Local Democratic Engagement in Cambridge

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1. Project overview and summary recommendations
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3. Possible functions of local democratic forums
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Project Overview
and
Summary Conclusions

Project Overview: Local Democratic Engagement in Cambridge

Project objectives:

- <u>Support reflection</u> on existing local democratic arrangements and consider future options for Cambridge

- <u>Share insight and good practice</u> from elsewhere

Project Activities

1. Research on key relevant local policies and national good practice
2. 10 interviews:
   - 5 x Officers
   - 6 x Councillors (Labour, Lib Dem, Green)
   - 4 VCS / resident representatives
3. Mapped potential priorities & functions
4. Selected contrasting good practice from around the country
5. Presentation to Governance Reference Group to inform final report
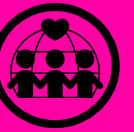6. Preparation of recommendations and implementation options

Summary Conclusions

- Across 10 interviews, diverse stakeholders reflected on the strengths and weaknesses of Area Committees. While the importance of visible opportunities for councillors to meet with residents and play an active role in the community was strongly reaffirmed, there was wide agreement that the format was not working effectively.

- Interviews suggest that there is a wide range of potential desirable objectives for any new activities. We recommend that the objectives of any activity are well-focused and explicit to ensure that they meet resident expectations.

- Our research suggests that experiences in Cambridge are consistent with wider trends in both council area-working structures, and democratic engagement in general.

- Councils are broadly responding in one of two ways: re-committing to traditional structures with specific innovations to tackle the problems, or moving to more flexible activities distributed across different levels of council working.

- Based on the interviews we conducted and the preferences of the Governance Reference Group, we recommend the latter approach. In-depth recommendations are presented on the next slide, along with a potential formats for implementation (end of report).
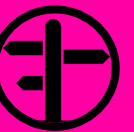
Recommendations

1. Take a "portfolio approach" to member-resident engagement rather than returning to the Area Committee structure. This will allow limited resources to be focused on those functions which are currently missing and/or higher impact. This will require that the (already wide) range of opportunities for engagement and for meeting other objectives are clearly signposted to both members and residents.

2. Any new activities should explicitly prioritise **open-ended resident voice and relationship-building in dynamic, informal settings** (in contrast to consultation on specific council activities). This will also encourage a spirit of early consultation and input. Given diverse community preferences, these functions are likely to lend themselves more to a series of decentralised activities. This is likely to require a degree of experimentation and ongoing review. Members might benefit from additional training and support to execute this role.

3. Wherever possible, additional member-resident engagement activities should build on **existing community-led structures and activities**. Where possible, **community-led activities should be proactively supported** to support this kind of engagement.

4. As part of the review of the wider engagement portfolio, consider opportunities to increase / better signpost the **number and impact of opportunities for residents to meaningfully influence decision-making,** noting existing successful examples in Cambridge (e.g. Tenant Residents' Group).

5. In particular, consider the opportunity of the grants review to explore **participatory budgeting,** given the strong stated resident interest, tangibility of impact, clear link to the principle of resident-voice, and positive track record in other places.

Context: National Trends

Wider National Context: Recent Trends

Our interviews in Cambridge and wider work across the country suggest that several national trends are also relevant in Cambridge. They provide useful context to understand both the status quo and choices about the way forward.

Diversification of info & engagement mechanisms

There is rapid **proliferation of how communities receive information** (e.g. offline / online), coupled with a **decline in the reach of mainstream media** resulting in fewer shared sources of information.

There is **diversification of communities' abilities, preferences and habits** in engaging with authorities and each other.

Wider democratic challenges

National / international trends are often also undermining local working (polarisation over specific issues; misinformation e.g. about council schemes; general institutional distrust).

NB: Local government remains more trusted than national government

Covid effect

The **impact of the pandemic** is still evolving, but seems to be affecting trends in engagement: e.g. proliferation of informal activity; some traditional engagement routes apparently struggling (e.g. formal volunteering).

