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Democracy Commission recommendations – Progress so far

We have already made progress, working in a way that is consistent with the principles adopted by the Commission:

Everything starts with the citizen – We have piloted a number of activities in direct response to specific needs identified by our citizens. These include a live and interactive Kirklees Question Time event in which citizens could put their questions to a panel of local leaders, and a series of “A Day in the Life of a Councillor” videos to help citizens understand different aspects of the councillor role. We are actively developing pathways for our young citizens to become involved in civic society. 20 schools have taken part in new activities to engage young citizens in local democracy. Our electoral outreach activities involve schools and colleges throughout Kirklees, along with the University of Huddersfield.

Working in the open – We are embedding our open way of working into our activities, and in particular looking for new opportunities to use digital and social media to increase democratic engagement. For example, we have already extended the use of our webcasting technology for interactive public events, national partnership events, and Q and A sessions for our staff.

Having a partnership approach – Our network is growing. We worked with 15 different partners to deliver an extended programme of events for Local Democracy Week. We are co-ordinating the Vote 100 in Kirklees network, in collaboration with the University of Huddersfield. We are part of networks to celebrate the 150th anniversaries of the boroughs of Huddersfield and Batley. We are also working with NCS, Third Sector Leaders and Democracy Club.

Evidence led – We are using the evidence that we’ve gathered to redesign the way we do things. For example, we’ve developed staff briefings and “Working in a Political Environment” workshops to help our staff understand the importance of the councillor role and how it is an invaluable asset as part of changing and redesigning services. This is in direct response to what we learned from staff and councillors as part of our evidence gathering process. We are currently designing a more focussed and streamlined councillor induction programme following feedback from councillors, to make more effective use of councillor and officer time.

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Commission recommendation	Actions to support delivery	Impact
<p>Kirklees Council should ensure that schools play a central role as local democratic hubs as part of the delivery of an Active Citizens Strategy. This should involve designing (and putting into practice) a range of approaches which will create pathways for young citizens to become involved in civic society, including raising awareness about being a councillor.</p>	<p>A range of approaches and opportunities to engage with schools initially piloted during European Local Democracy Week (ELDW) and now part of a regular programme to raise awareness of what Councillors do, how decisions are made and encourage young citizens to be active in their communities.</p> <p>Over 400 young people from Hyrstmount Batley, Huddersfield Grammar, St Marys Gomersal, Lowerhouses Junior School, East Bierley Primary School, Birstall Primary School, Paddock Junior & Infant, Cambridge Street School Batley, St Marys Catholic Primary School Batley, Staincliffe Junior School, Newsome Junior School, Colne Valley High School, Paddock I&J School, Almondbury and Royds Hall Community School participated in the following ways:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School Participatory Budgeting in the Council Chamber - How would YOU spend the money? Working with 3 Commissioners, 30 young people from two school councils were given responsibility for allocating a small budget for worthy community or school projects. 22 community/young citizen led social action projects were funded encouraging active citizenship 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young citizens begin to understand they have a stake in the place they live and have opportunities to influence the future of their community and the decisions affecting it. • Young citizens are interested and have the opportunity to be engaged in social action and local democracy • Young people develop listening, debating, negotiation, budget management, consensus building, and presentation skills.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Meet the Mayor - & the Council Chamber Experience. Over 50 young people from five schools visited Huddersfield Town Hall to meet the Mayor and Deputy Mayor of Kirklees to find out about their journey and learn more about their role.• Meet your Councillor - Local democracy sessions in schools. Following the launch of the Councillor Tool Kit at the October Council meeting, a number of Councillors have held local democracy sessions in schools. These sessions are interactive and help young citizens learn about where they live, who their local ward councillors are and their roles and how to contact them. To date Councillor led sessions have been held in the following schools:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ St Mary's Gomersal○ Spring Grove School○ Newsome Junior School assembly○ Birkby Primary○ Royds Hall Secondary○ Netherhall Learning Campus○ Honley High School○ Colne Valley High School○ Paddock I&J○ King James High, Almondbury• Electoral Outreach attendance at year 10 & 11 assemblies to raise awareness of participation in the democratic process, focusing on electoral registration;	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Young citizens have a better understanding about the significance of the Mayor's robes, mace and chain, had their own debates in the Council Chamber and found out more about what democracy means.• Young citizens are equipped with skills, confidence and knowledge and empowered to have their voices heard on issues that are important to them.• Young citizens have a stake in the place they live and are able to inform and influence the future of their community and the decisions affecting it• Young citizens are interested and have the opportunity to be engaged in local democracy• Young citizens start to develop a greater understanding of the Councillor role.
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Proactive engagement with Heads of years 10 & 11 in all schools across Kirklees to engage young people through delivery of democracy workshops either directly, via training of Youth Councillors or Ambassadors or by provision of resources to teaching staff;• Continuation of work with Schools Colleges and the University in support of activities to increase understanding and awareness of the benefits of engaging with the democratic process, this work includes:<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Voter registration sessions;- Delivery of Rock Enrol and vote with your feet workshops;- Attendance at Fresher Fayres;- Provision of resources to Huddersfield University Students Union and to PSCE Tutors in Colleges and schools.• Continuation of work with the NCS, including delivery of the Rock Enrol workshops, provision of training and resources to NCS staff and mentors. <p>In terms of planned work an exciting partnership has been established with Kirklees Council, NCS and local partners to boost the number of young people participating in the National Citizen Service Programme, especially from under-represented groups and to maximise the</p>	
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	<p>powerful impact of the programme upon young people and the wider community. The Programme is available to every young person aged 15-17 to help them develop confidence, skills and knowledge for life and the world of work. More information will be provided to a future meeting of the Working Group.</p>	
<p>Kirklees Council should promote the role of councillor to help Kirklees citizens understand the role and to encourage citizens to come forward and stand as councillors. We should positively promote the councillor role based on the real life experiences of our councillors, and demonstrate how being a councillor can enrich a person's life.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An extended programme of events across Kirklees was organised working with 15 different partners (Kirklees Youth Council, The Media Centre, University of Huddersfield, Creative Scene, Hidden Track Theatre, It's a Word Thing, Hannah Directory, Conscious Youth CIC, Kirklees Young Employee's Network, Huddersfield Students' Union, Building African Caribbean Communities, Global Diversity Positive Action, LGiU, UK Parliament outreach. and a number of council services) as part of ELDW to help citizens learn more about local democracy and be more aware of and more involved with the issues that really matter in our local communities. Over 600 people took part. A few examples include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>A Day in the Life of a Councillor</i> Videos – to date elected members in Birstall & Birkenshaw, Dalton, Newsome, Greenhead, Almondbury, Lindley and Batley East have been videoed in a number of different 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active citizens have a stake in the place they live and are able to inform and influence the future of their community and the decisions affecting it • Contacts and relationships with partners developed and strengthened providing greater opportunities for collaboration going forward eg with Vote 100, Huddersfield Borough and Batley Borough 150th anniversary celebrations. • 78% of participants who completed our ELDW feedback survey said that they had learned something new about local democracy by participating in one or more of our events. • Councillors are accessible, their role is clear, widely communicated and universally understood

