

STRENGTHENING LOCAL DEMOCRACY

Report of the Scrutiny Review Panel

Chair Cllr Chris Took

April 2004

CONTENTS

	Page
Foreword by the Chair of the Panel	1
Executive Summary	2
1. Introduction	3
2. Methodology	4
3. Baseline Information	5
4. Results of research	9
5. Analysis, recommendations and conclusions	13
Appendix A – Action Plan	
Appendix B – Questionnaires and survey results	

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

28 APRIL 2004

Subject: **Strengthening Local Democracy Scrutiny Review**

Director/Head of Service: Councillor Chris Took (Panel Chair)
Head of Development Projects (Lead Officer)

Decision Issues: These matters are within the authority of the Executive

Decision: Non-key

Classification: Non-confidential

Ward: **All**

Summary: *The committee is invited to consider the report of the Scrutiny Review Panel, to approve the report and action plan and to recommend it to the Executive for approval and implementation.*

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1. Proposed decision date in list of forthcoming decisions

Not applicable

2. Date first appeared in list of forthcoming decisions

Not applicable

3. Issues for consideration

The Council established this review to consider specific questions relating to the involvement of the public in decision-making and the ways in which the Council engages the public to determine the issues that are important to people when decisions are taken. The extent to which support is provided for councillors has also

been investigated. The panel considered extensive evidence and commissioned research to inform its conclusions. A proposal to investigate alternative methods of voting was pre-empted by government proposals to introduce all-postal voting at local elections.

The report has been circulated as a separate document.

4. Any consultations planned or undertaken

Consultation undertaken during the review is reported in detail in the panel's report.

Management Team has considered the report and advises that some of the recommendations will have resource implications that will need to be carefully considered when they are investigated in detail.

The Scrutiny Management Working Party considered the report on 14 April and commented that there needs to be greater involvement of non-executive councillors in decision making and the Council must look at ways of achieving this. The Working Party's detailed comments can be found in the minutes of the meeting which are elsewhere on this agenda.

5. Options available

a) to comment on the review and recommendations;

b) to recommend or not recommend that the Executive approve the report and implement its recommendations.

6. Any implications known at this stage

As contained in the report and action plan.

7. Any conclusions that can be drawn at this stage

The Council has made significant progress in the way in which it involves people in decision-making and supports councillors but there are further improvements that can be introduced. The role of councillors is still not clearly understood and further support to assist them in raising their profile and undertaking their duties effectively could improve the situation.

8. Next stage in process

To approve the recommendations and action plan and recommend these to the Executive.

Contact Officer: Malcolm Burgess Direct Dial: 862096

List of background papers (excluding published works) for this report:-

None

#Overview SLD report 28 Apr 04

Version 3

Date 15 Apr 04

Time #

APPENDIX A

ACTION PLAN

Strengthening Local Democracy Scrutiny Review - Action Plan

APPENDIX A

Rec No.	Priority High/Med	Actions	Responsible Officer/group	Estimated Cost	Start Date	Delivery Date
1	H	The Council develops its new marketing, public relations and consultation strategy to include comments from the review so that it is seen to be part of a comprehensive pre-decision process.	Head of Policy and Improvement/Head of Culture and Communications	Within existing budgets	Currently under review	Ongoing
2	H	The Council should bid for capital funding for IT by agreeing to pursue democratic renewal priority outcomes to be specified in the e-democracy New National Project for Local Government.	Head of IT	Within existing budgets	Bid in progress	June 2004
3	M	The Council should establish a standard system/protocol for advising councillors, participants and interested parties about issues before decisions are taken and of the outcomes.	Head of Policy and Improvement/ All HoS	Within existing budgets	September 2004	April 2005
4	H	Non-executive member and officer 'champions' be appointed for involving groups that have considered themselves excluded from the decision-making process.	Executive/Overview & Scrutiny Committee	None	May 2004	Ongoing
5	H	Working with schools, KCC Youth and Community, higher and further education establishments and youth organisations, a young peoples' champion should prepare proposals for improving students' and young people's participation in democratic processes. These might include a youth forum, a youth website and expansion of the 'Say What?' scheme.	Member champion/ Head of Housing and Community Development	To be determined	May 2004	November 2004

