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Agenda

Democratic Services Committee

Date: Thursday, 26 July 2018

Time: 5.00 pm

Venue: Committee Room 1 - Civic Centre

To: Councillors C Ferris (Chair), C Evans, M Evans, Y Forsey, I Hayat, R Hayat, L Lacey, K Thomas and T Watkins

Item   **Wards Affected**

1   Agenda yn Cymraeg / Agenda in Welsh   *(Pages 3 - 4)*

2   Apologies

3   Declarations of Interest

4   Minutes from May   *(Pages 5 - 10)*

5   Boundary Commission Review of Communities - Verbal Update

6   Support for Councillors in their Ward Work   *(Pages 11 - 52)*

7   Date of next meeting

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Date of Issue: Friday, 20 July 2018

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Agenda

Pwyllgor Gwasanaethau Democrataidd

Dyddiad: 26 Gorffennaf 2018

Amser: 5 y.p

Lleoliad: Ystafell Bwyllgor 1 - Y Ganolfan Ddinesig

Cynghorwyr : C Ferris (Cadeirydd), C Evans, M Evans, Y Forsey, I Hayat, R Hayat, L Lacey, K Thomas & T Watkins

Eitem		Wardiau Dan Sylw
1	Agenda yn Gymraeg	
2	Ymddiheuriadau	
3	Datganiadau Diddordeb	
4	Cofnodion o Mai	Pob Ward
5	Adolygiad Cymunedau'r Comisiwn Ffiniau – Y Diweddaraf ar Lafar	Pob Ward
6	Cymorth i Gynghorwyr gyda'u Gwaith Ward	Pob Ward
7	Dyddiad y Cyfarfod Nesaf	Pob Ward

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Minutes

Democratic Services Committee

Date: 24 May 2018

Time: 9.30 am

Present: Councillors C Ferris (Chair), C Evans, M Evans, Y Forsey, I Hayat, K Thomas and T Watkins

                G Price (Head of Law & Regulation), E Mulligan (Democracy & Communications Manager) and J Howells (Governance Officer)

Apologies: Councillors R Hayat & L Lacey and W Godrey

1   **Apologies for Absence**

     Noted above.

2   **Declarations of Interest**

     There were no declarations of interest.

3   **Minutes of the Last Meeting**

     The minutes of the meeting held on 9 November 2017 were submitted.
     With regards to item 4 (Independent Remuneration Panel - Determination 43) Cllr Matthew Evans wanted it recorded that there were differing opinions on the reimbursement of costs of care and whether claims should be anonymised.
     The minutes were confirmed as a true record subject to the above.

4   **Policy Framework Review**

     The Council operates within a series of strategies and policies. Some are identified as 'Policy Framework' documents and must be considered at a meeting of the Council.

     Other strategies and policies fall to the Executive for approval, either by the individual relevant Cabinet Member or by the Cabinet as a whole.

     The report suggested a review of the documents that make up the policy framework as the previous review had taken place in 2013 and some of the documents no longer existed or had been incorporated into other documents.

     The Democracy & Communications Manager went through the following suggested changes:

Current Framework document	Comments	Recommendation
Single integrated plan	No longer exists; replaced by the local wellbeing plan	Replace with local wellbeing plan and remain in Council list
Corporate plan	Important framework document	Remain in list for approval by Council

Improvement plan	No longer exists as a standalone document; content incorporated into the corporate plan	Remove from list
Local development plan	Important framework document	Remain in list for approval by Council
Welsh language scheme	Important framework document	Remain in list for approval by Council
Strategic equalities plan	This is a local choice issue and can be considered an executive function	Remove from list but add to those policies adopted by the Cabinet as a collective
Changes to the constitution or political structures	A matter for Council to determine	Remain in list for approval by Council
Pay and reward policy	Important framework document	Remain in list for approval by Council
Three year licensing policy	A function of the Council	Remain in list for approval by Council
Revenue and capital budget	Important framework document	Remain in list for approval by Council
Economic development strategy	An economic development strategy is an important but service – related issue that should be approved by the Cabinet Member following full consultation	Remove from list but add to those policies to be adopted by the Cabinet Member
Social services population needs assessment	Legislative requirement to go to Council but not a policy	Remove from list
Director of social services annual report	Legislative requirement to go to Council but not a policy	Remove from list

Several questions were raised with regard to the following documents:

Director of Social Services annual report: this would continue to go before Council but not as a framework document as it was not a policy.

Economic Development Strategy: it was felt this was an important document as it covered the development of Newport going forward. The Head of Law & Regulation explained that this was not a single document but a compilation of several and Council was not the best forum for its discussion.

The suggested list of Framework Documents for consideration by Council was therefore amended as follows:

- **Newport's wellbeing plan**
- **Corporate plan**
- **Local development plan**
- **Welsh language scheme**
- **Changes to the Constitution or political structures**
- **Pay and reward policy**
- **Three year licensing policy**
- **Revenue and capital budget**

Agreed:
That the above list be endorsed and go to full Council.

5 **Head of Democratic Services Annual Report**

Cllr Kate Thomas arrived during this item.

Under the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011, the Democratic Services Committee is required to keep under review the provision of staff, accommodation and other resources made available to the Head of Democratic Services, to ensure that adequate resources are provided for the responsibilities of the post.

The annual report of the Head of Democratic Services provided an outline of the resources made available in support of these functions, so that the Committee can fulfil its responsibilities under the Measure.

This report had been prepared by the Democracy & Communication Manager and included the structure of the new department which had just taken place and been implemented on 21 May 2018. The new structure was the result of an amalgamation of two departments following the departure of the former Head of Democratic Services and the Communications Manager.

Several concerns were raised by members as to whether there was sufficient staff cover all duties. The Head of Law & Regulation confirmed that the new structure would make more efficient use of staff available especially during staff absence. The restructuring was an operational matter but it was something the committee as a whole could review and report back in their Annual Report for 2019. The new structure also freed up the Democracy & Communications Manager to take up a more strategic role.

The Democracy & Communications Manager clarified some queries raised as to what each of the sections covered and also supplied contact names for the Scrutiny & Governance Manager, the Destination Development Manager, the Strategic Communication Manager and the Governance Team Leader.

Agreed:
To accept and endorse the Annual Report by the Head of Democratic Services

6   **Democratic Services Committee Annual Report**

The Local Government Measure requires each local authority to establish a Democratic Services Committee. The Committee is required to provide an annual report to Council.

The Measure was subsequently amended by the Local Government Democracy (Wales) Act 2013, to specifically provide for a wider range of functions for Democratic Services Committees, along the lines adopted in Newport.

The report is traditionally a backward looking report covering issues which had been considered by the committee over the past year.

During 2017–2018 the Committee had considered the following:

- **Terms of Reference**
- **Member Development**
- **Independent Remuneration Panel**
- **Work Programme**

The Committee had agreed the following items for its 2018-2019 work programme:

i)   Constitution Review
In September 2015 the Committee agreed the format for a new model constitution. Part of this was agreeing the WLGA role descriptions, which had now been adopted by Council. The Committee needed to oversee the reorganisation of the rest of the constitution which had been amended previously in a piecemeal fashion.

ii)   WLGA Member Development Charter

The WLGA Charter sets out a framework for supporting effective Member Training and Development activity. With a new Cabinet lead for Member Development in place, and the WLGA role descriptions adopted, Newport can embark on the self-assessment process with a view to achieving the Charter accreditation. It was suggested that, as a cross-party group with responsibility for Member support, the Democratic Services Committee could oversee and drive this process, in collaboration with the Cabinet Member.

iii)   Support for Councillors in their ward work

The Democratic Services team had recently reviewed the guidance for Members on ward meetings. The actual system of ward meeting support for Members was last updated in 2014 and focussed only upon ward meetings, not other ward activity. As few wards hold ward meetings a review was needed of this as well as the general support offered to all Members for ward work. This could also include the issue raised at the Committee's February meeting, highlighting the need for a protocol regarding enquiries from/about other wards.

This item prompted much discussion. The Democracy & Communications Manager confirmed that she would be looking at the support offered to ward meeting as well as support to members in general. In addition to her current role as support officer to St Julians she would be attending several other meetings. The Head of Law & Regulation confirmed that information would be collated and the effectiveness of ward meetings monitored over the next few months following which a report would come back to the Committee.

iv)   Boundary Commission Review of Communities

A "Community" is the unit of local government that lies below the level of the principal council.   From time to time, because of developments of shifts of population, it may be necessary to make changes to community areas and boundaries.

The Council has a duty to monitor the communities in its area and, where appropriate, the electoral arrangements of such communities. The Council also has a duty to report to the Boundary Commission for Wales every ten years on its community arrangements. The Boundary Commission was due to carry out an electoral review in Newport next year and, therefore, this community review needed to be completed before then. It was suggested that a working group of the Committee would be an appropriate body to oversee the process and consultation for this, and report any necessary changes back to Council.

The Head of Law & Regulation pointed out that some areas of Newport had grown in size, especially the Llanwern and Rogerstone wards. It was suggested that a scoping document could be discussed by the working group consisting of some Committee members and officers and a report be brought to the November meeting as the Council would need to complete this community review before April 2019.

Agreed:
To agree the content of the Committee's annual report for submission to the Council as required by the Local Government Measure.

7   **Mayoralty Protocol**

In February 2017, Democratic Services Committee discussed and agreed a new protocol to manage deferrals of nominations for the office of Mayor. This protocol was first put into practice at the Council meeting in January 2018, when it was requested that the protocol be referred back to this Committee for further consideration.

Newport City Council's method of selecting the Mayor is fair and balanced and determined exclusively on seniority irrespective of which political party he or she represents although

there are occasions when a prospective incoming Mayor may need to defer his or her election as Mayor for personal reasons.

There was no written protocol to take account of this situation and in the past there had been an informal agreement between the parties that an individual could defer for twelve months which would allow the individual time to resolve any specific issues but it would also take away the opportunity for individuals to 'pick and choose' when they serve as Mayor.

There was a need for clarity on when a Mayor defers his term of office as this could affect the members who are next in line to take up the office. It was therefore agreed last February that a formal Protocol should be adopted to clarify this and a form of words be written into the constitution that allows an individual to defer for one year from his or her original nomination date and that any longer deferral be a matter for decision by the Council.

The current Protocol also clarified the position with returning Councillors in an election year. In January of each year an individual is nominated to serve as Mayor. However, should that individual fail to retain his or her seat then the Mayoralty would fall to the next in line, according to seniority.

