

Review of Cambridgeshire CC's Committee System (Officers and Councillors)

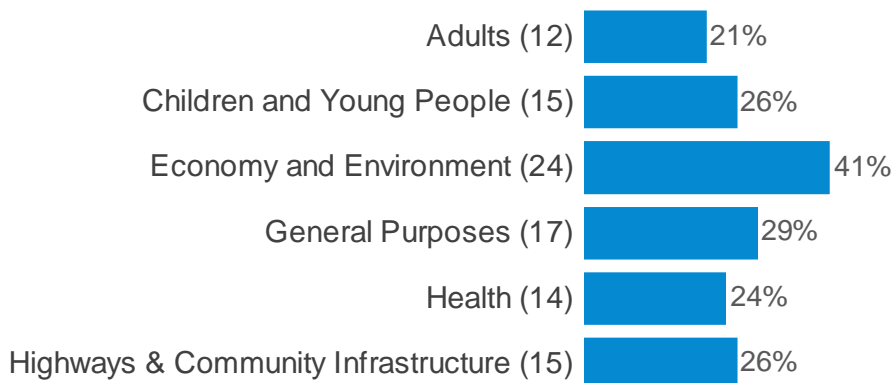
This report was generated on 14/01/15. Overall 63 respondents completed this questionnaire. The report has been filtered to show the responses for 'All Respondents'.

The following charts are restricted to the top 12 codes. Lists are restricted to the most recent 100 rows.

Are you responding as a...



Which committee are you involved in? Please tick as many as apply



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Simon Bywater	David Bethell	Cllr Anna Bailey
David Jenkins	Graham Wilson	Ian Bates
Adrian Loades	Cllr. Edward Cearns	Paul Bullen
Sandra Rylance	David Brown	Niki Clemo
James Barwise	Kate Parker	Steve Count
Tamar Oviatt-Ham	Fiona Onasanya	John Hipkin
Mike Davies	Derek Giles	Ian Manning
Kevin Reynolds	Lucy Nethsingha	Maurice Leeke
Tom Blackburne-Maze	Richard Lumley	Paul Sales
Emma Fitch	SVDK	Mike Shellens
Tanya Sheridan	Paul Rawlinson	Celia Melville
Sheryl French	Amanda Taylor	Gail Kenney
Cllr Steve Criswell	Cllr Barry Chapman	Ian Trafford

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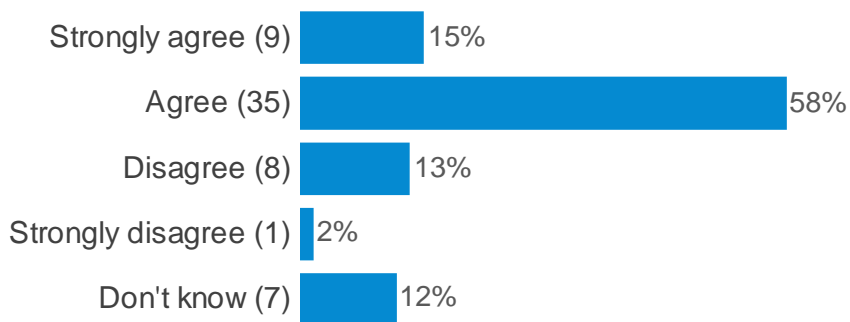
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How far do you agree that Cambridgeshire County Council's committee system is working well?



Please list what you like about the County Council's Committee system

Please list what you like about the County Council's Comm...

I feel it is a fair and democratic way to make decisions which involves all elected members. I feel I can make a worthwhile contribution during committees myself

It works, there's generally full engagement from members and there's obviously a widening of the democratic nature of the Council.

It provides an increase level of focus and engagement on issues and with services. Committee members are increasingly expert in key areas of the Council's operations. Cross party working is working well and from an officer perspective "politics" are not impeding decision making. This provides a greater sense of collective ownership in respect of decisions

Cross party committees coming to more democratic decisions. There seems to be an overall willingness to put party politics aside while dealing with the business at hand.

- Involvement from all political parties at a time of NOC; somehow feels more democratic. - More discussion and debate

Cross party involvement

Politically proportionate - each party gets to have their say Key decisions are made in public - open and transparent Spokes meetings - have proven extremely useful in terms of briefing members and making time to educate members and bring them up to speed to ensure that they understand the key issues and are well informed when making difficult decisions

It is more inclusive of all members and as officers we are getting access to a broader spectrum of elected member opinion

it gives all parties a voice. it is more democratic. there is more scrutiny.

Not a lot !

It's inclusive. It allows members of all parties to be involved in the decision making process

The chance to look at issues more closely and openly. The structure they bring to our work.

It shows a better degree of democracy as it involves each party and allows the decisions to be discussed and agreed.

A means to get clear decisions with input from all political parties in a 'hung council' Having that structure and challenge means that officers have to think carefully about decisions sought and evidence for those.

Meetings are held every two months but additional meetings can be called. Spokes is an opportunity to share information across the different parties and to get views on proposals. Committee meetings are having broader debates on the merits of proposals as there is a broad political interest across the committees.

Allows cross party debate Less adversarial now all members are 'in the same boat'.

Please list what you like about the County Council's Committee system

Please list what you like about the County Council's Comm...

Single committee for relevant area of work. Clear process from SMT > Group Leaders > GPC. Better having monthly meetings.

Opportunity to work together for the benefit of the county Good support from officers and patience to explain things numerous times

Its only been 6 months so not enough time to see full effect However it may be good to see the effect of aligning council structure with organisation

More transparent governance- evidence would suggest that more is coming to committee than was determined by Cabinet, as part of a cabinet members role was making decisions outside of the public domain Considerably more involvement with local residents, local issues and local councillors Increased engagement with council business with all councillors.

Able to have a range of views to impact on decisions Spokes sytem seems to engage well in discussion of pending items

Differing views from different political leanings coming together to share responsibility.