APPENDIX B

**QUESTIONNAIRES AND SURVEY
RESULTS**

Rec No.	Priority High/Med	Actions	Responsible Officer/group	Estimated Cost	Start Date	Delivery Date
6	H	In parallel with the experiment with members' questions the Executive should introduce for a trial period an opportunity for members of the public to ask questions at meetings of the Executive and Overview and Scrutiny Committee.	Head of Legal and Democratic Services	Within existing budgets	May 2004	Review November 2004
7	M	The meetings of the Council, particularly those at which the public are invited to speak, should be better publicised by measures such as dedicated notice boards in all towns and villages. Details of decisions taken should also be publicised by these means.	Head of Legal and Democratic Services	£?	?	?
8	H	As part of the review of the working of Area Member Panels the devolvement of limited budgets and decision-making powers should be considered.	CPA Review Group	Within existing budgets	March 2004	September 2004
9	M	The purpose, format and content of District Life be reviewed to widen interest in it, to create a forum for public opinion and to develop it as a consultation tool. The possibility of offering competitions with prizes to encourage responses should be investigated.	District Life Editorial Board/Head of Policy and Improvement/Head of Culture and Communications	Within existing budgets	May 2004	November 2004
10	H	The Council's communication policy must set clear standards to promote the use of plain language, to reduce the use of jargon in reports and publications and to provide clear explanations where the use of jargon or technical terms is essential. The council must ensure that the standards are adhered to.	Head of Culture and Communications	Within existing budgets	May 2004	Ongoing

Rec No.	Priority High/Med	Actions	Responsible Officer/group	Estimated Cost	Start Date	Delivery Date
11	H	Details of ward councillors should be delivered to every household in each ward in a memorable and easily retrievable form, such as on fridge magnets, together with an explanation of what a councillor can do and details of surgeries.	Head of Culture and Communications/Head of Legal and Democratic Services	To be determined	July 2004??	Ongoing
12	M	The A-Z should include information about how to obtain committee reports, agendas and minutes and details of the cycle of meetings as well as guidance about how people can participate in decision-making.	Head of Culture and Communications	Within existing budgets	May 2004	April 2005
13	H	Councillors should be encouraged to establish a programme of visits to schools in their wards.	Political Groups/Council Members	None	May 2004	Ongoing
14	M	The Council should investigate a public enquiry point on the Council's website where people can contact councillors.	Head of IT	To be determined	September 2004	April 2005
15	M	Develop the role of group PAs to assist councillors in arranging surgeries, to establish a central database of good practice and to advise on where information and support can be obtained.	Head of Legal and Democratic Services	Within existing budgets	May 2004	Ongoing
16	M	In conjunction with the Member Training sub-group to develop more opportunities for training, particularly on the use of IT, to enable councillors to make full use of the resources available to them according to their needs as they perceive them.	Member training sub-group/ Head of Legal and Democratic Services/Head of Personnel	Within existing budgets	May 2004	Ongoing

Rec No.	Priority High/Med	Actions	Responsible Officer/group	Estimated Cost	Start Date	Delivery Date
17	H	All departments should improve arrangements for responding to enquiries from councillors, ensuring that follow-up information is provided and that city, county and parish councillors are kept aware of matters occurring within their wards.	All Heads of Service	Within existing budgets	May 2004	Ongoing
18	M	Review the format and content of Not On Your Agenda to develop it into a source of more comprehensive information for councillors.	Head of Legal and Democratic Services	Within existing budgets	May 2004	September 2004
19	M	Include a web page detailing useful websites and other sources of information for councillors and officers.	Head of IT	To be determined	September 2004	April 2005
20	H	Work with the new catering contractors to develop a more varied selection of menus for food for meetings at different times of day.	Head of Culture and Communications	Within existing budgets	May 2004	Ongoing