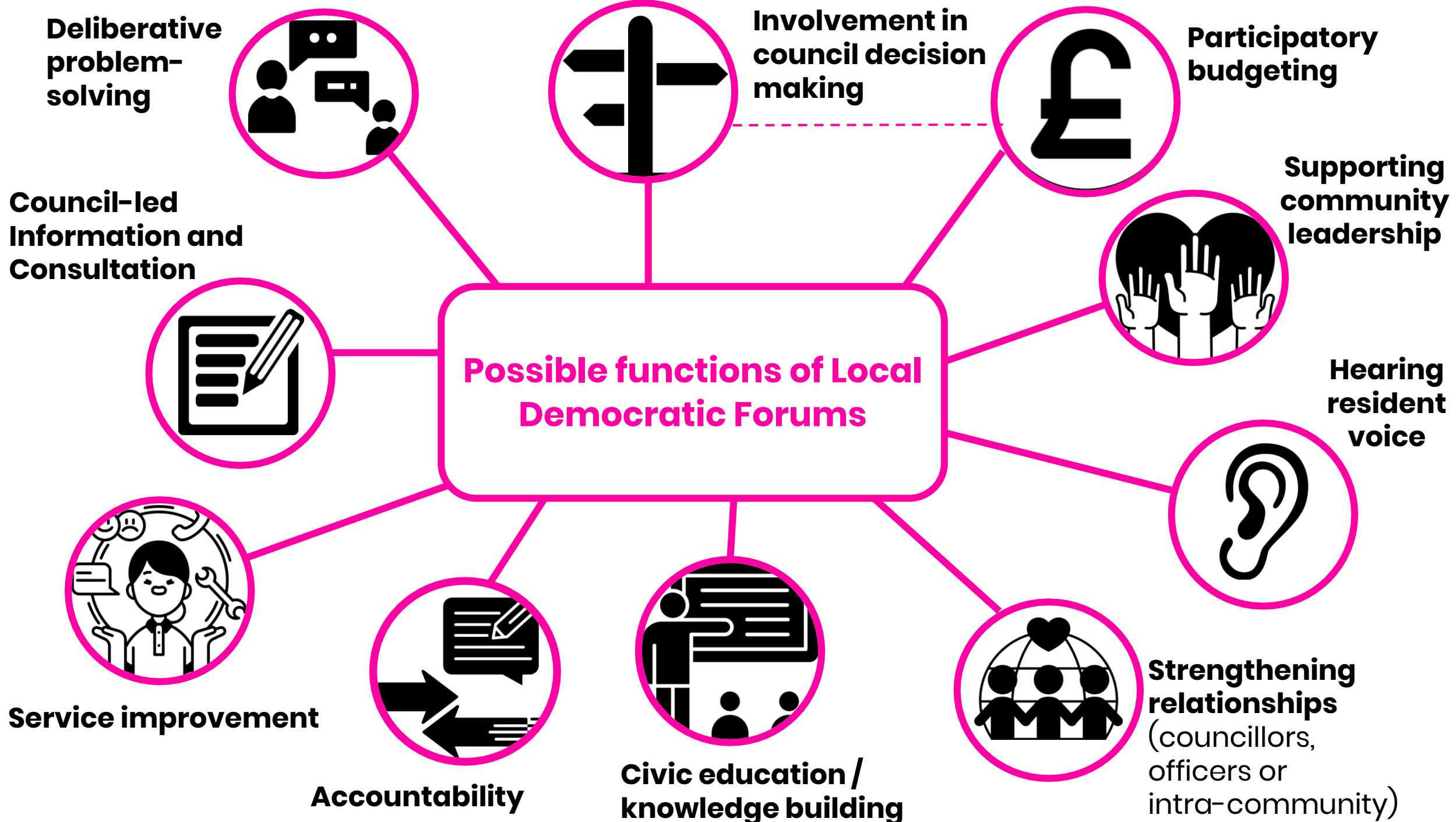## Diverging choices for councils

In response to both these trends and local circumstances, we see diverging responses:

- **Some councils abandoning traditional local coordination structures** in favour of cross-area, community-driven activities;

- **Some re-committing** by improving traditional models with additional resources / new methods

Possible Functions of Local Democratic Forums

Developing a clear focus

- Local democratic forums can be used to achieve a **very wide range of objectives** – overleaf are those which came up as desirable in Cambridge.

- While several of these are interlinked and mutually reinforcing, it's **very difficult to achieve all objectives to a high quality** without significant complexity and resource investment.

- Having clear and publicly shared objectives will ensure that residents, officers and members have **shared expectations** about what their involvement will and won't achieve. This is important to building trust for any additional activities.

- We therefore **recommend being explicit about the purpose** of different activities, while signposting to other opportunities and activities across the council. This will allow residents to make informed and meaningful choices about where and how they engage.

Possible functions of Local Democratic Forums

- Deliberative problem-solving
- Involvement in council decision making
- Participatory budgeting
- Council-led Information and Consultation
- Supporting community leadership
- Hearing resident voice
- Service improvement
- Accountability
- Civic education / knowledge building
- Strengthening relationships (councillors, officers or intra-community)

Reporting Back on Interviews

Summary of Interview Outcomes

1. **Current format not working:** There was strong consensus that Area Committees have not been functioning as an effective democratic engagement mechanism, or a good use of time /resources. While many interviewees were appreciative of the original intent, common problems have included poor, unrepresentative attendance, an unclear / mismatched remit, and an unengaging format.

2. **Successful engagement elsewhere:** There was awareness and appreciation of a wide range of other successful community engagement activity, including council-led, community-led and partnerships between the two.