The committee system provides a clear themed / service areas to deal with related business and there seems to be a good relationship or negotiation between the committee's to not have duplicated items. So a clear remit for each committee.

I like the fact that we are more involved in the decision making process as opposed to simply scrutinising proposals. In CYP I am the Topic Champion for the early years and the curriculum and being able to focus on and get to grips with a facet of such a huge area has been most helpful.

Give an opportunity for ALL councillors to know what is happening within the decision making process. This system enhances councillor input to decision making and makes councillors (well me anyway) feel 'involved'. I also feel that I am being listened to.

More Councillors are directly responsible for decision making at the council, and thus more engaged and knowledgeable about council activity.

Full debate from a range of parties - thereby achieveing cross-party consensus. Opportunity to raise key issues prior to Committee through Spokes.

More inclusive and cooperative which has improved working relationships across the political divide. I feel I can actually achieve things.

How all the politcal parties have a presence in each committee. There is more discussion about issues. More transparency.

It provides an opportunity for a solid decision making process that should be consitant and that demonstates democracy working to the public.

cross-party and thus more democratic decisions are thoroughly considered and benefit from a greater mix of skills and experience there is a willingness to refer back for more information where necessary

I have a deeper understanding of the work covered by the Committee I am on than I may have had under the Cabinet system

Members are more involved in decision making. Responsibility is devolved to more Members.

Better levels on member involvement in issues than previously

Democratic Allows more Members to have meaningful involvement Gives Members the opportunity to have deeper insight and involvement away from Committee meetings

More democratic Gives all Members more input and a better understanding of Council business Less autocratic

Good engagement from a broader group of elected Members helps to improve Corporate Parenting responsibilities Chair and Vice-Chair have excellent grasp of issues relating to CSC

Cross-party working Ability to share responsibility Decreasing political point scoring All members have the opportunity to be more involved

Please list what you like about the County Council's Committee system

Please list what you like about the County Council's Comm...

The sense of "collective responsibility" and equal status. We all matter. We all share in responsible decision making.

More influence, more ability to influence

It involves all members of the council in the running of the council. Committees have the opportunity to hear a range of views before coming to a decision. Members have the opportunity to develop their knowledge and interest in the areas of the council's work that they choose. This provides a very good grounding for them should they go on to take more senior roles. It also enables them to represent their electors better as they are more often aware of policies and also the factors that were taken into account in arriving at those decisions. Having more members involved in decision-making allows for some committee members to develop a specialism for a particular part of the committee's business.

I like the fact that the Committee system is more democratic and engages all of the members. I like the greater responsibility committees have for their subject, greater focus etc.

No single party dominance (possibly not necessarily due to Committee system but the NOC results two years ago)

I believe it gives more cllrs an opportunity to get involved - and to be blunt makes it unavoidable for more to be involved in the decision-making processes. (It is difficult to remain unengaged when you're obliged to attend meetings.)

More transparency More involvement of all members and parties More understanding and ownership of the challenging financial position and resultant Business Planning implications

They provide good opportunities for issues to be debated and in my experience of the Health Committee the process is not prolonged

I like the fact that all members are involved in decision making and everyone has a chance to say their piece. Quite often we have unanimity!!

Gives all elected representatives a voice in the decision making processes. Avoids some of the political conflict we used to see when Cabinet made a decision that other parties felt strongly about.

I believe that there has been a keen interest in the items that I have taken to Committee for consideration and this is reflected in the discussion that has taken place even where it is known that some political groups or individual members may have desired a different outcome. The questioning, though tough and wide ranging, I believe has been fair and designed to ensure that officers have considered all the options properly in reaching their recommendations and thereby holding us to account. I haven't seen the questioning as being designed to trip officers up or to unduly political point score. The system means more business is considered by members than otherwise would have been the case. However, in many cases this is to be welcomed as there are issues around section 106 negotiations involving large capital sums where it is beneficial to have member endorsement for the officer approach to them (eg Ely). It not only strengthens our negotiating position but making decisions of this importance without a member steer/support was a significant responsibility to carry. We do not want to overuse the Committee system and take items for the sake of it but if we are selective in what we take there are benefits.

Good cross party democratic involvement - a range of Health Committee Councillors across the political spectrum are now learning about, owning, and steering the Council's new public health functions and outcomes. There is also more public debate about public health outcomes and policies (public health items rarely went to Cabinet) and this seems appropriate. These positive features may apply to other Committees also. There are currently major issues and pressures in the Cambridgeshire health system, with potential for significant service changes being put forward. Having a dedicated Health Committee allows sufficient Councillor time and focus on the democratic scrutiny of the local NHS.

Please list what you like about the County Council's Committee system

Please list what you like about the County Council's Comm...

Decisions generally have the support of a wider range of Members / political parties, which gives them (the decisions) greater authority. There has been a real willingness of Chairs / Vice Chairs from the different political parties to work together to create an effective committee. Some Spokes have given an inordinate amount of time to engage with the issues and work with Officers, challenging and supporting, to the benefit of the Committee. There is wider engagement with issues from Members because more are involved in the decision-making process.

Involves more councillors in decision making process Require formal votes to agree changes to recommendations Limit powers of chairman and one party politics Mmembers have to work in a more consensual manner for the public there is more transparency in terms of decision made

HCI: The spokes meeting system is well organized and brings the party representatives round the table so everyone is fully informed at the very start of a gradual decision-making process. There has been a lot of finance training/background so that we understand the council's situation and the reasons for diminishing public service spending – whether or not we are happy about it being another matter. Decisions at committee tend to be unanimous and this high level of consensus reflects the fact that thorough consideration and discussion has taken place. The system was put to the test when we were asked to give our priorities to GPC for the allocation of unanticipated funding. The committee both acknowledged that it should keep an open mind but also that it had a responsibility to give a steer on its priorities. A good deal of thrashing out took place in trying to establish those priorities. There was unanimous consensus on street lighting; other smaller but ones that certain members felt very strongly about items (community grants and street lighting) did not initially gain full support, but eventually worked their way onto the list. And when the final list was put to the vote, the vote was unanimous. The chairman has achieved the right balance of managing the meetings and allowing full debate; the latter means that important questions work their way into our meetings and we are not rubber stamping. Overall the committee system has fostered a more constructive approach to council responsibilities and unhelpful political polarization and showmanship has been reduced.

