

Section 1

Engaging with Councils

1a Your Council and You

Introduction

Getting to know your council can seem daunting if you've never done it before but right now, possibly more than ever in history, it is imperative we understand who they are, what powers they have and how YOU can make your voice heard.

Some of the contributors to this 'Going Local Package' live in Leeds so we are primarily using Leeds City Council website as a basis for our suggestions. Until recently, none of us had attended council meetings so these really are just ideas to get you started based on our experience.

If you have any specific queries or recommendations in relation to getting to know/how to talk to your council then please email freedom@ukcitizen.org and one of us will get back to you. Please be aware that we are volunteers so may not be able to respond quickly if we receive lots of enquiries. It may become preferable to hold zoom meetings instead but we will see how things progress and will let people know.

Attending council meetings

Most council meetings are open to the public. Very occasionally, there will be 'closed meetings' but these should specify that they are not open to the public on the calendar. In Leeds, council meetings can be found here: <https://democracy.leeds.gov.uk/mgCalendarMonthView.aspx?GL=1&bcr=1>. You could try putting the name of your council + calendar in the search bar as this works for us but you may have to 'dig around' a little too to find what you're looking for (see section on Calendar of meetings).

When you find the calendar, look for things like Executive Board Meeting, Full Council Meeting, Cabinet Meeting or Community Committee Meeting as these seem to be the ones which are the most interesting. Your local area may have parish council or district council meetings; unfortunately, there is no 'standard' so it's difficult to be specific.

Click on the meeting you're interested in and it should take you to further information, including the agenda.

Which council meeting should I go to?

Having looked at the calendar, meeting details and agenda, decide whether the council meeting is likely to cover the subjects you are interested in. We have found community committee meetings very useful (you might have parish council meetings, which would also be useful) as they address a number of local issues including transport strategy and planning.

Listen carefully to the questions and answers and consider whether any councillors are asking pertinent questions which you might agree with and consider making contact with them after the meeting or via email. Perhaps ask for a follow up meeting saying something like ‘I heard what you said at XXXX meeting and would like to talk to you further about this.’

Although it is absolutely fine to simply observe at the council meetings, some people may want to ask a question. In our experience, it is easy to do this at the community committee (parish council perhaps?) meetings as they actively invite public participation. Full council and cabinet meetings are trickier so it would be worth simply attending as an observer to get a feel for things before arranging to speak.

Check whether you need to email your questions to your chosen meeting ahead of time or whether you can simply ask the clerk before the start of the meeting.

Who controls the council?

Councillors are elected by local residents to represent the interests of the people; they provide a democratic mandate to the council. It is important to understand that councillors do not have authority to act or make decisions as individuals, rather they are members of an elected body which makes decisions on behalf of local government. They are the conduit between the people and the council. Councillors have a political role.

Officers provide the professional expertise required to deliver the policies determined by the members of the council - the councillors. Officers are employees of the council - they are the people behind the implementation of the policies and they organise the provision of the services. On occasion, officers may also be delegated, by councillors, to make policy decisions. Officers have a professional and impartial role.

Whilst collaboration between councillors and officers is key to an effective local council, it is worth noting the different roles they fulfil as it can assist us in achieving change. Officers are obligated to give unbiased professional advice to councillors even if it means contradicting what the councillors want to hear. Consequently, officers sometimes have to tell councillors that the plan of action is not viable.

We have anecdotal evidence that if a member of the public raises a question to a councillor, that councillor then refers the said question to the officer and the officer then responds to the member of the public directly.

Before embarking on any interaction with the council, ask yourself whether it is better to reach out initially to a councillor or an appropriate officer. Be strategic. The goal is to identify ‘change leaders’. The independent advisor, referenced earlier in this pack, will be providing coaching (for those who would like it) in relation to strategy and will focus on how to identify ‘change leaders’ and the power that they, potentially, can wield.

After the meeting

Think about what you are going to do with your new found knowledge. Was anything discussed which concerned you? Would you like to speak with the councillors? Remember,

they were elected to represent their ward members and need to hear from you to enable them to do their job properly. Most councillors hold local surgeries (where they are available to speak to). This is how we find out when/where they are held in Leeds:

How to find and meet with your councillor

- 1) Put '[who is my councillor](#)' in the search box, fill in your postcode and click 'Find'.

- 2) Click on the green link as it will take you to the correct page on your local council website.

- 3) Fill in any information you know – your postcode is probably the easiest.

- 4) This will bring up the names of your local councillors.

- 5) Click on the name of one of the councillors and it should bring up information about when they hold surgeries – these are the times when you can drop in to speak to them.

Find your local councillors

Find out who your local councillors are and how to contact them.

Enter a postcode
 For example SW1A 2AA

Find

Find your local councillors

We've matched the postcode to **Leeds City Council**.

You can get information on their website.

[Go to Leeds City Council website](#)

Find Councillor

By name: Go

By political party: Go

or by ward: Go

or by postcode: Go e.g. LS13 4RT

or by part of their name: Go

Results by postcode: LS12 4PP

 Councillor David Blackburn Farnley and Wortley Green Party Leader of the Green Group	 Councillor Ann Fossaiti Farnley and Wortley Green Party Green Group Whip	 Councillor Mark Seward Farnley and Wortley Labour
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 Party: Green Party
 Ward: Farnley and Wortley
 Other councillors representing this Ward:
 Councillor David Blackburn
 Councillor Mark Seward

More information about this councillor

- Attendance record
- Register of interests

Surgery details

1st Saturday of the Month
 9:30am - 10:30am Lower Wortley Community Centre, Lower Wortley Road, Wortley

Scrutiny boards

Scrutiny boards are meant to scrutinise the work of the council so there are board meetings for all the key services the council delivers. A few people in Leeds have attended scrutiny board meetings where there was a fair amount of back slapping on what a great job everyone has done. However, think about whether the work they have done truly benefits the local population.

Calendar of meetings

Leeds City Council has a calendar of all meetings [Council and democracy \(leeds.gov.uk\)](#). This link takes you to all the committees in Leeds City Council (there are a lot). On the right-hand side of the page under 'Related Pages', you'll see the link to the 'Calendar'. Not all

council websites have a central calendar of meetings so you might need to dig around a little. Failing that, you can contact them by phone and ask for information about when meetings take place.

Remember, all council meetings are open to the public (though they ask you to leave whilst specific items are discussed, such as a safeguarding or commercially sensitive information).

Statement of Community Involvement

[APPENDIX.pdf \(leeds.gov.uk\)](#)

This sets out the requirements for consultations carried out with regard to planning issues (Leeds Local Plan falls under that). All

councils involved in planning and development have a Statement of Community Involvement. Read it carefully. They do not stipulate what percentage of the population has to be involved. Leeds considers it has consulted widely if it has consulted with councillors, partners such as NHS, universities and the third (voluntary) sector. Leeds has a very rich third sector which has umbrella organisations such as Forum Central ([About Forum Central - Forum Central](#)); have a look at their members list.

Forum Central is a network of health and social care third sector organisations in Leeds.

Forum Central is the collective voice for Leeds third sector in health and care. Our vision is a better quality of life for people in Leeds. Our work is delivered in partnership by [Leeds Older People's Forum](#) and [Valition](#).

We are a member led network and connect the fantastic work happening in Leeds' diverse third sector organisations with that of other organisations and strategic developments happening in health and social care. We promote and support partnership working across the city and provide information for and about the sector.

We do this across [health and care](#) and through our specialist networks including: [communities of interest](#), [learning disabilities](#), [men's health](#), [mental health](#), [older people](#) and [physical and sensory impairment](#).

All our activities are informed, driven and led by our [members](#) and our [Boards of Trustees](#).