3. **Ambitions for the future – Function:** The top stated objectives for any new activities were
   - Hearing resident voices more widely / openly
   - Strengthening of relationships
   - Participatory budgeting (if possible)

4. **Ambitions for the future – Format:** Top stated priorities for the format for any new activities were:
   - Informal / dynamic
   - Inclusive
   - Coordinated with existing (community) activity

Experiences of Area Committees: Appreciation & Bright Spots

Appreciation of Key Elements / Intent

- Good to listen to & **build relationships** with councillors / officers / residents in person

- Good to **involve residents in decision-making**

- Useful opportunity for **officer-councillor working**

When it worked….

- **Contentious issues** drove high attendance

- Some success when focused on **planning**

- **Experimentations** with format (North Area pilot 2011/2012)

Experiences of Area Committees: Challenges

Lack of clear & compelling purpose

- Unclear what the purpose was, and who the committee was supposed to be useful for
- "Talking shop"; no meaningful ability to hold power to account (particularly after transition online)

Experiences often neutral / negative

- Felt bureaucratic and uninspiring
- Discussion often dominated by concerns that didn't motivate wider audience
- For some: Felt like a political platform for attending councillors

Attendance: Limited and unrepresentative

- Attendance overall was often very poor
- Of those attending, poorly representative of wider Cambridge population
- Limited awareness in wider community; poorly advertised

Mismatched remit

- Geographic remit not matching resident experiences of issues – often not relevant
- Mismatched expectations because of confusion re levels of government

Issues with format

- Generated significant officer workload for little obvious effect
- Timing inconvenient for many

What Activities, Channels and Groups *Are* Succeeding in Securing Engagement from Cambridge Communities?

Council-led

- Tenant Panel
- Growth Community Forums
- Environmental Improvement Programme
- Community engagement team activities: volunteering; litter-picking / community clean-up days
- Pop-up consultations e.g. housing redevelopment
- Ward walkabouts
- Some individual councillor engagement

Collaborations

- Food Poverty Alliance
- Piggy-backing / bolting on to existing activities e.g. food-hub & warm-hub connection
- Pop-ups: Ukraine, cost-of-living.
- Community groups Whatsapp group
- Fairs & events e.g. volunteer fair.

Community-led

- Residents' Associations (variable)
- Community groups e.g. Abbey People, Queen Edith's Forum
- Mobilisation around one-off concerns
  - But doesn't sustain
- Civic education classes
- Faith groups

Aspirations for the Future: Function

Leading priorities

Clarity of objective
Considered important regardless of what it is

Resident voice (on their own terms) being heard by councillors and officers

Participatory budgeting

Strengthening relationships (particularly councillors, also officers)

Several mentions

Involvement in council decision making

Early-stage consultation & input into council decisions

Also mentioned

Civic education / knowledge building

Deliberative problem-solving

Service improvement

Aspirations for the Future: Form

Leading priorities

Informality / Dynamism

Inclusivity

Piggy-backing / coordinated with existing activities

Several mentions

Agenda set by residents

In-person

Welcoming setting

Agenda, advertising, follow-up

Hyper-local

Also mentioned

"Managing out the politics"

Also online

Managing expectations

Balance of council sharing info & reacting to info

Key tension: Routine & regular vs. occasional

Existing Engagement Activity

- There is already a **wide range of existing council-led engagement activity** occurring (see next slide). Coordinating well with existing activities / giving members the opportunity to engage in these activities will both allow an efficient use of resources / minimise duplication and streamline residents' ability to engage effectively.

- A sample of potential **existing activities to further strengthen / align with is** shown below.

Aspirations

Existing Activity / Opportunities

Voice and decision-making

- *Grant programme review*
- *Residents' Panel on Housing Scrutiny*
- *Growth Community Forums*

Using existing opportunities & networks

- *Youth Assembly*
- *VCS whatsapp*

Accessible & inclusive formats

- *Abbey Ward Pilot*
- *Appreciative Enquiry*

Community Engagement WhatsApp group

New Community Steering groups

Petition Scheme

Community Centre User Groups

Development Control Forum

Online consultations and engagement

Greater Cambridge Youth Engagement Service

Youth Advisory Board

Formal Committee meetings

Tenant reps meeting

Tenants' survey

Leaseholder Forum

Ward Walk-abouts

Network Lunches

Existing Council-led Engagement Activity

Residents Panel

Community Clean Up Days

Growth Community Forums

Housing Scrutiny Committee elections

Volunteer recruitment and training support

Residents meetings

Ward Walk-abouts

Community Right to Bid

Grants

Appreciative Enquiry

Resident association Grants

Resident inspectors meeting

Community Safety Partnership

Governance Reference Group Discussion Notes

Headline notes from Governance Reference Group Meeting 15/4/2024

- The group shared their own experiences of **challenges** of Local Area Committees, and agreed that the format wasn't working effectively

- The group agreed with wider interviewees that **hearing resident voices** on their own terms, and hearing from a **wider cross-section of people**, should be a priority of the revised arrangements

- It was noted that it's important to allow for **significant diversity between and within wards** – uniform arrangements are unlikely to be successful

- It was noted that there was a **particular benefit to reinstating some form of in-person contact** / opportunity for relationship-building, while noting that some residents prefer / require online opportunities.