An individual could be re-elected to the Council following an absence and, on strict seniority rues would qualify as Mayor in the year of his or her election. However by that time the Council will have already made a nomination for the coming year and it was therefore agreed that in such circumstances the person already nominated by the Council will become Mayor in the election year and the re-elected member will take his other place according to seniority in the following year. Any agreed deferrals will then be extended for a further period of time.

The protocol had been followed this year, but there were concerns that this had caused delay and confusion with the appointments process. An application had been referred to Council in January 2018 to defer a Mayoral nomination until May 2021, on medical grounds. Although this had been agreed, it was also resolved that the Protocol should be referred back to Democratic Services Committee for further review and reconsideration.

This item prompted lengthy discussion on Newport's method of selecting the Mayor and also how long a member could defer the office of Mayor.

It was agreed that there needed to be a deadline for members to apply for a deferral and that requests should be made to the Democracy & Communications Manager.

It was also agreed that there should be no automatic entitlement to a 12 month deferral and that there should be some "good reason" for the request, not just personal preference. Although it should not be necessary for the deferring Member to justify or explain the personal reasons for deferring for 12 months, they should be required to declare in writing that there are genuine reasons for the deferral. Although there was some concern about full Council having to consider a Member's personal circumstances and deciding whether this was "exceptional" for the purposes of a longer deferral, it was accepted that there was no other option. However, it was agreed that the protocol should clarify that any deferral could only be within the current term of office of the Council.

Agreed:

To recommend to Council that the Mayoral Protocol be revised to clarify the following:

(a)   That any Member can defer their nomination as Mayor for a period of 12 months in exceptional circumstances provided that there are good reasons for doing so. The Member would not be expected to divulge any personal information, but they should declare in writing that there are exceptional reasons for the deferral;

(b) That any Member who wishes to defer for longer than 12 months on the grounds of exceptional circumstances would have to divulge the reasons for the request and the matter would be referred to full Council for consideration. The maximum period for such a deferral would have to be within the term of office of the current Council.

(c) That there should be a strict deadline for deferral and Members should be required to confirm their wish to take up the nomination of Mayor for the forthcoming municipal year by the end of October in the preceding year, at the latest. Any Member who had not confirmed their decision by the deadline would lose the right to be nominated.

8   **Date of Next Meeting**

The next meeting will take place on 26 July 2018 at 5pm.

Report

Democratic Services Committee

Part 1

Date: 26 July 2018

Subject   **Support for Councillors in their ward work**

Purpose   To present an outline plan for this review.

Author   Head of Democratic Services

Ward   All Wards

Summary   The Committee has agreed to include this topic on its work programme for 2018-19. The report presents some initial background research, together with an outline plan for reviewing the topic.

Proposal   **The Committee is asked to consider the background information contained in the report and determine how it wishes to progress its review at this stage.**

Action by   Head of Democratic Services

Timetable   Immediate

Background

This Committee has agreed to review "Support for Councillors in their ward work" as part of its work programme for 2018-19. As stated in the Committee's annual report:

The Democratic Services team had recently reviewed the guidance for Members on ward meetings. The actual system of ward meeting support for Members was last updated in 2014 and focussed only upon ward meetings, not other ward activity. As few wards hold ward meetings a review was needed of this as well as the general support offered to all Members for ward work. This could also include the issue raised at the Committee's February meeting, highlighting the need for a protocol regarding enquiries from/about other wards.

The last in-depth research on this area was actually undertaken in 2011, when the old Neighbourhood Committee system was under review, and the Local Service Board was looking at options for partnership engagement. The final report of this review is attached at **Appendix 1**. It was this review which led to the current system of ward meeting support.

While there have been many developments since this review, particularly in technology and the ways people prefer to communicate, many of the themes and issues facing ward-level engagement are still current.

Draft Project Plan

The draft below has been prepared for the Committee to review and agree the plan for this work.

Scope of Review

The previous research on this topic predominantly reviewed the engagement methods themselves, and neighbourhood committees / ward meetings in particular.

It is proposed that, while this project will need to review and update the previous research, the focus should be on the practical support that Councillors need to undertake their ward work effectively, through all the different methods available to them.

Terms of reference

1.   Gather and review new sources available since the 2011 paper was produced, including the implications of new legislation such as the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act.

2.   Consult with Councillors, Officers and the Public on the available methods for engaging with residents.

3.   Review the officer support currently in place for ward meetings and other ward work.

4.   Develop a toolkit for Councillors to support them in managing their ward responsibilities effectively.

Methodology

1.   **Desk-based research**

      Purpose: to update the 2011 research paper, including a review of
      - developments in engagement methods e.g. the use of social media;
      - best practice and benchmarking with other authorities;
      - new legislation e.g. Wellbeing of Future Generations; and
      - new local policies, plans and strategies affecting this area.

2. **Questionnaire to councillors and senior officers**

Purpose: To gather feedback on the options available for engagement and contact with / by local residents.

Method: To be conducted via face-to-face interviews where possible. Otherwise through written responses.

3. **Interviews with key contacts**

In addition to the questionnaires to all councillors and senior officers, it is proposed that interviews take place with:

- Policy, Partnership and Involvement Team
  - How does ward activity link in with wider consultation and engagement activity by the Council and its partners?
  - Are there implications for councillors in new legislative requirements such as future generations, welsh language and equalities?
  - What corporate support and guidance could be made available to, or adapted for councillors' use?

- Newport Intelligence Hub
  - What intelligence is held corporately that could support councillors in their ward work? e.g. ward profiles – are councillors making the most of these?

- Organisational Development Team
  - What corporate training and support is available that could be made available to, or adapted for Councillors? E.g. generic training on case work management, information technology and security, health and safety issues such as long working etc.

- Digital Services
  - How can councillors make the best use of the technology available to them?
  - What guidance is / should be in place for information security and data protection in relation to ward work?

- Customer Services
  - What channels are available to councillors in managing ward enquiries and complaints?
  - How could councillors and customer services work together more effectively?

4. **Public consultation**

Purpose: to invite the views of the public on their preferences for communicating with their local representatives.

Methods: online survey; press release; citizens panel (if timings allow); promotion through consultation networks and community groups.

Timescales

To complete the consultation activity and report back to the Committee's meeting on 8 November 2018.

Financial Summary

This report is part of an ongoing review by the Committee, which is being funded from within existing resources. Financial and resource implications will need to be taken into account in drafting any recommendations, and these will need to be identified in the final report.

Risks

This report is part of an ongoing review by the Committee. The final report will need to identify and address the risks arising from the findings and recommendations.

Links to Council Policies and Priorities

Effective public engagement is a key priority for the Council, underpinning the Corporate Plan and other major policies. The Wellbeing of Future Generations Act also places huge emphasis on the importance of public involvement and engagement in all areas of our business. This review will need to take into account the wider engagement activity of the Council, and how the work of Councillors both contributes to and can draw from wider intelligence gathering by the Council and its partners.

Proposal

The Committee is asked to consider the background information contained in the report and determine how it wishes to progress its review at this stage.

Comments of Chief Financial Officer
To follow

Comments of Monitoring Officer
To follow

Comments of Head of People and Business Change
To follow

Local issues
This review will impact on all wards so all ward members will be provided with the opportunity to contribute to the review.

Equalities Impact Assessment and the Equalities Act 2010

The review will need to consider the implications of the Equalities Act in relation to ward activity, to ensure that any mechanisms proposed do not directly or indirectly exclude or discriminate against protected groups.

Children and Families (Wales) Measure

The review will need to consider any implications of the Measure in relation to ward activity.

Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

The Act represents a fundamental change in the legal framework since this topic was last reviewed fully in 2012. The review will need to take into consideration the new requirements of the Act, and how the principles of the legislation can be embedded within any new guidance or processes.

Crime and Disorder Act 1998

The review will need to consider any implications of the Act in relation to ward activity.

Background Papers
Review of the Overview and Scrutiny Forum for Learning, Caring and Leisure; "Engaging with the Public", 2011.

Dated: July 2018

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Background and Terms of Reference

1.1   The development of neighbourhood working is a key focus for the Council and the Local Service Board. The Local Service Board is working to join up what we do with our partners at a local level, so that residents are not passed from one organisation to another and we act as a seamless public service. This Neighbourhood Model includes:

- Engaging Residents
- Action Planning and Tasking
- Integrated Delivery
- Rationalisation of Assets

1.2   This neighbourhood focus is also endorsed by the Cabinet's 21 point Priority Programme, which includes work to introduce area managers, and to develop a strategy to increase the engagement of ward members and residents in identifying and prioritising local ward issues.

1.3   Engaging with the public is an essential part of this work. Successful neighbourhood working depends upon joined-up, localised services being supported by meaningful interaction between service providers and local people to determine local priorities and oversee local service provision.

1.4   The role of the Overview and Scrutiny Forum is to investigate what options are available to put into place a more efficient and effective method of engaging with the public locally, providing opportunities for contact based on need, rather than on process. In particular, the review focuses upon the role of the Neighbourhood Committees, which have been on hold pending the outcome of this review.

Terms of Reference

1.5   The overall objective of the review is to recommend more efficient and effective methods of engaging with the public locally, providing opportunities for contact based on need, rather than on process.

1.6   The Forum has agreed the following terms of reference for this project:

- To consider the purpose of community engagement, and agree the principles / vision that should drive the establishment of any new system.

- To examine the outcomes of the current arrangements for Neighbourhood Committees and to look at issues such as: strengths; potential weaknesses; attendance and outcomes.

- To examine a potential range of provision that could improve the current arrangements for this aspect of neighbourhood engagement, recognising that public meetings may continue to be part of that range of options.

- To consider how any new arrangements can fit in with the new arrangements for StreetScene adopted by the Council, recognising the significant number of 'street scene' items generally raised at the Neighbourhood Committees.

- To look at potential patterns of geographical arrangements for any new proposals.

- To examine the engagement mechanisms currently being used across the Council's partners, to explore any opportunities for collaboration, and in particular to seek a

commitment from the Police to incorporate the PACT process into any reconfigured system

- To consider the resources available to support any reconfigured system.

- To complete the review so that any new arrangements are in place with effect from May 2012 at the latest.

Desk Based Research

2.1 Officers have carried out extensive desk-based research to provide the Forum with the necessary background information to carry out this review. This section of the report details the findings of this research.

2.2 Newport's Neighbourhood Committees

2.2.1 The existing pattern of Neighbourhood Committees was introduced in the 1990's and was, at the time, an innovative idea as to how to engage with the public in the local ward areas. The Neighbourhood Committee pattern was established to provide an opportunity for consultation and debate as to issues affecting the ward.

