

**SCRUTINY REVIEW PANEL 1 – 2013/2014 – GOVERNANCE
EALING COUNCIL’S CURRENT GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS
OFFICER INTERVIEW NOTES**

	What in your opinion works well?	What in your opinion does not work well?	How is the public engaged?	How would you improve decision making?
1.	<p>General:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ealing is a ‘walk in the park’ compared with some local authorities; - There is a culture in trying to do the right thing; - Greatest strength is Members and Officers working hard and well together with respect for each other; - There is cross-party working. <p>Cabinet:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Is an efficient way of making decisions; - Now has shorter meetings. Previously, meetings sometimes lasting until 1.00am was not a good use of people’s time; - Shadow Cabinet can ask questions; - Members of public able to attend; 	<p>General:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Too many councillors; - Don’t make best use of backbenchers as they have a lot of enthusiasm and energy; - Need to harness this energy as can make them disgruntled; - Process can be followed via the Secretary of State to reduce the number of councillors to make savings, etc. - The Shadows (Deputies) worked well along the Portfolio Holders to bring them up to speed; - Portfolio Holders can often get overworked with big portfolio responsibilities. <p>Ward Forums:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Are good but whether officers use these effectively; 	<p>Public may not understand Cabinet, etc.</p> <p>Small number of decisions where it would go to Cabinet/Scrutiny.</p> <p>Forward Plan (statutory requirement):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - We weren’t publishing this well in advance but this has changed; - Now items are shown 3 months in advance; - Contacts, etc. can be different so there is no synergy; - Corporate Board is looking for synergy in the items. 	<p>There are presently two arms of decision-making:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cabinet - Council. <p>Full Council:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Not suitable for cabinet style so need the committee style debate; - Should be more tightly prescribed; - Could regularly debate reports produced by the Local Government Association and London Councils e.g. the recent debate on Rewiring Public Services as these are directly relevant to our role and functions and are non-partisan in party political terms. <p>Regulatory, etc. Committees have powers and duties that do not fall within a specific portfolio.</p>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Call-in Option applicable; - Unlike some authorities, Ealing’s criterion for Call-ins is encompassing. (HH to provide some samples of the Call-in criteria at other local authorities); - Fewer allowances now awarded as the number of portfolios has been reduced. <p>Shadow Cabinet:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - This is a strength of Ealing; - In 2006 the Conservatives came in and in 2007 we had delegates from Birmingham to see how Ealing had managed such a smooth transition; - Real power is Call-ins; - Read Cabinet papers and get officer briefings. <p>Minority Group:</p>	<p>Council:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Meetings not particularly efficient; - Could reduce the number of motions; - Not all reports are debated – there should be some discussion; - Have tried to tighten up the criteria for motions; - Some Councillors never speak (as can be quite intimidating); - Subject of the debate could be more focussed; - Pointless having a debate on a decision that has already been taken. <p>Cabinet:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No debate in Cabinet; - No opportunity for public debate. <p>Scrutiny:</p>		<p>Licensing 10-15 Councillors.</p> <p>More Pre-scrutiny:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Better than it used to be but could be improved; - Continuing challenge; - Corporate Board needs to engage with this more. <p>Direction Changing Decisions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Knowledge not always shared; - More OSC? - Decisions on tight timeframe so need to be taken early as OSC cannot be moved back any further; - Long run in. <p>Council-side committees?</p> <p>Executive Decisions (Regs 2000):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 95% of Council-side decisions are executive decisions;

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Minority Group meetings are a good thing. <p>Scrutiny:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Scrutiny is a statutory requirement since 2000 and works well; - Ealing has an open and transparent Scrutiny function to ensure good governance (e.g. Hammersmith has tighter criteria so less challenging). <p>Ward Forums:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Useful and work well for both Councillors and Officers (although because is the Director of Legal and Democratic Services makes a point not to attend); - Light governance as not decision making bodies; - 23 different ways to run these. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Scrutiny Officer support has been reduced in recent years. Therefore, there are now fewer Panels. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Decisions can be appealed against. <p>Right number of Council meetings?:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Presently 9 which includes Budget and Mayor-making; - There used to be more previously but have been reduced in recent years.