Other consultations

Councils carry out many other consultations. These are nothing to do with planning so the Statement of Community Involvement does not cover them. However, ALL actions are meant to have an [Equality Impact Assessment](#) carried out to ensure no-one is discriminated against or adversely impacted by an action. This is an area where we may be able to challenge them using some of the documents in the rest of this pack to help us.

Please also note that where the budget and spend is over £500, all councils are required to publish their spend for items. For example, this is the link for Leeds City Council [spending over £500](#). All council budgets must be published.

Documents

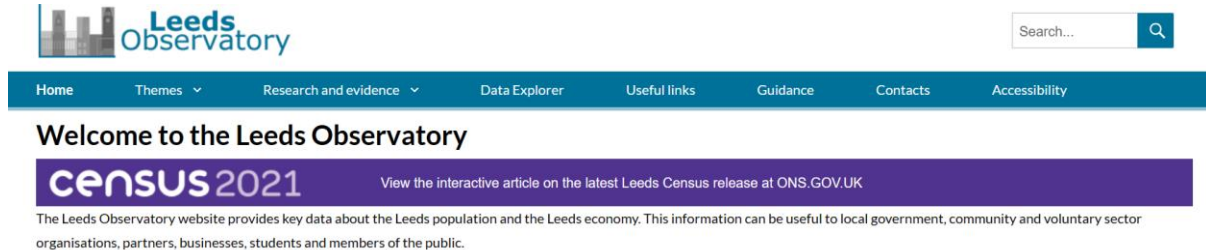
Trying to find documents (there is a list of them you might want to obtain in the next section of this pack) on council websites is not easy so it is often better and quicker to use a search engine to find what you are looking for.

Statistics

DataMill North [Data Mill North – Open Data for the North of England](#)

This contains lots of datasets from various councils in the north, Leeds developed this site. Be aware, not all data sets are accurate or up to date.

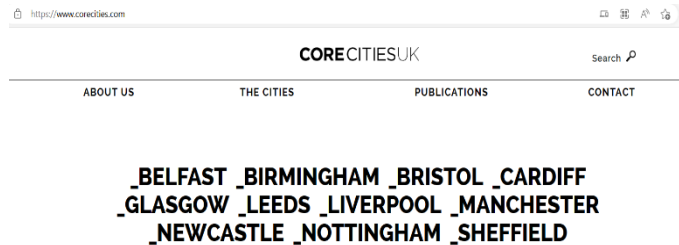
Leeds Observatory [Leeds Observatory – Welcome to the Leeds Observatory](#)



Beyond Leeds

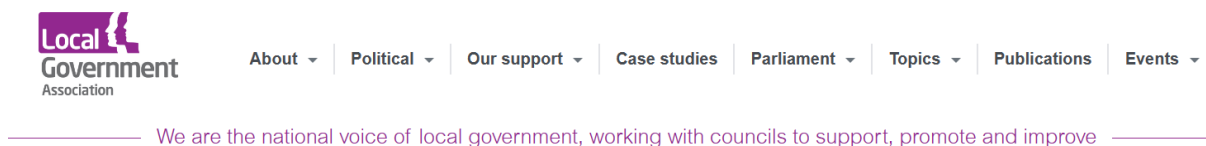
Core Cities

Leeds is a member of the core cities group which are the largest cities in the UK (outside London)
corecities.com |



Local Government Association

[Home | Local Government Association](#)



Combined Authorities

There are now 10 [Combined Authorities](#) which enables two or more councils to collaborate. There are also Unitary Authorities (this is the current list [here](#) – four more are due to be added shortly – [North Yorkshire, Somerset and two for Cumbria](#).)

Examples of how to find information on council websites - Leeds and Wolverhampton.

Leeds

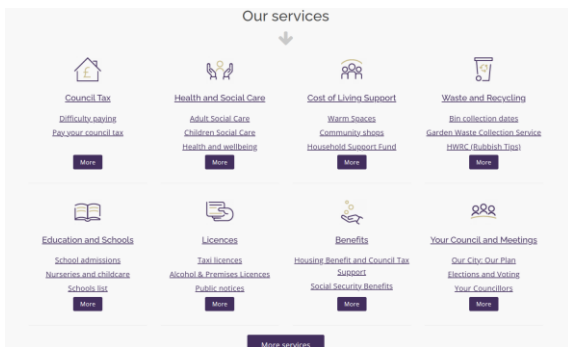
Welcome to [LEEDS.GOV.UK - Leeds City Council](https://www.leeds.gov.uk) this is the homepage – see the screen shot below. Click on Council and Democracy to find your councillors, committees, calendar of meetings etc. When you click on a meeting in the calendar there will be a link to the papers for the meeting. These are published seven days before the meeting so if you are looking at a date more than seven days in advance, there won't be any papers.

Antisocial behaviour and crime <small>Make a noise complaint, report antisocial behaviour, report fly tipping or other types of antisocial behaviour and crime</small>	Benefits and support <small>Information and advice on Housing Benefit, Council Tax Support and Free School Meals</small>	Bins, waste and recycling <small>Bin collection, what to do with unwanted items and how to recycle</small>	Births, marriages, deaths and citizenship <small>Register births and deaths, book cremations and get our free to receive birth and death certificates in the UK</small>
Business and licensing <small>For business rates, apply for licences and find time and property for sale or let</small>	Children and families <small>Find out about activities for children, childcare, adoption, fostering and keeping children safe</small>	Council and democracy <small>Meet councillors and council members and take part in consultations and elections</small>	Council tax <small>Includes payments, benefits, change of circumstances, exemptions and discounts</small>
Environmental health	Health and social care	Housing	Jobs, skills and training

Wolverhampton

Wolverhampton City Council website works in a very similar way. See below.

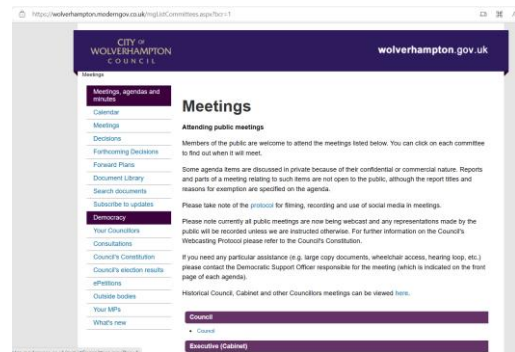
Meetings :: [Wolverhampton City Council \(moderngov.co.uk\)](https://www.wolverhampton.gov.uk)



Our services

- Council Tax**
Difficulty paying
Pay your council tax
More
- Health and Social Care**
Adult Social Care
Children Social Care
Health and wellbeing
More
- Cost of Living Support**
Warm Spaces
Community shops
Household Support Fund
More
- Waste and Recycling**
Bin collection dates
Garden Waste Collection Service
HWSC (Rubbish Ties)
More
- Education and Schools**
School admissions
Nurseries and childcare
Schools list
More
- Licences**
Taxi licences
Alcohol & Premises Licences
Public notices
More
- Benefits**
Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support
Social Security Benefits
More
- Your Council and Meetings**
Our City Our Plan
Elections and Voting
Your Councillors
More

[More services](#)



CITY OF WOLVERHAMPTON COUNCIL
 wolverhampton.gov.uk

Meetings

Attending public meetings

Members of the public are welcome to attend the meetings listed below. You can click on each committee to find out when it will meet.

Some agenda items are discussed in private because of their confidential or commercial nature. Reports and parts of a meeting relating to such items are not open to the public, although the report titles and reasons for exemption are specified on the agenda.

Please take note of the protocol for filming, recording and use of social media in meetings.

Please note currently all public meetings are now being webcast and any representations made by the public will be recorded unless we are instructed otherwise. For further information on the Council's Webcasting Protocol please refer to the Council's Constitution.

