Governance Review

The Council is reviewing how it makes decisions and how it involves people in those decisions at borough level and at area level. A panel of councillors from the Conservative and Labour parties will look at how decisions are made for the whole borough and at how local people and organisations can become more involved.

Public meetings will run monthly from October 2018 until May 2019 and will involve invited expert witnesses. Papers for discussion will be publicly available 5 working days before the meeting on the Committees Database [1].

You will be able to speak, ask questions of invited witnesses, and provide submissions about the issues being discussed.

Past meetings and papers

25 April 2019, Freeman Suite, Kensington Town Hall

Aim of the meeting

This meeting considered draft recommendations developed in response to what the Panel heard so far. The aim of the meeting was to agree what to present to Full Council at its May meeting.

All meeting papers are available on the Committees database. [2]

2 April 2019, 6.30pm; Freeman Suite, Kensington Town Hall

Aim of the meeting

This meeting reviewed ideas and approaches considered to date and identified which options, models and approaches needed to be developed further.

The aim of the meeting is for the Panel to identify options it wishes to recommend to Council, subject to considering further the financial and other support needs of those options.

All meeting papers are available on the Committees database [3].

5 February 2019, 6.30pm; Freeman suite, Kensington Town Hall

Aim of the meeting

This meeting considered:

- how any changes to the Council's governance might affect the work of partners in the borough
- how any new arrangements for involving people at local level might relate to borough-wide decision-making
- recent relevant developments in national thinking and local practice

The aim of the meeting was for the Panel to understand the views of local partners about involving people in decision-making, and how decision-making which involves people at local and borough-wide levels, can be joined-up to support change at the council.

All meeting papers are available on the Committees database [4].

15 January 2019, 6.30pm; Freeman Suite, Kensington Town Hall

Aim of the meeting

This meeting aimed to consider possible models for involving people more in decision-making at a local level. The aim of the meeting was for the Panel to understand different approaches and models used in other places, along with which model(s) might be most relevant to Kensington and Chelsea at present and in the future.

Summary

The aim of the meeting was to look at different approaches and models of governance at the local level used in other places and consider which ones would be relevant to Kensington and Chelsea. The discussion highlighted that support and capacity building for people would be needed so they could take a full part in any new local bodies.

It was noted that whatever the local governance system, the structure needs to reflect peoples' lives and availability so they can get involved. It needs to be properly resourced and supported by the Council, with appropriate local venues and money. The meeting considered the model of an urban parish council which is able to raise a precept to fund local initiatives.

The meeting heard a view that one model wouldn't fit the whole borough and where local bodies already exist, they should be built upon, not disrupted. People wanted to be clear on what significant decisions the local bodies would 'own' and what 'real' decision-making could be handed over.

People urged council communications to make more effort to produce documents that respond to local demographics in order to make the process as open, inclusive and transparent as possible, especially to those who don't currently have a voice in the democratic process. The meeting noted that though local people want to play an active role in any future model, local councillors could play a far bigger current role in convening, listening and acting upon issues. Finally, the meeting called for more face-to-face contact between officers and local people out in the community. There was the suggestion that different departments could be based in different areas throughout the borough, with the allocation guided by what departments have most impact locally.

All meeting papers are available on the Committees database [5].

11 December 2018; Committee Room 1, Kensington Town Hall The aim of this meeting was for the Panel to understand the issues to consider when looking at different models of governance andthe different options from which the Council can choose.

All meeting papers are available on the Committees database [6].

28 November 2018; Freeman Suite, Kensington Town Hall The aim of this meeting was for the Panel to have an understanding of good practice and what local people want, which they will then bear in mind when considering options for borough-wide and area governance in Kensington and Chelsea.

All meeting papers are available on the Committees database [7].

Summary
Residents provided helpful feedback about how they wanted to be involved in what the Council does, what we could do better and how our decision-making should change in the future. It was clear we still have more to do to better involve local people to the decisions and services that affect their lives.