APPENDIX B

Local Democracy Day Survey

Number of Respondents: 37

Age breakdown

15	9	24.32%
16	16	43.24%
17	8	21.62%
18	3	8.11%
No reply	1	2.70%

Gender breakdown

Male	20	54.05%
Female	16	43.24%
No reply	1	2.70%

Responses to questions relevant to the review –

8. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements:

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	No reply
I feel that I can influence the decisions made by the council that affect me	1	11	15	7	1	2
	2.70%	29.73%	40.54%	18.92%	2.70%	5.41%
I do not think that it is important to vote in local elections	-	1	3	15	16	2
	-	2.70%	8.11%	40.54%	43.24%	5.41%
I feel that I am well informed about what Canterbury Council does	-	3	11	18	3	2
	-	8.11%	29.73%	48.65%	8.11%	5.41%

9. **What do you think are the best ways the council can involve young people in making decisions?**

15	M	More days like these!
15	M	Put out questionnaires and enquire more as to our opinions
15	M	Public debates
15	M	Lord Mayor's Debate style events
15	M	Projects such as the Lord Mayor's Debate aimed at encouraging participation
15	F	In events like today
15	F	This sort of scheme but possibly having it so that there were one or two people from each school and these represented the general attitude of the school from which they came.
16	M	Going around schools and youth clubs
16	M	Actually listen to them, make them feel that their opinion is truly valued and not just dismiss them as kids. Most young people feel they are never listened to.
16	M	Inviting them to speak
16	M	Hold more youth councils
16	M	Broadcasting council meetings over the internet
16	M	Youth opinion polls (can I have the credit)
16	M	Give the youth council a bigger role
16	M	Hold more events like this one
16	M	I believe it is only necessary to ask them about things that would affect them or else they wouldn't be interested.
16	M	Online voting to gauge opinion on an issue
16	M	Have more debates open to young people such as this.
16	F	Increase the influence of the youth council. Make people more informed.
16	F	Let us have more say, ie give us a 'mock role'. Publish council proposals for us to read, ie start a web site.
16	F	More importance placed on Kent Youth Council - give them more power.
16	F	Advertise more; come into schools.
17	M	Frequent questionnaires, visiting schools
17	M	Going out into schools to advertise role of local democracy and important issues, as well as bringing in pupils for days such as this.
17	M	More days like this
17	F	Same as this
17	F	Contacting local schools, telling them what is important to local young people. Have discussions within school about the community.
17	F	Political forums in schools run by councillors/council workers. More information to young people on what's going on through schools.
17	F	School contact
17	F	Weekly 'youth issues' discussion groups; questionnaires sent to schools
18	F	Go around to schools, youth clubs and talk to them
18	F	Referenda; a youth council group with the Mayor
18	F	School visits, personalised past

10. **How do you think the council could keep young people better informed about issues and activities relevant to them?**

15	M	More inter-school relationships
15	M	Publishing a leaflet directed at young people to be made available where young people go, like McDonalds or the cinema
15	M	Hand out leaflets
15	M	Speaking to schools
15	M	Open channels of communication through schools, eg councillors appearing at school assemblies
15	F	Leaflets/talks at school
16	M	Sending information to schools and youth clubs
16	M	Inform through schools, tell people of the opportunities.
16	M	Making debates interesting
16	M	Through schools
16	M	Send a regular newsletter out
16	M	School visits
16	M	School/college involvements, open debates
16	M	Newsletters directed at young people
16	M	Issue leaflets containing relevant information.
16	M	Distributing free magazine better
16	M	Debates! Debates! Debates!
16	F	Regular interesting magazines. Arrange more debates between schools.
16	F	Newsletter, website, accessible information, given out at schools.
16	F	Leaflets through doors and to schools.
16	F	Magazine
17	M	Newsletters
17	M	Going out into schools as above.
17	M	Newsletters
17	F	Papers around school
17	F	Contact local young people through schools
17	F	Political forums. Newsletters/posters through schools and in places frequented by young people.
17	F	Schools e-mail
17	F	Questionnaires at schools
18	F	Go around to schools, youth clubs and talk to them
18	F	Talks in schools; representatives on the Council; youth magazines/paper
18	F	Adverts in papers, at schools, at home on local news

