supported by a more open approach to the preparation, publication and use of information by the Council. A shift is needed in openness and transparency. We will go on to talk about this in more detail in the sections below on formal decision-making, but it is important to note here that the provision of information, in an open, candid and frank way, is both a key element of cultural change and a critical prerequisite of an approach that gives local people more of an active role in decision-making.

Historically in RBKC, opportunities for the involvement of local people in decision-making have been limited. There is a consultation portal on the Council's website, but it contains very little information (at the time of writing, three active consultations are listed, with no onwards links for those requiring more information). There appears in the past to have been a residents' panel, but it seems to be in abeyance. One of the options we suggest below is that it should be re-established.

The examples we have seen of "consultations" are traditional and based on the assumption that the public will comment on detailed proposals produced by the Council. Under these circumstances, it is easy for local people to assume that consultations are seemingly carried out for the sake of compliance rather than to genuinely elicit views. The way that consultations are explained and expressed leaves the Council open to the criticism that materials make assumptions about the future that may not be justified, or that they deliberately exclude options that residents might like to explore.

We heard many examples of significant anger among local residents – both before and after the Grenfell fire – because of a sense that the Council routinely ignores their wishes and interests.

Further discussions about local expectations are necessary to dig into these concerns and to inform choices about some of the options. In particular, these conversations will influence the Council's decisions over both formal decision-making and scrutiny. Councillors will need to play a central role in these conversations, but they and the Council at large will need to show they intend to put local people in the driving seat when it comes to how these formal systems operate. This means formal decision-makers on the Leadership Team talking to local people and engaging with their views far earlier. It may also involve scrutiny and ward councillors having a particular role in understanding, challenging and mediating local people's views – especially on large or contentious topics on which local disagreement may arise. Councillors cannot, however, be seen as controlling these debates and discussions. They can be participants – and they have a role in feeding and shaping the debate – but that debate will belong to local people.

We think a likely approach will see a "matrix" developed that will provide a range of different options for public involvement and empowerment on different kinds of issues. Forthcoming decisions likely to have a profound impact on the whole Borough would demand a very different approach to public engagement compared to landscaping improvements in a local park, for example. But there will need to be some form of public stake, and public involvement, in each of these decisions.

A spectrum of participation methods and approaches are available that could "fill" this matrix. The citizens' assembly could begin to evaluate these different methods; this task could then be taken on by the policy development panel we talked about above. This panel could play a role in overseeing this process, identifying which decisions or issues could be subject to different levels of involvement and empowerment.

It is not possible at this stage to set out a list of decisions or issues that might be particularly amenable to certain levels of "public involvement". Only a conversation between the Council and local people can give rise to this agreement. That conversation cannot be short-circuited. The menu of different methods and

approaches to secure that involvement, too, can only be reviewed and evaluated by local people and councillors working together.

The methods and issues that would form part of this "matrix" would not, importantly, be the only way the Council would seek to secure public views on topics of local interest and contention. The approach we recommend the Council encourages elsewhere – the spirit of local people being able to self-organise and hold the Council to account in a way that suits them – applies to policy development as much as anything else. In a section below, we highlight how this bottom-up self-organising would intersect with these more Borough-wide approaches.

The different challenges and expectations around planning and development are a good example of the kinds of issues and factors that the Council and local people will need to consider to properly address everyone's needs.

Planning sits outside of the Council's executive decision-making arrangements. A change to the Council's governance arrangements would not affect the way that planning decisions are made. Planning policy is developed and adopted based on a statutory framework; planning applications are determined in a particular way, which is defined by law. There is not so much scope to do things differently in planning as there might be in other areas.

However, we have heard significant concerns about the way local people engage with the planning process. There is a worry that people are ignored when they express concerns about planning – that there is no "comeback" for local people, and no consequence for the Council if they act in a way that is seen to be to the detriment of local people.

These concerns are not unique to RBKC. In other parts of the country, planning is also a cause of significant local contention. But it has to be recognised as part of the range of issues that have contributed to the distrust in the Council. RBKC's planning challenges, as an inner-London Borough with complex, unique and significant pressures on development, suggest that a unique solution is required.

There is a clear case for the Council to do more – to learn from mistakes when they happen, to understand where local concern and frustration arises, to recognise the need for accountability to local people, and to explain and justify decisions on the basis of policy in a way that local people can understand.

Revisiting planning policy and how policies are designed and adopted seems to be the most obvious way to spread trust and understanding. Part of this will involve the Council being franker and more open about the competing interests and demands that influence policymaking. The "matrix" of different methods of involvement will help the Council and local people to understand what the best balance is.

Inevitably, engaging people in the act of decision-making will always be more attractive to local people – individual planning applications excite more interest than policies and plans, especially when they are large-scale in nature. While it will be difficult (and perhaps not advisable) to open up planning decision-making itself, in the first instance there is certainly a case for the Council to take more steps to explain and justify its decisions – on the basis of not only planning policy but also the impact that decisions have on people's lives.

Thinking about making it easier for members of the public to actively contribute at planning meetings might be one approach: giving local people more than a three-minute slot to express their views and giving them a right to reply to statements made by applicants. There is also a need for the Council to make sure that public representations can be shown to have been given due weight in the decision-making process. Jargon-busting work (in the form of documents and/or seminars for local people, provided by planning officers), and work to support ward councillors to empower their residents to engage productively in the planning system, will all help.

RBKC has unique demands around planning, which require unique responses in terms of governance. But these, like other issues, need to fit into a broader framework for public involvement in decision-making that is consistent, understandable and seen as owned by local people.

It is likely to take some time for a framework like this to get up and running. It will require experimentation. It represents a method of securing local insight and involvement in policymaking that is (in the UK local government context) quite radical.

Redesign the Council website

A large number of those we spoke to said the Council website needs urgent work to be fit for purpose. The website is the first port of call for people who want to find more information about the Council – and for those (including councillors) who are trying to hold the Council to account.

We recommend that a major redesign takes place as soon as possible, so that the website meets the needs of residents. The gov.uk design principles provide an excellent starting point, and we would also suggest talking to the LocalGovDigital group if more help is needed.

Work with councillors and the voluntary sector to foster and support local individuals, groups and organisations to self-organise to influence council decision-making

Above, we have set out a range of ways in which local people can use formal mechanisms to influence formal decision-making.

But public debate cannot – and should not – be channelled exclusively through these kinds of mechanisms. We talked in our main report and in this appendix about the importance of self-organisation – empowering local people to make decisions and influence the Council's decisions in the ways that best suit them, not the ways that are most administratively convenient for the Council.

Area working – again, discussed above – is one method of dealing with this challenge.

There are huge strengths in RBKC's community, not least the vibrancy, activity and interconnection of the various groups that exist to make local people's lives better on a practical level. Any solution, therefore, must also provide significant space for these groups to feed in,

express themselves and take action in ways that make sense to them – with the support of the Council. We think the flexibility that local people will demand to define for themselves how and where they engage will need to be built into the "matrix" approach we define above.

A range of individuals and organisations need to be supported and empowered to be more active and involved in this work – if they want to be. We have heard it expressed that local people are not especially interested in getting involved unless something directly affects them; that they are happy for the Council to act on their behalf. This is likely to be the case for certain people and issues (and the "matrix" will need to take account of this), but we cannot expect, given the scale and vibrancy of voluntary and community action in the Borough, that it is a widespread rule. In fact, we suspect there is a significant latent demand – people who would like to be more involved more but need support to play that more active part.

Councillors – in their role as representatives, but also as people encouraging their constituents to get more involved in important local issues – have a specific role here. Certain councillors may feel comfortable in "leading" efforts to do this in their own areas. In some areas, councillors may end up "mediating" local views, where they are expressed – if this is what local people want.

We think the voluntary sector in particular could also be crucial in providing this support. The sector, the Council and community organisations should discuss how the kinds of conversations we talk about in our report, and this appendix, can be opened up to engage a wider range of people. We can provide no hard-and-fast rules and approaches here; much of this will be very local – street by street, house by house, flat by flat.

Importantly, the people we are talking about here are not just current residents. We think there is a role in seeking to involve people who work and provide services in the Borough too.

Councillors working with residents
Recommendations

Hold development sessions for councillors working with communities

We have heard that some councillors need support as they engage with their constituents. Part of a response to this might be the employment of political assistants, as we discuss in later sections.

But other forms of development may also be necessary. Our recommendations pose challenges to local people, and to the Council, about how they work together. Councillors will be the mechanism through which much of this dialogue must happen – they must get the assistance they need to carry out their roles properly.

First, councillors need support to help local people navigate the Council's systems and processes. Councillors themselves need support in these systems to provide this assistance. This is particularly the case in the immediate aftermath of an election, and this support should form part of the induction process in the early summer.

Second, councillors need support to help local people engage in the various debates and dialogues we talk about throughout our report and appendix.

Third, councillors need support to gather and make use of insight and intelligence from local people. Part of this relates to the historic lack of a formal management system for councillors' casework. Councillors in a modern London Borough are called on to deal with a huge number and breadth of issues their residents are experiencing. Most councils have corporate systems, both to assist councillors in managing their time and to ensure they get answers to the questions they want answered on behalf of local people. Such systems often get fed into the Council's corporate complaints system. In the best instances, this ensures the Council's response to complaints, and issues arising from councillor contact, are prompt and seamless.

We are aware that RBKC is putting systems in place for the adoption of such a system.

Finally, councillors need support to more fundamentally understand the communities they serve. At ward level, there are a number of councillors who have excellent relationships with their residents – who are known and trusted.

But even councillors who have served the same communities for some time would, we think, benefit from the opportunity for structured conversations with local people and groups – led by local people – to talk about their hopes, needs and aspirations. In time, this option will come through the area working proposals we make in earlier sections. In the short term, we would call on local people and groups to organise to engage with ward councillors post-election – and we would call on councillors to respond promptly and positively to those attempts at engagement. We believe these steps can be supported by the Council's member induction process, which will work with councillors to understand how they, and the Council, can understand the communities they represent. As such, the member induction process will be a crucial element in making this happen.

Focus member induction (and ongoing support to councillors) on a clear understanding of councillors' various roles

Throughout our main report, and our appendices, we have commented on councillors' representative role. Later in this appendix, we will cover councillors' important role in decision-making.

It is important that councillors understand this role – and their other roles.

The recent report of the Councillor Commission (a body established by De Montfort University's Local Government Research Unit, on which the chief executives of both the Democratic Society and CfPS sat as commissioners) provides a good starting point for exploring councillors' different roles. We have also explored these roles with

interviewees (councillors, officers and residents).

Councillors are representatives of local people, but not delegates. They have to exercise their own judgement and use their perspective to understand and act on local issues in service of their community. Viewed this way, it is simplistic to say that they are "community leaders". They are a part of the community, but they do not "lead" in a conventional sense – they can act as advocates for local people, mediators where the interests of competing groups might clash and solution-finders for difficult local problems that affect an individual, a group or the whole area.

Councillors' roles include:

- Supporters of individuals (through casework)

- Supporters of groups and organisations at local level (charities, community action etc.)

- Challengers of the Council's leadership on behalf of local people

- Challengers of the Council's leadership from a political point of view

- Challengers of the Council's leadership from the perspective of overview and scrutiny

- Decision-makers (locally, depending on area working arrangements)

- Decision-makers (Borough-wide)

- Representatives of the Council on outside bodies

This is, of course, not an exhaustive list. New councillors will require the support of longer-standing colleagues and their political groups (if they are aligned to a political party) to carry out this work properly.

Councillors have to find their own roles and be supported to carry them out. Their role will depend on the unique relationship they forge with their own constituents. This is particularly the case in multi-member wards (like RBKC's). Multi-member wards allow for a degree in specialisation – some councillors (especially lead members) may become focused on strategic matters, some may focus on Borough-wide regulatory and quasi-judicial issues (like planning) and some may focus on their community representation role.

In RBKC, we have heard that some councillors see their role as bringing expertise to the Council, using this expertise either to hold the Council to account or to direct policy or decision-making. This has served to muddy the mutual roles of officers and members, which we will discuss below. The role of councillors is not bringing professional expertise to the authority; it is bringing their unique perspective to bear on decision-making through their connection to local people, which derives from their credibility and legitimacy as elected representatives.

It is important that the member induction plans for the 2018 intake of new councillors engage creatively with councillors to help them explore how their roles will evolve and develop over time.

Take action to ensure that officer responses to councillor requests are consistently timely, positive and informative

We have heard that councillors have sometimes experienced difficulties in getting answers to questions or securing action from the Council on important local issues.

This is a challenge shared in other councils. Councillors do have enhanced rights of access over information held by the Council. Councillors sitting on scrutiny committees hold particular enhanced rights. The issue here is not that councillors are denied access to information but that information may arrive incomplete (or presented in a way that is otherwise unhelpful) and/or late.

Some of the other changes we have talked about in this appendix will work to address this, particularly some of the actions around policy development and consistency in the preparation of evidence bases for decisions.

But action is still necessary to address individual requests for information.

As a first step, part of the culture change and organisational development work for the Council needs to engage with officers' awareness of members' roles and expectations. We have discussed this above in the specific context of

decision-making, but the understanding we talk about here goes much wider.

Understanding councillors' motivations, respecting those motivations and using that understanding to ensure that those expectations are met will help.

Officers need to be empowered, by senior managers, to be more proactive and responsive

in their communication with members. This, again, reflects the issues we talk about later regarding the culture of deference to councillors. A more productive and professional relationship between members and officers will help dialogue and understanding.

Lead members and decision-making
Recommendations

Clarify the different roles of officers and members in the decision-making process

Good governance in decision-making is about more than just making sure that rules are adhered to. But having rules is important. Part of a rules-based approach to decision-making is that people working within the system have to understand what their roles are.

Under the Leader and Cabinet system, two groups of people can be involved in formally making decisions. These groups are elected councillors, and council officers employed by the Council.

Councils have rules that set out who is responsible for making decisions on what issues, and when. Like other councils, RBKC has a Scheme of Delegation, which sets out where members and officers are responsible for decision-making with the required level of detail. However, looking at this alongside the Forward Plan, there are points of inconsistency – elements of certain decisions that might lend themselves more to member than officer decision-making, or vice versa. We have not found any egregious examples of misassignment, but enough that there is evidence of a certain woolliness, which probably expresses itself rather differently from department to department. It is something that the Council should seek to address.

This probably reflects two issues.

The first is the silo working that leads to such inconsistency. We go into more detail about this both in our main report and later in this

appendix, and suggest some approaches that could resolve the problem. "Silo working" means that, historically, departments and lead members have often made decisions on their own, without bearing in mind the implications on the work of others.

The second is the nature of the member–officer relationship at RBKC. Elsewhere, we have noted that the decision-making process can be messy and confusing to local people – it has been described to us as a "black box". This is particularly the case when one tries to understand the roles that members and officers play, separately and together, in formal decision-making.

It is especially difficult to point to specific evidence (particularly documentary evidence) of the way a relationship works practically on the ground. Much is informal and unsaid. But our interviews (and some recent documentary information derived from the schedule of key decisions, scrutiny reports and Cabinet/ Leadership Team paperwork) suggest that officers are given more latitude than they ought to have in directing the development and making of some decisions; here, more effective lead member oversight is needed. Equally, there are some decisions – operational in nature, and delegated to officers in a formal sense – where the level of member involvement is greater than would be expected. The challenge here is not, therefore, as simple as saying that RBKC's decision-making is "officer-led" or "member-led".

This all contributes to a woolliness around roles. As in other areas, the member–officer protocols in the constitution do not assist here, despite setting out expectations in general terms. The issue is one of behaviour – in particular, behaviour in which the personal interests of individual lead members dominate how much, or how little, they are involved in the decision-making process. This brings a "hobbyist" flavour to members' engagement and involvement – and hence, their accountability.

We have not seen documentary evidence of this happening, but evidence from multiple internal sources suggests it is the case. It is also not consistent; it almost certainly applied differently to different lead members (now, and Cabinet members in the past) and different departments. But the fact is that the space exists within the Council's decision-making systems that allows this practice to continue.

A lot of this appears to be focused on the work of policy boards. These informal spaces for council officers and lead members to discuss and deliberate exist in many councils. RBKC needs to consider how the culture of the Council contributes to the confusion that exists around mutual roles.

This is not to say that boards should not meet or that all policy development must happen in public and according to a rigid formula. But there is something about the informality of systems and processes that does need to be addressed. There is a tendency for members' active involvement in decision-making not to be directed towards those areas where they should be directing and overseeing work. As we have already noted, in our main report and this appendix, lead members' roles should be directed towards strategy, setting the Council's direction and identifying broad political priorities. Officers should plan and deliver the way those priorities are acted on and their impact on the ground.

This is heightened by the lack of mutual challenge between members and officers. While it is right that members set a strategic direction for officers to follow, in RBKC there is a (well-recognised) culture of officer deference (in terms of behaviour) to members, which the Council knows it needs to address.

Other councils have protocols and systems to govern member and officer relations around decision-making that are comparable to RBKC's, but – as in other areas – the practice looks quite different. Different spaces exist for member and officer liaison. For example, councils may convene joint meetings of their Cabinet and senior officer team to work on broad priorities; selected lead members and senior officers may meet on a time-limited basis to think of ways to tackle specific issues or deliver particular outcomes; officer conferences (such as meetings for large teams of middle managers) may happen, which are informed by the priorities and vision of the relevant lead member (or members), who attend to both set the scene and take an active part in discussion.