We heard some examples of what other local authorities are doing around the country. In particular, participatory budgeting and devolving responsibility for different activities attracted some interest and discussion. One change we could quickly implement is to make more use of existing individual ward budgets to fund both local projects and

better engage with people on ward level issues. A number of those present discussed how the ways the Council Leadership took decisions was not clearly explained and that people did not have sufficient notice of major decisions or the opportunity to influence them.

From the meeting we committed to taking forward the following points:

- We will look at how we make key decisions available to the public with the aim of better explaining how decisions are taken, cutting complexity where possible and publicising proposals before they reach the final decision stage
- We will explore ways of letting residents know about planning proposals for key sites at an earlier stage
- Are reviewing our communications and looking at ways to refresh our list of resident and community groups around the borough, with the aim of engaging them better in our decision-making

24 October 2018; Small Hall, Kensington Town Hall The aim of this initial meeting was to review the terms of reference before they were agreed and provide the opportunity for panel members and the public to express their expectations of how the work will be conducted.

All meeting papers are available on the [Committees database](#) [8].

Summary

Residents joined us for this session which looked at the different models of governance the council could adopt. Presentations from the Centre for Public Scrutiny and Council officers highlighted the decision making models available to local authorities and what sorts of decisions, including challenging decision around costs, councils have to take.

The discussions focussed on how the existing system needs to be better explained so people fully understand how they can get involved. There were calls for genuine power to be put into the hands of the community, potentially by using community budgeting. There was a call for the council to have a social contract, similar to the Voluntary Sector Compact, which would clearly set out the relationship, roles, rights and responsibilities between the citizen and council. The importance of creating spaces where residents can freely give their views was discussed. A culture of openness, transparency an active early engagement with residents was highlighted as more important than a simple structural change, like a shift from the 'Leader and Cabinet' governance model used by most English councils.

Some actions discussed in the meeting, included:

- The council would explore using an annual audit of cultural change to monitor the extent to the staff were adhering to the council's new values
- To make sure the council engages with the whole community, rather than a limited selection of community and voluntary organisations during consultations, the council will work to refresh its database of local groups
- The council would work to more clearly explain how peoples' thoughts and ideas were being put into action

Following the completion of this review, the Panel will make recommendations to the Leadership Team and Full Council. For more information please email governance@rbkc.gov.uk [9] .

Print page: /

Links

[1] https://www.rbkc.gov.uk/committees/Committees/CommitteesFrom2013Onwards/tabid/145/ctl/ViewCMIS_CommitteeDetails/mid/605/id/1604/Default.aspx

[2] https://www.rbkc.gov.uk/committees/Meetings/tabid/73/ctl/ViewMeetingPublic/mid/669/Meeting/7906/Committee/1604/Default.aspx

[3] https://www.rbkc.gov.uk/committees/Meetings/tabid/73/ctl/ViewMeetingPublic/mid/669/Meeting/7891/Committee/1604/Default.aspx

[4] https://www.rbkc.gov.uk/committees/Meetings/tabid/73/ctl/ViewMeetingPublic/mid/669/Meeting/7890/Committee/1604/Default.aspx

[5] https://www.rbkc.gov.uk/committees/Meetings/tabid/73/ctl/ViewMeetingPublic/mid/669/Meeting/7889/Committee/1604/Default.aspx

[6] https://www.rbkc.gov.uk/committees/Meetings/tabid/73/ctl/ViewMeetingPublic/mid/669/Meeting/7888/Committee/1604/Default.aspx

[7] https://www.rbkc.gov.uk/committees/Meetings/tabid/73/ctl/ViewMeetingPublic/mid/669/Meeting/7887/Committee/1604/Default.aspx

[8] https://www.rbkc.gov.uk/committees/Meetings/tabid/73/ctl/ViewMeetingPublic/mid/669/Meeting/7886/Committee/1604/Default.aspx

[9] mailto:governance@rbkc.gov.uk