2.2.2 A Neighbourhood meeting is held in each ward based on a diary of meetings and generally three times each year. The format for the meetings has evolved over time and varies from ward to ward, but is rooted in the traditional committee style, with formal chairing arrangements, agendas and minutes. The formality of the meetings risks excluding people not comfortable with that setting, so in modernising the system of neighbourhood committees, one of the options available to the Council is to adopt a more informal style, which might appeal to a wider range of people.

2.2.3 Over time, the experience at Neighbourhood Committees has changed with much business now centred on street scene issues, individual complaints and matters that could generally be dealt with by way of the City Contact Centre or the new Information Station. Evidence shows that attendance at meetings is generally limited and the outcomes are also limited.

2.2.4 A recent analysis of the attendance at Neighbourhood Committees shows an average attendance of just over 14 people per meeting. There is a wide disparity in attendance across the city with our most well attended meeting averaging just over 40 residents and the least well attended averaging just 4. Often the attendees are the same individuals at each meeting, demonstrating that we are currently failing to reach a wide range of members of the public. Anecdotal evidence shows that we are failing to meet specific sectors of the community, such as younger people.

2.2.5 Evidence from minutes shows that meetings tend to be dominated by questions on police matters and questions to Councillors on Street Scene issues affecting individuals. There is evidence of only one executive decision being taken since 2000 on a matter raised by a Neighbourhood committee.

2.2.6 Public meetings really come into their own when the Council is consulting on a significant development or when there are significant local concerns raised about a matter in a ward or adjoining wards and the meeting is an opportunity to explain decisions, hear views or allay fears. Initial feedback suggests that neighbourhood committee meetings have been successful where specific consultations have been referred, for example on the Local Development Plan or the Community Strategy.

2.2.7 In 2010, as part of the customer survey, Democratic Administration asked a range of elected members some questions about Neighbourhood Committees. At that time the majority of members interviewed – 10 members out of the 12 - (83%) agreed that Neighbourhood committees would benefit from a review by members to examine options for improvements.

2.3 Links with Customer Care

2.3.1 As the Council seeks to modernise its working patterns, increasingly more opportunities for the Council to engage with the public have emerged. These include the web, transactional

web opportunities, the City Contact Centre and the Information Station. Many of the complaints that are raised at neighbourhood committees could be more efficiently dealt with through one of these customer service avenues. That would enable the ward councillor to focus on more difficult cases where a higher level of intervention is required. In recognition of this, some ward councillors hold ward surgeries immediately before or after their neighbourhood committees in an effort to direct these queries into a more appropriate forum. Advisors from the contact centre have also attended neighbourhood committees in the past so that specific problems could be directed to them and dealt with outside of the main business of the meeting, however it proved difficult to provide staff to cover all of the meetings across Newport.

2.4   PACT Meetings

2.4.1   In some wards, neighbourhood committees have been combined with the police's Partnerships and Communities Together (PACT) meetings. PACT meetings are public meetings, also held on a ward-by-ward basis and attended by Neighbourhood Policing Teams and Councillors. The meetings are held quarterly to discuss community safety issues within the ward and to involve residents in setting priorities for the local Neighbourhood Policing Teams. Common priorities include anti-social behaviour, traffic offences, and environmental issues that overlap with the responsibilities of the Council.

2.4.2   There are clear overlaps in the issues raised in these two fora, with environmental and community safety issues being frequently raised in both, so combining the two seems logical – initial discussions with the police indicate that there is a willingness on their part to establish a new system that avoids the current duplication.

2.5   "Consultation Fatigue"

2.5.1   In researching the background to this project, officers looked into the concept of "consultation fatigue", to see if this was a factor in introducing a co-ordinated approach that cuts down on the duplication of consultation mechanisms across the public services in Newport. This term is used widely across local authority websites and consultation strategies (see Kirklees, Cardiff, Shropshire, Mansfield and Swansea local authority websites) to describe the effects of over-consultation, or bad consultation. The academic sources on this subject suggest that "consultation fatigue" is more likely to be a product of bad consultation, rather than over-consultation.

2.5.2   Clearly it makes good sense in terms of resources to avoid duplication of consultation where possible, and this could be a positive outcome from consultation being co-ordinated at the partnership level. But what is more important is that consultation exercises, and participation opportunities in general, are designed and executed well with clear objectives and meaningful feedback.

2.6   Representation and Diversity

2.6.1   Another factor impeding the neighbourhood committees as they currently operate is not only the small number of people who attend, but also the lack of diversity among those people. The traditional style of the meetings seems to dictate the type of people who participate, and the meetings attract largely the same people each quarter – generally people who understand the procedures and protocols of council business and so are at home within the formal meeting format.

2.6.2   It is easy to attribute the lack of participation in neighbourhood committees to the perceived apathy of citizens when it comes to participating in governance structures, but academic research shows that there are many other factors at play in determining who does and who doesn't participate.

2.6.3   Research by Li and Marsh used data from the 2001 Home Office Citizenship Survey to test the hypothesis that "citizens are not apathetic: rather, they are alienated from a political system which does not allow them a 'real', that is effective, voice" (Li and Marsh, 2008, p 248). They extended this analysis to assess the impact of different socio-economic factors on participation. Unsurprisingly perhaps, they found that class, age, education and ethnicity had a major impact on the type of participation, if any, citizens were engaged in: "access to economic, social and cultural resources is of crucial importance... the most disadvantaged social groups, namely, those in the working class and with little formal education, are least likely to be engaged in political participation" (Li and Marsh, 2008, p 271).

2.6.4   While a reformed system of neighbourhood committees may widen appeal to a greater audience, the number of residents interested in participating in such a forum will still be limited those people in society who are more inclined to be politically active. As such, this type of engagement needs to be complimented by other participatory methods that appeal to different sections of society and therefore enable the Council to gather a diverse range of views.

2.7   Comparison with other Authorities

2.7.1   The Scrutiny Support and Research Officer contacted the 22 Welsh authorities, as well as the 6 authorities in Newport's "benchmarking family group", to ask what community meetings they have in place, if any. The research revealed a wide variety of systems in place, and a number of Councils who have no formal arrangements for neighbourhood meetings. The findings also highlight familiar problems of low attendance, and show a number of authorities are also currently reviewing their consultation and engagement practices.

2.7.2   The full results are detailed in the following tables:

Welsh Authorities	
Blaenau Gwent County Council Borough Council	In the past they have held "Connect 2 Listen" which later became "Here to Listen" meetings but these have now stopped. The number of residents attending these meetings was approx 25 at the start but reduced to 2 or 3 at the end which is why they stopped. They are now looking at an LSB approach which is more strategic and collaborative. They are currently looking at an engagement strategy to include an "Engagement portal" and a "Citizen's Panel".
Bridgend County Borough Council	They tried to establish 9 x Local Forum Meetings but in all areas apart from one they have failed. That meeting is now arranged by the community for the community and not by the council. PACT meetings take place but nothing else.
Caerphilly County Borough Council	They have PACT meetings which members attend and also a Citizens Panel which meets 3 to 4 times a year and an open evening. The communication section is drafting a new consultation strategy which will be available soon. This will be taking into account community groups, face to face contact, developing interest with youth contacts and groups to generate as much interest as possible.
Cardiff Council	Cardiff have "Ask Cardiff" This is a group of senior managers from LSB partners who are responsible for consultation and community engagement. There are neighbourhood arrangements within this involving the police, council, health and voluntary sector and they are looking at ways of integrating with members by providing quarterly summary reports and directives for members and ways of feeding

	more information back to them.
Carmarthenshire County Council	They did have Community Networks but a political decision was made to bring these to an end. Attendance varied from between 10 and 40 at each meeting. Some members were disappointed that they were stopped, others relieved. There are housing network meetings for tenants that meet six times a year. They have PACT meetings and residents surveys, on line surveys and newspaper questionnaires regarding the budget.
Ceredigion County Council	They don't do anything at the moment. The nearest thing is "fireside chats" to 13 clusters where the Chief Executive and a clerk meet representatives from Community Councils.
Conwy County Borough Council	They do nothing at the moment. They are obliged to consult on the draft Corporate Plan so only consulting on strategies around this at the moment.
Denbighshire County Council	They have Community Forums held jointly by Members, police, health and fire but these are not well attended. The county is split into six areas and meetings take place every six months. Last year there had been some key issues such as school closures and attendance was good. There were no "hot" issues this year and numbers had declined. The Communities and Engagement Manager explained that he was in the process of preparing a report recommending that they stop the meetings and replace with something else. That report was being prepared for consultation and when complete he would forward a copy to us. He mentioned that feedback sheets had been circulated at each meeting and comments stated that residents would prefer a small table for each partner to be approached individually rather that a head table for all to hear any issues.
Flintshire County Council	They don't do anything at the moment.
Gwynedd County Council	Members arrange meetings themselves as and when required.
Isle of Anglesey County Council	They don't do anything at the moment.
Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council	They don't do anything at the moment.
Monmouthshire County Council	Monmouthshire has been split into four area committees and they each meet every six weeks. There is a committee chairman who chairs each meeting (a Councillor), an Area Services Officer and other officers are asked to attend as and when required. They are experimenting with the times of the meeting to get the best attendance which varies at the moment between five and ten people per meeting. They are looking to develop the role by asking each committee to investigate areas of work, make recommendations and set up Task and Finish Groups if appropriate.
	They also have Area Forums which are not organised by the Council. Local interested parties attend and Councillors are asked to attend

	for certain items.
Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council	They have no formal arrangements. Scrutiny invites various groups as and when appropriate. Neath Port Talbot Homes meets frequently with their tenants.
Pembrokeshire County Council	They have no formal arrangements in place. Representatives from different bodies will be called in for scrutiny purposes and other consultation exercises but these are normally "one off".
Powys County Council	There are no formal arrangements, Members arrange themselves as and when required.
Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council	They don't do anything at the moment other than sending out posters for members who have arranged their own meetings.
Swansea City and Borough Council	They don't do anything at the moment.
Torfaen County Borough Council	They have no formal arrangements at the moment.
Vale of Glamorgan Council	They have PACT meetings and members hold their own surgeries. Cabinet Members accompanied by officers hold roadshows at a series of venues across the Vale which usually coincide with Democracy Week. They have no other arrangements in place.
Wrexham County Borough Council	No response received.