INVITED FORUM 18 NOVEMBER 2003

Initial analysis of issues/ideas

1. Are Council's decision-making processes accessible to the public?

- a) The public should not expect to be 'spoon-fed'. Information should be made available for them to be able to find out things if they are interested. The availability of information has improved over the years.
- b) People who participate should be given feedback on the outcome i.e. the decision that the Council makes.
- c) The new democratic structure is seen as less accessible (and accountable?) than the former committee system. It is more difficult to understand and to participate in. There is suspicion about decisions taken by a small caucus of councillors.
- d) The jargon of the new system is more difficult to understand. Publicly accessible reports should be written in language that ordinary members of the public can understand.
- e) There is a perception of too much window dressing at the expense of delivery of real services. However, this view is contradicted to some extent by claims that the Council does not communicate enough about what it does, nor does it consult adequately.
- f) There is a need for clearer, simpler guidance about how people can participate in decision-making. The processes are obscure and need to be explained more simply.
- g) The Council needs to listen to a genuine cross-section of external representation.
- h) Decisions should be publicised better in accessible ways. There is a lack of knowledge about how to obtain agendas, reports and minutes.
- i) There should be feedback to people who have commented on planning applications. *(This does, in fact, occur – there will be more information about this).*
- j) Councillors should show the courtesy to speakers of appearing to be listening to what they have to say at meetings.
- k) There is a lack of information being sent to parish councils about what is happening in their areas.
- l) The website needs to be improved to make it more user-friendly and with information regularly updated.
- m) Area Member Panels (and all council meetings?) should be better publicised to encourage attendance by the public.

2. How can the Council know what the needs and issues of the public are?

a) Councillors should maintain throughout their period of office the level of contact that they make at election times - publicise regular surgeries, attend local events and meetings.

b) Read and take note of the local press.

c) Consult and involve people more widely, particularly with businesses on issues concerning the local economy.

d) Conduct more surveys where people gather naturally e.g. group/club meetings, outside schools.

e) Send questionnaires/comment forms with Council Tax bills to obtain views that can inform the following year's budget.

f) Find appropriate ways of contacting young people/students to encourage their continuing input. (*Applicable to all 'excluded' groups?*). Greater contact through schools.

g) People do respond on matters that genuinely concern them.

h) The website could be used for discussion and to obtain opinions.

i) The split of responsibilities between CCC and other bodies (particularly KCC) should be made clearer and the relative proportions of the Council Tax that each receives. This could avoid officers having to spend time fielding enquiries/complaints that are wrongly directed.

j) Encourage the formation of groups that can genuinely represent collective points of view to reduce the number of individual responses.

k) Set up town/urban parish councils to deal with local matters and to present local representations to the City Council.

l) Try proportional representation at the next City Council elections in 2007.

3. How well does the Council inform, listen and involve the public in decision-making?

a) There is a belief that the Council is genuinely trying to do this but that it has not got it right yet.

b) Councillors should show more genuine interest in issues and spend less time on politicking.

c) There needs to be greater clarification of the different roles of CCC and KCC.

d) More use should be made of the local press to inform and alert people.

- e) District Life is not effective – there is a perception that the majority of people do not read it.
- f) The business community does not feel involved or welcome. Other special interest groups seem to be more closely involved.
- g) The Council needs to find a way of letting people know that they have been heard.
- h) More public meetings and media coverage on specific issues to inform councillors before they take decisions. There is the impression that decisions are already taken before consultation.
- i) The inclination of people to vote is influenced by their perception of whether their vote, or indeed the council itself, can make any difference.
- j) The Council must ensure that issues upon which decisions are to be made are widely publicised well in advance. Interested organisations, such as parish councils, must be advised of matters that will be coming forward in their areas.
- k) The Council needs to be seen to give careful consideration to representations and to give an explanation when it takes decisions that are contrary to these representations.