- It was acknowledged that any arrangements should be **consistent with / complementary** to the Council's wider ambitions around **community power, community wealth building and revised governance arrangements**

- The group therefore encouraged the **exploration of more innovative models** from around the country to meet specific Cambridge circumstances.

Learning from Elsewhere

Contents:
- Different approaches to consider
- 3x Thematic Spotlights
- 5x Geographic Deep Dives

Scope / Footprint of Engagement Activities

Councils' engagement activities – whether member or officer-led - might be organised around a range of potential scopes / footprints. The examples we include consider a range of options.

Council-wide activities / programme

Scope

Responsive to community issues & identities

Around administrative boundaries e.g. wards

e.g. Cam Area Committees

Three Categories of Case Studies

There are 2 broad approaches to structuring democratic engagement arrangements: those councils continuing with / deepening their locality-focused structures around administrative boundaries, and those taking a more mixed portfolio approach (separate functions are distributed across different footprints i.e. ward-level; issue/ community-specific; council-wide). There are also councils experimenting with novel engagement formats in general, although these are not always focused on regular councillor activities. As requested, we have focused research on portfolio approaches and innovative formats (including one innovative locality-focused option).

Iterations on locality-focused structures
1x Deep Dive (DD)

- Durham
- Stevenage
- Bolton (DD)
- Sheffield

Portfolio approach
4x Deep Dive (DD)

- Oxford (DD)
- Barking & Dagenham (DD)
- Test Valley (DD)
- Norwich
- Adur & Worthing (DD)

Innovating away from traditional formats
3 x Thematic spotlights

- Hearing Resident Voices
- Engagement via Partnerships
- Engaging Formats

Pros: Easy-to-understand; lend themselves to some formal decision-making.
Cons: Common problems with attendance & inclusivity; often resource-intensive to do well.

Pros: Offers greater flexibility to appropriately engage with diverse issues and communities
Cons: Greater complexity; some residents prefer traditional format

Pros: Novel formats are showing early success in improving inclusion and engagement
**Cons:** Approaches are emergent and require more development / adjustment

Spotlight on: Hearing Resident Voice

NEW LOCAL

Southwark

- Proactive outreach in a specific neighbourhood to build social capital, connection and problem-solving capacity around specific issue (food inequality), with target of speaking to 80% of the neighbourhood
- Mixed stakeholder working groups hosted seven mass engagement events and on-street 1:1 conversations.

Useful links:
- [Case Study](#)
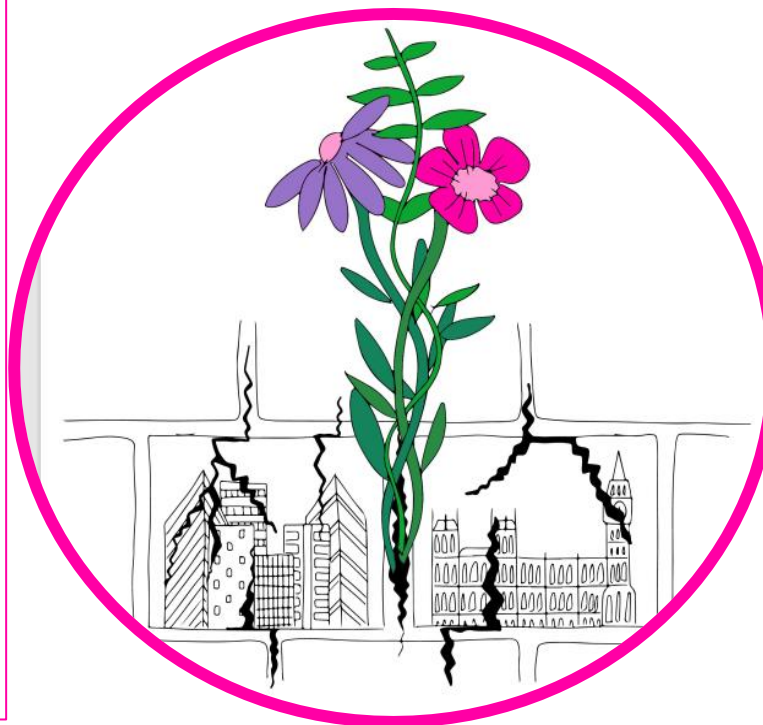
Wakefield

- Wakefield Council had a Big Conversation with residents, training 100 'conversationalists' (including councillors and officers) to have over 1,300 face-to-face conversations with people across the district to find out what they like about their area and what would make things better.