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2.	<p>General:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ealing has effective arrangements in place e.g. priorities , performance, etc. and this is a strength; - Broadly speaking, the governance has worked well since the last 10 years; - Pretty streamlined, low cost, not many decisions passed from one body to another; - Key relations are good (officers and politicians as well as between politicians of all parties); - Collective purpose (e.g. at our best during the Ealing riots – this was model governance); - Council’s approach on school places is very good across all parties; - The current level of officer control is about right; - Cabinet as the principal 	<p>General:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I’m never satisfied as I believe things could be better; - Greater emphasis needs to be placed on Ealing Borough as a whole rather than just running Council services e.g. the Council’s role regarding academies, welfare reform we tend to look at the impact on tenants but ignore private rental sector as this is not directly the Council’s responsibility. <p>Council:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Does not work well and often disappointing; - Tend to focus on the operation of the Council and Council/ public services but should focus on the governance of this area/place as a whole e.g. prosperity of life, etc.; 	<p>General:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Have conflicting views as most of the public are not engaged because they are not interested (working, etc.); <p>Ward Forums:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A cohort people are engaged e.g. at Ward Forums as issues are discussed at a local level (e.g. CPZ, tree outside my house, shops, etc.). <p>Scrutiny:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - People are more involved in Scrutiny. <p>Consultation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What is the value of consultation? - Can be a pointless exercise; - People think we are involving them in the decision making but often 	<p>General:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Manchester is a good Council and their Cabinet agenda is focused on Manchester as a place; - We need to be open and inviting to external inspections, criticism e.g. the Audit Commission used to shine light on areas that we are not very good at. <p>Planning:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Need to get more consensus in this area; - Topical. <p>Future Outlook:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - More accepting of risk and failure; - Need to be less risk averse; - We are so due to the services we run and are publicly accountable; - Need to come away from ‘this must never happen again’ mentality e.g. Victoria Climbié/

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	<p>body with other bodies seems to work well;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Have had experience of the Committee System (e.g. the Planning Committee in the days of the surcharge) as a young Accountant at Redbridge. <p>Scrutiny:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I would sell this; - Scrutiny does have an impact; - Better to do fewer things well than more things not as effectively; - External participation is good; - Has more capacity for careful deliberation. <p>Ward Forums:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ward Forums work well – technically not a decision making bodies and the scope is limited but can engage local people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Tendency to focus on the things that we run; - Tend to focus on internal mechanisms but need to move away from this; - Politically-led organisation (swing borough). <p>Petitions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Can be political; - A lot of pressure on the public with 69 Councillors there; - Little discussion on these. <p>Call-ins:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Initially thought this was a waste of time but there have been some good examples e.g. air quality (Horn Lane) and garden waste so now convinced that it is quite effective; - Enables a good debate; - Officers are more sceptical. 	<p>the direction has been set.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Need to minimise this; - Due to the financial constraints there needs to be a balance of responsibility of citizens and the Council e.g. the riots (tragic) and the Olympics (joy); - We need to renew the relationship and be more open and visible in showing the public how we work; - There should be more deliberative engagement e.g. show the public how much things cost e.g. a person in care, etc.; - Need to focus more on a local level engagement. 	<p>Baby P cases;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Need to try things out (development) and that things could go wrong. <p>Cabinet:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - It would not add much value to challenge Cabinet decisions in a more public way; - Challenge should be constructive and not criticism; - Could benefit from more pre-scrutiny; - Post-decision (Housing Commission) – good; - Call-in (present). <p>Cabinet versus Committees:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Would be unworkable but could be made to work; - Committees tended to work on their internal issues e.g. a donation of a collection of garden gnomes was debated within different Committees; - In the Committee System

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	(usually get about 30 people attending) for local issues.			there is more involvement in the subject; - No natural succession in the Committee System; - Not enough officers left; - There is an LGA leaflet - how many Councillors do we need?; - We could get by with 2/3 of the Councillors; - Got more than we use in a useful role; - Local Government as a whole has not found a way to make a good use of backbenchers.
3.	Cabinet: - Works pretty well compared to the old system; - It is quite a slick mechanism; - As officers, we need to ensure that the items connect; - The process is sound and robust; - Would favour it instead of	Cabinet: - Often too many items on the agendas; - Too many items that are not really decisions so could we be doing more Portfolio Holder Decisions? Call-ins: - At times these can be	Neighbourhood Governance: - People are engaged at local levels; - Are we engaging people on the real issues e.g. Libraries, etc. when there were some exciting ideas but these disappeared as soon as the policy was announced; - Policy and Strategy – engaging residents in what	General: - I would not fundamentally change the decision making process; - However, it needs finessing e.g. around decisions on staffing matters which could do with some change in the Appeals Process; - Need to look at what should be reviewed/decided where; - Scrutiny has a role but needs