Whatever happens, it is important that care is taken to ensure that members are involved in decision-making in the right way, and at the right time.

Importantly, these approaches, while they are set out in writing in the constitution, are in many councils backed up by years of practical working, leading to an innate understanding of mutual roles that forms part of the culture of the authority. This is not easy to replicate.

As such, for RBKC, putting new systems in place will not be enough. Looking at this issue alongside the rules around "key decisions" (explained below) will help to recast how members, officers and others play an understandable, transparent and consistent role in how decisions are formally made.

Redesign the "key decision" process

Legally, key decisions are defined as those that result in significant expenditure or a significant effect on local people across two or more wards covered by the Council in question. In its constitution, RBKC defines "significant expenditure" as £100,000, which is at the low end of the spectrum compared to other authorities. In other respects, the definition the Council provides conforms to government statutory guidance published on this subject in 2000 (guidance that, as far as we are aware, is still active).

Prior to 2012, councils had to publish their forthcoming key decisions in a Forward Plan: a document that was updated monthly and contained all the key decisions expected to be made in the next three-month period. The law changed in 2012. Now, councils are no longer required to produce a Forward Plan; instead, they must though give 28 days' notice of any key decision. Councils still produce what tends now to be called a "Schedule of Key Decisions", which some (including RBKC) still refer to as a Forward Plan.

The idea of the Forward Plan (and of the key decision process) is to highlight to the public and to non-executive councils where major decisions, expected to be of public interest, are likely to be made.

At RBKC, a system exists to highlight particularly important key decisions. Key decisions are graded on a scale between one and three diamonds, as described in the Council's constitution. This system was developed and designed by scrutiny chairs, who wanted to make sure scrutiny committees could play an active role in reviewing the most important decisions. The descriptions are:

♦♦♦ **High impact and high public interest:** A key decision that is likely to have a major impact on service users, residents or businesses and where there is prospect of significant public interest. This decision would be expected to feature planned consultation with the Scrutiny Committee and the public.

♦♦ **High impact or high public interest:** A key decision that would meet all the above criteria on impact or could be expected to be of particularly public interest. This decision would be expected to feature planned consultation with the Scrutiny Committee and the public.

♦ **Routine, low public interest:** A key decision that is of a relatively routine nature where the Scrutiny Committee would not wish to get involved.

Although this system focuses on the need for accountability, it does not seem to meaningfully influence the way that scrutiny engages with these decisions. Neither does it influence how the Council's executive deals with particular

key decisions. "High-impact" decisions are not placed on the Forward Plan earlier than others, and do not benefit from additional documentation to back them up. Neither do they seem to benefit from enhanced consultation arrangements (or attempts to evaluate their cross-cutting impact).

Moreover, it is difficult to ascertain how and why a judgement might be made as to whether a decision is a "key decision" or not. We have noted above that the constitution makes reference to the definition of "significance" insofar as it is applied to key decisions, but this is open to subjective interpretation. We have looked at this issue alongside the connected issue of decision-making delegation, on which we comment further below.

We think the "diamond rating" system is interesting and innovative. It could help to manage decision-making well if it were used more consistently and thought of as about more than just overview and scrutiny. In particular, we think it should be linked to the options we highlighted in the last section about variable community involvement in decision-making. If managed better, it could also be used to define the level and detail of information published to support decisions. It could also perform its expected purpose of helping the scrutiny function to oversee the decision-making process better.

A reviewed and revised key decision system – more predictable and backed up with more consistent information and background papers (see below) – also needs to be public and transparent.

At the moment, the rating and ranking of key decisions according to this system is "owned" by scrutiny. Because this sits independently of the Council's leadership, it provides important assurance – despite the shortcomings we have identified above – and should continue.

Local people (individuals and groups) have told us they want more ways of understanding when decisions that affect them will be moving to the formal decision stage.

One straightforward way of ensuring an element of transparency would be to integrate into the Council's committee and decision-management

systems a facility to provide email alerts to people who have signed up to express an interest in following specific decisions, or specific classes of decision. Such a system does exist, but the opportunity could be taken to review and enhance it. This is likely to be of particular value to local charities and voluntary organisations, but we anticipate it would also be of use to residents' associations and amenity groups.

Review the governance of the bi-borough and partnership arrangements to ensure they are compatible with the twelve principles

Where councils (and others) have entered into partnerships (formal and informal) with others, it has proven very difficult to get the governance right. Tri-borough was one of the first of these arrangements. Since it was developed, other councils have had the opportunity to trial and test it. Broad lessons emerging from those experiences can be summarised as:

- Clarity of purpose is important.

- Clarity of outcome (what outcome is sought, and how we will know that this outcome has been delivered) is also important.

- As far as possible, local people need to be in the driving seat in asserting what the purpose and outcome are to be. Some councils have managed this through public exercises to feed into the specification of large commissioning and partnership arrangements.

- Ongoing oversight and accountability are critical. Novel and different delivery vehicles demand their own governance systems. Sometimes these will be unfamiliar to those working in local government – and they may be difficult for the public to understand. There can be a temptation to design governance to be "light touch", but this tends to suit the interests of decision-makers more than anyone else and is unlikely to be sustainable in the long term.

These partnership-working arrangements take many forms. In tri-Borough, RBKC has some experience of this mode of working, but in other respects its models of service delivery and relationships with others are quite traditional.

The existing tri-borough arrangements will shortly be changing. Hammersmith and Fulham has terminated the tri-borough cooperation arrangements for children's, adult and public health services. New arrangements are being put in place for these services. A shared service arrangement is being entered for these services with Westminster Council, and a small number of services will continue to be shared with both Westminster, and Hammersmith and Fulham.

With detailed constitutional and governance plans for the establishment and operation of these services not yet in the public domain, making comment is difficult.

However – and only on the papers – lessons can be learned from the way that new joint working arrangements are presented both to the public and to the Council.

The former tri-borough arrangements seem to have been loose, informal and subject to too little scrutiny, in RBKC at least. "Tri-borough" seems to have been seen as an issue requiring scrutiny as a structural concept rather than in the context of the services and outcomes those tri-borough arrangements were meant to deliver.

In respect of other kinds of partnership, it is likely that the strategic challenges the Council faces will lead to it looking again at its relationships with others. It may begin to follow its neighbours in London and elsewhere and accelerate its use of strategic commissioning (where the Council enters a partnership with another organisation for the long term to tackle a broad issue) and trading companies, and joint working with bodies like the local NHS. The speed and nature of these future developments – and whether RBKC chooses to use them – goes beyond the scope of our work. If the Council does, however, it will need to reappraise the approach it takes towards governance, openness and transparency in light of these changes. Over time, RBKC will need to see the challenges it faces on governance less from a council perspective and more as a challenge around legitimacy, transparency and accountable that it shares with its partners.

In respect of slightly more traditional contract

monitoring, where the Council lets out a detailed contract which specifies a lot of operational detail, we have not looked into the detail of the governance applying to those contracts.

We anticipate that elements of the way the Council and its partners procure and monitor services will be investigated in more detail by the public inquiry as it looks into the refurbishment of Grenfell Tower.

More broadly, many councils have had to grapple with the accountability and governance implications of contracting out, and other more novel forms of delivery that might involve other organisations. This has usually been led by an understanding that, while delivery itself might be outsourced, accountability always remains with the Council. Politically and practically, this ends with lead members, who therefore have to satisfy themselves on key issues of performance and fitness for purpose of the services being delivered.

On contract monitoring, councils have in place systems of monitoring and escalation that give members (both executive and scrutiny) the confidence to intervene at the right time, and in the right way. Importantly, for these systems to work well, monitoring must be defined by outcome measures. Increasingly, rather than traditional contracting, councils are moving to commissioning and partnership arrangements – providing more flexibility for those arrangements to adapt to local need and more accountability for what is eventually delivered.

Other councils tend to struggle to open up these arrangements (including contract monitoring) to public scrutiny. Regulations provide for additional information rights for councillors on some of these issues, but it is less usual to see a more open and frank attitude towards contracting in local government in England. There are, therefore, opportunities for RBKC to innovate and lead in this area – within the legal framework that defines local authority contracting and adopting a tight definition of what might constitute "commercial confidentiality". This form of confidentiality applies to information provided by an outside party which might be sensitive to their business, or information generally which might affects the way that the council negotiates and comes to

agreements with other bodies when it pays for services.

We comment on this in more detail in the section below on overview and scrutiny. The Council needs to think about the way that residents and councillors oversee the management and delivery of contracts. We are not necessarily suggesting the Council supports an independent oversight mechanism like Lambeth People's Audit – although this could be an option if there is a public appetite for it. But the design of such monitoring arrangements (when contracting is underway) will need to take account of public interest and member interest, and ensure that such outside interest is built into the way contracting is done, rather than an afterthought – or worse, an exercise in duplication.

Publish an accessible general guide to how decisions are made

In this part of our appendix, we make a number of recommendations about changing the way that decision-making works – making it more consistent and clearer how decisions are made. This is in response to the comment from many that policy development can be a "black box", and that decision-making can happen in a way that appears to onlookers to be unpredictable and complicated.

Part of putting new systems in place is being able to explain those systems simply and straightforwardly. At the moment, information can be found in the Council's constitution, but this is hardly accessible. A plain-English guide to the Council's decision-making and oversight systems would be a way to draw local people into the process. It could also help to draw people into the debate, mentioned elsewhere, about how those systems might be improved.

Historically, the Council's adult social services function has engaged with a group of elderly residents to ensure material the Council publishes is accessible and understandable to this audience. This stopped some time ago, although we understand the practice is now being resurrected.

While we would not necessarily suggest that subject-specific "reference groups"

be established for all council material and publications, we do think some way to independently check important council documentation for readability and accessibility is an important part of the Council connecting better to local people. This is not just about vocabulary and grammar; it is about how information is presented more generally and ensuring it is produced in a way that local people will find helpful.

This has implications for the evidence and background papers we suggest be published as part of the new approach to decision-making, which we cover in more detail above.

Publish in a consistent way the reasons and evidence behind individual decisions

Many councils produce a wide range of background material relating to decision-making. Sometimes this is made public, but often it remains private. Evidence underpinning decisions includes:

- Meta-information (summaries and digests of where information is held and what it contains and explanations of the Council's policy development, whether for an internal audience or public consumption)

- The views of the public, however expressed (complaints data might be one source)

- Business cases

- Options appraisals

- Risk registers

- Performance and finance information

- Similar information to the above from partners

There is also something to be said for the publication of the datasets and other raw information that form the basis of some of the documents covered above. A more robust approach to open data, whereby the Council opens up the methods and products of its research, will be vital as it seeks to have a conversation with local people about what that data says about how local services are delivered. Many councils are consciously aiming to be

more "data-driven" organisations, and the LGA provides technical advice and guidance on these points.

There are challenges in bringing this data out into the open, especially for an authority that has been used to working in private as it develops policy. But part of a cultural change must be about opening up decision-making (as we have already covered). This opening up, whatever form it takes, has to be accompanied by the support that local people (and councillors) need to be able to make the best use of the information.

We suspect that the reason why such information has not been published is that, for many decisions, it may not exist (that is, formalised documentation in which the information is set out has not been prepared). This should be a catalyst to make sure that there is, in future, more consistency in the data and evidence used and published to underpin decision-making. We recognise and expect that all of the information and evidence we highlight above will not be published immediately, and that the Council will have to work on its systems to give it the confidence to produce this information on a consistent basis. But this much more open approach is something to which the Council should aspire – in due course, it will be crucial to the Council's ability to bring local people into the policymaking process.

Introduce "back to the floor" sessions for Leadership Team and senior officers

Part of a change in culture requires that senior decision-makers understand how more junior staff work.

We were told by some about a hierarchical culture of working at RBKC. This aligns with other things we have been told about the Council's traditional nature as a workplace. Because of the siloed way the Council works, this part of the Council's culture may not be reflected in the same way across all teams and departments.

Connecting senior officers and members to the work their council does in communities across the Borough will be a vital part of reconnecting the Council to the people it serves. Many

councils have "back to the floor"-type sessions, in which Cabinet members in particular work on the frontline in areas covered by their own portfolios. We would suggest going a stage further: breaking down silos and barriers by encouraging lead members to experience frontline services across the gamut of areas in which the Council holds responsibility.

The better that councillors (and senior officers) understand how services are delivered on the ground – and the more they understand the opinions of the staff who deliver them, and those who experience them on the doorstep – the easier it will be to apply this understand to their strategic role. As we have said before, this is about thinking creatively about the issues and outcomes that local people experience, and how the Council's services – as well as the services of partners and contractors – can help to tackle those issues.

We should stress that we do not want this to be seen as encouraging members or senior officers to start directing the operational delivery of services. It is about increasing insight and challenging assumptions.

Formally reporting back, reflecting and learning from these experiences should be a key element of the Council's broader approach to organisational development.

Review the way that different voices are balanced when decisions are made

We have not seen evidence that councillors are consciously biased when they make decisions. There are some residents who feel that they are – that councillors often act in bad faith. What could lead to this conclusion is the fact that all people are subject to unconscious biases in the way they act and behave – mindsets that might make us listen to certain voices over others, and weigh evidence and information in a different way to our peers.

Councillors need to understand how their subjective worldview comes across to others, and what they can do to address their biases. This is not so much about "eliminating bias" – this is impossible – but about recognising bias where it appears, challenging and reflecting on their own worldviews and thinking about how a

different perspective could draw them towards a different conclusion on a different subject.

Local people, too, have their own biases, preconceptions and worldviews, which influence how they express themselves. Bias does not invalidate or lessen the value of people's opinions. But again, councillors will need to be able to understand what this bias means for their ability to balance viewpoints as decisions are made.

The balancing of different views means councillors will increasingly have to make hard choices. Decision-making is difficult. We commented above on councillors' representative role; even where decisions are difficult, it is right that councillors need to formally make those decisions, and it is right that there will inevitably be some people who are unhappy with them. The measures we have identified elsewhere in our report and appendices on transparency and opening up policy development are about confronting this reality and giving everyone the confidence that, even when a decision is made with which they do not personally agree, they understand the evidence underpinning that decision and the rationale for it having been made.

In the first instance, more and more effective dialogue should help this to happen. But the Council may find that its lead members and senior officers need professional advice to grapple with these issues.

There may be some issues and decisions where residents would expect to be in the driving seat – for example, matters covered by the kind of "area working" arrangements we have described above. Other matters could be addressed through joint decision-making between local people and the Council, recognising that the "formal", legal decision will often need to be made by the Council alone. The detailed form of these joint approaches would be for local people and the Council to decide. For certain issues, the Council might take the lead. There are also other stakeholders and partners (neighbouring councils, other public bodies, charities) who could play an active role.

Once the general sweep of resident expectations is understood, some of the detail can start to be worked out. The challenge will be deciding

what kinds of decision-making (and resident involvement) is appropriate for different kinds of decision. It goes without saying that the needs and views of the public must drive how this is decided, within the confines of the law. Once in place, provisions setting out how local people will be empowered to lead on decision-making, where they will be involved jointly with the Council and where the Council will lead, depending on the circumstances, must be set out in a way that is clear and unambiguous. This will influence how rules around "key decisions" (see above) are amended.

A debate on this is important because it would be impossible to have a "one size fits all" rule that applies irrespective of a decision's importance (although we recognise that "importance" is a subjective point, and we will come back to this later).

Direct more policy questions to scrutiny – particularly where answers are unclear

In the section below, we make suggestions about redefining scrutiny's function and role. There is a particular relationship between decision-making and scrutiny in relation to the role of policy development.

There is a history of the Council's executive directing certain issues to scrutiny for discussion. Some recent task-and-finish groups provide evidence of this. In our view, this is a positive development that should be made more systematic. Along with the changes we recommend to the policy development and key decision system overall, we think there are particular opportunities, in relation to particular decisions, for scrutiny to be tasked with building consensus – among politicians and with the broader community – on issues of particular local contention.

Earlier in this appendix we highlighted the opportunity of policy commissions, which could involve councillors and local people looking into major issues, gathering evidence and making recommendations. Policy questions directed to scrutiny could well result in the establishment of such commissions. Importantly, though, they would be "owned" by scrutiny rather than leadership.

Leadership Team, mirrored by the Council's most senior officers, should create additional opportunities to discuss key policy issues as a group

We have heard that RBKC takes a siloed approach to the way it does its work. The Grenfell Recovery Taskforce recognised this silo working in their report in October 2017.

To an extent, all councils suffer from this form of working. Any large organisation has to work hard to break down the boundaries that exist between and within teams and departments.

It's been suggested to us (and our desktop research backs this up) that the Council finds it difficult to identify and act on issues that are genuinely cross-cutting. By this, we mean issues that affect more than one department or portfolio area. Cross-cutting issues and opportunities are increasingly the norm rather than the exception; the silo-based approach historically taken by the Council makes these difficult to recognise. We do note that the Council has recently taken steps to address this, including a restructure of the senior officer team.

Our research into decision-making has highlighted a particularly weak corporate core at RBKC. This means that, until recently, there has been nothing and nobody at the Council to "knit together" decision-making at top level. Opportunities to identify links between different services the Council provides have therefore been difficult to identify and act on. Again, the Council's restructure of its senior team is aimed at addressing this issue.

Until recently, issues were only discussed by the Leadership Team as a whole if they cut across more than one lead member's area of responsibility. Again, until recently, the most senior group of council managers met only once a month. It seems to us that most detailed discussion and decision-making has historically happened at policy board meetings, chaired by the lead member and involving relevant senior officers. Focusing work at this level makes it less transparent than it should be, as well as making it less clear to those at the top level of the organisation exactly what is happening, and why.