Useful links:
- [Case Study](#)

Worthing

- Emergent approach, rooted in becoming a listening 'council for the community'.
- Kicked off via new participation activities including a "Big Listen" campaign to understand how to deliver this agenda, with teams (including councillors) popping up around the town with big red deck chairs.

- **Useful Links:** [The Big Listen](#); *(Also features in Deep Dive)*

Spotlight on: Engagement Via Partnerships


NEW LOCAL

Barking and Dagenham

Several cross-borough initiatives heavily focused on mobilising and partnering with community groups, through which programmes are delivered. Councillor role in building and maintaining key relationships:

- Citizens' Alliance Network to coordinate resident voice and action at neighbourhood level
- BD Collective to foster VCSE network & collaboration

(Also features in Deep Dive)
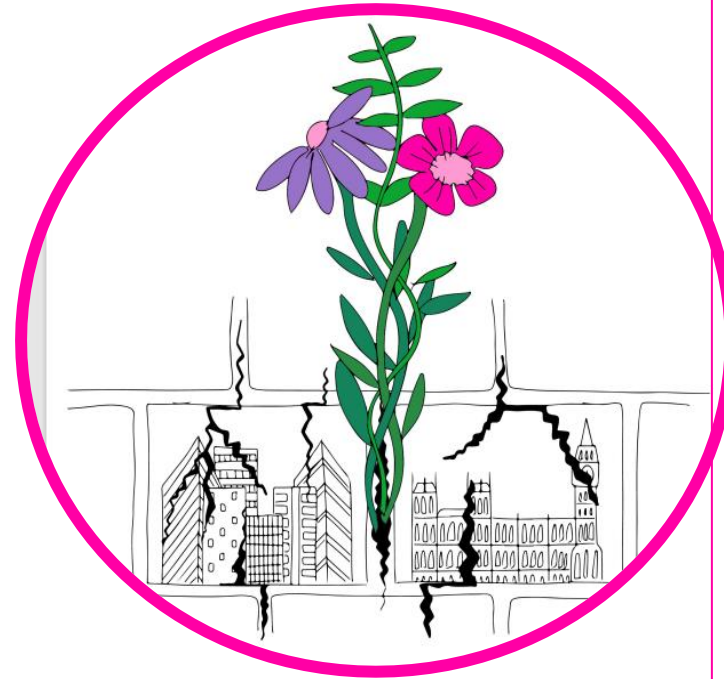
Test Valley (Romsey)

- Members are supported by officers to engage in rolling meetings with local groups and residents, with a particular focus on the role of the "community councillor"
- To tackle a contentious town centre development process, Test Valley ran a Citizens' Assembly to build a vision from a deliberative, citizen-led starting point. The Assembly provided the starting point for a wider partnership to support ongoing collaborative working

Useful links:

- Romsey Future & Podcast

(Also features in Deep Dive)

Bolton

- New approach in development creating informal networks of local residents, voluntary groups and businesses (also seen as a replacement for area forums).
- Supporting residents to connect better with each other and build on existing approaches.

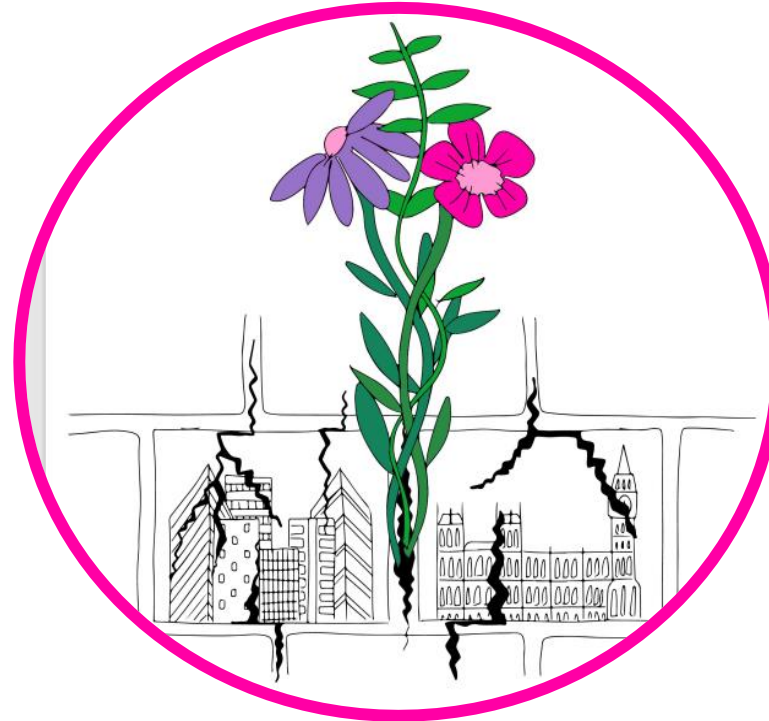- **Useful links:** Community Alliances; *(Also features in Deep Dive)*

Spotlight on: Engaging Formats

Hounslow

- Hounslow Council is running a Citizens' Jury to explore how residents can get more involved in council decision-making

Useful links:

- [Citizens' Jury](#)

World Café Method

- A method making use of an informal cafe setting for participants to explore an issue by discussing it in small table groups.