If you need any particular assistance (e.g. large copy documents, wheelchair access, hearing loop, etc.) please contact the Democratic Support Officer responsible for the meeting (which is indicated on the front page of each agenda).

Historical Council, Cabinet and other Councillors meetings can be viewed [here](#).

Calendar
 + Calendar

Executive (Cabinet)

Meetings agendas and minutes

- Calendar
- Meetings
- Decisions
- Forwarding Decisions
- Forward Plans
- Document Library
- Search documents
- Subscribe to updates

Democracy

- Your Councillors
- Consultations
- Council's Constitution
- Council's election results
- elections
- Outside bodies
- Your MPs
- What's new

1b Suggested Documents to Request from your Council

1. Constitution

The Local Government Act 2000 states that all councils must publish a constitution. This is a formal document which sets out how the council operates and how it makes decisions. It also sets out what the council must do to make decisions efficiently, transparently and accountably. Some of the processes in the constitution are required by law, whilst others are a matter for the council to choose.

In most cases you can simply search for your local council and you will be taken straight to the constitution e.g. search ‘Middlesbrough Council’: <https://www.middlesbrough.gov.uk/open-data-foi-andhave-your-say/open-data-and-policies/middlesbrough-council-constitution>. Alternatively, if you’re interested in several constitutions, search ‘city council constitutions’ and you will be taken to a long list of them. In the unlikely event you are unable to locate the constitution, you can request the same from your councillor.

It is important to familiarise yourself with your constitution so you are able to hold your councillors to account. If you need help in producing a summary of your council’s constitution we can help so just let us know by emailing freedom@ukcitizen2021.org.

2. Transport Strategy

It seems that 15-minute cities, 20-minute cities and low traffic neighbourhoods may be referred to as something else so it is important to get hold of a copy of your council’s ‘Transport Strategy’. Again, a simple search on your council’s website should take you to the document.

3. Climate Action Plan

The Climate Action Plan could be referred to as ‘Green Action Plan’, ‘Climate Change Plan’, ‘Net Zero Plan’, ‘Carbon Neutral Plan’, ‘Climate Emergency Plan’, ‘Climate Resilience Plan’ or numerous other terms. It is our experience that if you search for “Climate Action Plan” with respect to your own council, you will find what you need.

Conclusion

Familiarisation with the above documents will inform your next steps, be that an in person private meeting, attending a scheduled committee meeting, meeting an officer of a particular department, calling the council or writing e-mails/letters. If you need help formulating a

presentation or argument, then we can help that with that too. You will find some sample questions in Section 1f of this pack.

1c Summary of the Localism Act 2011

Introduction

The Localism Act 2011 (link at the bottom of the page) is an Act of Parliament that alters the powers of local government in England. The aim of the Act is to facilitate the devolution of decision-making powers from central government to individuals and communities thereby assisting the people in getting involved in and influencing decisions that stand to impact their lives in a material way. Consequently, it is an Act that you should familiarise yourself with.

A few clauses of particular note are listed below.

Part 1 – Local Government

Chapter 6 - Predetermination

Clause 25. Prior views on a matter must not amount to predetermination.

The Localism Act is used to clarify the rules on ‘predetermination’. The rules were developed to ensure councillors come to council discussions with an open mind. Councillors are to play an active part in local discussions (they should not be liable to legal challenge as a result).

Participating in discussions at the local level should help councillors better represent their constituents and enrich local democratic debate. People should be able to elect their councillor confident in the knowledge they will be in a position to act on the issues that are important to the people. Are the decision makers informed in the absence of advisory bias? If not, is it possible for a councillor to come to meetings with an open mind? Is ‘predetermination’ built into the current system?

Chapter 7 - Standards

Clause 27. Duty to promote and maintain high standards of conduct.

Clause 28. Codes of conduct.

Codes of conduct must be consistent with the following principles:

- Selflessness
- Integrity
- Objectivity
- Accountability
- Opens
- Honesty
- Leadership

Councillors play a crucial role in local life so it is important that the people who elect them are assured they adopt the highest standards of behaviour. The Localism Act 2011 requires that local authorities draw up their own codes.

It is a criminal offence for councillors to deliberately withhold or misrepresent a financial interest.

This effectively enshrines the Seven Principles of Public Life (the ‘Nolan Principles’) (link at the bottom of the page) in law.

Part 5 - Community Empowerment

Chapter 2 - Community Right to Challenge

‘The Government thinks that innovation in public services can offer greater value for taxpayers’ money and better results for local communities. The best councils are constantly on the lookout for new and better ways to design and deliver services. Many recognise the potential of social enterprises and community groups to provide high-quality services at good value, and deliver services with and through them.

In some places, however, voluntary and community groups who have bright ideas find that they do not get a proper hearing. The Localism Act gives these groups, parish councils and local authority employees the right to express an interest in taking over the running of a local authority service. The local authority must consider and respond to this challenge; and where it accepts it, run a procurement exercise for the service in which the challenging organisation can bid. This makes it easier for local groups with good ideas to put them forward and drive improvement in local services.’

A Plain English Guide to the Localism Act November 2011 Department for Communities and Local Government

Chapter 3 - Assets of Community Value

‘Every town, village or neighbourhood is home to buildings or amenities that play a vital role in local life. They might include community centres, libraries, swimming pools, village shops, markets or pubs. Local life would not be the same without them, and if they are closed or sold into private use, it can be a real loss to the community.

In many places across the country, when local amenities have been threatened with sale or closure, community groups have taken them over. In some cases, however, community groups who have attempted to take assets over have faced significant challenges. They often need more time to organise a bid and raise money than the private enterprises bidding against them. The Localism Act requires local authorities to maintain a list of assets of community value which have been nominated by the local community. When listed assets come up for sale or change of ownership, the Act then gives community groups the time to develop a bid and raise the money to bid to buy the asset when it comes on the open market. This will help local communities keep much-loved sites in public use and part of local life.’

A Plain English Guide to the Localism Act November 2011 Department for Communities and Local Government.

Part 6 - Planning

Chapter 1 - Plans and Strategies

Clause 110. Duty to co-operate in relation to planning of sustainable development.

Chapter 3 - Neighbourhood Planning

The Act introduces a new right for communities to draw up a neighbourhood plan - the belief being that local people should have the opportunity to influence the future of the places where they live. Neighbourhood planning allows communities to unite through a local parish council or neighbourhood forum and air their views on new houses, businesses and shops - where they should be located and what they should look like. Provided a neighbourhood development plan aligns with national planning policy, with the strategic vision for the wider area set by the local authority, and with other legal requirements, local people able to vote on it in a referendum. If the plan is approved by a majority of those who vote, then the local authority will bring it into force. Local planning authorities required to provide technical advice and support as neighbourhoods draw up their proposals.

Chapter 4 - Consultation

Clause 122. Consultation before applying for planning permission.

As and when we review other Acts influencing the local community, we will provide summaries by way of additions to this Going Local Pack Version 1. Some such Acts include the following:

- Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009
- Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (local development)
- Town and Country Planning Act 1990

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2011/20/enacted/data.pdf>

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/5959/1896534.pdf

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-7-principles-of-public-life/the-7-principles-of-public-life--2>



A plain English guide to the Localism Act





A plain English guide to the Localism Act

Department for Communities and Local Government
Eland House Bressenden Place
London
SW1E 5DU
Telephone: 030 3444 0000
Website: www.communities.gov.uk

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Foreword

“The time has come to disperse power more widely in Britain today.”

The Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister, Coalition Agreement, May 2010

For too long, central government has hoarded and concentrated power. Trying to improve people’s lives by imposing decisions, setting targets and demanding inspections from Whitehall simply doesn’t work. It creates bureaucracy. It leaves no room for adaptation to reflect local circumstances or innovation to deliver services more effectively and at lower cost. And it leaves people feeling ‘done to’ and imposed upon - the very opposite of the sense of participation and involvement on which a healthy democracy thrives.

I have long believed there is a better way of doing things. Eight years ago I wrote a book called *Total Politics* which set out the case for a huge shift in power - from central Whitehall, to local public servants, and from bureaucrats to communities and individuals.

Today, I am proud to be part of a Government putting this vision into practice. We think that the best means of strengthening society is not for central government to try and seize all the power and responsibility for itself. It is to help people and their locally elected representatives to achieve their own ambitions. This is the essence of the Big Society.

We have already begun to pass power back to where it belongs. We are cutting central targets on councils, easing the burden of inspection, and reducing red tape. We are breaking down the barriers that stop councils, local charities, social enterprises and voluntary groups getting things done for themselves.

But we can go a lot further by changing the law. The Localism Act sets out a series of measures with the potential to achieve a substantial and lasting shift in power away from central government and towards local people. They include: new freedoms and flexibilities for local government; new rights and powers for communities and individuals; reform to make the planning system more democratic and more effective, and reform to ensure that decisions about housing are taken locally.

This document summarises each of the main ideas contained in the Act, and explains the overall difference that they will make.

I look forward to seeing how local people will use the rights and freedoms the Act offers to make a difference in their communities.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Greg Clark". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "G".

Rt Hon Greg Clark MP, Minister of State for Decentralisation

About this guide

This document describes the main measures of the Localism Act under four headings:

- new freedoms and flexibilities for local government
- new rights and powers for communities and individuals
- reform to make the planning system more democratic and more effective
- reform to ensure that decisions about housing are taken locally

This document is designed to give an overview only. You can read the Act and its explanatory notes in full, on the parliament website at the address below: <http://services.parliament.uk/Acts/2010-11/localism.html>

The document *Decentralisation and the Localism Act: an essential guide* also gives further background. It explains how the principles that underpin the Localism Act also inform other government policies:

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/decentralisationguide>

So when can we use the rights in the Act?

Different parts of the Act will come into effect at different times. In many cases, the Government will need to set out further details, such as, the exact rules on how different community rights will work. In some cases, the Government will ask the public for their views. Parliament will also have the chance to look at the rules and vote on them before they are made final.

This can affect exactly when different parts of the Act come into force. The Government cannot give a cast-iron guarantee about timing. On current estimates (as of November 2011), however, we aim for many major measures to come into effect in April 2012. These include:

- The general power of competence for local authorities
- The community right to build
- Planning reforms including the changes to planning enforcement rules
- Reforms to social housing tenure and council housing finance

The Government will be issuing regular updates on likely start dates and public consultations on different parts of the Act. You can check for the latest information at www.communities.gov.uk.

New freedoms and flexibility for local government

Local government plays a crucial role in the life of the nation. It is directly responsible for important public services, from street lighting, to social care, to libraries and leisure centres. It makes sure that other services work together effectively for the good of the community. And with councillors elected by and accountable to local people, local government provides democratic leadership.

The Government is committed to passing new powers and freedoms to town halls. We think that power should be exercised at the lowest practical level - close to the people who are affected by decisions, rather than distant from them. Local authorities can do their job best when they have genuine freedom to respond to what local people want, not what they are told to do by central government. In challenging financial times, this freedom is more important than ever, enabling local authorities to innovate and deliver better value for taxpayers' money.

The Localism Act contains a number of proposals to give local authorities new freedoms and flexibility.

General power of competence

Local authorities' powers and responsibilities are defined by legislation. In simple terms, they can only do what the law says they can. Sometimes councils are wary of doing something new - even if they think it might be a good idea - because they are not sure whether they are allowed to in law, and are concerned about the possibility of being challenged in the courts.

The Government has turned this assumption upside down. Instead of being able to act only where the law says they can, local authorities will be freed to do anything - provided they do not break other laws.

The Localism Act includes a 'general power of competence'. It gives local authorities the legal capacity to do anything that an individual can do that is not specifically prohibited; they will not, for example, be able to impose new taxes, as an individual has no power to tax.

The new, general power gives councils more freedom to work together with others in new ways to drive down costs. It gives them increased confidence to do creative, innovative things to meet local people's needs. Councils have asked for this power because it will help them get on with the job. The general power of competence does not remove any duties from local authorities - just like individuals they will continue to need to comply with duties placed on them. The Act does, however, give the Secretary of State the power to remove unnecessary restrictions and limitations where there is a good case to do so, subject to safeguards designed to protect vital services.

Similar powers have been given to Fire and Rescue Authorities, Integrated Transport Authorities, Passenger Transport Executives, Combined Authorities and Economic Prosperity Boards.

Abolition of the Standards Board

Councillors play a crucial role in local life. The people who elect them have the right to expect the highest standards of behaviour. The Government thinks it is important to have safeguards to prevent the abuse of power and misuse of public money. Currently, all local authorities must, by law, adopt a national code of conduct and a standards committee to oversee the behaviour of their councillors and receive complaints. A central body, the Standards Board for England, regulates each of these committees.

In practice, however, this system of safeguards is ineffective. It is too easy for people to put forward ill-founded complaints about councillors' conduct. Lengthy debates about petty complaints or deliberately harmful accusations can undermine people's faith in local democracy and put them off standing for public office.

Through the Localism Act, the Government has abolished the Standards Board regime. Instead, local authorities will draw up their own codes, and it will become a criminal offence for councillors to deliberately withhold or misrepresent a financial interest. This means that councils will not have to spend time and money investigating trivial complaints, while councillors involved in corruption and misconduct will face appropriately serious sanctions. This provides a more effective safeguard against unacceptable behaviour.

Clarifying the rules on predetermination

In parallel with the abolition of the Standards Board, the Government has used the Localism Act to clarify the rules on 'predetermination'. These rules were developed to ensure that councillors came to council discussions - on, for example, planning applications - with an open mind. In practice, however, these rules had been interpreted in such a way as to reduce the quality of local debate and stifle valid discussion. In some cases councillors were warned off doing such things as campaigning, talking with constituents, or publicly expressing views on local issues, for fear of being accused of bias or facing legal challenge.

The Localism Act makes it clear that it is proper for councillors to play an active part in local discussions, and that they should not be liable to legal challenge as a result. This will help them better represent their constituents and enrich local democratic debate. People can elect their councillor confident in the knowledge that they will be able to act on the issues they care about and have campaigned on.

Greater local control over business rates

One of the most important things that councils can do to improve local life is to support the local economy. The Localism Act gives councils more freedom to offer business rate discounts - to help attract firms, investment and jobs. Whilst councils would need to meet the cost of any discount from local resources, they may decide that the immediate cost of the discount is outweighed by the long-term benefit of attracting growth and jobs to their area.

Directly elected mayors

Many major cities in the world outside of the UK have a strong and powerful executive mayor. The Government believes that elected mayors can provide democratically accountable strong leadership which is able to instigate real change for the benefit of our largest cities. Mayors will be clearly identifiable as the leader of the city and will have a unique mandate to govern as they will be directly elected by all local electors. People will know who is responsible for a decision and where the buck stops.

Elected mayors would help strengthen the governance of the city. With a four-year term of office, and a direct mandate to lead, the mayor would be able to focus on long-term strategic decisions - such as bringing together different agencies to make public services work better, and attracting jobs and investment to the city.

Using powers in the Act, the Government intends to trigger a referendum in the largest cities outside London, inviting local people to decide whether they want to have an elected mayor. Referendums are being planned for May 2012. For areas that vote in favour, mayoral elections will then be held shortly afterwards. People in other areas of the country will continue to be able to call for their own referendum on whether to have an elected mayor.