Benchmarking Family Group	
North Lincolnshire	They have tried various ways to engage with the public but with little success. No formal arrangements in place at the moment.
Peterborough	They have Neighbourhood Community Meetings (unable to get hold of the responsible officer to obtain more information).
Redcar	They hold area committees organised by the Community Protection Team and they take place every six weeks. Neighbourhood officers, Directors, Heads of Service and the police attend (no clerk). The meetings are well attended.
Stockton-on Tees	Area Partnership meetings are arranged by the Local Strategic Partnerships. The Local Strategic Partnership meets bi-monthly and the Area Partnerships meet monthly. The meetings are open to the public and they are allowed to speak at the discretion of the Chair (although they have never been refused). Not all ward councillors have a place, they are allocated according to political ratios.
Swindon	They have one off events but no regular arrangements in place.
Telford	They don't have any formal arrangements in place. They cover a small area and the Parish and Town Councils arrange their own

	meetings.

2.8 Conclusion to Desk-Based Research

2.8.1 The development of strategic customer care strategies, the Local Service Board focus on neighbourhood working, and the commitment from the Police to modify the PACT process, combine to present an opportunity to reform neighbourhood committees, and improve participation within communities across Newport.

2.8.2 Neighbourhood committees represent only one method of participation that attracts one set of people, but attract people they do – it would be foolish to abolish this type of engagement altogether and sweep away the good will of residents who have enthusiastically participated in these forums for the last decade. Rather this good will needs to be made use of to deliver more constructive outcomes. To ensure participation outcomes are representative of all sections of society, this type of formalised participation, whatever form it takes in the future, needs to be co-ordinated within a strategy that includes more diverse methods. This also needs to be tied in with the customer care strategy to make sure that the complaints currently being channelled through the neighbourhood committees are dealt with more appropriately. This in turn needs to be coupled with a clarification of the ward councillor's role, whose efforts are better directed at dealing with unresolved complaints that have not been dealt with properly by the Council in the first instance.

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Primary Research: Methodology

Options for Community Engagement

3.1   Before commencing the consultation period, officers drew up a list of "engagement options" to show the different ways that people can interact with the Council. This list was used to provide structure to the consultation questions, and to prompt responses on preferred methods of engagement.

1.   ***Ward Surgeries***
Drop-in / by appointment sessions to allow local people to meet with their local Ward Councillor and discuss any problems or concerns.

2.   ***Formal Public Meetings***
A meeting called to allow for public debate when there is a major issue affecting the local ward or area.

3.   ***Informal Ward Event / "Roadshow"***
Events at different locations in the ward, with representatives from local public services attending to answer residents' queries. Residents would be greeted by the local ward Councillor(s) who would direct their enquiry to the right person. Agencies represented could include Street Scene, the Police and the Contact Centre.

4.   ***Ward Focus Groups / Panels***
An opportunity for a smaller number of local people to be more involved in the planning of local services, helping officers to find solutions to problems and identify local priorities. Members of these groups would be responsible for representing the views of people in their area or interest group, and could act as a point of contact between local people and the Council.

5.   ***Telephone 656 656***
Members of the public can enquire about any Council services by ringing the Council's Contact Centre on 656 656. The Contact Centre is open from 8am to 8pm Monday to Friday and 9am to 1pm on a Saturday.

6.   ***The Information Station***
A face-to-face contact centre is opening soon next to the railway station in the city centre. This will be called the Information Station, and will be a "one-stop-shop" for accessing local public services, bringing all the services under one roof so you will be able to deal with all queries in one location. As well as the Council this will include the Police, the Health Board, the Job Centre, the Citizens Advice Bureau, University of Wales Newport, Communities First, and Newport City Homes.

7.   ***Website***
Information about the Council's services is contained on the Council's website. There are also a number of forms on the website that allow members of the public to make contact with services and provide feedback. The number of services available online is increasing on a weekly basis, and the design of the website is being updated to make online services easier to access.

8.   ***Social Networking***
We are looking at options for residents to contact the Council through Social Media such as Facebook and Twitter.

9. Email
There is a central email address (info@newport.gov.uk) that people can use to contact the Council. Individual email addresses for Councillors are also published on the Council's website.

10. Letters
Members of the public can write directly to the Council at the Civic Centre, Newport NP20 4UR.

11. Text
There is currently no facility for the public to contact the Council by text.

Questionnaire to Members / Senior Officers

3.2 All members of the Council were provided with an opportunity to participate in this review. Every Member was made aware of the consultation period and invited to call into the scrutiny office to complete a questionnaire before the end of October (notification sent 28 September). A reminder was circulated on 28 October to those who had not yet responded. A number of Members were interviewed by the Scrutiny Support Officer as part of this process, and others provided written responses. In all, responses were received from 24 Members.

The following questions were asked:

1. What do you understand to be the purpose of neighbourhood committees?

2. What are the strengths and weaknesses of this process? How could neighbourhood committees be improved?

3. What do the public get out of neighbourhood committees?

4. Outside of the neighbourhood committees, what methods do you use to keep in touch with your constituents? Which methods work best?

5. What other opportunities are there for people in your ward to keep in touch with the council and other public bodies (ie the police, health etc)?

6. We have put together a list of options for public engagement (see list - Options for Community Engagement). Any comments on options? Anything to add?

7. Would you be prepared to pilot an alternative way of holding ward meetings to judge whether they work in your ward?

8. The My Newport section of the website allows people to access information about their local area. What do you think about giving the ward members a greater presence on that site?

9. Younger people have raised the issue of using social networking sites to keep up to date on Council business. Do you believe this would be a worthwhile step for ward issues too?

3.3 In addition, similar questions were put to the following senior officers to gain an operational perspective:

- Managing Director
- Corporate Director – Regeneration and Environment
- Corporate Director – Young People and Performance

- Head of Street Scene
- Superintendent David Johnson

Press Release and Online Survey

3.4   An online survey was set up in order to gather the public's views on this topic. This was advertised by a press release, issued on 3 October, and links were put on the Council's main website, as well as the scrutiny webpages. Notification of the survey was also sent to Community Council clerks, to Community Development, and to Members who were asked to pass it on to any interested parties. A paper copy was made available to those not able to fill it on online.

3.5   In all, 29 responses were received. 4 written representations were also received from members of the public concerned about the suspension of neighbourhood committee meetings – the points raised in these submissions have been incorporated into the consultation findings in the next section.

3.6   The following questions were asked as part of the online survey:

1.   Have you ever attended a neighbourhood committee meeting?
        Regularly attend / Occasionally attend / Attended once or twice / Have never attended

2.   If you have attended, please tell us what you thought of the meetings, including their strengths and weaknesses.

3.   If you have never attended a neighbourhood committee meeting, are there any particular reasons why?

4.   *For each of the Options for Community Engagement (see above):*

4.a   Would you use this method to contact the Council / your Councillor?
        Yes / No / Maybe

4.b   Any other comments about this option?

5.   Do you have any further comments about these or other ways that the council and residents could communicate?

Citizens' Panel

3.7   In order to widen the research base, questions on this subject have also been put to the Citizen's Panel, the results from which will be available early in the New Year.

Research Findings: Neighbourhood Committees

4.1 As described in section 2.2 above, neighbourhood committees were established in the 1990s to provide an opportunity in each ward for consultation and debate on issues affecting the local area. The same system has operated for a number of years, with varied success across the wards, so it was agreed that the system should be reviewed as part of the Scrutiny Forum's wider work on Engaging with the Public. Neighbourhood committees have been suspended while this review is being carried out (NB. The suspension refers to the regular diaried meetings that are arranged centrally – other ward activities are unaffected and Members still have the option to arrange public meetings in the ward as required).

4.2 In reaction to the suspension of the neighbourhood committee meetings, 4 written representations were made by members of the community who were concerned that these meetings had ceased, and there was also a public presence at the last scrutiny forum when this was discussed. Some ward members have also raised concerns, and in particular the Labour Group has requested that neighbourhood committees are reinstated in all Labour wards.

4.3 In the absence of the diaried meetings, in some wards the elected members have arranged their own meetings to enable the business dealt with by the neighbourhood committees to continue. Such meetings have taken place in Malpas and Caerleon, and the attendees at those meetings asked for the following points to be fed back as part of this review:

Malpas:
- *Extensive discussion took place about role and value of neighbourhood meetings;*
- *The meeting was clear that they valued the neighbourhood committee meeting as a method of making their views known and that they wanted them to continue. The current OSF review was to be informed of the views of the meeting and of their view that it was important that communities should be able to engage collectively with their councillors on issues – not simply respond individually online or in writing.*

Caerleon:
- *Vital that the LDP is effectively consulted upon;*
- *Why has the Council stopped the administrative support for Neighbourhood meetings before completing a review?*
- *Caerleon is very different in Newport: it has no specific representation other than the three councillors and the neighbourhood meetings;*
- *Public discussion of issues is crucial – just having a mechanism to make complaints/raise concern is not enough. Must be a way to follow up issues in a formalised way;*
- *Neighbourhood meetings in Caerleon are consistently well-attended;*
- *Great concern about the apparently undemocratic nature of the Malpas Neighbourhood Agreement – councillors being excluded from the process;*
- *Caerleon is not fairly treated anyway, issues are left unresolved for years;*
- *Meetings have resolved issues in the past which have proved intractable by other mechanisms.*
- *The discussion concluded with a unanimous vote of all residents present supporting the continuation of neighbourhood meetings in their previous form.*

Public Consultation

4.3 Of the formal consultation responses, 2 were received from people who regularly attended neighbourhood committees. 3 respondents said they occasionally attended, and 7 had attended once or twice. 17 respondents had never attended.
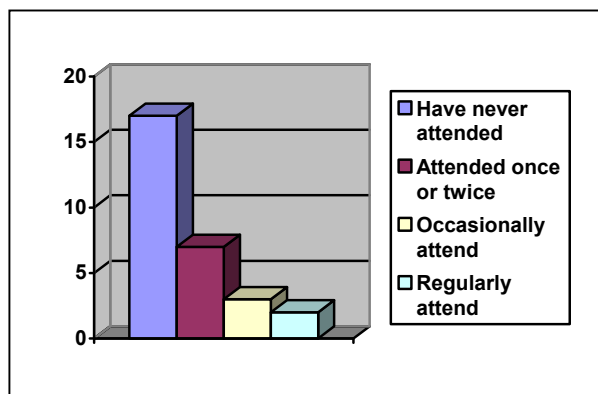
4.4 In addition to the formal consultation, 4 letters were received in support of neighbourhood committees – the points in these responses have been incorporated into the findings below.

