



Culture, behaviours and governance assessment: Cambridge City Council

Centre for Governance and Scrutiny

Independent Assessment

February 2022

Introduction

Cambridge City Council commissioned the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (CfGS) to carry out an independent assessment of its governance - looking at culture, behaviours and ways of working, alongside structures and processes. CfGS, a national charity expert in all aspects of governance and scrutiny, it has an established track record of working with local government, and across the public, private and voluntary sectors nationally and locally.

The council recognises the vital role of effective and efficient democratic governance, spanning decision-making, scrutiny, engagement and involvement, to support and enable its ambitions for Cambridge. The council has a strong and proud tradition of transparent and inclusive democratic culture. However, it is also keen to assess the current ways of working, which have changed little over the last twenty years, to consider what works and why, what doesn't and whether existing practice is fit for current and future challenges.

The council is embarking on organisational change to better align its mission, resources and priority outcomes. It appreciates that business as usual is no longer fit for purpose to best achieve those outcomes for the city and financial sustainability for the council.

The objective of the commission is to provide an independent, evidence-based assessment which incorporates:

- A focus on governance culture and behaviour, as well as structure and processes
- An assessment of the strengths and weaknesses against the characteristics of good governance in the CfGS Governance Risk and Resilience Framework
- Comparisons with similar authorities and best practice, and
- Recommendations on next steps which consider the purpose of governance, potential options and what change could be delivered

Our assessment was carried out from October to December 2021, through conversations and observations arranged online and at council meetings.

Scope & Methodology

CfGS have a wealth of expertise, experience and previous research which informs how we approach assessments and reviews of council governance. Our intention is always to work closely with Members, council staff and key partners to provide a forward-looking analysis, and a set of credible recommendations that can be acted on. The CfGS model for this work focused on:

- **Culture** - The mindset and mentality underpinning the operation of the council's approach to governance. This is informed by CfGS Governance Risk and Resilience Framework - [more information via this link](#).
- **Information** - How information is prepared, shared, accessed and used.
- **Impact** - Ways to ensure that governance is effective, that it makes a tangible difference to the lives of local people.

- **Structure** - How governance is structured and whether it is effective, proportionate, agile and efficient.

The evidence gathering consisted of:

- **Desktop work** - CfGS carried out a general sense-check of the council's constitution and rules of procedure, and meeting agendas and papers. This provided an evidence base for the rest of the work.
- **Conversations** - Across the council, including Members in key leadership, governance and group representative roles, a focus group was also offered to backbench members. Conversations were also held with staff, including the Chief Executive, Monitoring Officer, Finance (s151) Officer, senior officers and democratic service leads.
- **Observation** - Live and recordings of committee meetings were observed, alongside in-person attendance.
- **Member survey** – all Members had the opportunity to complete an online survey.

All of the evidence gathered has been analysed to inform the findings presented in the report below. In addition, the appendices provide more detail from specific evidence sources:

- **Governance Model comparisons (Appendix A)** – the Cambridge model has remained largely unchanged for twenty years whilst the council's approach to delivery has changed significantly e.g. shared services and different delivery arrangements, digital developments and the changing local government landscape. The city's hybrid model is an outlier compared to similar districts, where the Executive/Cabinet generally meet monthly in public rather than once a year and have an overview and scrutiny committee.
- A high-level review of the **Constitution (Appendix B)** – the approach in Cambridge to the constitution reflects a fairly prescriptive approach to governance with some aspects being unnecessarily complex, unclear and onerous. The constitution would benefit from clarifications and a review of areas such as delegations to support improved accountability, decision-making, assurance and less onerous delegation requirements.
- A high-level summary of key findings from CfGS's recent reviews and analysis of '**What good scrutiny looks like**' (**Appendix C**). This has been included as a guide for reference as our assessment revealed some lack of understanding about the role of effective scrutiny. Cambridge devotes significant resources to a number of scrutiny committee processes though they may not be delivering the intended benefits for the Council and residents as envisaged when the current approach was established some years ago.
- The results of the **Member Survey (Appendix D)** demonstrate a broad commitment to openness and transparency across the council and unanimous agreement to increase resident involvement and participation in decision-making. There was a lack of strong agreement around scrutiny's effectiveness in policy development and holding to account, and a lack of clarity around the respective roles and responsibilities of Members and officers. Area Committees were not rated as effective. Some Members felt that access to sufficient and timely information for scrutiny and information to respond to upcoming ward issues could be improved. Eighteen people responded to the survey out of forty-two Members.

Assessment Findings Summary

The purpose of this report is to provide feedback on the findings of the assessment and make suggested recommendations for discussion with the council. The analysis has been presented against the seven CfGS good governance characteristics¹.

1. Recognition of individual and collective responsibility for good governance

What works well:

- There is a well-developed understanding of the value of good governance and high regard for democratic accountability and representation.
- There is a strong relationship between statutory officers, political leadership in the Executive and other positions.
- Most Members recognised the timeliness and importance of this review as part of the overall transformation.
- Members have been impressed with how the council has maintained its values and openness during the COVID response.

Areas to review:

1. The council would benefit from a more collective approach, across the Executive and the Leadership Team, to developing a shared vision, identifying how to tackle complex issues and gaining a shared view on risk.
2. The current governance model, with one Executive meeting a year and the approach to Executive Member decision-making, leads to a lack of collective democratic accountability.
3. Overall, the governance model and approach is resource heavy (officer and member time), opaque and activity does not always result in improved outcomes. As described by one interviewee: *'There are more meetings about every meeting than any other organisation I've been in my life. It stifles ambition and the ability to do anything new. These processes are getting in the way'*.
4. There was a strong desire from officers to have operational freedom to get on with their operational roles and do the detail. This was an issue identified in the previous LGA Corporate Peer Review in 2017/18, and some felt the situation had not improved.

¹ <https://www.cfgs.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021-03-08-seven-characteristics-final.pdf>

2. How the Council looks to the future to set its decision-making priorities

What works well:

- There is a clear passion, commitment and focus on a wide range of strategic issues impacting the city and its residents including climate change, poverty, housing and economic growth.
- The place of Cambridge globally is reflected in the ambition the council has for the place and its people.
- The council is seen as being forward looking and a strong strategic partner at all levels from Combined Authority to county and locally.
- Many felt that the changes at a senior leadership level (Member and officer) provided an excellent opportunity to review the current position.

Areas to review:

5. The annual election cycle, while bringing benefits such as motivating regular engagement with residents, has detrimental impacts on medium/long term planning and decision-making.
6. The current model, with minimal collaborative working across political groups, does not equip the council to focus on strategy, planning or complex, cross-cutting issues.
7. The budget planning process could be more strategic and focused. There is worry from some quarters about a willingness to make difficult budget decisions (this is a worry articulated by some but not all Members and officers). There is also seen by some to be a risk of Members focusing only on the detail of budget bids rather than whole areas of spending.
8. It was felt by some that changes to governance were required to enable and support the council's transformation programme, as well as to reflect new ways of working. Without modernisation, governance is a risk to transformation.

3. Officer and Member roles

What works well:

- Overall, there was a very positive view of Members, their dedication and commitment, in particular that they are principled, committed to their work and respectful. As one interviewee said: *'They want to be here to drive change and benefit residents'*.
- The majority of Members wanted to recognise the 'amazing' officer team throughout the organisation. The response to COVID was cited as an excellent example of agility and outcome-orientated ways of working.

- Most Members felt supported in the decision-making process and could articulate how the governance model is designed to work.

Areas to review:

9. There is a need to clarify Member and officer roles and responsibilities. In common with many councils, Cambridge could provide reassurance on the nature of Executive Member leadership, and on the way that Member leadership serves to direct and inform officers' work. There could be more clarity on who exactly is involved in decision-making – where and how advice is given and who is responsible for acting on it. We recognise that there is likely to be a degree of sensitivity around the release of too much information about the policy development process and the provision of more detail will not be relevant or appropriate for every decision, but we think there is value in more clarity and transparency on the most significant decisions that the council proposes to make.
10. The council should reflect on the level of detail present in the scheme of delegation. Clarity could be assisted by streamlining the way that the scheme is presented².

4. The state of Member oversight through scrutiny and audit

What works well:

- Many Members could describe the historical rationale for the current governance model, approach and the value that it brings.
- Most Members and officers felt that the approach enabled a wide group of Members to have a better understanding of council business and that this demonstrated a commitment to participation.
- When the model is working well, evidence suggests that it enables consistent, high quality public scrutiny in a non-political environment.
- The approach to group-based briefings was seen as a good way to keep Members informed.

Areas to review:

11. The reality of decisions being made in Group presents a challenge to the effective operation of the scrutiny function. Members were open about the fact that the majority of pre-decision scrutiny and decision-making is happening in Group and decisions are rarely amended – this could be seen to be in conflict with the council's commitments on transparency.
12. Most felt that scrutiny is overly political in nature. It is to be expected that scrutiny will have a strong political dimension – carried out well, it should engage with matters that are

² See examples of the approach to delegation in other council Appendix B, page 18.

contentious, high profile, and the subject of lively political debate. Ensuring that this happens without this debate impinging on the ability of councillors to work cross-party can be challenging. Officers can help with this process – to support Members to work well together, and to find common ground as they develop and refine their work programmes.

13. Scrutiny tends to be focused on pre-decision activity, rather than looking to contribute either to policy development, or to the wider needs of the local community. Pre-decision scrutiny can be productive – and can be an important democratic function. However, it needs to be carried out with a clear outcome in mind. Overall, there needs to be a clearer understanding of what scrutiny exists to do, including a plan for scrutiny – what the outcomes are that it can deliver and how its ways of working can contribute to those outcomes. It is worth noting that the focus on pre-decision scrutiny means that – as highlighted by a number of members – there has been limited time available to consider complex issues and lack of focus on cross-cutting issues.
14. There is a significant impact on Member and officer resource from how the scrutiny meetings are currently run (busy agendas, very long meetings) which is disproportionate to the value the activity adds to outcomes for residents. This was particularly challenging for Members with other responsibilities.

5. How the council's real situation compares to its sense of itself

What works well:

- There is a strong recognition of the specific demands of serving a city like Cambridge.
- There is an appreciation of the high level of expectation and responsiveness demanded by some residents and how this context impacts on council operations.
- There is overall a good sense amongst members and officers about where pressures and opportunities around governance lie (although that insight is not always held corporately).

Areas for review:

15. There was a strong desire to improve how the council listens to diverse voices (including different demographic groups), alongside engaging with people who find it easier to get their voice heard, for example, because they understand how to influence the council's democratic and scrutiny processes.
16. There has been limited engagement outside the local area due to a tendency towards exceptionalism about the way things are done in Cambridge (that is, that Cambridge's distinct and unique characteristics mean that it does, and should, do things differently to everyone else). The council would benefit from looking further afield for what works well and lessons to be learnt.

6. Quality of local external relationships

What works well:

- The council is seen as a strong and consistent partner, well-run with responsive Members and good officers from senior to operational level.
- Partners recognise that ‘all our futures are linked to Cambridge’ and that a collective approach is needed to solving the complex challenges the city faces.
- The council recognises the value of having effective partnerships across a range of sectors and is committed to the principle of public engagement.
- Local decision-making has been in place through Area Committees for seventeen years and is seen by some as an important way to connect with local residents.

Areas for review:

17. There was a strong view that Areas Committees need a complete overhaul – that they are no longer fit for purpose and that their purpose, objectives, means of operation and outcomes all need to be revisited. Area Committees should integrate better with existing community engagement activity, and the council should give consideration as to whether they need to be formal committees.
18. There is a desire to continue the collaborative working demonstrated during the pandemic that involved greater cross-party engagement. There is a risk (which has been identified in other council areas) that these ways of working are being lost and moving back to traditional delivery.
19. There is a recognition that the council needs to find ways to engage better with diverse communities and reflect this in how governance operates. Cambridge understands that it has a complex demographic mix, and a somewhat transient population, and needs to feed that understanding more effectively into how it seeks to engage local people in formal decision making, and other elements of the governance system.
20. There was a view from some that the council can sometimes “lack confidence” and should be more confident in its civic leadership position locally and with the University of Cambridge.

7. Awareness of political dynamics

What works well:

- Officers had an excellent understanding and were able to interpret the political dynamics of the council, as one person said: *‘politics are real here’*.