Provides all councillors with the opportunity to work on policy and budgeting in an immediate sense, rather than being presented with a fait accompli from a cabinet; enables councillors to endeavour to use persuasive powers to influence policy/budget decisions etc in accordance with their responsibilities in terms of their respective Divisions; means that councillors have the opportunity to work (hopefully effectively) across party lines.

1. It is more democratic than the Cabinet 2. It involves all Members in Council business as it gives them an active role in policy making and decision making 3. On the CYP Committee we have seen all Members working constructively together to address the issues with real commitment, largely irrespective of political party membership

Please list what you dislike about the County Council's Committee system

Please list what you dislike about the County Council's C...

Papers are generally barely adequate. They are too long, often obtuse and reflect the ways things used to be done. We need an overhaul of the way that papers are prepared and to learn from the private sector who do good, concise executive summaries and short and to the point reports. There needs to be more use of compare and contrast tables where alternatives are concerned, diagrams and maps in the report to add value to the text and a minimum of 'boilerplate'. Officers should spend more time on reports and as a result they should be shorter.

Many issues considered by the Committees are too operational so there is a considerable increase in the time that is going into producing reports, which now by almost default meet on a monthly basis. The role of the GPC is yet to be resolved and the Business Planning process has been a little chaotic as a result, perhaps understandably in the first year but the Council has to be quicker in making key decisions. Additionally, the Committee's act as separate entities and corporate decision making is hard to achieve.

Please list what you dislike about the County Council's Committee system

Please list what you dislike about the County Council's C...

There is never enough time to read all of the paperwork thoroughly. Each committee has such a large remit.

- Difficult to make decisions efficiently at a time when the Council has tough decisions to make - Lengthy

Very long lead-in times

Administration heavy - with adminiatrstation required for both committee and spokes meetings Some Committee meetings can end up with too many items and not enough time for proper discussion. Can there be an overall limit to the amount of papers allowed. Member attendance at training sessions has been hit and miss. Have found that members are not always up to speed with IT and require hard copies of papers so would be beneficial for them all to have the relevant it skills and have access to a laptop or tablet. There is no central agenda plan so for example ETE has its own agenda plan for all key political meetings as well as having to provide an update to the Committee agenda plans. One central place for an overall plan and somewhere to upload papers would be beneficial on sharepoint.

GCP!!! The role and function of this committee is poorly defined. Frustratingly it fails to pick up general HR / Transformation / Systems / Customer Service issues and papers as it is entirely focused on business planning and the interaction between committee chairs and the leader. I'm not sure the members really know how the whole thing is meant to work. I've also found that the minuting of decisions has been less than perfect with myself receiving criticism from an elected member because a view expressed during debate in GCP was not followed through. This wasn't included in the minute decision / action which was why it was missed or really only left hanging as an opinion rather than something that the whole committee was agreed upon.

it means officers spend more time writing, checking and reviewing reports. not all members read the reports before the meetings. Items have often been deferred when there was a strategic case to proceed. All of the previous points impact on delivery and resources.

It has achieved Silo working / mentality with members in that they are fully occupied on their committee as opposed to being aware of what is happening across the council as whole where they have a direct responsibility (although many are unaware of this responsibility).

It unfortunately means that there are a lot more meetings for officers and members to go to with a large number of reports needing to be written. Whilst the benefits of this inclusive democratic service are welcome, this requires existing resources to be stretched to deliver the necessary additional papers within a lean organisation that was not designed to do this. This is perhaps not sustainable and needs to be resourced effectively to maximise the benefits without creating a problem.

The bureaucracy associated with running the Committees and the domination they can have over workloads and prioritisation. In my opinion the Committee's sometimes focus on the right things and sometimes we are diverted from other possible more important priorities as we are serving the needs of the Committees.

It does seem to take longer to move through a Committee system than the Cabinet system used to. This is in relation to lead in times, including the number of times the Committee meets in a year, but also the length of time each item seems to take during the Committee meeting as more parties want to discuss and question items.

The lead times to prepare papers for Spokes meetings and then for Committee can make it difficult to capture and get decisions on very fast-moving issues. Is there a means to get decisions when they are required urgently through eg. an extraordinary Spokes meeting or via correspondence?

Please list what you dislike about the County Council's Committee system

Please list what you dislike about the County Council's C...

Lack of in-depth understanding about process involved in infrastructure delivery. Committees are less likely to come to a decision and have deferred decisions on items which has led to delays in the delivery of schemes or adoption of policies. It is difficult for officers to address incorrect statements by Councillors which influences the decision making. Several times councillors have asked questions or made statements which suggest unfamiliarity with the Local Plans and adopted strategies. There has been more discussion but too often this has taken the form of unconstructive criticism or opinion rather than useful scrutiny.

The timescale is elongated if you need to take proposals through Spokes before committee. The lead in time for papers is long - this is due to the number of layers that the papers need to be seen by. For projects, which can move quite swiftly and need relatively fast decision making, the lead in times for papers and going through the process can be challenging.

No one is accountable or responsible for decisions No separate scrutiny function (self scrutiny = no scrutiny) Slow to react or make decisions Reinforces silo working of services Does little to improve engagement with the 'back bench' councillors it was supposed to. Service committee members would previously have served on the relevant scrutiny committee anyway. Most members are still only involved in one service. Must be more costly in member and officer time.

Scheduling presentation of reports through SMT > Group Leaders > GPC. Meetings every alternate month provided less flexibility.