4.5 Overall, those respondents that found the meetings valuable saw them as a vital part of local democracy, and an important way to keep in touch with and raise local issues. On the other hand, many respondents commented that they found the meetings repetitive, with the same issues being raised at every meeting. Respondents also raised issues around poor attendance, poor advertising, and domination of the meetings by a small number of people.

4.6 The specific strengths and weaknesses identified by respondents are outlined below:

Strengths
- Opportunity for local concerns to be discussed directly, face-to-face (x2)
- Opportunity to raise issues with ward members
- Opportunity to present proposals that affect the public
- Presence of relevant council officers, also the police, to respond to points raised
- Opportunity to highlight traffic issues that require police attention
- Important for those people not able to participate online
- Dates are fixed in advance
- Items minuted to report on
- A way of finding out what's happening; informative presentations; interesting to find out more about major projects (x2)

Weaknesses
- Continual repetition of items where NCC can't or won't take action; complaints do not appear to be addressed (x2)
- One Nash resident complained about meetings being dominated by Lliswerry issues
- Tend to be dominated by community councils
- Too much time spent on police matters; too many police attend, waste of their time
- Same problems repeated at length meeting after meeting by residents (x3)
- The same people go on about the same stuff and other people don't get a chance to talk; meetings taken over by the same individuals with the same axe to grind - boring and repetitive
- I use the contact centre for general things
- Poor attendance (x2)
- Poorly advertised
- No minutes received

- Councillors used the occasions as a PR exercise
- Contact centre attendance – if someone asks for something they should be able to provide a reference number and action the request then and there.
- What powers do they have to push forward change?
- Not impressed with meeting, chairman very abrupt and rude, kept interrupting those who were talking

4.7   For those who do not attend, the following reasons were given:

- I never know when / where they are on (x5)
- Didn't know about them (x3)
- Timing of meetings (x3)
- I'm not sure what good attending would do; unsure of purpose (x2)
- I don't think that this is the best way to ensure that all people in the community have a voice
- The same people go every time
- Lack of time
- I don't know what is on the agenda
- I don't know what neighbourhood I live in
- NCC employee – wouldn't want to be seen criticising my employer
- People often use the meetings as a place to complain about minor issues
- I am a community councillor and as the community council is the local elected body, I do not recognise neighbourhood committees.
- I don't go to meetings due to health issues

Consultation with Members

4.8   As outlined at paragraph 3.2 above, all Members were provided with an opportunity to participate in this review, either by completing a questionnaire or by a face to face meeting. In all, 24 Members provided responses.

4.9   The first section of the questionnaire asked for feedback on the existing system of neighbourhood committees. The views expressed were diverse – some felt strongly that neighbourhood committees worked well as they were and should be reinstated immediately; some felt they were useless and should be scrapped; and there were many shades of opinion in between.

4.10   Firstly, Members were asked what they thought was the purpose of neighbourhood committees. Responses included:

- Promoting regular contact and communication with residents
- Providing information on Council services and activities
- Giving presentations on new programmes and major developments
- Understanding the views of residents
- Demonstrating Councillors' ward work
- Meeting with the Police
- Opportunity for the public to share their concerns
- Opportunity for public engagement in Council decisions
- Opportunity for public questions to be referred to contact centre

4.11   Members were then asked to identify the strengths and weaknesses of neighbourhood committees. Their responses largely echoed those shared by the public.

4.12   Strengths

- Essential to engage with people
    - Direct contact with officers and councillors
    - Public dialogue and feedback – residents feel "listened to"
    - To allow Councillors to act on public's behalf
    - Presentations and information on plans and proposals
    - Communication between residents, sharing concerns
- Need for officers to be challenged and councillors held to account
    - Opportunity to provide accurate explanations for decisions
    - "Justice seen to be done"
- If targeted can be informative
- Public participation in the democratic process; openness and transparency
- Residents have ownership and feel they are contributing to local decision making
- More attend for specific issues; "people will turn up if they feel strongly about something"
- Well attended / popular (Malpas, Ringland, Lliswerry, Caerleon)

4.13   Weaknesses

- Resource-intensive
    - "not cost effective"; "waste of officer time"
- Too infrequent
- An opportunity to see Ward Councillors perform, better done in other ways
- The public get little out of it
- Meetings have drifted away from their original purpose
- Meetings have become a super ward surgery
- The setting is too formal and can be intimidating
    - Encourages aggression; "A few people ruin it for the rest"
- People should know their Ward Councillor if they are doing their job properly
    - It is not the Council's job to hold our hands
- Poor attendance
    - Due to poor advertising?
    - Don't reach enough people
    - Same people every time with same problems
    - Public not interested
- Minor issues better dealt with elsewhere
    - People saving up problems!
- Meetings are not controlled properly
- Meetings are an opportunity for the public to "have a go" at the Ward Councillors
    - Or at each other if there is a split ward
    - Banter can get personal
- Residents don't get what they want at the meetings and can get frustrated, end up seeing the process as futile
- The meetings happen even if there is nothing to discuss.

4.14   The following general points were also made:

- If they are stopped, people will think we're avoiding the public
- Residents are concerned about them stopping
- The process needs to be well managed
- Officers should only attend when needed, not all are always required, generally only need street scene, contact centre, minute taker
- It works better if all the relevant officers are there
- St Julians already have more relaxed version of NCs
- It works better with the contact centre there
- It works better with a presentation
- Would be better with roving microphones
- Some sort of public forum is needed with all key officers in one place
- Need more engagement with community councils
- I believe Councillors should look after their own communication and engagement. The Council itself should engage when there is a major issue or consultation e.g. a new school, planning application etc.

4.15   The questionnaire also asked what other methods Councillors used to keep in contact with their constituents. One Councillor asked that this question should not be used as an excuse to get rid of Neighbourhood Committees because they were still needed. Another, however, thought that this was the nub of the question because good Councillors would do what was necessary and more to keep in touch, and it was not the Council's job to hold their hands.

4.16   Below is a summary of the responses received, which shows the variety of methods employed by different Members according to their own styles and the needs of their wards.

- Street surgeries
- Ward walkabouts
- Email (although this only deals with issues one on one)
- Magazine with community councillors
- Home visits
- Attending local events and functions
- Being in the ward!
- PACT
- Neighbourhood watch
- (Weekly) ward surgeries
    - Only work if issue locally
    - Don't work
- Partnership board meetings
- Communities first meetings
- Contact with community organisations
- Community centre meetings
- Newport City Homes meetings
- Constituents should know where their councillor lives and that is all that is required
- Best attendance and behaviour is at presentations and exhibitions
- Political party meetings open to party members
- New media
- Advertise contact details
    - Posters in shops
    - Flyers with freepost envelopes
    - Newsletter

- Ad hoc meetings in response to specific issues

4.17   The progress of this review was discussed at the Council meeting on 1 November 2011.
        The Chair of the Forum agreed to take all comments back to the Forum as part of the
        review. As recorded in the minutes, the following points were raised:

- *Councillor Giles and Councillor Langsford were keen to recommence Neighbourhood
  Committees in the same manner as in the past in their Wards. The Chair stated that
  ward Members were still entitled to organise ward meetings if they so wish as the review
  progresses.*

- *The Leader of the Council said that the purpose of the review was to find a way forward;
  that Members were being consulted and that he would encourage Members to try
  various methods of engaging with local people and to report back to the Forum. He
  agreed there was a need for better communication. He said that lead officers are still
  available for the wards, although there are issues about administrative support.*

- *Councillor Bright was concerned about lack of clarity as to whether meetings are
  properly constituted. Councillor Whitcutt and Councillor Cooksey were concerned that
  any meetings are attended by the proper staff.*

- *The Monitoring Officer pointed out that Democratic Services staff would help Ward
  Members to organise meetings in wards and, if convened, they are properly constituted
  meetings.*

- *The Managing Director pointed out that Lead Officers remain in place for the wards and
  that notes being taken by officers in attendance was more cost effective than employing
  specific administrative support.*

Consultation with Senior Officers

4.18   The consultation with senior officers also asked for feedback on the neighbourhood
        committee process. The following points were raised:

Purpose
- They were designed as an opportunity for the Council to consult with the public and for
  the public to tell us about issues we are not aware of.
- Residents see the Council listening to their concerns, and their complaints being
  registered.
- When introduced, neighbourhood committees had a key role in direct relationship
  building between the Council and residents, when few other options were available.
  Now there are many ways for people to keep in touch with the Council and their ward
  members, and neighbourhood committees have become outdated.

Strengths
- They provide an open forum where anyone can turn up and speak
- The face-to-face arrangements make the Council appear more accountable

Weaknesses
- Issues should be raised as they occur and not left for quarterly meetings.
- All residents have to listen to specific issues which might only affect a few residents

- Low attendance levels, lack of interest from the public

What do the public get out of it?
- A small number of residents get the opportunity to make members accountable and have their views heard.
- An opportunity to tell the Council about what matters to them in a public forum – this opportunity should not always be on our terms.

General Points
- They should be called neighbourhood forums rather than committees because they are not decision-making meetings
- The quality of the meeting would improve if it were more structured and better managed
- Face to face arrangements should be provided but there should only be a meeting if there is a specific topic being discussed.
- There should be a balance between the holistic view of the officers, members, the number of people affected and if it is a major issue. The role of the ward member should also be clarified.
- Success of neighbourhood committees is very variable across the wards.

Research Findings: Other Public Engagement Methods

Consultation Findings

5.1 As described in section three above, before commencing the consultation period officers drew up a list of "engagement options" to show the different ways that people can interact with the Council. This list was used to provide structure to the consultation questions, and to prompt responses on preferred methods of engagement.