- The elections by thirds was seen as being a strength by the vast majority of elected Members, as a way to ensure continuity in democratic representation and a reason to engage regularly with the public.
- The city has a particularly active civic and democratic community. Political discourse, discussion and debate is seen as an important part of political and democratic life in the city, and is reflected in how governance operates, particularly in the council chamber.

Areas for review:

21. It was felt that a consequence of the election cycle and political environment is a more cautious, short-term focus and higher level of scrutiny – resulting in risk aversity. This is a feature common to councils that elect by thirds.
22. There is a political focus on some national and global issues, that realistically the council has very limited or no authority to resolve, which some saw as a waste of valuable council resources; there is a balance to be brought here, however, and the council does need to understand and act on major trends as they emerge and impact upon the area.
23. The current group briefings create significant demands on limited officer time and challenges to political neutrality – a more effective approach to the briefing and sharing of information with members is needed.

Conclusion

Throughout this process, there has been a strong recognition of the importance of good governance to the council's success and the timeliness of this assessment.

There was also a strongheld view that continuing with the same governance approach is not a viable option. Improvements are needed to reflect how the council works now compared to twenty years ago in order to create a modern governance environment that is fit for purpose to deliver improved outcomes and financial sustainability. One which is more transparent and easier to navigate so that it is more inclusive to a wider range of residents.

Positively, the foundation stones of good governance are already in place in Cambridge. There is an appetite to carefully consider what changes will have the most impact and for actions to support, complement or form part of the transformation programme.

In summary, it is CfGS's view that:

- **Modernising governance is essential to enable the council's transformation.**
- **There are significant benefits to be gained from taking a more collective, simplified and transparent approach to all aspects of governance.**
- **The council has an excellent opportunity to lead the way nationally in embedding diversity and inclusion in its democratic engagement and decision-making.**

Next steps

To deliver the required pace of change, we have set out draft recommendations for discussion with Members and officers.

These have been divided into ‘quick win’ recommendations – improvements that could be made within the current model and introduced relatively quickly after elections in May 2022 – as well as improvements to be considered with a view to being agreed in 2022-23.

From May 2022

- 1. Introduce a collaborative approach to strategy, business and budget planning** – Immediate steps could be taken to mitigate the impact of the annual election cycle, by looking at strategy, business and budget planning and considering how to introduce a more collaborative approach to how the Executive and Leadership Team work together, as well as cross-party and with other stakeholders.
- 2. Review the way Executive Member decision-making works** – To support the delivery of the council’s corporate plan and transformation programme, consider introducing additional public meetings of the Executive, and provide clarity on Executive Members’ and group decision-making roles and responsibilities.
- 3. Pre-decision scrutiny** – Take action to clarify the role of public scrutiny in Cambridge, by reviewing and refocusing the work programmes beyond pre-scrutiny of Executive Member decisions. Take steps to make it a safe space for member-led scrutiny and cross-party challenge and more manageable meeting agendas. Consider reviewing the number of committees to better align with the council’s corporate plan.
- 4. Area Committees** – Consider pausing Area Committees while a review is undertaken, releasing officer and Member resource to focus on developing a new approach which forms part of the council’s community engagement strategy.
- 5. Constitution** – Undertake an initial review of the Constitution to identify any immediate issues that can be tidied up or changed to provide clarity and support new ways of working.
- 6. Training and development** – Review the governance elements of the Member and officer training offer to align with the culture change programme and provide clarity on roles and responsibilities.
- 7. Shared services** – Take action to reduce the duplication and inefficiency of decision-making around this aspect of service delivery, whilst ensuring democratic accountability and oversight.
- 8. Delegated decision-making** – Review the scheme of delegation in order to empower officers to do their roles whilst providing Members with the assurance they need.

During 2022/23

9. **Governance model** – Consider if the council’s governance model (hybrid, hybrid) is still fit for purpose and if changing the model would deliver a more simplified, effective and efficient decision-making oversight.
10. **Public engagement and involvement** – Following the review (point 4 above), put in place a new democratic engagement and local decision-making model which forms an integral part of the council’s overall approach to engagement and delivery.
11. **Council meetings** – Consider how effective council meetings are in supporting the delivery of better outcomes in Cambridge and if improvements could be made.
12. **Constitution** – Undertake a more fundamental review of the Constitution to reflect how the council will now operate.

Feedback on the recommendations would be welcomed and we have suggested that these are discussed at an all-member briefing. We appreciate that the Executive will want to form a view on how best to take forward the recommendations.

We would encourage Group leaders and other Members, and officers to be involved in the development, design and implementation of recommendations that are taken forward. It is often the case that a working group made up of Members and officers is established to take forward changes to governance, and CfGS have experience of supporting these types of processes.

Cambridge City Council – governance comparison

The choice of governance options for local authorities is a spectrum, with a huge amount of variation rather than a blunt choice between “committee” and “leader-cabinet”. For example, very few councils operate the committee systems, and many councils with cabinet models establish working committees, which are distinct from the scrutiny process, to advise on and develop policy and engage and involve non-executive members in decision making.

In practice, councils can adopt “hybrid” arrangements. While this is not a formal change of governance the approach typically retains the leader and cabinet system but builds in a layer of committees advising and making recommendations to cabinet. Other forms of hybrid exist. How these systems operate tends to rest on two technical issues:

- the council’s formal scheme of delegation. This will impact the extent to which officers are delegated to make decisions; the scope and scale of officer decision-making being an important adjunct to member led decision making processes.
- the council’s decisions on “local choice” functions. Councils operating under executive options may decide which of certain functions sit with cabinet, and which sit with full council.

Cambridge model of governance

The City Council’s current governance arrangements have been in place since May 2002 when it changed its governance from a committee system to the Leader - Cabinet model of Executive decision making³. Cambridge did not adopt the conventional collective cabinet meeting approach like the vast majority of councils, and instead opted for a hybrid approach. There are very few non-metropolitan district councils operate a ‘hybrid’ model (see table below).

The Cambridge model of governance is best regarded as a “hybrid, hybrid with executive ratification”. Matters for decision generally come either to a scrutiny committee for debate and discussion before the decision is taken by an Executive Member (at the meeting itself or a later date) or are taken by the Executive Member in consultation with the Chair and spokespersons on the relevant scrutiny committee.

Cambridge’s model is, as far as we are aware, unique. In other hybrid authorities, decisions are usually taken by meetings of the Executive together – subject to the views and recommendations of scrutiny. Cambridge is unusual in having only one annual meeting of the whole Executive, with all other executive decision-making happening on an individual basis, and no Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

This model does anchor debate in committees to the eventual decision more clearly than other hybrids. However, as is always the case with hybrid working, there are structural risks about the clarity of the role of scrutiny, the challenge of making cross-cutting decisions that the Executive are collectively accountable for and the extent to which the Executive Member can consider their powers to be “fettered” or constrained by committees.

³<https://democracy.cambridge.gov.uk/documents/s14325/CAC%2021.11.12%20v3.pdf>

Governance Review of Hybrid models

In governance reviews that have taken place in councils with hybrid arrangements findings point towards a mixed picture of benefits and disadvantages.

A review of the hybrid structure in Sevenoaks District Council found that “councillors are generally more engaged in, and have more influence over, decision-making. There had been concerns that a more elaborate process would slow down speed of decision-making. The Executive still meets monthly, and the Cabinet Advisory Committees all meet before the Executive meets in the cycle so that they can influence Executive decision-making. Although councillors are more engaged under the ‘hybrid’ structure, it has proved to be more resource hungry particularly at senior officer level and for Committee Services.”⁴

Melton Borough Council were considering governance change and were keen to explore the hybrid model, however they found that “whilst it provided the benefits of both the Committee System and the Leader and Cabinet model, it was incredibly resource intensive. It also appeared to be slow and bureaucratic. Whilst it may work within other Councils, we did not feel that it would be an appropriate fit for Melton.”⁵

As we have outlined in previous CfGS guidance⁶, no one governance system is intrinsically better than another, or inherently more or less expensive to operate. Any of the prevailing models – Mayoral, committee, leader/cabinet or a hybrid form – can be made to work. Although structures are important, and can influence and inform behaviour, culture is arguably more critical in determining how governance systems operate. Without the right attitudes, values and behaviours being in place, a system which looks exceptional on paper could be found wanting in practice.

Some governance systems do allow more members to be directly involved in voting on decisions. The adoption of a hybrid model is seen as one way of enabling more consensual models of decision-making. However, an important consideration in this respect is distinguishing between increased activity at committee level and substantive member involvement in policy making. Member involvement in policy making is a longer-term process and can happen under any governance system in a variety of formats.

It is difficult to easily identify hybrid authorities, as many councils do not tend to use this word in describing their governance arrangements. The **table below** captures examples of non-metropolitan councils with a hybrid form of governance alongside other city district councils.

Except Cambridge, all other district councils operating hybrid arrangements identified in the table below have a model of an Executive collectively meeting on a regular basis, politically-balanced Cabinet Advisory Committees (CACs) or other such bodies, and overview and scrutiny remaining a distinct function or committee. The main difference between CACs tends to be whether or not the membership and chairmanship includes Cabinet Members.

⁴<https://democracy.guildford.gov.uk/mgConvert2PDF.aspx?ID=3161&ISATT=1#search=%22following%20a%20review%20of%20governance%20arrangements%2c%20on%207%20October%202015%20the%20Council%20agreed%20a%20new%20hybrid%20approach%22>

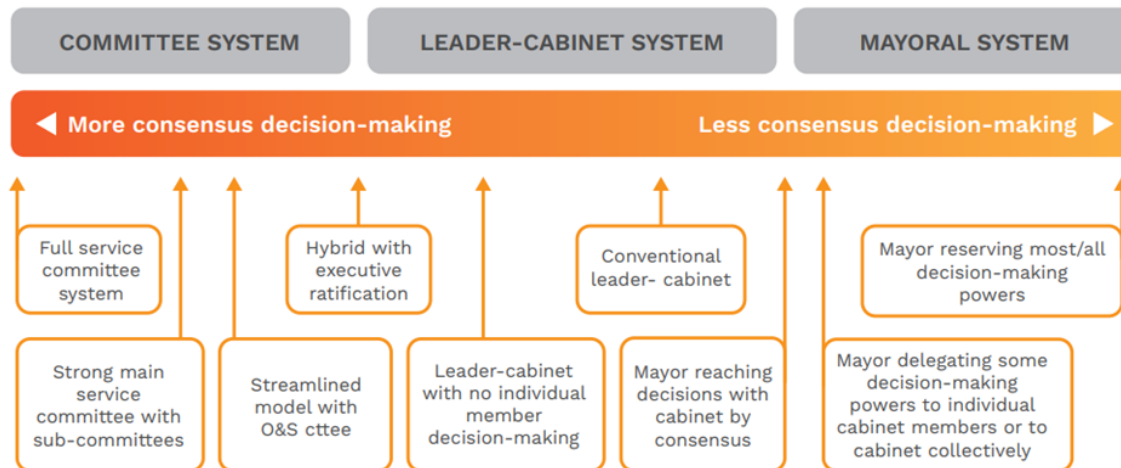
⁵<https://democracy.melton.gov.uk/documents/s6414/Appendix%20A-%20Governance%20Development%20Group%20Report.pdf>

⁶ “Musical chairs” (CfGS, 2012); “Rethinking governance” (CfGS / LGA, 2014) [“Rethinking governance for the 20s”](#) (CfGS, 2020)

Council name	2019 ONS population data	Council type	Upper tier council	Region	Governance system
Oxford	152,457	Non-metropolitan district, City	Oxfordshire	South East	Leader–Cabinet; Halves
Guildford	148,998	Non-metropolitan district, Borough	Surrey	South East	Hybrid ; All out
St Albans	148,452	Non-metropolitan district, City	Hertfordshire	East of England	Committee; Thirds
Lancaster	146,038	Non-metropolitan district, City	Lancashire	North West	Leader–Cabinet; All out
Preston	143,135	Non-metropolitan district, City	Lancashire	North West	Leader–Cabinet; Thirds
Norwich	140,573	Non-metropolitan district, City	Norfolk	East of England	Leader–Cabinet; All out
Tonbridge and Malling	132,153	Non-metropolitan district, Borough	Kent	South East	Hybrid ; All out
Exeter	131,405	Non-metropolitan district, City	Devon	South West	Leader–Cabinet; Thirds
Gloucester	129,128	Non-metropolitan district, City	Gloucestershire	South West	Leader–Cabinet; All out
Winchester	124,859	Non-metropolitan district, City	Hampshire	South East	Leader–Cabinet; Thirds
Cambridge	124,798	Non-metropolitan district, City	Cambridgeshire	East of England	Hybrid ; Thirds ⁷
Sevenoaks	120,750	Non-metropolitan district	Kent	South East	Hybrid ; All out
Tunbridge Wells	118,724	Non-metropolitan district, Borough	Kent	South East	Hybrid ; All out
Carlisle	108,678	Non-metropolitan district, City	Cumbria	North West	Leader–Cabinet; Thirds
Worcester	101,222	Non-metropolitan district, City	Worcestershire	West Midlands	Committee; Thirds
Lincoln	99,299	Non-metropolitan district, City	Lincolnshire	East Midlands	Leader–Cabinet; Thirds

⁷ 53 out of 182 districts elect by Thirds; 7 districts elect by Halves. Across all principal local authorities in England around 30% elect by Thirds. Principal local authority elections in Wales are ‘all out’ every 5 years, in Northern Ireland and Scotland every 4 years.