Variable input from members with some contributing nothing (or very little) Too much paper

Don't understand structure. 17 members in 6 areas that makes more than a 100 members however there are only 69 members. Do members sit in more than 1 area?

As expected it's a big demand on all councillors and staff Less appetite for scrutiny - though it's still an option for councillors Difficulty / resistance from officers to allow councillors to put issues on committee agendas Some members trying to run a shadow cabinet under the committee system- i.e. former members of cabinet who are now chairs and are not always involving vice chairs in decisions

Not sure whether it is working well in progressing actions needed-too soon to comment

At this early stage I feel it is too easy to defer decision-making. I believe the role and remit and responsibility of the Chairman/Woman needs greater clarity as does the role and remit of the GPC. It is also important that members clearly understand the roles and remits.

There appears at times to be too much business to attend to particularly when the Health Committee has a health scrutiny remit as well. We appear to be utilising reserve dates and I wonder if this should be rationalised more. Perhaps information reports shouldn't necessarily go to committee but could be listed to ensure members have an opportunity to raise a question if needed.

Sometimes voting on issues does not always appear to be a political and sometimes on the Adults Committee it feels like David and Goliath as opposed to a collaboration of views seeking to decide the greater good for the greater number - especially considering the savings we have to make in the current time.

As a new County councillor I took some time to realise the enormity of responsibilities of my new role. With the cabinet system, like HDC still operate, I, as an ordinary backbencher, feel completely surplus to requirements.

The committee size is larger than I think would be ideal. I understand and agree with the rationale for this, but ideally we would have smaller committees, which would reduce the additional time burden the committee system has brought for councillors.

Time taken for production of reports. Lead in time for Committee.

Agendas can be heavy but otherwise I am happy

Lengthy time for decision making process.

Please list what you dislike about the County Council's Committee system

Please list what you dislike about the County Council's C...

The few Committee meetings I have attended indicate that those who are making the decisions do not always seem to fully understand the issues that are voting on. I don't know if this is due to lack of research from members, (not reading reports fully) or not enough information from officers. I find that some members are quite willing to criticise officers in a way that I would consider bad mannered or rude in order to get a point over. If it would not be acceptable for officers to talk this way then it should not be acceptable for others including members to do so.

the committees are too large and would benefit from being 10 or 12 strong this leads to curtailment of debate, with time limits and opportunities to speak being restricted, eg only once per item officers' reports need to improve in terms of background information and evidence

Spokes do not fulfil the role of representing views of members of committees at Spokes meetings and act as though they have executive authority. Neither do spokes communicate on a regular basis with members apart from very limited occasions. There are a few exceptions but this element of the system has created roles where Spokes act as though they have delegated authority and provides less opportunity for input from members than under the Cabinet System and is far less democratic. Spokes receive considerably higher allowances than most other members paid for out of the public purse to communicate on behalf of members and not to act as Executives. Members continue to misuse the Full Council meeting by ignoring the instructions on questions - these are repeatedly put to Committee Chairmen (Chairs, Chairpersons!!!!) exactly as if the Committee Chairman has the Executive Authority of a Cabinet Member. In particular, I have noticed Cllr Woodhead make statements about what her Committee will do at some time in the future without having discussed it with Committee members. Also, Committee chairmen are criticised or questioned on matters which have not been discussed with their committee and as such have neither the personal responsibility for the decision or authority to say what action will be taken. Although I know more about the work covered by my committee I now know far less about what is going on in most other areas and therefore feel prevented from fully representing my constituents. It is far more difficult to identify who to take a problem too as this should go to a committee rather than a cabinet member and there is no route to pursue this. When a particular issue affecting my Division needs to be raised there is a lack of understanding by committee members where none of them know my Division. Nor do Officers operate within the Committee system. I've been to meetings where the briefings are inadequately explained for an informed decision to be made. Officers need to understand that greater efforts are required to properly inform 17 members than are required when only dealing with one person as under the Cabinet System, where the Cabinet member has more detailed specialist knowledge. Officers also regularly propose verbal amendments to business during the meetings. Whereas members are told they must submit these in writing. This should not be allowed to continue. Under the Cabinet system, the portfolio holder did not have the same time constraints place upon him/her. The committee system forces a decision to be made quickly to get through the agenda business and does not allow sufficient time for understanding of all members or quality decision making. I have witnessed several incidents where this effectively means the Council are gambling large amounts of money on an uninformed opinion. There is also a growing lobbying of committees by members not on the committee. This should not be happening and would not happen if the spokes were doing their jobs. Members should be able to put their opinions to spokes who should then discuss these with their group and the relevant committee members. Instead of this, we see members arrive at meetings to address committee and this wrongly extends the business time, often on local issues, preventing more important business from receiving adequate time. I've even seen a member lobbying a committee and then attempting to propose a resolution from the speakers chair!!!! The Committee system has taken away authority from elected representatives and agendas for Council business are now set and influenced by Officers. Lastly, but most importantly, the distribution of responsibilities for individual Councillors has become completely unbalanced. Some members are on many committees and outside bodies whereas others such as myself, are excluded.

Please list what you dislike about the County Council's Committee system

Please list what you dislike about the County Council's C...

The GPC and Service Committee arrangements do not seem to be working too well and I am no longer clear where decisions are made in relation to BP etc. Also at times it feels as if the committees are competing for influence and as an officer that has felt quite divisive and at times demoralising as issues have become quickly politicised which hasn't had a positive impact and the substance of the issue has been lost in the debate but maybe that is unavoidable. I think we could do more to improve links to the Health Committee for the same reason to avoid issues being caught up in the politics or the struggle for power over budgets or decision making which as an officer has been difficult. Also the workload has really increased with the requirement to service committees. I think there are examples of issues that have been discussed in public as a result of the committee system that would have previously been discussed with informal cabinet that are commercially sensitive and have therefore had a negative impact on our ability to negotiate with the market.