Importantly, cross-cutting issues are not always immediately apparent. In this context, relying on individual officers to identify where they arise and to take the initiative to contact their colleagues to develop a collective response is dangerous. We note that recently it has become the case that most executive decisions are made by the Leadership Team meeting together, highlighting the opportunities for this cross-cutting work.

The adoption of a new strategic vision will help here. It is worth noting that significant steps to act on cross-cutting matters have already been taken. The Council's culture change programme holds the promise that these changes will accelerate and spread across the whole organisation. However, developing a culture of collaboration within the Council will take time and effort.

Scrutiny
Recommendations

Review and agree scrutiny's role and purpose, and ensure that this role and purpose are well understood

Scrutiny's overall role in RBKC is to hold the executive to account and to carry out policy development work. We have already noted its role in reviewing key decisions prior to their being made. This role does not seem to have been articulated particularly effectively by the scrutiny function (including by scrutiny members). A vagueness around roles has contributed to the challenges that the function experiences around prioritisation.

Scrutiny's role needs to be better articulated. This will be particularly necessary if the Council chooses to change its formal governance arrangements (adopting the committee system, for example). Again, this has proven challenging in those councils that have grappled with these issues.

Since 2014/15, we have supported somewhere in the region of 50 to 60 councils to manage their changing role within a dramatically changing environment, ranging from ad-hoc advice to more detailed evaluations and review of the scrutiny process and how it sits within corporate governance more broadly. The lessons we can draw from this support are:

- Scrutiny needs to be more flexible and responsive.

- Scrutiny needs to focus relentlessly on adding value – on making a direct difference to the lives of local people – by bringing a different and unique perspective to bear on local decisions and doing a specific job that doesn't duplicate the work of others.

- Scrutiny's role needs to be well articulated and, critically, understood by scrutiny members, senior officers and Cabinet members.

- While increased resourcing will always help, the reality is that the prospects of this for most councils are remote – although we should note that the lack of any internal resource for scrutiny of health services might need to be reviewed. As such, focus should be on prioritisation.

Looking at scrutiny's role in the light of the Council's new strategic direction and cultural approach will be an important task, but will not be able to happen immediately. Because of this, we have suggested below that the Council takes the time to experiment with different approaches to scrutiny – different areas of focus and attention, driven by data and the needs of local people – in order to make the decision on roles easier.

This experimentation will be necessary because there are a range of changes, with which we engage throughout our report, which are likely to make a real difference to the way that scrutiny operates in the future. These changes are likely to include:

- **Changes to the governance arrangements of the Council:** If the Council and local people choose to adopt the committee

system of governance, "scrutiny" in this form would not be carried out, although scrutiny activity (people being held to account for performance, policy development) of course would.

- **Changes to area working arrangements:** Some area working arrangements might, for example, see some "scrutiny" happening at a more local level, and would require coordination with Borough-wide scrutiny.

- **Changes to expectations around public involvement in decision-making:** Including the public being directly involved in the making of decisions, in some cases. This would affect how these decisions are held to account, and also how scrutiny can build on and complement this holding to account, which local people may want to do as part of this work.

Prioritise scrutiny work better, informed by scrutiny's role and better use of information by scrutiny members

Scrutiny, like the rest of the Council, can be seen as siloed. Individual committees carry out their work in a way that by and large fails to take account of opportunities for cross-cutting work. Moreover – and again reflecting the Council's overall culture – reports submitted to scrutiny and subsequent discussions focus on reviewing issues from a service (and therefore council) point of view. Switching the focus to the community point of view – looking at outcomes as they are directly experienced by local people – would be more instructive and would mean scrutiny committees do not end up just reviewing information produced by the Council.

In our experience of other councils, councillors can be unwilling to take action to more effectively prioritise their work. There is often a sense that doing so will mean that things "fall between the cracks". The fear of missing something critically important, which scrutiny should somehow have identified, often weighs heavily on the minds of members. It has particular resonance given RBKC's current situation. However, it is impossible to look at everything from every angle, and where prioritisation is seen as a way to manage

more intelligently what will always be limited resources, it has to be seen as a benefit.

Underpinning prioritisation is members' effective access to and use of information. This critical issue and wider points about information governance are covered in more detail elsewhere.

There is an inconsistent alignment of work programmes between committees. Where there is any discussion of joint work, it is generally tactical – about which committees should tackle which topic, and information sharing – rather than driven by a common sense of prioritisation and focus.

Many agendas are extremely long. Large numbers of items on committee agendas – many of them highly operational –make the committees look and feel more like decision-making committees working through large amounts of formal business than scrutiny committees. This gives councillors the sense that they are busy, and that they are looking at important issues, but the impact they have on those issues will tend to be minimal.

We would suggest that looking at the model of business adopted by Parliamentary select committees might be useful here. Not everything about the way that select committees operate could or should be transposed to a local government context – their work and responsibilities are very different. They benefit from generous resources. But they are able to quickly direct and focus their time on the things that matter. Meetings that focus on single issues (hearing oral evidence from multiple witnesses; we know that RBKC has done this in the past but we would anticipate it becoming far more frequent) and a willingness to speak out on contentious issues are all features of select committees that RBKC could look at further.

The engagement with operational issues is a real challenge for any scrutiny function. There is clearly a "way in" for local people to bring issues to scrutiny – there is evidence that issues of public concern have led to scrutiny looking at certain issues in more detail. But formal material that scrutiny publishes makes it clear that it "does not deal with individual complaints". It may be that a more nuanced approach is necessary. Scrutiny can and should take people's

individual experiences and identify whether they mean that a more widespread problem exists. Connection to the work of ward councillors, and to the Council's corporate complaints system, will be an important way of making sure this can happen.

Put in place a single work programme for scrutiny that allows scrutiny councillors to focus on the most important issues for the Council and residents

A high-quality work programme is critical to success. Each of RBKC's scrutiny committees currently has its own work programme. There should be a single work programme for the whole scrutiny function, managed by the Executive and Corporate Services Scrutiny Committee and supported by the scrutiny manager. That committee's terms of reference and membership should be altered to reflect that it will, in future, provide a coordinating function for other scrutiny committees. This will help scrutiny to manage cross-cutting issues and to keep a close handle on the resources it uses. It will also help scrutiny to experiment more effectively with different approaches to its work, as we suggest above.

A good work programme is about impact and outcomes. Work programming is about highlighting and proceeding with those matters where scrutiny can make most difference to the lives of local people.

This relies on three things. First, having the information at hand to be able to make informed choices (we commented on this in detail in the section above on members' access to information). Second, understanding what "impact" looks like so that scrutiny can plan for it. Third, being prepared to experiment and do things differently – particularly as improvements and changes happen at RBKC.

Despite the challenges identified above, scrutiny does make an impact, in the context of how the culture of scrutiny operates in RBKC. As in many councils, impact tends to lie with the work of task-and-finish groups.

We have reviewed a selection of task-and-finish reports. We have not dug into the detail of those reports – looking at evidence submitted,

interviewing participants in detail about their role and so on. Recent reports, however, do appear to engage in important issues in a productive way. They tend towards being technical and complex, but they do go into forensic detail on some complex issues, bringing members' unique perspectives to bear on issues and areas where members clearly feel they can add value.

Committee meetings, on the other hand, are rather more variable. Our study has involved us looking through reports and minutes since around 2014. Minutes tend to be idiosyncratic, and do not follow standard sector practice (we note that members wish minutes to be detailed, but as things stand, their status as semi-verbatim transcripts makes it difficult to find the flow of the argument and clarity on what was agreed). Discussion at meetings seems to often be quite exploratory – more about information gathering than anything else. There is inconsistency in the quality of officer reports (members have highlighted this as a concern on the record, but it does not appear to have been addressed). Often, reports do not ask members to "do" anything other than to note them; many reports have clearly been drafted to meet the needs of other forums (Cabinet, presumably), and have just been given different headings to send separately to scrutiny. There are issues here in how and when reports are sent to scrutiny, quite apart from the volume of reports; we commented on this in more detail in the section above on member access to information.

Finally, to secure its impact, scrutiny should look at the need to monitor and evaluate its own performance and reflect more generally on the way scrutiny works and the impact it has.

Recommendation monitoring is an important part of this reflection; it is a good way for scrutiny to hold both the executive and itself to account on impact. But scrutiny also needs to think of ways to evaluate the different approaches and methods it applies to its own work, as part of the various recommendations we make here. In the first instance, there has to be a way for members to manage this experimentation – to have a way to evaluate what works and what doesn't. This is part of the reason we have suggested, above, an enhanced coordination role for the Executive and

Corporate Services Scrutiny Committee. When and where scrutiny tries out new approaches to its work, members should be able to reflect on this – what works, and what doesn't. Others involved in scrutiny (especially the public) should also be invited to provide their views on this.

All of these measures require commitment from senior officers and the Council's leadership. Scrutiny councillors, and the officers who support them, cannot make scrutiny effective and enhance its impact on their own. Part of the Council's culture change will need to relate to a receptiveness to challenge. Scrutiny forms a critical part of this challenge. Commitment in this context means more than words – it is about demonstrating, through action, that scrutiny is valued and valuable.

Clarify the role and responsibilities of lead members in respect of scrutiny to ensure a clear process of holding to account

We have seen (and heard, in interviews) that the roles of lead members and officers at Scrutiny Committee meetings can be perceived to be confused. In committee observations, members of the Leadership Team often sit among committee members, which can be confusing for those watching. There is also confusion about when it is appropriate to hold lead members to account, and when officer accountability should be sought.

In our view, this reflects the member–officer role issues that we highlighted above. As those issues come to be resolved, scrutiny should reflect on the circumstances in which members and officers are asked to account for themselves at scrutiny meetings.

Extend the use of co-option to give local people, and local experts, more of a stake in the scrutiny process

As things stand, scrutiny has a track record of involving and engaging expert professionals in its work. Scrutiny's direct involvement of local people is less consistent – although this reflects the situation in many other authorities, where the connection between scrutiny and

local people can be tenuous. There have been instances where scrutiny has drawn in views from the public, and where public interest in a topic has driven the placement of individual items on the work programme. However, this is sporadic, and follow-up is limited.

We have looked briefly at co-option onto scrutiny committees and task-and-finish groups. The approach RBKC takes to co-option (in the constitution and in practice) is fairly standard.

RBKC scrutiny does perform well in drawing in external expertise. Particularly to support working groups, but also in support of other work, there is a focused approach to identifying people who can provide such (usually professional) expertise. Officer expertise from service departments is also deployed to support task-and-finish work in a focused way.

Scrutiny should review and revise its approach towards co-option, both of expert professionals (who may also be local people) and local people who, while not professionals, may still have expertise in specific issues. This could be done along with thinking more generally about scrutiny's ability to draw in and involve local people more. However, this will need to be considered as part of the wider package of work around local people's involvement in decision-making overall. We cover this in the sections above, and local people's role in scrutiny will likely be defined by those matters.

Co-option to committees and working groups may need to work differently. In both instances, clarity of co-optees' roles will be important. Being clear on what is expected of a co-optee – and what co-optees can expect of scrutiny – is necessary to make sure they can play an active and valued role.

Co-option to committees can be a challenge. The Council legally has to have a "co-option scheme", to which it has to work. As part of this scheme, the Council has to decide whether the person, or people, co-opted to certain committees will have voting rights. If they do, it will affect the political balance of that committee. For the purposes of political balance, voting co-optees are usually, as a matter of law, treated as opposition councillors (to maintain the majority the leading party holds on the committee). This means that, in councils

with large majorities like RBKC, adding voting co-optees can make committees quite big. The infrequency of recorded votes at Scrutiny Committee meetings may therefore suggest that non-voting co-option is the best option.

It is worth noting that co-optees considering matters relating to education – so-called "statutory education co-optees" – have to be voting co-optees as a matter of law.

Another challenge with co-option onto committees is ensuring that people's skills and expertise are relevant. Co-optees might have experience of some of the committee's areas of responsibility, but not all. They might require support to be able to exercise their role effectively. It may be that the committee can use their expertise, where it does exist, to support the technical scrutiny of given issues – by tasking a co-optee to lead questioning or discussion on a certain point.

A final issue to consider on co-option is the term of office of co-optees. This is another feature that needs to be laid down in a co-option scheme. There is no hard-and-fast rule here, but councils providing for co-option do so with term limits that are usually two or three years. Occasionally, councils will assign co-optees to committees using timescales aligned to the Council's electoral cycle (so, appointment for a four-year term). But this is a significant commitment to expect a co-optee to make – especially when they receive no allowance.

Co-option to working groups is more straightforward. A subject expert, or experts, can be identified and brought in on a time-limited basis. The informality of working groups means this is not subject to any particular restrictions.

Appointment to the role of co-optee can be quite informal. Some councils adopt no formal process; officers carry out research about local people who hold particular skills and contact them directly to invite them to participate. We anticipate that, for RBKC, a more consistent and open process is necessary. The Council should look at its existing arrangements for co-option and see how opportunities could be created for people with different skillsets and backgrounds to take part – and how an open and fair process can be carried out to appoint them.

One possible factor when thinking about co-option is the risk of bias. Co-optees are likely to have professional and personal opinions. They are not required to constrain or limit the way they engage in debate, or to behave like officers. But the appointment process will have to take into account councillors', and co-optees', mutual expectations of their roles in this context.

Redesign the governance support function

Throughout this appendix, we make a range of recommendations on changed practices around governance, oversight, scrutiny, transparency and accountability. We recommend a number of measures that could, together, involve the Council expending more resource on its governance function than it does at the moment. The scale of the challenge the Council faces, and the nature of the response it needs to make, means that this is inevitable.

Other areas have grappled with governance as the size and stature of councils' central support functions decrease. There is concern in the sector that a reduction in the size of the corporate core (which has been a theme in councils looking to make efficiency savings) leads to a reduction in the capacity of the Council to make strategic decisions and prepare for the future. Some councils are having to draw in external expertise – including from consultants – to deliver these core areas of work. RBKC can learn from, and seek to avoid, these experiences.

In some councils, temporary interim staff have been drawn in to assist with the delivery of projects to make governance, and the corporate core more generally, more sustainable. This can work, but only where the terms of engagement of those staff are clear at the outset and they are working to a time-limited plan. Sustainability needs to be the watchword here. A recognition that good governance is the only way to help the Council achieve its strategic objectives is an important part of the way that RBKC needs to improve.

RBKC needs to invest in governance. This is not just about maintaining the numbers of staff involved in administration and support of formal

committees. It is about recognising that the number of staff involved in providing support to governance, in some form, is significant. People writing reports, council lawyers, officers producing responses to councillors (in person or in writing) – all of this is support to governance. The work of these people, usually in service departments but sometimes working in partner organisations, needs to be better aligned with the work of the core governance support team. This will provide some flexibility.

It is clear that many of our recommendations will result in a shifting burden of work on governance staff over the course of the next eighteen months to two years. Patterns of work and the nature of that work will become less predictable and will require staff to think, act and respond creatively to unforeseen events – central to the experimental approach we have discussed elsewhere.

The Council's existing complement of governance staff can meet this challenge, with the right support from within and outside the Council. Restructures and reorganisations are not needed at this stage. But the nature of the additional resource required will only become apparent once detailed work has gone into developing our recommendations and other proposals into concrete plans.

Two things will limit the resource burden on RBKC.

First, the Council needs to recognise the resource it has in the people who live in Kensington and Chelsea, and what they can do to lead the governance process. Taking on new staff will service bureaucratic need, but that "need" has to be expressed in terms of driving power down to local people, in the ways we describe throughout this appendix and our main report.

Second, many of the measures we suggest (options for area governance, improvements to the work of scrutiny, improvements to the way formal decision-making is undertaken) have to be looked at in a spirit of experimentation. The Council cannot move immediately to some notional archetype of ideal performance. It, and the community, has to work through what approaches will work best for the Borough

together. In due course, a settled approach will emerge – informed by the views of the Council but directed by what makes most sense for local people.

This experimentation is part of the cultural change RBKC needs to undertake – moving from rigidity and an inflexible focus on bureaucracy to a mentality around governance that is driven by a willingness to solve problems and try new things.

This will require a different approach to resourcing – a flexibility in how governance is managed and administered, and a management mentality that supports these objectives. It will also involve a mentality that sees residents as partners in governance.

In due course, settled systems and approaches for governance will emerge; but experimentation will need to continue as new challenges emerge and new techniques to deal with those challenge are developed – by local people as well as professionals.

Council meetings

Co-design with residents a petitions system to easily allow residents to raise issues for debate at council meetings

We have suggested in this appendix a number of practical changes the Council could make to its formal decision-making systems to open them up to local people.

In concert with the "listening committee" we suggested in the first section, the Council could address its petition arrangements.

We have heard concern and frustration with the current petition system – that it is difficult to understand, and that it does not result in action. On paper, RBKC's petition system looks similar to most other councils. But the challenges the Council now faces require an overhaul of the system to better meet local demand.

Clarity of local expectations around petitioning – what it can and cannot achieve – will help. As the Council reviews and revises its approach around governance more generally, the role petitions can play – and the role local people might expect them to play – will become clearer.

Review the expectations of local people, in terms of their experience of playing an active part at council meetings

Providing an opportunity for local people to take an active part in formal council meetings has proven a real challenge in RBKC since the Grenfell fire. Prior to the fire, the opportunities for local people to contribute at formal meetings was very limited – although we saw some interesting examples of public contribution to the work of scrutiny.