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	<p>settings to demonstrate different aspects of the councillor role.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ <i>A Woman's Work</i> - 35 participants had the opportunity to listen to lightning talks from some of our local councillors, MPs and Chief Exec. Speakers shared their inspiring stories of life in local government and how their lives and local communities are enhanced by what they do. The Fawcett Society also attended to share highlights from their research <i>Does Local Government Work for Women?</i>○ <i>The Political Game</i> - Hidden Track Theatre Company, organised by Creative Scene. Participants explored how decisions are made, who gets to make decisions and how do we feel when they are made.○ <i>Democracy Workshop for Young People</i> – organised by the Young Employee Network. An opportunity for young citizens to learn more about local democracy, find out how to get their voice heard and how to register to vote.○ <i>People Helping People Events</i> arranged by the Third Sector Leaders – 1 per district area. An opportunity for citizens to better understand how	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Citizen's awareness of different methods of voting and group decision-making is raised. ● Creating opportunities for citizens to have a real stake in the place where they live so they can influence their community's future.
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	<p>to engage/work with local ward councillors to make their communities better together.</p>	
<p>Kirklees Council should promote the role of councillors to staff members in a structured and ongoing way, as part of wider cultural changes both with the council and in our communities. Our staff should understand the importance of the councillor role and how it is an invaluable asset as part of changing and redesigning services.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two staff briefings (75 attendees) led by a Commissioner and Chief Exec were held during ELDW <i>I work for a democratic organisation and I'm proud of that</i>. The interactive session explored practical ideas and suggestions on how we can build understanding with staff and Cllrs of each other's roles. • Working in a Political Environment workshops have been developed – a choice of bespoke service specific sessions or general sessions all bookable via MiPod. The session is ideal for staff who want to improve their understanding of political and democratic processes, learn about the importance of the councillor role, and find out how staff and councillors can work together effectively. Bespoke Sessions delivered to date include:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Early Help Team – 30 staff ○ Public Health Leadership Team – 10 staff ○ People Service – 60 staff ○ Stronger Families Team – 15 staff ○ Transformation team – 20 staff ○ Streetscene & Housing – booked 1/3/18 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff can better understand the importance of working in a political environment and how officers (at all levels) and our elected members can work together collaboratively by developing mutual understanding and respect for each other's roles.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Physical Activities team – booked 23/3/18 ○ Economic Resilience Team – date tbc ○ Safer Kirklees Team – date tbc ○ School Facilities Manager – date tbc ○ Young Employees Network – date tbc ○ 26 employees signed up to attend general session. 	
<p>The Kirklees Members Allowances Independent Review Panel (MAIRP) should consider linking annual changes in the rate of councillors' allowances to the pay rate for local government officers.</p>	<p>The Allowances Panel considered this recommendation at their meeting on 10 November 2017. They have agreed this as a way forward as evidenced by the report which will go to Council in March 2018.</p>	
<p>Kirklees Council should ensure that councillors have the correct tools to carry out the changing councillor role. This involves:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building new councillor induction around the core expectations set out in the revised role profile. This should be compulsory for all new councillors but should also be open to all councillors. • Ensuring that any councillors who hold a position of special responsibility are fully briefed about the role, the expectations and the core knowledge required to effectively carry it out. • Implementing the findings of the councillor group who are currently looking at IT provision for councillors. 	<p>Planning is underway for the 2018 New Councillor Induction.</p> <p>Feedback was sought from Councillors elected in 2016 about their Induction which was held over a four week period.</p> <p>The 2018 Induction will be taking place over two days on the 9th and 10th May. The sessions have been condensed so that new Councillors are not overloaded with information and appropriate breaks have been built in on both days.</p> <p>It has been arranged for Councillors elected in 2016 to meet with new Councillors and offer advice and support to their new colleagues.</p> <p>Training sessions for Councillors appointed to Planning, Licensing and Substitutes Panel</p>	<p>A more focussed and streamlined process for induction meaning more effective use of Councillor and Officer time.</p>