Those who attended the forum:-

Mr D Beerling – Canterbury resident
Mrs P Beerling - -----“-----
Mr B Bethell – Canterbury resident
Mr B Bounds – Editor, Kentish Gazette
Mr J Cross – Canterbury Chamber of Trade
Mrs C Davis – Herne and Broomfield Parish Council
Mr R Eburne – Herne Bay Residents Association
Mr T Fox – Simon Langton Boys’ School
Mrs A Graham – Petham Parish Council
Mr Graham
Mrs A Wilks – Whitstable resident

BEST PRACTICE COUNCILS QUESTIONNAIRE

Canterbury City Council
Strengthening Local Democracy Scrutiny Review – Questionnaire

To save any duplication, if there are documents available on your website that answer any of the questions below then please indicate where they are available.

<p>1. How do you make the decision-making process more accountable?</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The way the Executive/Cabinet makes decisions? • The way Scrutiny issues are handled? • The use of Area working? If you have area working:<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Do they make decisions or are they consultative? - Do they have devolved budgets? - Do they have delegated powers? - Do you co-opt external representatives (e.g. non-officer or non member)?

2.

**How do the public normally make contact with elected Members?
(Please tick)**

• Surgeries

• "Ward walks"

• Email

• Other methods (Please state

3.

How does the council engage people less likely to get involved? For example:

What other initiatives/processes have you put in place to involve the local community?

How do you involve young people in decision-making?

Do you have dedicated forums for involving the views of minority ethnic groups in decision-making?

Do you have dedicated forums for involving the views of senior citizens in decision-making?

How do you deal with Issue-base interest groups?

STRENGTHENING LOCAL DEMOCRACY SCRUTINY REVIEW

BEST PRACTICE COUNCIL QUESTIONNAIRE – RESULTS

Question	Bracknell Forest	East Hants	Oxford
1. How do you make the decision-making process more accountable?			
Executive/Cabinet?	Information made freely available to residents.	Cabinet meetings take questions from members and public, subject to notice. Public participation in debates at discretion of cabinet chair.	Information freely available to residents.
Scrutiny?	Public Scrutiny Commission (O&S) and panels meet in public. Panels co-opt external participants.	O&S can commission public inquiries into matters and ask people to give evidence.	
Area Working?	Not used.	4 Area Community Committees, each producing an area action plan and regular bulletins.	Six Area Committees which produce area plans
Area decision-taking?	N/a	Decision taking and consultative	Decision taking
Devolved budgets?	N/a	Small amounts (C£10,000)	Small amounts. Proposal to delegate more.
Delegated powers?	N/a	Limited	Yes
Co-opt external representatives?	N/a	Parish councillors	Power to co-opt
2. How do the public normally make contact with members?	Surgeries, e-mail, telephone, face to face.	E-mail, telephone.	Surgeries, area committees
3. How does the council engage people less likely to get involved?			
New initiatives?	Consultation. Non-executive members appointed as champions – vulnerable and young people; pensioners;		Talkback – system of consultation

	tenants; voluntary sector		
Involving young people?	Youth Forum. Vulnerable and Young People's champion.	Council Citizenship Scheme in partnership with schools (12-17yr olds). Youth forum in 2 parishes.	Youth parliament (now relatively inactive).
Minority ethnic groups?	No specific forum.		No.
Senior citizens?	Pensioners' champion.		Pensioners' forum.
Other issue-based groups?	Standing panels or one-off consultations depending on need.		

More detailed information is available on each council's website.