Since the fire, the Council has tried (with varying levels of success) to provide space for local people to actively contribute at a range of formal meetings.

There seems to be a number of reasons why members of the public want to make their voice heard in formal meetings. They want to give testimony about their experiences, express anger about the Council's actions and hold the Council to account.

We have observed a number of meetings in public as part of the evidence-gathering for our work. It is easy to make generalisations about the kinds of contributions that members of the public have made. But overall, we think that public contributions have been of a high quality – thoughtful, articulate, focused, forensic – even where they are also accompanied by significant anger. The insights that the public brings must play a part in public meetings.

For many members of the public, attempts to contribute to these meetings in particular clearly cause immense frustration – and, in many cases, distress. Those attending council meetings see their formal structure – the bureaucracy and jargon that surrounds how meetings are carried out – as working against meaningful public contributions. Observing some of these meetings, we have felt the inevitable tension between members of the public (who want to be heard) and chairs and members of committees (who feel the committee has a "job to do" and try to work through a traditional agenda).

Accessibility of council meetings is a real issue – not just physical accessibility (with most being held in the Town Hall, which can be difficult to access for those in the north of the Borough) but also accessibility in terms of understanding proceedings and feeling that your presence is relevant and valued.

We realise that part of this challenge centres on the Council's operational response to Grenfell, but it would be a disservice to the local community to suggest that these difficulties only emerged in June 2017. Members of the public feel that they have a real contribution to make at formal meetings, but that they do not have that opportunity. This is part of the wider sense that they are sidelined and ignored by a council that does not understand them.

Part of the challenge is likely to be that local people feel there are no other opportunities to influence the Council, and hold it to account, other than these formal meetings.

Council meetings are "meetings in public" – but

they are not "public meetings". This difference is important. It is difficult to "bend" these kinds of meetings into a shape where local people will be satisfied with the (limited) opportunities they are given to contribute. But from the Council's point of view, these committees are formal spaces with work to carry out, which will sometimes come into conflict with what local people want and expect.

We suggest a way that Full Council could be reconfigured to meet some of these needs. Some of our suggestions on scrutiny and area working may also satisfy some of the need for a clear and direct public role. Our recommendation on a "listening committee" is intended to act as a first step – a stopgap until more permanent systems can be developed, together with local people. But by and large, providing the community with opportunities to hold council officers and councillors to account on their own terms, in ways that make sense to them, is likely to be best done away from these kinds of formal, traditional council meetings.

Elsewhere in this appendix, we suggest some ways in which this might happen. Area working, and the possibility of mechanisms for local people to influence and be involved in decision-making, will form part of this.

In other councils, opportunities for local people to contribute at formal meetings are similarly limited. The way that these meetings operate is a matter of law, and their formality (a Chair controlling proceedings, a committee or other group of elected councillors considering reports, often culminating in decisions being made) makes drawing in the voice of the public – at this point – difficult.

We think that these difficulties will begin to be resolved as the citizens' assembly process draws together a sense of Borough-wide and area governance. Spaces and forums will be created as a result of that work, which will provide local people with the space they need. As things stand, no quick and easy solution exists to this challenge.

Longer-term aspirations

Map where community and amenity groups exist, to make it easier for individuals and groups to self-organise and support each other

The Council needs to understand the local community better, and local people need to understand how and where their neighbours are working together to try to make change happen.

In certain parts of the Borough (especially in the South), there are umbrella organisations or groups drawing together community bodies, but this is not the case everywhere. Where groups exist – whether to agitate on specific issues for a set period of time, or to take forward local people's concerns in the longer term – they need to know that they can be supported by their peers, and that they have a direct line in to the Council.

This is not the same as suggesting that there be a council "register" of these groups – implying that registration confers some kind of advantage, and/or reduces the independence of

these bodies. A mapping exercise instead puts the onus back on the Council to do its own research; to understand where and how people want to engage on their own terms.

Such a map would not be owned by the Council, but by everyone. It would give local people, and councillors, the tools and knowledge to come together where necessary on issues of common concern.

Employ political assistants for party groups

At the moment, RBKC is unusual in not funding "political assistants" for party groups. Political assistants are council officers who are employed to provide support to party groups – to assist in dealing with ward matters and local people's needs and concerns, and to ensure that party groups are able to work cohesively and effectively. It is in the interests of the authority, and local democracy, that party groups

(especially opposition groups) are able to play their part in the governance of the Council.

For political assistants to carry out their roles effectively, political groups themselves must be cohesive. In employing assistants, the leaders of Groups will need to think about the kind of support they can provide – helping with ward work, assisting with research within and outside the Council, and so on.

If independent councillors are elected in May, the Council will need to think of an appropriate way of making sure they also receive an appropriate level of support.

We think the Council should, in due course, employ such assistants – initially on a trial basis, in the spirit of experimentation we suggest elsewhere, but with a view to such arrangements become permanent once an opportunity has been taken to evaluate their effectiveness. The appropriate level of provision will be for the Council to determine in discussion with its councillors (cross-party); a level of support that is relatively proportionate to the size of the political group would probably be appropriate.

The Council will not be able to come to a judgement about the appointment of assistants until some of the broader questions about member roles, highlighted in earlier sections, have been resolved.

Put in place a policy green paper or working paper system

We have thought about additional ways in which councillors, officers and local people can give each other the confidence that decisions are being developed in a way that reflects the needs and concerns of local people.

Above, we highlighted the possibility of decision-making that is led by local people, and where the Council and local people make decisions together. Central to the Council's approach to this – and more traditional approaches to decision-making – could be a practice of producing working papers to inform the public debate necessary to underpin this work.

This would go together with the more consistent publication of evidence underpinning policy decisions, but the content would be different. These working papers (or "green papers") would be more like discussion documents, setting out the challenges the Council identifies on different issues and laying out a variety of different approaches for meeting those challenges. They would invite challenge, and contribute to the kind of civic dialogue we talked about in earlier sections.

It is difficult to find examples of councils that have practised this form of open policymaking for a sustained period. Some authorities have experimented with similar approaches (some councils have consulted on their budget options in recent years, which is one example of how to provoke a local debate about priorities), but what we are suggesting is different – and probably more ambitious. We think it presents an option for a way of working that the Council could move towards, when more work has been done to tackle the distrust that we have already mentioned. It is an approach to policymaking that could demonstrate that the Council wants to take part in local debate from a position of genuine inquiry, rather than seeking to confirm already-made decisions.

Review the frequency of council meetings and the committee structure – only after other recommendations about role, purpose and so on have been resolved

Like decisions on committee structures and governance options, questions on the frequency of meetings are not a matter for the short term. Addressing culture, the involvement and empowerment of local people and associated issues (which we have already discussed) will help the Council to reach an informed decision about meeting frequency.

Meeting frequency will need to be looked at alongside other opportunities for public and councillor input into decision-making. Decreasing the frequency of meetings (below their pre-September 2017 level) will not be seen as acceptable if this is perceived as reducing the Council's accountability.

We recognise that the frequency of some meetings has increased since late 2017. The

Council will need to decide on a case-by-case basis whether its own business needs, and the needs of the community, require that the intensity of this schedule continue in the short term. It is likely that Full Council will need to meet monthly to ensure all members and the public have oversight of the Council's varied and substantial improvement activity. This will need to managed alongside the existing arrangements for the public to have a space to address councillors – although our suggestion below suggests how this might be expanded, and made more systematic, in the longer term.

Now is not the time, more generally, for changes to the number or frequency of scrutiny meetings. These are judgements that might be made in due course – when broader cultural concerns are being addressed, and when it becomes clearer how structural reform might fit into that broader vision.

The structure of scrutiny committees is another thing that can only be addressed once many of the other developments highlighted in our report and this appendix have been put in place. The structure of scrutiny committees varies significantly around the country. There is an increasing number of councils with single scrutiny committees that commission task-and-finish work. Some councils have two committees. This model might involve one focusing on policy and one on performance; or a model which divides council services into "people" and "places" and structures it committees accordingly. Others, like RBKC, have multiple committees, which often map to the portfolios of Cabinet members. This variability suggests there is no one right structure for committees.

In due course, once clarity has emerged over the mutual roles of lead members, officers, scrutiny and the public – and, not least, once a confirmed decision has been made on RBKC's overall and area governance arrangements – thoughts can turn to the structure and frequency of formal meetings. To have (and try to conclude) that debate now would be a distraction from the many other tasks the Council faces. But this is not an excuse for inaction – we have highlighted the need to experiment, and plenty of new approaches and new ways of working are possible within existing structures.

Full Council to continue to provide space for the public to address councillors, which places contributions from the public at the centre

Full Council meetings have changed since the Grenfell fire. Since September 2017, the public now has had the option of addressing the Council on a number of occasions; this has been a prominent feature of council meetings.

The question of whether this should continue is a challenging one. As new methods for engagement, conversation and empowerment emerge and are used, the need to use Full Council for this purpose is likely to recede. But it may be that, in the longer term (for example, once the short-term need for the aforementioned "listening committee" has receded), Full Council could be rethought as a space where all councillors, and members of the public, have an opportunity to hold lead members to account on critical issues affecting the whole Borough. In this sense, it could act as a space for reasoned debate on the matters most important to local people. It may be that, as other measures in our report and this appendix are put into place, it will be seen as less necessary that Full Council takes this form. But it could act as an important commitment by the Council to the principle of public debate in what can, in other councils, be a space where the public are only spectators.

The Council will need to consider how to balance this against more traditional subject matter and business which might traditionally happen at a Full Council meeting. But considered against the statutory duties of Full Council (which are not substantial in terms of time) and the frequency of council meetings, we feel there is ample opportunity to experiment with this approach in due course.

Summary of Responses to the Council Survey

Centre for Public Scrutiny

Change at the Council

Independent Review of Governance for the
Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea

General

- This survey was run and analysed independently by the Centre for Public Scrutiny as part of their independent review of governance for the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea (RBKC).

- This survey was aimed at anyone with direct experience of any aspect of governance at RBKC.

- A separate survey was issued for residents.

- The introduction to the survey, setting out the background and approach, is attached at APPENDIX ONE.

- A list of survey questions is attached at APPENDIX TWO.

- The survey was launched on 13 November 2017 and closed on 9 February 2018.

- Distribution was via email for the online version (SurveyMonkey). Hard copies were provided to councillors and residents attending council meetings.

- In total, 79 responses were received.

- The breakdown of who responded is attached at APPENDIX THREE.

- Following a two-page summary, a separate section is provided for each of the eighteen text-based questions included in the survey.

- For each question, responses are listed in summarised form, with the number of responses for each shown in brackets. No brackets after an item indicates a single response. The items are listed in order of the number of responses.

Contact: info@cfps.org.uk

Summary

Opportunities for residents to get involved

Positive opportunities for residents to get involved with the Council include: service engagements and consultations; residents' associations; speaking at scrutiny; involvement via councillors; petitions at council meetings and "Ask Nick" question-and-answer sessions with the Leader.

Suggested short-term improvements to help residents get involved with the Council include: decision makers being more proactive; better and more proactive promotion; communication and website/email alerts; better involvement through ward members; having genuine consultation – not just lip service, more online consultation through polls and surveys and more co-design of services.

Hopes for how opportunities for residents to be involved could be better in 12 months' time include: having a wider range of residents involved; a bigger role for ward members and backbenchers; earlier involvement of residents; a greater focus on residents, rather than developers; more events, e.g. focus groups, commissions, working groups; new tech and better online engagement; more transparency, and more co-design with residents.

Councillors working with residents

Positive things that councillors do when they work with residents include: effective advocacy and casework; listening well; understanding local issues through knowing the residents, being out and about in the community and responding to emails and letters.

Short-term improvements that councillors could make to the way they work with residents include: making proactive contact with residents, e.g. letters, email, visit estates; holding more accessible surgeries and being more available; using tech/social media/Twitter, attending more groups/meetings/residents' associations and representing a wider range of views.

Longer-term hopes for how councillors work with residents include: having some new councillors, a more diverse group of councillors and more of an effort being made to engage with, listen and be more responsive to residents.

Lead members and decision-making

Positive things that lead members do when they make decisions include: consulting with residents before making decisions; looking at a range of options; making measured, considered decisions and trusting officer advice.

Short-term improvements to the way lead members make decisions include: listening and engaging residents earlier/better or using social medial/digital; engaging with scrutiny earlier/more; working for the community rather than for developer interests; following officer guidance/the process better; working more as a team, explaining decisions better and being more transparent.

Longer-term hopes for how lead members make decisions include: more resident engagement, a more collective approach and being more transparent and visible.

Scrutiny

Positive things about the Council's system of scrutiny include: the questioning of lead members, working groups and themes reviews, and the involvement of backbenchers (but the most popular response was that there are no positive things).

Short-term suggestions for improving scrutiny include: training councillors in the scrutiny role and importance of scrutiny; changing the whole system; more independent and external input, and having a more constructive and less party-political approach.

Longer-term hopes for scrutiny include: earlier scrutiny with more pre-decision scrutiny; more informal working and working groups; scrutiny members having the right knowledge and skills, introducing an entirely new system and better work planning, including an annual work programme.

Council meetings

Positive things about council meetings include: good debates that reflect resident concerns and different political views; the public are able to speak, attend and watch; the opportunity for the opposition to present motions and ask questions, and information is available in advance.

Short-term improvements to council meetings include: better arrangements for public speakers, including questions being provided in advance and only local residents being able to speak; less party-political point scoring; more engagement from residents, more informality and more webcasting.

Longer-term hopes for council meetings include: genuine, thoughtful debate that is not party political with shorter speeches; more public engagement, fewer items considered more fully and shorter meetings.

Good practice elsewhere

Suggestions of good practice elsewhere include: support offered to members at Westminster City Council; Hammersmith and Fulham website and mail bulletins to residents; Lambeth Scrutiny Commissions (involving external stakeholders, community groups etc.); Hammersmith and Fulham commissions, Lambeth's use of map-based consultation software and Lambeth/Southwark community forums.

What one thing would you like to see the Council put into practice?

The one thing that people would like to see the Council do includes: humility and honesty; the first duty is to serve all residents; listen to all residents; proper consultation and engagement with residents; introduce the committee system of decision-making; change the leadership, staff, culture and behaviours, and bring back the residents' panel.

Opportunities for getting your voice heard in the decision-making process

1. What positive opportunities have you noticed for residents to get involved with the Council?

Summary: Respondents noted the following positive opportunities for residents to get involved: service engagements and consultations; residents' associations; speaking at scrutiny; getting involved via councillors, petitions at council meetings and "Ask Nick" question-and-answer sessions with the Leader.

Responses

- Service engagement / consultation (13)
- Residents associations (8)
- Speak at scrutiny (7)
- Through councillors (6)
- Council meeting petitions (5)
- Ask Nick (5)
- Limited / none (4)
- Public consultation meetings (4)
- Through planning (4)
- City Living Local Life (4)
- Exhibitions etc. for developments (3)
- Speak at council meetings (3)
- Grenfell meetings / scrutiny (2)
- RBKC publicity (2)
- Speaking at cabinet (2)
- Council website (2)
- Licensing
- Surveys
- Service co-design
- Safer neighbourhood board
- Ward votes
- Informal networking
- Community centre
- Working parties
- Elections
- Parent Carer Forum
- Active volunteering
- Some meetings in Chelsea

2. What could be done now to improve opportunities for residents to get involved in decision-making?

Summary: Suggested short-term improvements to help residents get involved with the Council include: decision makers being more proactive; better and more proactive promotion; communication and website/email alerts; better involvement through ward members; having genuine consultation – not just lip service, more online consultation though polls and surveys and more co-design of services.

Responses

- More proactive engagement as part of decision making / budget setting (9)
- Better, more proactive promotion, communication via website / email alerts / social media (9)
- Better involvement through ward councillors (7)
- Genuine consultation – not lip service (5)
- More online consultation though polls and surveys (4)
- More co-design of services (4)
- More engagement through scrutiny e.g. co-option (3)
- "Listening Forum" / listening committee / open forum for residents (3)
- Involve earlier (2)
- Residents panel (2)
- Sack managers / staff / employ residents (2)
- Better engagement with resident associations (2)
- Involve everyone – not just the few (2)
- Feedback to residents with the results of consultations (2)
- More webcasting
- More council staff
- Residents are not interested
- More transparent decision-making
- Public question time at council
- Hammersmith and Fulham Commissions
- Empowerment rather than consultation
- Explaining why difficult decisions need to be made
- Engagement through the voluntary sector
- Community compact
- Ward forums

3. Thinking longer term about opportunities for residents to get involved in decision-making, what do you hope will be different in 12 months' time?

Summary: Hopes for how opportunities for residents to be involved could be better in 12 months' time include: having a wider range of residents involved; a bigger role for ward members and backbenchers; earlier involvement of residents; a greater focus on residents, rather than developers; more events, e.g. focus groups, commissions, working groups; new tech and better online engagement; more transparency, and more co-design with residents.