Time commitment by Members is greater. Agendas are very full which can lead to some items getting less attention. It feels as though the business planning process has dominated meetings over a very long period of time. I do not agree with the principle that recommendations are tabled by officers and presumed to have been proposed and seconded. I believe that the Committee Chairman should be responsible for ensuring there is a proposer and seconder for recommendations I think the rules regarding Members being restricted to 5 minutes and only speaking once, which are always suspended, should be changed to reflect what actually happens in practice. Free-flowing debate needs to be encouraged and the current rules could potentially stifle this (even though they are not observed). It is silly having rules that are permanently disregarded. It is very often the same Members that speak at Committees, with some Members rarely or never speaking - more needs to be done to encourage all Members to participate (Chairman's training?). Decision making is slower and more unwieldy than the Cabinet system. Committee meetings not well attended by the general public.

Committees, in my opinion, are too big

Not sure how it works with GPC - timing of committees not always conducive to planning Rather early days to tell how effective as not had much on the agenda Some questions around what is taken to Committee and what is not - Spokes very helpful in teasing this out

Not enough informal discussion. Too much formal discussion Papers arrive at committees unfit for purpose, if chairs, perhaps with their vice chairs (or informal spokes but that is not working) had a greater influence on the examination and writing of papers they would be more finely tuned and acceptable before being examined by the public. Not enough committees, too many committee members There should be more committees but fewer members on each. This will lead to greater understanding of particular areas of expertise. As it stands there is so much reliance on officer reports that papers and recommendations can sometimes be under-challenged. A publication of all individual members attendance should somehow be more obvious. Lack of definition of responsibility areas, particularly between H&CI and E&E Non-delivery committees should be sub-set responsibilities of main committees ie Staffing and Appeals should be responsibility of GPC as should Audit and Accounts. Planning should be a committee under the umbrella of E&E All committees should be web-cast. I may not have always said this but I believe we should swap to a digital record of all our meetings, surely that would save cost. A digital translator could then be used with just a sense security check for accuracy if needed.

Too many pre-meets, spokes meetings. It is as if officers are so concerned to ensure the "right" outcome of committee deliberations that they "over-prepare" and "over-steer" members.

I still think "ordinary" members of the public may find it intimidating, albeit less so than Cabinet where they could not speak at all!

I think that the committees are at present bigger than would be ideal. In my view a committee size of say 13 would be more manageable. Committees need to be disciplined in trying to stick to their regular meetings, without using the reserve dates being the default position. They also need to realise that they are able to set up "Member-led" reviews if they wish.

Please list what you dislike about the County Council's Committee system

Please list what you dislike about the County Council's C...

I dislike the confused role that spokes have in relation to the committee. I dislike the confusion created with the establishment of a new system and also that there is further confusion about relationships between committees. I dislike the increased workload. I dislike the cramped accommodation in the KV Room.

If applied to A&A and Pensions, papers, endless papers plus the distinct feeling that we are being led by the nose by officers

The variety of Cllrs has at times led to what can fairly be described as squabbling in some committees (Specifically GPC). I do feel that some need to be 'reigned in' by their respective party leaders - specifically thinking of UKIP members here. Granted every Councillor wants to get a word in so he/she can post proudly about it later, and it might be the highlight of their week, but it does make it difficult to process a packed agenda in that atmosphere. Hopefully however this is something that will resolve itself in time as they grow more comfortable in their role(s).

The role of GPC would benefit from being reviewed, especially in relation to Business Planning Business Planning is a fluid process, which hasn't sat easily within the structured Committee system, with the necessary deadlines and lead in times causing complications. Inevitably, the Committee system has led to an increased administrative burden which can be quite overwhelming. A single agenda plan across the organisation (Sharepoint?) would be more efficient.

I do not have any strong dislikes

Lead in times seem to be growing and where negotiations are unway for planning and/or s106 agreements, situations can often change between the start of the report writing process to Committee.

I don't feel as involved in proceedings as I did in the last session. There are not as many small groups going on.

Having a portfolio holder who was the designated lead and could develop a good degree of knowledge and understanding made it easier to ensure that expert officer advice was available to that person. This is a little more challenging now. Although there is a chair the other 16 members also need a higher level of detail.

Very long lead in time for reports There has been one occasion where a proposal for a Free School in Wisbech was not very well received at CYP Committee. None of these concerns emerged at the spokes meeting a month before and officers proceeded with the proposal. The spokes meeting should be used to air concerns with a proposal/course of action in advance. It may provide an opportunity to address concerns or modify proposals prior to Committee or for officers to be aware of concerns and be in a position to respond more fully on the day of Committee. In reviewing the Committee system we need to ensure that it is not just the Committees that are functioning well but the other constituent elements also function correctly and that the role of the spokes meeting, for example, is clear to everyone who participates within it. Officers need to be well briefed and be prepared for questions that challenge their knowledge of their service as a whole and how the Council and public sector operates. You cannot just prepare for questions around what might be the narrow focus of your own report. This is probably OK for more experienced officers who recall the Committee system from days gone by but it does mean we need to consider how we support more junior members of staff in preparing for Committee and what other officer support is provided on the day. I'm not sure this is really a dislike but just something we need to be mindful of in preparing for meetings. We need to have a look at potential overlap with items relating to school place planning and new housing developments. One item on Ely and school 106 contributions went to both CYP and ETE Committee. I do not think we got this right and CYP members were not clear of their role in this issue when they considered it. Need to have a principle, if it does not already exist, that an item only appears at one Committee other than in exceptional circumstances. This is something easily resolved.

Please list what you dislike about the County Council's Committee system

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There is a risk that the Committee system could perpetuate directorate 'silos' because the Committee's responsibilities reflect the current Exec directorates. There are specific issues for delivery of statutory public health functions - which cut across directorates, and it doesn't feel as if we have fully sorted out the governance for this in the Committee system. I will go into more detail on the 'further comments' page.