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	<p>a Committees setup;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Portfolio Holders engaging with the overall Group – there is a gap so needs strengthening; - Wider engagement of backbenchers in some issues – there is a gap so needs strengthening. <p>Pre-scrutiny:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Timing of matters; - Best Value Reviews of services worked quite well previously as it was a useful mechanism to engage a lot of people at all levels; <p>Council:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There is a purpose in having a Council for political ‘rows’. <p>Neighbourhood Governance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Gives a lot of freedom to Councillors to develop 	<p>political or unnecessary as is a residents or Trade Unions campaign;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Need to be more robust; - Scrutiny should be apolitical at all times; - Junior officers can sometimes be caught in the crossfire; - Staffing changes can sometimes due to a campaign become personal and so can cloud the judgment. This is an internal organisation matter so Members should not really be looking at these matters; - Rigour of the reasoning (should be evidence based); <p>Pre-scrutiny:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Pre-scrutiny could be used more. <p>Mayoral System:</p>	<p>the Local Authority can/cannot provide);</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - We haven’t cracked how we can meaningfully engage the residents. <p>Council:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Is relevant; - Can be impossible for residents to change a policy at this stage; - Residents need to engage more meaningfully at other stages; - The process of public engagement is not very elegant presently. <p>Planning:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Am not very involved/too distance from this process so really don’t know how residents are engaged in this; - Planning Policy loses people as it is too complex/ imperfect. 	<p>to connect with policy/decision making.</p> <p>Cabinet:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To reduce the number of items on the agendas we could do more Portfolio Holder decisions; - Need to manage risk at an appropriate level e.g. smaller contracts don’t need to go to Cabinet; - For example, Manchester don’t do a lot of day-to-day business at Cabinet as more gets done at Portfolio Holder level (Member/ Officer decisions) so Cabinet focuses on more key/ strategic levels. <p>Neighbourhood Governance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - General engagement – more volunteering, participating, advancing of the Streetwatchers Scheme so public is more involved - There needs to be more

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	<p>their local areas;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Leader signing off the projects has helped lots of projects to take place. <p>Scrutiny:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Keith Fraser keeps us informed of Scrutiny at Corporate Board meetings; - I don't have strong views on the Scrutiny Panels. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - This system does not appear to be very popular; - Bristol City Council adopted a Mayoral model in 2012; - Mainly personality driven. <p>Staffing Decisions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - We haven't got decisions around staffing matters right; - Appeals for Dismissals should not be going to Members especially as some end up in the Employment Tribunals; - Some authorities have Appeals at officer levels. <p>Members:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Newly elected Members/ backbenchers are sometimes not as engaged; - Committees were a good feeder to Member Development; 	<p>Borough Boundary:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mostly Councillors and officers interested in this and residents are less so; - Sharing with other Boroughs is becoming more common. 	<p>cleverer/ sophisticated engagement with residents – what is this Council there for?;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - More debates to be had around community issues.

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I’m not sure that this warrants three Councillors per Ward; - My instinct is ‘yes’ there are too many Councillors. <p>Council:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Motions should be more relevant and focus on residents and policy; - However, where would policy get formed if not in this forum?; - Is this the right mechanism for shaping policy e.g. financial strategy, etc.?; - Questions are burdensome for officers; - There are examples elsewhere where oral questions are mostly used for live broadcasts e.g. Suffolk and Brighton; - Written Questions are very time consuming; - Councillors not receiving responses should be dealt 		