5.2 The following table gives an overview of the results from the public consultation on the different options given.
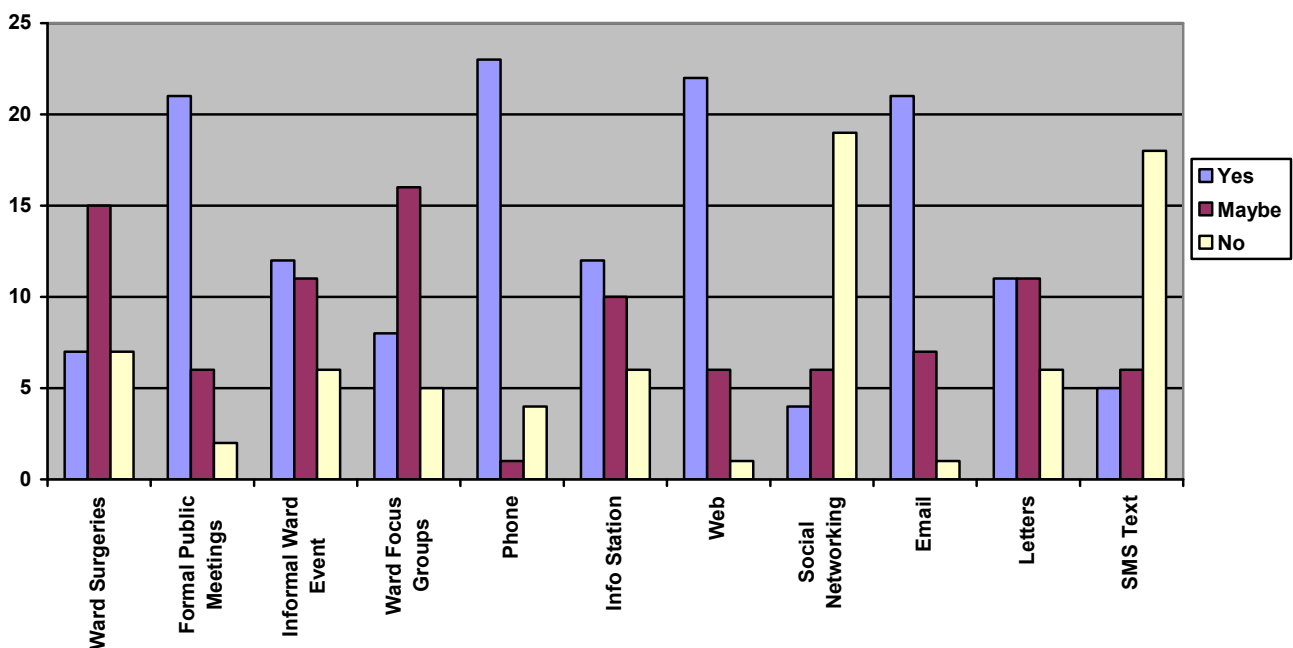
General Comments

5.3 The following general comments were made as part of the public consultation:

- I was impressed recently when I submitted a response to a planning application. I was able to do it online which was much easier.

- The newsletter is good but better publicity about neighbourhood meetings would help attendance – residents don't know about them. They are good for information sharing on ward matters.

- Informal settings where different sections of communities regularly go to – will be the best places for people to be engaged – without them having to get to a separate meeting in their own leisure time.

- I think that a range of facilities for people to give their views is important. Public meetings are not always the best because those that shout the loudest tend to be heard, drowning out others.

- This survey is an excellent idea and should have been done a few years back. The council needs to think about what is wanted before embarking on new projects. It should also treat residents as adults and be clear about the reasons behind projects – the 'Information Station' is about saving costs rather than extending access to services, but a very expensive way of saving!

- Why don't you just have a meeting when you've got something worthwhile to talk about. Don't meet to go over the same old stuff.

- To receive information from all the public, you have to offer access to meetings to all the public, not just those who are retired or don't work for whatever reason. Working people are not given a fair opportunity.

- Prefer to speak to individuals rather than email, text etc. Prefer personal contact.

- Need to go into community groups such as open days at residential homes and visiting teams to housing offices.

- As long as all correspondence is open and honest, I don't think it matters how it is provided.

5.4 The following points were made by the senior officers we interviewed:

- There should be more opportunities for the public to keep in touch with the Council – part of our framework should include understanding what residents need and we should have a policy to provide this. It's important to use the information we gain from these open sessions.

- With regard to the various options it is important to be clear on what purpose each one serves. For example, social networking sites are more about dialogue than one-to-one communications – for this, phone or email contact is more appropriate.

- When it comes to consultation, the process should be more transparent with consultation built in at the appropriate time, possibly earlier in the decision making process. Expectations should be managed and feedback given.

Specific Options

5.5 Now to look at each of the options in turn: The following analysis is based upon all the responses received from members of the public, councillors and senior officers.

5.6 Ward Surgeries

5.6.1 The consultation paper described this method as: *"Drop-in / by appointment sessions to allow you to meet your ward councillor and discuss any problems or concerns."*

5.6.2 The public response to this option was mixed: Yes (7), Maybe (15) and No (7). Specific comments included:

- Has been tried in the past, limited participation / success
- Locations and times need to be well publicised (x2)
- Needs to be out of working hours (x4)
- Only useful for particular concerns, not for general information giving on ward matters (x2)
- I would only use these if all other avenues had been exhausted.
- Are they private and confidential? When and where are they held? Is the elected member then in person or do I have to speak to someone else?
- I've never seen the need to complain to my ward councillor, I would use the contact centre. I would like to talk about broader issues like the decisions made that seriously affect Newport, or me.

5.6.3 The Councillors we surveyed were generally against this method – most said that they were not needed / didn't work, when held they were poorly attended, and it was better to be available by phone / other method when needed.

5.7 Formal Public Meetings

5.7.1 The consultation paper described this method as: *"A meeting called to allow for public debate when there is a major issue affecting the local ward or area."*

5.7.2 The majority of public respondents (21) said that they would use this method. A small number said No (6) and two people said Maybe. Specific comments included:

- Effective for dealing with big issues / major new plans / radical policy changes (x3)
- A good way of presenting the evidence and facts about an issue
- Depends on time of day (x2)
- Need to be well publicised (x4)
- Same voices get heard, and I don't feel happy about speaking up in public
- Yes, it's really good to have your say, I get annoyed at some of the stuff going on in the Council so it would be nice to think I can speak out
- Should be non-political
- Representatives from each affected area should be requested

5.7.3 Most of the Councillors we surveyed agreed that public meetings were useful held as and when required, and worked well in dealing with specific and/or major issues. One councillor felt these needed to happen in conjunction with the community councils, two said that turnout can be poor, and one said there could be problems when residents wanted to know where a Councillor stood on a particular issue – this could cause issues around predetermination in planning matters, for example.

5.8 Informal Ward Event / Roadshow

5.8.1 The consultation paper described this method as: *"Events at different locations in the ward, with representatives from local public services. Residents would be greeted by the local ward Councillor(s) who would direct their enquiry to the right person. Representatives could include officers from the Council, Gwent Police and others."*

5.8.2 The public response to this idea was mixed: Yes (12), Maybe (11) and No (6), but overall positive. The uncertainty in the response may reflect the fact that this is an untested new idea. Specific comments included:

- This is another good idea
- Could be effective if well-briefed staff available
- Helpful provided sufficient notice is given
- Not sure what queries would be relevant to such events
- Expensive if nobody shows up; better to guide people to the web / email / phone
- It would be useful to have discussions with highways / planning to discuss the road issues of Newport
- Timings – day time events wouldn't suit full-time workers
- Why not put events on (e.g. Parklife) where more people would attend who do not normally attend, and therefore you'd get a better mix of people to speak with and gather their views as opposed to the same people who are interested in this sort of thing and have probably done so for a number of years – is that really representative?

5.8.3 The Councillor response to this idea was also mixed. Some said they already did this, and some said they would be willing to try it. Some said it duplicated the work of other mechanisms such as street surgeries, ward surgeries, and the Information Station; others said it would encourage people to store up problems instead of using the contact centre. One Councillor suggested it could work if organised on an area basis.

5.9 Ward Focus Groups

5.9.1 The consultation paper described this method as: *"An opportunity for a smaller number of local people to be more involved in the planning of local services, helping officers to find solutions to problems and identify local priorities. Members of these groups would be responsible for representing the views of people in their area or interest group, and could act as a point of contact between local people and the Council."*

5.9.2 The public response to this idea was mixed: Yes (8), Maybe (16) and No (5). Again, this may reflect the fact that this is an untested new idea. Specific comments included:

- Duplicating the role of the community council (x3)
- There is a danger that people with an agenda will steer these groups in a way which does not represent the views of the majority of residents in the area.
- Such groups would be dominated by those with a vested interest, membership is too restricted.
- It is difficult to get balanced, objective views with these groups.
- Focus groups, in my experience, work very well when properly constructed, monitored and re-jigged in order to provide continuous improvement.
- Ward focus groups could be another voice towards the opposition of planning applications for local over-development that the local community and other organisations object to but to date such voices are ignored.

5.9.3 The majority of Councillors we surveyed were either against this option or concerned about how it would be operated. Like the public views above, Members questioned the selection methods for participants, raising concerns that these groups would not be representative of the wider community, and that people could use the position to pursue their own interests.

Two Councillors said similar groups had been set up to look at specific issues in the past, but then were disbanded. One Councillor said this could be bureaucratic, and asked who would have the capacity to organise these groups. Another felt that such groups would duplicate the role of elected Members in dealing with ward issues.

5.10   Phone

5.10.1   The consultation paper described this method as: *"Newport residents can enquire about council services by telephoning the council on 656 656 between 8am and 8pm Monday to Friday and 9am to 1pm on a Saturday."*

5.10.2   The majority of public respondents (23) said that they would use this method. A small number said No (4) and one person said Maybe. A lot of comments were made on this question, some positive and some negative. Comments referred to:

- The length of time to be connected
- The length of time for a follow up response; also lack of follow up.
- The system of issuing reference numbers (both positive and negative)
- Helpfulness of staff
- Rudeness of staff
- Good for specific problems but very poor for general matters
- I would want to conduct my business in Welsh, with someone competent to answer my questions directly
- Unsure my query would be passed on to the right person
- My questions have always been answered by the Council website
- Calls shouldn't be answered until an operator is available, instead put in a queue paying for the call unnecessarily.

5.10.3   The majority of Councillors we surveyed thought that the Contact Centre worked well. A few Councillors highlighted concerns over call waiting times, and one said it would be useful to be "tipped off" about ward issues reported through the Contact Centre. Two Councillors also highlighted the importance of reminding people about the Contact Centre, and advertising the service widely.

5.11   Information Station

5.11.1   The consultation paper described this method as: *"A face-to-face contact centre is opening next to the railway station in the city centre, called the Information Station, bringing local public services together so you will be able to deal with all queries in one location. As well as the council services it will include the police, local health board, the Job Centre, Citizens Advice Bureau, University of Wales Newport, Communities First, and Newport City Homes."*

5.11.2   The public response to this question was mixed: Yes (12), Maybe (10) and No (6). This may reflect the fact that the centre has not opened yet, and some of the comments reflect uncertainty with how it would work in practice. Specific comments included:

- Is this going to be a walk in centre or telephone centre?
- Sounds as if it could involve a long wait to see somebody
- Not local to where I live (x2); the building is not in the right place for people coming into town; what about moving it around to different areas to allow all residents access?

