

Appendix 2

CAMBRIDGESHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL'S COMMITTEE SYSTEM

Review Following the First 9 Months of Operation

v.5

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REVIEW – INTRODUCTION & METHODOLOGY

- System operational since May 2014 – 9 months.
- Review informed by experience over that period and the responses to a survey conducted during December.
- Seeking to confirm what's working well and to agree changes where it would improve the operation of the system.
- The C&E Committee will conduct the review through a workshop and agree any recommendations for change to go to Full Council in March for implementation from the Annual General Meeting in May.

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By the public sector, for the public sector



TOTAL OF 63 RESPONSES

Are you responding as a...



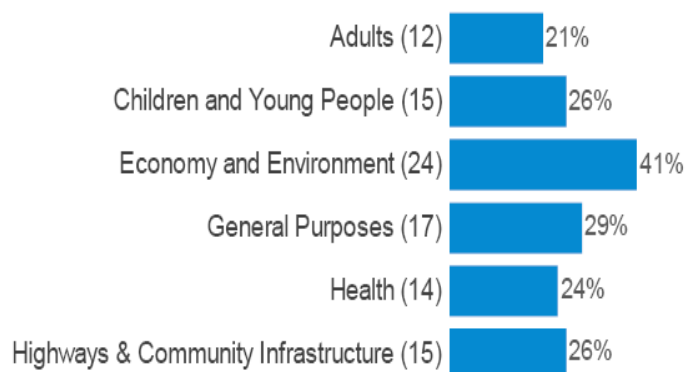
3

By the public sector, for the public sector



COMMITTEE AREA RESPONSES

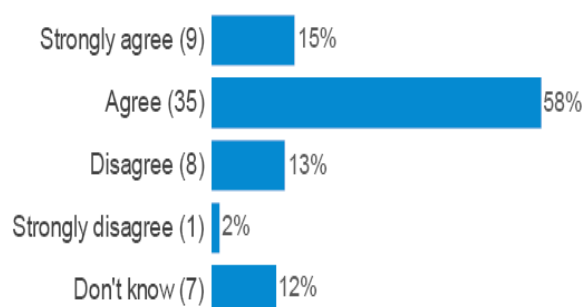
Which committee are you involved in? Please tick as many as apply



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IS THE COMMITTEE SYSTEM WORKING WELL?

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



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COMMITTEE SYSTEM – WHAT DO YOU LIKE?

- Councillors from all party groups are more fully engaged in the decision making process.
- Councillors more knowledgeable about Council activity, which enables them to represent their electors more effectively.
- Enhanced democratic accountability due to greater transparency of decision making.
- Increased level of focus and engagement on issues.
- Greater sense of collective ownership in respect of decision making.
- Responsibility is devolved to more Councillors.
- Structure encourages consensus building.

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COMMITTEE SYSTEM – WHAT DO YOU LIKE?

- Officers getting broader spectrum of Councillor opinion.
- More transparent governance.
- More decisions are being brought for decision by Councillors.
- Improved working relationships across political divide and unhelpful political polarisation reduced.
- Benefit of greater mix of skills and experience.
- Greater potential for all Councillors to influence decisions.
- Provides an opportunity for all Councillors to contribute to developing the Council's Business Plan.
- Debates are less adversarial.

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COMMITTEE SYSTEM – WHAT YOU DISLIKE?

- Reports are too long and often obtuse.
- Too many operational issues going to Committee.
- The role and remit of GPC needs greater clarity particularly in relation to the Business Plan.
- Committees encourage silo mentality which may hamper strategic decision making on cross cutting issues.
- Too many items going to Committee limiting proper discussion.
- There are too many Committee meetings.
- No self scrutiny of decisions.
- The process for dealing with cross cutting issues needs greater explanation.
- Questions at Full Council to Chairmen/women.

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COMMITTEE SYSTEM – WHAT YOU DISLIKE?

- Increased bureaucracy for officers stretching existing resources and diverting focus from important priorities.
- Takes longer to move through the committee system (lead in time too long).
- Role of Chair/Vice-Chair needs greater clarity.
- Committees too large (suggest more committees & fewer members).
- Spokes do not communicate on a regular basis with their members - greater clarity needed regarding their role.
- Process is too officer led.
- Not enough training/briefings for members in respect of the services within their committees and the impact of proposed decisions.