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		<p>with as a separate matter.</p> <p>Ward Forums:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cross-ward Working hasn't really taken off as there hasn't been a lot of interest in the past to do this. 		
4.	<p>Finance/Budget Process:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Important to get these right; - Most effective way of doing this as officers/Cabinet work together on this; - Easy for the Administration to get to grips with this as well informed. <p>Audit Committee:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How effective is this in giving assurance that the financial management is working effectively?; - Will look at reports on e.g. risk management, accounts and sign these 	<p>Finance/Budget Process:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Savings Reports get about two lines at the Cabinet meetings (lots of questions are asked behind the scenes around these); - However, information to others outside the Cabinet process is rather limited as a summarised schedule is put out in the public domain as otherwise there would be too many papers (quantity of papers); - What role can Scrutiny play in this process? - Doesn't allow pre-Scrutiny due to the timetable constraints; 	<p>General:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Disappointingly low attendance at public meetings; - Need to engage more with the public and businesses; - Ward Forums enable some engagement; <p>Managing Public Expectations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Need to manage expectations at a much earlier stage e.g. Council Housing, etc.; - Need to manage the expectations in a very careful way; - After the elections we need to do some real work on this 	<p>Finance/Budget Process:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Key proposals should go to the Scrutiny Panel to select the priorities – this should be manageable within the timetable; - Detailed backing paper are not put in the public domain but Scrutiny could undertake indepth scrutiny of the detailed budget papers e.g. contracts, structure charts, etc. possibly after Cabinet has taken a decision; - The challenge is whether the saving is realistic. <p>Audit Committee:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - An Audit Committee should

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	<p>off and work with External Auditors, etc.?</p> <p>Audit Board:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There is an Audit Board which is an internal Committee of officers which oversees a lot of the matters before these can go to the Audit Committee. <p>Pension Fund Panel:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Things happening elsewhere would impact on the work of the Panel; - Increased employer contributions could impact adversely on the levels of the Council Tax; - This should be kept local and prudent; - London Councils are now working on a development fund to counter some of the issues/difficulties; - City of London/Wandsworth are 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Time is needed – it is end October/early November by the time been through the challenge process (Star Chamber) - Council Tax needs to be set by December. <p>Audit Committee:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Treasury Management reports – not sure what additional value these add to the work of the Committee as a report goes to Council twice a year so would question whether they understand their remit clearly; - Training is required for new Councillors in this area. <p>Local Strategic Partnership:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Is this just a talking shop? <p>Health:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How do we engage with 	<p>to prepare people to include on the manifesto;</p>	<p>be totally independent as the Chair would have an independent role e.g. in fraud cases.</p> <p>Crowd Funding:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Advertise on the website and the public subscribes to the project; - This helps to fund projects as the public funds some of it and some is funded by the Council; - Donations can be made towards this by members of the public. <p>Emergency Budget:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The new Administration would need to take some decisions quickly e.g. last time it happened in July mainly around Housing; - Need to think of what processes should be in place. <p>General:</p>

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	<p>campaigning hard against this;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Former Hedge Fund Manager, Ed Troll, is leading on these matters. <p>Finance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Finance staff involved at an earlier stage; - Renewed energy in tightening things up by the new Finance Director. <p>Legal:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - We have some very good brains in this section; - Staff get involved in matters as are ‘a watchdog’ for the organisation to ensure people stay within the rules and work stacks up for the decision. <p>Scrutiny:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Replaced the Committees System and engages 	<p>them?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Need to understand who is taking the decisions; - Conflicting objectives for Councils and Health; - Partnership (a merger of services) but who pulls the strings?; - As a Council, how do we leverage to drive efficiencies?; - The Health Service presently works so disjointly. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Need to talk to the business leaders to increase their participation and further growth in the borough; - Need to listen to the small businesses; - Need to meet businesses annually regarding the Business Rates; - Incentivise growth e.g. parking, transport, etc.; - More businesses bolsters the revenue and employment in the borough. <p>Health:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I think the Council is the best place to take the decisions; - There should be questions about quality, resources and priorities; - Need to get to grips on how to improve the way this works best for the local community in a more joined up way. <p>Cabinet:</p>

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	<p>backbenchers;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Is one step removed from decision making; - Cabinet system is faster in making decisions than the older Committee System; - Sometimes can be a bit of scrabbling in the dark as outside the Cabinet decision making; - Call-in process is very valuable so need to continue to work on improving this for the future. 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Having Opposition at Cabinet is a good thing in challenging Cabinet decisions; - Need to be accessible, more human and engaging; - Respective roles of Members/Officers – what officers are delegated to do and what Members retain to do; - Big decisions need to be made at Cabinet.
5.	<p>Council:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Democratic and political; - Political stage; - Not dissimilar to other Councils; - Previously, senior officers did not attend these meetings in Ealing but they do so now out of respect for the democratic process and get a good understanding of what the 	<p>Council:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Too many written questions 50-70 (often repetitive over time); - Councillors should get prompt responses to their queries. <p>Scrutiny:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sometimes some recommendations are not easily implemented due to 	<p>Ward Forums:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Good for local involvement and consultation; <p>Community Involvement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There are changes in demographics e.g. the number of 85 years old cohort will double by 2030 and treble by 2045 and there will only be half the cash; 	