Useful links:

- [World Café](#)

Manchester

- Greater Manchester Combined Authority co-created the Greater Manchester Homelessness Prevention Strategy via a "Legislative Theatre" approach
- 35 residents came together to create original plays based on their experiences of homelessness services. These plays, performed to decision-makers were used to explore and drive decision-making.

Useful links:

- [Case Study](#)

Surrey

- Surrey County Council wanted to better engage residents they didn't normally hear from. They ran an event series called "Let's Talk Surrey", focused on creating safe spaces for residents to talk to the council in an engaging and innovative way.
- One particularly successful activity involved an "escape room" consultation, which reached young people who had not previously been engaged.

Useful links: [Case Study](#)

NEW LOCAL

Deep Dive: Test Valley

Overview: Portfolio approach which prioritises building members' role as "community councillor", and investing ad hoc in specific in-depth engagement and deliberative processes when needed; no formal neighbourhood forums

Where, when, what:
- In order to maximise the democratic involvement of all councillors, the council outlines distinct functions according to role (i.e. executive / backbencher), with an explicit development of the "community councillor" as a key part of the council's approach
- Community Development Team supports councillors to build relationships and meet informally with a wide range of residents and groups around particular local priorities
- Training for councillors in how to play this role well, with ongoing support from officers to focus their energies on key issues, and how to navigate to particular parts of the council
- A cross-party group with leadership representation works together on an ongoing basis to continue to build and develop the role of councillors in council working
- Occasional heavy investment in both engagement processes (e.g. around council plan) and deliberative decision-making processes (e.g. around development). Resource: Podcast

Strengths & limitations:
- ✓ Agile, flexible approach enables engagement with a wide range of residents, while limiting constraints posed by bureaucratic structures
- ✓ Balances investment in localised relationships with the ability to invest more significant resources into structured issue- or community-specific activities when needed
- ~ No formal regular space for localised decision-making
- ~ Relies on individual councillors to engage positively with the approach

Impact
- The team credit the approach with improving the democratic legitimacy of the councillors' roles in the eyes of residents

Role of councillors:
- Meeting informally with residents / groups as needed, in response to the needs and circumstances of their ward; supported by Community Development Team in identifying contacts and issues
- Councillors have small discretionary budget for distribution in ward, associated with wider dialogue / work with CDT
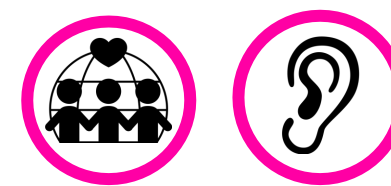
Resourcing:
- Community Development Team of c. 8-10 with some level of local focus
- Small budgets (low £000s) for individual councillors

Governance and control:
- No formal decision-making power via local structures
- Significant use of deliberative processes for other key decisions

Deep Dive: Oxford

Overview: Portfolio approach to engagement (i.e. some local, some issue-specific, some council-wide) with local focus via 4 Quadrants

Where, when, what:
- *Ward-level:* Traditional case work; Ward level budgets available to councillors
- *Quadrant-level:* Officer-led Locality teams x 4 working on coordinating local Thriving Communities work with focus on tackling inequalities, including signposting and coordinating partners to provide support; officers support councillor engagement in a locally tailored way; officers support access to centralised grants programme; Fortnightly learning sessions with guest speakers.
- *Cross-council / issue-based:* Several issue-specific partnerships e.g. health and wellbeing partnerships, youth partnerships operating across whatever footprint makes sense to that issue; Some specific engagement projects e.g. Community Champions programme (focused on health, based in anchor organisations and driving community-led approaches - DLUHC funded); Barton Health New Town (NHS funded); Community Insight Profile grants to support community-led activity,

Strengths & limitations:
- ✓ Quadrants are based on recognisable community identities rather than administrative boundaries; creates structure for a range of council activities
- ~ Officer resource can be spread quite thin; dependent on individual councillor engagement & responsiveness

Impact & insights
- Portfolio / Quadrant approach allows council to target resources to particularly needed issues / communities, while taking advantage of the benefits of some locality-based working for all areas

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Role of councillors:
- Work with Quadrant Manager to build relevant local relationships and identify / respond to local needs
- Small budget available for localised expenditure

Resourcing:
- 4 Quadrant Managers with senior coordinating responsibility, matrix management approach to incorporating both community development team and colleagues from other services – c. 10-12 people in each wider Quadrant team
- Ward budgets: (£1000/councillor + top-ups where available from the Community Infrastructure Levy)

Governance and control:
- No formalised local decision-making structure

Deep Dive: Barking and Dagenham

Overview: Portfolio approach with particular focus on supporting community leadership & community networks; *some* light-touch neighbourhood focus.