Cross-committee issues remain a difficulty - who do they go to? Further work is needed on developing protocols for these. The role of GPC still feels, at least in practice, to require clearer definition. Engagement from Spokes is variable but they are key to effective Committee functioning. Long lead in times means that it is harder for the system to respond to emerging issues - not impossible, but it takes more time. The Committee has a tendency to default to scrutiny mode, rather than executive function.

Nameplates used are time consuming to put out can delay decisions being made

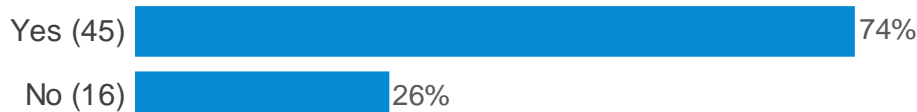
Chairing styles vary; the committees should be open and inclusive but are not always. Member-led reviews and working parties would strengthen opportunities for specialized interest, especially in cross-cutting areas. Business planning is still over-compartmentalized and this could help bring a more joined-up approach.

As a "back bench" member, I make the following observations. 1. The Committee system tends to delay decision making and appears to lead to a loss of direction. 2. I am sure there is extra cost to the County and I look forward to seeing figures. 3. The officers and Members appear sometimes to be travelling on different tracks and working in opposite directions.

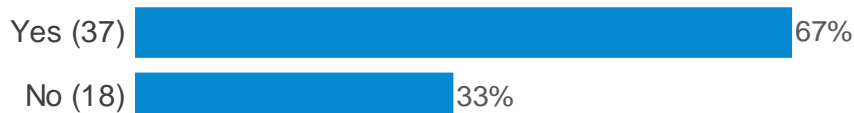
Means that committee decisions appear to be the decisions of all members: members are of course free to vote against and to abstain. However, ultimately decisions are decisions of the respective committees and this can mean that majority party/ies continue to direct policy and budgeting decisions etc. The cabinet system makes crystal clear the decision-making process/responsibility for decisions and particularly budget setting, whereas the committee system can make this more obscure.

There seems to be a problem with presentations. We have the papers so we do not need them read out to us at a meeting by the presenter of the issue - presentations are over long. At the most, five brief bullet points should be used. If I was being completely ruthless I would say no presentation at all, just questions and a discussion of the issues.

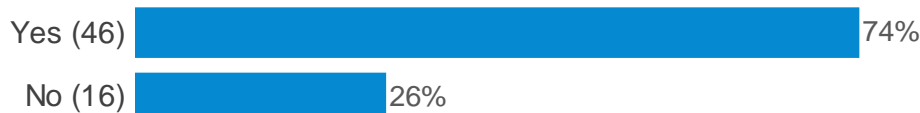
Should the Constitution and Ethics Committee consider the following proposals: (The Council should receive an annual report on the work of each Committee)



Should the Constitution and Ethics Committee consider the following proposals: (Should oral question time at Council continue given the change to a committee system (we have no portfolio holder now) i.e. questions be directed in writing to Spokes instead?)



**Should the Constitution and Ethics Committee consider the following proposals:
(Individual Members should be allowed to write and present reports to committees.)**



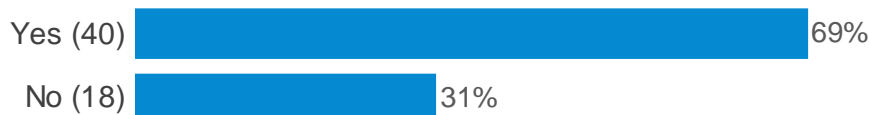
**Should the Constitution and Ethics Committee consider the following proposals:
(Parent governors should be included in the membership of Children and Young People Committee)**



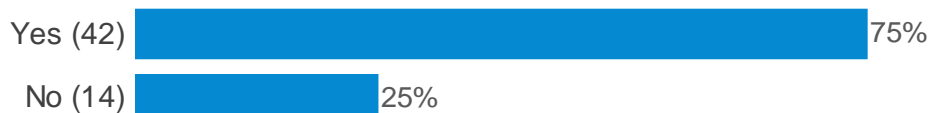
Should the Constitution and Ethics Committee consider the following proposals: (Local Members, like members of the public, should have three minutes rather than five to speak on an item?)



Should the Constitution and Ethics Committee consider the following proposals: (Given the volume of business at Committees, information reports should not be taken to Committee instead should Members be briefed in different ways)



Should the Constitution and Ethics Committee consider the following proposals: (Given the current pressure on resources, Committees should not receive reports just to improve Member understanding (instead training should be provided separately))



**Should the Constitution and Ethics Committee consider the following proposals:
(Should the number of seats on committees be reviewed?)**



**Should the Constitution and Ethics Committee consider the following proposals:
(Resources should be made available to webcast committee meetings)**



Do you have any further suggestions for improving the County Council's Committee System?

Do you have any further suggestions for improving the Cou...

At the moment I think its working well on the CYP and chaired very well. There is always going to be a balance of how much information should be contained within reports coming to the committee and is a balancing act. There is always going to be a case of more or less information. That said members should be given the agenda/paper in plenty of time so they have the opportunity to read it appropriately. I have attended other committtees and spoken . I believe 5 minutes should remain as I think 3 minutes is often too short especially when a complex issue needs to be addressed.

Review and resolve the functioning of GPC and the Business Planning process Create alternative arrangements for decisions that require the input of more than one Committee even if one Committee leads and the others have the opportunity to provide a view

All committee members should get the opportunity to attend spokes meetings occasionally to get a greater insight into what the committee does that doesn't always get discussed due to time constraints.

In the interests of transparency, potentially a listing could feature in local newspapers, detailing which items of local interest were up for discussion during the week's committees.

I would be happy to meet to discuss the thoughts i have in relation to the administration side of things. I lead on the setting up of the ETE Committees and Spokes so worked through a number of issues then in terms of agenda planning and report writing. I do feel that a central place to update agenda plans would be beneficial as well as somewhere to upload all papers and appendices so that we are not having to send large documents via email.