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	<p>and the annual update training will be arranged and will take place between Annual Council and the first meetings in the Municipal Year.</p> <p>Briefings will be arranged with Councillors appointed to Chair positions of Special Responsibility following Annual Council. Staff from within the Democracy Service will arrange this with the relevant Lead Officer within the appropriate service or will brief Councillors directly on the role, requirements and expectations.</p>	
<p>Kirklees Council should support all our councillors to understand and embrace digital technology. Digital literacy should be a core expectation of the councillor role. It should be part of new councillor induction and councillor development, so that we support councillors in developing their digital skills and confidence, and enable them to play an active part in explaining our decision-making processes to our citizens. Commission members should pilot this approach.</p> <p>AND</p> <p>Kirklees Council should provide timely information and intelligence at a ward and neighbourhood level to support councillors and communities in working effectively.</p>	<p>The Connected Councillor project has been developed with the intention of beginning to progress a number of recommendations that broadly support councillors, particularly in the context of digital technology.</p> <p>Thus far this has involved the development of a councillor account prototype. The first phase of commissioned work is focussing on a new approach to facilitate and support case work management.</p> <p>There is now a fully working end-end prototype which has been demonstrated to the elected member group. Feedback has been received which is being considered as part of the iterative design process.</p>	

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	<p>It is intended that a system will be developed that can be used by Councillors (likely as a controlled implementation) by April.</p>	
<p>Kirklees Council should organise quarterly question time events involving all group leaders. The content and agenda for these events will be set by the citizens of Kirklees. The events will be broadcast and allow the facility for questions to be taken online as well as in person.</p>	<p>We held a Kirklees Question Time during ELDW – a live and interactive Question Time style event with questions being put to a panel of councillors made up of:</p> <p>Councillor David Sheard, Labour Group Leader Councillor Andrew Cooper, Green Party Group Leader Councillor Andrew Marchington, Liberal Democrat Group Deputy Leader Councillor John Taylor, Conservative Group Deputy Leader Matthew Moran, Kirklees Youth Councillor</p> <p>The event, chaired by Dr Andy Mycock, reader in Politics at Huddersfield University, was attended by over 100 residents who had the chance to submit questions online and on the night.</p> <p>Future Question Time events will be planned on a quarterly basis.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active citizens have a stake in the place they live and are able to inform and influence the future of their community and the decisions affecting it. • 62% of participants who completed our ELDW feedback survey said that they would like more ‘Talks and debates’ in the future. This was the most popular type of event from the options in our ELDW programme.
<p>Kirklees Council should now take the opportunity to fully explore and implement the full capability of our webcasting technology, beyond purely broadcasting meetings. Taking advantage of the</p>	<p>Since the Commission reported a proactive effort has been made to extend the scope of webcast use beyond the traditional use focussed on council meetings. This includes:</p>	