Where, when, what: Range of activities operating over different footprints.
- Citizens' Alliance Network to coordinate resident voice and action at neighbourhood level x7; online collation of opportunities / activities; also acts as consultation hub
- BD Collective "network of networks" to foster VCSE collaboration in order to work with council on Borough Manifesto aims; run by external partner via tendered contract
- Participatory grant-making via NCIL , allowing residents to direct resources to community groups (£300k/year; outreach via sortition; aims to connect resources from from regeneration to activities where residents have voice / experience tangible benefit)
- CAN DO Fund: £250 grants to support community-led events to bring people together
- Some issues/community specific projects (with resources) e.g. Your Estate Your Call to generate community-led ideas for funded improvements; voted on by community

Strengths & limitations:
- ✓ Broad range of opportunities for residents to get involved supports diverse participation
- ✓ Strong relationships with VCS community underpins other activities
- ✓ Participatory budgeting is well established and involves a high degree of resident voice
- ~ Elements of approach have not been sustainable financially e.g. Participatory City
- ~ Neighbourhood level activity limited to online coordination
- ~ The iterative process meant that some projects were undermined by newer ones

Impact
- Culture of participation core to council's way of operating
- The team credit the approach with enabling their quick and effective covid response, as community networks were already engaged and mobilised
- Once people engage via NCIL, they tend to go on to other engagement opportunities

Role of councillors:
- No formal, regular LAC-type structure
- Particular focus on councillors playing stronger relationship-building role and supporting participatory processes
- During key projects (e.g. Borough Manifesto) councillors drop into key community venues / activities in order to seek input

Resourcing:
- Citizens' Alliance Network has officer team of 2
- BD Collective core £100k/year contract; 2FTE
- NCIL is key to delivering the participatory budgeting activity

Governance and control:
- Variable by activity as outlined

Deep Dive: Bolton

Overview: "**Community Alliance** model – innovation on traditional locality structure – Informal network of local residents, voluntary groups and businesses

Where, when, what:
- Recent move away from Area Forums, new approach called "Community Alliances" currently being rolled out, with initial activity in 7 areas
- Significant focus on communities leading activities according to their own preferences about issues tackled, and format, frequency and location of activities
- Officers support the Alliances by making connections between groups and people to collectively tackle local issues. Their aim is to discover individuals and groups who might want to be involved, connect them to each other and support them to mobilise themselves to deliver solutions.

Rationale:
- Build on existing locality-focused structures and identities, but move towards a more flexible, community-leadership focused approach within those activities

Strengths & limitations:
- ✓ Highly responsive to community preferences
- ~ Risk of approach preferencing communities with greater existing social capital and resources; equitable access likely to require proactive and ongoing community development activity via the Area Working Coordinator

Impact & insights
- Approach still being rolled out

Role of councillors:
- Supported by Area Working Coordinator to play an active role in the Community Alliances
- *NB: Still emergent*

Resourcing:
- 5 x Area Working Coordinators, each with responsibility for 4 wards
- £15,000 per wards, of which £7,500 per ward to be allocated to community group projects to generate and increase social action for the benefit of residents in the ward

Governance and control:
- No formal governance structures or decision-making responsibility

Deep Dive: Adur & Worthing

Overview: Portfolio approach with particular focus on listening and community participation; investing ad hoc in specific in-depth engagement processes when needed; no formal neighbourhood forums

Where, when, what:
NB: Some similarities with Test Valley approach; here spotlighting distinct elements
- Ongoing experimentation being used to develop approaches
- Kicked off via town-wide The Big Listen
- Localised projects: Use of a participatory process to build consensus around the future of Lancing; Start of the process was members identifying key data points (e.g. about economy; data points used to open up wider conversations with wider groups; members and community groups then reflected on these stories to identify priorities for the future.
- Similar approach taken to project where community was frustrated about development delay; members supported a process to overcome delays by bringing together developers and community to co-design development

Rationale:
- Key principle to "make the place the client" with cross-party action to engage community

Strengths & limitations:
- ✓ Experimentation with new formats in small areas then builds competence and confidence
- ~ No formal regular space for localised decision-making

Impact & insights
- Approach still in development but indicating early successes in building new and effective councillor roles

Role of councillors:
- Supporting and convening engagement activities as "learning spaces"
- "Community connectors", connecting residents to council projects, and to each other

Resourcing:
- Officer resourcing not known
- Local funding as below

Governance and control:
- As determined by requirements of projects
- NCIL Fund distributed via panels where members and community representatives engage on equal footing; distributed via "CIL areas" or clusters of wards

Recommendations & Implementation Options

Recommendations

The following 5 recommendations respond to the shared priority that councillors play an active, visible and effective role in supporting Cambridge's diverse communities to engage with the issues, changes and choices which affect their lives and the city's future.