We need to be clear that the buck stops at the service committee, they are the ones that need to hold the individual senior officers to account for their performance / performance figures / budget etc. The role of GCP needs to be clarified and particularly emphasised that it is NOT cabinet.

Committee reports should be presented to Full Council (information only) to allow those who are not on the committee to have a better understanding on what is happening and why ! This will help reduce the 'silo' working mentality that has now started to become the norm. Key decisions made by the committee should be recommendations to full council in each report ,this will give greater ownership of decision making across the council.

None. As it has only been in place for 6 months, it is working even better than expected and credit should be given to the Members for making it work so effectively.

Do you have any further suggestions for improving the County Council's Committee System?

Do you have any further suggestions for improving the Cou...

Although I think oral questions are an important part of the democratic process I do think that the questions should be limited in time and number to avoid an excessive amount of time being spent on similar issues. Perhaps knowing the questions ahead of time may help manage this process?

Work with group leaders and members to develop the Spokes role, so that Spokes on each committee act as representatives of the views of their colleagues. Use more training seminars and informal briefings to inform committee members, with formats/ short guidance so that these are pitched to people who don't work full time on the particular issue they have to decide on.

Provide comprehensive information and briefings particularly to new committee members on adopted policy, current schemes and work, likely potential schemes and policy arising (and if they disagree with the adopted policy the process to change this). I think it would also be helpful to explain the structure of the council - directorates, departments etc. I don't think it's enough to just give information to spokes (sometimes they do not attend spokes meetings and I would question how much of the information is passed on).

No, it seems to be working well.

We need to break out of the silo mentality that committees have made worse. Under the old Cabinet system, regular Cabinet/SMT meetings and workshops gave decision makers a cross-council perspective. GPC is the only cross-council committee and that doesn't include most members. It's too early at the moment, but as we move to Outcomes-based budgets and hopefully a more integrated style of working, Directorates and Committees can change to better reflect those outcomes.

Because I work I have difficulty attending the member training provided on Friday mornings, personally I would prefer us trying occasional evening member seminar meetings

Council members should always have the best interest of the public at heart and not be politically bound. Council members should have some background in politics and have some form of qualification as well as field experience in their local areas. Councillors should play an active role in research in their community and their needs.

Consider the way that technology can assist the committee system - look at different ways of holding meetings and sharing information with members and the public. EELGA has expressed interest in exploring this and could flow from the Networked Cllr programme that the council has just completed. Follow up on the skills and interest audit that all councillors were asked to complete at the start of the committees and look to match councillors with the activity of their committee. Provide bespoke training to the individual committees on equality and community impact assessments. Localised decision making - devolving decisions to forums. For e.g. in Cambridge C Joint Area Committee and the Area Committees.

Not at this time

See earlier answers.

As the committees have been developing the decision making process have improved. However in my opinion I feel there may be a reluctance to formalise decisions in particular remits of working groups and clarifying delegated responsibilities. More work is probably needed to ensure that decisions are made and recorded I think this problem relates to the fact that generally meetings are becoming quite lengthy so the business items at the end of the agenda are often rushed. Perhaps more training is needed for officers and members or more clarification on roles and responsibilities??

Training is so important and unfortunately for me as I work full time I am not able to attend training sessions which have been held late morning or early afternoon. Is there anyway, like the speed reading that member training sessions could be held in an evening say 4:30 or even early morning (9:30 ish) so that I could attend and still get back to work? I don't expect a system to change just for me! I just think this would help me learn more and therefore grasp matters in more detail/raise questions of clarification in respect of the Agenda items

Do you have any further suggestions for improving the County Council's Committee System?

Do you have any further suggestions for improving the Cou...

Seems to be working ok. Member involvement and member input should be a priority. Officer involvement and officer explanations to members is extremely good. Especially to us newer members. I have been pleasantly surprised at the way ALL members of ALL parties work together.....unlike HDC !!!!

I expect I will have some comments to make when the results of the survey are in!

Timetable for committees should be stuck to - i.e. decide on bi-monthly or monthly and stick with it. Verbal updates at Spokes should be suffice. If there is any scope for delegation of "operational" matters / business as usual matters to senior officers in consultation with members - then this should be taken forward. Need to be careful about the overlap between committees in ensuring an integrated approach to our business - (i.e. re-creating silo approach).

Its a new system, that needs time to bed-in, I would suggest not to fiddle until it becomes apparent that it is not working

Officers need to be better prepared to answer questions at meetings, and reports need to be written so that they provide all the evidence and information members need to make a decision first time round.

I have already stated my views on this earlier in my response

Paper copy received - Case No 1

Paper copy received. Case No 2

Paper copy received. Case No 3

Outside Committee a review as part of this review The cost (budget) for Committee is.....?? No more Committees Paper copy received. Case No 4

Reduce size of committees Merge Highways and Community Infrastructure and Economy and Environment into one Committee Paper copy received. Case No. 5

Paper copy received. Case No. 6

More committees, less members. Digitally recording, broadcasting do away with translating into acceptable written format. Publish attendance lists. Allow chairs (with or without vice-chairs) a greater role in preparing papers, to become co-authors. Automatically include a delegation on every committee paper to the author and chair. Amendments of minor detail Paper copy received. Case No 7

I wonder if E&E and HC&I should not be combined to form a single committee since there is a high degree of overlap and they are treated as one in the Business Plan. We might need to redistribute the workload through a system of sub-committees reporting to the main committee. Paper copy received. Case No 8

Proposal: Local members should be able to formally propose amendments on items that impact on their ward, or a neighbouring ward, without having to be members of the committee. They would still need a seconder from the Committee Reason: better localism, strange process at the moment where member has to find someone on committee to formally propose amendment they have suggested. The latter means they will tend to ask someone from their political party, which has the potential to unduly politicise the amendment. Proposal: If there are public speakers (either Cllrs or not), they should remain at the table for the duration of the debate on an item. Members should be allowed, if they wish, to seek additional clarification from the public speakers during the debate. Before any vote, they should be given the opportunity to make additional remarks of up to 1 minute each before members vote on them Reason: danger that members could misinterpret something and gives the chance for this to be corrected or clarified. Also danger that members do not address something the speakers mention. Paper copy received. Case No 9

Paper copy received. Case No 10

Do you have any further suggestions for improving the County Council's Committee System?