The Spectrum of Governance Models⁸



Summary of different options in the diagram:

Full-service committee system. This is a model in which individual service committees have the freedom to make decisions in the way that they like. Decisions which cut across more than one area will need to go to multiple committees for signoff.

Service committees but with strong S&R. It is common for committee system authorities to have a “policy and resources” or “strategy and resources” committee – a committee that has an overarching role in setting corporate policy. This committee may have the chairs of other committees sitting on it, and it may also set the agendas for those other committees. It will usually deal with major cross-cutting issues itself.

Streamlined “fourth option” style approach. Councils operating the committee system used to be obliged to operate what was termed a “streamlined” model – with only a couple of service committees, a strategy and resources committee and a separate scrutiny committee.

Hybrid, with executive ratification. This is a hybrid model, legally the leader-cabinet system but with features of the committee system. There are two basic forms:

- A model where committees – which, legally, are scrutiny committees - actually act as de facto decision-making committees;
- A model where politically-balanced Cabinet advisory committees or other such bodies exist as sub-committees of Cabinet, with overview and scrutiny remaining a distinct function.

Leader-cabinet with no individual decision-making. In this model, while all decisions are made by Cabinet, Cabinet decides everything collectively, in formal meetings.

⁸ [CfGS ‘Rethinking governance for the 20s’](#)

“Conventional” leader-cabinet. Under this model, there is a mix of all-Cabinet decision making, and individual cabinet member decision making by holders of distinct portfolios.

Executive Mayor, with delegation to Cabinet or individual Cabinet members. In the Mayoral system formal powers rest with the Mayor, but here the Mayor may delegate a significant proportion of that power to Cabinet.

Executive Mayor reserving most powers. In this model, the Mayor makes most or all decisions themselves, with Cabinet having a mainly advisory role.

Cambridge City Council Constitution

<p>Generally</p>	<p>It may be sensible to think about a merger of the Articles and Rules of Procedure – the approach set out reflects standard sector practice but does duplicate and is confusing for the uninitiated – there’s no longer a compelling reason these days to have separate Articles. If they are merged with the “rules of procedure” that will influence some of what we have to say about their content below.</p> <p>In terms of use of language, the constitution could probably do with a general plain English readthrough (for example it is better to use “they” rather than “he or she”).</p> <p>Take advantage of the fact that the constitution is now essentially a digital–first document, to use more accessible format than PDF, introduce hyperlinks etc, better use of cross-referencing. There may also be a need for more consistent version control (so that new iterations of the constitution can be more clearly distinguished from old)</p>
<p>Introduction</p>	<p>Will need further review if implementing other suggestions here.</p>
<p>Art 3</p>	<p>Follows the Government’s “New council constitutions” guidance (2000), which sets out a model, modular constitution for councils to adopt and adapt: this guidance still being in force. (The guidance is available at https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ukgwa/20120920053721/http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/localgovernment/pdf/155181.pdf)</p> <p>The opportunity does though exist to expand this to reflect on how the council sees itself engaging with local people more substantively – there may be a set of general principles that the council uses when engaging local people and communities that it might be helpful to put on a constitutional footing.</p>
<p>Art 6</p>	<p>There is a strong rationale to address the need for every executive decision, with few exceptions, to go to committee for pre-scrutiny. There is also a lack of alignment on this between the use of “shall” (6.3.1) and “may” (6.3.2).</p> <p>The list of scrutiny duties is more a list of generalised tasks – something more strategic about scrutiny’s role would be useful (noting comments in Appendix C about the role of good scrutiny).</p>

Art 8	This section may need a review depending on the level of decision-making sitting with Area Committees. Do they still need to be formal committees of the council?
Art 9	Remove reference to the wellbeing power, repealed in the 2011 Act
Art 11	Tables on these pages need to be slightly reorganised
Art 14	Possibly overdetailed, although members may want assurance on the exercise of the MO's powers to revise the constitution unilaterally. There is particular space for misinterpretation in 14.3.2.
Part 3, s2	There is arguably too much detail about executive responsibilities – although the issue is moot, as councillors may be reassured by this extra detail. There is inconsistency in how the functions of various different portfolios are described.
Part 3 s3	Local choice functions – on Point 12, a view needs to be taken about whether this part provides necessary legal certainty
Part 3 s5	5.5.1 – consider a way of incorporating these within committee procedure rules, it makes little sense having them here. The Council may also need to consider their necessity and continued legal application.
Part 3 s6	Framing the terms of reference with reference exclusively to council portfolios gives the impression that scrutiny is entirely inward-facing – we would rephrase to relate to general issues / services. Query combining the function of a scrutiny committee and a tenants/leaseholders committee. The functions are complementary but may not sit well as a single committee, and this kind of structure is very unusual. That said, it may be seen to bring together key elements of scrutiny for a council that is still a stockholder – and we suspect that councillors and tenants may both oppose any change here.
Part 3 s7	It is unusual for the JSEF to be a body appointed by a scrutiny committee. The role of the Equalities Panel feels insufficiently precise.

<p>Part 3 s9</p>	<p>Consultation with councillors around delegated powers. This form of consultation seems like it has the potential to be onerous under certain circumstances – decisions are delegated, or they aren't.</p> <p>There is a duplicate section here on the description of the Seal of the Council (duplicated entirely from Art 13)</p> <p>The specific scheme and description of delegations seems too detailed. A lot of this detail is legally necessary (the service area delegations, for example). Gloucestershire's is an example on how it can be done more proportionately, https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/constitution/part-3-responsibility-for-functions/section-5-scheme-of-delegation/</p> <p>Other hybrid authorities that may be useful to consider include,</p> <p>Guildford https://democracy.guildford.gov.uk/documents/s22818/Part%203%20-%20Responsibility%20for%20Functions.pdf (p48 – p91), and</p> <p>Tonbridge & Malling https://democracy.tmbc.gov.uk/documents/s57812/Constitution%20v2021005%20November%202021.pdf (p97 - p138)</p>
<p>Part 4A</p>	<p>Council Procedure Rules</p> <p>There is a case for merging the appendices in with the general procedure rules. Appendix E needs a rewrite – there is no need for separate rules regarding e-mail notices of motion.</p> <p>Appendix FA feels unnecessary, or at least in the wrong place, apart from the section on party political publicity. Appendix FB reads like a repository for a range of otherwise unconnected material – some of it can sit elsewhere (access to info procedure rules) and some probably excised entirely.</p>
<p>Part 4B</p>	<p>Wording relating to access to information should be more permissive in tone.</p>
<p>Part 4E</p>	<p>Scrutiny Procedure Rules</p> <p>Need a general tidy up. 3.1 suggests that scrutiny committees cannot schedule additional meetings without approval of CAC which seems unusual.</p>

	<p>Advance scrutiny rules seem quite doctrinaire. The approach seems to place a heavy burden on members, between meetings and at meetings, to look at a wide range of forthcoming decisions. These arrangements don't give Chairs much power over the agenda of their own committees (something on which we comment in Appendix C). This is a facet of hybrid working.</p> <p>Requiring a majority of members of a committee to request a call in is a very high bar, although this may reflect the operation of hybrid working arrangements and could be justified in that context.</p>
Part 4EE	<p>There is confusion about the extent to which Area Committees are 1972 Act committees. They currently meet virtually and are not making decisions.</p>
Part 4F.4G	<p>Financial and contract procedure rules – we would recommend a further expert review to reflect current practice in the sector.</p> <p>Other points</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bidding arrangements for any capital expenditure over £15,000 seems set low, especially when seen against permissive arrangements for revenue spending • Definition of “high risk contracts” (p331) is unusual • From pp305-318 (roughly) there is a chunk of the contents of the entire constitution reproduced in error.
Part 5A	<p>Worth reviewing this in the context of the 2021 Model Code, as well as bringing the Nolan Seven Principles of Public Life to the front of this section rather than having them as an addendum</p>

What good scrutiny looks like

Good scrutiny is about focus, prioritisation and cross-party, independent-minded dialogue on issues of critical importance to local people. It is about bringing a different perspective to bear on decision-making than might be held by members of the executive, or senior officers. Its ultimate purpose is to improve the lives of local people through improved public services. To justify the resources allocated to scrutiny it is important to be able to demonstrate it adds value and makes a difference to local people.

CfGS has carried out over 30 scrutiny improvement reviews (SIR) for local authorities over the last few years. These have produced clear and tangible results for those councils who have been through the process. Based on these reviews, key insights about what good scrutiny looks like were published in a short report⁹ which reflects best practice that has emerged across local government. The findings that are most relevant to Cambridge are set out below:

- **The importance of being clear on scrutiny's role.** Particularly in a hybrid council, there is a need for clarity on what scrutiny exists to do. For a hybrid there will be a need for scrutiny to participate in policy development and in performance management and review, like a service committee in the committee system – but this is different from how scrutiny is commonly carried out in a leader-cabinet authority.
- **Prioritisation is key.** Officers and members need to work together to determine when matters should and should not be brought to committee for discussion.
- **Access to information is important.** This is not just about sharing reports but ensuring that members have access to relevant information between meetings – and that evidence is used to determine what matters should and should not be scrutinised. This is particularly important for performance management.
- **Control of the work programme.** In a conventional leader-cabinet setup, scrutiny's work may not always be connected with executive business – in hybrid working, decisions have to be made about the extent to which scrutiny is independent from the executive in how it contributes to executive decision-making.
- **Good relationships.** Strong relationships between the Executive and scrutiny are important – this requires clarity around mutual roles and responsibilities.
- **Member leadership.** Connected to good relationships, member leadership is about ensuring that chairs – and ordinary members of committees – are empowered to take an active part in shaping committees' work programmes.
- **Behaviours are important.** The role of scrutiny impacts on how people – officers and members – behave in meetings. Vigorous political debate is expected – but there is the risk, which needs to be mitigated, that this can be counterproductive.
- **Focusing on impact is important.** Scrutiny will want to focus on those matters where it can make the most difference to local people's lives – in a hybrid system this is likely to involve focusing on forthcoming decisions which are especially contentious or high profile.

⁹ <https://www.cfgs.org.uk/?publication=scrutiny-improvement-reviews-main-themes-findings>

Cambridge City Council – Member survey

Summary

The survey results demonstrate a broad agreement about a clear commitment to openness and transparency at Cambridge City Council. There was a perception that decision-makers need a greater focus on evidence-based decisions and should be held to account more than they are currently.

Of those surveyed, there was a lack of strong agreement around scrutiny's effectiveness in policy development and holding to account. Member perceptions also indicate that there is a lack of clarity around lines of accountability in general, alongside a significant lack of clarity around the respective roles and responsibilities of members and officers.