- It is easier for me to phone or email
- It's a bit daunting, and I'm not sure where to park; The walk from the bus station is too far for me; Dislike immensely the road I have to cross to get there.
- Not sure of the opening hours, but unless it will be open on weekends I wouldn't use.
- Didn't know about it
- This contact centre is long overdue in my opinion
- If I need to contact someone it would be convenient to know that they are all under the same roof.

5.11.3 The Councillor response to this option was also mixed. Most thought it was a good idea, others were against it. Particular issues were raised regarding parking and location. Two Councillors felt it would not be used by people in their ward but would be useful for others. One Councillor highlighted the need for satellite centres, and the potential to use community centres for this purpose.

5.12 Website

5.12.1 The consultation paper described this method as: *"Information about the Council's services is available on the Council's website, with a number of forms that allow residents to comment, report, request, book and pay for services. The number of services available online is increasing and the site design is being updated to make online services easier to access."*

5.12.2 The majority of public respondents (22) said that they would use this method. Smaller numbers said Maybe (6) and one person said no. Specific comments included:

- Depends on people having computer / internet access; extremely useful tool but you should not rely solely on the website as many people to do not have access to it.
- I wasn't aware of this service, is it being publicised?
- I do not find it a very easy to use website, takes a long time to find what you want (x4)
- Only allows for standardised stuff, my case is unique and individual to me.
- Better navigation needed to get to what you want, but overall I like and use this option.
- I have requested services on the website and had my requests acknowledged, but no indication is given as to how long I should expect to wait for a response, and no details were provided of who to contact if further help was needed.

5.12.3 The response from Councillors to this option was mixed. Some said they used the website all the time, others that they never / rarely use it. Some thought the website was good, others that it needed updating, and was difficult to navigate around. One Councillor suggested that there should be a large "contact us" icon on the front page, so that people who are not confident at navigating around the website could click on the icon and type their query in a message that would be forwarded to the appropriate person.

5.12.4 We also asked Councillors whether they would like a greater presence on the "My Newport" section of the website, to give more information about what is happening in the ward. The majority said yes (provided they had a say in the content / the information was not available elsewhere). Particular concerns were raised about the potential use of this for political purposes, and the time required to keep the information up to date. One Councillor said they already had their own website.

5.13   Social Networking

5.13.1 The consultation paper described this method as: *"We are looking at options for residents to contact the Council through Social Media such as Facebook and Twitter."*

5.13.2 The majority of public respondents (19) said that they would not use this method. Smaller numbers said Yes (4) and Maybe (6). Although most said no, some of the comments show that people recognise the potential of this method if managed properly, and particularly in speaking to a younger audience. Specific comments included:

- It's instant, people can choose to reply at their leisure.
- I wouldn't use this but I know a lot of younger people who would. I think that this is the best way to reach the younger generation.
- Not Facebook, but Twitter should be used for brief alerts; I find Twitter useful, Gwent Police is a good example.
- Subject to abuse most likely, who and when to update? Another useless job and costing councils.
- This form of communication would not work for me but I believe that a significant number of people would use this form of media.

5.13.3 The majority of Councillors we surveyed were against the use of social networking for Council business, in particular highlighting the difficulties in policing the content on social networking sites. A smaller number thought that this was a good option, and/or would be a necessary tool in the future. One Councillor highlighted that social networking had already been used successfully for the Newport Festival and the Super Dragons.

5.13.4 We also asked Councillors whether the use of social networking would be worthwhile for ward issues as well. Most said they didn't like this idea, but others thought this could be worthwhile in the future. One Councillor said this was already in place in their ward.

5.14   Email

5.14.1 The consultation paper described this method as: *"There is a central email address (info@newport.gov.uk) that people can use to contact the Council and individual email addresses for Councillors are also published on the Council's website."*

5.14.2 The majority of public respondents (21) said that they would use this method. Smaller numbers said Maybe (7) and one person said No. Specific comments included:

- I didn't know about this (x3)
- I would be interested to know how quick the response is.
- I would use this if I thought my query would be addressed.
- Depends on computer / internet access – perhaps a problem for older people.
- Formal, relevant and useful.
- In my experience the Council email very quickly and effectively.

5.14.3 Most Councillors we surveyed used email regularly to keep in touch with constituents, some saying they receive hundreds of emails every week. Others said they receive a few emails, but have most contact with people over the phone, or meeting people when out in the local area.

5.15 Letters

5.15.1 The consultation paper described this method as: *"Residents can write directly to the Council at the Civic Centre, Newport NP20 4UR."*

5.15.2 The public response to this question was mixed: Yes (11), Maybe (11) and No (6). Specific comments included:

- As a last resort I have written letters and sometimes to do not receive a reply at all, and have to push the matter further and still sometimes without success.
- Very old fashioned and lengthy process and letters can sometimes 'get lost' or never arrive in the Council. With email there is some proof it was sent.
- I would email before sending a letter.
- Could be useful as long as letters are acknowledged.
- I would use this for serious issues if unable to get an issue resolved by talking, email or finding the information myself.

5.15.3 Most Councillors we surveyed said they get a few letters; only two said that this method was used regularly. One Councillor said this mode of communication was still favoured by some, particularly older people.

5.16 SMS Text

5.16.1 The consultation paper described this method as: *"There is currently no facility for the public to contact the Council by text message."*

5.16.2 The majority of public respondents (18) said that they would not use this method. Smaller numbers said Yes (5) and Maybe (6). Specific comments included:

- It is a direct, fast and effective form of communication and relatively cheap. Useful for people who do not have internet access.
- Subject to abuse and misuse; comments likely to be superficial or silly.
- Would be useful for short comments.
- It is not my preferred way to communicate, but I might appreciate receiving SMS messages in the case of e.g. road closures to advise of ways to get round it.
- The limit on length of messages would limit the usefulness of this.

5.16.3 The majority of Councillors we surveyed also said they would not use this method.

Co-ordination of Consultation Activity

6.1 Customer Insight and Community Mapping

The following briefing note on Customer Insight and Community Mapping was prepared by colleagues in the Corporate Policy team.

6.1.1 A number of surveys and focus groups have taken place during 2010/11 asking people their views about Newport:

- Community strategy consultation - January/February 2010
- Unified Needs Assessment survey - Summer 2010 (*circa 500 responses*)
- Residents survey - May/June 2010 (*2264 responses*)
- City contact centre surveys – Winter 09, Summer & Winter 10 (*740 responses*)
- Newport Unlimited focus groups - November 2010 (*circa 30 attendees*)
- 'Involve Newport' Shopping survey – January/February 2011 (*470 responses to date*)
- 'Involve Newport' Partnership survey – January/February 2011 (pending)
- Staff survey - February 2011 (pending)

6.1.2 The following is a list of the most popular recurring themes that appear in all of the above activity. Further in-depth analysis regarding each theme is available if required.

THEME	Comm strategy	UNA	Residents survey	CCC surveys	NU focus groups	Shopping survey
City centre cleanliness	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Community safety and anti social behaviour	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Sport and leisure facilities	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Attractive city centre	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Derelict properties across city / empty shops	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Shopping facilities – lack of choice and quality	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Food and drink facilities	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Heritage and culture	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Parking in city centre	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Pride in Newport / negative attitudes	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Regeneration progress		✓		✓	✓	✓
Nuisance in city centre		✓	✓		✓	✓
Activities and events across city	✓	✓			✓	✓
Encourage local businesses	✓	✓			✓	✓
Good public transport	✓	✓	✓			✓
Built environment / urban planning e.g. city centre layout	✓	✓			✓	✓
Niche role for Newport	✓				✓	✓
Location and geography of city		✓			✓	✓
Countryside and wildlife	✓	✓			✓	
Job, skills and employment	✓	✓			✓	

6.1.3   Given the diverse methods of data collection used and the high levels of participation involved, the information presented is robust and credible with over 4,000 views collected from residents, business people, children and young people. The common themes identified are testimony to the reliability and validity of this research.

6.2   Corporate Strategy for Consultation and Community Engagement

6.2.1   The data above from the Corporate Policy Team demonstrates the commonality of themes across consultation exercises, and the value of holding that information corporately to enable findings to be cross-referenced and shared across the organisation.

6.2.2   A lot of consultation and community engagement activity takes place across the Council, with varying degrees of involvement from the corporate policy officers. Some initiatives are driven from the centre, such as the unified needs assessment and the citizen's panel, and some consultation takes place in isolation within departments. Capacity to co-ordinate all consultation from the centre is limited due to the small team in place, but more could be done to encourage staff to use the expertise of this team in designing and carrying out consultation activities. This would have a number of benefits:

- Ensure there is a "corporate standard" in all engagement activity
- Increase the sharing of consultation data across departments
- Decrease duplication of consultation activity where relevant data is already available
- Ensure consultation is targeted at the right people, using appropriate methods

6.2.3   There is currently no central strategy in place to set out the corporate standards for consultation and community engagement and drive this activity from the centre. A draft strategy was put together in 2008 and published internally, but it has not been updated since, mainly due to resource capacity within the policy team, and the strategy wasn't widely publicised at the time. If a new strategy was updated and implemented it would need full endorsement and commitment from directors and heads of service.

6.2.4   A "consultation calendar" has also been trialled in the past to co-ordinate consultation activity across what was then the Local Strategic Partnership. It was available on the previous LSP website, but was very difficult to maintain due to limited resources within the policy team, and it also relied on all staff across partner organisations updating it. Again, if it was to be used in the future it would need 'buy in' from the top and some kind of central resource. It has not been transferred to the One Newport website.

6.3   Links with the Local Service Board

6.3.1   Development of a consultation strategy is also a priority within the Local Service Board work plan. The structure of the LSB is currently being reviewed, and work is expected to commence on the consultation strategy once the structure is finalised. There are clear opportunities to co-ordinate consultation and community engagement activity across the LSB partners. The Citizen's Panel is already funded from the LSB budget.

6.4   Links with the Police

6.4.1   Scrutiny Officers met with Superintendent Johnson as part of the consultation process, to discuss the consultation and engagement mechanisms employed by the police. He reported

that the PACT (Partners and Communities Together) had been created to encourage the community to work together to identify and resolve issues related to community safety. However, there was a tendency for this to be seen as a police exercise rather than a partnership, and there was duplication with other arrangements such as the neighbourhood committees.