Responses

- Wider range of residents involved (8)
- Bigger role for backbenchers / ward members in involving residents (4)
- Earlier involvement of residents in decisions (4)
- Decisions taken more in interests of residents – not developers (4)
- More engagement / engagement events e.g. focus groups, commissions, working groups (3)
- New tech / better online engagement (3)
- More transparency / open council (3)
- More co-design with residents (3)
- More decisions taken jointly with residents (2)
- No change / nothing (2)
- More mutual respect and trust (2)

- Genuine consultation (2)
- More resident co-optees on committees (2)
- A more diverse administration
- More infrastructure to support engagement
- Staff leading engagement being more committed
- Real equality impact assessments
- Tenants should employ their own builders
- Completely different approach
- Clear demonstration of how engagement has made a difference
- Dismantle cabinet / scrutiny
- Engagement becomes part of the culture of the whole organisation
- More engagement through scrutiny
- More engagement in big projects
- Using profiling to reach residents and service users
- Resident panel
- More decision-making at the locality level
- Simpler borough plan – like Westminster
- Ward panels
- Encouraging local resident community champions
- Better information about decisions
- More debate and discussion

4. What positive things have you noticed that councillors do when they work with residents?

Summary: Respondents mentioned the following positive things that councillors do when they work with residents: effective advocacy and casework; listening well; understanding local issues through knowing the residents, being out and about in the community and responding to emails and letters.

Responses

- Effective advocacy and casework (18)
- Listen well (10)
- Understand local issues / know the residents / out and about in the community (8)
- Responsive through different channels e.g. email, letters (5)
- Help residents understand / get involved in policy making (4)
- Hold surgeries and drop-ins (3)
- Little / nothing (2)
- Labour councillors work well (2)
- Participate in borough wide conferences / forums
- Creation of Grenfell Scrutiny
- Protect the wealthy over the needy
- Make judgements in the wider interest
- Attentive to resident associations

5. What could councillors do now to improve how they work with residents?

Summary: Respondents thought that short-term improvements that councillors could make to the way they work with residents include: making proactive contact with residents, e.g. letters,

email, visit estates; holding more accessible surgeries and being more available; using tech/ social media/Twitter, attending more groups/meetings / residents' associations and representing a wider range of views.

Responses

- Make proactive contact with residents e.g. letters, email, visit estates (12)
- Hold more accessible surgeries / be more available (8)
- Use tech/social media/twitter (4)
- Attend more groups / meetings / Residents Associations (3)
- Reflect the wider range of views (3)
- Increase awareness of the councillor role (2)
- Get involved in case issues – not just signposting (2)
- Focus on community before money (2)
- Involve residents earlier (2)
- Demonstrate that they are listening (2)
- Focus on the needy before the wealthy (2)
- Respond quicker
- Be a tenant or a housing officer for a day like Undercover Boss
- Tell the truth – not vague promises
- Be visible outside their wards
- Hold each other to a higher standard
- Already lost trust
- Change
- Stop looking down their noses
- Officers respond more quickly to councillors
- Do more
- Be users of the services they make decisions about
- Look outwards not inwards
- Make more use of City Living Local Life
- More authority over officers

6. Thinking longer term about how councillors work with residents, what do you hope will be different in 12 months' time?

Summary: Respondents answers about longer-term hopes for how councillors work with residents include: having some new councillors, a more diverse group of councillors and more of an effort being made to engage with, listen and be more responsive to residents.

Responses

- New / different councillors (4)
- Councillors are a more diverse group to reflect borough (4)
- Councillors are making more effort to engage with residents (4)
- More listening / listening without judgement (4)
- More responsive / accountable to residents / follow their concerns (4)
- Better system of communication between councillors and their constituents (3)
- Councillors walk in the shoes of residents to understand the life of the less well-off (3)
- Better engagement mechanisms to encourage discussion (3)
- More awareness of the councillor role (2)
- Greater trust / Grenfell residents can trust again (2)

- A diversity of views is represented (2)
- Better support for councillors doing casework (2)
- Officers respond promptly to councillors
- More informality
- More accessible
- A change
- Councillors review their own effectiveness
- More people believe the council works for them
- More scrutiny themed policy development work
- Residents have greater trust / respect for councillors
- Council explain its challenges better
- More councillor webpages and blogs
- More feedback to residents
- Ward panels
- More surgeries
- Engage better with businesses

7. What positive things have you noticed that Lead Members do when they make decisions?

Summary: Respondents noted the following positive things that lead members do when they make decisions: consulting with residents before making decisions; looking at a range of options; making measured, considered decisions and trusting officer advice.

Responses

- Consult with residents before making decisions (5)
- Look at a range of options (5)
- Little / none (5)
- Make measured, considered decisions (5)
- Trust officer advice (5)
- Decisive / stick to decisions / quick when needed (4)
- Challenge officers before making a decision (3)
- Observe / follow scrutiny process (2)
- Take personal responsibility (2)
- Keep residents' interests in mind (2)
- Follow the process
- Financially motivated
- Showing a commitment to help
- Understand their brief
- Poor at engaging other councillors
- Use own experience
- Think strategically
- Challenge each other
- Some good decisions e.g. Notting Hill Tower Block

8. What could Lead Members do now to improve the way they make decisions?

Summary: Respondents suggested the following short-term improvements to the way lead members make decisions: listening and engaging residents earlier/better or using social medial/

digital; engaging with scrutiny earlier/more; working for the community rather than for developer interests; following officer guidance/the process better; working more as a team, explaining decisions better and being more transparent.

Responses

- Listen / engage residents earlier / better / use social medial / digital (10)
- Engage with scrutiny earlier/more (5)
- Work for community rather than developed interests (3)
- Follow officer guidance / the process better (3)
- Work more as a team (3)
- Explain decisions better (3)
- Greater transparency (3)
- Understand member / officer roles better (2)
- Be strong minded (2)
- Balance different interests when making decisions (2)
- Leave (2)
- More truthful / do what they say (2)
- Communicate better with staff / residents (2)
- Learn from other councils
- Reply to backbenchers when they contact you
- Work more closely with officers / attend senior management meeting
- Challenge officers more
- Be more inclusive
- A central research resource
- Support better services in less well-off areas
- Protect public assets from developers
- Clearer allocation of actions to officers
- Have plainer criteria for making decisions
- Stay the same
- Fewer urgent decisions
- New mind-set / approach
- More strategic use of Key Decisions
- Make longer term funding decisions
- Involve local ward members more in decisions that affect them
- More informal briefings
- Think about all the residents when making decisions
- Understand the brief better

9. Thinking longer term about how lead members make decisions, what do you hope will be different in 12 months' time?

Summary: Longer-term hopes for how lead members make decisions include: more resident engagement, a more collective approach and being more transparent and visible.

Responses

- More resident engagement (8)
- A more collective approach (3)
- More open / transparent / visible (3)
- More Lead members / smaller portfolios (2)

- Taking fewer / bigger decisions (2)
- Understand process / constitution better (2)
- Stronger accountability (2)
- Better backbench engagement with cabinet (2)
- Taking difficult decisions (2)
- Putting residents first – not finances or business (2)
- More inclusive (2)
- Everyone aligned in their thinking
- Review what other councils do
- More external expert advice
- More due diligence
- Quicker decisions
- Less outsourcing
- More truthful
- Call it cabinet again
- Greater confidence / sense of direction
- Better working with scrutiny
- More respect between councillors
- Rotation of lead members
- Trust has been gained
- Robust governance demonstrated
- Representing the needy
- Key Decision process replaced
- Central database of decisions
- Better quality of officer advice
- More flexible if things aren't working
- Broader vision
- Show leadership

10. What positive things have you noticed about the Council's system of scrutiny?

Summary: The following positive things about the Council's system of scrutiny were mentioned: the questioning of lead members, working groups and themes reviews, and the involvement of backbenchers (but the most popular response was that there are no positive things).

Responses

- None / little (10)
- Check and balance / questioning of lead members (7)
- Working groups / themed reviews (4)
- Involvement of backbenchers (3)
- Resident involvement / issues of concern (3)
- Follows process (2)
- Transparency / open to public (2)
- Reflects interest of members
- The style it is run
- People perceive its effect
- Knowledgeable councillors
- Robust
- Interested in people

- Number of committees
- Engagement of lead members
- Community reps can speak
- Grenfell Recovery Scrutiny Committee
- External impact
- Keeps out of routine matters
- Opposition chair
- Opportunity to scrutinise decisions

11. What could be changed about the Council's system of scrutiny now?

Summary: Respondents thought about the following short-terms suggestions for improving scrutiny: training councillors in the scrutiny role and importance of scrutiny; changing the whole system; more independent and external input, and having a more constructive and less party-political approach.

Responses

- Scrutiny councillors trained in role / importance of scrutiny (4)
- Change whole system / have committee system (4)
- More external / independent input / hear from not just officers (3)
- More constructive / less party political (3)
- Scrutiny councillors lead agenda planning (2)
- Members attend more / more engaged (2)
- Members prepare better / read papers (2)
- More working groups / themed reviews (2)
- Scrutiny councillors become more subject knowledgeable (2)
- Tracking system for recording actions (2)
- Shorter / more focused agenda (2)
- More transparent (2)
- More informal working
- More evidence based
- Opposition chairs
- Clearer links to cabinet portfolios
- Needs to be given more time
- Needs more teeth to call in / challenge
- Sack them
- Select committee approach
- Outcome focus
- More professional
- More resident involvement
- Smaller committees
- Transcriptions available
- More drive from committee members
- Lead members / senior officers pay more attention
- More weight on councillor views
- Insight and balance

12. Thinking longer term about the Council's system of scrutiny, what do you hope will be different in 12 months' time?

Summary: Longer-term hopes for scrutiny include: earlier scrutiny with more pre-decision scrutiny; more informal working and working groups; scrutiny members having the right knowledge and skills, introducing an entirely new system and better work planning, including an annual work programme.

Responses

- Scrutiny takes place earlier / more pre-decision (4)
- More informal working / working groups (3)
- Scrutiny members have the right subject knowledge / skills (3)
- New constitution / system (3)
- Annual work programme / better work planning (3)
- More resident involvement including in workplan (2)
- Officers more confident to report issues
- More councillors on committees
- Community focus – not just services
- More residents attending
- More opposition chairs
- Reconciliation and forgiveness project post Grenfell
- Meetings held around the borough
- Greater accountability
- Clear expectations set for scrutiny councillors
- Stay the same
- Committees review their effectiveness
- Annual scrutiny report to council
- Scrutiny resourced better / respected across organisation
- More searching / honest / robust
- More constructive
- Greater commitment shown by scrutiny councillors
- Power to send decisions back to be amended
- Topic based with external input
- A more diverse council

13. What positive things have you noticed about council meetings?

Summary: Respondents noted the following positive things about council meetings: good debates that reflect resident concerns and different political views; the public are able to speak, attend and watch; the opportunity for the opposition to present motions and ask questions, and information is available in advance.

Responses

- Good debates / reflect issues of resident concern / different political views (7)
- Public can speak (7)
- None / limited (6)
- Opposition motions / questions / can challenge (3)
- Public attend and watch (3)
- Information available in advance (3)

- Transparent / open to public (2)
- Petitions
- Webcasting
- Councillors speaking knowledgeably
- Themed meetings
- Members attend
- Decent papers
- Well run / administered
- Everyone comes together
- Well informed officers brief councillors

14. What could be changed now about council meetings? (To improve them)

Summary: Short-term improvements to council meetings include: better arrangements for public speakers, including questions being provided in advance and only local residents being able to speak; less party-political point scoring; more engagement from residents, more informality and more webcasting.

Responses

- Better arrangements / agenda items for public questions / questions in advance / residents to speak (8)
- Less party politics / point scoring (5)
- More engagement from residents (3)
- More informal (2)
- Webcasting (2)
- More themed meetings
- Devolve more to scrutiny
- Stream on Facebook live to encourage debate
- Proper accountability
- More real, open debate
- More tenant involvement
- Change the system
- More external speakers
- Shorter
- More caring and compassionate
- Public friendly papers
- Allow current changes to be tested first
- Hold public interest items first
- Hold meetings around the Borough
- More expert speakers
- More open-minded debates

15. Thinking longer term about council meetings, what do you hope will be different in 12 months' time?

Summary: Longer-term hopes for council meetings include: genuine, thoughtful debate that is not party political with shorter speeches; more public engagement, fewer items considered more fully and shorter meetings.

Responses

- Genuine, thoughtful debate that is not party political with shorter speeches (6)
- More public engagement (3)
- Fewer items considered more fully (2)
- Shorter meetings (2)
- The administration comes from diverse backgrounds
- More available online
- More open to residents
- More accountability
- Committed council employees with resident interests at heart
- Modified format with public speakers / questions
- Stay the same
- New administration
- New layout so councillors don't have their backs to the audience
- Agendas reflect local concerns
- More reports from scrutiny
- Wider range of speakers
- More themed meetings
- More professional
- Training and refreshers for councillors
- People listened to
- Communicate to residents what's happening following meetings
- Decisions based on evidence and expert opinion

16. Are you aware of any good practice elsewhere that you think could be applied in Kensington and Chelsea? If so please tell us here.

Summary: Respondents provided the following good practice examples: support offered to members at Westminster City Council; Hammersmith and Fulham website and mail bulletins to residents; Lambeth Scrutiny Commissions (involving external stakeholders, community groups etc.); Hammersmith and Fulham commissions, Lambeth's use of map-based consultation software and Lambeth/Southwark community forums.

Responses

- Support offered to members at Westminster City Council
- Hammersmith and Fulham website and mail bulletins to residents
- Ward / area forums
- Westminster charge planning applicants for reviewing CTMPs
- Invest more in developing and supporting community participation in routine business – not just in high profile contentious issues
- Committee model should remain
- Co-design of services and co-production of review reports
- It seemed to work better before the Grenfell Tragedy
- Tower Hamlets housing have tried to start new initiatives
- Opposition chairs for scrutiny committees
- More time on the Council agenda for motions
- Occasional Council / Scrutiny meetings at community venues
- Give money to tenants stop giving money to builders
- Scrutiny Commissions (involving external stakeholders etc) e.g. Lambeth
- Some Councils involve people on issues outside of formal MTGS

- Scrutiny can have representatives from the voluntary sector at the table as with health and wellbeing boards
- WCC [Westminster City Council] is a bit different and may be worth looking at
- Allowing public questions
- Improving relations/ co-ordination between scrutiny and executive would help
- Focus on what people need rather than party politics
- Put the council into special measures
- Hammersmith and Fulham commissions
- Manchester City Council response to Manchester Arena bombing
- Growing use of technology as a means to engage
- Lambeth's use of map-based consultation software that allowed residents and visitors to identify locations where they felt streets could be improved
- Lead officer group meetings which facilitate information sharing across the Council
- Hammersmith and Fulham approach to supporting and serving residents
- Committee system
- Shorter local plan like Westminster
- Webcasting
- Resident co-design, co-production, co-option
- Community Forum – like Lambeth/Southwark

17. Thinking about all of the issues covered in this survey, what one thing would you like to see the Council put into practice?

Summary: The one thing that people would like to see the Council do includes: humility and honesty; the first duty is to serve all residents; listen to all residents; proper consultation and engagement with residents; introduce the committee system of decision-making; change the leadership, staff, culture and behaviours, and bring back the residents' panel.

Responses

- Humility and honesty; the first duty is to serve all residents (5)
- Listen to all residents (4)
- Proper consultation / engagement with residents / open to their ideas (3)
- Committee system of decision-making (2)
- New leadership / staff (2)
- The culture and behaviours need to change (2)
- Bring back residents' panel (2)
- Councillors meeting more residents in their homes / wards (2)
- Involve local residents (2)
- Better support for backbenchers
- More dynamic and efficient decision-making culture with fewer meetings
- More time in decision making for scrutiny and consultation with residents
- More engagement and team working in all areas
- More transparency
- Better communication to residents
- Learning from best practice in other boroughs and organisations
- Focus on residents who live in the borough rather than developers
- Scrutiny of corporate impact of decisions
- Engage more innovatively and digitally with residents
- More decisive decisions and leadership
- Start representing the constituents who voted them in

- Reinstate Cabinet by name
- Guidance for scrutiny councillors
- All scrutiny committees chaired by a member of the opposition
- The establishment of several community forums in the North?
- Local ballots on certain issues
- Ensure that cabinet members give strong leadership to their officers
- Let tenants decide who they use to do work
- Compassion for others
- Committees reviewing their effectiveness and reporting this to Council
- A clearer, easier key decision process
- More contributions from residents about what should be debated
- Sustained engagement with communities
- System of questions and answers from the public
- More awareness about the decision process
- More delegated decisions where appropriate, by value/impact
- Commissions on key issues
- Make better use of elected members
- Better tools for elected members
- Senior officers should delegate or learn to use the relevant system
- A more representative council
- Councillors engaging better with residents in their wards
- Effective community engagement strategies
- Resident friendly local plan
- Evidence based decisions
- Listen to a wide range of organisations / institutions

18. If there is anything else to do with this review that you would like to tell us about please let us know here:

Responses

- Different role for Governance Services – focus on key decisions and scrutiny, as opposed to assisting the departments with meetings.
- Talk to local charities and find out about what they are doing to plug the gaps that RBKC is leaving through negligence and poor allocation of funds.
- Higher financial thresholds like other boroughs. This may free up officer time to focus on supporting resident and community involvement in high interest, cross department issues.
- Councillors should meet officers more often.
- Many examples of best practice in RBKC governance, however, aspects of the Member culture may have hindered opportunities to engage with scrutiny and the public.
- Tri- and bi-borough arrangements have reduced officer support for decision making and have knocked staff morale and resident confidence – until tri and bi-borough is tidied up we will continue to struggle.
- Exec directors managing vast portfolios is simply going to replace the problems of governance with problems of logistics.
- Are we changing procedures that in the past have led the council to receive high ratings for the services they have provided over many years?
- The council are too much on the side of the developer and a few voices from well-connected members of resident associations.
- Give tenant right to decide.
- Some extremely poor decisions have been made post Grenfell which will unfortunately result

in this council reaching rock bottom within the next three-year period.