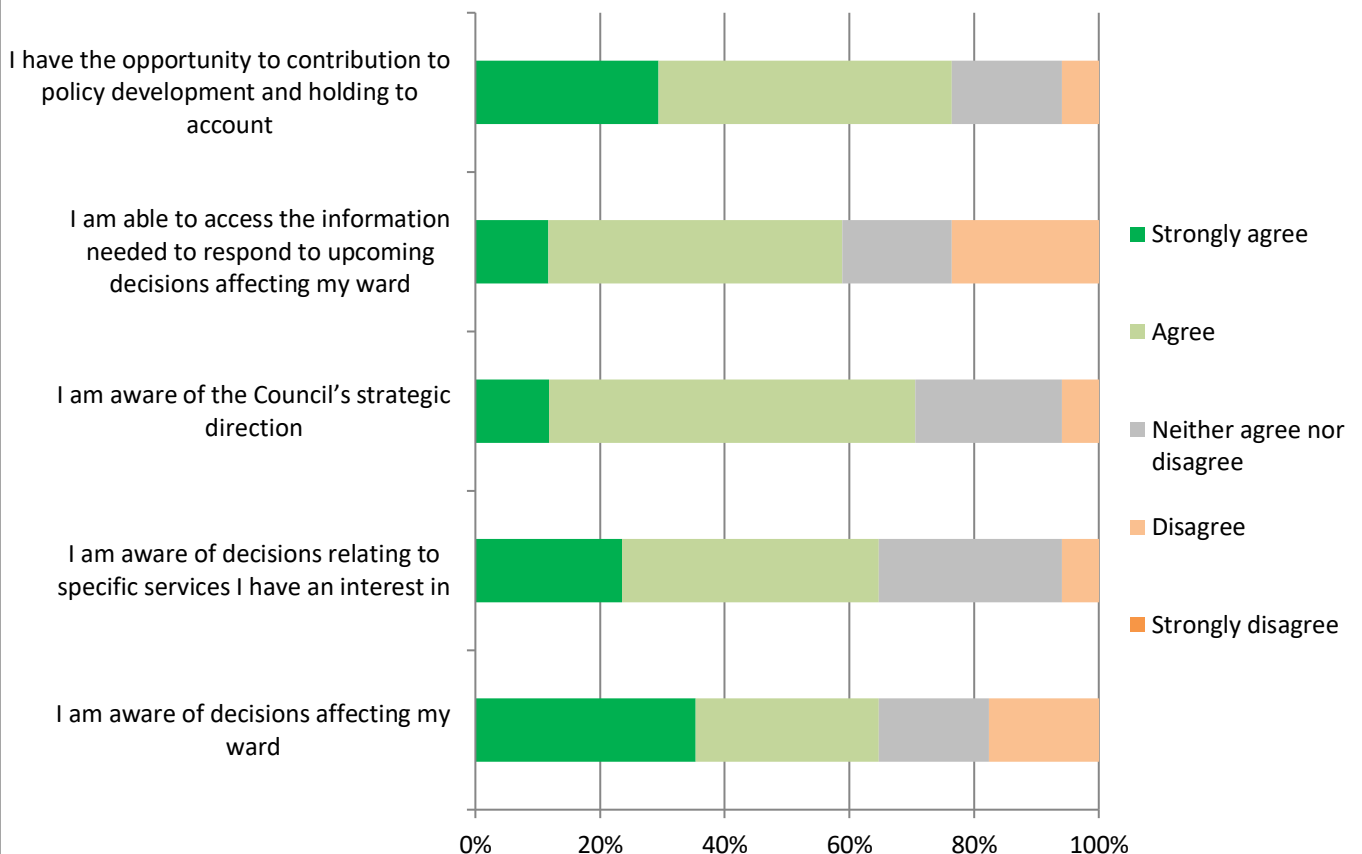
The effectiveness of delegated decisions (either to Executive members or officers) was not rated very highly by respondents. Developing a shared understanding around roles and responsibilities, as well as clearer lines of accountability may help this.

Survey results show that access to sufficient and timely information for scrutiny, as well as information for members to respond to upcoming issues in their ward could be improved.

Member respondents also expressed that the views of key stakeholders and diverse voices needed to be listened to more, and that Area Committees were not very effective. There was unanimous agreement that the council should seek opportunities to further increase resident involvement and participation in council decision-making.

Eighteen people responded to the survey out of forty-two Members.

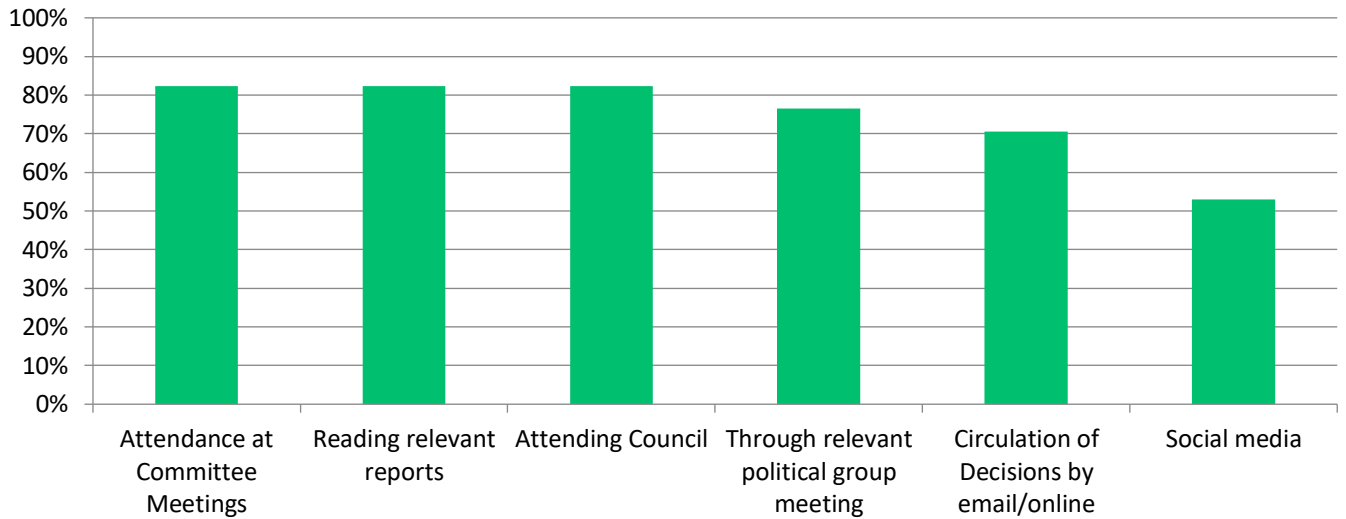
Q1: In regard to undertaking your role as a councillor, please rate your response to each of these statements.



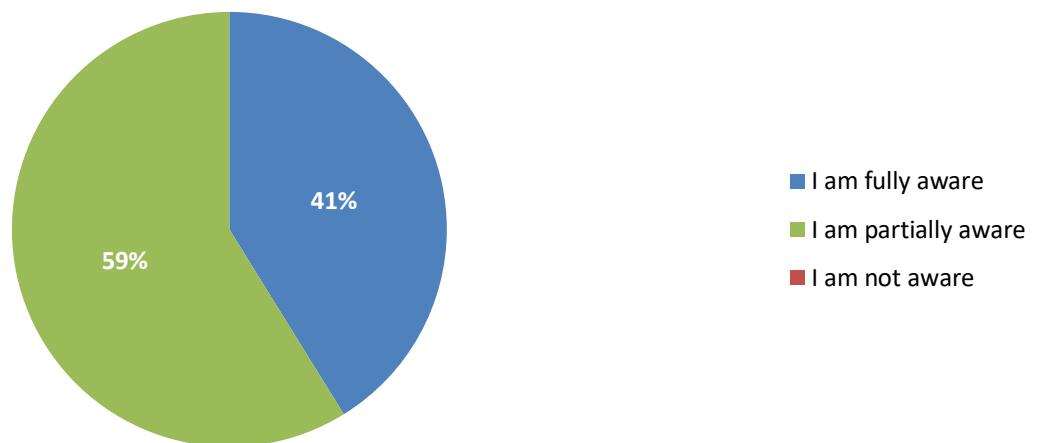
Any other comments on governance culture at the Council?

More highlighting of consultations on social media might be good. 'Have-your-say' tweets that tell you: 'Only one month Consultation XYZ closes' etc. And then: 'Only week to go [...]' etc.
Officer led rather than ruling party.
These questions do not provide for nuance nor for variation in approaches. There are instances where I would say that there is transparency and instances where that is clearly not so. Ditto consultation and evidencing why decisions are made - some decisions the process is clear some it is egregiously bad.
Scrutiny seems like a sham.
Residents are bewildered by the overlapping responsibilities of the City Council, County Council, Mayor, Greater Cambridge Council and external agencies. The feedback we get is that they find the governance process opaque and that deadlock and turf wars mean that decisions don't get taken. There are frequent references to "AstroTurf consultations". The council performs much better when dealing with in house issues and financial management and reporting is good but the public image is much less strong.
Officers seem to provide fair advice to the opposition when requested.

Q2: How do you become aware of Council decisions as they are made? (Tick all that apply)



Q3: Are you aware when Council decisions are going to be taken so you can choose whether or not to participate?



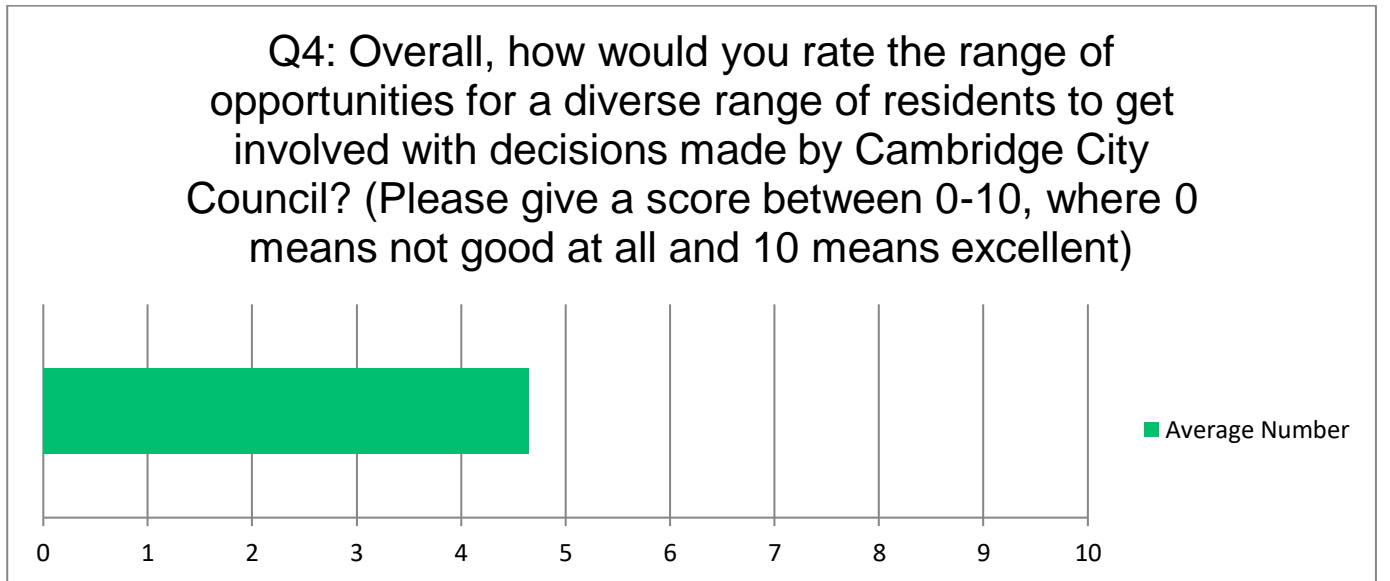
Please explain your answer:

Maybe a monthly 'digest' of everything that's on the horizon for decision would be good? In fairness, nearly all Officers do their best to keep us posted. And many Officers produce *outstanding* reports. Most Officers will also give helpful and detailed answers to individual questions. Yes, there are one or two Officers appear to do all the decision-making themselves, and then (perhaps unsurprisingly) do not get back to you when you ask about it. But that's fairly rare.

Generally agendas and cttee etc papers make this clear, although I think that often there is so much paperwork that one can drown in it before getting to the point.

There are always emails to flag up particular issues.