London

The Localism Act passes greater powers over housing and regeneration to local democratically elected representatives in London. It empowers the democratically elected Mayor to carry on housing investment activities currently carried out by the Homes and Communities Agency, and the economic development work done by the London Development Agency.

Empowering cities and other local areas

The Act also enables Ministers to transfer local public functions from central government and remote quangos to local authorities, combined authorities and economic prosperity boards - in order to improve local accountability or promote economic growth. Authorities will be encouraged to come forward with innovative proposals.

These new powers - included in the Act at the request of the Core Cities group, representing the largest cities in England outside of London - will enable us to empower our major cities and other local authorities to develop their areas, improve local services, and boost their local economy. This is likely to result in different places accessing different powers over different timescales.

Other freedoms for councils

The Government thinks that there are currently too many centrally-set rules about how councils organise themselves and run their affairs. The Localism Act will remove several of these rules, freeing councils to go about their business in a way that suits their local circumstances.

For example - many councils choose to run area committees, bringing decision making closer to those affected. In the future, councils will have greater freedom over how they set up these area committees, so that committees can cover wider or larger geographic areas to suit what local people want and need.

Similarly, council overview and scrutiny committees play a crucial role in examining the work of local public bodies, helping make sure they offer a good service to residents. In the future, committees will have greater flexibility about how they carry out this scrutiny role.

Finally, the Act also offers real choice for councils and local people to decide how their council should be governed. This includes allowing councils, where they wish, to move away from an executive form of governance (i.e. a leader or a mayor) to a committee system. The Act also removes previous constraints around the timing of when councils can change their governance models, so they can take these decisions when it best suits the needs of the council and the people they represent.

New rights and powers for communities

Greater freedom and flexibilities for local government are vital for achieving the shift in power the government wants to see. But, on their own, these measures will not be enough. Government alone does not make great places to live, people do. People who look out for their neighbours, who take pride in their street and get involved - from the retired teacher who volunteers in the village shop once a month, to the social entrepreneur who runs the nursery full time.

Until now, however, many people have found that their good ideas have been overlooked and they have little opportunity to get on and tackle problems in the way they want. Voluntary and community groups often find that their potential contribution is neglected, when, in fact, they carry out some of the most innovative and effective work in public services and we should be encouraging them to get more involved.

This Act passes significant new rights direct to communities and individuals, making it easier for them to get things done and achieve their ambitions for the place where they live.

Community right to challenge

The Government thinks that innovation in public services can offer greater value for taxpayers' money and better results for local communities. The best councils are constantly on the look out for new and better ways to design and deliver services. Many recognise the potential of social enterprises and community groups to provide high-quality services at good value, and deliver services with and through them.

In some places, however, voluntary and community groups who have bright ideas find that they do not get a proper hearing. The Localism Act gives these groups, parish councils and local authority employees the right to express an interest in taking over the running of a local authority service. The local authority must consider and respond to this challenge; and where it accepts it, run a procurement exercise for the service in which the challenging organisation can bid. This makes it easier for local groups with good ideas to put them forward and drive improvement in local services.

Community right to bid (assets of community value)

Every town, village or neighbourhood is home to buildings or amenities that play a vital role in local life. They might include community centres, libraries, swimming pools, village shops, markets or pubs. Local life would not be the same without them, and if they are closed or sold into private use, it can be a real loss to the community.

In many places across the country, when local amenities have been threatened with sale or closure, community groups have taken them over. In some cases, however, community groups who have attempted to take assets over have faced significant challenges. They often need more time to organise a bid and raise money than the private enterprises bidding against them.

The Localism Act requires local authorities to maintain a list of assets of community value which have been nominated by the local community. When listed assets come up for sale or change of ownership, the Act then gives community groups the time to develop a bid and raise the money to bid to buy the asset when it comes on the open market. This will help local communities keep much-loved sites in public use and part of local life.

Right to approve or veto excessive council tax rises

Local government derives a significant proportion of its revenue from council tax. The money raised through council tax is spent on supporting vital local services. But it is important that council tax is set at a rate which has the support of local people, and that their taxes are carefully managed by authorities on their behalf.

Previously, central government had the power to 'cap' council tax rises. If Ministers thought that local authorities were increasing taxes excessively they could stop them doing so. But we think that local people should decide whether to accept an excessive council tax increase.

The Localism Act therefore gives local communities the power to decide. The Secretary of State will determine a limit for council tax increases which has to be approved by the House of Commons. If an authority proposes to raise taxes above this limit they will have to hold a referendum to get approval for this from local voters who will be asked to approve or to veto the rise. This means that local authorities will need to convince local voters, rather than central government of the case for excessive rises in council taxes.

Transparency over senior council officials' pay

The Government thinks that taxpayers should be able to access information about how public money is spent on their behalf. It is, ultimately, their money. Transparency is also a powerful preventative against waste and duplication: when councillors and senior officials know that their spending decisions will be subjected to public scrutiny, they will be even more motivated to make every penny of public money work as hard as it possibly can. In line with these principles, under the terms of the Localism Act, councillors will need to vote on and publish a statement of their policies on pay. This will include the salaries of senior officials working in local authorities, but also the lowest paid employees. This will help local people understand how public money is being spent in their area, and to hold the Town Hall to account.

Getting rid of fines and charges for rubbish collection

The Government is committed both to recycling and to reducing the amount of rubbish we produce as a nation in the first place. We think that the best way to do this is by encouraging people to do the right thing, not through fines and punishments. The Climate Change Act 2008 gave councils the ability to charge families for overfilling their bin and to introduce extra tariffs for taking away household waste. In the Localism Act, we have removed this ability. Separately, the Government is also providing extra support to councils who wish to offer their residents weekly bin collections.

Reform to make the planning system clearer, more democratic and more effective

The planning system helps decide who can build what, where and how. It makes sure that buildings and structures that the country needs (including homes, offices, schools, hospitals, roads, train lines, power stations, water pipes, reservoirs and more) get built in the right place and to the right standards. A good planning system is essential for the economy, environment and society.

There are, however, some significant flaws in the planning system that this Government inherited. Planning did not give members of the public enough influence over decisions that make a big difference to their lives. Too often, power was exercised by people who were not directly affected by the decisions they were taking. This meant, understandably, that people often resented what they saw as decisions and plans being foisted on them. The result was a confrontational and adversarial system where many applications end up being fought over.

The Localism Act contains provisions to make the planning system clearer, more democratic, and more effective.

Abolition of regional strategies

'Regional strategies' were first required by law in 2004. These strategies set out where new development needs to take place in each part of the country. They include housing targets for different areas, set by central government. Local communities had relatively limited opportunities to influence the strategies.

This centrally-driven approach to development is bureaucratic and undemocratic. Rather than helping get new houses built, it has had the effect of making people feel put upon and less likely to welcome new development.

The Secretary of State wrote to local authorities in 2010 to tell them that the Government intended to abolish regional strategies. The Localism Act will enable us to do this.

Duty to cooperate

In many cases there are very strong reasons for neighbouring local authorities, or groups of authorities, to work together on planning issues in the interests of all their local residents. This might include working together on environmental issues (like flooding), public transport networks (such as trams), or major new retail parks.

In the past, regional strategies formed an unaccountable bureaucratic layer on top of local government. Instead, the Government thinks that local authorities and other public bodies should work together on planning issues in ways that reflect genuine shared interests and opportunities to make common cause. The duty requires local authorities and other public bodies to work together on planning issues.

Neighbourhood planning

Instead of local people being told what to do, the Government thinks that local communities should have genuine opportunities to influence the future of the places where they live. The Act introduces a new right for communities to draw up a neighbourhood plan.