Strengthening Local Democracy Street Survey Results

Number of Respondents: 62

Date

16/12/2003	12	25.93%
18/12/2003	40	74.07%

Area

Canterbury	16	25.81%
Herne Bay	25	40.32%
Whitstable	20	32.26%
No reply	1	1.61%

1. Have you heard of the new Canterbury District Residents' Card?

Yes, I already have one	2	3.23%
Yes, but I don't have one	16	25.81%
Never heard of it	35	56.45%
No reply	9	14.52%

2. Have you ever contacted your local councillor?

Yes	2	3.23%
No	60	96.77%

3. If yes, why?

Planning permission

4. If no, do you know how to go about contacting your local councillor?

Yes	17	27.42%
No	44	70.97%
No reply	1	1.61%

5. **How accessible do you think councillors are in general?**

Very accessible	3	4.84%
Quite accessible	37	59.68%
Not very accessible	20	32.26%
Completely inaccessible	1	1.61%
No reply	1	1.61%

6. **Which is the main way that councillors could become more accessible?**

Ward walks	0	0.00%
Local surgeries	28	45.16%
Local meetings	10	16.13%
Newsletters	22	35.48%
Other	1	1.61%
No reply	1	1.61%

7. **To what extent do you agree with the following statements?**

	Strongly agree	Agree	No opinion	Disagree	Strongly disagree	No reply
(a) Local politics does not affect me	1	28	14	18	1	-
	1.61%	45.16%	22.58%	29.03%	1.61%	-
(b) Issues made by the city council are important to me	1	20	29	12	-	-
	1.61%	32.26%	46.77%	19.35%	-	-
(c) I feel that I can influence the decisions made by the city council	1	5	25	26	4	1
	1.61%	8.06%	40.32%	41.94%	6.45%	1.61%

8. **From the following list of ways to vote, which would you prefer in the future?**

Vote at polling station	31	50.00%
Vote via the website	14	22.58%
Vote via a text message	8	12.90%
Postal vote	8	12.90%
Other	1	1.61%

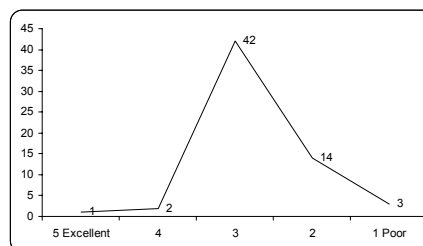
'Other' response: Would not vote

9. **Were you aware that everyone can now have a postal vote?**

Yes	11	17.74%
No	50	80.65%
No reply	1	1.61%

10. **Overall, on a scale of 1 to 5 (5=Excellent and 1=Poor), how would you rate Canterbury City Council?**

5 Excellent	1	1.61%
4	2	3.23%
3	42	67.74%
2	14	22.58%
1 Poor	3	4.84%



11. **Are you...**

Male	30	48.39%
Female	32	51.61%

12. **Age**

Under 11	0	0.00%
11 - 18	10	16.13%
19 - 24	14	22.58%
25 - 35	7	11.29%
36 - 50	16	25.81%
51 - 65	6	9.68%
65 and over	8	12.90%
No reply	1	1.61%

13. **Which postcode area do you live in?**

CT1	3	4.84%
CT2	8	12.90%
CT3	-	-
CT4	4	6.45%
CT5	23	37.10%

CT6	24	38.71%
-----	----	--------

14. **Any further comments**

Reduce the Council Tax!

Strengthening Local Democracy Scrutiny Review Support for Councillors

Number of respondents: 16

1. Do you feel sufficiently informed about what the council is doing?

Yes	11	68.75%
No	4	25.00%
No reply	1	6.25%

Do you know where to ask for information and assistance?

Yes	14	87.50%
No	1	6.25%
No reply	1	6.25%

2. Do you read Not On Your Agenda?

Never	-	-
Sometimes	5	31.25%
Frequently	11	68.75%
No reply	-	-

3. Are you satisfied with the process for obtaining information from officers?

Yes	13	81.25%
No	3	18.75%
No reply	-	-

If no, how do you think this might be improved?

No, but I now get the feeling that members of the Executive are informed about issues raised.

Once you can identify an issue, officers are glad to help.

The problem comes (for new councillors) with issues where you lack the background.

Better availability of officers.

Direction as to whom to approach - there is no guide to new members.

Some officers have referred members to portfolio holders.