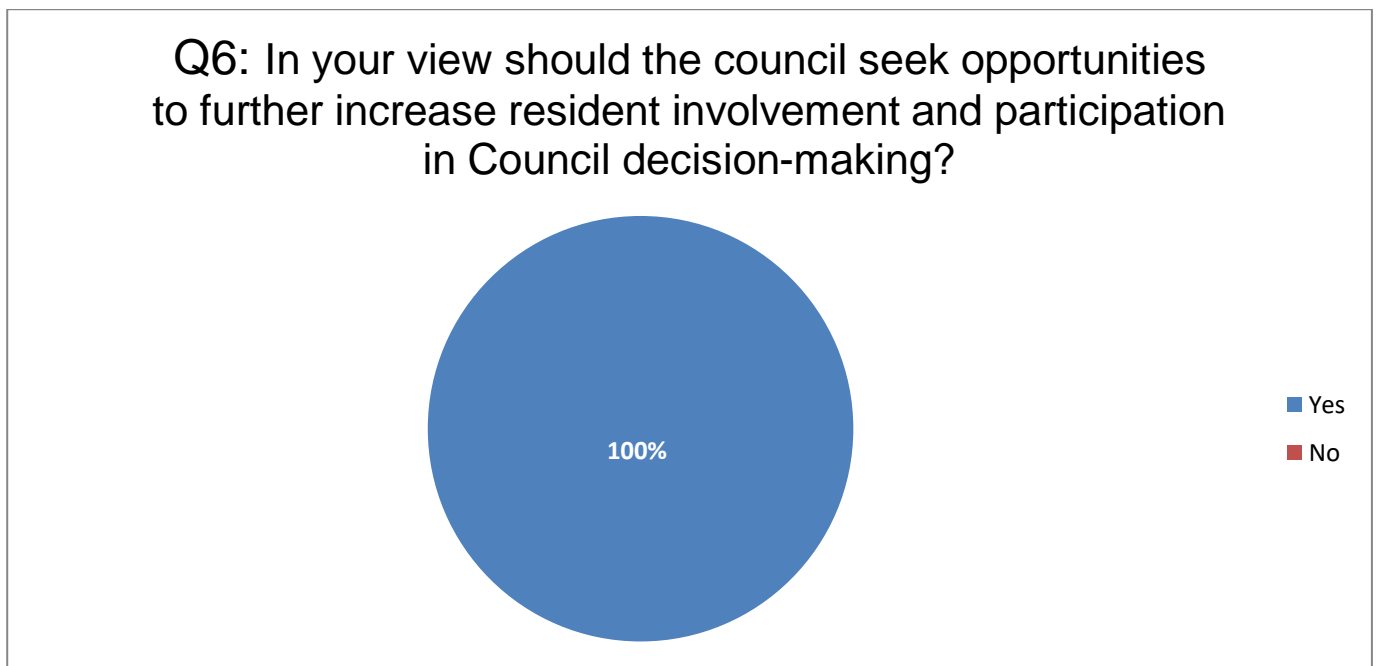
I don't always know when decisions are being taken.
Too much for me to individually keep on top of.
I sit on some scrutiny committees but not all and my group is unrepresented on some of them.
I think that some decisions are made without full consultation - especially as ward councillor which should be about the ward, not the politics of the individual ward councillors. There are examples of where something ward related has not been run past the ward councillors for their views unless they belong to the ruling group.



Q5: Please briefly explain why you decided on the above score.

There have been cases where important consultations were not adequately publicized or even advertised at all, specifically in the most relevant locations, and thus for key stakeholders.
They already made their minds up before residents get involved.
More effort is needed to understand and reach some of our communities.
Meetings normally held at night-time so difficult for working parents, majority of consultations on-line so excludes those not on line. Full Council held at night so again public questions difficult transport not as frequent during the day yet we already hold one full council during the day so why not the other 3.
Area Cttees do play a positive role - I say this being nonetheless well aware that other Councillors have an extremely negative view of them: the Cttee approach does need to be reviewed but *not* abolished. Public questions at Full Council - I am working to get this item on the agenda to be lengthened in time and more public awareness, but this is like an uphill battle, despite its making far more sense than the time spent on members asking executive councillors pre-arranged questions.;
I think some wards are more tuned in that others so for example Castle residents are mostly affluent and aware of council processes and have access to internet etc., other wards may not have the same resources or ways of knowing about upcoming meetings or indeed the time to participate especially if in a deprived ward in the city.
Not good but not bad.
Good but could always be more representative.
It is very difficult to engage with most people. The Council is aware of the challenges but is subjected to input from the well connected but struggles to engage with those who feel marginalised
Not much democratic engagement in general.
I think that there are opportunities but that they are not taken up because of low public confidence in the council.

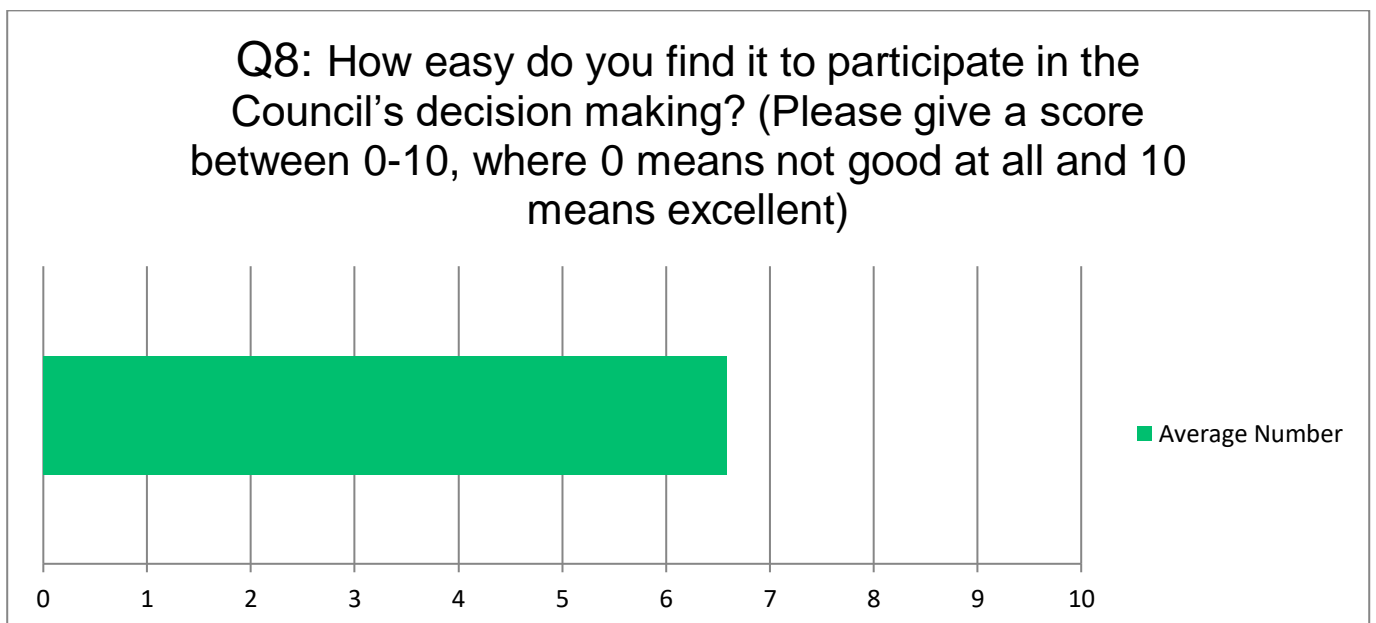
We aren't creative enough in how we engage residents which means we limit who takes part - it's often/usually the same residents who take part - the ones who shout the loudest.
Our Council does struggle to engage with minority communities in Cambridge and members are demographically not very diverse.
Many significant meetings such as planning meetings take place during what is typically the working day, which is not at all inclusive. They also last a very long time, often with no timings given to agenda items so members of the public need to commit to a whole morning/afternoon if they wish to speak to/listen to one aspect of a meeting. Minutes from meetings do not make it clear who asked what, so accountability and public scrutiny is limited. There are often more public questions than there is time given to them, so often residents are not able to speak.
Cambridge has some very powerful voices and groups who obviously have a right to be heard but I feel that sometimes these groups or individuals can mean that other interested parties who may have differing views are overlooked or pushed to the side-lines.



Q7: What ideas do you have for how improvements could be made with resident involvement?

Hybridize method-of-attendance options for the public-participation element of Committees. Allow those who are shielding or otherwise housebound to join on Zoom etc. while the less digitally confident/comfortable can still attend in RealSpace classic-styles. St Giles Church do this every Sunday. It's one dear kind person with a laptop and microphone. Maybe the City could follow St Giles.
Talk to the RA's.
Hold meetings in different locations in the city. Go out to residents meetings more. Use more plain English, plus more translations into other languages
Ward meetings held during the day and more often rather than the 4 Area meetings that held at night and have the same members of the public turning up. Drop in sessions, reinstate the housing offices used to have 2 but both closed again reducing face to face interaction.
Full Council - More time for public questions and advertising/publicising this; making Full Council more lively, interesting and engaging so as to attract resident involvement/attendance - eg tightening up length of time spent on moving motions, responding to 'put up' questions, etc. Revisiting Area Cttees - publicising better, rethinking format, etc.

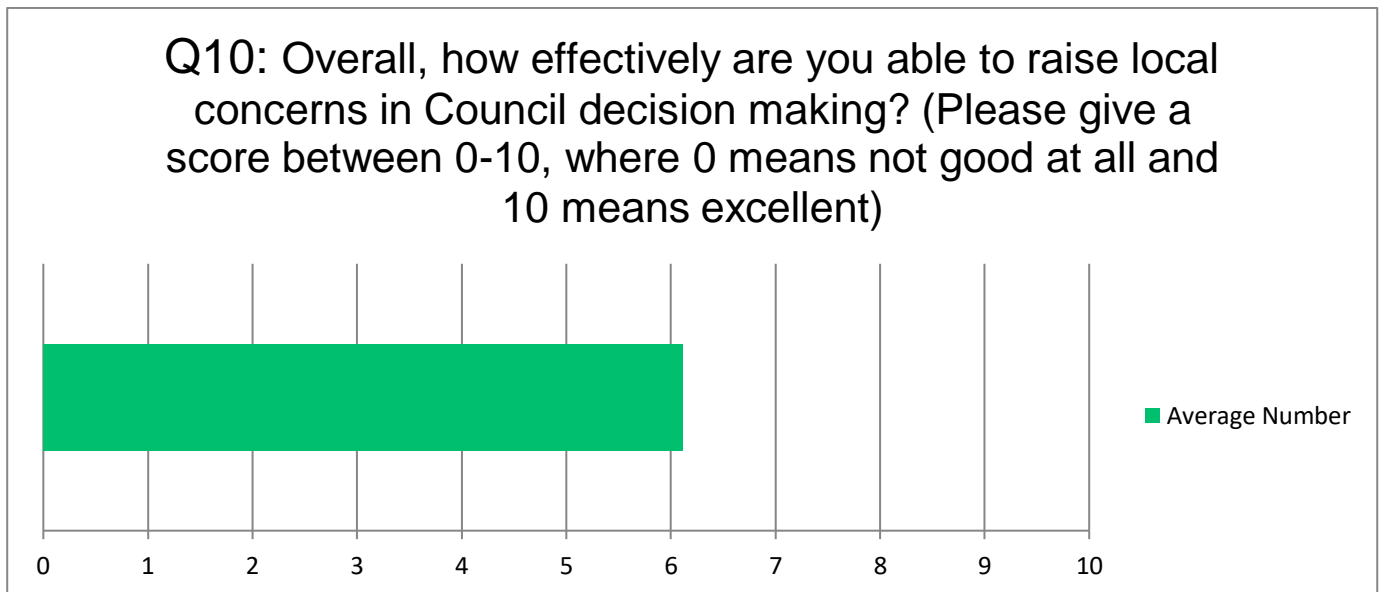
Young people should be consulted.
public meetings in community centres especially about community issues such as homelessness etc.,
Live updates on what's happening on internet.
Better advance publicity. Avoidance of regular customers repeatedly hogging airtime. Give ward councillors more credibility and respect in sharing input they have received.
There needs to be a more decentralised approach to delivery of services and empowerment of officers so that decisions can be made relevant to the local situation
Pay or bribe residents to engage in citizens assemblies or deliberative democracy
I would like to see FOI requests put on a website in anonymised form. I would like more meetings to be held online. But I don't think the problem is what the council does but how it is perceived.
Go to where people are!
Adjust timings of meetings to be more inclusive. Try to assign timings to agenda items so people can attend for just the relevant item. Reposition the camera used to record full council so all speakers can be seen, and their face can be seen (it is often just the backs of our heads).
Allowing remote access to committee meetings is vital - otherwise anyone who cannot attend in person is excluded and this will always disadvantage working people, carers and those who are less confident to speak in the chamber or committee. Council can be intimidating and has lots of apparently strange processes (which are necessary) but perhaps we could have some online help/videos to explain them more to help prepare people and for them to see how things actually work.