Neighbourhood planning will allow communities, both residents, employees and business, to come together through a local parish council or neighbourhood forum and say where they think new houses, businesses and shops should go – and what they should look like.

These plans can be very simple and concise, or go into considerable detail where people want. Local communities will be able to use neighbourhood planning to grant full or outline planning permission in areas where they most want to see new homes and businesses, making it easier and quicker for development to go ahead.

Provided a neighbourhood development plan or order is in line with national planning policy, with the strategic vision for the wider area set by the local authority, and with other legal requirements, local people will be able to vote on it in a referendum. If the plan is approved by a majority of those who vote, then the local authority will bring it into force.

Local planning authorities will be required to provide technical advice and support as neighbourhoods draw up their proposals. The Government is funding sources of help and advice for communities.¹ This will help people take advantage of the opportunity to exercise influence over decisions that make a big difference to their lives.

Community right to build

As part of neighbourhood planning, the Act gives groups of local people the power to deliver the development that their local community want. They may wish to build new homes, businesses, shops, playgrounds or meeting halls. A community organisation, formed by members of the local community, will be able to bring forward development proposals which, providing they meet

¹ More information and details of support can be found at <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/planningandbuilding/pdf/1985896.pdf>

minimum criteria and can demonstrate local support through a referendum, will be able to go ahead without requiring a separate traditional planning application. The benefits of the development, such as new affordable housing or profits made from letting the homes, will stay within the community, and be managed for the benefit of the community. The Government will also fund sources of help and advice for communities who want to bring forward development under the community right to build.

Requirement to consult communities before submitting certain planning applications

To further strengthen the role of local communities in planning, the Act introduces a new requirement for developers to consult local communities before submitting planning applications for certain developments. This gives local people a chance to comment when there is still genuine scope to make changes to proposals.

Strengthening enforcement rules

For people to have a real sense that the planning system is working for them, they need to know that the rules they draw up will be respected. The Localism Act will strengthen planning authorities' powers to tackle abuses of the planning system, such as deliberately concealing new developments.

Reforming the community infrastructure levy

As well as being able to influence planning decisions, local people should be able to feel the benefits of new development in their neighbourhood. Local authorities are allowed to require developers to pay a levy when they build new houses, businesses or shops. The money raised must go to support new infrastructure - such as roads and schools. This is called the community infrastructure levy.

The Localism Act will change the levy to make it more flexible. It allows some of the money raised to be spent on things other than infrastructure. It will give local authorities greater freedom in setting the rate that developers should pay. And crucially, the Act gives the Government the power to require that some of the money raised from the levy go directly to the neighbourhoods where development takes place. This will help ensure that the people who say 'yes' to new development feel the benefit of that decision.

Reform the way local plans are made

Local planning authorities play a crucial role in local life, setting a vision, in consultation with local people, about what their area should look like in the future. The plans local authorities draw up set out where new buildings, shops, businesses and infrastructure need to go, and what they should look like.

The Government thinks it is important to give local planning authorities greater freedom to get on with this important job without undue interference from central government. The Localism Act will limit the discretion of planning inspectors to insert their own wording into local plans. It also ensures that rather than focussing on reporting progress in making plans to central government, authorities focus on reporting progress to local communities.

Nationally significant infrastructure projects

Some planning decisions are so important to our overall economy and society that they can only be taken at a national level. These include decisions on nationally significant infrastructure projects such as major train lines and power stations. Previously these decisions lay in the hands of an unelected public body, called the Infrastructure Planning Commission which is not directly accountable to the public. The Government thinks that these important decisions should be taken by Government ministers, who are democratically accountable to the public. The Localism Act abolishes the Infrastructure Planning Commission and restores its responsibility for taking decisions to Government ministers. It also ensures the national policy statements, which will be used to guide decisions by ministers, can be voted on by Parliament. Ministers intend to make sure that major planning decisions are made under the new arrangements at least as quickly as under the previous system.

Reform to ensure that decisions about housing are taken locally

Social housing provides around eight million people in England with a decent home at a rent lower than they would be able to find in the private rented sector. It can make an immense difference to their health, happiness and quality of life.

But the previous social housing system had some fundamental flaws. The rules were too rigidly set by central government, so that councils found it hard to adapt and meet local needs. Social landlords didn't have enough discretion over how they managed their housing in the best interests of their local community. And in some cases social housing rules actually trapped people in difficult circumstances - making it hard to move for work, for example - with the result that the system was failing the very people it was designed to help.

The Localism Act reforms mean more decisions about housing are taken locally, and make the system fairer and more effective.

Social housing allocations reform

Previously almost anyone could apply to live in social housing, whether they need it or not. As social housing is in great demand and priority is rightly given to those most in need, many applicants have no realistic prospect of ever receiving a social home. The previous arrangements encouraged false expectations and large waiting lists.

The Act gives local authorities greater freedom to set their own policies about who should qualify to go on the waiting list for social housing in their area. This means that they are now able, if they wish, to prevent people who have no need of social housing from joining the waiting list. Authorities are still obliged to ensure that social homes go to the most vulnerable in society and those who need it most.

Social housing tenure reform

Under the previous system social landlords were normally only able to grant lifetime tenancies. Sometimes this meant that people acquire a social home at a moment of crisis in their life, and continue to live there long after their need for it has passed. Meanwhile there are people waiting for a social home who face much more difficult circumstances. This was unfair, and represented a poor use of valuable public resources.

The Government has protected the security and rights of existing social housing tenants, including when they move to another social rented home. However, provisions in the Localism Act allow for more flexible arrangements for people entering social housing in the future. Social landlords will now be able to grant tenancies for a fixed length of time. The minimum length

of tenancy will be two years in exceptional circumstances with five years or more being the norm. There is no upper limit on the length of tenancy. Councils can still offer lifetime tenancies if they wish. More flexible tenancies will allow social landlords to manage their social homes more effectively and fairly, and deliver better results for local communities.

Reform of homelessness legislation

People who experience a homelessness crisis need somewhere suitable to live. Councils have a duty to house people who are eligible, in priority need and unintentionally homeless; and this duty will remain in place. Central Government will also continue to fund support and advice to prevent homelessness and rough sleeping.

However, under the previous rules, people who became homeless were able to refuse offers of accommodation in the private rented sector, and insist that they should be housed in expensive temporary accommodation until a long-term social home becomes available. This meant that in some circumstances people in acute, but short-term housing need, acquired a social home for life, although they may not have needed one, while other people who needed a social home in the longer term were left waiting.

The Localism Act lets local authorities meet their homelessness duty by providing good quality private rented homes. This option could provide an appropriate solution for people experiencing a homelessness crisis, at the same time as freeing up social homes for people in real need on the waiting list.

Reform of council housing finance

The Localism Act changes the way social housing is funded to pass more power to a local level. Previously, local authorities collected rent from their social tenants and then sent the money to central government. Central government collected all the money raised this way into a single pot. Local authorities were then paid a sum out of the pot each year for the upkeep, renovation and repair of social homes.

Now, instead of having to send the money raised by rent to central government and wait to see each year what share they get allocated back, councils will be able to keep the rent and use it locally to maintain their social homes. This will give them a more predictable and stable basis to plan for the long term.

National home swap scheme

There are lots of reasons why people move house; to take up a new job, to be nearer to family members who need care, to give a young family more space to grow or to find a smaller, more manageable home in later life. Evidence suggests, however, that it is less straightforward for people who live in social

housing to move than for other people. Fewer than one in twenty households move within the social housing sector each year, for example, compared to almost one in four private renters.