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<p>interactive technology that currently exists should be a priority.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Kirklees Question Time (external venue);• Budget Information Event (Council Chamber);• The Voice of the Councillor (hosted national event);• Kirklees Democracy Commission launch event;• Local Democracy Week (see above);• Internal staff communications – Directors Q&A. <p>The above examples have seen a departure from traditional approaches, incorporating more interactive and engaging approaches with greater integration with other social media platforms e.g. Twitter.</p> <p>Moving forward there are opportunities to further develop the ways in which current capabilities can be utilised further to facilitate the delivery of the Commission’s recommendations. There is scope to explore the following capabilities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Coveritlive – has the capability alongside webcasting of (but not limited to):<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Comment moderation;- Tweet and Facebook post integration;- Two-way written discussion;- Web link posting to discussion timeline (supporting/reference documents / YouTube videos);- Live polls / surveys / questionnaires;	
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Facebook – embedding a live webcast feed into a Facebook timeline; - Voice over video presentations <p>This should form the basis of further discussion with the Cross Party Working Group.</p>	
Kirklees Council should work collaboratively with schools to develop an optional local approach to registering young people at the age of 16.	<p>Electoral Outreach Officers are now in the process of working together to access all schools, with the intention of targeting the 16 + cohort first.</p> <p>The Electoral Services Manager is currently seeking to meet with Head Teachers to progress this recommendation in schools following the elections in May.</p>	
Kirklees Council should work with the University of Huddersfield and local colleges to integrate electoral registration as part of the existing student registration process.	Plans are in place to contact the University and Colleges to explore the options for integration of electoral registration into the existing student registration process immediately following the District elections in May 2017.	
Kirklees Council should improve access to voter information by making polling districts and polling station data available to Democracy Club, in a format that meets their GoldPlus technical standard, in addition to sharing other essential elections data in recommended formats (candidates and election results)	<p>We have helped colleagues to develop a greater understanding of the importance of open polling station data for our citizens, and we attained Democracy Club’s Gold standard for our data for the 2017 General Election.</p> <p>The Gold standard is all about getting the right data, to give the most accurate information to citizens. This involves</p>	<p>Citizens are able to get accurate polling station information in a range of places online, without needing any prior understanding of where to look.</p> <p>Meeting the GoldPlus standard will save us both time and effort for future elections, so that we can continue to support our citizens well and help to increase voter turnout.</p>

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	<p>providing geographical mapping data to pinpoint all our polling stations exactly (postcodes aren't sufficient for this) and identifying which households are within each polling district. This data can then be used to tell citizens their correct polling station (not just the nearest one).</p> <p>Over 10,000 people in Kirklees used Democracy Club's tools to find their polling station for the 2017 General Election, using our Gold standard data. This is four times as many as looked for the same information on Kirklees.gov.uk during the same period.</p> <p>The next stage is to work with our colleagues in IT to attain the Gold Plus standard, which involves setting up a process of making sure that this accurate information can then be easily kept up to date over time. We are also working closely with Democracy Club to look at ways of improving other essential elections data, and we are promoting this work within local government and with our partners.</p>	
<p>Kirklees Council should provide our councillors with the appropriate IT hardware that they need to be effective in their role.</p>	<p>In January 2017 a cross party working group of seven Councillors was set up to look at the options for replacing the kit provided to Councillors.</p> <p>In July 2017 the working group commenced piloting devices. Testing of the equipment continued throughout 2017, with the roll out due to commence in May after the Election (at the request of the Working Group).</p>	<p>Councillors are able to access the wider benefits of mobile and agile working.</p> <p>Councillors will have access to their e-mail and calendar on the go and be more accessible to the electorate.</p> <p>Councillors will receive up to date information relating to appointments and be able to</p>

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		<p>access supporting documents i.e. agendas and reports.</p> <p>Councillors will be able to use staff wifi to connect in Council and partnership offices.</p> <p>Councillors will be able to access files and documents in meetings, reducing the need to print documents.</p>
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