There seems to be "an air of secrecy" towards non-executive members.

See answer to Q9

Not "kept advised of progress" but I can obtain information by asking Heads of Service. They always assist.

The speed of response and completeness of the information seems to be related to the department. Highways seem to be best followed by planning and then housing. Advanced info on the Drainage Scheme in Sweechgate has been the best of all! Hearing about bollards in McCarthy Avenue after they were planted the worst.

4. How satisfied are you with the way in which you are kept advised of progress in matters affecting your ward and with enquiries you make on behalf of constituents?

Very Satisfied	1	6.25%
Satisfied	11	68.75%
Dissatisfied	3	18.75%
No reply	1	6.25%

5. Are there any areas where you find difficulty in gaining access to information and support?

Yes	6	31.25%
No	9	62.50%
No reply	1	6.25%

If so, where?

Generally, I have to keep asking for an update rather than receive updates automatically. If something is 'flagged' as being of interest to a councillor then information should be passed automatically

I have not come across any but there may be perhaps where I have not had reason to seek this yet.

Transport can occasionally be an issue although I suspect this is because of the cooperation we have with KCC that extends issues. I would like more help with residents who are mad/drunk/abusive.....I don't really know where councillors should go to work with such issues.

Highways, Planning, Personnel. Planning is now routed via IT's call centre and this leads to frustration and procrastination by some officers. Highways take an inordinate time to action decisions of the JTB. That, in itself only meets some four times a year!!

I wish the New Pier Working Party would issue an interim report for the benefit of all Herne Bay members.

Whenever an Officer visits my ward (Heron) - I wish to be informed of this visit, in advance! (In case one of my colleagues has forgotten to tell me!)

If I do have difficulty I just persist until I get an answer.

Housing always reply to letters re Ward. Eric Banning keeps me informed on Highway matters regarding my ward. Anything else about Sturry I find out for myself.

Although initial contact is prompt, polite and efficient it can be difficult to get as good a response for follow up information or action.

More complete information should be supplied to all members about the costs of any project or work proposed. Budget data should be supplied in absolute numbers, rather than as a variance on last year.

6. Do you use the council's website and intranet?

Never	5	31.25%
Sometimes	10	62.50%
Frequently	1	6.25%
No reply	-	-

If you use them what do you use them for most frequently?

News	3	18.75%
Details of Services	1	6.25%
Minutes	4	25.00%
Reports	4	25.00%
No reply	5	31.35%

Other?

Just general browsing

Editing e-mails

Usually for any communications to myself.

Contact details

To receive and send e-mails from/to fellow councillors and officers.

Use e-mail only. V Useful indeed. Prefer to have reports on paper.

7. Are you aware of information that is available on local government issues on various websites and other sources?

Yes	11	68.75%
No	4	25.00%
No reply	1	6.25%

8. What training would help you in your role as a councillor?

Any training, available outside of the normal working day.

I think I have been a councillor long enough not to need any training.

Perhaps experienced councillors should help new ones. (I am actually doing this in my ward)

I do need more computer training - it is largely my fault that I have not found the time!

Briefing on changes to law relating to planning, licensing etc. Council policy on housing waiting lists.

E-mailing expertise - but this is now in hand through the IT department

New licensing training as I have been allocated to this committee (assuming that there is more information for me to learn about) at present.

A "mentor" telling me, crucially, why things (like parish concurrent funding) are the way they are (rightly or wrongly). (I could probably set this up for myself, but need the time and initiative).

None in particular.

The Lib Dem group attempted to instigate a buddy system where an older councillor looks after a younger one. This can be positive and negative on some issues. I find it has been better to find my own feet. Maybe a better understanding of role and responsibility would help - that said I know I have probably missed some very good courses due to work commitments.

Ethics and probity issues. Budget and Finance. Member/officer relationships. Scrutiny.

Basic IT training, as I missed out last year, especially Intranet and Trove. I cannot praise too highly the help which Spencer Clark has been.

Training in managing casework, both in terms of giving the resident good service and in related administrative tasks.