Q9: Please briefly explain why you decided on the above score.

The decision-making can feel a bit out-of-reach. But it is the answers on specific enquiries that are sometimes noticeably elusive. And that is a shame, since if we had these, we would perhaps be far more able to accept or at least understand the decisions that go against us. But please note that this is all in the context of ward-based casework. Decision-making at the level of policy formation and ratification is broadly something in which I have been able to participate on behalf of the constituents whose interests I serve, and in a way that is transparent to me - even where i do not win.
Have never really listened, just patronise you.
I understand the system quite well, and know many people
Most of the committees meet at night apart from 2 so limits your availability to sit on committees. Full council held at night and not enough time to fully debate discuss policies again if members working

during the day to have to sit from 6 till midnight not good for clear thinking and debate. Also we run hybrid system so not cabinet or committee so does not allow backbenchers to fully engage.
Cttee system is quite effective in opening up issues for discussion and critique, however, there is a strong tendency for questions to be seen as threatening rather than genuinely directed at drawing attention to valid concerns about projects - eg The Market. Some voices are 'heard' more than others, with lower level competency rewarded.
I have easy access to meeting links and scrutiny committees.
I am a long serving councillor with executive experience and I know the ropes.
Major decisions are made by the ruling group that I am a member of so I am involved in deciding what the Council will be delivering
I don't think I influence any decisions made. I have attempted to get involved but a tiny fraction of the labour group will reply to my emails
My party is in a minority and I have to exert all my skills to get heard.
As a Councillor, officers are responsive and diligent and do find time to help on matters.
I understand the voting process, and my group offer excellent support to aid decision making in terms of understanding the context. It seems we sometimes have to work very hard to add items to a scrutiny committee agenda, and this process seems quite complicated.
I am in opposition, so I feel that I can participate in scrutiny when needed via the committee structure and with access to officers via the Opps briefings and other contact during the cycle. However, I think that we don't involve ward councillors enough in issues local to them if they are not in the ruling group so I would like more of this to be offered.

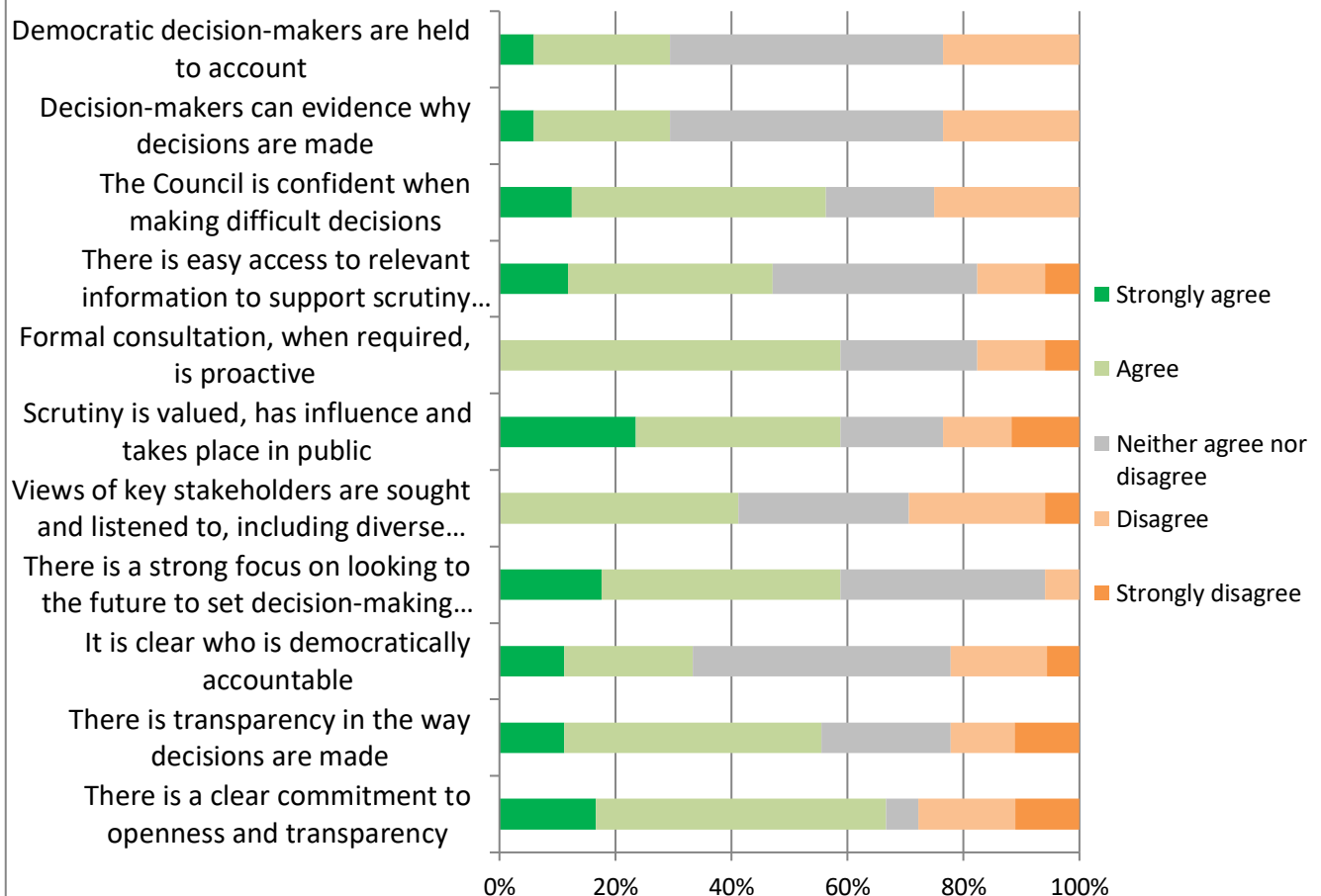


Q11: Please briefly explain why you decided on the above score.

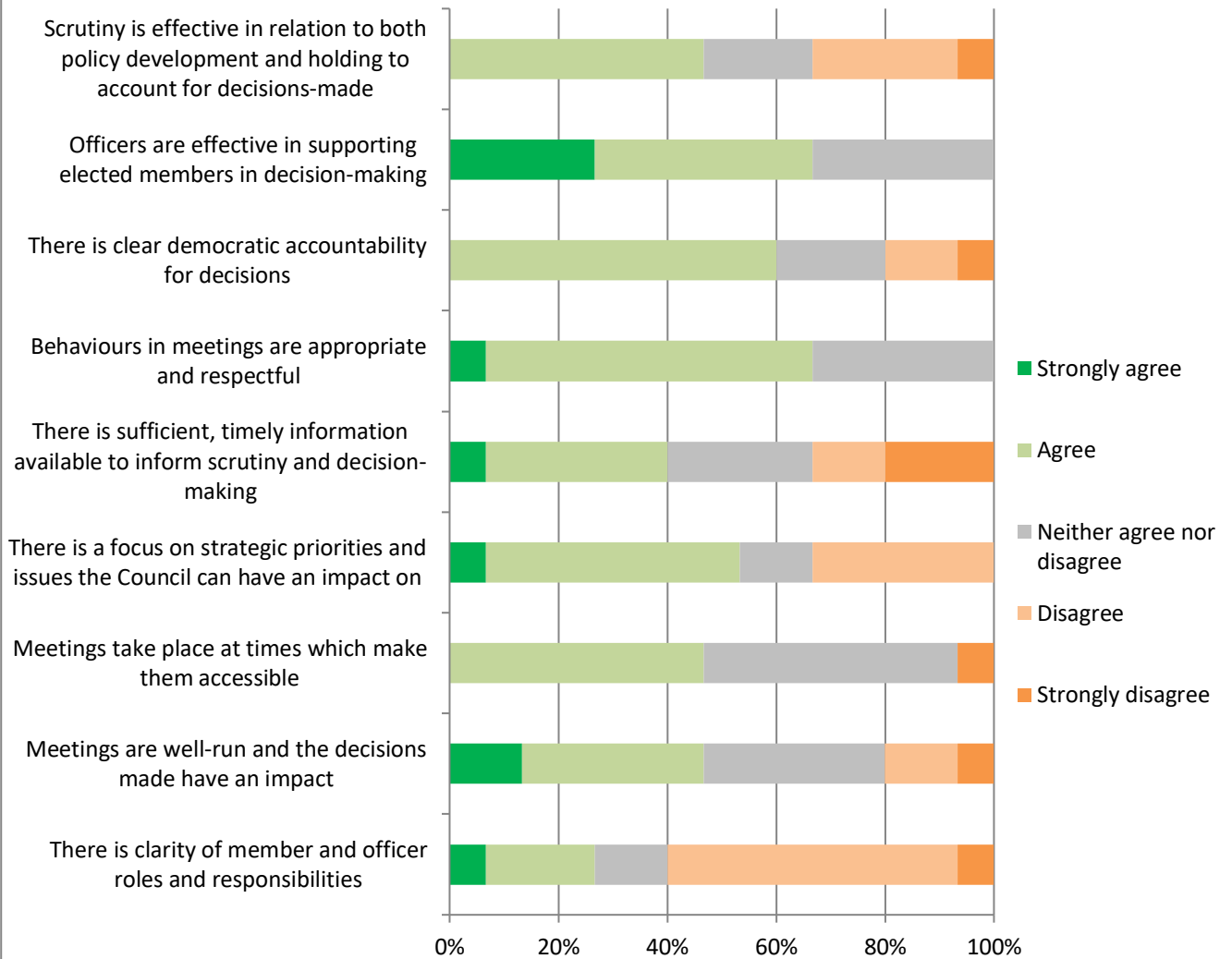
On the whole, the processes for raising concerns do exist and broadly speaking, they work reasonably well.
I have a good relationship with residents, and can bring their concerns to the right people or make suggestions on how they can come into the council and make their concerns heard.
Because I am not afraid to take my questions to the top i.e. Chief Executive if not satisfied with response from executive councillors.
Depends on which area the issue arises - that is, who is the Executive Councillor... variations in competence and capacity to listen or at least give the potential for credence to others' ideas/proposals..
I have every opportunity to raise issues.

Ward councillors are not consulted on many proposals before decisions are made.
I have good access to officers and Executive Councillors so can raise concerns in that way.
Labour councillors don't reply to my emails so it feels impossible to take a collaborative approach .
My party is in a minority and I have to exert all my skills to get heard.
I have opportunities in Committee, Council and through correspondence with officers.
I would do so via the relevant officer or in committee - often via the officers seems to achieve more of a result as in committee the question can be avoided by the Exec Cllr. Some decisions and changes happen without any sharing of the reasoning until afterwards which then makes it difficult as concerns can only be retrospective (out of hours noise service changes are an example of this).
I am not clear whether you mean local resident concerns, or concerns local to my ward. However, in either case, I have been able to raise the concerns of my residents at Area Committees and sometimes at scrutiny committee and I actively encourage them to submit questions to the public question session. However, most issues considered at scrutiny tend to be more headline and cover the whole city so it is a bit harder to raise local issues in these arenas - particularly at the moment when we are encouraged to avoid making meetings too long.