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QUESTIONS ON SPECIFIC ISSUES

- The survey included a section of questions on specific issues which had been raised over the recent months and capable of yes or no answers. The results are shown in the following slides.
- In addition, the survey invited suggestions from respondents as to how we might improve the system. The responses are reflected in the topics to be considered as part of the workshop discussions.

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STEER TO SPECIFIC ISSUES

- Should parent governors be included in the membership of the Children and Young People Committee – **63% said no.**
- Information reports should not be taken to Committee instead Members should be briefed in different ways – **69% said yes.**
- Reports intended solely to enhance Councillor understanding should not be taken to Committee but instead training should be provided separately – **75% said yes.**

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STEER ON SPECIFIC ISSUES

- Local Members, like members of the public, should have three minutes rather than five to speak on an item – **53% Said No.**
- Resources should be made available to webcast committee meetings - **57% Said No.**

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WORKSHOP TOPICS



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TOPIC 1 - FULL COUNCIL

1. The Council should receive an annual report on the work of each Committee – **74% said yes.**
Who should draft, how long should it be, how long should we give for questions at Council etc.?
2. Should oral question time at Council continue given the change to a committee system i.e. questions be directed to Spokes instead – **67% said yes.**
How should it be managed i.e. questions should be submitted in advance?
3. Amend the budget setting process to remove requirement to request Leader to re-consider.

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TOPIC 2 – THE ROLE OF GPC

3. Clarify the role of GPC and the Business Planning process.
How do we give greater clarity to the role of GPC in having a strategic cross council overview?
How do we clarify the relationship between the Service Committees and GPC?
4. Clarify process for dealing with issues falling within the remits of two or more committees.
There is a need to avoid taking the same report to different committees – what do you do if you get two different decisions!

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TOPIC 3 - ADMINISTRATION

5. Individual Members should be allowed to write and present reports to committees – **74% said yes.**
How do we prevent bias, how do we ensure all the facts are presented, how do we ensure the committees remain strategic?
6. Officer reports to be more succinct and contain executive summaries.
What are Members expecting from Committee reports?
7. Need to clarify the timetable for committees (monthly or bi-monthly?)
Should we just stick to bi-monthly and ask Committees to manage business accordingly?

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TOPIC 3 - ADMINISTRATION

8. Information reports should not be taken to Committee instead Members should be briefed in different ways –

69% said yes.

Clear steer but how do we do this?

9. More accessible training and briefings for members in relation to the services within their committee remits and decisions being made.

How do we do this (should each Committee agree a training programme?) and will Members turn up as some sessions have been poorly attended.

How do we improve the level of briefing for Councillors on the reports being brought before their committees?

TOPIC 3 - ADMINISTRATION

10. How can we reduce bureaucracy?

Any ideas?



TOPIC 4 – SERVICE COMMITTEES

11. Should the number of seats on committees be reviewed – **57% said yes.**
How do we ensure all Groups are automatically represented on Committees.
12. Increase the number of committees and reduce their size.
How does this work given the request for a reduction in bureaucracy?
13. Committees encourage silo mentality.
How do we address this?

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TOPIC 4 – SERVICE COMMITTEES

14. Service Committees to be renamed 'Policy & Service' Committees to better explain their role.
Should we change their name?
15. Need to clarify the roles of spokes and Chairs/Vice-Chairs in order to improve engagement of all committee members.
How do we do this – we already have role descriptions agreed by the Member Development Panel and published on Camweb.

TOPIC 4 – SERVICE COMMITTEES

16. Merge Highways and Community Infrastructure and Economy and Environment Committees?

Is this feasible?

17. Recorded votes at all Committee meetings (request from member of the public).

With no electronic voting system in the Kreis Viersen Room, this would increase the duration of meetings.



Next Steps

- **3 March** – Meeting of Constitution and Ethics Committee
- **17 March** – Full Council
- **12 May** – Annual Meeting of Council Implementation