



Method Statement

Change at the Council

Independent Review of Governance for the
Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea

Method Statement

Contents

This document describes the process of evidence gathering and analysis used by the research team undertaking this review. It covers:

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General

The research took place between October 2017 and February 2018.

Research team

The research was conducted by a team of eight: five from the Centre for Public Scrutiny and three from The Democratic Society.

Research topics

The research topics were drawn initially from the July 2017 council report that established the review and later refined following input from the Lead Cabinet Member.

The main topics covered during the research were:

- Opportunities for residents to get involved
- Councillors working with residents

- Cabinet members and decision-making
 - Scrutiny process
 - The overall decision-making process – formal and informal
 - Capacity and capability
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Research questions

The broad approach to the research was future- and solution-focused. With this in mind, the following questions formed the basis of the surveys, interview scripts and discussion groups:

1. What do people want to be different? We wanted to know what aspects of governance people wanted to see changed.
 2. What does good look like in other areas? As well as drawing on our own experience.
 3. What does good look like for Kensington and Chelsea? We wanted to know what good would look like for all those involved.
 4. What works already? We wanted to help people notice existing good practice that they can celebrate and build on.
 5. What new things could be tried? In particular, we wanted to hear what those with local knowledge thought might work well in Kensington and Chelsea.
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Evidence-gathering methods

To cover the research topics and to answer the research questions, we used the following methods:

Survey

We conducted two online surveys using SurveyMonkey. The first, aimed at residents, received 375 responses. The second, aimed at those with direct experience of the Council's governance arrangements, received 79.

The surveys were promoted by a variety of organisations and channels. The residents survey was promoted via two council press releases and social media and shared with organisations grant-funded by the Council. The Council's Community Engagement Team also wrote to around 150 residents' associations in the Borough about the review. Community and voluntary organisations promoted the survey through their networks, including the Kensington and Chelsea Social Council, which also wrote an article in their newsletter. A wide number of residents' associations emailed the survey to their residents and the Kensington Society shared it with its members. Hard copies of the residents survey were also made available to the public gallery of selected scrutiny meetings and some libraries. Leaflets about the review were provided to the public gallery of the Council meeting on 6th December 2017.

Summaries of each survey have been published separately.

Interviews

We conducted 51 interviews, including 11 with residents (residents' groups, voluntary and community organisations), 13 with councillors (including at least one from each party), 21 with officers and 6 with external observers (including partner organisations, co-optees and former councillors).

Potential interviewees were suggested by council officers and through discussion with voluntary and community groups. Final decisions about who to approach for interview were taken by the research team. Everyone who expressed an

interest was offered an interview.

Interviews with residents' groups and community organisations were organised by the research team. Interviews with councillors and council officers were organised via officers of Kensington and Chelsea Council.

While the majority of interviews were with single interviewees, a number were with up to four interviewees.

Each interview was semi structured and conducted by either one or two interviewers using a common script. Statements were written up by an interviewer into a separate evidence summary for each interview.

Workshops, meetings and discussion groups

We held 2 workshops with residents and community organisations, attended 7 meetings with council officers and councillors and held 3 discussion groups with councillors.

Evidence statements were written up for each.

Desktop research

A member of the team reviewed relevant documents relating to the Council's governance arrangements.

A report summarising the desktop research is available separately.

Meeting observations

We observed 9 council meetings, including Full Council, Leadership Team and 7 scrutiny meetings.

Evidence summaries were produced for each.

Evidence analysis

All of the evidence gathered has been captured in evidence summaries. Evidence summaries for the interviews, workshops, meetings and discussion groups were coded using QDA Miner.

The coding structure was as follows:

Research topics

- Opportunities for residents to get involved
- Councillors working with residents
- Cabinet members and decision-making
- Scrutiny process
- Council meetings
- General culture / other

TAPIC themes

- Transparency
- Accountability
- Participation
- Integrity (including coherence and effectiveness)
- Capacity (and capability)

Proposals

- Principles (what people want to be different)
- Foundations in place (existing good practice)
- Recommended Improvements (what's needed to meet basic standards over the next twelve months)
- Good practice experiments (Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea good practice that they can do more of, or practice from elsewhere, preferably nearby, which they can trial and develop)
- Aspirational practice (longer-term projects)

Coding summaries were produced as Excel files for each of the research topics and TAPIC themes, and these were reviewed by the research team as part of the report drafting process.

Ethics statement

General

The project followed the Economic and Social Research Council framework for research ethics:

- Research should aim to maximise benefit for individuals and society and minimise risk and harm
- The rights and dignity of individuals and groups should be respected
- Wherever possible, participation should be voluntary and appropriately informed
- Research should be conducted with integrity and transparency
- Lines of responsibility and accountability should be clearly defined
- Independence of research should be maintained and where conflicts of interest cannot be avoided they should be made explicit

Consent

- Research subjects must be informed fully about the purpose, methods and intended possible uses of the research, what their participation in the research entails and what risks, if any, are involved

Confidentiality

- The confidentiality of information supplied by research subjects and the anonymity of respondents must be respected
- Evidence statements, summary notes and coding reports are confidential to the research team
- Evidence made public (for example, in reports) should be not identifiable with an individual unless explicit written permission has been gained

Care for participants

- The emotional wellbeing and emotional needs of the participants is always the most important consideration
- Participants have the option to pause the activity, take a time out or leave the activity at any time – this to be explained at the start
- Researchers seek advice from those providing care and support at the start of the research process
- Researchers are able to signpost sources of care and support when required



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