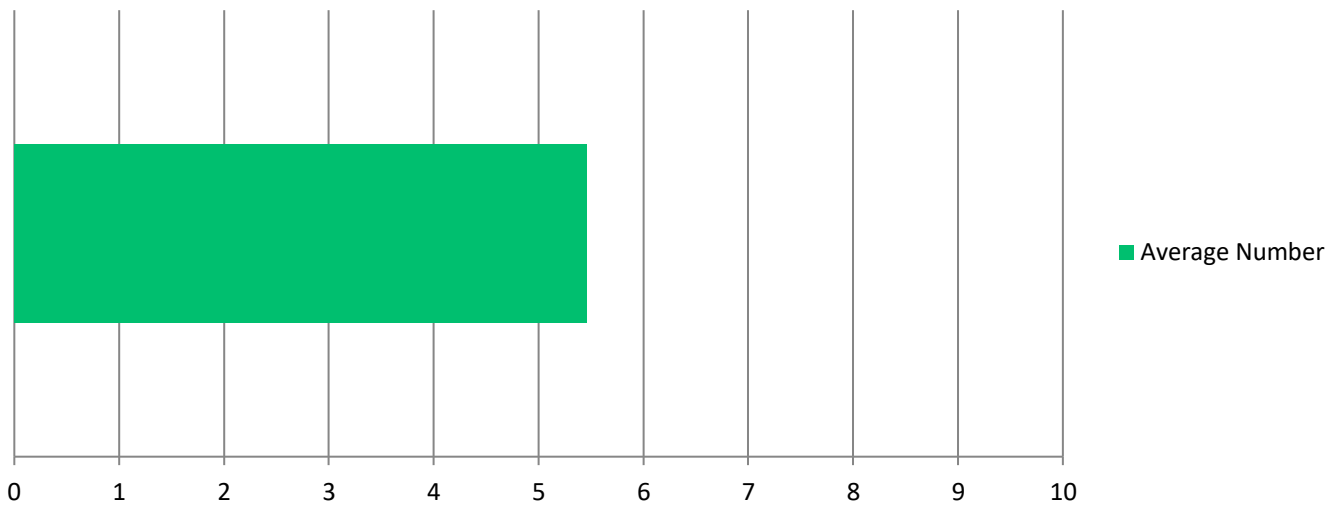
Q12: How would you describe the culture of governance in Cambridge City Council? Please rate your response to each of these statements.



Q13: How would you rate the way that decisions are currently made in Cambridge?



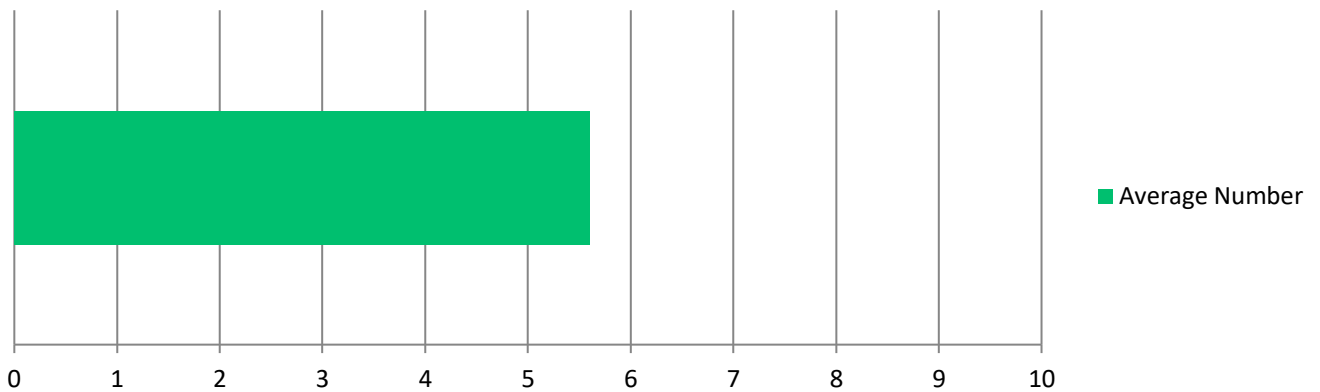
Q14: In addition to decisions being made at Scrutiny Meetings, some decisions are delegated to individual Executive Members to allow for timely decisions to be taken. In your experience how effective is the process for Executive decision making? (Please give a score between 0-10, where 0 means not good at all and 10 means excellent)



Q15: Please briefly explain why you decided on the above score.

The decision to delegate is itself something which can usually be voted upon by Labour Group and then, if appropriate, in Committee.
Making decisions without ward councillors views.
These are kept to a minimum, and this is explained at scrutiny meetings. Also the chair, vice-chair and opposition spokes get to comment on the delegated decisions
How did council operate before executive councillors and respond to emergency decisions having to be made. What happens if the executive councillor is not available? Holiday, sickness, not able to contact.
Difficult really to say as not clear when or what.
Don't always hear about decisions that are made.
The process is over-used and serves to mute transparency and public debate
Decisions aren't actually made at Scrutiny. They are made within the ruling group. Executive decisions outside of meetings do give the opposition to comment.
No insight of this.
We don't always get to hear about these and I find the executive Councillor role very opaque.
Opportunity for spokes to input is helpful; sometimes wider opportunity for ward councillors affected would be helpful.
I don't see many of these, but I know that any decision is scrutinised by Spokes for the opposition parties and then reported to scrutiny and any objections noted on the papers, which is good. I am not sure how else to do this in between meetings for urgent decisions.

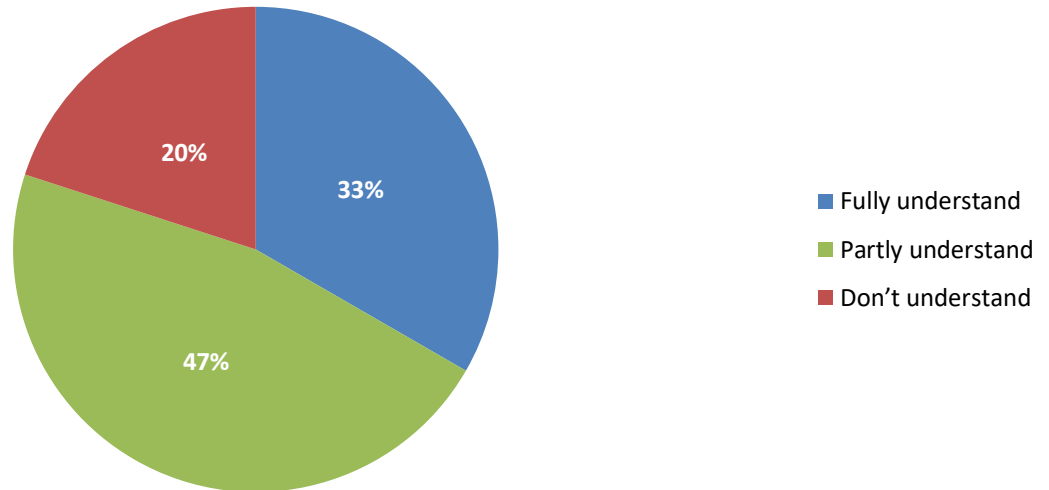
Q16: In addition to decisions made by Executive Members (collectively or individually), some decisions are delegated to officers to enable the running of council services. In your experience how effective is the process for Officer decision-making? (Please give a score between 0-10, where 0 means not good at all and 10 means excellent)



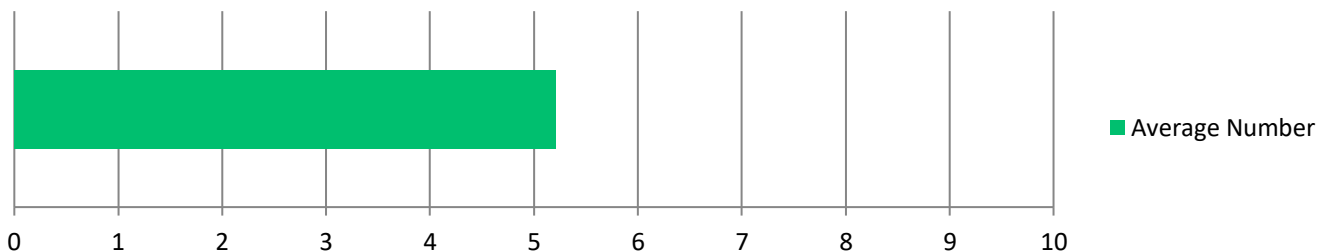
Q17: Please briefly explain why you decided on the above score.

Again, the decision to delegate is itself something which can usually be voted upon by Labour Group and then, if appropriate, in Committee.
The process is agreed in advance so it should be understood, but perhaps more reminders are needed.
Have seen instances where officers ignored decisions and advice by local councillor. Attitude towards councillors can also come across as condescending.
Some Officers are more effective than others.
It is unclear who is accountable for those decisions.
My main experience is with planning where most applications are decided by officers. I have little experience of significant decisions being made by officers.
Zero insight on this.
I am usually happy but there have been a couple of things.
Normally clear, and with steps now in process to get views from spokes.
I trust our officers and if I have a query about a decision, I have always been able to get an explanation. However, a delegated decision still needs to be backed by the Exec Cllr as ultimately they are overseeing the work and the scheme of delegation.

Q18: How would you describe your understanding of how delegated decision-making currently works?



Q19: Overall in your experience how effective are Council meetings? (Please give a score between 0-10, where 0 means not good at all and 10 means excellent)



Q20: Please briefly explain why you decided on the above score.

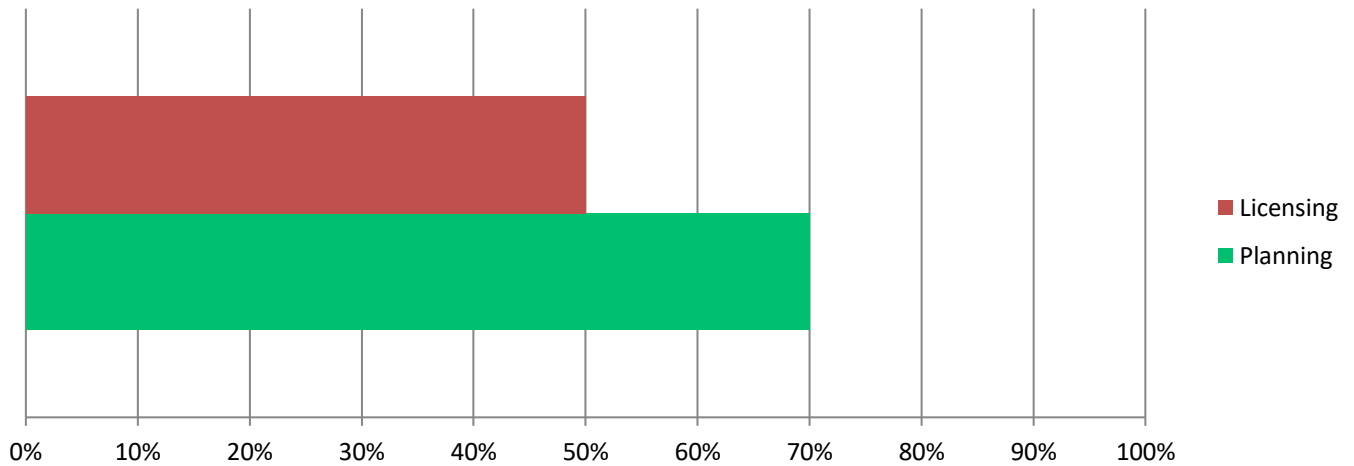
Broadly effective and mainly positive.
Its all agreed before the public meeting.
They need to focus more on real responsibilities of the council. The hours spent on motions could be far better spent.
The public seem to understand the process and come to ask questions in person or in writing. Most things are resolved. It does go on very late though
Sometimes far too much information to digest in the time allowed. Full council how effective are people who have worked all day then have to attend evening meetings, why do other councils have there meetings during the day?
Full Council definitely needs a shake up.
Too long, too many motions from opposition which is ridiculous considering their tiny numbers in comparison to majority party. Lack of consideration for councillors who work full time.
Very democratic.
Full Council meetings tend to be about political point scoring. Scrutiny Meetings are effective when there is not political advantage in raising issues

Wrecking motions are frustrating and make me feel everyone is playing politics.
Most of the interesting stuff happens in the pre meeting scrutiny. My natural bias is towards negotiation and consultation in smaller meetings rather than large set piece ones.
Decisions themselves tend to have been made by ruling group already, but there is an opportunity for press coverage and for the public to express annoyance.
It depends what you mean by effective - the full council has a different and more overtly political role than other committees and therefore it can be effective in showcasing the differences between ruling and opposition groups. The budget work we do is useful for the city and the motions we move can lead to real change. I find that scrutiny committees are more friendly and useful and whilst few amendments get accepted, the debate is a little more wide ranging and addresses some useful detail.