Training in committee procedure, so you can use standing orders to get your voice heard.

Probably time management.

9. What improvements can you suggest in the way the council supports its members in their role as ward representatives?

Perhaps a senior officer could be appointed "ward champion" to provide practical support.

Keeping them informed throughout all processes. Listening to their views- councillors know their wards and the views of local people. They need to be supported. Issues should not become political, but put the people first.

Not aware of any - if I was I would have asked!

If Trove is to be the main source of consulting reports and minutes, a more sophisticated indexing system would be useful to search for ward and subject.

For new councillors: - letter writing, - dealing with case work

Restrict the amount of paperwork which is sent out - it is depressingly large and frequent! There is much which does neither affect me or even interest me.

The Council has an electoral role; but occupants are moving all the time.

Does it also have a list of dwellings, taken (say) from the last census, or from other public sources?

Given the nature of the job, where it seems to be a free-for-all/do as you can or will or not, I can thank of very little support which might be forthcoming.

Officers were very good at helping me on a number of issues. Maybe a series of "Open Days" may help but then as previously mentioned I probably missed some good advice and also one would not want "introduction training" to be patronising. It is a difficult balance. (Sorry Malcolm that wasn't very helpful).

Change the current system of governance and get back to members being able to take decision on committees. My electorate is frustrated by the long delays in getting simple requests processed through the morass of bureaucracy of local government.

Should any officers have ideas for my ward which have not been put into a report, I would like to be notified at the earliest opportunity. There should be periodic meetings between officers and the 3 members of our ward, a 2-way discussion.

What support? I organize and run my monthly advice surgery, find answers to queries and then write to the constituent. I get no support for this and even have to provide my own paper, envelopes and postage.

Being alerted to upcoming issues.

Perhaps to provide sample Action Plans or typical issues that residents bring to Councillors.

Reversion to a committee rather than an executive structure for decision-making, though I obviously understand that this is not part of the review scope!

10. Have you any other comments to make on the support provided for councillors?

It is there when you ask for it. - Who notices when you are quiet?

Has improved over the past few years.. Not on your agenda is often out of date by the time it goes out. Especially the Diary Dates which have often changed or been cancelled. Regarding Food: this is welcome especially when meetings follow each other. However, sometimes too many

sandwiches (I often end up having them both for lunch and in the evening). Healthier option (salads) would be welcome. Parking needs attention, especially at Tower House and sometimes the public use it if the barrier is up. I have found it to be generally good. Occasionally correspondence has not been followed up but I have found my working relationship with officers helpful.

Compared with what they were when I first became a councillor 16 years ago - they have improved beyond all recognition! Then we had no room, no secretarial support and many officers were reluctant to talk to "opposition" councillors.

No. I am too new to the Council to have fully formed ideas on this. I would like to see a much fairer system of allowances paid to councillors. Nothing was done about these at the time of the changeover. They are now almost completely out of balance and generally compare unfavourably with neighbouring authorities. When I was elected I didn't even know how to switch on the microphone in the Guildhall so that I became somewhat cynical about any support and/or training. Given the difficulties of finding suitable candidates to stand for election I now know why: Once elected it seems to be a case of finding whoever is available to do the "jobs", apart from the favoured few who seem to be preordained.

The support I received was of, I believe, a high standard. The balance between an institutional 'new councillor' training and members finding their own feet is a difficult one.

Need for all members to appreciate the requirements for on-going training and development.

When the proposed officer restructuring has taken place, I would appreciate some further Induction Training as I missed out on the last one. I am not very 'au fait' with the Press Office.

Only by reading all agendas am I able to know some of what is going on in CCC. I never see agendas/minutes of working parties so haven't a clue of what they talk about. Items on CAMP can affect my ward - A28 traffic for example so I now have to ask for that agenda. WAMP and HB.AMP are closed books as far as I am concerned.

To reduce the number of items on agenda's, so that those issues that are discussed are done so thoroughly. I intensely dislike to be used as a 'rubber stamp'.