6.4.2   A review of the PACT arrangements had found that in some areas there is "full buy in" to the existing system, for example 50 to 60 people attend in Caerleon. In other areas, the meetings had not been successful and a "more organic approach" was needed. It was recognised that one size does not fit all, and the Police were keen to work with the Council on community engagement to avoid duplication and maximise outcomes. Overall, Superintendent Johnson highlighted that his job was to protect and reassure the public and to get this message over. In order to do this effectively, he needed meaningful contact and feedback with the public, and for the police to be held to account.

6.5   Resources

6.5.1   There are limited resources to support consultation and engagement activity, so resources need to be targeted at those methods which are going to be the most effective.

6.5.2   The Corporate Policy Team is on hand to provide advice and expertise on consultation, community engagement and customer insight initiatives – more needs to be done to encourage staff and members to use this resource.

6.5.3   Currently there is no administrative support available to clerk neighbourhood committees. It may be considered that a cost-effective solution is to make use of Democratic Services Officers to assist in the organisation and promotion of meetings, but that the Lead Officer at the meeting arranges for actions arising from meetings to be recorded and followed up.

6.5.4   Resources within the Street Scene department are also limited in terms of the capacity to support community engagement activities. In particular, if the Forum agreed to recommend a programme of ward meetings in whatever form, the Head of Street Scene has advised that his senior officers do not have capacity to support regular meetings in every ward, and it would not be appropriate for more junior staff to attend. If it was agreed that Members would determine and organise their own ward activities, and wished Street Scene staff to attend, staff would need to be given sufficient notice and clarification of their role in the event.

6.5.5   It is more likely that there would be capacity for Street Scene staff to support area-based events, such as the open days suggested in the next section. This would fit well with the role of the area managers, who could lead on co-ordinating such events if this option was taken forward.

Options and Recommendations

Consultation Strategy and Guidance

7.1   Whatever options are agreed as to the different types of regular engagement opportunities, there needs to be a strategy in place to ensure that consultation activity is properly co-ordinated and information is shared and used effectively. This needs to be co-ordinated both across the Council and across the LSB partners.

7.2   Staff would also benefit from practical guidance on "how to consult", setting out the recommended methods for each type of engagement activity and the support available to carry out this work. Whatever options are agreed upon as a result of this review, increasing staff awareness of the tools available would ensure they were used more effectively.

Day-to-day Queries / Customer Service

7.3   Consultation and community engagement has close links with customer services, so any emerging strategy needs to be properly linked in with initiatives in that area of work. There are a number of ways available for people to contact the Council to deal with day-to-day queries, problems and complaints; these include email, letters, telephone and the website, as well as the Information Station which is due to open shortly. It is important that these options continue to be developed and advertised to the public so that people are directed through the appropriate channels and queries are dealt with efficiently and effectively.

City-Wide Consultation

7.4   In addition to the opportunities for contact through customer services, the Council also provides opportunities for the public to have their views known on issues of wider local concern. It is widely accepted that people benefit most from public services that are based upon a real understanding of their needs. Effective consultation can help with the policy planning process, and help to make better informed policy decisions. Involving local communities in the design and review of local services ensures that local priorities are taken into consideration and services continue to be effective.

7.5   A number of regular consultation tools are already co-ordinated from the corporate centre / LSB. These include the Citizen's Panel, Residents Survey, Unified Needs Assessment stakeholder events, City Contact Centre telephone surveys, employee surveys, and Newport Unlimited focus groups.

Community Engagement

7.6   Until recently, regular contact with the public was also facilitated by the Neighbourhood Committees in each ward. One of the key objectives of this review was to look at whether this form of public contact could be better organised. This report suggests a number of options for how community engagement activity could be organised in future.

7.7   It is important to note that the options that follow represent the minimum provision that would be delivered in each area / ward. The consultation results in this paper show the range of different methods used by Councillors to keep in touch with their constituents. In recognition of the different needs of the wards, and the different styles of the incumbent ward members, any other engagement at the ward level would be the responsibility of the ward members to

organise as appropriate. If required, Members would be able to call on advice and expertise from the Corporate Policy Team about the best methods for consultation and community engagement. If Members consider that there is a need for a public meeting on any specific item(s), then Democratic Services Officers would help with the organisation and promotion of those meetings.

7.8   These options would be delivered in addition to the current customer services and city-wide consultation mechanisms described above.

Area Level Events

7.9   As described in the introduction to this report, the development of neighbourhood working is a key focus for the Council and the Local Service Board, and engaging with the public is an essential part of this work. Area Managers are already in place as part of the Street Scene service, taking responsibility for Street Scene issues within their neighbourhoods and therefore creating a virtual "one-stop-shop". In general, Local Service Board partners are working towards providing more joined-up, localised services that respond effectively to the different needs of different areas.

7.10   There is currently no mechanism for regularly engaging with communities at the multi-ward / area level. Something needs to be put in place to allow people to have a say about issues that cross ward boundaries, and contribute to the planning of services that are organised on an area basis.

7.11   The following option is therefore suggested:

Event:	**Area Open Days / Evenings / "Newport Matters" Event**
Level:	Area
Description:	Exhibition / Conference-style event where all agencies operating within an area attend to meet with residents, advertise services on offer, and for residents to have their say about the services in place. These events could also incorporate workshops, for more in-depth discussion with residents to identify local priorities and issues. There could also be opportunity for the individual wards included in the area to have a presence at this type of event.
Frequency:	At least twice a year
Purpose:	Exhibition on local services and any major plans, projects and policies; consultation on local priorities and issues.
Resources:	This could be organised by Street Scene as part of the area management role, or by the Local Service Board as part of the development of localised services.
Benefits:	Holding this type of event on a wider area basis would speak to a larger audience, and would encourage more agencies to have a presence at the event. It would also allow for consultation on local priorities across ward boundaries.
Drawbacks:	Issues particular to wards would still need to be addressed by activities at the more local level.

Ward Level Events

7.12   There are a number of options for organising engagement with residents at the ward level. Firstly, whatever option is agreed upon, formal public meetings would continue to be an important way to communicate with residents when key issues and developments arise:

Event: **Formal Public Meetings**
Level: Ward / Area, as appropriate
Description: A meeting called to enable public debate on issues affecting the local ward or area.
Frequency: Ad hoc, when there are major issues or proposals to be discussed
Purpose: To allow residents to air their views on key issues within a public forum, for concerns to be listened to and for views to be taken into account as part of the decision making process.
Resources: Support available from Democratic Services for organisation and promotion of public meetings. Members / Lead officers would be responsible for ensuring action points were recorded and followed up.
Benefits: Open and transparent communication with residents on topics of local concern; residents able to have a say on issues they feel strongly about; meetings called ad hoc to respond to particular issues in a timely and appropriate way, encouraging good attendance and constructive debate.
Drawbacks: Not all people feel comfortable attending / speaking at public meetings, so alternative channels of communication also need to be made available.

Options for Regular Ward Events

7.13   In terms of scheduled, regular meetings in wards, the following three options are put forward for consideration:

Option 1 – Informal Ward Meetings

7.14   This option suggests a new style of diaried event in the ward, in a more informal setting to encourage more people to participate.

Event: **Community Matters / [insert Ward Name] Matters**
Level: Ward
Description: Informal events held at different locations within the ward at different times, with representatives from local public services in attendance to answer resident's queries. These events would be hosted by the ward members, who would "meet and greet" residents and direct their queries to the appropriate agency. Those present could include Street Scene, the Police, and any other body with a presence in that area (e.g. Newport City Homes). It would also be possible for different departments to attend on an ad-hoc basis when specific consultations were underway, e.g. the Local Development Plan.
Frequency: These events would be diaried to take place at least twice a year
Purpose: Face to face contact with ward members and key agencies; opportunity for residents to share concerns and problems with decision makers and see action being taken.
Resources: Support available from Democratic Services for organisation and promotion of these events. Attendance of individual agencies would be for the Ward

Member(s) to determine and organise. There is limited capacity within Street Scene to support individual ward events – sufficient notice would be needed if their attendance was required.

Benefits: Informal setting to encourage more people to attend, residents get one-on-one contact with ward members / officers. Having the same event in every ward would ensure some equity in provision. Residents would recognise the "Newport Matters" brand.

Drawbacks: May duplicate similar events already organised by some Members in their wards.

Option 2 – Continue Neighbourhood Committees

7.15   Under this option, the Neighbourhood Committee format would be reinstated, with minor alterations to reflect the reduced resources available to support this function. This report suggests rebranding these meetings to move away from the suggested formality of a committee meeting and encourage wider attendance.

Event: **Neighbourhood Meetings / [insert ward name] Matters**
Level: Ward
Description: Diaried formal public meetings with ward members and a lead officer in attendance. Members would be encouraged to structure these meetings to focus on constructive outcomes, for example by arranging a presentation and debate on a specific topic.
Frequency: These events would be diaried to take place at least twice a year
Purpose: Face to face contact with ward members; opportunity for residents to debate issues affecting the ward.
Resources: Democratic Services staff would diary the meetings, book rooms and advertise agendas electronically. If notes of the meetings were required, the lead officer would be responsible for ensuring action points were recorded and followed up. There is limited capacity within Street Scene to support individual ward events – sufficient notice would be needed if their attendance was required.
Benefits: Having a diaried event in every ward would ensure some equity in provision.
Drawbacks: Not all people feel comfortable attending / speaking at public meetings; in the past neighbourhood committees have generally not been well attended

Option 3 – No Central Organisation of Ward Events

7.16   The consultation results in this report show the range of different methods used by Councillors to keep in touch with their constituents. In recognition of the different needs and preferences within each ward, and the different styles of the incumbent ward member(s), in this option any engagement at the ward level would be the responsibility of the ward member(s) to organise as appropriate.

Event: **(To be determined by Ward Members)**
Level: Ward
Description: Ward Members are responsible for organising community engagement at the ward level according to the needs and preferences of their constituents.
Frequency: As and when required.
Purpose: Depends on events held.

Resources: If required, Members would be able to call on advice and expertise from the Corporate Policy Team about the best methods for consultation and community engagement. As always, if Members consider that there is a need for a public meeting on any specific item(s), then Democratic Services Officers would help with the organisation and promotion of those meetings.

Benefits: Members would be free to organise events in their ward that suit the needs and preferences of their constituents.

Drawbacks: Potential for inconsistency in provision across wards.

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