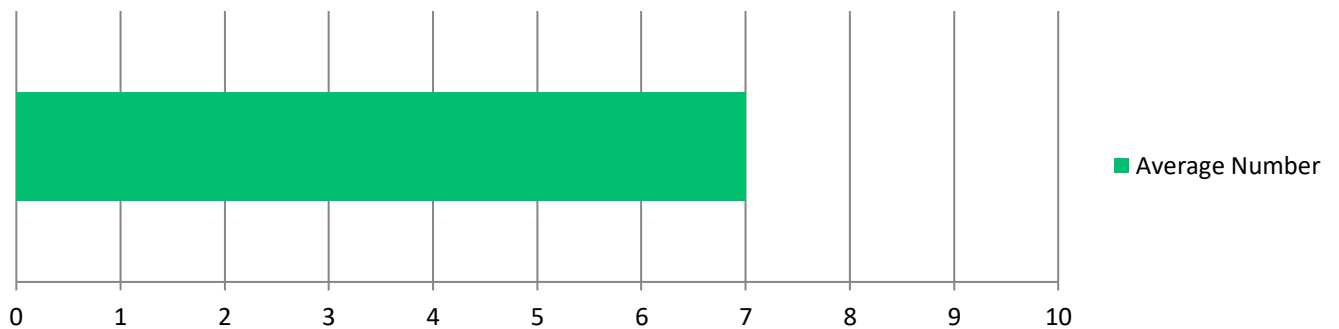
Q21: What do think works well now, and what would you like to see done differently?

Opening the windows to let air circulate has been working very well in the wake of Covid-19. Encouraging those who might feel a bit cold to put on more jumpers and cardigans is the right way forward. In the context of the Climate Emergency we have declared, let's keep the heating off wherever we can. Such considerations may seem separate from the topic of decision-making, but in fact, people will do clearer thinking if they can breathe more freely, and that really matters for the quality of our decision-making.
Back to a committee style council.
We should set up some open discussions as a full council + some wider online meetings with residents too.
Shorter meetings. More time for residents.
Committee meetings during the day. Full Council during the day. Ward meetings that would focus on what affects that individual ward rather than clumped with other wards. Scrap Area meetings, would save monies and officer time. Reopen housing offices. Scrap oral and written questions at full council as they can be done any time from councillors to councillors. Scrap Hybrid system and reinstate committee system new councillors not aware of other ways to operate council.
Executive Councillors portfolios are too large and need to be at least halved. Some are on top of their work generally but some are clearly not (my opinion) and halving the portfolios would help - would also diversify the field.
More connection between people receiving a service and those making decisions/policy (particularly on housing decisions).
Shorter reports.
Meetings work well when there is more of a cross party approach. This is typically when Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire are working together and on regulatory committees. I think there are opportunities for more cross party working through Task and Finish Groups.
I can't read amendments with one days notice to vote on them.
The pre scrutiny meetings work well.
I find full council was a very "masculine" environment with too much shouting which I think is disrespectful and can be intimidating. I hope that this is changing a bit post-covid and with a more gender balanced chamber. It can be very long, but equally, I would not want to shorten it as this curtails debate. The idea of splitting the budget one into two is a good one as this allows more engagement and people don't need to stay up all night. I wish sometimes that the ruling group did not whip so hard and just reject or amend every motion, and that instead they would listen to the debate and make changes or perhaps support a motion. I worry that officers/councillors may want to make meetings more streamlined, but actually all that would do is strip out the democracy of allowing public questions and debates on motions that are exactly what council is for and would just leave the ruling group (of whatever party) pushing through their agenda with no debate or challenge.

Q22: Do you participate in or have knowledge of operations of any of the below committees? (Tick all that apply)



Q23: How effective in your experience are the above committee(s) in the way they are run? (Please give a score between 0-10, where 0 means not good at all and 10 means excellent)



Q24: Please briefly explain why you decided on the above score.

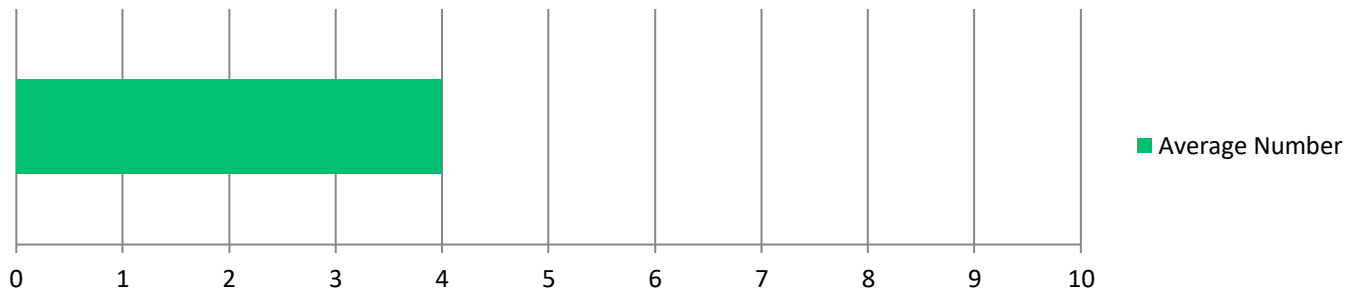
Expert chairing of both. Tenant & Leaseholder participation on Housing means we really have to win the arguments and make the case; being the ruling group does not guarantee us (Labour) a majority every time.
Understaffed, so officers don't have time to bring a full report to the meetings.
We have the best Planning Committee for years but discussions can ramble and be unstructured sometimes. Need also to be better for the audience.
Pre-meeting presentations are very useful, but perhaps could be done earlier in the planning process.
We have never been given the actual savings we have made by going to shared services and never given who as final say regards these. We have none of our own planners now as they are all

employed by S.Cambs so where is the loyalty. When based in the guildhall easy to meet up with in person and talk on local ward concerns. Takes longer to operate as there seems more chiefs than Indians.
I haven't had sufficient experience to be able to determine fairly ... only really of JDCC - here, officer advice is good and clear; I have sat in on Planning Cttee meetings supporting residents/making submissions and seemed to work okay.
Democratic decisions made and excellent officer input (we are very lucky to have such hard-working officer's).
They vary, but average score.
They work well as they tend to not to have political point scoring.
I think that the legal framework for Licencing gives us a better structure to work with and there is less political grandstanding.
I find that planning is well run, genuinely non-party political, and whilst the meetings can be long, do allow proper and rigorous scrutiny of each application. This also helps residents and applicants understand any reasons for refusal/acceptance and appreciate that due consideration has been given to their case. I know that there are huge delays in planning at the moment so I won't comment on these, but I note their impact on timescales for residents and at times, on officers perhaps not having as much time as needed to prepare papers. I have not sat on licensing for a while, but when I did, they seemed well run and councillors could challenge officers and query decisions.

Q25: What works well in relation to how the committee(s) operate now, and what would you like to see done differently?

Enable Public Questions to be made by Zoom etc. if required.
Strongly think that planning should be live streamed and recorded.
Get back our Cambridge City Planning Department. Get back our in house cctv and more detail and analysis on performance shared working.
Less formal and more plain English.
We have formal training for Planning and Licensing. We need that for Civic Affairs.
We don't have full online manuals and we really need these.
More realistic timing for planning (eg 2 hours for Majors and 1 hour for minors) and more notice of agenda items as it's a huge volume of papers to read in one week or less, particularly if members have caring responsibilities and/or work. I would also like to see more briefings prior to full committee for contentious and large schemes as these have been really helpful in sorting out queries from committee prior to the meeting and enabling us to let officers know what information we are likely to require on the day. This avoids deferrals and delays at the meeting.

Q26: How effective is your Area Committee as a way to engage local residents in Council business? (Please give a score between 0-10, where 0 means not good at all and 10 means excellent)



Q27: What works well in relation to your Area Committee works now and what would you like to see done differently?

<p>Better publicity for Area Committees might be advisable. Many constituents are still not in the habit of remembering that these opportunities are regularly there. And moreover that they, the people, are welcome. At least increase promotion for the ones at which the Police appear as guest speakers.</p> <p>And again, hybridize method-of-attendance options for the public-participation element. Allow those who are shielding or otherwise housebound to join on Zoom etc. while the less digitally confident/comfortable can still attend in RealSpace classic-styles. St Giles Church do this every Sunday. It's one dear kind person with a laptop and microphone. Maybe the City could follow St Giles.</p>
<p>Change to a single ward committee.</p>
<p>Online works much better. We need to review better ways of engaging locally e.g. ward forums to replace area committees with modest ward based budgets. And clearer council updates, ward by ward.</p>
<p>Should be hybrid meetings so people can join online. Should be more focused on what works well for residents. Could be completely overhauled after consultation with residents</p>
<p>Go to Ward meetings held during the day so local residents can pop in when it suits them. This would encourage locals to get involved. Scrap Area Committees they are expensive take to much officer time after working hours so have to pay overtime or give time in lieu compared to during the day that would not give any extra costs. Held more often and residents see action taken over there local matters.</p>
<p>Councillors who are adverse to them say only a select number of residents attend - however, this overlooks the fact that when an item on the agenda strikes a chord with residents, they turn up in droves. The one of which I am a member had between 80-100 residents attend one, and I have organised public meetings where up to that many (and sometimes more) residents have attended. If this is so, then there is no reason why Area Cttees cannot be organised to attract more residents - need more publicity, more making it clear to residents that their views are sought and will be taken on board and solutions sought.</p>
<p>Residents never turn up to them so not effective at all.</p>
<p>It is good to be able to focus on ward issues and their connectivity together.</p>
<p>Presentations good, maybe shorter , less talking for too long by councillors.</p>

Engagement is good when there are major issues but poor on most occasions. They are not well publicised and perhaps they need to be more localised and with more ability of residents to contribute.
Agenda to be set more by residents - there are lots of questions - can we bring officers along who relate to these areas to discuss policy with residents and councillors all together .
I like that it is online because we can persuade residents to come sometimes. I think that it would be better if some of our area committee meetings were with the other wards we most resemble rather than our more affluent neighbours.
The online format has allowed more residents to participate and I would strongly encourage this to continue even if councillors meet in person in future (eg allowing people to join remotely). I have been actively encouraging residents to submit questions as we also have the police there and County cllrs so it is a good (and rare) change to look more holistically at the area covered. However, we do need to do more to get more residents to come along or watch as they are still not very well attended.

Q28: Are you aware of any good practice elsewhere that you think could be applied in Cambridge City Council? If so please tell us here.

We should maybe think about Casework software? For example, eCasework: https://ecasework.com/ More generally, dependence upon proprietary software applications by Government, Local Government, and all arms of Government is problematic. Open source products should be sourced wherever possible. There ought to be a presumption in favour of these. Helpful article here: https://www.itproportal.com/features/the-future-of-local-government-must-be-open-source/
Change back to a committee run council like other councils have, it's more democratic.
Better website. Better communications - Cambridge Matters seems to be the best way residents get information, so more resources should go into communications. Some great officers who should get more recognition - perhaps an annual Mayors award?
Note the county have moved from cabinet back to committee so they must see the benefits of the committee system in getting more members involved. They also hold Full Council during the day again when held at night we have to pay extra officer time or give time in lieu were as during the day they are already there and no extra cost.
The hybrid approach does not benefit from nationally provided training. I am supportive of the cabinet model where there is strong accountability by individuals. This then allows other members to be involved in task and finish groups to address issues.
I find being a councillor incredibly demoralising and stressful. I really struggle to read scrutiny documents in the one week you're given. It would be ideal if some reports could come out earlier or they could be staggered. I would like to work collaboratively with executive councillors but as there is a majority there doesn't seem any interest in this. I wouldn't recommend being a councillor to anyone with a full time job if someone asked me about it.
We need to regulate ourselves better and cut down on the playground games and grand standing.
I have not been elected elsewhere so it is hard to say. However, from a staff point of view, reverse mentoring (where a senior staff member is mentored by someone more junior, or someone with a protected characteristic) is something that I would support to help make our council more diverse. And as I have mentioned earlier, I feel strongly that Exec Cllrs and managers should look after the staff and defend decisions made rather than let officers take the flak for a political or management decision.

Q29: Finally, please select your role(s) within the authority (tick all that apply):