- Have said a lot in short time. Thank you!
- Ask the Government to put RBKC into special measures now.
- Financial prudence is important, but K&C seems to have taken disproportionate pride in building up reserves.
- The review provides a real chance to do things better.
- We mustn't allow it to become a vehicle to provide for the capture of the Council by self-appointed "community spokespeople". We have elections to identify who speaks for the community. Let's use them!
- I think it would be a good idea if scrutiny meetings were observed by the review team.
- The quality of Councillor is low. Some are excellent, most are very nice, but not enough are good enough for what are demanding roles.
- There are plenty of examples of issues where the genuine concerns of residents have been ignored and in some cases belittled. Kings Road Crossrail station is a good example. Instead of attacking local residents, the council should genuinely consult and work with them.
- Residents rely on their local associations to deal with many issues that protect the neighbourhood but this seems to carry little weight with the council.
- Deal with rubbish on the streets – more street patrols to increase street safety.
- I feel so negative about the Council.
- It's about time that RBKC took on board ethical debt collection.

APPENDIX ONE
Survey Introduction

About this survey

This survey is part of the independent review of the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea Council. It aims to gather views of residents on various aspects of council decision-making. The views gathered from this survey will be used to provide advice to the Council about how it can improve the way it makes decisions in the future.

This survey is for residents of Kensington and Chelsea. There is a separate survey for those who work for the Council, service as councillors or run community organisations. It is divided into four sections, aiming to get views on opportunities or residents to get their voices heard, on councillors working with residents, council decision-making and council meetings.

Your responses to this survey will be completely anonymous and no identifiable individual responses will be shared with the Council or any other body or individual. The survey should take about 10 minutes to complete and we appreciate you taking the time to help with this important review.

If you would rather respond by email, please use the following email address: info@cfps.org.uk

You can return this survey to:

Jacqui Hird, Scrutiny Manager, The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea,
Level One (Purple Zone), Kensington Town Hall, London W8 7NX

Or

Centre for Public Scrutiny, 77 Mansell Street, London, E1 8AN

Thank you!

APPENDIX TWO

Survey Questions

- Overall, in your experience, how would you rate the opportunities for residents to get involved with the decisions made by Kensington and Chelsea Council? Please give a score between zero and ten where zero means not good at all and ten means excellent

- What positive opportunities have you noticed for residents to get involved with the Council? (The reasons why you gave a score higher than zero)

- What could be done now to improve opportunities for residents to get involved in decision making that would make the score you gave one point better?

- Thinking longer term about opportunities for residents to get involved in decision making, what do you hope will be different in 12 months' time?

- Overall, in your experience, how good are Kensington and Chelsea councillors at working with residents? Please give a score between zero and ten where zero means not good at all and ten means excellent

- What positive things have you noticed that councillors do when they work with residents? (The reasons why you gave a score higher than zero)

- What could councillors do now to improve how they work with residents to make the score you gave one point better?

- Thinking longer term about how councillors work with residents, what do you hope will be different in 12 months' time?

- Overall, in your experience, how good are the Lead Members for Kensington and Chelsea Council at making decisions? Please give a score between zero and ten where zero means not good at all and ten means excellent

- What positive things have you noticed that Lead Members do when they make decisions? (The reasons why you gave a score higher than zero)

- What could Lead Members do now to improve the way they make decisions, to make the score you gave one point better?

- Thinking longer term about how Lead Members make decisions, what do you hope will be different in 12 months' time?

- Overall, in your experience, how good are councillors at providing effective scrutiny? Please give a score between zero and ten where zero means not good at all and ten means excellent

- What positive things have you noticed about the Council's system of scrutiny? (The reasons why you gave a score higher than zero)

- What could be changed about the Council's system of scrutiny now to make the score you gave one point better?

- Thinking longer term about the Council's system of scrutiny, what do you hope will be different in 12 months' time?

- Overall, in your opinion, how good are council meetings? Please give a score between zero and ten where zero means not good at all and ten means excellent.

- What positive things have you noticed about council meetings? (The reasons why you gave a score higher than zero)

- What could be changed now about council meetings to make the score you gave one point better?

- Thinking longer term about council meetings, what do you hope will be different in 12 months' time?

- Are you aware of any good practice elsewhere that you think could be applied in Kensington and Chelsea? If so please tell us here.

- Thinking about all of the issues covered in this survey, what one thing would you like to see the Council put into practice?

- If there is anything else to do with this review that you would like to tell us about please let us know here:

- If you would like to be kept updated about progress with this study please provide your email here.

APPENDIX THREE
Survey Respondents

Are you?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
A councillor	14.52% 9
A council officer	45.16% 28
Working for another public service	1.61% 1
Working with a resident or community group	20.97% 13
A resident of Kensington and Chelsea	12.90% 8
None of the above	6.45% 4
TOTAL	63

Describe your gender?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Male	53.57% 30
Female	46.43% 26
TOTAL	56

How old are you?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Under 18	0.00% 0
18–34	12.07% 7
35–64	75.86% 44
65 and over	12.07% 7
TOTAL	58

How old are you?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
White: English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish	67.27% 37
White: Irish/British	5.45% 3
White: Irish	0.00% 0
White: Gypsy or Irish Traveller	0.00% 0
White: Other	9.09% 5
Indian	1.82% 1
Pakistani	1.82% 1
Bangladeshi	1.82% 1
Chinese	0.00% 0
White and Black Caribbean	0.00% 0
White and Black African	1.82% 1

White and Asian	0.00% 0
Other Mixed background	3.64% 2
Caribbean	0.00% 0
African	1.82% 1
Any other Black background	0.00% 0
Arab	0.00% 0
Other ethnic background	1.82% 1
Not covered above	3.64% 2
TOTAL	55

Do you consider yourself to have a disability?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Yes	9.62% 5
No	90.38% 47
TOTAL	52

How would you describe your sexual orientation?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Heterosexual	67.31% 35
Bisexual	3.85% 2
Lesbian/ Gay woman	1.92% 1
Gay man	3.85% 2
I am not prepared to say	17.31% 9
None of these	5.77% 3
TOTAL	52

What is your religion?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
No Religion	36.54% 19
Christian (including C of E, Catholic, Protestant and all other Christian denominations)	50.00% 26
Buddhist	0.00% 0
Hindu	1.92% 1
Jewish	1.92% 1
Muslim	5.77% 3
Sikh	1.92% 1
Any other religion (please specify)	1.92% 1
TOTAL	52

If you are a resident in Kensington and Chelsea is your current home?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Rented from council / housing association	5.56% 3
Rented from a private landlord	1.85% 1
Owner occupied	29.63% 16
Other	1.85% 1
Not resident in Kensington and Chelsea	61.11% 33
TOTAL	54

Responses to the Resident Engagement Survey

Centre for Public Scrutiny and
Democratic Society

Change at the Council

Independent Review of Governance for the
Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea

General

■ This survey was run and analysed independently by The Democratic Society and the Centre for Public Scrutiny as part of their independent review of governance for the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea (RBKC).

■ This survey was aimed at residents of Kensington and Chelsea.

■ A separate survey was issued for people who work for the Council, serve as councillors or run community organisations.

■ The introduction to the survey, setting out the background and approach is attached at APPENDIX ONE.

■ A list of survey questions is attached at APPENDIX TWO.

■ The survey was launched on 16 November 2017 and closed on 9 February 2018.

■ Distribution was via email for the online version (SurveyMonkey). Hard copies were provided in libraries and a workshop.

■ In total, 387 responses were received.

■ The breakdown of who responded is attached at APPENDIX THREE.

■ Following a one-page summary, a separate section is provided for each of the questions included in the survey.

■ For each question, responses are listed in summarised form, with the number of responses for each shown in brackets. No brackets after an item indicates a single response. The items are listed in order of the number of responses.

Contact: info@cfps.org.uk

Summary

Opportunities for getting your voice heard in the decision-making process

Most respondents had taken part in some form of activity to contribute to council decision-making, with communicating with Councillors being the most common form of contribution. However, this did not equate to people thinking the activities they had taken part in had any influence in the decision-making process, especially when it came to decisions affecting the local area. Local decisions were seen as being of critical importance, not least because of the impact they have on residents' lives.

Councillors working with residents

Just over half of all respondents had worked with a councillor in the last twelve months and over half of these rated their experience as positive, with 20% saying it was an excellent experience. This is similar to the number of respondents who thought that councillors listened to local residents (22%).

However, when it came to councillors and residents working together, a greater proportion felt this was either poor or very poor (41.9%). People's ideas and suggestions for improving this ranged from

improving communication, more frequent face-to-face engagement, listening to a broader group of residents and having better or younger councillors.

Council decision-making

There was little agreement that the Council understood residents' needs, listened or genuinely wanted to hear from residents when making decisions. While almost a quarter of all respondents had some experience of lead member decision-making, this experience was seen to be a confusing process, which created barriers for the Council connecting with residents.

Just over half of all respondents did not know if lead members were held to account by other councillors. When asked for ideas and suggestions for improving the way the Council makes decisions, people wanted greater transparency and information on decision-making processes.

Council meetings

43% of respondents had attended a public meeting of the Council, and 41% of people thought that council meetings were fairly to very accessible to the public. However, some people had had a negative experience, which meant that they felt uneasy about speaking up. Smaller and more local meetings were suggested with more time for the public to speak.
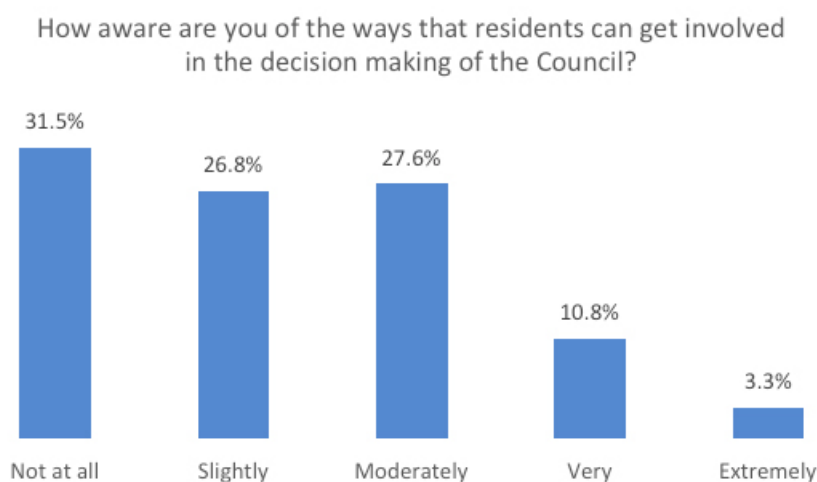
What one thing would you like to see the Council put into practice?

The most popular answers to this question were for the Council to improve communication and provide better information. Respondents also emphasised the importance of the Council and councillors listening to residents.

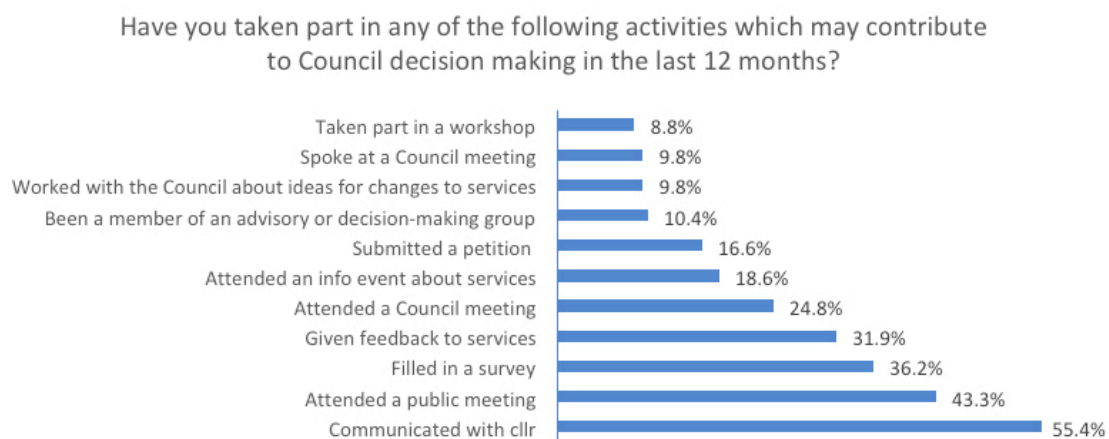# Opportunities for getting your voice heard in the decision-making process

1. How aware are you of the ways that residents can get involved in the decision making of the Council? (n=360)

Summary: Overall, respondents were generally not very aware of opportunities for involvement. Those aged 18–34 were almost twice as likely not to be aware of opportunities than other age groups (58.3% of 18–34-year-olds said they were not aware of the opportunities to get involved vs. 31.5% of all residents). The group most likely to be very or extremely aware was those aged 65 and over (12.6% chose very aware and 3% chose extremely aware) and those who considered themselves to have a disability (10.7% chose very aware and 10.7% chose extremely aware).

How aware are you of the ways that residents can get involved in the decision making of the Council?

Not at all	31.5%
Slightly	26.8%
Moderately	27.6%
Very	10.8%
Extremely	3.3%

2. Have you taken part in any of the following activities which may contribute to Council decision making in the last 12 months? (n=360)

Summary: The majority of respondents (80%) had participated in some form of activity to contribute to council decision-making over the last year. The most common types of activities were communicating and giving feedback (i.e. communicating with a councillor, filling in a survey and attending a meeting). Fewer people took part in activities that involved working with the Council more directly (i.e. being a member of a board, taking part in a workshop and working with the Council on ideas).

Have you taken part in any of the following activities which may contribute to Council decision making in the last 12 months?

Taken part in a workshop	8.8%
Spoke at a Council meeting	9.8%
Worked with the Council about ideas for changes to services	9.8%
Been a member of an advisory or decision-making group	10.4%
Submitted a petition	16.6%
Attended an info event about services	18.6%
Attended a Council meeting	24.8%
Given feedback to services	31.9%
Filled in a survey	36.2%
Attended a public meeting	43.3%
Communicated with cllr	55.4%

3. How much do you feel that you can influence decisions the Council makes affecting your local area? (n=359)

Summary: The majority of respondents felt they had little or no influence over council decision-making about their local area (79.1%). When lookin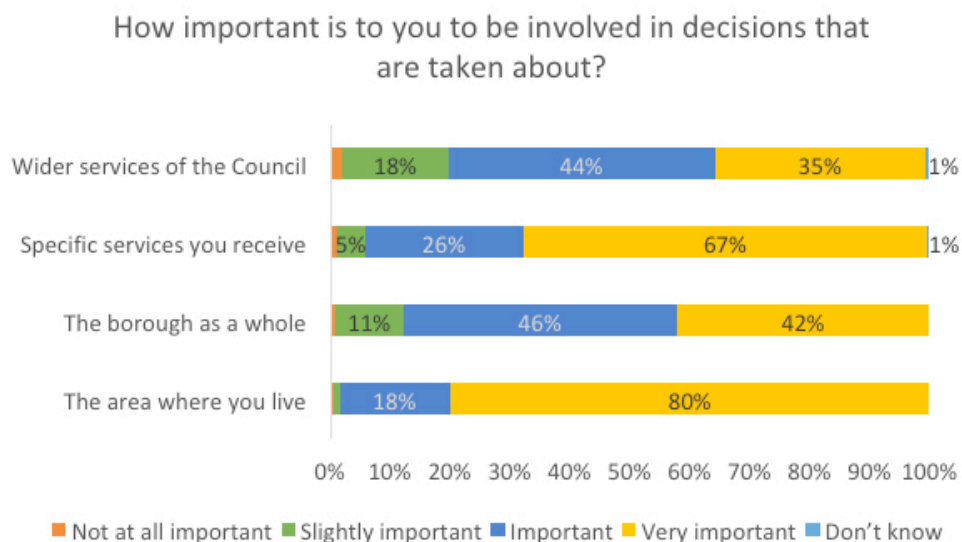g at respondents by age, a markedly higher number of people aged under 35 felt they could not influence decisions affecting their local area (83% vs. the average of 46.3%).
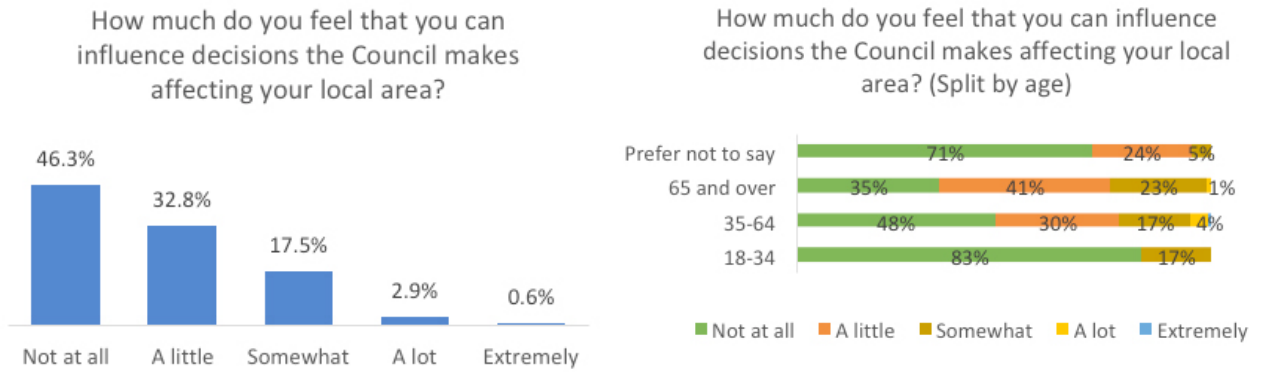
How much do you feel that you can influence decisions the Council makes affecting your local area?