Do you have any further suggestions for improving the Cou...

Oral questions should remain in full Council but should be re-jigged, limited with less opportunity for political grandstanding. Chairs should be more formal when members of the public are present. They do not know members' names. Paper copy received. Case No 11

Give me a chance to proof-read questionnaires before issue Give instructions as to how to return an electronic response Other than that it is too soon to judge. We should survey again after the difficult decisions have been made in the budget round to give us a chance to reflect on how it went and compare with the old single party system. Paper copy received. Case No 12

Accessibility of Democracy - do all Committee meetings have to be at Shire Hall? In one part of the survey there is a suggestion that the Committees provide an annual report on its work. One of the dangers of this is it will be under pressure to have looked busy and that will feed through into agenda management during the course of the year. If we are going to have an annual report would it not be better if a context is provided for the Committee. Is it possible for the Council or the Council (through its Group Leaders and Chief Executive) to set each Committee some objectives for the year so that there is a clear focus on its role and the Council's priorities. The annual report would then be an evaluation of a Committee's performance against some clear criteria that are important to the Council?

In the Council's constitution, the Health Committee has been delegated oversight of the Council's statutory public health functions, while the director of public health (DPH) has the chief officer role for the same statutory functions. This works well for the 2/3 of public health functions delivered by the public health directorate, overseen by the Health Committee. However 1/3 of public health functions (functions funded by the public health grant) sit outside the PH directorate and are overseen by other Committees. For this 1/3 of functions, there is a mismatch between the delegated duty of the Health Committee to oversee the Council's statutory public health functions, and its decision making powers. In addition, there is no clear route in the Council's constitution for the DPH to provide professional advice to Committees (other than the Health Committee), on public health functions which sit within their remit. I believe some further work needs to be done to tease this out - to ensure that the delegations to Committees in the constitution fully match the actual decision making processes, and that appropriate public health officer advice is always available. A small amount of further work may also be needed on the NHS scrutiny function. Specifically - the constitution currently delegates to the Health Committee the power to refer an NHS service change to the SoS for Health. I believe that legally, this power may need to sit with full Council - due to the Health Committee being a committee with a mixed function rather than a 'pure' scrutiny committee.

agree to reduce local member speaking time to be the same as members of the public as otherwise there is an inequality and also adds to length of meeting. revert to nameplates that are easier to operate between back to back meetings

We are only in our first year and need to allow this new system to run. Received as a hard copy. Case No 13

Submitted as paper copy. Case No 14

Do you have any further suggestions for improving the County Council's Committee System?

Do you have any further suggestions for improving the Cou...

Re the answers to the foregoing - have said 'no' to parents, etc represented on committee - this is because the committee members have a responsibility to represent the residents of their Division, whereas parents, etc even if representatives of parents, etc have a narrower brief: they (parents, etc) should have full opportunity to appear before committees and to make representations etc so that their views are known ... this is a different function from committee membership. Further, how could parent, etc representatives be selected? Isn't there a difference between political representation (that is people elected by a whole electorate of residents/voters) and special interest group representation? I think so. Have said 'no' to question re councillors having 3 minutes as members of public do in speaking - because councillors have a representative role in terms of their whole Division, whereas members of the public may represent their own or interest group positions. The latter are important and speakers from the public and interest groups are vital, however, they do not have the same representative reach/function. On information reports to committees - as committee members should attend all committee meetings, one way of ensuring that all members do receive information is to make the information reports to committees rather than by alternative means. I think that means could be explored as to doing this, and then consideration be given to possibilities, however, I generally believe it is important for information reports to come to the committees. I add here to an issue that will affect other Councillors although I am raising it in the context of my own commitments - I organise my work programme so that Thursdays and Tuesdays can be wholly devoted to County Council work at Shire Hall - of course I work on Council work outside those days, evenings, weekends, etc etc. However, I reserve those days so that I can be at meetings. If information reports are delivered at other meetings or training sessions then unless this happens on days I have deliberately set aside (because those days appeared to be the ones reserved in the main by the Council for Council business) I would not be in a position to attend. This would mean being cut out from vital information and possibilities of discussion - and listening to other Councillors' reactions, etc etc all of which is vital. There are other Councillors who are in a similar position - organising their Council work and commitments to dovetail with their other work commitments and it is vital that the scope for doing this is not more constrained. Training can be provided separately - it is where information reports lead to discussion and debate, with an opportunity to question and engage with County Officers, that it seems to me vital for reports to be provided to members in Committee meetings. As to numbers on Committees - it seems vital to me that all Councillors be engaged in Committee work - this provides Councillors with the opportunity to contribute through committees and for councillors to engage with one another in a direct working (and 'working together') environment which is to the benefit of Cambridgeshire.

1. There are clearly some procedural issues that need to be looked at e.g. should there be papers sent out only for information and not included on the agenda unless requested. 2. Are shorter monthly meeting better than longer less frequent meetings 3. How do we deal with issues that come under the remit of two committees. To solve this problem the Chairs and Vice Chairs of CYP and E&E meet to discuss school building programme which does seem to work. 4. The status of the Leaders Meeting within the committee system is unclear and needs to be clarified - for example is it a decision making body or not, if not what is its function? 5. There needs to be some rationalisation of the sub-committees of the main committees as there is often overlap of business so that some people, particularly the Chair i.e. me, gets the same information over and over again. We have started this rationalisation in CYP. This is clearly a second stage process. 6. We need to make more use of Committee members on sub-committees and other events. I find as a Chair I still get invited to everything as if I were the cabinet member - so in YP we are trying to spread responsibility around.