1. Take a "portfolio approach" to member-resident engagement rather than returning to the Area Committee structure. This will allow limited resources to be focused on those functions which are currently missing and/or higher impact. This will require that the (already wide) range of opportunities for engagement and for meeting other objectives are clearly signposted to both members and residents.
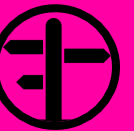
2. New activities should explicitly prioritise **open-ended resident voice and relationship-building in dynamic, informal settings** (in contrast to consultation on specific council activities). This will also encourage a spirit of early consultation and input. Given diverse community preferences, these functions are likely to lend themselves more to a series of decentralised activities. This is likely to require a degree of experimentation and ongoing review. Members might benefit from additional training and support to execute this role.

Recommendations

3. Wherever possible, additional member-resident engagement activities should build on **existing community-led structures and activities**. Where possible, **community-led activities should be proactively supported** to support this kind of engagement.

4. As part of the review of the wider engagement portfolio, consider opportunities to increase / better signpost the **number and impact of opportunities for residents to meaningfully influence decision-making,** noting existing successful examples in Cambridge (e.g. Tenant Residents' Group).

5. In particular, consider the opportunity of the grants review to explore **participatory budgeting,** given
the strong stated resident interest, tangibility of impact, clear link to the principle of resident-voice, and
positive track record in other places.

Key Questions to Consider Regarding Implementation

- What are the **priorities** for practical implementation?

- What **resources** are available to implement the different elements of these recommendations?

- What **additional training and support** might be required for councillors and/or officers to focus on these priorities? How can an innovative, decentralised approach be **best supported**?

- How can **existing activities and opportunities** be better signposted or amplified, both to councillors and residents?

Illustrative Implementation Options: Core Activities

Responsive: Issue / Community-Specific Engagement & Decision-making opportunities

Bespoke activities according to specific community need / challenge / opportunity e.g. Shaping Abbey Pilot, Tenants' Resident Group

Anchor Activity: Annual Event – The Local Listen

- Informal & fluid drop-in event
- Ward / Area Committee boundaries depending on resource
- Focus: Build relationships; encourage questions; hear resident voice; promote engagement opportunities.

Ongoing Satellite Meetings Via Community Organisations

- Format flexible according to needs of group
- Light-touch conversations focused on establishing regular agenda-free dialogue
- Flexes up / down according to Member capacity
- Officer support to set-up / coordinate meetings

Optional: Cross-City Participatory Budgeting

- Can include ward level focuses set via Local Listens / Satellite Events

Illustrative Implementation Options: Training and Support

New Resource for Councillors: Resident Engagement Guide

- Outline of different activities
- Articulation of approaches (including light-touch skills building)
- Key methods and templates for activities
- Signposting of other resident engagement & support opportunities

Training & Support

- Opportunity for councillor training in engagement & listening
- Engagement Innovation Group: Action Learning Set (or similar) for engaged councillors to trial and develop new approaches, for circulation to wider group

More Details on Individual Options

Activity	Rationale	Councillor Role	Other considerations
Issue / Community-Specific opportunities (responsive)	Ensuring that council activities are well tailored to the diverse range of places, communities and issues in Cambridge; flexibility to respond	Engaging with affected / interested residents, tailored to issue / community in question	Councillors & officers would work together to identify which issues require additional in-depth engagement
Anchor Activity: Annual Event – The Local Listen	Offer a baseline, open-access, community-wide opportunity to engage informally with local councillors	Meet with / hear from residents without fixed agenda; signpost to relevant activities / opportunities (with officer support)	Events can be more or less ambitious according to resource available
Ongoing Satellite Meetings Via Community Organisations	By engaging in light-touch meetings which are both more proactive and informal than Area Committees, councillors can hear a wide range of voices	Meeting with key groups to build council's knowledge, insight and ability to respond	Officer resource would be key to supporting councillors effectively; capacity needs to be considered / planned
Cross-City Participatory Budgeting	Strong resident interest, clear / compelling link to high-impact decision-making	Encourage & build cross community support for applications	*Remit for this sits with Grants team; review of activities ongoing*
New Resource for Councillors: Resident Engagement Guide	Ensure all councillors have clear overview of activities and their role, with support for implementation	Resource would ideally be co-created together with a group of councillors	Resource would need to be regularly updated
Training & Support incl. cross-party innovation group	Ensure all councillors feel confident in listening / convening approaches; encourage those with particular interest to lead the development of new approaches	All to engage with training opportunities; most engaged to champion ongoing experimentation and development	Training in "community champion" role increasingly common; resource implications.