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	<p>political issues of the day are;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Senior staff then brief the junior staff of the issues accordingly; - Nuances that we pick up; - Oral questions are a reasonable number; <p>Committee System:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - At the time appeared to work well; <p>Cabinet Structure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - This move gave a more joined up working (as a team rather than an individual); - A cohesive corporate body responsible for all the Council; - This was one of the original objectives of this structure; - Members visit a school/care home, etc. if there is a specific reason 	<p>resource/funding issues.</p> <p>HR Issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Member involvement in HR issues does not happen much in other local authorities; - It is cleaner and easier to leave senior officers to deal with this and appeals against us in the Employment Tribunals; - If senior officers discriminate against junior officers then the process provides for this. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - So need to address this as a Council, community and nation; - We need to encourage people to remain independent longer and communities (neighbourhoods) need to do more in their areas as Councils will not be able to do everything e.g. less street cleaning so members of the public pick up the litter as they walk along; - For example, use Streetwatchers to help with the litter picking, keep an eye on the elderly, etc.; - Need to proactively engage more with the community. 	

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	<p>e.g. a new school opening. Scrutiny does this in a more focused way is effective.</p> <p>Quality of Decision Making:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cabinet does not feel like rubber stamping as there is a process that happens beforehand e.g. Forward Plan, discussions with relevant Councillors (majority group) take place at various stages so are challenged rigorously; - Members of the public attend these meetings. <p>Call-in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Have not been involved in this directly. <p>Scrutiny:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Comprehensive set of processes; - At Ealing this is very focused compared to 			

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	<p>some Local Authorities;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Generally well informed; - Recommendations normally sensible and coherent; - The Health/Social Services Scrutiny works well although this is quite unusual. <p>Planning/Neighbourhood Governance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Am only marginally involved in these two areas. <p>Cabinet:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Model works well - Good Officer/Member relationship; - We have more Council questions and call-ins than most other local authorities but this is not really an issue; - Do not have strong views on the speaking rights for 			

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	<p>non-Cabinet Members.</p> <p>Social Services Complaint System:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Goes through to the Independent Panel (Stage 1-3); - There is strong emphasis on earlier resolution; - Officers are not bureaucrats using a set of rules as need to be more human to resolve these issues. 			
6.	<p>Council:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Forum for political debate; - Replicates the Westminster model. <p>Cabinet:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - At Lewisham, officers present reports and are then questioned by Cabinet; - Report writing is reasonable under the present system. 	<p>Council:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Greater control of agenda. <p>Committee System:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Is cumbersome and mostly working in ‘silos’. <p>Licensing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Whether we can explain the constraints better to the public. - Daytime meetings – Councillor attendance is 	<p>Council:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Public involvement works well. <p>Licensing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The public tends to see the process as either too harsh or too lenient depending on which side they favour. <p>Neighbourhood Planning:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Can get people, other than objectors, involved; 	<p>Council:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Perhaps debate policy issues/ regional issues. <p>Licensing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Need to explain the parameters to the public. <p>Councillors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Perhaps need fewer Councillors.

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	What in your opinion works well?	What in your opinion does not work well?	How is the public engaged?	How would you improve decision making?
	<p>Scrutiny:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Works best at ‘blue sky thinking’ and at holding other bodies to account. <p>Ward Forums:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mixed reports; - Worth investing in; - Positive profile; - Good for Councillors to engage and get things done locally. <p>Neighbourhood Planning:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Good for identifying and promoting projects; - Neighbourhood Plan – a democratic process and other processes e.g. planning, etc. will help inform this. 	<p>more difficult to arrange but is better for applicants, Police, etc.</p> <p>Call-in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Not sure what value this adds; - In a political environment the decision mostly tends to go in the majority party’s way. <p>Number of Councillors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Question whether there is sufficient work for three hard working Councillors; - Re-warding can be difficult. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A referendum helps to bring in the wider views of what the local people want and helps balance conflicting views. 	