The Localism Act paves the way for a national home swap scheme. This will enable people who would like to swap their social home to access details of all other tenants who may be a suitable match. This has the potential to enable social tenants to find a home that better meets their needs and to exercise greater control over their lives.

Reform of social housing regulation

The Act reforms the way that social housing is regulated. The Act provides social tenants with stronger tools to hold their landlords to account. Landlords will be expected to support tenant panels - or similar bodies - in order to give tenants the opportunity to carefully examine the services being offered. The Act also abolishes the Tenant Services Authority and transfers its remaining functions to the Homes and Communities Agency.

The Act also changes the way that complaints about social landlords are handled. Currently, there are two separate ombudsmen (the Local Government Ombudsman and the Independent Housing Ombudsman) handling social tenants' complaints about their landlord. In the future, a single watchdog (the Independent Housing Ombudsman) specialising in complaints about social housing will ensure greater consistency across the sector.

Abolition of Home Information Packs

Home Information Packs were first introduced in 2007. Anyone putting their home on the market had to have one. They included information about the property, including local authority searches and title documents. They often cost well over a hundred pounds to produce. The Government thinks that Home Information Packs imposed extra costs on individuals and families hoping to sell their home, without offering any significant benefits. The Government suspended the requirement for Home Information Packs in May 2010. Since then, homesellers have only had to provide an Energy Performance Certificate, showing the energy efficiency of their house. They have been able to get on with marketing their house without having to spend hundreds of pounds upfront. The Localism Act has repealed once and for all the original laws that called for Home Information Packs.

The overall effect of the Act

Taken together, the measures in the Act mean:

New freedoms and flexibilities for local government

The Act:

- gives local authorities everywhere the formal legal ability and greater confidence to get on with the job of responding to what local people want
- cuts red tape to enable councillors everywhere to play a full and active part in local life without fear of legal challenge
- encourages a new generation of powerful leaders with the potential to raise the profile of English cities, strengthen local democracy and boost economic growth
- enables ministers to transfer functions to public authorities in cities in order to harness their potential to drive growth and prosperity
- reforms the governance of London so that more power lies in the hands of elected representatives who are democratically accountable to London's citizens

New rights and powers for local communities

The Act:

- makes it easier for local people to take over the amenities they love and keep them part of local life
- ensures that local social enterprises, volunteers and community groups with a bright idea for improving local services get a chance to change how things are done
- enables local residents to call local authorities to account for the careful management of taxpayers' money

Reform to make the planning system clearer, more democratic and more effective

The Act:

- places significantly more influence in the hands of local people over issues that make a big difference to their lives
- provides appropriate support and recognition to communities who welcome new development
- reduces red tape, making it easier for authorities to get on with the job of working with local people to draw up a vision for their area's future

- reinforces the democratic nature of the planning system - passing power from bodies not directly answerable to the public, to democratically accountable ministers

Reform to ensure that decisions about housing are taken locally

The Act:

- enables local authorities to make their own decisions to adapt housing provision to local needs, and make the system fairer and more effective
- gives local authorities more control over the funding of social housing, helping them to plan for the long term
- gives people who live in social housing new ways of holding their landlords to account, and make it easier for them to move

This is, in sum, an Act with the potential to effect a significant change in national life, passing power to a local level, creating space for local authorities to lead and innovate, and giving people the opportunity to take control of decisions that matter to them.

Together with other, wider Government reforms, putting the Act into practice will represent a major milestone towards the transfer of power and control set out in the coalition agreement.

You can find updates about various consultations and guidance about the use of the powers in the Localism Act and about the Department for Communities and Local Government's wider work, at the address below:

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/corporate/whatsnew>

1d How to Send a Freedom of Information Request To Your Council in Relation to the ‘Climate Crisis’

Introduction

Below you will find suggested questions to send pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOI) in relation to the ‘Climate Crisis’. There are plenty more we can ask. For example, it would be interesting to have sight of the minutes of any council meetings leading up to a declaration of a ‘Climate Emergency’, however, we don’t want the councils to reject the request on the grounds that it is too onerous (which they are at liberty to do). We can consider further FOIs off the back of council responses.

Appoint one person to send in Freedom of Information Requests

It is imperative that multiple people do **NOT** send the same FOI because we do not want the council to be able to argue that the FOI is ‘vexatious’. An ideal situation is for one person within each council area to take on the responsibility of sending the FOIs.

Every council will have a section on their website providing information regarding FOIs. If you put ‘Freedom of Information’ into the search bar on the council website, you should be taken straight to the relevant page.

This is what Middlesbrough Council’s web page looks like:

<https://www.middlesbrough.gov.uk/open-data-foi-and-have-your-say/freedom-information-foi>



Check whether the information you seek is already available

Before sending the FOI, it is important to ensure that the information requested isn’t already available on the website. A link will usually be provided for you to check. There may be a link to previous FOI requests although we are yet to see that. If there is, check the link to see if what you’re asking has already been asked and answered. This is highly unlikely with respect to the questions below.

Climate Emergency

One of the questions below relates to the date upon which a ‘Climate Emergency’ was declared by your council. If you don’t know that date you should be able to find it via this link: <https://cape.mysociety.org/councils/>

Tell us what you find out and whether you want more help

We would appreciate you sharing any responses with us at northeast@ukcitizen2021.org so we can monitor what is happening across the country.

If you want help in analysing the answers, crafting a response, determining further questions or next steps generally then we are here to help – just get in touch via the above email address or the website.

As we determine other questions to ask (we are using Leeds as our pilot), we will up-date the Going Local Package accordingly.

Template for Questions

Pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act 2000, please respond to the following:

1. On *[dd/mm/yy]* *[insert applicable Council]* declared a ‘Climate Emergency’. What is the council’s definition of a ‘Climate Emergency’?
2. Please disclose the evidence, data, correspondence or other documents in support of the council’s decision to declare a ‘Climate Emergency’.
3. Please disclose a list of policies that have been introduced as a consequence of the ‘Climate Emergency’.
4. Please disclose a list of strategic ‘Climate Emergency’ partners.
5. *[What or who is ‘Team Leeds’?] [delete if your council does not have a similar ‘Team’]*
6. *[If relevant, how is ‘Team XXXX’ funded?] [delete if your council does not have a similar ‘Team’]*
7. Please disclose a list of the strategic partners of ‘Team XXXX’ and the strategic partners of *[insert name of council]* with respect to the ‘Climate Crisis’. *[If your Council does not have a ‘Team’ delete as appropriate].*

Yours faithfully,

[Your name]

1e The Delphi Technique

(Also known as the Delphi Method)

Introduction

The Delphi Technique originated as a Cold War strategy developed by Olaf Helmer and Norman Dalkey of RAND Corporation and is named after the Ancient Greek Oracle of Delphi. The RAND Corporation is an American think-tank that was founded in 1946 by the US air force, later becoming an independent non-profit organisation. Originally, the Delphi Technique was aimed at predicting the impact of technology on warfare.

What is it?

The Delphi technique is a method of group decision-making which involves consulting a panel of experts who anonymously provide their answers/predictions (usually in response to a series of carefully designed questions that are developed and refined over several rounds and presented as a questionnaire). It is based on the principle that collective wisdom is greater than individual knowledge.

After each round of questions, a facilitator compiles all the responses and subsequently shares them with the panel of experts. The experts, when confronted with each other's knowledge and views, are then inclined to revise their previous predictions in light of the information they have received from the other experts - a feedback mechanism.

The process is repeated (usually for three for four rounds) until a consensus, among the panel of experts, is reached. It is said to be an effective way of generating ideas and making accurate predictions about the future.

Can the Delphi Technique be used to manipulate outcomes?