How much do you feel that you can influence decisions the Council makes affecting your local area? (Split by age)

	Not at all	A little	Somewhat	A lot	Extremely
Prefer not to say	71%	24%	5%		
65 and over	35%	41%	23%	1%	
35-64	48%	30%	17%	4%	
18-34	83%	17%			

Bar chart values (single question):
- Not at all: 46.3%
- A little: 32.8%
- Somewhat: 17.5%
- A lot: 2.9%
- Extremely: 0.6%

4. How important is to you to be involved in decisions that are taken about the area where you live, the borough, specific services and wider services of the Council? (n=359)

Summary: It was either important or very important for the majority of residents (89.5%) to be involved in decisions for all of the mentioned areas, with the most important being decisions about areas where people live (98%). This finding was consistent across age, gender, religion, ethnicity and disability. 3% of respondents said it was not important for them to be involved in the decisions about wider services of the Council; these responses came from those who are aged 65 and over.

How important is to you to be involved in decisions that are taken about?

	Not at all important	Slightly important	Important	Very important	Don't know
Wider services of the Council		18%	44%	35%	1%
Specific services you receive		5%	26%	67%	1%
The borough as a whole		11%	46%	42%	
The area where you live			18%	80%	

5. Why is it important for people like you to get involved with decisions made by the Council?

The key reason respondents gave for the importance of getting involved was a feeling that council decisions, directly or indirectly, had a large impact on their lives: *"because we are the residents. We live here, work here, our children go to school here"*. However, many cited examples of how the decisions taken did not help local people and stated that the only way to rectify this was to get involved, although many thought this was currently difficult to achieve.

This was linked to the statements that there was a lack of local knowledge within the Council, and that the Council could not be trusted to have accurate insight into the needs of citizens, especially those in less wealthy areas. The lack of knowledge in the Council was often attributed to it being a "safe" borough, so *"councillors do not feel any pressure to pay attention to residents' needs"* or engage and consult with a broad range of people. This could easily be solved, respondents said, if the Council and councillors simply listened to all residents; one person wrote: *"being disabled I feel totally left out when not informed of changes in my area, I feel as if my voice will not be heard [and] my views are not important".*

In general, there was agreement that the Council was there to serve residents, including consulting them, because residents: *"pay the council wages and expenses. Therefore, they are employed by us, and have a duty to listen and consult."*
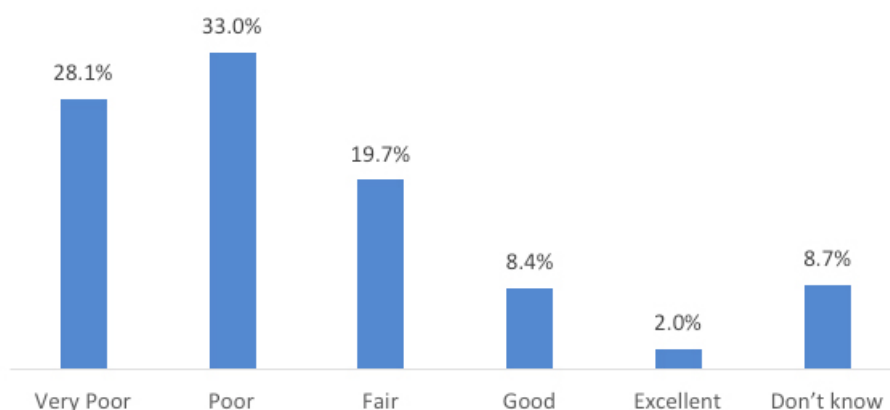
Responses (299)

- Council decisions affect our lives (95)
- To improve council and councillor insight (37)
- The council needs to improve (30)
- We are taxpayers (28)
- Residents have a stake in the borough (26)
- It will bring better decision making (17)
- This is what democracy is about (13)
- To be active in our engagement (11)
- To enable wider voices (8)
- So that the council listens to residents (6)
- So that residents gain insight (6)
- We should play our part (5)
- To support better councillors (3)
- Because the council is there to serve us (4)
- To bring more transparency (4)
- To ensure our needs are met (3)
- To provide scrutiny (3)

6. How would you rate the current opportunities for residents to give their views on decisions being made by Kensington and Chelsea Council? (n=357)

Summary: Most respondents thought the opportunities provided for residents to give their views were inadequate and rated them as either poor or very poor (61.1%). However, just under a third of people thought that current opportunities were fair to excellent (30.1%). Age was once again an important factor, with people aged under 35 feeling more strongly that current opportunities were not good enough.

How would you rate the current opportunities for
residents to give their views on decisions being made by
Kensington and Chelsea Council?

Very Poor	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent	Don't know
28.1%	33.0%	19.7%	8.4%	2.0%	8.7%

7. Do you have any ideas or suggestions that could improve opportunities for residents to get their voices heard as part of the decision-making process?

Two of the most popular responses to this question were that the Council needed to advertise opportunities for involvement far more and to contact residents directly, as many people had the desire to get engaged but no idea how to go about it. Additionally, residents felt that to encourage people to get involved the Council had to listen to them and act on what they were saying: *"we can participate in a 1000 ways, but if no one is willing to listen, it makes no difference how we participate"*. This was emphasised by many residents who called for greater transparency: *"perhaps residents' comments and ideas should be made public so the Council does not completely disregard them"*. It was felt that this would help to ensure residents were listened to.

People wanted the Council to communicate with them directly, as they felt *"out of the loop"*, but were aware that the Council had their email and postal addresses and could get in touch at any time. While there were specific requests for more use of email, surveys and letters, a combination of all forms of contact was the most frequently asked for. Many thought that increased communication should use more up-to-date technology, including suggestions of hyper-local media (such as NextDoor) and online meetings, as well as video recordings and livestreams of all council meetings (which was also linked to transparency).

Overall, respondents felt that to improve opportunities the Council had to make citizen participation and engagement a priority. One person suggested *"a dedicated resident involvement team and to look outside of the processes that may have been used for years such as consultation surveys and engage with people in more appropriate ways for the twenty first century"* to show their commitment.

Responses (233)

■ Communicate directly with residents (28)
■ Increase transparency (28)
■ Listen to and act on residents' views (26)
■ Widely publicise all engagement opportunities (19)
■ Provide more frequent opportunities (18)
■ Better councillors/Council (16)

- More use of technology (16)
- Take all residents seriously (12)
- Local meetings and decision-making (11)
- Follow through on residents' views (9)
- Communicate through residents Associations and other orgs (9)
- Residents (with Council support) should activate (8)
- More information (8)
- Democracy (6)
- Accessibility (5)
- Currently satisfied (5)
- Better council processes (4)
- Face to face engagement (3)
- Prioritise residents (2)

Councillors working with residents

8. In the last 12 months, had you had any experience of working with a councillor? (n=353)

Summary: Just over half of all respondents (54%) had worked with a councillor in the last 12 months. People aged 18–34 were least likely to have any experience of working with councillors (17% selected yes).

In the last 12 months had you had any experience of working with a councillor?

Don't know, 1%

No, 45%

Yes, 54%
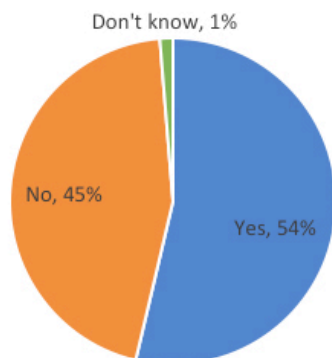
9. If yes, how would you rate that experience? (n=200)

Summary: For those who stated they had worked with their councillor, over half rated their experience as either good or excellent (52.6%). Black, Asian and minority ethnic respondents were slightly more satisfied with their experience than the average (55.5%), as did those who had a disability (64.5%). However, just over a quarter of all respondents rated their experience as poor or very poor (27.6%).

How would you rate the experience of working with a councillor?

Excellent 20.3%
Good 32.3%
Fair 19.8%
Poor 15.1%
Very poor 12.5%
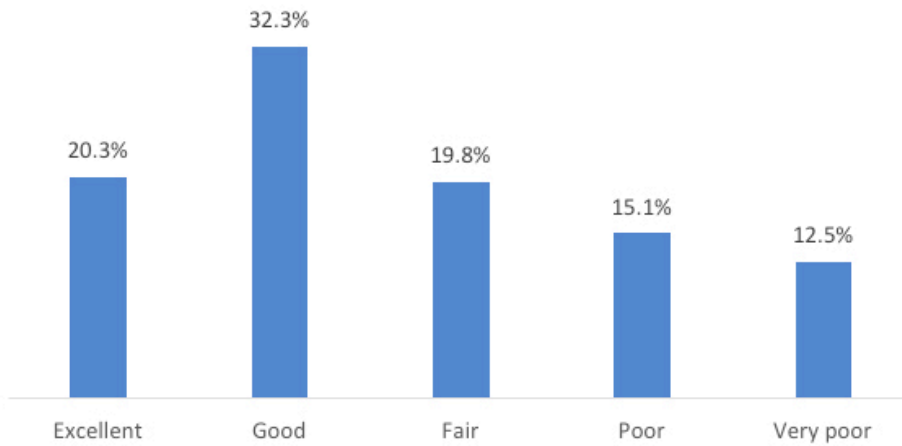
10. How much do you think councillors in Kensington and Chelsea listen to local residents? (n=350)

Summary: Respondents felt there was a lack of consistency regarding councillors listening to residents. Just under a quarter (22.2%) selected often or always, and one in ten respondents did not know if councillors listened or not. Those aged 18–34 were more critical; 18% said councillors never listen to them, and a further 45.5% that councillors rarely listen to residents.

How much do you think councillors in RBKC listen to local residents?

Never 8.6%
Rarely 25.4%
Sometimes 33.7%
Often 15.4%
Always 6.8%
Don't know 10.1%
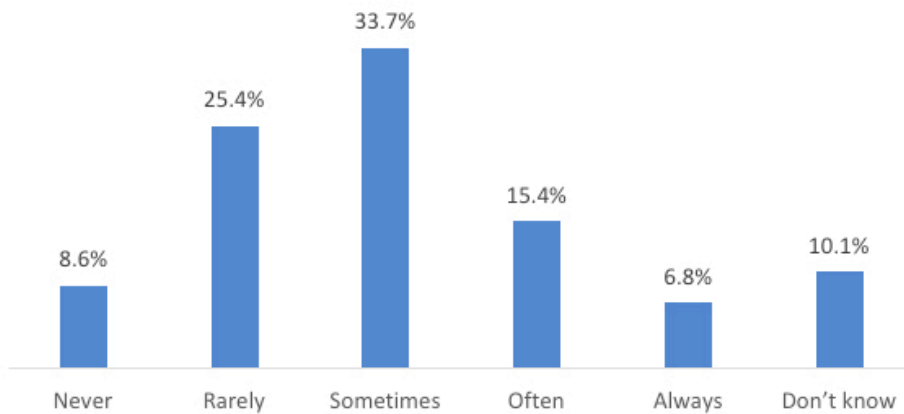
11. How good do you feel Kensington and Chelsea councillors are at working with residents? (n=347)

Summary: A greater proportion of participants felt that councillors were poor or very poor at working with residents (41.9%) compared to those who felt that they were either good or excellent (22.4%). Female respondents (47.7%) and residents aged 18–34 (75%) were more critical of councillors' work with residents compared to the average; they chose very poor or poor categories.

How good do you feel RBKC councillors are at working with residents?

Chart showing responses: Very Poor 20.8%, Poor 21.1%, Fair 23.5%, Good 16.7%, Excellent 5.7%, Don't know 12.2%
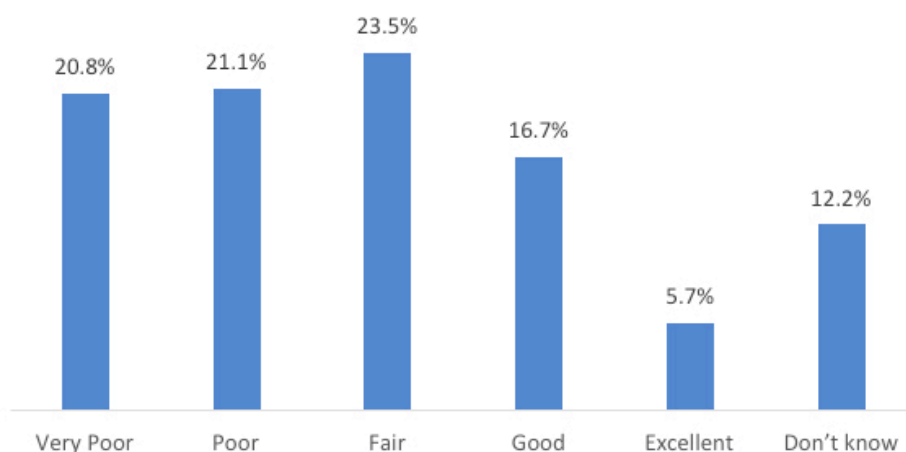
12. Do you have any ideas or suggestions to improve how councillors work with residents?

Many respondents to this question talked about the problems they faced with councillors, often mentioning a lack of availability and inadequate or poor responses: *"[It is] hugely variable – one of mine has never responded to any email/letter from any resident to my knowledge. Another is responsive and sympathetic but takes no action."* However, there were some specific councillors that people said were very good.

Frequently mentioned ideas included councillors needing to really listen to all residents' views and opinions, that *"old, vulnerable or disabled does not equal stupid"*, and better and more regular communication in a variety of ways – both online and offline: *"there isn't an easy way of finding what's going on, unless you go online and hunt for it".*

Issues raised by respondents relating to communication and transparency included raising the profile of councillors so residents know who they are and how to contact them, clearly explaining council processes so residents understand what is happening in their community, and publishing any criticism received as a way of holding them accountable: *"Councillors should be individually rated by an independent body for effectiveness and results disseminated. At the moment, they only seem accountable to their party apparatus."*

Responses (203)

- Need better councillors (38)
- Regular communication (31)
- Transparency (22)
- Listen to all residents (17)
- Already satisfied (15)
- Interact more with citizens (13)
- Better representation (9)
- Council must improve (9)
- Increased profile/visibility for Councillors (7)
- More face to face contact (7)
- Take residents comments seriously (6)
- Accessibility (4)

- Regular local meetings (4)
- Accountability and responsibility (3)
- Advertise work (3)
- Regain trust (3)
- Prompt responses to all residents' correspondence (3)
- Better prioritisation of issues
- Make residents opinions public
- Change attitude of electorate
- Cohesion within Council
- Democracy
- Talk to residents before final decisions are made
- Residents working together
- Work with whole borough
- Younger councillors

Council decision-making

13. In general, when thinking about the Council, how much do you agree or disagree with the following statements: The Council understands the needs of its residents when making decisions, the Council genuinely wants to hear my opinions and my opinion is heard when the Council makes decisions. (n=343)

Summary: When asked if people agreed or disagreed with the three key statements, respondents overwhelmingly disagreed. The statement that people least agreed with (8%) was that their opinion is heard when the Council makes decisions, while the statement that people most agreed with was that the Council understands the needs of its residents when making decisions (14%). 1 in 5 respondents did not know if their opinion was heard or whether the Council genuinely wants to hear their opinions, rising to 1 in 4 not knowing whether the Council understands residents' needs when making decisions.

In general, when thinking about the Council, how much do you agree or disagree with the following statements:

Statement	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Don't know
My opinion is heard when the Council makes decisions	33%	30%	20%	6%	2%	8%
The Council genuinely wants to hear my opinions	31%	31%	20%	12%	3%	5%
The council understands the needs of its residents when making decisions	26%	30%	25%	11%	3%	5%
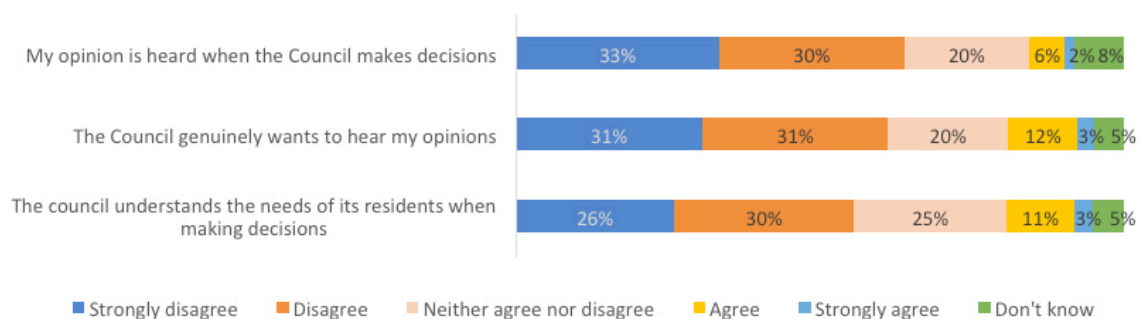
14. Do you have any experience of decision making by lead members? (n=345)

Summary: Most respondents had no experience of decision-making by lead members, while 24% said they had. However, this increased to 26.5% for respondents aged 35–64, and 39.3% for those who identified as having a disability.

Do you have any experience of decision-making by lead members?