The dictionary definition of 'consensus' is, "A general agreement about something: an idea or opinion that is shared by all the people in a group". Today, many would argue that 'consensus' means silencing all opposing positions thereby preventing dissent. Rosa Koire, author, argues that the Delphi Technique can be used to 'channel a group of people to accept a point of view that was imposed on them whilst convincing them that it was their idea' i.e. neutralising dissenting opinion whilst giving the illusion that you are making decisions for yourself.

Rosa argues that the Delphi Technique is often used in public meetings such as local council meetings, neighbourhood meetings, school trustee/board meetings or any meeting where the organisers want to give the illusion they have listened to the community, taken on their opinions and incorporated those opinions into the initiative. Such meetings can be promoted to the public as an opportunity to provide views and thereby input into the process and the new plan.

The reality is that only comments and opinions that support the pre-approved plan are given time and attention. All that is needed is the illusion of public buy-in; the organisers can, correctly, state that they held a public meeting where the public commented and the public agreed with the plan!

How can this be achieved?

One way is for the facilitator of the meeting to be hired by the organisers - a professional consultant effectively appointed to run and manage the meeting. Where the initiative is controversial, groups that support the initiative can be called to attend so that those in support outnumber those in opposition by a significant margin. Often those groups who would be in opposition will not even know about the meeting.

Another tactic is to close the meeting if it looks like those opposing the plan are in the majority - the meeting can then be rescheduled for another time and place. Time can be used - tight time frame with no questions or where questions that are answered briefly or deflected.

Where meetings are structured such that the public sit at tables, there can be shills at each table. These shills observe closely and identify those who will support the scheme, those that are argumentative, those that are passive and those who can be relied upon to cause a scene. Essentially, who can be manipulated and how. With respect to those who do speak up against the initiative, social pressure can be used to keep them in line; the person is shamed into agreeing. That person can then be isolated, ridiculed or disapproved of so that dissent becomes too scary and will, one way or another, be made to appear “fringe”. This is ‘consensus’ building.

The end of the meeting

The meeting will end and you’ll be thanked for your participation. You may feel you were the only one against the initiative or you weren’t heard, or you didn’t fight hard enough, but.... at least you attended and were a good citizen for doing so. The initiative was pre-determined and what happened was simply theatre. Just because you didn’t notice it happening doesn’t mean it didn’t happen!

See the first link below to see how their own methods can be used against them!

<http://vlrc.org/articles/110.html>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Delphi_method

1f The Power Resides with the People

Resistance is NEVER Futile

It has become clear to many in the truth and freedom movement that warning of the trouble which lies ahead is not sufficient to mount resistance against those troubles. Patrick M Wood refers to this as ‘*Sutton’s Paradox*’ (after the researcher, Professor Antony Sutton, who realised very early on of the dangers of globalisation). We expect our warnings to result in action, but that has not been the case beyond our committed ‘awake’ groups. Sutton’s Paradox: *‘The degree of personal response is inversely proportional to the length of time to personal pain.’*

Over the last forty-five years, globalisation has been allowed, unchallenged, to gradually embed itself across the globe at all levels of society. This is to such an extent that many who recognise the dangers now believe it has got so big and so entrenched in the very fabric of society, that it cannot be halted. Even though we now have many examples of technocracy taking hold - mass surveillance, smart cities, Internet of Things, 5G - Sutton’s Paradox prevails and many fail to take action instead expecting someone else to fight the fight.

It seems that for most people they must feel pain personally in order to act. Most are not yet feeling sufficient pain to resist and say ‘no’. Consequently, the fight is left to those of us who see the dangers and are prepared to resist simply because it is the right thing to do even, in some cases, where pushing back and resisting comes at great personal cost. We believe we have to fight the globalist powers; we have to resist the assault on humanity simply because it is the right thing to do. Whether we can win or not is irrelevant.

With so few of us fighting we need to ensure the resistance is effective:

‘If you know yourself but not the enemy, for every victory gained you will also suffer a defeat. If you know neither the enemy or yourself, you will succumb to every battle.’ Sun-tzu, and Samuel B. Griffith, The Art of War 1964.

We have missed the opportunity to launch a national resistance - that would have required our parents to be aware of the dangers back when Agenda 21 was launched. Most were not. The policies of Agenda 21, Agenda 2030 and the New Urban Agenda are now embedded in local policies so, consequently, we must act locally. The agenda is global, but our resistance must be local. We must act locally - local citizens must challenge what they don’t like within their own communities and push back and do so in accordance with the principles stated in *The Art of War*:

1. Know your enemy: do your research and understand who you are fighting before you do anything;
2. Make correct self-assessment: *‘Carefully compare the opposing army with your own, so that you may know where strength is superabundant and where it is deficient’;*

3. Create a strategy: *'All men can see the tactics whereby I conquer, but what no-one can see is the strategy out of which victory is evolved'*;
4. Keep your mouth shut: *'O divine art of subtlety and secrecy! Through you we learn to be invisible, through you inaudible; and hence we can hold the enemy's fate in our hands.'* Bear in mind that in all likelihood anything said on social media will be immediately known by those who intend to control us.
5. Just do it: *'Let your plans be dark and impenetrable as night and, when you move, fall like a thunderbolt.'*

We have the like-minded people within UKCitizen, but we need to start finding people locally too. Once we have a small group, we need to make a survey of the community within which we want to resist. Note all agencies, boards (education, fire, utilities, police), NGOs, think tanks, leaders (MPs and councillors, mayors) operating within the community. Gather as much information about meetings, locations, contact details. Note any initiatives that you can identify along with the purpose - can we link them back to Agenda 2030? With respect to each initiative, is there anyone that we can identify as being 'on side' – a 'change leader' perhaps?

Once this assessment is complete, decide which meetings to attend and determine a strategy (do we say nothing at the first meeting and simply observe or do we go straight in with our arguments/questions?). If we are successful in pushing back against the agenda, we know our success will not make it onto mainstream/corporate media so determine a strategy for getting the successes out to the wider public. Success will breed success since, if we can push back, others will believe they can too.

The power resides with the people - resistance is never futile.....

1g Suggested Questions for Councillors and Officers Involved in ‘Net Zero’, ‘Carbon Neutral’ or Absolute Zero’ Policies.

Many scientists are of the opinion that any ‘Net Zero’, ‘Carbon Neutral’ or ‘Absolute Zero’ policies are invalid and are based on flawed science if the research the council relies upon to inform their policies involves the following:

- Omitting unfavourable data that contradicts conclusions;
- Relying upon models that don’t work so would never be used in science;
- Relying on the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (‘IPCC’) which are government opinions rather than scientific findings;
- Failing to acknowledge the social benefits of CO₂ and fossil fuels;
- Failing to acknowledge the disastrous consequences of reducing fossil fuels and CO₂ to ‘Net Zero’; and
- Rejecting the science which illustrates there is no catastrophic global warming caused by fossil fuels and CO₂.

With this in mind, challenge your councillors and/or officers on the research underpinning the policies by asking and insisting on the following:

1. Does the research rely on research from the IPCC (‘IPCC’)? If so, delete all such references of IPCC government-controlled findings;
2. Does the research rely on CMIP ([Coupled Model Inter Comparison Project](#)) models or other unproven modelling? If so, delete unless the models can be proven to work;
3. Does the research rely on methods other than the scientific method? If so, delete any reliance on methods other than the scientific method, such as peer review and consensus;
4. Does the research include an analysis of the benefits of CO₂? If not, ask why not?
5. Does the research include an analysis of the benefits of fossil fuels? If not, ask why not?
6. Does the research acknowledge that elimination of all fossil fuel will lead to massive human starvation in the future? If not, ask why not?

(Taken from the ‘Challenging ‘Net Zero with Science’ essay on the CO₂ Coalition website. Link can be found on the resources page)