Don't know, 10.2%

Yes, 24.0%

No, 65.8%
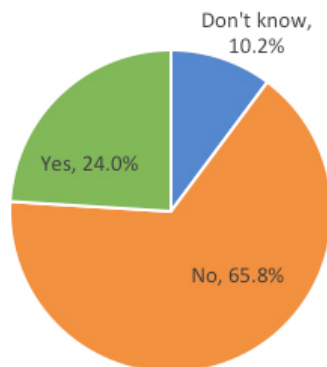
15. If yes, can you tell us a bit about the decision, what you thought and why?

Responses to this question focused on accounts of personal experiences and examples of trying to deal with the new Cabinet structure. Several of these stories were about Grenfell, and all described a process that left them feeling disregarded and taken advantage of. Residents said the lead members made them feel ignored; when they went to them, they *"felt that the Cabinet had already made a decision and was only 'going through the motions' of consulting residents to make sure that they had 'ticked' all the relevant legal and equality boxes"*. People also mentioned that it seemed almost deliberately set up this way; they thought the process was confusing and that there was little or no information on how to navigate it, describing it as *"a long and complicated process requiring physical attendance"*. Overall, many felt that the current structure was a way through which the Council could remove itself further from residents, and consequently make decisions that were less about meeting the needs of residents.

Responses (67)

- Have had a personal experience (13)
- The decision has created more barriers to residents wanting to air their views (11)
- Residents now feel ignored (10)
- Transparency/accountability/corruption (9)
- Decision was confusing, overly complicated, or without enough information (8)
- It prioritises wealthier residents/businesses/visitors (7)
- Allows Council to disregard residents input (5)
- Already satisfied (4)

16. Overall, in your experience, how good are councillors at holding lead members to account? (n=337)

Summary: A significant number of participants did not know whether councillors were good at holding lead members to account (49.5%). Those who self-identified as having a disability were more positive about councillors undertaking this function (3.7% chose excellent and 11% chose good). Those aged 18–34 (41.6%), as well as female (40.9%) and Black, Asian and minority ethnic residents (40%), were less positive, choosing poor or very poor answer options.

Overall, in your experience, how good are councillors at holding lead members to account?

Very Poor	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent	Don't know
18.4%	17.4%	8.5%	4.6%	1.6%	49.5%

17. What ideas or suggestions do you have for improving the way the Council makes decisions?

A wide number of suggestions were made, including 35 mentions of lack of scrutiny and challenge within the Council. Respondents requested that the Council *"be genuine, transparent and have answers. If answers are not known provide realistic timescales of when they can be given."*

Many respondents did not know about the process of decision-making or how they could get involved, which linked with key concerns about transparency: how decisions are made, what the procedure is and how residents' input is considered. This was also reflected in concerns about bias and corruption, in particular that *"some council leaders have chummy relationships with wealthier residents, and that wealthy people are given higher priority than less well-off people".* People wanted councillors and staff to come out and *"engage with the people that actually live here … visit local estates and areas and speak to local people",* showing their commitment to representing all citizens of RBKC.
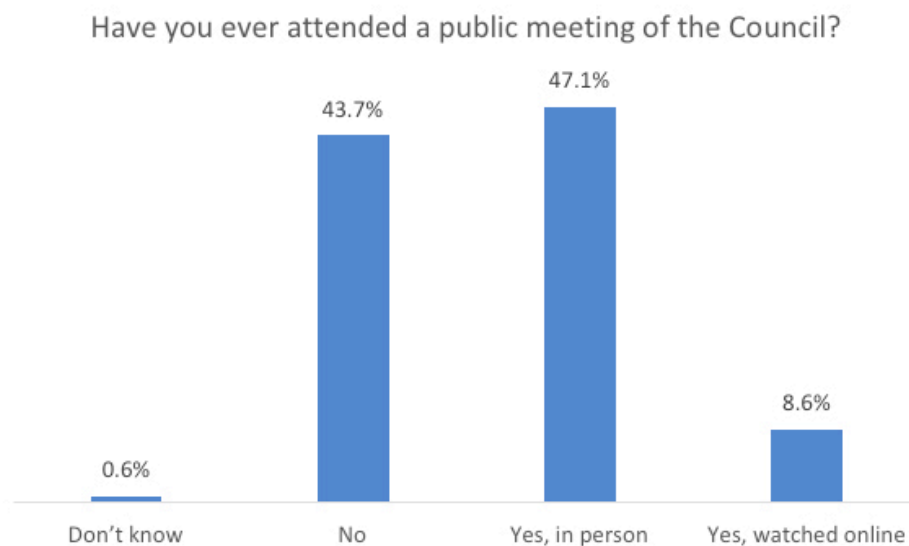
Responses (165)

- Reaching out and listening better (45)
- Increase scrutiny and challenge within the council (35)
- Transparency (25)
- Reduce bias, corruption, and improve genuineness (11)
- Better communication (10)

- Educate about how the council works (9)
- Better councillors (8)
- Need councillors and staff that more closely represent residents (5)
- Better Council staff (5)
- Hold referendums (3)
- Already satisfied (3)
- Better management (2)
- Increase trust (2)
- More accountability
- Independent media

Council meetings

18. In some meetings the public may have the opportunity to ask questions or make presentations. Have you ever attended a public meeting of the Council? (n=335)
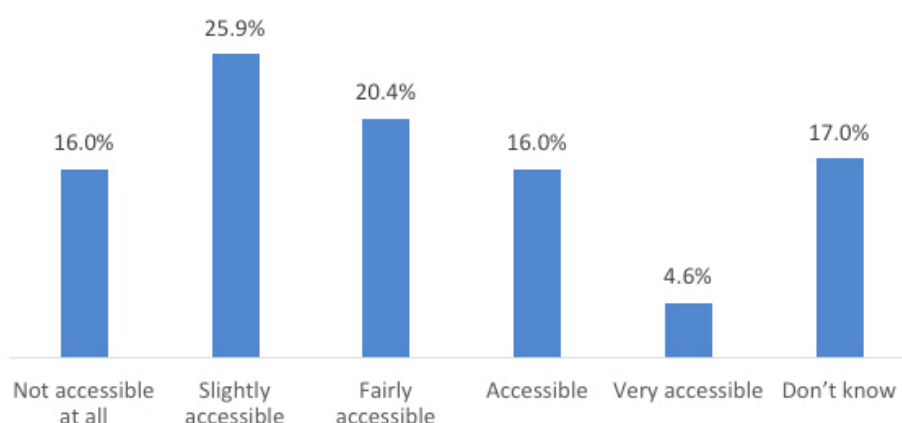
Summary: More respondents have attended a public meeting – either in person or online – than not (55.7%), which shows a high interest in participating in the Council's life. Female residents were more likely to attend a public meeting than male residents (49% of females attended a public meeting and a further 11.7% watched it online, vs 43.4% and 3.9% of men respectively). Those who identified as having a disability were also more likely to watch online (18%) or attend a public meeting in person (46.4%).

Have you ever attended a public meeting of the Council?

	Don't know	No	Yes, in person	Yes, watched online
	0.6%	43.7%	47.1%	8.6%

19. In your opinion, how accessible would you say the Council meetings are for a member of the public? (n=336)

Summary: 41% of respondents thought that council meetings were accessible, ranging from fairly to very. However, those identifying as having a disability were more likely to rate council meetings as not accessible (58.3%) compared to other respondents.

In your opinion, how accessible would you say the Council meetings are for a member of the public?

Not accessible at all	Slightly accessible	Fairly accessible	Accessible	Very accessible	Don't know
16.0%	25.9%	20.4%	16.0%	4.6%	17.0%

20. Do you have any ideas or suggestions for improving Council meetings?

People wanted more awareness of council meetings, such as when and where they took place, and asked for more advertising of them. One suggestion was *"a large electronic noticeboard with a diary of daily and weekly events. Similar signs at the main tube stations and popular sites could be easily installed and operated"*, like those in France.

Some residents provided personal anecdotes that highlighted negative experiences, such as feeling belittled; one respondent described a meeting where the councillors were on a high platform, literally looking down on residents: *"[It is] like attending a really bad piece of theatre. Address the use of silly formal language, the pomposity, the set up that means the public are an audience treated as supplicants..."*. Additionally, respondents said that too much security made them feel unwanted and uneasy about speaking up.

There was a call for smaller and more local meetings to make them more accessible, with fewer points of order creating more time for the public to speak. Other suggestions included having meetings online, enabling online participation to make it easier to engage and having alternative meetings with just the Leadership Team. One specific request was the allowance of spontaneous input, not just pre-registered statements.

Responses (137)

- Advertise meetings more (36)
- Enable/encourage public input (24)
- More positive/welcoming tone (17)
- Smaller/local meetings (11)
- Provide more information (8)
- Increase genuineness (8)
- Public access (8)
- Demonstrate impact (7)
- Professionalism and management (4)
- Educate about participation (3)
- Transparency (3)
- Other ways of inputting (2)
- Timings (2)

- Working well (2)
- Better councillors
- Disabled access

21. Thinking about all of the things covered in this survey, what one thing would you like to see the Council start doing or do better?

The most popular answers to this question reflected the points people made throughout the survey: that the Council must communicate better, *"make information available in its paper, website, via libraries … so we feel encouraged to show an interest and attend/engage"* and provide better information, such as *"background briefing papers [which] would help us understand where it is coming from when it announces policies – and so we could pitch in in an appropriate manner."* Residents emphasised the importance of the Council and councillors listening to residents: *"talk to us, not at us. Let us participate not just be told what is happening."* This was also made clear in responses that asked the Council to remember who they are serving, and to start prioritising residents' needs over those of tourists and visitors to the area: *"put people before profit."* Many responses recognised that, while *"RBKC does a lot of terrific work"*, there are also areas for improvement, such as *"taking more notice of residents"*.

Responses (242)

- Listen more (91)
- Communicate better (41)
- Prioritise residents over visitors/tourists (29)
- Change Council management structure (18)
- Improve Council attitude to residents (15)
- Better councillors (9)
- Better transparency/accountability (9)
- Change Council focus (8)
- It is already working well (6)
- More value for money (5)
- More help for victims of Grenfell (3)
- Better Council leadership (2)
- Need councillors that more closely represent residents (2)
- Tackle corruption (2)
- Fairer treatment
- Change citizens disinterest

APPENDIX ONE
Survey Introduction

About this survey

This survey is part of the independent review of the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea Council. It aims to gather views of residents on various aspects of council decision-making. The views gathered from this survey will be used to provide advice to the Council about how it can improve the way it makes decisions in the future.

This survey is for residents of Kensington and Chelsea. There is a separate survey for those who work for the Council, service as councillors or run community organisations. It is divided into four sections, aiming to get views on opportunities or residents to get their voices heard, on councillors working with residents, council decision-making and council meetings.

Your responses to this survey will be completely anonymous and no identifiable individual responses will be shared with the Council or any other body or individual. The survey should take about 10 minutes to complete and we appreciate you taking the time to help with this important review.

If you would rather respond by email, please use the following email address: info@cfps.org.uk

You can return this survey to:
Jacqui Hird, Scrutiny Manager, The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea,
Level One (Purple Zone), Kensington Town Hall, London W8 7NX

Or

Centre for Public Scrutiny, 77 Mansell Street, London, E1 8AN

Thank you!

APPENDIX TWO

Survey Questions

1. How aware are you of the ways that residents can get involved in the decision-making of the Council?

2. Have you taken part in any of the following activities which may contribute to Council decision-making in the last 12 months: filled in a survey (paper or online), attended a Council meeting, spoke at a Council meeting, attended an information event about services, worked with the Council about ideas for changes to services, given feedback to services, communicated with your local councillor, submitted a petition to Council, been a member of an advisory group or decision-making group, taken part in a workshop, attended a public meeting, other?

3. How much do you feel that you can influence decisions the Council makes affecting your local area?

4. How important is to you to be involved in decisions that are taken about the area where you live, the borough, specific services and wider services of the Council?

5. Why is it important for people like you to get involved with decisions made by the Council?

6. How would you rate the current opportunities for residents to give their views on decisions being made by Kensington and Chelsea Council?

7. Do you have any ideas or suggestions that could improve opportunities for residents to get their voices heard as part of the decision-making process?

8. In the last 12 months, had you had any experience of working with a councillor?

9. If yes, how would you rate that experience?

10. How much do you think councillors in Kensington and Chelsea listen to local residents?

11. How good do you feel Kensington and Chelsea councillors are at working with residents?

12. Do you have any ideas or suggestions to improve how councillors work with residents?

13. In general, when thinking about the Council, how much do you agree or disagree with the following statements: The Council understands the needs of its residents when making decisions, the Council genuinely wants to hear my opinions and my opinion is heard when the Council makes decisions.

14. Do you have any experience of decision-making by lead members?

15. If yes, can you tell us a bit about the decision, what you thought and why?

16. Overall, in your experience, how good are councillors at holding lead members to account?

17. What ideas or suggestions do you have for improving the way the Council makes decisions?

18. In some meetings the public may have the opportunity to ask questions or make presentations. Have you ever attended a public meeting of the Council?

19. In your opinion, how accessible would you say the Council meetings are for a member of the public?

20. Do you have any ideas or suggestions for improving council meetings?

21. Thinking about all of the things covered in this survey, what one thing would you like to see the Council start doing or do better?

APPENDIX THREE
## Survey Respondents

Describe your gender?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Female	170
Male	131
Other	<5
Prefer not to say	16
TOTAL	318

How old are you?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Under 18	<5
18–34	13
35–64	171
65 and over	113
Prefer not to say	21
TOTAL	320

What is your postcode?

Out of 387 respondents, 281 provided their postcodes and 106 residents preferred not to share this data. The postcode map below shows the density of responses based on the postcode data collected (the darker the ward colour, the greater number of responses). The table details the number of postcodes provided at ward level.
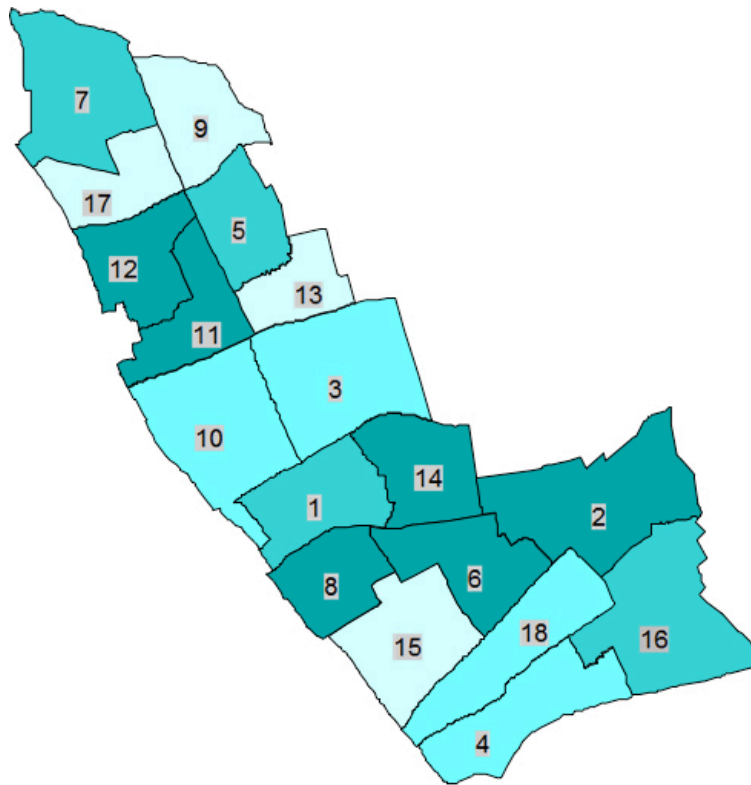
Where

N	Ward	Responses
1	Abingdon	18
2	Brompton & Hans Town	26
3	Campden	13
4	Chelsea Riverside	11
5	Colville	17
6	Courtfield	26
7	Dalgarno	16
8	Earl's Court	26
9	Golborne	8
10	Holland	10
11	Norland	21
12	Notting Dale	25
13	Pembridge	5
14	Queen's Gate	22
15	Redcliffe	4
16	Royal Hospital	17
17	St Helen's	6
18	Stanley	10

How would you describe your ethnic origin?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
White: English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish	190
White: Irish	<5
White: Gypsy or Irish Traveller	<5
White: Other	58
Asian or Asian British / Indian	<5
Asian or Asian British / Chinese	<5
Asian or Asian British / Any other Asian background	<5
Mixed or multiple ethnic groups / White and Black Caribbean	6
Mixed or multiple ethnic groups / White and Asian	<5
Mixed or multiple ethnic groups / Any other Mixed / Multiple ethnic background	<5
Black, African, Caribbean or black British / African	<5
Black, African, Caribbean or black British / Caribbean	<5
Other ethnic group / Arab	<5
Other ethnic group / Any other ethnic group	<5
Prefer not to say	40
TOTAL	320

Do you consider yourself to have a disability?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Yes	29
No	267
Prefer not to say	26
TOTAL	322

How would you describe your sexual orientation?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Heterosexual	232
Bisexual	<5
Lesbian/ Gay woman	<5
Gay man	12
Prefer not to say	68
TOTAL	320

What is your religion?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
No Religion	71
Christian (including C of E, Catholic, Protestant and all other Christian denominations)	158
Buddhist	5
Hindu	<5
Jewish	11
Muslim	9
Any other religion (please specify)	5
Prefer not to say	61
TOTAL:	321